

Acts of the Apostles

Introduction

- Author: Compare Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2.
Traveling companion of Paul: 16:11-16, 20:5-21:18
See also Colossians 4:10-14, Philemon 23-24.
Polycarp (100) and Irenaeus (170) both wrote that Luke was the author.
- Date: The end of the book leaves Paul in prison, but gives the length of time.
It seems as though Luke intended to write a third volume.
- Canonicity: In the Muratorian Canon. Never seriously disputed.

- 1:1 See Luke 1:1-4. Theophilus could have been a patron, or a governor, or a convert. Many guesses have been offered without proof.
- 1:2 He was 'taken up' in 1:9.
- 1:3 Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21, 1 Corinthians 15:4-7. The time from the Resurrection to the Pentecost of Acts 2 was 50 days. Pentecost was the day after the seventh Sabbath after the Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover (Leviticus 23:4-17). Therefore, the Ascension was approximately 10 days before Pentecost. Note that 40 seems to be a popular number for God: rain 40 days and 40 nights to begin the Flood, 40 years in the wilderness, 40 days and 40 nights on Mt. Sinai to receive the Law, Elijah went 40 days and 40 nights on the strength of the angel's food, 40 years reign for Saul, David, and Solomon, 40 days temptation for Jesus, and forty years from the resurrection to the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 1:4 This is a good lesson in hermeneutics. If commands given to the apostles are also for us, then we should live in Jerusalem, waiting for power from on high.
- 1:5 This baptism of the Holy Spirit must have occurred in Jerusalem before the apostles left there, 'not many days' after this was spoken. Acts 2 seems the best fulfillment. This promise is repeated in 11:16. However, in that place, it was a surprise to Peter. It had not been promised. Instead, it was a means used by God to get Peter to change his opinion about Gentiles and the gospel.
- 1:6 The apostles' question indicates that they still expected the Messiah to usher in the reconstruction of the Davidic monarchy. They still didn't quite get the concept of the Eternal Kingdom, the church.
- 1:7 God does not reveal much of His timetable. This is similar to statements about the timing of Judgment Day (Matthew 24:36, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10). Jesus' answer does not tell them that the earthly kingdom of Israel would not be restored, only that the timing was not theirs to know. Many people today claim to know God's timetable.
- 1:8 This is the first description of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, "You shall receive power." Considering the power they had exercised previously while on missionary journeys (see Matthew 10:1, Mark 6:7, Luke 9:1), they perhaps did not understand the magnitude of the power. Considering their previous question and Peter's attitude in Acts 10-11 about Gentiles, they probably understood that they would take the gospel to the Jews who were scattered to the remotest part of the earth. This promise was fulfilled within their lifetimes (see Colossians 1:6).
- 1:9 See also Luke 24:50. Jesus was lifting up His hands and blessing them when He was lifted up. Also note John 20:17, where Jesus mentions His future Ascension shortly after His resurrection. Ephesians 4:10 mentions both His death and ascension.

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- 1:10 Watching for some last glimpse of Jesus is understandable, and would make it easy for the two men in white clothing to arrive unseen by any number of natural or miraculous paths. The identity of the two men is not given. But the confidence with which they speak of future events make one suspect that they are angels (spiritual beings, not humans). In Mark 16:5, a being in white clothing, who was identified in John 20:12 as an angel, told the women at the tomb that Jesus body had not been stolen, but had arisen from the dead. Those in heaven as said to be in white (Revelation 3:5, 3:18, 4:4, 6:11, 7:9, 7:13, *et al*). There are only a few references of beings in white on earth.
- 1:11 Jesus coming on the clouds is also mentioned in Matthew 26:64, Mark 13:26, 14:62, and Luke 21:27. However, in those places, Jesus was referring to a prophecy of Daniel in which the Messiah was arriving at (not departing from) heaven. Others mentions of Jesus final return may be found in 1 Corinthians 15:23, , 1 Thessalonians 3:13, Hebrews 9:28. There are more details in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.
- 1:12 Luke 24:52 adds that they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. A Sabbath day's journey was about 2000 cubits (1.7 miles). The ancient rabbis settled on this distance because, in Numbers 35:5, the pasture lands within 2000 cubits of a Levitical city were considered part of the city. Therefore, one did not technically leave town until that line was crossed. Since one must "stay in his place" (Exodus 16:29) on the Sabbath, the definition of "place" was taken to be a city. Since only measurement of a city was for the pastures around a Levitical city, that became the standard for all. This measurement would be important to the apostles only on the Sabbath, so perhaps the Ascension was on a Sabbath, on the forty-first day since the resurrection, eight days before Pentecost.
- 1:13 The "upper room" is undefined. The use of the article, the, does not have the same meaning as in English. So a specific upper room may not be intended, rather "an upper room" would be an equally good translation. The most recent reference to an upper room in the writings of Luke would be the one in which the Lord's Supper was instituted (Luke 22:12ff). The place where the apostles were gathered in Luke 24:33 (also John 20:19) is not described. The list of apostles is the same as in Luke 6:14 except for a difference in order and the deletion of Judas Iscariot. The lists in Mark 3:16 and Matthew 10:2 use Thaddaeus instead of Judas the son of James. The Zealots (Simon the Sealot) were a group of nationalistic guerillas of the first century. They started the first Jewish Revolt that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 1:14 The group was much larger than just eleven men (see 1:15). The "women" likely include their wives, along with the prominent women around the tomb, "Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them". (Luke 24:10). The names of Jesus brothers were James, Judas, Joseph, and Simon (Matthew 13:55). The story that these were sons of Joseph but not Mary was first put forward in the fourth century, in order to defend the perpetual virginity of Mary. There were scholars on both sides of the issue until scholarship was lost and infallibility was asserted.
- 1:15 Peter assumes a leadership role as he has several times previously (*e.g.*, Matthew 14:28, 15:15, 16:16, 17:4).
- 1:16 The Scripture fulfilled by Judas is not given here. John 13:18 indicates that it is Psalm 41:9. Jesus, in His prayer, also said that the betrayal was a fulfillment (John 17:12).
- 1:17 Judas was given power over demons and to heal the sick in the same way as the others (Matthew 10:1, Mark 6:7, Luke 9:1). The Eleven were not aware that anything was wrong during the Last Supper (Matthew 26:20-25, John 13:2-5, 10-11, 21-30).

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- 1:18 Judas hanged himself after returning the money. The priests considered the money tainted, so they used it to purchase the Potter's Field and make it a cemetery for the indigent. (Matthew 27:3-10) The fulfilled Zechariah 11:12-13. Here, Peter tells us that the priests bought the field in which Judas hanged himself. Apparently, Judas had no family member to cut him down. So, he putrefied on his gallows. When the rope finally broke, his swollen body broke open. This would make the ground unclean. The timing of when the land was purchased is not given. Perhaps the owner was glad to sell after Judas defiled it.
- 1:19 Judas' suicide was a well known event. He was despised even by those who paid him.
- 1:20 Peter continues his speech with portions of two Psalms (69:25, 109:8) as fitting ways to deal with an enemy. Jesus connected the number of disciples and the number of the tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30). However, this is not conclusive that twelve was the only acceptable number. Jesus' comparison may have been connected only by coincidence. Further, there were thirteen tribes, since Jacob adopted Ephraim and Manasseh (there is no tribe of Joseph). And more than 12 are named as apostles in Acts.
- 1:21 The logic is lacking here. Replacing Judas was not necessary. James dies in chapter 12 but no mention is made of his replacement. The qualifications are not essential (Paul would not qualify). If this were a history written as it happened, the reader could question whether these actions were endorsed by God. However, Luke could not have come to know about it for at least 20 years (upon his conversion). If the apostles had acted presumptuously, surely God would have let them know before Luke recorded it. These qualifications indicate that there were a number of people who traveled with the group for years without being named. The Seventy in Luke 10:1 were sent out from a larger group of disciples.
- 1:22 "From the baptism of John" probably does not mean the time of Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13-17) because Jesus did not begin to gather disciples until Matthew 4:17-18. The time from intended by Peter is more likely the general time when John was baptizing. That time ended when John was imprisoned (before Matthew 11:2). Note the nature of witnessing, "Of His resurrection." Witnessing in the New Testament always is used to describe being an eye-witness of a physical event, as one would testify in a court. It is never used to describe an individual's experience.
- 1:23 These two men are not mentioned again.
- 1:24 They did not give God the choice of choosing neither.
- 1:26 Casting lots was a familiar method to the Jews (Leviticus 16:8, Joshua 14:2, 1 Samuel 14:41f, Nehemiah 10:34).
- 2:1 Pentecost was always on Sunday. It was the day after the seventh Sabbath after the Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (Leviticus 23:4-17). The place in which they were gathered is not specified, although it may have been the same upper room.
- 2:2 The noise caused people to gather (verse 6). So, it must have been loud enough to be heard outside the house. The number of people upon whom this miracle fell is not specified. Estimates range from 12 (1:26) to 120 (1:15). Since the time lag between 1:26 and 2:1 is not specified, any number is possible.
- 2:4 This is to be identified with the baptism of the Holy Spirit mentioned back in 1:5. Peter made that connection when recounting the events in Cornelius' house some years later (10:44-48, 11:15-17). They were speaking in languages other than Greek or Aramaic. The word translated tongue is always used to describe a known language of this earth.

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- 2:5 Because this day was one of the major annual festivals, Jerusalem would swell from its usual 250,000 inhabitants, to perhaps 2 or 3 million.
- 2:6 People were attracted by the wind noise. They were intrigued by the variety of languages.
- 2:7 The wording gives the impression that a miracle was being performed on the ears of the listeners: one noise, many different hearings. If the miracle were on the ears, the statement about Galileans implies that they had a low opinion of Galileans. If the miracle were in the speaking, then their comment was less derogatory, meaning that they were surprised that Galileans would be multilingual.
- 2:8 The listeners must have compared notes.
- 2:12 The meaning of this display was not immediately obvious to the crowd. Since God's work should make sense, the purpose must have been just to draw a crowd with a miraculous display in order to set the stage for the message to follow.
- 2:13 If the miracle were on the ears, then some people heard gibberish. If this were the case, then the supposition could be made that those with hard hearts were not permitted to hear the miracle. They were not blocked from the gospel (2:15-40). If the miracle were in the speaking, some people didn't find the person speaking their native tongue, so did not understand the miracle.
- 2:14 The mention of eleven seems odd since Matthias was just appointed to replace Judas (1:26).
- 2:15 In general, time was counted from sunrise. Thus, the third hour would be near 9 a.m. Matthew 20:1-2 gives a good example of Hebrew time. Luke (Luke 23:44) used the same time reckoning as Matthew (Matthew 27:45) concerning the darkness at the crucifixion.
- 2:16 Peter explains that the display before the crowd was prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:28-32).
- 2:17 Joel described the events of this Pentecost as being "in the last days." To the Jew, the last days were the days of the Messiah and following. They were not leading up to Judgment Day. Not everything Joel said took place on this particular morning. In a figurative sense, this beginning of the spread of the gospel could be said to be the pouring forth of the Spirit on all mankind. That action would never be fulfilled literally, since those who refuse cannot receive the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2 *et al*).
- 2:19 The wonders could be in the past to Peter, describing such things as the darkness at the crucifixion, since that would still be future to Joel. Or they could be signs future to that moment.
- 2:20 Although the sun has been turned in darkness, premillennialists claim that the moon has never been turned to blood, so these miraculous powers remain.
- 2:22 Peter assumes that the vast majority of the crowd knew about Jesus, His teachings, and His death 50 days previously. Peter uses the common knowledge of Jesus' miracles as proof that He was from God. So, there must have been little doubt among the common people that Jesus had been some sort of messenger of God.
- 2:23 Peter refutes the assumption that Jesus' execution was a mark of God's displeasure. The miracles performed by Jesus and those being performed at that moment validated this assertion. Foreknowledge is used in 1 Peter 1:2, Romans 8:29, and Romans 11:2. In each case, bad times are said to be part of God's plan.
- 2:24 The resurrection is introduced here for the first time as a proof of Jesus being the Messiah. The resurrection is a recurring theme in the rest of the New Testament, held by

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- Paul to be of "first importance" (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). The assertion that it was "impossible" to held in the power of death will be proven by the following quotations.
- 2:25 Peter quoted Ps 16:8-11. The ancient rabbis were in general agreement (as written in the *Midrash*) that the line about not undergoing decay was about the Messiah.
- 2:29 Psalm 16 is attributed to David, a fact which Peter confirms. Peter's point was aimed at the Sadducees, who did not believe in resurrection. The Pharisees would already agree that the Messiah would not see decay. So, Peter challenges his more liberal listeners to apply this to someone.
- 2:30 The promise is in Psalm 132:11-12, 2 Samuel 7:12-13, and Psalm 89:3-4. The last descendent of David to sit on the throne was Zedekiah in 586 BC.
- 2:32 The number of people included in Peter's "all" is not known: at least eleven and perhaps more than a hundred. 1 Corinthians 15:6 records that more than 500 people at one time saw the resurrected Lord. So the total was likely closer to 600. These are witnesses who can confirm a real event, not people who endorse a belief.
- 2:33 Peter's claim recalls Daniel 7:13-14, a passage used by Jesus to refer to himself (Matthew 24:30, 26:64 and parallels). The promise of the Holy Spirit would not be the promises made by Jesus to His disciples (e.g., Acts 1:4, and John 16:13) because the audience would not know of those promises. Instead, Peter refers to the prophecy of Joel quoted earlier and similar passages, such as Ezekiel 36:27. The conservative ancient rabbis taught that the time for the Messiah would include many works of the Spirit. Of course, the liberal faction denied any action by any spirits. Peter uses as his confirmation the miraculous events happening before their eyes.
- 2:34 Peter quoted Psalm 110:1. The ancient rabbis were unanimous in teaching that this psalm was about the Messiah. The crowd would have recognized the quote. The comment about David was directed again to the Sadducees, who denied that the Messiah would be the Son of God.
- 2:35 This line is also quoted in Hebrews 1:13 and 10:13.
- 2:36 Peter's proof was based on well known and accepted Scriptures, physical proof, and eye-witness testimony. Christianity is the only religion built upon that foundation. None of the presentations made to unbelievers in Acts had any other basis. There were no complex theories. Scriptures were not given new meanings. Ideas were not justified by obscure halves of verses from different prophets in different contexts. There is no need to rely on oratorical tricks when you have facts.
- 2:37 Those who responded knew that they were not personally guilty of condemning Jesus. These were ordinary folks who had much less control over their government than we have over ours. Yet, since they were all Jews, they realized that the Messiah of whom they had been taught all their lives had come and had been killed. Messianic expectation had begun to build when Rome took control of Palestine in 63 BC. This ushered in the fourth kingdom prophesied by Daniel. The announcement of Zacharias (father of John the Baptist) had re-awakened that expectation. Many false Messiahs had tried to steal the spotlight. Peter's case was so strong that a substantial part of the crowd had to agree that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. They did not know what to do next, since there was no Messiah to follow. Perhaps they were also afraid of some retribution from the Father.
- 2:38 Baptism had been popularized as a sign of repentance by both John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus (John 4:1), so the practice would have been familiar. John also baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). Two things were new here. First, it was

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to be done by the authority of Jesus. Everyone knew that only God could forgive sins, an argument faced by Jesus before (Matthew 9:2-6, Mark 2:3-12, Luke 5:18-26). Peter made the same assertion that Jesus did when He healed the paralytic; Jesus has the authority to forgive sins. Secondly, Peter promises the gift of the Holy Spirit. No details are given here as to what exactly that was. Due to the lack of information, many have made outrageous claims. In response, others have tried to counter their claims with a similar lack of information.

- 2:39 The promise is for all people for all time, not just for these people or one race or region. In addition to forgiveness, all who repent and are baptized will receive whatever this gift of the Holy Spirit is. Later inspired writers gave some clues about what this gift does (a few references have been given following this paragraph), but a full explanation is not given anywhere in the New Testament. This gift is accepted by faith (acting on the promises of God). It does something necessary for us by means unknown to us. Only bits and pieces have been revealed. If we knew exactly how everything worked, we would be walking by sight and not by faith.

A few verses concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit:

Acts 8:18-20, 19:2-3 Some manifestations of the Spirit came only through the laying on of the apostles hands.

Acts 10:44-45 Sometimes the Holy Spirit came without a human intermediary.

Romans 5:5 The love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Spirit who was given to us

Romans 8:1 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh--for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (also Galatians 4:6)

Rom 8:26-27 And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1 Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

2 Cor 5:5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

Gal 3:2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Eph 1:13-14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

2 Tim 1:14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

I Jn 3:24 And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

Jude 1:20-21 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

- 2:40 Although Peter labeled his generation as "perverse," it was not notably immoral or unreligious. The crowd was composed of mostly religious people. Perhaps this perversity is common to all generations where people lose sight of serving God and the inevitability of Judgment.

- 2:41 Some have argued that this number is too large, that it would take more than the remainder of the day to baptize this many people. The number of people doing the baptizing could have been quite large. Jesus sent out 70 in Luke 10:1, and they could cast out demons (Luke 10:17). If as few as 50 were baptizing, they would need to baptize

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- only 60 each. Others have objected that the amount of water was insufficient, that the city officials would not have allowed that many people to wade through the public water supply within the city. First, a visit to Jerusalem even today will suffice to prove that many unwashed children play in the same pools of drinking water without interference. Second, flanking the entrances to the Temple were dozens of baptismal pools used for ritual cleanness. Each had a stairway down into the water. chest-deep water at the bottom, and a separate stairway back out. If the disciples had commandeered these, the task could have been completed in less than two hours.
- 2:42 This suggests that they did not go back to work immediately after the holiday. The foreign Jews seem to have delayed their returns. This could have created a benevolence nightmare. The reason it was not so may be seen in 2:44 and 4:34. Some difficulties did arise (6:1). The "breaking of bread" could have been meals or the Lord's Supper, or an inseparable combination of the two. See Acts 2:46, 20:7, 20:11, 27:35, 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:24.
- 2:43 Miracles, the types not being specified here, were a regular occurrence. Despite this uncommon outpouring of the power of the Spirit, the conversion rate never exceeded two or three per cent of the population.
- 2:44 This kind of sharing is rare, but is demanded of the church (Ephesians 4:28, 1 Timothy 6:18, Hebrews 13:16, 1 Peter 4:9).
- 2:46 Unity also is rare, but demanded (Romans 12:16, 15:5, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 1:27, Colossians 3:14).
- 2:47 Romans 2:24 gives the counterpoint to finding favor with all the people. The number continued to increase beyond the original 3000.
- 3:1 The lampstand wicks were trimmed and incense was added twice each day, one of which was at 3 p.m. (Luke 1:10, Exodus 30:7-8) The time of the other is in dispute, either 9 a.m. or 6 a.m. It was customary for devout Jews in Jerusalem to stop work around 3 p.m. and go to the Temple to pray at that time. After the Temple work was done, the officiating priest would come out of the Holy Place and pronounce a familiar blessing: "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).
- 3:2 The disabled customarily lined the roads to the Temple, since the most generous people passed that way often. Begging was not as lowly as it is today. There was no welfare system, so those who could not care for themselves and whose families had none to spare were dependent on the generosity of others. The Israelites were commanded to care for the needy (*e.g.*, Deuteronomy 15:7).
- 3:3 Although signs and wonders were common at this time (2:43), it seems that this beggar either had not heard or did not recognize Peter or John as being miracle workers.
- 3:6 The term, Nazarene, comes from Matthew 2:23. The meaning is vague, probably meaning "a person from Nazareth." But the reference in Matthew to a prophecy for which one cannot find a quotation makes the understanding difficult and the source of many theories. Since all four gospel writers used the term to describe Jesus (a total of eleven times) indicates that the people of that time knew exactly what it meant. The definition was lost at the dawn of the mystical age of preaching, before 400 AD.
- 3:7 As with other miracles, God took care of the ancillary problems such as learning to walk (the man had been lame since birth) and creating muscle mass along with curing the disability.

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- 3:12 The miracle workers of the Bible were careful to let on-lookers know that the power was not their own, and that they were in any way better than anyone else because God chose them to transmit this power. The portico of Solomon was 27' tall with a cedar roof. On the east side of the Temple platform, the portico was 60' wide and 1530' long. On the north side, it was 90' wide and 922 feet long.
- 3:13 Peter confirmed that Pilate intended to release Jesus (John 19:12).
- 3:15 Again, the resurrection and eye-witness testimony are the foundation of Peter's proof, not theory or emotion.
- 3:16 The person having the faith is unclear. Perhaps the lame man had great faith in God and had had the opportunity to see and hear Jesus, but simply failed to recognize Peter and John in the crowd. Perhaps this is Peter's faith that allowed him to perform the miracle, as promised in John 14:12.
- 3:17 Although the accusations in 3:13-15 were strong, Peter showed here that he held no malice toward those who contributed to (or failed to try to stop) Jesus death.
- 3:18 The Suffering Savior concept (*e.g.*, Isaiah 53) was a topic of heated debate over the centuries. Rabbis had great difficulty reconciling the eternal kingdom and the throne of David with suffering. Most applied the suffering to a time of struggle as the Messiah gained power, usually through military force.
- 3:19 The call to repentance is given to a group of predominantly very religions Jews who took time from their work day to pray at 3 p.m. "Repent and return" have slightly different meanings, the first being more of a commitment, the second more of an action. Much has been made of this use of two words because many insist that they must mean different things. That is not the case in Hebrew thought, in which parallelism was an art form. The results of this repenting and returning were two-fold (see also verse 20). The refreshing probably is a figure of speech for the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:28), with which the audience should be familiar if they remembered Joel 2. Secondly, the promise is given that He may send Jesus. On the surface, Judgment Day seems to fit better, being a positive experience for believers. But, the coming of Jesus that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem fits better with the context of 3:21. The restoration of all things would be the eternal kingdom and the throne of David, which was not fully established until God put an end to Judaism, after the gospel had gone to the whole world. The things spoken by the prophets from ancient times (3:21) have to do with the Messiah being followed (3:22). The Jews who did not become Christians were cut off from the kingdom (3:23) This picture of the first century is repeat to the end of the chapter.
- 3:21 The prophets spoke of the time of the Messiah much more often than about Judgment and the end of heaven and earth.
- 3:22 The quotation is from Deuteronomy 18:15 or 18:18, referring to the Messiah. One would have the choice to listen to Him only on earth. Those in heaven will already have made that decision.
- 3:23 Jews who did not follow Jesus were cut off from the chosen people. The Chosen People today are Christians (1 Peter 2:9, Romans 9:25, 2 Corinthians 6:16).
- 4:2 The Sadducees did not believe in spirits or resurrection (Acts 23:8). So, this confrontation began over denominational doctrine, not Jesus.
- 4:3 Their system of justice was very different than ours. Theoretically, the Jewish authorities were required to have a speedy trial. Most rabbis quoted Jeremiah 21:12 to require daily

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- court sessions. But, no one had the power to force the High Priest or the king to apply this fairly. So, many political prisoners languished in jail for years.
- 4:5 Specifying 'men' would imply that they represented their households.
- 4:6 The Roman government frequently required that the High Priest be replaced for political reasons. The Jews did not recognize the change, but the Sadducees, the ruling party, cooperated in order to keep the peace. So, although Caiaphas was the High Priest of record, his father-in-law, Annas, was the High Priest according to the Law of Moses. John and Alexander also became High Priest at different times. The point of naming them here was to show that this trial brought out the most important people.
- 4:7 Teachers needed licenses (to be ordained). This charge also includes their cure of the lame man. Perhaps the council would wish to invoke Deuteronomy 13:1-5. To a Sadducee, advocating resurrection would be tantamount to going after other gods, so the miracle would become a capital offense.
- 4:8 Being "filled with the Holy Spirit" has been applied variously. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit when she prophesied (Luke 1:41), as was Zacharias (Luke 1:67). In Acts 2:4, those who spoke in other languages were filled with the Holy Spirit. Other incidents are recorded in Acts 4:31 (a group), 9:17 (Ananias wish for Saul), 13:9 (Paul giving a speech), and Ephesians 5:18 (opposite of drunkenness). The context suggests that Peter got some help with his answer.
- 4:10 Peter answers exactly the question asked. He attributes the healing power to Jesus. Peter also begins with his proof that an executed criminal can have power. His first proof, again, is Jesus' resurrection.
- 4:11 The quotation is from Psalm 118:22. Edersheim's list of rabbinic Messianic proof texts does not mention this Psalm. However, this passage became a favorite of early Christian writers to explain that the rejection of Jesus by the leaders of the Jews was part of the predicted plan. Jesus used this Psalm to describe Himself in Matthew 21:42 (Luke 20:17). This line also has been connected to Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16, and Daniel 2:35. See also 1 Peter 2:6-7, Romans 9:33, and Ephesians 2:20.
- 4:12 This uniqueness was stated by Jesus in John 14:6. This is the first recorded public announcement of that claim. All other religions are excluded.
- 4:13 Perhaps Peter's speech was abridged by Luke. It seems unlikely that they would marvel over three coherent sentences containing one allusion to Scripture. Whatever the cause, Peter's presentation caught their attention as being uncommonly persuasive. Perhaps the empty tomb was well known to this group, since they had commissioned the guards, and would know that the stolen body story was a lie they themselves had started.
- 4:14 And, the healing made it hard to argue.
- 4:15 This was common practice. Luke could have gained knowledge of their private deliberations from a member of the Sanhedrin who later became a Christian, or who was a sympathizer who knew Christians. For example, Paul could have been present. Or Gamaliel could have told him. Or Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea could have confided in someone.
- 4:16 With the man born blind in John 9, the Council called witnesses to verify that the man had been blind. This man must have been so well known that such an inquiry was pointless.

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- 4:17 The council missed the point. Peter told them that the power to heal was from Jesus (4:10) and the power to save was in Jesus (4:12). Peter made no claims to being an ordained minister (as would be necessary to speak publicly as a rabbi). Yet, they propose to order Peter cease public speaking, as though they were declaring his teaching credentials void.
- 4:19 Peter tried to point out the flaw in their understanding. He was not teaching as a rabbi who was credentialed after certain schooling and after gaining the endorsement of a small number of established rabbis. Peter's point here and in verse 20 is that (1) the obviously had the endorsement of God because they could do the miracle, and (2) they were not teaching as a rabbi would teach, they were relating eyewitness testimony of historical events, not teaching their opinions about the Scriptures.
- 4:21 Objective people glorified God for this obvious miracle.
- 4:23 Peter and John understood the threat, as revealed in the prayer that follows. Their response to these threats is not to be immediately disobedient, but to join their fellow Christians and pray.
- 4:25 The quotation is from Psalm 2:1, all of which was considered Messianic by the rabbis.
- 4:27 The Christians understood that rulers were appointed by God, even the bad ones.
- 4:28 They understood that the death of Jesus was planned. At the time of Jesus' death, they did not understand this.
- 4:29 They are asking permission to disobey the intention of the order of the Sanhedrin. They could have found a convenient excuse in that the Sanhedrin did not say they could not continue to relate facts (as Peter pointed out to them). Neither did they decide that they knew when it was permitted to disobey Jesus' clear injunction against disobeying their rulers (Matthew 23:1ff).
- 4:30 They ask for a continuation of the miracles to validate their claims.
- 4:31 They received a miraculous answer to this prayer. Many people have decided to disobey their rulers based on this scene (especially 5:29). They lack the earthquake, the miracles, and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- 4:32 See 2:44.
- 4:33 The great power, from the context, would seem to be miracles. The type of witnessing had to do with being eye-witnesses. The exact meaning of 'abundant grace' is not given. Perhaps their demeanor was peaceful rather than frenzied because of their understanding of grace. Perhaps this is only restating that they enjoyed the favor of the common people.
- 4:34 See 2:45
- 4:36 This is the first mention of Barnabas, who will have a significant impact on bringing Saul of Tarsus into the mainstream.
- 5:3 Satan "filled the heart" of Ananias not by taking over his choices but by deceit. If either God or Satan could override the free will of an individual, neither faith nor the lack of it would have any meaning.
- 5:4 Peter's concern was the lie. Giving was not coerced or commanded. Each contributed as each saw a need to do so.
- 5:5 The sobering fact was that Ananias, although numbered with the faithful, was spiritually dead already. Hebrews 6:4 – 8 indicates that, having been partakers of the Holy Spirit, repentance was now beyond their ability.

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- 5:9 Sapphira also was beyond reclamation. The patience of God would not bear fruit (2 Peter 3:9), so patience was not offered. God does not end the physical lives of all who are beyond hope (Romans 1:24), but is just in using their lives to make a point.
- 5:13 By comparing to 5:14, “none of the rest” must refer to the rest of those like Annanias and Sapphira, since good-hearted people continued to respond. The incident with Ananias and Sapphira apparently kept the proportion of faithful people in the assembly at a high level as the church was starting out, which was not always the case as the gospel spread (*e.g.*, Corinth). Perhaps this miraculous weeding of the church was only necessary at this point in its development.
- 5:17 The Sadducees were the majority party in the Sanhedrin. Government leaders could imprison (5:18) or have beaten (5:40) anyone, with or without charge. The limiting factors were two: potential revolution (5:26) or prohibition by the Roman government. The Sanhedrin could not assign capital punishment. The motivation for the jealousy or indignation of the Sadducees is not given. The reasons they gave to the apostles, which may or may not be their true motives, were lack of proper credentials (4:7) and loss of their dominant position (4:17).
- 5:28 The miracles of healing (4:22) and escape from prison (5:24) apparently had no effect on the council.
- 5:29 In other places (Titus 3:1, Romans 13:1 – 7, 1 Peter 2:13 – 17), Christians are enjoined to obey the government. No exceptions are given in those places. The dilemma of the apostles is due to Jesus direction to obey the council (Matthew 23:2 – 3). When this conflict arose, they sought resolution through prayer (4:24 – 30). They received a miraculous response (4:31). Then, an angel let an unknown number of apostles out of prison (5:17 – 19) and gave them instructions to continue to preach (5:20). People today who violate laws because they sincerely believe that the law is superseded by their own understanding of what God wants have no miraculous endorsement. The dilemma can be resolved by observing that the council was a religious body, not a civil one, and that God has promised assistance in resolving issues with the government (Psalm 2, 1 Corinthians 10:13).
- 5:31 Peter’s reference of “exalted to His right hand” is from Psalm 110:1, which the council would know was about the Messiah.
- 5:33 The response of the majority, despite repeated miracles, was murderous. The figure of speech is “cut to the quick,” also found in 2:37 and 7:54. The former resulted in repentance. The other two resulted in violence.
- 5:34 Saul of Tarsus studied under Gamaliel (22:3). Some of his writings exist today, revealing his good understanding of the Scriptures.
- 5:36 Historical reference to Theudas has been lost, although several revolts occurred immediately after the death of Herod the Great. Another Theudas led a revolt about 10 years after this, who is noted by the historian Josephus.
- 5:37 Judas of Galilee led a revolt in 6 AD when Judea was reduced in status from a kingdom to a Roman province. The census was conducted to determine the amount of tax that was to be collected from the population. The revolt was crushed by Rome, but the movement lived on in the party of the Zealots.
- 5:39 Gamaliel’s advice was to allow the miracles to play out. Even the Sadducees would agree that fighting against God would be useless.

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- 5:40 The beating of unconvicted people was common. Perhaps the council believed that this might silence the apostles.
- 5:41 See James 1:2 – 4 concerning rejoicing in suffering. “Worthy to suffer shame for the name:” for the essential qualities of Jesus.
- 6:1 Hellenistic Jews were those who lived in foreign countries. To live outside of Israel and maintain a claim to being Jewish required rationalization their religion to some degree. For example, distance made attendance at all the festivals impossible. Many also adopted different degrees of Greek culture such as hair styles, language, diet, and dress. Many no longer taught their children Hebrew, but rather relied on the Septuagint. Those mentioned in this verse were religious enough to spend a lot of time and money to come to Jerusalem for a festival. Others were those to whom Paul would preach later (in Turkey and Greece), who became violent when Paul suggested that the gospel was open to Gentiles. Palestinian Jewish Christians had a cultural bias against Hellenistic Jewish Christians, but they were united in their hatred of non-Jews. The church was still in the mode of 2:44 – 45 and 4:32 – 34. The out-of-town Jews who became Christians apparently were still around and needing help. If they were Hellenistic Jews from the immediate area, they would have jobs and families to support them.
- 6:4 Note that prayer comes first in a list of two items. Interestingly, the widow's job in the church was to pray (1 Timothy 5:5).
- 6:5 The wording of this line illustrates the nature of leadership in the church. Followers followed those whom they chose, knowing that they must give answer for rejecting godly leadership (Hebrews 13:17). In contrast, Israel was told to follow the High Priest, yet several of them were poor leaders. Jesus admonished his followers to obey this leadership of Israel despite its flaws (Matthew 23:3). Stephen will be the central figure of 6:8-8:2. Philip appears in a story in 8:5-40 and 21:8. The others are not mentioned by name again in the New Testament.
- 6:6 Again, prayer is first. Laying hands on another is mentioned in Matthew 19:13 and Mark 10:16 (Jesus imparting a blessing), Mark 6:5; 8:23 and Luke 4:40; 13:13 (Jesus heals sick people), Mark 16:18 (Jesus predicts that His followers will heal sick people), Acts 8:17; 9:12; 19:6 (apostles bestow Holy Spirit), Acts 13:3 (elders impart a blessing to apostles), Acts 28:8 (apostle heals a sick person), 1 Timothy 4:14 (elders impart a blessing to Timothy), and Hebrews 6:2 (among the rudimentary teachings).
- 6:7 Priests were among the best educated in the Law, so should be the most able to make an informed decision. These converted priests could have been Luke's source of eye-witness testimony of the dealings of the closed sessions of the Council without miraculous insight. This influx of trained teachers of the Law also would lead to confusion as the gospel was made difficult by those accustomed to centuries of grasping at straws in rabbinical schools.
- 6:8 The context of Stephen's power seems to be miraculous. However, that power will not save his life in the next chapter. A more interesting question is to determine what it means to be full of grace. John 1:14 uses those words to describe Jesus. See also Colossion 4:6.
- 6:9 Freedmen were simply those who had been slaves but had managed to obtain their freedom. Many Jews had been carried away as slaves in the many conquests of Israel, the most recent being that by Pompey in 63 BC. They would tend to be somewhat Hellenized, having lived in other cultures without the ability to refrain from work on the

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- Sabbath and to observe the dietary laws or attend the festivals. They were, in general, ostracized by the mainstream Jews of Jerusalem, so they had their own synagogues.
- 6:10 Stephen seems to have taken advantage of the promise in James 1:5. In addition, he seems to have been given some special assistance by the Spirit.
- 6:11 Leviticus 24:16 makes blaspheming the name of God a capital offense. Blasphemy against Moses probably is a figure of speech for blasphemy against the Law of Moses, the Word of God. Exactly what constitutes blasphemy is unclear. The same word that is translated blasphemy is also translated defame, rail on, speak evil, and revile. Other mentions of blasphemy in the New Testament may be found in Revelation 13:6; 16:9, 11, 21, Romans 2:24, 1 Timothy 6:1, and Titus 2:5. In Jesus time, the idea of ranting was not necessary, as illustrated by Mark 2:7 and 14:46 when merely making a claim of divinity was blasphemous.
- 6:14 Cross examination of witnesses by defense attorneys was not part of their judicial system, so perversion of justice was relatively simple. A claim made by Jesus in John 2:19 was repeated at His trial in Matthew 26:61. The customs that could be perceived as changing were not yet evident since Christianity had not moved out of Jerusalem and all the Christians were Jews, and all the customs were still observed. Jesus' response to the charge that he was trying to change the customs of Moses was answered in Matthew 5:17.
- 6:15 The meaning of the description of Stephen's face is unclear. The context leads the reader to expect something that Stephen's enemies could see that would startle them, since they were not inclined to think on him favorably. It is possible that Stephen's countenance was similar to that described in 4:13. But this seems to indicate more than that, perhaps an aura like Moses had when he returned from the mountain (Exodus 34:29).
- 7:2 When given an opportunity to speak, Stephen did not immediately address the question as Peter and John had when asked a question by the council (4:8 and 5:29). Instead, Stephen launched into a summary of Israelite history. This would not seem too unusual to the audience since rhetoric was in vogue.
- 7:3 Some have claimed that Stephen erred in saying that God spoke this to Abraham before he was in Haran. The quotation is from Genesis 12:1, when Abram was in Haran. However, God had previously started Abram on his route to Canaan in Genesis 11:31, so (as we would expect) Stephen was correct. And, if Stephen had not been correct, Luke would have had ample time to discover it.
- 7:4 A second mistake has been charged here. Genesis 11:26 says that Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran at the age of 70. If Abram left Haran at age 75, then Terah was 145 when he died. But Genesis 11:32 says he was 205. The fact that is overlooked is that Abram, Nahor, and Haran were not triplets. Abram was certainly not the oldest. Nahor's wife was Haran's daughter (Genesis 11:29), and Haran's son, Lot (Genesis 11:27), was not many years younger than Abram. So, there were 60 years between the births of Nahor and Abram. Although Terah fathered Abram at 135, Abram considered it remarkable that he might father a child at 99 (Genesis 17:1 and 17), but not specifically due to his age, but the fact that he had been unsuccessful for many years. Abraham continued to father children past the age of 135 (Genesis 23:1, 25:1).
- 7:5 The quotation may be found in Genesis 12:7, 13:15, 15:18, and 17:8. However, after these promises, Abraham did purchase a burial site for Sarah (Genesis 23:3-20).
- 7:6 The quotation is from Genesis 15:13.

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- 7:7 The quotations are from Genesis 15:14 and Exodus 3:12.
- 7:8 Circumcision was introduced in Genesis 17:10.
- 7:9 See Genesis 39-45.
- 7:14 A third mistake is attributed to Stephen in giving the number of persons in Jacob's family as 75, whereas Genesis 46:27 puts the number at 70, including two who had died in Canaan. The best answer is that Stephen was merely giving the number from the Septuagint which includes two sons of Manasseh, two of Ephraim, and one grandson of Ephraim. Stephen has a Greek name (not Hebrew) and was arguing with Freedmen (also Hellenized). So it is most likely that they read the Septuagint exclusively. Hebrew was not learned by most Hellenized Jews, so they had to use the Greek translation. Perhaps the Septuagint has preserved the correct number.
- 7:16 The accounts of the burial plots may be found in Genesis 23:18 (Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah at Hebron) and Genesis 33:19 (Jacob bought a piece of land in Shechem). But Jacob was buried at Hebron (Genesis 50:13). Joseph, however, was buried in Shechem (Joshua 24:32). Jewish tradition said that all the twelve patriarchs were buried at Shechem (Jerome, fourth century). The problem is one of translation. In English, Jacob would be included as an antecedent to 'they' in verse 16. In Greek, the sentence construction is different, so the only antecedent of 'they' in verse 16 is 'our fathers.' Although only Joseph is mentioned in the Old Testament as being buried there, strong Jewish tradition puts all of the twelve patriarchs there.
- 7:25 The story in Exodus 2:11:15 makes no mention of this event being a signal for the Israelites to rise up from slavery.
- 7:35 Stephen injects irony by comparing the scornful words of the Israelites in 7:27 (Exodus 2:14) with Moses' eventual position.
- 7:37 Stephen finally introduces the concept of the Messiah from Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15-19.
- 7:38 In the accounts of Moses at the burning bush and as he received the Law (both on Mount Sinai), the divine person who spoke in each scene is called Jehovah and God (Exodus 3:2 and Exodus 20:22), although the burning bush is said to be a manifestation of an angel (Exodus 3:2). Galatians 3:19 notes that the Law was delivered through the agency of a mediator. Stephen apparently received some special information that the Messiah was also present at one or both occasions.
- 7:39 Stephen begins to make a case for the historic unfaithfulness of Israel. He will later use this history as an example of the Jews of his own day, who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah.
- 7:42 Stephen follows the Septuagint rendition of Amos, as would be expected of one addressing a Hellenistic crowd. The fact that Stephen used the Septuagint is not so important as the fact that Luke preserved his use of it some 30 years after the fact. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Septuagint, not the Hebrew Old Testament, contains the more accurate rendition of that passage. Exodus and Deuteronomy do not mention this point of history preserved by Amos, about 700 years later.
- 7:43 Stephen departs from both the modern Septuagint and Hebrew texts by stating, "Beyond Babylon" rather than "Beyond Damascus." Perhaps both modern texts are corrupt at that point. Or, perhaps Stephen intentionally misquoted in order to reference another dark chapter in Israelite history. Stephen did not claim to quote Amos, so a change would be acceptable.

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- 7:45 Commentators differ on the antecedent to "until the time of David." Historically, the tabernacle was in use through David's time. Some claim that the Canaanites were finally subdued under David, although the historical support is tenuous. The context from verse 44 through verse 48 has to do with the tabernacle and Temple, so Stephen's point of mentioning David here probably was to mark the transition from tabernacle to Temple, not the subjugation of the Canaanites.
- 7:50 The purpose of this section about the tabernacle and Temple is difficult to discern. Perhaps, considering Stephen's point about the unfaithful Israelites in the wilderness, he was making reference to the fact that the same unfaithful Israel built the Temple. Perhaps he is finally addressing the charge from Acts 6:14 that Jesus said He would destroy the Temple. Of course, Jesus meant the Temple of His body (John 2:19). However, the accusers also could be mixing in Jesus prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24, Luke 21, Daniel 9:24-27). Perhaps Stephen's point was that the Temple was not so sacred, being no more than the creation of human hands.
- 7:51 Uncircumcised hearts are mentioned in Leviticus 26:41 and Ezekiel 44:7-9. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit to which Stephen refers is probably the working of miracles, as mentioned in 5:12. The Israelites in the wilderness overlooked the miracles performed by Moses when they sought other gods. Being upset about a prediction of the destruction of the Temple reveals that they did not take the miracles of Jesus or the apostles into account.
- 7:53 The point of the Law being ordained by angels is also in Galatians 3:19, but not in the Old Testament.
- 7:54 Three groups were similarly cut to the heart: here, 2:37, and 5:33. Two groups turned murderous, one repented.
- 7:55 The Messiah was known to be sitting at the right hand of God (Psalm 110:1,), not standing. This is a new concept, but one the audience surely understood.
- 7:57 They considered this declaration that Jesus is the Messiah to be blasphemy. Therefore, they covered their ears to shut out what they considered to be an affront to God. Their response is one of misplaced zeal, not evil (see Romans 10:2)
- 7:58 Blasphemy was a capital offense (Leviticus 24:16). Stoning was the method of execution given in the Law for those who gave their children to Molech (Leviticus 20:2), for a medium or spiritist (Leviticus 20:27), cursing God or blasphemy (Leviticus 24:14-16), gathering wood on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:35), enticing people to follow other gods (Deuteronomy 13:10, 17:5), being a rebellious son (Deuteronomy 21:21), or prostitution or adultery (Deuteronomy 22:21). Whenever a location is mentioned for stoning, it is always outside the city or outside the camp. The rabbis assumed that this was so that the camp or city would not be defiled by the shedding of blood. The one to be stoned was cast into a rock-lined pit perhaps eight feet deep and a few feet across. The accuser had the duty to drop the first stone. The one being stoned was advised to stand still and be knocked unconscious by the first stone rather than being crushed while conscious as stones were heaped upon the pit. The stones were large and heavy, so people generally removed their outer cloaks. This is the first mention of Saul.
- 7:59 Apparently, Stephen was not knocked unconscious by the first or even the first several stones, since he had time to utter two final sentences.
- 7:60 This is similar to Jesus' words in Luke 23:34.

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- 8:1 Saul will be re-introduced in 9:1. This is the first time on record of the church being spread outside of Jerusalem. Surely some earlier converts had gone home, carrying the gospel with them. But this event precipitated a large migration. And, as these people went to new places, they would be strangers, rather than those returning home. Certainly more Christians than just the apostles stayed in Jerusalem, but not many. By chapter 15, a large group of Christians were in Jerusalem. It is interesting that Samaria is mentioned. Jews avoided the region for fear of becoming unclean. Apparently, a significant number of Christians did not.
- 8:2 Loud lamentations were a part of a normal Jewish funeral. This also shows that grief is normal even for Christians (see also Philippians 2:27).
- 8:3 Knowing the perseverance and commitment of Saul from his other writings, the apostles must have been well hidden. The Sanhedrin had the authority to imprison whomever they wished for offenses against their religion.
- 8:4 In the midst of terrible times, these ordinary Christians taught those whom they met about Jesus.
- 8:6 The Sanhedrin had no interest or control over Samaria. Jesus spoke in Samaria with considerable success (John 4:39-42). The miracles Philip performed endorsed his message.
- 8:9 Some historical references can be found of a magician named Simon, although it is uncertain whether that Simon was this Simon.
- 8:10 Those who could not distinguish between 'magic arts' and God's miracles considered Simon to be from God. Whether Simon's magic was real (from Satan) or illusion is not told. However, the remainder of the story seems to indicate that he was just a very good illusionist.
- 8:12 Believers were baptized. Nowhere in the New Testament does anyone raise the question of whether it is 'necessary for salvation.' That argument was not made until many centuries later as theologians began to debate fine points of law. Baptism was neither a rule nor a liberty. It was an illustration of a life-changing commitment that the believer wanted to do in order to demonstrate a decision.
- 8:13 Although Simon will soon make a grievous error, Luke tells us he believed.
- 8:15 This implies that apostles were necessary for the imparting of the Holy Spirit. That is the impression Simon had (verse 18). The same sort of happened in 19:1-6. A difficulty arises in comparing this with other mentions of receiving the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:38, the gift of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Peter could have been imparted by apostles, since the several were present. Other passages imply that the Spirit was given to Christians without an apostle (Romans 5:5, 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, Galatians 3:2, 4:6, et al). Many have debated whether a particular context indicates miraculous powers (healing, raising the dead, casting out demons, and such like) and which context indicates a no less powerful but less flashy 'indwelling Spirit.' The debate is unnecessary. Miraculous powers are not a subject for argumentation, but for demonstration.
- 8:18 Whatever was bestowed was visible to Simon.
- 8:19 The practice of purchasing a church office came to be called simony. Whether Simon wanted the power or the potential economic benefit is not given.
- 8:21 Although Simon was a believer (verse 13), his heart was not right with God due to this desire.

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- 8:22 Peter's rebuke indicates that a believer may fail to be forgiven due to misplaced intentions of the heart. This is another clear example that, if a Christian's heart goes bad, heaven can be lost (e.g., Galatians 5:4, Revelation 3:5).
- 8:24 Whether Simon's request was appropriate is not given, although the fact that Luke recorded it indicates that this is a good response. Simon seems to have taken the rebuke to heart. Many tales of Simon's later exploits were recorded by early writers, most indicating that he fell away from the faith. However, none of the stories are reliable.
- 8:25 The practice of preaching to everyone in every place seems to be common.
- 8:26 How Philip knew that an angel had spoken to him is not given. Philip had headed north from Jerusalem to Samaria. The angel turned him southwest. This is the same Gaza as is in the news today.
- 8:27 Millions of Jews had emigrated to Egypt during the various wars that swept the region since the time of the Assyrians. Many had moved to southern Egypt, Ethiopia. Whether this man was a Jew by race, or a proselyte, is not given. However, as a eunuch, he was not permitted to enter the Court of the Men, but had to remain in the Court of the Gentiles. Leviticus 21:20 bars eunuchs from priestly service. Tradition had extended that ban as a qualification for entry into the Temple. This eunuch had a very high position. In many countries, high civil servants were made eunuchs so that they could not produce offspring and attempt to overthrow the government. In those days, people would not follow one who could not produce an heir, knowing that war would surely ensue upon his death, their being no peaceful way to transfer power.
- 8:28 The reason for this respite is not given.
- 8:29 Philip received precise directions about to whom to preach.
- 8:31 The eunuch's response has been used by some to argue that a teacher is necessary for understanding of the Word to occur. Luke recorded the sentiments of the eunuch, not necessarily those of God. Paul makes the point in Romans 1 that God is evident in nature, and in Romans 10:8 that it is sufficiently simple for us to understand. Some have argued that Luke would not have recorded a false statement without a clear indication that it was false. But the context leans toward understanding this as a simple statement of humility, not necessity.
- 8:32 The quotation is from Isaiah 53:7-8. Rabbis before Jesus taught that this passage referred to the Messiah. The Messianic name, Leprous, is based upon it. However, since the passage quite obviously has the Messiah suffering, many theories arose about how this might be harmonized with a king in an eternal kingdom.
- 8:34 Some disposed of the problem by teaching that Isaiah was writing about himself, although there is no historical evidence that Isaiah suffered.
- 8:36 It seems that a natural response of realizing that Jesus is the Son of God is to desire to be baptized.
- 8:37 This verse was not in the original, first appearing in the twelfth century. Although the King James Version was translated largely from a fifth century manuscript that did not include this verse, it was included because it had become an entrenched tradition through the Latin Vulgate.
- 8:39 Exactly how Philip disappeared is not given. The language of verses 39 and 40 implies that it happened suddenly, as in a disappearance, rather than a swift departure. The response of the eunuch indicates that he had at least some warning of the disappearance. As a point of history, the church in Ethiopia grew rapidly and, due to its isolation, has

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- developed distinctly different practices. More recently, the Rastafarian cult claimed that Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia in the middle of the twentieth century, was a direct descendent of the Ethiopian eunuch, and venerated him for it.
- 8:40 Azotus probably may be identified as ancient Ashdod, one of the cities of the Philistines, about 20 miles north of Gaza (verse 26). Philip worked his way up the coast to Caesarea. He was in that same city in Acts 21:8-9, fifteen or twenty years later, when Luke met him for the first time.
- 9:2 Letters of introduction typically were sealed by the sender. The insignia of the sender must be well known to the recipient. Although forgery would be possible, there would be little to gain from it. Also, the synagogue would be inclined to assist anyone on a mission to arrest Christians. The letters also would gain the tacit approval of any Roman authorities along the way. If any in Saul's custody were to appeal to the local authorities, such letters probably would have enough weight to allow Saul to keep his prisoners and transport them to Jerusalem for 'justice.' Luke recorded two recountings of the following story, in Acts 22 and Acts 26. In the former instance, Paul was addressing a murderous crowd just outside the Temple. His point was to validate his claim to being a messenger appointed by God. In the latter, Paul was addressing Agrippa and Festus. Again, Paul's point was to validate his claim to be following a heavenly mandate. The three accounts include slightly different details, but no contradictions. Some have used the fact that the story of Paul's conversion is an example we should follow, recounting our own conversion experiences. Unfortunately, we lack certain essential features to be able to copy Paul's purpose.
- 9:3 More detail of Saul's activities as a persecuter of the church are given in Acts 26:9-12. Some of those he arrested were later executed. Saul had sufficient authority to be included in a panel of judges. He tried to force Christians to blaspheme the name of Jesus by unspecified methods. Acts 22:4-5 also mentions prison sentences for Christians. The light from heaven mentioned here is described as brighter than the sun in 26:13.
- 9:4 When Ananias came to Saul in 9:27, he said that Jesus appeared to Saul on that road. This statement could mean that the brightness was Jesus, but that Saul could see no more than just brightness. However, Barnabas in 9:27 related to the apostles that Saul 'had seen the Lord on the road.' The event to which Paul refers in 1 Corinthians 15:8, when the Lord appeared to him, may or may not be this event.
- 9:5 If Saul did see Jesus in the brightness (before he was blinded), then he did not recognize him. Alternately, the vision may be understood as having too little detail to allow exact identification. Acts 26:14 included that Jesus spoke to him in Hebrew, and collapses several days into one speech.
- 9:7 Here, the others in the party are said to have heard the voice. Acts 22:9 clarifies the account to say that the others heard something, but did not understand it. The light, however, must have been obviously miraculous to all.
- 9:9 Saul's failure to eat or drink most likely were due more to his apprehension over waiting for instructions than for his blindness. He had been given just enough information to prove to him that he had been dreadfully wrong, but not enough to know what would come next. Verse 12 adds that Saul knew he was to be cured of this blindness and by whom.
- 9:10 Ananias' response was the same as that of Isaiah in Isaiah 6:8.

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- 9:11 Ananias was given details as though he did not know of Saul, although Ananias' response in verse 13 indicates otherwise.
- 9:13 Ananias responded as though this might be news to the Lord. His statement implies his reluctance.
- 9:16 Ananias' message would contain a charge and predictions of distress. Peter wrote of distress to the Christians in Turkey in 1 and 2 Peter. John did the same in Revelation. Paul did the same in Romans 8 and 2 Corinthians 1, among others. The good news often contained a reminder that 'good' did not imply freedom from difficulty.
- 9:17 Saul had been told to expect Ananias and to be healed by him. The information not recorded previously was that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Whether this refers to the indwelling Spirit or specifically to miraculous powers is not indicated by the context, since no miracles take place at this point in the story. That distinction, between indwelling and miraculous, is an artificial division created by later theologians. This is more likely similar to the twelve men Paul encountered in Acts 19:1-7 who did not know that there was a Holy Spirit.
- 9:18 In Paul's retelling of the story in Acts 22:16, Ananias has more to say about baptism.
- 9:19 Saul's immediate acceptance may have been due to Ananias as he told of his visions concerning Saul. He was not so well accepted in Jerusalem (verse 26).
- 9:20 Exactly when Saul was made aware of his mission to the Gentiles is not clear. That mission is part of the condensed version in 26:15-18, but that brief account may cover the events of several days or weeks. The account in Acts 22 places his charge to go to the Gentiles in a vision after his return to Jerusalem. Here, Ananias was told of that mission (9:15). It seems likely that he relayed that information to Saul almost immediately.
- 9:21 Paul's stay in Damascus must have lasted some time, since the synagogue met only on Saturday. In Galatians 1:15-18, Paul reveals some additional details. This period lasted three years, in which he preached not only within the walls of Damascus, but also in a wider region he calls Arabia.
- 9:22 Saul's message was focused on proving that Jesus is the Christ, presumably from the Scriptures and the way in which Jesus fulfilled them. His primary topic was not a call to repentance, but a call to respond to facts, as he had done.
- 9:23 Saul had set out to arrest and imprison Christians in Damascus. The Jews to whom Saul's letters (from the High Priest) were addressed would now feel compelled to carry out the task. These Jews rejected Saul's proofs, therefore they were convinced that Saul was blaspheming. Blasphemy was a capital crime. So, their actions are not so much evil as misguided zeal. The plot, apparently, was to be executed upon one of his returns to Damascus from preaching in the surrounding region.
- 9:24 Since most of the Christians were Jewish, it would be difficult to hatch a plot secretly. Family members might talk. Or there could be those who were still in the non-Christian camp who were either closet Christians or at least sympathizers.
- 9:25 Saul had disciples: learners. It was common to attach oneself to a teacher in order to learn, as had been the case with John the Baptist. The basket incident is repeated in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33.
- 9:26 Having not returned to Jerusalem for three years, only rumors were known of Saul's intentions.
- 9:27 Barnabas was mentioned previously in 4:36 as one who donated the proceeds from a land sale. Later, he would seek out Saul to help with the evangelism of Gentiles in Antioch of

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- Syria (9:25). Later, they would become traveling companions (13:2). The means by which Barnabas came to know these facts is not given. Perhaps he had talked to people who had seen Saul's work in Damascus or Arabia. Perhaps God told him. Paul notes in Galatians 1:18-19 that the only apostles he saw on this trip were Peter and James, the Lord's brother. He stayed with Peter 15 days.
- 9:28 Although Saul moved freely in Jerusalem, the duration was brief. In Galatians 1:22 he noted that he was unknown by sight to the churches of Judea (the province of which Jerusalem is the capital).
- 9:29 Saul was from Turkey, a region of Hellenistic Jews. He argued with those most like himself.
- 9:30 Saul was from Tarsus (9:11). Tarsus is the major city of the province of Cilicia, in southeastern Turkey.
- 9:31 Apparently, the defection of Saul left the Jewish mainstream without a champion.
- 9:32 Lydda was WNW of Jerusalem, on the Plain of Sharon, on the road to Joppa. It appears that Peter did not spend all his time in Jerusalem, but rather traveled to some extent in order to spread the gospel. In this case, Christians already were present.
- 9:35 This miracle had a profound impact on church growth. This small story seems to be here to explain how Peter got to Joppa, from whence he was called by God to meet a certain centurion.
- 9:36 Luke translates some Hebrew terms for his Greek audience. In that time, names often were translated, so people may have heard the story under either name. This story also appears to be in this place to set the stage for Peter's meeting with the centurion.
- 9:37 This was the custom of the time. Since embalming was not practiced in this culture, burial generally occurred just before sundown on the day of the death so the time of uncleanness would be minimized, and so the body would not have a chance to begin to smell.
- 9:38 Since it was about a three hour walk from Joppa to Lydda, these disciples may not have known that Dorcas had died. While healing the sick was fairly common, resurrection was not (*e.g.*, Stephen). But, if she had died the previous night or early in the morning, there would have been time to make the round trip before sundown.
- 9:39 Again, this is the custom of the time.
- 9:40 Interestingly, Peter chose (perhaps at the prompting of the Holy Spirit) to perform this miracle privately, even though he had performed many miracles publicly. Some miracles are coupled specifically to prayer. Some are not.
- 9:42 Although the miracle was performed privately, the act still promoted belief.
- 9:43 This detail will become important in the next chapter (10:6).
- 10:1 Caesarea was built by Herod the Great as a seaport. The coast of Israel has no seaport south of Acco, present day Haifa. Joppa had been the major place of landing, but loading and unloading was difficult without a harbor. Herod's engineers built a large, deep-water harbor that was larger than the present day harbor. A centurion was an officer over approximately 100 men. Sixty centurions composed a legion. A cohort was smaller than a legion, but of uncertain size. Although not a general officer, centurions were accorded considerable respect. In occupied Israel, a centurion often was the representative of Rome to the leaders of a city.

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- 10:2 The Gentile had become a worshipper of the one true God. How he had come to know God is not given, although it seems likely that this would have occurred during his assignment in Palestine.
- 10:3 Although not stated specifically, the assumption may be made that Cornelius was praying at the time of the vision for two reasons. First, the previous sentence notes his continual prayers. Second, the ninth hour was a customary hour of prayer among Jews, the time of the evening incense offering at the Temple (3:1). How he knew that this was an angel is not given.
- 10:4 The message from God starts with reassurance, then instructions. Although the gospel could have been communicated to him directly, God chose to have him send for Peter. Later in the story, it will be revealed that it was Peter who needed the lesson. Note that he was heard although he was neither a Jew nor a Christian.
- 10:8 The centurion dispatched his men immediately, although it would entail a night on the road. Although the way was flat and surely paved, the distance was more than 30 miles. No cities lie between. They could have found a town in which to lodge, but hostels were crude and unsafe in those times. Perhaps the soldier was for protection. These three were privy to the details, not just those sent to fetch Peter.
- 10:9 Peter chose noon time to pray on this day, rather than the traditional 3 p.m. Perhaps he was waiting for lunch and was making good use of the time (see verse 10).
- 10:10 Only Luke uses this word translated trance (10:10, 11:5, 22:17). But the context makes it sound much like the experience of Cornelius: a vision that occurred during a prayer.
- 10:14 Peter was fully in charge of his faculties during the vision, even to objecting to a vision from God. Perhaps he thought he was being tested. Leviticus 11 lists many types of clean and unclean creatures. The descriptions of 10:12 are not sufficient to determine which they are. Peter's response settles the question. This comment also verifies that Peter still considered observing the Law of Moses to be very important. So, most Christians at this time must have thought this also.
- 10:16 Since we know the end of the story, the meaning is obvious to us. Peter was not so sure.
- 10:17 Peter was justifiably perplexed. He was told in a vision to eat unclean animals. The application was not given. Peter's response in verse 14 indicates that his first impression was that this was a test of his loyalty to the Law, which he believed that he passed. But later, after three presentations, he was not so sure. Making the application to Gentiles was not obvious to him. He may have wondered if he was going to need to eat unclean animals in order to stay alive at some point in the future.
- 10:19 This reassurance by the Spirit may have been brought about by a hesitance on Peter's part to be made known. People like Saul were seeking to imprison him. He had been arrested before. The visitors were not members of the church. Some translations include a marginal note that "some early manuscripts read *two*." Actually, only one early manuscript has that variant. A few omit the number altogether. The best and earliest manuscripts have *three*.
- 10:22 The messengers have no hesitance about relating that their employer/master had seen a vision. This could have been seen as a sign of weakness in powerful circles.
- 10:23 Allowing three Gentiles to lodge in a Jewish house was an extreme of hospitality. The neighbors would consider the whole house unclean.
- 10:24 The return trip also required a night on the road. The motivation of the brethren from Joppa is not given. But surely this portend to be something important. Cornelius also

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- expected something important and had invited friends and relatives, not knowing what would happen.
- 10:25 Although various translation of Cornelius' actions are possible if the verse is translated in isolation, Peter's response in the next verse indicates that Cornelius attempted to worship Peter. Without help from the context, all we would know is that Cornelius paid homage to Peter, but no more so that someone in that time and culture would do for an important person.
- 10:26 Other occasions of worship of a non-divine person may be found in Revelation 19:10, 22:8, Acts 14:13, 12:23. In each case, the context or a clear statement let us know that the action was wrong. Worship of Jesus on earth may be found in Matthew 2:2 14:33, 28:9, 28:17, John 9:38. In each case, the action is commended.
- 10:28 The Law contains no such prohibition. Peter had allowed Scripture and common teaching to overlap. But, he began to understand the meaning of the vision he had had in Joppa. This introduction is perhaps a bit insulting to his Gentile audience, and unnecessarily commending of himself.
- 10:29 Peter's claim is a bit overstated. The Spirit told him specifically that he should accompany the three men without misgivings. He did not at that time understand the vision.
- 10:33 Cornelius' account is both accurate and humble. Peter's other sermons were delivered to less promising crowds. This group is predisposed to listen attentively and sympathetically.
- 10:34 Peter assumes that his audience is well aware of current events.
- 10:41 All the foregoing facts were public knowledge and easily proven. The resurrection could be confirmed by over 500 people (1 Corinthians 15:6), but only by this pre-selected group. Jesus could not appear to everyone in order to confirm the resurrection, or He would need to continue to appear to new generations, until Judgment. The fact that the tomb was empty and that the body could not be found despite the best efforts of two governments would have to suffice. Many historical events are confirmed by far less evidence, and a routinely accepted.
- 10:42 As with the majority of sermons in the New Testament, the two main issues are Judgment and proof. Morality is not an issue when addressing unbelievers.
- 10:43 The other piece of proof was Jesus' fulfillment of many centuries-old predictions.
- 10:44 The Spirit did not wait for the invitation song. The manifestation of the Spirit in this instance was the ability to speak in languages not studied. The language they were speaking probably was Hebrew. Everyone present knew Greek, so speaking that language would not require a miracle. If these Gentiles spoke some language other than Greek or Hebrew, the Christians from Joppa would not understand. Those who spoke several other languages in Acts 2 were understood because of the many foreign Jews who were present for the holiday. Since the Hebrews who were present were the ones who needed the proof, it seems most reasonable that they would hear Hebrew coming from the mouths of Gentiles. Peter later compares this miraculous display with that of Acts 2 (see 11:15).
- 10:47 Peter was convinced that Gentiles should be included in the kingdom. Many have tried to answer the question of whether they were forgiven before they were baptized. Many of those who insist that they were forgiven first then use that fact to excuse anyone who refuses baptism as being acceptable to God, which is an obviously ridiculous position.

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However, instead of pointing out the legalism and irrationality of that argument, others have tried to prove that they were not forgiven until after they were baptized (or as they were baptized). This is an equally legalistic position that requires very poor hermeneutics and faulty logic. It is not the action of baptism that saves us (see 1 Peter 3:21), but the faith that got us to that baptism. Those who refuse are unlikely to have saving faith. See also Acts 15:8-9.

- 11:2 Despite the visions and the credible eye-witnesses, some people chose theory over experiment.
- 11:16 With the second telling of the story, some new information is added. Peter not only compared the events at Cornelius' house with that of Acts 2, but also he remembered Jesus' words of Acts 1:5 (see also Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33).
- 11:18 Although they "quieted down," this question will be revisited several times in Acts and the letters.
- 11:19 The scattered Jewish Christians did not immediately talk to Gentiles, but rather related the gospel to the Jewish communities in those places (see 8:4).
- 11:20 How the Jewish Christians in Antioch of Syria came to preach to Gentiles is not given. However, these Jewish Christians were Hellenized (from Cyprus and Cyrene, not Palestine), so the step would be shorter. They probably had Gentile friends, perhaps even relatives.
- 11:21 In what way the "hand of the Lord" was with them is not given. Perhaps they could work miracles. Perhaps God gave them special help in sermon preparation and delivery. Perhaps He strengthened them for the task. The possibilities are limitless.
- 11:22 Barnabas, in his few appearances thus far, seems to be a trusted friend of the apostles, although he was not one of the seven chosen in 6:5. He is called an apostle in Acts 14:14.
- 11:24 Barnabas was experiencing considerable success. In the next verse, he goes for help, so he must have thought that he needed Saul to help with the teaching.
- 11:25 Whether he was prompted by God to find Saul is unknown. Tarsus is not very far from Antioch, but the trip is still considerable. It may be made by land and sea (30 miles by land and 80 miles by sea, one way) or entirely by land (125 miles). Either way, it would take more than a month.
- 11:26 The language hints that Barnabas did not know exactly where to find Saul. Some extra time may have been consumed in locating him. Upon their arrival back at Antioch, the great success of the gospel continued. The name, Christian, was coined there. The turned out to be a serviceable name, specific enough to distinguish the group. King Agrippa uses the term in Acts 26:28. Peter uses it in 1 Peter 4:16.
- 11:27 One is said to come down from Jerusalem because Jerusalem is at a high elevation.
- 11:28 Agabus also appears in Acts 21:10, when he prophesies of Paul's imprisonment. Both times, Agabus came from Jerusalem to deliver his prophecy. This famine had been predicted by Jesus (Matthew 24:7, Mark 13:8, Luke 21:11). Luke verifies that this happened before the writing of Acts. Claudius reigned from 41 to 54 AD. So, this would be the famine that prompted the monetary gifts collected by Paul and Silas in Greece and Turkey for the starving saints in Jerusalem. Note that Agabus said that this famine would affect the whole world, so it would catch up with Greece and Turkey not long after they sent their gift. The timeline in Galatians 1 and 2 places the conversion of Saul between

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- 31 and 35 AD (some say 37 AD) Therefore, the famine had not started when Agabus gave his prophecy.
- 11:29 These disciples immediately began sharing as the early church in Jerusalem did (2:45, 4:34). The famine would come to Antioch, as well. They shared anyway.
- 11:30 This trip is not noted in Paul's recording of his travels in Galatians 1 and 2. Saul worked around Damascus three years (Galatians 1:18) before meeting the apostles briefly (Acts 9:27). He then worked 14 years in Syria and Cilicia (Galatians 1:21 and 2:1) before meeting the apostles again. In order to leave time for all of Paul's travels, and to fit with the known historical points in Acts, that 14 years must end with the meeting in Jerusalem described in Acts 15. In this verse (11:30), they are sent to Jerusalem with a gift, and they return to Antioch from that trip in Acts 12:25. This may be reconciled with the account in Galatians 1 and 2 by assuming that Saul did not meet with apostles on that trip. Maybe they were out of town on other church business, just like when Peter was absent from Jerusalem from Acts 9:32 through 11:2.
- 12:1 This Herod is the grandson of Herod the Great, and nephew of the Herod who killed John the Baptist. He had been awarded rule over all of Palestine by Caligula and Claudius.
- 12:2 James was the only one of the Eleven whose death is recorded.
- 12:3 The "Jews" refers to the Jewish leadership, since all the Christians in Jerusalem were also Jewish and it would not please them.
- 12:4 The idea of waiting until the end of the festival was to avoid dampening the holiday spirit, not because it might cause problems with the multitudes. The four squads of soldiers were composed of four soldiers each. This was far more than necessary for an ordinary prisoner. One squad would be plenty under normal circumstances, since the prisoner would be chained as well. As the story unfolds, it becomes apparent that the soldiers were strategically located from the dungeon to the outside. The men of a squad would work in pairs in 12-hour shifts, so eight would always be on guard in four locations, including the two who were chained to Peter. It seems reasonable that these extraordinary precautions are a result of Peter's last recorded stay in that same prison (Acts 5:17-26).
- 12:5 As will become apparent later, although the church was praying for Peter, they refused to believe that the prayer could be answered by his miraculous release. The exact subject matter of their prayers is not given, but may not have included requests for a jailbreak. This is understandable since it is very likely that the same prayers had just been offered for James.
- 12:9 Peter had been released from prison by an angel before (Acts 5:19), and he had seen a vision before (Acts 10:10). Here, he wasn't sure what was real. It must have gotten confusing being a pipeline for God. If Peter's own expectations and experiences (the deaths of Jesus and James) were mixed in with this visit from an angel, he could have been nearly clueless as to what to do next.
- 12:10 The previous prison escape had few details, so could be explained non-miraculously by translating the word 'angel' as 'messenger.' Peter could have been released by a sympathizer inside the prison. Here, that naturalistic explanation cannot be sustained because the details include miraculous events.
- 12:12 Mark, after whom the second gospel is named, is mentioned specifically in Acts 12:25 (Mark accompanied Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to deliver a gift from Antioch), 13:5 (John Mark went with Paul and Barnabas on the first journey), 13:13 (John Mark left

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- Paul and Barnabas shortly into the trip), 15:37 (dispute between Paul and Barnabas about taking Mark on the second trip), 15:39 (Barnabas took Mark on his second trip), Colossians 4:10 (Mark was with Paul when he wrote that letter from prison in Rome), 2 Timothy 4:11 (Timothy is to pick up Mark and bring him to Paul to help him), and Philemon 24 (Mark was present with Paul when he wrote this letter from prison in Rome).
- 12:14 The girl was scatter-brained, but at least she knew Peter was real.
- 12:15 Her reputation for reporting reality must not have been very good. Note that the others would rather believe that a miracle had happened (an angel at the door) than a miracle had happened (Peter released from prison).
- 12:16 Peter probably did not knock loudly for fear of being heard by the neighbors.
- 12:17 Since James the brother of John was recently deceased, this James is either James the Less (an apostle of which nothing further is known) or James the brother of Jesus, who wrote a letter and presided over the conference in Acts 15. The latter is the more likely due to historical reference outside the New Testament. Peter did not assume that God would rescue him again and prudently left the area.
- 12:19 By custom, a guard who lost a prisoner took the prisoner's punishment. In this case, all 16 of them would be executed. This is not like the guards who lost Jesus' body (Matthew 28:11-15) who were bribed and transferred. Besides, Jesus' body was not destined for execution, so those losing it were not subject to specific penalties. No punishment (or lack of punishment) is mentioned in Acts 5, when Peter escaped from prison with the assistance of an angel.
- 12:20 Tyre and Sidon, despite being destroyed a few times since the days of Solomon, were still maritime powers, but now under Roman domination. Being a merchant culture with little farmland, they imported most of their food from agriculturally based Israel. The nature of the dispute between Phoenecia and Israel is not known, but may have had to do with an unfavorable balance of trade. The chamberlain was the treasurer.
- 12:21 Josephus records substantially the same story with a few more details. Josephus recorded the crowd as saying, "Be thou merciful to us, for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature." Upon this the king did neither rebuke their impious flattery. But, as he presently afterwards looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings. Josephus further records that Agrippa felt pain in his belly immediately and died five days later.
- 12:25 See comments on 12:12.
- 13:1 Barnabas and Saul were not the only primary teachers. Nothing is known of the others named here. Manaen may have been Luke's source for the thoughts of Herod in Luke 9:7-9.
- 13:2 The role of fasting in the early church is unclear. It is mentioned only in Acts 13:2, 13:3, and 14:23, each time in connection with prayer. Jesus example in Matthew 9:15 connects prayer, fasting, and affliction. However, affliction is not a necessary component, as seen in Acts 14:23 when it was in connection with the appointing of elders. The Holy Spirit was directly involved in prompting the further spread of the gospel.
- 13:4 The Spirit caused this trip to be begun. However, the degree of detail given by the Spirit has not been recorded. They could have received general instructions to go and preach the gospel in new places, or they could have received a list of cities to visit.

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- 13:5 The pattern of visiting the synagogue of a city first is repeated throughout Acts. From a practical viewpoint, this would be a sensible place to start since people who care about the one true God were already assembled. From a promise point of view, Paul noted in Romans 1:16 and 2:9-10 that the Jews would hear the gospel first, presumably as a part of their 'pay' for being the keepers of the history of God. The part John Mark played as a helper is unknown.
- 13:6 Bar Jesus means Son of the Savior. He portrayed himself as a prophet of God. How he convinced others that he was a prophet is not given. Perhaps he predicted events in advance based on Daniel's prophecies. This would gain the attention of world leaders. Perhaps he was a very clever and devious person who was able to fool even intelligent people. Perhaps he had help from the Devil in the way of miracles (verse 8, the magician).
- 13:7 The motivation of Sergius Paulus for wanting to hear the gospel is not given. The fact that he soon believed (verse 12) indicates that his motives most likely were pure. Agrippa, Festus, and Felix (Acts 24-26) had less pure motives. There being no mass media, traveling philosophers were considered good entertainment. Many older commentaries conclude that Luke made a mistake in calling Sergius Paulus a Proconsul, insisting he should have been called a proprator. However, coins with the inscription, Paulus the Proconsul, have been found on Cyprus. Unfortunately, there were three men named Sergius Paulus in the Roman government during this time, so exact identification is impossible.
- 13:9 This is the first mention of Saul's new name, Paul. No reason is given for this new name, although the association with Paulus is striking. Luke wrote this history long after its occurrence, so it is peculiar that he would use the name Saul consistently up to this point, then use Paul consistently after this point. Also, Saul is usually not named first in lists (*e.g.*, Barnabas and Saul) before this event, but is usually named first after this event (*e.g.*, Paul and Barnabas).
- 13:11 This is the only record of a miracle being performed by Paul that injured another, unless we consider the loss of income to the owners of the slave girl in Acts 16:16. Peter announced the deaths of Anannias and Sapphira. The length of time that this blindness lasted is not given.
- 13:12 The proconsul believed. Many commentators have denied that he had saving faith, refusing to believe that such a thing could happen.
- 13:13 They traveled from Cyprus to south-central Turkey. The reason for the departure of Mark is not given. Neither good nor bad is assigned to it. But, Acts 15:38 adds the detail that Paul considered this desertion.
- 13:14 It is likely that Paul and Barnabas had spoken to the elders of the synagogue before the Sabbath in order to be afforded this opportunity. This Antioch was a large and prosperous city, so the synagogue would be well organized, not likely to ask a traveling stranger to speak. Paul and possibly Barnabas would be afforded this opportunity due to their backgrounds (education and wealth).
- 13:15 This reflects the general pattern of a synagogue service. A passage was read from the Law and also from the Prophets, generally the next page after the reading of the previous week. Then, someone or several people would expound on the reading.
- 13:16 Paul motioned with his hand also in 21:40 and 26:1. Since Luke wrote some years after these events, perhaps Paul had become know for this opening gesture. Some have

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- determined that the phrase, "and you who fear God," referred to God-fearing Gentiles who were present, as mentioned in 13:43. However, Paul also may have been using that familiar Hebrew literary technique of parallelism.
- 13:17 Israel was made great in Egypt according to their numbers, not their wealth or power.
- 13:19 The 450 years refers to the time it took God to make the nation great, from their choosing through Abraham to Joshua and the conquest of the promised land, approximately 1950 to 1400 BC. The next verse begins, "after these things," so what comes after this verse is after the 450 years. Many have argued over how to place the 450 years between Joshua and King Saul, when it does not refer to that period.
- 13:22 The quotation is from 1 Samuel 13:14 and Psalm 89:20.
- 13:23 Paul moved quickly through Israelite history, probably due to the reading of that Sabbath that gave him the springboard. He declares early in his talk that Jesus is the promised Messiah. As will be apparent as the story unfolds, these people were willing to listen to something unusual.
- 13:24 Paul assumed that these people had heard of John the Baptist.
- 13:25 Paul assumes that they knew of John's teaching, despite the large distance. Paul's first proof was the testimony of John.
- 13:27 Paul's second proof was the fulfilled prophecy. Perhaps Paul gave an example or two here that Luke did not record.
- 13:31 The final proof was the resurrection, attested by many.
- 13:33 The first Old Testament quotation that Luke recorded was from Psalm 2:7. This same line is quoted in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5. The meaning cannot be derived from the words quoted, although many have tried. This was a very well known Messianic Psalm that had been discussed in every synagogue for centuries. Psalm 2:1 was connected in the Talmud to Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog and Magog), as a further description of the devastation during the time of the Messiah. Psalm 2:2 mentions the Messiah specifically. The same two verses are quoted in Acts 4:25-28 to describe the actions of those who killed Jesus. The Talmud interprets verse 7 as a clear indication that there will be a new covenant with the Messiah, explaining how He could be 'begotten.' Psalm 2:9 is quoted in Revelation 2:26 to describe how the saints will be like the Messiah. Paul quotes only a line from Psalm 2 in order to represent the whole context of the Psalm. He is saying that God has fulfilled the promise of a new covenant with the Messiah in Jesus. Paul's points from 13:26 through 33 are summed up in Psalm 2.
- 13:34 Paul's reference is Isaiah 55:3, the promise of an everlasting covenant with the Messiah, a son of David. To seat the Messiah on David's throne for an everlasting covenant, He could not die. The resurrection made that a reality. Many rabbis believed that the Messiah would never die, but this led to the erroneous conclusion that He could not be killed.
- 13:35 Psalm 16:10 is also quoted by Peter in Acts 2:27 to show that the resurrection was predicted.
- 13:36 This is substantially the same argument made by Peter in Acts 2.
- 13:38 The two topics of Peter's and Paul consistently are (1) proof and (2) judgment. They assume that the concept of judgment is uppermost in the minds of the listeners, that they have considered it before at great length. Perhaps this is a major difference with people today. Or, the reason for the small conversion percentage in the first century was that only those who cared about that question would respond.

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- 13:39 Thinking Jews understood that they could not keep the Law perfectly, and that the sacrifices stipulated in the Law by which they were forgiven were not of sufficient value to compensate for that sin (Micah 6:6-8).
- 13:41 Although many hints were given through the prophets concerning the Messiah, a complete description was not. Paul quoted Habbakkuk 1:5 to remind the audience that God had warned of the unexpected qualities of God's works in this example concerning the use of the Chaldeans to execute justice. The fact that the Romans were used to execute the Messiah should not be so amazing.
- 13:42 Without the political overtones of Palestine, unusual teachings could be considered.
- 13:43 Some did not wait for the next Sabbath to learn more.
- 13:44 In this Hellenized region, Jews had some, although limited, social contact with Gentiles. So, both Jews and proselytes could have been responsible for this large increase in the audience. Also, this indicates that Gentiles who were not followers of Judaism also had a concern about Judgement.
- 13:45 Luke, or the person who related this to Luke, would need divine assistance in order to know the motives of the detractors. The nature of the blasphemy is not given. It is unlikely that these Jews reviled the name of God or the Word directly. Rather, perhaps they reviled the simple and direct explanations of Scripture offered by Paul and Barnabas, maintaining a rabbinical position based on convoluted logic. Even when people disagree, they need not stoop to reviling the position of the other.
- 13:46 Paul repeats the idea that the gospel must go to the Jews first in Romans 1:16, 2:9, and 2:10. This was part of the wages of Israel for hosting the promise.
- 13:47 Turning to the Gentiles was not a second choice or a fall-back plan, but a promise made by God to the whole world, as given in Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6. Over the centuries, arrogant rabbis had explained this away by saying that the nations would see the light, but were still not a part of the kingdom.
- 13:48 Apparently, these Gentiles had been told that they were without hope, that only Jews could be forgiven. Many have taken the 'appointed to eternal life' as an endorsement of the Calvinistic doctrine of election. Luke's point is much simpler. Many of the Gentiles present were already appointed to eternal life. They were already faithful, just as Abraham and Melchizedek were faithful (among others outside the Law). When they heard the Word of God, they believed it. The gospel was the goal of their search, although they had not known how they would find what they sought until God sent it to them.
- 13:49 The implication is that those who believed were instrumental in the spread of the gospel, rather than just Paul and Barnabas.
- 13:50 Women had considerable influence in Greek culture. Wealthy women had as much influence as men. The fact that the unbelieving Jews could instigate this persecution illustrates that not everyone was present at the synagogue in verse 44. The people of prominence were less likely to attend. The accusations brought by the leading Jews against Paul and Barnabas are not given. But, the charges must have been serious enough to prompt action from the civic officials. In addition, the charges must have been more than matters only of interest within the Jewish religion. Later, 17:7, Paul and company will be charged with proclaiming a new king.
- 13:51 Shaking the dust from one's feet against them was, apparently, a Jewish custom, as seen in Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5, and Luke 10:11. ISBE reports that this was a

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- custom of the Pharisees upon passing Gentile land, since they believed Gentile land to be unclean. Iconium was about 90 miles southeast from Antioch, across difficult terrain, although along a Roman road.
- 13:52 Regardless of the difficulties, the disciples were filled with joy. Exactly what manifestations of the Spirit were present is not given, whether miraculous gifts or otherwise.
- 14:1 The synagogue in Iconium also was attended by a significant number of Gentiles. The Jews of this region had had a considerable impact on their neighbors over the years.
- 14:2 Embittering people has been and continues to be a favorite technique of controlling others.
- 14:3 This is the first mention of miracles since Paul and Barnabas arrived in Turkey, although it could be that Luke just didn't mention them.
- 14:5 The opposition again turned to the civil authorities to resolve a dispute over religion.
- 14:6 This is an illustration of leaving the area of danger. At times, Paul went into danger, but generally because he had been sent that direction by the Spirit. It seems that, lacking specific directions, they did not try to tempt God by placing themselves in danger (Matthew 4:5-7). Lycaonia is the province in which Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe are found. Lystra is about 20 miles south of Iconium. Derbe is about 60 miles east southeast of Lystra.
- 14:9 The same connection of faith before being healed may be found in Matthew 9:28. In other cases, however, the faith of the one being healed was not an issue (for example, in 3:16, the crippled man did not know who Peter and John were, but rather it was through the faith of Peter and John that the miracle was performed. In every case, the power is God's, to be dispensed as He desires and for His purposes. People, whether by their faith or lack of it, cannot control such powers. Luke's point here was that the lame man had faith that the miracle could be done. Perhaps Paul had recounted miracles by Jesus or even by himself.
- 14:10 Seeing (most likely due to some inside information from above) that the lame man would understand the source of the power that would cure him, and somehow knowing that this was a miracle God was about to perform, Paul announced to the crowd what was about to happen.
- 14:11 The lame man knew from where the power came. The multitudes were not so astute. They responded in typical pagan fashion. Many Greek myths included stories of gods visiting the earth. Unfortunately, Paul and Barnabas were not granted the miraculous gift of interpretation on tongues at that moment, so they did not understand what these people were saying.
- 14:12 Zeus is the chief god of Greek mythology.
- 14:13 This was a typical response to a miraculous event, whether it was a real or imagined miracle.
- 14:14 Tearing the robes was Jewish custom of grief or exasperation. The first mention of the practice in the Bible is in Genesis 37:29, when Reuben found that Joseph was no longer in the pit. In Numbers 14:6, Joshua and Caleb tore their robes when the people voted with the other ten spies. This practice is recorded at least 26 times in the Bible, although always by the descendants of Jacob. The local people may not have understood the meaning fully, although the idea would have been obvious. Note that Barnabas is called an apostle.

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- 14:15 Herod Agrippa was struck down by God in Acts 12:23 for accepting praise as a god. Angels and men who were praised in that way, other than Herod, declined to be worshipped (Acts 10:26, 12:23, Revelation 19:10, 22:8). The opposite may be found for the worship of Jesus during His life on earth: Matthew 2:2 14:33, 28:9, 28:17, John 9:38. In each case, the action is commended.
- 14:16 Paul made a similar comment in Acts 17:30 in his speech to the philosophers of Athens. This point was important to both Jews and Gentiles, but for different reasons. The Jews did not like the idea that Gentiles were being allowed to do whatever they wanted for all those centuries, and then be accepted into the Eternal Kingdom without making up for the lost time (as though Israel had performed some great feat to earn their membership, or had performed terrible labors without pay). Paul addresses this concept in Romans 3. The Gentiles questioned whether God was really in charge or really cared because He did nothing with them for all those centuries. Paul address this concept in Romans 1.
- 14:17 Paul attributed the 'fruitful seasons' to God as a sign of His beneficence toward them.
- 14:19 The oratorical skills of the unbelieving Jews from Antioch and Iconium must have been formidable. They overcame the evidence of miracles. Luke does not say that Paul was dead, but rather that he was believed to be dead by his enemies. In 1 Corinthians 11:25, Paul wrote that he was stoned once. This must be it.
- 14:20 Although not dead, some sort of miracle would be necessary for Paul, one who appeared dead, to get up and walk back to town, and on the next day start out on foot to a town 60 miles away.
- 14:21 No persecution is mentioned in Derbe. The return trip must have been long enough after the persecutions for things to have quieted down.
- 14:22 The tribulations had been vividly illustrated during their first visit.
- 14:23 One of the requirements Paul gave to Timothy for elders (1 Timothy 3:6) was that they not be new converts. That would not be possible here. If this is understood non-miraculously, then these elders must have been from among faithful Jews and perhaps proselytes who had a good foundation in the Scriptures and a deep faith. However, the qualities necessary for church leadership could have been imparted miraculously, with gifts such as wisdom and faith (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). Fasting accompanied times of stress and times of dedication. It is mentioned only in Acts 13:2, 13:3, and 14:23, each time in connection with prayer.
- 14:27 They returned to those who had sent them out.
- 15:1 Interestingly, circumcision is not a big point of the Law. The festivals are described numerous times. Circumcision appears only in Exodus 12:44-48 (only the circumcised may eat the Passover) and Leviticus 12:3 (circumcise on the eighth day). The two references in Deuteronomy (10:16 and 30:6) are concerned with circumcision of the heart. Genesis 17, in the story of Abraham, contains the most information. However, by the time of Jesus, circumcision had come to stand for the whole Law. Paul made this point in Galatians 5:3. Other passages addressing circumcision in the New Testament may be found in Romans 2:25-4:12, 1 Corinthians 7:18-19, Galatians 2:3-12, 6:12-15, and Philippians 3:2-5. The best argument for circumcision starts with Genesis 17 and the covenant with Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. Circumcision identified the male as a part of the nation of promise. Since even foreign servants were to be circumcised, a case was made that this represented the Gentiles being brought in to the Chosen People.

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- 15:2 The fact that Paul (and Barnabas?) had performed miracles before did not add sufficient weight to cause their arguments to be accepted. Their miracles had some impact in Jerusalem (15:12). Many translations add words to this verse in order to cause the reader to believe that the brethren called this meeting. Literally, the text reads, "It was determined," not implying how it was determined. In Galatians 2:2, Paul reveals that this meeting was due to a revelation, specifically not because of people organizing a conference. This verse has been used as the Biblical precedent for church conferences, the decisions of which are binding on the participants.
- 15:3 Being sent on their way by the church implies that they were funded for the journey, not that they were endorsed by the church. The church in Antioch was divided over this matter. Luke relates that the churches along the way were happy about the Gentiles. It seems that only the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (and surroundings) insisted on circumcision.
- 15:5 Those that insisted on circumcision appear to have arisen primarily from among believing Pharisees.
- 15:7 The apostles and elders allowed "much debate" to be conducted before they spoke. They seemed to have no fear of discussion of controversial subjects. After that debate, Peter reminds the audience of his experience with Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:1 - 11:18).
- 15:9 Peter made the assumption that the Gentiles were accepted without circumcision because God caused them to perform miracles without any preconditions. Further, Peter had had his vision a few days earlier telling him not to consider anyone unholy or unclean. From this (or perhaps through further revelation) he determined that their faith was enough.
- 15:10 The Law of Moses was given specifically to the descendants of the people at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:3, 5:29, 6:1-2). Peter saw no reason to burden people outside that group.
- 15:12 When disputes arose in the synagogues about the gospel, the result generally was violence. In the church, the dispute was fervent, but civil. The miracles of Paul and Barnabas were related in the context of this debate, so must have been used to show that God was pleased with the Gentile Christians without first ordering them to be circumcised.
- 15:13 The earliest commentators agreed that this James is the brother of Jesus, who wrote the letter that carries his name. Extra-biblical history records that he was an elder in Jerusalem with his brother Jude until 70 AD. They left the city during the siege.
- 15:15 The fact that miracles had been performed was not sufficient evidence. James showed how these miracles harmonize with Scripture.
- 15:16 James quoted Amos 9:11-12. This was long considered a Messianic passage by the rabbis, and is discussed as such in the Talmud.
- 15:19 The quotation from Amos showed that Gentiles should be expected in the new Davidic kingdom. The conclusion that they should not be required to follow the customs of Moses must have been based on Peter's and Paul's experiences. Some have taught that James was the president of the council, and that his decision was binding on all the church. Therefore, they reason, church councils today may do the same.
- 15:20 Some laws are universal. James did not list murder or other common crimes that normally are handled by civil governments. Those he lists seem to be those that might be more difficult for Gentiles to determine independently. For example, meat offered to idols customarily was later sold in the marketplace. Fornication was common in most of

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- the subcultures of the empire, the Jews being an exception rather than the norm. Killing animals by strangulation was a cult practice, retaining the blood in the meat. The eating of blood was common. All of these things were legal. Paul added homosexuality to the list in Romans 1:26-27. Many evil practices have become accepted in various cultures that a new convert may not recognize as inappropriate unless informed.
- 15:21 Apparently, James thought that some of the clamor to force the Gentiles into the Law was because some Jewish Christians anticipated that the Old Testament would fall into disuse, and that the history of Israel would be forgotten. James comforts them with this comment.
- 15:22 Although the paragraph starts with the intimation that this letter that follows was the idea of the apostles and elders (a point used to justify orders from central councils), verse 28 adds that this letter was the product of the Holy Spirit, not the work of men. The selection of the messengers seems to have been the choice of the church, as seen in verses 25-27.
- 15:23 The letter is addressed to the regions immediately affected. It is interesting that the churches of Galatia, established on the first missionary journey, were omitted. Perhaps the reason is that no one from Jerusalem had gone to Galatia yet to cause this problem.
- 15:24 The apostles and elders expressly disavow ever endorsing those teachers. Later, some will raise this problem again, claiming to be 'from James' (Galatians 2:12).
- 15:31 Previously (15:1-2), a great controversy had arisen over this topic. The fact that the response to this resolution is 'rejoicing' indicates that the majority agreed, and that the controversy had been brought about by a few.
- 15:32 Note that a lengthy message was considered an encouragement.
- 15:34 Many translations omit this verse. It does not appear in any manuscripts before the sixth century. Very likely, it was added by a helpful but unscholarly copyist who felt a need to explain why Silas was sent back to Jerusalem in verse 33, but departed with Paul in verse 40. The most reasonable explanation is that Silas went back to Jerusalem, but returned some time later. No hints are given as to the length of time between those two verses.
- 15:35 Many teachers were available in Antioch besides Barnabas and Paul.
- 15:36 The first journey was instigated by the Holy Spirit (13:2). This journey seems to be Paul's idea. The fact that there were many teachers in Antioch may have had something to do with it. They were expendable.
- 15:38 Differences sometimes arose between brethren. Luke did not record any divine intervention in its resolution. In later writings, Paul spoke highly of Mark (Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 24). This scene is the last appearance of Barnabas in Acts, although Paul mentions him in a few letters (1 Corinthians 9:6 and Galatians 2:1-18). In 1 Corinthians, Paul uses Barnabas as an example of a traveling preacher who pays his own way. Since Barnabas was not with Paul when the church in Corinth was established, it must be assumed that the church in Corinth became aware of Barnabas by other means, and that Barnabas continued to travel and preach for many years.
- 15:39 Barnabas and Mark revisited the churches that had been established during the first part of the first journey, while Mark was still with them.
- 15:40 The Christians in Antioch still took an active interest in this evangelism.
- 15:41 Paul and Silas took the back way into Turkey, visiting the region where Paul had been preaching before Barnabas had enlisted him (11:25), then revisited the churches of

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- central Turkey, beginning with Derbe (14:20-21), the last place that Paul and Barnabas had visited before retracing their steps to Antioch.
- 16:1 This is the first mention of Timothy. Note that Titus, a Gentile, had been present in Jerusalem during the events of chapter 15 (Galatians 2:1). Perhaps Timothy was converted during the first tour (14:8-20), or during the time between. No synagogue was mentioned as being in either Lystra or Derbe. So Timothy's mother, a Jew, probably did not suffer much criticism from other Jews for marrying a non-Hebrew. Of course, interfaith marriages were prohibited by the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 7:3). Timothy's mother's name was Eunice, and his grandmother's, Lois (2 Timothy 1:5).
- 16:2 Lystra and Iconium were a considerable distance from Derbe, more than 90 miles.
- 16:3 Paul followed the Law as long as God allowed it to be practiced (until 70 AD). Although Timothy was at most half Hebrew, Paul considered him to be a part of the Jewish heritage. Therefore, he should be circumcised.
- 16:4 The 'decrees' are contained in 15:23-29. Some have used this to justify the authority of church councils, overlooking the fact that the original decree was issued by the Holy Spirit (15:28).
- 16:5 The growth seen in Jerusalem is reproduced in Turkey.
- 16:6 The means by which they were forbidden to enter Asia (southwestern Turkey) is not given. Both Paul and Silas were prophets, but other modes of revelation could have been used. God's reasons for this action also were omitted. It is unlikely that Paul and Silas interpreted some adversity as a sign that they should not go to that province, since they faced many adversities without changing directions.
- 16:7 Bithynia stretches from the Straits of Bosphorus eastward along the coast of the Black Sea. Again, the means and reasons behind this re-direction is not given. Many have supposed that God was directing them to Philippi, as they will be in verse 9. But these earlier directives could have been for a great number of reasons, including avoiding danger or meeting believers in Phrygia and Galatia.
- 16:8 Troas is in the northwest tip of Turkey, gateway to Greece and the rest of Europe.
- 16:9 After two negative directives, Luke records some details of a positive directive.
- 16:10 Although it seems obvious to us that it was the intention of the Spirit to guide them to Macedonia, Luke wrote in such a way so as to give the impression that they were not entirely certain of the interpretation. This is the first time that Luke includes himself in the narrative, using the pronoun, we. From here forward, the reader can determine the presence of Luke in the story by his use of 'we' or 'they.'
- 16:11 Samothrace is an island in the north end of the Aegean Sea. The straight course implies a favorable wind. Neapolis is the port city of Philippi.
- 16:12 A great battle had been fought between Brutus and Cassius on one side, Octavian and Anthony on the other, to determine the fate of the empire. Augustus, in memory of the battle, had the city built and populated it with Italians. Thus, it was a Roman city in the midst of a Greek civilization.
- 16:13 Paul and company had not located a synagogue in Phillipi, probably meaning that there was not one (fewer than 12 Jewish men in the city). So, they went to the traditional place for Sabbath observances in the absence of a synagogue: the riverside. Neither synagogues nor riversides are in the Law. This gathering of women probably represented all those of Jewish heritage. It is likely that Timothy's mother gathered with fellow Jews in the same way in Derbe.

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- 16:14 Thyatira is in northwestern Turkey, in a region known for its fine purple dyes. Purple was the royal color, so fine purple clothing was much in demand. Lydia had a business of her own, as was reasonably common in that society. Since no husband is mentioned, she was likely a widow. The means by which the Lord opened her heart has been speculated for centuries. Calvinists use this verse to prove their teaching that one is prompted by God to believe. Others insist that her belief sprang from Paul's words and her hearing (Romans 10:14). The fact is that the method by which the Lord opened her heart is not given. Luke's point was to record her conversion, not to deliver a treatise on the subject of the nature and mechanics of conversion.
- 16:15 Many have used 'her household' as a justification for baptizing infants, arguing that certainly her household would include some infants. Others have argued that, as a widow, no infants would be present. Both arguments strain the limits of inference. The household may or may not have infants in it, and the term, household, may be a generalization. No conclusions can be drawn on the matter of infant baptism from this paragraph. Luke's point was to record her hospitality.
- 16:16 Miracle-working by servants of Satan is unequivocal. Here, Luke records that the slave girl is the abode of an evil spirit and can predict the future successfully. Other miracles from the other side are recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, Revelation 13:13, 16:14, 19:20, besides the several people who were demon-possessed in the gospels.
- 16:17 The demons knew who Jesus was, but Jesus forbade them to testify (Mark 1:34).
- 16:18 Paul was annoyed at the advertising from the wrong side. Either he was unable to stop the demon until this time (since God controls the power), or he did not consider it in quite the same light as Jesus. Jesus did not want to be revealed until the right time. To Paul, this was only a minor inconvenience. However, Jesus' position was proclaimed openly by John the Baptist (John 1:29 and 36) and by His many miracles.
- 16:19 Luke was able to supply the true motivation for the charge brought in verse 21. In those times, a magistrate sat on an elevated chair in the marketplace in order to be available to settle disputes. The court docket was not so formal as in our time.
- 16:20 The first charge is disturbing the peace, a minor charge but one of importance to the civil authorities. Being unable to keep the peace was the primary reason for the replacement of civil officials.
- 16:21 Within the empire, existing religions could be practiced without hindrance. Since the Roman legions had defeated them all, it was unlikely that a revolution based on religious fervor would arise. However, new religions often result in war. The Romans, being students of history, banned the establishment of any new religion. Christianity held a tenuous position. Outsiders often considered Christianity merely an offshoot of Judaism, and therefore legal.
- 16:22 Mob violence was somewhat common. The judicial process had not yet developed. The rods were similar to hoe handles. In 2 Corinthians 11:25, Paul related that this had happened to him three times in his career up to the time of that writing. No effort was made to hear a defense, as will be brought out later.
- 16:24 Stocks were not necessary in a jail. The intention was cruelty, forbidding movement to cramping muscles after a severe beating.
- 16:25 The singing certainly would be unusual under those circumstances, so the other prisoners took note.

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- 16:26 Although earthquakes were not uncommon in this region, this one was obviously miraculous. Chains do not fall off prisoners due to seismic activity.
- 16:27 Guardians of prisoners who lost their charges were assessed the penalty of those whom they lost. The jailer had a lot of prisoners, so the penalty would be huge. He intended to avoid the more horrible parts of his own execution through suicide.
- 16:28 For reasons not given, the other prisoners did not take this opportunity to escape.
- 16:29 It is probable that the singing and praying had been reported to the Jailer before he had retired that evening. Apparently, he understood that this earthquake was an endorsement of Paul and Silas, perhaps because the others did not escape.
- 16:30 The jailer's thought turned to Judgment. It is likely that he had heard something of the gospel in the previous weeks. The sermons to Gentiles in Acts all focused on Judgment, so it is likely that Paul had raised the same question in Philippi. If so, the townspeople would be discussing this topic themselves. The jailer considered the prospect of Judgment as very real, and was now convinced that Paul and Silas had a legitimate answer to the problem.
- 16:31 Just as Judgment was very real to them, the concept of believing implied a change in lifestyle.
- 16:32 Paul took the opportunity to enlarge on the jailer's knowledge of the things of God.
- 16:33 Washing their wounds illustrates the jailer's changed viewpoint. He had not caused those wounds. Washing them would not alter his status at Judgment. But, he considered it important at this moment. The teaching Paul and Silas did that night made the jailer conclude that baptism was something he needed to do (as well as the washing of their wounds) at this inconvenient time. The household argument for infant baptism is the same as for the household of Lydia (16:15).
- 16:34 This also is unusual behavior. Setting a table in the middle of the night was difficult due to the lack of kitchen conveniences.
- 16:35 Whether the magistrates were aware of the earthquake is not given. The earthquake could have been localized to the jail. It seems that the magistrates considered the punishment inflicted to be sufficient for the crime charged. They did not yet know that Paul and Silas were citizens (verse 38) and therefore supposedly exempt from the summary judgment they had received the previous day. Citizens were guaranteed the right to defend themselves before being judged and the right to appeal before a sentence was executed.
- 16:36 Paul took advantage of legal processes, such as they were. He knew that the magistrates would be assessed his same punishment if he pressed the issue. More importantly, he was upset that the gospel would be maligned because of this imprisonment. Having the magistrates come and bring them out would signify that Paul and Silas had been found not guilty, and the magistrates were acknowledging their error.
- 16:39 The magistrates begged them to leave probably to avoid being charged with unlawful conduct and failing to keep the peace. Either they knew that the earthquake had been miraculous and didn't care, or they didn't know about the earthquake.
- 16:40 Paul and Silas took their own time before leaving town. The length of time before they left is not given. Paul was capable of delivering very long exhortations. Whether they had miraculous help to heal their wounds is not given. Because Luke used 'they' instead of 'we' (16:10), it appears that he was left behind to aid in the development of the church

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- there. Timothy may or may not have gone with Paul and Silas. He is with them in 17:14, but may have caught up with them with a gift (Philippians 4:15-16).
- 17:1 Whether they stayed for any significant length of time in Amphipolis and Appolonia is not given. Luke glosses over this part of the trip, resuming the detailed accounting with the arrival at Thessalonika, about 100 miles from Philippi.
- 17:2 The fact that Paul started his preaching in the synagogue is here given as his regular practice. In Romans 1:16 and 2:9-10, he relates that it was part of the promise to Israel, that they would hear the gospel first. With Gentiles, Paul tended to start with a miracle in order to establish his credibility. When teaching Jews, his focus was the Scriptures, using reasoning rather than power. However, some miracles were performed (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Although the church at Philippi sent gifts (Philippians 4:15-16), this was not sufficient for their means, so they also worked (1 Thessalonians 2:9).
- 17:3 Which Scriptures Paul used has not been preserved. Most likely, he used the Messianic prophecies that every Jewish schoolboy had to memorize. The hardest part to get across would be that God had planned all along for the Messiah to suffer, die, and rise again. The rabbis over the centuries had filled the people with multitudes of theories based on poor hermeneutics. Many of those same techniques are still used today within Christianity. Apparently, Paul did not expect people to take his word for anything.
- 17:4 Some Hebrews believed, but the success rate was higher among the Gentiles who worshipped Jehovah, including a significant number of businesswomen.
- 17:6 Not finding Paul and Silas, their host, Jason, was brought before the magistrates on the same sort of trumped-up charge. However, since Jason was of that city, he could not be handled quite so roughly.
- 17:7 This charge goes beyond the no-new-religions law, using the same sort of twisted logic as the Sanhedrin did in Luke 23:2.
- 17:9 Jason and his friends were released on bond. Nothing more is known of the disposition of this case.
- 17:10 Although not stated explicitly, the fact that they sent Paul and Silas away by night indicates that they feared further violence. Night travel was generally avoided due to the lack of security on the roads. Timothy seems to have gone with them (17:14), although it is possible that he came along shortly afterward. As indicated in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6, Paul had some anxiety over how the church would survive.
- 17:11 This is the only response of this type. In cities with synagogues, unbelieving Jews always raised some sort of disturbance, generally violent. These Jews, however, evaluated Paul's arguments carefully.
- 17:13 In cities without synagogues, sometimes unbelieving Jews from previous stops would follow them and cause trouble (14:19). Since the local synagogue was not making trouble, Jews from Thessalonica, moved by their firm belief that Paul was blaspheming (and jealousy, 17:5), made the trip in order to keep their religion pure.
- 17:14 Fearing further violence, Paul was sent on while Silas and Timothy remained. Paul must have been almost the only public speaker, since he was thought to be the only one in immediate danger.
- 17:15 Silas and Timothy arrived at Athens after the speech by Paul to the philosophers in the next section, but departed from Athens before Paul (18:1). In 1 Thessalonians 3:1, Paul notes that he was left alone in Athens. But Silas and Timothy rejoined him at the next stop, Corinth (18:5).

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- 17:16 Athens was reputed to have a temple to every God known in the Empire.
- 17:17 The Jews of Athens apparently were not given to violence over Paul's teaching. Although he may have done it before, this is the first mention of preaching in the marketplace. In Lystra, the exact location of Paul's public preaching was not given (14:8-14).
- 17:18 Athens was the acknowledged cultural center of the world. Out of respect, the Romans had by-passed Athens in their conquest, making Athens an allied city-state rather than an occupied nation. This status lasted until the 16th century AD, when the Acropolis was virtually leveled by the Turks. The Greeks had turned it into a powder magazine, thinking no one would shell it. It was hit and exploded. The philosophers of Athens, despite the many temples, were generally agnostic. Epicurean philosophers were followers of Epicurus (300 BC). He had taught that pleasure was the chief end of life. The best life was one of tranquillity, free from pain, disturbing passions, and superstitious fears, especially fear of death. He denied the existence of an afterlife. Stoics were followers of Zeno (300 BC). They got their name from their meeting place, the Stoa or Porch of the Acropolis. Zeno taught that one should live in harmony with nature, individually and self-sufficiently. To him, man's rationality was of primary importance. He held no class distinctions. He taught a high moral code and sense of duty. The comment about "idle babblers" probably was a pun for someone who makes his living picking up scraps: a rag picker. They could not identify Paul's philosophy, so imagined that he had merged pieces of several. If 'strange deities' is parallel to 'Jesus and the resurrection,' perhaps some of the philosophers thought Paul was identified with the gods of health and restoration.
- 17:19 The invitation was nearly an order. Had Paul refused, he would have been ridiculed by the crowds every time he sought to speak thereafter. This was also an honor. The philosophers thought there was enough scholarship in Paul's message to be worthy of a hearing. The philosophical soundness of his theories would be evaluated and challenged by the assembled scholars from many disciplines.
- 17:21 Listening to different ideas was a cultural practice of Athens. Sound new ideas were applauded. However, no one was expected to actually do anything about those ideas.
- 17:22 Because of the scholarly nature of the audience, we may assume that Paul chose his words carefully and intended several double meanings. Some of them are almost good-natured insults. Others are almost humorous. Paul called them 'religious,' a word that could be used in about as many ways as we use it today. Paul knew that the philosophers in general were agnostics, believing the many gods to be the 'placebo of the masses.' Here, Paul is almost playfully associating these philosophers with the many idols to be found in Athens, as shown in the next verse.
- 17:23 This altar did exist. Someone thought it best to be sure they did not anger some forgotten god. Again Paul uses a little humor by calling them ignorant. In addition, Paul quickly separates himself from all known philosophies, so there will be no confusion as in the marketplace.
- 17:24 All these philosophers would agree with Paul's assertion. He began with common ground.

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- 17:26 Athenians were racists. They claimed that they had sprung from the Achaian soil, and that all others were from some origin less worthy. Other ethnocentric beliefs abounded. The Biblical view that all descended from Adam might be new to these people. The assertion that God took an active role in human history also was a controversial thought. This is also the clearest passage in the Bible that asserts that God has some sort of control over the rise and fall of all nations, not just those making contact with Israel.
- 17:27 Paul gives a major purpose for human life: that we should seek God. Other philosophies sought for a meaning to life. Paul's image of groping like a blind person was his assessment of the philosophers. They would have understood his application. Many philosophies came to proper conclusions about the nature of a supreme being.
- 17:28 Paul quotes Epimenides the Cretan twice, here and in Titus 1:12. The poem, as spoken by Minos, King of Crete, a mortal in Hades, to Zeus, his father, "They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one, the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, and idle bellies. But thou art not dead. Thou livest and abidest forever. For in thee we live and move and have our being." The line quoted by Paul was a truism of the day.
- 17:29 Paul's audience again would be in agreement. The philosophers all understood that the idol was only an image, not a god.
- 17:30 Now that Paul has reminded the audience of the foolishness of the religion of the day (a fact of which they were well aware), he moves quickly to one transition point. If religion is so frivolous today, yet we are to seek God, why does a supposedly all powerful God let it go on? Paul announces that the hands-off period is over. God is calling for a response to His purpose in creation.
- 17:31 Rather than a long logical argument by human logic to prove that the times of ignorance were over (how could humans come to that conclusion?), Paul immediately gives evidence. This is the unique mark of Christianity. It is the only religion with proof.
- 17:32 Resurrection was not a new thought, but had been dispatched by philosophers long before. Others were willing to hear evidence of this resurrection, which, if true, would be sufficient proof to establish Paul's argument. Once again, gospel sermons to Gentiles were centered on Judgment and evidence.
- 18:1 Corinth was the next city to the south, sitting on an isthmus that controlled trade from the Aegean to the Adriatic Sea. Corinth was as worldly as Athens was philosophical.
- 18:2 This is the first mention of Priscilla and Aquilla (spellings vary between translations and in different places in Acts). They are also mentioned in Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19, 2 Timothy 4:19, and Acts 18 (3 times). The expulsion of the Jews from Rome was due to a disturbance over one named "Crestus," according to Roman history. Whether that was a person's name or a poor spelling for Christ is unknown.
- 18:3 All Jewish men, educated or not, learned a trade for just such occasions as this.
- 18:4 Again, Paul's custom of starting in the synagogue is repeated.
- 18:5 1 Thessalonians 3 tells that Paul had sent Timothy to check on the Thessalonians. Perhaps Silas and Timothy brought money from the Christians in the north, or perhaps the extra workers made it possible for three to live on what two could make.
- 18:8 Crispus is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14 as one of the few whom Paul baptized personally.
- 18:9 The opposition described in the previous verses does not sound as bad as had been encountered in several other places. However, Paul must have perceived a significant threat, or this vision would have been useless.

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- 18:10 The church in Corinth became quite large, as evidenced by the types of problems they had. There were at least four factions mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:12. The diversity of miracles indicates a significant number of people with various powers.
- 18:11 Durations of stays are mentioned rarely. Some are obviously short due to persecution. Others may have lasted many months. But, no timetable is given. Here, Luke notes that Paul stayed 18 months, implying that this length of stay was unusual.
- 18:12 Gallio was born Marcus Annaeus Novatus, but changed his name when adopted by the rhetorician Lucius Junius Gallio. He was the son of Seneca, the rhetorician, and brother of Seneca, the philosopher. An inscription at Delphi indicates that he became proconsul of Achaia about 52 A.D. He later was executed for participating in a failed plot to assassinate Nero.
- 18:13 The charge must relate to Roman law, not the Law of Moses. The claim was that Christianity was a new religion and therefore illegal.
- 18:14 Gallio apparently had kept himself informed. He understood that Christianity was under the umbrella of Judaism, and that this dispute was internal to that religion. Therefore, he dismissed the case before it could even be presented. Historically, Gallio was known for his good nature and ability.
- 18:17 There has been dispute over whether Sosthenes was a Christian or an unbelieving Jew. Since Crispus had been a leader of the synagogue, it has been argued that Sosthenes, too, had converted and that he was caught up in the mob violence. However, it is more likely that he was Crispus' replacement, an unbelieving Jew, who was beaten by his constituency for failing to make a reasonable case before the authorities. The Gallio described in history would have cared about the mob beating a Christian whom he had just refused to prosecute, whereas he probably would have been amused that the plaintiffs beat up their attorney.
- 18:18 As will become apparent in the next few verses, Paul's motivation for leaving Corinth was to report back to Antioch of Syria. Priscilla and Aquila move to Ephesus, becoming Paul's travelling companions for a time. They will become important in Ephesus in the next paragraph. The vow probably was a Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1-21). It was not possible to execute a Nazirite vow exactly while living outside of Palestine because of the need to offer certain sacrifices. However, Paul was a Hellenized Jew, so he had learned how to adapt the Law for life at a distance from the Temple. Because of those adaptations, it is not possible to know if Paul's cutting of his hair was because he had come in contact with a dead person, or if his vow had been completed. In either case, he would have to adapt the Law to his situation. (These adaptations of the Law were at the center of the hatred of Hebrew Jews toward Hellenized Jews.) Many commentators have denied that this was a Nazirite vow because they cannot come to terms with Paul or any Christian continuing to observe the Law after the resurrection of Jesus. However, Paul continued to observe rituals of the Law in Acts 21:20-26, perhaps concerning this same vow.
- 18:19 As was his custom, Paul spoke in synagogues first. He had been prevented by the Spirit from coming to Ephesus previously (Acts 16:6).
- 18:20 Paul's goal of returning to Antioch of Syria prevented a long stay. The next paragraph shows that Priscilla and Aquila were able helpers for the new church there.
- 18:21 Paul did not always know his future.

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- 18:22 Instead of landing at the port city adjacent to Antioch (Selucia), he sailed to Caesarea, 300 miles to the south. The reason for this inefficient itinerary is not given. This concludes the second missionary journey.
- 18:23 The third missionary starts after "some time." This is the third trip through Galatia, turning west through central Turkey as in the second journey. However, this time the Spirit does not forbid him to enter Asia, so he will return to Ephesus (19:1).
- 18:24 Apollos, a Greek name, is mentioned here, in 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:5-22, 4:6, and 16:12, plus in Titus 3:13. Paul spoke highly of him in those letters. The Jewish community in Egypt numbered in the tens of millions. Their scholarship was legendary. They were the motivating force behind the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (the Septuagint) three centuries earlier. The university and library of Alexandria were arguably the best in the Roman world.
- 18:25 Believers existed during Jesus' lifetime. Some, apparently, were Alexandrian Jews. It is most likely that they heard the teaching of John the Baptist or of Jesus, but had not received the update concerning the resurrection. The reasons for Apollos' travels are not given. Perhaps he was a merchant who travelled anyway. Perhaps he was motivated by the news of the Messiah and was seeking to inform the Jews of the Dispersion. Since he had not heard about the resurrection, he must not have been able to return to Jerusalem in more than 20 years. Probably, he was not in Alexandria either, since surely the news had reached that far.
- 18:26 The fact that Priscilla's name is listed first has been given much comment. If the assumption is made that women had no standing, then listing her first would be significant. However, Priscilla and Aquila were Hellenized Jews, where women had rights and could occupy leadership roles. So, perhaps the order of the names means nothing. Aquila is listed first on two occasions, Priscilla on four. Their method of introducing Apollos to the rest of the story is noteworthy. They were gentle, not harsh; private, not public.
- 18:27 Apollos continued in his travels, whether for religion or business, to Corinth. The brethren in Ephesus were sufficiently impressed to offer a letter of recommendation. Luke notes the value of his time in Corinth. As people still tend to do, a competition arose between those who liked Paul better, and those who liked Apollos better (1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4-22). But, in 1 Corinthians, Paul also taught that neither of them was better than the other, but merely servants doing what was necessary at the time.
- 19:2 This is another example of how slowly the gospel traveled. After 20 years, the message brought by John still had not been updated. After this much time, they may have begun to wonder how much time should elapse between the forerunner and the Messiah. John did not know about the role of the Holy Spirit in the gospel. The Spirit is mentioned in the Old Testament as one who brings the Word of God (e.g., Genesis 1:2 and Psalm 51:11). But the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit and the indwelling Spirit were not part of John's message (John did no sign. John 10:41).
- 19:4 Some have taught that, although John preached a baptism of repentance, that it was not for the forgiveness of sins, since those commentators cannot reconcile anyone being forgiven before the sacrifice of Jesus. However, Mark 1:4 states, "John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." These followers of John may or may not have known who Jesus was, since they may have been taught by John (or a disciple of John) before John 1:32-33, when John

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- saw the sign he had been promised. Thereafter, John proclaimed the Messiah as a particular individual (John 1:34-36) instead of a soon-to-be-fulfilled concept.
- 19:5 Baptism in the name of Jesus is more than a baptism of repentance, and more than for forgiveness of sins. "In the name of" did not mean to invoke a response from God by uttering certain words (or we must speak the name of Jesus in Hebrew), and it did not mean "by the authority of" Jesus. The "authority" position was developed centuries later in order to maintain the power of church leaders. "In the name of" means "having the essential quality of." To be baptized in the name of Jesus means to be immersed into the essential quality of Jesus. Baptism is also a symbol of the washing away of sin, as in the baptism of John (Acts 22:16, Hebrews 22:16), of being reserved for godly purposes (1 Corinthians 6:11, Ephesians 5:26), of becoming a sacrifice life Jesus (Romans 6:3 – 4, 12:1), of beginning a new life (Romans 6:4, Titus 3:5), of a future resurrection (Romans 6:5, Colossians 2:12), a freedom from slavery to sin (Romans 6:6), of miraculous unity among believers (1 Corinthians 12:13), of transformation (Galatians 3:27), of being rescued from an evil world (1 Peter 3:21), and of receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:28). The Holy Spirit, of whom these men were ignorant, is a part of the pledge of that inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5, Ephesians 1:14).
- 19:6 Miraculous powers were sometimes bestowed by the laying on of apostles' hands (8:17-18), but not always (2:6, 10:44). The power is under God's control. The method of transmission is of His choosing.
- 19:9 Paul had spoken in Ephesus previously (18:19-20). Priscilla and Aquila were living there. Apollos had spoke there and made an impact. Considerable time would be required for Paul to travel from Ephesus to Caesarea to Antioch and overland back to Ephesus. In all that time, the synagogue had not split over the gospel. Finally, after another three months of Paul's preaching, the division came. "The Way" (also in 9:2 and 19:23) is one of many terms used to describe the church.
- 19:10 Of the few absolute time periods given for Paul's stays in various places, this is the longest except perhaps for his imprisonments in Caesarea and Rome.
- 19:12 These miracles might be difficult for the casual observer to differentiate from magic. It would seem that the power belonged to Paul. However, Paul was unable to use this power on himself (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).
- 19:13 Real demon possession as described in the gospels was common enough to produce many imitators. Jewish literature documents the regular practice of exorcism. A Jewish exorcist commonly placed a tea cup in the doorway of the room of the one possessed, so that, if the exorcism were successful, the demon would knock over the cup on the way out the door. These exorcists, apparently, had encountered some real demons in their careers. If they had been merely frauds, using the name of Jesus would have been unnecessary.
- 19:15 The fact that Paul had not been attacked by demons indicates that God protected those who cast them out legitimately.
- 19:17 The purpose of the style of the miracles by Paul in verse 12 is implied; God knew that this community need the display of raw power to reach those who would believe. As the story continues, Luke reveals that magic was a big part of the culture there. In other places, just searching the Scriptures or just discussing with Paul was enough.
- 19:19 If one magician discloses his secrets, the secrets of many are revealed. This wave of conversions among the magicians would have destroyed the ability of the unbelieving magicians to make a living in this place, since few if any secrets would remain. Fifty

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- thousand dracmas was approximately 250 man-years of wages for common laborers. In today's money (keeping the standard of living low to be comparable to the common laborer of that time), this would be close to \$3.5 million.
- 19:21 The meaning of "purposed in the spirit" has long been debated. However, if it does not mean that this decision was either endorsed by or suggested by the Holy Spirit, then it has no meaning. If the trip to Jerusalem was Paul's idea alone, the "in the Spirit" phrase has no connection to the Holy Spirit. The controversy has arisen from those who want to find Paul going against God's wishes when Agabus tells of the danger waiting for him in Jerusalem (21:11-14). The part about Rome was ironic. Luke would be writing this from Rome while Paul was in prison there (because that's where this book ends). Perhaps Paul had received from God the information about going to Rome, just without details of how it would happen. Paul had previously mentioned his desire to pass through Rome in Romans 15:24-29. Romans likely was written from Corinth, perhaps during his visit described in Acts 20:2, but perhaps earlier (18:18).
- 19:22 The visit by Timothy is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:10. Erastus is an historical person, immortalized in a road he had built. Those who donated public works projects had their names carved in stone and set into the project. The plaque attributing a road to Erastus may be seen in Ephesus today. He was the city treasurer (Romans 16:23) of Corinth.
- 19:23 The church is called The Way in 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 24:14, 24:22. This name has been trademarked in our time as The Way International.
- 19:24 Artemis was the Greek name. In Latin, the name was Diana. This god was a meteorite that landed in this region many centuries earlier. The meteorite had a high metals content, so it melted as it fell through the atmosphere. Upon cooling, it formed globs of metal all in one direction. This reminded someone of many breasts, so they made this god who fell from heaven a fertility goddess. Silver reproductions sold as well as little Eiffel Towers in Paris.
- 19:25 The similar trades would all be somehow associated with the Temple of Diana.
- 19:27 The obvious motive was money. But loyalty to an ancestral religion can make a mob feel noble.
- 19:29 All cities of reasonable size had an out-door theatre used for both the arts and for public meetings.
- 19:30 Paul's friends did not share the attitude that when one's time comes, it will come. They saw no need to tempt God.
- 19:31 An Asiarch was an official of the province of Asia. Apparently, Paul had gained friends (if not converts) in high places.
- 19:32 Most members of a mob do not know the reason for the gathering. They just wanted to find out what all the commotion was about.
- 19:33 Opposition from unbelieving Jews is recorded in 19:9. Seeing an opportunity to silence Paul, they attempted to steer the wrath of the mob.
- 19:34 Those who worshipped the local gods always harbored animosity for Jews, who were quick to ridicule gods made of stone or gold or wood. A Jew who would step forward in a mob that had gathered in support of a pagan idol had underestimated pagan loyalty and their hatred of Jewish arrogance.
- 19:35 The town clerk (much like our city or county clerk) recognized the political liability of the gathering. The Roman Empire allowed self-rule to those who showed that they could

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- do the job. Mob violence was a disruption to trade and taxes, usually requiring the use of troops to restore order. The clerk understood that this assembly could cost the Ephesians their government. The comment about the idol falling from heaven is probably true. Diana is probably a meteorite.
- 20:1 Luke does not comment on whether Paul's departure was partially motivated by the recent events. However, since he wanted to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost (20:16), and needed to retrieve the money from Macedonia and Achaia for famine relief in Palestine (2 Corinthians 8), this may have been a scheduled departure. The three month stay in Corinth (20:3) perhaps indicates that Paul had not yet set a definite timetable.
- 20:4 Sopater and Secundus are mentioned only here. Aristarchus was mentioned in 19:29, will be mentioned in Acts 27:2, Colossians 4:10 (my fellow prisoner), and Philemon 24. This is not the same Gaius as in 19:29, as that Gaius was from Macedonia. The Gaius in Romans 16:23 and 1 Corinthians 1:14 was from Corinth (Achaia, not Macedonia). Which Gaius was the recipient of 3 John is unknown. Timothy is mentioned 24 times. Tychicus is mentioned in Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Titus 3:12. Trophimus will be the Gentile that Paul is accused of taking into the Temple (21:29). He is also mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:20. This large group may have been gathered for several reasons. First, traveling alone was dangerous, although Paul and Barnabas (or Silas) did it often. Second, some may have been appointed to tend to the proper disposition of the contribution (1 Corinthians 16:3, 2 Corinthians 8:18-22). Third, they may be disciples of Paul's, since several of them are still with him during his imprisonment in Rome years later.
- 20:5 Luke indicates here that he has rejoined the group. The last mention of "we" or "us" was in 16:16, in Philippi.
- 20:7 Many have argued over whether this meeting was on our Saturday night or Sunday night.
- 20:13 – 15 These locations are all on the west coast of Turkey. Sailing ships rarely went out of sight of land.
- 21:1 Luke is accompanying Paul at this point (“we”). Counting the days since Passover (20:6), twenty-nine days had elapsed. Since Passover is always on the day of a full moon, the moon is full again, allowing ships to sail at night in order to make a “straight course” rather than hugging the shoreline and anchoring at night.
- 21:4 Apparently, Paul had not been to Tyre in some years, so some search was needed to find the disciples. The others in the party were all foreign born, so probably were unfamiliar with the region. “They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.” It is unlikely that Paul would disregard a command from the Spirit, and Luke certainly recorded accurately that the information came from the Spirit, so we must assume that the brethren misunderstood the message that Paul faced imprisonment as a direction to avoid it. This message was revealed in many places Paul visited on this trip (20:23, 21:11 – 12).
- 21:5 Praying at the occasion of Paul's departure occurred also in Miletus (20:36).
- 21:8 Philip is mentioned also in 6:5 and 8:5 – 40.
- 21:9 Paul favored remaining unmarried, although not as a command (1 Corinthians 7:25 – 38). Some Christian women prophesied (Acts 2:17, 1 Corinthians 11:5, 14:34).
- 21:10 Agabus also prophesied of a coming famine in Judea (11:28).
- 21:11 The substance of this message had been received before (20:23, 21:4). Since it unlikely that Paul misunderstood the message (as Peter did in 10:16, so God repeated it three

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- times), the repetition sure is for the benefit of the others who were present, so that Paul's subsequent imprisonment would be known to be the work of God.
- 21:13 Paul understood that physical afflictions were a minor inconvenience compared to the assignment he had received from God (Philippians 3:7 – 8, 4:1 – 14).
- 21:17 The brethren who received Paul gladly were the apostles and elders and those close to them. Some were not so pleased (21:21).
- 21:20 To glorify the Lord means to extol His character. In this case, they announce the wisdom and grace of God in His plan to include the Gentiles in the Kingdom.
- 21:21 A great number of Jews in Jerusalem had become Christians. However, their cultural baggage was not all left behind. This problem apparently was not settled conclusively in Acts 15. Paul wrote about this problem to the churches of Galatia. Some Jewish Christians believed that Gentiles had to first become Jews (be circumcised and keep the Law). Even those who could accept the Gentiles were included in the Kingdom were unsure about what to do about the Law. The apostles and prophets and elders in Jerusalem understood that Jewish Christians should continue to observe the Law until God put an end to it. They also knew that the practices of the Law would be ended decisively by God very soon (70 AD). This is similar to David's resolve not to assassinate Saul even though David had been anointed by Samuel as king (1 Samuel 24:6, 26:9). He let God handle it.
- 21:23 These vows probably were Nazirite vows (Numbers 6), perhaps explaining the occasion when Paul shaved his own head (18:18).
- 21:25 See Acts 15:19 – 29.
- 21:27 Ephesus is in Asia, so these Jews probably are the same ones who opposed Paul there.
- 21:28 Although not specifically given in the Law, a strong tradition had arisen that forbade all but the men of Israel from entering the Court of the Men. Warning signs in Latin and Greek were carved in stone at the entry ways which read, "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the Temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." This was the only capital offense under the authority of the Sanhedrin. Two of the stone signs have been found. This barrier perhaps was in Paul's mind when he described the "middle wall of partition" in Ephesians 2:15.
- 21:30 The doors of the Temple were shut by the priests at any hint of violence to prevent such things from entering the Temple itself.
- 21:31 The Roman garrison was responsible for keeping order in all areas except the Temple platform. A similar uproar in 67 AD, but with a less experienced commander, resulted in the start of the Jewish Revolt that resulted in the destruction of the Temple. On the latter occasion, the commander called out his entire garrison, rather than a portion. The mob quickly realized this, outflanked the soldiers, and took over the fortress, driving the soldiers out of Jerusalem.
- 21:34 The commander tried gather information but was unsuccessful.
- 21:36 "Away with him" is a figure of speech for the death penalty (John 19:15, Luke 23:18).
- 21:38 Even though the commander made an attempt to be fair, he assumed that Paul was deserving of such a public outcry. This Egyptian probably is the same as noted by Josephus.
- 21:40 The commander probably was hoping to glean some information from Paul's speech. But, Paul spoke to the crowd in Hebrew.

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- 22:2 Speaking in Hebrew made Paul more believable to the crowd, less likely to be guilty of the charge of taking a Gentile into the Temple. Most Hellenized Jews could not speak Hebrew fluently, and few could read it, which was the need filled by the Septuagint.
- 22:3 Paul immediately aligned himself with Gamaliel, a respected conservative rabbi of the time. Further, he identifies himself as one zealous for the Law, which was true, although not in the way the audience might expect.
- 22:6 Recounting his meeting with Jesus was not an account of his conversion, but a claim to being a prophet. Many misapply the fact that Paul told the story of his meeting with Jesus twice as an example to be repeated in our time: recounting my own conversion story. Giving such “testimonies” may or may not be profitable, but invoking this scene as its justification misses the point Paul was making. The facts he puts forward as his credentials are (1) the light and sound were heard by all in the group headed to Damascus, (2) his blindness and miraculous healing were witnessed by many, (3) his assignment given by one who could heal blindness. Reporting that Jesus spoke to him was supported by the miracles, and by the fact that even unbelieving Jews considered Jesus a prophet.
- 22:18 Then he recounts the charge given to him to which there were no witnesses, that he should go to the Gentiles with this message. Interestingly, Paul does not cite the many miracles performed through him in the past 20 years although Jews from Asia were present.
- 22:22 “Away with such” was the figure of speech of that time for “kill him.”
- 22:23 Tearing clothes and throwing dust in the air were signs of grief, in this case grief concerning what they considered blasphemy.
- 22:24 Non-citizens could be detained without charge and whipped to elicit a confession.
- 22:25 Roman citizens had the right to a trial and could not be beaten or whipped beforehand.
- 22:26 Unlawful punishment was meted out in equal measure on those who administered it.
- 22:27 Making a false claim to citizenship was punishable by death. And, the record of Paul’s claim would have been recorded at the Temple only a few hundred yards away. All genealogies were kept there, and all births to Jewish families were recorded when possible. Being from a prominent family and having studied under Gamaliel, Paul certainly had been recorded. Whether the commander investigated is not given. Perhaps he assumed that anyone so close to the proof would not risk such a lie.
- 22:28 One could purchase citizenship for a large sum, or one could be born in Italy, or in one of the “free” cities, of which Tarsus was one.
- 22:29 Although the rules of justice were deficient by our standards, the Roman Empire had the closest resemblance to it available in that era. Throughout this period, the Roman government did not actively persecute Christianity except when prompted by unbelieving and wealthy (powerful) Jews. This was partly because persecuting Christians was not cost effective. Being mostly poor people, the plunder captured would not even pay the meager salaries of the soldiers, let alone bring a profit. Secondly, Roman officials, on several occasions, objected to persecuting Christians at the behest of powerful Jews because the Christians were law-abiding and tax-paying. The commander’s role was to keep the peace. So, he wanted to know the facts in order to know what to do with Paul.
- 23:1 Paul was well known to the audience, the Council. His opening statement was inflammatory. He claimed that his defection was right.

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- 23:2 The council had no rules about physical abuse of prisoners, although one could interpret the Law in that way. Deuteronomy 25:1 – 2 says that the convicted can be beaten. Beating them beforehand is not mentioned, leaving a supposed loophole.
- 23:3 The whitewashed wall comment is like Jesus' comment in Matthew 23:27, comparing the rulers to whitewashed tombs that look pretty, but are full of uncleanness. Whitewash also was a way of hiding the imperfections of a structure while giving the illusion of beauty.
- 23:5 Paul asserted that he was not aware that Ananias was the High Priest. This seems odd because Paul probably kept up with the news of Jerusalem, and the High Priest wore special clothes. So, it may be sarcasm, that Ananias' behavior would make anyone doubt that he was a real High Priest.
- 23:6 Paul exploited the fact that the Council was composed of two parties and incited what he knew would start a huge argument (23:7). He identified himself as a fervent Pharisee (which was true even at that moment) being persecuted for his belief in resurrection by the majority party, which did not (23:8).
- 23:9 Reports of Paul's claim to being a prophet of God undoubtedly had been relayed to the members of the Council. Gamaliel made a similar argument concerning Peter and John in (5:34 – 40).
- 23:10 The commander still had no information to help with his decision concerning what to do with Paul. He again rescued Paul from violence, as was his job, and went back to the fortress.
- 23:11 God spoke to Paul several times to comfort and prepare him (16:6 – 10, 18:9 – 10, 22:18, 21, Galatians 1 – 2, 2 Corinthians 12:7, *et al*).
- 23:12 Probably, this was a vow before God, like a Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1 – 21), since they announced the vow to the Council (23:14). People were fond of invoking serious oaths (Matthew 5:33 – 37, 23:16 – 23).
- 23:15 Such plots were fairly common. Having seen the previous trip from the fortress to the Council meeting place, they knew the likely route. The city had narrow, winding streets, so a swift attack from hiding places in the houses was likely to succeed, considering that their objective was not to fight the soldiers, but to kill Paul. They expected to be able to blend back into the city after the attack.
- 23:16 Conspiracies are rarely keep secret. This fact was the turning point for Charles Colson, one of the Watergate "plumbers." He decided that the story of Jesus must be true because his group, consisting of the most powerful men on earth, had been unable to keep their story straight for a week, let alone 40 years.
- 23:17 The fact that Paul could call for a centurion and have his request granted shows that Paul was in protective custody, not arrest.
- 23:23 Again, the commander of the occupation forces shows that he has a desire to do the right thing. The size of the contingent sent with Paul was partly to deter an attack, rather than just to turn back an attack. Also, attacks by night are more difficult to defend. The governor's palace was in Caesarea.
- 23:27 The letter sent with Paul stretches the truth a bit in favor of the writer.
- 23:31 They travelled about 40 miles that night, and 30 the next day.
- 23:35 Governor Felix also set out to bring about proper judgment. Paul's living conditions in the Praetorium are unknown, as all manner of accommodations were available, from apartments to dungeons.

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- 24:1 Tertullus was chosen to prosecute the case because he had studied oratory. He opened with words of flattery, as was the custom of the time.
- 24:5 Certainly Tertullus used more words than are recorded here, this being a summary, so we cannot know what level of detail he gave concerning the charges.
- 24:11 Paul's response addresses the charges. As to creating dissension, he had been in Jerusalem only 12 days. His purpose had been to worship at the Temple as the millions of others. No evidence had been produced concerning any disputing or inciting in the Temple or the synagogues or the city streets. From 21:18:27, no mention is made of Paul preaching to anyone, although he certainly talked with someone in that period. The best assumption is that he talked with Christians, else some controversy would have arisen.
- 24:14 Paul asserts that Christianity is the version of Judaism that he follows. This avoids the "illegal religion" argument and labels the problem internal to Judaism, not of concern to the Romans.
- 24:15 The reference to the resurrection must have irritated the high priest, since he was a Sadducee. However, some of the elders who came along must have been Pharisees, or an objection would have been raised.
- 24:17 This is exactly true. The purpose of this visit was to bring the famine relief funds to Jerusalem.
- 24:18 Paul diverts the accusation by showing that the wrong people showed up to accuse him (24:19). Those who claimed that he brought a Gentile into the Temple (21:28) were not present. Further, he had been in the Temple in a proper way, both properly purified and without causing disruption.
- 24:20 Paul brings up a point embarrassing to the High Priest, that he had lost control of his own Council. Paul's final argument (24:21) directs attention back to the fact that this is an internal matter, not appropriate for being brought to the Roman governor.
- 24:22 Felix had people watched and received regular reports so he could be pro-active to threats to the peace rather than reactive. He decided to wait until he could confer with the person he trusted to tell him the truth, Lysias.
- 24:33 Paul's accommodations were not luxurious, but certainly were clean. However, in that day, the government did not feed those in custody. Paul could move freely within the palace, and his friends could bring him food and could stay to visit. This was the status of one the governor expected to release.
- 24:24 Lacking electronic media, an interesting speaker was always in demand. The "Jewishness" of Drusilla is questionable, since she married a Roman governor. But, she must have had some background in things Jewish. She was one of three daughters of King Agrippa I (who died in 12:23). One of her sisters, Bernice, appears in 25:23. Drucilla was married to King Azizus of emiza at age 14 (a political liason) with a province in southwestern Syria, just east of Lebanon. She was wooed away by Felix few years later and had a son with him.
- 24:25 The concept of judgment can be frightening, especially when accompanied by evidence. Felix defended himself in the most politically correct way: delay.
- 24:26 Felix's motives were not entirely pure, but that was the way of the world in that place and time, and is still such in most of the world today. He enjoyed the talks to some extent, but was also hoping for Paul's friends to offer a gift. In response, he would have been willing to release Paul. Bribery in general is not conducted openly, but on a gift basis, so as to avoid blatant disregard for justice.

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- 24:27 Without a bribe to make Paul's release worth the obvious trouble it would cause, he kept Paul in custody – which was legal, even against a citizen. This went on for two years.
- 25:1 The new governor went to visit the High Priest. This may have been interpreted as weakness. Festus required that the High Priest come to him.
- 25:2 The charges against Paul were renewed. Apparently, the previous confrontation had prevented the Council from pursuing the matter, probably because they could not produce any facts. Since Paul was held in custody without further action, they had let it languish. Now, with a new and perhaps weak governor, they could revive the plot to kill Paul without being blamed (25:3).
- 25:4 Festus had a limit to how much he was willing to accommodate the Council.
- 25:7 The second hearing went much like the first – lots of unsupported accusations.
- 25:8 Again, Paul cuts to the heart of the matter: no proof. (23:10)
- 25:9 Apparently, Festus had not been informed of the previous plot – or did not care.
- 25:11 Paul knows that ambush is likely if not certain. Also, Jesus had promised him that he was going to Rome (23:11). Perhaps he thought the case would be decided by the Council and rubber-stamped by the governor, as had happened to Jesus. As a citizen he had the right to appeal to a higher court. Further, even his release would mean immediate danger from people like the band who had vowed to kill him previously. Putting all these together, Paul thought the appeal was his best course of action.
- 25:12 Festus consented because he had no choice, and was relieved to have this mess out of his jurisdiction.
- 25:13 This Bernice was the sister of Drucilla. This Agrippa is her brother, son of the Agrippa who died in 12:23. Bernice had married to two king by the age of 18. The first died of old age, the second she left. She is rumored to have had an on-going relationship with her brother throughout. Finally, she became the mistress of Titus and Vespasian.
- 25:14 Festus was not as well-informed about Judaism and Christianity as his predecessor. The knowledge base of Agrippa and Bernice was useful.
- 25:15 Festus' description shows how a Roman official would look at such things.
- 25:26 The most important reason for the meeting is to have something to write to the authorities in Rome.
- 26:2 Paul's speech begins with a little history of his training and beliefs (Phariseeism), and his work with the council. He then makes his case for being a prophet as before. Certainly, this is a summary of the speech, so we do not know how much detail Paul provided.
- 26:21 Paul specified that the cause for the murderous intentions of the Council was his preaching to Gentiles.
- 26:22 "Having obtained help from God" probably is the summary for many miraculous things that had happened to and through Paul.
- 26:23 Paul's answer to the charge of preaching to Gentiles was that the prophets had predicted it.
- 26:24 All this was new to Festus. The argument sounded logical and reasonable, but ended in an unexpected place. Festus' response was to assume that he had missed something along the way, although he could not determine where. He assumed that long study of religious topics had caused Paul to let go of reason and espouse mysticism. Intelligent and educated Romans and Greeks considered religion the "opiate of the masses."
- 26:26 Paul appealed to Agrippa to validate that what he has said was correct according to the Law and the Prophets.

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- 26:28 I take Agrippa's comment to be sarcasm.
- 26:29 The word translated "except" is used only twice in the New Testament. A better translation would be "regardless."
- 26:32 Agrippa said what everyone was thinking; Paul had done nothing wrong.
- 27:1 Giving the name of the centurion implies that the original readers would have some knowledge of him. Perhaps he became a Christian.
- 27:2 Adramyttium was a city in southwestern Turkey, the same province as Ephesus. Caesarea has a port. So, the ship would be expected to head toward Asia. Aristarcus (19:29) sailed with them, perhaps to help with Paul's needs while in chains. Luke was present also (us).
- 27:3 Sidon is a major port of Labanon to this day.
- 27:4 They sailed between Cyprus and Turkey to be shielded from adverse winds, hugging the coast from eastern to west, docking in Myra in the southwest corner of Turkey. There, they changed ships to continue their journey toward Rome.
- 27:7 The wind must have been from the west, and they were headed west, so it was slow going. With difficulty, they made the eastern end of Crete and proceeded along its southern coast to the west, to Fair Havens.
- 27:9 Well behind schedule, the prime season for sailing had passed. Storms were likely. "The Fast" was Yom Kippur, which is in mid-September.
- 27:10 Paul advised them to winter on Crete.
- 27:11 But, the centurion listened to the advice of the ship's owner and helmsman. Of course, the owner did not want to wait, but rather deliver his cargo and get paid.
- 27:12 Wintering in Fair Havens was not advisable because the harbor was not oriented favorably, meaning that winter storms could damage the ship by driving it onto shore, rocks, or reefs. Phoenix was favorably oriented, so the owner set sail for there.
- 27:13 Having neither global weather satellites nor GPS, a day of favorable wind was enough.
- 27:14 Before they could reach Phoenix, a strong northeast wind came up and drove them away from the island.
- 27:17 The Syrtis Sands are off the coast of North Africa. Not wanting to be driven into the sand bars and broken up, they lowered the sails and were driven southwest as little as possible. The cables were to re-inforce the hull in case of collision with a sand bar.
- 27:19 Having no idea where they were, still afraid of the sand bars, they lightened the ship to possibly clear them. The tackle went first.
- 27:21 God talked to Paul again, to re-assure him. Paul relayed the encouraging news to the crew.
- 27:27 Two weeks at sea in a storm, they were lost but intact.
- 27:28 Soundings were taken regularly, even in storms, due to the fear of sand bars. The shallowing water was indication of land ahead.
- 27:29 They wanted to be able to see what they were sailing into, so they dropped sea-anchors to slow themselves down.
- 27:30 The experienced sailors knew that this did not look good, so they sought to escape.
- 27:32 By this time, the centurion believed Paul over the sailors and cut away the lifeboats.
- 27:36 The passengers and crew begin to think Paul knows something they don't.
- 27:38 As a last resort, the cargo is thrown overboard to perhaps clear a few more rocks before running aground.

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- 27:41 “Where two seas met” is a place where two angles of coastline cause waves to collide. Being stuck there meant being pummelled from two direction and surely broken up and sunk.
- 27:42 The sentences of lost prisoners were meted out on the guards. Once could always claim the prisoners were trying to escape, so killing prisoners was the normal precaution.
- 27:43 But, again, the centurion trusted Paul with the lives of all the soldiers and himself. Perhaps this explains why his name is given at the beginning of the story. All 276 occupants made it to shore safely. Apparently, none of the prisoners escaped, either.
- 28:1 Malta is a small island off the southern coast of Sicily. Had they missed it, which would have been easy to do, they would have sailed into the open Mediterranean without a clue as to which way to sail. Although not stated, God may have had a hand in getting them to land with the right impact on passengers and crew.
- 28:2 Luke calls this “unusual kindness.” This was common behavior on the American eastern seaboard, but not then. A shipwrecked crew was considered a threat.
- 28:4 The locals, along with nearly all pagans of that time, had a sense of karma. The snakebite surely was a sign that Paul was a terrible person.
- 28:6 This is another case where God preserved Paul’s life. The way in which He did it also had a positive impact on the locals. This was not the first time Paul’s observers thought he was a god (14:11).
- 28:8 Paul performed many miracles while there. Luke does not record if the result was faith, but it seems a reasonable assumption.
- 28:11 After three mons on the island (mid-December), they finally were able to continue their journey. The details about the ship, which had wintered there, implies that the original readers knew that ship. Perhaps the captain and crew had become Christians and repeated the story in many ports of call.
- 28:12 Syracuse is on the east coast of Sicily.
- 28:13 Rhegium is on the toe of Italy. Puteoli is about half way up the coast toward Rome.
- 28:15 Christians lived in the area. Lacking mass media, the news had to be spread by people. The most likely candidates were the crew who had wintered on Malta. The local Christians immediately came to see how they might help Paul.
- 28:16 Paul received special privileges, probably due to his new friend, the centurion. Centurions generally had some wealth from their various campaigns. This is the most likely source of funding at the beginning.
- 28:17 All Jews had been ordered out of Rome previously (18:2). Apparently, they had been able to come back. Also, Paul wrote to Christians in Rome while he was in Corinth (Romans 16:21 – 24), which was after the banishment. So, they also had returned. Apparently, whatever disturbance had prompted Augustus to banish them had evaporated, because the local Jews were not in conflict with the local Christians any longer, although they had heard of Christians (28:22).
- 28:21 The local Jews had not heard anything about Paul’s legal troubles. So, either letters from the Council had not reached there yet, or the Council was not serious about pursuing Paul.
- 28:23 Paul had an unusual reception; they all listened politely. Not everyone agreed, but the unbelievers did not turn to violence.
- 28:30 Perhaps Luke did his research during the time Paul was incarcerated in Ceasarea, giving him good access to eye-witnesses (Luke 1:1 – 3). Perhaps he composed the bulk of the account while in Rome with Paul (Colossians 4:14).