

THE
ACTS
OF THE APOSTLES

Promise of the Holy Spirit (1:1-11)

1 ¹⁻²Theophilus, I have already written an account for you of Jesus' teaching and the works He performed before His return to heaven. Before His departure, He gave the apostles He had chosen the commission they were to fulfil through the Holy Spirit. ³After His death on the cross, He appeared in His risen body to these men, demonstrating that He was very much alive. During a period of forty days He appeared to them on a number of occasions and spoke further to them about God's Kingdom.

⁴While eating with them on one occasion He commanded them: "Stay in Jerusalem until you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit that My Father promised, and of which I spoke to you. ⁵For John only baptised people in water for the forgiveness of their sins, but within a few days you will be immersed in the Holy Spirit, baptised in His life and power."

⁶When the apostles saw Him in His risen body, they asked Him: "Lord, is this the time when You will restore Israel as Your Kingdom people?"

⁷Jesus told them: "The Father alone has the authority to determine when such things will happen. That is not your business. ⁸However, you will receive God's power when you are baptised in the Holy Spirit. Then you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, the whole of Judea and Samaria and in every part of the earth."

⁹After saying this, they watched as Jesus ascended until a cloud hid Him from their sight. ¹⁰They kept staring up at the sky until two men robed in white garments stood beside them. ¹¹"You Galileans, why stand here looking into the sky? Jesus, who has now been taken from you, will Himself come back in a similar manner to the way He has just departed into heaven."

Matthias replaces Judas (1:12-26)

¹²This took place at the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem.

¹³When the apostles returned to the city, they went to the upstairs room in the house where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas son of James. ¹⁴They met and prayed constantly together, along with the women including Jesus' mother Mary and His brothers.

¹⁵⁻¹⁶During this period, Peter addressed the group of one hundred and twenty believers, saying: "My brothers, it was necessary for the scripture referring to Judas to be fulfilled. This scripture was given by the Holy Spirit through David's words. ¹⁷Even though He was one of us and shared this ministry with us, Judas guided those who arrested Jesus."

¹⁸(This Judas bought a field with the money he was paid for his betrayal; and it was there that he fell, and his intestines burst out of his body. ¹⁹This was common knowledge in Jerusalem and the field was named in Aramaic as the Field of Blood).

²⁰Peter continued: "It is written in the Psalms, 'Let his place be desolate so that no-one can live there,' and 'let another take his position.'

²¹⁻²²"Therefore we must choose someone to replace him; one of the men who has been among us throughout the time the Lord Jesus was with us, from the time of John's baptism to the time when He was taken from us by ascending to heaven. The one we elect must, like us, be a witness of His resurrection."

²³Two men were put forward: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴⁻²⁵Then they all prayed: "Lord, you know every person's heart. Make clear to us which of these two is your choice to share in this apostolic ministry in the place of Judas, who has gone where he belongs."

²⁶Matthias was chosen by casting lots and was added to the eleven apostles.

Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:1-13)

2 ¹⁻²It was on the day of Pentecost, when they were all gathered together, that suddenly there came a sound from heaven like the blowing of a gale force wind, filling the place where they were meeting. ³They saw, coming upon each of them, what appeared to be flames of fire. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages that the Spirit gave them.

⁵At this season, many God-fearing Jews from different nations were staying in Jerusalem. ⁶The sound of the believers speaking in all these languages caused a crowd to gather. They were bewildered because each of them heard the believers speaking in their own native languages. ⁷This so astounded them that they asked: "Surely all these men are Galileans, aren't they?" ⁸How is it possible, then, that we can hear them speaking in our own languages? ⁹⁻¹¹For among us are Parthians, Medes and Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the area of Libya near Cyrene. There are visitors from Rome (both Jews and those converted to Judaism) and also Cretans and Arabs. Yet we hear these men speaking of God's wonders in our own languages!" ¹²They were so amazed and perplexed that they questioned among themselves: "What could this mean?"

¹³However, there were some who ridiculed the believers suggesting: "They are merely drunk!"

Peter explains to the crowd (2:14-36)

¹⁴Then Peter stepped forward, together with the other Eleven apostles, and shouted to the crowd: "Fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem, listen carefully to me. ¹⁵These men are not drunk as some of you suggest. After all, it is only nine o'clock in the morning! ¹⁶No, what you see here is the fulfilment of the prophecy spoken by Joel. God says:

¹⁷'In the last days I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Then your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will be given visions and your old men dreams. ¹⁸In those days I will pour out My Spirit on My servants, both men and women, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will demonstrate wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, fire and clouds of smoke. ²⁰The light of the sun will disappear and the moon will look like the colour of blood before the great and glorious day when the Lord comes. ²¹All who call on the Lord's Name will be saved!'

²²"Listen to this, people of Israel: God demonstrated who Jesus of Nazareth was by the miracles, wonders and signs He performed through Him. You are well aware of these things. ²³Yet God allowed this Man to be handed over to you because this was His pre-ordained

purpose. And you, with the help of sinful men, had Him put to death by crucifixion. ²⁴But God freed Him from the barrier of death and raised Him back to life. It was impossible for death to keep Him in its grip! ²⁵Referring to Him, David said:

‘I saw the Lord always before me. Because He is by my side I shall never be shaken. ²⁶⁻²⁷So my heart is full of joy and I praise God with my tongue. And my body can live in hope because You will not leave me among the dead, nor will You allow the body of Your Holy One to decay. ²⁸Instead, You have shown me the path of life and will fill me with joy in Your eternal presence.’

²⁹“My brothers, I tell you with authority that our forefather David died and was buried; his tomb is now here in Jerusalem. ³⁰But he spoke as a prophet, knowing that God had solemnly promised to place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹With foresight he spoke of Christ’s resurrection, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor was His body left in the grave to decay. ³²Rather, God has raised this Jesus back to life; and we can all bear witness that this is absolutely true. ³³Now He has been exalted to heaven to be at God’s right hand. As promised, the Father has given Him the authority to pour out the Holy Spirit in the way you can now both see and hear.

³⁴⁻³⁵“It was not David who ascended into heaven and yet God said through him, ‘Sit in the place of honour at my right hand until I cause your enemies to be a footstool beneath your feet.’

³⁶“So all the people of Israel need to be sure of this: God has made this Jesus, who you put to death on the cross, both Lord and Christ, your Messiah!”

3,000 repent and are baptised (2:37-41)

³⁷These words were like an arrow to the heart of the people and they said to Peter and the apostles: “Brothers, what can we do?”

³⁸Peter answered: “All of you need to repent and be baptised. You need to turn to God and be immersed to show you have been purified from all your sins, made new and made one with Jesus Christ. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who will come to live in you. ³⁹For God’s promise of His Spirit is for you, your children and even for other nations who have lived far from God, for all who the Lord our God chooses and calls to belong to Him.”

2:28 Psalm 16:8-11
2:34-35 Psalm 110:1

⁴⁰Peter warned them at length of the consequences if they refused to repent and pleaded with them: "Save yourselves from the corruption of the world that is so evident now."

⁴¹Those who responded to this message were baptised, about three thousand people on a single day!

Devotion of the believers (2:42-47)

⁴²They then devoted themselves to being taught God's Word by the apostles and to sharing their lives with one another in love. They were also committed to the breaking of bread, recalling all that Christ had done for them, and to praying together. ⁴³There was a sense of awe among them because of the miracles and wonderful works that God performed through the apostles.

⁴⁴All the believers lived as members of one Body and shared whatever they had with one another. ⁴⁵They sold possessions and gave to everyone who was in need.

⁴⁶They continued to come together in the temple courts every day. They also met in one another's homes, sharing the Lord's Supper and eating their meals with glad and thankful hearts. ⁴⁷They praised God and were shown favour by everyone. And every day the Lord added to their numbers those who were being saved.

Crippled beggar healed (3:1-10)

3 One day Peter and John went to the temple for the afternoon time of prayer at three o'clock. ²At the entrance to the temple called the Beautiful Gate, was a man who had been crippled from birth. He was carried there every day to beg for money from those entering the temple courts. ³So when he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money. ⁴Both looked directly at him and Peter said: "Look us in the eye!" ⁵The man did so, expecting to receive something from them.

⁶Peter said to him: "I don't have any silver or gold to give you, but what I do have I give you now. Walk, in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." ⁷He took the man by the right hand and began to pull him to his feet. Immediately his ankles were healed and were made strong. ⁸He jumped up and began to walk. Then he went with Peter and John into the temple courts, walking freely and jumping about, praising God as he did so. ⁹⁻¹⁰When all the people saw the way he walked and heard his shouts of praise, they recognised him as the one who used to beg for money at the Beautiful Gate. They were amazed and filled with awe because of what had happened to him.

Peter preaches to the crowd (3:11-26)

¹¹The man clung to Peter and John in gratitude and soon a crowd of astonished people came running to them and surrounded them in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹²Peter used the opportunity to address them:

"People of Israel, why does this amaze you? Why look at us as if we have caused this man to walk by some power of our own or by our godliness? ¹³Your God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has glorified His servant Jesus through this miracle. You handed Him over to the Roman authorities to be crucified and you rejected Him before Pilate, even though he wanted to release Him. ¹⁴You denied the Holy and Righteous One and demanded that a terrorist murderer be released instead. ¹⁵You were responsible for putting to death the One who gave you life. Yet God raised Him from the dead and we are witnesses of His resurrection.

¹⁶"So by faith in the person of Jesus this man has been healed and he is someone you clearly recognise. It is by the Name of Jesus and the faith that comes from knowing Him that this complete healing has been given to this man, as you can all see clearly for yourselves.

¹⁷"Brothers, I acknowledge that you and your leaders only acted in ignorance. ¹⁸But realise that God has fulfilled what He promised through all the prophets. He foretold that the Christ would suffer. ¹⁹⁻²⁰So repent now; turn to God so that you can be forgiven and freed from all your sins, that you can enjoy times of refreshing that only the Lord Himself can give, that the living Christ will come to you now and that Jesus will return at God's appointed time. ²¹He has to remain in heaven until the time comes that has been promised through the holy prophets, when God will restore everything to His purposes.

²²"It was Moses who said: 'The Lord your God will raise up a prophet from among your own people, a prophet for you who will be like Me. You must listen to all that He says to you. ²³For anyone who does not listen to this Prophet will be cut off completely from God's people.'

²⁴"In fact, all the prophets from the time of Samuel onwards have spoken these things. ²⁵Because of the covenant God made with your forefathers, you are heirs of all the prophets foretold. He said to Abraham, 'All the peoples of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.'²⁶So when God raised up His Servant, Jesus, He sent Him to you first in order to bless you by turning you away from your sinful ways."

3:23 *Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, 19*

3:25 *Genesis 22:18*

Peter and John face opposition (4:1-12)

4 While Peter and John were addressing the people, some priests and Sadducees, together with the captain of the temple guard, approached them. ²They were extremely disturbed because the apostles were teaching that through Jesus the dead are definitely resurrected. ³They arrested Peter and John and, because it was late in the day, had them thrown into prison overnight. ⁴Despite this, many who had heard their message became believers; and their number grew to about five thousand men.

⁵On the following day, the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was present, as were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷They ordered Peter and John to be brought before them and demanded to know: "By what power and in whose name did you heal that man?"

⁸Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, replied: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹⁻¹⁰If we are being charged because of an act of mercy shown to a cripple and you want to know how he was healed, then you and all the people of Israel need to understand this: It is by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man can stand before you completely healed. ¹¹He is the One referred to in the scripture that says, 'The stone rejected by you builders has become the corner-stone on which the whole building depends.'

¹²"No one else can provide salvation! Through His Name alone is it possible for people to be saved."

Peter and John before the council (4:13-22)

¹³When they saw the boldness and authority with which Peter and John spoke, although they knew them to be ordinary men who had received no theological training, they realised that they were followers of Jesus. ¹⁴But there was nothing they could say because the man was standing before them clearly healed. ¹⁵So they ordered them out of the council chamber while they conferred together.

¹⁶They discussed together: "What are we going to do with these men? Everyone in Jerusalem is well aware that they have performed an outstanding miracle. We cannot deny this. ¹⁷However, we must stop them spreading their teaching any further by warning them not to speak to anyone in this Name."

¹⁸So they called Peter and John before them and ordered them not to speak or teach again in the Name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John

responded: “You can judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s eyes for us to obey you rather than to obey Him. ²⁰We cannot remain silent but must speak about what we have seen and heard.”

²¹The council threatened them further before releasing them. They could not agree on any suitable form of punishment because all the people were praising God for the wonderful miracle that had happened. ²²For the man who had been a cripple was over forty years old!

A fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit (4:23-31)

²³Once released, Peter and John returned to the other believers to report on all that was said to them by the chief priests and elders.

²⁴In response, the believers all prayed aloud together, thanking God by saying: “Sovereign Lord, You created the heaven, the earth, the sea and everything in them. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through Your servant, our father David, ‘Why do the nations rage? Why do the people make their own useless plans? ²⁶The kings of the earth and rulers together stand against the Lord and His Anointed One.’ This is what happened here in this city. ²⁷Herod and Pontius Pilate, Gentiles and the people of Israel together, plotted against Your holy Servant Jesus, Your Anointed One. ²⁸But they were only doing what You had decided by Your power and will should happen. This was Your plan.

²⁹“But now, Lord, because You are aware of their threats, enable us as Your servants to speak Your words of truth with great boldness.

³⁰We need to see You stretch out Your hand to heal the sick and to perform more signs and wonders through the Name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

³¹After they had prayed in this way, the meeting place shook. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit again and spoke God’s Word boldly.

Unity among the believers (4:32-37)

³²There was great unity among the believers. They were one in what they believed and in the ways they thought and acted. No-one thought of his possessions as belonging to himself, but they shared everything they had with others.

³³⁻³⁵The apostles continued to witness to the resurrection of Jesus, speaking and acting with great power. So great was God’s grace on the whole body of believers that nobody among them was left in

need. Some who owned land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds from the sales to the apostles, and they ensured that it was distributed to those in need.

³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus called by the apostles Barnabas, meaning son of encouragement, was one such. He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Holy Spirit (5:1-11)

5 Another man called Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, sold some property. ²But he kept back part of the money for himself, with his wife's full knowledge. The rest he brought to the apostles.

³However, Peter said to him: "Ananias, what has Satan done to your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept some of the money from the sale for yourself? ⁴It was your property before it was sold, was it not? So after the sale the money was yours to use as you wished. How could you make it appear that you had given the full amount? You have lied to God, not only to men!"

⁵On hearing this, Ananias fell to the ground and died. Those who heard of this were shocked and were filled with fear. ⁶The young men took Ananias' body, wrapped it in a sheet and carried it out for burial.

⁷About three hours later, his wife arrived, unaware of what had happened. ⁸Peter asked her: "Tell me truthfully, was this the whole price that you and Ananias received for the land?"

"Yes," she replied, "that was the full amount."

⁹Peter asked her: "How could the two of you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The men who are now entering have just buried your husband and they will do the same to you."

¹⁰Immediately she fell to the ground at Peter's feet and died. Then the young men came forward, confirmed that she was dead and carried her body out for burial next to her husband. ¹¹Great fear took hold of the whole church and others who heard of what had happened.

The apostles perform many signs and miracles (5:12-16)

¹²The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. All the believers used to congregate in the area of the temple known as Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³Although people thought highly of them, they were reluctant to join them. ¹⁴Even so, more and more men and women became believers in the Lord and were added to the church.

¹⁵Because of the apostles' reputation, people brought the sick and laid them on mattresses and beds in the streets, hoping that even Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he walked along.

¹⁶Crowds came from the towns and villages surrounding Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those in bondage to evil spirits; and all of them were healed!

Apostles continue despite opposition (5:17-39)

¹⁷By now, the high priest and the fellow members of the council who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸They arrested the apostles and had them thrown into prison. ¹⁹However, during the night one of the Lord's angels came and opened the prison doors and led them out. ²⁰He told them: "Go into the temple courts and give the people the message of the new life." ²¹They obeyed and entered the temple courts at daybreak and began to teach openly.

When the chief priests and their officials arrived, they called the Council together, the full assembly of the elders of Israel, and sent word to the prison for the apostles to be brought before them. ²²But the officers found that they were not in the prison. So they returned to the Council to report this. ²³"We found the prison locked securely with the guards in place at the doors. But when we looked inside no one was there!"

²⁴This report puzzled the captain of the guard and the high priests, who were concerned about what would happen next.

²⁵Then someone arrived with the news: "The men you put in prison are now standing in the temple courts teaching the people." ²⁶On hearing this, the captain of the guard took some officers to arrest the apostles again but without using any force, for they feared that the people might turn on them if they did.

²⁷They brought the apostles before the Council to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸"We ordered you specifically never to teach again in this Name," he said. "Yet you have filled the whole city of Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to place the guilt of His death on us."

²⁹Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God, for His authority is higher than that of men! ³⁰The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead, He whom you killed by having Him nailed to a cross. ³¹Yet God exalted Him to the place of honour at His right hand where He is both Prince and Saviour. Now He gives the whole nation of Israel the opportunity to repent and receive forgiveness for their sins. ³²We are personal witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit who God has given to those who obey Him."

³³The Council was furious when they heard this and wanted to kill them. ³⁴⁻³⁵But a Pharisee called Gamaliel, a teacher of the law greatly respected by the people, stood and ordered the apostles to be put outside the chamber while he addressed the Council: “Men of Israel, be careful about what you decide to do with these men! ³⁶Remember that some time ago Theudas claimed to be someone great and about four hundred men supported him. However, he was killed and his supporters dispersed; the whole thing came to nothing. ³⁷Then there was Judas the Galilean who, at the time of the census, led a group of rebels to revolt. But he, too, was killed; then all his followers scattered. ³⁸Therefore, I advise you to leave these men alone. Release them. For if what they are saying and doing is merely from themselves, it also will fail. ³⁹But if their purpose has been initiated by God, you can do nothing to stop these men. To attempt to do so will mean you will find yourselves fighting against God.”

Apostles flogged for the name of Jesus (5:40-42)

⁴⁰This persuaded the Council. They called the apostles before the Council again and had them flogged. They ordered them not to speak in the Name of Jesus again and then released them.

⁴¹The apostles left the Council, rejoicing that they had been given the privilege of suffering disgrace for the Name of Jesus. ⁴²Undeterred, they went daily into the temple courts, as well as from house to house, and continued to teach and proclaim the good news that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.

Seven men chosen to serve (6:8-15)

6 As the number of disciples increased, the Greek-speaking Jews complained about the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were not receiving a fair amount in the daily distribution of food. ²So the twelve apostles called a meeting of all the disciples and said: “We should not be involved in these administrative details but should be able to concentrate on preaching and teaching God’s Word. ³⁻⁴So, brothers, select some men from among you who have the reputation of being wise and men of the Spirit. We will hand this responsibility over to them, while we devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.”

⁵Everyone responded well to this proposal. They selected Stephen, who was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas who came from Antioch and was a convert to Judaism. ⁶These seven men were presented to the apostles, who laid their hands on them and prayed for them.

⁷As a result of these changes, God's Word spread further and the number of disciples increased rapidly in Jerusalem. Even a large number of priests became obedient believers.

Stephen falsely accused (6:8-15)

⁸Stephen, full of God's grace and power, performed extraordinary wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ⁹However, opposition also arose, especially from those who belonged to the so-called Synagogue of the Freed Slaves. These were Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria and the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. ¹⁰But when they argued with Stephen they had no answers to his wisdom, nor to the anointed words he spoke by the Spirit.

¹¹So they quietly spread false rumours about Stephen. Some claimed they had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God. ¹²In this way they stirred up opposition among the people generally, but especially among the elders and teachers of the law. They had Stephen arrested and brought before the Council. ¹³There they produced false witnesses who claimed: "This man speaks continually against the Temple and against the Law of Moses. ¹⁴We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and set aside the customs Moses handed down to us."

¹⁵As the members of the Council stared at Stephen, his face shone like the face of an angel.

Stephen recounts Israel's history: Abraham's call (7:1-7)

7 ¹⁻²"Are these charges true?" the High priest asked Stephen, who replied: "Brothers and fathers, hear what I have to say! The God of glory appeared to our forefather Abraham while he lived in Mesopotamia before leaving for Haran. ³God told him, 'Leave your country and your people and I will show you the land to which you are to go.'

⁴"So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and went to live in Haran, where he stayed until his father's death. Then God led him to the land where you now live. ⁵But God did not give him any inheritance here, not even a tiny piece of land. However, He did promise him that he and his descendants would possess the whole land, even though, at the time, Abraham was childless. ⁶This is what God promised him, 'Your descendants will live as strangers in

a foreign land where they will be mistreated and live as slaves for four hundred years. ⁷But I will punish the nation that enslaves them.' Then God added that after those four hundred years they would leave that country and come to worship Him in this place.

⁸"It was to Abraham that God gave circumcision to be a sign of the covenant between them. As his father, Abraham had Isaac circumcised eight days after he was born. In due course Isaac became the father of Jacob, who was the father of the twelve patriarchs of our nation.

⁹⁻¹⁰"But because they were jealous of Joseph, his brothers sold him and he became a slave in Egypt. However, God was with him and delivered him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom that enabled him to gain the favour of Pharaoh, Egypt's king, who made him governor of the whole of Egypt and placed him over the affairs of the palace.

¹¹"When the whole of Egypt and Canaan was struck by a famine that brought great suffering, our ancestors were facing starvation. ¹²So on hearing there was grain in Egypt, Jacob sent his sons, our forefathers, on their first visit there. ¹³Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers on their return visit and Pharaoh was made aware of Joseph's family and their plight. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵So Joseph then sent for his father Jacob and all seventy-five members of his family came to live in Egypt, where in time they all died. ¹⁶Their bodies were duly brought back to Shechem and buried, along with Abraham, in the tomb he had bought from Hamor's sons.

¹⁷"The number of our people in Egypt had grown considerably by the time God fulfilled the promise He gave to Abraham. ¹⁸By then there was a new Pharaoh ruling Egypt, who knew nothing about Joseph. ¹⁹He dealt harshly with our people and oppressed them by forcing them to abandon their newborn babies so that they would die.

God delivers Israel out of captivity (7:20-38)

²⁰⁻²¹It was during this period that Moses was born; but he was no ordinary child. He was cared for in his own home for the first three months, but when his parents had to conceal him he was found by Pharaoh's daughter who brought him up as her own son. ²²So Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians and grew to become powerful in speech and action.

²³“When forty years old, Moses decided to visit his natural relatives. ²⁴He witnessed a Hebrew being mistreated by an Egyptian and went to his rescue, but ended up killing the Egyptian. ²⁵Moses expected that his own people would realise that God had sent him to be their saviour; but they didn’t! ²⁶When Moses saw two Israelites fighting on the next day, he again intervened wanting to bring reconciliation. ‘Men, you are brothers,’ he said, ‘Why fight each other?’

²⁷“But the one mistreating the other pushed Moses aside saying, ‘Who made you our ruler and judge?’ ²⁸Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹On hearing this Moses fled to Midian, where he lived as a foreigner and where two sons were born to him.

³⁰“When he had been there for forty years, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush while he was in the desert near Mt. Sinai. ³¹⁻³²This was an amazing sight and when he approached, he heard the Lord speak to him from the bush saying, ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ Moses shook with fear and had to look away from the bush.

³³“Then the Lord told him, ‘Take off your sandals; you are standing on holy ground. ³⁴I have seen the way My people in Egypt are being afflicted. I have heard their cries to be delivered from their oppression and I have now come to rescue them. So go now, for I am sending you back to Egypt.’

³⁵“So, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush, God sent back as their ruler and deliverer the same Moses whom the Israelites had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you our ruler and judge?’ ³⁶It was Moses who led them out of Egypt after performing miraculous signs at the Red Sea and during the forty years they wandered around in the wilderness.

³⁷“Moses himself told the Israelites, ‘God will send you another prophet like me, someone from among your own people.’ ³⁸It was while Moses was leading the people in the wilderness that the angel spoke to him on Mount Sinai. He could receive God’s living words on behalf of the people, words that are passed on to us today.

Israelites worship the golden calf (7:39-43)

³⁹“But our forefathers refused to obey what God said through Moses. They rejected him and wanted to return to Egypt. ⁴⁰They told Aaron to make them an idol that they could follow as their god. ‘As for Moses,’ they said, ‘we don’t know what has become of him!’

⁴¹“This was the occasion when they made an idol in the form of a calf. They offered sacrifices to it and treated with honour something

they had made with their own hands. ⁴²So God turned away from them and left them to worship the heavenly planets like pagans. No wonder the prophet wrote, 'O house of Israel, did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings in the desert for forty years? ⁴³No, you venerated the shrine of Molech and Rephan's star. For this I will send you into exile in Babylon.'

God's temple (7:44-50)

⁴⁴"Our forefathers carried the tabernacle with them in the wilderness, made to the instructions God gave Moses. ⁴⁵Our fathers brought this tabernacle with them when, under Joshua, they took the land from the nations they had to drive out. It remained here until David's time. ⁴⁶Because he enjoyed favour with God, he wanted to provide a permanent temple as God's dwelling place among them. ⁴⁷But it was his son, Solomon, who actually built the temple.

⁴⁸⁻⁴⁹"However, the Most High God does not live in houses built with human hands. As the prophet writes, 'The Lord says, 'Heaven is My throne and earth My footstool. So what kind of house can you build for Me? How can you determine where I dwell? ⁵⁰Am I not the Creator of all things everywhere?'

Israel resists the Holy Spirit (7:51-53)

⁵¹"You leaders are so stubborn! Your hearts are hardened and your ears deaf to the truth. You are exactly like your forefathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵²Your fathers persecuted all the prophets; they even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. Now you have betrayed and murdered the One of whom they spoke. ⁵³Yes, you who are so proud that you received the law through angels, have disobeyed His words."

The stoning of Stephen (7:54-60)

⁵⁴The leaders were furious when they heard what Stephen said and shouted abuse at him. ⁵⁵But Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit and as he looked up to heaven he saw God's glory, with Jesus standing at God's right hand in the place of honour. ⁵⁶He said: "Look, I see heaven open and Jesus, the Son of Man, standing at God's right hand."

⁵⁷The Jewish leaders covered their ears when they heard this and rushed at Stephen, yelling abuse at him. ⁵⁸They dragged him out of

7:43 *Amos 5:25-27*

7:50 *Isaiah 66:1-2*

the city and began to stone him. The officials took their coats off and laid them at the feet of a young man called Saul.

⁵⁹As they stoned him, Stephen prayed: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰He fell on his knees and shouted: "Lord do not condemn them for this sin." When he had said this he died peacefully.

The believers scatter (8:1-8)

8 Saul witnessed Stephen's death with approval. This event triggered a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. All the believers, except the apostles, fled to places of safety in Judea and Samaria. ²But godly men buried Stephen's body and mourned deeply for him.

³Saul tried to destroy the church wherever he could. He went from house to house dragging off both men and women to be thrown into prison.

⁴But those who were scattered as a result of the persecution preached the gospel of Jesus wherever they went. ⁵For example, Philip went and proclaimed the Christ to a city in Samaria. ⁶When the crowds heard Philip's preaching and saw the miraculous signs he performed, they listened attentively to his message. ⁷Evil spirits came out of people with shrieks, and many paralysed and crippled people were healed, ⁸causing great joy in that place.

Believers receive the Holy Spirit (8:9-25)

⁹For some time in that city, a man named Simon had practised sorcery and claimed to be someone great because he did things that amazed the Samaritans. ¹⁰He drew everyone's attention, from the most important to the least. It was even said of him that he had divine power, 'the Great Power!' ¹¹He had a large following because he amazed people with his magical deeds.

¹²However, those who believed Philip's preaching about the good news of God's Kingdom and the Name of Jesus Christ, were baptised, both men and women. ¹³This magician Simon also professed to believe and was baptised. He then followed Philip everywhere, and was amazed at the great signs and wonders he saw Philip perform.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the gospel, they sent Peter and John there. ¹⁵⁻¹⁶On their arrival they discovered that the believers had not yet received the Holy Spirit; they had only been baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷So Peter and John laid hands on them and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ When Simon saw that God's Spirit was given to people when the apostles laid their hands on them, he offered them money saying: "Give me this power so that everyone on whom I lay my hands will receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰ Peter answered him: "Let your money perish with you for imagining that God's gift could be purchased. ²¹ You cannot share in this ministry because your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps then He will forgive you for thinking such a thing. ²³ I see that you are still full of bitterness and are a prisoner of sin."

²⁴ So Simon said: "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing awful will happen to me."

²⁵ When Peter and John had testified and preached God's Word, they returned to Jerusalem, stopping to proclaim the gospel in many villages on the way.

Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40)

²⁶ An angel of the Lord told Philip: "Go south to the desert road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza." ²⁷ He obeyed and on the way met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official from the court of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was in charge of her treasury and had been in Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ Now he was returning home and sitting in his chariot, reading the book of the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip: "Go and walk alongside that chariot."

³⁰ As Philip ran to be close to the chariot, he heard the man reading from the prophecy of Isaiah and so asked him: "Do you understand what you are reading?"

³¹ "How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?" the eunuch replied. He then invited Philip to enter the chariot and sit with him. ³² He was reading the passage that says, 'He was led to the slaughter like a sheep and did not open His mouth, just as a lamb is silent before the shearer. ³³ He was humiliated and deprived of justice. Who can speak of His descendants? For His life was taken from the earth.'

³⁴ The official asked Philip: "Please tell me who is the prophet speaking of, himself or someone else?" ³⁵ Using that passage of scripture as a starting point, Philip told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶ As they continued along the road they came to a pool of water. So the eunuch said: "Look! Here is some water, surely I can be baptised now!"

³⁷ Philip replied: "You can be baptised if you believe with all your heart."

"I believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son", the eunuch answered.

³⁸ He gave orders for the chariot to stop. Then both of them went down to the water and Philip baptised the eunuch.

³⁹ When they came up out of the water, suddenly the Lord's Spirit took Philip away. Although the eunuch did not see him again, he continued on his journey rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Philip suddenly found himself at Azotus, a city further to the north. From there he set out for Caesarea, preaching the gospel in every place on the way.

Saul's conversion (9:1-16)

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still making dire threats against the Lord's disciples. ² He asked the high priest for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, giving him authority to take as prisoners anyone he found there who belonged to the 'Way of Jesus', whether men or women. He would then bring them to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus, suddenly a brilliant light shone from heaven and seemed to envelop him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him: "Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting Me?"

⁵ "Who are You, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," came the reply. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ Those travelling with Saul stood speechless; they heard the voice yet saw no-one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, but discovered that he had gone blind; he had to be led by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ He remained blind for three days and did not eat or drink anything during that time.

¹⁰ There was a disciple in Damascus called Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision: "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him: "You are to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for Saul of Tarsus, who is praying there. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man called Ananias coming to lay hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ Ananias answered: "Lord, I have heard many reports of this man, how he has done much harm to your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And now he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all those who call on Your Name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias: "Go! I have chosen this man to be My instrument in bringing the truth about Me to the non-Jewish people and their rulers, as well as to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ And I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My Name."

Saul filled with the Holy Spirit (9:17-25)

¹⁷So Ananias went to the house. On entering, he placed his hands on Saul saying: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me to restore your sight and so that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸⁻²⁰Immediately it was as if scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again. He was then baptised and soon regained his strength once he had eaten.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus, preaching in the synagogues that Jesus is God's Son. ²¹Everyone who heard him was amazed and queried, "Isn't this the man who has caused such destruction among the believers in Jesus in Jerusalem? Did he not come here to take His followers to the chief priests as prisoners?" ²²Yet Saul's preaching increased in power and to the Jews of Damascus he proved, to their consternation, that Jesus is the Christ.

²³⁻²⁴After some time, the Jewish leaders decided to kill Saul, but he learned of their plans. They kept a close watch on the city gates both day and night in order to murder him. ²⁵So one night some fellow believers lowered him in a basket through an opening in the city wall.

Saul meets the apostles (9:26-30)

²⁶Saul tried to join the disciples when he arrived back in Jerusalem; but they were all suspicious of him. They did not believe that he had become a true disciple. ²⁷However, Barnabas brought him to the apostles. He related to them how, on the journey to Damascus, Saul had encountered the Lord, who had spoken to him personally. He told them of how he had preached fearlessly there in the Name of Jesus.

²⁸So Saul remained with the apostles and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the Name of the Lord. ²⁹When he debated with the Grecian Jews, they plotted to kill him. ³⁰When the other believers heard of this, they took Saul to Caesarea from where they sent him home to Tarsus.

The gospel spreads as Peter performs miracles (9:31-43)

³¹Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria had a time of peace when it could gather strength and increase in numbers. The believers were encouraged by all the Holy Spirit was doing among them and they lived in the fear of the Lord.

³²While travelling around the country, Peter went to visit the saints in Lydda. ³³He found there a man called Aeneas, who was

paralysed and had been bed-ridden for eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him: "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed!" Immediately Aeneas was healed. ³⁵Everyone living in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord when they saw Aeneas walking around completely healed.

³⁶There was a disciple in Joppa named Tabitha, otherwise known as Dorcas. She was continually doing good by serving others, especially helping the poor. ³⁷But she became sick and died. Her body was washed and laid upstairs. ³⁸The disciples in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda, which was nearby. So they sent two brothers to him to beg him to come immediately to Joppa.

³⁹Peter went with them and on his arrival at the house was taken immediately to the upstairs room. All the widows had gathered to mourn and showed Peter the clothes Dorcas had made for the poor.

⁴⁰Peter asked them all to leave the room. He sank to his knees and prayed. Then he turned to the dead woman and said: "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, saw Peter and sat up. ⁴¹Peter took her by the hand and helped her to stand. Then he called in the other believers and widows and presented her to them, alive and well!

⁴²News of this spread throughout Joppa and many became believers in the Lord. ⁴³So Peter prolonged his stay there, living with Simon, a leather-worker.

Cornelius sends for Peter (10:1-8)

10 Cornelius, a Roman centurion of the Italian Regiment, lived in Caesarea. ²He and his household were God-fearing people. Cornelius gave generously to those in need and was a man of prayer. ³At around three in the afternoon one day, he had a vision of an angel coming from God and calling his name: "Cornelius."

⁴Cornelius was afraid but couldn't help staring intently at the angel: "What is it, Lord?" He asked.

The angel replied: "God has heard your prayers and is aware of your gifts to the poor. ⁵Send some men to Joppa to fetch a man called Simon Peter, ⁶who is staying with Simon the leather-worker who lives by the sea."

⁷When the angel had disappeared, Cornelius called two of his servants and also a devout soldier who was one of his personal staff. ⁸He told them of the vision and sent them to Joppa.

Peter's vision (10:9-16)

⁹Around noon on the following day, while they were making their way to Caesarea, Peter was praying on the roof of the house where

he was staying. ¹⁰He was hungry and wanted something to eat but fell into a trance while his meal was being prepared. ¹¹In a vision he saw that the heavens were opened and what appeared to be like a large sheet was being let down to the ground by its four corners. ¹²In the sheet were a variety of animals, reptiles and birds. ¹³Then Peter heard a voice telling him: "Rise, Peter, kill and eat."

¹⁴Shocked, Peter replied: "No way, Lord! Never have I eaten anything forbidden or considered ritually unclean."

¹⁵The voice addressed him again: "Do not say that anything is unclean if I have made it clean."

¹⁶This happened three times before the sheet was taken up into heaven.

The Lord sends Peter to Cornelius' household (10:17-26)

¹⁷While Peter was wondering what this vision meant, those sent by Cornelius had found their way to the house and were at the gate.

¹⁸They called out, enquiring if Simon Peter was staying there.

¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him: "Simon, three men are calling for you. ²⁰Get up and go down to meet them. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

²¹So Peter went downstairs and told the men: "I am the one you want. Why have you come?"

²²The men replied: "The centurion Cornelius sent us. He is a good and God-fearing man, greatly respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to invite you to come to his house so he can hear whatever you have to say." ²³So Peter invited them in to stay as his guests.

On the next day Peter, together with some of the brothers from Joppa, set out with the messengers for Caesarea, where they arrived on the following day. ²⁴In anticipation of their arrival, Cornelius had gathered together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵When Peter entered the house Cornelius met him and fell before him in worship. ²⁶But Peter pulled him to his feet, saying: "I am only a man like yourself."

Peter preaches the truth to the Gentiles (10:27-48)

²⁷After talking briefly to Cornelius, Peter went into the room where he found a large gathering of people. ²⁸He addressed them: "You know it is against our religious law for a Jew to have anything to do with a Gentile or to set foot inside his house. However, God has

made it clear to me that I should not consider as forbidden what He has stated to be acceptable. ²⁹So when I was sent for I responded, without raising any objections. I want to know why you sent for me.”

³⁰Cornelius replied: “Four days ago, while I was praying here in my house at about three in the afternoon, suddenly a man in shining clothes stood in front of me. ³¹He told me, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayers and has taken note of your gifts to the poor. ³²Send to Joppa for one known as Simon Peter, who is staying in the house of Simon the leather-worker who lives by the sea.’ ³³So immediately I sent for you and I am grateful you have come. Now we have come together in God’s presence to hear all that the Lord has told you to say to us.”

³⁴⁻³⁵Then Peter replied: “It is clear to me now that God certainly does not show favouritism but accepts men of all nations who fear Him and do what pleases Him. ³⁶You must have heard of the revelation that God gave to His people Israel, the good news of how peace with God has been made possible through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷You have heard of the events that took place in Judea, the series of events that began in Galilee following the baptism that John preached. ³⁸God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. Because God was with Him, He then went from place to place doing good things and healing all who had been oppressed by the devil.

³⁹⁻⁴⁰“We apostles saw everything He did among the Jews and what happened in Jerusalem. There they killed Him by crucifying Him, but on the third day after His death God raised Him back to life and caused Him to be seen by certain witnesses whom God had specially chosen. ⁴¹He was not seen by everyone, but we actually ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. ⁴²He ordered us to preach to everyone and to testify that He is the One appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³He is the same One of whom all the prophets spoke, saying that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins in His Name.”

⁴⁴The Holy Spirit fell on the whole gathering while Peter was still speaking. ⁴⁵The Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on those who were not Jewish. ⁴⁶This undoubtedly had happened, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

⁴⁷Then Peter said: “Is there any reason why these people should not be baptised in water? For they have already received the Holy Spirit in just the same way that we did.” ⁴⁸So he commanded that

they should be baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ. And they asked Peter to remain with them for a few days.

Peter criticised by Jewish believers (11:1-18)

11 The apostles and other believers in Judea received news that the non-Jewish nations had accepted God's Word. ²So when Peter returned to Jerusalem, he was criticised by the Jewish believers. ³They challenged him by saying: "You visited the house of Gentiles and ate with them."

^{4,5}So Peter explained the whole situation to them exactly as it happened: "While praying in the city of Joppa I fell into a trance and saw a vision. What appeared like a large sheet was being let down from heaven by its four corners, right there in front of me. ⁶⁻⁷I saw that it contained a variety of animals and wild beasts, reptiles, and birds, and I heard a voice commanding me, 'Get up Peter, kill and eat.'

⁸"Amazed I replied, 'No way, Lord! I have never eaten anything that is forbidden or that is considered ritually unclean.' ⁹But this heavenly voice spoke again, 'You are not to call anything unclean that God has made clean!' ¹⁰Three times this happened before the sheet was pulled up heavenwards again.

¹¹"At that very moment, three men arrived at the house where I was staying. They had been sent from Caesarea to find me. ¹²The Holy Spirit told me not to hesitate in agreeing to go with them. These six brothers here accompanied me.

¹³"When we entered the man's house, he told us that an angel had appeared to him in his house and said, 'Send to Joppa for Simon Peter. ¹⁴He will tell you how you and all your household will be saved.'

¹⁵"I had not been speaking long before the Holy Spirit fell on them in the same way that we received Him right at the beginning. ¹⁶I recalled what the Lord had told us: 'John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷So if God saw fit to give them the same gift that He gave us, who was I to imagine that I could oppose Him?"

¹⁸Those present raised no further objections when they heard this but praised God saying: "So God has also given to the Gentiles the opportunity to repent and receive eternal life."

The gospel spreads to Gentile regions (11:19-23)

¹⁹Meanwhile, those who had dispersed during the persecution that followed Stephen's death travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and

Antioch, proclaiming the gospel wherever they went, but only to Jews. ²⁰ However, some from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began to witness to Greeks as well, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord anointed them and worked through them so that a great number of people turned to the Lord and became believers.

²² When news of this reached the church in Jerusalem they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ On his arrival there he saw for himself the evidence of God's grace at work among them. So he rejoiced and encouraged them to remain faithful to the Lord, and to serve Him with all their hearts.

Saul and Barnabas go to Antioch (11:24-30)

²⁴ Barnabas had a good reputation and was a man full of the Holy Spirit and with strong faith. Through his ministry a great number of people came to know the Lord personally.

²⁵⁻²⁶ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Saul and brought him back to Antioch. Both Barnabas and Saul remained there for a whole year, meeting with the church and teaching God's Word to larger numbers of people. It is at Antioch that the believers were first called 'Christians'.

²⁷ A number of prophets from Jerusalem visited Antioch during this period. ²⁸ One of them was called Agabus and he predicted, under the inspiration of God's Spirit, that the whole Roman world was about to experience a severe famine, an event that took place during the reign of Claudius. ²⁹ The disciples there decided to provide help for their fellow believers in Judea. ³⁰ Each gave as generously as he could, and the elders entrusted their gift to Barnabas and Saul to take to Jerusalem.

An angel frees Peter from jail (12:1-11)

12 About this time a persecution began, when King Herod arrested some believers in the church. ² He had the apostle James, John's brother, killed with a sword. ³ Seeing that this pleased the Jewish leaders, Herod then had Peter arrested during the Passover Feast. ⁴ He had him thrown into prison where he was guarded around the clock by four squads, each of four soldiers. Herod's intention was to try Peter publicly after the Passover.

⁵ But while he was in prison the church prayed earnestly for Peter. ⁶ On the eve of the day set by Herod for his trial, Peter was asleep between two soldiers, bound by two chains with sentries also standing guard at the entrance to his prison.

⁷Suddenly a bright light shone into the cell and one of the Lord's angels appeared. He shook Peter to awaken him and said: "Get up quickly!" Immediately the chains on Peter's wrists fell off!

⁸The angel said to him: "Get dressed and put your sandals on." Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel instructed him. ⁹So Peter followed him out of the prison. But the whole event seemed so unreal, he didn't realise that this was actually happening; he thought he must be seeing a vision.

¹⁰They passed both the first and the second guards and when they came to the prison gate it opened for them by itself. They passed out into the city and when they had walked down one street together, the angel disappeared suddenly!

¹¹Peter then realised that this was not his imagination and thought, 'Now I know for sure that it is true! The Lord really did send his angel to rescue me from Herod and from all that the Jewish people intended to do to me.'

Peter returns to the believers (12:12-17)

¹²When he realised this, Peter went to the house of Mary, John Mark's mother, where many had gathered to pray for him. ¹³He knocked on the outer gate and a servant girl called Rhoda came to see who was there. ¹⁴When she recognised Peter's voice she ran back into the house without opening the door and told everyone: "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵"You must be imagining things," they replied. But she kept insisting that it was true. So they said: "Well, it must be his angel."

¹⁶Meanwhile Peter continued to bang on the door. When finally they opened it and saw that it was indeed Peter they were amazed. ¹⁷Peter indicated with his hand that they should be quiet and then explained how the Lord had freed him from the prison. "Tell James and the other brothers what has happened," he said before leaving for another place.

Herod struck dead (12:18-25)

¹⁸There was great consternation among the soldiers on the following morning; they had no idea what had become of Peter. ¹⁹Herod ordered a thorough search to be made for him. This proved fruitless, so he then interrogated the guards before ordering their execution.

²⁰Then Herod left Judea for Caesarea where he stayed for a time. He was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; so they sent a delegation to settle the dispute. With the support of Blastus, one

of the king's close personal assistants, they made peace with Herod, as they were dependent on his country for their food supply.

²¹On the appointed day of the audience Herod sat on his throne in his royal robes and made a speech. ²²The people shouted: "This is not a man speaking, but the voice of a god!"

²³Immediately one of the Lord's angels struck him with a terrible disease, because he received the acclaim for himself and did not give praise to God. Herod was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴However, God's Word continued to spread and the number of believers increased.

²⁵When Barnabas and Saul had completed their mission in Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch, taking John Mark with them.

13 There were a number of prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch: Simon known as the black man, Lucius from Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod Antipas) and Saul. ²On one occasion, while they were worshipping together during a time of fasting, the Holy Spirit told them: "You are to consecrate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³So after a further time of fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them on their way.

⁴Knowing they were commissioned by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went to Seleucia from where they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵They preached God's Word in the synagogues when they arrived at Seleucia. (John Mark had accompanied them as their assistant).

Governor of Paphos believes (13:6-12)

⁶They then travelled throughout the island until they reached Paphos. There they encountered a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet called Bar-Jesus. ⁷He was an associate of the governor, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. He sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear God's Word for himself. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for this is what his name means in Greek) opposed what they said and tried to dissuade the governor from believing. ⁹⁻¹⁰Then Saul, who was becoming known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked directly at Elymas and said: "You child of the devil, you are an enemy of the truth and all that is right. You are full of deceit and falsehood. Will you never stop perverting the Lord's revelation of the truth?" ¹¹Now the Lord's hand is against you and you will be struck blind and unable to see anything for a time."

Immediately mist and darkness fell on him. He stumbled around pleading for someone to take his hand and guide him. ¹²When the

governor saw what had happened, he became a believer and was amazed at what he was taught about the Lord.

Paul preaches in Pisidian Antioch (13:13-43)

¹³Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia, where John Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴From Perga they travelled to Pisidian Antioch and attended the synagogue service there on the Sabbath. ¹⁵After the readings from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders sent them word saying: "Brothers, please speak to us if you have a message of encouragement for the people."

¹⁶So Paul stood and motioned with his hand for the people to be quiet: "People of Israel and those of you from other nations who worship God, listen to me," he began. ¹⁷"Israel's God chose our forefathers and caused them to prosper during their time in Egypt. Then He led them out of that country with a display of His mighty power. ¹⁸Then He endured their rebellious conduct in the wilderness for about forty years. ¹⁹He conquered seven nations in Canaan and gave His own people their land as their inheritance. All this activity covered a period of about four hundred and fifty years.

²⁰"Then God gave them leaders known as judges until the time of the prophet, Samuel. ²¹It was then that the people demanded to have a king to rule over them, and He gave them Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, and he reigned for forty years. ²²After his death, he made David their king, saying of him: 'I have made David, son of Jesse, a man after My own heart. He will accomplish all I want him to do.'

²³"From David's descendants God has given Israel the Saviour He promised, Jesus. ²⁴But before His ministry began, John preached that all the people of Israel needed to repent of their sins and be baptised. ²⁵While John was fulfilling his mandate he asked, 'Who do you believe I am? I am not the Christ, the Messiah. No, He is coming after me and I am not worthy even to do the work of a slave for Him!'

²⁶"Brothers, you children of Abraham and those of other nations who fear God, we have been given this message of salvation; the Saviour was sent to us. ²⁷But the people of Jerusalem and their rulers failed to recognise Jesus as their Saviour, as the Christ, and in condemning Him fulfilled the prophetic words that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸Despite the fact that they could not find Him guilty of any crime worthy of death, they asked Pilate to have Him crucified.

²⁹"When they had fulfilled the words written about Him in the scriptures, they took Him down from the cross and laid His body in

a tomb. ³⁰⁻³¹ Yet God raised Him from the dead and, over a period of many days, He was seen in His risen body by those who had come with Him to Jerusalem from Galilee. They are now witnesses of His resurrection to our people.

³²⁻³³ “We proclaim to you this good news: What God promised our forefathers, He has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus. God says of Him in the second Psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have become your Father.’ ³⁴⁻³⁵ The truth that God raised Him from the dead so that His body would never decay, is expressed in these words: ‘I will give you the holy and certain blessings I promised to David,’ and elsewhere, ‘You will not allow Your Holy One to decay.’

³⁶ “When David had fulfilled God’s purpose for him in his generation he died, was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed. ³⁷ But He whom God raised from the dead has not suffered any decay!

³⁸ “Therefore I want you to know, brothers, that through Jesus you can receive forgiveness of all your sins. This is what we proclaim to you. ³⁹ Through faith in Jesus everyone who believes is made acceptable to God, and is brought into a right relationship with Him. No one could achieve such acceptance through the law given to Moses. ⁴⁰⁻⁴¹ So make certain that what the prophets said does not apply to you, ‘Understand, those of you who scoff at the truth; you will perish, for I am going to do something in your day that is so wonderful you would never believe it, even if someone revealed it to you.’”

⁴² Paul and Barnabas were about to leave the synagogue when the people asked them to explain these things further on the following Sabbath. ⁴³ After the service many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked further with them and urged them to continue to live in God’s grace, in the good of all He gives.

The gospel spreads despite opposition (13:44-52)

⁴⁴ It seemed that the whole city had come together on the following Sabbath to hear the Word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jewish leaders saw the crowds had gathered around Paul and Barnabas they were filled with jealousy and spoke aggressively against Paul’s teaching.

⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ Then Paul and Barnabas answered their allegations boldly: “We had to speak God’s Word to you first. As you choose to reject it then, clearly, you do not consider yourselves worthy of receiving

13:32-33 *Psalm 2:7*

13:34-35 *Isaiah 55:3*

13:34-35 *Psalm 16:10*

13:40-41 *Habakkuk 1:5*

eternal life. So now we will turn to the other nations, for the Lord has commanded through the prophet Isaiah: 'I have made You a light to the Gentile nations, that You might take the message of salvation to every part of the earth.'"

⁴⁸When the Gentiles present heard this, they were really pleased and decided to obey the Word of the Lord. And all those chosen by God for eternal life believed!

⁴⁹So the gospel then spread throughout the whole region. ⁵⁰However, the Jewish leaders initiated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas by stirring up women of influence who were faithful to their religion, and also the leading men in the city. They expelled Paul and Barnabas from that region. ⁵¹So they shook the dust of that place from their feet as a sign against their rejection of the truth and then travelled to Iconium. ⁵²Yet all who became disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas speak boldly in Iconium (14:1-17)

14 At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went together to the Jewish synagogue, where they spoke so powerfully that a great number believed, both Jews and Gentiles. ²But those Jews who rejected their message and refused to believe stirred up opposition among the Gentiles by slandering Paul and Barnabas. ³Even so, they spent some time there and continued to preach boldly for the Lord, who endorsed their message of His grace by empowering them to perform miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴The city population was divided; some supported the apostles, others sided with the Jewish opposition.

⁵However, a group of Gentiles and Jews including some of the leaders plotted violence against Paul and Barnabas, wanting to stone them. ⁶⁻⁷But they heard of the plot and fled to Lycaonia, to the cities of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding country, where they continued to proclaim the good news.

⁸In Lystra they encountered a man who from birth had crippled feet and had never been able to walk. ⁹⁻¹⁰He listened intently to Paul's preaching. When Paul looked at the man, he perceived that he had faith to be healed and so called to him: "Stand up on your feet." Immediately the man jumped up and started to walk.

¹¹The crowd that witnessed this shouted out in their own language: "These are gods come to visit us in human form." ¹²They called Barnabas 'Zeus' and Paul they called 'Hermes', as he was the main

spokesman. ¹³The priest from the temple of Zeus that was just outside the city brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the city gate because both he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to Barnabas and Paul. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵When the two apostles realised this they tore their robes in disgust and ran among the crowd shouting: “Why are you doing this? We are merely human like you. We bring you the good news that you can turn away from such worthless things and know the only living God, who created heaven and earth, the sun and every living creature. ¹⁶⁻¹⁷In the past, He allowed nations to go their own ways, although He never was without witnesses to the truth about who He is. Even though you did not know Him, He showed you His generosity by giving you rain and enabling you to grow seasonal crops, thus providing you with plenty of food and cause to be grateful.”

Paul stoned for the truth (14:18-22)

¹⁸Despite what they said, the two apostles had the utmost difficulty in preventing the crowd from offering sacrifices to them. ¹⁹But when some Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived, they turned the crowd against them. They stoned Paul and dumped his body outside the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But when the believers gathered around him in prayer, he stood up and then went back into the city. Both Paul and Barnabas left for Derbe on the following day.

²¹⁻²²There a large number became disciples in response to their preaching. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch where they strengthened the believers, encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must persevere through many trials and hardships to inherit God’s Kingdom,” they told them.

Apostles appointed elders (14:23-28)

²³Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for each church. They prayed for them after a time of fasting, entrusting them to the Lord in whom they believed.

²⁴Then, passing through Pisidia, they arrived in Pamphylia. ²⁵⁻²⁶They preached God’s Word in Perga before moving on to Attalia, from where they sailed back to Antioch, the city where they had been entrusted to God’s grace for the work they had now completed.

²⁷So when they arrived there they called the church together, reporting all that God had accomplished through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸Then they stayed with the disciples in Antioch for a prolonged time.

Paul and Barnabas contest wrong teaching (15:1-21)

15 While there some men arrived from Judea. They taught the believers, “You cannot be saved unless you are circumcised according to the custom taught by Moses.” ²Paul and Barnabas argued strongly against such teaching and so confronted these men. Paul and Barnabas, together with a delegation from the church, were appointed to go to Jerusalem to discuss the matter with the apostles and elders. ³As they travelled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told of how Gentiles had now been converted; and that brought joy to the believers there.

⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were given a warm welcome by the apostles, elders and the whole church. They then reported all that God had done through them.

⁵Some believers who were Pharisees declared: “The Gentiles must be circumcised and told that they have to obey the Law of Moses.” ⁶The apostles and elders met to consider this matter. ⁷There was much debate before Peter stood to address them: “Brothers, you remember that some time ago God made it clear to you that He had chosen me to take the message of the gospel to the Gentiles so that they could believe. ⁸God, who knows the heart of every man, showed that He had accepted them by imparting the Holy Spirit to them in the same way that He had to us. ⁹He made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, for He purified the hearts of both groups of believers through their faith in Him.

¹⁰“Now why do you question what God has done by putting a yoke on the necks of these Gentile disciples that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? ¹¹This cannot be right! We believe that we are saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, just as these Gentiles have been.”

¹²The whole gathering listened attentively as Barnabas and Paul told of the miraculous signs and wonders God had performed through them among the Gentiles. ¹³In conclusion, James summed up: “Listen to me, my brothers. ¹⁴Simon has reminded you of how God first showed that it is His purpose to take a people for Himself from among the Gentiles. ¹⁵This agrees with the written prophecies that have been handed down to us:

¹⁶⁻¹⁸“Then I will return and restore David’s fallen kingdom. I will rebuild its ruins and restore it, that the faithful remnant may seek the Lord, together with all the Gentiles who

believe in My Name. This is what the Lord says, for this is the purpose He determined long ago.'

¹⁹“Therefore, in my judgment we should not add unnecessary difficulties for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰It would be better for us to write to them, informing them that they should not eat meat offered to idols, nor indulge in sexual immorality. They should not drink blood nor eat the meat of strangled animals. ²¹For the Law of Moses has been read and preached on every Sabbath in the synagogues in every city from the earliest times.”

Apostles' message to church at Antioch (15:22-35)

²²Then the apostles and elders, together with the whole church, decided to select representatives to send with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. They chose two of their leaders, Judas Barsabbas and Silas.

²³With them they sent this letter:

From the apostles and elders, your brothers,
To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:
Greetings.

²⁴We have had reports about the way you have been disturbed by those from the church here who came to you without our authorisation; how you were troubled by their teaching. ²⁵⁻²⁷So we have all agreed to send our official representatives to you, Judas and Silas, along with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul, two men who have endangered their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will confirm by word of mouth what we write in this letter.

²⁸⁻²⁹It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything further than these requirements: You are not to eat food offered to idols, nor are you to drink blood or eat the meat of strangled animals. And you must not indulge in any form of sexual immorality. You will do well if you obey what we say. Farewell.

³⁰Then the four men left Jerusalem for Antioch, where they gathered the church members and delivered the letter to them. ³¹They were greatly encouraged by its contents. ³²Judas and Silas, both of whom were prophets, also said many encouraging things that strengthened the faith of the believers. ³³After spending time in Antioch, the brethren there sent them back to Jerusalem with the blessing of God's peace. ³⁴But Silas believed it to be right that he should remain there.

³⁵Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch where they taught the Word of the Lord, along with many other preachers.

Paul and Barnabas part company (15:36-41)

³⁶After some time, Paul suggested to Barnabas: “We should make a return visit to the believers in all the towns where we have already preached the Lord’s Word, and monitor their progress.” ³⁷⁻³⁸Barnabas wanted John Mark to accompany them, but Paul thought otherwise because he had left them in Pamphylia and had not persevered with them in the work.

³⁹⁻⁴¹They disagreed so deeply about this that they decided to go their separate ways. Barnabas and Mark sailed for Cyprus, while Paul took Silas with him, going through Syria and Cilicia, where they strengthened the churches. They were all entrusted to the Lord’s grace by the believers in Antioch.

Paul and Timothy (16:1-5)

16 Paul and Silas went to Derbe and then to Lystra, where they met Timothy, a disciple whose mother was a Jewish believer and whose father was Greek. ²Timothy had a good reputation with the believers in Lystra and Iconium. ³Because Paul wanted him to accompany him on their onward journey in an area where there were many Jews, Timothy was circumcised, as it was widely known that his father was a Greek.

⁴In every town they spoke of the decision made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, so that the local believers could comply. ⁵As a result, the churches in that area were strengthened in faith and continued to grow daily in numbers.

Paul’s vision leads them to Macedonia (16:6-12)

⁶Paul, Silas and Timothy then travelled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, as the Holy Spirit had made it clear they were not to go to the province of Asia at that time. ⁷However, when they arrived at the border of Mysia they wanted to go into Bithynia; but again the Spirit of Jesus would not permit this. ⁸So they bypassed Mysia and went to Troas. ⁹That night Paul saw a Macedonian man in a vision. He stood pleading with him, “Come and help us in Macedonia.” ¹⁰Having received such a vision, Paul concluded that God was leading them to preach the gospel in Macedonia; so we prepared to go there immediately. (It was at this point that Luke, the author of this book, joined Paul and his companions).

¹¹From Troas we sailed to Samothrace, and then the next day on to Neapolis. ¹²From there we journeyed to Philippi, a Roman colony that was the leading city of Macedonia, where we stayed for several days.

Lydia baptised at Philippi (16:13-15)

¹³⁻¹⁴We went outside the city gate to the riverside on the Sabbath, expecting to find others gathered there for prayer. We sat down and began to speak to some women, among whom was Lydia, who came from the city of Thyatira and traded in exclusive purple cloth. As she was a worshipper, the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's preaching. ¹⁵After she and the members of her household were baptised, Lydia invited us to her home. "If you accept that I am a true believer in the Lord, please come and stay at my house," she said. So, at her insistence, we agreed to this.

Deliverance of possessed girl (16:16-28)

¹⁶On another occasion, when we were going to the place of prayer we encountered a demon-possessed slave girl. She was used by her owners to earn much money by telling fortunes and predicting the future. ¹⁷The girl followed us shouting: "These men are servants of the most high God and they are letting you know how you can be saved." ¹⁸She did this continually for several days until Paul became so exasperated that he turned towards the girl and addressed the spirit operating through her. "In the Name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" he said. Immediately the spirit obeyed and left her.

¹⁹⁻²⁰However, when the girl's owners realised that they could no longer use her to make money, they seized Paul and Silas and hauled them before the magistrates in the market place. They claimed: "These Jews are fermenting uproar in the city. ²¹They are encouraging people to do things that are contrary to our Roman customs."

²²As the crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, the magistrates ordered that they be stripped and beaten. ²³They were severely flogged and then thrown into prison, where the jailer had strict orders to guard them carefully. ²⁴So he put them in a cell and secured their feet in the stocks.

²⁵Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God while the other prisoners listened. ²⁶Suddenly a violent earthquake shook the foundations of the prison; all the prison doors flew open and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷The jailer

awoke and seeing the prison doors open was about to kill himself, because he assumed all the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted: “Stop! Don’t kill yourself. We are all here!”

The jailer and his household are baptised (16:29-34)

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed into their cell and fell to the ground before Paul and Silas, trembling with fear. ³⁰ He then led them out of the cell and asked them: “Sirs, how can I be saved?” ³¹ They told him: “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your whole household will be saved.”

³² Then they revealed the Word of the Lord to the jailer and his whole household. ³³ Even though it was the middle of the night, they were all baptised, once the jailer had washed Paul and Silas’ wounds. ³⁴ He welcomed them into his house and set a meal before them and was filled with such joy because he and his whole family had now become believers.

Paul and Silas pardoned (16:35-40)

³⁵ At daylight, the magistrates sent officials to order the jailer to release Paul and Silas. The jailer told Paul: “You are free to go. ³⁶ The magistrates have ordered that you are to be released. So go in peace.”

³⁷ But Paul told the officials: “The magistrate had us beaten publicly without trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and then had us thrown into prison. And now they want to be rid of us secretly? Never! Let them come here themselves and release us.”

³⁸ The officials went and reported this to the magistrates, who were alarmed when they realised that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. ³⁹ They came apologetically and escorted them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ But first, as soon as they were released from the prison, Paul and Silas went to Lydia’s house where they met with the believers and encouraged them before leaving.

Paul preaches Christ in Thessalonica (17:1-4)

17 Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived in Thessalonica. ²⁻³ As was his custom, Paul went to the Jewish synagogue and on three successive Sabbaths explained and proved from the scriptures that the Christ, their Messiah, had to suffer and then to rise from the dead. He told the people: “This Jesus of whom I speak is the Christ, your Messiah.” ⁴ Some of the Jews were convinced

and joined Paul and Silas, together with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and several prominent women.

Jewish leaders turn on Jason's household (17:5-9)

⁵This only made the Jewish leaders jealous. So they gathered a mob of undesirable characters from the market place and began a riot in the city. They made for Jason's house looking for Paul and Silas, intending to deliver them into the hands of the mob. ⁶Failing to find them there, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city officials shouting: "These men have caused trouble everywhere they have been and now they have come here. ⁷This Jason has welcomed them into his home. They all speak against Caesar's laws, claiming there is another king who they call Jesus."

⁸This claim threw both the crowd and the city officials into confusion. ⁹They forced Jason and the others to post bail and then released them.

The Bereans receive the gospel (17:10-15)

¹⁰When night fell, the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. As soon as they arrived there they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹The Bereans were more open to the gospel than the Thessalonians and received their message readily. Every day they examined the scriptures to verify what Paul said. ¹²Many Jews became believers, together with prominent women and many Greek men.

¹³When the Thessalonian Jews heard that Paul was preaching God's Word in Berea, they came and stirred up trouble there. ¹⁴The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast with an escort, while Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. Paul and those with him moved on to Athens. ¹⁵There the others left him and returned to Berea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join them as soon as possible.

Paul preaches to Athenian philosophers (17:16-34)

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of pagan idols. ¹⁷In the synagogue he debated with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks and preached openly to all in the market place. ¹⁸A number of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers started to argue with him. "What strange notion has this babbler picked up?" some asked, while others said, "He seems to be promoting some foreign gods." They only said such things because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and His resurrection.

¹⁹They brought him to a meeting of philosophers at the Areopagus and asked him: “Tell us about this new teaching you are giving. ²⁰What you say seems very strange to us and we cannot understand what you mean. ²¹(The Athenians and the foreign population in the city loved to spend time doing nothing but debating the latest fashionable ideas.)

²²⁻²³Paul stood to address the meeting and said: “Men of Athens! It is obvious that you are very religious, for as I have walked around I have observed carefully how many objects of worship you have. I even found an altar that bears the inscription: ‘To an unknown god.’ I am now going to tell you about this God whom you do not know.

²⁴“He is the God who created the world and everything in it. He is Lord of both heaven and earth, but He does not live in a temple built by human hands. ²⁵There is nothing men can do to meet His needs, for He does not have any! It is He who gives life to all men and breath to every living creature.

²⁶“He created the first man, from whom every nation of men has descended, so that now they inhabit the whole earth. It is He who has determined when and where they should all live. ²⁷His purpose in doing this was to encourage men to seek to know Him, to reach out to Him, although He is not difficult to find as He is not far from each one of us. ²⁸Because we live in the presence of this God, every move we make is known to Him and we are dependent upon Him for our very being. Even some of your own poets have said that ‘we are His offspring.’

²⁹“Therefore, if we are His offspring we should not think of God as one fashioned in gold, silver, stone or any other image devised by a craftsman. ³⁰For centuries God permitted such ignorance, but now He commands everyone to turn away from such ignorance and embrace the truth. ³¹And He has set a day when the entire world will be judged with justice by the Man He has appointed, the same Man He has raised from the dead as proof of His intentions.”

³²Some treated this talk of resurrection from the dead with derision, but others told Paul: “We want to hear more about this.” ³³Then Paul left the meeting. ³⁴A number became believers on hearing more from Paul, among whom was Dionysius who was a member of the council, and a woman called Damaris.

Paul in Corinth (18:1-13)

18 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth where he met a Jew called Aquila. ²He had been born in Pontus and had recently arrived from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because the

Emperor Claudius had decreed that all Jews must leave Rome. ³Like them, Paul was a tent maker by trade; so he stayed and worked with them.

⁴Every Sabbath Paul spoke in the synagogue, trying to convince both Jews and Greeks of the truth of the gospel.

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul spent all this time preaching, proclaiming to the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah. ⁶However, when they opposed and insulted him, Paul shook his cloak before them in protest and said: "Your blood be on your own hands. I have discharged my responsibility by telling you the truth. Now I will go to the Gentiles."

⁷When he left the synagogue, Paul went next door to the house of a true worshipper, Titius Justus. ⁸The synagogue ruler, Crispus, and his whole household believed in the Lord, and many Corinthians became believers and were baptised as a result of his testimony.

⁹One night the Lord gave Paul a vision in which He said: "Don't be afraid. Keep speaking boldly and do not be silent. ¹⁰For I am with you, to protect you from attack or injury, for I have many loyal people in this city." ¹¹So Paul remained there for eighteen months teaching God's Word.

¹²But the Jews made a concerted attack on Paul while Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia. ¹³They brought this charge against him in court, "This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are against the law."

Paul challenges the Jewish leaders (18:14-23)

¹⁴As Paul was about to speak in his defence, Gallio told the Jews: "I would listen to you Jews if you made a justifiable accusation of some serious crime. ¹⁵But as you are only concerned about questions concerning words and names of your own religious law you can settle the matter among yourselves. I refuse to act as the judge in such matters." ¹⁶So he dismissed them from the court. ¹⁷In anger the Jewish leaders rounded on Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him there in the courtroom. But Gallio ignored them.

¹⁸Paul continued his stay in Corinth for some time. He then left the believers there and sailed for Syria, accompanied only by Priscilla and Aquila. However, before he sailed he had his head shaved at Cenchrea as a sign that he had made a vow. ¹⁹They arrived at Ephesus where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. However, before leaving he went into the synagogue and debated with the Jews there. ²⁰⁻²¹Although they asked him to prolong his visit he declined, but promised to return when it was God's will for him to

do so. ²²He then sailed from Ephesus to Caesarea where he met with the church before travelling on to Antioch.

²³Having spent some time there, Paul then travelled throughout Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening and encouraging the disciples in that region.

Priscilla and Aquila teach Apollos (18:24-28)

²⁴⁻²⁵At the same time a Jew called Apollos came to Ephesus from Alexandria. He was a scholar with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, who had been taught about the way of the Lord and spoke with great zeal. What he taught about Jesus was accurate, but he had only experienced John's baptism.

²⁶Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak boldly in the synagogue and invited him to their home, where they gave him further revelation of God's way in Christ.

²⁷When Apollos decided to visit Achaia, the believers in Ephesus encouraged him and wrote a letter of commendation to their brethren there. Apollos proved to be a great help to those in Achaia who had become believers through God's grace. ²⁸He argued strongly with the Jews at public meetings, proving from the scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Corinthians baptised in the Spirit (19:1-10)

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul took the inland route to Ephesus. ²There he found a group of disciples to whom he put the question: "When you believed, did you receive the Holy Spirit?"

"No," they replied, "We have not heard anything about the Holy Spirit."

³So Paul then asked them: "Then what baptism have you received?" "John's baptism," they replied.

⁴Paul explained: "John's baptism was for repentance. But he made it clear to people that they were to believe in the One who was to come after him, Jesus."

⁵On realising this, they were baptised into the Name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶⁻⁷Then Paul laid his hands on them, praying for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. When he did so, all twelve spoke in tongues and prophesied.

⁸Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue for three months, arguing persuasively about God's Kingdom. ⁹But some of the Jews obstinately refused to believe and openly insulted the Way. So, together

with those who had become disciples, Paul left the synagogue and began daily meetings in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰They continued to meet there for two years, enabling both Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia to hear the Lord's Word.

God works miracles through Paul (19:11-16)

¹¹God worked amazing miracles through Paul. ¹²When handkerchiefs or cloths that he had touched were laid on the sick they were healed of their diseases and set free from demonic oppression.

¹³Some Jewish teachers who travelled from place to place tried to use the Name of the Lord Jesus to drive out evil spirits. They said such things as, "In the Name of Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴The seven sons of Sceva, the Jewish chief priest, tried this. ¹⁵One day an evil spirit answered back, "Jesus I know and Paul I know about, but who are you to command me?" ¹⁶Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them and overpowered all seven. They were attacked so violently that they fled naked from the house with their wounds bleeding.

Fear of God grips people of Ephesus (19:17-22)

¹⁷When both the Jews and Greeks who lived in Ephesus heard of this, the fear of God came on them and they highly honoured the Name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁸As a result, many of the believers were moved to confess their sins openly. ¹⁹Those who had been involved with occult practices brought their books of so-called magic and burned them publicly. The scrolls that were destroyed were reckoned to be worth a fortune.

²⁰So God's Word was spread more and more widely and became increasingly influential and powerful in its effect.

²¹Later, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, taking the route through Macedonia and Asia. "After I have been to Jerusalem, I must visit Rome," he said. ²²He sent two of his assistants, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia while he spent a further short period in Asia.

Idol maker stirs riot against Paul (19:23-41)

²³It was around this time that a great controversy arose concerning the Way. ²⁴Demetrius was a silversmith who made silver shrines of the goddess Artemis, a business that involved several craftsmen. ²⁵He called them and workers in other related trades together and said: "Fellow workers, you know we prosper financially from this business. ²⁶But you have both seen for yourselves and have heard

how this man Paul has persuaded large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in nearly the whole province of Asia to depart from the worship of the gods. He says that man-made gods are not gods at all. ²⁷Our trade is in great danger and will lose its good reputation. Even the temple of the great goddess Artemis will become discredited and the goddess herself, who is worshipped not only in Asia but throughout the world, will be robbed of her divine honour."

²⁸These words so angered them that they began shouting: "Artemis of the Ephesians is great!" ²⁹It was not long before the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, who had travelled with Paul from Macedonia, and dragged them to the theatre. ³⁰Paul wanted to address the crowd but the other disciples wouldn't allow him to do so. ³¹Even some of their provincial officials, as well as their friends, sent Paul a message imploring him not to go near the theatre.

³²The crowd there was in complete confusion, shouting contradictory things. Most did not even know why they were there. ³³The Jews pushed Alexander forward to be their spokesman, wanting him to explain their position. He called for silence so that he could defend their cause. ³⁴But when the crowd realised he was a Jew, they shouted for two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵Finally the city clerk managed to quieten the crowd and said: "People of Ephesus, the whole world knows that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell from heaven. ³⁶This fact is undeniable; so you ought to be quiet and not take matters into your own hands. ³⁷These men who have been brought here have neither robbed our temples nor have they blasphemed our goddess.

³⁸"So if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have some charge to bring against anyone, the courts are available and there are proconsuls to judge such matters. That is the right way to press charges. ³⁹If there are any other matters of dispute they must be settled according to our legal system. ⁴⁰As it is, we are in danger of being charged ourselves. Because of what has happened today we could be charged with causing a riot. If that was the case we could give no adequate explanation for all this commotion, for there is no reason for it." ⁴¹He then dismissed the crowd.

Paul continues to travel (20:1-6)

20 When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the disciples and encouraged them before leaving for Macedonia. ²He encouraged the believers wherever he went, arriving finally in

Greece where he stayed for three months. ^{3,4}As he was about to set sail for Syria he became aware of a Jewish plot against him, and so decided to return to Macedonia accompanied by Sopater the son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. ⁵These men went ahead and waited for us at Troas.

⁶After Passover we sailed from Philippi and joined them five days later in Troas, where we stayed for one week.

Young man brought to life (20:7-12)

⁷We met together to break bread on the Sunday and because he intended to leave on the following day, Paul spoke to the people until midnight. ⁸The upstairs room where we met was lit by many lamps. ⁹Seated on the windowsill was a young man called Eutychus, who fell asleep while Paul was speaking at such length. While asleep he fell to his death from the third story. ¹⁰Paul went down to him, bent down to him and embraced him. "There is nothing to be alarmed about," he said, "he is alive!" ¹¹Then he returned upstairs where we broke bread and ate together. ¹²The young man was taken home alive and well, much to everyone's relief.

Paul continues to travel (20:13-16)

¹³We went by ship to Assos, while Paul travelled on foot. ¹⁴There he joined us on board and we sailed to Mitylene. ¹⁵On the following day we sailed past Kios, crossed over to Samos and then on the following day arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶To avoid spending time in the province of Asia, Paul had decided to bypass Ephesus. He wanted to reach Jerusalem quickly, by the feast of Pentecost if possible.

Paul exhorts Ephesian elders (20:17-38)

¹⁷Paul summoned the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet with him at Miletus. ¹⁸When they arrived he said to them: "From the time I arrived in the province of Asia you have seen the example I set by the way I lived among you. ¹⁹I served the Lord humbly and often with tears. I was sorely tried by the way the Jews plotted against me. ²⁰Yet, as you know, I never hesitated to preach whatever would be helpful to you. I taught you at the public meetings and face to face. ²¹I proclaimed to both Jews and Greeks alike that they had to turn to God in true repentance and put their faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"But now I am going to Jerusalem, believing that the Holy Spirit is urging me to do so even though I have no idea what will happen

to me once I am there. ²³ However, I do know that in every city I visit, the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and suffering await me. ²⁴ But the only thing that matters to me is that I complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace. Nothing else matters by comparison!

²⁵ "I know in my heart that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom of God will ever see me again. ²⁶ So I affirm to you now that I have faithfully fulfilled God's purpose. ²⁷ I have never hesitated to make His will clear to you. Yes, I have preached every aspect of God's Word. ²⁸ So I charge you to watch diligently over both yourselves and all those the Holy Spirit has given you to oversee. Be good shepherds of God's church, all those he purchased for Himself with His own blood.

²⁹ "I am well aware that after I have gone, savage wolves will seek to come into the church and they will care nothing for the sheep. ³⁰ Some will even emerge from your own number who will distort the truth because their motive will be to create their own followers. ³¹ Watch out for such people. And remember that I watched over you diligently myself for three years by both day and night, often with tears.

³² "Now it is time for me to entrust you to God, to the Word of His grace that has the power to build you up and enable you to share in the inheritance that He gives to all those He has called and set apart for Himself.

³³ "I have never been jealous of those with money and fine possessions. ³⁴ As you well know, I worked to meet the needs both of myself and my assistants. ³⁵ In every way I showed by my example that we must work hard so that we are able to help those in need, never forgetting the words of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he and the elders knelt and prayed together. ³⁷⁻³⁸ As they parted they embraced Paul and wept, for they were touched deeply by his statement that they would never see him again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

Paul sets sail again (21:1-9)

21 After this emotional farewell, we set sail first to Cos, then on the following day to Rhodes and from there to Patara. ² When we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, we boarded and set sail. ³ We passed to the south of Cyprus and sailed to Syria, landing at Tyre where our ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ We met with the disciples there and stayed for a week with them. Through prophecies

from God's Spirit they told Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ⁵Despite this we returned to the ship when it was time to set sail. All the disciples, together with their families, escorted us out of the city and knelt with us on the beach to pray. ⁶After greeting each other we boarded the ship and they returned home.

⁷From Tyre we continued our journey to Ptolemais, where we landed and were greeted by the believers. ⁸We spent the day with them before leaving for Caesarea, where we stayed with Philip the evangelist, one of the seven set apart by the apostles. ⁹He had four unmarried daughters, all of whom prophesied.

Agabus prophesies Paul's fate (21:10-14)

¹⁰When we had been there a few days, a prophet from Judea named Agabus arrived. ¹¹He came over to us, took hold of Paul's belt and tied his own hands and feet with it, declaring: "The Holy Spirit says, 'This is how the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and deliver him to the Gentile authorities!'"

¹²On hearing this, both we and the local people begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ¹³But Paul was adamant. "Why weep like this?" he asked. "Are you trying to break my heart? I am prepared not only to be bound but to die in Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴Because he would not be swayed by anything we said, we surrendered to the inevitable saying: "May the Lord's will be done."

Paul returns to Jerusalem (21:15-26)

¹⁵Then we prepared ourselves for the journey to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the Caesarean believers accompanied us and took us to the home of Mnason, one of the early disciples from Cyprus, and we stayed there with him.

¹⁷When we arrived in Jerusalem the believers there welcomed us with joy. ¹⁸On the following day we went with Paul to visit James and all the elders of the church. ¹⁹Having greeted them, Paul gave a detailed report of all that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰They gave God the glory for what they heard and then told of the many thousands of Jews who had become believers. "And all of them are truly obedient to the law of God," they said. ²¹"But they have been told that you teach the Jews who live in Gentile lands that they do not have to keep the law of Moses, that they should not circumcise their children nor live by our customs. ²²What shall we do? Your coming faces us with a dilemma.

²³“This is what we suggest: Four men in the church here have taken a vow. ²⁴Go with these men to the temple, join with them in the purification ceremony and pay for them to have their heads shaved. This will prove to everyone that there is no truth in the rumours about you, and that you yourself live in obedience to the law.

²⁵“We have already written about our decision as far as Gentile believers are concerned, that they should not eat food that has been sacrificed to idols nor the meat of strangled animals. They should not drink blood and must refrain from sexual immorality.”

²⁶So on the following day Paul went with the men and took part in the purification ceremony. At the temple he announced publicly that when the time of their vows expired, the appropriate offering would be made for each of them.

²⁷When the seven days of purification were nearly completed, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple and stirred up a large crowd by shouting: ²⁸“Men of Israel, help us! Here is the man who teaches against our law and this temple everywhere he goes. Not only that, but he has defiled this sacred place by bringing Gentiles into the temple.” ²⁹Earlier they had seen the Ephesian, Trophimus, with Paul in the city and had assumed that he had brought him into the temple.

Paul arrested at the temple (21:30-36)

³⁰The discontent spread rapidly and people came running from every direction. They seized hold of Paul and dragged him out of the temple. The gates were then shut. ³¹However, while they were trying to kill him, news of the disturbance that had now spread to the whole city reached the Roman commander. ³²Immediately he led a troop of officers and soldiers to where the crowd had gathered. When those involved in the riots saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

³³When he arrived at the scene the commander arrested Paul and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He then asked about his identity and crime; but some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another. ³⁴Because of the confusion the commander could not find out the truth and ordered Paul to be taken to the barracks. ³⁵But when they reached the steps, the crowd became so violent that Paul had to be lifted clear by the soldiers. ³⁶Still the crowd followed shouting: “Take him and kill him!”

Paul addresses the crowd (21:37-22:21)

³⁷As they neared the barracks, Paul asked the commander: “May I

“speak with you?” The commander was surprised that Paul spoke Greek. ³⁸“I thought you were the Egyptian who started the revolt of four thousand terrorists in the desert some time ago!”

³⁹Paul replied: “No, I am a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a city of note. Please allow me to speak to the people.” ⁴⁰The commander consented and Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd to be quiet. When they were all silent he addressed them in Aramaic:

22 “Brothers and fathers, hear what I have to say in my defence.” ²When they heard him speaking in Aramaic they paid close attention.

³Then Paul continued: “I am a Jew by birth, from Tarsus in Cilicia, although I was brought up here in Jerusalem. I was trained in the precise practice of the law of our fathers under Gamaliel. I was zealous about God, as you are today. ⁴I persecuted the followers of the Way, arresting both men and women, having them thrown into prison. I wanted them dead. ⁵The high priest and the whole council can verify this for I received letters of authorisation from them to the Jewish leaders in Damascus, giving me authority to take these people prisoner and bring them to Jerusalem for punishment.

⁶“It was around noon and I was approaching Damascus when suddenly a great light from heaven shone all around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting Me?’

⁸“‘Who are You Lord?’ I asked.

“‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting!’ He replied.

⁹“Those with me saw the light but could not understand what the voice was saying to me.

¹⁰“I asked: ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything you have been appointed to do.’

¹¹“As the brilliance of the light had blinded me, my companions had to lead me by the hand into Damascus.

¹²“There Ananias, a devout observer of the law, highly respected by all the Jews, came to see me. ¹³He stood by my side and said: ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ Immediately I could see him!

¹⁴“Then he told me: ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will, to see the Righteous One for yourself and to hear His voice. ¹⁵You will testify about Him to everyone, telling them what you have both seen and heard. ¹⁶Now why delay? Be baptised immediately for the cleansing of all your sins, as you call on His Name.’

¹⁷“While praying in the temple on my return to Jerusalem, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord Jesus in a vision. ¹⁸He said to me, ‘Be quick. Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not believe what you say about Me here.’

¹⁹“I replied, ‘Lord, everyone knows I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat anyone who believes in You. ²⁰When Your martyr Stephen’s blood was shed, I was there approving of what was happening and guarding the clothes of those who actually killed him.’

²¹“Then the Lord commanded me, ‘Go! I will send you to the Gentiles in distant places.’”

Paul’s Roman citizenship (22:22-29)

²²Up to this point, the crowd had listened attentively to Paul; but then they started shouting at the top of their voices: “Take him away. Such a man does not deserve to live!” ²³They tore their clothes in disgust and threw dirt into the air. ²⁴So the commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks to be flogged and questioned as to why the people shouted such things at him. ²⁵As they were binding Paul ready to lash him, he said to the centurion: “Is it lawful for you to flog a Roman citizen before he has been found guilty?”

²⁶The centurion went and reported what Paul had said to the commander. “What are you going to do, for this man is a Roman citizen?” he asked.

²⁷The commander went personally to Paul and asked: “Is it true that you are a Roman citizen?”

“Yes, I am,” Paul replied.

²⁸The commander told him: “I had to pay a high price to buy my citizenship.”

“But I was born a citizen of Rome,” Paul said.

²⁹Those who were about to interrogate Paul withdrew quickly. The commander himself was alarmed when he realised that he had placed a Roman citizen in chains.

Paul on trial before Jewish council (22:30-23:11)

³⁰On the following day, the commander ordered the chief priests and the Jewish Council to meet and brought Paul, now released from his chains, before them.

23 Paul looked at the council members boldly and said: “My brothers, I stand before you with a clear conscience that to this day I have lived to fulfil God’s will.” ²Ananias ordered those

near Paul to strike him on the mouth. ³Then Paul retorted: “God will strike you. You are like a whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself break the law by commanding me to be struck.”

⁴Those standing near Paul said: “How dare you insult God’s high priest!”

⁵Paul replied: “Brothers, I did not know that he was the high priest, for it is written, ‘You are not to speak badly about the ruler of your people.’”

⁶Then Paul, realising that some of those present were Sadducees while others were Pharisees, said to the whole Council: “My brothers, I am a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. I am on trial here because I hope in the resurrection of the dead.” ⁷Immediately an argument broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees and the gathering was divided. ⁸(The Sadducees do not believe there is resurrection; neither do they believe in angels or spirits, while the Pharisees believe in all of these).

⁹The assembly was in chaos. Some teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood and argued strongly. “We can see nothing wrong with this man,” they concluded. “Perhaps a spirit or an angel has spoken to him.”

¹⁰There was such sharp division the commander feared for Paul’s safety. So he ordered the guards to go and rescue him and take him to the barracks.

¹¹On the following day Paul saw the Lord standing by him. He said: “Take courage! As you have testified faithfully about Me in Jerusalem, it will be necessary for you to testify also in Rome.”

Jewish leaders conspire to kill Paul (23:12-22)

¹²⁻¹³Early on the following morning the Jewish leaders conspired against Paul. More than forty of them took an oath saying they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed him. ¹⁴They went and told the chief priests and elders: “We have taken a solemn oath not to eat until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵We want you and the whole Council to ask the commander to bring him before you so you can examine his case further. We will be ready to kill him before he arrives.”

¹⁶However Paul’s nephew heard of this intended ambush and went to the barracks to inform Paul. ¹⁷He in turn called one of the centurions and said: “Take this young man to the commander; he has a message for him.” ¹⁸The centurion did so, saying: “The prisoner

Paul sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you as he has a message for you.”

¹⁹Taking him by the hand, the commander took the young man aside and asked: “What have you to tell me?”

²⁰He replied: “The Jewish leaders have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Council tomorrow on the basis that they want more accurate information about him. ²¹Don’t do as they ask, because over forty of them have planned to ambush him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink anything until they have killed him. They are already prepared and await your consent.”

²²The commander dismissed the young man telling him: “Don’t tell anyone that you have warned me of these plans.”

Paul escorted to governor Felix (23:23-35)

²³Then he ordered two centurions: “Prepare an escort of two hundred soldiers, seventy cavalry and two hundred spear men to leave for Caesarea at nine this evening. ²⁴Provide mounts for Paul and take him to the governor Felix. ²⁵He wrote the following letter:

²⁶Claudius Lysias
To the Most Excellent, Governor Felix:
Greetings,

²⁷This man was arrested by the Jews who were about to kill him, when I came with a detachment of my soldiers and rescued him. I have learned that he is a Roman citizen.

²⁸I wanted to discover the basis of the accusations against him and so brought him before the Jewish Council.

²⁹However it seems that the charges involved questions about their own religious law but certainly did not warrant the death penalty or even imprisonment.

³⁰I was then informed that some Jews were plotting to kill him and so immediately sent him to you. I have also commanded those who accuse him to present their case against him to you personally.

³¹The soldiers obeyed their orders and that night took Paul as far as Antipatris. ³²On the following day the cavalry continued their journey with Paul, while the rest of the detachment returned to barracks. ³³On arriving at Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and put Paul into his custody.

³⁴⁻³⁵The governor read the letter and asked Paul what province he came from. On hearing that he came from Cilicia he said: “I will

hear your case when your accusers arrive.” Then he gave orders for Paul to be put under guard in Herod’s palace.

Paul on trial before Felix (24:1-27)

24 Four days later, Ananias the high priest arrived in Caesarea, together with some of the elders and a lawyer called Tertullus, to bring their accusations against Paul. ²When Paul was summoned, Tertullus presented their case to Felix the governor: “Under your authority we have enjoyed a long period of peace and through your wisdom you have been responsible for bringing about reforms for our benefit.

³“Most excellent Felix, we are aware of all this and are deeply thankful to you. ⁴We do not want to weary you but ask you to be gracious enough to hear our charges against this man. ⁵⁻⁶We have found him to be a trouble maker who causes unrest among the Jews wherever he goes. He is the leader of a sect called the Nazarenes and we arrested him because he attempted to desecrate the temple in Jerusalem. So we seized him, wanting to judge him according to their own law. ⁷But Lysias, the commander, came and took him from us with considerable force. He ordered our accusations to be made before you. ⁸If you question him yourself you will be able to verify that these charges we bring against him are true.”

⁹The other Jews in the delegation supported his allegations.

¹⁰When the governor invited Paul to respond, he said: “I am aware that you have ruled this nation for several years and are able to judge such matters; so I gladly make my defence before you. ¹¹It can be proved that I went up to Jerusalem to worship no more than twelve days ago. ¹²My accusers here did not see me causing any arguments in the temple, nor inciting crowds in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. ¹³So they are unable to prove any of these charges they are bringing against me.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵“However, I openly admit that I worship the God of our fathers and am a follower of the Way which they refer to as a sect. I consent to everything written in the Law and the Prophets and like these men my hope in God leads me to believe that there will be a resurrection from the dead of both the righteous and the ungodly. ¹⁶Believing this, I always endeavour to keep a clear conscience before both God and man.

¹⁷“I came to Jerusalem after being away for several years, bearing gifts for the poor among my people and to worship the Lord. ¹⁸When my accusers saw me in the temple courts I was completing

a time of ritual purification and was therefore ceremonially clean. No crowd surrounded me, neither was I involved in starting a riot. ¹⁹But some Jews from the province of Asia were there, and they should be here now to bring before you any charges they have against me. ²⁰Or else those who are here should state clearly what crime they found me guilty of when I appeared before the Jewish Council. ²¹As I stood before them I only shouted: 'I am on trial before you today because of my faith in the resurrection of the dead.'"

²²Then Felix, who knew about the Way, adjourned the hearing, saying: "I will judge your case when the commander, Lysias, arrives." ²³He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard while allowing him some freedom. Also his friends were permitted to visit him and take care of his needs.

²⁴Some days later Felix, with his Jewish wife Drusilla, sent again for Paul and listened as he spoke of faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵When Paul spoke on righteousness, self-control and future judgment, Felix became afraid and said: "Enough for now; you can go. I will send for you again when it is convenient." ²⁶He hoped Paul would offer him a bribe and therefore sent for him frequently that they might talk further.

²⁷After two years Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but he kept Paul in prison as a favour to the Jews.

Paul appeals to Caesar (25:1-27)

25 ^{1,2}Three days after Festus had arrived in Caesarea he went up to Jerusalem where the chief priests and Jewish leaders came before him to present their charges against Paul. ³As a favour to them they asked Festus to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, intending to ambush and kill him on the way there.

⁴Festus answered that Paul was being held in Caesarea, where he himself was going soon. ⁵"Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges as to anything wrong the man may have done," he said.

⁶After spending eight to ten days in Jerusalem, Festus left for Caesarea where he arranged for the trial to take place on the day following his arrival. ⁷When Paul was brought before him, the Jews from Jerusalem brought many serious accusations against him, none of which they could prove.

⁸Paul then denied the charges: "I have not broken any laws, neither those of the Jewish people, nor of the temple, nor of the Roman authorities."

⁹ Wanting to ingratiate himself with the Jewish leaders, Festus asked Paul: "Are you prepared to go and stand trial in Jerusalem on these charges?"

¹⁰ Paul replied: "I am already standing before a Roman court. I have not wronged the Jews in any way, as you well know. ¹¹ However, if I was guilty of a crime deserving death, I would not be afraid to die. But as these are serious charges that the Jewish leaders are bringing against me, nobody has the authority to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

¹² Festus then conferred with his advisors before declaring: "You have appealed to Caesar, so to Caesar you shall go!"

¹³ A few days later King Agrippa and his sister Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ As they were spending several days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with Agrippa. "Felix left a prisoner here, against whom the chief priests and elders brought serious charges when I met with them in Jerusalem. They want him to be condemned to death.

¹⁶ "I made it clear that Rome does not condemn anyone until he has had the opportunity to defend himself against his accusers. ¹⁷ Their leaders came here with me and I heard the case on the day following my return. ¹⁸ When Paul came before the court his accusers did not bring any of the charges against him that I was expecting. ¹⁹ Instead, they argued with him over some details of their own religion, and in particular about a dead man called Jesus, whom Paul claimed was still alive.

²⁰ "I had no idea how to proceed in such a case; so I asked him if he would be prepared to go Jerusalem where these charges could be properly assessed. ²¹ It was then that this Paul appealed to the emperor, and so I ordered him to remain in detention until I could send him to Caesar."

²² "I would like to speak with this man myself," Agrippa told Festus. "You will hear him tomorrow," Festus replied.

²³⁻²⁴ With great pomp, Agrippa and Bernice entered the audience room on the following day, together with the high officials and leading men of the city. Festus ordered Paul to be brought before them and said: "King Agrippa and all of you present, this man you see before you is the subject of a petition I have received from the entire Jewish community from Jerusalem and Caesarea. They demand he be put to death. ²⁵ But as far as I can see he has done nothing that deserves such a punishment. However, because he has appealed to the emperor, I have decided to send him to Rome. ²⁶ But I am at a loss as to what to write to the emperor about him. So I have brought him

before this assembly, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this examination I shall know what to write. ²⁷For I can hardly send a prisoner to the emperor without detailing the specific charges against him!"

Paul tells Agrippa of his conversion (26:1-32)

26 Then Agrippa told Paul: "You have freedom to speak in your defence." So Paul raised his hand and began to speak: ²⁻³"King Agrippa, I am truly fortunate to stand before you today to make my defence concerning all the accusations brought against me by the Jews, especially as you are so knowledgeable about Jewish customs and controversies. So I ask you to listen to me patiently.

⁴"The Jews are well aware of how I have lived since childhood, both in my own country and in Jerusalem. ⁵Not only have they known me for a long time, but they can also acknowledge, if they are prepared to, that I lived as a Pharisee, the strictest party in our religion. ⁶And now I stand on trial here today because I expect God to fulfil what He promised to our forefathers. ⁷This is the same promise that all the twelve tribes of Israel expect to see fulfilled as they faithfully serve God by day and night. Majesty, it is because of this hope we all have, that these Jewish leaders are accusing me! ⁸Why should it seem incredible to any of you that God is able to raise the dead?

⁹"There was a time when I was convinced that I should do everything possible to oppose the Name of Jesus of Nazareth and all He stood for. ¹⁰And I did just that in Jerusalem, receiving authority from the chief priests to imprison many believers, and I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. ¹¹On many occasions I went from one synagogue to another to have them flogged in an attempt to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with opposing these saints that I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

¹²⁻¹³"Majesty, on such a journey I was travelling on the road to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, when at about noon I saw a bright heavenly light, brighter even than the sun. It shone around me and my companions. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground and I heard a voice speaking to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to keep kicking against a rock!'

¹⁵"'Who are You, Lord?' I asked.

“‘I am Jesus, the One you persecute continually,’ the Lord replied. ¹⁶‘Now stand to your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as My servant. You are to tell others what you have seen of Me and what I shall reveal to you in the future. ¹⁷⁻¹⁸I will protect you from both your own people and the Gentiles. I am sending you to open their eyes and to turn them from their spiritual darkness to the light of the truth, from the devil’s power to God, so they can receive forgiveness of their sins and be numbered among those who are made holy through their faith in Me!’

¹⁹“So you see, King Agrippa, I have not been disobedient to the heavenly vision I received. ²⁰First in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and then among the Gentiles also, I have preached to people, telling them that they must repent. They must turn to God and prove that they have submitted themselves to Him by the evidence of the things they do.

²¹“This is the reason why the Jews seized me in the temple courts with the intention of killing me. ²²⁻²³But God has continued to help me right up to this present time, enabling me to stand here and testify to great and small alike. I teach nothing beyond what was predicted by Moses and the prophets, that the Messiah would suffer and would be the first to rise from the dead; that through Him the light might be made known to both His own people, the Jews, and to Gentiles alike.”

²⁴Festus then interrupted: “You must be mad, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning has driven you crazy!”

²⁵“Most excellent Festus, I am not crazy,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is both true and reasonable. ²⁶These things are well known by King Agrippa and so I can speak freely before him. I am sure that none of these things has escaped his attention, for nothing has happened in secret. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I am sure that you do!”

²⁸Then Agrippa answered Paul: “Do you imagine you can persuade me to become a Christian so easily, in such a short time?”

²⁹Paul replied: “Whether it takes a short or a long time, I pray to God that not only you but all those within the sound of my voice today will become what I am, apart from these chains I wear!”

³⁰At this the King, the governor, Bernice and those with them stood to close the meeting. ³¹They left the room and conferred together concluding, “This man is not guilty of anything that deserves death or even imprisonment.” ³²Agrippa told Festus: “If it had not been for the fact that he has appealed to Caesar, he could have been set free.”

Journey to Rome begins (27:1-8)

27 When it was time for us to set sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were put under the charge of a centurion named Julius of the Imperial Regiment. ²We boarded a ship from Adramyttium that was due to sail to ports along the coast of the province of Asia. When we sailed, Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was also with us.

³We landed at Sidon on the following day and Julius kindly allowed Paul to visit his friends there who could provide for his needs. ⁴From Sidon we sailed to the north of Cyprus because of the strong headwinds. ⁵After sailing across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. ⁶There the centurion put us aboard an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy. ⁷But for many days we made only slow progress and neared Cnidus with great difficulty. The wind was so strong we could not maintain our course and so sailed on the protected side of Crete around the Cape of Salmone. ⁸We could only follow the coastline with difficulty before finally arriving at a place known as Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

Paul warns of the ship's disaster (27:9-12)

⁹⁻¹⁰We had lost much time and sailing had already become dangerous because it was late in the year. So Paul warned all on board: "Men, I can tell that our voyage will end in disaster, with the loss of both the ship and its cargo. Even our lives will be in danger."

¹¹Instead of heeding Paul's words, the centurion followed the advice of the pilot and ship's owner. ¹²Because this harbour did not provide sufficient protection for the winter, the majority voted to continue the voyage, hoping to spend the winter at Phoenix, a harbour in Crete that faced both southwest and northwest.

A storm arises (27:13-20)

¹³When a gentle southerly wind arose, it seemed they had the ideal conditions they wanted. So they weighed anchor and sailed along the coast of Crete. ¹⁴But before long a tempestuous wind known as the 'north-easter' arose. ¹⁵It took hold of the ship and drove it out to sea away from the land. It was impossible to battle against such a wind, so we had to allow ourselves to be driven along by it. ¹⁶As we passed a small island called Cauda, it was almost impossible to keep the lifeboat secure. ¹⁷The crew had to hoist it aboard and even had to pass ropes under the ship itself to strengthen the hull.

The crew feared we would run aground on the sand bars of Syrtis off the African coast, so they lowered the anchor and allowed the ship to be driven by the wind. ¹⁸The gale-force winds continued to batter the ship to such an extent that on the following day the crew began to jettison the cargo. ¹⁹On the third day of the storm they even threw overboard the ships tackle and other equipment. ²⁰We saw neither the sun nor the moon for several days as the storm continued to rage. It seemed that there was no hope of being spared ourselves.

Paul encourages those on board the ship (27:21-44)

²¹Everyone had gone for days without food before Paul addressed them: “Men, you should have heeded my advice and not set sail from Crete; then you would not have suffered this damage and loss, and your own lives would not have been in danger. ²²But now I urge you not to lose heart. Maintain your courage, for I assure you that no-one’s life will be lost; only the ship shall be destroyed. ²³⁻²⁴Last night the God to whom I belong and whom I serve sent an angel to me. He stood by my side and said, ‘Paul do not fear. You have to stand trial before Caesar, and God has graciously granted you the safety of all who sail with you.’ ²⁵So, men, maintain your courage. I believe that everything will happen exactly as God has told me. ²⁶But we must run this ship aground on an island.”

²⁷We were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea on the fourteenth day of the storm when the crew sensed at about midnight that we were nearing land. ²⁸When they took soundings they found the water was about a hundred and twenty feet deep. When they took another sounding shortly afterwards, they found it was ninety feet deep. ²⁹To prevent being dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. ³⁰The sailors let down the lifeboat into the sea, in an attempt to escape from the ship. They made it appear that they were letting down further anchors from the bow. ³¹But Paul told the centurion and the soldiers: “Unless these men stay aboard the ship, they cannot be saved.” ³²So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and allowed it to fall away.

³³Just before daybreak Paul urged everyone to eat, saying: “For the past fourteen days you have been in constant danger and have eaten nothing. ³⁴Now I urge you to eat, for you will need strength to survive. Not a hair of your heads will be lost.” ³⁵Having said this Paul took some bread and thanked God for it before them all; then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶⁻³⁷This encouraged everyone else and

they all did likewise, all 276 who were on board. ³⁸When everyone had eaten, the crew lightened the ship by throwing the grain overboard.

³⁹At first light they were unable to recognise the coastline, but they saw a sandy bay that appeared suitable for beaching the boat if they could. ⁴⁰⁻⁴¹So they cut the anchors adrift, leaving them in the sea, and untied the ropes that had secured the rudder, then they hoisted the foresail and headed for the beach, but the ship ran aground on a sand bar. The bow stuck fast and would not move, while the stern was smashed to pieces by the pounding of the waves.

⁴²The soldiers intended to kill the prisoners to ensure that they did not escape by swimming ashore. ⁴³But because the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life, he did not allow them to do so. Instead he ordered that those able to swim were to jump overboard first and make for the beach. ⁴⁴The rest were to cling to planks of wood from the ship, and in this way everyone reached land safely.

Shipwrecked on Malta (28:1-6)

28 Once safely ashore we discovered that the island was called Malta. ²The local people treated us with great kindness. They welcomed us warmly and, because it was both wet and cold, they built a fire. ³Paul gathered an armful of wood but as he put it on the fire a poisonous viper, driven out by the heat, fastened onto his hand. ⁴When the local people saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other: "This man must be guilty of murder. He may have escaped from the sea but justice has been served on him and he cannot live." ⁵However, Paul merely shook the snake off into the fire, totally unharmed. ⁶Those watching expected him to swell up with the poison or suddenly fall dead; yet after waiting some time it became obvious that he had come to no harm. So then they had a change of mind and decided he must be a god.

Paul heals an island official (28:7-10)

⁷The chief official of the island, Publius, owned a nearby estate and he welcomed us to his home, where he extended hospitality to us for three days. ⁸His father was sick with fever and dysentery. So Paul went to pray for him; he laid his hands on him and healed him. ⁹Other sick people on the island then came, and they also were healed. ¹⁰They truly honoured us and gave us all the supplies we needed when we were ready to sail.

Paul encouraged by believers en route (28:11-16)

¹¹For three months we wintered on the island before sailing in an Alexandrian ship with the twin gods Castor and Pollux as its figure-head. ¹²We called at Syracuse where we stayed for three days before setting sail for Rhegium. ¹³Then, after arriving there, a southerly wind arose enabling us to reach Puteoli on the following day. ¹⁴There we found some believers with whom we stayed for a week before travelling on to Rome. ¹⁵The believers there were expecting us and came as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them he was encouraged and thanked God.

¹⁶When we arrived at Rome itself, Paul was placed under house arrest, with only a single soldier to guard him.

Paul shares the truth with Jewish leaders in Rome (28:17-31)

¹⁷Three days later, Paul called the Jewish leaders together and said to them: "My brothers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans, even though I was not guilty of any offence against our people or the customs of our forefathers. ¹⁸After examining me they wanted to release me as I did not deserve the death penalty. ¹⁹When the Jewish leaders objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, although I had no intention of pressing charges against my own people. ²⁰This is why I wanted to see you and talk with you. I am bound with this chain because of my faith in the hope of Israel, the Messiah."

²¹They replied: "We have not received any letters about you from Judea and none of the brothers who come from there has reported anything bad about you. ²²But we want to hear for ourselves what you believe, for we are aware that everywhere people are denouncing these Christians."

²³They arranged a meeting with Paul when an even greater number of Jews came to the place where he was staying. He explained the Kingdom of God to them from morning until evening, trying to persuade them from the law of Moses and from the prophets that Jesus is the Messiah. ²⁴He convinced some, but others refused to believe. ²⁵⁻²⁶So they disagreed among themselves and left after Paul's final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to our forefathers when He spoke through the prophet Isaiah, 'Go to these people and tell them, 'You will forever hear but never understand. You will always be looking but never perceiving.' ²⁷For the hearts of these people have become hardened; they cannot hear with their

ears, and they have closed their eyes to the truth. If this was not the case they would be able to see with their eyes, hear with their ears and understand with their hearts; then they would turn to me in repentance and I would heal them.'

²⁸ "Therefore I want you to understand that salvation has been sent to those who will listen – the Gentiles!" ²⁹At this the Jews departed, arguing and disputing among themselves.

³⁰Paul lived in his own rented house for two years, welcoming all who came to him. ³¹He preached about the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ boldly and without any hindrance!

