

Free Bible Version

Acts

1 ¹Dear Theophilus^a, in my previous book I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day he was taken up to heaven. This was after he'd given instructions through the Holy Spirit to his chosen apostles. ³Over the course of forty days after the death he suffered, he showed himself to them, proving that he was alive with convincing evidence. He appeared to them, and told them about the kingdom of God.

⁴While he was still with them^b he instructed them, "Do not leave Jerusalem. Wait to receive what the Father promised, just as you heard it from me. ⁵It's true that John baptized with water, but in just a few days' time you will be baptized by the Holy Spirit."

⁶So when the disciples met with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will re-establish Israel's kingdom?"

⁷"You don't need to know about the dates and times that are set by the Father's authority," he told them. ⁸"But you will be given power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest places on earth."

⁹After Jesus had told them this, he was taken up as they were watching and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰While they were staring intently at the sky as he ascended, two men dressed in white were suddenly standing beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee, why are you standing here staring at the sky?" they asked. "This same Jesus who has been taken up from you to heaven shall come in the same way you saw him go into heaven."

¹²Then the disciples went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives which is about a Sabbath day's walk from Jerusalem^c.

¹³When they arrived, they went upstairs to the upper room where they were staying: Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and

^a 1:1. Meaning "One who loves God," either a specific person, or more generically. The "previous book" mentioned is the Gospel of Luke.

^b 1:4. Or, "while he was sharing a meal with them."

^c 1:12. In other words, a relatively short distance.

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Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴They all joined together in prayer, together with the women and Mary, Jesus' mother, and his brothers.

¹⁵At this time Peter stood up and addressed a crowd of around one hundred and twenty believers who had gathered together.

¹⁶“My brothers and sisters,” he said, “The Scriptures, spoken by the Holy Spirit through David, had to be fulfilled regarding Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷He was counted as one of us, and shared in this ministry.”

¹⁸(Judas had bought a field with his ill-gotten gains. There he fell down headfirst, and his body burst apart, spilling out all his intestines. ¹⁹Everybody who lived in Jerusalem heard about this so that the field was called in their language “Akeldama,” which means, “Field of blood.”). ²⁰As it's written in the book of Psalms, “Let his home be abandoned, and no-one live there;” and “Let someone else take over his position.”^a

²¹“So now we have to choose someone who has been with us the whole time that Jesus was with us, ²²from the time John was baptizing up until the day Jesus was taken up to heaven from us. One of these must be chosen to join together with us as we witness, giving evidence of Jesus' resurrection.” ²³Two names were put forward: Joseph Justus, also known as Barsabbas, and Matthias. ²⁴They prayed together and said, “Lord, you know everyone's thoughts^b; please show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵to replace Judas as an apostle in this ministry that he gave up to go to where he belongs.” ²⁶They cast lots, and Matthias was chosen. He was counted as an apostle with the other eleven.

2 ¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all meeting together in one place. ²Suddenly a noise came from heaven like a roaring wind that filled the whole house where they were staying. ³They saw what looked like separate tongue-shaped flames that settled on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with

^a 1:20. Citing Psalm 69:25 and 109:8.

^b 1:24 “You know everyone's thoughts”—literally, “heart-knower.”

the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to do so.

⁵At that time there were devout Jews from every nation on earth living in Jerusalem. ⁶When they heard this noise, a large crowd of them gathered. They were puzzled because everyone heard their own language being spoken. ⁷They were totally amazed, saying, “Look, these people who are speaking—aren’t they all Galileans? ⁸So how is it that we can all hear them speaking in our own mother tongue?” ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia; from Egypt and the area of Libya around Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts, ¹¹Cretans and Arabians—we hear them speaking in our own languages about all the great things God has done.”

¹²They were all amazed and confused. “What does this mean?” they asked each other. ¹³But others jeered and said, “They’ve been drinking too much wine!”

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the eleven disciples and spoke in a loud voice: “Fellow Jews and everyone living here in Jerusalem: pay attention to me and I’ll explain all this to you!

¹⁵These men aren’t drunk as you presume. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶What’s happening is what was predicted by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷‘God says, “In the last days I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸I will pour out my Spirit on my servants, both male and female, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will also give you miraculous signs in the heavens above and on the earth below—blood, fire, and swirling smoke! ²⁰The sun will become dark, and the moon will become red like blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹But whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”^a

²²“People of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man confirmed by God to you by the powerful miracles and signs that God performed through him, right here among you—as you well know. ²³God, knowing beforehand what would happen, followed his plan and resolved to hand him over to you.

^a 2:16. Quoting Joel 2:28-32.

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By means of the hands of wicked men, you killed him by nailing him to a cross. ²⁴But God raised him back to life, freeing him from the burden of death, because death did not have the power to keep him a prisoner.

²⁵“David says of him, ‘I saw the Lord always in front of me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. ²⁶That’s why my heart is glad! That’s why my words are full of joy! That’s why my body lives in hope! ²⁷For you will not abandon me in the grave^a, nor will you allow your Holy One to experience decay. ²⁸You have revealed to me the ways of life. You will fill me with joy with your presence.’^b

²⁹“My brothers and sisters, let me tell you plainly that our ancestor David died and was buried, and his tomb is here with us to this day. ³⁰But he was a prophet, and knew that God had promised on oath to place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹David saw what would happen and spoke about the resurrection of Christ—for Christ was not abandoned to the grave nor did he experience decay.

³²“God has raised this Jesus from the dead, and we’re all witnesses of that. ³³Now he’s been exalted to God’s right hand, and has received from the Father the Holy Spirit whom he promised, and has poured out what you’re seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David didn’t ascend into heaven, but he did say, ‘The Lord told my Lord, “Sit down here at my right hand ³⁵until I have made your enemies a stool to put your feet on.”’^c ³⁶Now let everyone in Israel be totally convinced of this: God has made this Jesus, who you killed on a cross, both Lord and Messiah!”^d

³⁷When the people heard this they were conscience-stricken^e. They asked Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸“Repent!” Peter told them. “All of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹This promise is

^a 2:27. Literally, “Hades,” the place of the dead. Also verse 31.

^b 2:28. Quoting Psalm 16:8-11.

^c 2:35. Quoting Psalm 110:1. A sign of victory.

^d 2:36. Messiah (Hebrew) is equivalent to Christ (Greek).

^e 2:37. Literally, “cut to the heart.”

given to you, to your children, and to all who are far away—everyone the Lord our God calls.”

⁴⁰Peter went on speaking, giving them much more evidence. He warned them, “Save yourselves from this perverted generation.” ⁴¹Those who accepted what he’d said were baptized, adding about three thousand people to the group of believers that day.

⁴²They committed themselves to what the apostles had taught them, and to the fellowship of the believers, “breaking bread”^a and praying together. ⁴³Everyone was in awe, and many miracles and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵They sold their property and belongings, sharing the proceeds with everyone as they needed. ⁴⁶Day after day they continued to meet together in the Temple, and ate together in their homes. They enjoyed their meals humbly and happily. They praised God, and everyone thought favorably of them. ⁴⁷Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

3 ¹Peter and John were on their way up to the Temple at the time of the afternoon prayer, around 3 p.m. ²A man who had been lame from birth was being carried there. Every day he was placed beside the Temple gate called “Beautiful” so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. ³He saw Peter and John as they were about to enter the Temple and asked them for some money. ⁴Peter looked right at him. John did, too.

“Look at us!” Peter said. ⁵The lame man gave them his full attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶“I don’t have any silver or gold,” Peter told him, “but I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!”

⁷Peter took him by the right hand and helped him up. Right away his feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet, and then began to walk. He went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and praising God. ⁹Everyone there saw him walking around and praising God. ¹⁰They recognized him as the beggar who used to sit by the Temple’s Beautiful Gate, and they

^a 2:42. This is probably a reference to the Lord’s Supper, and not just ordinary meals, though they would also be included.

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were surprised and amazed at what had happened to him. ¹¹He held on tightly to Peter and John while everyone ran to them by Solomon's Porch^a in complete astonishment at what had happened.

¹²When Peter saw this opportunity he told them, "People of Israel, why are you surprised at what's happened to this man? Why are you staring at us as if it was by our own power or faith that we made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of our forefathers—has glorified his servant Jesus. He was the one you betrayed and rejected in the presence of Pilate, even after Pilate had decided to release him. ¹⁴You rejected the One who is Holy and Right, and demanded a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵You killed the Author of life, the one God raised from the dead—and we are witnesses to this. ¹⁶By trusting in Jesus' name this man was healed by him. You see this man here; you know him. Through trusting in Jesus this man has received complete healing right in front of all of you.

¹⁷"Now I know, brothers and sisters, that you did this in ignorance, like your rulers. ¹⁸But God fulfilled what he had prophesied through all the prophets: that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Now repent, and change your ways, that your sins can be wiped away, so the Lord can send opportunities for you to heal and recover, ²⁰and send Jesus, the Messiah appointed for you. ²¹For he must stay in heaven until the time when everything is restored, as God announced through his holy prophets long ago.

²²"Moses said, 'The Lord God will send you a prophet from among your own people who is like me. You must listen to everything he tells you. ²³Anybody who doesn't listen to him will be totally removed from the people.' ²⁴All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel on, prophesied about these days. ²⁵You are the sons of the prophets, and of the agreement^b which God made with your fathers when he said to Abraham, "From your descendants all the families of the earth will be blessed. ²⁶God prepared his Servant and sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your evil ways."

^a 3:11. A section of the Temple, see also 5:12.

^b 3:25. Or "covenant."

4 ¹While they were talking to the people, the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and the Sadducees came up to them. ²They were angry that they were teaching the people, telling them that through Jesus there is resurrection from the dead. ³They arrested them and placed them under guard until the following day since it was already evening. ⁴But many who had heard the message believed it, and the total number of believers grew to about five thousand.

⁵The next day, the rulers, elders, and religious leaders met together in Jerusalem. ⁶They included the high priest Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and others of the high priest's family. ⁷They brought Peter and John before them and asked, "By what power or by whose authority have you done this?"

⁸Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, answered them. "Rulers of the people, and elders: ⁹Are we being interrogated regarding a good deed done to a man who couldn't help himself, and how he came to be healed? ¹⁰If so, all of you should know, and all the people of Israel, that it was in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the one you killed on a cross and whom God raised from the dead—it's because of him that this man stands before you completely healed. ¹¹He is the stone you builders rejected, but he has been made the chief cornerstone."^a ¹²There is no salvation in anyone else; there is no other name under heaven given to humanity that can possibly save us."

¹³When they saw Peter and John's confidence, and realized they were uneducated, ordinary men, they were very surprised. They also recognized them as Jesus' companions. ¹⁴Since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there with them, they had nothing to say in response to what had happened.

¹⁵So they instructed them to wait outside the council while they discussed the matter among themselves. ¹⁶"What should we do with these men?" they asked. "We can't deny a significant miracle has happened through them. Everybody living here in Jerusalem knows about it. ¹⁷But to prevent it spreading among

^a 4:11. Quoting Ps. 118:22.

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the people any further, we should threaten them never to speak to anybody in this name^a again.”

¹⁸So they called them back in and ordered them never to speak or teach in the name of Jesus again. ¹⁹But Peter and John responded, “Whether it’s right in God’s eyes to obey you rather than God—you decide. ²⁰We can’t help talking about what we’ve seen and heard!”

²¹After making more threats they let them go. They couldn’t work out how to punish them because everyone was glorifying God for what had happened. ²²For the man who received this miracle of healing was more than forty years old. ²³After the disciples had been released, they went to the other believers and told them everything the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard what had happened, they prayed to God together:

“Lord, you made heaven and earth and sea, and everything that is in them. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through David, our forefather and your servant, saying ‘Why did the people of the other nations become so angry? Why did they plot so foolishly against me? ²⁶The kings of the earth prepared for war^b; the rulers united together against the Lord and against his Chosen One.’^c

²⁷“Now this has really happened right here in this city! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the foreigners and the people of Israel, united together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed as Messiah. ²⁸They did whatever you had already decided because you had the power and the will to do it.

²⁹“Now Lord: look at all their threats against us! Help us your servants to speak your word really boldly. ³⁰As you exercise your power to heal, may signs and miracles be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus!”

³¹When they had finished praying, the building they were meeting in was shaken. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God boldly. ³²All the believers

^a 4:17. Clearly the name of Jesus, but they did not even want to mention the actual name...

^b 4:26. “For war,” implied.

^c 4:26. Literally, “Anointed.” The quote is from Ps. 2:1, 2.

were of one heart and mind. None of them claimed anything they had as their own, but shared everything with each other. ³³The apostles gave their testimony regarding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with tremendous power, and God greatly blessed them all. ³⁴None of them needed anything because those who had lands or properties sold them. ³⁵They took the proceeds and presented them to the apostles to be shared with those in need. ³⁶Joseph, the one the apostles called Barnabas (meaning “son of encouragement”), was a Levite, a Cypriot national. ³⁷He sold a field that belonged to him. Then he brought the money and presented it to the apostles.

5 ¹Now a man called Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold some property. ²He kept back some of the money he received for himself, and brought the rest to present to the apostles. His wife knew what he was doing.

³Then Peter asked him, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back some of the money from the land you sold? ⁴While you had the land, didn’t it belong to you? And after you sold it, didn’t you still have control over what you did with the money? Why did you decide to do this? You haven’t lied to human beings, but to God!”

⁵Hearing these words, Ananias fell down and died. Everyone who heard what happened was terrified. ⁶Some of the young men got up and wrapped him in a shroud. Then they carried him out and buried him.

⁷About three hours later his wife arrived, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter asked her, “Tell me, did you sell the land for this price?”

“Yes, that was the price,” she replied.

⁹Then Peter told her, “How could you agree together to swindle^a the Spirit of the Lord? Look, those who buried your husband are just returning, and they’ll carry you out too!”

¹⁰Immediately she fell down dead at his feet. The young men came back in and found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹Great fear spread through

^a 5:9. Literally, “tempt.”

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the whole church, as well as among everyone who heard what had happened.

¹²Many miraculous signs were performed among the people by the apostles. All the believers used to meet together in Solomon's porch^a. ¹³Nobody else dared to join them even though they were greatly respected. ¹⁴However many men and women came to believe in the Lord. ¹⁵As a result, people brought those who were sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that as Peter passed by his shadow might fall on them^b. ¹⁶Crowds from the towns around Jerusalem brought their sick and those afflicted by evil spirits. They were all healed.

¹⁷However, the high priest and those with him (who were Sadducees) became very jealous and decided to intervene.

¹⁸They arrested the apostles and threw them in the public jail.

¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and led them out. ²⁰"Go to the Temple and tell the people everything about this new way of life!" he told them. ²¹They did as they were told and went into the Temple at around dawn and began teaching.

Then the high priest and his followers called a council meeting with all the leaders of Israel. He sent for the apostles to be brought from prison. ²²But when the officials went to the prison they couldn't find the apostles so they went back and told the council, ²³"We found the prison all locked up, with guards at the doors. But when we had them open up, we couldn't find anyone inside."

²⁴Now when the captain of the Temple guards and the chief priests heard this they were totally baffled, and wondered what was going on. ²⁵Then someone came in and said, "Look, the men you put in prison are right there in the Temple teaching people!"

²⁶So the captain went with his guards and brought them in, but did not use force because they were afraid that the people would stone them. ²⁷The apostles were brought in and made to stand in front of the council.

²⁸"Didn't we order you not to teach in this name?" the high priest demanded to know. "Now look—you've filled the whole

^a 5:12. See footnote for 3:11.

^b 5:15. With the thought that even the touch of Peter's shadow could heal.

of Jerusalem with your teaching, and you're trying to blame us for his death!"

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, "We have to obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our forefathers raised Jesus from the dead—the one you killed by hanging him on a cross.

³¹God exalted him to a position of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior, as a way to bring repentance to Israel, and for the forgiveness of sins. ³²We are witnesses of what happened, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

³³When the council heard this they were furious and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But then one of the council members stood up to speak. He was Gamaliel, a Pharisee and a doctor of law who was respected by everyone. He ordered the apostles sent out for a short while.

³⁵Gamaliel addressed the council: "Leaders of Israel, be careful what you plan to do to these men. ³⁶Some time ago Theudas tried to make a name for himself, and about four hundred men joined him. He was killed and all who followed him were scattered and it came to nothing. ³⁷Then after him Judas of Galilee came along at the time of the census, and he attracted some followers. He also died, and those who listened to him were dispersed. ³⁸So in the current case I recommend that you leave these men alone, and just let them go. If what they are planning or what they are doing comes from their own human thinking, then it will be defeated. ³⁹But if it comes from God, you won't be able to defeat them. You could even find yourselves fighting against God!"

⁴⁰They were convinced by what he said. So they called the apostles back in, had them whipped, and ordered them not to say anything in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go. ⁴¹The apostles left the council, happy to be considered worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. ⁴²Every day they continued to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, in the Temple and from house to house.

6 ¹At this time, when the number of believers was increasing rapidly, the Greek-speaking believers started arguing with the

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Aramaic-speaking believers^a. They complained that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

²The twelve apostles called all the believers together, and told them, “It’s not appropriate for us to give up spreading the word of God so we can wait at tables. ³Brothers, choose from among you seven trustworthy men full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will hand this responsibility over to them. ⁴We ourselves will give our full attention to prayer and the ministry of spreading the word.”

⁵Everybody was happy with the arrangement, and they chose Stephen, (a man full of trust in God and of the Holy Spirit), Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, (originally a Jewish convert from Antioch). ⁶These men were presented to the apostles who prayed for them and placed their hands on them in blessing. ⁷The word of God continued to spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem greatly increased, with a large number of priests committing themselves to trusting in Jesus.

⁸Stephen, full of grace and God’s power, performed wonderful miracles among the people. ⁹But some started arguing with him. They were from the synagogue called “the Free,”^b as well as Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and people from Cilicia and Asia Minor. ¹⁰But they weren’t able to stand against Stephen’s wisdom or the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹So they bribed some men to say, “We heard this man blaspheme Moses, and God too!”

¹²They stirred up the people, and together with the elders and the teachers of the law, they came and arrested him. They brought him before the council, ¹³and called false witnesses who testified against him.

“This man is always slandering the holy Temple^c and the law,” they said. ¹⁴“We’ve heard him say that this Jesus of

^a 6:1. Literally “Hellenists” and “Hebrews.”

^b 6:9. Presumably a synagogue made up of former slaves.

^c 6:13. Literally, “this holy place,” also in 6:14.

Nazareth will destroy the Temple, and will change the laws^a we received from Moses.”

¹⁵Everyone sitting on the council looked closely at Stephen, and his face shone like the face of an angel.

7 ¹“Are these allegations true?” the high priest asked.

²“Brothers and fathers, listen to me!” Stephen replied. “God in his glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was living in Mesopotamia, before he moved to Haran.

³“God told him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives, and go to the country that I’m going to show you.’ ⁴So he left the country of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. After his father’s death, God sent him here to this country where you now live.

⁵God didn’t give Abraham an inheritance here, not even one square foot. But God did promise Abraham that he would give him and his descendants possession of the land, even though he had no children. ⁶God also told him that his descendants would live in a foreign country, and that they would be enslaved there,

and would be mistreated for four hundred years. ⁷God said, ‘I will punish the nation that enslaves them. Eventually they will leave and come here to worship me.’ ⁸God also gave Abraham the circumcision covenant^b, and so when Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him on the eighth day. Isaac was the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹“The patriarchs, who were jealous of Joseph, sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God was with him, ¹⁰and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave him wisdom and helped him gain the favor of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him governor over Egypt and the royal household.

¹¹“Now a famine occurred throughout Egypt and Canaan. It caused terrible misery, and our forefathers had no food. ¹²When Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt he sent our forefathers down on their first visit. ¹³During their second visit, Joseph revealed to his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh discovered Joseph’s family background. ¹⁴Joseph sent for his father and all

^a 6:15. Also translated “customs”; however in the context this has far more to do with legal and ceremonial requirements.

^b 7:8. Or “agreement.”

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his relatives—seventy-five in total. ¹⁵Jacob traveled to Egypt, and died there—as did our forefathers. ¹⁶Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought with silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

¹⁷“As the time approached regarding the promise that God had made to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt increased. ¹⁸A new king came to the throne in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. ¹⁹He took advantage of our people and treated our ancestors badly, forcing them to abandon their babies so they would die. ²⁰It was at this time that Moses was born. He was a handsome child, and for three months he was looked after in his father’s home ²¹When he had to be abandoned, Pharaoh’s daughter rescued him and took care of him as her own son.

²²“Moses received instruction in all areas of Egyptian knowledge, and he became a powerful speaker and leader.

²³However, when he was forty years old, he decided to visit his relatives, the Israelites. ²⁴He saw one of them being mistreated, so he intervened to defend him. On behalf of the man he took revenge and killed the Egyptian. ²⁵Moses thought his fellow Israelites would see that God was rescuing them through him, but they didn’t. ²⁶The next day when he arrived, two Israelites were fighting one another. He tried to reconcile them and stop the fight. ‘Men! You are brothers!’ he told them. ‘Why are you attacking each other?’”

²⁷“But the man who had started the fight pushed Moses away. ‘Who put you in charge over us? Are you our judge now?’” he asked. ²⁸“Are you going to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?” ²⁹When he heard this, Moses ran away. He went and lived in exile in the land of Midian, where two sons were born to him.

³⁰“Forty years later, in the desert of Mount Sinai, an angel appeared to him in the flames of a burning bush. ³¹When Moses saw this, he was amazed at the sight, and went over to take a closer look. The voice of the Lord spoke to him: ³²‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.’ Moses shook with fear and didn’t dare look up. ³³The Lord told him, ‘Take off your sandals, because where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴I have closely observed the suffering of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their groans. I have come

down to rescue them. Now come over here, for I'm sending you to Egypt.'

³⁵“This was the same Moses that the people had rejected when they said, ‘Who made you a ruler and judge over us?’ God sent him to be both a ruler and a liberator, by means of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶Moses led them out after performing miraculous signs in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and continued to do so in the desert for forty years. ³⁷This is the same Moses who promised the Israelites, ‘God will send you a prophet like me from among your people.’ ³⁸Moses was with God’s assembled people in the desert when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and there with our forefathers he received God’s living word to give to us. ³⁹He was the one our fathers wouldn’t listen to. They rejected him and decided to return to Egypt.

⁴⁰They told Aaron, ‘Make gods for us to lead us, because we don’t know what’s happened to this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt.’ ⁴¹Then they made an idol in the shape of a calf, sacrificed to it, and celebrated what they themselves had made!

⁴²“So God gave up on them. He left them to their worship of the stars in the sky. This is what the prophets wrote, ‘Were you giving offerings or making sacrifices to me during the forty years in the desert, you Israelites?’ ⁴³No, you carried the tabernacle of the god Moloch and the image of the god Rephan’s star, images that you made so you could worship them. So I will banish you in exile beyond Babylon.’

⁴⁴“Our ancestors had the Tabernacle of testimony^a in the desert. God had told Moses how he should make it following the blueprint he had seen. ⁴⁵Later on, our forefathers carried it with them when they went in with Joshua to occupy the land taken from the nations the Lord drove out before them. It stayed there until the time of David. ⁴⁶David found favor with God and asked to make a more permanent home for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who built a temple^b for him. ⁴⁸Of course the Almighty doesn’t live in temples we make. As the prophet said, ⁴⁹‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth the place I put my feet.

^a 7:44. Meaning that it gave God’s message, and provided evidence of his presence.

^b 7:47. Literally, “house.”

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What kind of dwelling could you build for me?’ the Lord asks. ‘What bed could you make for me to rest in?’⁵⁰ ‘Didn’t I make everything?’

⁵¹“You arrogant, hard-hearted people! You never listen!^a You always fight against the Holy Spirit! You act just like your fathers did! ⁵²Was there ever a prophet your fathers didn’t persecute? They killed those who prophesied about the coming of the One who is truly good and right. He is the One you betrayed and murdered—⁵³you who received the law by means of the angels, but refused to keep it.”

⁵⁴When they heard this, the council members became mad with rage, and snarled at him, grinding their teeth. ⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed up into heaven and saw God’s glory, with Jesus standing at God’s right hand. ⁵⁶“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open, and the Son of Man standing at God’s right hand.”

⁵⁷But they held their hands over their ears and shouted as loudly as they could. They rushed together at him, ⁵⁸dragged him out of the city, and began to stone him. His accusers laid their coats down beside a young man called Saul. ⁵⁹As they went on stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰He knelt down, calling out, “Lord, please don’t hold this sin against them!” And after he said this, he died^b.

8¹Saul agreed that Stephen had to be killed. On that very day terrible persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and everyone except for the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ²(Some faithful followers of God buried Stephen, with great mourning). ³But Saul set about destroying the church, going from house to house, dragging both men and women off to prison.

⁴Those who had been scattered spread the word wherever they went. ⁵Philip went to the town of Samaria, and told them about the Messiah. ⁶When the crowds heard what Philip was saying and saw the miracles he did they all paid attention to what he was telling them. ⁷Many were freed from possession by evil

^a 7:51. Literally, “uncircumcised in heart and ears.”

^b 7:60. Literally, “fell asleep.” Death is often spoken of as a sleep in the NT.

spirits that screamed as they came out, and many who were lame or disabled were healed. ⁸The people who lived in the city were overjoyed.

⁹Now there was a man named Simon living in the city who used to practice sorcery. He claimed that he was someone very important, and had astounded the people of Samaria ¹⁰so they all paid attention to him. From the lowest to the highest in society they said, “This man is ‘God the Great Power.’” ¹¹They were impressed by him because he had amazed them with his magic for so long.

¹²But when they believed in what Philip told them about the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Simon too believed and was baptized. He accompanied Philip, amazed at the miraculous signs and wonders he saw.

¹⁴When the apostles back in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to visit them. ¹⁵When they arrived they prayed for the converts in Samaria to receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶The Holy Spirit hadn’t come to any of these converts yet—they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷The apostles placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given when the apostles placed their hands on people, he offered them money. ¹⁹“Give me this power, too,” he asked them, “so that anyone I place my hands on will receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰“May your money be destroyed together with you for thinking God’s gift is something that can be bought!” Peter replied. ²¹You’re not part of any of this. None of this work belongs to you, because in God’s eyes your attitude is totally wrong. ²²Repent of your evil ways! Pray to the Lord and ask forgiveness for thinking like this. ²³I can see that you are full of bitter envy, and chained down by your sin.”

²⁴“Please pray for me, that nothing you’ve said may happen to me!” Simon replied.

²⁵After they had given their testimony and shared the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, sharing the good news in many Samaritan villages along the way.

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²⁶An angel of the Lord told Philip, “Get ready and go south to the desert road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷So Philip set out, and met an Ethiopian man, a eunuch who had a high position in the service of the Kandake^a, Queen of Ethiopia. He was her chief treasurer. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship there, and ²⁸was returning from his trip, sitting in his chariot. He was reading out loud from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹The Spirit told Philip, “Go over close to the chariot.” ³⁰So Philip ran over, and heard the man reading from the prophet Isaiah.

³⁰“Do you understand what you’re reading?” Philip asked him.

³¹“How can I unless someone explains it?” the man replied. He invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²The Scripture passage he was reading was this: “He was led like a sheep to be slaughtered. Like a lamb is silent in front of his shearer, he didn’t say a word. ³³He was humiliated and denied justice. No one can speak of his descendants, for his life came to an end^b.”

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, who is the prophet talking about? Is it himself, or someone else?” ³⁵Philip started explaining, beginning from this Scripture, telling him about Jesus. ³⁶As they continued on, they came to a stretch of water. The eunuch said, “Look, there’s water here—why shouldn’t I be baptized?”^c ³⁸He ordered that the chariot be stopped. Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came out of the water the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The eunuch never saw him again, but he continued on his way full of joy. Philip found himself at Azotus. ⁴⁰He spread the good news in all the towns along the way until he arrived at Caesarea.

9 ¹But meanwhile Saul was making violent threats against the disciples of the Lord, wanting to kill them. He went to the high priest ²and asked for letters of authorization to take with him to

^a 8:27. Kandake is not the personal name of the Queen, but her title, like “Pharaoh.”

^b 8:33. Literally, “his life was taken from the earth.”

^c 8:36. The following verse (37) found in some Bibles is not in the earliest manuscripts.

the synagogues in Damascus, giving him permission to arrest any believers in the Way^a that he found, men or women, and bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners.

³As Saul approached Damascus, suddenly he was surrounded by a light that blazed down from heaven. ⁴He fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

⁵“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, the one you’re persecuting,” he replied. ⁶“Get up, go on into the city, and you’ll be told what to do.”

⁷The men who were traveling with Saul stood there speechless. They heard the voice speaking, but they didn’t see anyone. ⁸Saul got to his feet, and when he opened his eyes, he couldn’t see anything. His companions took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. ⁹For three days he couldn’t see, and he didn’t eat or drink anything.

¹⁰A follower of Jesus called Ananias lived in Damascus, and the Lord spoke to him in a vision.

“Ananias!” he called.

“I’m here, Lord,” Ananias responded.

¹¹“Get up, and go to Straight Street,” the Lord told him. “Ask at Judas’ house for someone called Saul, from Tarsus. He’s praying. ¹²He’s seen in vision a man called Ananias come and place his hands on him so he can regain his sight.”

¹³“But Lord,” Ananias replied, “I’ve heard a lot about this man—about all the evil things he did to the believers in Jerusalem. ¹⁴The chief priests have given him the power to arrest everyone here that worships and follows you.”

¹⁵But the Lord told him, “Get on your way, because he is the person I have chosen to take my name to foreigners and kings, as well as to Israel. ¹⁶I will show him what he’ll have to suffer for my name’s sake.”

¹⁷So Ananias left and went to the house. He placed his hands on Saul. “Brother Saul,” he said, “The Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were traveling here, has sent me so you can regain your sight and be filled with the Holy

^a 9:2. “Believers in the Way,” one early term referring to followers of Jesus.

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Spirit.”¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. He got up and was baptized.¹⁹ He also had something to eat and felt stronger.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.²⁰ He immediately started speaking in the synagogues, saying, “Jesus is the Son of God.”²¹ All who heard him were amazed, and asked, “Isn’t this the man who caused so much trouble in Jerusalem for those who believed in Jesus? Wasn’t he coming here to have the believers arrested and taken in chains to the chief priests?”²² Saul grew more and more confident, proving Jesus was the Messiah so convincingly that the Jews who lived in Damascus could not refute him.

²³Some time later the Jews plotted together to kill him,²⁴ but Saul learned of their intentions. Day and night they waited by the city gates looking for the chance to murder him.²⁵ So during the night his followers took him and lowered him down in a basket from an opening in the city wall.²⁶ When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the disciples, but they were all afraid of him because they were not convinced he was really a disciple.²⁷ However, Barnabas took him to meet the apostles, and explained to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road and how the Lord had spoken to Saul. Barnabas also explained how in Damascus Saul had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.

²⁸Saul stayed with the apostles and accompanied them all over Jerusalem,²⁹ speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to kill him.³⁰ When the brothers learned of this they took him to Caesarea, and sent him to Tarsus.

³¹During this time the whole church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was left in peace. The church grew strong and increased rapidly in numbers as the believers lived reverently for the Lord^a, encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

³²Peter was traveling around and went to visit the believers who lived in Lydda.³³ There he met a man called Aeneas who was paralyzed and had been confined to his bed for eight years.³⁴ Peter told him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and pick up your mat!” Immediately Aeneas got up.³⁵ Everyone

^a 9:31. Literally, “in the fear of the Lord.”

living in Lydda and Sharon saw him, and became believers in the Lord.

³⁶In Joppa lived a follower called Tabitha, (Dorcas in Greek^a). She was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷However about this time she became sick, and died. After washing her body, they laid her out in an upstairs room. ³⁸Lydda was near Joppa, so the disciples in Joppa, hearing that Peter was in Lydda, sent two men to him with the message, “Please come to us right away.” ³⁹So Peter got ready and left with them. When he arrived they took him upstairs. All the widows were there crying, and they showed him the coats and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰Peter told them all to leave, kneeled down, and prayed. He turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and lifted her up. He called in the believers and the widows, and presented her to them alive. ⁴²The news spread through the whole of Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³Peter spent a long time in Joppa, staying at the house of Simon the tanner.

10 ¹In Caesarea lived a man named Cornelius who was a Roman centurion of the Italian battalion. ²He was a religious man who, together with everyone in his household, had great reverence for God. He gave generously to the poor, and prayed regularly to God. ³At about 3p.m. one day he had a vision in which he saw very clearly an angel of God who came to him and called to him, “Cornelius!”

⁴Frightened, Cornelius stared at him and asked, “What do you want, Lord?”

“God has paid attention to your prayers, and recognized your generosity to the poor,” he told Cornelius. ⁵“Now send some men to Joppa, and fetch Simon, also called Peter, ⁶who is staying at Simon the tanner’s house down by the sea-shore.”

⁷When the angel who had spoken to him had left, Cornelius called in two of his house-servants and a soldier of his personal guard, a religious man. ⁸After he’d explained to them all that had happened he sent them to Joppa.

^a 9:36. Tabitha/Dorcas means “gazelle.”

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⁹The next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up onto the top of the house^a to pray. It was about noon,¹⁰ and he was getting hungry, wanting to eat. But while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance, and¹¹ he saw heaven opened. He saw something coming down that looked like a large sheet held by its four corners being lowered onto the earth.¹² Inside were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds.¹³ He heard a voice say, “Get up Peter, kill and eat!”

¹⁴But Peter replied, “Certainly not, Lord! I have never eaten anything that is impure and unclean.”

¹⁵He heard the voice speak again, “Don’t you call unclean what God has made clean!”¹⁶This happened three times, and then the sheet was quickly taken back into heaven.

¹⁷While Peter was puzzling over what the vision he’d seen really meant, the men sent by Cornelius had found out where Simon’s house was and were standing at the gate.¹⁸They called out, asking whether Simon, also called Peter, was staying there.¹⁹While Peter was still wondering about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Look, there are three men looking for you.²⁰Get up, go downstairs, and go with them. Don’t worry at all because I’m the one who sent them.”

²¹So Peter went downstairs to meet the men. “I’m the one you’re looking for,” he said. “Why are you here?”

²²“We come from Cornelius, a good, religious man who has reverence for God and is widely respected among the Jewish people,” they replied. “A holy angel instructed him to send for you to come to his house so he can hear what you have to tell him.”²³So he invited them in and they stayed there.

The next day he got up and left with them. Some of the brothers from Joppa went with them too.²⁴The following day they arrived in Caesarea where Cornelius was waiting for them with his relatives and close friends whom he’d called together.²⁵When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.²⁶But Peter pulled him back up, telling him, “Stand up! I’m only a man!”

^a 10:9. Houses of the time had flat roofs, and served as open-air rooms.

²⁷ Peter spoke with Cornelius, and then went on in where he found many other people waiting for him. ²⁸He said to them, “You certainly know that it’s not permitted for a Jew to be associated with or to visit foreigners. But God has shown me that it’s not for me to call anyone impure or unclean. ²⁹That’s why I came without any argument when I was sent for. So now I want to know the reason why you sent for me.”

³⁰“Four days ago, at about this time—three in the afternoon—I was praying in my house,” Cornelius explained. “Suddenly I saw a man standing in front of me, dressed in clothes that shone brightly. ³¹He told me, ‘Cornelius, your prayers have been heard, and God has recognized your generosity to the poor. ³²Send someone to Joppa for Simon Peter. He’s staying at Simon the tanner’s house, down by the sea-shore.’ ³³So immediately I sent for you, and it was good of you to come. That’s why we’re all here, meeting together before God, ready to hear everything the Lord has told you.”

³⁴Peter replied, “I’m totally convinced that God has no favorites. ³⁵In every nation God accepts those who respect him, and do what is right. ³⁶You know the message he sent to Israel, sharing the good news of peace that comes from Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷You know that this good news spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, following John’s call to baptism. ³⁸It’s about Jesus of Nazareth—how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went around doing good, healing all those who were under the devil’s control, for God was with him.

³⁹We can testify to all that he did in Judea and Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross. ⁴⁰But God raised him back to life on the third day, and had him appear, ⁴¹not to everyone, but to those witnesses chosen by God—including us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He gave us the responsibility of publicly telling this to the people, to testify that he is the one God chose as the Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³He is the one all the prophets spoke about, that everyone who trusts in him will receive forgiveness through his name.”

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all of them who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵The Jewish

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believers^a who had come with Peter were astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was also poured out on the foreigners.

⁴⁶They heard them speaking in tongues, glorifying God. ⁴⁷Then Peter asked, “Is anybody going to prevent them being baptized in water, since they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

⁴⁸He gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they pleaded with him to spend some time with them.

11 ¹The apostles and brothers in Judea heard that foreigners had also accepted the word of God. ²When Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, those who believed circumcision^b was still essential argued with him. ³“You went into the homes of uncircumcised men, and ate with them,” they said.

⁴Peter began to explain to them everything that had happened. ⁵“While I was in the town of Joppa I was praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. Something that looked like a large sheet was being let down by its four corners from heaven, and it came down to me. ⁶When I looked inside I saw animals, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds.

⁷“Then I heard a voice that told me, ‘Get up, Peter, kill and eat.’

⁸“But I replied, ‘Absolutely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth!’

⁹“The voice from heaven spoke again, and said, “‘Don’t you call unclean what God has made clean!’ ¹⁰This happened three times, and then it was all taken back into heaven. ¹¹At that very moment three men were standing in front of the house where we were staying. They had been sent from Caesarea to see me. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them, and not to worry about who they were. These six brothers here also went with me, and we went into the man’s house. ¹³He explained to us how an angel had appeared to him in his house, who told him, ‘Send someone to Joppa, and fetch Simon, also called Peter, ¹⁴who will tell you

^a 10:45. Literally, “those of the circumcision that believed.”

^b 11:2. Literally, “those of the circumcision,” which could mean simply “Jews.” However from the context it would appear that these were Jewish Christians concerned over relationships with “foreigners.”

what you need to hear so you can be saved—you and your whole household.’

¹⁵“When I started speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as happened to us in the beginning. ¹⁶Then I remembered what the Lord said, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁷Since God gave them the same gift as he gave us when we trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, what power did I have to oppose God?”

¹⁸After they had heard this explanation, they didn’t argue with him anymore, and praised God, saying, “Now God has granted the opportunity to repent and have eternal life to foreigners as well.”

¹⁹Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that happened when Stephen was killed traveled all the way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. They only spread the good news among the Jews. ²⁰But when some of them who were from Cyprus and Cyrene arrived in Antioch, they shared the good news with the Greeks too, telling them about the Lord Jesus. ²¹The power of the Lord was with them and a large number trusted in the Lord and turned to him. ²²News about what had happened reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw for himself how God’s grace was working, he was delighted. He encouraged all of them to completely dedicate themselves to God and to stay true. ²⁴Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and put his whole trust in God. Many people were brought to the Lord. ²⁵Then Barnabas went on to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and when he found him, he took Saul back with him to Antioch. Over the course of the next year they worked together with the church, teaching the message to crowds of people. It was in Antioch that the believers were first called “Christians.”

²⁷It was during this time that some prophets went from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them called Agabus stood up and gave a prophetic warning by the Spirit that there would be a terrible famine that would affect the known world^a. (This came true in the reign of Emperor Claudius). ²⁹The believers decided

^a 11:28. Literally, “the inhabited world,” basically referring to the Roman Empire.

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to send funds to help the brothers that lived in Judea, with everyone giving according to what they had. ³⁰So they did this and sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the church leaders there.

12 ¹Around this time King Herod began to persecute some members of the church. ²He had James, John's brother, executed by sword. ³When he saw that the Jews were pleased by this, he had Peter arrested too. (This was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.) ⁴After having Peter arrested, he threw him in prison, with four squads of four soldiers each to guard him. He planned to have Peter brought out for a public trial after the Passover.

⁵While Peter was kept in prison the church prayed earnestly to God for him. ⁶The night before Herod was to have him put on trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, chained to each of them, and with guards at the door keeping watch. ⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. The angel shook Peter awake, saying "Quick! Get up!" The chains fell from his wrists, ⁸and the angel told him, "Get dressed, and put on your sandals." So he did. Then the angel told him, "Put on your coat and follow me." ⁹So Peter followed the angel out. He didn't realize that what the angel was doing was actually happening—he thought he was seeing a vision.

¹⁰They passed the first and second sets of guards, and came to the iron gate that led into the city. This opened for them by itself. They went out and down the street, when suddenly the angel left him. ¹¹When Peter came to his senses, he said, "Now I realize this really happened! The Lord sent an angel to rescue me from Herod's power, and from everything that the Jewish people had planned."

¹²Now that he was conscious of what had happened, Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Many believers had gathered there, and were praying. ¹³When he knocked on the gateway door, a servant girl called Rhoda came to open up. ¹⁴But recognizing Peter's voice, in her excitement she didn't open the door. Instead she ran back inside shouting, "Peter's at the door!"

¹⁵“You’re mad!” they told her. But she kept on insisting it was true. So they said, “It must be his angel.”^a ¹⁶Peter continued knocking. When they did eventually open the door, they saw it was him, and were totally shocked.

¹⁷Peter held up his hand for them to be quiet, and then explained to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. “Let James and the brothers know about this,” he told them, and then left to go somewhere else.

¹⁸When daylight came there was total confusion^b among the soldiers as to what had happened to Peter. ¹⁹Herod had a thorough search made for him, but he couldn’t be found. After interrogating the guards, Herod ordered that they should be executed^c. Then Herod left Judea and went to stay in Caesarea.

²⁰Now Herod had become furious with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They sent a joint delegation to see him and managed to win Blastus, the king’s personal assistant, over to their side. They pleaded for peace with Herod because they were dependent on the king’s territory for food. ²¹When the day came for their appointment with the king, Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and gave a speech to them. ²²The audience shouted in response, “This is the voice of a god, not that of a man!”

²³Immediately the angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory. He was consumed by worms and died.

²⁴But the word of God spread, and more and more people believed. ²⁵Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem once they had finished their mission, taking John Mark with them.

13 ¹The church at Antioch had prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (the childhood friend of Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. ²While they were worshipping

^a 12:15. “His angel.” Some at the time believed people had a spiritual equivalent that existed whether the individual was alive or dead. Perhaps today the expression would be, “It’s his ghost!”

^b 12:18. Literally, “not a little confusion.”

^c 12:19. The Greek actually says, “that they be led away.” However most commentators understand this to mean “led away to their deaths,” since the punishment for allowing prisoners to escape was execution.

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the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart^a Barnabas and Saul to do the work I’ve called them to.”³ After they had fasted, prayed, and placed their hands on them in blessing, they sent them on their way.

⁴So Barnabas and Saul, directed by the Holy Spirit, went to Seleucia. From there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵Arriving at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John^b was with them as their assistant. ⁶They traveled throughout the island and eventually came to Paphos. There they found a Jewish magician, a false prophet by the name of Bar-jesus. ⁷He was close to the governor, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. Sergius Paulus invited Barnabas and Saul to come and visit him since he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸But the magician Elymas (his Greek name) opposed them, trying to prevent the governor from trusting in God.

⁹Saul, also called Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and looked straight at him. ¹⁰“You are full of deception and all kinds of evil, you son of the devil, you enemy of all that is right! Will you never give up perverting the Lord’s true ways? ¹¹Look, the Lord’s hand is on you and you will become blind. You will not see the sun for some time.” Immediately mist and darkness fell on him, and he had to find someone who could lead him by the hand. ¹²When the governor saw what happened he trusted in God, amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

¹³Then Paul and those with him sailed from Paphos and went to Perga in Pamphylia, while John left them and went back to Jerusalem. ¹⁴They went through Perga and on to Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and were seated. ¹⁵After the readings from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent them a message saying, “Brothers, please share with the congregation any words of encouragement you may have.”

¹⁶Paul stood up, motioned with his hand to get their attention, and began speaking. “Men of Israel, and all of you who have reverence for God, listen to me. ¹⁷The God of the

^a 13:2. Or, “dedicate.”

^b 13:5. This John is John Mark (12:25).

people of Israel chose our forefathers, and gave our people prosperity during their stay in the land of Egypt. Then with his mighty power he led them out of Egypt, ¹⁸and he patiently dealt with them in the desert for about forty years.

¹⁹“After he had overthrown seven nations living in the land of Canaan, God divided their land among the Israelites and gave it to them to inherit. This took about four hundred and fifty years. ²⁰Then he provided them with judges as leaders until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹Then the people asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled for forty years. ²²Then God removed Saul, and made David their king. God approved of David, saying ‘I found David the son of Jesse to be a man according to my own heart; he will do everything I intend.’

²³“Jesus is David’s descendant; he is the Savior that God promised to bring to Israel. ²⁴Before Jesus came, John announced the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵As John was completing his mission, he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not the one you’re looking for. But after me one is coming whose sandals I’m not worthy to untie.’

²⁶“My brothers, children of Abraham and those of you who have reverence for God: the message of this salvation has been sent to us! ²⁷The people living in Jerusalem and their leaders didn’t recognize Jesus or understand the words spoken by the prophets that are read every Sabbath. In fact they fulfilled the prophetic words by condemning him! ²⁸Even though they couldn’t find any evidence to sentence him to death, they still asked Pilate to have him killed. ²⁹After they had fulfilled everything predicted that they would do to him, they took him down from the cross and buried him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and he appeared over the course of many days to those who had followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to the people.

³²“We are here to bring to you the good news of the promise that God made to our forefathers, ³³that he has now fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus from the dead. As it is written in Psalm 2: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’

³⁴God raised him from the dead, never to die again, as he indicated by saying, ‘I will give you what is holy and

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trustworthy, as I promised to David.^a ³⁵As another psalm says, ‘You will not allow your Holy One to see decay.’^b ³⁶But David died, after he had done what God wanted in his own time, and he was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed. ³⁷The one God raised from the dead saw no decay.

³⁸My brothers, I want you to understand that we’re telling you that through this man sins are forgiven. ³⁹Through him everyone who trusts in him is made right from all that is wrong—in a way that you could never be set right by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Make sure that what the prophets said doesn’t happen to you: ⁴¹“You who are scornful, look in amazement, and die! For what I’m doing in your lifetime is something that you could never believe, even if someone told you!”^c

⁴²As they were leaving, the people pleaded with them to tell them more the next Sabbath. ⁴³After the meeting in the synagogue, many of the Jews and the converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas who spoke with them, encouraging them to continue to hold on to the grace of God. ⁴⁴The following Sabbath almost the whole town turned out to hear the word of God. ⁴⁵However when the Jews saw the crowds, they became extremely jealous, contradicting what Paul was saying and cursing him.

⁴⁶So Paul and Barnabas spoke out strongly, saying “We had to speak the word of God to you first. But now that you’re rejecting it—you’re deciding that you’re not worthy of eternal life—well now we’re turning to the foreigners. ⁴⁷That’s what the Lord has told us to do: ‘I’ve made you a light to the foreigners, and through you salvation will go to the ends of the earth.’^d

⁴⁸When the foreigners heard this they were overjoyed, praising the Lord’s word, and all those chosen for eternal life trusted in God. ⁴⁹So God’s word was spread throughout the region. ⁵⁰But the Jews incited the prominent religious women and leaders of the city to persecute Paul and Barnabas, and had them expelled from their territory. ⁵¹So they shook the dust off their feet against them as a sign of protest, and went on to Iconium. ⁵²And

^a 13:34. Referring to Isaiah 55:3.

^b 13:35. Quoting Psalm 16:10.

^c 13:41. Quoting Habakkuk 1:5.

^d 13:47. Quoting Isaiah 49:6.

the believers continued to be filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

14 ¹In Iconium the same thing happened. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and spoke so convincingly that many of both the Jewish and Greek-speaking worshipers trusted in Jesus. ²But the Jews that refused to believe in Jesus stirred up the feelings of the foreigners^a, and poisoned them against the believers. ³Paul and Barnabas stayed there a long time, speaking to them boldly in the Lord, who confirmed their message of grace through the miraculous signs that they were enabled to perform. ⁴The inhabitants of the town were divided, with some supporting the Jews and some the apostles. ⁵But then the foreigners and the Jews, together with their leaders, decided to attack and stone Paul and Barnabas. ⁶However they found out about it and fled to the region of Lycaonia, to the towns of Lystra and Derbe, ⁷where they continued to share the good news.

⁸In the town of Lystra there was a disabled man who was lame in both feet. He had been crippled from birth and had never been able to walk. ⁹He sat there listening to Paul speaking. When Paul looked directly at him, and realized that the man was trusting in God to heal him, ¹⁰Paul said in a loud voice, “Stand up on your feet!” The man jumped to his feet and started walking. ¹¹When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted out in the language of Lycaonia, “The gods have come down to us looking like men!” ¹²They identified Barnabas as the Greek god Zeus, and Paul as the god Hermes because he was one who did most of the talking.

¹³The priest of the temple of Zeus that lay just outside the town, brought oxen and wreaths^b to the town gates. He planned to carry out a sacrifice in front of the crowds. ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul learned what was happening, they tore their clothes^c, and rushed into the crowds, shouting out, ¹⁵“People, what are you doing? We are human beings with the same kind of nature as you. We came to bring you good news, so

^a 14:2. In other words, the non-Jewish population.

^b 14:13. Wreaths—these were put on animals just before they were sacrificed.

^c 14:14. In ancient cultures a sign of great distress.

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you could turn from these pointless things to a God who is truly alive. He is the one who made heaven, earth, and sea, and everything in them. ¹⁶In past times he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways. ¹⁷Even so he still provided evidence of himself by doing good, sending you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons, providing all the food you need, and filling your hearts with happiness.” ¹⁸With these words they barely managed to stop the crowds from offering sacrifices to them.

¹⁹But then some Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul, and dragged him outside the town, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But when the believers gathered around him, he got up, and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. ²¹After sharing the good news with the people in that town, and after many had become believers, they went back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

²²They encouraged the believers to remain firm and to continue to trust in Jesus. “We have to go through many trials to enter God’s kingdom,” they said.

²³After they had appointed elders for every church, and had prayed and fasted with them, Paul and Barnabas left them in the Lord’s care, the One that they trusted in. ²⁴They passed through Pisidia, and arrived in Pamphylia. ²⁵They spoke God’s word in Perga, and then went on to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed back to Antioch^a where they had started out, having been dedicated there in God’s grace to the work they had now accomplished.

²⁷When they arrived, they called the church together. They reported everything God had done through them, and how he had opened a door for the foreigners to trust in him. ²⁸They stayed there with the believers for a long time.

15 ¹Then some men arrived from Judea who started teaching the believers, “Unless you’re circumcised according to the rules set down by Moses, you can’t be saved.” ²Paul and Barnabas had many arguments and debates with them. So Paul and Barnabas and some others were appointed to go to Jerusalem and talk to the apostles and leaders there about this issue. ³The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and

^a 14:26. Antioch in Syria, where they had begun their journey (see 13:1).

Samaria, they explained how foreigners were being converted, which made all the believers very happy. ⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem they were welcomed by the church members, the apostles, and the elders. They explained everything God had done through them. ⁵But they were opposed by some of the believers who belonged to the Pharisee faction. They said, “These converts have to be circumcised, and instructed to observe the law of Moses.”

⁶The apostles and elders met together to discuss the issue. ⁷After much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you know that some time ago God chose me from among you so that the foreigners could hear the message of good news and trust in Jesus. ⁸God, who knows our hearts^a, has shown that he accepts them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us. ⁹He doesn’t make any distinction between us and them—he cleansed their hearts as they trusted in him.

¹⁰“So why do you want to oppose God and put a burden on the believers that our fathers weren’t able to bear, and we can’t either? ¹¹We’re convinced that we’re saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way they are.” ¹²Everyone listened attentively to Barnabas and Paul as they explained the miraculous signs that God had performed through them among the foreigners.

¹³After they had finished speaking, James spoke up, saying, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simon^b has described how God first revealed his concern for the foreigners by taking from them a people committed to him. ¹⁵This is in accordance with the words of the prophets, as it’s written, ¹⁶“In the future I will return, and I will rebuild the fallen house of David; I will rebuild its ruins and set it straight. ¹⁷I will do this so that those who are left may come to the Lord, including the foreigners who call on my name. ¹⁸This is what the Lord says, who revealed these things long ago.’

¹⁹“So my decision is that we shouldn’t make it difficult for foreigners who turn to God. ²⁰We should write to them and tell

^a 15:8. In other words, knows the way we think.

^b 15:14. Simon Peter.

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them to avoid food sacrificed to idols^a, sexual immorality, meat of animals that have been strangled, and from consuming blood. ²¹For the law of Moses has been taught in every town for a long, long time—it's read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

²²Then the apostles and elders, together with the whole church, decided it would be good to choose some representatives and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas Barsabbas and Silas, leaders among the brothers, ²³and sent them with this letter:

“Greetings from us, the apostles and elders and brothers, to the non-Jewish^b brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: ²⁴We have heard that some from our group have confused you with their teachings, causing you trouble. We certainly didn't tell them to do this! ²⁵So we have agreed to choose some representatives and send them to you together with our much-loved brothers Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷“So we are sending to you Judas and Silas who can verbally confirm what we're saying. ²⁸It seemed best to the Holy Spirit and to us not to place on you any heavier burden than these important requirements. ²⁹You should avoid: anything sacrificed to idols; blood; meat from strangled animals; and sexual immorality. You will do well to observe these requirements. God bless you.”

³⁰The men were sent on their way to Antioch. When they arrived they called everybody together and delivered the letter.

³¹After they had read it, the people were so happy for the encouraging message. ³²Judas and Silas, who were also prophets, encouraged the brothers, explaining many things, and strengthening them. ³³After spending some time there they were sent back by the brothers with their blessing to the believers in Jerusalem^c. ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and proclaiming the word of God along with many others.

³⁶Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let's go back and visit the believers in every town where we shared the word of the

^a 15:20. Literally “pollutions of idols.”

^b 15:23. Literally, “Gentile.”

^c 15:33. Verse 34 regarding Silas is not thought to be part of the original.

Lord, and see how they're doing.”³⁷ Barnabas planned to take along John Mark too.³⁸ But Paul didn't think it was a good idea to take him with them, since he'd left them in Pamphylia and hadn't continued working with them.³⁹ They had such a strong disagreement that they separated. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus.⁴⁰ Paul chose Silas, and as they left, the believers committed them to the grace of the Lord.⁴¹ Paul traveled through Syria and Cilicia, encouraging the churches there.

16¹ Paul went first to Derbe, and then on to Lystra, where he met a believer by the name of Timothy. He was the son of a Jewish Christian mother, and his father was Greek.² The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.³ Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him, so he circumcised him because the Jews in the area all knew that Timothy's father was Greek.⁴ As they went through the different towns they gave them the requirements the apostles and elders in Jerusalem had said should be observed.⁵ The churches were strengthened in their trust in the Lord and every day their numbers increased.

⁶ They traveled through the districts of Phrygia and Galatia, since the Holy Spirit prevented them from going to the province of Asia to speak the word.⁷ When they arrived at the border of Mysia they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to enter.⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

⁹ There Paul saw in vision during the night a man from Macedonia standing up, pleading with him, “Please come over to Macedonia and help us!”¹⁰ After Paul saw this vision, we^a immediately made arrangements to go to Macedonia, since we concluded that God had called us to share the good news with them.

¹¹ We set sail from Troas and made straight for Samothrace. The next day we went on to Neapolis,¹² and from there to Philippi, the most important town in Macedonia, and also a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for several days.¹³ On the Sabbath day we went out of the town gates down to the riverside

^a 16:10. The change to “we” indicates that the writer, Luke, had joined them.

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where we thought people would come to pray. We sat down and talked with the women that had gathered there.

¹⁴One of them was called Lydia, who sold purple cloth from the town of Thyatira. She worshiped God, and she listened to us. The Lord opened her mind to what Paul was saying, and she accepted what he told her. ¹⁵After she and all her household were baptized, she pleaded with us, “If you really think that I’m truly committed to the Lord, then come and stay at my house.” She kept on insisting until we agreed!

¹⁶One day when we were going down to the place of prayer we met a slave girl possessed by an evil spirit^a. She earned her masters a great deal of money by fortune-telling. ¹⁷This girl followed Paul and the rest of us around, shouting, “These men are the servants of Almighty God. They are telling you how to be saved!” ¹⁸She went on doing this for several days. This bothered Paul so he turned around and told the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to leave her!” The spirit immediately left her.

¹⁹But when her masters saw they had lost their means of making money, they grabbed hold of Paul and Silas ¹⁹and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. ²⁰They brought them in front of the magistrates, and accused them: “These Jewish men are causing a great disturbance in our town,” they said. ²¹“They’re advocating things that are illegal for us as Romans to accept or to practice.” ²²The crowd joined together in an attack on them. The magistrates tore off Paul and Silas’ clothes, and ordered them beaten with rods. ²³After giving them a severe beating, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them locked up. ²⁴The jailer followed his orders. He threw Paul and Silas into the inner cell and shackled their feet in the stocks.

²⁵Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

²⁶Suddenly a tremendous earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. Immediately all the doors flew open and everyone’s chains fell off.

^a 16:16. Literally, “python spirit,” a spirit of divination.

²⁷The jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison wide open. He drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted out, “Don’t hurt yourself—we’re all still here!”

²⁹The jailer asked for lights to be brought and rushed in. Shaking with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He escorted them out and asked them, “Sirs, what do I have to do so I can be saved?”

³¹“Trust in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your whole household,” they replied. ³²Then they shared the word of the Lord with him and everyone who lived in his house. ³³Even though it was late at night he bathed their wounds, and he was baptized right away, along with all his family. ³⁴He took them home and had a meal prepared for them. The jailer and his whole family were full of joy because they trusted in God.

³⁵Early the next day the magistrate sent officials to the jailer, telling him, “Release those men.” ³⁶The jailer told Paul, “The magistrates have sent word to release you. So you can leave, and go in peace.”

³⁷But Paul told them, “They publicly beat us without a trial—and yet we’re Romans citizens! Then they threw us in prison. Now they want to quietly let us go? No, they should come themselves and release us!”

³⁸The officials went back and reported this to the magistrates. When they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens they were really worried, ³⁹and went to apologize to them^a. They escorted them out and begged them to leave town. ⁴⁰So Paul and Silas left the prison and went to Lydia’s house. There they met with the believers, encouraged them, and then went on their way.

17 ¹After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia they arrived at Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As usual, Paul went into the synagogue and over the course of three Sabbaths he debated with them using the Scriptures. ³He explained what the Scriptures meant, proving that the Messiah had to die and rise from the dead. “This Jesus

^a 16:38. It was illegal to punish a Roman citizen without a trial.

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I'm telling you about—he is the Messiah,” he told them. ⁴Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, along with many Greek-speaking worshipers^a and some leading women of the town.

⁵But the Jews became jealous and with some rabble-rousers they gathered from the marketplace^b they formed a mob. They rioted in the town, and attacked Jason's house. They tried to find Paul and Silas so they could bring them before the people.

⁶When they couldn't find them they dragged Jason and some of the other believers before the town leaders, shouting, “These people are famous for causing trouble, turning the world upside down. Now they've come here, ⁷and Jason has made them welcome in his house. They all defy Caesar's decrees, committing treason by saying there is another king called Jesus.”

⁸The people and the leaders of the town were very disturbed when they heard this. ⁹So they made Jason and the others post bail before they let them go.

¹⁰The believers had Paul and Silas leave for Berea that very night. When they arrived in Berea they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹The people there had a better attitude than those in Thessalonica in that they were very quick to accept the word, and every day they examined the Scriptures to make sure what they were told was right. ¹²As a result many of them became believers, along with some highly-placed Greek women and men.

¹³But when the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was also spreading the word of God in Berea, they went there and caused the same kind of trouble, stirring up the crowds.

¹⁴Immediately the believers sent Paul to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. ¹⁵Those escorting Paul took him as far as Athens, and then returned with instructions from Paul to Silas and Timothy that they should join him there as soon as possible.

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens he was very troubled to see all the idolatry in the city. ¹⁷He debated in the

^a 17:4. Greek-speaking worshipers: the term is usually applied to “heathen” who had come to accept the belief in the one God of Judaism but had not become Jews by circumcision.

^b 17:5. Literally, “evil men from the market.”

synagogue with the Jews and those who worshiped God^a, as well as in the marketplace with those he happened to meet from day to day. ¹⁸Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also argued with him. “What is he going on about?”^b they wondered. Others concluded, “He seems to be teaching about some foreign gods,” because he was speaking about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹So they took him to the Areopagus^c, and asked him, “Please tell us about this new teaching that you’re promoting. ²⁰We’re hearing from you things that sound odd to us, so we’d like to know what they mean.” ²¹(All the Athenians, including foreigners who lived there, spent their whole time doing nothing except explaining or listening to something new).

²²Paul stood up right in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “People of Athens, I notice you are very religious about everything. ²³As I was walking along, looking at your shrines, I found an altar that had the inscription, “To an Unknown God.” This unknown God whom you worship is the one I’m describing to you. ²⁴The God who created the world and everything in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, doesn’t live in temples we make. ²⁵He doesn’t need to be served by us as if he needed anything, since he is the source of all life for every living being. ²⁶From one man he made all the peoples who live on the earth, and decided beforehand when and where they should live. ²⁷God’s purpose was that they should seek him, hoping they would reach out for him and find him—though he isn’t far from any one of us. ²⁸In him we live, move, and exist. Just as one of your own poets wrote, “We are his family.”

²⁹Since we are his family we shouldn’t think that God is like gold, or silver, or stone, shaped by human artistry and thinking. ³⁰God disregarded people’s ignorance in the past, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent. ³¹For he has set a

^a 17:17. Presumably the same “class” of believers mentioned in 17:4: foreigners who had accepted the God of Israel but had not become Jews.

^b 17:18. Literally, “What is this seed-collector trying to say?” “Seed-collector” referred to chattering birds picking up seeds in the marketplace; otherwise translated “babbling.”

^c 17:19. A kind of discussion forum of philosophers.

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time when he will rightly judge the world by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone that he is the one by raising him from the dead.”

³²Some of them laughed when they heard about the resurrection of the dead, while others said, “Please come back so we can hear more about this later.” ³³So Paul left them. ³⁴A few men joined him and trusted in God, including Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, as well as a woman called Damaris, and some others.

18 ¹Paul then left Athens and went to Corinth ²where he met a Jew named Aquila. Aquila was originally from Pontus, and had just arrived from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius^a had ordered all Jews expelled from Rome. Paul went to see them, ³and because they were in the same business of tent-making, he stayed with them. ⁴He debated in the synagogue every Sabbath, convincing both Jews and Greeks. ⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul felt he had to become more direct in what he said, and told the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶When they opposed him and cursed him, he shook out his clothes^b and told them, “Your blood is on your own heads! I am innocent of any guilt, and from now on I will go to the foreigners.”

⁷He left and went to stay with Titius Justus, who worshiped God and whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord together with his whole household. Many of the people of Corinth who heard the message became believers and were baptized.

⁹The Lord told Paul in a vision at night: “Don’t be afraid. Speak up, don’t keep quiet—¹⁰because I am with you, and no one will attack you, for many people in this city are mine.”

¹¹Paul stayed there for eighteen months, teaching the people the word of God.

¹²However during the time when Gallio^c was the governor of Achaia, the Jews united in an attack against Paul and brought

^a 18:2. The Roman Emperor.

^b 18:6. A symbolic act declaring innocence.

^c 18:12. Gallio was the brother of Seneca, the Roman Stoic philosopher.

him before the court^a. ¹³“This man is persuading people to worship God illegally,” they declared.

¹⁴But just as Paul was about to defend himself, Gallio told the Jews, “If you Jews were bringing criminal charges or some serious legal offense, there would be a reason for me to listen to your case. ¹⁵But since you’re only arguing over words and names and your own law, then you deal with it yourselves. I won’t rule on such matters.” ¹⁶Then Gallio had them ejected from the court.

¹⁷Then the crowd turned on Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him right outside the court, but Gallio wasn’t concerned about this at all.

¹⁸Paul stayed on for a while. Then left the believers and sailed for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila along with him. He had his head shaved while in Cenchrae, because he had taken a vow^b.

¹⁹They arrived in Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews.

²⁰They asked him to stay longer, but he refused. ²¹He said his goodbyes, and set sail from Ephesus, telling them, “I’ll come back and see you if it’s God’s will.”

²²After landing at Caesarea he went to greet the church members^c, and then carried on to Antioch. ²³He spent some time there and then went from town to town through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, encouraging all the believers.

²⁴In the meantime a Jew named Apollos, originally from Alexandria, arrived in Ephesus. He was a gifted speaker who knew the Scriptures well. ²⁵He had been taught the way of the Lord. He was spiritually passionate, and in his speaking and teaching he presented Jesus accurately, but he only knew about John’s baptism. ²⁶He started speaking openly in the synagogue. So when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to join them and explained the way of God to him more fully. ²⁷When he decided to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples there telling them to welcome him. When he arrived he was very helpful to those who through grace

^a 18:12. Literally “judgment seat,” or “judge’s bench.” Also in 18:16, 17.

^b 18:18. Vow: probably a Nazirite vow (see Numbers 6).

^c 18:22. Possibly the church members in Jerusalem.

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trusted God, ²⁸because he was able to strongly refute the Jews in public debate, demonstrating from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

19 ¹While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul took the inland route and arrived in Ephesus where he found some believers. ²“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” he asked them.

“No, we haven’t heard anything about a Holy Spirit,” they told him.

³“So what baptism did you receive?” he asked.

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

⁴“John baptized with the baptism of repentance,” said Paul. “He told the people that they should trust in the one who would come after him—that is, they should trust in Jesus.” ⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶After Paul had placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve of them in total.

⁸Paul went to the synagogue and over the course of the next three months spoke boldly to those who were there, discussing with them and trying to convince them about the kingdom of God. ⁹But some of them were stubborn, and refused to accept. They denounced the Way^a to the crowd. So Paul gave up on them and left the synagogue, taking the believers with him. Then he had discussions every day at the hall of Tyrannus.

¹⁰This went on for the next two years, with the result that everyone who lived in the province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord. ¹¹God performed unusual miracles through Paul, ¹²so much so that they took handkerchiefs or aprons Paul had touched to heal the sick and to drive out evil spirits.

¹³Some Jews who were going around exorcising decided to use the name of the Lord Jesus when they drove out evil spirits. They’d say, “I command you to leave in the name of the Jesus that Paul talks about.” ¹⁴The ones doing this were the seven sons of Sceva, a Jew and a chief priest.

^a 19:9. “The Way”: another early term for Christianity.

¹⁵But one day an evil spirit responded, “I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?” ¹⁶The man with the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered all of them. He beat them so severely that they ran out of the house, naked and badly injured.

¹⁷People living in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, heard about this. They were all in awe at what had happened, and the name of the Lord Jesus gained great respect. ¹⁸Many came to trust in the Lord and confessed their sins, openly admitting their evil practices. ¹⁹A number of those who used to practice sorcery collected their books on magic and brought them to be burned publicly. They worked out how much the books were worth, and the total was fifty thousand silver coins. ²⁰In this way the word of the Lord grew strong and spread widely.

²¹Some time after this Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing first through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I’ve been there, I’ll have to go to Rome,” he said. ²²He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed on for a while in the province of Asia.

²³It was about this time that serious problems occurred regarding the Way. ²⁴A man called Demetrius, a silversmith, was producing small silver replicas of the temple of the goddess Artemis. This business brought in a great deal of work for such craftsmen. ²⁵Demetrius called them together, along with others who worked in similar trades, and said, “Fellow-workers, you know that it’s through this business we make our money. ²⁶As you’re no doubt aware from what you’ve seen and heard—not just here in Ephesus, but throughout almost the whole of Asia—this man Paul has convinced and misled many people, telling them that there are no such things as gods made by human hands. ²⁷It’s not just a question that our business will be in danger of losing respect, but that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be considered worthless. Artemis herself would be dethroned from her high position as the one whom everyone in Asia and the whole world worships.”

²⁸When they heard this they became furious, and shouted out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹The city was in complete chaos. People rushed towards the amphitheatre, dragging along with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions who were from Macedonia. ³⁰Paul thought

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he should confront the mob, but the other believers would not let him. ³¹Some of the provincial officials^a, who were Paul's friends, also sent a message begging him not to go into the amphitheatre.

³²Some were shouting one thing, and some something else, for the crowd that had gathered was in total confusion—most of them had no idea why they were there. ³³The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front. Alexander motioned with his hand for them to be quiet, wanting to explain things to the people. ³⁴But when they realized he was a Jew, they all took up a chant that lasted for about two hours, shouting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵After the town clerk had managed to quiet the mob down, he told them, "People of Ephesus, who doesn't know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image that fell from heaven? ³⁶Since these facts can't be denied, you should stay calm—don't do anything rash. ³⁷You have brought these men here, but they haven't robbed any temples or blasphemed against our goddess. ³⁸So if Demetrius and the other craftsmen have a complaint against anyone, then go to the authorities^b and the courts. They can press charges there. ³⁹If there's anything else, it can be taken to the legal assembly. ⁴⁰In fact we ourselves are in danger of being accused of being responsible for this riot today, since there was no reason for it, and we can't justify why it happened." ⁴¹When he had finished speaking, he dismissed the crowd.

20 ¹Once the uproar had died down, Paul called the believers together and encouraged them. Then he said goodbye, and left for Macedonia. ²He passed through the area, sharing many words of encouragement with the believers there, and then traveled on to Greece. ³After he had spent three months there and just as he was about to sail to Syria, it was discovered that the Jews were plotting against him. So he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴These were the people who traveled with him: Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy; Tychicus and Trophimus from the

^a 19:31. Literally, "Asiarchs."

^b 19:38. Literally, "proconsuls."

province of Asia. ⁵They went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. ⁶After the Feast of Unleavened Bread we sailed from Philippi, and met them five days later in Troas, where we spent a week.

⁷Paul was speaking on the first day of the week as we gathered together to break bread. He was planning to leave in the morning, and went on speaking until midnight. ⁸(The upstairs room where we were meeting was lit by many lamps.)

⁹A young man called Eutychus was sitting in the window, and he began feeling very sleepy. As Paul went on speaking he fell sound asleep and tumbled down from the third story. When they picked him up they found he was dead.

¹⁰Paul went down, stretched himself out upon him, and hugged him. “Don’t worry, he’s alive,” he said.

¹¹Paul went back upstairs, broke bread, and ate together with them. He went on talking with them until dawn came, and then he left. ¹²They took the young man home alive and well, and were very thankful for this.

¹³We went on ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos. There we were due to pick up Paul, since that was what he had planned as he decided to travel on foot. ¹⁴He did indeed meet us at Assos. We picked him up, and went on to Mitylene. ¹⁵Sailing on from there we arrived off Kios, and the next day we stopped briefly at Samos, and the following day we arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶Paul had planned to sail on past Ephesus so he wouldn’t have to spend time in the province of Asia. He was keen to get to Jerusalem in time for the Day of Pentecost.

¹⁷From Miletus Paul sent a message to the elders of the church in Ephesus. ¹⁸When they arrived, he told them, “You know how I always behaved while I was with you from the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. ¹⁹I served the Lord in humility and in tears. I put up with the troubles and stress caused by the plots of the Jews. ²⁰However I never held back from sharing with you anything that would be to your benefit, and I taught you in public, going from house to house. ²¹I witnessed both to Jews and Greeks that it was essential to repent and turn to God, and to trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²Now the Spirit is insisting that I go to Jerusalem, and I have no idea what will happen to me there. ²³All I know is that in every city I visit the

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Holy Spirit warns me that prison and suffering are waiting for me. ²⁴But I don't consider my life as worth anything to me. I only want to finish my mission and the ministry that the Lord Jesus gave to me, to witness to the good news of the grace of God.

²⁵“Now I am certain that you will not see my face again, you among whom I shared the news of the kingdom. ²⁶So I declare to you today that I am not responsible if anyone is lost^a. ²⁷I didn't hesitate to tell you everything God wants you to know. ²⁸Take care of yourselves and of all the flock, which the Holy Spirit has given to you to supervise. Feed the Lord's church which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave vicious wolves will come among you, and won't spare the flock. ³⁰From among your own group men will rise up perverting what is right so they can lead believers to follow them. ³¹So watch out! Don't forget that for three years I went on instructing all of you night and day, often crying over you. ³²Now I commit you in God's care and to the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and provide you with the inheritance that belongs to all who are kept right with him. ³³I never had any desire for anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You know that I worked with my own hands to provide for my own needs, as well as for those who were with me. ³⁵I have given you an example in everything: work to help those who are weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

³⁶When he finished speaking, he kneeled down and prayed with all of them. ³⁷They all wept as they hugged and kissed him. ³⁸What upset them the most was what he said about never seeing him again... Then they walked down to the ship with him.

21 ¹After we had said goodbye to them, we sailed directly to Cos, and the next day on to Rhodes. From there we went to Patara ²where we found a ship going to Phoenicia. We went on board and set sail. ³We passed within sight of Cyprus on the left, and continued on to Syria where we landed at Tyre, where the ship's cargo was to be unloaded. ⁴We found the believers and

^a 20:26. Literally, “I am not guilty of the blood of anyone.”

stayed there for a week. Through the Holy Spirit the believers told Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ⁵When the time was up, we left and went back to the ship to continue our journey. All the believers, and wives and children, accompanied us as we left the city. We knelt down on the beach and prayed, and said our goodbyes. ⁶Then we boarded the ship, and they went back home. ⁷Our voyage from Tyre ended at Ptolemais where we greeted the believers and stayed with them for a day.

⁸The next day we left and went to Caesarea. We stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist (one of the Seven)^a. ⁹Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. ¹⁰After we'd stayed there for several days, a prophet called Agabus arrived from Judea. ¹¹Approaching us, he took Paul's belt, and bound his own hands and feet. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'This is how the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt, and will hand him over to the foreigners.'"

¹²When we heard this, we and the believers there pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ¹³However Paul answered, "What are you doing, crying and breaking my heart? I'm ready not only to be bound in Jerusalem, but to die in Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴Since he couldn't be persuaded otherwise we gave up, and said, "May the Lord's will be done."

¹⁵After this we packed our bags and headed for Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the believers from Caesarea came with us, and they took us to the home of Mnason, where we were going to stay. He came from Cyprus and was one of the early believers.

¹⁷When we arrived in Jerusalem, the believers there welcomed us warmly. ¹⁸The next day Paul went with us to see James, and all the church leaders were there. ¹⁹After greeting them, Paul went through in detail everything God had done for the foreigners through his ministry.

²⁰When they heard what had happened they praised God and told Paul, "Brother, you can see how many thousands of Jews have come to trust in the Lord, and they all keep the Law very carefully. ²¹They have been told that you teach Jews living

^a 21:8. One of the seven chosen to help with food distribution (Acts 6:5).

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among the foreigners to ignore the Law of Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children and not to follow our customs.

²²“So what should we do about it? People will certainly get to hear that you’ve arrived here. ²³This is what we want you to do: Four men among us have taken a vow. ²⁴Go with them and perform the purification rituals with them, paying for them to have their heads shaved. That way everyone will know there’s no truth to the rumors they’ve heard about you, but that you yourself observe the Law in the way that you live. ²⁵As to the foreigners who have trusted the Lord, we already wrote a letter regarding our decision that they should refrain from eating food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from any animal that is strangled, and from sexual immorality.”

²⁶So Paul took the men with him, and the next day went and purified himself with them. Then he went to the Temple to give notice regarding the end of the time of purification and the offering which would be made for each of them.

²⁷The seven days were almost over when some Jews from Asia saw Paul in the Temple and incited the crowd against him and seized him. ²⁸“Men of Israel, help!” they shouted. “This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere to oppose our people, the Law, and the Temple. He’s also brought Greeks into the Temple, defiling this holy place.” ²⁹(They said this because they had seen him previously in the city with Trophimus the Ephesian and presumed that Paul had brought him into the Temple). ³⁰The whole city was shocked by this and people came running. They grabbed hold of Paul and dragged him out of the Temple. Immediately the doors were shut. ³¹As they tried to kill him, news came to the Roman troop commander that the whole of Jerusalem was in an uproar.

³²Immediately the commander took some centurions and soldiers and ran down to the mob. When the mob saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³Then the commander came over and arrested Paul, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He asked who he was, and what he had done. ³⁴Some in the mob were shouting one thing and some another. Since the commander couldn’t find out the truth due to all the noise and confusion, he ordered Paul brought into the fortress.

³⁵When Paul got to the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because the mob was so violent. ³⁶People in the crowd that was following were shouting, “Get rid of him!” ³⁷Just as he was about to be taken inside the fortress, Paul asked the commander, “Can I tell you something?”

“Do you know Greek?” asked the commander. ³⁸“Aren’t you the Egyptian who recently incited a rebellion and led four thousand Assassins into the desert?”

³⁹“I am a Jew, a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, an important city,” Paul replied. “Please let me talk to the people.”

⁴⁰The commander gave Paul permission to speak. So Paul stood on the stairs and motioned for silence. When it was quiet he spoke to them in Aramaic.

22 ¹“Brother and fathers,” he said, “Please listen as I give my defense before you.” ²When they heard him speaking to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.

³“I am a Jew born in Tarsus in Cilicia,” he began. “However I was brought up here in this city, and sat at the feet of Gamaliel. I was taught to strictly observe the law of our fathers. I was zealous for God, just like all of you here today, ⁴and I persecuted the people of this Way—having them put to death, and imprisoning both men and women.

⁵“As the high priest and the council of the elders can also verify, I received from them letters of authorization addressed to the Jewish brothers in Damascus, and went there to arrest these people and bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

⁶“At around noon, while I was on my way and approaching Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven shone all around me. ⁷I fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

⁸“‘Who are you, Lord?’ I answered.

“‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, the one you are persecuting,’ he told me.

⁹“Those who were traveling with me did see the light, but they didn’t hear the voice that spoke to me.

¹⁰“‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.

“‘The Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you’ll be told everything that’s arranged for you to do.’

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¹¹“Since I couldn’t see because of the brightness of the light, those who were with me led me by the hand into Damascus.

¹²There a man called Ananias came to see me. He was a religious man who observed the law, and was highly respected by the Jews who lived in the town. ¹³He stood in front of me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive back your sight.’ At that very moment I could see again, and I looked at him.

¹⁴“He told me, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will, to see the One who is truly right^a, and to listen to what he has to say to you. ¹⁵You will testify for him to everyone about what you have seen and heard. So what are you waiting for? ¹⁶Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins as you call on his name.’

¹⁷“I returned to Jerusalem, and as I was praying in the Temple, I fell into a trance. ¹⁸I saw a vision of the Lord telling me, ‘Hurry! You need to leave Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept what you are telling them about me.’

¹⁹“I replied, ‘Lord, they certainly know that I went from synagogue to synagogue, beating and imprisoning those who trusted in you. ²⁰When Stephen was killed for testifying about you I was standing there in full agreement with those who killed him, holding their coats for them.’

²¹“The Lord told me, ‘Leave now, for I am sending you far away to the foreigners.’”

²²Up until this point they had listened to what he was saying, but then they started shouting, ‘Get rid of this man from the earth—he doesn’t deserve to live!’” ²³They screamed and tore off their coats and threw dust into the air. ²⁴The commander ordered Paul brought into the fortress, and gave orders for him to be interrogated by flogging so he could find out the reason people were shouting so much against Paul. ²⁵As they stretched him out and tied him down to flog him, Paul asked the centurion standing there, “Is it legal to flog a Roman citizen who hasn’t had a trial?”

²⁶When the centurion heard what Paul said, he went to the commander and asked him, “What are you doing? This man is a

^a 22:14. Referring to Jesus.

Roman citizen.”²⁷The commander came, and asked Paul, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”

Paul replied, “Yes I am.”

²⁸“I paid a lot of money to buy Roman citizenship,” said the commander.

“But I was born a citizen,” Paul replied.

²⁹Those who were about to interrogate Paul left immediately. The commander was worried when he found out that Paul was a Roman citizen because he had placed him in chains^a.

³⁰The next day, wanting to find out the reason why the Jews were accusing Paul, he had him released and taken before the chief priests and the whole council which he ordered to assemble. He had Paul brought down and placed him before them.

23 ¹Paul, looking right at the council, said, “Brothers, right up to now I have always conducted myself before God with a clear conscience.”

²Ananias the high priest ordered the officers standing beside Paul to hit him on the mouth.

³Paul said to him, “God will hit you, you whitewashed wall! You’re sitting there to judge me according to the law, and you order me to be hit in contravention of the law!”

⁴The officers standing beside Paul said, “How dare you insult the high priest!”

⁵“Brothers, I didn’t know that he was the high priest,” Paul replied. “As Scriptures say, ‘You must not speak evil of any ruler of your people.’”

⁶When Paul realized that some of the council were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, he shouted out, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee! I’m on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead!”

⁷When he said this, a tremendous argument broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees that split the council. ⁸(The

^a 22:29. It was illegal to place a Roman citizen in chains who had not first been found guilty.

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Sadducees say there is no resurrection from the dead, no angels, and no spirits, but Pharisees believe in all of these.)

⁹A great commotion erupted and some of the Pharisee teachers of the law stood up and argued fiercely, saying, “We find this man not guilty! Maybe a spirit spoke to him, or an angel!”

¹⁰The argument was getting out of hand, so the commander, concerned that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go and rescue him from them by force, and take him back into the fortress. ¹¹Afterwards, during the night, the Lord stood by Paul, and told him, “Keep up your courage! Just as you have given your testimony about me in Jerusalem, so you must be my witness in Rome as well.”

¹²Next day some Jews plotted together, and they took an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³Over forty were part of this conspiracy.

¹⁴They went to the chief priests and leaders and said, “We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵So you and the council should send word to the commander that he should bring Paul down to meet with you, as if you wanted to examine his case in more detail. We’re ready to kill him along the way.”

¹⁶But Paul’s nephew (his sister’s son) heard about their planned ambush, and he went into the fortress and told Paul about it. ¹⁷Paul called over one of the centurions, and told him, “Take this young man to the commander, because he has some information to share with him.”

¹⁸So the centurion took Paul’s nephew and brought him to the commander and told him, “The prisoner Paul called me over and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you.” ¹⁹The commander took the young man by the hand and drew him aside. “What do you have to tell me?” he asked quietly.

²⁰“The Jews have arranged to ask you to bring Paul to the council tomorrow, as if they wanted to ask more detailed questions about his case,” he explained. ²¹“Please don’t listen to them, because they have planned to ambush him with more than forty men who have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they

have killed him. They're ready right now, waiting for you to agree to the request."

²²The commander sent the young man on his way, warning him, "Don't tell anyone that you've told me about this." ²³He summoned two centurions and told them, "Get two hundred soldiers ready to go to Caesarea, together with seventy cavalrymen and two hundred spearmen. Be ready to leave at nine p.m. tonight. ²⁴Provide horses for Paul to ride to make sure he gets to Governor Felix safely."

²⁵He also wrote a letter that went like this:

²⁶From Claudius Lysias to His Excellency Governor Felix, greetings! ²⁷This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, when I arrived on the scene with soldiers and rescued him, because I had found out he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸I wanted to know the reason for their accusations, so I took him before their council. ²⁹I found out the charges against him had to do with issues regarding their law, but he was not guilty of anything that merited death or imprisonment. ³⁰When I discovered a plot against this man I sent him to you right away, ordering his accusers to make their complaints before you."

³¹So the soldiers followed their orders and took Paul overnight to Antipatris. ³²The next morning they sent him on with the cavalry, and went back to the fortress.

³³When the cavalry arrived at Caesarea they delivered the letter to the governor and brought Paul before him. ³⁴After reading the letter, the governor asked Paul what province he came from. When he learned he was from Cilicia he told Paul, ³⁵"I will investigate your case when your accusers arrive." He ordered Paul detained in Herod's palace.

24 ¹Five days later Ananias the high priest arrived with some of the Jewish leaders, and with a lawyer called Tertullus. They presented formal charges against Paul to the governor. ²When Paul was summoned, Tertullus began making his case against him. He said, "Your Excellency Governor Felix, we have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and as a result of your wise judgment reforms have been enacted for the benefit of the nation. ³All of us throughout the country are so very grateful to you for this.

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⁴“But in order not to bore you, please be so kind as to give us your attention for a short while. ⁵We discovered that this man is a real pest^a, stirring up rebellions among Jews all over the world, a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. ⁶He tried to defile the Temple, so we arrested him^b. ⁸By interrogating him yourself you will discover the truth of our accusations.” ⁹The Jews joined in, saying that this was all true.

¹⁰The Governor motioned for Paul to respond. “Recognizing you have been a judge over this nation for many years, I gladly make my defense,” Paul began. ¹¹“You can easily verify that I arrived in Jerusalem to worship just twelve days ago. ¹²Nobody found me arguing in the Temple with anyone, or inciting people to riot in any synagogue or anywhere in the city. ¹³Nor can they prove to you any of their accusations against me.

¹⁴“But I will admit this to you: I serve the God of our fathers following the beliefs of the Way, which they call a heretical sect. I believe everything the law teaches and what is written in the books of the prophets. ¹⁵I have the same hope in God that they do, believing that there will be a resurrection of the good and the wicked. ¹⁶Consequently I try to make sure I always have a clear conscience before God and everyone.

¹⁷“Having been away for a few years I returned to bring some money to help the poor and to give offerings to God.

¹⁸That’s what they found me doing in the Temple—completing the ceremony of purification. There was no crowd and no disturbance. ¹⁹But some Jews from the province of Asia were there, who should be present here before you today to bring their charges, if they have anything against me. ²⁰Otherwise let these men here explain themselves what crime they found me guilty of when I stood before the council, ²¹except for the time when I shouted out to them, ‘I am on trial before you today because of my belief in the resurrection of the dead.’

²²Felix who was well-informed about the Way then adjourned the trial. “When Lysias the commander comes I will make my decision regarding your case,” he said. ²³He ordered

^a 24:5. Literally, “plague.”

^b 24:6b-8a. There is doubt as to the originality of these verses and are omitted from the standard Greek text.

the centurion to keep Paul in custody but to allow him some measure of freedom and to let Paul's friends care for him without interference.

²⁴Some days later Felix returned with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him speak about trusting in Christ Jesus. ²⁵He discussed with them about living right, self-control, and the coming judgment. Felix became alarmed and told Paul, "You can go now, and I'll send for you when I get the chance." ²⁶Hoping that Paul would give him a bribe, Felix often sent for Paul and talked with him. ²⁷Two years passed and Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. To stay in favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

25 ¹Three days after Festus had arrived in the province^a he left Caesarea to go to Jerusalem. ²The chief priests and Jewish leaders came to him and brought their charges against Paul. ³They begged Festus as a favor to send Paul to Jerusalem, plotting to ambush and kill him on the way. ⁴But Festus replied that Paul was in custody at Caesarea and that he himself would be there shortly. ⁵"Your leaders can come with me, and make their accusation against this man, if he has done anything wrong," he told them.

⁶After staying there with them for no more than eight or ten days, Festus returned to Caesarea. The following day he took his seat as judge, and ordered that Paul be brought before him.

⁷When he came in the Jews that had come from Jerusalem surrounded him and brought many serious charges against him that they couldn't prove.

⁸Paul defended himself, telling them, "I have not sinned at all against the Jewish law, the Temple, or Caesar." ⁹But Festus, who was looking to gain favor with the Jews, asked Paul, "Are you willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried before me there about these matters?"

¹⁰"I'm standing before Caesar's court to be tried, right where I should be," Paul replied. "I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you very well know. ¹¹If I've committed a crime and

^a 25:1. The Roman province of Judea.

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have done something that deserves death, I do not ask to be pardoned from a death sentence. But if there's no substance to these accusations they're making against me, then nobody has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!" ¹²Festus then conferred with the council, and replied, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go!"

¹³Several days later, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice arrived in Caesarea and came to pay their respects to Festus.

¹⁴They were staying some time so Festus presented Paul's case to the king, explaining, "There's a man that Felix left as a prisoner here. ¹⁵When I was in Jerusalem, the Jewish chief priests and leaders came and made accusations against him and asked me to sentence him. ¹⁶I replied that it is not according to Roman law to convict anyone without having them face their accusers and giving them the opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. ¹⁷So when his accusers arrived here, I wasted no time and convened the court the very next day. I ordered the man to be brought in. ¹⁸However, when the accusers got up they didn't bring charges of criminal acts as I expected.

¹⁹Instead they brought up controversies over religious questions, and over a man called Jesus who was dead but whom Paul insisted was alive. ²⁰Since I was undecided as to how to proceed in investigating such matters, I asked him if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried there. ²¹However Paul appealed for his case to be heard by the emperor, so I ordered him detained until I could send him to Caesar."

²²"I would like to hear the man myself," Agrippa told Festus.

"I'll arrange for you to hear him tomorrow," Festus replied.

²³The next day Agrippa arrived with Bernice in great ceremonial splendor and entered the auditorium with the commanders and leading citizens. Then Festus ordered Paul to be brought in.

²⁴"King Agrippa, and everyone who is present here with us," Festus began, "you see before you this man whom all the Jewish people, both here and in Jerusalem, have complained to me about, shouting that he shouldn't be allowed to live.

²⁵However I discovered he has not committed any crime that deserves death, and since he has appealed to the emperor I

decided to send him there. ²⁶But I don't have anything specific to write about him to His Imperial Majesty. That's why I have brought him before you so I can have something definite to write. ²⁷It doesn't seem fair to me to send on a prisoner without explaining the charges made against him."

26 ¹Agrippa then said to Paul, "You are free to speak on your own behalf."

With a sweep of his arm, Paul began his defense. ²"I am delighted, King Agrippa, to make my defense before you today regarding everything I am accused of by the Jews, ³particularly because you are an expert in all Jewish issues and customs. I beg your patient indulgence as you listen to what I have to say."

⁴"All the Jews know my life story—from my earliest days beginning in my own country and then in Jerusalem. ⁵They have known me for a long time and can verify, if they choose to, that I have followed the religious school that observes our faith in the strictest way—I lived as a Pharisee.

⁶"Now I am standing here to be judged regarding the promised hope God gave to our fathers ⁷that our twelve tribes hoped to receive as they continually dedicated themselves in God's service. Yes, it's because of this hope that I'm accused by the Jews, Your Majesty! ⁸"Why should any of you think it's unbelievable that God raises the dead?

⁹Previously I was sincerely convinced I should do as much as I could to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰This is what I did in Jerusalem. I threw many of the believers in prison, having been given authority to do this by the chief priests. When they were sentenced to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹I had them punished in all the synagogues, trying to make them recant. I was so furiously opposed to them that I went to cities outside our country to persecute them.

¹²"That's why one day I was on my way to Damascus with the authority and orders from the chief priests. ¹³At about noon as I was on my way, Your Majesty, I saw a light from heaven that blazed brighter than the sun. It shone around me and those who were traveling with me. ¹⁴All of us fell to the ground. Then I

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heard a voice speaking to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It’s hard for you to fight against me!’^a

¹⁵“Who are you, Lord?” I asked.

“I am Jesus, the one you’re persecuting,” the Lord replied.
¹⁶“But pick yourself up and get to your feet. The reason why I’ve appeared to you is to appoint you as my servant, to be a witness for me, telling others how you have seen me and everything I will reveal to you. ¹⁷I will save you from you own people and from the foreigners. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes so they can turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and so that they can receive forgiveness for their sins and a place with those who are set right as they trust in me.”

¹⁹“Clearly, King Agrippa, I could not disobey this vision from heaven. ²⁰First in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and then all over Judea and also to the foreigners I shared the message of repentance: how they should turn to God, demonstrating their repentance through their actions. ²¹That’s why the Jews seized me in the Temple and tried to kill me.

²²“God has looked after me so I can stand here today as a witness to everyone, both to ordinary people and to those who are important. I am only repeating what Moses and the prophets said would happen—²³how the Messiah had to suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead he would announce the light of God’s salvation^b to both Jews and foreigners.”

²⁴Festus interrupted Paul as he made his defense, shouting out, “Paul, you’ve gone mad! All your knowledge is driving you insane!”

²⁵“I’m not mad, Festus your Excellency,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and makes sense. ²⁶The king recognizes this, and I’m explaining it very clearly. I am sure that he is aware of what’s been happening, because none of this took place as if it were hidden in a corner.

²⁷“King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets said? I’m sure you do!”

^a 26:14. Literally, “kick against the goads”—the image of the prods used to direct livestock.

^b 26:23. Implied. The original simply says “light.”

²⁸“Do you think you can convince me to become a Christian so quickly?” Agrippa asked Paul.

²⁹“Whether it takes a short time or a long time doesn’t matter,” Paul answered. “But my prayer to God is that not just you, but everybody listening to me today would become like me—except for these chains!”

³⁰The King stood up, along with the governor and Bernice, and everyone who had been sitting with them. ³¹They conferred together after they had left. “This man hasn’t done anything that deserves death or imprisonment,” they concluded. ³²Agrippa told Festus, “He could have been freed if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.”

27 ¹When the time came for us to sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion called Julius of the Imperial Regiment. ²We boarded a ship based in Adramyttium that was headed to the coastal ports of the province of Asia, and we set sail. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, went with us. ³The next day we had a brief stop at Sidon, and Julius was kind enough to let Paul go ashore and visit his friends so they could provide what he needed.

⁴We set out from there and sailed to the leeward of Cyprus because the winds were against us. ⁵Then we sailed directly across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, arriving at the port of Myra in Lycia. ⁶There the centurion found a ship from Alexandria that would be sailing to Italy, and arranged for us to join it.

⁷We sailed slowly for several days and eventually arrived off Cnidus. But since the winds wouldn’t allow us to continue we sailed across to the lee of Crete, near to Salmone. ⁸With some difficulty we made our way along the coast until we arrived at a place called Fair Havens, near to the town of Lasea. ⁹We’d lost a lot of time, and the voyage was becoming dangerous because it was now after the Fast^a. Paul warned them, ¹⁰“Men, I predict that this voyage will result in much hardship and loss—not just of the cargo and the ship, but also our very lives.” ¹¹But the centurion

^a 27:9. The Fast^a: The Day of Atonement, probably in October, so sailing at this season would be problematic.

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paid more attention to the advice of the ship's captain and its owner than to what Paul said.

¹²Since the harbor was not large enough to over-winter in, the majority were in favor of leaving and trying if possible to reach Phoenix and spend the winter there—a harbor in Crete that faces northwest and southwest.

¹³When a moderate south wind began to blow, they thought they could do what they planned. They pulled up the anchor and sailed close inshore along the coast of Crete. ¹⁴But it wasn't long before a hurricane-force wind called a "northeaster" blew from the land. ¹⁵The ship was forced out to sea and could not face into the wind. So we had to give in and allow ourselves to be driven before the wind. ¹⁶We were eventually able to run into the lee of a small island called Cauda, and managed with some difficulty to secure the ship's boat^a on board. ¹⁷After hoisting it aboard, the sailors bound ropes around the hull to strengthen it. Then, worried that they would be wrecked on the Syrtis banks, they lowered the sea anchor and allowed the ship to be driven along.

¹⁸The following day as we were violently thrown about by the storm, the crew started throwing the cargo overboard. ¹⁹On the third day they grabbed the ship's gear and tossed it into the sea. ²⁰We hadn't seen the sun or the stars for many days as the storm beat down on us; so any hope of our being saved was lost.

²¹Nobody had eaten anything for a long time. Then Paul stood before them and told them, "Men, you should have listened to me and not sailed from Crete. Then you could have avoided all this hardship and loss. ²²But now I advise you keep up your courage, because nobody is going to be lost, just the ship. ²³Last night an angel of my God^b and whom I serve, stood beside me.

²⁴"Don't be afraid, Paul," he told me. "You have to stand trial before Caesar. See, God has graciously given to you everyone who is sailing with you." ²⁵So men, have courage! I trust God, and I'm convinced things will happen just as I was told. ²⁶However, we will be wrecked on some island."

^a 27:16." Ship's boat"—a small boat like a dinghy or lifeboat, sometimes towed behind a ship, sometimes tied down on deck. Also in verse 30.

^b 27:23. Literally, "the God to whom I belong."

²⁷At around midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, still being blown over the Sea of Adria, the crew suspected they were getting close to land. ²⁸They checked the depth and found it was forty meters, and a little while later they checked again and it was thirty meters.

²⁹They were concerned that we might be wrecked on rocks, so they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for daylight to come.

³⁰The crew tried to leave the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the water with the pretext that they were going to drop anchors from the ship's bow. ³¹But Paul told the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless the crew stays with the ship, you will be lost." ³²So the soldiers cut the ropes holding the ship's boat, and let it loose.

³³At daybreak Paul urged all of them to eat something. "It's been fourteen days now that you haven't eaten anything because you've been so worried and preoccupied," he told them.

³⁴"Please do what I say and eat some food. This will help give you strength. For not even a hair from anyone's head is going to be lost!" ³⁵When he'd finished speaking he picked up a loaf of bread, and gave thanks to God for it in front of everyone. Then he broke the bread, and began to eat. ³⁶Everyone was encouraged and they ate too. ³⁷The total number of people on board was two hundred and seventy-six.

³⁸Once they'd had enough to eat, the crew made the ship lighter by throwing the supplies of wheat overboard. ³⁹When dawn came they didn't recognize the coastline, but they saw a bay that had a beach. They planned to try running the ship aground there. ⁴⁰So they cut the anchor ropes, leaving the anchors in the sea. At the same time they untied the ropes holding the rudders, raised the foresail to the wind, and made for the beach.

⁴¹But they struck a sandbar and the ship grounded. The bow hit, and stuck so firm it couldn't be moved, while the stern began to be broken apart by the pounding surf.

⁴²The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so none of them could swim away and escape. ⁴³But the centurion, because he wanted to save Paul's life, prevented them from doing this, and ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make

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for land. ⁴⁴The rest grabbed hold of planks and other wreckage, so that everyone was able to reach land safely.

28 ¹When we were safe ashore, we discovered that we were on the island of Malta. ²The people there were very kind—they started a fire and called all of us over so we could warm up from the rain and the cold. ³Paul collected a bundle of firewood and threw it on the fire. But a poisonous snake was driven out of the bundle because of the heat and bit him, fastening itself on his hand. ⁴When the people there saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, “This man must be a murderer. Even though he escaped death from the sea, Justice won’t let him live.”

⁵However Paul shook the snake off into the fire, and suffered no ill-effects. ⁶They were expecting him to swell up, or suddenly fall down dead. But after waiting a long time, they saw that nothing bad had happened to him so they changed their minds and decided he must be a god.

⁷Nearby were lands that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us and looked after us for three days very hospitably. ⁸Now Publius’ father was sick, lying in bed suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and prayed for him, placed his hands on him, and healed him. ⁹After this happened, everyone else who was sick on the island came and was healed. ¹⁰They presented us with many gifts, and when we had to sail they provided everything we needed for the voyage.

¹¹After a three month stay we set sail aboard a ship from Alexandria having a figurehead of the Heavenly Twins^a that had spent the winter at the island. ¹²We stopped at Syracuse, and spent three days there. ¹³From there we sailed on to Rhegium. The following day a south wind blew, and on the second day we arrived at the port of Puteoli, ¹⁴where we discovered some believers. They asked us to stay with them for a week.

So we came to Rome. ¹⁵When some of the believers from Rome heard we had arrived they came to meet us at the Forum

^a 28:11. Named after the twin gods Castor and Pollux.

of Appius and the Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he was thankful to God and much encouraged. ¹⁶When we entered Rome, Paul was permitted to stay under house arrest with a soldier to guard him.

¹⁷Three days later Paul invited the Jewish leaders there to come to see him. When they were all together he told them, “Brothers, even though I had not done anything wrong against the people or the customs of our forefathers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Roman authorities. ¹⁸After they had interrogated me they wanted to release me because I had done nothing that warranted execution. ¹⁹But the Jewish leaders opposed this, so I was forced to appeal to Caesar—not that I had any accusations against my own people. ²⁰That’s why I asked to see you, and talk to you, because it is on account of the hope of Israel that I am chained up like this.”

²¹“We have not received any letters from Judea about you, and none of our people have come here with reports against you or to speak badly of you,” they told him. ²²“But we do want to hear from you what you believe—especially regarding this sect, which we know is condemned everywhere.”

²³They made an appointment to meet with him. On that day many people came to where he was staying. From morning till night Paul was explaining to them, telling them about the kingdom of God. He tried to convince them about Jesus using the writings of the law of Moses and the prophets. ²⁴Some accepted what Paul said, but some refused to believe. ²⁵They couldn’t agree among themselves, and they left after Paul told them this: “The Holy Spirit said it well through Isaiah the prophet to your forefathers, ²⁶“Go to these people and tell them, “Even though you hear, you won’t ever understand, and even though you see, you won’t ever comprehend. ²⁷For the minds of these people have become calloused and hard, their ears cannot hear, their eyes are shut, in case they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their minds, and might come back to me and I would heal them.””

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²⁸“Consequently you should know that this salvation that comes from God has been sent to the foreigners and they will listen.”^a

³⁰For two full years Paul stayed there in the house he rented, welcoming everyone who came to see him. ³¹He spoke of the kingdom of God, and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ very boldly. No one prevented him.

^a 28:29. This verse is not in all manuscripts, and some commentators think it may have been added.

