

A BRIEF BACKGROUND, OUTLINE, ANALYSIS, & COMMENTARY The Gospels of Luke, John, Acts

**By Willis C. Newman
(B.A., M.Ed., M.Div., Ph.D., D.Min.)**

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INTRODUCTION

This work is not meant to be exhaustive in scope, but to introduce you, the student, to a major overview of the Gospels of Luke and John plus the Acts of the Apostles. These notes are the culmination of many years of my teaching New Testament studies, but as time rolls on, and the Lord permits, I will add more information. Here you get the basics.

This work is written in outline form. The reason being I first put them down in lecture form, and have kept up the pattern. Since I am still teaching, and this is an online course, I trust the format is still useful to you.

This work is organized in three major sections. First, I cover the introductory issues of the Gospel of Luke, and second and third, I do the same thing with John and Acts. For details on an introduction to the four Gospels, I recommend my commentary on the introduction to the Gospels, Matthew, and Mark. There I cover an overview of the Gospels that includes the nature and critical issues of the Gospels along with a brief presentation of the cultural and historical context. In addition, more details on background material can be found in my New Testament Survey work.

You will find a general bibliography for the entire New Testament at the back. I also include several online sources that are invaluable for you who are taking this course online.

The following table of contents will give you greater detail in following the material, and locating various subjects with comments. I give the page numbers of the outlines of each book that will break down in greater detail the organization of the material, and how to find comment on various subjects.

One magnificent product of the computer age is being able to put this work in pdf format. You can use this tool as an index. Just type in the word you are looking for, and Adobe will find them for you.

I wish you all the best as you undertake this study about the wonderful life of our wonderful Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Willis C. Newman
Tacoma, Washington, 2009

About the Author

I am reluctant to talk about myself, but I must to establish a degree of credibility. I also place this here so you can get a little acquainted with me. I received my B.A. in Psychology and M.Ed. in counseling from the University of Portland. I earned the M.Div. from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (pastoral studies), the Ph.D. in church administration from California Graduate School of Theology, and the D.Min. in cross cultural studies from Faith Evangelical Seminary (Tacoma).

I also have taken other courses, and obtained certificates. For example, I have the "Grad Certificate" in Bible from Multnomah Bible College (Portland, Oregon), and a certificate in fund raising management from the University of Washington.

I grew up in central Idaho on a cattle ranch. In my youth I was a cowboy, sawmill worker, construction worker, and did other labor type work. I have three living children: Willie, Teri, and Matthew, who I just adopted. Matt is the son of my Filipina wife, Esmeralda. We have been married almost 10 years. I have six grandchildren, and one great granddaughter.

I served eight years as a pastor, and seven years as a missionary to the Kingdom of Tonga where I established Faith Seminary - Tonga. I have taught at the college or graduate school level for over 20 years at such places as International College & Graduate School of Theology (Hawaii), Faith Evangelical Seminary (Tacoma), and at the community college level in America. I have taught as guest lecturer in the South Pacific for International School of Theology (Manila).

I am an Adjunct Assistant Professor at a community college, and a Professor at Faith Evangelical Seminary. My favorite music is American Country and Western, Hawaiian Slack guitar, blues, and Jazz. My favorite sports are boxing, rodeo, and American professional football. This may sound corny, but the book that has influenced me the most is the Christian Bible.

All the best to you my friend as you study the wonderful word of God through the Bible. You will do well. Stay encouraged in the work of Christ.

Dr. Willis Newman, 2009

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outline & analysis
of Luke, John, Acts

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**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE:
A BACKGROUND, OUTLINE,
ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY**

**BRIEF CONTEXT OF
THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.**

In this examination of the Gospel of Luke, my objective is to present a summary of background and introductory issues, point out some general observations, delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the Gospel. We will then give an extended analysis of the Gospel along with various comments.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

A. THE AUTHOR.

The early Christian tradition is unanimous in assigning the authorship of the third Gospel to Luke. He was a Greek speaking, educated medical doctor (Colossians 4:12-14). He possibly was born in Antioch of Syria, and practiced medicine in Philippi. He was not an eyewitness to the ministry of Christ. He probably was converted in Antioch by those who fled Jerusalem following the early persecution of Christians by King Herod Agrippa I. Perhaps Paul brought Luke to Christ. Luke did public, itinerant missionary work, and was one who answered the Macedonian call (Acts 16:13, 17).

His ethnicity was Greek, and he was a friend and companion with Paul (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). Paul identified Luke as being distinct from Jews (Colossians 4:11). Luke accompanied Paul on part of his missionary journeys. He accompanied Paul to Rome and remained with him during Paul's first imprisonment. Many think Luke wrote both his Gospel and Acts during this time. During Paul's second imprisonment, Luke was his only companion, showing great devotion to the Apostle (2 Timothy 4:11).

Luke later adopted Philippi as his headquarters, and help establish the church there while Paul traveled to Corinth during the second missionary journey (Acts 16:40). Very little more is known of Luke. An anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke's Gospel claims that he remained without family and died at the age of 84 in Boeatia, Greece. He is the author of this Gospel and The Acts of the Apostles. Luke was the first great church historian and literary apologist for Christianity (Luke 1:1-4).

B. DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING.

The date of writing was about A.D. 60, as Paul went to prison in Rome the first time in A.D. 60. It was before A.D. 70, as that was the year of Jerusalem's destruction. Luke

would have mentioned such a momentous event, but he only gave the account of Jesus predicting the event (Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24). The book of Acts ends with Paul in prison in Rome, so Luke's history goes up to that point, but no further.

The location of writing possibly was in Rome. Luke was with Paul when he reached Rome, and there Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles:" Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians (Colossians 4:14), and Philemon (23, 24). Some say the Gospel was written in Achaia, which was a Greek province. Probably it first appeared there. Another view has Luke writing the Gospel during Paul's two year imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 24:27), which would place the date slightly before A.D. 60. This is the view that I hold.

C. THEME AND PURPOSE.

The Gospel of Luke places attention on Christ, the Son of Man, the Perfect Man, and Savior of the World. The emphasis is that this is the Gospel for the Greek world in a wider sense, although it was directed toward someone named, "Theophilus," whose identity is unknown. Some speculate he was a Gentile. The person may have been of some rank, as Luke uses the title, "most excellent" (Luke 1:3).

The first four chapters point to Jesus as the Messiah, and show a link to the Old Testament. This would suggest the reader was a person closely related to Judaism. However, that part of the world was Hellenized, that is, deeply entrenched in Greek culture and language, which meant the Gospel needed to appeal to the Greeks. Luke was a Greek, thus, he would have written from a Greek frame of reference.

Chapters 1:1-4:13 establish the identity of Christ. In a world with many Greek gods, Luke would need to distinguish Jesus from all others. This he did by establishing Jesus as the God of the Universe. Chapters 4:14-9:50 portray Jesus' teachings and demonstrations of power. Chapters 9:51-19:44 display the contention between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders. Chapters 19:45-24:53 speak of the final trials of Jesus, and his death, burial, and resurrection.

The purpose of the Gospel was to carefully document the events of Christ's life, so that Theophilus, "*might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught*" (Luke 1:4). In other words, the Gospel was a discipleship manual. However, the Gospel also has an apologetic flavor, that is, a defense of the Christian Faith, and finally, it had an evangelistic thrust. Paul used a similar pattern of both defending the faith and evangelistic intent with King Herod Agrippa II (e.g. Acts 26:2, 3, 26, 27).

D. THE TARGET READERSHIP.

The immediate readership of this Gospel is someone by the name of Theophilus. It is also oriented toward all Gentiles. For an extended examination of this man, see the article on, Who is Theophilus? at the end of this commentary on Luke.

F. THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF LUKE'S GOSPEL.

Each of the Bible books has their own distinctive flavor. This is determined by the purpose of the book (or letter), the historical, cultural, geographic conditions of the time

the readership, and the unique background and abilities of the writer. People, even today, tend to look at things through their own distinctive perceptions. For example, business people tend to look at things through the eyes of a businessperson: where can they cut costs, how can get more customers, etc. A psychologist tends to look at people and events through the lens of their training and what they do every day. Luke was a Greek medical doctor; consequently, he tended to view people and events from the perspective of a doctor.

The medical thrust is unique in Luke's Gospel. Luke's medical background is evident from his use of medical terms (e.g. 4:38; 7:15; 14:2; 18:25), and unusual interest in the accounts of healing and details of diagnoses and cures (e.g. 4:38; 5:12; 8:55; 22:50). He shows a deep interest in the sick, the afflicted, and the poor, which indicates his great sympathy for hurting people.

The infancy narratives receive focus. Luke records the inner thoughts of Mary, the announcements to Zacharias and Mary, the songs of Elizabeth and Mary, birth and childhood of John the Baptist, the birth of Jesus, circumcision of Jesus, and His presentation in the Temple, He gives details of the childhood of Jesus.

Luke had a very special interest in individuals.

Luke showed an unusual interest in the prayer life of others.

Luke contributed much concerning the place and work of women.

Luke had special concern about the issues of poverty and wealth.

Luke's poetic temperament led him to record the beautiful hymns of the nativity: Magnificat, Benedictus, and Nunc Dimittis.

II. NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS AND EMPHASIS.

Christ's genealogy is traced back to Adam. It does not stop at David or Abraham as in Matthew. It goes back to the first man, because in Luke, Jesus, as the Son of Man, embraces all men everywhere.

This Gospel specially portrays Jesus as praying. He is here as man is, and should be: the dependent One. Today we are in danger of becoming independent of God. Thinking we can manage for ourselves. It is not until we find ourselves in difficulties that we begin to pray. But Jesus, the perfect man, is found in Luke's Gospel continually upon His knees.

In Luke 9:6, Christ's disciples preached everywhere. This is because as the Son of Man He has come for all men. In Matthew, as the King of the Jews, He sent His disciples out with the prohibition to not go in the way of the Gentiles.

Humanity seems to be at the front in Luke's Gospel. The parables begin with the words, "a certain man." In Matthew, the kingly Gospel, the same parables begin with, "the kingdom of heaven is like...."

In Luke, we see His human sympathy. He wept over Jerusalem, healed the ear of Malchus, and took note of the thief on the cross. Christ's tender sympathy with mankind is found throughout the Gospel.

Luke records in part the Sermon on the Mount, but omits allusions to the "old times" and references to the "law and the prophets," such as in Matthew where the Jewish flavor, history and emphasis is strong. In Luke, Christ is the Son of Man coming to the whole race, and the race as such had not "old times" and no "law and the prophets" in the sense that the Jews had.

In Luke we find Christ as man, such as in the garden with prayer, the agony and the bloody sweat.

III. SAMPLES OF CHRIST'S TEACHING IN LUKE

1. On the Messiah 1:26ff.
2. Insight on abortion: when life begins (1:41, 44).
3. On temptation (4:1-13).
4. On evangelism (5:1-11).
5. On prayer (5:16; 6:12; 10:2; 22:40).
6. On perspective in life (10:17-20).
7. On priorities in life (10:27).
8. On heaven (15:7, 10).
9. On money (16:13-15).
10. On the spiritual afterlife in Hell (16:19-31).
11. On faith (22:31)
12. On the Bible (24:27, 44, 45).
13. On the Great Commission (24:46-48).

BRIEF OUTLINE OF LUKE.

I. THE PREPARATION OF JESUS CHRIST (1:1-4:13).

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK (1:1-4).

B. CHILDHOOD OF JOHN AND JESUS (1:5-2:52).

1. The birth of John proclaimed (1:5-25).
2. The birth of Jesus proclaimed (1:26-56).
3. The birth of John Baptist (1:57-80).
4. The birth of Jesus (2:1-38).
5. The childhood of Jesus (2:39-52).

C. CHRIST'S MINISTRY PROCLAIMED (chapter 3).

1. The baptism of Jesus (3:1-22).
2. The genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38).

II. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST (4:1-19:48).

A. HIS MINISTRY IN GALILEE (4:1-19:48).

1. Jesus was tempted by Satan (4:1-13).
2. Jesus introduced His ministry (4:14-30).
3. Jesus demonstrated His authority and power (4:31-6:11).
4. Jesus selected His disciples (Apostles) (6:12-49).
5. Jesus' activity in ministry (7:1-9:50)

B. HIS MINISTRY IN JUDEA & PEREA (9:51-19:48).

1. Jesus was rejected by the Samaritan (9:51-56).
2. Jesus was rejected by the men of the world (9:57-62).
3. Jesus commissioned the 70 disciples (10:1-24).
4. Jesus gave parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37).
5. Jesus taught Mary and Martha about priorities (10:38-42).
6. Jesus taught the disciples to pray (11:1-13).
7. Jesus was rejected by nation Israel (11:14-36).
8. Jesus was rejected by the Jewish religious leaders (11:37-54).
9. Jesus taught about hypocrisy (12:1-12).
10. Jesus taught about greed (12:13-35).
11. Jesus taught about faithfulness (12:35-48).
12. Jesus taught about division and signs (12:49-59).
13. Jesus taught about repentance (13:1-9).
14. Jesus taught about hypocrisy (13:10-17).
15. Jesus taught about the kingdom (13:18-35).
16. Jesus taught about different kinds of people (chapter 14).
17. Jesus taught about soul-winning (15:1-10).
18. Jesus taught about the prodigal son (15:11-31).
19. Jesus taught about wealth (16:1-18).
20. Jesus taught about Hell (16:19-31).
21. Jesus taught about various principles (17:1-19:27).

III. WEEK OF PASSION: DEATH, BURIAL (19:28-23:56)

A. DAY ONE: SUNDAY

1. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:28-40).
2. Jesus wept over Jerusalem's destruction (19:41-44).

B. DAY TWO: MONDAY (19:45-48).

1. Casting out moneychangers
2. Teaching the people

C. DAY THREE: TUESDAY (20:1-21:38).

1. Christ confronted by Jewish leaders (20:1-8).
2. The parable of the vineyard (20:9-18).
3. The religious leaders tried to entrap Jesus (20:19-40).
4. Christ stated his authority (20:41-47).

5. Christ taught on giving: poor widow versus rich (21:1-4).
6. Christ taught on His second coming (21:5-38).

D. DAY FOUR: WEDNESDAY (22:1-6).

1. The betrayal by Judas
2. The plot to capture Jesus

E. DAY FIVE: THURSDAY (22:7-53).

1. The final Passover: Lord's Supper (22:7-38).
2. Dispute among the disciples (22:24-30)
3. Predicted sifting by Satan of Peter (22:31-34).
4. Christ predicted His suffering (22:35-38)
5. Suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:39-46).
6. The arrest of Jesus (22:47-53).

F. DAY SIX: FRIDAY (22:54-23:55).

1. The denial of Jesus by Peter (22:54-62).
2. Humiliation and beating of Christ (22:63-65).
3. Trial before the Sanhedrin (22:66-71).
4. Trial before Pilate (23:1-5).
5. Trial before Herod Antipas (23:6-12).
6. Second trial before Pilate (23:13-25).
7. Crucifixion of Christ (23:26-49).
8. Trudging to the Skull: Golgotha (23:26-31)
9. The two criminals (23:32-43).
10. Jesus' death (23:44-49).
11. Christ's burial in the tomb (23:50-55).

G. DAY SEVEN: SATURDAY (23:56).

1. Resting on the Sabbath
2. Preparation of spices and perfumes.

IV. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST (Chapter 24).

A. THE EMPTY TOMB (24:1-12).

B. CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO THE EMMAUS DISCIPLES (24:13-35).

C. HIS RESURRECTED BODY AND LIFE (24:36-43).

D. THE GREAT COMMISSION (24:44-49).

E. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST (24:50-53).

Extended notes

F. THE HEROD FAMILY.

G. WHO WAS THEOPHILUS?

H. TIMELINE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE **ANALYSIS, COMMENTS, PRACTICAL NOTES**

I. THE PREPARATION OF JESUS CHRIST (1:1-4:13).

A. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK (1:1-4).

Theophilus mean, "God-lover." His name connects this Gospel to the book of Acts, and places one writer as the author of both. (Cf. Acts 1:1). The author was Luke. Luke says his own work was motivated by others and shows his own careful, systematic research, and recording of historical and spiritual facts. The Holy Spirit guided Luke so that his selection and presentation of events produced the end product (the Gospel), which was without error. Note the following characteristics of Luke's work.

1. He interviewed eye witnesses (v. 2).
2. He did careful, thorough, systematic research (v. 3).
3. He employed precise documentation (v. 4).
4. He used orderly, accurate writing, which was not necessarily chronological, but logical in keeping with his purpose (v. 3).
5. He had a clear purpose and intent (v. 4).

B. CHILDHOOD OF JOHN AND JESUS (1:5-2:52).

There was the pronouncement of the birth of John the Baptist by the angel Gabriel (1:11, 19, 26; cf. Daniel 8:16; 9:21; 10:13, 21; 12:1; Revelation 12:7; Jude 9). Gabriel and Michael the archangel are the only two good angels of God that are named in the Bible. Gabriel's function seems to be the delivery of special messages to various people, and Michael, an archangel, seems to be instructed to protect Israel. Perhaps they have other jobs as well.

There was the pronouncement of and conception of Jesus (1:26-56). Note the many Old Testament Scripture verses in Mary's praise, showing how the Scriptures were loved in the home of Jesus.

The conception of Jesus was through the Virgin Mary, and a special miracle by the Holy Spirit (1:34, 35). In some manner unknown to us, the Holy Spirit protected that conception in such a way that Jesus' human nature was not infected with sin; thus, His sinlessness (1 Peter 2:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21). This condition did not make Jesus any less a human, because sin is not necessarily inherent to the nature of humanity.

Sin was a malady introduced to the human nature at the fall of Adam, not at the creation of the human race. At the finish of the original creation, God saw that all He had made was very good (Genesis 1:31); thus, sin entered the human race subsequent to creation, and through Adam (cf. Romans 5:12-14). Sin also impacted creation, and brought ruinous consequences (Romans 8:19-22).

The birth of John the Baptist is recorded (1:57-80). He and Jesus were cousins, and grew up together. One may note how the baby, John, when only six months in his mother's womb, exhibited life and an intellectual, emotional, willing awareness, and understanding. John even responded to events outside of his mother while still in the

womb (1:36, 41, 44; cf. Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 136:13-16; 51:5). He was a person by six months, and expressed all the attributes of humanity and personhood. He was much more than a “fetus,” or a blob of pre-human matter. John was fully human during the second trimester of prenatal development. This is not to say that he was not human from the time of conception, because we are humans at conception.

The genealogy of Jesus is given (3:23-38). Evidently, this line is traced through his mother, Mary (cf. notes on Matthew introduction). The line mentions Noah, Enoch, Seth, and Adam as the first from God. Consequently, Luke confirms the Genesis story of creation and the flood as literal history. Jesus’ three year public ministry started when He was about 30 years of age (3:23). His birth is estimated at 5 B.C.

II. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST IN GALILEE (4:1-9:50)

A. JESUS’ TEMPTATION (4:1-13).

Several things can be noted about His temptation. There is the reality of Satan, his personal opposition to the work of God, his misuse of the Bible, and distortion of godly priorities. Jesus taught that the worship and service to God was of greater value than the attainment of all the glory and power of this world’s kingdoms. Notice the stress on the importance of the Bible in our lives. The Bible is the standard used to determine what values and priorities to focus our attention and energy upon. We all have a set of core values that we have chosen for our lives, and which to us are valuable, important and satisfying. Furthermore, the core energy that drives the anti-God values and forces of this physical world is generated in the spiritual realm: from Satan and his cohorts (Cf. Ephesians 6:10-20).

For more details on the temptation of Jesus, you can study the notes on Matthew 4:1-11 and Mark 1:9-13.

B. JESUS INTRODUCED HIS MINISTRY (4:14-30).

Christ was reading from Isaiah 61:1ff. He stopped reading at 61:2a, because the rest of the section is reserved for His second advent to earth when He brings judgment. What He did read gave the purpose for His first advent. His purpose has a two-fold application: that of physical healing to be primarily realized in the resurrection, and secondly, a spiritual application as explained in the following parenthesis. In 4:18, 19, He was to:

1. Preach the gospel to the (spiritually) poor.
2. Proclaim release to the captives (of sin).
3. Recover sight to the (spiritually) blind.
4. Set free those downtrodden (by sin).
5. Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord (the Messianic Kingdom).

The Scripture He read was fulfilled that day (4:21). The kingdom was offered. The physical historical applications of the reading would have been realized had the Jews received their King with His kingdom. The reason is that those conditions are spoken of in those prophetic sections that speak of the quality of life during the Messianic Kingdom (Cf. Isaiah 11:1-10; 35:1-10).

The dominant accomplishment of Jesus at His first advent was dealing with the sin problem. Then He was the suffering Savior who saves His people from sin. In the future, He will be the reigning King who will rule and judge the world. This is explained in the rest of Isaiah's predictions where in 61:2b he speaks of the day of vengeance of our God. Jesus did not read that part.

We do not mean to declare that physical healings are not for today. Christ healed multitudes in His day on earth, and powerful healings are accomplished today in the name and power of Christ. However, if one wishes to prove from the Bible the great healing power of God for today, they would be better served to select different verses than these.

C. JESUS DEMONSTRATED HIS AUTHORITY AND POWER (4:31-6:11).

1. He had authority over demons (4:31-37). (See notes on Mark 3:7-12, and the extended notes at the end of Mark's Gospel, #D).
2. He had authority over disease (4:38-34).
3. He had authority over the disciples (5:1-11). This section outlines the methods the disciples were to use in soul-winning. The principles may be outlined as follows.
 - Soul-winners go to the unsaved (v. 4).
 - Soul-winners persist in the face of discouragement (v. 5).
 - God directs and gives success and results (v. 6).
 - Cooperation between Christians is needed (v. 7).
 - Supernatural events occur during evangelism (vv. 8, 9).
 - Soul-winning is a major trait of a spiritual Christian (v. 10).
 - Sensitivity to life's priorities is needed by soul-winners (v. 11).
4. He had authority over disease (5:2-26). Again, it is true that Jesus heals physical disease in this life. It is not true, however, that Jesus heals all illness in this life (2 Corinthians 12:7-10; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20; Philippians 2:27). After all, Christians die. Sometimes God does not heal for various reasons: to glorify Himself (John 9:1-3), to show forth His Power in human weakness (2 Corinthians 12:7-10), or chastisement (1 Corinthians 11:30). We are to pray for healing in faith, from an obedient life, and use medicine (James 5:14-18). Sometimes God heals instantly, and sometimes it is over time. Sometimes Satan will heal for his own purposes as he performs feats of powers through his agents (Acts 8:9-11), and he causes sickness (Luke 13:16). Physical healing is, indeed, in the atonement (cf. Isaiah 53:4-6), but that physical benefit Christ purchased for us will be fully realized by us in our experience at the day of resurrection when we receive our glorified bodies (cf. Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 15:42-50).

5. Jesus prayed (5:16). Prayer was a source of His power. He often went away to a secluded place to pray. A study of the prayer life of Jesus from this Gospel would include the following principles for our application.
 - Jesus prayed at His baptism, the start of His ministry (3:21).
 - Jesus prayed in the midst of a busy ministry (5:16).
 - Jesus prayed all night before selecting his key workers (6:12, 13).
 - Jesus prayed when teaching others (9:18).
 - Jesus prayed before important events (9:28, 29).
 - Jesus' prayers were an example to others (11:1, 2).
 - Jesus prayed for His workers (22:31, 32).
 - Jesus prayed for those who opposed Him (23:34).
 - Jesus prayed when blessing meals (24:30).

6. Jesus had authority over prejudice (5:27-39). Local, national, ethnic, cultural bias and prejudices are subjected to and must bend before the authority and Word of Christ.

7. Jesus has authority over religion (6:1-5). Bible based Christianity is exclusive over all other religions. Christ stands as Lord over all the religious affairs and systems of humanity. However, Christ is not merely one of many equal ways to salvation. And, not all the roads of religion lead to God: only through Christ can we approach God (John 14:7).

8. Jesus has authority over deformity (6:6-11). The crippled and disabled of the Lord's will someday rejoice in their physical liberation by Christ. It is even possible that they receive that liberation and relief in this life, at least perhaps to a degree. It is true that someday the blind will see, the deaf will hear, and the crippled will walk.

D. JESUS SELECTED HIS DISCIPLES (Apostles) 6:12-49).

His prayer and choice (vv. 12-16).

His instruction to His disciples (vv. 17-49). Christ pointed out practical principles in dealing with ministry that includes the following.

1. How to handle rejection.
2. How to relate to opposition.
3. How to examine oneself for personal growth and ministry.
4. How to obey Christ.

E. JESUS WAS ACTIVE IN MINISTRY (7:1-9:50).

1. He was willing to help the sick (7:1-10).
2. He had compassion to those in grief (7:11-17).
3. He met the needs of those in need (7:18-35).
4. He graciously forgave sinners by faith (7:36-50).
5. He traveled, preached, and taught (8:1-21).
6. He rebuked those with little faith (8:22-25).

7. He gave great demonic deliverances (8:26-39).
8. He encouraged and rewarded faith (8:40-56).
9. He taught others to minister (9:1-9).
10. He welcomes people with hospitality (9:10-17).
11. He is generous in reward to those who follow Him (9:18-50).

III. HIS MINISTRY IN JUDEA AND PEREA (9:51-19:48).

A. JESUS WAS REJECTED BY THE SAMARITANS (9:51-56).

This was racial prejudice. Christ refused to retaliate, because it would interfere with His priorities in ministry and life. He did not have time to “get even,” or to expend energy on that which may be important, but not the most important thing to focus upon. We are to do first things first, and important things first. And, some things are not important to bother with.

B. JESUS WAS REJECTED BY THE MEN OF THE WORLD (9:57-62).

The men in this story kept putting the things of God far down their list of priorities. They rejected Christ and His program. Jesus taught that His followers, through self-sacrifice, must put the work of Christ first.

C. JESUS COMMISSIONED THE SEVENTY (10:1-24).

Among the principles observed here are the following.

1. Under Christ, Christian work takes a team effort (v. 1).
2. The mission of Christ is urgent (v. 3).
3. Workers must pray for more workers (v. 3).
4. Salvation is the greatest joy of the Christian (v. 20).
5. Spiritual insight is of great value (vv. 21-24).

D. JESUS EXPLAINED TRUE RELIGION (10:25-37). – The Great Commandments.

The lawyer sought to justify himself, as he was satisfied in his religious habits and routines. Jesus gave him a requirement he did not want: love God with all his heart, soul, strength, mind, and one’s neighbor as one’s self. Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate His point.

E. JESUS TAUGHT MARY AND MARTHA (10:38-42).

Work is important. So is fellowship with Christ. Do not let the worthy business of the Lord’s work crowd out that which is most important: time alone with Jesus in quiet, thoughtful prayer, and Bible meditation. What we are and our relationship to Christ is more important than what we do for Christ. Enjoying Jesus is more important than the hurry and worry of this world. The reason our personal devotion to Christ must come before our work for Him is because our Christian service is motivated, focused and defined by our relationship with Christ. Without that relationship, our work becomes boring, and we become indifferent and lackluster in our zeal for the things of Christ. In other words, our heart is not in the work.

F. JESUS TAUGHT THE DISCIPLES TO PRAY (11:1-13).

Traditionally called the Lord's Prayer, the Christian may learn several principles to help our prayer life. Actually, the "Lord's" prayer is in John 17. This might better be called the "disciple's" prayer.

1. We worship God as Father. This speaks of relationship.
2. We ask for material needs. Wants, however, may not be needs.
3. We confess our sins to God. Be specific, humble, and repentant.
4. We forgive others. Grudges and hatred block prayer.
5. We ask to be delivered from evil, or, the evil one: Satan.
6. We persist in prayer: asking, seeking, and knocking.
7. We expect answers to prayer. God is our father; we can trust Him.

G. JESUS WAS REJECTED BY MANY (11:14-36).

Some rejected Jesus by saying His miracles were accomplished by demons (v. 15). Others demanded a sign from Him as proof of His claims. He answered the first by saying that the Devil would not be working against himself. Secondly, He offered the sign of Jonah, which was a sign of judgment on sinners – not what the Jews had in mind! In other words, the works of Jesus was a sign of judgment on Christ's enemies.

We also note that demons are real, cause physical symptoms when possessing humans (11:14), unclean (11:24), seek bodies to occupy (11:24-26), operate in groups (11:26), are intelligent, and evil (11:26). Some are more evil than others (11:26). Beelzebul is identified as the ruler of the demons. The name means, "lord of the flies," and is a variant of Baal-zebub. The meaning could also be, "lord of the dwelling," or "lord of dung." It was the name of a Philistine deity (2 Kings 1:2). To the Jews, it was a reference to Satan. What an awful accusation to claim that Jesus was working for Satan.

This interaction also points to the unrivaled and unrelenting corruption, confusion, and deception of Satan – and how his work plays out in the physical realm. In the spiritual world, you will remember that at Christ's temptation, Satan tried to get Jesus to work for him. Now, in this incident, he had put it into the minds of Christ's opponents that Jesus had actually accepted Satan's offer. The human opponents probably did not recognize what Satan had done (Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15; Acts 5:3; Luke 22:3; John 13:27).

There is an important practical lesson about the demons returning to a swept and clean house to occupy it again, and making it worse that at first. When someone cleans up their life, they must replace old harmful habits with new good ones. Otherwise, they can drift back to their old lifestyles (Cf. 2 Peter 2:20, 21). A backslidden Christian (or a backslidden church or denomination) can become very evil. This fact can be seen in the corrupt antichristian policies and practices carried out by many liberal churches of today.

An important teaching of this section is that Jesus confirms Jonah as a genuine historical figure. Jesus believed that the real man, Jonah, actually lived, was flesh and blood, walked the dirt of earth, and preached to the people of Nineveh.

H. JESUS REJECTED BY THE RELIGIOUS JEWISH LEADERS (11:37-54).

Jesus condemned the leaders with several “woes” upon which they became very hostile, and plotted against Him (vv. 53, 54). Stated positively, some qualities that Jesus wanted, but which the leaders lacked are the following.

1. Heart worship is more important than ceremonial routine and ritual. This does not condemn rituals in the church, but it addresses the heart condition of worshippers.
2. Integrity and humility are desired by Christ.
3. Generosity, justice, and honesty are prized by Christ.

I. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT HYPOCRISY (12:1-12).

Hypocrisy is the pretense of possessing certain attitudes, belief, principles, etc., that in reality one does not actually possess. These men pretended to have qualities that God approved when in fact they did not. They pretended to be good when they were evil. The opposite of hypocrisy is transparent integrity: being the same on the inside as we are on the outside. Among the principles to be learned about hypocrisy are the following.

1. Hypocrisy is wrong, and condemned by God.
2. Hypocrisy cannot hide the truth forever.
3. Hypocrisy fears man, and serves men’s opinions. One must fear God.
4. God knows and cares about the details that hypocrisy overlooks.

J. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT GREED (12:13-35).

Greed is the extreme, reprehensible desire to acquire something, which might be things such as wealth, power, influence, or prestige. Jesus’ teachings include the following.

1. Greed comes in many forms, guard against it (v. 15).
2. Even if one is rich, it will not satisfy in itself (v. 15).
3. Be rich toward God, and don’t be concerned for earthly treasure (v. 21).
4. God provides for this world’s needs: quit worrying (vv. 30, 31).
5. Let Heaven be your treasure house, and fill it full (v. 33).
6. Our hearts are where our treasure is located (v. 34).

K. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT FAITHFULNESS (12:35-48).

The following principles are considered and valuable.

1. Be ready for service to Jesus. Obtain the training for the Lord’s business.
2. Be faithful in service to Jesus. Stay with the assignment at hand, and work hard.
3. More is required from those who have been given more resources, opportunities, training, and abilities.

L. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT DIVISION AND SIGNS (12:49-59).

Jesus said there would be conflict between believers and non-believers. The gospel divides people. We must make sure that it is the gospel that is dividing, and not our own obnoxious behavior and attitude.

On signs, Jesus said that we need to focus on the right issues. For example, focus more attention on doing what is right before God than forecasting the weather. The worries, deceitfulness, and noise of the world distract us from the truly important things of life.

M. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT REPENTANCE (13:1-9).

Repentance means to change one's mind regarding something. Sometimes it is accompanied by remorse. It is turning from self to God. In other words, repentance is a change of mind that leads to behavioral change corresponding to the new direction of one's thinking. The following principles are taught by Jesus.

1. There is a need for repentance. All need to be saved (v. 3).
2. There is a certain judgment for those who do not repent (v. 5).
3. God's patience is great toward sinners (vv. 8, 9). The fig tree represents Israel.

N. JESUS TAUGHT MORE ABOUT HYPOCRISY (13:10-17).

The "*daughter of Abraham*" had been sick for 18 years. It was an affliction caused by Satan. Jesus had compassion, and healed her, even though it was on the Sabbath, and that act of mercy brought down the wrath of the Jewish religious leaders.

The religious leaders put higher value on material possessions, religious ceremony, and outward form than they did on helpful compassion to those in need. According to Jesus, this was wrong.

Jesus makes the common people happy and hypocritical religious leaders humiliated and angry. He highly valued the qualities of service before self, personal integrity, and excellence in all we do. He also valued our personal relationship to Him.

O. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE KINGDOM (13:18-35).

In view is the mystery kingdom of this age (See Matthew 13 & 28, note D). This kingdom consists of all of Christendom throughout the world. It is very large, but it is also very full of false teachings, which is the typical meaning of leaven (Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 2:11; Matthew 16:6; 1 Corinthians 5:6-9; Galatians 5:9; 1 Timothy 4:1; Jude 12). The teaching of Jesus is that many in churches are not saved, and that He is the narrow way, the only way of salvation (vv. 23-28). He also said that many who hold high church position of seeming importance and power will be reduced to their smaller, true worth in the next age (vv. 29, 30). Jesus lamented over Jerusalem.

P. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE (Chapter 14).

Principles for life that Jesus taught include the following.

1. Compassion is better than outward religious rules (vv. 1-6).
2. Humility brings reward; pride brings disgrace (vv. 7-11).
3. Be generous without thought of return (vv. 12-14).
4. Be serious about evangelism: go to the highways and byways and "compel" lost sinners to come to Christ. Compel means urgent persuasion (vv. 15-24).
5. Self-denial is the high cost of discipleship (vv. 25-35).

Q. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE JOY OF SOUL-WINNING (15:1-10).

Evangelism is a vital component of Christianity. Not all people are saved and on their way to heaven. Jesus has entrusted part of the evangelism program to His people. We go into all the world and present the gospel. He guides us, empowers us, prepares the hearts of others, and the Holy Spirit enlivens (i.e. regenerates) the heart so that His elect can believe and be converted (Cf. John 3:3-7; 15, 16; Ephesians 2:1, 5, 8-10).

Following are three main principles Jesus taught regarding this privilege.

1. **The need** for soul-winners.

- Evangelism is needed, because of the lostness of humanity. The word “lost” is stressed eight times in this chapter.
- Evangelism is needed, because of the contrast of attitudes (vv. 1, 2): few are evangelizing. The religious elite were self-righteous, indifferent, and found fault with and criticized soul-winning. They thought it was inconceivable that God should seek lost sinners. Jesus, in contrast, sought and received sinners, showed them great interest and affection. Jesus was a soul-winner. Spurgeon said, “Our Lord’s career is a course of soul-winning.”
- In order for soul-winning (evangelism) to work, it must have a high priority in the church. There must be organization, planning, prayer, training, and motivation set in an environment that rewards, supports, and expects evangelism by faith. Fear of rejection is the big obstacle to overcome.

2. **The search** of the soul-winner (vv. 4, 8).

- They are urgent, definite, all absorbing, active, personal, persevering, continuous, and concentrated.
- They are successful. The shepherd found the sheep. The woman found the lost coin. We can win lost souls, not just look for them.

3. **The celebration** of the soul-winners (vv. 7, 10).

- There is joy in Heaven. Joy is emphasized eight times. Angels, saints, God, and Jesus were overjoyed at the conversion of a lost sinner. What many Christians are cold about, the angels in Heaven are ecstatic about. Heaven is intensely interested in evangelism on earth. Perhaps Hebrews 12:1 can be applied here as well.
- There is joy on earth. The soul-winner is happy. The shepherd and the woman were beside themselves with joy. They sought someone to share with. If we have our mind set on Heaven, it will be set on evangelism.

R. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE PRODIGAL SON (15:11-32).

The main thought of this story is about a father (God) who warmly welcomes and forgives repentant sinners. Other lessons we can learn include the following.

1. God grants forgiveness to lost sinners.

2. We do not deserve God’s forgiveness. He owes us nothing except judgment. This is grace.

3. We cannot earn the Father's forgiveness by good works or any other means. It is a gift from God.
4. The Christian's attitude toward lost sinners should be that of our Father: warmly welcoming them into the fold of Christianity. This is in radical contrast to the ideas of some religions, which is to murder all infidels, or non-believers. Their attitude regarding evangelism is this: be converted or die. However, this does not nullify our basic right of self-defense when they try to slaughter us.
5. The prodigal son gained the father's forgiveness by recognizing his need, coming to the father, humbly confessing his error and need, and accepting the father's forgiveness.
6. The father was ready and willing to forgive, and made provision for forgiveness even before the prodigal son sensed his need.
7. Personal relationships and attitudes were important to the father.

S. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT WEALTH (16:1-18).

In a society which is caught up in materialism, and a world system that yearns after the accumulation of wealth, power, and prestige, the teachings of Jesus seem difficult to bear. They are different than the world, but they put things into proper perspective.

Here is what He said.

1. One cannot serve God and money (v. 13). If money and wealth is our dominant objective out of life, we have no time left over to serve God. Our ardent motivation is going in the wrong direction. Furthermore, those who do not have wealth are filled with resentment, and seek to rebel against those who have wealth. And, those who have the money have arrogance on the one hand, and shame on the other, because they have defrauded those who do not have wealth. In addition, the wealthy are consumed with trying to keep their money from being taken from them.
2. True riches are spiritual responsibilities and opportunities (v. 11). In the long run, they are of greater value than wealth, power, and prestige.
3. The Pharisees' value system was different than God's: they loved money, and God considered that to be detestable (v. 15).
4. Faithfulness is a quality that is consistent in all areas of responsibility (v. 13). To be consumed with self-indulgence and neglect spiritual responsibilities is foolish (vv. 19-31).
5. Wealth is not a necessary sign of divine favor (Cf. the rich man and Lazarus below). In the final analysis, wealth is given by God, and can be a test to our faith. The ardent love and pursuit of money can lead to a very barren spiritual life, and cause us to place our priorities in the wrong places (Cf. 1 Timothy 6:10-19).

This does not mean, however, that wealth in itself is evil, or that people of wealth are not spiritual.

Money can be a great temptation to those in Christian service. Normally, the life of the pastor, Bible teacher, and evangelist (and others) is one hardship, and sometimes poverty. The leader also has many opportunities to make money to supply their income. In many cases, that is necessary. The pastor has to feed his family, and pay his bills. However, the get rich schemes also are dangled in front of the pastor, leader or even a church and non-profit organization. They may get to thinking that they too should have wealth like those who do not make their living from the Gospel. Jealousy and envy enter into their thinking. Maybe the thought may be pure to start with. The motive of might be how much more they could accomplish for God if they just had the money. The result is that the spiritual work of the ministry is neglected because energy and focus is shifted to gaining the cash.

It is also true, that those involved in Christian ministry must obtain money to pay for ministry and personal expenses. Churches must raise money. Missionaries must raise money. Traveling evangelists and Bible teachers must raise money. It can be difficult, but it must be done. Raising money is part, and sometimes a large part, of ministry. The trick is to keep things in proper, godly perspective – and not become resentful or greedy.

6. Paul further explains that if we have money, we are to trust God because money can dissipate so quickly. Those with wealth are to be rich in good works, be generous and ready to share with others in need (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Jesus said that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), because by this pattern of life, we store up treasures in heaven – which are permanent. Having wealth is not bad in itself, but what is essential is our attitude toward it, and how we use the wealth God has entrusted to us. Important also, is how we obtain money. The Pharisees obtained it by the oppression and extortion of the poor. (See notes on Luke 21:1-4).

T. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT HELL (16:19-31; See Mark 9:42-52 notes).

This subject is very sobering. Jesus makes a distinction between “*Gehenna*” (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:19; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6), “*Hades*” (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Revelation 1:18; 20:13, 14), “*Tartarus*” (2 Peter 2:4), and the “*lake of fire and brimstone*” (Revelation 20:10, 14, 15; Matthew 18:8, 9; 25:41, 46). “*Sheol*” is used in the Old Testament, and depending on the context, generally refers to the final abode of the saved and unsaved dead. “*Abraham’s bosom*”, spoken here by Jesus, is discussed below.

Hades refers to a temporary holding prison that houses the unsaved who are awaiting their final judgment. Their final destination is eternal banishment into *Gehenna*, which is the same place as the lake of fire and brimstone (cf. Revelation 20:10, 13-15; Matthew 25:41). In *Gehenna*, the punishment is described as intense torment: eternal,

unquenchable fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth, outer darkness, where the worm does not die, and being salted with fire. It portrays physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering. It is a picture like being forever trapped in a volcanic crater, or caldron, filled with boiling, bubbling, swirling, molten lava. Using volcanic imagery to describe *Gehenna* would powerfully drive the point home as there was abundant volcanic activity in the land of Italy.

For example, in A.D. 79 there was the horrendous explosion of the volcano, Vesuvius. In six hours both Pompeii and Herculaneum were entombed to a depth of eight to ten feet. The earth quaked, and clouds of dust, smoke and flashes of fire were mixed with the shrieks and terror of fleeing citizens separated from loved ones, or going to their grisly death. By the third day, lava and mud had buried Pompeii to the rooftops, and Herculaneum had vanished. Estimates are that some 2,000 people lost their lives. This dreadful disaster occurred some 10-15 years before John wrote the book of Revelation. It is an example of the Bible writers using contemporary events to vividly illustrate the spiritual realities they were attempting to communicate to others.

Another example of this imagery used by Jesus regards the many deposits of brimstone about the Dead Sea. The brimstone (sulfur) would sometimes catch fire and turn into a roaring holocaust. The brimstone would melt and flow, burning, down ravines. Yellow, suffocating fumes billowed up and blanketed the countryside. One could see a literal lake burning with livid, liquid brimstone. Sulfur is extremely combustible and hot. It is used in gun power, matches, and blasting powder. Sulfur ignites in air at 478 degrees Fahrenheit, and reaches its boiling point at about 235 degrees Fahrenheit.

Gehenna, itself, is in the valley of Hinnom just south of Jerusalem. In Old Testament times it was used by wicked kings to sacrifice their children to foreign gods (2 Chronicles 28:1-3; 33:6; Jeremiah 32:35). Later it was used as a dumping ground for garbage, and the dead bodies of animals and criminals. A constant fire was kept burning to consume the refuse. Eventually, the name became used to identify the final destination of the wicked in the next life. Following are some of the truths Jesus taught regarding Hades.

1. There is conscious existence in Hell (v. 23, 24).
2. There is no second chance in Hell (v. 26).
3. There is no communication between those in Heaven and others in Hell (v. 26).
4. Angels are involved in conducting believers to Heaven (v. 22). By inference, we may assume angels are involved in transporting the unsaved to Hell. The rich man had to somehow get to Hell. It seems evident that he did not volunteer to go there after his death, nor did he know how to travel there. Consequently, angels must have carried him to Hell.
5. There is no "soul-sleep" for either the saved or damned (vv. 24, 25). Soul sleep is a doctrine that believers slip into a state of unconsciousness at the point of

death, and when Christ comes again, they will be raised up into eternal life and awareness. Lazarus was not asleep. Abraham's bosom is equal to the "Paradise" as Jesus explained to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43).

6. The unsaved in Hell are still aware of things on earth (vv. 27, 28). A point of speculation: could there be news from earth received in Hell by recent arrivals?
7. The unsaved in Hell still care for loved ones on earth (vv. 27, 28, 30).
8. The unsaved in Hell have changed their mind about spiritual realities.
9. The unsaved in Hell want Christians to win their families to Christ (vv. 27-30).
10. People on earth, and Heaven and Hell can still think about and love each other, but there can be no communication.

There is another interesting twist to the rich man's fate. He never asked to be removed from Hades, but only that his torment be lessened. He either did not want to leave, or else knew his request would fall on deaf ears. He realized that he deserved his fate, and did not make charges of God being unfair, unjust, or unloving. In summary, the rich man in Hades could see, speak, hear, feel, and remember, but lived in constant agony. Tough existence.

Now, what about Abraham's bosom that Jesus speaks of? According to "*Josephus' Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades*," the Jewish belief was like that of Jesus. They believed that Hades was the place that both the saved and unsaved went at death, and was located in a subterranean region of the earth. They were guided there and guarded by angels. However, there were two places in Hades: one for the unsaved, and the other for the saved. The unsaved are being held in torment for a future permanent abode called the "lake of unquenchable fire". There they undergo permanent, eternal punishment.

Abraham's bosom, on the other hand, is reserved for the righteous who are protected by angels. Josephus describes it as a wonderful place whose inhabitants rest and wait for their future eternal new life in heaven. The day of transition for the denizens of both places will be at some future date when God will judge the souls of all people. His description runs parallel with that of Jesus.

Abraham's bosom evidently is the same place as was called "Paradise" by Jesus and Paul (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4). With the advent of the New Testament revelation, the major difference is that when Jesus was crucified, He descended into Hades, gathered the righteous, and took them to heaven with Him. This is reflected in the Apostle's Creed, "He descended to hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, thence He will come to judge the living and the dead".

That He transferred the righteous to heaven from Abrahams bosom is believed by some to be documented by Paul, “When He ascended on High, He led captive a host of captives...(Now this expression, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” (Ephesians 4:8-10; cf. 1 Peter 3:18-22).

U. JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT VARIOUS PRINCIPLES OF LIFE (17:1-19:27).

The Following is a list of principles extracted from the stories, statements and illustrations Jesus spoke.

1. Christians should forgive others, and develop faith (17:1-6).
2. Serving Christ is the Christian obligation (17:7-10). Many activities and enterprises in this world are good, productive, and helpful, but we need not trade off the best for something of less value. Bringing glory to God, serving Christ, and loving others as ourselves are the best (1 Corinthians 10:31: Galatians 5:13, 14). We need not become a pastor or missionary to serve Christ, but we must be faithful to advance His cause in whatever capacity, and with whatever abilities, resources and opportunities He gives us. If we are a truck driver, teacher, house wife, attorney, or whatever, then we have been given a station in life to represent and glorify God.
3. One grateful healed leper out of 10 teaches us to be grateful to God for the blessing He constantly bestows upon His children (17:11-19). It is good to mentally keep track of the good things God places in our lives. It is too easy in this hard, negative world to dwell on the pain, discouragement, and loss that we sometimes face. Even when we are down on our luck, God still loves us, is there for us, and will cause all things to work together for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28).
4. Christ’s second coming will be accompanied with definite characteristics (17:20-37). Jesus speaks of the present “mystery kingdom (vv. 20-21; see Matthew 28), and His second coming, which is yet future. He gives the sequence: He would suffer and be rejected first (v. 25). Then there will be a long absence of His physical presence (v. 22). Finally, He would appear suddenly, and in a very spectacular way (v. 24), and with judgment (v. 37).
5. The story of the widow and unrighteous judge teaches believers to persevere in our prayers (18:1-8). We can be persistent and persuasive in bringing our requests before God in a compelling fashion. But, we should come in a respectful, humble, and courteous attitude. Though we have a present and personal relationship with our Father, we must remember that He is also the God of the universe who is to be feared and worshiped.
6. The famous sinner’s prayer is given: “*God be merciful to me a sinner*” (18:9-14). The story also speaks against smug, prideful self-righteousness. We are sinners

by nature who deserve judgment and punishment. However, motivated by love, God displayed His grace through Christ on the cross, and regenerated us with the Holy Spirit, so that we might humbly receive His salvation by faith and serve Him to His glory and our benefit (Ephesians 2:5-10). We have nothing to boast of, salvation is a gift that we can only receive, and never can we earn salvation.

7. One enters the kingdom by childlike faith (18:15-30)
 - By childlike faith (15-17).
 - By the work of God (18-27).
 - By great reward (28-30).
8. Christ predicts his death, burial, resurrection (18:31-34). It is amazing the detail by which Christ predicted the awful things humanity would inflict upon the Son of God. He also emphasized that the actions would fulfill prophecy, which points to one of the best proofs of the deity of Christ, and supernatural nature of Scripture.
9. A blind man received his sight from Christ: he asked, believed, and received (18:35-43). This man responded well: he followed Christ and glorified God.
10. Christ's conversion of Zaccheus, the chief tax-collector of the Jericho area, teaches us to evangelize, and that anyone can come to Christ for salvation (19:1-10). There was a dramatic change in Zaccheus' life. Christ's major definite purpose on earth is given in this section, "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (v. 10).
11. The nobleman who gave 10 mina to his servants teaches us to be faithful and show creative initiative with the resources, opportunities, and abilities that Christ entrusts to us in increasing His work and interests (19:11-27).

III. JESUS' WEEK OF PASSION (19:28-23:56).

A. JESUS' TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM (19:28-40).

This event occurred on day one of Passion Week. Jesus started this phase of His ministry on a Sunday, Palm Sunday. This was a momentous event with commanding prophetic emphasis. Here are some important pieces of this astonishing event. Christ entered Jerusalem as the victorious Messiah. The disciples and multitude declared such (vv. 37, 38). Verse 38 is a quote from Psalm 118:26, which is a Messianic Psalm. This means the Psalm is speaking of the coming Messiah.

The Pharisees clearly understood what the people were saying, and ordered Jesus to stop the multitudes (v. 39). He refused.

Jesus said the stones would cry out if the people did not, which was an admission of being Messiah (v. 40).

Jesus called the event "*this day*," (v. 42), and, "*the time of your visitation*" (v. 44). These words of Jesus hearken back to the prophecy made by Daniel (9:25). Daniel is probably

the cornerstone of Old Testament prophetic books. His prophecy of the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:24-27), some say, predicts to the day when the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem – Palm Sunday, and later be crucified. This is the greatest time prophecy in the Bible, and forces one to believe in the literal interpretation of prophecy.

A brief summary of the prophecy goes like the following. The time line to the Messiah being cut off and the destruction of Jerusalem starts with the giving the decree by king Artaxerxes Longimanus on March 14, 445 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:5) to rebuild Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. The weeks of Daniel 9:25-27 refers to weeks of years: one week equals seven years. Daniel mentions there are 69 weeks before the Messiah is “cut off,” indicating a violent death. By using the biblical year of 360 days to a year, one comes to 483 years (7 X 69 =483), or 173,880 days. By adding the days to the starting date, we arrive at the date of April 6, A.D. 32, or March 30, A.D. 33).

Scholars are uncertain of the exact date of the crucifixion, but place it sometime between A.D. 29 and A.D. 34)! Astonishing as it may seem, Daniel nailed his prediction down to the exact time frame the event actually occurred in history! Let us give Daniel the benefit of the doubt, and say he nailed it to the day!¹

Christ offered Himself as the long expected Messiah, and the kingdom to the nation. The offer was publicly acknowledged, but refused by Israel.

The consequences of this rejection, Jesus predicted, would be the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome, which did occur in history in A.D. 70 (v. 41-44).

B. JESUS WEPT OVER JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION (19:41-44).

This event occurred on Day one: Sunday. Jesus saw into the future, and had compassion and pity over the terrible consequences of the Jewish leader’s poor choice. Our choices have consequences, and Jesus does not gloat nor is He happy when we suffer the pain that comes from those poor choices. His accurate prediction, again, demonstrates His deity, and His knowledge and control of future events.

C. JESUS CAST OUT THE TEMPLE MONEYCHANGERS (19:45-48).

This occurred on Monday, day two of Passion Week. There is further information in the notes on Matthew 28. This event is another Old Testament prediction (Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11). Jesus is concerned that the church keeps in mind its purpose and mission. Greed, corruption, injustice, and oppression of the poor have no place in His church. Jesus also emphasized the need for prayer within the Christian community.

¹ For a more detailed explanation of the calculations of this event, see the following. Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895); Alva J. McClain, *Daniel’s Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940). John Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985). John F. Walvoord, *Daniel the Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971). Paul D. Feinberg, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Daniel 9:24-27,” in John Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, eds., *Traditions and Testament: Essays in Honour of Charles Lee Feinberg* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981).

Jesus' teaching also indicates the importance of biblical and theological education in the church community. Teaching helps form our attitudes, focuses our mission, shapes our values, structures our behavior, and guides our relationships.

D. DAY THREE: CONFRONTATION AND TEACHING (20:1-21:38).

1. Christ was confronted by the Jewish leaders (20:1-8). They demanded by what authority Christ was teaching. He confounded them by throwing the question back on them. If they said the authority was from God, then, they condemned themselves, and legitimized Christ's teaching. However, if they had denied John the Baptist's certification of Christ, then the people would have stoned them. Either way, the leaders lost. They had a choice: John the Baptist was a prophet, or a liar. Jesus still continued to teach and preach, and the people were listening. He stayed focused on His priorities.
2. The parable of the vineyard (20:9-18). (See notes on Matthew 21:18ff.; Mark 12:1-12). The parable illustrates the nation of Israel rejecting their messiah (cf. v. 19), and the subsequent judgment upon that nation. The man (v. 9) represents God, the vine-growers are Israel, the slaves represent various prophets, and the beloved son is Jesus whom they rejected and killed. The destruction of the vine growers represents the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, and the ones who then received the vine yard represent the church, which includes both Gentiles and Jews. This rejection of Israel is only temporary and partial, as they will be restored in the future (cf. Romans 11). Jesus nailed the story down with a quote from Psalm 118:22.
3. The leaders attempted entrapment of Jesus (20:19-40; see notes on Mark 12:13-17). Their strategy was to send spies to hear Jesus' teaching, and try to discover, or trap Him into saying something that would offend the Roman governor. They wanted to position Jesus as leading some sort of insurrection against Rome. Jesus was wise to their deception. They tried to trap Him on taxes paid to Caesar. He said to render to the civil sector what was due, and to God what was due Him (cf. comments on Matthew 28 note F, and 22:15-46). The Sadducees denied any resurrection, and tried to nail Jesus on that theological issue (cf. notes on Mark 12:28-34). He demonstrated from Scripture the story of Moses and the burning bush that those who have finished their course in this life are still living (v. 37, 38; cf. Exodus 3:6). That we will be like angels does not mean that we will be angels, but only that we will not be married in heaven. Incidentally, Jesus believed the story of Moses and the burning bush to be literal, historical fact.
4. Christ stated His authority (20:41-47; cf. notes on Mark 12:35-37). The point of Jesus is that David considered the Messiah as both David's son and Lord; consequently, Jesus had to be Messiah.
5. Christ taught on giving: poor widow vs. the rich (21:1-4). The point is that God greatly favors and rewards giving that is sacrificial in nature. This type of giving

indicates where our heart is: either with God, or our creature comforts in this world. This is not to say we are to choose a life of poverty, but even that is not wrong, because many do take a vow of poverty. The emphasis is on how we use the money and wealth that God entrusts to our keeping and use. He does not need our wealth, because He owns everything, and has given us what we have. Money is His, and He has given us the responsibility of stewardship over that which He has given. (See notes on Mark 10:17-31; 12:41-44; Luke; 16:1-18; See Acts 17:15-17; James 4:13, 14; Luke 12:16-34; 1 Timothy 6:6-19; 2 Corinthians 8, 9).

The Second Coming of Christ

Christ taught on His second coming (21:5-38). Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple (21:5, 6). He also predicted, explained, and described His future return. (See notes on Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13).

The disciples set the context with the question, “*when will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?*” (v. 7). He expands on what He spoke of in Luke 19:41-44 (See notes there). There seems to be a double reference in this section, because of the nature of the actual content of Jesus’ explanation. Some of the material clearly relates to the stunning events surrounding the second coming of Christ (v. 27), which will be physical, visible, with power and great glory. Some of the material relates to the great tribulation (vv. 8-19; 25-28). Some of the material seems to relate to the actual destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (vv. 20-24).

The term “*times of the Gentiles*” (v. 24) evidently refers to the domination by the Gentiles (non-Jews) of Jerusalem and Palestine. According to this verse, there was a definite start and completion of this phase of history. The start evidently occurred when Nebuchadnezzar crushed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It was still in effect at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and will continue until Christ comes again.

There is another problem in this section of prophecy. The term that “*this generation will not pass away until all things take place*” (v. 32; cf. Matthew 24, 34) has been difficult to interpret. One of the major problems of future prophecy deals with the nation of Israel. Some theologians of previous generations discounted the literal establishment of a future Messianic Kingdom of Israel, because the Jews were scattered all over the world. There had not been a land of Israel since the destruction of Jerusalem. If there was no Israel, the thought went, there could be no Messianic Kingdom. For example, the great Lutheran theologian, Mueller, wrote in 1934, “The return of the Jews to Palestine, which is usually made a concomitant of the general conversion of the Jews, is based upon a bare literalism in interpreting Old Testament Prophecies..., which is as unscriptural as it is ridiculous.”²

However, history brought about a remarkable surprise and strange twist to the life of the Jews. The Jews, through the centuries, had trickled back to Palestine and settled there – sometimes in large numbers, sometimes in small. There was also constant struggle

² John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 625

between the Arab and Jew. However, something radical happened in 1948: the State of Israel was established, and in 1949 it even gained entrance into the United Nations. Maybe we should believe in literal prophecy after all. Jesus did, and history confirms it. If prophecy was interpreted literally up to the time of Christ, and it was, then it seems mandatory that all future prophecy be interpreted literally as well.

Many Bible scholars who believed in the literal interpretation of prophecy, became excited, and thought that “*this generation*” meant that Christ would return before that particular group, or generation, of Jews would die. They thought, perhaps, that a generation would be 20 years or so. Unfortunately, spinning out of this observation, some even named a date of Christ’s return. This was dangerous, because no one, except God knows that date (Acts 1:7). At this writing, 58 years have passed, and Christ has not appeared.

What, then, does “*this generation*” mean? Well, in the first place, the youngest of that generation is still only 58 years of age. They have not yet died off. Consequently, the jury is still out. Furthermore, the conditions in the world seem to be spinning out of control as never before in history. Evil is powerful and is gaining momentum. The nuclear threat, genocide, rogue nations, terrorism, plague of AIDS, and the mounting of forces seeking the destruction of Israel are ominous and fear provoking. The newspapers sound like the words of Jesus describing the world immediate to the return of Christ.

Regarding “*this generation*,” there are other approaches as to its meaning. It could mean that when the end time comes, all the events Jesus predicted would fall within the timeline of one generation. It could also mean that the generation Christ talked to would not pass away before the destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was destroyed within their lifetime. Thirdly, it could mean that the Jewish people as a race would not pass away, or destroyed, before Christ returns.

Jesus gave special instructions on how His people should live their life during that great tribulation, which applies whenever we go through dark times in our lives.

1. He said to not surrender to dissipation and alcohol and giving up on life.
2. He said not to be overcome by the worries of life, which are many.
3. He said to remain alert to spiritual realities, and to pray, which would bring strength.

E. THE BETRAYAL BY JUDAS: DAY FOUR (22:1-6).

In this section we see Judas conspiring with the chief priests and scribes to capture Jesus and kill him. We are told that Satan entered Judas. (See notes on Judas Iscariot under “extended notes” at the end of Mark’s Gospel #A).

F. DAY FIVE: THURSDAY (22:7-53).

1. Jesus had the Last Supper (Passover) with His disciples (22:7-38). Jesus changed the Passover into a symbolic event of the New Covenant: the elements were a symbol by which to remember Him (v. 19). Christ identified Judas as the

one who would betray Him, and told of leadership as being servants. He predicted Peter's denial (22:31-34), and Satan's involvement. He prayed for Peter to be preserved in ministry. The application is that prayer is a vital solution to those who make mistakes and sin in ministry. Christ predicted His sufferings (22:35-38). (See notes on the Passover in Mark 14:1-52).

2. Jesus suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane, and an angel strengthened Him (22:39-46). See notes on Mark, extended notes, #B. Jesus was arrested (22:47-53). Jesus instructed the disciples to pray to protect themselves against temptation. He dreaded the suffering of the cross, and the separation from the Father. He was willing, however, to do the will of the Father. He was in agony because of the conflict within Him. His disciples slept and were rebuked by Him.
3. Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:47-53). Judas pointed Christ out to the soldiers. Peter (John 18:10) cut off the right ear of the high priest's slave. Jesus stopped the bloodshed, and healed the ear. That hour with the wicked power and darkness of evil was given to the enemies of Christ. Christ permitted them to do what they wanted, which fit into the plan of God. The same angel that gave Christ strength could have killed all in that multitude, which numbered some 500 people. A Roman cohort (John 18:3) contained some 300-600 men.

G. DAY SIX: FRIDAY (22:54-23:55).

1. Peter denied Jesus (22:54-62). Peter was bold in his boast (22:33); even insisting that he would go to prison or die for Jesus. Satan sifted Peter, and fear overcame him in the time of crisis. Prayer and a different perspective could have brought him strength (22:45, 46). In the end, however, Peter did go to prison and was executed for his faith in Christ. Because of his failure, he was filled with bitterness and regret, but later found forgiveness and peace.
2. Jesus was humiliated and beaten (22:63-65). The pain and shame were starting for Christ – for our behalf. Had Christ not gone through with the suffering on the cross, then salvation would not have been available for humanity. For all time He paid all the penalty for all the sins of all those who receive Him as personal Savior (cf. Romans 8:1).
3. Jesus was tried before the Sanhedrin (22:66-71). (Cf. notes on Mark 14:53ff.). The aristocratic, Jewish Sanhedrin was a native Supreme Court that functioned in both civil and religious areas at the time of Christ. High priests presided over the group, which was made up of 70 members. However, they did not have the authority to give the death penalty; consequently, they made up a case and sent Jesus to the Roman in authority, Pilate.
4. Jesus was tried before Pilate (23:1-5). Pilate was the senior representative in Judea of the Roman government. As the Sanhedrin knew that Rome would not inflict the death penalty for blasphemy (22:71), they accused Jesus of an

insurrection against Rome. Pilate saw through their deception, and found Christ innocent of the trumped up charges against Him (23:4).

5. Jesus was tried before Herod Antipas (23:6-12). This was because Jesus was from Galilee, and consequently, fell under Herod's jurisdiction. Pilate passed the responsibility on to Herod in order to extract himself from his dilemma. He considered the whole matter a farce, mocked Jesus, and sent Him back to Pilate. But, Herod also found Jesus innocent. Official religion raged against Jesus, and wanted Him dead (v. 10). The world treated Him with contempt and ridicule, and wanted to be entertained by Him (vv. 8, 11). The world joined as friends with religion against Jesus (v. 12).
6. Jesus was brought again before Pilate (23:13-15). Pilate declared Jesus innocent, but offered to punish Jesus and set Him free. The Jews wanted Him dead. It was a custom at the feast for one prisoner to be released. Pilate gave the Jewish leaders a choice of releasing Jesus or a real insurrectionist and murderer by the name of Barabbas. The Jewish leaders chose Barabbas. In order to avoid a riot, thus for political expediency, Pilate sentenced the innocent Jesus to death, and set the guilty Barabbas free. Nothing is known about what ever happened to Barabbas. Matthew calls Barabbas a "notorious prisoner" (Matthew 27:16), and John called him a "robber" (John 18:40). Mark and Luke call Barabbas an insurrectionist and murderer (Mark 15:7: Luke 23:19). Barabbas was possible a Jewish freedom fighter (Zealot) who was fighting for socio-political liberation from Rome. He obviously was some kind of outlaw, because his penalty imposed by Rome was death.
7. Jesus was put to death by crucifixion (23:26-49). The responses of the people varied.
 - Multitudes followed Him who mourned for Him (v. 27). His response was for them to mourn for themselves over the coming destruction of Jerusalem. His concern was for their welfare.
 - The rulers and soldiers mocked and sneered at Him (vv. 35, 36). His response was to pray for them (v. 34).
 - One criminal cried out that Christ ought to help them escape from their present predicament (v. 39). Christ ignored him, refusing to be thrown off of His mission.
 - The other criminal feared God (v. 40), and asked Christ for eternal life (v. 42). He was rightly concerned about the next life. Christ promised that He would save him and take him to Paradise on that same day. Note that the thief did not have time to be baptized, do any good works, join any church, or do anything that might merit some sort of favor. Out of a repentant heart, he simply asked Christ to save him (v. 42), and Christ, out of love and grace, granted the request.

- The Roman centurion observed the occasion, believed Christ was innocent, and began praising God (v. 47). A centurion was a Roman military officer in charge of about 100 soldiers.
8. How Christ responded to rejection. We constantly face rejection in life and/or ministry. The bolder we are for Christ, the greater the degree of scorn and hostility we face from the world. We are considered “nut cases,” ignorant, intolerant, and enemies of what our culture deems correct. At our risk and peril do we speak out against sins such as homosexuality, same sex marriages, or abortion. Of course, if we are closet Christians, or cave into the values of our culture, then we are not treated so badly. By observing Christ in His rejection, we can use the same methods He used to help cope with this painful experience of rejection.
- Christ kept His mission in view. He realized there were greater things occurring than the pain of the present episode (cf. Hebrews 12:2ff.).
 - Christ looked at the real source of opposition. He said His accusers did not realize what they were doing. Satan was the real culprit behind the scene. The real war was being fought in the spiritual realm (4:2, 13; 22:3, 31). His mental perspective was from Heaven’s point of view.
 - Christ prayed (22:40-45; 23:34). Christ prayed for both Himself and His enemies.
 - Christ ignored those (e.g. the unrepentant thief) who simply wanted present, personal relief, but had no sense of perspective as to eternal or spiritual things. The unrepentant thief also had no realization of his own personal guilt.
 - Christ also kept in mind that evil would eventually be judged, even in this life (vv. 28-31). He was not driven to “get even.” He believed in the proverb, “What goes around comes around.”
 - We may summarize the key elements: prayer and proper mental perspective kept Jesus poised, powerful, and prevailing.
9. Christ was buried in a tomb (23:50-55). Joseph of Arimathea was a good man, a member of the powerful Sanhedrin court that had plotted and secured the death of Christ. He had not agreed to the satanic plot of the court, which is an indication that good men can serve in good institutions that happen to be ruled by wicked leaders. Joseph went to Pilate, asked for Jesus’ body, and buried Him on Friday before the Sabbath.

G. DAY SEVEN: SATURDAY (23:56).

The scene on this day was one of rest, and the preparation of spices and perfumes to anoint the body of Jesus.

IV. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST (Chapter 24).

A. THE EMPTY TOMB (24:1-12).

The women had gone to the tomb to prepare the body, but they found the stone rolled away from the mouth of the tomb, and the body of Christ was gone. Angels appeared to them and asked one of the greatest questions in history, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?”

The women were amazed, and returned to tell the disciples what had happened. The disciples would not believe them, except for Peter, who ran to the tomb to see for himself. Peter had denied knowing Jesus at His trial. His loyalty to Christ had not completely vanished. Satan thought his dastardly deed of killing Jesus was accomplished; Peter was humiliated, and was finally leaving Peter alone in his dismay.

B. CHRIST’S APPEARANCE TO THE EMMAUS DISCIPLES (24:13-35).

The two disciples were walking to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking among themselves about the staggering events of the whole situation regarding Christ’s crucifixion and purported resurrection. They were stunned and puzzled about the events. One of the disciples was Cleopas (v. 18), whose wife was named Mary (John 19:25). Jesus appeared and began walking and talking with them, but they failed to recognize Him. Something prevented them from recognizing Christ.

The disciples were baffled by the significance of all that had happened; consequently, Jesus began to explain. He called their lack of faith foolishness (v. 25). Christ identified Moses and the prophets as writing Scripture, and by such also identified Moses as the writer of the Pentateuch (v. 27). Jesus said that He was the subject of the Old Testament. Eventually, Christ enabled them to recognize Him, and disappeared from sight. This was another miracle and indication of what His glorified body was like.

C. THE RESURRECTED BODY AND LIFE (24:36-43).

Christ appeared in the midst of the assembled disciples. They feared, thinking He was a spirit. They were troubled and filled with many doubts.

Christ told them to stop their unbelief. He demonstrated that He was not simply a spirit by showing His scars, solid flesh on His body, and capacity to eat food. His resurrected body was real, genuine, physical, yet, endowed with very unusual qualities.

D. THE GREAT COMMISSION (24:44-49; see notes on Matthew 28:16-20).

Jesus identified the Law of Moses (the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Old Testament), the Prophets, and the Psalms as Holy Scripture (vv. 44, 45). This included all of the Jewish Bible, or the Old Testament we now possess. Note, however, that no other writings, such as the Apocrypha, were included as Holy Scripture. This statement of Jesus isolates and identifies only the Old Testament, while excluding all other writings, as being Holy Scripture. This was at a point in time when as yet the New

Testament had not been written. Redemption is given as the central theme of the Old Testament, and Christ is the central figure.

The disciples were given instructions to wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them to endue them with power (v. 49). This empowerment was for witnessing and for proclaiming a specific message to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. The gospel message was that through Christ alone, based upon His death, burial, and resurrection, people could gain forgiveness of sin and eternal life through repentance – by faith turning to Christ from sin to receive salvation. Evangelism is the center piece of any church program, and any missionary work. There are several motives for evangelism. Included are ten motives below.

1. Motivated by obedience to God (1 Corinthians 9:16, 17).
 - Soul-winning is not to be boasted about.
 - Soul-winning is a debt to be paid (Romans 1:14, 15).
 - Lack of soul-winning brings negative consequences (1 Corinthians 9:16).
2. Motivated by fear (2 Corinthians 5:10, 11).
 - Not groveling terror, but awe, reverence, respect.
 - Examples include Moses (Exodus 3:6; Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5), Daniel (Daniel 10:5, 6), early church (Acts 5:11), John (Revelation 1:17).
3. Motivated by joy, enthusiasm (Acts 5:41, 42).
4. Motivated by desire to please God (2 Corinthians 5:9).
5. Motivated by Christ's love for us (2 Corinthians 5:13-15).
6. Motivated by future rewards (2 Corinthians 5:10, 11).
7. Motivated by compassion, because the lost go to Hell (2 Peter 2:4; Mark 9:46, 47; Revelation 20:10, 14, 15).
8. Motivated by love and good will (Philippians 1:15-17).
9. Motivated by wishes of people in Hell (Luke 16:19-31).
10. Motivated by the sin of soul-manslaughter (Ezekiel 3:17-19).

E. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST (24:50-53).

Luke briefly mentions the ascension of Christ into Heaven in his Gospel, but he picks up the theme in the beginning of Acts.

With this I end our journey through the Gospel of Luke. We have discussed introductory issues, which included the author, date and place of writing, theme and purpose, target readership, a timeline of Paul's ministry, the distinctive of Luke's Gospel, and several noteworthy observations. I also presented a fairly detailed outline of the Gospel, and

then provided an analysis, comments, and several practical notes as we walked through the Gospel of Luke. And, I hope you slowly studied your way through the Gospel, and let it sink in to your mind and soul. But, don't stop here...keep reading as there is another Gospel to go. Good reading.

Extended notes

F. The Herod family

The story of the Herod dynasty in Palestine is important. It runs parallel to the establishment of Christianity, and is very helpful in understanding the historical and cultural context of the time. The Herods were the puppet kings of Rome, and governed Palestine at the local level during New Testament times. Their time span on this earth stretched from about 63 B.C. until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The story shows in graphic detail how God raised up a dynasty of rulers, and in spite of their corruption, used that dynasty to establish and maintain the political and social incubator for the birth and ministry of Christ, and the establishment of Christianity.

This brief paper traces the origins, lineage, intrigue, and work of the Herods, and shows how God managed their activities to accomplish His purpose on this earth. It gives us hope, since we also live in a world full of deception, violence and corruption. We can be encouraged that God is still interested in the affairs of humanity, and that He makes, maintains, and governs history

The Herod story is complex, and filled with cunning political ability and charm, but also with brutal palace intrigue. It interfaces with the famous names we are familiar with: Antony, Cleopatra, Caligula, Julius Caesar, and other legendary names.

The Herod clan was large and it is hard to sort them all out. The following five players are probably the best known and most important in relating to Bible history. They are Antipater (he started the clan), Herod the Great (ruler at the birth of Christ), Archalaus (who ruled when Christ's family fled to Egypt), Herod Antipas (who ruled at Christ's crucifixion), Herod Antipas I (who tried to stamp out Christianity), and Herod Antipas II (the last of the rulers).

Antipater

A starting place would be when the Roman ruler, Pompey, organized the eastern part of the Roman Empire in 63 B.C. Pompey placed a man by the name of Hyrcanus as the high priestly ruler over Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Perea. Hyrcanus, in turn, appointed an ethnic Edomite, Antipater, as his senior officer. This senior officer and his descendents became Herodian dynasty.

A brief word about who were the Edomites is in order. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau (Genesis 25:30; 36:1, 8). The kingdom of Edom was founded

during the 13th century B.C., and is located on the mountain and plateau area between the Dead Sea and Gulf of Aqabah, and is referred to as Mount Seir. Esau was the oldest of the twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, who were sons of Isaac and Rebecca (Genesis 25:24, 25). The Jews descended from Jacob.

When Esau sold his birthright to Jacob, and when Jacob stole Esau's blessing, an animosity arose between the two that stretched throughout history to this day (Genesis 27:34-41). Even after Jacob fled for his life, and returned in later years, there was a wary truce between the two men (Genesis 33). For example, an Edomite king refused Moses passage through Edom (Numbers 20:14-21). Saul fought against the Edomites (1 Samuel 14:47), David conquered them (2 Samuel 8:14), but they revolted against Jehoram about 847 B.C. (2 Kings 8:20, 22). The Edomites rejoiced over the torment of Judea during the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., and began to take over some of the land. Under Persian rule, Edom became known as Idumea, the Greek form of Edom.

In summary, we can see that the Edomites (ethnically part of the Arab world) and Jews had a centuries old tension that was reflected in the culture of New Testament times – and continues today. The Herodian dynasty had to politically navigate the stormy waters between the ruling Romans, restive Jews, and at a time when the Jews had an age old animosity against the Edomites. God gave the Herods the necessary political, diplomatic, economic and leadership skills to maintain a good balance. A place of relative stability was needed to birth the Church.

Now, we can return to how the Herodian lineage developed. Antipater, who was an able and loyal administrator, won Julius Caesar's favor, and in 47 B.C., Antipater was appointed to the procurator ship of Judea. Hyreanus, now getting up in age, was persuaded by Antipater to give Phasaël, Antipater's eldest son, the governorship of Jerusalem, and Herod, Antipater's second son, to the governorship of Galilee. Bad times, however, fell on Antipater as he was murdered in 43 B.C. It followed that Antipater's two sons, Phasaël and Herod, were granted their father's position in Hyreanus' court. Then began Herod's rise to power. Here is how it happened.

Herod the Great

The perennial nemesis from Rome's northeastern empire, the Parthians, revolted the year after Julius Caesar's assassination. In 40 B.C., they invaded Palestine, captured both Hyrcanus and Phasaël, and carried them off in captivity. The sly, charming Herod, however, escaped to Egypt, evaded the scheming Cleopatra, and made his way through a stormy winter voyage to Rome where he courted and won the favor of both Octavian and Antony.

Herod was appointed to govern the realm of Palestine, and in 39 B.C. traveled home to claim his turf. A wily, capable warrior and military strategist, Herod unseated the Parthian puppet, Antigonus, and mastered his inheritance. From here we can call him Herod the Great. He was ruthless, yet a capable negotiator, effective diplomat, politically astute, and eager opportunist. He displayed remarkable skills of politically steering a safe course between the ruling Romans, and cantankerous Jews.

As the story continues, in 30 B.C., the charismatic Herod the Great retained the favor of Octavian, who had defeated Antony. Herod remained in power for the rest of his life, down to 4 B.C. He was the king when Jesus was born, somewhere around five or six B.C.

The Herodian party embraced the Hellenization culture and Roman policies in Palestine. They favored local political control, and were resistant to any challenge of the status quo. They did not want the Romans to interfere with their nominal local control, politically. Herod the Great built the great temple in Jerusalem. He started the project in 20 B.C., and it was finished in A.D. 64 – just six years before its complete destruction – a real historical event that was predicted by Jesus (Matthew 24:1, 2). Herod the Great accomplished other favors to the Jews. He gave Palestine order and economic opportunity. The Herods even joined in with the plot to eliminate Jesus (Matthew 22:16; Mark 3:6; 12:13).

Herod the Great, however, had a dark side. He was a cruel tyrant. His family and private life were marked by feuds, intrigue, and murder. For example, Herod the Great had several sons by different women. But, he also had a favorite wife, Mariamme. Herod's sister, Salome, along with his son, Antipater (whose mother was Doris), murdered Mariamme and her two sons (Alexander and Aristobulus) in 7 B.C. Distraught, and nearing the end of his life, Herod the Great then killed his son, Antipater.

Herod the Great contributed much to Palestine. He built many buildings, fortresses, and even started building the massive temple in Jerusalem in 20 B.C.

The slaughter of the innocent babies (Matthew 2:16-18) also occurred under his rule. He finally fell victim to delusions of persecution and uncontrollable outbursts of violence. As mentioned, he died a tormented death in 4 B.C., right after his demented attempt to murder the Messiah in His infancy (Matthew 2:3-19). He was about 70 years of age, and had great wealth, which he spread throughout his family. Surprisingly, Herod the Great's evil stratagems were permitted by God, and were in fulfillment of God's plan, according to prophecy (Matthew 2:5, 15, 17).

It is of special note, however, that Herod the Great recognized and acknowledged the coming of the Messiah, and sought to discern from the Jews the location of where the Messiah (Jesus Christ) would come from (Matthew 2:1-6). Messiah was to be a political leader for Israel, and Herod wanted to eliminate any threat to his throne.

With all of Herod the Great's sons and daughters from different mothers, the picture becomes more confusing at his death. Herod the Great left his kingdom to three sons. **Archelaus**, whose mother was Malthace, a Samaritan woman, took Judea and Idumea. **Herod Antipas**, whose mother was also Malthace, took Galilee and Perea. Finally, **Philip**, whose mother was a Jewess named Cleopatra, took Iturea, Trachonitis, and other lands in the northeast. Then the jockeying began between the sons to gain more power.

Archalaus and the Parable of the Pounds

Archalaus was brutal, but lacked political skills. He took the title of king, and severely quelled the bloody uprisings in Jerusalem after the death of Herod the Great. This was the time when the Jesus and His parents came back from Egypt. The Bible states, *“But when he (Joseph) heard that Archalaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee, and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’”* (Matthew 2:22, 23). Thus, Christ grew up under the rule of Herod Antipas.

It is, indeed, comforting to know that God has His plan, and is working it out to perfection, even in the midst of the political corruption and intrigue that we see on the surface of history.

Archalaus traveled to Rome to gain the Emperor’s support, as things were rapidly falling apart under his rule. He was opposed by his brother, Herod Antipas, and a Jewish embassy, but managed to maintain his hold on power. He was, fortunately, denied the royal title of king. His story serves as the background for the Parable of the Pounds, spoken of by Luke (19:11-27). Archalaus kept his rule for 10 years, but was finally unseated and banished to Gaul. A Roman knight, Coponius, took his place as governor of Judea. He levied a harsh tax against the Jews, which initiated a revolt led by Judas of Gamala, and the rise of the Zealots who became a force in Palestinian politics.

Herod Antipas

Herod Antipas (an abbreviation for Antipater) inherited his father’s cunning for political rule. Jesus called him “That fox,” (Luke 12:32). He ruled in Galilee until A.D. 39. Probably sometime before A.D. 23, Herod Antipas met the evil force that brought much grief, and his eventual downfall: the woman, Herodias, who demanded John the Baptist’s head. Herodias was first married to Herod Antipas’s half brother, Philip.

This Philip lived in Rome, and was not the Philip who inherited a portion of his father’s rule. This Philip in Rome was the son of an unnamed wife of Herod the Great. Now, here is where it gets complicated. Herodias was also the daughter of Aristobulus, who was the son of Herod the Great and his favorite wife, Mariamme. This made Herodias a niece as well as the wife of Philip. She liked her uncles.

On a trip to Rome, and while visiting relatives, a sexual affair developed between Herod Antipas and Herodias. Herodias was a descendant of the once mighty Maccabees, and the daughter of Aristobulus. It is better, she thought, to be married to the ruler, rather than the ruler’s brother. As it turned out, Herod Antipas took her back to Palestine as an unlawful wife and queen. The two probably loved each other, but trouble dogged them the rest of their lives.

In the meantime, Herod Antipas' rightful queen, who was a daughter of Aretas IV, the king of the Nabateans, got wind of the affair before the couple made it back to Palestine. Herod was going to divorce her. She escaped to her father's place before Herod Antipas could detain her. Consequently, when Herod Antipas and Herodias returned to Palestine, they found themselves in a frontier war with Herod's father-in-law.

The Nabateans, a powerful nation, had moved into the area of Edom and Moab between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C. (Obadiah 1-7; Malachi 1:1-7). By New Testament times their empire stretched from the Mediterranean Sea south of Gaza, to the Red Sea, and on to the Euphrates River. They controlled Damascus. They also built the famous city of Petra, which was their capital. They were a formidable foe. Herod Antipas was wise in marrying Aretas's daughter to forge a political alliance, which was a common practice of the day. It was a massive blunder, however, to divorce her and thus bring a bitter war on himself.

John the Baptist

It was at this time that the crime of John the Baptist's murder occurred (Mark 6:14-29). Herod Antipas was celebrating his birthday with many influential visitors in attendance. The location was at the fortress of Machaerus. Machaerus was Herod's southernmost fortress, located east of the Dead Sea, and on the border of Perea. Areas' kingdom spread southward and it was from here that Herod Antipas and Herodias conducted their disastrous war against Aretas. Machaerus was where Herodias had John the Baptist imprisoned because of his speaking out against the unlawful marriage of Herodias and Herod Antipas. Herodias had to silence anything that would cause her to lose her newfound wealth, status, and power.

The wine flowed freely, and the food and celebration continued. The shouts of merriment and the noise of music wafted across the ground and filtered down to the dungeon where John awaited his fate. Finally, being bored, Herod called in his step daughter, Salome, to dance before the guests. It was sensual, sexual, and appealed to all the base instincts of men. The consequences were violence, the death of John the Baptist whose head rolled from his body at the impact of the executioner's axe. The sordid event marked a tragic, downward, freefalling spiral in the life of Herod Antipas. Herod had positive feelings toward John, could recognize what was truth, and even grieved over John's death (Mark 6:20, 26). But, his life crumbled.

This became the second plank in Herod's fall: the hatred of the Jews against him for the murder of John the Baptist. The Jews believed God was leveling justice against Herod Antipas, and became rebellious. Herod Antipas feared an uprising.

There was yet another force coming hard against Herod Antipas: the ministry and following of Jesus Christ. This disturbed Herod Antipas greatly (Mark 6:14-16). His mind was deteriorating, because he thought Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected and coming to haunt him (Mark 6:16). A tormented conscience and impending loss and bankruptcy are a torturous experience.

Herod Antipas also participated in another dastardly deed: the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in A.D. 30. At Christ's trial, Pilate sent him to Herod Antipas, because Jesus fell under Herod's jurisdiction, being from Galilee (Luke 23:6-12). Herod, in the face of heated opposition from the Jews, experienced his popular support quickly fading. Furthermore, faced with a war that was going badly, he caved in to Jew's demands for Jesus' murder. The act also cemented an alliance between Pilate and Herod – which Herod badly needed. Political pressure caused Herod Antipas to make another enormous decision. But, again, God was using the political corruption and palace intrigue of the day to accomplish His eternal purposes.

As a footnote to the girl, Salome, she eventually married her uncle Philip, the governor of Iturea, and brother to Herod Antipas, about 30 A.D. King Philip died in A.D. 34, and she then married her cousin, Aristobulus, king of Chalcis, which was north of Abilene in the Anti-Lebanon hill country. Salome, according to legend, died from injuries incurred from a fall on some ice.

Meanwhile, the military campaign Herod Antipas was conducting against his father-in-law was falling apart. It was a disaster. In fact, Herod Antipas' army was destroyed. Finally, Herod Antipas had to appeal to Emperor Tiberius in Rome for help, who sent Vitellius, governor of Syria to help. More problems confronted Herod, however. Vitellius marched his two legions of warriors through Judea on the way to Petra and a military confrontation with Aretas in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Jews opposed Vitellius. They objected to the army marching through Judea with their various images and insignias, which was against their laws. Vitellius halted his army. There, along with Herod Antipas, he went to Jerusalem for a few days to offer sacrifices to God, and win over the Jews. While there, he granted the position of high priest to Theophilus. However, while in Jerusalem, more bad news cascaded upon Herod Antipas. In A.D. 37, the report came from Rome that Herod Antipas' sponsor, Tiberius, had died. Fearing that the new Emperor would not want him to continue the war effort, Vitellius disbanded his army, and retired to Syria. Herod Antipas was abandoned.

Finally, in A.D. 39, Herod Antipas fell from power. Caius Caligula had ascended the throne at Rome, and Herod, incited by Herodias, appealed to the new ruler for the title of king. Herodias was desperately jealous of the favor Caligula had bestowed upon Herod Agrippa I, her brother. She wanted Herod Antipas to have the same. Herod Antipas was resistant to the persistent cajoling of Herodias, suspecting he might run afoul of Caligula by such a request. Eventually, he consented. Caligula, suspecting treasonable motives, actually deposed Herod Antipas. Ironically, the charge had been leveled against him by his treacherous nephew, Herod Agrippa I. Herodias had dragged Herod Antipas to his moral and political failure. But, to her credit, Herodias rejected the favors of the Emperor, and accompanied Herod Antipas in his exile at Lyons in Gaul (modern France).

As to the favors Caligula offered Herodias, he discovered that she was the sister of Herod Agrippa I. Consequently, he offered to let her keep her share of the Herod Antipas wealth. She refused, stating, "Thou, indeed, O emperor, actest after a magnificent manner, and as becomes thyself, in what thou offerest me; but the kindness of which I have for my husband hinders me from partaking of the favor of thy gift: for it is not just that I, who have been made a partner in his prosperity, should forsake him in his misfortunes."³ In the end, even Herodias displayed deep love for her husband, and a degree of honor. But, her dark side was very dark.

Herod Agrippa I

It seems, according to Josephus, that the third son of Herod the Great, Philip of Iturea, was the best ruler. He was a generous leader, who continued the Herodian pro-Roman policies. His territory was far enough away from the center of Jewish activity to avoid direct confrontation with them. He married another member of the Herodian clan, as mentioned, by marrying Salome.

Upon Philip's death, the way opened up for the third Herod to be mentioned in the Bible, Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1). Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great, the son of Aristobulus, and brother to Herodias. Herod Agrippa I had been raised in the royal courts of Rome, and gained favor with Caligula, who granted him the vacant realm of Philip. Herod Agrippa I was very charming, ruthless, deceitful, calculating, but an astute politician and ruler. Upon the exile of Herod Antipas and Herodias, Agrippa was granted their realm of Galilee and Perea. Caligula's successor to the Roman throne, Claudius, granted Herod Agrippa I the rest of the realm that was ruled by Herod the Great (A.D. 41). Herod Agrippa I was now in control of Palestine, having also won the support of the Jews.

Herod Agrippa I rose to great power, though still a puppet king of Rome. Unfortunately for him, however, his reign was short lived. He died in A.D. 44. He was well loved by the people, but he made a fatal mistake. He opposed the fledging Church. He put to death the first Apostle martyr, James, the brother of John. Seeing that this was to the liking of the Jews, Herod Agrippa I overplayed his hand.

He arrested Peter, and was going to put him to death. God helped Peter to escape, and Herod Agrippa I was so furious that he had the guards executed. He then traveled to Caesarea, and proceeded to give a great speech to the people of Tyre and Sidon who were petitioning him for peace. He died, struck down by an angel of the Lord at the age of 54, because Herod Agrippa I did not give the glory to God. God is very much in control of the affairs of humanity.

God used the event for at least two purposes. First, He removed a barrier to the spread of the Church, which was the killing of Christians. Secondly, since the Christians in Jerusalem confined themselves to that area, Herod Agrippa's persecution forced them

³ Cited by Flavius Josephus in William Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (New York: H.L. Burt Company, Publishers, n.d.), p. 471.

out and onto the uttermost parts of the world. This was the instruction from God (Acts 1:8), but He used Herod Agrippa to force the issue with the Christians.

Herod Agrippa II

But, the Herod dynasty was not finished. Herod Agrippa I left a teen-age son. Claudius appointed this son as king of Chalcis in A.D. 48. Later, more of the realm was added. This son became the last of the Herod dynasty, and was given the title of Herod Agrippa II in A.D. 53. His wife (or live in companion) was his sister, Bernice. They were living together in an incestuous relationship. Another sister, Drusilla, was married to Antonius Felix a Roman procurator of Judea. Felix had seduced her away from the king of Emesa, now known as the Syrian port city of Homs. Paul spoke out against this arrangement before Felix, which cause Felix great fear (Acts 23:24-25:14). Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus.

King Herod Agrippa II displayed the better qualities of a Herod: intelligent, pro-Roman, and very supportive of Judaism. God had used this dynasty, who under Rome maintained a degree of stability and peace in the region, which was needed for the establishment of Christianity. Rome was grateful to this dynasty. However, when the Herodians stepped over the line in opposing the work of God, He put a stop to their cruelty. God used corrupted, cruel, immoral rulers to advance His cause. The Herods were an amazing and competent family, and an unwitting but important part of God's plan.

The Herodian end

But, the reign of the Herods came to a jolting end, and they disappeared from the dusty pages of history. Festus died in A.D. 64, and the Great Revolt of the Jews started in A.D. 66 with the eventual terrible destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Some estimates placed the Josephus indicates that Herod Agrippa II lived in Caesarea, and witnessed the Roman destruction of his country. He lived the life of a humble and contented vassal of Rome, and died in A.D. 100.

There is another positive note to Agrippa II. When the Jewish wars started (A.D. 66), the Jewish Christians began deserting Jerusalem. In an act of compassion, Agrippa II provided them asylum in the town of Pella in Decapolis, which is beyond Jordan in the north part of Peraea. In another strange twist, Bernice, Agrippa's wife and sister, employed her sensual charms to seduce the conquering Titus. He desired to elevate her to the imperial throne, but public opinion dissuaded him.⁴

As a peculiar note, the great temple buildings in Jerusalem built by the Herods at great expense, and to keep the favor of the Jews, were completely destroyed by the invading Roman army. The soldiers were told that Jewish treasures of gold was hidden in the seams of the great stones of the temple buildings. Eager for rich plunder, the soldiers dismantled every stone and laid the area waste. Some estimate that some 1.3 million Jews were slaughtered, and about 100,000 prisoners were taken away. The Jewish commonwealth was destroyed, and the conquering Vespasian confiscated the land for

⁴ Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), Vol. 1, p. 401, n. 2.

himself, or distributed it out to his military veterans. The Herodian attempt to please God with their wealth and power was ultimately and devastatingly rejected.

In a span of 100 years, virtually the entire huge and wealthy Herod clan had become extinct. These were the ones who had power, wealth, and prestige; yet, one generation sought to murder the Christ child, another generation presided over His crucifixion, and a third tried to stamp out the church. The enemies of the Gospel utterly failed and were destroyed, but the church of Jesus Christ goes on.

G. WHO WAS THEOPHILUS?

At this point, I digress on a theory as to the identity of this “most excellent Theophilus,” the immediate recipient of Luke’s Gospel. My speculative conclusion, or theory; consequently, is this: the “most excellent Theophilus” was a highly placed aristocratic Jewish clergy member, a possible former high priest, who was perhaps a convert to Christ, and/or was at least sympathetic toward Christianity. Luke wrote the Gospel to help convert or stabilize Theophilus in his Christian faith, and/or to help Paul gain his release from prison. He may have been one of, “a great many of the priests (who) were becoming obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

An understanding of the historical context makes this view both plausible and probable. I will first lay out for you a brief historical context of the events of this time. Secondly, I will present my conclusions. This history is very brief; consequently, it might be helpful for you to read the history of the Herod family at the end this commentary on the Gospel of Luke. It will help fill in some of the historical blanks. Let me start by giving a short history of the high priests of that time.

There were, during the reign of the Herods, many high priests. Since the land was under Roman rule, the high priests were appointed by various Roman governors. Sometimes their time in office was short, sometimes longer. Their appointment was at the mercy of the Roman governors. Josephus wrote, “Accordingly the number of the high-priests, from the days of Herod until the day when Titus took the temple and the city, and burnt them, were in all twenty-eight; the time also that belonged to them was a hundred and seven years.”⁵ Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

One high priest was named Theophilus. Here is how it happened. Josephus tells us that Vitellius, under orders from the Roman Emperor, Tiberius, came to the aid of Herod Antipas who was at war with his ex father-in-law, Aretas IV. Vitellius was the Roman appointed governor of Syria. Aretas IV was the king of another nation, the Nabateans from the area of Edom and Moab.

During this time, both Herod and Vitellius visited Jerusalem. The year was A.D. 37, just four years after the crucifixion of Christ. Josephus writes that while at Jerusalem, Vitellius “made a stay there for three days, within which time he deprived Jonathan of

⁵ Flavius Josephus, translated by William Whiston, *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (New York: H.L. Burt Company, Publishers, n.d.) p. 578

the high-priesthood, and gave it to his brother Theophilus.”⁶ This Jonathan is probably the “John” of Acts 4:6, who was also a member of high-priestly descent, and was a son of Annas. Hence, Jonathan succeeded Caiaphas in A.D. 37, but his reign was very short lived.

Now, to fast forward history, Josephus explained of King Herod Agrippa II some 20 years later, “He also deprived Jesus, the son of Gamaliel, of the high-priesthood, and gave it to Matthias, the son of Theophilus, under whom the Jews’ war with the Romans took its beginning.”⁷ The Jewish wars against Rome started in A.D. 66. King Herod Agrippa II ruled during the ministry of Paul (Cf. Acts 26:1-32). Matthias was the next to last high priest. The last one was Phannias, the son of Samuel. But, the point to consider here is that we have a second occurrence of a well connected person by the name of Theophilus!

The political complexities of the day make it hard to sort out the details. But, during the death of Christ (A.D. 33), Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests (Cf. Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6). Annas held the title during about A.D. 6-14, and then Caiaphas held it during about A.D. 18-36. Annas still carried the title, probably out of respect, but Caiaphas was the official high priest, and also the son-in-law of Annas. Annas was a very powerful figure, as all five of his sons served as high-priest at one time or another. All this is to say that the title of high priest traveled a bit.

Then, to further fill out the historical puzzle, we examine the time frame of Paul’s ministry. As mentioned, Paul was converted in A.D. 35. He involved himself in missionary work throughout Arabia, Palestine, and Asia Minor. In A.D. 57, Paul returned to Jerusalem with a relief offering to suffering Christians because of a famine. Regarding his co-ministry with Luke, he had joined Paul on the latter’s third missionary journey during A.D. 53-57, and stayed with Paul constantly through the end of the narration of Acts (Acts 20:5; 28:30). Their being together is determined by the “we” statements written by Luke in Acts, the book he authored (cf. Acts 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16).

Upon Luke and Paul’s arrival in Jerusalem with the relief effort, Paul was immediately pounced upon by the Jewish leaders, and was placed under arrest by the Roman army. He was in prison in Jerusalem, and then was transferred to Caesarea. The trials against Paul languished for two years, and finally Paul appealed his case to the Roman Emperor, Nero, who ruled A.D. 54-68. Under military guard, Paul was escorted to Rome, and placed under house arrest for another two years (Acts 28:30). He was acquitted in A.D. 63, and resumed his missionary work. Later, he was rearrested, and executed in A.D. 67 at Rome.

Now, let us go back to Caesarea. When Paul was in prison in Caesarea (A.D. 57-59), Ananias was the high priest (Acts 23:2). He had the title about A.D. 47-58. Sometime after this, the son of Theophilus became high priest. As a side note, Ananias was pro-

⁶ Ibid., p. 453

⁷ Ibid., p. 575

Roman; consequently, he was assassinated by zealous anti-Roman revolutionaries at the start of the Jewish wars against Rome, which started in A.D. 66.

So, what can we now piece together from this evidence? Several facts guide us as we try to determine the identity of Theophilus, the recipient of the Gospel of Luke.

1. There was a Theophilus who ruled as high priest during A.D. 37-41.⁸ At that time Christianity was in its infancy, and growing rapidly. Paul was converted in A.D. 35. Since Paul was a leading Jewish clergyman before his conversion, he certainly knew this Theophilus quite well. They were colleagues. In fact, Paul appealed to the high priest, Caiaphas, for permission to arrest Christians in Damascus (Acts 9:1).
2. High priests came and went fairly rapidly, being under the capricious rule of various Roman rulers. But, the aristocratic high-priestly classes still held great respect, influence and honor even if they were deposed and replaced. However, the high priesthood was mostly controlled by a small number of wealthy and powerful aristocratic Jewish families. When the New Testament refers to “chief priests,” this tight, powerful circle is in mind.
3. Then, there was Matthias, the son of Theophilus, who was appointed high priest during A.D. 65-68.⁹ This Theophilus, undoubtedly, had great influence among the Jewish clergy, Roman governors, and very well could have been the former high-priest some 20 years earlier.
4. The time span between Theophilus becoming high priest (A.D. 37), and his son being appointed is about 23 years, and it was during this time span that the early rise of Christianity occurred, along with the dynamic ministries of Paul and Luke – and including Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea! Furthermore, there was abundant opportunity for them to be in contact with each other.
5. We can conclude this: during the ministry of Paul and Luke, there was at least one, and maybe two, high level Jewish leader(s) with the name of Theophilus. If there were two, then one was a high priest, and twenty some years later, the other the father of a high priest. If there was only one Theophilus, then he was a high priest, and so was his son, also some 20 years later.
6. We need to give attention to the phrase Luke uses to address Theophilus, “most excellent,” (Gr. *Kratistos*), which means mightiest, noblest, or best (Luke 1:3). It is the superlative degree of *kratus*, which is strong word, and was used as a title indicating a person of great respect and honor. Paul used the same phrase when addressing Festus (Acts 26:25; cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3). It would be equivalent to addressing a king, “your Majesty,” or a noble as “the honorable....” Theophilus, consequently, must have been a man of high rank. The Jewish high priestly caste was of high rank.

⁸ F.F. Bruce. *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 67.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

7. The Gospel of Luke was written probably sometime in the late A.D. 50's, when Paul and Luke were in Caesarea or Rome. Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem upon his return from Asia, and was in prison appealing for his life. Three things stand out. First, Luke had urgent motive to appeal to people of high influence to save Paul's life, and to have him released from prison. Luke was also in geographic close proximity to those people of high influence. Remember, Paul's life was tremendous jeopardy, with the deadly threat coming from the Jewish leadership. Luke, in my opinion, was strongly lobbying within that community for support.
8. Second, Luke was in Palestine with Paul, and had access to eyewitnesses of Christ's ministry. Third, the historical context reveals Paul's defenses and appeals were patterned similarly to Luke's Gospel, which was to gain his freedom, and at the same time to present the gospel. Luke's Gospel is also evangelistic and apologetic. One can compare the five defenses by Paul in Acts.
 - First, against the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1-21).
 - Second, against the Sanhedrin Council in Jerusalem (Acts 22:30-23:10).
 - Third, before the Roman governor Felix in Caesarea (Acts 24:1-27).
 - Fourth, before the Roman governor Festus in Caesarea (Acts 25:1-27).
 - Fifth, before King Herod Agrippa II in Caesarea (Acts 25:1-32).
9. To return to my original point, my speculative conclusion, or theory is this: the "most excellent Theophilus" was a highly placed aristocratic Jewish clergy member, a former high priest, who was perhaps a convert to Christ, and/or was at least sympathetic toward Christianity. Luke wrote the Gospel to help convert or stabilize Theophilus in his Christian faith, and/or to help Paul gain his release from prison. This view seem to me to best fit the historical facts of the case.
10. Finally, at this point, we can switch to and expand on the issue of where Luke's Gospel was written: either Caesarea, or Rome.
 - It would make better sense if Luke wrote the Gospel in Caesarea, as the times were desperate for Paul in prison. Luke also would have better access to the primary sources of information recorded in the Gospel.
 - However, it would also make sense for the Gospel to be written in Rome. Luke and Paul would have been preparing a defense against the Jewish leaders who were to travel to Rome to help prosecute Paul before Nero. The leaders never arrived from Jerusalem, which could have been due to the influence of Luke's Gospel on the sympathetic and influential Theophilus.

H. TIMELINE OF PAUL'S MINISTRY.

To help place things into a time perspective, perhaps the following partial chart is profitable.

Dates	Event	Comments
c. 5 B.C.	Jesus' birth	

4 B.C.	Herod the Great's death	Matthew 2:19
A.D. 6-14	Annas high priest	Luke 3:2; Acts 4:6
A.D. 18-36	Caiaphas high priest	Reigned during Jesus' death: Matthew 26:57
c. A.D. 14-37	Tiberius: Roman Emperor	Reigned during Jesus' death
c. A.D. 29-34?	Christ's death	
c. A.D. 29-34	Pentecost	Start of the church, Acts 2
A.D. 37	Birth of Josephus	
A.D. 37-44	King Herod Agrippa I	Acts 12:1ff. Span of rule
A.D. 35	Paul's conversion	Acts 9
A.D. 37-41	Theophilus high priest	From Josephus
A.D. 47-49	Paul's 1 st missionary trip	Acts 13:1-14:28
A.D. 50-53	Paul's 2 nd missionary trip	Acts 15:36-18:22
A.D. 53	King Herod Agrippa II	Began rule
A.D. 53-57	Paul's 3 rd missionary trip	Acts 18:23-21:26. With Luke
A.D. 53	Josephus with Banus	Banus: a possible disciple of John the Baptist
A.D. 50's	Matthew's Gospel	Written by Matthew
A.D. 57	Paul returned to Jerusalem	Acts 21:27. With Luke
A.D. 54-68	Nero: Roman Emperor	
A.D. 57-59?	Paul in prison	In Jerusalem, Caesarea
A.D. 47-58	Ananias high priest	Acts 23:2
c. A.D. 65-68	Matthias as high priest.	Son of Theophilus
c. A.D. 58-60?	Gospel of Luke written	From Caesarea (or Rome).
A.D. 60-62	Paul in prison in Rome	Paul writes prison epistles. With Luke
A.D. 60-61	Acts written	Luke is the writer
A.D. 63	Paul released from prison	
A.D. 65-70	Mark's Gospel written	
c. A.D. 65-68	Matthias: high priest	Son of Theophilus
A.D. 67	Paul's death	
A.D. 70	Destruction of Jerusalem	
A.D. 90	John's Gospel written	

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: A BACKGROUND, OUTLINE, ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

BRIEF CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

In this examination of the Gospel of John, my objective is to present a summary of background and introductory issues, point out some general observations, and delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the Gospel. I will then give an extended analysis of the Gospel along with various comments.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION.

A. THE WRITER.

From the days of the early Church Fathers, there is agreement that the Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John. Examples include Theophilus of Antioch (c. 180), Origen (c. 250), Tertullian (c. 220), Irenaeus (c. 200), Polycarp (A.D. 60-155), and Clement of Alexandria (c. 220). Early enemies of Christianity also agreed to John's authorship (e.g. Porphyry, and Julian the Apostate).

John the Apostle, a Palestine Jew, was a son of Zebedee and Salome. He was the older brother of the James who was martyred under Herod Agrippa I. John came from a well to do family (Mark 15:40, 41). They were fishermen by occupation. John the Baptist (different person from the Apostle) pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God to John and Andrew. John is thought to be the second unnamed disciple in John 1:40.

While John was fishing with James, Jesus called them to follow Him (Mark 1:19, 20). Jesus called them Boanerges, sons of thunder (Mark 3:17), because of a volatile, zealous trait in their character. This trait was expressed in the Book of Revelation. They belonged to the inner circle of Christ's friends.

John was the disciple, "whom Jesus loved" (21:20, 24). He was present when Jesus raised Jairus's daughter from the dead, at the transfiguration, and in Gethsemane. Jesus, while on the cross, commended His mother, Mary, to John's care. After Christ's Ascension, John was one of 120 in the upper room. After Pentecost, in about A.D. 50, John left Jerusalem, and eventually moved to and labored at Ephesus sometime after A.D. 63. Later, he was exiled to Patmos for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 1:9). His exile probably occurred under the violent rule of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). John later returned to Ephesus, and died in old age in about A.D. 98.

B. PURPOSE AND THEME

John wrote five New Testament books: the Gospel, three epistles, and the Revelation. In His Gospel, John records the self-revelation of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God and Savior of the world. He states the aim of his writing, "*Many other signs therefore*

Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30, 31).

John presented Christ as The Word (Logos). The word, logos, means word, concept, thought, and the expression of the specific content. In this case, it refers to Christ's expression of God. The purpose of the Gospel is evangelistic: that people might believe in Christ so as to obtain eternal life, and escape everlasting punishment. John's approach was to set forth the Person and work of Christ, what is the requirement for salvation, and what are the consequences of unbelief. His proof was the miracles performed by Jesus. Belief is mentioned 98 times. This Gospel gives the clearest explanations of the plan of salvation.

C. THE DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING.

The date of writing is around A.D. 90. The place of writing was probably Ephesus.

D. THE READERSHIP AND CONTEXT.

The Gospel is directed to the whole world (e.g. 1:13, 14, 29; 3:16-19). There are several possible motives as to why John wrote his Gospel. Besides pure evangelism, they include the following.

1. Some believe John was writing to comfort and encourage Jewish converts who had been expelled from their synagogues.
2. Some believe there was a heretical threat against the Deity of Christ, called "Docetism." This heresy rejected the incarnation of Christ. John's Gospel affirms that Jesus is the eternal word, and also human flesh - fully God, and fully man (e.g. 1:1, 14).
3. Some think John was recording the signs (20:30, 31; 21:25) to prove Christ's claims.
4. Some think John was writing to correct the teachings of Judaism, the infant philosophy of the Gnostics, or even the remaining followers of John the Baptist.
5. Finally, some think that John was writing to compliment the other three Gospels.

Regarding the historical context, there had been radical changes in the lands of the Bible. Jerusalem and Judaism had been destroyed with the Jews being scattered as exiles or taken as prisoners. Christianity had been clearly identified as a separate religion, and not just a Jewish sect. The Christian Faith had grown to large numbers, and was scattered throughout the Roman Empire, and beyond. The Church had suffered under the brutal persecution of Nero (A.D. 54-68), who succeeded in murdering both Peter and Paul.

John had taken over the leadership of Paul and Peter, and built upon their work. He settled in Ephesus, which was the Roman capital of Asia Minor. It was the center of Greek culture, commerce, and religion, philosophy, and the worship at the temple of Diana. Paul had established a very influential church, and Christian movement in the region.

All the forces of Christian heresy and orthodoxy collided in the city. Jerusalem was destroyed, and Rome had not yet ascended to Christian power; therefore, Ephesus became the principal center of church history in the second half of the first century. John gave the Church her resolve against violent persecution from outside, and heresy and corruption from within.

And, persecuted they were. The Gospel was written during the brutal reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). He was the second Roman Emperor who sadistically persecuted Christians. Banishment was one of his favorite forms of punishment. This bloodthirsty ruler even surpassed Nero in atrocious cruelty. He demanded worship, seeking out the Jews and Christians who refused to grant him veneration due deity. Many Christians were murdered under the charge of atheism. He even murdered his own cousin, Flavius Clemens.

E. THE SEVEN SIGNS OF JOHN.

There are seven “signs,” or miracles given in John, which some say are the signs used to document the claims of Jesus. (See notes on John 2:1-11).

1. Jesus changed water into wine at Cana of Galilee (2:1-11).
2. Jesus healed a royal official’s son who was near death at Cana of Galilee (4:46-54). The man and his family were converted.
3. Jesus healed an invalid at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem (5:1-18).
4. Jesus fed 5,000 with five barley loaves and two fish near the Sea of Galilee (6:5-14).
5. Jesus walked on the surface of the Sea of Galilee (6:16-21).
6. Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth. Location: in Jerusalem (9:1-7).
7. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany (11:1-45).

Of course, the greatest sign miracle of all was when Christ, Himself, came back from the dead.

II. NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS.

A. CHRIST’S DEITY EMPHASIZED.

There is not a human genealogy given in John, and no human link between Christ and God the Father. In Matthew, Jesus was born King of the Jews, and traced back to Abraham. In Luke, the emphasis is Christ as the Son of Man (Luke 19:10), and traced back to Adam (3:38). In Mark, Christ is introduced as the Son of God (Mark 1:1, 11), but in the role of servant (Mark 10:45). In John, Jesus is introduced as God (1:1) who created all things (1:3), is the source of life (1:4), maker of the world (1:10), and the great “I AM (8:58), who entered the human race and explained, or revealed God to humanity, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him”* (John 1:1, 14, 18).

John keeps the power and majesty of Deity in the foreground. For example, he did not record the agony and bloody sweat in the garden. At Christ's arrest, He introduced Himself as "I AM," and the soldiers were hurled to the ground – they were in the presence of God! Many private and personal interviews are in John's Gospel, and each point to Christ as God. Four major signs are given, that are unique to this Gospel, and that show His Deity: the healing the nobleman's son from a distance, the power over nature seen in His walking on the sea, the healing of the man born blind, and raising Lazarus from the dead.

B. CHRIST'S CLAIMS TO DEITY.

Some claim that Christ never claimed to be God; consequently, Christ's Deity is an invention of the early church. Many try to discount that Christ is God. There exists, however, in John four occasions in which Christ claimed to be God.

1. Jesus claimed an equality of access with God, "*And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man*" (3:13).
 - The idea is that no one has access to both heaven and earth, except of course, Jesus. He came from heaven to earth, and then went back. His was a claim to have exclusive access to heaven. Only God has that right.
 - In view is the realm in heaven where only the Trinity has access, and which is illustrated in the Holy of Holies located in the innermost place of the Temple, and was associated with the presence of Yahweh. In the tabernacle the inner Holy of Holies contained a golden altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant and other items. Into this realm, only the high priest could enter, and only once a year with his blood offering for sin. Christ is our high priest, and has the exclusive right to enter the real sacred place in heaven (Hebrews 9:1-7; 11, 12, 24).

2. Jesus claimed equality of existence with God (8:58). To set the context, we must go back to a revelation given to Moses.
 - God was sending Moses to the sons of Israel, and Moses asked of God His name in case the Israelites should ask. Scripture records, "*And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you''*" (Exodus 3:14; cf. Genesis 17:1). God had revealed the inner meaning of Yahweh as being the One Who Exists. It refers to God's active self-existence. He is the source of all, the ultimate ground of all being. He eternally exists in and of Himself, completely independent of anything else. He "is," signifying all that is in the verb "to be."
 - Returning to John, the Jews were confronting and accusing Jesus. Jesus claimed to be older than Abraham, and that those who kept His word would never die. John records, "*Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am*" (John 8:58). In other words, Jesus said that He existed before Abraham was born, and had power over death. He was the mighty, "I AM," the absolute, eternally self-existent One. Furthermore, the Jews in Jesus' presence understood Him to be making a claim of deity, because they picked up stones to kill Jesus (John 8:59).

3. Jesus claimed equality with God (5:18). John wrote, *“For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God”* (John 5:18). The Jews wanted to kill Jesus, because He broke the rules of the Sabbath, and claimed that God was His own Father in a unique way that could not be applied to normal humans. They understood Christ to claim to be God.
4. Jesus claimed equality of essence with God by saying, *“I and my Father are one”* (John 10:30). Jesus was not saying He and the Father are the same Person, because of the neuter form of the word, “One.” There are three Persons in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The issue of the Trinity is not that it is a contradiction, but a complexity that the Bible reveals to humanity. We cannot fully understand the nature of God (See notes on Matthew 28). Jesus claimed to be of one with the Father in perfect unity of purpose and eternal basic nature. Humans are separate, created beings from God. Christ and God are uniquely one in essential nature or being. Again, the Jews attempted to kill Jesus. The reason they gave is recorded as, *“For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God”* (John 10:33). They clearly understood Jesus’ claim to Deity.

D. ETERNAL LIFE.

The Gospel of John gives the way of eternal life, *“that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life”* (3:15; cf. 1 John 1:2; 2:25; 4:9; 5:13, 15). Eternal life is defined four ways by John.

First, eternal life is a quality of life that involves knowing God in personal experience, relationship, and unity (John 17:3).

Second, eternal life is seen in its duration. That is, it is a life that never ends (John 12:20-26; cf. Mark 10:30; 2 Corinthians 4:18; Romans 16:26).

Third, eternal life is one without condemnation, which in a sense could fall under the category of quality of life (John 3:16-19, 36).

Fourth, eternal life is life (John 3:15, 16, 36). Life is that principle that allows us to experience conscious existence. It is that power which God possesses, and eternal life is something we receive from Christ (1 John 5:11). In this world, life is seen in contrast with death. It is that which is gone from the “lifeless” corpse in the coffin. Death, from the Bible’s point of view, is separation from God, not cessation of existence. The unsaved still exist, but in a state of endless torment (Matthew 25:46).

One obtains eternal by faith in Christ. This means that we must personally receive Christ and His offer of salvation (John 1:12, 13). It is to personally believe, or trust, that the death, burial and resurrection of Christ sufficiently covers the penalty of one’s own personal sins, and will obtain eternal life.

Believe (Gr. πιστευω, *pisteuo*) means to be convinced of something, to trust, to rely on, to believe, to be persuaded of, to place confidence in. Believe means we are to be convinced of the truth in question. One dictionary defines *pisteuo* as “belief in a special sense, as faith in the Divinity that lays special emphasis on trust in his power and his nearness to help, in addition to being convinced that he exists and that his revelations or disclosures are true...God and Christ are objects of this faith.”¹⁰ Belief is mentioned some 98 times in John, who gives the clearest explanations of the plan of salvation (cf. 1:12, 13; 3:15, 16, 36; 5:24; 6:37, 40, and 47).

After salvation one finds new, eternal life and the power to obey, the ability to imitate and the strength to serve. The four Gospels have in common the record of the cross and resurrection. They all close with the missionary program to go into the entire world and preach the gospel to all creation.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF JOHN.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE PERSON OF CHRIST (1:1-18).

- A. Twelve great truths about Christ.
- B. Christ is the logos.
- C. Christ eternally co-existent with God the Father.

II. WITNESSES TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST (1:19-2:11).

- A. Witness of John the Baptist (1:19-34).
- B. Witness of Christ's disciples (1:35-51).
- C. Witness of Christ at wedding in Cana (2:1-11).

III. THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST (2:12-12:50).

- A. Christ cleansed the Temple (2:12-25).
- B. Christ witnessed to Nicodemus (3:1-21).
- C. John the Baptist gave testimony (3:24-36).
- D. Jesus led many Samaritans to salvation (4:1-42).
- E. Jesus healed the official's son (4:43-54).
- F. Christ revealed as the author and sustainer of life (Chapters 5-6).
 - 1. Jesus healed the sick man (5:1-18).
 - 2. Christ's authority in the resurrection of mankind (5:19-29).
 - 3. Christ presented as the Son of God (5:30-47).
 - 4. The miraculous feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-15).
 - 5. The miracle of walking on water (6:16-21).
 - 6. Christ: the Bread of Life from Heaven (6:22-71).
- G. Christ opposed by many (chapters 5-6).
 - 1. Opposed by his family (7:1-9).
 - 2. His sermon at the temple brought opposition (7:10-36).

¹⁰ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 666

3. A second sermon brought opposition (7:37-53).
4. Entrapment: the woman taken in adultery (8:1-11).
5. Jesus the spiritual light of the world (8:12-59).
6. Healing of the blind man on the Sabbath (Chapter 9).
7. Jesus as the Good Shepherd (chapter 10).
8. Lazarus raised from the dead (chapter 11).
9. Jesus' feet anointed by Mary of Bethany (12:1-11).
10. Triumphal entry of Jesus (12:12-19).
11. Some Greeks seek Jesus (12:20-36).
12. The Bible judges men (12:37-50).

IV. CHRIST'S PRIVATE MINISTRY TO HIS OWN (chapters 13-17).

- A. Christ ministering at the Last Supper (Chapter 13-14).
 1. Washing of the disciple's feet (13:1-20).
 2. Christ predicts His betrayal (13:21-35).
 3. Christ predicts Peter's denial (13:36-38).
 4. Christ instructs on heaven and His return (14:1-14).
 5. Christ promises the coming of the Holy Spirit (14:15-26).
 6. Christ gives His peace (14:27-31).

- B. Christ ministers by further instruction (chapters 15-16).
 1. Instruction on fruitfulness (15:1-17).
 2. Instruction on the hatred by the world (15:18-27).
 3. Jesus warns of persecution (16:1-6).
 4. Promise of the Holy Spirit (16:7-15).
 5. Promise of His death, Resurrection, second return (16:16-33).

- C. Christ ministers through His high priestly prayer (chapter 17).

V. THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST (chapters 18-19).

- A. The arrest of Christ (18:1-11).
- B. The trial of Christ before Annas (18:12-23).
- C. The trial of Christ before Caiaphas (18:24-27).
- D. The trial of Christ before Pilate (18:28-19:16).
- E. The murder of Christ by crucifixion (19:17-37).
- F. The burial of Christ (19:38-42).

VI. THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST (chapters 20-21).

- A. The empty tomb (20:1-10).
- B. The appearance to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18).
- C. The appearance to the disciples, minus Thomas (20:19-25).
- D. The appearance to the disciples, with Thomas (20:26-31).
- E. The appearance to the seven disciples (21:1-14).
- F. Christ's interchange with Peter (21:15-25).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN ANALYSIS, OUTLINE, COMMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION: THE PERSON OF CHRIST (1:1-18).

A. TWELVE GREAT TRUTHS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST.

John begins his Gospel with the Person of Christ. It is lofty, powerful, remarkable, and wonderful. It is written simply; yet, the concepts are complex and deep. Among the truths John describes, the following is included.

1. Christ has always existed (v. 1).
2. Christ eternally co-existed with God the Father (v. 1).
3. Christ is distinct from God the Father (v. 1).
4. Christ was the creator of all created beings and things (v. 3).
5. Christ was not created (v. 3).
6. Christ is the source of all life and light: physical and spiritual (vv. 4, 5, 9).
7. Christ revealed what God is like (v. 18).
8. Christ is God (v. 1). He did not evolve into a god, but eternally was God.
9. Christ was rejected by the world and His own (vv. 10, 11).
10. Christ became flesh and lived among humanity on this earth, and in history (v. 14).
11. Christ grants spiritual regeneration to those who receive (believe), which places them by birth in the family of God (vv. 12, 13).
12. Three major characteristics of God are holiness (revealed through the Law of Moses), grace and truth (v. 17).

B. CHRIST IS THE LOGOS.

John says that Christ is the Word, or the Greek word, "Logos" (v. 1ff.). Logos has as its central idea that of revelation. Logos is an idea, thought, reason, concept and its expression. In this sense, Jesus is the revelation of God. (cf. Hebrews 1: 1, 2; Colossians 1:15-19). That is, Jesus explained who God is, what He is like, and how He relates to His creation (1:18). What Jesus is like, is what God is like.

C. CHRIST AS ETERNALLY CO-EXISTENT WITH GOD THE FATHER.

There are many in this world that deny the Deity of Christ, or at least deny His Deity as revealed in the Bible. The Bible identifies Christ as the God of the universe, and not as some minor or major deity in a pantheon of many deities. Unfortunately, some say Christ was just a man at one time, but evolved into a god. Some say Christ was God, but not a man. Some say He was man, but not God. Some say He is just created as "a" god, among many other gods. The main idea, in whatever form, is that Christ did not eternally co-exist as God. Some mistranslate verse one to read, "The Word was 'a' god." In response to this deprecation of Christ, I offer some thoughts regarding the Deity of Christ.

1. The Word (Christ) is eternal. He pre-existed before creation with God (v. 1). The phrase "*In the beginning*" means before time and creation began (cf. Colossians 1:15-17). Paul clearly indicates this when he writes, "*And He is before all things...For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form*" (Colossians 1:17; 2:9). (See also #5, 6 below).

2. The Word has an eternal relationship of fellowship with God the Father, "*the Word was with God*" (v. 1) indicates a face to face fellowship. This fact also points to the Word's eternal distinction from God the Father. They were "face to face."
3. The Word is God. That is, He is the same in essential nature as God the Father. Three distinct Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) exist within the Godhead, or Trinity. They fully, eternally, equally, and simultaneously co-exist in the same common essence or nature. (See notes on Matthew 28).
4. The Word is identified as Jesus Christ (v. 17).
5. The phrase, "In the beginning," is before both time and anything of this universe was in existence; therefore, it was eternity.
6. Christ is the creator of all things. He existed before anything was created (v. 3). He could not; therefore, Himself be a created being for the following reasons.
 - Christ could not bring Himself into existence as a created being; consequently, He would necessarily need to be the Self-Existent One (God) from all eternity.
 - Christ would always necessarily be prior to when He came into existence (if, indeed, He had been created, which He was not) both logically and chronologically. This backward progression would continue until the ultimate First Cause, and would then necessarily identify Christ as that ultimate First Cause, or, God.
7. In verses 14 and 18, the "*only begotten God*" designation of Christ has a special meaning. The Greek word, *monogenous*, refers to uniqueness (one-of-a-kind), and priority of relationship. The term does not refer to something chronological, or to the birth order of several offspring. In the example of Abraham, Ishmael was also a son, and actually was the chronological first born, not Isaac, who was called Abraham's "*only begotten son*" (*monogenous*) (Hebrews 11:17; cf. Genesis 22:2). Christ, then, has a special relationship to God the Father; He was not the created offspring of the Father.
8. To say that Christ is "a" god, means one is a polytheist, and guilty of worshipping another God than the god of the Bible – a very serious, dangerous thing to do! According to Jesus, everyone who denies the Deity of Christ as explained in the Bible die unsaved (John 8:28; cf. 8:58, 59).
9. The problem with translating verse one as saying, "*the Word was a God*," is this. The Greek language has a definite article, "the," but not an indefinite article, "a". If the definite article is used, then it points to a definite, specific thing. For example, the statement "Give me the pen" refers to a specific pen. On the other hand, if one says, "Give me a pen," then it refers to any of several pens. The

Greek language can only call attention to “the” pen, but has no word for “a” pen. However, if there is no definite article written, then the thing in question can refer to a specific pen or any pen, depending on the context.

10. In the case of John 1:1, there is no definite article before God. Consequently, some arbitrarily mistranslate the Word (Jesus) as “a” God. They mistakenly insert the indefinite article, “a”. But, what does the context call for? The context of the first 11 verses clearly identifies Christ as the eternal God who created all things. John did not need to supply the definite article, “the,” because his meaning is understood from the context. In fact, Christ’s Deity is one major theme of the Gospel of John!

II. WITNESSES TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST (1:19-2:11).

A. THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (1:19-34).

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, was the one prepared to announce the Messiah to Israel. Following are several important features of his announcements.

1. He witnessed to the Jews (vv. 19-34).
2. He was the voice to announce Christ, as predicted by Isaiah 40:3 (v. 23). This prophecy from Isaiah also identifies Jesus as the Yahweh of the Old Testament. This again confirms Christ’s Deity.
3. Jesus is the lamb of God (v. 29), the consummation of historical Passover lamb (Exodus 12:3), and the prophetic sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world (Isaiah 53:7, 12). That Christ died for the sins of the world means that the atonement of Christ now extends to both Gentiles and Jews – not just to the Jews. If Christ died for the whole world, then the whole world would be saved. But, the Bible clearly teaches that not to be true. That particular unbiblical doctrine is called Universalism.
4. John said Jesus was the Son of God (v. 34).

B. THE WITNESS OF JESUS’ DISCIPLES (1:35-51).

John continues to call forth the eyewitnesses to the acts and words of Jesus Christ. Christianity is not just hearsay, rumor, idle gossip, the invention of imaginative minds, or a political movement. Christianity is rooted in real history, with real people doing real things, and saying real words. It is historical, real, true, accurate, and vitally important. That is why John calls forth the eyewitness testimony. In this section we find some of the testimony of Christ’s disciples, who were direct eyewitnesses.

1. They said He was the Messiah of Israel (v. 41).
2. They said He was the Son of God: King of Israel (v. 49).
3. He is called the Son of Man (v. 51).
4. He displayed attributes of Deity by seeing things out of His presence (v. 48).
5. They said He was the one whom Moses and the Prophets wrote about (v. 45).

C. TEN GREAT TITLES GIVEN TO JESUS IN CHAPTER ONE.

John spent great detail and time in identifying the Person of Christ in chapter one of his Gospel. We can now summarize some of the data regarding the Person of Christ.

1. Jesus is the Word: the revelation of God (v. 1).
2. Jesus is God (v. 1).
3. Jesus is the creator of the universe (v. 3).
4. Jesus is the light of the world (v. 7).
5. Jesus is the only begotten of God (v. 18).
6. Jesus is the Lamb of God (vv. 29, 36).
7. Jesus is the Son of God (vv. 34, 49).
8. Jesus is the Messiah (v. 41).
9. Jesus is the King of Israel (v. 49).
10. Jesus is the Son of Man (v. 51).

D. WITNESS OF JESUS (2:1-11).

This section is the first of seven “sign” miracles given by Jesus to make credible His words and to inspire faith in people. Each sign miracle teaches something about the Person and/or work of Christ. The miracles and theological meanings are listed below.

1. Christ turned water to the “best” wine (2:1-11). This miracle showed His glory and power. It amazed people, and gave His disciples faith. To the Jew, wine was used in Jewish weddings as a symbol for life and good times. It represented the young couple having a good, happy, and abundant life. Jesus is the source of a happy, good, and abundant life (John 10:10).
2. Christ cured the official’s son, and brought him back to life (4:46-54). This demonstrated Christ’s power over death and distance. He healed simply by His word.
3. Christ healed the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-18). This showed His power over deformity, religion, and sin. His authority and Deity were displayed. He is the great high priest who forgives sin. He displays personal interest in the troubles of people, and is eager to help and heal.
4. Christ fed the crowd of 5,000 (maybe 10,000 counting women and children) near the Sea of Galilee (6:6-13). This showed that He was the Prophet spoken of by Moses (1:21; Deuteronomy 18:15). Christ is the Creator who provides.
5. Christ walked on water (6:16-21). This verified His power over nature and natural laws.
6. Christ healed the blind man (9:1-7). This was a sign of judgment against Israel (vv. 39, 41). He is the judge of the universe. He determines values, and governs according to His will.

7. He raised Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44). This indicated the glory of Christ (v. 4), and confirmed His power over death. It also showed His compassion and tender feelings for humanity.

The greatest question in the world is, "What think ye of Christ?" Some say He was merely a man, good teacher, prophet for his age, illegitimate child, first created being, one of many beings or gods, etc. The Person of the living Jesus Christ is central to Christianity and His person stands unique in time and eternity. He is fully God, fully man in one Person. Our view of Christ's Person places Christianity against all other religions of the world. They are simply known for the teachings of their founders who are now dead, or soon will be.

Christ is fully God, co-equal, co-eternal with God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit. Though three distinct personalities, they fully, simultaneously share in one common nature. Christ claimed to be God; others understood Him to make that claim, which included both friends and enemies. He performed many miracles to prove His claims, including raising others from the dead, and even He Himself came back from the dead.

We are faced with three options concerning Christ: He was either the world's greatest liar, a half-baked lunatic, or He is who He said He was. He was not a liar, because no sane man would die for what he knew to be a lie. He was not crazy, because His teachings carry the highest moral virtues and profound spiritual insights ever written. He demonstrated marvelous, powerful miracles to demonstrate His words. Consequently, He must be who He said He was: God. Everyone must make a choice, and our choice determines our destiny.

III. THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST (2:12-12:50).

A. CHRIST CLEANSED THE TEMPLE (2:12-25).

The Jewish pilgrims brought various monies with them, and exchanged the money to buy various sacrifices. They were being charged excessive rates to exchange their money. Christ's zeal and anger was directed against the greed and exploitation of worshippers by religious leaders – the commercializing of true religion. This temple cleansing was at the start of Christ's ministry. Another occurred at the end. There is more information at the extended comments at the end of my commentary of Matthew.

Christ also predicted His death and resurrection (v. 22), and gave a sign of His Deity: He knew all men, thus, He was omniscient (v. 25). He could determine other's thoughts and motives.

B. CHRIST WITNESSED TO NICODEMUS (3:1-21).

Nicodemus was an aristocratic, well meaning Jew, and a member of the powerful Sanhedrin (See 7:50-52; 19:39). Evidently, he later became a clandestine follower of Christ. He came secretly to Christ, and was getting close to salvation. Nicodemus was convinced Christ had come from God, based on the miracles performed. He was a genuine seeker of the things of God, and what was truth. Jesus kindly, systematically,

and carefully led Nicodemus through the issues of becoming converted. Two concepts I explain and emphasize in this section: the term “born again,” and “faith.”

WE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Jesus quickly drove to the point that one had to be born again (v. 3). Born of water and the Spirit (vv. 3, 5, 7) refers to the necessity and mechanism of regeneration. Being born again means being born from above - from God. The problem comes with the meaning of “water” in this context. Various interpretations have been proposed through the centuries, and are discussed below.

1. Water = a symbol for the Word of God, or the Bible (Ephesians 5:26; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18; John 15:3). As one reads the Bible, they become informed on how to come to Christ by faith is how the theory goes.
2. Water = water baptism. But, the problem with this understanding is that it contradicts other Scripture where faith is the sole requirement for salvation (John 3:15, 16, 36; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5).
3. Water = the Holy Spirit (Jesus 7:37-39). However, the problem with this view is that in the context of talking to Nicodemus, Jesus spoke of the water and Holy Spirit being two separate entities. In other words, the water is one thing, and the Holy Spirit is another thing.
4. Water = a symbol of repentance, because of John the Baptist’s ministry of baptism, which signified a turning from sin to God. In this case, we have water baptism as a sign of identification with a particular group who hold similar beliefs. This was a common practice of other religions in the region at the time.
5. Water = natural birth. This view seems to make most sense in the context. The thought in Nicodemus’ mind was, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” (v. 4). Nicodemus had natural, physical birth in his mind. Jesus simply answered Nicodemus’ question. Jesus replied that one needed to be born of water, and the Spirit. That is, by both a physical, natural birth and secondly, by spiritual rebirth. This flow of logic goes as follows.
 - Jesus: “Nicodemus, you must be born again” (v. 3).
 - Nicodemus: “How can one have two natural births?” (v. 4).
 - Jesus: “You must have two births: one natural, the other spiritual” (v. 5).
 - Jesus: “Let me explain further what I mean. *‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit’*” (v. 6).

In summary, Jesus, Himself, identified what He meant by “water.” He meant natural birth.

Jesus went on to teach that the spiritual rebirth was also needed in the Old Testament times, because Jesus chided Nicodemus for not knowing of this theological truth (v. 10;

cf. Ezekiel 36:26; Psalm 19:7; Isaiah 53; Romans 1:17). Being born again was not a new concept.

To be “born again” is the same as several popular terms used to describe the experience: spiritual rebirth, new creature, new man, made alive, quicken, or regeneration. Jesus said this experience is absolutely necessary to be saved and go to Heaven. Why? We are spiritually dead, and cannot respond to God (Ephesians 2:1). Regeneration is the theological term used for this personal experience. It is defined as the act of the Holy Spirit implanting eternal life in the human spirit, making it holy and initiating faith in Christ.

FAITH ALONE FOR SALVATION

Faith alone in Christ is the only basis for salvation (eternal life). Eternal punishment is the alternative (vv. 15-18, 36). By “faith,” Jesus meant “belief” (John 3:15, 16, 36). To believe, in the sense Jesus meant, means to adhere to, trust, or cling to. It means the acknowledgment of the claims of another and the entrusting of oneself to Christ. Christ becomes a part of one’s life. John 1:12, 13 defines belief as receiving Christ. One must turn from all other means of salvation, and receive the gift of eternal life, which is to receive Christ. One trusts His death, burial, and resurrection alone for one’s salvation.

Jesus said there is no other way under heaven to be saved (John 14:6; cf. Acts 4:12). To say it another way, one believes (commits to) that only the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is totally sufficient to take away the full penalty of one’s sin. One clings and commits oneself to that hope alone, trusting in nothing else, and in fact, rejecting all other alleged means of being saved. As mentioned elsewhere, “belief” is mentioned 98 times in the Gospel of John.

Receiving Christ is to believe that if there is another way to be saved, then I am doomed, because all my hope and trust is in Christ alone. In other words, we put all our eggs in one basket, so to speak. John is specific to tell us that none of the following can save us: our family status, any works, efforts, or decisions we enact, philosophies we craft, or religions we invent. (John 1:12-13).

To illustrate, when we step on an airplane to fly across the country to another city, we entrust ourselves to the pilot and the plane to get us safely to our destination. We have nothing else to trust in. We cannot fly the plane, nor can we hold it up should the engines quit. By faith we believe we will reach our destination. In the same way, we trust Christ to save us from our sins, and give us eternal life.

In 3:17-20, Jesus again emphasizes faith as the only way to salvation. He sets up a scenario. He said there are two groups of people: the judged and those not judged. Then, Jesus hammers the truth home by asserting that there is only one thing that separates the two groups: belief in Christ (3:18). He fills out this scenario by declaring that the reason, or motive, people reject His salvation is because they love sin more than Him (cf. Romans 1:18).

The problem we face regarding our salvation is this. We are sinners by birth, we have sinned against God, and those sins carry an eternal penalty. The penalty involves spiritual death (eternal banishment from God), and punishment. We could pay for our sins ourselves, if that were possible, but it would take an eternity of punishment. Consequently, we can never fully pay the penalty of our sin. Now, the gospel is that Christ went to the cross, suffered the punishment for our sins, went to His death, and rose again to eternal life. He became the sacrificial substitute for our punishment. He provided a full, legal, and complete pardon for humanity based on His fully and eternally paying the entire penalty for all our sin. Then, because He rose from the dead, He also grants us eternal life.

However, that provision we must personally and individually receive – just as a convicted criminal must personally accept or receive a pardon offered by the governor, or whoever has authority to grant the pardon. The way this reception works, according to Jesus, is that we must first be spiritually born again, then that enables us to believe, or receive the pardon offered to everyone by Christ. The pardon is a gift freely given to us, and we can only receive it by faith – that is, by believing that it is true (cf. Ephesians 2:1, 5, 8-10).

C. JOHN THE BAPTIST GAVE TESTIMONY (3:24-36).

We can learn three more truths from the testimony of John the Baptist.

First, he said that God is the source of all things (v. 27). The context was the growing popularity of Jesus' ministry, and declining followers of John. John was not jealous or bitter, but acknowledged that if we have any favor in life, it is a bestowal by God. He gives us our station in life, opportunities, recourses, and any success, prestige, power, or wealth we might have.

Some very bright, capable people are born, live their life, and die on a small, remote island somewhere in the Pacific. They never have opportunity to enjoy the prosperity of wealthy Western cultures and countries. Others, who might be less able, are born with many privileges, opportunities and enjoy ease of life. Whatever we have, John says, comes from God, and we must trust in His perfect, loving plan for our lives. However, if we have opportunity to better our lives, and that of our family, then by all means we should take advantage of the situation. That opportunity, though, also comes from God.

Second, John the Baptist said Jesus is above all, and that He had come down from Heaven (v. 31), being sent by God the Father (v. 34). Jesus spoke the truth, and is loved by the Father (v. 35). Therefore, if we say we love God, then we, too, must love Jesus. And, if we do not love Jesus, how can we say love God? If we reject the Son, Christ, will not we also be rejected by God?

Third, John said the vehicle of salvation is faith (v. 36), and that the alternative is to experience the wrath of God (v. 36; cf. 6:40; 6:28, 29).

D. JESUS LED THE SAMARITAN WOMAN TO SALVATION (4:1-43).

In this section, we see Jesus as a soul-winner. From His methods, we can learn much about our role in the sacred endeavor of people coming to Christ for salvation. Jesus went out to people, wherever they were (vv. 3-5). He went to where the people lived their lives. Sometimes, but not often, do people just walk in off the streets into our churches. They usually come to church after a Christian has established a positive relationship with them, prayed for them, led them to Christ, or invited the seeker to church. God never commanded the world to come to the church, but for the church to go to the world with the gospel message.

The Samaritans were an ethnic group located north of Judea who were descendants of a mixed ethnic group made up, on one hand, of lower class Jews left behind after the capture of Israel by the conquering Assyrians in 722 B.C. The other part of the ethnic mix was Gentiles who were sent to colonize the conquered land. The Samaritans were treated with contempt by the “pure” Jews who populated Judea. The Samaritans were considered as “half-castes,” and inferior. However, the Samaritans saw themselves as also people of God, and had even built themselves a temple on Mt. Gerizim. There was racial and religious tension and discrimination between the two peoples. Jesus crossed religious and ethnic lines to bring the gospel to the woman.

Jesus forgot about His reputation among humanity. He did not permit what people might think of Him stop Him from soul-winning (vv. 9, 27). The woman was an unpopular, loose-living Samaritan woman. By going through so many husbands, she was probably a woman difficult to get along with. She was a woman hardened and discouraged with the many disappointments and rejections in life. Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi who was forbidden to speak to women in public. However, He saw her hurt and need.

Jesus said it is impossible to fail in evangelism (vv. 35-38). He used a local analogy to illustrate His point. He said the fields are white, and ready for harvest. Another important principle is that when we evangelize, we sometimes harvest what others have sown, and others will harvest what we sow. This means that we will not always see immediate results of our attempts to evangelize. But, sooner or later, the witness we leave will bring results. It may be someone else who leads the person to Christ. Likewise, when we get results of our evangelistic effort, it is because of the gospel “seed” someone else has planted, - maybe even years before. In the end, however, the Lord’s crop will be harvested.

By Jesus’ example, we learn that personal contact is required in soul-winning (vv. 39-42). Jesus established a good relationship with the woman. He was not condescending, but displayed courtesy, genuine interest, and sincerely desired to help the woman. When he spoke of her past life, He was not trying to condemn her, but was displaying His Deity and awareness of knowing what the woman’s life was like. Jesus dealt one-on-one, in small groups, and with huge masses of people.

Jesus was alert to opportunities (vv. 28-32). The disciples were dull. Soul-winning was more important to Jesus than eating supper. He even extended the trip two days to

finish the follow-up. Christ was busy building friendships to those around Him. Jesus did not look at a person's race, geography, social status, reputation, or religion, but as men and women needing new life and salvation.

Jesus initiated the conversation with the woman (v. 7). He started by talking on a common every day thing, a common interest, which was a drink of water. He then bridged the gap to spiritual things (vv. 10, 14, 19). He did not argue, or let Himself become distracted (v. 20). He spoke of four things: God, eternal things, sin, how to be saved. As He presented the gospel, He focused on three points:

1. He pointed to the woman's need.
2. He pointed to the provision, which was the Messiah.
3. He pointed to the program, which was worship in spirit and truth). The new worship was in spirit (as opposed to external matters), and in truth (sincerity). True religion is a personal relationship with the Savior.

E. JESUS HEALED THE OFFICIAL'S SON (4:43-54).

Jesus displayed His Deity by healing the son from a distance, and actually bringing the boy back from the cliff of death. He healed with just His word. The healing was in response to the official's request and faith. The end result was that the whole household was saved and followed Jesus.

F. JESUS: THE AUTHOR AND SUSTAINER OF LIFE (Chapters 5, 6).

Jesus healed the sick man (5:1-18). In the process, Jesus claimed to be equal with God (v. 18), and the Jews understood Him to make this claim.

Jesus' authority is seen in the resurrection of humanity (5:19-29). He gives life (v. 21). He judges (v. 22). He resurrects people from the dead, both the saved and unsaved (vv. 28, 29). From verse 24, we learn four things about salvation.

1. Salvation is by faith in Christ.
2. Salvation is eternal.
3. Salvation includes eternal life.
4. Salvation is instant.
5. Salvation includes a future resurrection to life (v. 29).

Jesus presents Himself as the Son of God (5:30-47). In doing so, He rebukes and condemns the Jewish rulers who rejected Him. He said they did not have the love of God in their hearts (v. 42), and actually did not believe the words of Moses (v. 46).

Jesus fed 5,000, and possible 10,000 counting women and children (6:1-15). Several things can be observed from this miracle.

1. It was humanly impossible to get the food that late in the day.
2. The food cost was eight months wages for a working man.
3. All the resources were a small boy's lunch that he had not yet eaten. Maybe that was a miracle itself!
4. Jesus sat the people in orderly fashion, which was a testimony to His organizational ability.

5. Perhaps more than 10,000 people were present. The need was overwhelming.
6. Jesus distributed through His disciples. He delegated. God's blessings are channeled through means.
7. God's supply was sufficient, and was there when truly needed.
8. This was the high point of Jesus' popularity.

Jesus performed the miracle of walking on water (6:16-21). This miracle demonstrated Christ's power over nature and natural law. Even in the face of natural disasters, global warming, drought, earthquake, tsunamis, hurricanes, or whatever, God is in control. He created the world and universe, and will not allow humanity to destroy what He has created. This is not to say He causes all natural disasters, such as Katrina, or other devastating storms. He does permit such catastrophes, just as He permits evil in the world for a season. Nature, itself, is subject to the curse, impact, penalty, and plight that original sin brought with it when it entered the world through Adam (Genesis 3:17-19; cf. Romans 8:19-22).

Jesus gave theological lectures (6:22-71). They are listed as principles below, and are to our benefit to store deeply in our memory banks to use as our guides to a successful life. Included is His discourse on the bread of life.

1. He gave rebuke for material motivation (v. 26).
2. He gave rebuke for lack of spiritual perception.
3. He said to set priorities for results that are eternal in impact and benefit (v. 27).
4. He said the only acceptable "work" for God is belief in Christ (vv. 28, 29). The work He had in mind was the work that people do to earn their salvation. Salvation is by faith in Christ, not works.

The Bread of Life

1. God gave the true bread from Heaven: Jesus Christ (v. 32). The phrase of Jesus as being the bread of life is a figurative phrase used to illustrate Christ as being the source and sustainer of eternal life, which is appropriated by faith. There was no cannibalistic intent in Jesus' words. Bread was a staple in Jewish diet, manna sent from Heaven during the time in the desert was like bread, Jesus had just fed the 5,000 with bread, and this discourse was given during the time of the Passover, or feast of unleavened bread. Note the following statements in the so called "Bread of Life Discourse."
 - Jesus said He was the bread of life (v. 35). He asks them to believe in Him.
 - Jesus said belief brings eternal life and resurrection (v. 40).
 - Jesus linked belief, eternal life, and bread of life together (vv. 47, 48).
 - The term "eating" is a figure meaning to believe on Christ (v. 51).
 - Jesus said that those who eat His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life and resurrection (v. 54).
 - Jesus explained his figurative language, "*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothings; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life*" (v. 63). He identified the words, "bread, flesh, blood" as spiritual figures of speech.
 - The Holy Spirit applies eternal life to the believer (v. 63).

2. He rebuked the people for lack of faith (v. 36).
3. The Father enables people to come to Christ (v. 37).
4. The saved are eternally saved (vv. 37-40). The Father gives, and Jesus will never cast away.
5. The sequence of salvation is: look, believe, eternal life, resurrection (v. 40).
6. People are hopeless to come unto God unless He draws them (vv. 43, 44).
7. Appropriation of Christ is necessary for eternal life (vv. 53-56).
8. Some followed Jesus; however, many rejected Him (vv. 60, 66, 68, 69).

In this section, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." He was claiming to be the source of life, an act only possessed by God. In John there are listed seven great "I AM" statements claimed by Jesus. They are listed below.

The Seven Great I AM's

1. Jesus is the Bread of Life (6:35). Bread sustains life, thus, Jesus gives and sustains eternal life.
2. Jesus is the Light of the World (8:12). Light gives direction and explanation to reality. Jesus reveals God, and explains the truth of the reality of the universe and beyond.
3. Jesus is the Gate for the Sheep (10:7, 9). Gates are doorways of access. Jesus is the entrance into Heaven.
4. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (10:7, 9). Shepherds lead, sustain, protect, correct, watch, and heal.
5. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life (11:25). This is the best option to death and a resurrection to eternal punishment.
6. Jesus is the Way, Truth, Life (14:6). He is the way to God and eternal life, the instructor in living a good life, and source of what is true.
7. Jesus is the True Vine (15:1, 5). He is the source of successful Christian living and service.

G. CHRIST WAS OPPOSED OY OTHERS (Chapters 7-12.)

Jesus was opposed by His family (7:1-9).

1. His brothers expressed unbelief.
2. He gave His priority, focus, and energy to God's plan as opposed to "disproving" the criticism and disapproval of others.
3. He was hated by the world, because He pointed out its sin. Jesus clearly knew what was right and wrong. He believed and adhered to "absolute" truth. His was not a diatribe to convince others to believe like He did so as to defend His own insecurity. He is God; He created the universe with all its laws, dynamics, and rules for operation. He perfectly knows what is harmful, and what is hurtful. Sin hurts and destroys. Adherence to God's way of living leads to benefit. God is for us, not against us.

Jesus preached at the temple and aroused bitter conflict (7:10-36).

1. There was confusion over the Person of Christ, and various responses to Him.
 - Some said He was a good man (v. 12).

- Some said He was a deceiver (v. 12).
 - Some marveled at His teaching (v. 15).
 - Some were unwilling to understand Him (v. 17).
 - Some said He was demon possessed (v. 20).
 - Some hated Him and wanted to kill Him (vv. 19, 30, 32).
 - People were divided over Him (v. 32).
 - Many believed Him (v. 31).
 - Some were confused at His teaching (vv. 35, 36).
2. Jesus was critical of the Jewish leaders. He was strong, bold, and right. He is God.
- He said they were unwilling to obey God (v. 17).
 - He implied they sought their own glory (v. 18; cf. v. 24).
 - He said they did not judge with righteous judgment (v. 24).
 - He said they did not know God (v. 28).
 - He said they would die in their sins and not go to Heaven (v. 34).

Jesus preached a second sermon, and aroused more conflict and confusion (7:37-53).

1. He said believers would have the Holy Spirit after His glorification (vv. 37-39).
2. People were again divided over the Person of Christ (v. 43).
3. Some thought He was a prophet (v. 40).
4. Some thought He was the Christ (Messiah) (v. 41).
5. The officers were amazed at the teaching of Jesus (v. 46).
6. The Jewish rulers did not believe (vv. 47, 49).
7. Nicodemus defends Christ (v. 50).

Jesus forgave the woman taken in adultery (8:1-11). One must note that not all conservative scholars believe this portion was part of the original text, nor written by John, but is only instructive. It is said that it is not in the earliest texts, when it is included it is in asterisks, and that it is inserted in various places. The issue is open, but it does fit the character of Christ. Someone has said that if the story was not in the original text, then it should have been.

The Jewish leaders were trying to trap Jesus. The conflict they place Him in was this: if Jesus condemned the woman, then He would have lost popularity with the common people. Secondly, He would have run afoul of the Romans, because only they could decide in capital cases. Rome would consider Him a murderer. A third problem was that if He let her go free, He would be breaking the Law of Moses. Either choice (stone or not to stone) was designed to discredit and/or destroy Him.

Jesus deftly defended Himself. He had four powerful weapons on His side.

1. One, the Law of Moses did not require stoning in all cases (Deuteronomy: 22:23, 24). Consequently, they misconstrued the Law of Moses.
2. Second, the man also should be stoned, but only the woman was brought before Jesus. Consequently, they were not just and fair in applying the Law of Moses.

3. Third, Jesus did not have jurisdiction to apply the death penalty, which was a fact the leaders knew, because they brought Christ to Pilate to request capital punishment. Consequently, they were deceitful and treacherous in bringing the case to Jesus.
4. Fourth, Jesus is the Lawgiver, or Lawmaker, the One greater than the Sabbath, the One who is equal with God. The Lawgiver can apply mercy and compassion, which is in keeping with character of the Lawgiver, which in turn is in keeping with the spirit of the Law of Moses. Consequently, the leaders were trying to overrule God.

However, the route Jesus took to extract Himself from the trap was to place the accusing scribes and Pharisees into a trap. He began by writing with His finger in the dirt. What he wrote in the dirt is pure conjecture. Many have guessed what the words were, and have placed symbolic meaning in the act of writing in the dirt. However, no one knows, hence, the words are probably not important. If they were, then we would have been told.

Something else must have been going on. The only certain evidence is in the context of the act, and the words of Jesus. He said to the accusers, *“He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her”* (v. 7). They all left. Why? It is the belief of this writer that Jesus’ words trapped them all in a self evident, self incriminating sin, which would require harsh penalty to be placed on them. What was the sin?

The sin was bringing a false witness, and/or perversion of justice. They had formed a conspiracy and trumped up false charges against the accused woman, or they had conspired to pervert justice and show partiality against her. In either case, they violated the Law of Moses, which reads, *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor... You shall not bear a false report; do not join you hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute”* (Exodus 20:16; 23:1-3).

In fact, perhaps these verses were what Jesus was actually writing in the sand for all to see!

The plain evidence for all to see was the absence of the participating adulterous man, and demanding death for only the woman. The accusers had either lied, or were perverting justice. As the words of Jesus began to sink in, the participating individuals slowly realized their own personal guilt, all the conspirators gradually became aware of their corporate complicity in the wicked plan, and they knew the multitude gathered around the scene saw through their wicked plan. The conspiracy was transparent for all to witness.

The point of Jesus writing in the dirt was to allow time for the reality of the situation to increasingly sink into the minds of all present. The guilty slunk away in humiliation before the gaping, astonished crowd. The woman probably did commit adultery. Even

that fact is not clear. The text says she was caught in adultery (v. 3), but then Jesus did not condemn her (v. 11). However, He did tell her to sin no more (v. 11), which may indicate that she did commit adultery.

If she did, then Jesus displayed His Deity by forgiving her of her sin. Even the adulterous can be forgiven of their sin. Maybe even more important, is that the unrepentant bearing of false witness (gossip, slander, etc), and perverting justice is worse than repentant adultery.

Jesus claimed to be the spiritual light of the world (8:12-59).

Jesus' six fold statement concerning Himself.

1. He claimed to be the true spiritual light (v. 12).
2. He claimed His message was from God (v. 12).
3. He said His was the only true spiritual message (v. 24).
4. He said He could set people free from their sin (v. 32).
5. He claimed to be God, the great I AM (v. 58; see notes on introduction, II, B, Christ's Deity).
6. He said those who deny His Deity would die unsaved (v. 24).

Jesus' three fold statements concerning the Jewish leaders.

1. He said those rejecting Him would die in their sin (v. 24).
2. He said they refused the truth (v. 37).
3. He said their true father was the devil (v. 44).

The two fold response of the people.

1. Many believed Him when He taught (v. 31).
2. The leaders sought to kill Him for blasphemy (v. 59).

Jesus healed the blind man on the Sabbath (9:1-41). Note these principles.

1. Sickness is not always because of sin, but can be to glorify God (vv. 1-9).
2. Jesus healed on the Sabbath day, which divided the people (vv. 13-16).
3. Unbelief will cause hardness of the heart (v. 24).
4. Faith is a commitment of the will based on information (vv. 36, 37).
5. The Pharisees were spiritually blind (vv. 39-41).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd (10:1-42). Three great truths are taught.

1. One great truth is about the Person of Christ. He claims to be God (v. 30), and is the Good Shepherd of His sheep. That He and the Father are "one" means one in essence, or essential nature (See notes on Matthew 28, on Trinity). "One" is in the neuter form, which excludes the reality of them being one person. The Jews understood Christ to mean that He was God, because they sought to kill Him for blasphemy (vv. 31-33).
2. The second great truth is about the work of Christ. By telling the story, Christ points to many great doctrines of the Christian Faith concerning His work of redemption. Included are the doctrine of the calling of God (vv 3, 27), conversion

(v. 4), justification (v. 9), limited atonement (v. 15), and that the church is one (v. 16). One doctrine dealt with in some detail is that of eternal security (vv. 28, 29). The doctrine may be defined as “The teaching that God secures the final salvation of born again believers, the elect. God keeps them from continued and open practice of sin, and will bring them to ultimate salvation, which is entrance into the eternal state of blessedness.” Support for this doctrine from verses 28 and 29 is as follows.

- The promise is for unbroken eternal life, not brief, short, or maybe. We already have eternal life in an absolute sense, not possibly, maybe, shall, wait and see, or perhaps. Eternal life means everlasting, ceaseless, endless, lasting forever, immutable, and always. To have eternal life means that we will always, everlastingly live forever, and that we will never die or perish – ever. If we could lose our salvation, then we do not, by definition, have eternal life – but intermittent life.
 - The promise is that we will never perish. If we can perish (lose our salvation), then it appears that Christ was lying, but we know that for Christ to lie is impossible (Hebrews 6:18).
 - The promise is that no one can snatch us away: the Devil, teachers, friends, and family, yourself – no one. To say that we can snatch ourselves away is to call Christ a liar, and say we are stronger than God. God is strong enough to accomplish our keeping. He is strong enough to grow a tree, make an ocean, a mountain range, a world, a universe. Since we are not that strong, we cannot force Him to let loose of us – nor can anyone or anything else – nothing.
3. The third great truth concerns the Word of God (v. 35).
- The context is that the Jews were trying to kill Christ, because He called Himself God (*Elohim*). His return was that if the Old Testament used the term to describe men who were representatives of God, then how could they possibly object to Him applying the term to Himself, who indeed, was God, the source of Truth.
 - The key phrase to note is Christ’s claim to the inerrancy of Scripture, “*Scripture cannot be broken*” (v. 35). The phrase means that the binding authority of the Bible cannot be broken. Scripture cannot be nullified, but all of it has eternal, binding force or authority. This statement gives support for the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture. Christ based His claim on three pillars.
 - He based His saying on an obscure quote from the Psalms (82:6). He said that since that part of Scripture cannot be broken, neither can this section. He considered the Old Testament to be reliable, plus His own saying was reliable and true.

- Second, note as well that it is the “words” of the Old Testament that are regarded as unbreakable Holy Scripture. Jesus took the notion of inspiration of Scripture away from the nebulous region of thoughts, or reports of religious experience, and nailed inerrancy down to the actual words of the Old Testament.
- Third, Christ said that all Scripture, not just parts, are authoritative and binding upon humanity. Included are matters of history, geography and science as well as faith and spiritual truth.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (11:1-56). Various comments are offered.

1. Though Jesus was pressured, He waited on God’s timing to raise Lazarus from the dead (v. 4).
2. The term “fallen asleep” (vv. 11, 12) is a term for the death of a believer. Their body is only sleeping, and will come back to life at the resurrection. A Christian corpse appears to be asleep, but the person is not in a state of “soul-sleep.” The latter is a doctrine that holds the Christian, at death, slips into a state of unconsciousness, but will be revived on the day of resurrection. It is contrary to Scripture (Cf. Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 23:43).
3. This event was one of Christ’s great public miracles.
4. Jesus was deeply moved (sorrow and anger) at the pain of death (vv. 33, 34). He still has sympathy and deep concern for the death of His own, and the grief stricken family who mourns the loss of a loved one.
5. Jesus said that only Lazarus should come up from the dead. Otherwise all in that graveyard would have risen.
6. To this wonderful act of Jesus, there were two responses recorded: many believed, many rejoiced over the return of Lazarus, and Christ’s enemies wanted to murder Him and Lazarus (v. 53, 57; cf. 12:10). This brings to question the wonder and power of sin and Satan to blind the eyes of the unsaved. Jesus had just raised someone from dead. How in the world did they expect to keep Jesus and Lazarus dead, if they could even kill Jesus to begin with?

Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus’ feet (12:1-11). There are several observations to be made from this section. Various reactions are recorded by various people. Jesus was back with His friends, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, His disciples – and the enemies.

1. Martha served Jesus. She was the busy homemaker, the one with the gift of hospitality (v. 2).
2. Lazarus was there, and enjoyed the fellowship with Jesus. He must have had great stories to tell those around. He had been to the place of the dead, and back again (v. 2).

3. Mary worshipped Jesus and anointed His feet with very expensive ointments (v. 3). The amount came to about one year's wage for a common worker. It was a common custom to anoint a guest's head, which was a sign of honor, but the feet – that was an act of worship!
4. Judas, the greedy one, complained about what he considered was a waste of ointments, which was cash to him. He was not concerned about the poor, but the lack of money for him to steal (vv. 4-8).
5. The jealous Jews sought to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (vv. 9-11). They were distressed about losing influence over the people. One can compare John the Baptist's attitude (3:30) with that of the covetous and conniving Jewish leaders. They were desperate to stop the hemorrhaging of their followers over to Jesus. They were interested in their own success, not the success of God.
6. Many of the multitudes believed in Jesus, and followed Him (v. 11).

The triumphal entry of Jesus (12:12-19). The multitudes recognized Jesus as the Messiah (13). Note also the details of Bible prophecy (v. 15; cf. Zechariah 9:9). The Messiah would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt. Normally, triumphant kings rode in to the city on a chariot pulled by magnificent horses.

Some Greeks seek Christ (12:20-36). The Greeks who had come to worship asked a critical question regarding salvation, "*Sir, we wish to see Jesus*" (v. 21). The cross draws people from all over the world, which was a prediction Jesus made (v. 32). Jesus also spoke of priorities in life (vv. 25, 26), and with the promise of honor to those who choose to follow Jesus. Finally, the cross is the basis of defeat of Satan, because Christ defeated death (v. 31). It also serves as a sign of condemnation to those who reject Christ. The way of salvation has been made apparent to all, and if it is rejected, there is no other way of salvation. The Christian cross is probably the best known symbol in the world.

The Word of God judges humanity (12:37-50). Several observations can be made.

1. First, there is the issue of fulfilled prophecy, and the unbelief of many who had seen abundant proof of who Jesus was. They did not believe in Christ, because such was predicted in the Old Testament (v. 37-40; cf. Isaiah 53:1; 6:10). God permitted the unbelievers to stay in their hardened condition, much like Pharaoh did with Moses. The idea is that after repeated rejection of the truth, people lose the capacity to receive Christ.
2. Second, there is the issue of hidden faith. Many of the rulers did believe in Christ (v. 42). However, the people in power would have thrown them out of the synagogue if they were aware of the conversions among themselves. It is stated that the reason the secret believers were not open about their faith was because

of the fear of the leaders. They enjoyed the approval of men more than they did the approval of God.

3. This situation is different than facing circumstances where one may lose their life by confessing their faith in Christ. To be a Christian in many lands, such as Muslim or Communist countries, means one may lose their life. It is wise to be careful, and even go underground so as to stay alive and to perpetuate the gospel. Throughout history, many have been given the chance to either recant their Christian Faith, or face death. Some Christians have recanted, others have accepted death. We must be careful to not judge those who surrender to the pressure, and outwardly recant. God is the final judge in such matters. And, born again believers are still believers, and have not lost their salvation.
4. A biblical example would be Peter. He was bold in saying he would never deny Christ; yet, he did. Peter also returned to Christ, and was used mightily as a gospel preacher. In another case of bold assertiveness against the Jewish leaders who had ordered them to quit preaching Jesus, Peter plainly told them, "*We must obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29). However, later, Peter was thrown into prison by Herod Agrippa I, and was to be put to death. An angel delivered Peter, who then went to a Christian meeting place, reported to the people there, and speedily ran away from the place (Acts 12:17).
5. Third, there is the issue of what God will use to judge people (v. 48). God will use His revelation to humanity as a standard by which to measure, evaluate and judge everyone.

IV. CHRIST MINISTERED IN PRIVATE TO HIS OWN (Chapters 13-17).

A. CHRIST MINISTERED IN THE LAST SUPPER (Chapter 13).

1. The humility of Jesus serves as an example to believers (v. 15).
2. Judas betrayed Jesus (vv. 21-30). Satan had put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. He was unsaved, a thief, and traitor. (See notes on Mark VI extended notes, A, Observations on Judas Iscariot).
3. A great effective method of evangelism is for Christians to love one another (vv. 34, 35).

B. CHRIST MINISTERED THROUGH ENCOURAGEMENT (Chapter 14).

1. He gave the promise of future Heaven (v. 2).
2. He gave the promise to return (v. 3).
3. He gave the promise of access to God the Father, which is the only access (v. 6). Christianity is exclusive. There is only one true religion. All other religions are false, according to Jesus Christ. He rose from the dead to certify His claims.
4. He gave the promise to answer prayer (v. 14). His name refers to His authority.
5. He gave the promise of the coming Holy Spirit (v. 16).
6. He gave the promise of peace (v. 27).

7. He gave the promise of successful ministry (v. 12).

C. CHRIST MINISTERED BY INSTRUCTION ON FRUITBEARING (Chapter 15).

Jesus gave important instruction on fruit bearing, which is a figure used to illustrate the Great Commission. This segment is in a context for how Christians are to serve, not how to be saved. It instructs us on how to be successful servants of Christ. Jesus also tells us what to expect in our service to Him. We disciples of Christ are to:

1. Receive discipline from God (v. 2).
2. Have fellowship with Christ (v. 4).
3. Be dependent on Christ (v. 5).
4. Be saturated with the Word of God (v. 7).
5. Have much prayer (v. 7, 10).
6. Be obedient to Christ (vv. 10, 14).
7. Be joyful in Christ (v. 11).
8. Have love for other Christians (v. 12).
9. Win souls (people) for Christ (vv. 16, 26, 27).
10. Experience rejection from the world (vv. 18-21). Soul-winners and those who live for Christ will be opposed by the world, and even some other Christians who misunderstand or are still worldly in their Christian growth. Evangelism is not popular.
11. The visible result of fruit bearing is to evangelize and disciple those whom Christ permits us to introduce to Him. The fruit of a faithful, mature Christian is another faithful, mature fruit bearing Christian. The fruit of the Spirit is that of Galatians 5:22, 23.
12. According to verse 16, Christians have been selected, equipped, and appointed by Christ to keep on evangelizing and discipling converts. This is related to love, and getting answers to prayers. Christians are the only one on earth assigned exclusively to this glorious task. No other movement, religion, government body, business organization has been given the joy of bearing fruit for Jesus – or, making disciples for Jesus Christ. Only the Church has been charged with the Great Commission.

D. CHRIST MINISTERED BY TELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Chapter 16).

This section teaches of the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians and Christianity. It also reflects the constant conflict between Christ with His followers against the world.

1. Religion and the world will persecute Christians (vv. 1-6). History bears out this gruesome fact.
2. The Holy Spirit is a Person, not a force, principle, or a dynamic of some sort. Note the many personal pronouns identifying the Holy Spirit.
3. The Holy Spirit will reprimand the world of sin (vv. 7-11).
 - He convicts through Christians and the Bible.
 - Convict means to convince of the truth.
 - He convicts of sin's reality (v. 9)

- He convicts of the wrong view of Christ and His resurrection (v. 10).
 - He convicts of the certainty of coming judgment (v. 11).
4. The Holy Spirit is to lead Christians (vv. 12-15).
 - Christ gives the promise of the New Testament (vv. 12, 13; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10). He said the New Testament includes prophecy (16:13), theology, and history (cf. 14:26).
 - Jesus is the focus of the Holy Spirit's teaching.
 5. Jesus gave encouragement to the Apostles (vv. 16-33). He did this by telling the disciples what to expect, and what meaning to place on what would happen. We are to expect difficulties, disappointments, and to be misunderstood. Following are other teaching on tribulation and hard times.
 - Tribulation comes because we live in a sinful world (Romans 8:35, 36).
 - Tribulation is sometimes allowed in our lives by God (2 Corinthians 12:7).
 - Tribulation is sometimes chastisement (Hebrews 12:6).
 - Tribulation has a good purpose and end (1 Peter 1:6, 7; Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4).

E. CHRIST PRAYED HIS HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER (Chapter 17).

In this prayer for the church (vv. 9, 20), Christ asks nine requests, and gives a purpose statement for His Church. Since these are prayer requests that Christ prayed on our behalf, then it makes sense for Christians to cooperate and make them real in their lives.

1. He asked for His own glorification (vv. 1, 5).
2. He asked that His elect might be saved (vv. 2, 6, 24).
3. He asked that God would keep Christians saved (v. 11).
4. He asked that Christian would be joyful (v. 12).
5. He asked that Christians would be protected from the evil one – Satan (v. 15).
6. He asked that Christians would be sanctified by means of the Word – the Bible (vv. 17, 19).
7. He asked that Christians would be unified (vv. 21-23).
8. He asked that Christians would be glorified (vv. 22-24).
9. He asked that Christians would be full of love (v. 26).
10. He gave a statement of purpose for the church: the great Commission (v. 18).

V. JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED AND DIED (Chapters 18, 19).

A. CHRIST WAS ARRESTED (18:1-11).

1. The Roman cohort came to arrest Him. It numbered some 300-600 hardened Roman soldiers (v. 3).
2. Jesus' claim to Deity hurled all the troops to the ground (v. 6).
3. Peter cut off the ear of Malchus (v. 10).

4. How did they expect to keep Christ captured in light of His feat of power? Sin blinds and blurs the mind, plus distorts and destroys accurate perception. Evil is a narcotic to good common sense, and things that are plainly evident.

B. CHRIST WAS TRIED BEFORE ANNAS (18:12-23).

Annas was a former high priest, but still held the title out of courtesy. Caiaphas was the official, Roman appointed high priest. Annas was very influential. (See note on Luke, I Background Information, C the target readership. The other disciple known to the high priest was John (vv. 15- 16). Both John and Peter were eyewitnesses to this trial.

C. CHRIST WAS TRIED BEFORE CAIAPHAS (18:24-27).

Peter denied knowing Christ, and the cock crowed. (See notes on Luke 22:54-23:55).

D. CHRIST WAS TRIED BEFORE PILATE (18:28 – 19:16).

Several things can be noted regarding this interchange between Jesus and Pilate.

1. Jesus is the source of truth (v. 37). Pilate recognized the fact that truth is difficult to discern. The world is full of lies, treachery, deceit and suppression of truth.
2. The Jewish leaders were seeking the death penalty for Jesus. Only the Romans could give that sentence.
3. Christ admitted He was King of the Jews, but that His kingdom was not of this present world order, which is ruled over by Satan. There will be a new world order. Education, progress, research, diplomatic efforts, wars, and preaching will not transform this world into the Kingdom of Christ. Only Christ can and will do that at His second coming. (See comments on Matthew 28 regarding kingdoms).
4. Grades of sin do exist. Jesus said that all authority has been granted by God, even Pilate's position. He also said the Caiaphas' sin of delivering Christ up to be murdered was greater than Pilate's sin of passing sentence.
5. Pilate was put in a dilemma. He saw that Jesus was innocent (18:38; 19:4), but yielded to the pressure of the crowd rather than what was true and right. His action, however, was in keeping with the plan of God. He was faced with a riot, a stinging rebuke from Rome in not handling the problem well (19:12), but he also had fear of who was Christ (19:7, 8, 9), and he knew he was sentencing an innocent man to death.

E. CHRIST WAS MURDERED BY CRUCIFIXION (19:17-37).

They crucified Christ between two thieves. Pilate honored Him by putting up a sign over the cross that read "Jesus the Nazarene, the king of the Jews." The Jews wanted it taken down, but Pilate refused. Scripture was fulfilled regarding the dividing of garments (v. 24), and not a bone would be broken, and others (vv. 24, 28, 36, 37). Jesus' words, "*It is finished*" indicate the work of paying the penalty for our sin was fully completed (v. 30). There is nothing anyone can add to help pay the penalty.

F. CHRIST WAS BURIED (19:38-42).

The blindness of the Jews is also displayed. They had just murdered an innocent man, who happened to be their Messiah, but they wanted His body to be removed for the Sabbath. This is an extraordinary example of how sin blinds one's perspective, and turns priorities upside down (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:3). Out of jealousy, they wanted to preserve their own prestige, power, and wealth at any cost. The more important things of the Law of Moses (i.e. justice), was dismissed and overturned to focus on a trifling, minor issue (keeping the Sabbath). They had substituted their own rules for those of God.

In a surprising turn of events, Jesus' disciples did not bury Jesus. They were scattered. It was high level aristocratic Jewish leaders, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who requested to take Jesus' body, prepare it for burial, and placed in into a new tomb. The lesson is that we must be very careful in judging the actions and motives of other people. They were secret believers who finally took a stand at an important time. God has His people in all walks of life.

VI. JESUS CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD (20:1 – 21:25).

A. CHRIST'S TOMB WAS EMPTY (20:1-10).

For the events surrounding Jesus' resurrection, see notes on the introduction to the Gospels, The Gospels: background and Analysis, III Summary: the Death, Burial Resurrection of Christ. See also the notes on the other three gospels regarding this event.

B. CHRIST APPEARED TO MARY MAGDALENE (20: 11-18).

The phrase of Jesus that He must "*ascend to My Father*" (20:17) probably refers to Christ going to Heaven to take the offering of atonement blood into the Holy of Holies as the eternal high priest (Hebrews 9:11, 12, 24, 25). Mary recognized Christ, and clung to Him; consequently, He had the same physical body, but which had been endowed with new abilities and powers.

C. CHRIST APPEARED TO THE DISCIPLES, MINUS THOMAS (20:19-25).

This is another Great Commission passage. Christ sends us as He was sent from Heaven. He was the first missionary of the Christian era! Christ was sent to seek and to save lost sinners (Luke 19:10). For other Great Commission passages see Matthew 28:16-20, plus notes on Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:8; 10:42, 43).

Again, Christ showed His physical body to His disciples. The phrase "*If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them*" (v. 23) means that the church has the authority to declare to the world that sins are forgiven by God through Jesus Christ. Only God can forgive sin.

D. CHRIST APPEARED TO THE DISCIPLES WITH THOMAS (20:26-31).

Thomas, a steadfast Jew from birth, confesses that Jesus Christ is God. This is another proof of the Deity of Christ. This "doubting Thomas" later traveled to the land of India as a missionary and planted Christianity in that great land.

E. CHRIST APPEARED TO THE SEVEN DISCIPLES (21:1-14).

Discouraged through the whole affair, Peter quit the ministry, and went back to his secular work. Though he boasted of great loyalty to Christ, he denied Him three times, and must have felt like a defeated failure. Christ appeared on the shore, and Peter's confession of love for Christ offset the three denials. Christ had prayed for Peter (Luke 22:31, 32), and now He was going to Peter, the backslidden preacher. The lesson is that we both pray and get personally involved in the restoration of backsliders. We must pray for our leaders who face pressure from Satan, people, and fleshy weaknesses.

Great men and women of God will fall, but restoration comes from repentance plus God's loving-kindness, grace and forgiveness. Peter was restored to the ministry, and preached the first Christian sermon at which about 3,000 people responded and received Christ as Savior (Acts 2:41). (See Luke 22:31-33, 46, 61).

At issue in Peter's restoration was who and what did he love the most. This was a condition of the heart. What were his priorities? Whose interests would he serve? Peter had two choices before him.

1. First, would he put his own life and business interests first? Would he stay under the shame and discouragement of defeat and moral failure? Would his faith fail him and thus give the victory to Satan? Would he keep his back to the ministry?
2. Second, would he love Christ above all, and put Christ's interests above all else? Would Peter repent and turn back to the ministry again? Would his faith again become bold and strong? Would he win souls to Christ and strengthen other believers, and Christian leaders? Would he follow Christ? Peter selected the latter choice, which was the best choice.

The roadway of the Faith is cluttered with fallen ministers of God: preachers, evangelists, missionaries, and teachers. Many are their temptations. The unholy trinity of ministry temptations includes: greed for money and material possessions; pride and its insatiable thirst for power and prestige; sex and its emotional craving to be expended and satisfied upon the altar of forbidden physical pleasure and conquest. The servant of God is also confronted with laziness, fear of men, and indifference to the things of God. The obstacles to Christian service are powerful, satanic, pervasive, and cry out for faith, prayer, and personal encouragement. To see how to react to personal sin, we look at three examples from the Bible.

1. King Saul was beset with greed and pride, and lied to try to cover up, minimize, justify, and explain and blame away his sinful exploits and disobedience (1 Samuel 15; 1 Chronicles 10). God took his kingdom and his life. This course of action in response to sin was not to Saul's benefit, nor to his family and nation. His offense to God, and refusal to humbly take responsibility for his actions, and refusal to confront and confess his sin destroyed his life and ministry.
2. King David, on the other hand, fell to adultery and murder. Seemingly, these are much worse sins than those committed by King Saul. David's response,

however, was different. He took responsibility for his actions. David humbled himself, confessed and forsook his sin. Consequently, God left him with the leadership of Israel, a productive ministry, and gave him a long, full life. Chastisement was involved, however, as trouble plagued his family (See 2 Samuel 11, 12). Saul ignored his relationship with God; David cherished and nourished his relationship with God.

3. Peter is our third example. He was full of pride and “self-confidence” in his abilities. In the strength and cunning of his own fleshly skills and talents, he thought he could handle any problem that would come along. He thought he did not need to pray. When the overwhelming pressure came, however, he crumbled. He underestimated the opposition, which is Satan (Ephesians 6:12; Luke 22:31). It is with vivid personal experience that Peter could later write, “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking some to devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). In shame and defeat, Peter quit the ministry. However, he later repented and God used Him in a mighty way. Specifically, Peter humbled himself before God, cast his fears on God, resisted Satan, stood firm in his faith, and was established by God (1 Peter 5:6-10).

It is with this final lesson that we end our assessment of the Gospel of John. In this examination, my objective was to present a summary of background and introductory issues, point out some general observations, delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the Gospel. I gave an extended analysis of the Gospel along with various comments. Be encouraged in Christ. Love and serve Him with all your heart.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES A BACKGROUND, OUTLINE, ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

BRIEF CONTEXT OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT OF ACTS

In this examination of the Acts of the Apostles, my objective is to give a summary of background and introductory issues, some general observations, delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the book. We will then give an extended analysis of Acts along with various comments.

I. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION INFORMATION.

A. THE AUTHOR.

The human author is Luke, the physician. He was the human instrument used by God to write Acts (Luke 1:3; cf. Acts 1:1). The first verse addresses the book to Theophilus, and indicates it was a continuation of a prior work. That prior work would be the Gospel of Luke, thus, Acts was a sequel to Luke's Gospel. There are also many "we" and "us" passages in Acts that indicate the writer was a close companion of Paul (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). This connection seems to eliminate all other missionary companions of Paul, as explained below.

The evidence for Luke being the writer may be summarized by saying that only Luke could meet the following criteria.

1. The writer is the same as for the Gospel of Luke (cf. Luke 1:1; Acts 1:1).
2. The writer was a close companion to Paul on the second and third missionary journey (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5:21). Luke was with Paul for the Macedonia call to go into Europe (16:10 – note the "us"). Luke stayed in Philippi while the others traveled on (16:40), and rejoined with Paul about six or seven years later (20:5). Luke then stayed with Paul to the end of the book of Acts.
3. The writer was with Paul when they traveled for the last time back to Jerusalem, and Paul was imprisoned and eventually spent two years in the Caesarea prison (21:15 ff.; 27:1).
4. The writer was with Paul on the imprisonment journey back to Rome on his way to appeal his case to Caesar (Acts 27:1-28:16).
5. The writer was present when Paul wrote the so called Prison Epistles, and 2 Timothy, which was Paul's last document (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). Paul wrote the Prison Epistles while in Rome during his first imprisonment

(Ephesians 3:1; Philippians 1:7; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 9). The book of Acts ends with Paul's two year stay under house arrest in Rome (28:30, 31).

6. The writer seems to have been a physician, because of the generous use of medical terms (e.g. 1:3, 7ff. 9:18, 33; 13:11; 28:1-10). Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24 affirm that Luke was a physician.
7. There is also the process of elimination of Paul's missionary companions. By data gathered from Prison Epistles, those present at Rome were Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), Timothy (Ephesians 2:19), Tychicus, Aristarch, Onesimus, Mark, Justus, Demas, Epaphras, and Luke (Colossians 4:7-14). Of those, Epaphras and Epaphroditus did not arrive in the company of Paul. Timothy, Tychicus, Aristarchis and Mark are all mentioned in the third person in Acts. Onesimus was an unconverted slave that crossed paths with Paul while in Rome (Philemon 10). Concerning Justus, there is no evidence he was present during the "we" sections, and no patristic literature confirms he was the writer. Demas deserted the faith; consequently, the only one left is Luke.
8. The testimony of the ancient church from the end of the second century all attribute Luke as the author. The first identifiable references appear in Justin Martyr's (c. A.D. 130-150) First and Second Apologies.

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK.

The purpose for the book has been given as a work of history, and also apologetic. Apologetic means it is a defense of the Christian Faith. One must remember that the immediate context was that Paul was in prison for the Faith, and preparing for a defense. (See notes on the introduction to Luke).

Perhaps the primary purpose is to offer a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. Furthermore, Acts documents how God directed the course of events from the exclusive kingdom message delivered to the Jews to the emerging of the Church with its universal message of salvation through Christ to the entire world. It documents the switch of God's program from the Jews to Gentiles.

The key verse is 1:8, "*but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*" This verse gives the basic outline of Acts, and shows Jesus' desire to sent the gospel out to all the earth, like a pebble tossed into a pond, and the ripples expanding outward to the distant shores.

C. THE DATE AND SETTING.

The date Acts was written is about A.D. 60-62. The time span of Acts is from the resurrection of Christ until Paul's imprisonment in Rome: c. A.D. 30 to A.D. 60-62. A date later than 64 is unlikely as the great fire in Rome set by Nero is not mentioned, and neither is Paul's death (c. A.D. 66-68), the start of the Jewish war (A.D. 66), or the

destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Luke started the book probably in Caesarea, and completed it in Rome.

The Geographical setting is in Palestine, modern Turkey, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, and the islands of Cyprus, Crete, Malta, and the general Mediterranean area. The intended reader was Theophilus, who was probably a member of the high priestly Jewish cast, and perhaps a former high priest. (See the introduction to Luke's Gospel for the evidence backing this view).

D. GENERAL FEATURES OF ACTS.

1. Acts is a history of the spread and growth of the early church throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.
2. Acts shows the transition from God's chief instrument in the world being Jews and Judaism to the use of the Christian church, which included both Jews & Gentiles (Acts 15:14-19).
3. Acts is a manual on church growth, missionary methods, and evangelism.
4. Acts is an example and picture of the early church life, and gives much historical and cultural background for the epistles.
5. Acts is a continuation of the work started by Jesus Christ.
6. Acts displays the sovereignty of God at work in His church.
7. Acts has as its great theme the penetration of the world with the gospel.
8. Acts underscores the major definite purpose of the Christian church (1:8; 10:42; 15:14-18; 19:10, 20, 26; 26:16-18; 28:28-31).

E. PROMINENT FEATURES OF ACTS.

1. Jesus Christ is presented as active, interested, purposeful, and powerful.
2. The Holy Spirit is presented in His activity, indwelling and filling of believers, and ministry to the church.
3. The church is presented in its reality, power, visibility and invisibility, and as a new institution in God's outworking of world history.
4. There are numerous places and people mentioned (e.g. 110 people).
5. The centrality of the resurrection of Christ is prominent in the preaching.
6. There is stress on Peter in the first half (1-12), and Paul in the second half (13-28).

F. THE SPECIAL IMPORTANCE OF ACTS.

Acts records the advent of the Holy Spirit as the Gospels record the advent of Christ. It is not meant that the Holy Spirit was not always in the world, but that He has now come with a different mission than ever before.

The book is the connecting link between what has gone before as recorded in the Gospels, and the epistles that follow. The Bible would be incomplete without the book of Acts. In the Old Testament the Father is seen at work for men with the promise of the coming Son. In the Gospels, the Son is seen at work with men with the promise of the coming Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts the Holy Spirit is seen at work through humanity with the promise of the coming glory.

The Gospels tell of what Jesus was doing and teaching before the cross, resurrection and ascension. Acts begins where the Gospels end, and tell what He continued to do and teach. Matthews closes with the resurrection of Christ and the **missionary program**. Mark closes with the ascension of Christ and the **missionary program**. Luke closes with the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the **missionary program**. John closes with the promise of the second advent of Christ and the **missionary program**. Acts opens with all of these: the resurrection, ascension, the promise of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Second Advent – and the **MISSIONARY PROGRAM**.

Acts does not give a full account of the Apostles work, but it does mention some. For example, there is no record of Paul's going to Arabia: the epistle to the Galatians records that experience. There is no account of the gospel going to Egypt and to Babylon: 1 Peter tells us that. There is no account of the founding of the church at Rome: the epistle to the Romans tells of that. There is no account of various voyages and shipwrecks of Paul: we find that in Corinthians. However, one shipwreck and the existence of believers in Rome are mentioned.

The purpose of the book of Acts, therefore, is not to present a full account of the Apostles, but to show the acts of the ascended Lord as the great Worker, the acts of the Holy Spirit as the power, and the acts of believers as the instruments. To remember this will help us in all our Christian service and activity. Christ is the Worker, the Holy Spirit is the power, and believers are the instruments.

The divine working through believers is why so much is said in the Bible of surrendering or yielding unto Him. The Spirit of God is not a Divine influence that we are to lay hold of and use, but a Divine Person who desires to lay hold of us as instruments through which He can work out His will on earth. The more surrendered or yielded we are (as individuals or churches), the greater the work He can accomplish through us. The Holy Spirit dwells in the body of Christ, which is the body through which He accomplishes His work. His body is His church. Christ, we can say with reverence, does not carry out His gospel work on earth today apart from the members of His body. This is how He has chosen to work His will on earth.

Yielding to God; therefore, is not a vague, mystical, indefinite spiritual experience or exercise, which brings only happy emotions to the heart. There will be actual service and focus wherever authentic surrender is found. God will lay hold of the yielded and surrendered one, and through that one will do His own work in the world.

G. SEQUENCE OF MAJOR EVENTS LINKED TO TIME

1. The gospel is preached in Jerusalem (1:-8:13; A.D. 30? – 35). The major events were the ascension of Christ, Day of Pentecost, birth of the church, three persecutions of the church, and the murder of Stephen.

2. The gospel is preached in Judea/Samaria (8:4 – 11:18; A.D. 36-41). The major event were the evangelist Philip in Samaria, the conversion of Paul, Paul in Damascus, Jerusalem and Tarsus, and Peter in Caesarea.
3. The gospel is preached to the world (11:19 – 21:18; A.D. 42-58). The major event were the start of the Antioch church, Paul locating in Antioch, Peter jailed, James killed, missionary journey one, the Jerusalem council, and missionary journeys two and three.
4. The gospel is preached by Paul, who is a prisoner for the gospel (21:19 – 28; A.D. 58 – 63?). The major event were Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, his transfer to Caesarea, transport to Rome and placed in house arrest.

II. THE BOOK OF ACTS OUTLINED.

The book can be outlined into two sections according to the dominance of Peter (chapters 1-12), then Paul (chapters 13-28). It can also be outlined into three sections, according to Acts 1:8: the gospel to Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), the gospel to Judea and Samaria (chapter 8 – 11:18), and the gospel to the uttermost part of the world (11:19 through chapter 28). I offer a four-fold outline as specified below.

Acts of the Apostles Outlined

I. THE GOSPEL IN JERUSALEM (1:1 – 8:3).

- A. The ministry of Jesus on earth (1:1-11).
 1. Ministry on earth after resurrection (1:1-5).
 2. The Great Commission and ascension to heaven (1:6-11).
- B. Matthias, the replacement of Judas (1:12-26).
- C. The Day of Pentecost (2:1-36).
 1. Coming of the Holy Spirit in Power (2:1-13).
 2. Peter's sermon (2:14-36).
- D. The impact of the Day of Pentecost: growth (2:37-47).
- E. Miracle healing of a crippled beggar by Peter & John (3:1-11).
- F. Peter's sermon on repentance (3:12-26).
- G. First persecution against the church (4:1-37).
 1. Plots and orders by Jewish leaders (4:1 – 22).
 2. Prayers of the people (4:23 – 31).
 3. Preaching and sharing of Christians (4:32 – 37).
- H. Internal purging of the church: Ananias & Sapphira (5:1-11).
- I. Second persecution of the church: by high priest (5:12-42).
- J. Problems of church growth: helpers to serve tables (6:1-7).
- K. The murder of Stephen (6:8 – 7:60).
 1. His mighty works (6:8-15).
 2. His defense (7:1-53).
 3. His stoning (7:54 - 60).

II. THE GOSPEL IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA (8:1 – 11:18).

- A. The church scattered by persecution (8:1-4).
- B. The preaching of Philip (8:5-40).
 - 1. The conversion, corruption, and repentance of Simon (8:5-25).
 - 2. The conversion of the Ethiopian court official (8:26-40)
- C. The conversion of Paul (9:1-31). A.D. 35.
- D. Peter prepared to evangelize the gentiles (9:32 – 10:22).
- E. Peter preaching to Cornelius (10:23 – 48).
- F. Peter's defense for giving gospel to Gentiles (11:1-18).

III. THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE WORLD (11:19 – 21:26).

- A. Start of the church at Antioch (11:19-30).
- B. Christians pressured and persecuted by Herod Agrippa I (12:1-25).
 - 1. Murder of James (12:1-2).
 - 2. Prison and delivery of Peter (12:3-18)
 - 3. Death of Herod Agrippa I (12:20-25).
- C. The first missionary journey (13:1 – 14:28). A.D. 47 – 49.
 - 1. Commissioning the missionaries: Barnabas, Saul (13:1-3).
 - 2. Evangelism in Cyprus (13:4-12).
 - 3. Evangelism in Galatian cities (13:13 – 14:20).
 - 4. Missionaries return & report to Antioch church (14:21 – 28).
- D. The Jerusalem council: heresy counteracted (15:1-35).
 - 1. Conflict: saved by grace, or Law of Moses (15:1-5).
 - 2. Conference: rethinking the gospel (15:6-18).
 - 3. Conclusion: gospel reaffirmed (15:19-29).
 - 4. Courier: returning decision to church at Antioch (15:30-35).
- E. The second missionary journey (15:36 – 18:22) A.D. 50 – 53.
 - 1. Barnabas & Paul disagree: teams selected (15:36-40).
 - 2. Revisit of regions previously evangelized (15:41 – 16:5).
 - 3. The Macedonia call: to Europe (16:6-10).
 - 4. Evangelism at Philippi (16:11-40).
 - 5. Missionary work at Thesssalonica, Berea, Athens (17:1-34).
 - 6. Missionary work at Corinth (18:1-17).
 - 7. Missionaries to Ephesus, return home to Antioch (18:18-21).
- F. The third missionary journey (18:23 – 21:26). A.D. 53-57.
 - 1. Missionary work in Ephesus (18:23 – 19:41).
 - 2. Missionary work in Greece (20:1-5).
 - 3. Missionary work: Troas and Ephesian elders (20:6-38).
 - 4. Paul's return voyage to Palestine (21:1-14).
 - 5. Paul's return to Jerusalem (21:15-26).

IV. PAUL THE PRISONER FOR THE GOSPEL (21:19 – 28:31).

- A. Paul's arrest (21:27-40).
- B. Paul's defense against his enemies (22:1 - 23:10).
 - 1. Before the mob (22:1-23)
 - 2. Before the Roman commander (22:24-29)
 - 3. Before the Sanhedrin (22:30 – 23:10).

- C. Paul taken to Caesarea (23:11-35).
- D. Paul's defense to Felix (24:1-27).
- E. Paul's defense to Festus (25:1-12).
- F. Paul's defense to Agrippa II (25:13 – 26:32).
- G. Paul on to Rome: ocean voyage & shipwreck (27:1-44).
- H. Paul's ministry on remote island: Malta (28:1-10).
- I. Paul's arrival and Ministry at Rome (28:11-31). A.D. 60-62.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS

I. THE GOSPEL IN JERUSALEM (1:1 – 8:3).

A. THE MINISTRY OF JESUS ON EARTH (1:1-11).

In this setting, there is the ministry of Jesus the risen Lord for 40 days on earth, His commission given to the church and His ascension into Heaven. Of special note is His mentioning that He will return, but that it is not for Christians to know the exact date of His return (v. 7). When He does return, it will be to establish the Messianic Kingdom. At least, that was the issue addressed by His disciples, "*Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?*" (v. 6). Jesus did not correct them on the issue of the Messianic Kingdom, but clarified the timing of the event (v. 7). In the meantime, they were to preach the gospel to the entire world.

Jesus gave His Great Commission (v. 8). The purpose statement is world evangelism, the power is the Holy Spirit, the program is every Christian participating, and the priority is that it is a command from Christ. Making disciples for Christ is the mission statement for the church. Evolving out of this mission statement, Christians are to mobilize the money, materials, machinery, methods and manpower to accomplish the mission. Given our resources and opportunities, we are to set strategies to accomplish the mission. We are to plan, organize, train, coordinate, lead and evaluate our efforts. We may expand on the Commission below.

1. The Commission is from Jesus to His church (cf. John 20:21).
2. The scope is to the entire world (cf. Mark 16:15).
3. The strategy is to preach the gospel, disciple all converts by baptizing, teaching those who receive all the teachings of Christ, and to reproduce the effort (cf. Mark 16:15; Acts 10:42, 43; Romans 10:14, 15; Matthew 28:19, 20). We are to use every available means at every available time to reach every available person for Christ. This includes church ministries, education, evangelistic rallies, literature, medical missions, radio, T.V., church planting, humanitarian works, and the list goes on.
4. The content of the message is repentance (faith) and forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ grounded in His death and resurrection (Luke 24:46-48).

5. The geographical target audience is from Jerusalem to the most remote part of the world – even to Pitcairn Island (Acts 1:8).
6. The vehicle or organization is the church and its legitimate arms. This can be seen by the statement of purpose by Christ (Matthew 16:18), that baptism means identification with the church (Acts 2:41), and by the example of the early church (Acts 8:1, 4; cf. 11:19-21; 13:1; 15:3, 4, 41; 20:17, 28).
7. The duration is to the end of this age (Matthew 28:20).
8. The empowering agent for the Great Commission is the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Note that only the first Christians had to wait for the Holy Spirit. He descended, and has been with the church ever since. We do not need to “tarry” or wait for a special unction from the Holy Spirit before we carry out the Great Commission.
9. The authority, owner and director of the Great Commission is Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). We go to the entire world by the authority of Christ Himself. No person can, or has the right, to tell us to stop witnessing for Christ (cf. Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29).

A key passage on the ascension of Christ is given (Acts 1:9-11). Christ’s ascension refers to His visible, physical transfer from earth to Heaven in His fully glorified body. The event marks His exaltation to universal glory, honor, and rule in Heaven. We note four factors concerning His ascension.

1. First, there is the fact of the ascension. Christ predicted His ascension while on earth (John 7:33-36). The event was accomplished by Christ after His resurrection (Acts 1:9). It was certified by apostolic experiences (Acts 7:55, 56; 9:3-5; 22:6-8; 26:13-15; Revelation 4:1-6).
2. Second, there is the nature of the ascension. It actually happened as a true, literal event (Acts 1:9). The ascension finishes Christ’s redemptive work on earth, and inaugurates His High Priestly work in Heaven (Hebrews 1:3). It raises Christ as the exalted ruler of all creation, and guarantees His final victory over His enemies (Ephesians 1:20-23; Acts 2:32-35). It secures the work of the Holy Spirit today (John 16:5-7; Acts 2:33ff.).
3. Third, the importance of the ascension concerning Christ is twofold: it proves the truth of His claims (Matthew 26:63, 64), and guarantees His absolute righteousness (John 16:10).
4. Fourth, the importance of the ascension can be presented in a fivefold manner.
 - It provides us an advocate with the Father (Hebrews 4:14-16; 9:24).
 - It widens our ministry in the world (John 14:12).
 - It places us in the heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6).
 - It enables us to be steadfast (Hebrews 4:14-16).
 - It guarantees us a place in Heaven with Christ (John 14:1-3).

It is helpful if we stop and examine several other vital factors regarding the reality of Christ's ascension.

1. First, we can note the activity of Christ between His crucifixion and resurrection.
 - Christ **descended** into Hades (Ephesians 4:9; Acts 2:27, 31). Many believe the Bible teaches that Sheol had two compartments: Paradise or Abraham's bosom for the righteous, and the lowest Sheol for the wicked (Deuteronomy 32:22; cf. Luke 16:22, 23, 26; 23:42).
 - Christ also **preached** in Hades (1 Peter 3:18-20; 4:6; Luke 4:18). Evidently, Christ preached to both classes of people. The content was the gospel, which was doom to the wicked and deliverance to the righteous. However, He did not preach a second chance for those who refused the gospel in this life.
 - Christ **transferred** Paradise to Heaven (Ephesians 4:8; Hebrews 12:22, 23). The phrase "captives captive" refers to Old Testament saints transferred to Heaven (Ephesians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Now all believers go to heaven at death, to be with Christ (Acts 7:55, 59; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Revelation 6:9-11). The conditions in Paradise are: protection, consciousness, communication, awareness of earth, access to Jesus and resting.
2. There is also the completion of the sacrificial work of Christ. The first ascension of Christ occurred on the day of resurrection (John 20:17). Though He refused Mary to touch Him, later He invited the apostles to touch Him (Luke 24:39). Evidently, He went to heaven in His glorified body, and returned back to earth in one day.
3. Christ also fulfilled the type of the Day of Atonement (Hebrews 9:11, 12, 24). This was the fundamental sacrifice in which yearly an animal was killed and the high priest took the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat. This action pointed to the truth fulfilled in Christ. Christ as our high priest appeared before God in heaven (the Holy of Holies in the heavenly temple) to present His sacrificial blood to God, which guarantees forever our salvation.
4. Christ also fulfilled the type of wave sheaf (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). At the beginning of harvest, farmers waved a sheaf of grain to God, which was the first fruit of all the harvest to follow; thus, Christ became the first fruits to all who will follow Him in resurrection, which is a harvest of souls.
5. Christ ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11). It was a visible ascent, which followed 40 days after the first ascension on the day of resurrection. The ascent was gradual, visible, physical, real, and He will return in the same manner. This was also the inauguration day for Christ (Acts 2:33; 7:56; Mark 16:14; Hebrews 10:12).

6. Christ was seated at the right hand of God. This was a mark of honor, and a participation in government. He was installed as King of the universe, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and crowned with glory and honor. He exercises absolute authority, and enforces with infinite power.
7. These features can be seen in the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended to hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, thence He will come to judge the living and the dead; I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

B. MATTHIAS, THE REPLACEMENT OF JUDAS (1:12-26).

Following the suicide of Judas, who betrayed Christ, another had to take his place. This was in keeping with Old Testament prophecy (1:20; cf. Psalm 62:25; Psalm 109:8). One key requirement for apostleship was being a witness to the resurrection of Christ as well as a close follower of Christ (vv. 21, 22). The choice was between a man by the name of Joseph, and Matthias. The latter was chosen by drawing lots (Acts 1:23-26; cf. Proverbs 16:33; Luke 1:9).

This was the last time in the Bible that God's will was decided by lot. No moral issue was involved, and both men were equally qualified. Many people mistakenly use lots, or a similar method, to seek the Lord's will for their life. This is not good. Such a practice should not be based on this verse. The practice can easily lead to superstition, and a magical approach to seeking God's will. This does not mean that we cannot vote to elect a leader.

Finally, as to Judas, he had attempted suicide, and evidently bungled the job of trying to hang himself (1:18; cf. Matthew 27:5). Even though Judas was a companion of Christ, who considered him as friend (Matthew 26:50), Judas was unsaved (cf. John 6:64, 70-71; Acts 1:25).

C. THE DAY OF PENTECOST (2:1-41)

In the following analysis, I will address issues that do not enjoy full agreement by all godly, Bible believing, evangelical Christians. Unfortunately, in some quarters there exists bitter controversy regarding the various positions: e. g. baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, second work of grace, nature of the church, etc. Love, grace, courtesy, humility, and openness to the evidence must prevail when discussing differences that godly people hold in interpretation of Scripture. No one has a corner on truth, except for God.

Specifically, I will address the issues of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the start of the church, speaking in tongues, the second work of grace, and Joel's prophecy. I will also examine the relationship between faith, repentance, water baptism, and salvation.

Baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is the beginning of the church, which is referred to as being "***baptized with the Holy Spirit***" (Acts 1:5). There are several verses that help pinpoint this historical time as the church's emergence into history. First, we must be reminded that Jesus predicted the formation of the church, and that it was yet in the future (Matthew 16:18); consequently, the church did not yet exist when Jesus revealed His future plans. Second, after His resurrection, Jesus told His disciples that they would be "***baptized in the Holy Spirit***" in yet a few more days – still a future event (Acts 1:5). Third, there occurred the dramatic event of the Holy Spirit falling upon the group (Acts 2:1-13). Fourth, Peter later identified this experience of Pentecost as a past event, and also called it being "***baptized with the Holy Spirit***" (Acts 11:15, 16).

This experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit later is defined by Paul when he writes, "***For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we all made to drink of one Spirit***" (1 Corinthians 12:13). He taught that the "baptism" was that mystical, spiritual merging of all believers into one body, the body of Christ, which is the church of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

We see, then, that the church is something completely new, unique, and entirely different from Israel or any other entity (cf. Ephesians 2:11 – 3:21; Romans 11:25; Acts 15:15-18). The church of Jesus Christ (the body of Christ) is made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Israel is temporarily set aside until the church is completed. However, and this is important, Israel still has a place in God's program for the ages.

It appears, from the biblical data and language, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens once to a Christian (cf. Acts 11:15, 16; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:12). In fact, if one does not have the Holy Spirit, then they are not a Christian (Romans 8:9). In contrast, the "filling" of the Holy Spirit, which is a different experience, can happen many times after salvation (Ephesians 5:18; Acts 4:18, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9, 52).

It is important to recognize that other Bible believing evangelicals hold a different view, and believe that baptism is a work subsequent to salvation. One Pentecostal position on baptism states,

We believe that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is granted to all believers who ask for it. We further believe this experience is distinct from and follows the new birth, that it was the normal experience of New Testament Christians and that it brings an endowment of power for Christian living and service (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8; 2:4; 10:44-46; 15:8, 9).

We believe the baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives utterance. This speaking in tongues is the same in essence as the gift of tongues but is different in its purpose and use (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-10, 28).¹¹

Perhaps the difference of opinion is that some believers hold different meanings for the same word or phrase. For example, what some call the “filling of the Holy Spirit” could be understood by some to be the same experience as “being baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Another puzzling issue to factor into the equation of what is “Holy Spirit baptism,” is the inconsistent patterns that are set up in Acts. For example, the experience came before water baptism (10:44-48), after water baptism (19:5, 6), after salvation (8:12, 16; 19:5, 6), and at the moment of salvation (10:44; 19:2). The baptism did not always accompany speaking in tongues (8:15-17). Sometimes the baptism and tongues are associated with laying on of hands (19:6), and sometimes it was not associated with the laying on of hands (10:44). Finally, Paul writes that those without the Holy Spirit are unsaved (Romans 8:9).

Speaking in tongues.

Now, I take up another area of differences: “speaking in tongues.” In fairly staying as close to the Scripture data as possible, the “speaking in tongues” of Acts 2:4-6 was the apostles actually speaking in a previously unlearned foreign language so that the people present from those other “dialects” could understand the gospel message. The Greek word used is “*dialektos*” from which we get the word “dialect.” What was proclaimed was the “*mighty works of God*” (2:11).

Furthermore, the experience was a confirmation sign of spiritual reality to Israel. That is, to authenticate the messengers and the message to the Jews (cf. 2:14, 22), and as a sign of judgment to the unbelieving Jew that indeed the Holy Spirit had been given (3:33-36; cf. 1 Corinthians 14:21, 22).

In the Bible there is only one place that clearly defines the act of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:3-11), and one place that gives the purpose (1 Corinthians 14:21, 22). The purpose is a sign of judgment on unbelievers. The Bible also records the mystical speaking in tongues of the pagan mystery religions (1 Corinthians 13:1; 14:2), which was practiced in the Corinthians church and drew a crisp warning by Paul.

Some Christians maintain that speaking in tongues is speaking a personal prayer or praise to God that is unknown to the speaker, or perhaps to no one but God. Some say there must be an interpreter present to explain the utterance. In exploring the various explanations of the phenomena of speaking in tongues in 1 Corinthians 12-14, one finds a bewildering variety of opinions.¹²

¹¹ Statement of Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God, Article 7, 8.

¹² For a responsible scholarly discussion by one sympathetic to speaking in tongues, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 1069-1080). For additional exegesis, see Earl D. Radmacher,

It seems to me, that the actual biblical evidence is not absolutely conclusive on the nature of tongues in 1 Corinthians, that the experience of speaking in tongues should still be practiced in our day, or that what is practiced today is the genuine biblical speaking tongues.

Much of the authority for today's speaking in tongues is based on the personal experiences of many fine believers, but which is not adequate to establish biblical doctrine. Why? Because it is also true that Hindus and pagan religions also speak in tongues. Witch doctors speak in tongues. Mormons speak in what they claim to be biblical tongues. Their experience does not prove that what they do is biblical or from God.

Again, I do not wish to discredit, denounce or discourage the personal spiritual experience that multitudes claim and enjoy. Many God fearing worshippers of Christ do speak in tongues. However, many God fearing and faithful Christians do not.

Second work of grace.

Next, I take up the topic of the "second work of grace." Some evangelical theological positions hold that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs as a second work of grace sometime after salvation, and that the experience entirely sanctifies the believer. That is, the Holy Spirit cleanses the heart from sin, and empowers the believer for life and service. The believer is purified from all sin, and perfected in divine love.¹³

This position has several problems. For example, the Bible says there is no one on earth who does not sin (1 Kings 8:46; Proverbs 20:9; Romans 3:10; James 3:1; 1 John 1:8), there is constant warfare between the flesh and the Spirit in the lives of Christians (Galatians 5:16-25), we are to continually to confess our sins (1 John 1:9), and finally, Paul was not sinless even close to the end of his life (Philippians 3:10-14).

The work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation

Understanding the working of the Holy Spirit in this historical age of the Church helps to bring more clarity to Bible teaching. Confining the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation experience alone, we observe the following from Scripture.

1. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer. This experience happens once, and occurs at the point of salvation. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer's body (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19).
2. The Holy Spirit regenerates the believer. In this experience, the principle of new, eternal life is implanted in the believer, who then is born again (John 3:5, 6, 8; Titus 3:5).

General Editor, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999); Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans/Publisher, 1970); Wayne A. Grudem, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

¹³ Orton H. Wiley, and Paul T. Culbertson. *Introduction to Christian Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, n.d.), p. 311.

3. The Holy Spirit baptizes the believer. This one time experience occurs as the believer is merged into vital, spiritual union with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).
4. The Holy Spirit seals the believer. This one time experience is the act by which the Holy Spirit becomes a seal of ownership (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30).
5. The Holy Spirit grants a spiritual gift(s) to the believer. This gift may change, or be modified over the course of the believer's lifetime. A spiritual gift is a special ability the Holy Spirit gives to believers to perform spiritual service for Christ (1 Corinthians 12:11). The gift can be a natural ability, such as teaching or administration, but which is turned to achieve spiritual ends for Christ and His church.
6. The Holy Spirit convicts the unbeliever to become a believer. He convinces the unsaved of the reality of sin, the need and availability of righteousness through Christ, and the finality of judgment should Christ be rejected (John 16:8-11).

Repentance, water baptism, obedience and salvation.

With this background of the Holy Spirit's ministry, I can now address another perplexing problem in the context of salvation: repentance, water baptism, and obedience. Luke quotes Peter as saying, "*Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). Again, Peter said, "*And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him*" (Acts 5:32; cf. 6:7; Romans 1:5).

Some say that based on these verses, obedience is required in obtaining the Holy Spirit, and that both water baptism and repentance are necessary for the remissions of sins. We have a major problem: either we are saved by faith alone, with all the attendant benefits, which includes the Holy Spirit, or we are saved by works. The two are mutually exclusively. Then, how can we solve the seeming problem?

The first rule of establishing a doctrine is to assume that the Bible contains no contradictions, and that all relevant data must be considered. Further, vague data must give way to an abundance of clear data found elsewhere in the Bible. With this in mind, we can establish the following.

To say that salvation involves obedience and repentance is contrary to abundant Scriptural data found elsewhere. Salvation is by faith alone. This is the central theme of the gospel, and is vigorously defended in such epistles as Romans and Galatians (cf. John 3:16, 36; Romans 4:1-17; 11:6; Galatians 3:8, 9; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Acts 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18). How does this resolve the issue at hand?

First, we must give way to the abundance of Scripture that says we are saved by faith alone. Second, the water baptism of Acts 2:38 is administered on the "basis of" or

“because of” the repentance that led to the remission of sin. The word “for” is used as in Matthew 12:41. Baptism is in response to a prior event, like, “After seeing the red light on the police car in my rear view mirror, I pulled over to the side of the road and stopped.”

Water baptism does not save anyone. It is an outward sign of an inward event, as the official Methodist positions states, “Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth.”¹⁴

The “obedience,” in addition, is to the faith (Romans 1:5). It is an obedience to believe the sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross to save entirely, and not to trust on works or religious rites to save. Repent (Gk. *metanoia*) simply means to change one’s mind or purpose. There may be remorse and emotions involved, but emotions always follow thinking. The thinking involves changing one’s mind about Christ, and how to be saved. It involves switching 180° from trusting one’s own good works for salvation to trusting Christ alone for salvation. One acknowledges Christ one’s personal Savior (Romans 10:9). This change results in faith, which leads to the remission (forgiveness) of sin. The next step is water baptism.

Joel’s prophecy

Another difficult issue in this section of Acts deals with the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28-32), which was quoted by Peter (Acts 2:17-21). Several observations may be made and considered before any interpretive conclusions can be made.

First, it is important to note the context in Joel refers to the Messianic Kingdom, and events that will happen prior to that event – which is still in the future.

Second, the prophecy was partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit as predicted by Joel did happen. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was upon the prophets, and also others for special service. But now, the Holy Spirit came upon all who believe.

Third, the experience of Pentecost proved that Jesus was the Messiah (vv. 29-31), who was now seated in Heaven (vv. 34-36). The last days had started, Peter was declaring. The argument goes like this:

1. Joel prophesied that the last days before the Messianic Kingdom would be characterized by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (v. 17 ff.).
2. Jesus Christ predicted the coming of the Holy Spirit (V. 33)
3. The Day of Pentecost experience witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
4. Jesus Christ, the descendent of David and heir to David’s throne, was crucified, rose from the dead, and had ascended into Heaven (vv. 29-33).
5. Conclusion: Jesus is the Messiah, and we are now in the last days leading up to the Messianic Kingdom.

¹⁴ Methodist Articles of Religion, 1784, Article XVII.

During the New testament era, prophecy and visions of the nature of Joel's prophecy did occur, but prophecy (meaning revelation as receiving new information from God) was terminated at about A.D. 95 at the conclusion of the book of Revelation (Revelation 22:18, 19).

The remarkable physical events of verses 19 and 20 did not occur at Christ's first advent, have not occurred since, are not occurring now, but are the same as events associated with the future Tribulation and coming of Christ at His second advent (cf. Revelation 6:2; Matthew 24:29-31). The prophecy specifically identifies its complete fulfillment with the future return of Christ, "*the great and glorious day of the Lord*" (v. 20). Some remarkable physical events did happen at Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 27:51-54), but in detail they do not match the events of this prophecy.

The conclusion seems to be that the better part of wisdom suggests that one must be extremely wary and cautious concerning doctrinal dogmatism with data derived solely from the book of Acts. This is due to the book's transitional nature. It is transitional in that it records God's transition from working through Judaism to working through the church with all the accompanying certifying signs and events to demonstrate, or prove, that the new faith (Christianity) was valid and authentic. By its nature, Acts is a historical record of a very unusual time in history in which doctrinal issues are not specifically taught in more systematic detail such as in the Epistles.

The bottom line is that some of the prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost, and other parts are still hanging – waiting to happen when Christ comes in His Second Advent.

In deciding doctrine, good judgment suggests the following. One must get all the available facts on the issue, be fair with the treatment of all the facts, be honest with the conclusions, and always be open to truth – not merely proving one's case. Among believers, head for common ground, not fighting ground. On the essentials stand firm and bleed; on the non-essentials enjoy diversity with grace. Do not major in the minors, nor minor in the majors. Surely, be open to the wisdom passed down from our spiritual forefathers in the Faith: e.g. the Church Fathers, church confessions, Augustine, Calvin, Wesley, Aquinas, Luther, and the more modern giants such as Berkhof, Strong, Chafer, and Mueller, etc.

On the fundamentals of the Christian Faith, we must not compromise our convictions, but we also must make sure the fundamentals are the issue, and not our own personal, peevish, prejudice and pride cloaked and disguised in a mantle of petty parochialism. Finally, it is wise to judge our Christian experience with the Bible, and not the Bible with our own experience. Theology must flow out of the Bible; we must not read our personal theology into the Bible.

With this complex section of Holy Scripture now behind us, we can begin to explore other matters in the book of Acts.

D. THE IMPACT OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST (2:41-47)

The result of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47) was Peter's bold, soul-winning preaching, of which the resurrection of Christ was the theme, and the call was to be saved. Conversions multiplied as some 3,000 people were saved, and the first Christian church was started. Believers occupied themselves in six basic activities in this context.

1. Study of the Bible.
2. Christian fellowship with each others.
3. Worship to Christ.
4. Prayer to God.
5. Mutual caring and concern.
6. Evangelism.

They had a reverent spirit, and experienced joy, happiness, and praise. There was growth in numbers. The enduement of power by the Holy Spirit was to fulfill the Great Commission (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

E. MIRACLE HEALING OF A CRIPPLED BEGGAR (3:1-11).

Peter and John were on their way to the temple to worship. The hour of prayer was 3 P.M. As they walked past the beggar begging for some coins, they stopped and got the man's attention. The man was healed, enjoying his new found ability, and praised God. The people who saw the event were full of wonder and amazement. When Peter saw the response, he took advantage of the situation and began his second sermon.

F. PETER'S SERMON ON REPENTANCE (3:12-26).

The healing of the cripple was proof of Christ's power. The sermon was both to individuals (v. 17), and to the nation of Israel (v. 21). The offer was repeated to the nation to receive Christ as the Messiah, and experience the Messianic Kingdom (vv. 14-26). Evidently, if Israel would have repented from their sin and changed their decision about Christ's Messiahship, then Christ would have returned even at that late date.

The promise was Messiah returning (v. 18) to set up His kingdom, as seen in the words, "*times of refreshing...period of restoration of all things*" (3:19, 21).

The offer was rejected by the priests, Sadducees, and temple guards as they seized and placed the Christian evangelists into prison (4:3). The great patience of our Lord is grandly displayed, but His patience does not last forever in tolerating sin. Finally, the theme of Peter's sermon was the resurrection of Christ (4:2).

G. FIRST PERSECUTION AGAINST THE CHURCH (4:1-37).

There was religious persecution directed against Christians for preaching Christ (vv. 1, 2). The central theme of the preaching, as mentioned was the resurrection of Christ. This fact points out the importance of His resurrection to the Christian faith. If Christ had not come back from the dead, then He could not offer eternal life to believers.

Many were saved as a result of the sermon: about 5,000 men alone (v. 4). Counting the first sermon, the number who received Christ exceeded 8,000 individuals. Considering

the central theme was the resurrection of Christ, if Christ's resurrection was a hoax, then that many people would not have believed.

The soul-winning preachers were questioned (vv. 7, 8), but filled with the Holy Ghost, they boldly preached the gospel of Christ. Again, they emphasized the resurrection of Christ. As proof of the truth of their message, they offered the miraculous healing to the crippled beggar. They underlined that the only way of salvation was through Christ (v. 12).

The leaders commanded the evangelists to suspend witnessing (v. 18), but they refused to be quiet (vv. 19, 20). Under oppression, the Christians prayed (vv. 23-31). Their focus was on the great power of God. They were then filled by the Holy Spirit, and boldly went to soul-winning. That was their reaction to political and religious persecution. They sought a spiritual solution, not a political solution. However, to bring balance, Paul later used persuasion and legal appeals to protract his life.

The aggressive boldness was to preach the gospel of Christ. They did not demand political, social, economic and racial reforms of the existing social structure of the culture. In fact, Israel had rejected a perfect government, which was Christ as their Messiah. They were not interested in a better, fairer, more just political structure.

The greatest influence to secure a less corrupt government and social culture is by the changed hearts of corrupt politicians and other leaders. To try to bring justice by simply changing an existing corrupt social system usually is to only trade one group of bad people for another. Better men and women make better social systems. In the final analysis, it is God that brings protection and blessing to a nation and people. Only He can restrain the onslaught of Satan and his minions.

The early Christian community continued on in unity, power, caring and generosity – and evangelism. God was with them, and blessed them.

H. PURGING WITHIN THE CHURCH: ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA (5:1-11).

Here the Holy Spirit is identified as God (vv. 3, 4). The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was lying to God, a sin inspired by Satan. Spiritual warfare is real. Satan is real, and he knows well our hearts, and the weakness of our flesh. They pretended generosity for the praise of men, but lied to satisfy greed. They were deceitful and dishonest. They were free to give all or none of the money to the church. God knows and judges sin, and sometimes Christians are put to death because of their sin (1 Corinthians 11:30, 31; 1 John 5:16).

I. SECOND PERSECUTION: BY THE HIGH PRIEST (5:1-11).

Since multitudes (v. 14) were being saved, the religious Jewish leaders became jealous (v. 17). Maybe one could say their extreme jealousy intensified against Christ and His servants. The apostles were thrown in jail. Civil government and religion joined against the church. An angel delivered the soul-winners; they were commanded by the angel to keep on spreading the gospel (v. 20).

Astonishingly, the supernatural act of the men's release did not faze the Jewish leaders. The evangelists were rearrested, and brought back before the Council (v. 27). Another evil impulse expressed itself. The leaders resented the evangelist's bringing to the populace's attention that the Jewish leaders had put Jesus to death. They wanted to cover up their dastardly deed (v. 28).

The leaders commanded the evangelists to halt their preaching and teaching. In direct defiance, Peter and the apostles retorted, "*We must obey God rather than men*" (v. 29). They also forcefully reminded the leaders that they had murdered Jesus. This brought swift retaliation from the leaders: they intended to murder the evangelists (v. 33).

A well respected theologian and Jewish leader, Gamaliel, came to the men's defense (vv. 34-39). His reasoning was that many had started up rebellions in the past, but the movements had fizzled. Furthermore, if Christianity was something invented by men, then it too would dwindle away into nothing. However, if it was of God, then nothing could stop its spread. Interestingly, this is another proof of the genuine nature of the Church: it did not fizzle out, and is now the largest religion in the world!

As a side note, this Gamaliel was also the Apostle Paul's teacher (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel, a Pharisee, was a proponent of the more liberal teachings of Hillel, who was another Rabbi who lived before the time of Christ.

In Gamaliel, the church had found another friend within the Sanhedrin. The others were Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38, 39). Luke reports that in addition to multitudes coming to Christ, "*a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith*" (Acts 6:7). There is much evidence to believe that Theophilus, who in later years was the recipient of Acts, was also among the top tier of high priests. Consequently, the Sanhedrin was becoming desperate to maintain discipline among their ranks. Caiaphas, who was the high priest at this juncture, was replaced by a Jonathan, who was immediately deposed by Roman decree and replaced with Theophilus in A.D. 37. Caiaphas' toppling could have been because of his constant, murderous opposition to Christ and His followers. In any event, the high priestly class was desperately trying to maintain their hold on power.

As mentioned, Peter chose to obey God in opposition to civil and religious authorities. His power came from the filling of the Holy Spirit (4:8, 9). Our dependence on the Holy Spirit in Christian ministry is vital. The Christians gave mass saturation coverage of Jerusalem with the gospel (v. 28). They were flogged and commanded not to spread the gospel (v. 40), but continued soul-winning daily with great joy (vv. 41, 42). They witnessed personally and house to house.

J. PROBLEMS OF CHURCH GROWTH: THE FIRST DEACONS (6:1-7).

The multitudes of converts were too much to handle with the limited leadership. The solution was to organize and delegate responsibility. This was the first deacon board (though the word deacon is not used here), and their qualifications were that they were:

1. Men of good reputation.
2. Men full of the Holy Spirit.
3. Men who were wise.
4. Men who were full of faith.

They were elected by the congregation, and confirmed by the apostles (v. 3). Their role was to organize and manage the material matters of the church. Two were great soul-winners: Stephen, and Philip.

The function of the apostles was to pray and get out the Word of God (6:4; cf. 5:41, 42). A division of labor was made between spiritual and material matters. This did not mean that the deacons had no spiritual responsibilities, because Stephen was mighty in the Word (6:8, 10). The apostles, as well, also had leadership responsibilities (v. 3).

K. THE DEATH OF STEPHEN (6:8 – 8:3).

Stephen was to give the final sermon to the nation of Israel, who had rejected their Messiah (cf. John 19:14, 15). His sermon was hard as his theme was, “*you have done just as your fathers, reject God*” (7:51-53). Stephen was murdered for telling the truth (7:60). We also learn that Christ is very interested in individuals and the work of His church (7:55, 56). The record states the “heavens opened,” and that Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God (7:55, 56). Evidently, there is a thin veil between the material world of which we are familiar with, and the spiritual world that exists along side of our earthly experience.

It is of curious note to observe that Jesus was “standing” at the right hand of God. In Ephesians, Paul states that Christ is “seated” at the right hand of God, and is now over all rule, authority, power and dominion, and that everything is in subjection to Him (Ephesians 1:20-22).

Regarding death.

Regarding the murder of Stephen, a few observations can be said about the dreaded experience of death.

1. Humans have a spirit. Stephen’s last words were a call to Jesus, “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*” (v. 59). It is recorded that Stephen’s physical body was buried (8:2), but that his spirit went to Christ. We do, then, have a material part, and a separate immaterial part, which is referred to in this context as a spirit. The body quits functioning in death, but the spirit transits on to Jesus in Heaven – which is our home.
2. Stephen went directly into the presence of Jesus. He saw Jesus (vv. 55, 56), and talked to Him (vv. 59, 60). The transition was immediate. Jesus was there to receive Stephen’s spirit.
3. The Bible states that at the point of death, Stephen “*fell asleep*” (7:60). This phrase is commonly used in the New Testament to indicate the temporary immobilized nature of our body at death. Someday, in the resurrection, our body

will be raised from its “sleep” and be reunited with our spirit (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

4. We can also learn yet another lesson. When we face death in this world, we know that beings in Heaven are aware, and will help us make the transition from this world into the next. One can view death as taking a trip somewhere, not as a dreadful end of all that is good.
5. At this point I need to bring in some other biblical data from the apostle Paul to confirm Stephen’s experience.
 - *“we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:8).
 - *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better”* (Philippians 1:21-23).
 - *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself”* (Philippians 3:20, 21).
 - *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones”* (Psalm 116:15).

With this, I now return to other issues regarding Stephen’s death. Persecution then broke out and the church was scattered (8:1), which was good, because the gospel was spread to the places the Christians hurriedly scattered as refugees. Paul also began his persecution of the church (8:3). He also watched the cloaks of those who murdered Stephen. He was an accomplice.

One must also note the history of Moses given by Stephen (7:20 ff.). God has prepared Moses for the task of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. Moses was raised in the royal household of Pharaoh; consequently, he was well acquainted with the life of leaders. He was educated in the best university of Egypt, which probably included subjects on public administration, leadership, politics, military science, and engineering. He was a leader equipped with power, and who accomplished great deeds. Then, he was driven out to the wilderness where he learned the terrain, climate, and all the skills needed to survive in that vast wilderness.

From Moses’ example, we can learn that God is preparing us for the rest of our life. He is teaching us what we need to know to accomplish what He has planned for us in the

future. That is why it is important to carefully and faithfully attend to what He has placed into our hands to do today.

From Paul's example, we can learn that there is forgiveness for sin, and hope for the case of the most wretched of sinners. Though he was guilty of hatred against Christ, and murder of Christians (Acts 9:1), yet God saved Paul, and made him a mighty warrior for the gospel of Christ.

As we come to the end of this section of Acts, we are constantly reminded of the bombardment by the enemies of Christ (the world, Satan, flesh) against Christians. This should influence our expectations of the Christian life. We can learn that sometimes God permits tough circumstances to come in our lives for the ultimate good of His work, and our lives. We must look for God's hand in everything that comes our way. Further, the chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy His riches forever. It is not the immediate pleasure, comfort and stress free environment for the believers. Trials increase our faith and endurance (James 1:2-4), and Christ is with us.

II. THE GOSPEL IN JUDEA & SAMARIA (8:1 – 11:18).

A. THE CHURCH SCATTERED BY PERSECUTION (8:1-4).

Of special note is that it was the lay people who were scattered, not the apostles. Those scattered Christian refugees went about spreading the gospel of Christ. The lesson to learn is that all Christians can be witnesses. Witnessing is not something confined solely to the pastors and church officers. By the example of the first Christians, it is unusual for all not be participants in evangelism and discipleship.

As Stephen was buried, there was the expression of grief. By their example, we learn that to grieve for our lost loved ones is normal. The ones we leave behind do grieve, because all loss is sad. Even when we move to another city in this life, people are sad at our move. It is alright to grieve for a time, but it is important to keep the blessed hope in mind to keep things in correct perspective.

The final issue in this section is to note that Saul initiated savage persecution against the Christians.

B. THE PREACHING OF PHILIP (8:5-40).

Philip was a deacon (6:5), and evangelist (21:8). He traveled down to Samaria, and started an evangelistic crusade. Many were saved. The Samaritans were of mixed race, and not pure Jewish. They were made up of Jews left behind after the Assyrian captivity of Israel, and Gentiles sent back Palestine to colonize the area. They even set up their own temple in competition to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. The "pure" Jews from Judah looked down on this ethnic group.

One man by the name of Simon was a man who worked miracles and magic. He believed and was baptized, but some question if it was a real conversion based on verses 20-23. Simon wanted to buy privilege from God to do the miracles he saw the Christians doing, and specifically to impart the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands.

Peter rebuked Simon, and it appears that he repented of the bitterness, pride, and greed in his heart (v. 24). It was in Simon's character to ardently crave prestige, power and wealth (vv. 9-11). He wanted some more of that reputation and privilege.

The apostles were setting the highest of ethical standards for the infant church, which was in stark contrast with official Judaism. From Simon's experience, we learn that the good gifts, abilities and blessings are granted by God, and cannot be purchased by donations to the church to be used for our own advantage (v. 20; cf. James 1:17). When preparing for and seeking position, we are to do it for the sake of service to God and His people, not to enrich and enhance our own station in life.

The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit (8:14-17). It is not clear that they spoke in tongues. Today, all Christians receive the Holy Spirit at salvation (Romans 8:9). This unusual exception was because of the division between the Jews and Samaritans (John 4:9, 20, 21). The animosity between the two groups required that the same unique authentication was needed for the Samaritans as was displayed to the Jews in Jerusalem.

The experience of the Holy Spirit for the Samaritans accomplished two things. First, it clarified to the Samaritans that the work of the apostles and Philip was of God (cf. John 4:20-22). Second, it demonstrated to the apostles that the gospel was for the Samaritans also. This would explain the delay in the Samaritan's reception of the Holy Spirit until they were in the presence of the Jewish Christian apostles who started the church in Jerusalem. The point was hammered home that the gospel was for everyone.

The Ethiopian eunuch was converted (8:26-40). This man was a high court official, in fact, the treasurer, in the rule of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. Candace was a title. He was evidently a man sympathetic to Judaism who traveled to Jerusalem to worship. Certainly, his heart was open to God. The trip was some 750 miles one way. He was in Jerusalem during the enormous growth of the church, and was a student of Scripture. He received Christ after Philip explained to him the gospel, and became the first witness of Christ on the continent of Africa. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which now numbers some 40 million adherents, traces its beginning to this Ethiopian court official.

Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to go witness to the Ethiopian (v. 29). The Bible was used in this witnessing experience (vv. 32, 33). Philip preached Jesus (v. 35), and the man was converted and baptized – in that order (vv. 36, 38). The Old Testament Scripture was Isaiah 53:7, 8. In the early church, only believers were baptized. Philip and the eunuch went “down into” the water, which was a baptism done by immersion. Adam Clarke, the great Methodist theologian says in his commentary on this section, “he probably plunged himself under the water, as this was the plan which appears to have been generally followed among the Jews in their baptisms.”

As mentioned, this man took the gospel to Ethiopia. Even though the eunuch had the Bible, he needed an individual to explain the gospel to him. Even so today, God uses

people to explain the gospel to others. This example also gives a strong case for literature evangelism.

C. THE CONVERSION OF PAUL (9:1-31).

On his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, Paul was converted in a dramatic conversion. Paul refers to his conversion as being supernatural in purpose and nature (Galatians 1:15). It was sudden (1 Corinthians 15:8), a new creation (2 Corinthians 4:6), a merciful act (1 Timothy 1:13), and it involved seeing Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1).

This conversion of Paul is a powerful proof of the truths of the Christian Faith. He was a man of great power, influence, intellect, and success; yet, he changed to embrace that which he was trying to destroy. By himself, Paul had no motive to convert to Christianity, and every motive not to convert (Galatians 1:10-14; Philippians 3:4-7). The fact is, however, he did convert. He gave up popularity, power, authority, prestige – everything – to be a Christian and suffer the stigma of scorn for the sake of Christ. Only a supernatural occurrence could have produced his conversion.

Paul was blinded, born again, healed, baptized, filled with the Holy Spirit, and began witnessing immediately (vv. 17-20). God had especially chosen and appointed Paul to witness to the Gentiles, kings, and Israel, which he did (v. 15; cf. 2 Timothy 1:11).

D. PETER PREPARED TO EVANGELIZE THE GENTILES (9:32 – 10:22).

God continued to use Peter in a mighty way. He healed Aeneas who was a palsied man (9:32-35). He raised Dorcas from the dead (9:36-43).

God used Peter to convert Cornelius (10:1-48). God used an angel to prepare Cornelius to receive the gospel of Christ. The deliberate shift to taking the gospel to the Gentiles is occurring (11:1-3, 18). Peter was prepared by a vision from God (10:10-19). He was sent to Cornelius by the Holy Spirit (v. 19). Cornelius and others were converted and baptized (vv. 44, 47, 48). The Holy Spirit fell on them as He did on the Jews at the Day of Pentecost, which amazed the Jews present at Cornelius' salvation (v. 45). The Holy Spirit came before they were baptized, and without the laying on of hands.

This was a critical experience in the life of the church. The question of the Jew was whether or not an uncircumcised Gentile could be admitted into the church. The conversion and reception of the Holy Spirit by Gentiles was authenticated by their speaking of tongues, which was the same as with the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (v. 47). This was the method God used to certify and show His approval and plan of His new institution, which was the church (1 Corinthians 14:21, 22). This was a time of transition, where unique and powerful things happened to demonstrate the validity of God's transition to a new way of dealing with humanity.

Another example of God's unusual working by miracles and wonders during a transition period is the many plagues and miracles that occurred when the nation Israel was formed upon their leaving Egypt. It appears that at certain periods in history there are extraordinary clusters of spectacular signs and miracles that God uses to markedly

demonstrate His presence and movement in history. The beginning of the church was one of those moments. This is not to say, however, that God performs miracles only at certain junctures of history.

Another observation we can make has to do with the factors God used in the conversions of the Ethiopian, Paul, and Cornelius. The Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and an individual soul-winner were involved in all three experiences. Further, concerning evangelism, Jesus ordered the apostles to be soul-winners (vv. 42, 43). In the case of Cornelius, he was not saved by good works, though he was an upright, moral man. God did send him further light when he responded to the light given him (10:1-4). Humanity must have the gospel in order to be saved (Romans 10:13-15).

We observe that Spirit filled and led Christians going to unsaved individuals with the Word of God are mere instruments God uses to reach the lost. Prayer is also involved (10:9). Spiritual dynamics are involved. For example, angels (10:3), and the Holy Spirit were active in the mission. Conversion is accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

There was a specific sequence in the conversion of Cornelius. There was the need in his heart, the presentation of the gospel, his understanding and accepting of the gospel, his conversion, the speaking in tongues, the immediate baptism, and the follow-up. However, it can be noted that not all converts spoke in tongues.

F. PETER'S DEFENSE FOR GIVING THE GOSPEL TO GENTILES (11:1-18).

Some of the Jewish Christian leaders took issue with Peter for taking the gospel to the Gentiles (v. 2). They thought the Gentiles should be saved by accepting Christ, but also the ritual induction into Judaism by way of circumcision. This belief was to become a point of contention in the church for many years, and was the issue of conflict in the first church council held in Jerusalem (Acts 15:15ff. cf. Galatians 5:1-12).

Peter's explanation was satisfactory, and the Jewish Christians were happy with the results of many conversions (v. 18). The problem, however, did not go away.

III. THE GOSPEL TO THE UTMOST PARTS OF THE WORLD (11:18 – 21:18).

A. START OF THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH (11:19-30).

Antioch was located on the Orontes River about 300 miles north of Jerusalem. It was the capital of the Roman province of Syria, and with a population of some 500,000, it was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. It was a cosmopolitan center of that day, being representative of many parts of the world in culture and viewpoints. With its seaport only 16 miles away (13:4), Antioch was a major commercial center.

Barnabas became a key player at this point of time in the life of the early church. He was a good man, one who consoles, encourages, and was full of the Holy Spirit (4:36; 11:24). He was full of faith, and a good soul-winner. Barnabas persuaded the apostles of the genuineness of the conversion of Paul (9:27), represented the apostles at Antioch (11:22-24), went with Paul on the first missionary journey (13:2), and defended the

missionary work and results among the Gentiles at the first church council at Jerusalem (15:12, 22, 25).

The great church at Antioch was started by soul-winning laypeople (11:19-21). God was with them and many people were saved. Barnabas was sent to confirm and establish the new church in the faith (11:22). Antioch replaced Jerusalem as the major center for Christianity and missionary work (6:5; 13:1; 14:26; 15:35; 18:22). It was at this center that it has been said that the first Protestant school of hermeneutics flourished, which influenced Jerome and the Reformers even centuries later. Its emphasis was on the literal, historical and grammatical exegesis of the Bible, and stood against the letterism of the Jews, and the allegorical method devised by men such as Philo and Origen who were headquartered at another major center of Christianity: Alexandria, Egypt.

The great bishop and martyr, Ignatius (c. A.D. 110), ministered at Antioch, as did Chrysostom (c. A.D. 390), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. A.D. 390). They were great teachers of the Faith. Later, because of its supposed heretical connections with the Nestorians (c. A.D. 431), the Orthodox Church crushed the church at Antioch.

B. CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED BY HEROD (12:1-25).

James was put to death (vv. 1, 2) in Jerusalem, and Herod placed Peter in jail (vv. 3, 4). This was Herod Agrippa I, who was the grandson of Herod the Great who ruled at the birth of Jesus. By this time Herod Antipas, who ruled at the crucifixion of Christ, had been deposed and sent into exile with his wife, Herodias. Herod Agrippa I was a nephew to Herod Antipas, and brother to Herodias.

Peter escaped in a very spectacular fashion (vv. 5-19). The Christians prayed for Peter (v. 5), and he was delivered by an angel. Guardian angels do exist (cf. Genesis 48:16; Daniel 10:20, 21; 12:1; Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 1:14). The prayer warriors had much doubt (vv. 11-16). They persevered in prayer, and that overruled wavering faith. The evangelistic Word of God kept getting out to the multitudes (v. 24), even in the face of the political persecution. It is important to note, however, that this time Peter did not boldly go back to the temple, but escaped to another place (v. 17).

In this section we can again see the tremendous cooperative interaction between the supernatural world and the activity of humanity to carry out the mission of God's work. The Christians prayed and evangelized while behind the scenes was the supernatural work of angels.

It was payback time for Herod. He was angry with the cities of Tyre and Sidon, and they wanted to be in his favor. The reason was that they had to import grain from the fertile fields of Galilee. Consequently, the trade delegation won over king's chamberlain, and sought to flatter Herod. While giving his speech, an angel struck him bringing death. Josephus claims that after five days of suffering, Herod died in A.D. 44. Still again, we see the hand of God working in history. God's program for history trumps all the political ambitions of the rulers of this world.

C. THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY (13:1 – 14:28).

Barnabas and Paul were commissioned by the church at Antioch as the first official missionaries (13:1-3). The first foreign missionary society was in Antioch. The Holy Spirit called and sent the missionaries (13:2). The missionaries prayed, fasted, and obeyed (13:2). Their first stop was in Cyprus (13:4-12), which is a large island nearby in the Mediterranean Sea. They proclaimed the gospel (13:5), and people were converted to Christ (13:12).

From Cyprus, they traveled to the Galatian cities in what is now south central Turkey. The gospel was preached, and many were saved. The Jews of that area, however, became jealous (13:45), and opposed the missionaries, who in turn, preached out boldly against the Jews and turned to the Gentiles (13:46). They viewed themselves as under orders from the Lord to proclaim the gospel (13:47). The Word spread, many were saved, and the opposition increased. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and Joy (13:52). The main themes of the sermons were Christ's resurrection, His deity, and salvation through Christ alone.

The missionaries began to backtrack to the places they had just evangelized. They first traveled back to Iconium. There they preached boldly with reliance upon God (14:3). They faced bitter opposition with resultant division and conflict among the population (14:4). Consequently, they were forced to leave town, but they kept right on preaching the gospel of Christ (14:5-7).

The missionaries traveled to Lystra where a man was healed, and the missionaries were mistaken as gods (14:11). Quickly, they corrected the mistake, and gave a clear statement of their purpose: preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (14:15). From the sermon we learn that Pagans can recognize God through general revelation: by creation, by the rain and crops, and by providence with the giving of food and joy. Hot on their trail, the hostile Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium to silence Paul. This Antioch, located nearby, was a different town from the Antioch in Syria from whence the missionaries had their home base. Paul was stoned and left for dead (14:19, 20). By a miracle, he got up, and left the next day. This could have been when Paul went to heaven and saw marvelous things in that place, and of which he was forbidden to describe (2 Corinthians 12:1-5).

From this traumatic experience, the missionary team returned to the mission base: Antioch (14:21-28). Paul kept on preaching the gospel (14:21), encouraged new believers, and told them that Christianity attracts many trials and hard times (14:22). He organized churches (14:23), and back in Antioch reported on the just finished first missionary trip (14:27, 28). In that report, it was related that the gospel had gone to the Gentiles, and that salvation was by faith alone: not by faith and works.

From this record we learn much about the missionary work of God. The trip was God's work. He opened the door, and sent the missionaries, giving them clear instructions on what the trip was about, and what to say. God gave the opportunities, and the results, as well as much boldness and joy. He permitted severe opposition: satanic, human,

political, and religious. Not all accepted the gospel, but many did. The missionaries planted and organized churches, and were accountable to the sending body, the church back at Antioch. They planned, organized, accomplished the tasks, and evaluated the results. God was in the whole operation.

D. THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL: HERESY COUNTERACTED (15:1-35).

A great theological problem arose over two issues: salvation and separation. Within the church there was a group (the Judaistic party) who maintained that salvation came by Christ plus following the laws of Moses: circumcision, various rites, etc. If Gentiles refused this pattern, then the Jewish Christians demanded that Jews and Gentiles be separated.

Paul had addressed this issue, and was very adamant that salvation was through Christ alone, and that Jews and Gentiles were one. These are the issues hammered home in Paul's epistle to the Galatians, which was probably written before the Jerusalem council was convened in A.D. 50. The date of the epistle was probably A.D. 48 or 49.

The issue was so controversial that the special council was called at Jerusalem to settle the issue. James was the leader at Jerusalem. During the proceedings, Peter gave his testimony of how God had shown him that Gentiles were to be accepted on an equal basis as the Jews before God.

The conclusion was that everyone is saved by faith alone (vv. 9, 11), apart from any works of the law, but that Gentiles were to voluntarily keep from any practice that would be hateful to Jews. The great force of this council decision was that the church was set apart as something completely distinct from Judaism. It crosses all social, racial, and ethnic barriers, offering salvation to all humanity by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ – but only through faith in Christ.

God's purpose and program for this age is also given in this section (15:14-18). James related that God is taking for His own a group out of the Gentile population (the church), a plan predicted in the Old Testament. After the church is complete, then Christ will return and set up the Davidic Kingdom, which is also known as the Messianic Kingdom (cf. Romans 11:11-32).

Church co-operation can be seen from this section. There was co-operation in missions (v. 2), solving theological disputes (vv. 1, 2), information sharing (v. 3), motivation (v. 3), reporting, which implies accountability (v. 4), sending messengers (vv. 1-4), giving advice when sought, but which was not a legal, binding directive (vv. 19, 20), in teams working together, finances (11:29, 30), and encouragement (v. 32).

E. THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (15:36 – 18:22).

The teams were selected (15:36-40). The missionaries were led to return to do follow-up on their new churches and converts. A controversy arose between Paul and Barnabas over whether Mark could go along. Paul said no, because young John Mark, Barnabas' cousin, had previously deserted the team (13:13; 15:37, 38). Barnabas

wanted to give Mark another chance. The result was that two missionary teams went out rather than just one.

It would seem that on occasion, that the better part of wisdom for good, that Bible believing Christians need to separate because of differences in personality, practice, or objectives. Later Mark and Paul were reconciled (2 Timothy 4:11). Another lesson is that sometimes controversy is a means of God's letting His will be accomplished. There were two mission teams sent out rather than one.¹⁵

Many Christian groups have separated over doctrinal issues. Sometimes the division was over issues such as the Sacraments, and sometimes over the rejection of the fundamentals of the Faith (cf. Galatians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:18; 2 John 10).

The purpose of the second missionary trip was to follow up on the evangelistic success of the first journey, but God had other plans: to take the gospel into Europe (chapter 16). Timothy was added to Paul's team (16:1-5). They received the vision of the "Macedonia Call" (16:6-10). The purpose was to preach the gospel. We can learn some principles of how to determine the will of God in Christian service. The disciples were deliberately involved in seeking God's interests as a normal part of their lives. They were seeking opportunities to preach the gospel. Their own personal interests were secondary. They were busy in prayer and devotion to God, holy living, evangelism, discipleship, and planting churches. God was active and evident in their life and activities, as they were active and interested in His interests.

However, having pointed out their priorities, it is also important to note that they also needed funding to pay for food and living essentials. They raised money, were financially supported by others, and at times had to work secular jobs to make a living (2 Corinthians 8, 9; 1 Corinthians 9:4-14; 16:1-4; Philippians 4:10-19; Acts 18:3).

The European beachhead for the gospel of Christ was Philippi (16:11-40). Several observations and principles can be learned from their evangelistic approach.

1. They went to those most likely to respond (v. 13).
2. They initiated the gospel presentation (v. 13).
3. God opened the heart of Lydia to believe as they presented the gospel (v. 14).
4. Opposition came from the business world (v. 19), and government (vv. 22, 23). They were thrown into prison.
5. The jailed missionaries gained personal victory through prayer and hymns of praise (v. 25).
6. Supernatural intervention came in form of an earthquake and the chains mysteriously unlocking (v. 26).
7. The jailer was saved (vv. 30, 31), and all his family (v. 34).
8. The believers were baptized (v. 33).

¹⁵ For more information on Mark, see the introductory notes by Willis Newman, *The Gospel of Mark: a Background, outline, Analysis and Commentary* (unpublished classroom material, 2006).

9. Paul demanded a public apology from the city officials, because he had been wrongly jailed, and to not leave the new church under a possible stigma (vv. 35-39).
10. The new believers were encouraged (v. 40).

For more information on the nature of this church, read Paul's epistle to the Philippians.

The gospel advanced through Europe (17:1-34). The team traveled into Thessalonica (vv. 1-9) where some were converted. Many Jews became jealous, started a riot, and forced the evangelists out of town. A good church was planted, to which the two epistles to the Thessalonians were written by Paul.

Traveling on, the missionaries brought the gospel to Berea (17:10-15), where many more were converted. The trouble makers caught up with them, stirred up hard feelings against the missionaries, who again had to leave town.

Paul, then, traveled down to Athens (17:16-34). It is the home of democracy, which was cultivated during its "golden age" of about 450 B.C. Decline came to the city, and by the 1st century, Athens was primarily known just for her cultural prowess and university. In Paul's day, this city was the political, economic and cultural center of Attica in eastern Greece.

While in Athens, Paul preached in the synagogues, and daily did personal soul-winning work in the commercial and intellectual parts of town. He tried to win some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers to Christ. He spoke before the Areopagus, which was the city council dealing with religion and education. Some believed, but the results were meager. There is no New Testament record of a church ever being in Athens.

From Paul's evangelistic sermon we can learn about his flow of presentation.

1. First found the common ground from which to start the presentation: the "unknown god" (17:22, 23).
2. Second, he described God: who He is, what He has done in creation, what He is like, and His present and eternal rule. The sermon was highly doctrinal.
3. Third, Paul spoke of humanity's dependence upon God.
4. Fourth, he told of humanity's need for salvation.
5. Last, he gave the resurrection of Christ as proof of the claims of Christ.

The response was mixed. A few were saved (17:32-34). Some doctrinal issues can be observed. All humanity is of one person; therefore, the unity of all humanity is established. Second, we learn that God has established the times and boundaries of all ethnic groups. Third, we learn that God created the world and all that is in it; consequently, evolution is rejected.

From Athens, Paul traveled on to Corinth (18:1-17). He had a significant ministry in that city. Paul entered this phase of ministry with much fear (v. 9; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:3). He was human too. God encouraged him, and promised to protect him in Corinth. Paul

stayed there 1½ years, and established a great church where many were saved. For more detail on the city, see the New Testament Corinthian epistles. Following this ministry to Corinth, Paul concluded the second missionary journey by returning to home base in Antioch (18:18, 22).

F. THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY (18:23 – 21:26).

The action of this campaign starts in Ephesus. Apollos, who was an outstanding preacher, had started the work in Ephesus. He was a man learned in Old Testament Messianic knowledge. His doctrine about Jesus was accurate, but incomplete. Apollos preached John's message of repentance to God. He did not know of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3-10; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 1:12).

While drifting through Ephesus, Paul found those disciples who had been converted by Apollos (19:1-7). They did not know of the Holy Spirit. Their problem was with the content of their belief. They were disciples of John the Baptist (v. 3). The speaking in tongues (v. 6) was given as a sign to Old Testament Jewish believers to validate the gospel message from Paul.

Paul started a Bible college in Ephesus (19:8-20). The project began in the midst of an extended evangelistic campaign (19:8). From there it moved to rented quarters (19:9), where the college was very evangelistic in curriculum content. God did many miracles (19:11, 12), though He did not always work that way with Paul. Many were saved through that region as a result of the ministry of the Bible college (19:10, 17, 20, 26).

Paul encountered much opposition from the business world while in Ephesus (19:21-41). Many were saved under his ministry with the result that they quit buying idols for the worship of Artemis (Diana). The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was huge and magnificent. The monument had 127 columns 60 feet high, and stood on an area 425 feet long and 220 feet wide.

The chief opponent was one Demetrius, a silversmith, who appealed to the civic pride of the Ephesians, which was a lie to cover up the real reason for his displeasure: greed. The assembly rioted and was in confusion (19:32). The town clerk finally quieted the mob, persuaded them that if there was just cause, they should take the matter up in the courts. He dismissed them. Fortunately, the mob disbanded.

Paul was moved to venture on to other places with the gospel. He and his team did missionary work in Greece (20:1-5). Good results flowed from the efforts, but opposition also continued by the Jews.

More work occurred in Troas, and also with the Ephesian elders (20:6-38). The Christians were now meeting on the first day of the week (20:7). For Christians, Sundays became the regular day of worship in honor of Christ's resurrection on that day. We can learn many things about Paul's style and strategy of ministry by observing his interaction with the Ephesian leaders.

In his manner, Paul was personally involved with people (v. 18), humble (v. 19), a hard worker (v. 20), his motivation was soul-winning service to Christ and discipleship (v. 24), he was bold in ministry (v. 27), he warned leaders (v. 28, 31), was without greed and very generous (vv. 33, 35), set the example for others (v. 35), and entrusted the converts to God (v. 32). His life was one of dependence, devotion, duty, and desire to serve God.

In his teaching style, Paul taught in public (v. 20), house to house (home Bible studies), (v. 20), with feeling (v. 31), and he used the Bible (v. 32).

The theological content of his teaching included the salvation message (v. 21), the grace of God (vv. 24, 32), the kingdom of God (v. 24), and the whole council of God (v. 27) – the full scope of Christian doctrine.

Paul gave special insight on the doctrine of the church (vv. 28-32). The church belongs to God, was purchased by the blood of Christ, the overseers (bishops), and pastors (shepherds) are of one office. Church pastors are assigned by the Holy Spirit.

The duty of pastors is to shepherd the flock, maintain doctrinal purity, lead and guard the flock from false doctrine and teachers, guard themselves, follow Paul's example, and preach the Word of God.

Paul returned by voyage to Palestine (21:1-14). From the area of Ephesus in eastern turkey, they touched land in several places to say farewells. They received several warnings for Paul not to return to Jerusalem, because of the hatred of the Jews against him. He went anyway. Paul arrived in Palestine, and stayed a few days at Caesarea at the home of Philip the evangelist (21:8; cf. Acts 6:5; 8:5). Final warnings came to him from a prophet named Agabus, who came down from Judea. Paul refused the warnings, and determined it was God's will for him to return to Jerusalem.

Paul returned to Jerusalem (21:15-26). The trouble aroused over the church council of Acts 15 had not gone away, and the antagonism against Paul continued (21:20). A lie about Paul had been circulated by his enemies. Paul did teach Gentiles that it was of no consequence from God's point of view whether or not they circumcised their sons. He never, however, taught Jews not to circumcise their sons or to disregard Jewish customs – as was the charge against him. Paul tried to placate the Christian Jews by participation in Jewish purification rites, which was simply a matter of Jewish customs, not of salvation or sanctification. He was urged to take action to show that he was a middle of the road Jewish Christian.

IV. PAUL THE PRISONER FOR THE GOSPEL (21:19 – 28:31).

A. PAUL'S ARREST (21:27-40).

Paul's move, however, did not work, as unbelieving Jews from Asia stirred up the mob to kill Paul. Lies again were told about Paul to agitate the crowd. Confusion distracted the crowd except for one goal: murder Paul. The Roman captain came to quell the riot, and placed Paul under arrest. He thought Paul was an Egyptian who had stirred up a

revolt with the Assassins, who were radical Jewish freedom fighters. Paul asked for an opportunity to address the Jewish crowd, and the captain gave permission.

B. PAUL'S DEFENSE TO THE MOB (22:1-23).

Paul gave his personal testimony, telling about his conversion and calling (vv. 1-16). He then told of his commission from the Lord to take the gospel to the Gentiles. The statement enraged the murderous mob of Jews, who savagely sought Paul's death (vv. 27-29).

C. PAUL TAKEN TO CAESAREA (22:24 – 23:15).

Paul was threatened by scourging by the Roman officer in charge of the military detachment (22:24-29). Upon finding out Paul was a Roman citizen, the commander treated Paul with all the rights accorded a Roman citizen. Paul wisely appealed to his rights for his own protection, and to continue on with the gospel.

Paul appeared before the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 or 72 Jewish elders and teachers of the nation of Israel. They functioned as a sort of Supreme Court. They ruled over religious and civil matters until the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The council was under, however, the rule of Rome, who permitted them to govern Israel with limitations. At the time of Christ, there may have been two Sanhedrins: one political, and the other religious. Roman appointed high priests presided over the body.

Somehow, in the volatile situation, they were able to interfere in the proceedings of Paul, and have him appear before the Council, rather than being directly taken to the Roman governor in Caesarea.

The high priest, Ananias, commanded Paul to be struck when he began to speak. Ananias ruled as high priest from about A.D. 48-58. He was insolent, overbearing, and wicked. Paul replied harshly to the high priest, and then being informed that he was talking to the high priest, Paul seemed to retract the statement (23:5). It could have been that Paul did not recognize that it was the high priest, because of his bad eyes. Paul's statement could be sarcasm, meaning something like, "I did not think a high priest would ever act that way."

Again, we must remember that Paul was a human being. A normal human reaction to being hit alongside the head is to react in anger – to remove the pain. Paul may have flared in anger, and then checked himself to take a cooler, wiser approach. In fact, Paul's reaction was correct: the high priest was a hypocrite by breaking the law he was to support.

With much wisdom, Paul put the Council into confusion by dividing them against themselves over the issue of the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection, and the Sadducees did not. That move by Paul broke up the session.

Paul was then escorted to Caesarea (23:11-35). The Lord encouraged Paul by appearing to Him. The other three appearances were at his conversion (Acts 9:5), in

Corinth (Acts 18:9, 10), and on his first visit to Jerusalem (22:17, 18). A plot to murder Paul was foiled and Paul was delivered to Felix, the Roman governor of Judea from A.D. 52 to about A.D. 58, or 60. The governor agreed to hear Paul's case when his accusers arrived.

D. PAUL'S DEFENSE TO FELIX (24:1-27).

Ananias led the group that presented the case against Paul. He had hired a Roman lawyer, Tertullus, to articulate the charges before Felix. Actually, Tertullus expanded the charges, accusing Paul to be an insurrectionist and saying that the commander (Claudius Lysias) exceeded his authority in removing the case from the Jewish court to the Roman court. The Jewish charge was profaning (showing contempt for religious things) the temple and religious heresy by following Christianity, "*the sect of the Nazarenes*" (v. 24).

Paul responded by saying the Jews could not prove their case. He had only been in Jerusalem 12 days; consequently, how could he start a riot in that time? Besides, they could not prove that he had spoken to anyone. Furthermore, the original accusers, the unbelieving Jews from Asia, were not present to personally accuse Paul. He established his good character, as indicated by brings alms and offerings to the people of Jerusalem.

Paul did admit to being a follower of Jesus, but proved that it was not religious heresy, and that he was merely a Christian exercising his religious rights.

Felix stalled the case, putting the Jews off by saying Lysias was also absent as a witness. This brings us to another point. As mentioned, the question of jurisdiction was another issue of Tertullus' charge against Paul, but which contained a serious contradiction. Since Tertullus charged Paul with being an insurrectionist against Rome, then Lysias should have placed Paul under Roman jurisdiction. At any rate, to placate the Jews, Paul was left in custody, which was a loose military confinement.

Felix was a man of weak morals, and a penchant for corruption (24:26). Drusilla, a Jewess, was his third wife. He had stolen her from her husband, the king of Emesa in Syria. Drusilla was the daughter of King Agrippa I, the man who had put James to death (Acts 12:1, 2). Paul's preaching frightened Felix, but they had many conversations together.

E. PAUL'S DEFENSE TO FESTUS (25:1-12).

After two years, the assignment of Felix was finished, and his replacement was Porcius Festus. The year was around A.D. 60. Felix had brutally suppressed a riot by the Jews in Caesarea, and was replaced by the emperor Nero. The Jews sought to reopen the case, have Paul returned to Jerusalem, and murder him by ambush on the way. There was much Jewish unrest, mayhem, and violence in Israel during those days. Thousands of Jews were murdered. For example, in about A.D. 68, the Gentiles rose up in

Caesarea and murdered some 20,000 Jews. In another day, the Gentiles of Damascus slit the throats of about 10,000 Jews.¹⁶

Wanting to please the Jews, Festus tried to have Paul returned to Jerusalem to stand trial. Paul knew he would probably be killed on the way, and if he was tried in Jerusalem, the trial would be unfair. His only recourse was to appeal to Caesar (v. 11), who at that time was Nero. This right of appeal was one of the cherished ancient rights of a Roman citizen.

F. PAUL'S DEFENSE TO AGRIPPA (25:13 – 26:32).

King Agrippa II, and his sister, Bernice (whom he was living with in incest), came to Caesarea several days later to pay respect to Festus. This was Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I (12:1), and great-grandson of Herod the Great (Matthew 2:1). About 30 years old, Agrippa II was a friend of the Roman imperial family, and was allowed to rule the territories northeast of Palestine with the title of King. He appointed the Jewish high priest, and had control over the temple treasury.

Paul was not required to defend himself at this time, because of his appeal to Caesar, but he took advantage of the situation to witness for Christ. He gave his personal testimony, and gave his major definite purpose and mission in life (26:16-18). He had been appointed by Christ to be a minister and witness, sent to the Gentiles with the objective to open the Gentile eyes that they might turn from the darkness to light – from the dominion of Satan to God. The purpose was that the Gentiles may receive forgiveness of sin, and an inheritance among God's chosen. He stated that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the heart of the complaint of the Jews (26:8).

Festus was a Roman, and could not understand Paul's reasoning (26:24). On the other hand, Agrippa, a Jew, understood Paul's logic, and may have come close to being converted (26:28). By application, we observe the importance of understanding the cultural viewpoint of peoples we go to as missionaries. People need to know a certain amount of truth about God before they can understand salvation through Christ.

G. PAUL ON TO ROME: OCEAN VOYAGE & SHIPWRECK (27:1-44).

A Roman detachment of 100 soldiers was assigned to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to Rome. The leader was Julius (v. 3). They sailed north to Cyprus, then westward, keeping close to the shores of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The prevailing fall winds came from the northwest, which made it difficult for a coastal ship to handle in the open ocean. They were transferred to another ship at Myra, and sailed to Crete, an island southeast of Greece. Trying to get to a safer harbor in Crete in order to spend the winter, the ship was caught in a strong east-northeast wind, and was driven out to sea. Paul warned them against undertaking such a risky and dangerous action.

Disaster loomed as the buffeted ship commenced to break up under the violent storm, and the men gave up all hope of surviving (27:16-20). Paul received encouragement

¹⁶ Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ* in The Story of Civilization series (New York: Simon and Schuster, vol. 3, 1944), p. 544.

from an angel sent by God, passed the word on to the men, and predicted they would be saved. Paul, the prisoner, had risen to a place of commanding leadership. Eventually, the wind and sea swells slammed the ship onto an unknown island reef (v. 41). The island was Malta, about 60 miles south of Sicily. All the people made it safely to the island.

H. PAUL'S MINISTRY ON REMOTE MALTA (28:1-10).

Paul was bitten by a snake and lived. He healed an island leader (v. 8), which placed them in good favor with the islanders. His ministry on that island was significant. The island has been Christian ever since Paul's visit.

I. PAUL'S ARRIVAL AND MINISTRY AT ROME (28:11-31).

After winter, they boarded an Alexandrian grain ship that had wintered at Malta, and sailed for Rome. They harbored at Puteoli, Italy, because the harbor at Rome was too small to handle the large grain ships.

They arrived in Rome, and Paul was placed in house arrest (v. 16). There he met with the Jewish leaders, and explained the gospel and Messianic hope (v. 23). Some were saved (v. 24). Paul wrote the so-called "prison epistles" while under house arrest in Rome: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Evidently, his Jerusalem persecutors did not show up to accuse him; thus, he remained in prison two years, and was released. In the meantime, the gospel was spreading throughout Rome, the Praetorian Guard (Philippians 1:13), and perhaps even on to England. The Praetorian Guard was a group of imperial guards separate from the army or Roman police. Its number in Rome was about 9,000. This group had heard the gospel through those fellow members who had been guarding Paul. It is perhaps by this group that the gospel reached England during the Roman invasion and occupation.

After his release in about A.D. 63, Paul did more missionary work, including perhaps a trip to Spain (Romans 15:23-29), which was his dream. He wrote 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus during his release. However, Paul was recaptured, and was executed in about A.D. 67. He was beheaded by Nero with the sword on the third milestone of the Ostian Way outside of Rome. The place is known as Aquae Salviae. He is buried under the basilica of St. Paul.

In this examination of the Acts of the Apostles, our objective was to give a summary of background and introductory issues, note some general observations, and delineate the purpose, theme, unfolding and outline of the book. We then gave an extended analysis of Acts along with various comments.

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Dr. Willis Newman

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 Association of Religion Data Archives - <http://www.thearda.com/>
 Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry - <http://www.carm.org>
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