

ACTS

You, God, and a KJV Bible

By Eric Neumann

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Quotations

The only material quoted in this book is the Word of God in the King James Version. No commentaries or scholars are quoted, because God's Word is important, not man's word. As such, I encourage all readers to be good Bereans by searching the scriptures to see if what I have said is true (Acts 17:11). It is okay if you do not agree with what I say, but it is not okay if your disagreement is not based upon the Word of God in its proper context, which involves "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

Goal

The goal of this Bible study is to cast "down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and [bring] into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5) so that members of the body of Christ may "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4).

Contact the author

Therefore, the author encourages any disagreements be brought to his attention so that future versions of this Bible study can be changed if deemed necessary.

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Books by Eric Neumann

All books are available in paperback and in Kindle formats by going to: www.amazon.com/author/bibledivider. You may also access the author's sermons by going to: <http://www.youtube.com/user/bibledivider/videos>.

Eric has been working on a Bible study guide since 2011. So far, the following books are available:

Genesis

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

Hebrews

James & I Peter

II Peter – Jude

In addition, the following books are available:

A Bible Believer's Bible Summary: How to Understand the

Bible – Section 1 is a narrative of the Bible from beginning to end, while section 2 gives a one-sentence summary and a key verse from each book of the Bible. (84 pages)

Bible Per-VERSIONS: How Satan Changes God's Word to

Lead You Astray – Over 850 Bible verses are listed in the KJV, NIV, NKJV, and NLT with comments to show how modern versions stray from the truth of God found in the KJV. A topical guide and an explanation of why modern versions are perverted are given. (248 pages)

How to Be Led by the Holy Spirit: Discerning God's Will for

Your Life – This book examines a megachurch pastor's decision-making process, compares this process to scripture, and shows God's way to be led by the Spirit in making decisions in your life. (34 pages)

A Bible Believer's Critique of Ironside's "Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth": A Defense of Paul's Mystery – (150 pages)

Acts Introduction

The book of **Acts** shows Israel's history after the cross. The Holy Ghost is given in Acts 2. The nation, as a whole, rejects God's law covenant with them for the final time, as they reject the ministry of the Holy Ghost. Jesus had said, "Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him" (Matthew 12:32). Thus, when Israel makes their final rejection of the Holy Ghost with the stoning of Stephen, Jesus STANDS at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56).

Old Testament scripture shows that Jesus' standing at the right hand of God is incredibly significant. Psalm 110:1 says that God the Father instructed God the Son to "SIT Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Acts 2:23 says, in talking to Israel, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" Jesus. Therefore, "Thine enemies," according to Acts 2:23, are Israel. Isaiah 3:13-14 says, "The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of His people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses." The vineyard is the house of Israel, according to Isaiah 5:7. Thus, Jesus' STANDING at the right hand of God, in Acts 7:55-56, says that God has judged Israel as apostate and is now setting aside His plan to reconcile the earth back to Himself through the nation of Israel. He does not end this plan, because "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). Therefore, God will still reconcile the earth back to Himself through the nation of Israel. However, He sets this plan aside for now, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and Israel is not ready to enter it, even though they are supposed to be God's kingdom of priests in the kingdom to reach the Gentiles with the gospel (Exodus 19:5-6).

In Genesis 1:1, God created the heaven and the earth. The next verse starts with "and the earth." From Genesis 1:2 through Acts 7:60, God's focus has been on the earth. Beginning with Acts 9, God shifts His focus to the heaven. "The heavens are not clean in His sight" (Job 15:15), because Satan (Ezekiel 28:15-16) and 1/3 of the angels rebelled against God (Revelation 12:4). Therefore, the heaven needs to be reconciled back to God, just like the earth. However, if God had talked about His plan to reconcile the heaven back to Himself before, Satan "would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (I Corinthians 2:8).

In order to reconcile both the earth and the heaven back to God, Jesus had to die on a cross. The Old Testament never mentions this. The Old Testament says that the Christ would die for the sins of Israel (Isaiah 53:3-8), and He would do so by being sacrificed on the altar in the temple in Jerusalem (Psalm 118:27), as the complete Passover Lamb to take away their sins (John 1:29). Therefore, when Jesus came into Jerusalem, Satan got the Jewish leaders to arrest Him and send Him off to the Romans to keep Him from being sacrificed on the altar as the atonement for Israel's sins. What Satan did not know is that, by being "lifted up" on the cross, He would "draw ALL men" to Himself (John 12:32). In other words, both Jews (The Jews said, "His blood be on us" (Matthew 27:25).) and Gentiles (Pilate said, "I have power to crucify Thee" (John 19:10).) were involved in His crucifixion, which gives both Jews and Gentiles the opportunity to be saved.

Therefore, Jesus did not “give his life a ransom for many” on the altar (Matthew 20:28), but He gave His life “a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (I Timothy 2:6) on the cross. Paul was an apostle “born out of due time” (I Corinthians 15:7-8) to give this testimony.

Therefore, once Israel is set aside, God calls Paul in Acts 9 to go to the whole world, and not just to the Jews. The Lord said about Paul that, “he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Not only that, but Paul was given new information to preach. What Peter preached to Israel in early Acts was what “God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). What Paul preached, beginning in Acts 9, was “the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest” (Romans 16:25-26). This new information was that salvation comes by trusting in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, as atonement for sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), rather than repenting and being baptized for the remission of sins, as Peter said (Acts 2:38).

Paul said, “a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me” (I Corinthians 9:17). It was in Paul “FIRST” that “Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting” (I Timothy 1:16). Paul said, “the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12). He preached “the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God” (Colossians 1:25).

When God called Paul, He had set aside Israel’s program. However, God still wanted Israel to be saved. Therefore, God gave Israel the opportunity to be saved under this new program committed to Paul. It is Paul’s going to Israel that is shown from Acts 9 through the end of Acts. In this portion of Acts, we see Paul preaching “the gospel ... to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Thus, Paul’s pattern is to go to the Jewish synagogue, preach the gospel, and then go to the Gentiles with the gospel.

Just like we saw Israel reject the gospel of the kingdom 3 times in Acts 1-7 (see Acts 4:15-18; 5:17-18; 7:54-59), we see Israel reject the gospel of the grace of God 3 times in Acts 13:44-46, 18:5-6, and 28:25-28. This period of time is called “the diminishing of” Israel (Romans 11:12). Israel diminished away, and Paul focused exclusively on the Gentiles after Acts 28, as “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). That is why the book of Acts ends after chapter 28. It has shown the fall of Israel in rejecting the gospel of the kingdom, preached by Peter and the believing remnant of Israel, and it has shown the diminishing away of Israel in rejecting the gospel of the grace of God under Paul’s ministry. Thus, Acts ends, not with Paul’s death, but with Israel’s death, having rejected God’s salvation, both in earthly places and in heavenly places.

If you do not understand these things that the book of Acts teaches you, you will never understand the New Testament. That is why more commentary is provided by this writer on Acts than on Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

Summary: The at-hand phase of the kingdom goes away due to Israel's unbelief (7:55-56), and God begins reconciling the heavenly places back to Himself by saving Paul and all those who believe his gospel (Romans 16:25).

Key passage: 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

1 Jesus instructs the disciples in the kingdom of God (v. 3), He ascends to heaven (v. 9), and He chooses Matthias (vs. 15-26) to complete the 12 apostles who will sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).

1:1 "The former treatise" is the book of Luke. Luke wrote the book of Luke to Theophilus (Luke 1:3), and he is writing Acts to him, as well. Luke is about Jesus' earthly ministry to Israel, and Acts is about the Holy Ghost's earthly ministry to Israel.

1:2-3 These verses give the purpose of Jesus' 40-day ministry with the disciples after His resurrection. He stuck around to: 1) Give them proofs that He is the Messiah and will set up God's kingdom on earth in the future, 2) Give them commandments to follow during the tribulation period (namely, to preach the gospel to the lost sheep of Israel), and 3) Speak of the things of God's kingdom to give them motivation to continue to preach the gospel of the kingdom throughout the tribulation period.

There are two reasons why Jesus was with the disciples for 40 days after His resurrection: 1) 40 is the number of probation in the Bible. For example, there were 40 days of rain in Noah's day and Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Therefore, Jesus was with His disciples for 40 days to prepare them for the Holy Ghost's ministry, and 2) The Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost (2:1), which was 50 days after the Passover—the day Jesus was crucified. Jesus said that the Holy Ghost would not come, unless He left and sent Him to them (John 16:7). Therefore, He had to stay less than 50 days in order for the Holy Ghost to come to them on the day of Pentecost.

1:4-5 "The promise of the Father" is the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost was "the feast of weeks," celebrating the firstfruits of harvest (Exodus 34:22). Spiritually speaking, "the fields...are white already to harvest" (John 4:35), meaning that the lost sheep of the house of Israel are ready to be found. The little flock needs the Holy Ghost to empower them with the words to say, the miracles to perform, and the discernment to determine who believes the gospel of the kingdom and who does not. That is why Jesus will send the Holy Ghost. And, since the Holy Ghost will bring forth spiritual fruit in that the lost sheep of Israel will be saved, His coming represents the firstfruits of harvest, which makes it appropriate that He be sent to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Thus, the "not many days hence" that the disciples have to wait for the Holy Ghost to come refers to less than 10 days from now, since Jesus has been with His disciples 40 days since His resurrection, which was two days after Passover, and Pentecost is 50 days after Passover.

Thus, the coming of the Holy Ghost is linked to the feast days. The Holy Ghost, then, is not waiting, as Pentecostalists claim, for the disciples to be in one spirit or "one accord" (2:1). Rather, He is waiting for the day of Pentecost to "fully come" (2:1). Since many of the lost sheep of Israel will be coming to Jerusalem for the feast of weeks since it is one of the three, annual feasts at which all Jewish males must appear before the Lord in the temple (Deuteronomy 16:16), Jesus tells His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Ghost to come. Also, being baptized with the Holy Ghost completes the little flock's ordination as priests of God, as a priest had to be washed with water (their water baptism) (Exodus 29:4) and anointed with oil (type of the Holy Ghost) (Exodus 29:7). That is what John the Baptist told them when they were water baptized (Mark 1:8), and it is what Jesus says now just before they receive the Holy Ghost.

1:6-7 When the little flock first believed the gospel of the kingdom, they fully expected Jesus to overthrow the Romans and establish God's kingdom on earth right then. His death threw them for a loop, such that they were offended, and Christ had to restore them to belief. Now that they again believe that God will establish His kingdom on earth, they are a little hesitant to assume He will do it right then. Therefore, they ask Jesus if He will "AT THIS TIME restore again the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). In hindsight, we know that the answer is "no," but only because the nation of Israel as a whole did not believe the gospel of the kingdom. If Jesus told them, "No, no kingdom yet, because all of your hard work of preaching the gospel will go to waste because Israel will reject the gospel," they would not have preached the gospel, and Israel would not have been given the chance to believe it, as Jesus had promised them in Matthew 12:32-33. Therefore, Jesus tells them that "it is not for you to know the times or the seasons."

Fundamental Christianity says that God replaced His earthly kingdom with a spiritual kingdom in heaven once Jesus was crucified, because Israel had rejected their Messiah. However, here we are after the resurrection, and the disciples are asking if Jesus will restore the kingdom at this time. This means that, in the forty days that Jesus spent with His apostles after His resurrection, He taught them that God still planned to set up His eternal kingdom on earth, and that Israel was still His chosen people through whom He would do this. The question was not, "Since Israel rejected You as their Messiah, I guess there is no earthly kingdom for You. So, are we now going to the Gentiles to preach eternal life in heaven?" NO! Jesus had told them that the kingdom program was still going on, which is why they asked about the kingdom being restored to Israel. The question was about timing. It is only because the mystery was not to be revealed until after the stoning of Stephen that Jesus does not answer their question. But, their question does give clear proof that God was still planning on establishing His eternal kingdom on earth with Israel ruling with Him, even AFTER the cross. Therefore, Acts is a continuation of the at-hand phase of the kingdom that was started by God with John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2).

1:8 Rather, the disciples are to work without asking questions. They are just servants doing their duty (Luke 17:10). The "power" of the Holy Ghost is not the

speaking in tongues, as Pentecostalists claim. The "power" is to know what miracles to ask the Father to perform through them so that the lost sheep may believe the gospel of the kingdom (John 15:7-8), and then to know if someone actually has believed the gospel so that they can either remit their sins or retain them (John 20:22-23). The power to forgive or not forgive sins is much greater than the power to speak in tongues, for the power of forgiveness means they have the power to let someone into God's kingdom or not. That is why Jesus told Peter that He would give Him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

We see Peter exercising this power in 5:3-10, when he pronounces death sentences upon Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Ghost. The reaction is that "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (5:11). By contrast, the reaction to the speaking in tongues was, "What meaneth this?' Others mocking said, 'These men are full of new wine'" (2:12-13). There is power behind the death sentences that causes fear, but the speaking in tongues looks more like a magic trick that causes amazement and mocking.

Once they receive the Holy Ghost, they are to start preaching the gospel of the kingdom in Jerusalem, then go to the rest of Judah, then go to the northern territory of Israel (Samaria), and then go to the Gentiles. Because they will not finish going through all of Israel before Jesus' second coming (Matthew 10:23), they are to preach only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6) until then. Therefore, although the commission is ultimately to go to all the world with the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20), they will not go to any Gentile territories and preach the gospel until God's kingdom physically comes on earth. Jesus alludes to this in this verse by dividing the world into Jew and Gentile, because He says that they are to be witnesses "both" in Jerusalem, etc. "Both" means two, and the two categories, here, are: 1) Jerusalem, Judaea, and Samaria (the Jews), and 2) the uttermost part of the earth (the Gentiles). The Jews are reached before Jesus' second coming, and the Gentiles are reached in Jesus' millennial reign.

Because Jesus was speaking to ISRAEL about restoring the kingdom to ISRAEL (1:6), there is no commission in the current dispensation of grace to go to other nations with the gospel. That being said, we are also not excluded from going to other nations with the gospel. We are just given the ministry of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:18) without any geographical boundaries, because, in the dispensation of grace, God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11). Do not allow Christianity to trick you into believing that Jerusalem means starting from your hometown and then going to the rest of the world with the gospel. Jerusalem means Jerusalem. If Jesus wanted them to start from their hometown, He would have said so. In fact, the apostles are all probably from Galilee, and so they are actually not starting from their hometown by starting in Jerusalem. They are starting in Jerusalem because that is where God established His temple, and that is where all devout, male Jews (2:5) came three times per year, as required under the law (Deuteronomy 16:16). Therefore, many of the lost sheep of Israel would be coming to them in Jerusalem.

With the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, God set aside Israel's program and began

the dispensation of grace with Paul in Acts 9. In Acts 15, there is a council between Paul and the Jerusalem church to talk about the two, different programs going on. From Paul's account in Galatians 2, we learn that, at that time, the Jerusalem church recognized that "the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto" Paul (Galatians 2:7). The result was that the 12 apostles decided to constrain their ministry to saved Jews only, while Paul went to all other people with the gospel of grace (Galatians 2:9). Therefore, the 12 apostles abandoned the commission of Acts 1:8, recognizing that God had put Israel's program on hold and began the mystery program with Paul. As such, anyone following the Acts 1:8 commission is going against what God is doing today in forming the body of Christ.

1:9 With His instructions to His disciples now complete, Jesus ascends to heaven so that the little flock can continue Jesus' ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel through the power of the Holy Ghost.

1:10-11 The two men are probably the angels, Michael and Gabriel, since angels are also called men in the Bible, because they look like men. (They do not have wings, as is commonly thought.) The point of their statement is that the little flock needs to get their focus off of where Jesus has gone and get their focus on the job that He has called them to do. Jesus will come back to establish the kingdom on earth. In the meantime, they will not have finished going over the cities of Israel before He comes back (Matthew 10:23). Therefore, they do not have time to build an altar to Jesus where He left them and worship there, looking for apparitions of Jesus, as their flesh would lead them to do. Rather, they need to go to Jerusalem (1:4) and wait for the Holy Ghost to give them the power to reach the lost sheep of the house of Israel with the gospel of the kingdom and signs following (Mark 16:16-20).

1:12 Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives. Zechariah 14:4 says that, when Jesus comes back, He will stand upon the Mount of Olives. Therefore, not only will Jesus come back in like manner, i.e., in a cloud (Revelation 14:14), but He will also come back to the very location that He left them at. However, since Jesus told the little flock to wait for the Holy Ghost from Jerusalem (1:4), we see them journeying there now.

1:13 We are told the names of the 11 apostles here (Judas Iscariot has killed himself by now.) to show that all of them were there for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. In other words, Jesus kept them from being lost (John 17:12). Note the use of the word "both" again, although 11 are named. This shows there are two groups: 1) Peter, and 2) The other 10 apostles. God divides them this way because Peter is the kingdom church's God-appointed leader (Matthew 16:18-19). This would be like saying, "both the President and his men."

1:14 Note that "Mary the mother of Jesus" was also there, showing that Jesus kept her from being lost, as well, by having John take her home with him (John 19:25-27). Note also that Jesus' half brothers are there, too. Not too long ago, His half brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). Jesus' raising Lazarus from the

dead and His Own resurrection must have caused them to believe the gospel of the kingdom.

1:15 Since Peter is God's appointed leader, he is the one who talks here. Note that there are only 120 people waiting for the arrival of the Holy Ghost. Jesus had great multitudes following Him (Matthew 14:14 and 20:29), including "a very great multitude" less than one week before His crucifixion (Matthew 21:8). Once He died, though, almost all left Him, such that there are only 120 believers, who tarry in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Ghost, as Jesus had commanded them to (1:4-5). Thus, Israel, as a whole, has rejected the gospel and only has one year left to believe or be set aside by God (Luke 13:6-9). This one-year period is covered in the first seven chapters of Acts.

1:16,20 Peter was pretty ignorant when it came to the things Jesus shared with him. He did not think Jesus would die (Matthew 16:21-22), did not believe He would rise from the dead (Luke 18:33-34), did not believe in Jesus' resurrection even after it had already happened (John 20:6-9), and had given up on following Jesus' commands even after Jesus had appeared to him twice after His resurrection (John 21:3). Now, Peter knows the scripture so well that he knows that Judas Iscariot must be replaced as one of the twelve due to a combination of Psalm 69:25 ("Let their habitation be desolate") and Psalm 109:8 ("Let another take his office"). This shows the great transformation in Peter over the last month. After His resurrection, Jesus had opened Peter's eyes such that he now understands what Jesus shared with him from scripture, where he was clueless before Jesus' death. The reason is because he now understands what Jesus did on the cross and what God is doing now with the little flock. Today, a similar thing happens for people who study the Bible for years, and then learn how to rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15). They know scripture, but it does not make sense until they understand the prophecy and mystery programs and the timing of everything. Then, the pieces fall into place. That is why understanding right division is essential to understanding God's Word.

Also, note that Peter says that these two passages from Psalms were spoken by "the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David." This tells us that God did not just give some general ideas to the Bible writers and have them put those ideas in their own words. Rather, "ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16). Every single letter and word is from God (Matthew 5:18) and was written down perfectly by man (II Peter 1:21), because the words on the page were actually spoken to us by the Holy Ghost.

1:18 Matthew 27:5 says that Judas "hanged himself." Here, we are told that Judas fell headlong, burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out. Since all of God's Word is true (John 17:17), both things must have happened. Judas probably hung himself around the time of Jesus' crucifixion. When Jesus gave up the ghost, there was a great earthquake (Matthew 27:50-51). This earthquake was probably the cause of Judas' dead body falling headlong, bursting asunder, and all of his bowels gushing out. As such, what happened to Judas' body is a type of the judgment that will come upon the wicked for rejecting what Jesus did on the cross

for them.

1:19 The fact, that "all the dwellers at Jerusalem" knew about the blood bath regarding Judas Iscariot's body, shows that this was no ordinary occurrence. People had hanged themselves before, but never had it been so gruesome. That is because betraying the Lord is the ultimate sin, deserving of the ultimate punishment. Jesus said, regarding His betrayer: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark 14:21). Also, the gruesomeness of Judas' hanging would also serve as witness that he did, in fact, betray the Son of God. Perhaps some people were saved, as a result.

1:21-23 Most Christians say that Paul replaced Judas Iscariot as the 12th apostle, and that the disciples' appointing of Matthias was against God's will. However, two things tell us that is not true: 1) Peter was obeying scripture by replacing Judas. He was not in the flesh. He was doing God's will, fulfilling scripture. As mentioned before, Peter did not know what was going on spiritually during Jesus' ministry. Now, after spending 40 days with Jesus after His resurrection, he pieces together two scriptures to show that they needed to name a replacement for Judas. The only way he could have done this was if Jesus specifically told him to do so, which Jesus would not have done, if Paul was supposed to be the 12th apostle, and 2) The 12th apostle had to have followed Jesus from the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry until the day of Pentecost, in order to be a witness of Jesus' resurrection (1:21-22). Paul does not fit this criteria, as he did not follow Jesus until Jesus called to him from heaven in Acts 9 (I Timothy 1:13), which makes Paul an apostle "born out of due time" (I Corinthians 15:8). It is probable that, the reason Barsabas and Matthias are chosen, is because they are the only two men who fit this criteria. This shows that there are only 13, eligible men to be the apostles. 13 is the number of rebellion, and the nation of Israel is in rebellion at the time.

Christians say, "Matthias is never mentioned again. So, he cannot be the 12th apostle." However, look at some of the other apostles. Bartholomew, for example, is mentioned by name only four times in scripture (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). In all four instances, he is only in a list of apostles. We have no details about him. That is because the purpose of selecting 12 apostles is so they can rule over Israel in the kingdom (Matthew 19:28). Since the kingdom is still future, they have not taken that position yet, which is why we do not know anything about some of the apostles. Therefore, we should not think it odd that Matthias is never mentioned again either after Acts 1.

1:24-26 Again, Peter was not in the flesh, here, as he prayed for the Lord's guidance. The casting of lots to choose Matthias is how God communicated His will to Israel under their program. Therefore, this is not gambling. Rather, the casting of lots is how God made His choice known to Israel as seen in Leviticus 16:8, Joshua 18:10, and I Samuel 14:41-42. If Peter was in the flesh, he would have made the choice himself, rather than asking God "which knowest the hearts of all men" to make His choice. It was important to bring the number of apostles up to 12 because that is God's number of government, and the 12 apostles will

rule over the 12 tribes of Israel in God's kingdom (Matthew 19:28). Therefore, this casting of lots, according to the Mosaic law, is clear evidence that Israel's program is being continued here, and that they are still under the law. This is NOT the start of the Body of Christ. If God did start the church in Acts 2, there would be no need to elevate Matthias over Barsabas here.

2 The Holy Ghost comes upon the little flock of Israel to bring forth the spiritual firstfruits of the harvest, which is seen by the little flock growing in numbers from 120 to 3,120 on the first day (v. 41)! As such, the Holy Ghost is separating out His nation from apostate Israel (Matthew 21:43).

2:1 Note the term "fully come." Pentecost was celebrated every year as the feast of weeks proclaimed under God's law (Exodus 34:22), but the full fulfillment of this feast is the celebration of the firstfruits of God's SPIRITUAL harvest. These 120 people are the firstfruits, and they are now commissioned, under the power of the Holy Ghost, to start the spiritual harvest of the lost sheep of Israel so that Israel may be a kingdom of priests to reach the Gentiles with the gospel of the kingdom (Exodus 19:5-6). The word "fully" is key to understanding the significance of the Holy Ghost's coming. The little flock's being "with one accord in one place" also signifies they were not in the flesh, but were awaiting the Holy Ghost's coming in order to reach the lost sheep of Israel.

2:2 The mighty wind filling the whole house should remind us of God's coming to Israel by filling the whole tabernacle that Moses and Israel built (Exodus 40:34-35). Therefore, the Holy Ghost's filling the whole house shows that God's presence has, once again, filled all of believing Israel, as it did originally with the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Also, in John 3:8, Jesus links the wind to those born of the Spirit, and that they must be born of water and of the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). These 120 believers have been born of both now. In Acts 2:38, Peter will give the invitation to those in Jerusalem for them to be born of water (water baptized) and born of the Spirit (by repenting, which means to change their minds and believe the gospel of the kingdom) so that they can also enter the kingdom of God.

2:3-4 In Genesis 11, the whole world spoke one language. Because man united in rebellion against God, God created many languages as a way to keep man from becoming fully apostate. By giving the gift of speaking in other tongues to His little flock, God is uniting the world back to God (Exodus 19:5-6). The tongues are "as of fire" because God had promised to refine Israel by fire (Malachi 3:2-3), meaning that they would go through the fiery trials of the tribulation period in order to determine if they will side with God or with Satan. If they reject the gospel they hear through the Holy Ghost, they will be baptized with that fire by going to the lake of fire (Matthew 3:11-12). If they believe the gospel, they will receive the Holy Ghost and be refined by that fire so that they have pure souls, making it into God's kingdom on earth. Thus, the fire both divides apostate Israel from believing Israel and purifies believing Israel. This is why the tongues were "cloven," which means divided or split in two. This is also why the national symbol of Israel is the

burning bush (Exodus 3:2), not the pagan star of David.

Now, the Pentecostals love to quote 2:4 to show that you do not have the Holy Ghost, unless you speak in other tongues, because that is what happened here. However, as mentioned, Acts 2 is a continuation of ISRAEL'S program. It is not the dispensation of grace, which does not begin until Acts 9. 2:6 tells us that these "other" tongues were man's languages that were understood by other nations. The speaking in tongues by the Pentecostals today is not an understandable language. In fact, it is just gibberish to create an emotional release and to make the speaker proud in his supposed spiritual maturity. However, even if it were a real language given by God, it would be a spiritual language that no man understands, as Paul goes over in I Corinthians 12-14, rather than a real language spoken by men in other countries. Therefore, speaking in other tongues or languages is specific to Israel's program. Therefore, even if speaking in tongues is of God today, it would not be done in this manner, because Acts 2 is a different dispensation than the one we are currently living in, which means that speaking in tongues is not the evidence of having the Holy Ghost.

Also, note that the Pentecostals experience being "slain in the Spirit" with uncontrollable gyrations in the Spirit. However, neither of these things is found anywhere in scripture—not even here—except as it relates to the devil, e.g., Mark 9:17-22. Romans 5:3-5 says that the Holy Ghost is given unto us today so that God's love is shed abroad in our hearts through the trials we go through as we walk in the Spirit, which means living out sound doctrine for today so that others may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). This is the opposite of uncontrollable gyrations and speaking in gibberish, which makes the Pentecostals look like devil-possessed loons! Even when tongues were of God in the dispensation of grace, Paul admits that unbelievers, who heard such things, would say that the speakers were mad (I Corinthians 14:23). How much more so, then, is this the case since tongues have now passed off the scene (I Corinthians 13:8)!

2:5 Due to the fifth cycle of chastisement, Israel was scattered abroad among the nations (Leviticus 26:33), but the faithful to God's law would return to Jerusalem for Pentecost as God had commanded (Deuteronomy 16:16). Therefore, the "devout men" of Jewish descent are in Jerusalem at this time "out of every nation under heaven" (2:5).

2:6 We see a reversal of the Tower of Babel here. The little flock speaks "the wonderful works of God" (2:11), and the Holy Ghost translates it for the hearer into the hearer's language. The purpose of the other tongues, then, is so that the language barrier is removed so that all people may hear the gospel of the kingdom and believe. Thus, there is no confusion, and there is complete understanding by all listening. Contrast this with today's Pentecostal movement, which has nothing to do with uniting God's people into one language. In fact, Pentecostalism today is the opposite, taking a group of people, who speak one language, and dividing them with a language that none of them understands.

2:7 It is significant that the little flock is comprised of Galileans, which the Jewish community considered to be like Gentiles, due to their lack of Jewish religious observance (Matthew 4:15-16). By contrast, the Jewish religious area of Jerusalem, where the real “holy” people dwell, does not seem to be represented here. This shows that it is much harder for a religious person to believe the gospel than for a particularly wicked person to do so.

2:8 Note that this verse does not say that the little flock “spoke” in many languages. Rather, the scripture says that every man “heard” in their own tongue. Therefore, speaking in other tongues really means that the speakers speak one language, but the hearers hear that message in their own language. Thus, the speakers are speaking in unison, which is another confirmation that God is speaking through them, as unison speaking in tongues NEVER happens in Pentecostalism today. It is this unison speaking that keeps confusion from happening and brings the clarity of the gospel to all hearers. Also, the fact, that they hear in their own tongues, is confirmation that God is at work here. After all, how could ignorant Galileans know so many languages (4:13)?

The reason everyone hearing the word of God in their own tongue is so important is because that is the only way that the whole world will hear the gospel of the kingdom before the end of the tribulation period. Jesus sent the little flock to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6), and He said that they would not finish going through all of Israel before Jesus’ second coming (Matthew 10:23). Jesus also said that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached “in all the world for a witness unto all nations” before the end (Matthew 24:14). So, how does the whole world hear the gospel when the little flock does not even go to cities outside of Israel? The answer is that the little flock will be arrested and will speak before councils, rulers, and kings (Mark 13:9). At that time, the Holy Ghost will speak through them (Mark 13:11). In other words, the Holy Ghost will speak the gospel of the kingdom through them, and all nations will hear that gospel in their own tongues, as they watch on the latest technology device. That is how the gospel is published among all nations (Mark 13:10). Therefore, the gospel of the kingdom would not go to every nation in the tribulation period if not for the Holy Ghost’s gift of tongues.

2:10 Note that there were also proselytes here, meaning Gentiles who had become Jews. In Israel’s program, Gentiles could be saved by either blessing Israel (Genesis 12:3) or by becoming proselytes.

2:12-13 We see two groups of observers here. The devout Jews, coming to the feast, wonder what this means, while others come up with a flimsy excuse to try to explain how this is not of God. It is flimsy because the mockers claim that those speaking in other tongues are drunk. However, drunkenness hinders communication, while the Holy Ghost is enhancing communication by causing men to interpret the same set of words into their own language dialects. Thus, drunkenness cannot be the reason for the little flock’s speaking in other tongues, since drunkenness has the opposite effect of what is really going on here.

If they were drunken, it means that they are not thinking with their right minds, but they are really speaking clearly the wonderful works of God. Similarly today, when we rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15), we are using the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16), communicating clearly. However, because Christianity uses corrupt minds (I Timothy 6:5), they say we are confusing matters and speaking like we are crazy. Therefore, the reaction to the truth, in 2:13, is the same reaction we get today from unbelievers.

2:14 As in 1:13, the 12 apostles are divided into two groups: 1) Peter, and 2) "The eleven," because Peter is the God-appointed leader of the little flock. Note that Peter is NOT preaching to all of mankind. He is only preaching to Jews, because Jesus was only sent "unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24) and Jesus sent the little flock as His Father sent Him (John 20:21). Therefore, the little flock is only to preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This is why Peter addresses his sermon to "ye men of Judaea" (2:14), "ye men of Israel" (2:22), and "all the house of Israel" (2:36).

2:15 Because the mockers are clearly wrong, it only takes this one statement to refute them.

Note that Peter says that it was "but the third hour of the day." According to Mark 15:25, Jesus was crucified at the third hour. Therefore, God probably poured out the Holy Ghost at this time to signify that Jesus' crucifixion made this possible and also to show that man cannot stop God's plan.

2:16 The answer to the question of "What meaneth this?" is that "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Peter then quotes Joel 2:28-32. Again, Peter goes from being a bumbling idiot before the cross to being extremely knowledgeable after the cross. This shows the work of Jesus and the Holy Ghost in his life.

2:17 Since "this is that," Israel has entered "the last days," which will end in "the great and notable day of the Lord," (2:20) which is a reference to Christ's second coming (Isaiah 13:9 and Joel 1:15,2:1,11). Daniel 9:26-27 says that there are at least seven years between Jesus' death and the end of the tribulation period. However, due to the unbelief of Israel at Jesus' first coming, Luke 13:6-9 says that God would give Israel a one-year grace period before starting the tribulation period. Therefore, with the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, that one-year grace period has now started to be followed by the seven-year tribulation period to be followed by God's pouring out of wrath upon unbelieving Israel.

The "all flesh" of 2:17 does not include the Gentiles, because it is explained by what comes after it to mean "YOUR sons...YOUR daughters...YOUR young men..., and YOUR old men." Previously, in Israel's program, only one or two people typically received the Holy Spirit, such as the king or a prophet. God is saying that ALL of believing Israel will now receive the Holy Ghost—sons, daughters, young, and old. Those, who try to claim speaking in tongues and moving in the Spirit for themselves today, are trying to steal Israel's promises without accepting the

associated curses of blood and fire and the day of God's judgment (2:19-20).

2:18 The reason, that all of believing Israel now receives the Holy Ghost, is so they can prophesy. Prophesying refers to speaking forth the word of the Lord. Thus, they are to all go out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and speak the gospel of the kingdom to them. If Pentecostalists are correct in saying that speaking with other tongues is for today, then how are they prophesying when no one can understand what they are saying?

John 7:38-39 says that the Holy Spirit is living water. Therefore, it makes sense that God says that He will "POUR out" His Spirit (2:18). Also, note that God says that His servants and handmaidens will receive the Holy Spirit (2:18). This is a reference to all of the little flock, because it is their duty, as servants (Leviticus 25:55), to preach the gospel of the kingdom to Israel (Luke 17:10).

2:19-20 In addition to hearing the gospel of the kingdom and seeing the signs of the kingdom (casting out devils and healing the sick (Mark 16:17-18)), Israel will also see the signs of God's judgment for those who do not believe. Note that the signs will be in creation, so that there is no mistake that God is doing them, not man. Also, the signs are of blood and fire. Blood represents life (Leviticus 17:11), and fire represents the lake of fire. Thus, the signs of blood and fire are visual, graphic representations of apostate Israel burning forever in the lake of fire if they do not repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). (It seems odd, then, that the Salvation Army would use blood and fire in their flag.) John tells, in Revelation 6:12 and 8:12, of these signs coming to pass in the tribulation period. These signs are part of the refiner's fire of God to get apostate Israel to believe the gospel of the kingdom (Malachi 3:2-3). By the way, the "signs in the earth beneath" refer to what is seen in Revelation 8:7-8, where trees and grass are burned with fire and blood, a great mountain is burned with fire, and the sea turns into blood as a sign of God's soon judgment of the unbelievers. In other words, since God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1), it is clear to man that they are about to be judged by God when He puts these signs of judgment in both heaven and earth.

The sun being turned into darkness and the moon being turned into blood (2:20) are signs after the end of the tribulation period and before Jesus' second coming (Matthew 24:29). In other words, God turns the lights out to give man time to contemplate what just happened. Then, those who call on the name of the Lord can be saved (2:21).

2:21 Thus, the tribulation period is God's reconciliation program for the nation of Israel. Saved Israel will speak the gospel to the rest of Israel during the tribulation period, and God will help lost Israel to see that God's wrath is about to be poured out upon them by seeing the signs of blood and fire. This is God's twofold warning system so that Israel will believe the gospel in order to "be saved" (2:21) from "the great and notable day of the Lord" (2:20).

For Israel, most of this salvation occurs during the period of darkness just before

Jesus' second coming. This is seen in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. There, we see the little flock give the midnight (because it is dark) cry that the bridegroom is coming (Matthew 25:6). (Jesus comes as "a thief in the night" (II Peter 3:10).) The ten virgins had all been sleeping during the tribulation period (Matthew 25:5), and so they have to scramble to believe the gospel, and only five of them make it in (Matthew 25:10). These are the ones, who call upon the name of the Lord, by believing the gospel of the kingdom, and are saved (2:21).

2:22-23 Now, Peter tells Israel why they will soon be judged by God into the lake of fire. It is because they took their Messiah and killed Him. Note how Peter says that Jesus was "a man approved of God." This means that He was their Messiah. Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" to be bound upon the altar in the temple and sacrificed for the sins of Israel (Psalm 118:27). Instead of doing this in faith, Israel, in unbelief, took Jesus "by wicked hands" and crucified and killed Him. Therefore, they are deserving of God's wrath being poured out upon them at Jesus' second coming. Although both ways involved Jesus dying, eternal life with God is ALWAYS linked to faith in what God has revealed to you. Therefore, the issue is not Jesus' death, but it is Israel's unbelief.

Christians like to say that there is only one gospel in the Bible, and it involves believing that Jesus died for your sins. However, the gospel, that the 12 apostles preached, was the gospel of the kingdom, which was to "repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins" (2:38) The 12 apostles began "preaching the gospel" (Luke 9:6) about two years before Jesus' death, and they did not even know that He was supposed to die and rise from the dead until after He had already done so (John 20:9). Therefore, they could not have preached Jesus' death as part of their gospel.

Now, for the first time, they preach the gospel, knowing that Jesus died for Israel's sins, and they STILL preach the same gospel, as they did before the cross. In other words, the new information about Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection does not change the good news God has given to man at that time, because God is continuing Israel's program. He has NOT started something new at Acts 2. Peter does mention Jesus' death, but he mentions it, here, as BAD news, not good news. He says that God gave Jesus as the Lamb of God to take away their sins (John 1:29), and, in disobedience, Israel took the sacrificial Lamb and killed Him in unbelief on a cross, so that He could not die on the altar in the temple as God said He was to do (Psalm 118:27). Therefore, Israel is subject to God's wrath because they killed their Messiah (2:36). In other words, Peter is saying that, because Israel killed Jesus on a cross, they are headed for hell, instead of being part of God's kingdom on earth. That is NOT good news!

By contrast, when Paul preaches about Jesus' death, he preaches it as good news, i.e., the gospel that gives them eternal life (I Corinthians 15:3-4). This makes it clear that Peter preached a different gospel than Paul preached.

2:24 Israel tried to get rid of their Messiah by killing Him, but God intervened to

raise Him from the dead. The reason that Jesus rose from the dead is because “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), but Jesus Christ never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Therefore, the justice of God demanded that He rise from the dead. By going to hell (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27) when He did not deserve hell, Jesus Christ fought death and won. Therefore, He gives believers the victory over death (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

2:25-28 This is a quote of Psalm 16:8-11. By Peter's use of this under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we learn that these verses, written by David, were actually spoken by Jesus in His death. In other words, Peter is saying that Jesus had to be raised from the dead. He could not stay in hell because God's justice would not allow "Thine Holy One" (2:27), being a perfect man, to be part of Satan's kingdom. The Lord watched Jesus the whole time (2:25), making sure He was not corrupted by Satan in hell, because the justice of God would not allow such a thing to happen. In fact, Jesus' flesh actually rested in hell (2:26), having the confident expectation that God would raise Him from the dead. This is the ultimate example of faith in God to be able to “rest in hope,” while in hell! Thus, Peter gives this as the explanation of why Jesus' death proves that He is the Messiah, rather than proving that He is not the Messiah, as the natural mind would think.

This passage also sheds light on Psalm 139:8, which says, "if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there." Therefore, this passage means that God the Father did not leave Jesus' soul in hell, because He was watching the whole time to make sure He did not suffer corruption.

2:29-32 Although David wrote the Psalms in the first person, this Psalm could not have been about David himself, because he had not yet been resurrected from the dead. Therefore, if Peter's audience believes that all scripture is true, they will have to conclude that Peter is correct in saying that David wrote Psalm 16:8-11 as a prophecy about the Messiah's resurrection from the dead. Thus, Peter is proving to the Jews that the Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would not sin, would die, and would be raised from the dead by God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ fulfills all three aspects. Therefore, He must be their Messiah.

Peter also shows how David could write in the first person and still be talking about the Messiah. The way he does this is because God made a covenant with David that David's throne would be established for ever (II Samuel 7:16) through God establishing David's son's throne forever (II Samuel 7:13-15). That Son is the Messiah. Since David's promise is fulfilled by his Son's promise being fulfilled, David can write in the first person about his Son and it is true also about himself. This is what Peter explains in 2:30-31 by saying that David saw this beforehand, such that David could speak in the first person of the Messiah's resurrection.

Also, note that 2:30 says that David was a prophet. Christians usually think of the Psalms as devotionals with relative truths that God somehow mystically applies to their lives. But, God says that the Psalms are prophecy. They have definite meanings, and the truths, found in them, apply to Israel's program, not to us today. Therefore, if you rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15), you will

learn that the Psalms talk about Israel and the Messiah, both in tribulation and in the kingdom, among other things. These truths are not discovered in Christianity's devotional books.

2:33-35 Peter now quotes another passage from Psalms to show that it also applies to the Messiah, not to David. Psalm 110:1 says that "the Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou at My right hand." Thus, God the Father (the first "Lord" in the passage) is saying to God the Son (the second "Lord" in the passage) to sit at God the Father's right hand. Since "David is not ascended into the heavens," this scripture must also speak of the Messiah. The Messiah, then, is at God's right hand. As such, He gives the Holy Ghost to the little flock.

Israel had been looking for their Messiah to come, overthrow the Romans, and make Israel the world power again. A believing remnant put their hope in Jesus, thinking He was the Messiah, but this remnant left Him when He was crucified, because they assumed that death was not part of God's plan. However, what Peter has just shared with the devout Jews gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost (2:5) is that it was God's plan all along for their Messiah to die. By doing so, their Messiah conquered death (2:24), became Lord (2:36), sat down at the position of power over the whole world (2:34), and has now given the Holy Ghost to the believing remnant (2:33) so that they may endure unto the end of the tribulation period and enter God's eternal kingdom on earth. Therefore, rather than Jesus' death being the end of Him being the Messiah, it is actually just the beginning.

2:34-36 In 2:12, the devout Jews asked the little flock "What meaneth this?", referring to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Now, Peter tells them that it means that they are in BIG trouble. He has proven from scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah. Israel had taken their Messiah and crucified and slayed Him by wicked hands (Acts 2:23). Through His death, He is Lord, so that He is now "both Lord and Christ" (2:36). Therefore, they have just killed their Lord. God the Father says that Jesus will sit in heaven "Until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." The wicked people, who killed Jesus, must be His foes.

Israel was God's nation, above all other nations (Deuteronomy 7:6). Because the nation had become apostate, God promised to take the kingdom away from the apostate nation and give it to the believing remnant in Israel (Matthew 21:43; Luke 12:32). Since Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of the Father, He certainly has the power to do this. Since Israel crucified Jesus (2:36), they will be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire if their current situation does not change.

2:37 The reason that Peter is the one, who speaks to these Jews, is because Jesus gave him the keys to the kingdom and gave him the authority to loose or bind things on earth (Matthew 16:18-19), which includes the authority to retain or remit sins (John 20:22-23). Therefore, Peter has just pronounced God's judgment upon "all the house of Israel" (2:36) for killing their Messiah. Thus, the response of the devout Jews is "What shall we do?"

Note the term "pricked in their heart." When something is pricked, what is inside

slowly begins to leak out. Because these men are devout Jews (2:5), they sincerely want to follow God's law covenant with them and have killed Jesus out of ignorance (3:17). Therefore, the pricking of their hearts means that they now realize that killing Jesus was actually a bad thing. They then repent, or change their minds, about Jesus, and so they want to know what they can do to get out from God's wrath being poured upon them.

Contrast this with the Jewish religious leaders, who were also "cut to the heart" (7:54). Their response was to try to destroy God's messenger by gnawing on him (7:54) and stoning him to death (7:58-60). This demonstrates how believers beg for mercy from the messenger, while unbelievers seek to silence the messenger by killing him or doing away with him. Today, when confronted with the truth, unbelievers often "kill" the messenger by ignoring the truth he proclaims or by calling him crazy.

2:38 Because they killed Jesus out of ignorance (3:17), God gives them a way out of His wrath. This way is to repent and be baptized, which is the gospel to them. Then, their sins will be remitted, and they also will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Because Christians try to apply Acts to themselves today and they do not believe that water baptism is required for salvation, they change this verse to read that they are to be water baptized BECAUSE they have already repented and received remission of sins. This "explanation" makes absolutely no sense. First, the context tells us that these people had no idea that they were guilty of killing their Lord and Messiah. If they did, they would not have asked the question, "What shall we do?" Second, if they had already repented and had received remission of sins, Peter would have said "be baptized...because your sins have been remitted." He would have left out the repentance part.

Only by rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15) does this verse make perfect sense. God had called Israel to be His kingdom of priests to reconcile the earth back to Himself (Exodus 19:5-6). A priest was required to be washed with water and anointed with oil (Exodus 29:4,7), with the anointing of oil being a type of receiving the Holy Ghost. Before John the Baptist, only the Levitical priests would be washed with water and anointed with oil. However, John the Baptist came preaching, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Since Israel needed to be cleansed to be priests to the Gentiles because the kingdom of heaven was now at hand, John the Baptist started baptizing ALL Israelites who repented (Matthew 3:2,6).

Repentance means a change of mind. The only way Israel could enter God's kingdom is if they believed that their own righteousness was as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Therefore, they had to jettison the idea of following the Jewish traditions to work their way into the kingdom and believe that God would give them His imputed righteousness through the law covenant He had made with them. If they did this, they would have repented. Then, they would see the requirement to be water baptized to be saved, as Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is

baptized shall be saved." Their belief in the gospel of the kingdom means they have repented. Their water baptism means they have joined saved Israel's priestly kingdom. Then, God would give them the Holy Ghost because He is the anointing with oil that makes them full-fledged priests. Also, water baptism cleanses them from their idolatry (Ezekiel 36:25). Therefore, water baptism is an absolute requirement for salvation at this time, but it is only required for Israel during the at-hand phase of the kingdom.

Today, though, in the dispensation of grace, it is not part of the gospel, for Paul said that "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). Thus, Paul sets water baptism in contrast to the gospel, while Jesus says that water baptism is a part of the gospel (Mark 16:16). Paul's good news to us today is to trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), while Jesus' death was Peter's bad news to Israel (2:23,36). Therefore, you will be following the wrong gospel if you do not understand that Acts 2:38 is not written to you today.

2:39 Because God is building up Israel to be a kingdom of priests, the promise of the Holy Ghost is only to Israel at this point. Note, in 2:36, that Peter is addressing only Israel: "let all the house of Israel know assuredly." So, the promise is only to "you" (the Jews), "your children" (more Jews), and "all that are afar off," which would be "Jews...out of every nation under heaven" (2:5), since the Jews had been scattered among the heathen according to the fifth cycle of chastisement (Leviticus 26:33). Still, the Holy Ghost is being given to all saved Jews (2:17-18), whereas, before this point, the Holy Spirit was given only to certain Jews for a certain task, e.g., Bezaleel to build the tabernacle (Exodus 31:2-5). Therefore, all believing Jews are now water baptized and receive the Holy Ghost, when both were limited to only certain people before Acts 2.

It is important to recognize that 2:39 and 2:17-18 limits the Holy Ghost coming upon Jews only so that, when the Holy Ghost does come upon Gentiles in 10:44-45, you will recognize that God had started the dispensation of grace by then. Further confirmation, that the Holy Ghost was given only to Jews, is seen in that saved Jews were "astonished" when the Holy Ghost came upon Gentiles in 10:44-45.

2:40 Again, the audience is Israel. Israel, as a whole, is guilty of using wicked hands to crucify and slay their Lord and Messiah. Thus, Israel is perverse or "untoward," meaning that they are "not toward" God. Jesus said that that generation was a generation of vipers that could not escape the damnation of hell (Matthew 23:33). Individual Jews are now called to "depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence" (Isaiah 52:11) and "flee from the wrath to come" (Matthew 3:7) by believing the gospel of "repent and be baptized" (2:38).

2:41 In just one day, the little flock grows by 2,500% by going from 120 to 3,120 believers! And, this was all the Lord's doing. The devout Jews came to the place where the little flock was, they heard them speaking in their own languages, and the Holy Ghost spoke a message to them that led them to believe the gospel and be

saved. This shows how clear it was to the Jews present, WITH THE HEART TO HEAR, that Jesus is Israel's Messiah and Lord.

This also shows that the method of baptizing had to have been sprinkling. From a practical standpoint, if each member of the little flock baptized an equal number of believers, they would have each baptized 25 people. More importantly, though, God had said that He would "SPRINKLE clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness" (Ezekiel 36:25). Therefore, these 3,000 souls were baptized in water via sprinkling.

2:42 A popular non-denominational church today uses this verse to say that these are the four pillars of the early church that we should follow today. Funny that they do not sell all their possessions and distribute them among fellow believers, as Jesus commanded ALL members of the little flock to do in Luke 12:33, and as we see ALL of them doing in Acts 2:44-45. By rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15), we know that the Body of Christ is not in view here. Rather, the little flock is being built up by God so that Israel will be a kingdom of priests to reach the Gentiles with the gospel in Jesus' millennial reign. Thus, this verse is not to be applied today.

1) "The apostles' doctrine" would be what Jesus taught, as Jesus said in Matthew 28:20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This would include Moses' law, as Jesus told them in Matthew 23:2-3a: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." Therefore, the apostles' doctrine is Moses' law, which includes, among other things, bringing animal sacrifices to the temple for each child who is born (Leviticus 12:6-8), not wearing clothes mixed with wool and linen (Leviticus 19:19), and not having round beards (Leviticus 19:27). With the Holy Ghost being given to the little flock, the apostles' doctrine also includes loving one another with Christ's love (John 13:34) and preaching the gospel (Matthew 10:6-8).

2) "The apostles'...fellowship" involves selling all that they have and distributing as every man has need (Acts 2:44-45 and Luke 12:33), since all of their assets will be taken away from them halfway through the tribulation period, because they will not be able to buy and sell because they will not take the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:17). Thus, they might as well use all of their assets now for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

3) "Breaking of bread" would have been them eating meals together, going house to house (2:46) so that the little flock may be united, as God is, in order to further the gospel (John 17:22-23).

4) "Prayers" would have been along the line of what Jesus had told them to pray in Matthew 6:9-13, which would center around God's kingdom coming on earth, asking for daily bread from the Lord, since they would not be able to buy and sell food, forgiving others to keep the unity in the Spirit as they preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of Israel, and being delivered from having to face

apostate Israel and the Antichrist so that their faith does not waver (James 1:5-6).

By contrast, in the dispensation of grace, our prayers are to be focused on the spiritual only. And, if you need daily bread, work at a job to get it. Note the contrast between what Jesus said and what Paul said. Jesus: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink" (Matthew 6:25). Paul: "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (II Thessalonians 3:10).

Therefore, very little of 2:42 is actually practiced today, which is good, because it is not for this dispensation. Today, our doctrine is found in Paul's epistles, our fellowship is with Christ's sufferings by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us through our intake of God's Word rightly divided (I Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 3:10; Galatians 5:16; I Corinthians 2:9-14; II Timothy 2:7,15), our breaking of bread is eating a meal with believers as the body of Christ, and our prayers are all spiritual, asking for God's twofold will to be done of salvation and edification of believers (I Timothy 2:4).

2:43 An example of the fear, that "came upon every soul," is seen in 5:1-11, where a husband and wife are killed for lying to the Holy Ghost. This is not the loving God of the New Testament, but the vengeful God of the Old Testament. Actually, they are one and the same, and God pours out more of His wrath in the New Testament than He does in the Old Testament (see Revelation 14:18-20). But, the point is that the fear is another evidence of the continuation of the Old Testament law covenant here in early Acts, since, in Israel's program, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

2:44-47 Some Christians will claim the speaking in tongues through the Holy Ghost (2:4) and some Christians will claim 2:42 as the four pillars of the church today, but you do not see Christian denominations claiming 2:44-45. The little flock sold their possessions because the Lord commanded them to (Luke 12:33). The reason He commanded them to was because they would soon have to give up all their possessions to the Antichrist because they would not take the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:17). Therefore, they might as well sell what they had to further the gospel of the kingdom. The way that this furthered the gospel of the kingdom is seen in 2:46-47. By selling their possessions, they had money to sustain them so that they did not have to work for a living. This enabled them to be fellowshiping together all the time. They fellowshiped over God's Word to them. They had a lot of bad religion built into them that had to be purged out through the holy Word of God. Therefore, they used their time getting bad doctrine out and putting good doctrine in, which would enable them to go from city to city in Israel, preaching the gospel of the kingdom. This is how they achieved "singleness of heart." In the meantime, they were also going to the temple every day, preaching the gospel of the kingdom there, which resulted in daily increases to the little flock of Israel. Thus, at this point, God's saved nation of Israel is growing quickly.

It was okay to sell what they had because "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). According to Daniel 9:24-27, there were 70 weeks of years, which

equals 490 years, that were left before God would bring in the kingdom. The 69th week ended with the Messiah's crucifixion. This meant that, in this timeline, the Antichrist would come soon and make a seven-year covenant with Israel. This covenant is the seven-year tribulation period. Then, Jesus would come back and establish His kingdom on earth (Daniel 2:44). None of the events after Jesus' crucifixion happened, due to the unbelief of Israel (7:51). However, if Israel had believed, the little flock was probably less than 10 years away from the kingdom starting at this point, which is why it made sense for them to sell all their possessions. By contrast, today, we do not have a timeline for when the rapture will take place, which is why we are NOT commanded to sell our possessions today. Therefore, we should continue to keep our jobs and provide food for our households (I Timothy 5:8).

We should note that "having favour with all the people" (2:47) does not mean that the Jewish religious leaders left them alone. In fact, some of the apostles will be arrested by the religious leaders in 4:1-3. Rather, the favour they had was with the common Jews. They listened to what the apostles said, and those in the crowd, who were part of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, were saved. These are the ones, who were "added to the church daily such as should be saved" (2:47). That is not to say that God predestinated some to eternal life and some to the lake of fire. Rather, the ones, that "SHOULD be saved," were those who had faith in the gospel preached to them. The others, out of their own free will, chose to continue to trust in their own self-righteousness and were not saved.

3 God performs a healing in the temple so that the temple-goers of Israel have a chance to hear the gospel of the kingdom and believe.

3:1 While the new members of the little flock are being edified through the taking out of bad doctrine that the Jewish religious leaders had taught them for years and the putting in of the good doctrine of following God's law covenant and preaching the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel because the kingdom of God is at hand, Peter and John go to the temple at 3:00 PM to reach the lost sheep of Israel in Jerusalem. This will be the little flock's first confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders since Jesus' resurrection and will be a true test of whether or not the nation of Israel as a whole will believe the gospel of the kingdom.

3:2 This lame man is a picture of Israel. From the time God brought Israel, His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22), out of Egypt under Moses, Israel had not followed God's law. Therefore, they are spiritually lame from birth, just like this man was physically lame from birth. He was at the gate called "Beautiful." So, too, God had brought Israel to His beautiful kingdom (Psalm 48:2), but they had not entered in, due to their unbelief (Hebrews 3:19).

Note that the verse says that "they laid" the man daily at the temple, where he begged for alms. The "they" of this verse would be the religious leaders. They lay him there so that people will feel sorry for him and give him money. The lame man, then, has to give the religious leaders a cut of the money; otherwise, they will not

continue to bring him there and he will starve to death. Thus, this lame man is a money-making machine for the corrupt Jewish religious leaders. Therefore, the religious leaders arrest Peter and John, when they come that evening to pick up the lame man (4:3).

3:3-6 The lame man was asking for the wrong thing. He wanted money, but what he needed was to be healed spiritually so that he may live forever in God's eternal kingdom. Thus, Peter shifts his focus from the material ("Silver and gold have I none") to the spiritual ("Rise up and walk"). Note also that the little flock is now operating with the spiritual discernment and authority that the Lord Jesus Christ had when He was confronted by people with physical ailments. Before, the apostles rejoiced that they cast out devils (Luke 10:17), and Jesus told them to rejoice in the spiritual, not in the physical (Luke 10:19-20). They are doing that now because they are operating under the power of the Holy Ghost. God is working through them, which had never happened before. That makes the difference. So, too, today, because we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can make an incredible difference for the Body of Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us rather than fulfilling the lust of the flesh (Romans 16:20).

By the way, the reason Peter had no money was because he had sold all of his possessions and distributed them to believers as they had need (2:44-45). This shows that, as the leader of the little flock (Matthew 16:18-19), he was not getting rich off of the people, as the shysters in big churches do today.

3:7-8 What happened to the man shows that this was a bonafide miracle of God. In fact, the Pharisees later admit that this was "a notable miracle" that they could not deny (4:16). If a doctor had helped this man, there was no way that the man could have gotten up, leaped, and walked, because he had been "lame from his mother's womb" (3:2). God had to strengthen his atrophied muscles and bones in order for him to walk. So, too, Israel is so lame spiritually that only God can make Israel whole such that she can walk into God's eternal kingdom when He comes back for her at His second coming.

3:9-10 In Acts 2, the speaking with other tongues and the 2,000 people being saved as a result did not happen in the temple where the Jewish religious leaders were. This miracle, though, happened in the temple, such that "all the people saw him," meaning "all the people" who normally follow the religious leaders and pay their tithes to them. So, now the Holy Ghost is threatening man's religious system. They also knew this man from having seen him every day. Therefore, this is not a Benny Hinn type healing, but the people know this is a true miracle and not a gimmick. None of the so-called physical miracles of today are such. Note the progression. First, the gospel goes to the devout Jews coming to the feast. Now, it goes to the Jews in the temple. Next, it will go to the religious leaders of Israel (4:5-12).

3:12-13 As in Acts 2, Peter's audience is Israel. He says, "Ye men of Israel." He also says that the power with which this man was healed came from "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers." The God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is ALWAYS the God of Israel (Genesis 50:24; Exodus 2:24; 3:15; 3:16; 4:5; Leviticus 26:42; II Kings 13:23, etc.), because it was God who called Abraham from among the nations in Genesis 12 and made of him a great nation—the nation of Israel (Genesis 12:2). God then continued the nation through the miracle births of Isaac and Jacob through barren wombs (Genesis 11:30 and 25:21). Thus, this can only be a reference to the nation of Israel. Peter is NOT preaching a message to us today. It is a continuation of the kingdom program of the nation of Israel.

3:13-15 Peter preaches the cross to Israel, but it is not good news, as it is for us today, because they are not saved by trusting in Jesus' blood as atonement for their sins. Rather, the preaching of the cross is bad news to them, just as it was when Peter first preached the cross in 2:22-36. The cross shows Israel that they need to believe the gospel of repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). "Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him...ye denied the Holy One and the Just...and killed the Prince of life." Pilate, a Gentile, "was determined to let Him go" (3:13; John 19:12), but Israel said, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). Therefore, per Israel's request, God's wrath will be poured out upon Israel for killing their Messiah. And, this wrath will be poured out on them by Jesus Himself, because, being "the Prince of life," God has raised Him from the dead (3:15).

So, when believers are martyred in the tribulation period and they ask the Lord to avenge their blood (Revelation 6:9-10), Jesus says, "No problem. I've got some avenging to do of My Own blood," as Hebrews 10:29 says that those, who fall away, "hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant...an unholy thing."

The preaching of the cross to Israel, here, is bad news. However, to the body of Christ today, "it is the power of God" (I Corinthians 1:18) to give us eternal life.

3:16 The way that faith in Christ's name healed the lame man was that Peter and John believed the commandment Jesus had given them to heal the sick (Mark 16:18). They then used the power of "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (3:6) to raise the lame man. This verse CANNOT be used to say that the lame man was healed because of HIS faith in Christ's name. After all, the only thing the lame man expressed to Peter and John was that he wanted some money. But, Christians want to twist this verse to fit their false doctrine that God performs physical miracles today, if only you have the faith that God will heal you.

3:17 In 3:13-15, Peter shows that Israel is guilty of killing their Lord and Messiah. According to Numbers 15:30-31, if they did so in bold defiance of God's commandment, they were to be killed for their sin. According to Numbers 15:24-28, they can be forgiven of their sin if they committed it in ignorance. Therefore, the fact that Peter says, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it" means that, while they are worthy of death for killing their Lord and Messiah, they have a chance to be forgiven of this sin. Their ignorance is key to them still having a chance to be forgiven extended to them through the gospel of the kingdom. In other words, the

common Jews were ignorant of the fact that they were killing their Lord and Messiah. They thought they were killing someone worthy of death under the law, because that is what the Jewish religious leaders said (John 19:7). Because of this ignorance, they can get out of God's wrath upon them by believing the gospel of the kingdom.

3:18 The Jewish religion thought that their Messiah would come, overthrow the Romans, have Israel rule over the world, and He would not suffer. However, according to what Peter says here, the Old Testament prophets said "that Christ should suffer." In fact, I Peter 1:11 says that the prophets "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." What this means is that, if the Jews had faith in God's Word to them, they would have expected their Messiah to suffer first before He set up the kingdom. But, that was not what the Jews wanted to hear. Therefore, they made God in their own image and trusted in their own religion. Then, when Jesus did not fit their definition of what the Messiah would do, they crucified Him. Similarly today, Christianity rejects the truth of God's Word and will ostracize anyone who stands fast in God's Word when it is contrary to their religion.

3:19-20 Israel can avoid God's wrath by changing their mind (repenting), meaning that they abandon the Jewish religion's tradition of the fathers and start believing God's Word—His law covenant with them. If they do this, they will be converted, but their sins will not be blotted out until "the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord" (3:19). All modern translations change Acts 3:19 to imply that their sins were blotted out right then, instead of waiting until Jesus' second coming. That could not be the case because they were about to go through the tribulation period. If they took the mark of the beast or worshipped the image of the beast, they would be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 14:9-11).

If God had blotted out their sins but then He threw them into the lake of fire, anyway, that would make God a liar. Either He lied about blotting their sins out then and will throw them into the lake of fire, or He will not throw them into the lake of fire for taking the mark of the beast, which makes Him a liar in Revelation 14:9-11. Since God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), their sins being blotted out has to take place after the tribulation period is over at Jesus' second coming when God says it will take place (3:20). I Peter 1:7-9 confirms that "at the appearing of Jesus Christ," they receive "the end of [their] faith, even the salvation of [their] souls" (I Peter 1:9).

By contrast, today in the dispensation of grace, our salvation is not conditional upon anything we do. Therefore, we have NOW been "justified by His blood" (Romans 5:9), and "we have NOW received the atonement" (Romans 5:11). If you do not rightly divide the Word of truth, you make God out to be a liar, because Romans 5:11 and Acts 3:19 say two, different things. However, if Acts is for Israel's program and Romans is for the Body of Christ's program, then both can be true, and the integrity of God's Word is maintained. You MUST draw a line between Acts and Romans, seeing that Acts is not written to you today and Romans is. If you do not draw this line, then you do not believe God's Word is holy, without error.

3:21 A few things to note about this verse. First, we are told that “the heaven MUST receive” Jesus Christ until all things are restituted. This is a slap in the face for Israel. God’s plan was for His will to be done “in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). However, Israel rejected their Messiah, crucifying Him “by wicked hands” (2:23). This means that Israel’s unbelief has kept all things from being restored to Jesus Christ on earth. Therefore, “the heaven must receive” Him until Israel believes. (This is also a great proof text that God still plans to set up His kingdom on earth. If God changed His mind and made heaven the only place of eternal life, then Jesus Christ is home in heaven, rather than having to be housed there temporarily due to Israel’s unbelief.)

Second, Peter tells Israel that Jesus Christ will stay in heaven “until the times of restitution of all things.” So, this tells Israel how long they have to believe the gospel of the kingdom in order to be saved. The “restitution of all things” would be the restitution of both heaven and earth to God, having Satan and his forces kicked out of both realms. However, because the restitution of the heavenly places was not spoken of until revealed to Paul, the “restitution of all things,” in this context, means only the restitution of the earth back to God. This means that Satan and his forces have to be destroyed in the earth, which means that Jesus will sit at God the Father’s right hand until God the Father makes God the Son’s enemies His footstool (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:13). Since Israel crucified and killed God the Son, they are His enemies. Therefore, they need to believe the gospel of the kingdom before God’s offer of forgiveness is taken away from them. (“Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7).)

Third, note again the dispensational difference here. God’s plan of the “restitution of all things” to God in the EARTH is what “God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” God did not speak about the restitution of all things to God in HEAVEN until He revealed the “mystery” to the apostle Paul, beginning in Acts 9. Therefore, God says in Romans 16:25 that “the revelation of the mystery...was kept secret since the world began.” Again, you MUST draw a line between Acts and Romans. If you believe both are for you today, then you are calling God a liar, because He says in Acts that God spoke of the restitution of all things since the world began, while God says in Romans that the mystery of restoring the heavenly places back to Himself was “kept secret since the world began.” Today, the mystery is revealed “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Ephesians 3:10). God must be talking about two, different programs for one to be revealed since the world began, while the other one was kept secret since the world began.

Christians say, “You are making things too complicated by ‘inventing’ a mystery and another gospel that the 12 apostles did not preach.” But, I have invented nothing. I just believe the words on the pages of my Bible. Ephesians 3:2-5 says that “the dispensation of the grace of God” was a mystery until Jesus Christ revealed it to Paul. “In other ages,” it “was not made known unto the sons of men.”

Galatians 1:11-12 says that the gospel Paul preached was revealed unto him by Jesus Christ. Therefore, if I choose to go along with Christianity in saying that Paul preached the same thing that the 12 apostles preached, then I have to “invent” an explanation for these verses by changing what they mean. I have then called God a liar, because He did not mean what He said. And, whenever you lie about something, you have just made your explanation a lot more complicated to understand, which is why Christianity has to invent divinity schools to conjure up divinations to support their lies with more lies. But, if you just believe what God says in His Word, you can enjoy “the simplicity that is in Christ” (II Corinthians 11:3) by believing the truth of God’s Word (John 17:17).

3:22-23 However, Peter is still in the gospel of the kingdom program. The mystery has not been revealed yet. Therefore, Peter is telling Israel of the things that God hath spoken “since the world began” (3:21). As such, he goes back to Old Testament scripture to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:15, which says that God would raise up a Prophet “of your brethren,” which means He would be a Jew, but it also says that that Prophet would be “like unto Me,” meaning that He would also be God. Therefore, Old Testament scripture says that their Messiah would be both a Jew and God. Only the Lord Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man. Therefore, Jesus is the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18:15.

Since that is the case, Deuteronomy 18:19 applies to them, which says that God will destroy those who do not hearken to this Prophet. Note that 3:23 says they “shall be destroyed from among the people.” That means: 1) God is still continuing Israel’s program of salvation to Israel under the law covenant at the time of Acts 3, and 2) Being a Jew does not automatically mean you will make it into God’s kingdom. You must hearken unto Jesus to keep from being destroyed.

Since the Jews place their trust in Moses, they should see that Moses prophesied of the coming Messiah, and that God would destroy those, who did not listen to Him. Therefore, only those, who believe the gospel of the kingdom, will make it into God’s kingdom, while the unbelievers in that gospel will be destroyed by God at Jesus’ second coming. And, that understanding comes from their scriptures—not from anything new that had not been written down yet.

3:24 It was not just Moses but “all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after,” who have also spoken of the last days when the kingdom of heaven is near for Israel. This is an important statement for us to understand in Bible study, because it tells us that the Old Testament prophets “foretold of these days” (3:24) between Jesus’ first and second coming. We know that 144,000 Jews will believe the gospel of the kingdom during the first half of the tribulation period (Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1). This is the largest group of believers ever seen at any one time before Jesus’ second coming, and it comes about during the greatest time of deception this world will ever see (Matthew 24:21-24). Therefore, it makes sense that God would have every prophet mention the last days to give the little flock the wisdom they need to endure unto the end and be saved (Matthew 24:13).

3:25 Again, Peter is speaking to Israel only here. Israel are “the children of the prophets.” God is still working under the covenant He gave to Israel, because it is through Israel that “all the kindreds of the earth [shall] be blessed.” This is not the new covenant; it is the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:3). If God started the body of Christ in Acts 2, Peter would not keep referring to Israel and God’s covenant with them. Instead of saying that all the kindreds of the earth will be blessed through the believing remnant of Israel, he would say that all kindreds will be saved by believing the gospel because there is no respecter of persons with God. But, that is what Paul says, in the mystery given to him in Acts 9 (Romans 2:11). That information was not applicable at this time, because it had not yet been revealed. Paul received the mystery by direct revelation from Jesus (Galatians 1:11-12,16-18). He did not get it from Peter. In fact, God gave His Own revelation to Peter in Acts 10 that the mystery program had begun. It is not until that time that God is no respecter of persons (10:34). In Acts 3, God is a respecter of persons, because the Gentiles are saved through Israel. Therefore, he could not have possibly preached the mystery here, because it had not been revealed to anyone yet. It was in Paul FIRST that God established the pattern of giving eternal life in the dispensation of grace (I Timothy 1:16), breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:14). Since Paul was not saved until Acts 9 and Peter is preaching in Acts 3, he could not possibly be preaching that God is no respecter of persons, and we see that in his saying here that salvation comes to the Gentiles only through Israel.

3:26 The blessing of salvation goes “unto you [Israel] first” so that they can, in turn, offer the blessing of salvation to the Gentiles. That is what the Abrahamic covenant says: “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee,...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3). Exodus 19:5-6 gives the detail, where God said, “ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” Just in case anyone has any doubt whatsoever of who God is talking to, He continues, “these are the words which thou shalt speak unto the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL,” settling, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Israel is to be “the Priests of the Lord” to the Gentiles (Isaiah 61:6). Therefore, Peter is preaching to JEWS ONLY to tell them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:28) so that they can be that kingdom of priests to the Gentiles so that the Gentiles may be saved, and God will have reconciled the whole earth back to Himself through the nation of Israel, just as He promised to do in Exodus 19:5-6. Peter confirms this himself in I Peter 2:9 by saying that Israel is “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation.” This nation must be saved Israel, because he says that they need to have their “conversation honest among the GENTILES” (I Peter 2:12). Therefore, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is still up, here, in Acts 3.

4 Common Jews are being saved by the thousands (v. 4), but the Jewish religious leaders are still rejecting God's kingdom (vs. 16-18). This time, they are rejecting the Holy Ghost, which is the sin that will not be forgiven them (Matthew 12:31-32). Nevertheless, being filled with the Holy Ghost, the little flock continues to speak God's Word with boldness (v. 29), and they continue to obey Jesus' command by selling their possessions and having all things in common (vs. 32-37), because

God has not given up on Israel yet.

4:1-3 The devout Jews reacted in chapter 2 by asking what they could do to be saved from God's wrath upon them (2:37). Now, we see the reaction of the Jewish religious leaders, and it is to arrest Peter and John, before they finish speaking, and put them in jail. They do not care about the truth and about believing the gospel. They only care about continuing to have power over the common Jews and receive money from them.

Note the doctrine that they hate is the resurrection from the dead through Jesus. The devil hates this doctrine because, without the resurrection, everyone is dead in their sins (I Corinthians 15:17 and Colossians 2:13). God gives eternal life to His believers through Jesus' resurrection.

4:4 In spite of the opposition from the Jewish religious leaders, the common Jews believe the gospel. 120 people were in the little flock when the Holy Ghost came upon them (1:15). About 3,000 devout Jews were saved, due to Peter's first sermon on the day of Pentecost (2:41). Now, 5,000 more common Jews are saved with Peter's next sermon. Therefore, the little flock is growing, and the Jewish religious leaders are scared that they are losing their power over the people. Therefore, they have arrested Peter and John. This represents the first time that the Jewish religious leaders reject the ministry of the Holy Ghost.

However, this also shows the ministry of the Holy Ghost to draw people to believe the gospel. Jesus' message, in John 6:25-65, started with 5,000 men (John 6:10) and ended with just the 12 following Him still (John 6:66-69). However, here, in Acts 3 and 4, after the Holy Ghost had come, Peter and John have 5,000 people believe the gospel of the kingdom, because the Holy Ghost had given them the ears to hear the gospel.

4:5-6 So many Jews are believing the gospel in such a short time that all the top religious leaders are gathered together to put a stop to it. You can also see the corruption of the religious system in that the high priest's relatives all have the power. I am sure they draw a large paycheck, as well.

4:7 The religious leaders know that Peter and John were preaching in the name of Jesus, and the religious leaders had already established the legal precedent that Jesus is a blasphemer of God and was killed, as a result. Therefore, they want to link Peter and John with Jesus so that they can be punished. That is why they ask them "by what power, or by what name have ye" healed the lame man.

There are two types of supernatural power: 1) God's power, and 2) Satan's power. The Jewish religious leaders healed people by Satanic power (Matthew 7:22-23 and 12:27). Since Peter and John were not of them, they knew that Peter and John were healing people by God's power, which means that "the kingdom of God" was come unto them (Matthew 12:28). Since they, by wicked hands, had crucified and slain Jesus (2:23), they were in trouble, because God raised Him from the dead (2:24). That is why the religious leaders seek to get rid of Jesus' followers.

4:8 The last time Peter was around the Jewish religious leaders, he denied the Lord thrice, even though Peter was not on trial. Now, Peter is the one on trial, and he has a very intimidating audience with all of the top religious leaders trying him (not Jesus). Yet, Peter speaks boldly. Why? Because Jesus had promised he would. Jesus told His disciples in Luke 12:11-12: "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

That is exactly what happens to Peter here. Rather than denying his Lord, he speaks for his Lord, being "filled with the Holy Ghost" (4:8). It is so important for the little flock to obey God's commands in the tribulation period that the Holy Ghost will fill them and speak for God through them when they are brought before councils in the synagogues (Mark 13:9). However, if they decide to stop believing the gospel of the kingdom, they will end up denying their Lord before men, resulting in Jesus denying them before His Father (Matthew 10:33). Unlike today, where we are sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14), in Israel's kingdom program, the Holy Ghost can be taken away from them. The Holy Spirit will not stay with them until God starts His new covenant with them in Jesus' millennial reign (Ezekiel 36:27). This is why we have to be told that Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and is why David prayed for God not to take His Holy Spirit from him (Psalm 51:11).

4:9-10 Note how Peter does not take credit for healing the impotent man. The credit goes to Jesus Christ. The religious leaders had asked Peter, "by what name" (4:7) he had done this, and he says, "by the name of Jesus Christ" (4:10). However, Peter does not stop there. He says, "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom YE crucified" (4:10). Since Jesus Christ has the power to raise a lame man to walk, the religious leaders must know that Jesus Christ is no longer dead. This also means that Jesus Christ has the power to kill them for crucifying Him. In fact, God has made Jesus "both Lord and Christ" over Israel (2:36). Therefore, apostate Israel is in deep trouble with God!

Note also that Peter's audience is "all the people of Israel" (4:10). He is not speaking to the Gentiles. Therefore, God's plan to reconcile the earth back to Himself through the nation of Israel (Exodus 19:5-6) is still going on here. God has not yet started the body of Christ. He will not start the body of Christ until Acts 9 with the call of Paul.

4:11-12 Peter quotes Psalm 118:22 to show that even the Messiah's rejection by Israel was prophesied in the Old Testament. Peter's comment also contrasts the Jewish religious system with the religion that God established in the Old Testament. God "built" the religious system, and it was the religious leaders' job to keep it from getting polluted. Instead, they rejected God's religion and established their own, as seen by Peter calling them "you builders." This shows the problem. They built their own religion so that they would have the money, power, and glory. The Messiah's death did not fit into their building. However, God fulfills His plan,

regardless of man. Therefore, the Messiah "is become the head of the corner" of God's building in that His sacrifice on the cross atones for Israel's sin. This is why "neither is there salvation in any other" (4:12).

Peter preached a different gospel than what Paul preached. Peter's gospel is to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). Paul's gospel is to trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sin (I Corinthians 15:3-4). In fact, Paul even calls this "my gospel" (Romans 16:25), since he received that gospel "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12). When we state that there are two, different gospels, Christianity is greatly offended. They are offended for two reasons: 1) We have said something that goes against their religion, and 2) They think we are saying that the blood of Christ does not save Israel. The latter reason is NOT what we are saying. Just because the gospel that they believe is different does not mean that the method by which they are saved is different. In other words, although Israel was to believe a different gospel than what we are to believe today in order to be saved, the way that all believers from all dispensations are saved is by the blood of Christ atoning for their sins.

Abraham believed that God would make his seed as the stars in heaven for multitude, and God applied the blood of Christ to atone for his sins (Genesis 15:5-6). Noah believed God and built an ark (Genesis 6:13-18), and God applied the blood of Christ to atone for his sins. Similarly, if the Jews believe the gospel of repenting and being water baptized, the blood of Christ will atone for their sins. That is what Peter means when he says, "neither is there salvation in any other" (4:12). He CANNOT mean that they are to trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins, because Paul was saved by that gospel first (I Timothy 1:16), and Paul was not saved until Acts 9. The details of Peter's salvation message are to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). The summary of this is that they are saved by the name of Jesus Christ, meaning that, by repenting and being water baptized, they are having faith in what God has told them, which pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, Jesus Christ intercedes for these believers by having His blood atone for their sins (Hebrews 7:25, 9:14-15).

Peter did not break it down to this level, here in 4:12, because his salvation message was in 3:19-21, and 5,000 souls were saved by that message (4:4). Here, in 4:12, he is defending the name of Jesus Christ to the unbelieving religious leaders. He does not preach the gospel to them, because they do not have the ears to hear. Therefore, this verse cannot be taken out of context to say that Peter's gospel is the same as Paul's gospel.

4:13 "The boldness of Peter and John" and the fact that they know Old Testament scripture even though they are "unlearned and ignorant" causes the religious leaders to marvel. They conclude that they are this way because "they had been with Jesus" (4:13). In other words, rather than comparing what they say with scripture to see if it is true, the religious leaders look to man for the answers.

In their lives, the religious leaders follow their scholars and professors to become doctors of law (5:34). They also learn how to use Satanic power to perform miracles

(Matthew 7:22-23 and 12:27). Now, they encounter Peter and John who are “unlearned and ignorant” in the sense that they are not learned in the ways of the Pharisees. So, they begin to question how they healed the lame man. They note that Peter and John must have been following the methods of a man named Jesus. Jesus did greater miracles than the Pharisees could do, and so they killed Him so that He would not compete with them for followers. Now, they see that Peter and John have picked up on Jesus’ methods, and so they need to stop them, as well.

In other words, the Pharisees do not link belief in the gospel and the signs of the kingdom to what God is doing during the at-hand phase of the kingdom. Instead, they believe God is doing nothing, and that it is up to man to learn the ways of man in order to succeed in the profession of religious shyster. Therefore, they just think that Peter and John are better shysters than they are, and they must get rid of them so that the religious leaders’ methods will continue to wow the common people.

We can make a similar comparison today. The godly people, in Christianity’s eyes, are the ones who go to seminary and learn a certain denomination’s lie system for getting money and power from the common people by subtly explaining away the truth of God’s Word while appearing to stand on God’s Word. Then, someone comes along, who has studied God’s Word rightly divided and has allowed the Holy Ghost to teach them spiritual things (I Corinthians 2:13), and they cannot combat it, because they “can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (II Corinthians 13:8). They also cannot stop it, because “it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Therefore, they expel true believers from their churches and revile them (I Corinthians 4:11-13), so that they can continue to get money and power from the common Christians.

4:14 We see the religious leaders' intention here is to get rid of the little flock. They are not seeking justice. If they were, they would go into the temple themselves and proclaim Jesus is the Christ. Instead, they are only trying to find fault with Peter and John. Since they can find nothing, they will let them go.

Note how the healed man is now standing with Peter and John. In 3:2, we were told that some people brought the lame man to the gate to beg for alms, and I mentioned that it was probably the religious leaders, who brought him, so that the leaders could get more money from the people. Now, the healed man stands with Peter and John, since he was tired of being used by the religious leaders for their material gain.

4:16-17 The Jewish religious leaders cannot deny that a miracle has been done. Since that is the case and they are the religious leaders, they should bring Peter and John before all of Israel and have them proclaim the gospel of the kingdom so that all of Israel might be saved. However, they are not interested in building God's house. They are only interested in building up their own house (4:11). Since the building up of God's house is to the detriment of them building up their own house, the religious leaders' goal is "that it spread no further among the people" (4:17). Therefore, they are trying to get rid of the gospel, rather than promote it. As

such, they are just like their forefathers. God had done miracles for them, but they did not believe; therefore, they would not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:22-23). So, too, the religious leaders will not enter God's kingdom because of their unbelief.

The religious leaders say that they cannot deny that a notable miracle has been done (4:16). This shows that their attitude is not to find out what God is doing and repent so that they can be part of God's work. Rather, their attitude is to continue in their apostate religion and try to put down everything that comes against it, including God. Their problem is that they cannot deny what God had done. Therefore, they use their religious authority to command Peter and John not to tell anyone what has been done, so that other Jews are not saved and come into the knowledge of the truth. Similarly today, if you combat the lies of Christianity with the truth of God's Word, they will command you to be silent and kick you out of their churches, lest others hear the truth, believe the gospel, and then come into the knowledge of the truth.

4:18 Because the religious leaders are in unbelief, they give Peter and John a commandment that is contrary to the commandment that Jesus Christ had given them. Jesus had commanded them to preach the gospel to Israel (Matthew 10:6), and the Jewish religious leaders command them to stop speaking anything related to Jesus. Note that the religious leaders do not tell them what they can or cannot teach. They tell them that they are "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (4:18). In other words, they recognize that the power of God is in Jesus' name. They know that He has conquered death through His resurrection, and that they are powerless to stop God from working through Jesus' name to build God's kingdom and crush their own kingdom. Therefore, all they can do is try to stop the power of God by stopping people from teaching in Jesus' name.

Similarly today, Satan knows that his forces lost through the crosswork of Christ (Colossians 2:14-15). The only way he can stop God from reconciling the heavenly places back to Himself is by stopping people from preaching the gospel. Therefore, most all Christian churches, including the most fundamental ones, do not preach a clear gospel. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:4). Christian churches are being run by Satan's ministers, who are deceiving people into believing they are God's ministers (II Corinthians 11:13-15), because these ministers have been taken captive by the devil to do his will (II Timothy 2:25-26). They have no problem with you studying the Bible or even teaching a Bible study, but they will kick you out in a flat second if you actually teach the gospel and God's Word rightly divided. That is because they are of their father, the devil (John 8:44), while a Bible believer is a child of light (Ephesians 5:8).

4:19-20 Both 4:17 and 4:21 mention that the religious leaders think they are threatening Peter and John by commanding them not to speak any more in Jesus' name. However, they cannot really threaten Peter and John, because they do not fear the religious leaders. At the worst, they could kill Peter and John, but Jesus

told them, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Therefore, even physical death is no threat to them. Psalm 118:6 says, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"

So, these threats are rather comical. Peter and John have God's command, and they now have man's command. It is right in the sight of God that they "ought to obey God rather than men" (5:29). Therefore, that is what Peter and John will do. They have to "speak the things which [they] have seen and heard" (4:20), because they were commanded to do so by Jesus Christ. Contrast this with Jesus' arrest, when Peter denied Jesus for fear of his life, even though the focus was on Jesus and not on Peter (Matthew 26:69-74). Therefore, the boldness, that they have with the religious leaders, is because they are filled with the Holy Ghost (4:8), as seen by the comment in 4:31.

4:21 In Matthew 12:31-32, Jesus said that the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven Israel "in this world, neither in the world to come." By threatening Peter and John, the religious leaders now have strike one in blaspheming the Holy Ghost. The devout Jews believe the gospel, such that 3,000 were added to the church (2:41). The common Jews believe the gospel, such that 5,000 are saved (4:4). However, the religious leaders have rejected the gospel. Not only have they rejected it, but they have tried to put a stop to the furtherance of the gospel by forbidding them to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (4:18).

Note how God is getting glory from the miracle, and the religious leaders are trying to stop God from getting glory, when they had been put in a place of leadership by God to BRING God glory. God is fulfilling the prophecy of Deuteronomy 32:21 by provoking the religious leaders "to anger with a foolish nation," i.e., the little flock. Then, at Jesus' second coming, "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you [religious leaders] and given to a nation [the little flock] bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43).

4:22 Since this verse begins with the word "for," it explains the previous verse. Therefore, the reason men glorified God for the miracle is because the man was over 40 years old. Why would this make a difference? It must mean that the Jewish religious leaders performed miracles of their own by the power of Satan. This makes sense in light of what they will say when Jesus judges them at the great white throne judgment: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23). The Jewish religious leaders performed miracles by the power of Satan, but it appears they were not able to heal people over 40 years old, probably for the very reason to show to all of Israel, here, that this miracle was done by God, not by Satan.

4:24-28 Note that "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord" (4:24). This is not unlike the day of Pentecost when they were all in one accord (2:1) and all spoke "as the Spirit gave them utterance" (2:4). At that time, they were speaking

"the wonderful works of God" (2:11). Now, they pray a seven-verse prayer (4:24-30) to God in one accord. There can be no doubt that the Holy Ghost spoke these words through them. Otherwise, they could not have all spontaneously spoken the exact same words in a unison prayer to God. This is an example of the Holy Ghost praying through them, which is why Jesus gave the disciples the unconditional prayer promise (John 14:13, 15:7, 15:16, 16:23-24,26).

Their prayer is to the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. In 4:25-26, they quote Psalm 2:1-2, showing that this Psalm is being fulfilled by the Jewish religious leaders. Thus, in this prayer, God calls the Jewish religious leaders "the heathen." They had said that they are children of Abraham (John 8:39), but God will cut them off from being His people because they are really children of the devil (John 8:44), due to their unbelief. Therefore, it is not the natural line of Abraham that is important, but the spiritual line. Thus, God calls the Jewish religious leaders "the heathen," when man would think of them as being Jews.

Psalm 2 goes on to say that the Jewish religious leaders try to cast God from their presence (Psalm 2:3), but God says that He will destroy them in His wrath (Psalm 2:5). They are under God's condemnation because they continue in their unbelief. Of course, it is not just the Jewish religious leaders, who tried to destroy Jesus, but also Gentiles, as 4:27 points out. We see, there, Luke mentioning two groups again—the Gentiles and the Jews—as he uses the word "both." At the same time, they were playing right into God's hand, because God had determined beforehand that the Christ would die for the sins of Israel (Isaiah 53:8), and for the rest of the world, to be testified in due time by the apostle Paul (I Timothy 2:5-7).

4:27,30 In these two verses, we see the term "holy child Jesus" used. This seems strange, since Jesus was an adult when He was crucified (4:27) and is still an adult today (4:30). Yet, the phrase must be accurate, doctrinally speaking, since the Holy Ghost spoke the phrase through the people here. Since the prayer, here, is related to Psalm 2, we can see from Psalm 2:7 the phrase: "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." According to Acts 13:33, "this day" refers to Jesus' resurrection. Galatians 4:5-7 says that, today, in the dispensation of grace, when we receive eternal life, we are adopted as God's sons, as well. Therefore, we can conclude that the term "holy child Jesus," rather than referring to a kid, refers to a full-grown Son, who becomes an heir of God at His resurrection due to His faith in the Father's plan. Therefore, the term "holy child Jesus" is a reference to Jesus' position as the Son of God or His spiritual birth, which was realized at His resurrection, and it is not a reference to the babe in the manger or His physical birth.

4:29-30 Note the prayer here. It is not, "Lord, deliver me from persecution by destroying Your enemies," as their flesh would want it to be. Rather, because the Holy Ghost is praying through them, they pray for boldness to continue to speak the gospel, even though they have been threatened with punishment from the religious leaders. They also ask for God to continue to do "signs and wonders." They do not ask this so that people can live long lives without physical ailments. Rather, they ask for signs to confirm the gospel of the kingdom that they preach to

Israel (Mark 16:16-20).

4:31 Jesus said that He would answer whatever prayer they prayed. Here, they had prayed for boldness (4:29); therefore, they immediately receive boldness. Such a prayer will be essential for the little flock during the tribulation period. If they do not have boldness to speak God's Word in the face of persecution, they will end up denying the Lord to save their physical lives (Revelation 13:15) and will lose their spiritual lives (Revelation 14:9-11), also.

The fact, that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," shows how they did not have the permanent, indwelling Holy Spirit as we do today, because they are not under the new covenant yet. Rather, they are filled with the Holy Ghost to do the work of the gospel of the kingdom and the miracles so that Israel will believe the gospel. In 2:16-21, Peter said that the filling of the Holy Ghost is what was prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:28-32), which has to do with signs and wonders and also hearing the word of the Lord in the tribulation period. It is not the indwelling Holy Spirit to cause Israel to walk in God's commandments and dwell in the Promised Land with God (Ezekiel 36:24-28), although they did obey God's commandments with the Holy Ghost being in them.

Some Christians today, because they do not rightly divide the word of truth, use this passage to support the idea that, although we have the permanent, indwelling Holy Ghost today, we should also pray for a second filling of the Holy Ghost to give us the power and boldness to serve God more effectively. The funny part, though, is that none of these people, who supposedly have received this second filling, have ever had the place shaken when they received it, which shows that it is not something that happens today in the dispensation of grace.

4:32 As we saw in 2:44-45, the little flock ALL sold their possessions and lived in a communal setting with each other as God commanded them to do (Luke 12:33). Christians, who do not rightly divide, try to apply Acts to themselves today, and they get around having to sell all their possessions by saying that you have to be led of the Spirit to do so. But, this is taking God's Word and turning it into a lie. Jesus did not say to sell your possessions if you are led to. Rather, He commanded them to "Sell that ye have" (Luke 12:33). 4:32 does not say that the little flock sold their possessions only if they were led of the Spirit to do so. Rather, it says that NONE of them claimed their possessions for themselves, "but they had all things common." The reason is because the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 4:17), and their possessions would be taken away from them halfway through the tribulation period when the mark of the beast would be instituted (Revelation 13:15-18). Therefore, they might as well sell their possessions now and use the funds to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6-8).

Also, this communism worked only because they were "filled with the Holy Ghost" (4:31), which made them "of one heart and of one soul," (4:32) meaning that they were all obeying God's commandments due to the Holy Ghost working through them. This included the 12 apostles, as Peter said, "silver and gold have I none"

(3:6). If someone went against this command, they could be struck dead, as seen in 5:1-11. Since this kind of physical, supernatural power is not present today, we should not be following "the apostles' doctrine" (2:42) that was followed in Acts 1-7. Rather, we should follow the mystery doctrine given to us by Paul, "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed" (Ephesians 3:5). By contrast, Peter preached prophecy doctrine, "which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (3:21). Therefore, through the apostle Paul, God has given us new doctrine to follow, which is not found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, or Acts 1-7.

4:33 The "great power" and "great grace" come from the Holy Ghost. The great power refers to the gospel of the kingdom to give them eternal life. Romans 1:16 says that "the gospel of Christ" "is the power of God unto salvation." The great power also refers to the casting out of devils and healing the sick that the little flock did so that Israel may believe the gospel of the kingdom. Finally, the great power also refers to their ability to remit or retain sins (John 20:23). With this great power in operation in their midst, Israel has no excuse for remaining in apostasy. The great grace refers to the gift of eternal life to believing Israel (I Peter 1:10), even though Israel deserves God's wrath for crucifying their Messiah with wicked hands (2:23).

4:34-37 Again, we are told that the little flock ALL sold their possessions to meet the needs of all of the little flock. They did this because: 1) Jesus commanded them to (Luke 12:33), 2) They would soon lose their possessions when the Antichrist institutes the mark of the beast, and they cannot buy or sell for not taking the mark (Revelation 13:17). Therefore, they might as well get some use out of their possessions now, and 3) Jesus had already told them that they would not reach all the cities of Israel with the gospel in the seven years before the tribulation period ends (Matthew 10:23). By pooling their assets, they could reach more people for God during the tribulation period. Even when the money runs out, they are to rely upon God to provide for them (Matthew 6:30-34); otherwise, they would have to take a job and not be able to travel from city to city in Israel.

At the stoning of Stephen in chapter 7, God put His kingdom program on hold due to Israel's unbelief (7:56 and 9:15). The result was that there were a lot of "poor saints which are at Jerusalem" (Romans 15:26). This was not God being mean to His faithful, but it was God giving Israel yet another opportunity to enter God's kingdom on earth. It also created an opportunity to teach the Body of Christ to be blessed by blessing others, and it brought humility to the little flock of Israel by having to take what the Gentiles gave them. As Paul said, those giving would reap bountifully (II Corinthians 9:6), while those receiving "glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ" (II Corinthians 9:13). Thus, the poor condition of the little flock was a spiritual blessing both to the little flock and to the Body of Christ. "For when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:10).

Note that Barnabas was saved under the gospel of the kingdom (4:36-37), but he recognized the change in God's program in chapter 9, such that the Holy Ghost

had him join Paul on his first, apostolic journey, preaching the gospel of the grace of God (13:2).

By the way, there is no way that communism would work today in the body of Christ, because most Christian leaders are really ministers of Satan (II Corinthians 11:13-15). Therefore, instead of Christians laying their possessions at the leaders' feet and the leaders giving to everyone who has need (4:35), the leaders would give to a few people to use as examples to the rest of the church, and then they would pocket the difference.

We should also note that most fundamental Christian churches like to study Acts so that they can emphasize the missionary aspect in order to raise money for missions, yet they will not emphasize selling all that they have. The reason for this is twofold: 1) It is hard enough to get Christians to shell out a 10% tithe, which belongs to Israel's program only. Very few people would actually give a 100% tithe, which is part of the at-hand phase of Israel's program, and 2) If people sold all they had and gave it to the church, then the church would have to support them, and it would be easy to see that the money was not going to help out church members. Therefore, it is much easier to scam people by guiltting them into giving money to "missions," have a small percentage actually go to missions as "proof" that God is doing great things in other countries through their giving, and then pocket a large percentage to buy fancy cars and houses for themselves.

If these fancy cars and houses are ever questioned, the leaders can say that God is blessing them because they are giving to the Lord, which creates a further opportunity to fleece the flock, telling them that God will do the same for them if they just give more. After all, Luke 6:38 says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Of course, if they bothered to check the context of this passage, they would understand that this verse is part of the 100% giving program of the at-hand phase of the kingdom and that men do not abundantly give back to them until Jesus' kingdom on earth.

By the way, guilt giving to missions is most effective when they show starving children in other countries. Yet, God wants all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). God does not mention feeding starving people. Now, in Israel's program, God did tell Israel to take care of the fatherless children, but He also said to take care of widows (Deuteronomy 14:29 and 24:19-21). And, in the dispensation of grace, Paul tells the church to take care of widows, but he never mentions the fatherless (I Timothy 5:3-11). However, you do not see poor, old widows paraded before churches in videos to get them to give, because widows are depressing, as they remind people of this evil world and their own immortality. But, children are created in the image of their parents (Genesis 5:3) and have their whole lives ahead of them, and so everyone loves them. Thus, starving children are placed on missions videos, and the money rolls in. So, Christianity sticks their widows in nursing homes, where they get subpar care on the government's dime, when the church is really supposed to take care of them. Meanwhile, missionary money to help kids in starving countries, who we are not

told to take care of today, really goes to church leadership's pockets. And, Christians wonder why unbelievers think Christians are hypocrites!

5 The Holy Ghost purges sin out of the little flock by death (vs. 1-11), causing apostate Israel not to join the little flock, while more believers do (vs. 12-14). Since multitudes have been added to the little flock (v. 14), the religious leaders now want to slay the apostles (v. 33), as they did with Jesus, but they only beat them (v. 40), not having a charge under the law for which they can kill them.

5:1-2 Jesus said in Matthew 19:24 that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," meaning that it is impossible for a rich man to enter in (Matthew 19:25-26). That is because God commanded the rich people to "sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matthew 19:21). Acts 4:34 says: "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold" (4:34). Acts 4:36-37 gives an example of a rich man who obeyed this command. Acts 5:1-2 gives an example of a rich man who did not obey this command. The former ended up travelling with Paul to proclaim the gospel of grace to the unsaved (13:2-4). The latter was struck dead for lying to the Holy Ghost (5:5).

5:3 For the first time since the Holy Ghost was given to the little flock, we see someone disobey one of God's commands. Ananias actually breaks two of God's commands because: 1) He does not give the entire proceeds of the sale of a possession to the apostles, and 2) He lies about it. Peter says that Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost. That is because the Holy Ghost has been poured out upon the believing remnant (2:17-18), and the believers are in one accord (1:14, 2:1, 2:42, 4:24, and 5:12). Therefore, a lie breaks the fellowship of the brethren with the Holy Ghost. Now, in order to restore that fellowship, the offender, Ananias, must be killed.

5:4-6 Peter is not saying that Ananias could have kept the money from the sale if he wanted to. What Peter is saying is that, if Ananias did not want to sell the money and give it to the little flock, he should have left the little flock. That way, he would not have broken the little flock's fellowship with the Holy Ghost and would not have been physically killed. God offered forgiveness to the nation of Israel for killing Jesus Christ because they did so in ignorance (3:17,19), but God will not forgive this willful sin. Therefore, God strikes him dead.

The reason for this is found in 5:3. By keeping some of God's money and lying about it, rather than being filled with the Holy Ghost, Ananias' heart is filled with Satan. Thus, Satan is in the midst of the little flock. They are not in one accord now (2:1,46), which means that his sin must be dealt with harshly in order to restore the fellowship that the little flock has with the Holy Ghost. The little flock needs to be united in God because Jesus told the Father that their being one in God is the way "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). If they allow Satan to infiltrate the little flock, they are not one in God, because Satan cannot be where God is. God, then, cannot work through the little flock to

reach the lost sheep of Israel. Therefore, Ananias must be killed to purge Satan from their midst.

This should remind us of a parallel passage in Joshua 7, where Achan had taken "of the accursed thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel" (Joshua 7:1), such that 36 men died as a result when they battled Ai (Joshua 7:5). To rid themselves of the evil, Israel killed Achan (Joshua 7:25-26). The result was that they re-attacked Ai and destroyed all 12,000 people there (Joshua 8:25).

In Acts 5, if the little flock allows Satan to infiltrate them through Ananias' sin, when they go out to battle Satan in preaching the gospel of the kingdom to Israel, people will not be saved because the power of God will not work through them and some of the little flock will abandon the gospel of the kingdom and go back to the Jewish religion, as a result. Therefore, to win the victory over Satan, the evil must be purged out of the midst of the little flock. Because Ananias willfully sinned, Peter uses the power Jesus gave him to retain the sin of Ananias (John 20:23), and God killed him, causing men to gather him up to be cast by God on the day of judgment into the lake of fire.

Ananias, then, is an example of what Jesus said in John 15:6: "if a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." As a result, "great fear" comes upon the rest of the little flock. The flesh may think that a lie is no big deal, but God is dwelling within them. Because they have not received the atonement yet (3:19-20), their sin is counted against them. They must be holy because God is holy (Leviticus 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26 and I Peter 1:16), because they are still waiting "for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:13), i.e., forgiveness of sin. Therefore, a willful disobedience of God's law results in capital punishment so that God can continue to be in the little flock as they preach the gospel to Israel.

We see the result in 5:12 that they are "all with one accord." To prevent a repeat of this event from happening in God's kingdom on earth, God will put His Spirit within saved Israel and cause them to walk in His statutes so that they live in the land with God (Ezekiel 36:27-28). This event of Ananias' death will cause only those serious about obeying God to stay in the little flock, while others will leave for fear of being killed as well.

5:7-10 Ananias' wife's death shows how important the "great fear" of 5:5 is. The little flock will all yield their flesh to Satan and lose the power to reach the lost sheep for God if they do not have the fear of God's punishment within them, because they will let the sin nature rule through them. As with Ananias, we are told that Sapphira's dead body was carried out by men to show the fulfillment of John 15:6 here.

Note how Peter says that Ananias and Sapphira "have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord." In other words, by yielding to Satan, they were tempting or

testing the Spirit of the Lord to see if He would really stay with the little flock in the midst of sin. Of course, they did not think of it in these terms, but that is what it was. It was a temptation for the Holy Spirit to be marred by sin by allowing the sin to remain within the little flock out of his love for Ananias and Sapphira, not wanting them to end up in hell. Of course, the Holy Spirit did not yield to this temptation, because "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13). He remained pure, even if it meant two more souls burning for all eternity in hell. The long-term consequence, though, of purging out the evil from the little flock, is more souls being in God's eternal kingdom from God's power continuing to work through the little flock to save the lost sheep of Israel.

5:11 Two people had to be killed by God before the church would take seriously the facts that the Holy Spirit is with them and that they will have to obey God's commands in order for the Holy Spirit to continue to work through the little flock to reach the lost sheep of the house of Israel with the gospel of the kingdom. Sin will be dwelt with severely to maintain God's holiness.

This should be another clue that God is operating differently today in the dispensation of grace than He was during the at-hand phase of the kingdom in Acts 5. If God started the body of Christ in Acts 2, as fundamental Christianity would have you believe, then all Christians would be required to sell all of their possessions, give the proceeds to the church, and live together in a commune. Then, if one of them was not obeying God's commands, he would be struck dead. Obviously, this is not happening today.

5:12-14 The parenthetical reference shows us the effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. Those in the little flock had "great fear" (5:11) due to the fact that they could die, both physically and spiritually, if they willingly disobeyed God's commands. This fear separated Israel into two groups. The first group were those who believed that God would bring the kingdom to Israel and were willing to go through the trials of the tribulation period. Therefore, they became part of the little flock. The second group were unbelievers, which would include those who just went along for the miracles. This second group disassociated themselves from the little flock, since they would be killed if they disobeyed God's commands. Thus, unbelievers stayed away from the little flock ("durst no man join himself to them"), but they magnified the apostles because of the signs and wonders done through them.

This shows that they were unbelievers, because they magnified the apostles, rather than magnifying God. (This is not unlike what unbelievers do today, magnifying people like the Pope or Billy Graham, even though these unbelievers do not believe the gospel.) The word "durst" means that they lacked the courage to join themselves to the little flock. However, there were "multitudes both of men and women," who were added to the Lord. These were probably people, who believed God and His Word, but had previously followed the Jewish religious leaders in ignorance. When God was shown to be working through the little flock instead, these people, as true believers, joined themselves to the little flock. Thus, the little flock is growing exponentially. The "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16) has grown from

120 in Acts 1:15 to 3,120 in Acts 2:41 to probably about 20,000 in Acts 4:4 (5,000 men are mentioned here) to a number of maybe 50,000 - 100,000 in Acts 5:14. This means that they are well on their way to getting up to the 144,000 who believe, halfway through the tribulation period (Revelation 7:3-8).

The way I came up with the 50,000 – 100,000 figure is that "a great multitude" is 5,000 men plus women and children in Matthew 14:14,21, which would be the equivalent of the Acts 4:4 crowd, and now "multitudes both of men and women" have joined the little flock, which would probably be several times the Acts 4:4 crowd. It is the great fear of God that kept such a large group in "one accord" (5:12). Apostate Israel, called "the rest," would not join themselves to the little flock because they are still in unbelief.

5:12,15-16 People, who claim that physical miracles are happening today, need only look at these verses to see that this is not so. The claim, that God will perform a physical miracle today if someone has enough faith and God wills to do it, has to be false, as a multitude of people with sicknesses and devils came to Jerusalem, "and they were healed EVERY ONE." At least some of those sick folks and all those filled with devils had to have lacked faith, being dragged there by relatives, but every single one of them was healed. Also, Peter did not even have to push them down to the ground, as faith healers do today, as we are told that they just waited for Peter's shadow to overshadow them. Yet, they did not even need Peter's shadow to touch them to be healed, since the verse does not say that Peter's shadow healed them. We are told that multitudes laid in the streets, hoping that, "at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them," but yet every one of them was healed. Surely, in a great multitude, not everyone would be close enough to have Peter's shadow go over them, but all were healed. Thus, not even the shadow was needed.

The fact that EVERY ONE was healed shows that God stands willing to heal EVERY ONE of Israel spiritually, as well. He wants to cast Satan out of them (the sign of casting out devils) and heal them of the infirmity of sin (the sign of healing the sick) so that they may all enter into God's kingdom. The physical healings pale in comparison to God's offer to heal them spiritually. "The power of the Lord was present to heal them" (Luke 5:17). The spiritual result was that "believers were the more added to the Lord" (5:14), while unbelievers would not dare join themselves to the little flock (5:13).

You can also see the religion that was quickly developing in 5:15. Most everybody, due to their pride, thinks they have to have SOME part in something good that happens to them so that they can take the credit for it. With Jesus, religion said that they had to touch Him in order to be healed (Matthew 14:35-36). Now though, even greater multitudes are being healed through Peter than with Jesus, which means that touching him would be even more difficult. Therefore, they set up beds and couches and invented the idea that people could be healed by Peter's shadow. The truth of the matter, though, was that God was healing people physically as a sign of the healing He wanted to provide them spiritually. There was nothing that man had to do to receive this healing.

Having said that, it is interesting that Peter's shadow is mentioned, because, when God compares the law to the body of Christ, He says that the law was "a shadow of things to come" (Colossians 2:16-17). Similarly, the physical healings by Peter were a shadow of the spiritual things to come for believing Israel in the kingdom.

5:17-18 God stands ready to heal the entire nation of Israel spiritually, and the religious leaders, who were supposed to have pointed Israel to God, are trying their best to lead the nation away from God, by arresting the apostles. Note that these religious leaders were filled with indignation, which is anger over unfair treatment. The religious leaders are used to getting all the money and the praise, and God is healing the common Jew instead. Therefore, the religious leaders are jealous of what God is doing through the little flock. Unfortunately, they are not jealous enough to believe the gospel of the kingdom and join the little flock. Instead, they want to destroy the little flock, which is suddenly not so little any more. This is now strike two against the religious leaders in blaspheming the Holy Ghost.

5:19-20 God has a job for the little flock to do. They need to reach the lost sheep of Israel before the end of the tribulation period. They cannot be wasting their time in jail. Therefore, God opens the doors and tells them to preach "all the words of this life," meaning that they are to teach saved Israel of how they need to put themselves back under God's law covenant with them (Matthew 28:20 and 23:2-3), preach the gospel of the kingdom to Israel (Matthew 10:6), and endure unto the end of the tribulation period in order to be saved (Matthew 24:13). These are "the words of THIS life."

By the way, "the angel of the Lord," which is a form that Jesus Christ takes on, is mentioned 68 times in scripture, and all 68 times are regarding Israel.

5:21 Their teaching "early in the morning" is a sign of how they have not entered the night of the tribulation period yet. They are still in the one-year grace period God has afforded Israel to believe or be set aside (Luke 13:6-9). Note, here, that all of the religious leaders are called together in opposition of what God is doing in saving Israel. This means that strike three in blaspheming the Holy Ghost is just around the corner for Israel. God is about to put the prophecy dispensation on hold.

5:23 Note that the guards did not even know that the apostles had escaped from prison. This means that God either: 1) Put them to sleep as He had the apostles escape, or 2) Had the apostles magically disappear out of the prison and re-appear in the temple. In any event, this is like Jesus' resurrection, where Jesus rose from the dead with the stone still blocking the entrance to the grave. This is a sign of Jesus' second coming. He will come as "a thief in the night" (II Peter 3:10), meaning that He will steal His believers from Satan's kingdom and Satan will not even realize it. He will do this at "the day dawn" (II Peter 1:19). Similarly here, the angel of the Lord came by night (5:19), and the apostles "entered into the temple early in the morning" (5:21).

5:24 The top, Jewish religious leaders are not interested in obeying God and entering His kingdom. Instead, they want to make sure THEIR rule continues, and they will do anything, including killing their own Messiah and God, to keep God from ruling over Israel. We see this here. They do not want the gospel to flourish. In fact, they want the opposite. They want the gospel to be crushed so that their rule and Satan's kingdom can continue. So, too, in the tribulation period. Apostate Israel will do all they can to stop God's kingdom from growing by declaring that all, who do not worship Satan, will be killed (Revelation 13:15).

5:25 A man tells apostate Israel where the little flock is. The same thing will happen during the tribulation period. This is what Jesus referred to when He said, "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:17-18).

5:26 This verse shows that the Jewish religious leaders really only had as much power over the common Jews as the common Jews would let them have. As Jesus had told His disciples, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20), the mountain being a reference to the Jewish religious system. In other words, while it is true that the religious leaders are keeping Israel in unbelief, Israel can still believe, join the little flock, and bring God's kingdom in if they only have the faith to do so.

However, the reason that the people like the apostles is because they are bringing all people physical healing (5:15-16). If they believed the gospel of the kingdom, their reaction would be to join the little flock and preach the gospel themselves. It would not be to stone the religious leaders for arresting the apostles. This shows that they did not believe.

5:28 You can see the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders here. They are blaming the apostles for trying "to bring this man's blood upon us" (5:28). However, the religious leaders were the ones who, less than one year prior, had arrested and killed Jesus and said themselves, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). Peter told them as much in 2:23: "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." However, since they did this in ignorance (3:17), they have the opportunity to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). Therefore, while the religious leaders accuse the apostles of bringing Jesus' blood upon them, Peter is actually doing the opposite. They brought Jesus' blood upon themselves, and Peter is giving them the opportunity to be cleansed from their wicked deed by believing the gospel of the kingdom.

The religious leaders also make an incorrect statement in saying, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." No, that is what the Jewish religious leaders have done by filling Jerusalem with their traditions to make God's commandments of none effect (Mark 7:13). Rather, the apostles are proclaiming God's Word so that they may believe the gospel, which will purge out man's doctrine. Therefore, the

religious leaders accuse the apostles of doing things that the religious leaders have done to themselves.

We should also note that the religious leaders' complaint that the apostles should not teach any more in Jesus' name is the same complaint that Judaism has made against Christianity ever since then. They think that Jesus came and started a new religion called Christianity, breaking away from Judaism. In fact, one, devout, Jew once asked, "When did Jesus become a Christian?" The truth is that Jesus came, not to do away with Judaism, but to bring about the promises God made to the Jews. Romans 15:8 says, "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Therefore, Jews should rejoice over the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than trying to snuff them out, because snuffing them out results in God's promises to Israel not coming to them at that time due to their unbelief.

5:29 Peter's answer shows that they are proclaiming God's doctrine, not man's doctrine, as he says that he will obey God, preaching the gospel of the kingdom to Israel as God had commanded him to do (Matthew 10:6), rather than obeying what man has told him, which was to stop teaching in Jesus' name (4:18). We should note that it is religious leaders, who command the apostles to stop preaching the gospel of the kingdom. They want the apostles to stop proclaiming new truth that God had revealed to Israel. Similarly today, the greatest opposition that Bible believers face in proclaiming the gospel and the truth of God's Word comes from Christianity, which tries to stop us from proclaiming the new truth that God has revealed to us today through the apostle Paul.

5:30-32 Jesus said that, "when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10:19-20). Therefore, we know that Peter's answer, here, is the Holy Ghost's words, not Peter's words. Note how concisely God gives His message through Peter. In just three verses, He tells them that God was the One Who sent Jesus; they killed Jesus on a tree, which means that He was made a curse "(for he that is hanged is accursed of God)" (Deuteronomy 21:23); the Pharisees are guilty of killing their Messiah; God raised Him up and exalted Him such that He is both Prince and Saviour; forgiveness of sins is through Him; the Holy Ghost is for those obeying God; and all of these facts have been established by the two witnesses of: 1) The little flock, and 2) The Holy Ghost. Thus, they can see all three members of the Godhead were at work to bring forgiveness of sins to Israel through Jesus. However, in their current state, Israel will not be forgiven because they have blood on their hands and are unrepentant.

5:33 Hebrews 4:12 says that, "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." When devout Jews (2:5) heard that they had killed their Lord and Messiah and were now subject to God's wrath, "they were pricked in their heart, and said...what shall we do?" (2:37), showing that they had repented

hearts. Here, the Jewish religious leaders are “cut to the heart,” but, instead of looking for a way to get out of God’s wrath, they “took counsel to slay” the apostles, showing that they have wicked hearts. This is strike two against the nation of Israel in their chance to believe the gospel and become God’s kingdom of priests in order for the tribulation period to start and God’s kingdom to begin thereafter.

5:34 The Jewish religious leaders want to kill the apostles, but Gamaliel convinces them not to because, “if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it” (5:39). Gamaliel is important because he was the teacher of Paul (22:3). Paul was brought up in the Jewish religion, but Gamaliel seems to be one of the more rational of the religious leaders, because he does not get involved in religious emotionalism.

5:36-37 Devout Jews would have known God’s prophecy that their Messiah would be cut off 483 years after the commandment was given to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25-26). Because of that, around the time of Jesus’ birth, there was a believing remnant looking “for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). Jesus said that there “shall arise false Christs” (Matthew 24:24). Therefore, it should not be surprising that the false Christs of Theudas and Judas rose up prior to Jesus. Because those false Christs were not of God, their revolutions came to naught. Gamaliel’s point is that, if Jesus is the true Messiah, there is nothing they can do to stop Him. If Jesus is not the true Messiah, the apostles’ revolt will also come to naught. Therefore, this matter will resolve itself in time, which means that there is no need for the Jewish religious leaders to fight against the apostles.

5:38-40 Note that the Jewish religious leaders make their decision solely based on what man says, rather than on what God says. Even when they do decide to let the apostles go, they beat them first. The apostles had done nothing wrong. In fact, they had been trying to get people to believe the gospel so that they might be in God’s kingdom. God’s law says that, when they judge a person, they are to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked (Deuteronomy 25:1). Only if a wicked man is “worthy to be beaten...,the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face” (Deuteronomy 25:2). Yet, here are the apostles before a council (5:34), and they are beaten for absolutely no legal reason.

Also, they are commanded not to speak any more in Jesus’ name. In order to make a just determination of whether Jesus was a true prophet or not, they needed to look at the things that He said would come to pass (Deuteronomy 18:15-22). Since Jesus was not a false prophet based upon that assessment, Israel should have feared Him and thanked the apostles for spreading His Word to Israel. Thus, we see that the trial of the apostles is a whole mockery of God’s law. They are not trying to bring justice; they are wanting to slay them (5:33). They are trying to come up with a reason for killing them. Just like with Jesus, they cannot come up with a legal reason for killing them.

5:41 You will notice that the emphasis continues to be on Jesus’ name. When Jesus comes back, He will have His name written on his vesture: “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16). It is for this name that the

apostles suffered.

In God's eyes, worthiness is often linked to suffering in this world. In Revelation 5:12, we see all of heaven proclaim: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." In Hebrews 11:38, we see the reverse being true, with the world not being worthy of suffering believers. The reason suffering is good in God's eyes is because it "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17). The apostles must have had this same view of suffering in order to rejoice in their suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:42 The little flock continues to fulfill the Great Commission by teaching in Jerusalem first (1:8). They have not even expanded out to Judah yet. Even when persecution arises and the church is scattered abroad, the apostles will remain in Jerusalem because that is where Jesus told them to go first (8:1). In fact, they do not get out of Jerusalem before Israel's program is put on hold and the dispensation of grace begins with Paul in chapter 9.

6 Dissension within the little flock is met with men full of the Holy Ghost, and the little flock continues to multiply greatly (vs. 1-7). So much so that Judaism mounts a large-scale attack against them by having Jewish religious leaders from all over come to Jerusalem to lie in an attempt to stop what God is doing with believing Israel (vs. 8-15).

6:1-3 Note how greatly the little flock has expanded. There is a "multitude of disciples," and there are even many Greeks, who have become proselytes, joining the little flock. So great is the multitude that it takes seven men to rule over the job of the daily feeding of widows. Now, that is a lot of widows!

The twelve apostles say that seven men "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (6:3) are to be appointed to take care of this. The fact, that "full of the Holy Ghost" is mentioned, shows that not all believers had the Holy Ghost, as we do today (Romans 5:5). Granted, God did say that He would pour out His Spirit upon ALL flesh (2:17). However, because Israel does not receive the atonement until Jesus' second coming (3:19-21), a person could stop having faith in the gospel of the kingdom. That person would then lose the Holy Ghost. By contrast, today, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), because we have already received the atonement (Romans 5:11). Therefore, we cannot lose the Holy Ghost today.

6:2,4 Because the little flock is growing, Satan got the Greeks and the Hebrews within the little flock to fight against each other in an effort to get the little flock to go into apostasy. (This is like the fight between Abram's and Lot's herdsmen (Genesis 13:7-9), except the fight in Acts 6 does not result in a split, because men full of the Holy Ghost are chosen to resolve the problem.) This shows that Satan's primary attack against believers is to get them away from believing and studying God's Word. Recognizing this attack, the 12 apostles say they will continue to focus on praying for God's guidance in how the little flock is to expand and on teaching the Word of God to the multitude of disciples to train them up in the

mysteries of the kingdom, as Jesus had taught them, and to prepare them to preach the gospel to the rest of Israel. This is also how God tells us to win the victory over the wiles of the devil today (Ephesians 6:17-18).

6:5 These seven men were all “full of the Holy Ghost” (6:3), meaning that they have faith in what God has told them, rather than believing the Jewish religion. Stephen is specifically mentioned as being “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,” since he alone will stand trial before the Jewish council. This tells us, then, that Stephen’s rejection, in chapter 7, stands for the third and final rejection by Israel of the ministry of the Holy Ghost in early Acts.

The “Philip” here, and in chapter 8, is not the Philip of the 12 apostles (Matthew 10:3), because the 12 are giving themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (6:2,4). This is important to note, because it shows that the 12 apostles did indeed stay in Jerusalem during the persecution of the little flock in Acts 8.

Also note that there is a Gentile (Nicolas) in this group of seven. In 10:45, after the dispensation of grace had begun, the circumcision believers, i.e., the little flock, were astonished that Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Ghost. This shows that, even as late as Acts 6, the only way a Gentile could receive the Holy Ghost would be to be circumcised so that he becomes a Jew, because the Holy Ghost is only given to saved Jews at this point, because they are still in Israel’s program. The promise of the Holy Ghost is to “YOUR sons and YOUR daughters” (2:17), not to the Gentiles who have not become proselytes by being physically circumcised. This is another proof that the body of Christ did not start in Acts 2.

6:6 Jesus gave the 12 apostles the leadership role over Israel (Matthew 19:28), even to the point of having the power to remit or retain sins (John 20:23). That is why the apostles have to lay hands upon these seven men, giving them authority to act on their behalf.

6:7 Because the little flock continues to be led by the Holy Ghost, Satan’s attack with the dispute between the Hebrews and the Greeks did not work. Instead, the little flock continues to multiply greatly. We had a number of about 50,000 – 100,000 in the little flock in 5:14. If that number is multiplied greatly, we are probably up to about 200,000 believers in Jerusalem now. The population of Jerusalem when Jesus was alive was probably around 50,000 with another 100,000 or so coming to the feast days. This means that Jerusalem’s population has multiplied quickly from believers coming from all cities to which the Jews were scattered (2:5) and people from all other cities around Jerusalem (5:16). This also shows how quickly 144,000 Jews can believe after the tribulation period starts (Revelation 7:3-9).

There were many believers in God among the Jews, who came to Jerusalem for the feasts, but they were following the Jewish religious traditions out of ignorance, being “as sheep not having a shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Then, you have Gentiles, living in and around Jerusalem, who became proselytes because they saw God working through the little flock (5:16). These proselytes are seen in 6:1, and they

ALL must have been physically circumcised to become part of the circumcision. Otherwise, they would not have been astonished by uncircumcised Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost in 10:45. In addition, 6:7 tells us that “a great company of the priests,” who “were obedient to the faith,” also joined the little flock. Therefore, Jerusalem is now saturated with believers, vastly outnumbering the Jewish religious establishment in Jerusalem insomuch that even many of the priests of that religious system have now joined the little flock.

6:8 When Jesus was on earth, He did have as many as 5,000 men follow Him around (John 6:10), but that number had dropped to 120 on the day of Pentecost (1:15). Jesus told His disciples that He had to go away in order for the Holy Ghost to come to them (John 16:7). Now, we can see why the Holy Ghost’s coming is such a big deal. He is the last member of the Godhead, and it is only His work, coupled with what God the Father and God the Son had already done, that leads so many people to be saved. This is seen in the “faith and power” that Stephen demonstrates among the people.

This also shows that the power of God is in the cross. After all, God is using “unlearned and ignorant men” (4:13) to build the little flock from 120 to 200,000, while Jesus was God in the flesh, and He only built up 120 believers. That is because the apostles’ ministry was after the cross, while Jesus’ ministry was before the cross.

6:9 Because the little flock has grown tremendously, it may look like Israel has believed the gospel of the kingdom and has become a kingdom of priests such that the 70th week of Daniel will now start. However, the Jewish religious leaders are the ones who speak for the nation as a whole. We saw in 4:17-18 that they tried to stop the little flock from preaching God’s law and the gospel and speaking in Jesus’ name (That is, they tried to stop the healings associated with God’s kingdom.). We saw the same thing in 5:40, and they beat the apostles there. Now, we see a third opposition against the little flock by the Jewish religious leaders. Three strikes, and they are out! Note that now it is not just Jewish religious leaders from Jerusalem, but also the leaders from the other territories where the Jews had been scattered to among the heathen have come to Jerusalem to try to put a stop to Israel following God and God’s kingdom coming. This shows that the whole nation is in unbelief.

We should also note that, some of those, who disputed with Stephen, came from Alexandria (6:9). This is important because the corrupt manuscripts, that are used by modern versions of the Bible to introduce false doctrine into Christianity, also come from Alexandria. The correct manuscripts come from Antioch, which is where the disciples were first called Christians (11:26). Thus, before the Bible was completed, we can already see the centers of truth (Antioch) and corruption (Alexandria) being developed in Acts.

6:10 The crème de la crème of the Jewish religious leaders have come from all over to try to put a stop to the spread of God’s Word and people being saved by the gospel. All of the top, Jewish scholars have gathered together against ONE man.

Although they have ganged up on Stephen, the result was that “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.” Stephen was not “a doctor of law” (5:34) like Gamaliel and other of these leaders were, yet he outsmarted them all. That is because it was not him speaking, but the Holy Ghost speaking through him. Mark 13:11 says that, “when they shall lead you, and deliver you up,... it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” Therefore, they had not come against a mere man, “unlearned and ignorant” (4:13). Religion was debating against the truth of God, and man cannot win when he goes against God, because God has made foolish the wisdom of this world (I Corinthians 1:20).

6:11 Since the wisest of men cannot even compete with the foolishness of God (I Corinthians 1:25), the Jewish religious leaders now resort to wickedness to stop God’s kingdom program from continuing. “They suborned men.” This means that they bribed or induced them to give false testimony. Stephen has not blasphemed Moses or God. In fact, we will see him uphold both in Acts 7 when he is tried. However, because they cannot come up with a lawful reason for killing Stephen, they will make up a reason, just like they did to kill the Lord Jesus Christ. Similarly today, if you believe God’s Word rightly divided, Christianity will accuse you of blaspheming Jesus by believing God’s Word given to Paul. Basically, there is a lot of money in religion. Since religion fails when confronted with the truth of God’s Word, religion will do anything it can to kill the truth and keep their money supply going (I Timothy 6:9-10). Therefore, they will accuse you of heresy, when they are the ones, who are the heretics.

6:12 “They stirred up the people.” If the nation of Israel as a whole did not participate in rejecting the gospel of the kingdom, it would not have been stopped. They could have said to that mountain of religion, “Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, [and] it shall be done” (Matthew 21:21). Instead, they allowed the Jewish religious leaders to make the decision for them that they would reject God’s kingdom and follow the Jewish religious system. Therefore, the common Jews and the elders and scribes brought Stephen to the council to do away with him. The common Jews should have obeyed God rather than men (5:29).

The situation was probably similar to what Jesus experienced in John 2:23. There, we are told that “many believed in His name,” but “Jesus did not commit Himself unto them...for He knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25). Therefore, although maybe 200,000 people were in the little flock by Acts 6, many of them allowed the Jewish religious leaders to stir them up against Stephen. Thus, the nation of Israel, as a whole, has rejected God’s kingdom with most believers turning into unbelievers by the persuasion of “important” religious leaders.

6:13-14 People, who say that Jesus abolished the law and the Old Testament way of doing things, need look no further than these verses to see that this is not true. Men said that Stephen said that Jesus “shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.” Since these men are FALSE witnesses (6:13) and Stephen is full of the Holy Ghost (6:5), we know that Jesus did not teach to do away with the law. In fact, Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law” (Matthew 5:17). Furthermore, many years after Acts 6, James says that there are “thousands of

Jews...which believe; and they are all zealous of the law” (21:20). Because the gospel of the kingdom was to repent from Jewish tradition and follow God’s law covenant instead, God’s law covenant has not been abolished. It is still continuing through the little flock right here in early Acts. They are teaching men to observe what Jesus had commanded them (Matthew 28:20), which was to observe the law of Moses (Matthew 23:2-3).

Therefore, Stephen did not speak against the holy place, the law, and the customs that Moses taught them. In fact, Stephen, by the Holy Ghost, will say that it is the Jewish religious leaders, who have not kept God’s law (7:53). God’s program in early Acts is a continuation of the law covenant that God made with Israel under Moses. It has not been abolished.

The reason these witnesses falsely accuse Stephen of teaching against the law is because what God’s law covenant said is different from the traditions of the Jewish fathers, which is what they taught, which is why Jesus told them to repent of these things. The same holds true today. If you teach God’s Word rightly divided, Christians will accuse you of heretical and blasphemous teachings against God’s Word, when you are really standing for God’s Word and they are the ones speaking heresies against the truth of God’s Word, even if they quote God’s Word to do so.

A key factor to understand is that they have accused Stephen of changing “the customs which Moses delivered us” (6:14). Moses never gave Israel any customs; he gave them the law. The Jews did not like God’s law, and so they created their own customs to replace God’s holy law (Mark 7:6-9). Then, they taught in the synagogues to obey these customs, as if Moses gave them the customs, which he did not. Then, when Stephen teaches the truth of God’s law, going against their customs, they twist his words to say he is going against the law. Similarly today, the Christian religion has created customs that go against God’s Word, but they claim to have received these customs from God’s Word. Then, when you teach the truth of God’s Word, they will twist your words to make you look like a heretic.

6:15 “The Jews require a sign” (I Corinthians 1:22); therefore, God gives them one by having Stephen’s face appear like an angel. People think of this as a very soothing, comforting thing, but it is not. Whenever an angel appears to man, the typical response is to fear (Matthew 28:2-4 and Luke 2:9-10). Yet, the Jewish council is so stiffnecked and hardened against God that, when Stephen pronounces God’s judgment upon them (7:51-53,55-56), they start chomping on his flesh and then stone him to death (7:54,57-59). This shows that Israel is so far gone in unbelief that there is no recovery for them at this time, which is why God sets aside Israel’s program at the end of Acts 7 and begins the dispensation of grace with Paul in Acts 9.

7 Stephen gives the Jewish council types of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament that show that Jesus Christ was Israel's Messiah. He also shows Israel's continuous rebellion against God in the Old Testament to show them that their fathers rejected the types and they have rejected their Messiah in the flesh. Now, God is giving them another chance through the Holy Ghost, and they are still

rejecting God by not believing the gospel Jesus taught. When the religious leaders ignore Stephen's speech and kill him, Jesus stands and judges them. Israel's program is set aside, and the dispensation of grace will begin in Acts 9, which is the dispensation that we live in today.

7:1 The charge against Stephen is that he has blasphemed the temple and the law, saying that Jesus will destroy the temple and change the law (6:13-14). Of course, Stephen is upholding God's law covenant with Israel in the face of the Jewish religious leaders, who have rejected God's law so that they can keep their traditions (Mark 7:9). Stephen never answers the high priest's question. Instead, it is God, Who, through Stephen, puts Israel on trial.

7:2 The Holy Ghost will now indict the nation of Israel for their unbelief and apostasy from the beginning of the nation up to the present to show Israel why God will now set them aside and begin building the body of Christ through Paul. Primarily, the Holy Ghost focuses upon Moses. The Promised Land was at hand for Israel in the wilderness, but they rejected Moses. Therefore, they did not enter in. Similarly, the kingdom was at hand for Israel from Matthew through early Acts, but they rejected God the Father (through John the Baptist), God the Son (through Jesus), and God the Holy Ghost (through Stephen). Therefore, they will not enter in.

7:3 Israel still has favored-nation status with God, because Israel's program is still going on here, as Stephen points them back to the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12:1-3, where their favored-nation status began. Thus, Jesus did not start something new. He did not abolish the law. He came as the kinsmen redeemer of Israel so that God could fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel of establishing them as the rulers underneath the Lord Jesus Christ in God's eternal kingdom on earth.

7:4 In Genesis 11:1, the whole earth was united against God. They were not divided into nations, but they were under the Babylonian rule of Nimrod (Genesis 10:9-10). When the world united in Genesis 11 in rebellion against God, God gave up on the Gentiles (Romans 1:24,26,28), creating one nation through which He would reconcile the earth back to Himself. That one nation was the nation of Israel. At the time Stephen is speaking, God is trying to unite the whole world again, but all under God, by eliminating language barriers by again having the world speak just one language through the Holy Ghost's power to interpret words into other tongues (2:4,8,11). However, this must first start with Israel being saved as a kingdom of priests to reach the nations with the gospel of the kingdom (Exodus 19:5-6) during the millennial reign (Zechariah 8:23). Thus, Stephen starts at the beginning of God's kingdom program with Israel to show that Israel has been in unbelief, regarding what God has told them, this whole time. Therefore, God cannot reconcile the earth back to Himself through Israel at this time, and so He will begin reconciling the heaven back to Himself by beginning the body of Christ in Acts 9.

There is an interesting parallel between Abraham's father and the nation of Israel

in Acts 7. Genesis 11:31 says that Terah, Abraham's father, left Ur of the Chaldees to go to Canaan. Evidently, he must have done this because God called him to do so. However, Terah served other gods (Joshua 24:2). Therefore, he never made it to Canaan (the Promised Land) but dwelt in Haran instead (Genesis 11:31). Similarly, God called Israel in early Acts to believe the gospel so that God could bring them into the kingdom, but they refused to believe. Therefore, another generation of Jews, which will spring up after the rapture of the body of Christ, will believe, much like Abraham sprung up after Terah to believe.

7:5 Abraham had a child with Hagar, but God said that that child would not be the heir, because it was not a miraculous birth. Thus, Ishmael was not the child of promise, Isaac was (Galatians 4:22-31). This is why God did not give Abraham the land when he was alive. It was a promise to him. If He gave him the land when he was alive, Abraham would not have obtained righteousness by faith. He had to trust God that He would fulfill His promise to him in the ages to come. This is why Abraham refused to accept a burial plot in the Promised Land as a gift from Ephron (Genesis 23:11-16). He paid for it because the only gift of land he would receive would be from God's promise to him, not a gift of land from man. Therefore, both the land and the seed were promises to Abraham, both of which would be provided by God.

7:6 40 is the number of probation in the Bible, and 10 is the number of a new beginning. Thus, $40 * 10 = 400$ years. God would make a new beginning for the earth after man's probation period was over by bringing Israel into the Promised Land. Thus, the promise that Israel would be in bondage in Egypt for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). Israel needed to suffer before they would trust in God for the Promised Land. Similarly, at the time Stephen is speaking this, Israel must suffer through the tribulation period before they will trust God for His kingdom on earth. When Israel came out of Egypt, they did not believe and had to suffer another 40-year probation period in the wilderness. So, too, in Stephen's day, Israel did not believe, and has suffered through a probation period of 2,000 years and counting, awaiting their kingdom promises. The writer of Hebrews makes this connection between Israel in the wilderness and Israel in early Acts: "While it is said, To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Hebrews 3:15).

7:7 God judged Egypt for keeping Israel in bondage for 400 years, because God said that He would curse those who cursed Israel (Genesis 12:3). So, too, at the end of the tribulation period, God will judge the apostate nation of Israel for keeping the believing remnant of Israel in bondage to Jewish traditions, instead of following God's law covenant (Matthew 21:43, Malachi 4:1, Matthew 13:30, and John 15:6).

7:8 God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17:10-14 to give Jews a freewill choice of being part of God's nation or not. If they are not circumcised, God promises to cut them off (Genesis 17:14). Although they were to be physically circumcised, God is ultimately referring to the circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16). If they obey His commands (Deuteronomy 30:2), He

will circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:6) so that they will enter God's eternal kingdom on earth.

Stephen's audience has been physically circumcised, but they will not enter God's kingdom because they have not obeyed God's commands, which is to believe the gospel of the kingdom. If they are true children of Abraham, they will have faith plus works and enter God's kingdom (John 8:39). Thus, the covenant of circumcision introduces to Israel the necessity they have to believe the gospel of the kingdom and to do the works of Abraham in order to enter the kingdom.

7:9 Immediately, we see that this covenant of circumcision caused a division within Israel between covenant breakers and covenant obeyers. Even among the 12 men, who are the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel, we see them in unbelief, save Joseph, before God's law was even given to Moses! Thus, Stephen is going to show that, from the beginning of Israel's existence, there have been these two groups in Israel. The Jewish religious leaders of Stephen's day represent the unbelievers, who will be cast into the lake of fire (John 15:6), while Stephen represents the believing remnant who will rule in God's eternal kingdom on earth (Matthew 5:5).

Note also how the patriarchs were "moved with envy" against Joseph (7:9). That is the real reason why apostate Israel persecutes believing Israel, and why Christianity today persecutes Bible believers. Religion strives in the flesh to accomplish what God has freely given us by His Spirit. The culmination of this, in Israel's program, is the Babylonian religious system under the Antichrist in the tribulation period, and it is all because "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Galatians 5:17).

By giving Joseph as an example, Stephen also shows that the believing remnant will never be completely destroyed, because "God [is] with him," regardless of how apostate Israel tries to destroy believing Israel. Thus, God will fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel.

7:10 Thus, apostate Israel afflicted Joseph (the believing remnant) by selling him into Egyptian slavery, but God "delivered him out of all his afflictions." The point, then, to Stephen's audience is that, apostate Israel may kill him and other members of the little flock, but the Lord WILL deliver the believing remnant by bringing them into His kingdom. Apostate Israel, who is now trying Stephen, is powerless to stop God. And, since they are subject to God's wrath for killing their Messiah by wicked hands (2:23), why not believe the gospel and be made governor of God's house in the kingdom, as Joseph was made Pharaoh's governor in Egypt?

7:11 This dearth represents the little flock going through the tribulation period. They will find no sustenance during that time, except for what God provides to them (Revelation 12:14), because they will not take the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17). Therefore, they cannot buy food.

7:12-15 Israel came to Egypt the first time for physical food, and they did not

recognize Joseph. At their second coming, Joseph was made known to Israel, and Joseph brought Israel into Egypt to live and prosper and be made known to Pharaoh. Similarly, Israel did not recognize their Messiah when Jesus Christ came the first time. They only came to Him for physical food (John 6:26). As such, we see the two groups in Israel again—the little flock and the rest of Israel. At Jesus' second coming, they will finally recognize Him as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10). Then, Jesus will bring Israel into the Promised Land to live and prosper and be made known unto God the Father. (Joseph is the most complete type of Jesus Christ found in the Bible, as Arthur W. Pink has identified 60 ways in which Joseph was a type of Jesus Christ!)

A note about Bible contradictions and circular reasoning: One thing that should be mentioned is that 7:14 says that “all his kindred” were “threescore and fifteen souls,” but Genesis 46:26 says that “all the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob’s sons’ wives, all the souls were threescore and six.” You can find many so-called contradictions like this in scripture, and people bring up things like this all the time to try to prove that the Bible contains errors. However, differences like this actually prove that the Bible does NOT contain errors. The reason is because, if man wrote the Bible, he would have been careful to change one verse or the other to make them both say the exact same thing.

However, God, “is a rewarder of them that DILIGENTLY seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing” (Proverbs 25:2). Therefore, many times in scripture, God will state the same thing twice, but each instance will be just a little different to make it look like there is a contradiction. If you do not want to believe the Bible, you can use these to say that it contains errors, and God will not reward you. However, if you do believe the Bible, you will diligently seek for the answer in scripture, find why there is a difference, and then God gets the glory for concealing the truth from unbelievers, while revealing it to babes with childlike faith (Luke 10:21).

Therefore, instead of appealing to the original Greek and Hebrew (The corrupt Greek Septuagint actually adds names to the Genesis 46 list so that there are 75 listed there!) and trying to explain the difference, we will simply look at the wording of each passage to discover why there is a difference. Genesis 46:26 does not include Jacob’s sons’ wives, while Acts 7:14 includes “all his kindred.” Therefore, we can conclude that the extra 9 people are wives.

What is wonderful about Stephen mentioning 75 souls is the very fact that he gave a number that was different from the Old Testament. In other words, Stephen could not have come up with 75 on his own. He must have received this number from the Holy Ghost, which means that the Holy Ghost must have been speaking through Stephen, since he was “full of the Holy Ghost” (7:55), because only God would have known that all his kindred were 75 souls. Therefore, rather than proving the Bible contains errors, Acts 7:14 proves that Stephen was speaking by the Holy Ghost, which tells us that we can rely upon everything Stephen says as being 100% accurate.

Man will say, “You can’t do that. That is circular reasoning. You have to use extra-Biblical sources to prove what is correct.” That is the most ridiculous statement that can be made. God wrote one book. Man wrote all extra-Biblical sources. Since God’s ways and thoughts are higher than man’s ways and thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9), using extra-Biblical sources to test God’s Word would corrupt His holy word and would be a way of tempting the Lord, which is forbidden by scripture (Deuteronomy 6:16). Since man wrote down, word for word, exactly what God told him to write down (II Peter 1:20-21), man did not put any thought into the scripture. As such, man is to God what a parrot is to man.

If you walked into my house and heard my parrot say, “My name is Eric,” you may want to know if the parrot’s name is Eric or my name is Eric. You would not say within yourself, “I think I will ask other parrots to get verified, independent stories so that I know for sure who is named Eric. The reason is because parrots cannot think to tell you what I told the first parrot, even though these other parrots may have heard me talk to the first parrot. Similarly, you would not go to man to find out what God wrote in His word, because man is not capable of thinking on God’s level. You have to go to God to find out what He said in His word, because man does not think on God’s level, just like a parrot does not think on man’s level. The only way a parrot can say what a man says is if a man tells the parrot what to say, and the only way a man can understand what God says is if God tells him what He said. And, since there is only one God (Isaiah 45:5-6) and He only wrote one book, you must go to God’s Word to find out what God said and have the Holy Ghost, Who is God, teach you the meaning of it (I Corinthians 2:9-14).

And, since God’s Word is true (John 17:17), God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and God has promised to preserve His Word forever (Psalm 12:6-7 and Matthew 24:35) down to the very letter of every word in the Bible (Matthew 5:18), you do not need to worry that man has somehow corrupted God’s Word and you do not need any other sources to verify its accuracy. God’s Word today in the English language in the King James Version is 100% accurate without error and is just as accurate as the original manuscripts written thousands of years ago, all because God says this is so. Case closed!

7:16 Abraham bought a burial plot, rather than allowing it to be given to him, because the only gift of the Promised Land that he would accept would be from God, as He had promised him (Genesis 23:13-16). This burial plot was a sign of Israel being in the land, since Isaac, Sarah, Rebekah, Abraham, Jacob, and Leah were buried there, forming the acrostic ISRAEL, when El Shaddai (the Almighty God) is put in the place of Jacob (Genesis 49:31). Thus, the burial plot in Canaan was a witness to Israel during the 400 years in Egypt that God would bring them back into the land, as He had promised their fathers.

7:17-19 When the time to enter the Promised Land was at hand, another king arose after the Pharaoh that Joseph was under and, through subilty, got Israel to kill their own children. Similarly, with the kingdom of heaven being at hand at the time Stephen is speaking (see Matthew 3:2, 4:17, and 10:7), another king, i.e., the

Antichrist, will arise and, through subtility, get Israel to lose their place in God's kingdom by taking the mark of the beast or worshipping his image.

7:20-21 Moses is a type of Jesus, as well. (Exodus 2:2-3) Moses was raised by his mother for three months, but then had to cast him out, because he was too big to hide (Exodus 2:2-3). Similarly, Jesus was “cast out” by the Jews at His first coming after being received by them for three years (His earthly ministry), but will later come back to lead Israel out of bondage to Satan. After Moses was cast out by his Jewish mother, a Gentile (Pharaoh’s daughter) accepted him. In between Jesus' two comings, the Gentiles are reconciled back to God in this current dispensation of grace. Of course, this latter parallel can only be seen in hindsight since the dispensation of grace was a mystery until revealed to Paul in Acts 9.

7:23-25 At Moses' first coming to deliver Israel, he killed one who had oppressed Israel, thinking that Israel "would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not" (7:25). Similarly, at Jesus' first coming to deliver Israel, Jesus bound Israel's oppressor, Satan, so that Israel could go free (Matthew 12:29 and Isaiah 49:24-25), but Israel rejected their redeemer because they understood not that God by His hand would deliver them (3:14-17).

7:26-28 Moses was not some arrogant Jew, who was mad at the Egyptians, and got ahead of God’s plan for his life, as Christianity would have you believe. Rather, he was chosen by God from birth to be Israel’s deliverer (Exodus 2:2 and Hebrews 11:23). “By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king” (Hebrews 11:27) by killing the Egyptian oppressor. Since he did this by faith, God’s will was for him to kill the Egyptian oppressor, because God was ready to deliver Israel right then. Therefore, he showed himself to Israel the day after killing the oppressor to "set them at one again" (7:26). This was Israel’s chance to be delivered by God through Moses. Instead, Israel was in unbelief and said, "who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" (7:27). Thus, Israel had to wait 40 more years for Moses to come back to deliver them.

Similarly, Jesus forsook the Jewish religious system, not fearing the wrath of the Pharisees. He then showed Himself to Israel after His resurrection, and they would not let God rule over them. Therefore, they will now have to wait until after the dispensation of grace is over before Jesus will come back to deliver them.

7:29 Moses did not flee because he was afraid of the Hebrews. After all, he had just killed an Egyptian and was not afraid of what the king would do to him. Rather, the reason Moses fled was because he saw Israel’s unbelief, which meant they were not ready to be delivered from their oppressors. Therefore, he chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25). God’s people were not the Jews in Egypt, because they were in unbelief. Therefore, he fled to Madian, where the true people of God were.

Similarly, Jesus did not have His ministry in Jerusalem where the center of

Judaism was, because they were in unbelief, as shown by them putting John the Baptist in prison (Matthew 4:12). Instead, He had His ministry in "Galilee of the Gentiles," where the true people of God were (Matthew 4:15-17).

7:30 The "flame of fire in a bush" appeared, showing that Israel would only have the faith to enter the Promised Land by going through the trials of the wilderness, since they rejected their deliverer at first. Similarly, the fiery trials of the tribulation period are the only way Israel will recognize Jesus as their Messiah and enter the Promised Land at the end of the tribulation period (Malachi 3:2-4), since they rejected their Messiah at first. Thus, the burning bush, and NOT the star of David, is Israel's national symbol, since Israel will only be saved by fiery trials (Romans 11:26).

7:31 Moses only hears the voice of the Lord when he is close to the fiery bush. Similarly, Israel will only hear the voice of the Lord (in His word) and repent when they go through the fiery trials of the tribulation period.

7:32 God identifies Himself as the God of Israel, even though Israel has not heard from Him for 400 years. Similarly, at His second coming, Jesus Christ will identify Himself as the God of Israel, even though they have not heard from Him for 2,000 years and counting. Moses does not recognize God until He appears in the fiery bush, just like God will be in the fiery trials of the tribulation period, but Israel will not recognize Him as such until the end (Daniel 3:25; Zechariah 12:9-10). Moses recognized Him as God by His voice, just like Israel will believe when they hear His voice (John 10:16).

7:33 Moses was on holy ground because God was there, and God is holy (I Peter 1:16). Moses' taking off of his shoes signifies how Israel must take off their clothing of religion (Genesis 3:7,21) and have their sins atoned for by the blood of Jesus Christ in order to enter the Promised Land for Jesus' eternal reign on earth, because unholy man cannot dwell in the presence of a holy God.

7:34 Moses' second coming to Israel in Egypt to deliver them will result in their deliverance, because they were not ready for him at his first coming. Similarly, Israel will not be delivered from their bondage to sin until Jesus' second coming, because they were not ready for Him at His first coming.

The two comings are seen by God saying, "I have seen, I have seen" (7:34). He saw Israel's affliction 40 years prior. That is why God put it into Moses' "heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel" then (7:23). But, Israel was in unbelief. Therefore, they were not delivered then. God saw Israel's affliction again, 40 years later, and sent Moses a second time.

7:35 Just like God sent the same Moses to Israel a second time, God will send the same Jesus to Israel a second time to bring them into the kingdom. ("This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (1:11).)

7:36 Note what it took to bring Israel into belief under Moses. They had to see “wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years” (7:36). Similarly, in order to bring Israel into belief under Jesus, Israel will have to see wonders and signs in Jerusalem (spiritual Egypt) from Matthew through early Acts, and in the tribulation period (the spiritual Red Sea), and in the dispensation of grace (the spiritual wilderness).

7:37 Stephen has already shown the Jewish religious leaders many parallels between Moses and Jesus Christ. Therefore, Stephen has already clearly demonstrated that Jesus Christ is the Prophet like God that God promised, in Deuteronomy 18:15, to send to the nation of Israel. In that prophecy in Deuteronomy, God then goes on to say "that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him" (Deuteronomy 18:19). Since Israel did not hearken to Jesus' words, Stephen is showing the Jewish religious leaders that they are presently under the wrath of God. So, again we see the two groups in Israel: 1) The little flock, who hears the Prophet and is saved, and 2) Apostate Israel, who will not hear the Prophet and has incurred God's wrath, as a result.

7:38 Christianity says that the church started in Acts 2. However, this verse says that the church was in the wilderness during Moses' day. This shows that the word “church” does not mean four walls and a roof. Rather, it simply means a group of believers. More importantly, this also shows that, what God started with Abraham, was still continuing at this time. God did not start something new with Jesus in the book of Matthew, nor did He start something new at Pentecost in Acts 2. Rather, He is still continuing the same program of reconciling Israel to Himself so that Israel may be a kingdom of priests to reach the Gentiles with the gospel of the kingdom in the millennial reign.

7:39 While it is true that Israel continued to follow Moses physically in the wilderness, this verse points out that, in their hearts, they were back in Egypt. In other words, in spite of their cries to God for deliverance from affliction in Egypt, because of their unbelief and their sin nature, they would rather be in affliction in Egypt, following the lusts of their flesh, than to be in God's land obeying God's law. Similarly, Israel would rather be in affliction under the Romans than to believe that Jesus is their Messiah and allow Him to lead them into God's kingdom on earth.

7:40-41 God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, but Israel says that Moses brought them out. We see this today in Christianity, where people put their pastors or some Christian leaders in the place of God. Then, when that pastor sins, they forsake God. Here, Israel forsakes God because Moses has been gone from them too long. Similarly, in the tribulation period, many in Israel will align themselves with the Antichrist and worship his image, because they follow man instead of God.

Also, note that Israel told Aaron to “make us gods” (7:40). Do you realize how ridiculous that sounds? God is greater than man. God made man in His image

(Genesis 1:26). Man cannot make God, since man is lower than God. But, it is because man wants to be higher than God that he creates his own gods. Since he is the creator now, he can rejoice in the works of his own hands (7:41) by making up his own rules, following the lusts of his flesh, while easing his guilty conscience by supposedly worshipping a higher power.

7:42-43 Exodus through Deuteronomy does not record Israel physically bowing down to idols, that represent the host of heaven, as they wandered through the wilderness. That is why Amos 5:25-27 is quoted here to prove that Israel worshipped these idols during that time, and it is because of their continued idolatry that God eventually carried them into Babylonian captivity for 70 years.

Since God and Moses were both with Israel during the 40 years in the wilderness and they were wandering around the whole time, they probably did not make images and worship them in the wilderness. However, 7:39 says that their hearts were back in Egypt. Therefore, God is probably saying that they worshipped the host of heaven with their hearts. Then, when they settled down in the Promised Land, they built these temples and served these physical idols (II Kings 17:16-17) up to the Babylonian captivity, when God carried them away.

Therefore, 7:42-43 is saying that Israel worshipped the host of heaven from the time they left Egypt, because they did so in their hearts in the wilderness, and this translated into them worshipping physical idols in the Promised Land after that. What had happened, then, was Israel was afflicted in Egypt for 400 years and worshipped other gods during that time. Then, when God brought them out of Egypt, they continued their old idolatrous practices, in spite of all the miracles that God did through Moses.

Similarly, Jesus Christ came to deliver Israel from bondage to Satan. But, Israel continued their idol worship by following their religious system, which is a false system worshipping a false god, in spite of all the miracles that God did through Jesus Christ. In the wilderness, Israel claimed to be offering "slain beasts and sacrifices" to God, but they were offered to other gods instead. So, too, at Jesus' first coming, Israel claimed to be offering slain beasts and sacrifices to God, but they were really offering them to false gods, since they were following their own traditions, rather than the commandments of God. They may have gone to "God's temple," but they were really worshipping idols. Similarly, Israel in the wilderness may have gone to God's tabernacle, but they were really worshipping false gods there.

7:44 God dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness as a witness against Israel, and they still rebelled against God. So, too, the Holy Ghost dwells in Stephen and the rest of the little flock here, and Israel is still rebelling against God.

7:45 All modern translations change this verse to read "Joshua," rather than "Jesus," as they also do in Hebrews 4:8. Jesus is the correct translation, because Jesus is the Greek for the Hebrew name "Joshua." Also, mentioning the name "Jesus" shows you that He was the real One bringing Israel into the Promised

Land. As such, this reminds Stephen's audience that Joshua was a type of Jesus, which is what Stephen is showing here anyway.

He is showing that these Old-Testament people and what they went through were all types so that Israel could better understand that Jesus Christ is their Messiah, fulfilling, not just specific Old-Testament prophecies, but also being a full fulfillment of Israel's deliverers throughout her history. The good aspects of each of these Old Testament characters, then, are seen in the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry.

Also, note in this verse that God drove the Gentiles out from Jesus' day "unto the days of David" in spite of Israel's disobedience of God's law covenant during most of that time. This would be referred to as "the sure mercies of David" (Isaiah 55:3). It should be seen as no coincidence, then, that the fulfillment of "the sure mercies of David" (13:34) is seen in Jesus Christ's resurrection, because it is Jesus' resurrection power that will finally give Israel the land, even though they were in unbelief at the time.

7:46-47 God did not allow David to build Him a house because his hands were bloodied from all the wars he fought for God (I Chronicles 22:8). Rather, his son, Solomon, built the house of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ won the battle over Satan on the cross. He will also get bloody at His second coming when He destroys the wicked (Revelation 19:13-21). Therefore, Jesus prepares a place for saved Israel in His Father's house in between His first and second comings (John 14:2-3).

7:48-50 Verses 49 and 50 are a quote of Isaiah 66:1-2a. The passage in Isaiah goes on to say that God is not looking for a physical building to dwell in. He is looking to dwell in people (Ezekiel 36:27), and, in Israel's program, He will only dwell in men of a "poor and of a contrite spirit" who "trembleth at My Word" (Isaiah 66:2b). The ones, who just follow religion in their sacrifices, "killeth an ox...as if he slew a man" (Isaiah 66:3a), according to God. Thus, the Holy Ghost is saying, through Stephen, that the Jewish religious leaders are not God's people. It means nothing that they have a temple and say that they sacrifice to God in it. What matters to God are those who obey God's Word, and the Jewish religious leaders fall way short in this category, just like their fathers did.

In other words, everything that God has done in Israel's program has lead up to this point where God wants to dwell in a temple made without hands, and that temple is the saved house of Israel (I Peter 2:5). Since God has done everything He needs to do to redeem Israel, it is now up to Israel to have the proper response of faith so that they can be that saved house of Israel for God to dwell in. Since Israel, as a whole, is in unbelief, the Holy Ghost, in 7:51-53, will now indict Israel as being guilty and unworthy for God to dwell in.

7:51 Now, God gives His judgment of apostate Israel. God had tried to draw Israel to Himself, not only through His law, but also through the living examples of God that He gave them through men like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David. Each

one was rejected by God. Then, God Himself came in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, and He was the full fulfillment of all prophecies regarding the Messiah. However, since Israel rejected the Old-Testament types, they also rejected the true Christ. Then, God Himself dwelt in ALL believers in the person of the Holy Ghost, and they have again rejected Him. They are uncircumcised in their ears in that they do not have the ears to hear God's Word, because of their unbelief (John 12:37-40). They are also uncircumcised in heart because of their unbelief, and the uncircumcision in heart means that God will not put them under the new covenant (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Because they are uncircumcised, God will now cut off their souls from His kingdom (Genesis 17:14).

7:52-53 Because of their unbelief, the apostate nation of Israel is of a certain generation that sheds all righteous blood (Matthew 23:35-36). Jesus called this generation a "generation of vipers" (Matthew 23:33). A viper is a picture of the devil; thus, they are children of the devil (John 8:44). It is these children of the devil, who have existed throughout Israel's history, which is why they have persecuted and slain the prophets, betrayed and killed Jesus Christ, and have not kept God's law covenant with them. They persecuted and killed the prophets, they persecuted and killed "the Just One" (7:52), the Lord Jesus Christ, and now they are persecuting and killing the little flock. Therefore, God will now set aside Israel's program and start the body of Christ with Paul in Acts 9.

7:54 Hebrews 4:12 says that "the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In 2:37-38, devout Jews (2:5) were "pricked in their heart," and they believed the gospel and were saved as a result. In 5:33, religious leaders were "cut to the heart, and took council to slay" the apostles. Now, the word of God has so condemned these evil vipers that they are "cut to the heart," and they immediately try to kill Stephen.

They have absolutely no evidence of any wicked thing that he has done to make him worthy of any punishment, but yet they kill him. That is because the word of God has pierced their souls and found them to be utterly corrupt, and so they want to silence God's voice by killing His messenger. Note, here, that "they gnashed on him with their teeth." They literally were biting him, trying to take chunks of flesh out of his body. This is a perfect manifestation of their devilish actions, being children of the devil. Satan split open the body of Judas Iscariot (1:18), and now these Jewish religious leaders have become so hardened against God that they are mutilating Stephen with their teeth!

7:55-56 First, we are reminded that Stephen is full of the Holy Ghost so that we know assuredly that what Stephen is about to say is 100% accurate. What he says is that God is judging Israel right now. Note that we are told twice that Jesus is "STANDING on the right hand of God." In 2:32-35, the Holy Ghost told Israel through Peter that Jesus was SITTING on the Father's right hand "UNTIL I make Thy foes Thy footstool." Since Jesus stands up here, that means He is standing up to judge His foes. His foes are Israel, of course, since they, "by wicked hands[,]

have crucified and slain" Jesus (2:23). Therefore, "the judge standeth" (James 5:9) and condemns apostate Israel at this point.

The kingdom dispensation, at this very moment, is set aside, and God will begin the dispensation of grace with the calling of Paul in Acts 9. However, instead of killing Israel at this point, Jesus judges their program to be suspended, and He starts a new program so that both Jew and Gentile may be saved by the gospel of grace to reconcile the heavenly places back to Himself.

Now, I know that Christianity will call me crazy for suggesting such a thing. They say that Jesus is not ending the kingdom dispensation here. Rather, He is standing up to welcome home Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Now, that may have given you a nice, warm, fuzzy feeling inside, but we are told this nowhere in scripture. What we are told is that, "the Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people" (Isaiah 3:13). God's Word tells us that He would sit until His enemies are made His footstool, and it tells us that, when He stands, He stands to judge His people. Therefore, let us believe God's Word over Christianity, which is trying to protect their religious system, at the expense of not believing God's Word.

Another point to note is that Stephen could not be the first, Christian martyr, because "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (11:26). Since that happened in Acts 11, we are in Acts 7, and the last time I checked, 7 comes before 11, Stephen was not a Christian. Rather, he was a member of the little flock of Jewish believers.

Another reason we know that Jesus was not just simply standing to welcome Stephen home is because of the reaction of the Jewish religious leaders to what Stephen said. Twice, Stephen said that he saw Jesus "STANDING on the right hand of God" (7:55-56). We are then told: "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him" (7:57-58). These Jewish religious leaders knew that Isaiah 3:13 says that the Lord stands to judge the people, and they knew that is what was happening at that time. So much so, that they ran toward Stephen with their hands upon their ears and killed him as quickly as they could, because they did not want to hear God's judgement against them. If Jesus was just standing to welcome Stephen home, they would have laughed at Stephen's statement and mocked him. However, because Jesus' standing meant that they were being judged by God, they immediately silenced Stephen by putting their hands on their ears and by killing him.

Although the Jewish religious leaders have rejected the Holy Ghost through Stephen, we noted in 6:7 that there are probably about 200,000 people in the little flock. So, you may wonder why Jesus would judge Israel with so many believers. The reason is that they are not believers any more. 6:12 says that the Jewish religious leaders "stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes" to bring Stephen to the council. This means that most of the little flock switched sides at this point.

This is not unlike what happened with the events that surrounded Jesus. When Jesus came into Jerusalem, “a very great multitude spread their garments” and “multitudes...went before” Jesus “saying, Hosanna to the Son of David” (Matthew 21:8-9). Then, just a few days later, “the chief priests moved the people” to shout about Jesus: Crucify Him! Crucify Him! (Mark 15:11-15).

The same thing happens at the stoning of Stephen. Also, the ones, who are left in the little flock at this point, are persecuted, causing them to leave Jerusalem (8:1). Why? Because Israel has rejected the Holy Ghost three times in early Acts (4:21, 5:17-18, and 7:54), and three strikes means they are out. Therefore, God allows the church to be scattered because the great commission has ceased (Galatians 2:9).

7:57 In 4:24, the little flock “lift up their voice to God” for God to give them boldness to proclaim the gospel. Here, the Jewish religious leaders “cried out with a loud voice” to stop the testimony of the Holy Ghost against them. They then “stopped their ears.” Since they did not have the ears to hear the gospel, they stopped their ears to keep from hearing God’s judgment against them. Then, to try to stop God’s judgment, they “ran upon him with one accord.” Their doing so in one accord brings us back to the tower of Babel, when the whole earth was united against God in rebellion (Genesis 11:4). God had sent the Holy Ghost in Acts 2 to reverse the curse of the tower of Babel so that the world may be united in one language and one speech again (Genesis 11:1), but this time being united to God. Instead, Israel is in rebellion, such that they are in one accord against God to kill God’s man, Stephen. It is obvious from their reaction in this verse that Jesus’ standing on the right hand of God meant he was saying that God is judging them. Otherwise, there is no need to cry out with a loud voice to drown him out and stop their ears so as not to hear him. God wants to save His people, Israel, and they have, with a loud voice, told Him, “NO!”

7:58 The Jewish religious leaders’ casting of Stephen out of the city equates to casting God out of Jerusalem. Their laying down their clothes at Saul’s feet shows that they recognize Saul as their leader. (Saul is the Paul, who God later used as “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13).) When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, “a very great multitude spread their garments in the way” (Matthew 21:8), honoring Jesus as their king. So, too, laying their clothes at Saul’s feet shows that they think of him as their leader, and that the stoning of Stephen was something that Saul led them in doing (8:1).

Satan likes to copy God. God sent His Christ, and so now Satan is raising his Antichrist—Saul. At this point, Saul is well trained in the Jewish religion (22:3), being “exceedingly zealous of the traditions of [his] fathers” (Galatians 1:14), and is blameless according to the law (Philippians 3:6). Thus, he looks like a holy man, making him the perfect candidate to be the Antichrist, because he persecutes the church of God beyond measure (Galatians 1:13). Thus, to snuff out the growth of the little flock in Jerusalem, Satan has raised up Saul as his christ for all of Israel to follow instead of the true Christ.

7:59 This is the Jews' third strike against the Holy Ghost. The first was in 4:17,21 when the Jewish religious leaders threatened the apostles. The second was in 5:40 when they beat the apostles. Now, they are killing Stephen, which is the third strike. In Matthew 12:31-32, Jesus said that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven. The reason is that, after rejecting God the Father and God the Son, once they reject God the Holy Ghost, there is not another member of the Godhead left to reject. Israel has now committed the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, Israel's program, started by God in Genesis 12, is now set aside, and God will begin a new program of salvation to all men to make up the body of Christ to reconcile the heavenly places back to Himself.

It is significant that Stephen addresses God here as "Lord Jesus." The reason is because Saul would have heard him say this, since he was standing right there (7:58). In 9:3-4, Saul is blinded and God says, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" "And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest" (9:5). Therefore, when Stephen calls God "Lord Jesus," he is preparing Saul to understand that Jesus is Lord when Jesus blinds him near Damascus.

7:60 Although Israel has committed the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost with no forgiveness available to them, Stephen asks for forgiveness for them, just like Jesus did from the cross (Luke 23:34). How can God grant forgiveness when He said that no forgiveness is available? He does so by starting a new program. No forgiveness was available to Israel under the gospel of repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). Forgiveness will now be offered to Israel under the gospel of trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Thus, they are condemned under God's earthly program, but God offers them grace to be saved under God's heavenly program—the body of Christ. God makes this offer to them first before giving it to the Gentiles. This is why Paul goes to the Jews first in the book of Acts, and it is why Paul says that the gospel of Christ is "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

Finally, note in this verse that Stephen did not die, but he "fell asleep." In other words, he will have eternal life in God's kingdom on earth when God raises Him from the dead at Jesus' second coming. Thus, Stephen is not dead; he is only sleeping in Jesus (John 11:11-13).

8 With God putting His earthly kingdom on hold, the church is scattered (v. 1), and the gospel of the kingdom spreads outside of Jerusalem to Samaria (v. 5), Ethiopia (v. 26), and other cities (v. 40).

8:1 Saul's consenting unto Stephen's death shows that he is the leader of the Jews at this point. He is Satan's copycat of the Christ. Thus, he is primed to be Satan's Antichrist in the tribulation period. God allows a great persecution to come upon the church in Jerusalem, because the kingdom program is now on hold. Before, they needed to be in one accord to reach the lost sheep of Israel. Now, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is down (Ephesians 2:14), and

salvation can go to all. Thus, God allows the little flock to be scattered.

However, the 12 apostles stay in Jerusalem, because God told them to start their ministry in Jerusalem (1:8). They do not know about the change in programs, because Paul is not saved until Acts 9. Paul is “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). God committed the dispensation of grace to the apostle Paul (I Corinthians 9:17), and it was in Paul FIRST that Jesus Christ showed His longsuffering to both Jews and Gentiles as “a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting” (I Timothy 1:16). And, right now, Saul is consenting unto Stephen’s death (8:1).

Therefore, since Paul is not saved yet, the 12 apostles do not know about the dispensational change yet. Although they do know that Jesus’ standing on the right hand of God was a significant event in Israel’s program, they do not yet know that Israel’s program has been set aside. Therefore, they continue to follow Jesus’ last instructions to them, which was to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in Jerusalem, which they do, in spite of the persecution that has just taken place. The Holy Ghost is no longer empowering them to fulfill the great commission, but their mindset is to continue to try to do so. It is not until Acts 15 that they agree to abandon the great commission (Galatians 2:9).

When mainstream Christianity does not rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15), they try to fit the events of Acts 1-8 into the current dispensation. A sad consequence of this is that they accuse the apostles of going against God’s will. Such is the case here. Christianity says that the persecution of 8:1 came about because the little flock was not going out to the rest of the world with the gospel as Jesus had commanded, and so God had to smother the apostles out of Jerusalem. (A similar argument is given for the choice of Matthias, in 1:26, as the twelfth apostle. “Paul is the twelfth apostle, not Matthias. The apostles were out of the will of God when they chose Matthias,” is the argument made by Christianity. However, this goes against scripture, since 1:24 says that the Lord chose Matthias as the twelfth apostle.) The problem is that, by saying the apostles were out of the will of God, Christianity is really saying that the Holy Ghost was out of the will of God. Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost when he spoke in 4:8. The whole assembly was filled with the Holy Ghost in 4:31. 6:5 and 7:55 both say that Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost. 5:32 says that the Holy Ghost is only given to those who obey God. Therefore, the apostles must have been obeying God in order to continue to be filled with the Holy Ghost. The real reason the apostles did not go away from Jerusalem was because God did not want them to, and even the persecution of 8:1 would not cause them to deviate from God’s instructions.

Based on this, we can conclude that, if God wanted the apostles to move on from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, they would have been leading the way, just like they had led the little flock in everything in early Acts up to this point. Instead, they stay in Jerusalem, while the rest of the little flock goes to Judea and Samaria, not to move along in the great commission, but to get away from persecution. Therefore, their staying in Jerusalem actually shows their obedience of Jesus’

instructions, since they continue to obey in spite of the persecution there.

8:3-4 Saul thought he would stamp out the little flock by putting them into prison. The result, though, was that the gospel spread around all of Israel (8:1), since they had to keep on the move to avoid being taken by Saul. (This is a great proof that Jesus' resurrection was not a hoax. After all, if the disciples stole Jesus' body, they would not have endured persecution for a lie that they told.)

By the way, the same thing will happen in the tribulation period. The little flock will "not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matthew 10:23). Yet, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). The way that the gospel goes to the whole world, even though the little flock only travels in Israel, is that they are brought before rulers and kings and the Holy Ghost speaks the gospel through them, as they are brought on trial before the whole world (Mark 13:9-11). Therefore, rather than snuffing out the gospel, persecution spreads the gospel. This should also tell us today, in the dispensation of grace, that it is not our job to reach all the nations with the gospel, since that will take place in the tribulation period. Therefore, money, given to missions, would be better spent reaching people in the area with the gospel, right division, and other sound doctrine, rather than financing tax-deductible vacations in the name of "missions."

8:5 God has set aside the kingdom program. In Matthew 10:5, Jesus told the little flock not to enter into any city of the Samaritans, and here is Philip preaching in the city of Samaria.

Although God has judged Israel and the kingdom of God will not come in right now, the gospel of repent and be baptized for the remission of sins is still being preached, since God has not started the dispensation of grace yet. Also note that the Philip here is not one of the twelve apostles for they were still at Jerusalem (8:1) and did not come to Samaria until after they "had received the word of God" (8:14).

8:6 God is also still doing miracles through the little flock, since Jews need to see a sign in order to believe (I Corinthians 1:22). Basically, Acts 8 records the gospel of the kingdom still being preached. Those believing will still have eternal life in God's kingdom on earth. The difference is that the kingdom is not at hand anymore. Believers will have to wait until the dispensation of grace begins in Acts 9 and ends with the rapture before they are resurrected to live in the kingdom, just like all other Jews saved before them.

8:7 Since they will still have eternal life in the kingdom, God still performs the two signs of the kingdom: 1) Casting out devils, and 2) Healing the sick.

8:9-11 Simon represents apostate Israel. Simon used sorcery, such that all of Samaria thought he was the great power of God. Similarly, apostate Israel used/will use Satanic power to do miracles to bewitch Israel into thinking they represent God (Matthew 7:22-23 and 12:27).

In 8:18-19, Simon offers the apostles money so that he may be able to give the Holy Ghost to whom he wills. This shows that, even when Satan does miracles, his power is less than God's power. Otherwise, Simon would not have asked for the greater power of the Holy Ghost. An example of this is seen in Pharaoh's magicians. They were able to duplicate some of God's miracles (Exodus 7:10-12, 7:20-22, and 8:6-7), but not all of them (Exodus 8:16-19).

8:12 All of Samaria gave heed to Simon (8:9-10). But, then they heard the gospel from Philip and believed that. Similarly, most all of Israel followed the Jewish religious leaders, but some of them left when they heard the gospel.

The gospel of the kingdom is to believe and be baptized (Mark 16:16), and that is what happens here, which tells us that people are still being saved under the guidelines of Israel's program, even though the kingdom is no longer "at hand" (Matthew 3:2 and 4:17).

8:13 We know that Simon genuinely believed the gospel, because this verse says that he did. But, then he put money above his belief, such that Peter said, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (8:21). This is another proof that the dispensation of grace has not started yet, because Simon loses his salvation about as quickly as he received it, while believers, in the dispensation of grace, cannot lose their salvation because they receive the atonement when they believe (Romans 5:11).

8:14-17 The dispensation of grace has not started yet because the apostles had to lay their hands on them to receive the Holy Ghost, whereas today we are sealed with the Holy Spirit when we believe (Ephesians 1:13-14). The reason one of the 12 apostles had to lay hands on them to receive the Holy Ghost was because Jesus gave unto them alone the power to remit or retain sins (John 20:22-23) because they had the Holy Ghost guiding them to determine if a person has a heart that is right with God. In this way, the apostles know everyone who had saved themselves "from this untoward generation" (2:40), which would receive the wrath of God for using wicked hands to crucify and slay Jesus (2:23,34-36).

8:15 gives an example of people who have their sins remitted because they have right hearts before God. The example of Simon is an example of a person who does not have his sins remitted because his "heart is not right in the sight of God" (8:21). Only the apostles, by the power of God, would know this. After all, in 8:13, we are told that Simon believed and was baptized. This is the formula for forgiveness of sins that Peter mentioned in 2:38, but, when Peter arrives, he determines that Simon's "heart is not right in the sight of God" (8:21) and tells him that he still needs to repent (8:22). Only God could know that his heart is not right, and the Holy Ghost lets Peter know that Simon's heart is not right.

Therefore, the 12 apostles are necessary to either retain or remit sins so that only those who have right hearts before God receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Today, in the dispensation of grace, the intermediary of the apostles has been eliminated,

and God directly gives forgiveness of sin and the Holy Ghost to all those who believe in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sins. It is a good thing, too, because man would try to abuse this power, just like Simon wants to do here (8:18-19).

8:18-19 Note that Simon did not receive the Holy Ghost, because his heart was not right (8:21). He believed (8:13), but his belief was like the devils' belief (James 2:19), meaning that, because Simon was already familiar with Satanic power, he knew that the power of the Holy Ghost was real. Therefore, he believed in the power, but he did not repent for the remission of sins (8:22). As such, he is a type of unbelieving Israel. Israel followed Jesus around for the miracles (John 6:2), but they did not believe the gospel (John 12:37). Similarly, Simon saw the miracles that the apostles performed (8:13), but he would not stop trusting in his own self-righteousness in order to enter God's eternal kingdom on earth.

Note that Simon did not want the Holy Ghost for himself. He wanted the power to give people the Holy Ghost. He had fooled all of Samaria with his sorcery (8:9-10) and was losing followers to the little flock's preaching of the gospel. Therefore, he tried to regain power over the people by purchasing God's power. Simon tried to buy the power of God, while the apostate, Jewish, religious leaders of Jerusalem tried to kill the power of God. Regardless, both Simon and the Jerusalem religious leaders will perish (8:20).

8:20 "The gift of God" (8:20), in this context, is the Holy Ghost. Peter says that Simon will perish if he tries to purchase God's gift. In the dispensation of grace, we are told that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Yet, people try to purchase this gift by their own works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Since a gift cannot be purchased, their works will perish with them in hell (Revelation 20:11-14).

8:22-24 Peter told Simon that the way to be forgiven is to repent and pray for God's forgiveness, meaning that he would have to change his mind and trust in God's imputed righteousness, through the gospel of the kingdom, to save him, rather than continuing in his sorcery. However, Simon is not interested in being forgiven. He just wants Peter to pray so "that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me" (8:24). The main "thing" that Peter told him would come upon him was "thy money perish with thee" (8:20). Therefore, all Simon cares about is not losing his money. "The love of money is the root of all evil" (I Timothy 6:10), and it is Simon's love of money that will keep him from entering the kingdom of God.

Note how Peter told Simon to "pray God" (8:22), and Simon told Peter, "pray ye to the Lord for me" (8:24). Religion goes to a holy leader, who prays to God on the person's behalf. Catholics do this by going to a priest who then absolves their sins on behalf of God. By contrast, God's Word tells Israel that they themselves may "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). Therefore, we see that Simon is a religious person, but he is not a saved person.

Finally, note that Peter says, “if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (8:22). Sin is not the act of murder, adultery, lying, etc., but it is the thought of those things. Jesus made this clear in Matthew 5:21-32. Christianity wants to make sin an action, rather than a thought, so that they can excuse themselves from their wickedness so that they do not have to believe the gospel, because they will work their way to heaven by their good actions.

8:25-27 Here are two, more clues that God has abandoned the kingdom program. First, the apostles “preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans” (8:25). In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus told these same apostles not to enter into any city of the Samaritans, “but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” God must have changed programs for them to do this.

Second, in Matthew 10:23, Jesus told them that they would not finish going through all the cities of Israel before Jesus’ second coming. However, here “the angel of the Lord” specifically tells Philip to preach the gospel to an Ethiopian man with Ethiopia being far south of Israel. So, God told the little flock in Matthew 10 to preach to Israel only during the seven-year tribulation period, and now God tells Philip to preach to an Ethiopian outside of Israel. Therefore, God has set aside the nation of Israel and the kingdom program to reconcile the earth back to Himself and will start the mystery program to reconcile the heavenly places back to Himself beginning with Paul in Acts 9.

8:29 The Spirit wants Philip to witness to a Gentile? Jesus would not even talk to a Gentile woman after she had spoken to Him, because He was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24). Jesus told His disciples: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles” (Matthew 10:5). Obviously, something has changed, because the Spirit now sends Philip to a Gentile. This shows that God has moved away from the plan to save Israel and then have saved Israel reach the Gentiles, because Israel has rejected all three members of the Godhead. At the same time, He has not begun the mystery program yet. Therefore, the gospel of the kingdom is still going out. The difference is that the kingdom is no longer at hand for Israel.

8:30-31 The man was reading Isaiah 53:7-8 (8:32-33), which foretold of Jesus’ death. He does not understand if Isaiah was speaking of himself or of someone else (8:34) because no man can tell him. That seems strange since he just came from Jerusalem (8:27), the center of the Jewish religion. This man is probably familiar with the promise that all nations will be blessed in Israel (Genesis 12:3), and that Israel is to be a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles (Exodus 19:5-6). In fact, in the kingdom, saved Israel will go to the Gentiles with the gospel (Matthew 28:19-20), and Gentiles will grab hold of the Jews so that they can go with them to Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:23) to hear the Mosaic law (Isaiah 2:2-3).

Here, however, this Gentile man, probably knowing that God is the God of Israel and knowing of the events that had happened to Jesus recently, decided to go to Jerusalem all by himself to get guidance from God’s people, the Jews. Instead, he left disappointed. No man in Jerusalem could even explain what Isaiah 53:7-8 means, even though Jesus Christ fulfilled that prophecy in Jerusalem just one

year prior! The Jewish religious leaders, who God had set up to lead Israel to God, did not point him to Christ. He was left to fend for himself.

However, God saw him and sent a member of the little flock to teach him the truth that Jesus died to save the world (John 3:16) and gave him the gospel of the kingdom so that he may have eternal life. Thank God that today, in the dispensation of grace, we do not ever have to look to a man to guide us into the truth of God's Word because we have the Holy Spirit to teach us "the things that are freely given to us of God" (I Corinthians 2:12).

8:32-33 The man went to Israel, and Israel could not tell him what the Jewish scriptures meant! Note that this quote of Isaiah 53:7-8 leaves out the last line, which reads, "for the transgression of My people was He stricken." That is because God will soon reveal to the apostle Paul that Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all" (I Timothy 2:6), not just for the "many" of Israel (Matthew 20:28). Therefore, the gospel is going out to the Gentiles now, including this Ethiopian eunuch.

"His judgment was taken away," means that Jesus was not given a fair judgment by being killed. "Who shall declare His generation," means that the generation of vipers, known as the Jewish religious leaders, was busy peddling doctrines of devils all over the world (Matthew 23:15,33) instead of declaring the generation of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1) for salvation. The answer to the question in Israel's program, then, is "a nation [the little flock] bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43) will declare His generation," as seen here by Philip speaking with this Ethiopian, who could not learn of the generation of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem.

8:35 The scholars and doctors of law could not tell this man what this scripture meant, but Philip could, because he believed God's Word. So, too, today, the seminary professors and high-browed pastors are too busy pushing their own doctrine and philosophies to teach what the Word of God says. You have to go to a Bible believer to hear the truth of God's Word from someone else. Like Philip does here, it is as simple as opening the scriptures and teaching them, because the scriptures testify of Jesus Christ, giving life to those who believe them (John 5:39).

Note that this verse says that, "Philip opened his mouth." Luke 21:15 says, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom." Mark 13:11 says, "whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." Therefore, we are probably told that Philip opened his mouth to show that the Holy Ghost was speaking the truth of God's Word through him to this eunuch. By the way, Jesus does the same thing in Matthew 5:2.

8:36-37 These two verses are further proof that the gospel of the kingdom is still being preached at this time. The gospel of the kingdom is to "repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins" (2:38). The fact, that the eunuch asks Philip to baptize him, shows us that Philip must have shared the gospel of the kingdom with the man. Philip did not initiate the baptism himself, probably because he knew that the man was a Gentile, which made him a little uneasy, since God had sent the little flock to the Jews only. However, since "the angel of the Lord" (8:26)

led Philip to this man, he relents and baptizes him, once he knows he believes.

By the way, modern Bible translations completely omit 8:37. Funny how they omit complete verses in the New Testament, but they do not omit genealogy in the Old Testament. That is because they do not mind you struggling over the pronunciation of complicated names, but they do not want you to know the clear message that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (8:37).

8:38-39 Incidentally, Philip would have sprinkled water upon the man, rather than dunking him, since Ezekiel 36:25 says, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.”

Just like Jesus shared with the two men in Luke 24, and He vanished out of their sight (Luke 24:31), the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away once this man was baptized. Note that the Spirit waited until after the man was baptized, because the eunuch was not saved until that point.

8:40 With the kingdom no longer being at hand, the gospel goes to other cities so that people may be saved and enter God’s kingdom when it does finally come, after the tribulation period is over.

9 God saves Saul (Paul) and begins the dispensation of grace. At the same time, God is not done with Peter yet, as Jews are still being saved through miracles done by him.

9:1 Here is Satan’s man, Saul, going out to kill members of the little flock just like apostate Israel will be trying to gather up members of the believing remnant to bring to the Antichrist to be killed during the last half of the tribulation period (Matthew 10:21; Revelation 13:15 and 20:4).

The last time we saw Saul was at the stoning of Stephen (7:58). Since “Saul was consenting unto his death” (8:1), it is reasonable to assume that he had a say so in Jesus’ death, just one year prior. Therefore, Saul is now continuing on his rampage to arrest and kill all Jews who go against the Jewish religion by believing God’s Word.

9:2 Saul’s authority, to arrest members of the little flock, comes from the high priest (9:1). The letters, to arrest believers, are written to the synagogues in Damascus. Since the dispensation of grace and the body of Christ have not begun yet, believing Israel is still following their program. As such, they are required to obey the Mosaic law (Matthew 23:2-3), which means that they are still going to the synagogues on the sabbath, even though they are being persecuted (8:1). Therefore, they obeyed God, although that obedience could have caused their death.

This method of arresting the little flock shows that the persecution is coming from within the Jewish religion. Persecution of believers always comes from religious people, because non-religious unbelievers do not care if someone believes the

gospel or not. But, the gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16), which includes salvation from religion. Today, in the United States, we also have persecution from the government, but that government is trying to enforce their religions of science, atheism, agnosticism, pleasure, etc. Therefore, even governmental persecution today is really religious persecution. The same is true for the little flock, because it is by the authority of the Jewish religion that Saul came to Damascus to arrest and kill believers (22:4-5).

9:3 “There shined round about him a light from heaven” (9:3). This light blinded him for three days (9:8-9). Saul, and everyone with him, heard a voice, but saw no man (9:4,7). All of these facts lead to the conclusion that Jesus Christ came to Saul, not in bodily form, but as “the true Light” (John 1:9). He was surrounding Saul as the Light, such that His voice came from the Light, and not from heaven. Hearing a voice on earth, but seeing no one, left Saul’s companions speechless (9:7).

9:4-5 The first, two things God tells Saul are that Saul is persecuting Him and that His name is Jesus. Right away, then, Saul knows that Jesus is Lord, which means He also must be the Messiah. That means that Saul’s going about to imprison the believing remnant is going against God’s people. Saul probably already had a suspicion that this was the case. After all, he knew the Jewish religion very well (Galatians 1:14), which meant that he also knew the Old Testament.

Note that Saul says, “Who art Thou, LORD?” He knows that the Lord is speaking to him, and he is saying in his mind, “I just know that He is going to say that He is Jesus.” The reason we know this is that Saul already knew Who God is. He is the “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). Therefore, there was no sense in asking for His name, unless Jesus is really the Lord after all.

Pricks were used to keep animals in line. Thus, kicking against the pricks means that Saul was rebelling against God, as a “brute beast” would (II Peter 2:12). Having been brought up in the Jewish religion, Saul had the opportunity to know the God of the Old Testament and the prophecies of the Messiah and how Jesus fulfilled those prophecies. By trying to kill the believing remnant, Saul was doing the opposite of what he should have been doing. Therefore, he was kicking against the pricks that God had placed around him, the pricks of God’s Word to keep him in line. He was “a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious” to God’s people (I Timothy 1:13).

Just like the Lord called Saul to come out of the Jewish religion to be saved, in the tribulation period, the Lord will call His people to come out of the Babylonian religious system of the Antichrist (Revelation 18:4). Speaking of the Antichrist, based upon Saul’s background, if Jesus had not started the dispensation of grace at this time, Saul would have been the Antichrist. What is great about that is that it shows that God’s grace is sufficient to save the vilest man ever to live, which means that NO ONE is too steeped in sin not to receive the gift of eternal life.

9:6 James 2:19 says that the devils tremble at God, because they know He has the power to destroy them. So, too, Saul trembled. However, Saul was also astonished. As a zealous Jew (Galatians 1:14), Saul knew that, if Jesus is Lord, he should have been destroyed. If Jesus is Lord, then He was sitting at the Father's right hand, until the Father made His enemies His footstool (Psalm 110:1). Since Saul had crucified Jesus by wicked hands (2:23), he was Jesus' enemy. Therefore, when Jesus came to him, scripture, up to this point, would have Saul believe that he would have been killed. When Jesus' wrath does come upon this earth, Revelation 6:15-17 shows everyone running to caves to try to escape His wrath. Saul probably tried to run also, but he could not because Jesus had encased him in His Light. Therefore, Saul is astonished that he is still alive, and asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (9:6).

Now, you may wonder how Saul was saved in the first place. After all, Jesus said, "whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matthew 12:32). Since Stephen was filled with the Holy Ghost (7:55) and Saul was consenting unto his death (8:1), Saul committed the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. The reason Saul was forgiven was because he did so in ignorance. How do we know? I Timothy 1:13 tells us so: "Who was before a blasphemmer...: but I obtained mercy, BECAUSE I did it ignorantly in unbelief."

This is not unlike the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The law says that the murderer of an innocent man is worthy of death (Numbers 35:30), but he is not worthy of death if he did it in ignorance (Deuteronomy 19:4-6). This means that Israel was worthy of death for killing Jesus Christ, except that they did it in ignorance (3:15-17), which means that they have an opportunity to be saved (3:19). Therefore, because Saul blasphemed the Holy Ghost in ignorance, he obtained mercy from the Lord.

9:8 Saul must have closed his eyes when the light came. Now, he is blind, which symbolizes his spiritual blindness in following the Jewish religion (Matthew 15:12-14).

9:9 Saul's being blind and not eating or drinking for three days is also a picture of the nation of Israel, who were blind to seeing God during the three years of Jesus' ministry (Luke 13:6-7) He was with them on earth, and were not spiritually fed by Him.

9:10 This is not the same Ananias as in 5:1, because that one was killed for lying to the Holy Ghost (5:5).

9:11 How appropriate that Saul is now on Straight Street, since the Lord had set him straight. Since Saul could not see, eat, or drink (9:9), he prayed. Today, regardless of physical limitations, all members of the body of Christ can pray.

9:12 Although he could not physically see, Saul, in his mind, "saw" a vision from God of Ananias coming to him and giving him sight. This would be another

confirmation to Saul that God has called him. More importantly, Jesus, the One he persecuted, has called him, and He will give him spiritual sight, in addition to physical sight. This is seen in 9:17, where Ananias said that he was sent so that Paul might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

9:13-14 Ananias is a man of God in that he obeys God in spite of Saul's reputation. Saul was being groomed by Satan to be the Antichrist, and God calls Ananias to come to Saul. This is a picture of apostate Israel in the tribulation period. They need the little flock to come to them with the gospel in order to save them from Satan's clutches in his Babylonian system.

9:15 Satan's chosen vessel becomes God's chosen vessel. I am sure Satan was upset when this happened. The man, he was grooming to be the Antichrist, becomes God's man to spread the gospel to the Gentiles. Saul will also preach to the Jews, and, when he goes into a city, he preaches to the Jews first (13:16). That is because the Holy Ghost, through Stephen, asked the Lord to give Israel a chance to be saved in the dispensation of grace (7:60). Also, the little flock begins preaching Paul's gospel, but to the Jews only (11:19). Since the little flock does not preach to the Gentiles and Paul will stop preaching to the Jews at the close of Acts (28:28), Paul is specifically called "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), even though he also temporarily preaches to Jews in Acts 9-28.

9:16 Although the tribulation period has been put on hold due to Israel not believing the gospel of the kingdom, Paul will go through great sufferings himself, because he will be proclaiming the truth of the gospel in Satan's world (II Corinthians 4:4). We are not told when God revealed to Paul the things he would suffer for the Lord. He may have told him during the three years he was in Damascus after he returned from Arabia (Galatians 1:17-18), which coincides with the "many days" of 9:23.

In any event, Paul gives a list in II Corinthians 11:23-28 of just some of the things he suffered, including being beaten five times by religious Jews, three times by rods, once being stoned and left for dead, and three times being shipwrecked, just to name a few. And, Paul still ministered for years after he wrote that list! However, God was fair to Saul because He showed him beforehand "how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (9:16). Therefore, he was forewarned, yet he still preached the gospel. Before Acts 9, Paul was zealous for the Jewish religion (Galatians 1:14). Now, he will be zealous for the gospel of the grace of God (20:24).

9:17 Ananias believes God such that he goes into Saul's house and immediately calls him "brother." Since he calls him brother and Saul has been praying, Saul must have already repented. But, he still needs to be water baptized in order to receive the Holy Ghost (2:38). Saul also needs to receive physical sight. Therefore, God sends Ananias to do those two things.

9:18 Both Saul's physical and spiritual eyes have now been opened. He knew all about the Jewish traditions, and he followed those traditions to the point of killing members of the believing remnant (22:4). Saul has repented, or changed his mind,

about following those traditions, and trusts in God's imputed righteousness through God's law covenant with Israel to save him. Therefore, he is baptized, receiving remission of sins according to the gospel of the kingdom and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost (2:38). This places Saul in God's eternal kingdom on earth as part of saved Israel.

Paul was also later saved by the mystery gospel and placed into God's eternal kingdom in heaven as a member of the body of Christ, but that did not happen at this time. We know this for two reasons. The first reason is that the pattern followed by Ananias is the pattern followed in early Acts for people to be saved into Israel's program. A person needed to repent and be baptized in order to be saved, and then he would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (2:38). One of the two reasons God sent Ananias was so that Saul would "be filled with the Holy Ghost" (9:17). In other words, Ananias had to preach the gospel of repent and be baptized for the remission of sins to Saul. Saul believed this gospel and was water baptized in 9:18, receiving the Holy Ghost.

The second reason we know that Saul was saved under Israel's program at this time is by what he says in Galatians 1:11-12. There he says, "the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I NEITHER RECEIVED IT OF MAN, NEITHER WAS I TAUGHT IT, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Ephesians 1:13 says, "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." In other words, a person receives the Holy Ghost after believing the gospel. Since Ananias was sent by God for Saul to "be filled with the Holy Ghost" (9:17), Ananias must have been the one, who gave Saul the gospel. Since Saul never received the mystery gospel of man, neither was he taught it, the gospel, that Ananias gave to Saul, must have been the gospel of the kingdom.

You cannot say that Saul received the gospel from Jesus Christ before this, because scripture does not record that. Saul asked Jesus Christ, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (9:6). The Lord's response was that he would be told in the city what he needs to do. In other words, the Lord sent Ananias to Saul with the gospel of the kingdom message. Compare this with 2:37 when men asked Peter, "what shall we do," and Peter gave them the gospel of the kingdom in 2:38. In other words, the answer to the question of what to do is to believe the gospel, which means that Ananias must have shared the gospel with Saul. Since Saul did not receive the mystery gospel from man, the gospel Ananias gave Saul was the gospel of the kingdom. This means that Saul was saved into Israel's program, not the body of Christ at this time.

Granted, the kingdom program had been set aside, and God's kingdom was no longer in the "at hand" phase, but salvation by trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection had not been revealed yet. Therefore, the gospel of the kingdom is still the method of salvation; it is just that the kingdom has been placed on hold. As mentioned before, Saul had rejected the gospel of the kingdom to the point of even ordering Stephen's stoning (7:58 and 8:1). However, he did it ignorantly in unbelief; therefore, he obtained mercy from God (I Timothy 1:13) just like Jews, in Acts 3, obtained mercy for their sin of ignorance (3:17-19). By contrast, the nation

of Israel, as a whole, with the stoning of Stephen, had committed the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness, so that the nation, as a whole, has been set aside by God and the dispensation of grace will soon start (Matthew 12:31-34). But, God offers forgiveness under the kingdom program to Saul because of his sin of ignorance.

Once the mystery is revealed to Saul, he will also be saved by believing in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins, since it is in Paul FIRST that Jesus Christ shewed "forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe to life everlasting" (I Timothy 1:16). Therefore, Paul is saved under both gospels, just like Abraham was saved under both gospels (Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:2-3 – justification by faith alone; Genesis 22:9 and James 2:21 – justification by faith plus works). This explains why Saul was water baptized here, even though water baptism has nothing to do with the gospel of the grace of God that Paul preached (I Corinthians 1:17).

9:19 Because the book of Acts is written to Israel, the details given, here, are only what are important to Israel. Because the book of Galatians is written to the body of Christ, the details given, there, are only what are important to the body of Christ. Therefore, merging the two accounts together to determine what happens now is an educated guess.

Paul says, in Galatians 1:15-18 that, once he received the mystery gospel, he "immediately...conferred not with flesh and blood." Rather, he "went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." He then went up to Jerusalem after three years.

The book of Acts never records him going to Arabia and returning to Damascus. It just shows him in Damascus, and then he goes to Jerusalem due to being persecuted (9:22-26).

It is my belief that, the spiritual meat, of 9:19, is the gift of the Holy Ghost. He is then "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16), which would be understanding that the Old Testament scriptures show Jesus as the Messiah, which means that He had to die for the sins of Israel at His first coming. He knew the Old Testament through the traditions of the fathers. Now, he learns the Old Testament through the eyes of faith.

9:20 If my comments in 9:19 are true, Paul did not preach Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins in 9:20. That is the gospel of the grace of God, which is part of the mystery, and Jesus Christ has not revealed the mystery to him yet. I make this conclusion because Galatians 1:15-18 says that, once Paul received the mystery gospel, he "immediately...conferred not with flesh and blood." Rather, he "went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." However, in 9:19-20, he was with the disciples in Damascus and preached in the synagogues that Christ is the Son of God.

Therefore, he is preaching the gospel of the kingdom, which is to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. He did preach Christ, as this verse says, but he preached Christ as BAD news, just like Peter had done in Acts 2 and 3. The bad news is that the Jews crucified their Messiah. By Paul's preaching Christ as the Son of God, they can see that they are subject to God's wrath upon them if they do not repent. The GOOD news is that salvation is still available to them by abandoning Jewish tradition, going back to the law covenant, and being water baptized.

I think the reason that Paul has not learned the mystery gospel yet is because there had to be a transition period to show the little flock that he has converted and is one of them. Once the amazement of his conversion wears off (9:21), Jesus Christ then commits "a dispensation of the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:17) unto him.

9:22 This verse says that "Saul increased the more in strength," which tells me that this refers to the time that Jesus Christ revealed the mystery gospel to him. He then went into Arabia to learn the doctrine related to this new dispensation, thereby, increasing the more in strength. He then returned to Damascus and confounded the Jews that Jesus is very Christ (9:22). In preaching Israel's program in 9:20, he amazed the Jews that he was now preaching the same message that the little flock had been preaching. But, then, in 9:22, he had the new information of the mystery gospel that these religious Jews had never heard before, such that they were confounded. In other words, religious Jews already had their arguments against Israel's program, but they had never heard the mystery. Therefore, they were confounded, not able to respond to this new information from God by the mouth of Paul.

9:23-24 Since Paul goes to Jerusalem in 9:26, the three years, that he spends in Damascus before going to Jerusalem (see Galatians 1:17-18), had to have taken place before 9:26. Therefore, the "many days," of 9:23, must refer to these three years. This makes sense in light of I Kings 2:38-39, where "many days" also equals three years. This means that Paul preached the mystery gospel and doctrine in Damascus for three years in 9:23. The religious Jews then sought to kill him, much like Jesus preached the kingdom message for about 3 years before He was crucified.

This shows that, even with the grace that God has extended to Israel with the mystery gospel, they have again chosen to continue to follow their traditions for they are now trying to kill their former leader, Saul. This begins the diminishing away of Israel, as they reject the gospel of grace from 9:22 – 28:29.

Again, the book of Acts does not make the distinction between the change in programs, here, because, as far as God is concerned, He is still trying to give eternal life to Israel. He is just doing so, now, with a different gospel than before.

9:25 Unlike Jesus and Stephen, the Jewish religious leaders were unsuccessful in killing Saul, since he is God's chosen vessel to spread the gospel to the Gentiles (9:15). But, Saul had to become the first "basket case" in order to survive.

9:26 This verse is yet another clue that God has set aside Israel's program. In 5:3, Peter knows that Ananias is lying to him because he has insight from the Holy Ghost to either retain or remit people's sins (John 20:22-23). Now, however, this same Peter does not believe that Saul is a disciple, even though Saul has just spent the last 3 years preaching the gospel in Damascus. Why doesn't Peter know? Because he has lost the power from the Holy Ghost to let people in or keep people out of God's kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19) because God's kingdom program has been put on hold in favor of the mystery program just revealed to Paul.

9:27 The Holy Ghost does not show the 12 disciples that Paul is saved. It is Barnabas, who has to show them, showing that God has set aside the kingdom program and has begun the dispensation of grace.

9:28 Paul says, in Galatians 1:18-19 that, when he did go to Jerusalem, the only apostles he saw were Peter and James. Yet, 9:28 says that Paul came in and went out with the apostles in Jerusalem. This may mean that the visit, mentioned in Galatians, happened before the one in 9:26. However, there does not seem to be another visit, especially since Galatians 2:1 implies that the next time he went to Jerusalem was 14 years later. Therefore, what probably happened was that Barnabas tried to get the apostles to accept Paul, but only Peter did. Although Paul went in and out with the apostles, they probably would not speak to him, since they were afraid that he would try to arrest and kill them.

9:29-30 We are not told who these Grecians are, but the context seems to indicate that they are part of the little flock in Jerusalem, especially in light of 6:1. If that is the case, then there are even members of the little flock who want to kill Saul as he speaks boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. That is because these Grecians believed a different gospel. They repented and were water baptized for the remission of sins (2:38), while Paul, having already received the mystery from Jesus Christ, was preaching salvation by trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Paul was preaching a new gospel, and these Grecians were not open to the idea that someone could be saved in a different manner than they were saved. Therefore, they become the enemies of the cross just like the Jewish religious leaders were, and just like the apostles were, except for Peter and James (Galatians 1:18-19). In fact, in Paul's epistles, Judaizers, preaching salvation by faith plus works, are seen often. If Paul was not preaching a different gospel, members of the little flock would not be trying to kill him.

However, some members of the little flock did believe that Jesus Christ had given Paul a new, different gospel, such that they protected him from being killed. These believers are called "the brethren," who are probably saved Jews of the little flock. By the way, if the kingdom program were still going on, this protection would not have been necessary, as the Holy Ghost would have struck these Grecians dead, as He did with Ananias and Sapphira (5:5,10).

9:31 The rest came about in the churches when they got rid of those opposing Paul. Then, they were multiplied as people began to believe the gospel of the grace of God given to Paul. We see this in Galatians 1:22-24, as Paul went to the churches in Judea. Because the apostles had nothing to do with Paul, these Judean churches did not know Paul by face (Galatians 1:22). However, they knew that they could believe the message that Paul preached because they feared the Lord (9:31), meaning that they believed God's Word to Paul, and they were comforted by the Holy Ghost (9:31), meaning that He strengthened their souls in the persecution that their own flesh brought them for believing God's Word. Thus, we see the church, the body of Christ, multiplying under Paul, much like we saw the church, the bride of Christ, multiply under Peter (6:7).

9:32 Although the kingdom program has been set aside and Paul has been chosen by God (9:15) to dispense the mystery gospel to all men (Ephesians 3:7-9), the book of Acts' focus is on the nation of Israel. Therefore, the narrative goes back to Peter now, who must have known about the change in dispensation, since Paul had visited with him for 15 days (Galatians 1:18). Perhaps "Peter passed throughout all quarters" (9:32) to inform saved Israel of the dispensational change, and that they were still subject to the rules of the prophecy dispensation (10:14; 21:20), since they were saved as part of that program.

9:33-35 Just because God has set aside the kingdom program does not mean that physical miracles stop happening. In fact, we will see God doing physical miracles through the end of the book of Acts, because the Jews require a sign (I Corinthians 1:22), and God wants to provoke them to jealousy (Romans 11:11).

In Luke 5:24-25, Jesus told a man sick of the palsy to take up his couch and walk. This is significant because Luke 5:17 says that, at that time, "the power of the Lord was present to heal" religious Israel. That is because the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 4:17).

Now, in 9:33-35, we see another man sick of the palsy, and Peter tells him to take up his bed and walk. This is significant because this is the first mention of Peter, the leader of the believing remnant of Israel (Matthew 16:18-19), since God put the kingdom on hold and began the dispensation of grace. We are also told that the man had been sick for eight years, and eight is the number of a new beginning in the Bible. Therefore, the healing of the man sick of the palsy is not just some random healing. Rather, it signifies that the power of the Lord is still present to heal religious Israel, but that power is now in the new beginning that Israel has by having the mystery gospel go to them under the new dispensation of grace.

Jews can still be forgiven of their sins and have eternal life with God, even though the kingdom program has been put on hold! What is amazing is that all those, who saw the man, turned to the Lord (9:35). What this shows is that the Jewish religious leaders had been holding back Israel from being saved by holding them to their own traditions and by rejecting the Messiah. Now that the kingdom program has been put on hold, there are no religious leaders over the Jews, and they are free to believe in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sins.

9:36-41 This is another miracle that shows that God is willing to save Jews in the dispensation of grace. Tabitha did good works, just like John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples did good works during His earthly ministry. Tabitha was sick and died, just like Israel killed their Messiah (spiritual sickness) and stoned Stephen (spiritual death). It may seem weird that they would wash a dead body and put her in an upper chamber, but this is also a type of what God did with Israel. He gave Israel a renewed opportunity to be saved by washing her with water (2:38) and giving her the Holy Ghost in an upper room (1:13 and 2:4). Tabitha was raised from the dead, just like Israel now has the opportunity to be raised from the dead, spiritually speaking, by believing the mystery gospel that has now been made manifest (Romans 16:25-26). "Lydda was nigh to Joppa" (9:38), just like the mystery dispensation was now nigh to the prophecy dispensation.

9:37 The Jews took great care of dead bodies. This verse shows that they would bathe them. Luke 24:1 shows that they would bring spices to the grave to mask the smell of the decaying process.

9:42 Just like in 9:35, we see many Jews saved in the mystery dispensation, as a result of the miracle that shows that Israel has a renewed opportunity to have eternal life with God.

9:43 We are told 3 times that Peter was lodging with a tanner (9:43, 10:6, and 10:32). A tanner was one who took dead animals' skins and made them into leather. Leviticus 11:8 prohibited a Jew from touching the carcass of a ceremonially unclean animal. Therefore, a good Jew, like Peter, would not associate with a tanner. However, there has been a dispensational change. God would soon show him a sheet of unclean meat and tell him, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (10:15). Therefore, Peter's lodging "many days" (9:43) with a tanner is yet another clue that the prophecy dispensation has been set aside and the mystery dispensation has begun.

10 The gospel of grace goes to the Gentiles for the first time recorded, and God calls Peter to give the message so that he may see the dispensational change firsthand.

10:1-2 Cornelius is "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house," but he is a Gentile. Because the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile was up through Acts 7, he did not receive the Holy Ghost like devout Jews (2:5) did in 2:41. Rather, he was to be blessed by God for blessing Israel (Genesis 12:3), which is why we are told that he gave alms (10:2). Now, however, with the change in program, God will make Cornelius a member of the body of Christ.

10:3-5 Now that the middle wall of partition has come down (Ephesians 2:14), God is going to save Gentiles with the gospel of grace and give them the Holy Ghost. Although Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), Peter is still learning about the change in programs. Therefore, God calls Peter to reach Cornelius, as a learning experience for Peter. Peter is also probably called to reach

Cornelius because of the great respect and God-like status that Peter has with Cornelius (10:25). Therefore, Cornelius also needs to learn that God has taken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile.

10:6 Peter will instruct Cornelius, but first Peter must learn that God is no longer a respecter of persons, which he will learn in 10:9-16. Most Christians think that God was never a respecter of persons, and it was Peter's Jewish pride that kept him from realizing this until now (10:34). However, God specifically says, in Deuteronomy 7:6, that He had made Israel "a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." Jesus Himself recognized this when He refused to even talk to a Gentile woman, finally saying, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). In Matthew 10:5, Jesus told Peter: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:5), and that he would continue to go only to Israel until Jesus' second coming (Matthew 10:23). Now, the Spirit tells Peter to go to the Gentiles (10:19-20). Clearly, there has been a dispensational change.

10:9-10 The fact, that Peter "became very hungry, and would have eaten," may imply that God made him hungry. Even if He did not, God waited at least until Peter was hungry to teach him that God is now going to the Gentiles apart from Israel, even though the Gentiles were unclean in Israel's program.

10:12-15 In Leviticus 11:4-8, God declares certain animals unclean to eat. Therefore, Peter has "never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (10:14). Now, though, God tells Peter that "God hath cleansed" all of the unclean animals. This is not in line with God's law in Israel's program, but it is in line with the dispensation of grace in which God says "for every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving" (I Timothy 4:4).

Therefore, a dispensational change has occurred from prophecy to mystery (Romans 16:25-26), which means the animals, that were unclean to Peter all of his life, have now been cleansed by God in this dispensation of grace. Note that 10:15 specifically says that "God hath cleansed" these animals, which means that the animals were unclean before then.

Christians, who refuse to recognize the mystery dispensation, will say that this vision is not about unclean animals being made clean, due to a dispensational change, but that the Gentiles are now clean in the eyes of God. Therefore, no dispensational change has occurred. According to 10:28, the Gentiles being clean in God's eyes is the correct interpretation of the vision. However, we need to note two things.

First, initially, Peter does not know what the vision means (10:17). Therefore, his response of "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (10:14) is in reference to actual unclean animals. If God had started a new dispensation at the cross, in which there are no unclean animals, Peter would have been eating those unclean animals since then. Since we are now in Acts 10

and he has not eaten any unclean animals up to this point, it shows that no dispensational change occurred at the cross or in Acts 2.

Second, Peter is still under the law, because he says that “it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation” (10:28). Therefore, even here in Acts 10, **because he is a saved member of Israel’s program**, Peter is STILL under the law. It is just that he has now learned that, because of the dispensational change, he can keep company with Gentiles now (10:28). But, he is still to be “zealous of the law” (21:20).

In other words, if a dispensational change had occurred at the cross or at Acts 2, in the 40 days that Jesus was with His disciples before His ascension, He would have taught Peter the lesson that he is “not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14), because God has blotted “out the handwriting of ordinances that was against [him], which was contrary to [him], and took it out of the way, nailing it to [Christ’s] cross” (Colossians 2:14). Instead, that was a message that God revealed to Paul first in Acts 9. Meanwhile, Peter will always be under the law, because he was saved as part of Israel’s program.

Therefore, the trance of 10:9-16 is not God getting it through Peter’s thick skull that he has been doing things incorrectly in Acts so far. Rather, it is God telling Peter that, due to the dispensational change in Acts 9, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is down, such that he need not isolate himself from Gentiles any more. They can now be saved by the dispensation of grace by which Paul was the first one saved in Acts 9 (I Timothy 1:16).

10:16-17 The vision of unclean meat is a major departure from God’s instructions to Peter before Acts 9. Therefore, God brings the vision to him three times, and he is STILL unsure of the vision’s meaning. Again, if God had not been continuing Israel’s program after the cross, Peter would have been eating previously unclean meat and going to the Gentiles before the Holy Ghost came in Acts 2. Instead, the Holy Ghost was given to them in Acts 2 to give them the power to CONTINUE Israel’s program, not to start something new. Therefore, Peter is now confused by God’s command to eat unclean meat, because it is directly against the law of Moses and all instructions he had received from God before Acts 9.

10:19-20 Peter is still thinking on the vision when the three men come from Cornelius’ house, because this is new information to him, due to the dispensational change that occurred in Acts 9. The Spirit has to tell Peter not to doubt what is going on. Peter needs to understand that, because the dispensation of grace has begun, God is saving the Gentiles, apart from the Jews, and He is saving them with the new gospel of grace, not the gospel of the kingdom. More important than learning that all animals are now clean, Peter needs to learn that all people are now clean. In other words, the vision of the formerly unclean meat that is now clean was to teach Peter that the formerly unclean Gentiles are now clean in the sense that they can be saved by the gospel. While Peter was only supposed to go to the Jews before (Matthew 10:6), now, the gospel is to go to all nations. While the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:17) was preached before,

which is to repent and be water baptized for the remission of sins (2:38), the gospel of the grace of God (20:24) is being preached now, which is to trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins (I Corinthians 15:1-4).

10:21 Note that Peter does not know what is going on. He just saw a vision of unclean meat that he is supposed to eat, even though God had previously said it was unclean. Now, the Spirit tells him to go with three men, but he does not know why they have sent for him. God keeps the details a secret, because the dispensational change is causing Peter to make some major changes, which his flesh does not want to make.

10:22 This verse tells us that Cornelius was a Gentile, who came to God through the Abrahamic covenant as a Gentile was supposed to. That is, he blessed Israel in order to be blessed by God (Genesis 12:3). The problem is that the nation of Israel is in unbelief. In 8:27-28, an Ethiopian man came to Jerusalem to worship and never found out the meaning of Isaiah 53:7-8, even though Jesus Christ fulfilled it just one year earlier. Given this, we can assume that Cornelius was also seeking answers from God as to what Jesus did. Was He the Messiah? He probably went to Jerusalem for the answer, and he got nowhere. Therefore, he fasted and prayed (10:30), and God has now answered his prayer by sending him Peter.

10:24 Peter's audience will be Cornelius' family and friends.

10:25-26 Cornelius "feared God...and prayed to God alway" (10:2). He is not a man who worships idols or men. He did not worship the angel in bright clothing, who came to him (10:30), but yet he worshipped Peter. This probably means that Cornelius thinks that Peter is God in human flesh. Peter had been elevated by people to being God himself. This is probably because everyone was healed when he passed by (5:15-16), and he had the authority to remit or retain sins (Matthew 16:18-19). The Jews may have been saying that Peter was the resurrected Jesus, or Cornelius may have seen Jesus as the one preparing the way for the Messiah, which would make Peter the Messiah, because of the miracles he did. This would explain why Cornelius worshipped Peter.

10:28 Peter got the point of the vision that God had sent him. He realized that he "should not call any MAN common or unclean," although the vision also told him that, since he would be with Gentiles, he did not have to worry about refraining from eating unclean food with them. Note that Peter says "that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation." This may be a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ's command not to go to anyone with the gospel but the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6).

Peter has learned the lesson from the vision that God has declared the Gentiles clean. They can now receive and believe the gospel for eternal life. This coincides with a change from the kingdom gospel of repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38) to the mystery gospel of trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for the atonement of sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Although, based on what Peter says in 10:34-43, it appears that he does not understand the mystery

gospel yet. What he does understand now, though, is that God has taken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile in the dispensation of grace (Ephesians 2:14).

10:29 In 10:6, God told Cornelius that Peter would tell him what he ought to do. In 10:22, Peter asked Cornelius' servants why they came to him. Now, Peter is asking why Cornelius sent for him. The answer is that Peter is to speak what God has told him to speak (10:33). Therefore, God will make sure Peter speaks the correct message to Cornelius, even though only God knows what is going on at this point.

10:30 10:7 says that an angel spoke unto Cornelius. Here, he describes the angel as "a man...in bright clothing." Most everyone thinks that an angel has wings, but the Bible says that angels look like men. Therefore, they have no wings. Cherubim are spirit creatures with wings (Exodus 25:20), and Satan is a cherub (Ezekiel 28:14). This tells us that Satan has gotten man to make angels look like himself. In doing so, he has "transformed" himself "into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14). He has also gotten men to worship angels (Colossians 2:18). Therefore, Satan has gotten men to worship him, and it all started with getting men to add wings to angels!

10:32 Jesus had given Simon the surname of Peter (Mark 3:16). He did so in the context of Peter being the leader of the little flock with the power to forgive or retain sins (Matthew 16:18-19). Throughout the gospels, he is called Peter (93 times) more than he is called Simon (41 times). Yet, three times in this passage (10:5, 10:18, and 10:32), he is called Simon, whose surname is Peter, even though this may be confusing, since he was residing with another man named Simon. The fact, that the name "Simon" is given, is probably a clue to the reader that Peter no longer has the power to forgive or retain sins, since the prophecy program has now been set aside.

10:33-34 Cornelius says that they are waiting to hear what God tells Peter to say, and then Peter opens his mouth and speaks for 10 verses before the Holy Ghost comes upon the Gentiles in his presence. Although Peter does not know what is going on, we can conclude, from 10:6, that he is speaking the words that Cornelius needs to hear. The first thing he says is that "God is no respecter of persons," which shows that the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has come down. There is no difference between Jew and Greek in the dispensation of grace (Romans 10:12-13).

10:35 This statement represents a major departure from the kingdom program. Even the little flock, who was scattered due to the persecution in 8:1, preached to Jews only (11:19). Now, Peter has learned that God also accepts Gentiles who fear God and work righteousness. The way he knows this is that God sent Peter to preach to one of these Gentiles.

10:36-37 Based upon the information in 10:34-43, the only thing Peter has learned in the dispensation of grace is that God is no respecter of persons. He does

not yet know the mystery gospel. Therefore, he starts with “the word which God sent unto the children of Israel” (10:36). It was not a gospel for all the world at the time. The gospel of the kingdom was only to the children of Israel. In 10:37, Peter says that they know this gospel. Yet, they were not saved by it, because it was not for them. The Gentiles, in Israel’s program, were not saved by repenting and being water baptized (2:38). They were saved by blessing Israel (Matthew 25:31-46). Therefore, Peter does not go into the details of this gospel, because it is not applicable to them.

Peter knows that Paul is preaching the mystery gospel, since Paul stayed with him for 15 days, three years after receiving the revelation of the mystery (Galatians 1:18). But, the mystery is new information that is hard for Peter to understand, since he was brought up in the Jewish religion and taught the kingdom program by Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:15-16). Therefore, in speaking here, Peter sticks to information about what Jesus Christ did that is not applicable only to Israel’s program.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Rather than wresting things he does not understand, which will cause Cornelius’ destruction (II Peter 3:16), he will speak what he does know. Since he will be speaking God’s Word, he trusts that, if his audience believes what he says, the Holy Spirit will give them eternal life. After all, if what he does know does not contain the mystery gospel in there somewhere, then God would not have sent him to speak to Cornelius.

He says that peace comes by Jesus Christ. Because all the kingdoms of the world belonged to Satan (Luke 4:5-8), Jesus had to bind Satan (Matthew 12:29) by giving His life a ransom for the many of Israel (Matthew 20:28 and Isaiah 53:11). With the beginning of the mystery program in Acts 9, Jesus Christ revealed to Paul that He really gave His life a ransom for all, not just the many of Israel (I Timothy 2:6). Peter also knows this now. Note also the parenthetical reference that "He is Lord of all," which shows that, as Lord of all, He has the ability to save Gentiles, and not just Jews.

10:38 Since Cornelius’ household knows the gospel of the kingdom and it does not apply to them, Peter skips it and talks about what Jesus Christ did, since He gave His life a ransom for all. 10:38 focuses on what Jesus, the man, did in His earthly ministry. He preached the gospel and performed miracles because “God was with Him.”

10:39-40 Peter says that he saw the things that Jesus “did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem.” In wording it that way, he is saying that Jerusalem is not the land of the Jews. However, in the Jewish mind, Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish religion, while Galilee, where Jesus had most of His ministry, was considered by them to be “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matthew 4:15), because the Galileans were not followers of the Jewish religion. What this shows is that God looks at things spiritually, while man looks at things physically. Since Peter is speaking God’s Word, he sees “the land of the Jews” as the place where “the Israel

of God” (Galatians 6:16) was, rather than where the Jewish religion was at its strongest.

Because the Jewish religion in Jerusalem was not the Israel of God, they slew Jesus and hung Him on a tree. (By saying that He was hung on a tree, rather than “He was crucified,” Peter is letting his audience know that Jesus became a curse for them because Deuteronomy 21:23 says that “he that is hanged is accursed of God.”) However, because Jesus had never sinned (Hebrews 4:15), God raised Him from the dead on the third day. Note how, in these two verses, Peter has just said that Jesus died and was raised from the dead by God on the third day. The mystery gospel is to trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Therefore, Peter just shared part of the mystery gospel without even realizing it!

10:41 Note that the resurrected Jesus was only shown to witnesses, who God chose. Spiritually speaking, God will only reveal His Word to those who are in the resurrected Jesus (Colossians 3:3), because the natural man cannot understand the things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-14).

10:42 Jesus will not show Himself to unbelievers until His second coming when He judges Him. That is why Jesus, before His crucifixion, said "Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23:39). Yet, believers do “see” Him, once they are saved, because they are placed into His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-6). Because of His victory over death (I Corinthians 15:54-57), He is now "the Judge of quick and dead," which means that He alone can judge all of humanity, both the alive (the quick), who are alive because they have eternal life through Jesus' death, and the dead, who are dead because they have not believed the gospel so as to pass "from death unto life" (John 5:24).

10:43 Peter says "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." He is not preaching the mystery gospel, because John 3:16 also says that “Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” and, at that time, salvation was of the Jews (John 4:22). “Believing in Him,” then, means believing the message that He preached. To Israel in their program, this message was to “repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins” (2:38). To those in the mystery program, it means to trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), which is the message that Jesus preached to Paul (Galatians 1:11-12). Therefore, “believing in Him” is a generic term that applies to either dispensation. This is important to understand because, in speaking this, Peter’s audience has now heard the full, mystery gospel. They heard that Jesus died and rose from the dead (10:39-40), and that believing in Him gives them remission of sins. Since they have now heard and believed the full, mystery gospel, they now have eternal life and so the Holy Ghost falls on them (10:44).

Now, when Peter says that "all the prophets witness" that salvation is by believing in Him, he is probably not referring to the Old Testament prophets, since the gospel of grace was kept hidden until revealed to Paul by Jesus Christ in Acts 9

(Ephesians 3:1-5). In referring to the mystery, Paul says that, "in other ages [it] was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5). Thus, all the prophets living during Peter's time confirm that the gospel of grace is the new gospel from God. (In fact, we are told that Jesus Christ specifically gave prophets to the mystery program (Ephesians 4:8,11) until the written Word of God was completed (Ephesians 4:13).) In other words, all of the prophets of the Lord, who Cornelius could go to, would confirm that salvation for the Gentiles comes by trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins, rather than needing to bless Israel, which was the method of salvation for Gentiles in Israel's program (See 10:2,22 and Genesis 12:3).

10:44 The change in gospels is seen in that the Holy Ghost fell upon those who believed. In 2:38, Peter said that they must repent and be baptized before they will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Here, however, they receive the Holy Ghost before they are baptized (10:47). The gospel of grace is now in effect, which does not require water baptism. Therefore, they hear the gospel, they believe, and they immediately receive the Holy Ghost. This shows when salvation occurs in this current dispensation. It happens immediately upon belief.

10:45 Not only was Peter sent to the Gentiles so that they might believe and receive the Holy Ghost, but he was also sent to show to saved Israel the change in dispensations. See how the saved Jews "were astonished" that the Gentiles received the Holy Ghost. If believers had been under the new covenant since the cross or since Acts 2, there would have been no astonishment here. Christians argue, "No, these Jewish believers were just biased against the Gentiles. They had racial pride and thought that God would only save them. That is why they were astonished." That argument is not true because 6:1 says that there were Gentiles among the little flock, and 6:3, 5 says that there was a proselyte, named Nicolas, who was full of the Holy Ghost. What this shows is that believing Gentiles had become members of the little flock before the stoning of Stephen, but they had done so by becoming Jews. In other words, Nicolas was water baptized and physically circumcised, in order to get on the right side of the middle wall of partition. What astonishes the believing Jews with Peter is that Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Ghost without doing those things. All they did was believe. Therefore, a dispensational change has occurred, because, up until this point, no Gentile had ever received the gift of the Holy Ghost without first being water baptized and physically circumcised (if male).

10:46 In spite of the dispensational change, these Gentiles speak with tongues, just like those receiving the Holy Ghost in Acts 2-7. There are at least three reasons for this. First, all of the Jews present needed to know that these Gentiles were now saved. Otherwise, Peter would have kept preaching and would not have learned when they became saved. Thus, the speaking in tongues taught the little flock that God had made a dispensational change.

Second, the gift of speaking in tongues is given to the body of Christ during the diminishing away of Israel during the dispensation of grace (Acts 9-28) to provoke

unsaved Israel to jealousy (Romans 11:11). In other words, unsaved Israel would now see that God is not going to wait around for them to believe, but He will now save Gentiles, in spite of Israel's unbelief. Some of unsaved Israel may then get jealous and believe the gospel of the grace of God.

Third, the gift of speaking in tongues is given for the body of Christ to learn sound doctrine for the new dispensation. Since the mystery "was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25), these new believers have no Bible they can read to learn mystery doctrine. Therefore, God gave the gift of speaking in tongues as a way of teaching mystery doctrine to the early church. Once the mystery doctrine was written down in God's Word, speaking in tongues was done away with (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

Therefore, speaking in tongues was given at this time to teach saved Jews, unsaved Jews, and saved Gentiles. After this, saved Jews no longer need to hear the speaking in tongues by these Gentiles, since saved Jews already have this gift themselves. Unsaved Jews need to hear speaking in tongues as long as the gospel of grace is going to them, which is through the end of Acts. Saved Gentiles need to hear the speaking in tongues until mystery doctrine is written down for them, which is also probably at the end of Acts. Therefore, speaking in tongues is not for today, but it was very beneficial during the Acts period.

10:47-48 Water baptism is specific to Israel's program and was required for salvation as part of the gospel of the kingdom (2:38). It is not for today as an outward manifestation of an inward work of grace. In fact, it is never that in any dispensation at any time. If you want an outward manifestation, allow the Holy Spirit to teach you God's Word and work through you as you live it out. Being sprinkled with or dunked in water only proves that you are not afraid of water. It does not prove that you have eternal life.

Nevertheless, Peter water baptizes these Gentiles so they will not offend the saved Jews who are present (10:45), since those Jews were water baptized for salvation. It will also help the saved Gentiles reach unsaved Jews should the opportunity arise. That is why Paul circumcised Timothy (16:3), and we do not see any new, Christian converts today lining up to get circumcised as an outward manifestation of an inward work of grace, which is more of an outward manifestation than water baptism is! "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews" (I Corinthians 9:20a).

11 The Jerusalem saints hear of God's saving of Gentiles without becoming Jewish proselytes. The first Christian church is established in Antioch. Mystery doctrine is taught for one year there. They are strengthened with might in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16), such that they decide on their own to help the poor, Jerusalem saints, who had sold all that they had. Therefore, the body of Christ is starting to grow, and Gentiles are a big part of it, since the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has come down (Ephesians 2:14).

11:2-3 Here comes the opposition. Before, opposition to what God was doing

came from the Jewish religious leaders. Now, it comes from within the little flock of saved Jews, who see Peter's eating with Gentiles as breaking the law. Again, if the current dispensation had started at the cross or at Acts 2, there would have been no opposition here. Paul records, in Galatians 2:12, that Peter will later buckle under pressure from Jews by separating himself from Gentiles. However, at this time, he shares Gentile salvation apart from becoming proselytes, and these saved Jews glorify God (11:18). Thus, now all the saved Jews in Jerusalem, both those who came with Peter and those who stayed home, know that God has made a change in dispensations.

11:4-17 God only has to say something once for it to be true. However, when He repeats Himself, you know that what He is saying is of particular importance. The story of Paul's conversion, ushering in the dispensation of grace, is so important that God tells it to us in Acts 9, 22, and 26. Similarly, the first recording of Gentiles being saved by the gospel of grace is important enough for God to mention it both here and in Acts 10.

11:5,10 The sheet of meat was "let down from heaven" and was, at the end "drawn up again into heaven." The meat represents the Gentiles being declared clean by God under the new, mystery dispensation. If they were not clean, they could not have been let down from heaven or drawn up into heaven. This is a clue to the fact that the Body of Christ has now been raised up to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

11:6-7 With the previously unclean meat coming down from heaven, God is primarily telling Peter that the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has come down, such that all men, both Jew and Gentile, may now be saved by trusting in Jesus' death as atonement for sins. Gentiles can now be reached directly with a gospel from God, rather than having to wait for Israel, as a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:5-6) to preach the gospel to them in the millennial reign.

11:8 "Not so, Lord" is a contradictory statement, because, if God is Peter's Lord, then he would not argue with Him. However, it is easy to understand why Peter argued because God has changed the rules on him. In the kingdom dispensation, there are many unclean animals (Leviticus 11:4-8), and the Gentiles are unclean to preach the gospel to (Matthew 10:5-6). Now, in the mystery dispensation, all animals are clean to eat (I Timothy 4:4), and all people may be reached with the gospel (Ephesians 2:14-18). So, when Peter says, "Not so, Lord," he does so based on the Mosaic law, and not because he is an unbeliever.

11:9 "God HATH cleansed" unclean animals and unclean people (the Gentiles), meaning that they were not clean in the prophecy program, because God gave them up, due to their unbelief (Romans 1:28). However, God knew that some Gentiles would believe, and so God winked at them (17:30), under Israel's program, knowing that He would turn His attention back to the Gentiles with the mystery program. Therefore, the Gentiles are now clean if they believe the gospel of the grace of God.

11:10 Peter had to see the vision three times before he would be willing to go with the Gentiles, who were sent to him. The sheet of meat being drawn up again into heaven also refers to how the saved members of the Body of Christ will be raptured up to heaven. We have already been raised up to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). Thus, the rapture is us being “drawn up again into heaven.”

11:12 In 10:23, we were told that “certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.” Now, we are told that there were six brethren, who went with Peter.

11:14 Detail is added, here, telling us that God told Cornelius that Peter would tell him how to be saved. They were already following Genesis 12:3 by blessing Israel in order to be blessed. However, Israel was in apostasy, and the mystery dispensation had now begun. Therefore, God had Peter tell them the mystery gospel so that they could be part of the body of Christ. Nevertheless, Peter did not understand much about it, which is why this verse says that he told them words, rather than saying that he gave them the gospel.

11:15 This verse shows that no works are required for salvation under the current dispensation of grace. In the gospel of the kingdom, they had to be water baptized before they were saved (2:38). Now, though, they are saved immediately upon belief in the gospel.

11:16-17 Peter quotes 1:5, and Christians immediately object to the mystery by saying that the Gentiles, in Acts 10, were saved in the same way as the 3,000 in 2:41 were saved. However, that is NOT what Peter is saying. Peter is not giving the gospel here. Rather, he is defending his actions before a contentious, but saved, Jewish audience (11:2-3). These people knew that Jesus said that the Holy Ghost would only come upon believers. Peter is saying that, since the Holy Ghost came upon the Gentiles, what happened in Acts 10 was of God, just like what happened in Acts 2 was of God. This means that, if Peter had not eaten with Gentiles, he would have been withstanding God. Therefore, rather than contending with Peter over breaking the law, they should be glorifying God that Gentiles were saved, and that is what they do in 11:18. The quote of 1:5, then, does not negate the dispensational change that had occurred. Rather, it shows that the mystery dispensation is of God, just like the prophecy dispensation is of God.

11:18 “To repent” means to change your mind. (This definition comes from Numbers 23:19.) It does NOT mean to turn from your sins. (This definition comes from Christianity.) If you could turn from your sins, then God would not save you, because God’s love was commended to us “while we were yet sinners” (Romans 5:8). God’s love is not commended to self-righteous people, who have somehow made themselves good enough for God to save them! Rather, it is sinners, who God has called to repentance, or to change their minds (Matthew 9:13).

Therefore, the statement, here, about the Gentiles repenting unto life, just means that they stopped trusting in their own self-righteousness and trusted in God’s

imputed righteousness to give them life through believing the gospel. In the kingdom dispensation, repentance meant to change your mind about following Jewish traditions and start believing in God's law covenant to save you. Today, in the grace dispensation, repentance means to change your mind about your own works and religion getting you into heaven and trust in Jesus' death and resurrection to give you eternal life. Either way, repentance is required for salvation and is not to be confused, here, with the gospel of "repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins" found in 2:38.

11:19-20 11:19 takes us back to 8:1 when the little flock was scattered due to the persecution that occurred at the time of Stephen's stoning. Because the mystery had not been revealed yet, these believers preached "unto the Jews only," as Jesus had commanded them to do (Matthew 10:5-6). After the mystery was revealed to Paul in 9:22, Paul went to the churches of Judaea with the new gospel of grace (Galatians 1:22 and 9:31), and we see "all the prophets" of God, in 10:43, witnessing that the gospel of grace is the gospel for today. Word, then, must have spread to the believers in Cyprus and Cyrene because, even though they only spoke the gospel of the kingdom to the Jews before, they are now preaching the Lord Jesus to the Gentiles (11:20). This shows that the mystery gospel is now being preached.

11:21 "The hand of the Lord was with them" shows that God is the One Who changed dispensations. If the mystery was something that man had concocted, God would not be with them preaching to the Gentiles, since He told them to preach to Israel only (Matthew 10:5-6). The fact that "a great number believed" in Antioch shows that the nations are now receiving eternal life, continuing what we saw in Acts 10 with Cornelius and those with him.

11:22 It has now been over 3 years since the mystery was given to Saul (Galatians 1:18). God said that Saul would preach the gospel to all people (9:15), but the Jerusalem church does not like Saul, because he had persecuted them before the dispensational change. Barnabas was the first one in Jerusalem, who was excited about Saul and the new dispensation that God had started with him (9:26-27). Since Barnabas was "one of them," the Jerusalem saints send for Barnabas to reach these new believers. Because Saul is the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:15), Barnabas will soon recognize that he is in over his head and will go to Tarsus to get Saul so that he can come and give sound, mystery doctrine to these new believers (11:25).

11:23 When Samaritans were saved in Acts 8, the Jerusalem apostles sent Peter and John to them to pray for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost (8:15-17). In Antioch, though, there is no mention of an extra step that is necessary in order for them to receive the Holy Ghost. This shows the change in dispensation. The Holy Ghost came upon the Antiochians immediately upon believing the gospel, as He did in 10:44, while, in the kingdom dispensation, the 12 apostles had the power to retain or remit sins, and so the Holy Ghost only came upon believers through them (John 20:22-23). Therefore, when Barnabas arrives in Antioch he sees "the grace of God." In other words, Barnabas sees that they already have the

Holy Ghost.

11:24 Much people being added to the Lord means that more people were believing the gospel as Barnabas was there. It is not a reference to the people who had already believed before Barnabas got there, because those people had already been added to the Lord (10:21). In other words, Barnabas did not add them to the Lord; their belief in the gospel added them to the Lord.

11:25 Apparently, Barnabas is over his head. He knows about Israel's program, having had all things in common with the little flock of Israel (4:35-37). But, he does not know much about the mystery program. Jesus Christ had made Saul the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:15) and had spent three years educating him with the doctrine for this new dispensation (Galatians 1:18). Jesus Christ had specifically committed the dispensation of the mystery gospel to Saul (I Corinthians 9:17). Therefore, about all Barnabas can do is exhort the new believers to cleave to the Lord (11:23), but he does not know how to answer their questions and edify them in the doctrine. Therefore, he goes to Tarsus to get Saul to bring him to Antioch (11:26).

Now, you may wonder why Saul was not already in Antioch. There are probably two reasons: 1) He does not get along well with the Jewish believers yet, and so they probably do not want him there, which is why they called for Barnabas instead, and 2) Saul has undergone a major transformation from being zealous of the Jewish religion (22:3 and Galatians 1:14) to learning something completely new from Jesus Christ. Today, we have God's completed Word, and Christianity thinks we are bonkers for believing the mystery. How much more, then, must all religious Jewish people, both believers and unbelievers, think that he is a wacko? Therefore, Saul is probably apprehensive about sharing the mystery information that Jesus Christ has revealed to him.

11:26 This is the first record of the edification of the body of Christ in the Bible. Saul had learned much from his three years with Jesus Christ, such that he is able to spend a whole year, instructing these believers in mystery doctrine. "The disciples," here, are not the 12 disciples. Rather, it is a reference to Saul's disciples—those who are being discipled in the gospel of grace and the mystery that Saul had learned by direct revelation from Jesus Christ over a three-year period (Galatians 1:12,17-18).

The term "Christian" is first used here. It is significant, then, that the term "Christian" was first used in reference to following what Christ revealed regarding the mystery program. The term "Christian" is used today, and most everyone thinks it means following what Christ said to do in Matthew through John. However, because Christ's instructions to us today are found only in Paul's epistles, a Christian today should follow the instructions in Paul's epistles, not Christ's instructions in Matthew through John.

The reason, that the term "Christian" is first used here, is because believers, of the current dispensation, are part of the body of Christ. So, they are to be Christlike or

Christians, being part of His body. When Christ came to earth, He did NOT start something new. Rather, He just continued what God started in Genesis 12 with Abram. He did not speak of His Own accord, but He spoke whatever His Father commanded Him to speak (John 8:28,38, and 15:15). Therefore, the believers, in Matthew – John were following God the Father, as directed to do so by Christ. By contrast, Jesus Christ began the mystery program after His ascension. By then, God had made Him Lord (2:36). As Lord, He called Saul on the road to Damascus (9:5). Therefore, mystery believers follow Jesus Christ, as directed to do so by Paul (I Corinthians 11:1), making them Christians, a title that is NOT appropriate for believers in Matthew – John. (Having said that, “Christian” is still an appropriate title for believers in Israel’s program AFTER the cross, because they would also be following Christ after He became Lord. Therefore, Peter calls prophecy believers Christians in I Peter 4:16.)

11:27-28 When the word “prophets” is seen in Scripture, people usually think of the Old Testament. However, God had prophets until the time that the word of God was completed. Ephesians 4:8,11 says that Christ gave prophets to the body of Christ, and Ephesians 4:13 says that they were given until the word of God was completed. The “prophets,” here, show that, when Peter said in 10:43 that all the prophets give witness to Jesus Christ, he was talking about the prophets in Jerusalem at the time that God gave to Israel in their dispensation until the word of God was completed.

Agabus is also mentioned in 27:10-11, where he says, by the Holy Ghost, what will happen to Paul if he goes to Jerusalem. Therefore, he is a true prophet of God. When Jesus stood up in 7:55 and set aside the kingdom program, He gave Israel another chance to be saved through the gospel of grace given to Paul. However, God still sends punishment to Israel for their rejection of the kingdom program through this worldwide famine that will result in the Jews being commanded by Claudius Cesar to leave Rome (18:2). There will also be persecution within the church by Herod (12:1). In other words, because of Israel’s unbelief, their program has been set aside. God will still give them the gospel of grace through the apostle Paul, but they will be punished with persecution and famine and having to leave Rome, because of their unbelief. This is how the Lord chastens them so that they may believe and have eternal life with Him (Hebrews 12:5-7).

11:29-30 Jesus commanded the little flock to sell all that they have (Luke 12:33 and Matthew 19:21). This was not a suggestion only to be obeyed by those who felt “led of the Lord” to sell their possessions. Rather, this was a commandment for ALL believers to follow. We see them obeying Jesus’ command in 2:45 and 4:34-35. This was done because, if Israel believed the gospel, the seven-year tribulation period would have started, and their possessions would have been taken away from them by the Antichrist in the middle of the tribulation period because they would not take the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-17). They also needed to concentrate their full efforts on reaching all of the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6), because they would not even finish going over all the cities of Israel before Jesus’ second coming (Matthew 10:23). Therefore, they might as well quit their jobs and use their possessions now for the furtherance of the gospel,

rather than having them taken away by the Antichrist.

However, because Israel did not believe the gospel, the kingdom program has been set aside. The end of the world will not come in seven years, and God's promise to give them the food they need to live on is no more in the dispensation of grace (Matthew 7:7-11). This means that the Jerusalem saints are poor and in need (Romans 15:26). Therefore, the Christians in Antioch sent a gift to the Jerusalem saints to help them. This is another sign that the kingdom program has been set aside. If it had not, they would have asked for God to give them what they need, and He would have provided. "Take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?' ... For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32). Instead, they have to rely upon help from the Christians of the grace dispensation.

The fact, that Saul is involved in this relief, will help his standing with the Jerusalem saints. This will help prepare the Jerusalem saints to believe that God has started a new dispensation, and it will help them take Saul's side in the dispute that occurs in Acts 15.

12 God delivers Peter from prison, symbolizing God's deliverance of the little flock at the end of the tribulation period. God kills Herod, symbolizing God's destruction of the Antichrist. The word of God grows in Jerusalem, symbolizing many people in Israel being saved and entering God's kingdom at the end of the tribulation period.

12:1-3 The great persecution that comes upon Israel is a sign of the prophecy dispensation being put on hold. Israel's program being set aside means that God allows Satan to persecute the church, as a way of chastening Jews so that they may believe the gospel of grace. Therefore, we saw a great persecution in 8:1, and we see another one here. Apostate Israel is also seen, here, as still hating the little flock, such that the Jewish religious leaders are happy to see one of the 12 apostles—James—being killed. As such, Herod is a type of the Antichrist.

Note the parenthetical note at the end of 12:3 that Herod apprehended Peter just before the days of unleavened bread. This was a feast, immediately after the Passover, to celebrate being led out of Egypt, which, in its full meaning, is a celebration of being led out of bondage to sin and Satan (Exodus 12:17). However, due to their unbelief, Israel is still in bondage to sin and Satan, even though Jesus was the complete Passover Lamb sacrifice to get them out of this bondage. The first killing of one of the 12 apostles and the imprisonment of Peter show that Israel is still in spiritual bondage.

12:4 "Four quaternions" of soldiers would be a total of 16 soldiers. This detail is told to us so that we know that Peter was well guarded.

This verse is the only mention of Easter in the Bible. It was not a celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Rather, it is the pagan celebration, in which they celebrate the resurrection of the god, Tammuz, who was brought back to life by his mother, Ishtar, pronounced Easter. The tradition of colored eggs also comes

from this pagan celebration, since Tammuz was born by being hatched from an egg.

The feast God established was Passover, which took place just before the days of unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:5-6). Thus, the little flock had already celebrated Passover. At that time, Easter was celebrated by the pagans at the time of the vernal equinox, which was around March 21, which would have been after Passover. Herod was a Gentile king, and he intended to keep Peter in prison until after his pagan holiday of Easter was over. Thus, it is Herod, who celebrated Easter. It was not believers, who celebrated that holiday. The Jewish believers celebrated Passover and unleavened bread, not the pagan holiday of Easter.

12:5 I Thessalonians 5:17 commands us today, in the dispensation of grace, to pray without ceasing. This does not mean you have your eyes closed and pray to God all the time. Rather, it means that you should always be thinking over sound doctrine as you make decisions in life. Here, we see an example of prayer without ceasing. There is no mention of an around-the-clock prayer chain going on. They could get a good night's sleep and still pray without ceasing for Peter, because that just means that they were constantly thinking about Peter's well being.

12:6-7 Jesus told Peter that he would be carried away to be killed, but that would not happen until he is old (John 21:18-19). God still has work for Peter to do. Therefore, He sends the angel of the Lord to deliver him. Peter's deliverance from prison also symbolizes God's deliverance of the little flock from apostate Israel and the Antichrist at the end of the tribulation period.

12:8 "The angel of the Lord" is the Lord Jesus Christ, since He speaks as God, e.g., Exodus 3:2-6. Acts 12 is the last mention of "the angel of the Lord" in scripture, which is another indication that the prophecy dispensation has been put on hold, since God operates in the spiritual, rather than in the physical realm, in the mystery dispensation.

There may be some irony, here, because the angel of the Lord, who is Jesus, tells Peter to "follow Me" (12:8), just like He told him at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry (Matthew 4:19). This is probably an indication that Peter has a new calling from the Lord, which is to edify members of the little flock, as opposed to preaching the kingdom gospel to the lost sheep of Israel. Peter recognizes this new calling in Acts 15, according to Paul's account in Galatians 2:7-9. So, Jesus calls Peter, here, to go only to the little flock with kingdom doctrine, while, in the next chapter, the Holy Ghost calls Paul to begin dispensing the mystery gospel (I Corinthians 9:17) to all unbelievers (13:2).

12:10 Passing "the first and the second ward" before "the angel departed from him" may be a sign of how the Lord Jesus Christ will be with Peter throughout the time between Jesus' first and second comings (Matthew 28:20). The opening of the gate, that leads to the city, is probably a sign of how the Lord Jesus Christ will enter through the gate and dwell with saved Israel in the New Jerusalem (Ezekiel 43:1-7).

12:15-16 Although the little flock prayed for Peter's release from prison, they did not have faith that God would miraculously deliver him from prison, because "they were astonished" when they actually saw him. This shows that having faith in God to do a miracle had nothing to do with God doing the miracle. God's will is the determining factor. Today, God has ceased doing physical miracles because the word of God is complete (I Corinthians 13:8-10). Therefore, God's will today is always not to do the physical miracle. At the time of Acts 12, though, physical miracles still occurred since the word of God was not complete yet.

Note the influence of religion within the little flock. Their response to Rhoda was that it was Peter's angel that she saw. Many people today believe that there are guardian angels, but there is no evidence of this in scripture. Apparently, the belief in guardian angels goes back at least 2,000 years. The scripture used for this today is Matthew 18:10, which says, in reference to immature believers, "That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." The reason, given for this, is "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Matthew 18:11). In other words, the job of these angels is to make sure the lost sheep of Israel are found and enter God's kingdom. This does not mean that there are angels to protect people physically. Besides, how could these angels protect people physically, when they are always looking at the Father, rather than looking at the actual people?

12:17 The James, here, is James the brother of Jesus, since James the apostle had already been killed (12:2). Now that the kingdom dispensation is over, in which Jesus had appointed Peter the leader (Matthew 16:18-19), we will see James take a bigger role, speaking up at the Jerusalem council (15:13-21), since Peter no longer holds the kingdom keys since the kingdom has been set aside and the gospel of grace is going out. (Peter probably stepped down as the leader in 9:32.)

12:20 Now, we skip to a different story involving Herod. This story is told so that we know that the threat, that Herod had been to the little flock, has been eliminated since God killed him.

12:22-23 Herod is a type of the Antichrist. The Antichrist will sit on the throne and declare himself to be God. Herod sat on a throne, and others declared him to be a god. God judged Herod by killing him and having him eaten of worms. The Antichrist will be killed by God and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20), "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44). Herod killed a member of the little flock (12:2), and the Antichrist will kill members of the little flock, too.

12:24 With Herod out of the way, the word of God is growing in Jerusalem. The word of God, though, is different than it was when it grew in Jerusalem from Acts 2-6, because it is now the gospel of grace, not the gospel of the kingdom. Therefore, instead of telling people they are saved by repenting and being water baptized (2:38), the saints at Jerusalem are telling people they are saved by trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for atonement of their sins (I

Corinthians 15:3-4). Therefore, God's forgiveness of Israel by Stephen's words (7:60) is having the same, initial effect that God's forgiveness of Israel by Jesus' words had (Luke 23:34). Namely, Jews in Jerusalem are being saved. However, just like Israel rejected God's offer of salvation in the kingdom program in Acts 2-7 three times (4:18, 5:40, and 7:59), we will see Israel reject God's offer of salvation in the grace program in Acts 13-28 three times (13:46, 18:6, and 28:27-28).

12:25 Barnabas and Saul were in Jerusalem, delivering the gift that the Christians in Antioch had given them to give to the poor saints in Jerusalem (11:29-30). With that being done, they return to Antioch (13:1) with John Mark, as they need another minister in Antioch with the congregation growing there.

13 Paul and Barnabas go on their first apostolic journey to proclaim salvation unto the ends of the earth (v. 47). Many believe, but there is opposition by religious leaders. That is okay, because their expelling of Paul and Barnabas just means that another region will now hear the gospel of grace.

13:1 Since the Gentile church in Antioch has grown to the point of having several prophets and teachers, the Antioch church is established, such that they do not need Saul. It is now time for him, as the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), to reach other Gentiles with the gospel of grace.

13:2 "Ministered to the Lord". This is an interesting phrase. It means that they were furnishing or supplying the Lord. Since those saved were members of the Body of Christ, preaching the gospel and mystery doctrine brings more people into the Body of Christ and edifies current members of the Body of Christ, meaning that the Lord is furnished with more and better functioning body parts. So, too, today, we are ministering to the Lord when we preach the gospel of grace.

Also in this verse, the Holy Ghost separates out Barnabas and Saul to deliver the gospel of grace to reach Jews and Gentiles with the gospel of grace in other territories. The 12 apostles are not called to do this work, because they are part of the kingdom program. They will be sitting on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). Barnabas was also saved under the kingdom program (4:36), but, not having a promised position like the 12 apostles, God has him help Paul with spreading the gospel of grace. Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). As such, he does the preaching. Barnabas' role is to be a consoler of Paul, as 4:36 says. Given the great physical trials Paul would face, e.g., the list in II Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul would definitely need some consoling! Therefore, God has called Paul to spread the gospel of grace to the unsaved, and Barnabas will go along to console him. Meanwhile, the 12 apostles' ministry is to edify those saved under the kingdom program. We see Paul and the 12 apostles come to such a conclusion in Galatians 2:9, albeit this conclusion is reached after Paul and Barnabas go out.

13:3 Fasting and praying, in order to hear from the Lord what one should do or in order for someone to receive physical healing, should not be followed today. The reason is because God speaks today through His Word and He does not bring

physical healing upon people because God's Word is complete (I Corinthians 13:8-10). "The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13) is found in that completed Word. Therefore, God treats us like full-grown, adult sons (Galatians 4:5-7), who can make decisions based upon God's completed Word, rather than having to wait for some inner impression and confirmation from circumstances that God wants us to do a certain thing. At the time of 13:2, however, no mystery doctrine had been written down. Therefore, the fasting and praying were necessary.

13:5 Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), but he was also sent to "the children of Israel" (9:15). When Stephen asked God not to charge Israel with his stoning (7:60), God granted that request by having Paul go to "the Jew first" with the gospel of grace (Romans 1:16). Therefore, the pattern we will see Paul following in Acts is that, when he comes to a city, he will preach the gospel in the Jewish synagogue first. Then, he will go to the Gentiles.

This verse also mentions that John was ministering with them. This would be John Mark (12:25 and 15:37), the writer of the book of Mark. He was not one of the 12 apostles.

13:6-12 This story demonstrates the condition of Israel at the time. They are in Satanic captivity by the hand of the Jewish religious leaders, as represented by Barjesus, even though they think they are following God. The Jewish religious leaders try to turn Israel away from the gospel of grace, just like Elymas tries to do here. God reveals the truth through a miracle, and now Israel knows their religious system is false. Therefore, they have to make a choice. Those trying to follow God will make the choice that Sergius Paulus does, i.e., believe the gospel of the grace of God. The miracle is of blinding Elymas, which is a type of how God blinded the Jewish religious leaders to the truth, since they were already in unbelief (John 12:37-40). Note that the blinding was only for a season, meaning that Israel now has a renewed opportunity to be saved under the new dispensation.

13:6-7 Satan has a stronghold in Paphos. A man named "Barjesus" is there, which means "son of Jesus," but he is no son of Jesus Christ, because he is a false prophet. Satan is so good at deception that a prudent man, Sergius Paulus, had been fooled by this Barjesus such that he believes Barjesus and wants Barjesus to get Barnabas and Saul to speak to him. In other words, this prudent man thinks Barjesus is God's man, not Satan's man, such that he thinks that Barjesus and Saul are on the same side.

Note that Barjesus is called "a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew" (13:6). The Jews were following their religion, which was not of God. They spoke in God's name, which made them false prophets. It also made them sorcerers, because they were bewitching people (Galatians 3:1) into thinking they are obeying God. Therefore, Barjesus is mentioned, here, because he is a type of the Jewish religion, which is keeping common Jews from believing the gospel.

13:8 "Barjesus" means "son of Jesus," so how could his name, by interpretation,

be Elymas the sorcerer? My guess is that the interpretation is God's interpretation. Men call him "son of Jesus," because they have been bewitched into thinking that his doctrine is the same as Jesus' doctrine, but God calls him what he is—a sorcerer. Since he tries to get Sergius Paulus not to believe the gospel preached by Paul, he is on Satan's side. He is a deceitful worker, who has transformed himself into an apostle of Christ (II Corinthians 11:13).

13:9 From now on, Saul is called Paul. Saul is Hebrew, and Paul is Greek. People will say that he is called "Paul" now because he goes to the Gentiles. However, he still goes to the Jew first through the end of Acts. If "Paul" means he is going to the Gentiles, the name change would not be found at all in Acts. In my opinion, God changes Saul's name to Paul at this moment, because it is at this time that he is filled with the Holy Ghost to go on his apostolic journeys to fulfill the commission that Jesus Christ gave him in 9:15. Since Saul had blasphemed the Holy Ghost (7:58 and 8:1), perhaps God is giving him a clean slate at this time under the new name of Paul.

13:10-11 Anyone, who claims that the Holy Ghost is still doing today what He did back in early Acts, need only look at these verses to see this is not true. No one can know the heart of man in order to pronounce him to be a child of the devil today like this and subsequently have that person struck with blindness.

Many parallels exist in Peter's ministry and Paul's ministry in the book of Acts. In 8:20-21, Peter rebuked a sorcerer. Here, Paul rebukes a sorcerer.

13:12 Sergius Paulus believes, "being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." He had been told by the Jews that he had to follow the traditions of the Jews in order to have eternal life. This was a grievous burden (Matthew 23:4). Paul told him that he only had to believe. He did not have to do anything whatsoever. Working for eternal life got him nowhere. Now, believing in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for his sins gives him eternal life and a position in heavenly places. This free gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23) is probably what astonished him.

13:13 John Mark departs to Jerusalem. His departure is briefly mentioned here, but it will cause Paul and Barnabas to split up later. In 15:36, Paul wants Barnabas to go with him to re-visit the cities where they have preached the word of the Lord. Barnabas wants to take John Mark, but Paul does not want to take John Mark because he left them in 13:13. This contention is so sharp that Barnabas and Mark go on their own journey, while Paul teams up with Silas (15:36-41). Thus, this little note about John Mark departing to Jerusalem has long-term consequences. The good news, though, is that John Mark will mature spiritually over time, because, later on, Paul says that Mark "is profitable to me for the ministry" (II Timothy 4:11).

13:14-16 Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), but he was also to minister to the children of Israel (9:15). God had determined that the Jews should be given an opportunity to believe the gospel of grace first (Romans 1:16).

Therefore, Paul's pattern was to go to the Jewish synagogue once he had entered a city, preach the gospel to the Jews, and then go to the Gentiles after the Jews had rejected the gospel. As such, Jews will have no excuse when they stand before the Lord Jesus Christ on judgment day.

In a Jewish synagogue, it was customary for the leaders to allow visitors to speak to the congregation, especially someone like Paul, who had some clout, being a Jew and having learned the Jewish traditions from Gamaliel (22:3), a doctor of the Jewish law (5:34). Therefore, the way Paul reached the devout Jews with the gospel of the grace of God was by going into the synagogue and waiting for his turn to speak. Then, he preached Jesus Christ to them, they kicked him out, and he went to the Gentiles in that city. Granted, there were some Jews, who did believe, but most did not, because the hardest person in the world to save is a religious person.

13:17-23 Paul starts Israel's history with their time in Egypt so as to link the Promised Land (Canaan) with the promised king (David) with the promised Messiah (Jesus). To bring Israel into the Promised Land, God had to drive out the heathen Canaanites. In order to give Israel an eternal king (David), He had to drive out the heathen king Saul. In order to give Israel redemption with their promised Messiah, God had to drive out the heathen religious leaders and replace them with the believing remnant. This should show the Jews that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

13:17 Paul speaks to the Jews, being a Jew himself. Therefore, he refers to Israel's fathers as "our fathers." Paul is going to show the Jews that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Messiah, as prophesied in Old-Testament scripture. These people listen to the scripture, having read the law and the prophets earlier (13:15). If they believe that the law and the prophets are the word of God, as opposed to just going through the ritual of going to the synagogue, they will realize that what Paul is saying, regarding Jesus being their Messiah, is true.

The "high arm," that God used to bring Israel out of Egypt, is actually a reference to Jesus Christ. He is "the arm of the Lord" in Isaiah 53:1. Exodus 15:3 says that "the Lord is a MAN of war," and the only man of the Godhead is Jesus Christ. Therefore, although He was not born yet, it was Jesus Christ, as the man of war and high arm, who brought Israel out of Egypt. He will also make war and destroy Israel's enemies at His second coming at the end of the tribulation period (Revelation 19:11).

13:20 Sometimes, people will say that the 450 years of judges is a Bible contradiction, because I Kings 6:1 says that there were only 480 years from the time Israel left Egypt to the fourth year of Solomon's reign, and so the 450 years of judges seems to be too long based on I Kings 6:1. However, there is no contradiction here. Without going into a long explanation, the simple answer is that Paul is counting the entire period of the judges, while I Kings 6:1 deducts approximately 114 years of those 450 years in which Israel was under a non-Jewish ruler, due to their rebellion against God. Therefore, just like with all

supposed Bible contradictions, rather than being a contradiction, the difference is actually a proof that the Bible is God's Word. After all, if man wrote it, he would have made sure to word things similarly in both places so as not to create an apparent contradiction.

13:21-22 In I Samuel 8, Israel had rejected God as their king, wanting a king like all the nations. So, God gave them what they requested. He gave them Saul, their choice for a king. Then, God removed him and gave Israel God's choice for a king, David, who would sit on the throne forever (II Samuel 7:16).

13:23 The promise, that Paul refers to, here, is the Davidic covenant. In II Samuel 7:12-13, God promised to establish the kingdom of David's son forever. Here, Paul says that that promised Son is the Saviour, Jesus.

13:24 John the Baptist preached a different gospel than what Paul is preaching. John preached "the baptism of repentance," which meant that he preached to Israel to repent, or change their mind, abandoning Jewish traditions and embracing God's law covenant with them, being water baptized at the same time (Mark 1:4-5) to save themselves from the apostate nation, which is called "this untoward generation" (2:40).

13:25 John said that, not only was he not Israel's Messiah, but he was also not worthy to participate in the kinsmen-redeemer process. That is what is meant by the phrase "whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose" (see Ruth 4:7-9). Therefore, John was just a preacher; he was not the Messiah, Who would sit on David's throne forever. Granted, he was a greater prophet than all other previous prophets (Matthew 11:11), because he preached the kingdom of God. However, since he was a man, he was no better of a person than anyone else.

13:26 The gospel of grace is sent to the Jew first (Romans 1:16). That is why Paul first addresses "children of the stock of Abraham." The Gentiles will hear the gospel from Paul on the next sabbath day (13:42).

13:27 Paul makes it clear that the Jewish religious leaders are guilty of killing their Messiah, for which they have no excuse, since they read the Old Testament scriptures every Sabbath day. Therefore, they should have been like Simeon, who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). Instead, they were part of Herod's effort to try to kill Jesus as a baby (Matthew 2:4-6), and they ultimately did crucify him on a cross by wicked hands (2:23).

13:28 Speaking of His death, Paul also shows that the Jewish religious leaders killed their Messiah unjustly. That is, they broke the law, killing Him without a cause (John 15:25).

13:29 In 13:27, Paul says that Jesus' earthly ministry showed Israel that He fulfilled Old-Testament prophecies of the Messiah. Now, Paul says that Jesus' death on the cross also fulfilled Old-Testament prophecies regarding the death of the Messiah. That is, He became accursed of God by hanging on a tree

(Deuteronomy 21:23), and He made His grave with the wicked and the rich (Isaiah 53:9). Therefore, Israel should have believed the gospel at His crucifixion.

13:31 Not only did Israel have Old-Testament testimony regarding the Messiah's life and death that showed that Jesus is the Messiah, but they also had eyewitness testimonies of His resurrection. Therefore, Israel should have believed the gospel during the Holy Ghost's ministry to Israel in Acts 2-7.

13:32 "Gospel" means "glad tidings" or "good news." Therefore, in spite of Israel's rejection of their Messiah's life (13:27), death (13:29), and resurrection (13:31), they STILL have an opportunity to receive eternal life in this new dispensation of grace.

13:32-34 "The promise which was made unto the fathers" is the promise of eternal life. "God hath fulfilled" or hath made eternal life possible by raising Jesus from the dead to die no more. This is the assurance to Israel that He can do the same for them. That is why the "mercies of David" are sure. The term "sure mercies of David" is a quote of Isaiah 55:3, and is a reference to the new covenant that God will make with Israel in which He will place His Spirit within them and cause them to do God's law (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Since they will obey God's law perfectly, David's mercies are sure, because there is no way that saved Israel can disobey God's law and fall out of those mercies. As I John 3:9 says, "he CANNOT sin, because he is born of God." Of course, this does not happen until Jesus establishes God's kingdom on earth at His second coming.

13:33 This quote of Psalm 2:7 shows that the day God begat Jesus was at His resurrection. At the same time, Hebrews 1:5-6 seems to quote Psalm 2:7 to apply to His earthly birth, as does John 1:14,18 and John 3:16,18. It appears, then, that Jesus was born or begotten of the Father at His birth, and He was also begotten of the Father at His resurrection. Thus, He was "born again" at His resurrection, which is required to enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3,5). This makes sense because Jesus, the man, was forsaken by God at the cross when the sin of the world was placed upon Him (Psalm 22:1 and Matthew 27:46). Therefore, He died. This is why 13:33 says that the Father "hath raised up Jesus AGAIN." He raised Him up at His birth, and He raised Him up again at His resurrection.

II Timothy 2:8 says "that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to [Paul's] gospel." In other words, Jesus, the man, had faith in what God told Him to do, which was to die on the cross. And, because Jesus had faith, He pleased God (Hebrews 11:6), and so Jesus was raised from the dead, according to His own death on the cross. In other words, since Jesus was made sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21), that sin had to receive atonement in order to raise Jesus from the dead. God applied the blood of Christ to that sin because Jesus had faith in what God told Him to do, just like God applies the blood of Christ to our sin because we have faith in what God has told us to do, i.e., trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for our sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

13:34-35 13:35 is a quote of Psalm 16:10, which says that "Thine Holy One"

would not “see corruption.” 13:34 says that, when God raised Jesus from the dead, He did so “now no more to RETURN to corruption.” He must have been in corruption in order for Him not to return to corruption. So, how did Jesus go to corruption when Psalm 16:10 said He would not “see corruption?” The answer is in understanding that Jesus, the man, received corruption by suffering in hell as the payment for our sins. (Jesus says, in Psalm 22:6, that He is a worm, and Mark 9:43-44 says that hell is the place “where their worm dieth not.” Therefore, Jesus, the man, reduced down to a worm in hell to pay for our sins.) But, “Thine Holy One” would be Jesus, as God. Thus, as God, Jesus did not suffer in hell. God kept the deity part of Jesus pure, because, as God, He did not “see corruption,” but the man part of Jesus had to be corrupted in order to pay for our sins. Then, when Jesus was resurrected from the dead, Jesus, as man, would not return to corruption, because the sin debt had already been paid. Therefore, if God can raise from the dead the man (Jesus) who actually took our sin payment, then surely He can raise all believers from the dead, because we will never have to suffer hell.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (I Corinthians 15:20).

13:36-37 Because David was a believer, he went to Abraham’s bosom. Therefore, he did not suffer in the torment side of hell. This would be part of “the sure mercies of David” (13:34). However, he suffered corruption in the sense that his body decayed in the grave. We are told that it was God’s will that David “fell on sleep.” That is because there will be some believers still alive at the rapture. Therefore, for those believers, it will not be God’s will that they fall on sleep (I Thessalonians 4:17).

Since Jesus “saw no corruption” (13:37), this also probably means that Jesus’ body never decayed any during the three days He was in the grave. This would be a miracle in itself, since a body normally stinks after being dead for four days (John 11:39).

13:38-39 Forgiveness of sins comes to Israel now, in the dispensation of grace, by believing in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection for the atonement of sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Note the difference between this gospel and the gospel of the kingdom. Under the gospel of grace, “all that believe are justified from all things” (13:39). Under the gospel of the kingdom, “he that believeth AND IS BAPTIZED shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

In this passage, Paul also shows the point of the law. The law cannot justify someone. It just sets up the perfect, holy standard by which someone must live to have eternal life on his own (Romans 7:12). Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), falling short of that perfect standard, the law shows the need for a Saviour to give God’s imputed righteousness to the believer in order to receive the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23).

13:41 Paul quotes Habakkuk 1:5. The context of Habakkuk 1:5 shows that the work God is referring to is the Babylonians taking over the land of Israel

(Habakkuk 1:6). That happened during Daniel's day, but it will also happen in the tribulation period when the Antichrist rises up and restores Babylon as the world power. Thus, the warning here to Israel is that, if they despise the grace God is offering them, they will perish by making a covenant with the Antichrist (Daniel 9:26-27). Obviously, this did not happen while these Israelites were alive. Therefore, the word "your" in the phrase "in your days" must refer to apostate Israel, i.e., the generation of vipers (Matthew 23:33), who will still be in apostasy during the tribulation period. Even though these particular Jews will go to the grave before then, they will still be subject to God's wrath at the Great White Throne Judgment if they do not believe the gospel of grace before they die. Therefore, they should heed this warning by Paul and believe.

13:42 There were some Gentiles in Paul's audience in the Jewish synagogue, as evidenced by his reference in 13:16,26 to those present who fear God. Therefore, although Paul was speaking primarily to Jews, it was the Gentiles who listened and wanted their Gentile friends to hear the gospel of grace, as well. This establishes a pattern that we will see throughout the rest of the book of Acts that the Jews, for the most part, will reject the gospel of grace, while the Gentiles will be anxious to hear it, because, for the first time since Genesis 11, the middle wall of partition has been taken down (Ephesians 2:14).

13:43 From what is said, we can determine that "the Jews and religious proselytes" of this verse refers to members of the little flock. Therefore, "many" of those saved under the kingdom program understand that God has changed the program and are persuading Paul and Barnabas to continue preaching the gospel of grace. This is a major change in thinking among the little flock.

Note that Paul tells the little flock "to continue in the grace of God." For them, this means that they are to continue in the doctrine that relates to their program. Since they were saved as part of Israel's program, they should continue in that program in order to receive the promises that God gave them at the time they were saved. If Paul did not mean this, he would not have told them "to continue." Rather, he would have said to believe and learn the doctrine that relates to the new, mystery dispensation.

Just because the new dispensation is often called the grace dispensation, does not mean that God did not give grace in Israel's program, as well. For example, Hebrews 4:16 tells the Hebrews to approach the throne of grace, and Peter tells the little flock to "grow in grace" (II Peter 3:18). Therefore, we should not see the grace word and immediately think "grace dispensation." Rather, we must read the context surrounding that word to determine that they are "to continue in the grace of God" that He gave Israel in their program and to grow in that grace, i.e., grow in kingdom doctrine. Meanwhile, unbelieving Israel has the opportunity to be saved under the mystery program, since God's promises to believers have now changed, due to the change in dispensation.

13:45 From what is said, we can determine that the Jews of this verse are the Jewish religious leaders of the apostate nation of Israel. Rather than wanting to

know the truth, they act on their feeling of envy of Paul, because nearly the whole city has come to hear him (13:44). This shows how anxious people are to get out of bondage to sin. If only they would overcome the flesh and believe the message of grace! These Jews contradicted Paul's message, which means that they must have said something like, "God does not give you eternal life as a free gift. You must do the things that He says to do. You must obey the law." They also blasphemed, which means that they probably said something like, "Jesus was a good man, but He was not God." Such statements should sound familiar to us, as most of Christianity includes some kind of works in order to maintain or prove your salvation, while all other religions do not believe that Jesus is God. Thus, 2,000 years afterward, the attacks against God's free gift of eternal life has not changed, because the envy by the flesh of the things of the Spirit also has not changed. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Galatians 5:17).

13:46 This is the first strike against the Jews in the dispensation of grace. God has offered salvation by grace to Israel, and they have rejected it here. Therefore, in this city, Paul will now speak to the Gentiles, not to the Jews. By rejecting the gospel, the Jews have deemed themselves "unworthy of everlasting life." This does not mean that they are not good enough to receive everlasting life. Rather, it means that they would rather die in their sins than to deny the flesh's efforts by accepting the gift of eternal life from God by doing absolutely nothing to earn it.

Jesus warned His apostles that people would do this, when He told them to go out and preach the gospel of the kingdom to Israel. A city is worthy of the gospel only if they believe it (Matthew 10:13). Note that Paul says that "it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you." Thus, it was God's plan for Paul to come to a city, preach to the Jew first, and then go to the Gentiles with the gospel.

13:47 The previous three references in scripture of being a light to the Gentiles are found in Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, and Luke 2:32. All three refer to the Messiah being a light to the Gentiles, meaning that salvation would go to the Jews first and then the Jews would preach to the Gentiles. This is under the kingdom program. Now that the grace dispensation has begun, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, says that these scriptures are fulfilled by the gospel of grace going to the Jews first and then preaching the gospel to the Gentiles afterward. This shows that, in spite of Israel's rejection of the kingdom program, God is still sending "salvation unto the ends of the earth" through the apostle Paul. In other words, God will not keep the Gentiles from receiving the offer of eternal life, just because Israel has rejected eternal life themselves.

13:48 This verse is not talking about the individual predestination of believers, which is false doctrine, since we have to make a freewill choice to receive eternal life. Rather, it is saying that those, who make that freewill choice to believe, are "ordained to eternal life." Otherwise, if individual predestination were true, why would Paul even preach and suffer as a result? Why not just stay at home, knowing that God has predestinated certain people to have eternal life, regardless of what Paul does? No, "WHOSOEVER shall call upon the name of the Lord shall

be saved” (Romans 10:14), and “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Therefore, Paul preaches to as many as he can reach, so that he “might by all means save some” (I Corinthians 9:22), even though this means that he must suffer great things for Jesus’ name (9:16).

13:48-49 This shows God’s plan for people to be saved. They hear the gospel and believe. Then, they tell the gospel to those they know, such that the gospel is “published throughout all the region” (13:49).

13:50 The persecution, that Paul and Barnabas received, largely came from the Jewish religious leaders. Just like with Jesus in Matthew – John and the 12 apostles in Acts 2-7, the Jewish religious leaders are threatened by God taking over their congregations. So, too, today, Christian denominations pervert the word of God so that they have control over their congregations, rather than God. Then, when you believe the truth, they kick you out of their congregations and defame you. These same people preach tolerance from the pulpit, which to them means that we should tolerate their false doctrine but they will not tolerate the truth when we speak it.

13:51 Since the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia have deemed themselves unworthy of eternal life, Paul goes to the next city (Iconium) with the gospel. This is not unlike what Jesus told the 12 in Matthew 10:14: “And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.”

13:52 “The disciples were filled with joy.” This would not be the 12 disciples, who Jesus chose in Matthew – John, because we are now in a different dispensation. Rather, it would be those discipled by Paul with mystery doctrine, as seen at the church in Antioch in 11:26. It probably refers to the disciples at the city Paul just left, which would be Antioch in Pisidia (13:14).

Paul and Barnabas were expelled from the Jewish synagogue (13:50), yet “the disciples were filled with joy.” This shows that joy is not dependent upon circumstances. This is why we can “rejoice evermore” (I Thessalonians 5:16), even in the midst of persecution. Happiness is dependent upon happenings, but joy is dependent upon the inward man.

14 Paul preaches in several cities, and the Jews persecute him to the point of stoning him to death (v. 19). However, God uses his death to let him see the third heaven and learn more mystery doctrine (II Corinthians 12:2-4). Then, He raises him from the dead (v. 20), and many Gentiles are being saved as he goes from city to city with the gospel of grace (v. 27).

14:1-2 Again, Paul follows God's commandment to him to preach the gospel of grace in the Jewish synagogue first before going to the Gentiles. Many Jews and Gentiles believe. Note the craftiness of the unbelieving Jews. They get unbelieving Gentiles to think that believing Gentiles (and Jews) are evil, such that now both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles are against Paul and Barnabas. To make Gentiles

believe that believing Gentiles are evil, the unbelieving Jews must have told them of the lawless gospel that Paul preached. They probably complained that those believing Gentiles cannot be trusted if they believe a gospel that says that they are no longer under the law (Romans 6:14). How, then, can those believers be trusted? Thus, evil Jews cause evil Gentiles to believe that justified Gentiles are the evil ones.

In 10:28, we learned from Peter that it was unlawful for a Jew to come unto a Gentile. Then, in 11:2-3, Jewish members of the little flock contended with Peter for going against the law in coming unto a Gentile. This is significant to note because this background information shows the irony of what is going on here in 14:1-2. The “unbelieving Jews,” in 14:2, would be part of the Jewish religion, since they heard Paul speak in the Jewish synagogue. Therefore, these same people had Jesus crucified and had Peter arrested for supposedly breaking the law, yet they have no problem with breaking the law themselves. This shows that they really do not care about being good, law abiding Jews. Rather, they just care about putting down all threats to their religion, even if the threat, in this case, comes from what God is doing. The same thing goes on in Christianity today. The Christian religion will complain that right dividers are going against scripture with their beliefs, yet they will use unscriptural methods to try to silence the Bible believers!

14:3-4 Note that Paul and Barnabas stayed in Iconium for a long time because there was a large group of believers and a large group of unbelievers. The believers have God’s Word plus signs and wonders to confirm the message, much like Jews had when Jesus sent the disciples out with the gospel after His resurrection (Mark 16:20). Therefore, it is clear that Paul and Barnabas are speaking God’s Word, yet many people respect the high standing of the Jewish religious leaders over God’s Word. Therefore, they do not believe. The result is a divided crowd.

14:5 God does not try to force people to believe Him, but Satan will use any means necessary to get people on his side. Since Satan’s forces can “do nothing against the truth” (II Corinthians 13:8), they will usually try to silence or kill the messengers of the truth. Therefore, Satan's crowd begins attacking the believers, such that they try to kill them with stones. Both Jews and Gentiles are trying to get rid of the gospel of grace.

14:6-7 There are plenty more places where Paul can preach the gospel. Therefore, he flees from Iconium and goes to Lycaonia.

14:8 This man is symbolic of the Gentiles. Spiritually speaking, they have never walked, since they were always on the wrong side of the middle wall of partition. Just like this man was healed physically, God wants to heal the Gentiles spiritually such that they become members of the body of Christ.

14:9 If you have a physical ailment, you pray for God to heal you, and He does not heal you, people like to use this verse to show that the reason God did not heal was due to a lack of faith on your part. However, the faith that Paul perceived, here, is NOT the faith to be healed physically, but the faith to be healed spiritually.

Paul had preached the gospel (14:7). This man "heard Paul speak" (14:9). Salvation comes by believing the gospel. Paul perceived that the man had the faith to be healed spiritually. Therefore, Paul healed him physically, because his physical healing would give him the opportunity to tell those, who knew him, about his spiritual healing.

This man represents those who believe the gospel. If they do not believe, they are not healed spiritually. Paul did not want to heal him if he did not have the faith to be healed spiritually, since, spiritually speaking, he would still be foot impotent. Paul has the physical match the spiritual as a sign to those watching that God can do the same thing for them spiritually if they just believe the gospel.

14:10 The man is not deaf, but Paul speaks with a loud voice to draw attention to all around of the miracle that God is performing, as a sign of what the gospel of grace can do for them spiritually speaking.

14:11-13 This reaction may seem terrible, and it is. However, it is no different than the Jews' reaction. The Jews had their own religion and tried to make Jesus king (John 6:15). When He would not let them do so, they abandoned Him (John 6:66). Later, they were persuaded by the Jewish religious leaders to crucify Him (John 19:16). Similarly, these Gentiles see the miracle and want to make gods out of Paul and Barnabas. They will then abandon them (14:18), and then be persuaded by the Jews to stone Paul to death (14:19). This is a good example of what man usually does when confronted with the truth of God's Word. He either rejects it, like those in Iconium, who tried to stone Paul (14:5), or he tries to make it fit into his religious system. Either way, the truth of God is rejected for Satan's lie program.

The greatest crime a person can do is to tear down another person's religion, because it destroys the salve that they have applied to their guilty consciences and they are confronted with the stark reality that they are still sinners bound for hell. Rather than admit that their own religion is wrong, religious people will use whatever means necessary to expel the truth teller, including killing him.

Note also that the Greeks worshipped the planets as gods (14:12). As such, they worshipped the host of heaven. Also, note that their religious system mimicked the one God set up, as they sacrificed animals (14:13). Satan is the great imitator of God. The more his lie program mimics the truth, the more people will fall for it and reject the truth, should it be presented to them.

We should also note the irony in the statement: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (14:11). The true God came down to earth in the likeness of man not too long before this, and man crucified Him.

14:14-18 Barnabas and Paul had to strip naked to prove they are men, not gods, and it was STILL difficult to keep the Gentiles from sacrificing to them as gods (14:18). This shows how, in spite of the evidence to the contrary, it is very difficult to get people to go against their own religion.

Note the change in dispensations that Paul mentions here. "In times past," God allowed the Gentiles to walk in their own ways. Paul explains this in Romans 1. The Gentiles were "vain in their imaginations" (Romans 1:21), "changed the truth of God into a lie" (Romans 1:25), and "did not like to retain God in their knowledge" (Romans 1:28). Therefore, God "gave them up to uncleanness" (Romans 1:24), "gave them up unto vile affections" (Romans 1:26), and "gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Romans 1:28). This happened in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel. From Genesis 12 - Acts 9, God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (14:16). But now, He has given the Gentiles a gospel by which they can "turn from these vanities unto the living God" (14:15). For the first time in almost 2,000 years, the Gentiles have direct access to God, and these Gentiles choose to continue in their idolatry. How sad! They continue to worship gods, when they could turn unto the LIVING God instead.

14:17 Even after God gave up the Gentiles in Genesis 11, Gentiles could still see that there is a God in creation. Romans 1:19-20 says that all people are without excuse when it comes to God, because He has placed His witness within every man that He is the Creator and worthy of worship. Therefore, although these Gentiles were on the wrong side of the middle wall of partition before Acts 9, they could still be saved by recognizing the rain and food given to them by the Creator and worshipping Him. How sad that, in this day and age, people have God's completed Word, and they still use their own vain imaginations to deny what they know is true in their hearts that there is a Creator.

14:19 Paul is stoned to death, and it is the religious Jews, who followed him from other cities, to kill him. Just like the religious leaders persuaded the common Jews to kill Jesus, the Jewish religious leaders, here, persuade the Gentiles to kill Paul. Evil is so powerful that, even evil from a competing religious system can convince a different evil religious system to follow their marching orders in trying to get rid of God's man, Paul. Can you imagine, say, Muslims convincing Hindus to kill someone?!

In II Corinthians 12:1-4, Paul says that he was caught up into heaven and heard unlawful words. If they were unlawful words, they must have been grace words, which means that God revealed more of the mystery program to him at that time. The timing, compared with the events in Acts, seems to indicate that the time Paul was caught up into the third heaven was here. Paul, then, was stoned to death, he went to heaven, Jesus revealed more details of the mystery program to him, and he returned to earth, because God still had a job for him to do. Therefore, while being stoned to death sounds like about the worst thing that could happen, it actually benefited Paul and all believers with a further revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul experienced the true meaning of "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

14:20 Paul has no qualms about preaching the gospel, even after he was stoned to death, because "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Paul has already seen the gain awaiting him in heaven, and living means more

people get to hear the grace message so that they may have eternal life in heaven, as well. Therefore, Paul gets right up and goes to the next city to preach the gospel of the grace of God, and then will go right back into the cities from which Jews just stoned him to death (14:21). Paul was already a bold man of God, but he becomes exceedingly bold from now on, with new information from Jesus to reveal to others and the firsthand knowledge of what heaven looks like. When you experience the joys of heaven, you will count the things of this life as dung (Philippians 3:8). Take it from someone who knows—Paul.

14:22-23 Paul goes right back to the cities from which he had just been killed. After all, he now has some advanced doctrine from the Lord Jesus Christ that he can share with them. He can also establish churches there. Paul will not be with them long, since he is going to go from city to city, preaching the gospel. Therefore, Paul only comes back to establish the churches and give them new information. Now, these Gentile churches probably did not have great, learned men of scripture to lead them, as they were all new believers. Therefore, Jesus Christ probably supernaturally gave them apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, until the time when the Bible is complete when they could read the complete information about the mystery themselves (Ephesians 4:11-13). Thus, God would teach them through these people with Paul not around. Therefore, although Paul is “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13), he does not, singlehandedly, give all the mystery doctrine to all the Gentiles.

By the way, “the kingdom of God,” mentioned here, is not a reference to God’s earthly kingdom. God’s kingdom will encompass the entire universe. The heavenly realm is just as much a part of His kingdom as the earthly realm is. As such, we should not think that Paul is preaching the same message as Jesus was, just because he talks about God’s kingdom here. Similarly, we should not think that Paul is referring to Israel’s seven-year tribulation period, just because he uses the term “tribulation” here.

14:26-28 Antioch is the place where believers were first called “Christians” (11:26), and it serves as sort of a hub for Paul’s apostolic journeys. Certain prophets and teachers are there, and it is where Paul was sent out on his first apostolic journey (13:1-2). Therefore, he returns to them and reports what happened on his journey. For the Jews he went to, it is the same, old story of not many people being saved and the Jewish religion persecuting God’s people. However, many Gentiles are being saved now.

15 Satan tries to bring contention within both the Gentile church headquarters (Antioch) and the Jewish church headquarters (Jerusalem). He also brings contention between Paul and Barnabas (v. 39). However, both of these plans of Satan fail. With the first plan, the Jews reject the bad doctrine of certain of the Pharisees within their midst (vs. 23-24). With regard to Paul and Barnabas, two teams, instead of one team, go out with the gospel of the grace of God (vs. 39-40).

15:1-2 Christians, who read the story of the meeting in Jerusalem, tend to think of the big, Jerusalem council with all of the apostles as the power of the day, and

Paul, a latecomer to the party, comes up to seek their approval for his ministry. However, the opposite is true. The truth of the matter is that Paul is coming to them to call them on the carpet. In fact, Jesus Christ specifically revealed to him that he needed to go up to Jerusalem to take care of the division there (Galatians 2:2). (Keep in mind that Luke is writing the book of Acts for Israel, while Paul writes the book of Galatians for the body of Christ, especially Gentiles. The two accounts give different details based upon these different perspectives. Therefore, while Luke says the little flock “determined that Paul and Barnabas...should go up to Jerusalem” (15:2), Paul says that he went up to Jerusalem “by revelation” (Galatians 2:2). Both statements are true.)

Paul has been preaching the gospel of grace that Jesus Christ gave to him by revelation (Galatians 1:11-12), and men came to him from Jerusalem, trying to corrupt grace believers by trying to put them back under the law. They told the Gentile believers that they must be circumcised in order to have eternal life, but the Lord Jesus Christ has shown Paul that “in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision” (Galatians 5:6). In fact, if members of the body of Christ desire to get circumcised, Christ will profit them nothing, because they will become debtors to do the whole law (Galatians 5:2-3). Therefore, Paul, must go up to the Jerusalem church to set the apostles and elders straight, not the other way around.

The “no small dissension and disputation” (15:2) that Paul had with these people from Jerusalem is described by Paul as being over “false brethren...who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Galatians 2:4). Therefore, Paul did not go to Jerusalem to receive approval of his ministry from the 12 apostles. Rather, he went there to warn them of these false brethren and to set the Jerusalem brethren straight so that they would not be led astray by false doctrine.

15:3 True brethren are joyful regarding the salvation of the Gentiles. They do not try to put them under the bondage of the Mosaic law.

15:4-5 Fourteen years have passed since Paul was saved (Galatians 2:1), which is why the apostles and elders in Jerusalem received Paul and Barnabas, whereas, before, they had trouble with Paul (9:26).

Now, we see that it is believing Pharisees, who are causing the trouble in Jerusalem. Unlike the Jewish religious leaders, they may have good intentions, but the result is that they are trying to bring the body of Christ under the law, when the Lord Jesus Christ told Paul that, “ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

15:7 Fourteen years have passed since Paul received the mystery, and there is still “much disputing” (15:7). The reason is because there is a great difference between the instructions that Jesus gave the little flock and the instructions that the Lord Jesus Christ gave us today through the apostle Paul. The little flock was to obey the law of Moses (Matthew 23:2-3). The body of Christ is told that we are

not under the law (Romans 6:14), because the law was taken out of the way, being nailed to Jesus' cross (Colossians 2:14). God told Israel that they would be cut off from God if they were not circumcised (Genesis 17:14). God told the body of Christ that circumcision does nothing for you (Galatians 6:15). Such contrasts caused "much disputing," even though the mystery dispensation had been going on for 14 years now. The fact, that Christianity today says that Paul preached the same message as the 12 apostles, shows their ignorance and wresting of scripture to their own destruction (II Peter 3:16).

It is probably for this reason that Peter had taken a fifteen-day course on the mystery program from Paul (Galatians 1:18), God gave him a vision, showing that the Gentiles are clean (10:9-16), and Peter preached to Gentiles and saw them saved (10:34-44). Therefore, Peter is familiar with the mystery, and the fact that the middle wall of partition has come down, such that he will bridge the gap between the two groups here. The Jewish brethren are familiar with these things, too, as Peter shared the story with them, and they rejoiced over the Gentiles being saved (11:2-18).

15:9 Note the change in dispensation. Until Acts 9, God DID put a distinction between Jew and Gentile. God says in Deuteronomy 4:7-8 that Israel is the only nation "who hath God so nigh unto them" and "that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law." By contrast, the Gentiles were in the dark, having to seek the Lord by feeling after Him (17:27). Now, though, in the dispensation of grace, God hath "put no difference between us and them" (15:9). If Christianity denies the great change that took place in Acts 9, then they deny God and His Word!

15:10 The Lord Jesus Christ put the yoke of the law upon believers when He was on earth, when He said, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do" (Matthew 23:2-3). Now, in the dispensation of grace, with regard to the Mosaic law, God says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1). God says that ye are "not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). If man, then, puts the yoke of the law upon saved people, he is tempting God, meaning that he is trying to get God to sin by trying to get Him to go back on His promise to the body of Christ by disobeying His commandment not to put themselves back under the law (Deuteronomy 6:16-17).

This, AGAIN, shows the change in dispensation. In the kingdom program, Israel was to teach God's commandments to their children, bind them on their hands, and write them on their doorposts (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). In time past, they would have been obeying God by teaching believers the law. Now, these Pharisees are disobeying God by trying to bring the Gentiles under the law. Since the little flock, who was to obey the law, would be tempting God by putting the body of Christ under the law, how much more is Christianity, who is not to obey the law, tempting God when they put Christians under the law today!

Also, note that Peter says that even saved Israel could not bear the yoke of the Mosaic law. So, why, then, did Jesus say that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light? (Matthew 11:30). Although Jesus put the yoke of the Mosaic law upon Israel, He was not referring to them earning salvation by obeying that law. Rather, He was saying that the Pharisees were trying to work their way into God's kingdom. That was a heavy burden "and grievous to be borne" (Matthew 23:3), because their self-righteousness was not good enough to bring them into God's kingdom (Matthew 5:20). Jesus was saying to put themselves under the Mosaic law, but, in so doing, they would be trusting in Jesus' perfect obedience of the law to remove them from the curse of the law. Therefore, although they would still be under the Mosaic law, they would not be required to obey it, because no one can obey it perfectly. It is their faith in God's promise to them to give them eternal life through that law that would keep God from imputing their sin to them, when they disobeyed the law (Psalm 32:1-2).

What Peter is saying, then, is that the believing Pharisees are trying to put the body of Christ under the law as a means of obtaining righteousness. After all, they stated that, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (15:1). Paul says that "every man that is circumcised" (Galatians 5:3) is trying to be "justified by the law" (Galatians 5:4). Therefore, Peter will say in the next verse (15:11) that all people, regardless of dispensation, are saved by grace, even those under the Mosaic law. The reason is because those, under the Mosaic law, are not trying to earn their salvation by their obedience of the Mosaic law. If the believing Pharisees put the body of Christ under the Mosaic law, they would be putting them under the self-righteous aspect of the law, which is a burden that "neither our fathers nor we WERE able to bear" (15:10). Note that Peter uses the past tense, which shows that, although they are still under the Mosaic law (21:20), they are no longer bearing the burden of trying to be saved by their own obedience of the Mosaic law. Rather, they are trusting in God's imputed righteousness by grace through Jesus' perfect obedience of that law on their behalf.

15:11 Peter, and the other members of the little flock, were saved by believing the gospel of the kingdom, which was to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). They were not saved by trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins. However, regardless of the dispensation, all are saved by "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," because it is God's unmerited favor toward someone that brings them into heaven, and the power to bring them into heaven was brought about by Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross for sins. Thus, Peter, and the rest of the little flock, repented and were water baptized, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will give them eternal life. Those saved in the dispensation of grace trusted in Jesus' death as atonement for their sins, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will give them eternal life, also.

The difference between the programs can still be seen, even in this verse, because Peter says that the little flock "SHALL be saved," which happens at Jesus' second coming (3:19-20). Those, under the gospel of grace, are already saved, having now received the atonement (Romans 5:11). Similarly, Jesus Christ's grace saves the body of Christ right now from having to obey the law, while His grace does not save

the little flock from the Mosaic law until Jesus' second coming. Even if they break the Mosaic law, though, sin will not be imputed unto them (Psalm 32:1-2), because they please God by having faith in God's promise to give them eternal life in the kingdom (Hebrews 11:6), and not by obeying the law. Yet, they are still under the law, since they made the law covenant with God (Exodus 19:8), and God will not break His promises to them (Hebrews 6:18).

15:13 James speaks longer than Peter did (9 verses compared with 5 verses). This shows the change in dispensations. In Israel's program, God gave the keys to the kingdom to Peter (Matthew 16:18-19). Therefore, Peter alone speaks to crowds in Acts 2:14-40; 3:4-6; 3:12-26; 4:8-20; 5:3-9; and 5:29-32. Now, for the first time, Peter is seen as no longer being the leader of the little flock. He just gives his testimony. James is the one, who gives the sentence (15:19), the conclusion, and dismisses Paul and Barnabas (15:29-30). Therefore, James is now the leader of the little flock, even though he is not even one of the 12 apostles, since the James of the 12 was killed in 12:2. This shows that Peter no longer holds the keys to the kingdom. Therefore, a dispensational change has taken place.

15:14 James does not call Peter "Peter." He calls him "Simeon." Simeon is a variant upon the name "Simon." Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter, because He gave him the authority to let people in or keep people out of God's kingdom (Matthew 16:17-19). Now that the kingdom program has been set aside, so has Peter's authority, such that James calls him "Simeon." In fact, this is the last time Peter is mentioned by name in the book of Acts, regardless of what name is used, because God's apostle in the dispensation of grace is Paul, not Peter, although Peter does remain an apostle to the little flock (Galatians 2:9).

15:15-18 James says that the words of the prophets agree with what has just happened, in that the Gentiles have been saved (15:14). Then, he quotes Amos 9:11-12, except that his interpretation is much different from the original.

Amos 9:11-12 says, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by My name, saith the Lord that doeth this." A Bible believer in Israel would take this passage to mean that, after God has physically destroyed the unbelievers in Israel (Amos 9:7-10), which would take place during the tribulation period, God would raise up His tabernacle in the kingdom so that the believers in Israel can possess the saved Gentiles in God's eternal kingdom on earth. Such an interpretation is entirely consistent with Old-Testament prophecy.

However, James quotes this passage as saying, "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, Who doeth all these things." Based on the new, mystery dispensation, that began with Paul in Acts 9, a Bible believer would interpret this passage as saying that the

unbelievers in Israel were spiritually destroyed at the stoning of Stephen. In other words, Amos 9:7-10 was really fulfilled in Acts 7, rather than being fulfilled at Jesus' second coming. Then, the raising up of the tabernacle of David occurred with God's call of Paul with the mystery gospel in Acts 9 and not with Jesus' second coming. Therefore, it was a spiritual raising up, giving Israel a renewed opportunity to be saved under the dispensation of grace. Then, instead of believing Israel possessing the Gentiles, the quote is changed to say that this renewed opportunity gives "the residue of men," i.e., unsaved Jews, and all Gentiles the opportunity to be saved in the new, dispensation of grace.

Therefore, the interpretation of Amos 9:11-12 has been vastly changed from the original. That is okay, because it is the Holy Spirit, through James (see 15:28), Who made this change. And, God will still fulfill the original intent of this passage in Israel's program after the rapture. Therefore, God did not lie. However, there is absolutely no way anyone would have ever figured out James' interpretation of Amos 9:11-12 before the mystery was revealed to Paul in Acts 9. That is why, after quoting this passage, James says, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (15:18). In other words, although man had no idea that Amos 9:11-12 meant that, God knew, when He wrote it, that it meant that, because God knows ALL His works from the beginning of the world. By contrast, man did not know that interpretation because God's mystery program "was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). Incidentally, Amos 9:6 says that God builds "His stories in the heaven," which is another reference to the mystery program. Again, no man would have figured that out, but God knew He was referring to the mystery program there in Amos.

James' quote of Amos 9:11-12 should be proof positive that the mystery was not revealed to man until Acts 9. After all, James quotes Amos 9:11-12 as proof that the salvation of the Gentiles in the mystery dispensation was part of God's plan all along, and there is no way anyone would figure that out from the original. Therefore, the mystery must have been kept secret in the Old Testament. In other words, if the mystery was not a secret in the Old Testament, James would have been able to use a clear quote from the Old Testament, rather than one that does not at all seem to say what James says that it says.

15:18 God knew all of His works from the beginning of the world, but man did not. Man knew the prophecy program (3:21), but he did not know the mystery program (Romans 16:25). James' point is that this mystery program may be new to his audience, but God knew what He would do all along. By the way, modern translations take God out of this verse. Therefore, they say that man knew about the mystery program all along, making God out to be a liar in Romans 16:25.

15:19 James gives the sentence, which means that he is now the leader of the little flock. But, Jesus made Peter the leader, in Matthew 16:18-19, by giving him the keys of the kingdom. So, what happened to Peter's power to forgive or retain sins (Matthew 16:19)? It has gone away, due to the new, mystery dispensation that the Lord Jesus Christ started with the apostle Paul.

15:20-21 James is not offering a compromise between law and grace by trying to put the Gentiles under part of the law. Rather, these verses tell you the reason he wants the Gentiles to obey certain laws. The reason is that he recognizes that every city has Jewish religious leaders, who preach the law in their synagogues every day. So as not to offend the Jews going to the synagogues, he asks that the Gentile believers, under grace, choose to give up some of their liberty so that followers of the Jewish religion will not be offended by them and will believe the gospel of grace.

Paul says the same thing in his epistles. For example, James says to “abstain from pollutions of idols.” Paul says “that an idol is nothing in the world.... Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge.... Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend” (I Corinthians 8:4,7,13). Therefore, while believers today are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14), James asks the Gentile believers to put themselves under certain laws voluntarily so that people may be saved and those saved under the gospel of the kingdom will not stumble. This is all part of the mystery doctrine to be “made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (I Corinthians 9:22).

15:22 The issue, of what saved Gentiles in the mystery program should be doing in light of saved Jews in the prophecy program, has now been settled in Jerusalem. Since some from Jerusalem taught contrary doctrine in Antioch, the Jerusalem saints now send Judas and Silas to Antioch so that the Antiochians know that the bad doctrine taught them by people in Jerusalem is not what they should be following.

15:23 The phrase “which are of the Gentiles” shows that the believers of the body of Christ are different from the believers of Israel’s program.

15:24 The phrase “subverting your souls” shows that the brethren in Jerusalem recognized the change in dispensations. The Jerusalem saints needed to be circumcised, because God said that the uncircumcised man child’s “soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant” (Genesis 17:14). But, God told the body of Christ that circumcision does not avail anything (Galatians 6:15). Therefore, those, requiring circumcision, were “subverting your souls,” because the Gentile saints in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia did not need to be circumcised because they were saved under the mystery program, where they are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

15:25-26 The Jerusalem saints also recognized Barnabas and Paul as ministers of the grace of God to the Gentiles. In giving his account of the meeting that just happened in Jerusalem, Paul mentions the result was the agreement that Paul and Barnabas would preach the mystery program to unbelievers, while the 12 apostles would limit their ministry to edifying those already saved under the kingdom (Galatians 2:9). Thus, the 12 apostles recognize God’s change in program and abandon the so-called Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

15:27 It was so important for the body of Christ to understand that they did not need to keep the law that the little flock sent both written instructions and verbal instructions that they should not be required to be circumcised and to keep the law.

15:28-29 The Jerusalem saints have already made it clear that the Gentiles do not need to “keep the law” (15:24). Therefore, these things for them to keep are only necessary so that those saved under the kingdom program do not lose faith and so that Jews going to synagogues in their towns are not offended by the gospel of grace. Also, note that the little flock’s instructions came from the Holy Ghost, which shows, much to the chagrin of today’s liberal scholars, that James’ “sentence” (15:19) was really God’s instructions on the matter, and not just the opinion of man.

15:32 Judas and Silas were prophets, which is another proof that there were prophets during this time period, because the Word of God had not been completed yet. They are part of the prophets to which Peter referred when he said that “all the prophets witness” to the gospel of grace being the gospel for today (10:42-43). It is also these prophets to which Paul referred when he said that the mystery “now is made manifest...by the scriptures of the prophets” (Romans 16:25-26). These scriptures would be Paul’s epistles. They are “scriptures of the prophets” because it was the prophets who determined which ones of Paul’s epistles were “thus saith the Lord,” and, thus, official scripture. Therefore, you should not automatically think of Isaiah through Malachi when scripture uses the word “prophet.”

15:33-34 Judas went back to Jerusalem, but Silas stayed in Antioch. This is important to note because Paul’s second, apostolic journey will soon begin, and Silas will be his partner now, instead of Barnabas (15:40). But, if you have a modern version, you do not have that detail, because 15:34 is omitted from the modern versions, which means that 15:40 does not make sense.

15:36 God’s will is for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). Acts 13-14 records Paul and Barnabas’ journey to various cities, preaching the gospel of grace. Now, Paul wants to check up on the believers in those cities to make sure they are fulfilling the second part of God’s will for them—“to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

15:37-41 Satan rears his ugly head, creating a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark. Mark went with them on their first apostolic journey, but he quit before they finished (13:13). Because of this, Paul does not want Mark going with them, but Barnabas does want Mark going with them. The result is a split between Paul and Barnabas. However, Satan’s splitting up of the pair works for God’s glory. Paul still goes on his trip, but he goes with Silas. Barnabas goes on a trip of his own with John Mark. Therefore, instead of one team going out, two teams go out. John Mark must have stuck with Barnabas this time because, toward the end of his life, Paul says that Mark “is profitable to me for the ministry” (II Timothy 4:11). Thus, Satan’s plan is thwarted.

This is the opposite result of a similar attack of Satan at the beginning of the kingdom program. Then, Satan worked a strife between Abram and Lot, the result of which was a split (Genesis 13:7-8). Lot went to Sodom and Gomorrah, which was destroyed because man was lying with mankind. Satan, therefore, is probably hoping for a similar result with Paul and Barnabas' split, but the Holy Spirit has a different plan. This also shows the greater power that God has on earth in the dispensation of grace, because the Holy Spirit indwells believers now.

16 Paul's second, apostolic journey continues. People are saved in Philippi, and Paul gets to teach them the doctrine of suffering, as Paul is beaten and thrown in jail.

16:1-3 The main issue in Acts 15 was over circumcision. Men from Jerusalem were teaching in Antioch that "except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (15:1). Paul disputed greatly with them (15:2), since Paul says in Galatians 6:15 that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Paul went to Jerusalem to make sure the kingdom saints understand that the mystery saints do not have to be circumcised to be saved. Does it seem strange, then, that the first recorded event by Paul in his next apostolic journey is that he circumcises Timothy? Not at all. "All things are lawful" (I Corinthians 6:12) to the believer in this dispensation because we are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14). Therefore, Paul can do whatever he wants to do. What he wants to do is have men saved. "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews....I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:19-20,22). Paul uses his liberty in Christ to gain souls for Christ.

With this background, let us look at the situation in 16:1-3. Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. All the Jews "in those quarters" knew that Timothy's "father was a Greek." Therefore, if Timothy was to preach the gospel of grace to the Jews, the Jewish religious leaders would probably render Timothy's preaching null and void because they would tell the common Jews not to listen to Timothy since he had never been circumcised. Therefore, although circumcision availeth nothing, Paul uses his liberty in grace to circumcise Timothy so that he might eliminate the Jews' argument against Timothy so that he might gain the Jews.

This is important for us to understand because Paul is our apostle (Romans 11:13), and he says that Christ did not send him to baptize (I Corinthians 1:17). Therefore, we should not be water baptizing people today. Yet, Christianity will turn to passages, like 16:15, where Paul baptized someone, to prove that we should be baptized today. Well, if that is true, then we also need to circumcise new, male converts today. However, when we understand that Paul circumcised Timothy only to be able to reach the Jews, then we also understand why Paul baptized some new converts, even though Christ did not send him to baptize.

16:4-5 Paul is going through the Gentile churches that he visited on his first,

apostolic journey to deliver to them the request from the little flock of kingdom saints to the Gentiles saved by grace to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (15:20) so as not to offend those attending Jewish synagogues (15:21). 16:5 tells us that this was a success. The churches "increased in number daily," since they were not offending the law-keeping Jews because they were obeying the parts of the law of which disobedience was most offensive to the Jews.

16:6 The book of Galatians had probably been written before this time. The main focus of the letter is how the Galatians were "so soon removed" from the gospel of grace to the Jewish traditions (Galatians 1:6). This shows how the Gentile churches had already been "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14), which is why Paul's second apostolic journey, to re-establish the Gentiles in mystery doctrine and confirm the part of the law they should follow so as not to offend the Jews, was so essential.

It also makes me wonder if the reason John Mark left Paul and Barnabas on their first, apostolic journey and returned to Jerusalem (13:13) was because he was being tossed to and fro by bad doctrine, too, which would explain why Paul would not take him on his second, apostolic journey.

16:6-7 Paul, Timothy, and Silas were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia," and the Spirit also kept them from going into Bithynia. The reason is that there are people in Philippi who need to hear the gospel and believe. A church was established there, and, after the book of Acts was over, the epistle to the Philippians was written, which we have today in God's Word. Meanwhile, although Paul did eventually go to Asia with the gospel, the believers there ended up turning away from him later on (II Timothy 1:15). Therefore, it was more needful that Paul go to Philippi.

Today, Christians like to pray for God's guidance about taking a job, marrying a spouse, or moving to a different location. They will use verses, like 16:6-7, to support this, since the Holy Ghost forbade Paul from going to Asia and the Holy Spirit did not allow him to go to Bithynia. However, there are a few problems with trying to apply this today. First, we have God's completed Word. Therefore, God speaks through His Word, when He also spoke outside of His Word before it was completed. Second, Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13) and was commissioned by God to go to all unbelievers before he died (9:15). No one else has ever received such a commission. Granted, we are ambassadors of Christ today (II Corinthians 5:20), but our location does not matter to God. This is seen in the fact that, even before the word of God was completed, there was no problem with Apollos going against the will of Paul (see I Corinthians 16:12), even though Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles.

16:8-10 II Corinthians 2:12-13 says that Paul had a door opened unto him of the Lord to preach Christ's gospel in Troas, but he left for Macedonia because he did not find Titus in Troas. The Acts account says that Paul received a vision, whereby the Lord called them to go to Macedonia. Since God's word is true (John 17:17),

both of these accounts must be true. Since the Lord opened a door in Troas and the Lord also gave a vision to go to Macedonia, this shows that the Lord was leaving it up to Paul to decide what he wanted to do.

This shows that, for the mature Christian, the choice is not between good or bad, but between good and better. Paul had a good opportunity in Troas to preach the gospel, but he had a better one in Macedonia. Therefore, he made the decision to go to Macedonia. He could have made the decision to stay in Troas, and that would have been okay, too, since God “always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place” (II Corinthians 2:14). Therefore, we should not agonize over “what would the Lord have me to do.” If you walk in the Spirit, God will work through you, regardless of the circumstance you decide to put yourself in. God in your circumstance is what is important, not the circumstance itself.

16:10 When referring to Paul's journeys, Luke has used the term "they" (16:7). Now, Luke switches to "we," showing that, once they got to Troas, Luke joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy on their journey.

16:12-13 "Philippi...is the chief city of that part of Macedonia." Since it is the chief city and Paul baptizes Lydia after she is saved, there probably was a Jewish synagogue in Philippi. However, Paul breaks custom and goes to a river outside the city, where some women had gathered for prayer. Apparently, the vision he had must have told him to go to the river instead. It appears that this was not a place where the saints gathered, because 16:16 tells us that a woman with a spirit of divination was there. Therefore, this may have been a Satanic place of prayer. Thus, while the human-good side of man (Romans 2) was seen in the Jewish synagogues, the human-evil side of man (Romans 1) is seen here by the river outside of Philippi. Both need Christ as their Saviour (Romans 3).

16:15 Paul baptized Lydia, which tells us that she must have had business with the Jews. She probably sold her purple (16:14) to the Jews. If so, she was familiar with the Jewish religion, and she was probably frustrated with the hypocrisy of it all. Yet, she worshipped God (16:14). This may be why Paul received the vision to come to Macedonia to preach the gospel, much like Peter received the vision, in Acts 10, to preach to Cornelius. Since Lydia's business probably brought her into the synagogue, Paul baptized her so as not to offend members of the little flock, just like he circumcised Timothy earlier in the chapter so as not to offend the Jews.

16:16-18 The spirit of divination, although being one of Satan's angels, proclaimed the truth that "these men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation" (16:17). Why would Satan want to call attention to the way of salvation? What Satan is doing is he is trying to get people to listen to the devil inside this woman, rather than to Paul. This would not be hard to do since the damsel is well known (16:16). Then, having convinced people to listen to the devil, the spirit of divination would give false and blasphemous doctrine so that people would listen to the devil, rather than to Paul. Thus, this is

Satan's way of getting people to ignore God's apostle to the Gentiles. Knowing this, Paul commands the devil to come out of the damsel.

The same thing goes on today. I Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." These doctrines of devils come from Satan's ministers, who have transformed themselves into ministers of righteousness (II Corinthians 11:13-15). These ministers are in the pulpits of most Christian churches today. They speak God's Word, but they corrupt the word of God (II Corinthians 2:17). It is no coincidence, then, that the woman, in 16:16, had a spirit of divination, while most Christian pastors have a master's degree or doctorate in divinity.

16:19 Paul and Silas are persecuted because, with the devil being cast out of the woman, her masters' hope of monetary gain has been dashed. This is the same reason the Jewish religious leaders persecuted Jesus, the 12 apostles, and Paul. Truth is cast out in favor of money, which is why I Timothy 6:10 says that "the love of money is the root of all evil," and that it causes people to err from the faith.

16:20-21 Just like Jesus was falsely accused, Paul and Silas are falsely accused. They did not teach the Philippians to disobey Roman law. They merely cast a devil out of a woman. Since they did not do anything unlawful, her masters have to bring Paul and Silas in on a trumped-up charge. Her masters say that Paul and Silas had taught the Romans to obey Jewish customs, when they had actually taught people not to follow Jewish customs but to believe the mystery gospel.

The same thing happens today for those following the mystery doctrine found only in Paul's epistles. Unbelievers think we are teaching people to follow Christian traditions, when we are actually teaching people to abandon Christian traditions and believe God's Word instead. Christians do not like us because we teach against their traditions, and unbelievers do not like us because we teach God's Word. Therefore, all are against us, which is why Paul says that, if what we believe is false, "we are of all men most miserable" (I Corinthians 15:19). However, because what we believe is true we can "rejoice evermore" (I Thessalonians 5:16), even though no one likes us.

16:22-24 The magistrates prove to be unjust judges, as they have Paul and Silas beaten with only an accusation against them. There is no proof that Paul and Silas did anything unlawful, and Paul and Silas have not been given a chance to respond to the accusation. They are beaten with many stripes, cast into the worst part of the prison, which is the inner prison, and their feet are fastened into stocks. They are treated like murderers even though they have done nothing wrong.

16:25 Paul and Silas had been beaten with many stripes (16:23) and thrown into the worst part of the prison (16:24), although they had done nothing wrong. Yet, they "sang praises unto God." That is what I call a true worship service! In I Thessalonians 5:16, we are commanded to "rejoice evermore." Joy comes from the

inward man, while happiness is dependent upon happenings. Paul and Silas demonstrate that it is possible to have joy, regardless of the circumstance you are in.

16:26 The great earthquake shook the foundations of the prison. However, God must have caused the doors to be opened and the bands to be loosed apart from the earthquake. After all, the whole building would have probably caved in before the bands loosed as a result of the earthquake! Therefore, this event cannot be explained by an act of “Mother Nature,” as seen by the reactions of the prisoners and the jailor.

16:25-28 Why did the guilty prisoners stay in prison, even though "all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed?" Note that 16:25 says that "the prisoners heard them" singing praises unto God. Paul must have told the prisoners to stay put, and they did so. This shows the power of rejoicing in a dire and unfair situation. These prisoners stuck around so that they might have what Paul and Silas have (the indwelling Holy Spirit) that would cause them to rejoice in prison, even though sticking around would probably cost these prisoners their freedom. The reason Paul told the prisoners to stay put is because the jailor would have killed himself otherwise and would have gone to hell. Instead, he ends up asking the question “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (16:30) and receives the gift of eternal life.

Christians usually ask for God to take suffering away, but joy in suffering is what causes unbelievers to believe the gospel. After all, a joyful Christian is no big deal to the world when he has money in the bank and life is good. However, when he is suffering and he is more joyful than unbelievers, who are in a better situation, the unbelievers will want to know “a reason of the hope that is in” the believer (I Peter 3:15). Therefore, it is through afflictions that “the power of Christ” rests upon us (II Corinthians 12:9), and not through material prosperity.

16:29-30 Having been through earthquakes myself, I know that people naturally run out of a building as fast as they can. Prisoners would be doubly fast, since they would want to be free. This shows that “the power of Christ” is like no other, such that the jailer trembles and falls down when faced with this power. (He did not tremble over the earthquake and the opening of the jail, but he trembled at the fact that Paul and Silas kept all of the prisoners there.) Now, the jailor did not hear Paul and Silas singing, because he was asleep (16:27). Yet, he goes right up to them, falls down before them, and asks them how he can be saved. This shows that he recognized that God had sprung them out of jail. If God has that kind of power, then he is in trouble with God. Therefore, he asks for salvation from God’s wrath.

16:31-32 The gospel of grace is just to believe in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins. Water baptism is no longer required for salvation. Christians will quote 16:31 to say it is the gospel, but it is not. It only says to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no detail there. James 2:19 says that the devils believe there is a God, and they tremble. Yet, they are not saved.

You ask a fundamental Christian what the gospel is, and most of them will say to believe in Jesus or trust Jesus. However, that does not save you. 16:32 says that “they spake unto him the word of the Lord.” That is when they shared the gospel with him. They showed him that he is guilty before the Lord, because he has sinned (Romans 3:23). They then shared that Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead as the payment for his sins. If they believe that, then they are saved (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Christians also get confused over Paul’s mention of “thy house,” as if Paul is saying that the man’s decision counted for his whole household. However, there is no confusion here because 16:32 says that Paul also spoke the word of the Lord to everyone in the guy’s house. If the jailor made the decision for his whole house, there would be no need to share the gospel with everyone else. The fact, that Paul did share the gospel with everyone in the house, shows that each person has to make his own, individual decision to trust the blood of Jesus Christ for salvation. Therefore, in 16:31, Paul is just saying that the OFFER of salvation is extended to the jailor's whole house (16:32).

16:33 Water baptism was required for salvation in Israel’s program (2:38 and Mark 16:16). It is not required today. Paul said that Christ sent him to preach the gospel, not to baptize (I Corinthians 1:17). Yet, he still baptized in some cases so as not to offend those saved in Israel’s program. Most of fundamental Christianity says that water baptism is “an outward manifestation of an inward work of grace,” but this idea is not found in scripture anywhere. Christianity has made water baptism an initiation ceremony so that the local church can have control over you. Satan has gotten so many to do this so as to mask the true baptism by the Holy Spirit into Christ’s death (Romans 6:3-4 and I Corinthians 12:13), because, if you learned that, you would know how to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). But, if you are water baptized instead, then you focus on the flesh so that you cannot serve Christ. That is why Satan has made water baptism such a big deal in Christianity.

Again, just because Paul baptized someone does not mean we should do that today. Paul also circumcised Timothy (16:3), but you do not see fundamental Christianity sharpening their knives to circumcise people. Note how Colossians 2:11-12 says that we “are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,” and part of that is that we are “buried with Him in baptism.” So, if the circumcision is spiritual, the baptism must be spiritual, too, especially since God says there is only “one baptism” today (Ephesians 4:5). Therefore, God only recognizes your baptism by the Holy Spirit into Christ’s death. Also, if this baptism were water, it would not say that we are “buried” in baptism. Rather, it would say that we are “dunked” or “sprinkled” in baptism. This shows how Satan has gotten Christianity to twist God’s Word so that you do not realize your completeness in Christ (Colossians 2:10). Thus, upon believing, the new convert is initiated by water baptism into the flesh-oriented system of religion known as Christianity so that he does not believe God and His Word.

16:34 Note that all of his house believed the gospel, as well. Therefore, they are

all saved, not because he believed, but because each individual member of his house believed.

16:35 After the great earthquake, the opened doors, the loosed chains, and the prisoners staying put, the magistrates are probably scared of Paul and his group now. Therefore, they try to get rid of them quietly.

16:37 From the account of 16:19-23, it appears that Paul never got to share the gospel with the magistrates. If the magistrates have to "come themselves and fetch us out," Paul would have a chance to share the gospel with them. This would be a perfect opportunity to do so, given the sign that God has already performed of the earthquake, opened doors, loosed chains, and the prisoners staying put. This is probably why Paul makes this demand. The point is that Paul probably objected to leaving quietly, not because he wanted to embarrass the magistrates, but because he was thinking of God's twofold will for "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4). Therefore, we can deduce that his motivation for calling the magistrates was to share the gospel with them.

16:38 The magistrates had to come to Paul, because they could have gotten in trouble for breaking the Roman law by beating Paul without a cause.

16:39-40 Paul pays no attention to the request of the magistrates. He does leave the prison, having shared the gospel with them, but he does not immediately depart out of the city. Instead, he goes to the house of Lydia, where the believers met so that Paul could work on the second part of God's will, which is for all men "to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4). This is seen in Paul's comforting the brethren. Paul was the one beaten, arrested, and told to get out of the city, yet Paul is comforting the brethren. Shouldn't it be the other way around? No, because, if the brethren continue to follow the mystery program, they will have tribulations in that city, and so they need God's comfort in order to continue to walk in the Spirit. As such, Paul fulfilled II Corinthians 1:3-4 "The God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." God comforted Paul in the prison, such that he sang praises to the Lord (Acts 16:25). Now, Paul can comfort the new believers in Philippi that God will do the same for them when they are in trouble.

17 Paul preaches in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. The Jews are religious in Thessalonica (v. 5); therefore, it is mostly Gentiles who are the new believers there (v. 4). In Athens, the audience is largely Gentile, and they are caught up in philosophy (v. 21), such that just a few believe (v. 34). The Bereans accept God's Word as their final authority (v. 11); "therefore many of them believed" (v. 12).

17:1-2 "As his manner was" reminds us of how God had told Paul to preach the gospel of grace "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Therefore, before he goes to the Gentiles, Paul spends three weeks, going to the Jewish synagogue and showing them, from Old-Testament scripture, how Jesus was the promised Messiah.

17:3-4 Jewish religious tradition taught that the Messiah would come and establish God's kingdom on earth with Israel ruling over the Gentiles. While that will happen at Jesus' second coming, the Messiah needed to suffer and die as a ransom for the sins of Israel in His first coming. Since religious tradition did not teach about the suffering Messiah, Paul covers this in the synagogue, showing from Old-Testament scripture, for three, solid weeks, that this is so. In spite of his efforts, only some Jews believed, while "a great multitude" of Gentiles believed. This shows that the hardest audience to reach with the gospel are religious people.

Note also that the majority of the people, who were saved, were Gentiles and women. Both groups were looked down upon by the Jewish religion. Thus, God was saving the downtrodden and giving them the gifts of the Spirit that Israel should have already received. God was doing this to provoke Israel to jealousy (Romans 11:11) so that they might believe the new gospel of grace and receive the gift of eternal life.

17:5 Most common Jews did not believe the gospel, because most people believe what man says over what God says. The Jewish religious leaders do not care about the truth. They only care about continuing to have power over the people and receiving tithes and offerings from them. Therefore, they are "moved with envy" over the great multitude, who leave their synagogue and begin meeting in Jason's house. Since too many of the synagogue goers have left them, they do not have a large enough crowd to go overtake the new members of the Body of Christ there. Therefore, they get "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort" to come up with some false accusations to "set all the city on an uproar" to try to kill Paul and Silas. This shows that they are just as evil as the men they align themselves with to overthrow Paul and Silas. The same is true of the religious folks, who killed Jesus and Stephen. So, why would anyone follow them? Yet, most wars are conducted in the name of doing what is right!

17:6 "These that have turned the world upside down." The Jewish religious leaders meant this as a derogatory remark, but it is really the best compliment they could have given believers. Since Satan is "the god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4), turning the world upside down, then, means that they were getting people to recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as God. This shows the power of the cross. Christ's sacrifice for sins is totally sufficient to bring a person from being Satan's prisoner to being Christ's free man, such that the world is turned upside down when people simply believe in Christ's sacrifice as atonement for their sins! As such, "the god of this world" can be bruised under the feet of the body of Christ (Romans 16:20).

17:7 This accusation is comical because the Jewish religious leaders taught that the Messiah would be a king to overthrow all other kings, and Paul had to teach them that the Messiah had to suffer first to save them from their sins (17:3) before ruling the earth as king. In other words, Paul taught in the Jewish synagogue that the reason Israel missed Jesus as their Messiah was because they were looking for a king to overthrow the Romans, and Jesus would not do that yet. So, the Jewish

religious leaders accuse Paul of teaching something that he did not emphasize from the Old Testament, because the Jewish religious leaders already taught it! Thus, they are indicting themselves more than they are indicting Paul.

Today, when you believe the Bible over man's word, you will find that man will accuse you in a similar manner. For example, when you recognize the mystery given to Paul, Acts-2 Christians will accuse you of making things too complicated by inventing a new dispensation. However, in truth, it is the Acts-2 Christians, who make things complicated, by trying to make Matthew – Acts 7 and Hebrews – Revelation doctrine fit into the current dispensation. They try to make a square peg fit into a round hole, which will not work. As such, they are the ones, who have left “the simplicity that is in Christ” (II Corinthians 11:3), even though they accuse us of doing this.

17:8 This verse shows that the real troublemakers are the Jews and their lewd fellows, rather than the believers in Thessalonica.

17:9 This verse must mean that the Jews and their lewd fellows let go of Jason and the other after the people of the city took them into custody. We are never told what happened to Jason and the other, which probably means that the people let them go because they did nothing wrong. I make this conclusion because 17:13 says that the Jews of Thessalonica followed Paul to Berea to persecute him. Therefore, Jason and the other were probably let go. The Jews were mad at this, and so they went to Berea to try to arrest Paul and Silas.

17:10 Paul and Silas go to Berea to get away from the persecution at Thessalonica, yet they leave behind a great multitude of believers. The Thessalonians ended up being faithful believers to walk in the Spirit, as Paul had very little to say against them in the two epistles he wrote to them. The two epistles to the Thessalonians were probably written shortly after this and may be the first writings of Paul that are in the Bible. This shows that, while Satan thought he was damaging God's plan by having Jews and lewd fellows persecute Paul, he was actually helping God's plan, since the result was sound doctrine, written in God's Word, that has been edifying believers for almost 2,000 years now. Thus, while Satan thought evil against Paul, “God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20). “For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (II Corinthians 13:8).

Also, note that Paul and Silas went immediately into the Jewish synagogue. Paul had just spent three sabbath days in the Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica, and the result was that the Jews got a bunch of thugs together and tried to have Paul killed (17:1-7). So, why would Paul go into the Jewish synagogue once he got into Berea? Because God gave him the gospel of Christ to share “to the Jew first” (Romans 1:16). Therefore, even after being persecuted by the Jews in Thessalonica, Paul goes right back to the Jews in Berea, because that was part of the commission that God had given him.

17:11 This is a great statement about the Bereans. Among the churches that Paul wrote epistles to, Thessalonica was probably in the best shape. They understood

Romans (faith) and Ephesians (love) doctrine and only needed Paul to write to them about their hope of eternal life. Yet, the Bereans "were more noble than those in Thessalonica." This explains why Paul did not have to write an epistle to them. They used the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) to learn the truths of God's Word. Therefore, they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." This shows that the Bereans valued God's Word over anything that man said. They made His Word their final authority. As such, they are a shining example for us to follow today.

17:12 The "therefore," that starts this verse, shows that the Bereans believed the gospel of grace, not because Paul said so, but because they searched the scriptures and found them to support what Paul said. Very few people will do this today. The amazing thing is that the Bereans did this without any of Paul's written epistles with the possible exception of Galatians. This shows that the mystery program, while not revealed until Acts 9, can be seen from the Old Testament in hindsight. So few Christians today see the mystery in reading Paul's epistles, because they do not want to see it, while the Bereans saw it just from the Old Testament, because they had "readiness of mind" (17:11) to believe God's Word. This shows what faith in God's Word as your final authority can do!

17:13 Here come those pesky, religious Jews from Thessalonica, rearing their ugly heads to persecute the grace message. It is not enough that they persecute Paul and Silas while they are in Thessalonica, but they also follow them about 50 miles to Berea!

17:14-15 Since the Bereans hold God's Word as their final authority, Paul did not need to stay in Berea, even if there was no persecution. Silas and Timotheus stay for a little bit, probably to establish church order. However, the Bereans do not really need them. They have God's Word to guide them. So, too, today, if you have someone, who believes God's Word as his final authority, he does not need man to tell him what to believe. Rather, he can read God's Word, and the Holy Spirit will teach him spiritual things Himself (I Corinthians 2:9-13).

By contrast, Athens is a city that is "wholly given to idolatry" (17:16). So, again, Satan thinks he is hindering Paul by having him persecuted in Berea, but he is actually helping the spread of the gospel, since Athens needs the gospel. Berea, on the other hand, will grow from their own study of God's Word, especially since Paul is just starting to write down the mystery doctrine in the epistles that we have in God's Word today.

17:16 Since the Bereans believe God's Word, they will be fine without Paul. The more pressing work is in Athens, because the city is "wholly given to idolatry." What a contrast between Berea and Athens! If God were to look at the United States today, He would probably draw the same conclusion about us as Paul did about the Athenians. There are idols in Catholic churches and other religions, but, more importantly, the United States follows the idols of wealth, popularity, good looks, and good feelings, while persecuting God's people in the name of love, fairness, and tolerance. They have discarded God's Word, even among

fundamental Christianity, for the things of this world.

17:17 Athens has a lot of religion and philosophy in their midst. This gives Paul the opportunity, not to preach just every sabbath day in the synagogue, but also to talk in the market every day to those who love philosophy. As we will soon see, it is in the market where he has a captive audience. In the Jewish synagogue, the people are stuck in their religion. The devout persons are even worse. However, the heathen philosophers are willing to listen to him. It is the same thing today. Try teaching the mystery in a fundamental, Christian church, and you will be kicked out before the service is over. Devout, religious people also will not listen to you, but a philosopher will lend you his ear. Even if he does not believe, at least he will listen to you, which means he may end up believing the gospel, which is more than can be said about the so-called “Christians” today.

17:18 Christianity, in the United States today, is worried because fewer people, than in generations past, attend church and believe what they say. However, for the Bible believer, this is actually good news, because that means that more people may be willing to hear the gospel. In other words, they will not tune you out or say, “I go to church, so, you are wasting your time. I know all about it.” Granted, they may think what you say is just another philosophy among the many philosophies out there, but at least you have a better opportunity to present the gospel to the unchurched than to the church. The Athenians seem to be a similar crowd. While some mocked Paul (17:32), at least “certain men clave unto him, and believed” (17:34). That is a better result than what he achieved among the devout, religious folks in the Jewish synagogue.

17:19-21 Most of the Athenians are just interested in gaining more and more knowledge about philosophical ideas. That is why they are interested in what Paul has to say. Still, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Since Paul is presenting the Word of God to them, some may hear and believe, because the Holy Spirit can get through their religion of philosophy.

17:18 tells us that Paul preached about Jesus and the resurrection. 17:19 says that this was a “new doctrine” to these philosophers who spent their entire lives learning new things (17:21). This shows the difference between God’s Word and all of man’s religions. All of man’s religions involve man working so that he makes it to heaven, obtains inner peace, and/or experiences eternal bliss. God’s Word involves having faith in what God has told you in order to receive eternal life and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). Therefore, justification by faith alone (Romans 3:28) is a new thing to philosophers.

Sadly, faith in God is also a new thing to most of Christianity. They are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (II Timothy 3:7). They are trying to learn God’s Word through the energies of their flesh, but they fail to learn the truth. That is because “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him” (I Corinthians 2:14). Therefore, they learn the things of man, not the things of God, when they supposedly study scripture. Yet, they believe they are learning the things of God,

because they use scripture to support their beliefs. That is why the church, who have never believed the gospel, are in worse shape than the unchurched, because they will not listen to you telling them the truth because they think that they already know it.

17:22-23 Christians like to read Paul's opening, here, and talk about how Paul established common ground with the Athenians so that they would listen to him, and we need to do this, too, before we preach the gospel to others. While Paul may have peaked their interest by talking about "the unknown God," Paul is not sugar coating anything to get them to listen. In fact, he starts off right away by telling them that they "are too superstitious," meaning that they are too much into religion and philosophy, rather than trying to find the truth and latching on to it. This is why God is "the unknown God" to them. They could have found Him if they sought after Him (17:27). Then, they would have known Him. Instead, the one and only true God is unknown to them. Therefore, Paul did not just go through their idols and find one as a good opening for his gospel presentation. Rather, he told them that the only reason they did not know God was because they were superstitious.

Unfortunately, most Christians also try to know God through their superstitions. They may ask God for a sign to confirm a decision they have made. That is tempting God. They are afraid to mention something bad, because they will jinx themselves. Do they honestly think that Satan is waiting around for them to mention the word "tornado," and then he will cause one to hit their houses? They cringe at owing \$6.66 at a retail establishment, such that they ask to pay more money. They say "God bless you" when you sneeze. They may ask God to reveal His will to them and then randomly turn to a passage, assuming that God will guide them to the verse with the answer. There are many more examples that could be used. The point is that, because Christians do not read and believe God's Word with the goal of learning what it says, they do not know God. Since God is unknown to them, they use superstitions as their doctrine, rather than God's.

17:24-25 First, Paul reveals God as the creator. Romans 1:19-20 says that God, the Creator, has made Himself known to all men. Therefore, when Paul starts talking about God, the Creator, the Athenians would know that this is the God Who has revealed Himself to them, regardless of if they will admit that He exists or not. Paul tells them that God does not dwell "in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands." The emphasis on the hands shows that God is not a religion, like they have created with temples and idols. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). In other words, these Athenians will never have eternal life and worship the true God until they stop focusing on what they can make into god and start believing in the only true God, Who made them, worshipping Him with the spirit He gave them. This is the gospel to the Gentiles during "the times of this ignorance" (17:30), which was before the gospel of grace. This shows that, although the Gentiles were on the wrong side of the middle wall of partition before Acts 9 (Ephesians 2:14), they still could have received eternal life by this "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6-7).

17:26 Although there are many nationalities of men, all men have the same blood running through their bodies. This shows that they all belong to the human race. If they have faith in what God tells them to have faith in, then they receive forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood (Ephesians 1:7). God did things this way so that man would see that, in spite of living in different areas of the world and speaking different languages, all men can be placed into Christ, because all nationalities have the same blood. Since Paul says that God "HATH made of one blood" (17:26), this tells us that the one blood is Christ's blood. In other words, all people, who will live in God's eternal kingdom on earth, will be there through Christ's blood. This was important to understand in time past when the Jews were God's favored nation (Deuteronomy 7:6), yet God still wanted all nations to dwell with Him on the face of the earth in His kingdom, as He told Abraham in Genesis 12:3. Therefore, these Gentiles, in time past, could still have eternal life with God in His kingdom on earth. In that kingdom program, all nations of men will dwell on all the earth with God, but that program has been set aside, as Paul will start to talk about in 17:30.

"The bounds of their habitation" refers to Deuteronomy 32:8, where God says that He has divided the world into 12 boundaries or sections, one for each tribe of Israel to rule over the Gentile nations. Therefore, although these Gentiles would probably look at Paul, a Jew, as thinking that he is better than them and that the Jewish God hates the Gentiles, Paul is telling them that it has been God's plan, all along, to save the Gentiles. And, since the Jews are still in unbelief, God will now save the Gentiles directly.

17:27 During time past, the Gentiles were on the wrong side of the middle wall of partition. In other words, in order to get to God, they had to go through Israel. A main difference was that the light of the Mosaic law was only given to Israel (Romans 3:1-2). Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Being absent of this light, the Gentiles were in the dark and had to "feel after [God], and find Him" (17:27). The good news was that He was still not far away from them because of both internal and external witnesses of God that He had given to each man (John 1:9 and Romans 1:19-20). However, they had to seek the Lord to find Him. That is really what everyone has to do, including Jews in Israel's program, as God says, in Hebrews 11:6, that God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Therefore, although the Gentiles were in the dark, they could still be saved, just like the Jews could, who had the Mosaic law.

17:28 These witnesses of God show that all people are His offspring in the sense that all people are His creation. And, because they are His creation, they all live, move, and exist thanks to God. God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Therefore, God takes care of His entire creation and loves everyone (John 3:16), even unbelievers (II Peter 3:9). Note also how Paul seeks to keep their attention by quoting their poets.

17:29 Paul is talking to unsaved Gentiles, but he mentions the Godhead to them.

How would they know about the Godhead? God has revealed the Godhead to all men, as Romans 1:20 says, “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” Therefore, although they may have never read scripture, they know about the Godhead. This knowledge was a problem to them, because men, in their pride, want to be God themselves. Therefore, they do “not like to retain God in their knowledge” (Romans 1:28). So, they “became vain in their imaginations...and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man” (Romans 1:21,23). In other words, in an attempt to get rid of their knowledge of God, they decided to make idols so that they could say that they are God. Paul is trying to get them back to correct thinking according to the internal knowledge of God that God gave them. In other words, how can they make gods, when God made them?

17:30 God has given all men the law of the conscience (Romans 2:15). At the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, God concluded the Gentiles in sin, giving “them over to a reprobate mind” (Romans 1:28). Then, He formed the nation of Israel and gave them the Mosaic law. In Acts 9, God set aside Israel, concluding them in sin (Romans 2:5). Thus, all people have been concluded under sin “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19). The result is that “but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested” (Romans 3:21) so that all believers may be “justified freely by His grace” (Romans 3:24).

“Time past” in Israel’s program (Genesis 12 – Acts 8) was a time when the Gentiles lived in ignorance, because God had given the Jews favored nation status. But, God winked at the Gentiles during that time, meaning that it looked like God had abandoned the Gentiles. However, He was really allowing the Jews to come to the same place that the Gentiles came to in Genesis 11, so that He could show that all are sinners. He could then save all people with the gospel of grace, beginning in Acts 9.

In other words, God’s wink to the Gentiles told them, “It may look like I am ignoring you, but I plan to offer salvation to all believers. You just need to wait until I conclude the Jews in sin. Then, it will be clear that all are guilty before Me. Then, I will remove the middle wall of partition and treat everyone the same in the dispensation of grace.”

Since the middle wall of partition is down, God “now commandeth all men every where to repent” (17:30). This is not a reference to the gospel of the kingdom message of “repent and be baptized...for the remission of sins” (2:38). The gospel Paul preaches is the gospel of grace, which is to trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for sins. To do this, though, repentance is involved. Repentance means to change your mind. Paul’s audience is trusting in philosophy and religion to give them eternal life. They need to change their minds by abandoning these vain imaginations (Romans 1:21) and by believing God’s gospel to them for eternal life. Thus, the way they repent is by trusting in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sins. The way Israel repented in

their program was to trust in God to give them eternal life through the law covenant, rather than earning it on their own. The things, they were to repent of, were different because God gave them different instructions based upon different situations. However, all people, regardless of dispensation, need to stop trusting in their own works and start trusting in God's gospel to them in order to have eternal life.

We should also note that, since both Jews and Gentiles have been concluded under sin, they are both saved TODAY by the same gospel to trust in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sins. Jews TODAY are NOT to put themselves under the Mosaic law, because God has given different instructions to all today. Once the rapture takes place, Israel's prophecy dispensation will begin again, the middle wall of partition will be back up, and the Jews will be back under the Mosaic law. However, we must be clear to point out that there is only ONE, saving gospel today, because Paul says that we are to let him be accursed who preaches any other gospel than Paul's gospel today (Galatians 1:6-9).

17:31-33 The reason Paul gives for people to repent is because God's righteousness requires Him to judge every man. That is bad news for unrepentant man, because he has sinned and will receive death as the just payment for his sin (Romans 3:23 and 6:23). God will give this judgment through the man, Christ Jesus. The good news is that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. This gives "assurance unto all men" (17:31) that God can raise them from the dead and give them eternal life, as well.

If people recognize their depraved condition, the response to this statement would be the question, "what shall we do" (2:37) in order to have eternal life? However, because most of his audience are prideful and do not recognize that they deserve God's eternal judgment in the lake of fire, they start mocking the resurrection of the dead. Some said they would hear him again, but Paul knows that would be unprofitable. He would be going round and round with these people who spend "their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (17:21). Therefore, Paul does not come back to speak to them. He moves on to people, who will listen to him. This is a lesson for us today. If we go over Romans 1-3 doctrine with people and they are not "pricked in their heart" (2:37) to believe, there is nothing more that can be done. You cannot talk about other doctrines or answer their philosophies, because the things of God are foolishness to them (I Corinthians 2:14). All you will be doing is talking from the spirit, and they will be talking from the flesh. Since your flesh is dead (Romans 6:6-7) and their spirits are dead (Ephesians 2:1), no true communication can occur. Therefore, you should move on to people who are willing to listen.

17:34 However, there were some, who considered what Paul said and realized it lined up with their internal and external witnesses from God. Therefore, they "clave unto him" (17:34), which means that they went with him when he left the crowd. Paul must have shared the gospel with them in private, since we are told that they believed. Thus, Paul's sermon was not without profit. The lesson for us is that, in spite of the majority opposing us, it is always worthwhile to share the

depravity of man and the gospel with those willing to listen.

18 The Jews in Corinth do not believe, which is strike two against them in the dispensation of grace (v. 6), but Gentiles believe and a church is started there (v. 8). Priscilla and Aquila help the church in Ephesus, especially by showing the mystery to a kingdom saint, Apollos, who will both edify the body of Christ and preach the gospel of grace to Jews (vs. 24-28).

18:2 The Jews missed Jesus as their Messiah, because they were looking for their Messiah to overthrow the Romans. Now, the Romans have kicked the Jews out. This will make it even harder for the Jews to believe the gospel. On the other hand, this opens up a ministry opportunity for believing Jews to reach the Gentiles with the gospel. Aquila and Priscilla will now minister to the church in Corinth along with Paul.

18:3 Could you imagine working side by side with the apostle Paul? Aquila must have learned much mystery doctrine.

This verse shows that Paul continued to work to make a living. Paul preached the gospel in Corinth free of charge (II Corinthians 11:7). He did so in order to keep from hindering the gospel's effectiveness (II Corinthians 11:12 and I Corinthians 9:11-15). In other words, he did not want people to say that he was preaching for the money. Paul was "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13). The mystery dispensation was specifically committed to him (I Corinthians 9:17) by Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). He traveled all over the world to preach the gospel. Therefore, if anyone deserved to be paid for preaching, it was Paul. Yet, he labored as a tentmaker so that by all means he might save some (I Corinthians 9:22).

Today's church is carnal, just like it was in Paul's day in Corinth. Today, no one is the apostle of the Gentiles, and all are on the same level of mystery doctrine since we all have God's completed Word. Moreover, today's pastors do not need to travel like Paul did. Therefore, pastors should not take any money from a church. They should work full-time jobs and support their families, just as if they were not pastors. That way, more people may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). Yet, nearly all pastors take some form of compensation, and many hinder the gospel by becoming rich off of the poor people in the church. They "devour widows' houses" (Matthew 23:14), when they should be financially supporting widows (I Timothy 5:3-10). Most do not even teach a saving gospel, because they have erred from the faith due to their love of money (I Timothy 6:10). Thus, Christianity has "ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet...not many fathers" (I Corinthians 4:15) and so very few people, who attend church today, are actually saved.

18:4-5 In Thessalonica, Paul reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue for three sabbaths, "as his manner was" (17:2-3). Given this, and the information in 18:4-5, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul spent about three sabbath days in Corinth, showing from scripture that the Messiah was not going to come the first time, overthrow the Romans, and set up God's kingdom. Rather, He would suffer and

die for the sins of Israel. Thus, he preached the gospel to them (I Corinthians 15:3-4). Then, when Silas and Timotheus arrived, he decided to press the issue with the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. He probably sensed the opposition, and, much like a lone police officer in a dangerous situation, Paul probably waited until Silas and Timotheus showed up, because he wanted other believers with him in case there was an uproar as a result.

18:6 The Jews “opposed themselves,” which means that they did not believe the gospel. Therefore, they kept themselves from receiving eternal life. Today, the same term of “oppose themselves” is used of those who will not acknowledge the truth (II Timothy 2:25). Therefore, all those, who oppose God’s Word, are really opposing themselves, because they keep the power of God’s Word from saving and/or sanctifying them.

Blasphemy means speaking evil of God. The Jews must have told Paul that Jesus was not the Christ. With the Jews’ mind made up not to believe the gospel, Paul moves away from them. After all, the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned him to preach the gospel to all unsaved people (9:15). Therefore, Paul should not waste his time on blasphemers, when he can preach the gospel to others who may be willing to listen.

As such, this is the Jews’ second strike when it comes to the gospel of grace. Their first strike was in 13:46, when they judged themselves “unworthy of everlasting life.” Paul then turned “to the Gentiles.” Now, since the Jews oppose themselves, Paul will henceforth “go unto the Gentiles.” Finally, 28:28 gives strike three, where Paul turns to the Gentiles permanently. The Lord Jesus Christ had commissioned him to preach the gospel “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). After three strikes, God has Paul go the Gentiles only at the end of Acts, which is why the book ends where it does, because it is written to Israel. Thus, we see the Jews will keep diminishing away in God’s eyes, as they keep rejecting God’s offer of eternal life to them in the dispensation of grace (Romans 11:11-12).

Also, note that Paul said, “your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean” (18:6). This shows the seriousness of Paul’s call to preach the gospel to all unsaved people. He needed to reach as many people as possible so that their blood would not be on his head due to them not being saved because they did not hear the gospel. Granted, Paul would not lose his salvation if he did not reach everyone in the world. The point is that he was held responsible by the Lord Jesus Christ for preaching the mystery gospel to the unsaved. As he said in I Corinthians 9:16: “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” Therefore, if he did not fulfill his commission, he would not receive the high position of authority that God has for him in heavenly places for eternity. But, since he did preach the gospel here, he is clean of the blood of these wicked people in Corinth.

18:7 Paul did not have to go far to go to the Gentiles. He just went next door! Apparently, some of the Jews in the synagogue in Corinth did believe the gospel. One of these was Justus, whose house shared a wall with the Jewish synagogue.

18:8 Even Crispus, “the chief ruler of the synagogue” (18:8), believed the gospel. It is important to note that Paul baptized him, not because it was necessary for salvation, but so as not to offend the Jews, who were right next door in the synagogue. In fact, Paul said to the Corinthians, in I Corinthians 1:14-16, that he thanked God that he only baptized Crispus, Gaius, Stephanas, and their households. The reason is because “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (I Corinthians 1:17). In Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38, the gospel included water baptism. But now, in the dispensation of grace, water baptism is no longer a part of the gospel. It is not even something that should be done. However, so as not to offend the Jews, Paul baptizes Gaius and his household, which is the same reason he circumcised Timotheus (16:3).

Yet, most all Christians today will make up excuses to hold onto Christianity’s sacred cow of water baptism. They will tell you that Paul had other people baptize the rest of the Corinthians. So, let me get this straight. According to their argument, Paul thanks God that he did not baptize many in Corinth because he does not want people to say that he baptized in his own name (I Corinthians 1:15). But, he did have others baptize people in Corinth for him. Wouldn’t having others baptize for Paul lead more people to conclude that they were baptized in the name of Paul than if he did the baptizing himself in the name of God?

Even more important than this is the fact that Ephesians 4:5 says there is only one baptism and I Corinthians 12:13 says that all of the Corinthians were baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Being part of the body of Christ is required for eternal life today in the dispensation of grace, which means that Spirit baptism is necessary for salvation. Therefore, this must be the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5. Yet, Paul says that water baptism is not part of the gospel (I Corinthians 1:17). This shows that the ONLY baptism that God recognizes today is the Spirit’s dry baptism of the believer into Christ’s death, as Romans 6:3 states. Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12 both say that we are “buried” with Him in baptism. “Buried” is a term used in connection with death. If water baptism was what happened, the text would say, “immersed,” “dunked,” or “sprinkled.” Therefore, the logical conclusion, as to why Paul baptized some of the Corinthians, was so as not to offend the Jews next door. As such, water baptism should not be practiced today. Doing so immediately “immerses” the new believer into the flesh, not recognizing that Christ has made his spirit alive (Ephesians 2:1) so that Christ can live in him (Galatians 2:20). Instead, he will spend his Christian life trying to obey God out of the energies of his flesh, which is called “dead works” (Hebrews 9:14). Christianity hopes that this means he will give large sums of money to the church. Therefore, they propagate the lie that water baptism is “an outward manifestation of an inward work of grace,” when water baptism is never that in ANY scripture in ANY dispensation.

18:9-11 After the Jews “opposed themselves and blasphemed” (18:6) and Corinth was full of paganism, Paul was probably leery of staying there. In fact, 18:12 shows the Jews bringing Paul to the judgment seat. However, God says that He has “much people in this city.” Therefore, no man will hurt Paul (18:10). This shows God’s divine protection of Paul, because God wants him to stay and edify

the Corinthians. Therefore, he stays for 1 ½ years. No other church has more written to them in God's Word from Paul than the Corinthians because no other church had so many problems, yet they were still God's people. This shows the necessity for Paul to stay there so long. It also shows the error of the teaching that someone must live a life in service to Christ in order to demonstrate that they are saved. If they do not, then they are not saved. This is untrue when you look at, for example, the man committing sexual sin with his father's wife (I Corinthians 5:1). Paul says that he still has eternal life (I Corinthians 5:5). David committed adultery (II Samuel 11:3-4) and murder (II Samuel 11:14-15), and yet God would not impute those sins to him (Romans 4:6-8). Therefore, it does not matter what you do after you trust in Jesus' death as atonement for your sins. You have now received the atonement (Romans 5:11), you are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), you are holy (Colossians 3:12), and you have the gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23), regardless of your service, or lack of service, to God.

We should also note that God has much people in Corinth (18:10), even though the Jewish religion rejected the gospel (18:6) and there was so much wickedness there. This should give us encouragement to keep proclaiming the mystery, since the United States today has much wickedness in it, and the Christian religion, for the most part, also rejects the gospel.

18:12-17 Again, it is the Jewish religious leaders who persecute Paul. (Corinth is a city within Achaia (see 18:27 and 19:1), which shows that the Jews have taken Paul to a higher authority than city officials.) However, Paul does not immediately leave, as he did in Thessalonica (17:10) and Berea (17:14), because God promised to protect him, since God had much people in the city (18:9-10). Therefore, the Jews' plan backfires. Gallio is no dummy. He knows that Paul has not broken any civil laws. He refuses to get involved in religious spats, and he overlooks the Greeks in his court, taking this as an opportunity to beat, not Paul, but the chief ruler of the synagogue.

This may be a picture of what is going on spiritually. Jesus told the disciples that they could remove the mountain of religion if they just had a little bit of faith (Matthew 17:20). Instead, Israel crucified their Messiah. Now, in the dispensation of grace, the Gentiles are believing the gospel. As such, they are saying to religion "Be thou removed," as pictured by Greeks, howbeit unsaved Greeks, beating up the chief religious guy. Again, this shows that vile unbelievers do not have a problem with someone preaching the gospel. The problem comes from pious religious people, who see the gospel as a threat to the money and power they receive from their congregants. This shows that it is better to have an unbelieving ruler, who understands the scam that religion is, than to have a professed Christian as a ruler, because the latter will allow the injustices of religion to continue, while the former looks the other way, as Gallio did, when unbelievers punish religious people.

Personally, when I was expelled from Calvary Chapel Bible College in 2009 for standing on the truth of God's Word, it was church people, who told me I was a heretic. All non-Christian people, including a Buddhist, said I was treated unfairly.

18:15 Gallio mentions that religious people get involved with questions “of words and names.” The reason that hundreds of Christian denominations exist, even though there is only one Bible, is because of these questions. Each denomination seeks money and power by coming up with different doctrines that will appeal to the flesh, so that people will attend their churches and give them money. They substantiate these doctrines with questions of words that change the meaning of what the Bible says. Peter calls this wresting the scriptures (II Peter 3:16). Paul says that they are “doting about questions and strifes of words,” and that this is “perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds,” who are “destitute of the truth” (I Timothy 6:4-5). Therefore, what Christianity today does with the Bible is something that man has been doing with God’s Word for thousands of years. The funny thing is that a presumed unbeliever, Gallio, understands this better than presumed believers who attend churches!

18:18 Whenever we say that water baptism is not for today, fundamental Christianity will bring up examples where Paul baptized people to show that water baptism is for today. Why don’t these same people advocate circumcision and Nazarite vows for today, because Paul circumcised Timotheus (16:3) and because Paul took a Nazarite vow (18:18)? The point is that, just because Paul did something, it does not mean that it is for today. We have to examine why Paul did something.

The vow Paul had, here, was a Nazarite vow. Numbers 6 talks about the Nazarite vow as something God set up under the law for those wishing to separate themselves unto the Lord. The reason Paul had this vow is told to us in 21:17-26. Because Paul preached the gospel of grace, Judaizers accused Paul of not following God’s law. This hurt Paul’s chances of reaching the common Jews with the gospel. To help with this, “James and all the elders” (21:18) asked Paul to get his head shaved, along with four others, to show to the “many thousands of Jews” that “are all zealous of the law” (21:20) that Paul “walkest orderly, and keepest the law” (21:24). Paul said that “unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews” (I Corinthians 9:20). Paul was not kidding about this, as he even got his head shaved and participated in an animal sacrifice (Numbers 6:18-21), so that the Jews would not accuse him of not following the law. Paul was not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14), yet he used his liberty in Christ (I Corinthians 8:9) to put himself voluntarily under the law so that saved Jews under the kingdom program, who were still required to follow the law, would not set it aside, citing Paul.

18:19-20 Paul reasons in the Jewish synagogue, and they desire him to stay longer. Because he has the Nazarite vow, he appears to be a very devout Jew, which causes him to gain the Jews’ respect, such that they listen to him. Thus, we see the effectiveness of his vow. Paul has to leave them in order to go up to Jerusalem, but Paul leaves Aquila there so that he may continue to preach grace to these Jews, since Aquila is a Jew himself (18:2). Thus, Paul stops in Ephesus long enough to gain an audience for Aquila to carry on the ministry.

18:21 First, Paul took a Nazarite vow (18:18). Now, he is keeping a Jewish feast. He sure is acting strangely for someone saved by grace. The point is that he does these things so as not to offend saved Jews under the kingdom program. Since he goes to such extremes so as not to offend saved Jews, it is easy to see how he would also water baptize Gentiles saved by the gospel of grace so as not to offend saved Jews. He did not water baptize as an outward manifestation of an inward work of grace, as Christianity so widely claims today.

Remember that the book of Acts is written to the Jews, while Paul's epistles are written to Gentiles in the gospel of grace. Therefore, 1) Acts records Paul circumcising Timothy (16:3), while Paul told the Gentiles that "neither circumcision availeth any thing" (Galatians 6:15). 2) Acts records Paul baptizing the Corinthians (18:8), while Paul told the Corinthians that Christ sent him "not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). 3) Acts records Paul taking a Nazarite vow (21:26 and 18:18), while Paul told the Colossians "if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances" (Colossians 2:20). 4) Acts records Paul leaving the Ephesians to "keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem" (18:21), while he told the Colossians "let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Colossians 2:16).

The point is that, in the dispensation of grace, Paul is not under the law, yet he can do the things contained in the law so as to gain the Jews (I Corinthians 9:20). Therefore, Acts shows things Paul did to save the Jews. It is not meant for us to be a Christian guide of what we should do today. Our guide is in Paul's epistles alone.

18:24-25 Apollos was "mighty in the scriptures" but knew "only the baptism of John." This means that Apollos was not in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Ghost in Acts 2. Since he was born in Alexandria and has now come to Ephesus, he must not have been around Jerusalem for the events of Acts. Therefore, he also does not know about the mystery. Instead, he "was instructed in the way of the Lord" found in scripture. Since the gospel of grace was a mystery, he knew nothing of it. He only knew the gospel of the kingdom that was taught by John the Baptist. If what Paul taught was the same as what the 12 apostles taught, as fundamental Christianity claims, then why did a man "mighty in the scriptures" know nothing about it?

18:26 Apollos was preaching the kingdom program in the Jewish synagogues, and Aquila and Priscilla "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly," meaning that they shared the mystery program with him.

18:27 With this new information, Apollos is able to help "them much which had believed through grace." Thus, the more perfect information, that Aquila and Priscilla shared with Apollos, must have been mystery doctrine. Since Apollos knows the scriptures well, he is now able to help those in Achaia, who have been saved by grace.

18:28 Apparently, the "help" that the Corinthians need is to convince the Jews

next door (18:7), that they are really following God and not some cult. Because he knows the Jewish scriptures well, Apollos is able to go into the Jewish synagogue and preach the gospel of grace, while using Old-Testament scriptures to prove that Jesus is the Christ. Thus, he provides the missing link for the Jews to their scripture. This is something the newly saved Gentiles were unable to do. He also helped in edifying grace believers, as Paul mentioned to the Corinthians that "Apollos watered" in Corinth after Paul had planted there (I Corinthians 3:6). Since Acts is written to Israel, this fact is not found here in Acts.

19 Paul is in Ephesus for two years. In that time, he: 1) Brings the Holy Ghost upon those saved under the gospel of the kingdom (vs. 2-6), 2) Gives the gospel to Jews for three months (v. 8), 3) Gives the gospel to Gentiles for two years (vs. 9-10), and 4) Casts out false religion and idol worship (vs. 13-19). With all of this, the Word of God has grown mightily (v. 20), such that those, making their living off of idols, cause a riot (v. 21-34). However, unlike the Jewish religious leaders in places like Jerusalem, the rioters do not prevail.

19:1 With regard to the Corinthians, Paul said that he planted, and Apollos watered (I Corinthians 3:6). Paul came to Corinth in 18:1 and stayed with them 1 ½ years (18:11). Apollos was then at Corinth (19:1), bringing the Corinthians edification in the mystery. Therefore, Paul planted, and Apollos watered.

19:2 Paul's question of these Ephesians is meant to find out what dispensation they were saved under. If they were saved by grace, they would have immediately received the Holy Ghost (Ephesians 1:13-14). If they were saved by the kingdom gospel, they would have received the gift of the Holy Ghost by having hands laid upon them by an apostle (see 8:14-19). Since they have never even heard of the Holy Ghost, a follow-up question is needed.

19:3 This follow-up question is of their baptism. He finds out that they were saved under the ministry of John the Baptist. This means they are kingdom saints, not grace saints. Their promise, then, is of eternal life by putting themselves under God's law covenant with Israel and being water baptized with the Holy Ghost not coming until Acts 2. Because these people were not around the 12 apostles, they have not been baptized with the Holy Ghost yet.

19:4-6 John said "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). Paul picks up on this verse to say that, since they did not follow Jesus Christ by going to Jerusalem and tarrying for the Holy Ghost in Acts 1-2, they do not have the Holy Ghost yet. In other words, they started with the kingdom program by being baptized unto repentance, but they have not continued with the kingdom program to be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

To continue these people in the kingdom program, Paul baptizes them in the name of the Lord Jesus (19:5). These two verses (19:4-5) are used by churches to say that you have to be water baptized in their church in order for it to count. If you

grew up Catholic, were baptized as a Catholic, and later became Baptist, you need to get baptized by the Baptists. Or, you were saved in a Church of Christ and were baptized by them, and then you became Pentecostal. Now, you have to be baptized by the Pentecostals. After all, John water baptized these people, but apparently that was not good enough, because Paul also had to water baptize them in the name of the Lord Jesus.

These verses are also used to argue about Whose name you should be baptized in. Some say you are baptized in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Others say you are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (19:5). Others say you are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (2:38). Because Christianity has made such a big deal out of water baptism, people become dogmatic over how it is done, and they make people get baptized two or three times because the first two times did not take because they were not done correctly. This is all done so that each church can say that only they do the baptizing correctly so that you have to come to their church and give them money. This is part of the love of money which causes people to err from the faith (I Timothy 6:10).

Since we have already established that water baptism is not for today, we know that all of these baptism arguments are in vain. To understand what is going on, we need to know a little about the at-hand phase of Israel's kingdom program. God said that Israel would be a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles to reconcile the earth back to Himself (Exodus 19:5-6). They fulfill this commission during Jesus' millennial reign on earth (Zechariah 8:23; Isaiah 61:6). Part of the priest's ordination ceremony was that he had to be water baptized (Exodus 29:4). Since the kingdom was at hand, beginning with John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2), all believers in Israel were to be water baptized (Matthew 3:6). This was a baptism unto repentance (Matthew 3:11), meaning that they were water baptized to show that they had separated themselves from the apostate nation (Matthew 3:7) to take on God's commission to be a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles once the kingdom was established on earth.

Then, after Jesus ascended to the Father, He promised to baptize these priests with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11), so that they would have the authority to forgive sins (John 20:22-23) and perform the signs of the kingdom (Mark 16:17-20). These things would be done first among Israel, during the tribulation period, and then among the Gentiles in the millennial reign (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20).

There were 120 believers who were water baptized in Matthew – John and then received the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost (1:15; 2:3-4). The people, whom Paul has just encountered, were apparently water baptized by John, but then they did not follow Jesus. Jesus said that those, who would not follow him, were not fit to be part of the kingdom (Matthew 16:24-26). Believing Israel must be water baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and then endure unto the end of the tribulation period in order to be saved (Matthew 24:13). They must continue in the program in order to be saved.

These people were “disciples of John” (Matthew 9:14), but they did not follow

Jesus. Therefore, they are unfit for the kingdom (Matthew 8:21-22). In other words, they repented of their own self-righteousness and believed the gospel of the kingdom, but they did not follow Jesus. Therefore, they were not present on the day of Pentecost and did not receive the Holy Ghost. This means that they have to start over again. They have to “repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (2:38) in order to save themselves from the untoward generation (2:40) of apostate Israel.

It is not that they were baptized by the wrong person, the wrong denomination, or in the wrong name. It is that they did not continue in the kingdom program after they were baptized. This means that they must believe the gospel of the kingdom again. This is like the wise virgins of Matthew 25, who slept during the tribulation period. They had to trim their lamps in order to enter the kingdom (Matthew 25:7). You could say, then, that these disciples of John are trimming their lamps by now becoming disciples of Jesus. **Since they were already part of the kingdom program**, Paul causes them to continue in that program by believing the gospel of 2:38, even though a new dispensation has begun.

From 8:15-18, we know that an apostle must lay his hands upon these people in order to receive the Holy Ghost. Before Acts 9, it had to have been one of the 12 apostles. Paul is not one of the 12, as God picked Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot (1:26). However, God did save Paul both under the prophecy program and the mystery program, as discussed in the commentary on chapter 9. Paul is "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), but God also called Paul to bear God's name before the children of Israel (9:15). Thus, it is in this capacity that Paul has the God-given authority to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost upon these kingdom saints. Therefore, Paul lays his hands on them, and they are now “caught up” with the kingdom program.

As such, this passage shows the distinction between the two, different methods of salvation at the time and how Paul had to identify which gospel these people had believed in order to determine what promises from God they would receive. If they had never believed before, they would have received the Holy Ghost without water baptism or laying on of hands, as the Gentiles did in 10:44-48. But, since they had already believed the gospel of the kingdom, Paul must continue them down that road, which means they have to receive the Holy Ghost in the same manner that those in 8:15-18 did.

And, since water baptism is not recognized by God today, there is no need to fool with any nonsense of trying to use these verses to support the supremacy of one Christian denomination over another. Just believe in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for your sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), and skip over Satan’s trap of water baptism. You can then recognize the dry baptism of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13) into Jesus’ death (Romans 6:3-4), so that you recognize that you are dead to sin and alive to Christ (Romans 6:8). Praise the Lord!

19:7 “All the men were about twelve.” 12 is not a large number. Therefore, it would be real easy to come up with an exact count. So, why doesn’t the verse say,

“all the men were eleven” or “all the men were thirteen?” The reason must be that God wants us to focus on the number 12. 12 is the number of governmental order in the Bible, which is why Jesus chose 12 apostles and why there are 12 tribes of Israel. Therefore, the men being “about twelve” should make us think that God had elders in Israel’s program in Ephesus, but they were not complete because they had not received the Holy Ghost yet. Therefore, they were “ABOUT twelve” rather than being exactly twelve.

19:8 As his custom was, Paul preaches the gospel of grace in the Jewish synagogue first. We should not confuse this with the gospel of the kingdom just because we are told that he spoke "the things concerning the kingdom of God." After all, the kingdom of God encompasses both heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1). Paul spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3 and 2:5-7), while believing Israel spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth (Matthew 5:5 and Revelation 5:10). Paul only followed the earthly program with the 12 or so Ephesians mentioned in 19:1-7 because that was the gospel they had believed. But, Israel’s gospel was set aside with the revelation of the mystery to Paul in Acts 9 (see Galatians 2:7). Therefore, Paul would have only preached a saving gospel to unbelievers in the Jewish synagogues, and that gospel, at this time, was the gospel of the grace of God (20:24). However, since the Jews were familiar with the Old Testament and supposedly believed it, he would have been using Old Testament passages to show Jesus as the Messiah, although he also could have used Matthew – John and Hebrews if the Jews would have accepted those books as scripture, but they probably did not. Therefore, Paul probably used Old-Testament passages such as Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 53:5-6,10, and Psalm 16:10, 22:1,6,16, 69:1,7, and 110:1, which show that the Jewish scriptures point to Jesus as the Messiah.

19:9 Paul, again, faces persecution by the unbelieving Jews. Therefore, he leaves the Jewish synagogue, but he takes the believers with him. One of the believers was probably Tyrannus, who ran a school, and he allowed Paul to teach there.

19:10 Tyrannus' school, then, was probably a school of philosophy, where people from all over came to hear new philosophies. It might have been the equivalent of Oxford or Harvard today. Therefore, teaching at this school was a unique opportunity to reach all of Asia over the next two years. We are not told the effectiveness of these two years. However, at the end of his life, Paul said that "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (II Timothy 1:15). Therefore, it seems probable that some believed the gospel, but, in the end, they all abandoned Paul's teachings, probably for some new philosophy. This shows how difficult it is to get those of higher education to believe the gospel and sound doctrine on a long-term basis. They may listen because it is new to them (see 17:18-21,32), but, ultimately, their god is education and philosophy. Because God’s Word is absolute truth, believers will make the choice to abandon man’s philosophy for God’s truth, but that is a very difficult mountain to remove from philosophers’ minds (Matthew 17:20).

19:11-12 Many things mentioned of Peter in early Acts are also mentioned of Paul

in the last half of Acts. This is a case in point. Every one of the sick multitudes were healed when Peter passed by (5:15-16). Similarly, many are healed, here, through Paul. With Peter, the sick had to be present in order to be healed. With Paul, the sick can receive a handkerchief that Paul touched, and they are healed. Thus, Paul has greater power than Peter had, which is a sign of the greater work of the gospel in the dispensation of grace versus the gospel in Israel's program. Israel will not receive the atonement until Jesus' second coming (3:19-20), because they are justified by faith plus works (James 2:24). By contrast, the body of Christ receives the atonement the moment they believe (Romans 5:11), because they are justified by faith alone (Romans 3:28).

These "special miracles" were necessary so that the Jews might believe, since "the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom" (I Corinthians 1:22). Therefore, the Greeks hear the wisdom of Paul's teachings, while the Jews see the signs that confirm that the doctrine that Paul preaches is true (Mark 16:20). Both Jews and Greeks should now be convinced that Paul is speaking the very words of God. Therefore, these words should be believed, and all philosophy should be jettisoned. Of course, like all physical miracles, these special miracles were a picture of the spiritual healing God would do for those who believe the gospel.

19:13 The Jewish religious leaders performed miracles through the power of Satan, including casting out devils (Matthew 12:27). This was all part of how Satan seduced people into following the Jewish religion rather than believing the gospel for salvation. Because there is more power in Jesus' name, they start casting out devils in Jesus' name. Jesus mentions that they will do this during the tribulation period (Matthew 7:22).

19:14 Note that these "vagabond Jews" (19:13) are not poor followers of the Jewish religion. Rather, they are seven sons of the high priest, showing that the chief priest had been using Satanic power to cast out devils in order to try to trick people into thinking that he is on God's side, much like the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2:9) and the false prophet (Revelation 13:12-15) will do in the tribulation period. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Catholic church today performs so-called exorcisms as a proof that they are God's church.

The word "vagabond" appears four times in scripture. The first two refer to Cain as a curse by God on religion for his killing of Abel (Genesis 4:12,14). The third mention is in Psalm 109:10, where the wicked, who crucified Jesus, are said to have children who are cursed to be vagabonds. Furthermore, Psalm 109:6 says that Satan is to stand at the right hand of these wicked people. Similarly in Acts, the vagabonds are the sons of a chief priest of the Jews, who is really a Satanic high priest. Therefore, these exorcists are the fulfillment of the curse of Psalm 109:10. Also, note that Jesus is God's high priest (Psalm 110:4), and He is now standing at the right hand of God (7:55-56), just like Sceva is standing at the right hand of Satan, according to Psalm 109:6. This shows two things. First, it shows that the Jewish religion was under the control of Satan, just like the Christian religion is today, for the most part. Second, it shows how strong the Satanic attack is against Paul. After all, he is the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).

Therefore, Satan's primary focus is to destroy Paul's faith (II Corinthians 12:7) so that the gospel that was given to him by Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12) is not given to the world (I Corinthians 9:17). Then, if it is given to the world, he attacks the words of the gospel so that its hearers will be blind to its truth (II Corinthians 4:3-4). Therefore, it should come as no surprise to us that a clear, gospel message is rarely given in Sunday morning messages in "Christian" churches today and that believing God's Word rightly divided is a rarity.

19:15 Just like Jesus will say to those children of the devil who cast out devils during the tribulation period: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23), this evil spirit acknowledges that he knows those with eternal life (Jesus and Paul), but he does not know the chief priest's sons. This shows that, just because someone mentions Jesus' name, it does not mean that God will do what they ask Him to do. Jesus said that all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18), but the power of God is not present with unbelievers. The devils tremble at God Himself (James 2:19), but not at the mention of God's name by an unbeliever. Therefore, there is no power in the Mormon church, or any other church for that matter, just because Jesus Christ's name is in their church or because Jesus and God are mentioned from the pulpit. The evil spirits, here, are able to do what they want to do, because there is no power in Jesus' name when it is invoked by those on Satan's side. Similarly, unbelieving churches today do nothing for the Lord, except blaspheme His name (Romans 2:24). How funny that an evil spirit on Satan's side is the one who rats out these seven sons of Sceva!

19:16 This verse shows how much greater the power of God is over Satan. Paul, using the power of God, healed many and cast out evil spirits remotely (19:12). The seven sons of a chief priest could not cast out a single evil spirit, and they could not even keep the evil spirit from overpowering them and taking them over. These men were very religious and seemed to be great men of God to the people, since they were exorcists of the chief priest and were able to make a living travelling from city to city within Israel. However, they were trusting in their own righteousness to save them, which was utterly worthless. Thus, the nakedness of these men is symbolic of their spiritual condition and of the spiritual condition of all those who trust in religion to save them, rather than in the gospel, regardless of how good they may seem to be in the eyes of man.

19:17 These were highly respected men, who were overcome by the evil spirit. The fact, that Paul cast evil spirits out and the top Jewish religious leaders of Ephesus were bound by evil spirits, shows to all that Paul is speaking the gospel. More importantly, Paul cast out evil spirits by "the name of the Lord Jesus" (19:13). This shows that the power Paul has comes from Jesus. Therefore, He was not just a man, but He is Israel's Messiah and Lord. They should then trust in Jesus' death as atonement for their sins. Thus, Paul's casting out of evil spirits and the failure by top religious leaders to cast out evil spirits proves that Jesus is Who Paul claims He is and the gospel that Paul preaches can save them from being subject to God's eternal wrath against them. Thus, the Lord Jesus' name is only magnified when the truth is proclaimed and believed, because belief in the truth is faith,

which pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). This means that Christianity, when they preach false doctrine, does not magnify the Lord Jesus' name just by mentioning Him.

19:18 They received eternal life by believing the gospel. They did not have to confess their sinful deeds, because confession is specific to Israel's program (Leviticus 26:40-42; I John 1:9). People will say, "That's not true. What about Romans 10:9, which says that you must confess with your mouth to be saved?" However, that verse also says that you are to believe in your heart. Obviously, you do not believe in the physical organ called the heart, because all that does is pump blood. Since God is not talking about your physical heart, He is also not talking about your physical mouth in that verse. Rather, the heart refers to your spirit, while the mouth refers to your soul. Your spirit hears and believes the gospel, and your soul responds by confessing that the gospel is true.

Regardless, these men confess their sins with their physical mouths. They do not do so for salvation, because they only need to believe in order to be saved. Rather, they do so because they are afraid that the same things could happen to them as happened to the sons of Sceva (19:16-17). Also, the new man inside them wants to please God, and they recognize that Satanic practices are not of the new man.

19:19-20 The Word of God prevailed over the wicked in Ephesus. This is what will happen at the end of the tribulation period when "The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13) destroys the wicked on the earth (Revelation 19:15). Better that men believe the gospel and be saved from God's wrath, rather than running to dens to try to hide from the Lamb at His second coming (Revelation 6:15-17).

The "curious arts" of these people probably refers to witchcraft, séances, spells, and other Satanic practices. There was a lot of money involved in these practices, such that the burned books alone were worth 50,000 pieces of silver! However, God's Word is much more precious than "precious" metals, and so it was able to prevail over money, due to the belief in the gospel of these people.

19:21 Paul has "great heaviness and continual sorrow" in his heart over unbelieving Israel (Romans 9:2-4). Therefore, he purposed to go to Jerusalem. He does not get there until 21:17.

19:22 This verse tells us that Paul stayed in Ephesus, while he sent Timotheus and Erastus to Macedonia.

19:23 Although the word of God grew and prevailed in Ephesus (19:20), there were still many who made their living off of religious practices / idolatry. Those people would not be happy about their sudden unemployment. Therefore, they will now cause Paul some major trouble.

19:24-27 In an attempt to overthrow Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Demetrius calls together those making their living by crafting idols, because people are not buying their idols, since Paul told them that the idols "be no gods, which are made with

hands" (19:26).

19:26 Paul's two-year ministry at the school of Tyrannus made great strides for God in Asia. Much of that large territory has abandoned gods for the true God.

19:28 Diana cannot be too great if she has to be defended. They have to make silver shrines for her, for she has no power to make something herself (19:24). Diana's temple has also been despised, and she did nothing about it (19:27). Why? Because she is a powerless idol. Man made her into something, and man has to defend her to keep her alive. Contrast this with Jesus Christ. Man killed Him, and He rose from the dead. Man destroyed His temple by putting Satan's religion in it, and He raised up the little flock to build His kingdom.

We should also mention that Diana is just another name for the queen of heaven. In Genesis 11, man built the Tower of Babel, which is part of Satan's religion called "Babylon," in order to worship the host of heaven and its queen. In Judges 2:13, we see Israel worshipping this queen, who is now called "Ashtaroth." She is specifically called "the queen of heaven" in Jeremiah 44:17-19. The Catholic church today calls her the Virgin Mary, and she is identified as "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" in Revelation 17:5. Here, in Acts 19, she is called "Diana." Whatever she is called, the worship of her represents Satan's counterfeit, idolatrous system to get people away from recognizing the gospel and the truth of God's Word.

19:30-31 Paul does not care about putting his life in danger in front of an angry mob, because he knows that to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). If it were up to Paul, he would go right into the theatre and start preaching. After all, he has a large audience. It takes his disciples and friends to keep him from endangering his life by going into the theatre where the angry mob is.

19:32 The idolmaker's union was the one that started shouting "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (19:28). People showed up because of the ruckus the idol makers had created. The common people really did not know what was going on.

19:33 It is funny that the Jews put forth Alexander to speak for the Christians in Ephesus, because, if this is the same Alexander who preached false doctrine (I Timothy 1:20) and did "much evil" to Paul (II Timothy 4:14), he is not a good, Christian representative. It does not matter anyway, because the Gentiles will not listen to him.

19:34 This verse says that the reason the mob chants is because Alexander is a Jew. Therefore, the mob thinks that the reason for this gathering is that the Jewish religion has stirred up trouble with Diana's temple. Paul has been in Ephesus for two years, and all in Asia have heard him speak (19:9-10). Since this mob chants "great is Diana of the Ephesians," the mob must be unbelievers. Yet, they have no problem with Paul. Their problem is with the Jewish religion. This demonstrates the principle that unbelievers will usually leave believers alone, as long as they do not try to force them to convert or change their ways. The Jewish

religion was of the devil and tried to force people to follow them. Therefore, when the mob saw a Jew, they started defending their Gentile religion. The point is that the Gentiles' problem is with the corrupt, Jewish religion, and not with Paul. Also, note that there is no substance of truth to their religion. The Ephesians act purely on emotions by crying "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" for two hours straight.

19:35 Crying for two hours straight is enough to get Ephesus in trouble by the next level of government, and the townclerk knows that he will be in trouble if that happens. Therefore, he tries to calm the people down. The planets in our solar system are named after Greek gods. Here, we are told that the Ephesians, in addition to worshipping Diana, also worshipped an "image which fell down from Jupiter." Halfway through the tribulation period, the queen of heaven's image will be set up by the false prophet in the temple, and all will be forced to worship it at the penalty of death for non-compliance (Revelation 13:14-15). Therefore, this "image which fell down from Jupiter" is probably of Diana, the queen of heaven. Thus, the Babylonian religious system was set up in Genesis 10, was alive and well in Acts 19, is seen today in the Catholic church, and will continue through the end of the tribulation period

19:36 The fact, that it cannot be spoken against that the Ephesians worship Diana, shows how engrained idol worship is in the Ephesian culture.

19:37-41 Although the townclerk does not take Paul's side, he does take the side of rational, law abiding behavior, such that he is able to convince the crowd to leave this unlawful assembly.

The great thing about standing for the truth is that a rational government will never do anything against you. Government's job is to keep people from injuring others. Paul had not robbed their churches, blasphemed Diana, or even spoken against the Ephesians' religion. All he did was proclaim the truth. If people choose to abandon religion in favor of the truth, that is just their freedom of choice, with which a rational government will not interfere.

20 Paul travels, sets the world record for longest sermon, and gives his departing words to the Ephesians, encouraging them to stay true to the mystery program that Jesus revealed to Paul.

20:3-5 People either take great offence at the truth, or they wholeheartedly embrace it. This can be seen by the two groups of people here. The Jews, who are opposing the truth, are waiting for Paul to arrive so they can persecute him. However, there are also seven men (20:4), who have believed the gospel of grace, probably by Paul's ministry to them, who are also waiting for Paul to arrive, probably so as to keep him from danger. 20:5 says that they "tarried for us." Since Luke wrote Acts, he is probably with Paul. Silas is probably with them, and perhaps others are with them, also.

20:6 Every Jewish feast probably presented an even greater opportunity for Paul to proclaim the gospel of grace to those practicing the Jewish religion. It makes

sense, then, that he waited until the feast of unleavened bread was over before he sailed. This feast included the passover (Leviticus 23:5-6), which is around the same time as Easter. However, there is no mention of him celebrating Easter, because Easter was a pagan holiday; it was not the celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Today, the way to celebrate Jesus' resurrection is to allow the Holy Spirit to work through you, because that is only possible through His death, burial, and resurrection. This is a much better way to celebrate than by painting and hunting Easter eggs that are made after the god Tammuz anyway.

20:7 By meeting on Sunday, instead of Saturday, the body of Christ has already broken from the commandment of “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). The reason they have done this is because “ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Contrast this with the believing remnant of Israel. We are told, just one chapter later, that “they are all zealous of the law” (21:20), which means that they still met on Saturdays. The reason the body of Christ meets on Sundays is because Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, which is another way to celebrate Jesus' resurrection, because there would be no living church without a living Saviour. Now, that is not to say that we have to meet on Sundays, but that is the reason for the change.

Also, when this verse says that they broke bread, it means that they had a meal together. It does not mean that they ate a wafer and drank 0.5 ounces of grape juice, as Christianity today would want you to believe. The churchgoers probably each brought their own dish, and then they shared the food, while the preaching went on. They did this because they would be there a while. That way, they would not have to break to go somewhere to eat. This also shows that the true fellowship for Christians is with fellow believers; it is not in isolation or with secular family members. God's Word is not to be confined to an hour each week. It is something that should be working in the life of the believer at all times, which creates true fellowship with other believers when they get together to learn from God's Word.

20:8 Is electricity a modern invention? Perhaps the lights were candles, but electricity is not out of the question.

20:9-12 Paul did not give a three-point, 20-minute sermon, like you would find in many churches in the United States today. Rather, he preached for hours. It was probably more like a 14-hour sermon, since he started at meal time (20:7), ate a second time (20:11), and preached until sunrise (20:11). Paul was only in Troas for one week (20:6), and he is “the apostle of the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13). A “dispensation of the gospel” had been committed unto him (I Corinthians 9:17). Paul preached the mystery that had been revealed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12), and that no man knew until revealed to Paul (Ephesians 3:3-5). Therefore, the Troas believers saw this unique opportunity to receive sound doctrine from their apostle, and so they stayed up all night to hear it. Contrast this with today, when we have the completed Word of God (Colossians 1:25) and the Holy Spirit to teach it to us (I Corinthians 2:9-10), and most Christians let dust accumulate on their Bibles.

As previously mentioned, Paul and Peter have very similar things recorded of them in Acts. Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (9:40), and Paul raised Eutychus from the dead (20:10-12). Both are types of what God does with the believer spiritually. “And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

The “he” of 20:11 is Paul. Paul was “long preaching” (20:9) “until midnight” (20:7). Then, he raised Eutychus from the dead, ate a second meal, and preached “a long while, even till break of day” (20:11).

20:13 No one can accuse Paul of being lazy. After preaching a 14-hour sermon, raising someone from the dead, and getting no sleep, he walked BY HIMSELF to the next city, while the rest of those with him went by boat! On the other hand, it makes sense that Paul would walk to the next city, considering that he had already suffered shipwreck three times by this point (II Corinthians 11:25).

20:16 Again, Paul was still observing feast days. He would try to make it to Jerusalem for the three feasts for which all males were required under the law to attend (Exodus 23:17). He did so, not because he was under the law, but so as not to offend the Jews who were under the law, being saved by the gospel of the kingdom. He also went so that unsaved Jews would not be offended by Paul's liberty in Christ and might believe the gospel of grace that he preached.

20:17 Ephesus seems to be the Asian hub of the Christian church, and Paul will not be able to go back there before he dies (20:25). (This works out great for us because he will later pen the epistle to the Ephesians from prison.) Therefore, Paul calls the elders of the church to him and encourages them to continue in the grace of God, regardless of the persecution that comes their way.

20:19 Paul is not bragging about his humility. Rather, he is giving his life as an example of how they should live their lives in his absence. “I beseech you, be ye followers of me” (I Corinthians 4:16). Note that the persecutions Paul faced were largely due to the Jews. The Gentiles and the government, for the most part, left Paul alone. However, the Jewish religion, that God set up to preach the gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20), was turned around by Satan to persecute the one whom God called to preach the new gospel of grace to the world (9:15).

20:20 Paul had revealed to the Ephesians all of the mystery program that the Lord Jesus Christ had revealed to him, because God chose Paul (9:15) to dispense mystery information to the world (Colossians 1:25-26).

20:21 The gospel of grace is to trust in Jesus' death as atonement for your sins. This involves repentance, which means to change your mind. You stop trusting in your own self-righteousness and you trust in God's imputed righteousness to you through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 3:22). Repentance does not mean to turn from your sins, as Christianity would have believe. The truth is that no one has the ability to turn from his own sins, which is why "while we were YET SINNERS, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Therefore, when Paul says that the gospel includes “repentance toward God” (20:21), he means that you must stop

trusting in your own righteousness. The changing of your mind is "toward" God's imputed righteousness. And, the way you receive God's imputed righteousness is by having "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, salvation involves realizing your righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) and accepting God's imputed righteousness by having faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for your sins.

Israel's gospel, during the at-hand phase of the kingdom in Matthew through early Acts, was very similar, because they also were to stop trusting in their own self-righteousness and trust in God's imputed righteousness to them. However, since they were under the Mosaic covenant, they were to have faith in God saving them through God's fulfillment of that covenant Himself. The specifics, of how God would do that, were unknown to them (I Peter 1:10-12). They did not even know that Jesus was to be killed until Matthew 16:21, and they did not know until after the resurrection that God's plan, all along, was for Jesus to be killed on a cross. If they knew that, then Satan would not have had Jesus crucified (I Corinthians 2:7-8). Therefore, they never trusted in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection for eternal life. Now, in the end, it is still the blood of Christ that saves Israel, but they did not know that until after the cross (John 20:9). Moreover, they were required to be water baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16), since they are to be a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles during Jesus' millennial reign on earth (Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 61:6). Therefore, the specifics of belief are different between dispensations, but the general details are similar, which is why the same words are seen in both dispensations, even though they mean different things. By recognizing the differences in specifics, we can understand how "repentance toward God" (20:21), as told by Paul in the dispensation of grace, is different from "repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17), as told by Jesus in the at-hand phase of the kingdom.

20:22-23 Paul does not know what awaits him in Jerusalem, but the Holy Ghost has told him, in every city to which he has gone, that he will be persecuted and arrested. (In 21:11, Paul will find out that, in Jerusalem, he will be arrested and put into a Roman jail.) However, Paul wishes that he would be "accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites" (Romans 9:3-4a). Therefore, Paul goes to Jerusalem in hopes of saving some Jews, knowing full well that he will be arrested and persecuted in the process. Note that Paul says that he is already "bound in the spirit." In other words, because of his great burden for Jews to be saved, he will let his spirit guide his flesh to Jerusalem, even though he will be bound in the flesh for doing so.

20:24 Knowing full well that he will be bound and afflicted, Paul says that "none of these things move me." In other words, even tribulation cannot move him from reaching unsaved Jews with the gospel. His focus is on the spiritual, not the physical. Note that Paul says that he has received the ministry from "the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Paul makes this clear in Galatians 1:11-12 as well, where he says, "The gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Therefore, Paul is not one of the 12 apostles, and he did not

preach the same gospel as the 12 apostles. He preached "the gospel of the grace of God," while Jesus and the 12 were sent to preach "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 9:35 and Luke 9:2,6). Another clear passage from Paul is I Corinthians 9:17, where he says, "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me." Because Paul was required to dispense the gospel, he calls what he is doing: "my course" (20:24). The 12 apostles taught what "God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (3:21), while Paul taught "the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). These passages make it clear that Paul had a distinct ministry that was different from the 12 apostles' ministry.

20:25 Paul said that he is preaching the gospel of grace. He is not preaching the kingdom gospel. However, he now says that he has "gone preaching the kingdom of God." There is no contradiction here. God's kingdom is wherever He rules. The kingdom gospel was Israel's program by which people receive eternal life in God's kingdom on earth. The grace gospel is the body of Christ's program by which people receive eternal life in heaven. Since God rules in heaven, too, heaven can also be referred to as the kingdom of God. Ephesians 1:10 puts the two realms together by saying "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth."

Also, in this verse, Paul tells the Ephesians that they will not see him again on this earth. Paul knows he will suffer afflictions in Jerusalem, and he knows he will not get back to Ephesus. It turns out that he makes it to Rome after Jerusalem (28:16), which is where Paul had planned to go (19:21).

20:26 Because "a dispensation of the gospel" was committed unto Paul (I Corinthians 9:17), he had the obligation to preach the gospel of grace to the world. If he did not do this, he would have been guilty of the blood of those who would have believed if Paul would have preached to them. Because Paul "kept back nothing that was profitable unto you" (20:20), he is "pure from the blood of all men" at Ephesus. This is comparable to what God told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 3:17-21, where Ezekiel was made by God to be "a watchman unto the house of Israel." It is not that Paul would have lost his salvation if he did not preach the gospel, because he had already received the atonement (Romans 5:11). Therefore, his soul is saved, but he would have lost his reward in heavenly places (I Corinthians 3:15).

20:27 Declaring unto the Ephesians ALL the counsel of God means that Paul has told them about the different programs or dispensations that God set up, and he has given them the sound doctrine for the current, mystery dispensation that God has revealed to him so far. When Paul receives a further revelation of mystery doctrine, he will write it down for them in the epistle to the Ephesians, which he pens after the end of the book of Acts.

20:28 Now that the Ephesians know the mystery-program information that Paul received from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Ephesian leaders need to be careful to preach the Bible rightly divided to the flock of grace believers there.

Note that the Ephesian leaders are called “overseers” (20:28). Because each member of the body of Christ has the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach him the things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-10), church leaders are only overseers. They are not the ultimate authority. God’s Word is. As such, church leaders are called to oversee the church, making sure that only sound doctrine is taught (I Timothy 1:3-4). They do not have dominion over our faith, but are helpers of our joy (II Corinthians 1:24). Unfortunately, most Christians believe the pastor or their denomination is their final authority, rather than the word of God.

20:29-30 The attacks on God's Word rightly divided come from both unbelievers and believers. The unbelievers (“grievous wolves”), the Judaizers in this case, sought to get believers back under the law so that they could have power over them and receive tithes and offerings from them as their "wise" instructors in the law. The attacks from within would be from believers, teaching false doctrine that appeals to the itching ears of the flesh (II Timothy 4:3-4). They do so “for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:11). Therefore, pride and money are great motivators in detracting people from the truth of God's Word rightly divided. In fact, it is in the context of false doctrine that Paul says that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (I Timothy 6:10). So, there will be attacks to get people away from the truth. People will easily believe the lies of false doctrine because the flesh is strong. People want to feel good about themselves and how they play their part in gaining eternal life or living for Christ. Therefore, they are easily "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). The only way to stay in the truth is by continually reading/hearing God's Word rightly divided. That is why Paul tells the church leaders "to feed the church of God" (20:28). Otherwise, most in the church will feed their flesh, rather than their spirit.

20:31 In spite of Paul's three years with them and the turmoil his soul went through because of them, the Ephesians did not keep the church free of false doctrine because, after the book of Acts had come to a close, Paul told them to "HENCEFORTH be NO MORE children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). The implication, then, is that they were being tossed to and fro by false doctrine at the time.

Also, note what makes Paul cry. It is not physical death or hardship. Paul’s tears are from seeing unbelief, as was the case with Jesus in John 11:35.

20:32 In today's dispensation of grace, we are not only saved by grace, but we are also edified by grace. Christians, who believe in eternal security, still somehow think that, once they are saved, they can, in their flesh, serve Christ. This verse says that it is the word of God's GRACE that builds them up to give them an inheritance, which means walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh (Galatians 5:16). In I Corinthians 3:12-15, we are told of the judgment of believers. They will receive a reward if their work lasts. Acts 20:32 says that that reward or inheritance comes about only through the word of God's grace. Therefore, once saved, man still cannot work for God. Man must allow God to work through them through His word working in them in order to receive a reward on judgment day.

Again, this applies to a reward only. It does not apply to salvation, because salvation is by believing in Jesus' death as atonement for your sins. That is why this verse says that the reward or inheritance comes to those who are ALREADY sanctified, or set apart as holy for God.

20:33-34 Although Paul, as their apostle, was worthy of receiving a wage from them (I Corinthians 9:9,11), he did not take a wage, lest people be offended, thinking that he was serving them for money (I Corinthians 9:12). Therefore, he paid for the expenses for himself and those travelling with him by making tents (18:1-3). Paul recognized that the true gold and silver was in heaven, because only that gold would last for eternity (I Corinthians 9:25).

20:35 Paul tells the Ephesian church leaders not to take money from their congregation either. That is how they would be "so labouring" like Paul, which would "support the weak" in the faith from straying from the truth, thinking that the church was a moneymaking scheme. In doing so, they would be giving, rather than receiving. These words, in red in most Bibles, are not found in Matthew - John. Therefore, these words are probably part of the mystery doctrine that the Lord Jesus shared with Paul. If that is the case, then "it is more blessed to give than to receive" are the only red-letter words in a Bible that are written to us today. The context shows that the giving is of a spiritual nature. If the church leaders freely give of their time to preach the gospel and the truth of God's Word rightly divided to their congregation without asking for anything in return, more people will be saved and edified. They, in turn, would receive a greater reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, it is more blessed to give than to receive, because they give in this temporal life and, in return, they receive a blessing in their eternal life. In other words, if they give of their time to God's work, God will reward them, while, if they have the attitude of being leaders only to receive money from men, they have their reward in this life and they lose their reward in the life to come (I Corinthians 3:15).

21 Paul continues to be warned by the Holy Spirit that he will be bound and suffer trouble if he goes to Jerusalem (v. 11). However, Paul is ready "to die at Jerusalem" if need be (v. 13). Once there, Paul finds out he is not welcomed. First, the saved Jews of Israel's program do not like him being there, since he is of a different dispensation (vs. 20-25). Then, the religious Jews beat him and would have killed him if the Romans did not put a stop to it (vs. 31-32).

21:1-16 These verses show Paul stopping at a few cities and praying with them, since he knows he will not be seeing them again. Paul was not stopping there so they would pray for him to be safe in travel, as Christianity today would have done. Rather, he was praying for them that they would not allow false doctrine to take people away from the truth (20:28-32).

21:4 Paul said in 20:23 "that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." This witness continues here. The Holy Ghost is not forbidding Paul to go to Jerusalem like He forbade Paul to preach in Asia in 16:6. Rather, the Holy Ghost says that he "SHOULD NOT go" to Jerusalem

because of the persecution that awaits him there, and the Jews in Jerusalem have already rejected the gospel of grace. Yet, because Paul's "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1), Paul is "ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (21:13).

This shows the freedom that we have in Christ. Even as the apostle of the Gentiles, specifically commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to preach the gospel to everyone (9:15), Paul still had the liberty to go where he wanted to go. How much more, then, do we have the liberty in Christ to live and do what we want to today! God does not treat us like weaned children (Psalm 131:2), who have to follow "the Lord's leading" in all circumstances. Rather, He treats us like adult sons (Galatians 4:6-7) with the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16), giving us the ability to think through things and make decisions using that mind.

It should also be noted that, the fact, that every city has people proclaiming through the Holy Spirit the afflictions that await Paul in Jerusalem, means that Jesus has given prophets to every city to speak for the Lord, since the Bible is not complete yet. The prophets, then, are not just confined to the Old Testament (Ephesians 4:11), as Christianity would have you believe, but they continued until the entire Bible was completed (Ephesians 4:12-13).

21:5 Although we are not told the prayer that they prayed, you can bet that it was not for traveling mercies for Paul, since Paul did not count his life dear to him (20:24). All knew that he would suffer in Jerusalem, and yet Paul was praying for THEM that they would not stray from the mystery and the sound doctrine contained in it, in spite of the attacks of the adversary through the Judaizers and other false religion. When they prayed for Paul it was probably that the gospel might be believed by the Jews in Jerusalem. The point is that, if we set our affections on things above (Colossians 3:2), then our prayers will be for the spiritual, rather than for the physical for which Christianity today usually prays.

21:8-9 When 21:8 says that Philip "was one of the seven," it refers back to 6:5, where there were seven men appointed to take care of the daily ministrations of the widows. Therefore, Philip was a believer in Israel's kingdom program. This would have been the same Philip who preached in Samaria (8:5) and preached to the Ethiopian eunuch (8:27), since we last heard that he was in Caesarea (8:40). Since there are still believers in Israel's program around and the dispensation of grace is going to the Jew first (Romans 1:16), we cannot really say which program Philip's four daughters were prophets of.

21:11 If I was Paul and I was told that "the man that owneth this girdle" shall be bound and delivered to the Gentiles, I would have taken that girdle to the nearest thrift store and donated it for free. Seriously though, this is Paul's final warning that he will be bound if he goes to Jerusalem, and the warning comes from someone who came down from Judea (21:10).

Today, Christians try to be "led by the Spirit" by praying and seeking God's

guidance on what they should do. Then, they seek for confirmation from others and from circumstances that what the Holy Spirit has been “speaking to their heart” is true. Then, they follow what they believe the Holy Spirit wants them to do. However, today, since we have God’s completed Word (Colossians 1:25), God does not speak to us in this manner. Even if He did, God still gives us the liberty to make our own decisions (Galatians 5:1). Paul’s circumstances are a great example of this. In 20:23, Paul said that the Holy Ghost testified in every city that bonds and afflictions abide him. Christians, today, would say that that is God’s way of saying that Paul should not go to Jerusalem. However, Paul says that, “none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself” (20:24). Now, he gets a specific prophecy from the Holy Ghost that he will be bound by the Jews and delivered to jail, and he STILL does not back down. This shows that God gives us the free will to make our own decisions, and, we could say, that choosing persecution for Christ is probably the best decision, as Jesus and Paul both made that same choice, not counting their physical lives dear to themselves.

21:12-13 Everyone, including Luke and Silas, tells Paul not to go to Jerusalem, because they are concerned for his safety. However, Paul’s love for Israel is so great that he could wish he was accursed from Christ for the salvation of Israel (Romans 9:3-4a). Therefore, he says, “I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13). Paul does not count his life dear (20:24), since “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Sadly, so very few Christians today have this same attitude.

21:14 “The will of the Lord be done” does not mean that God wants Paul to be bound and afflicted. The will of the Lord is for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:4). Therefore, what they are saying is that since Paul is determined to go to Jerusalem and since Paul will go there to try to win Jews for Christ, they pray that men might be saved by Paul’s preaching to them, in spite of the fact that he will be bound and put in jail.

21:16 Every word in the Bible is there for a reason. There must be a reason, then, that we are told that they were going to lodge with an old disciple named Mnason. It is interesting that, although the brethren received them gladly when they got to Jerusalem (21:17), the brethren did not let him stay with them. In fact, the brethren seem like they are a little jealous. They ask him to take Jews into the temple to have their heads shaved for the Nazarite vow they had (21:23-24). This may have led to Paul’s arrest, as we will see later. Therefore, the note that Paul was going to stay with Mnason may be here to tell us that the kingdom saints in Jerusalem do not care too much for Paul.

21:17-18 The brethren in Jerusalem received them gladly. Then, the next day, they met with the elders in Jerusalem.

21:19-21 The elders in Jerusalem do not appear glad to see Paul. When Paul told them of the great things going on with the Gentiles, they did not say, “That’s great, Paul. We sure are glad to see the Lord saving the Gentiles.” Instead, they put the focus back on themselves, saying “how many thousands of Jews there are which

believe.” It is as if they are trying to match Paul. Paul tells of the Gentiles being saved, and they say, “Well, we’ve got many thousands of Jews who are saved, too.”

Note that they say that the Jewish believers “are all zealous of the law.” The book of Acts is almost over, and they are bragging about being zealous of the law. Paul wrote the book of Romans around 20:1-3 and said that we “are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). This shows the two, different dispensations still going on at the time. Those today, who say that a new dispensation began at Acts 2, need only look at 21:20 to see that many saved individuals are still in Israel’s kingdom program that started back in Genesis 12. There are still many thousands of people saved under the kingdom program that the Jewish apostles are in charge of edifying. Under the kingdom program, they are still under the law; therefore, they are zealous of the law. Paul, though, preaching the gospel of grace is preaching that people are not under the law. Now, you can see why the Jewish brethren are not really happy to see Paul. He is preaching a different gospel than they are, and they are worried that he will cause those still under the law to stumble and not follow the law due to Paul’s grace message. It is like two worlds are colliding here.

21:20-21 The Jews, zealous of the law in 21:20, are correct in being zealous of it, because they were saved in Israel’s program. The Jews, in 21:21, who have forsaken the law of Moses, are also correct in forsaking it because they were saved in the mystery program. The Jews, in 21:20, were saved by going back under God’s law covenant and being water baptized. The Jews, in 21:21, were saved by trusting in the blood of Christ as atonement for their sins and are under grace, not under the law. Therefore, both are correct in their respective programs.

21:22-24 The elders, in Jerusalem, propose a solution for the colliding worlds of law and grace. They have four men, who have taken a Nazarite vow, which is something that is clearly under God’s law covenant with Israel (Numbers 6). The elders suggest that Paul go with them to the temple, since Paul had also already taken a Nazarite vow himself (18:18). That way, the Jews zealous for the law will see Paul follow the law and not be offended by his liberty in Christ. This act by Paul goes along with his statement in I Corinthians 9:20: “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law.” Thus, James wants Paul to take these men so that the saved Jews in Israel’s program are not offended by Paul, but Paul agrees to do this so that it may open up the opportunity for Paul to share the gospel of grace with the unbelieving Jews at Jerusalem.

21:25 James and the elders at Jerusalem remind Paul of how, at the previous Jerusalem council, he asked the Gentiles to live so that they also will not offend Jews saved in the kingdom program (15:19-20). This is not a case of Paul submitting to the authority of James, because Paul has already been given his authority by the Lord Jesus Christ to preach to all unsaved people (9:15). Rather, this is Paul respecting saved Jews in Israel’s program so that they will not stumble and will continue to be zealous of the Mosaic law that they are under in their dispensation.

21:26 Paul fulfills the request of the Jerusalem elders by having his head shaved, along with the four men, to show the saved Jews that he is obeying the law, too. Paul put himself under the law “that I might gain them that are under the law” (I Corinthians 9:20). The Nazarite vow was a voluntary separation unto the Lord. “All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow” (Numbers 6:5). This is why Samson had long hair, because he had been a Nazarite from birth (Judges 13:5). When the days of separation are over, “the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation” (Numbers 6:18). This is what went on with Paul and these four men. Paul had a Nazarite vow back in 18:18. Now, he has his head shaved, because he has chosen to end his days of separation. He then stays in the temple “until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.”

21:27-28 According to Numbers 6:10-11, it appears that he needed to stay in the temple for seven days. Then, on the eighth day, he would offer an offering, and his days of separation would be officially over. What happens instead, though, is that Jews have followed him all the way from Asia, and they forcefully remove him from the temple. They stir up the people by saying that Paul “hath polluted this holy place” by bringing Gentiles into the temple. Paul had done no such thing. Paul had separated himself unto God under the law with the Nazarite vow, and he had brought four Jews with him, who were also under a Nazarite vow.

The fact, though, that these Jews remove him from the temple before his sacrifice can be made means that THEY are the ones guilty of polluting the temple, not Paul, because they have interrupted the days of separation for a Nazarite required under the law. Therefore, the Jews are guilty of the very accusation they have falsely hurled at Paul! Just like when Jesus was arrested, Paul’s arrest is handled very unlawfully by those who supposedly judge according to the law. This shows that these religious Jews really hate the truth of God’s Word so much that they compass land and sea to hunt down Paul and arrest him unlawfully because they have no lawful means by which they can arrest him. It is ironic that they accuse Paul of teaching men everywhere against the law, when Paul was there solely because he was keeping the law, and they, by interrupting his Nazarite vow, have taught the Jews, by example, to disobey the very Mosaic law that they supposedly protect!

21:29 The Jews’ allegation against Paul, that he brought Gentiles into the temple, was based on the fact that they saw him associating with Gentiles outside the temple, but Paul never broke Jewish law by bringing them into the part of the temple that a Gentile was forbidden from going into.

21:30 Their accusation should have seemed comical to the Jews. After all, he was almost at the end of seven days of purification with four other Jews in the temple. How could he teach against the people, the law, and the temple (21:28), when he has been with Jews for seven days, obeying the law in the temple? But, men love

“the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43). Therefore, the Jews completely disregard God’s law, kick Paul out of the temple, and want to kill him.

21:31-32 There is no justice in the traditions of the Jews, as they are beating Paul and wanting to kill him without a trial, which is against God’s law (Deuteronomy 19:15-21). They would have succeeded if the Romans did not interfere here and stop them from beating up Paul. How ironic that God made Israel to be above the Gentiles as an example to them (Deuteronomy 7:6), and it takes the Gentiles interfering in the matter to keep Israel from unjustly killing God’s apostle (Romans 11:13)!

21:33 From 22:29, the implication is that it was against the law for an uncondemned Roman to be bound with a chain, but the chief captain does not know, at this point, that Paul is a Roman (22:29). However, considering that the Jews were about to kill Paul, it was a good thing that the chief captain interfered.

21:34-36 Religion sure is an ugly thing. Paul cannot give his defense to the chief captain here because the people keep yelling and arguing that he should be killed. The soldiers even have to carry him to protect him, because the Jews cry “Away with him.” This is also what they cried against the Lord Jesus Christ when they had Him crucified (Luke 23:18). Pilate asked why He should be crucified, but he never got an answer. Instead, the Jews used loud voices to insist that He be crucified (Luke 23:22-23). Thus, the Jews’ treatment of Paul, here, is much like their treatment of Jesus to be crucified. The heathen think that for their “much speaking” and loud insistence that the truth will be snuffed out (Matthew 6:7). However, nothing can be done against the truth, but only for the truth (II Corinthians 13:8).

21:38 Israel were God’s chosen people. Therefore, they were supposed to be holy (I Peter 1:16). Jerusalem was the capital city, where God had promised He would set up His throne and rule over the earth forever (Psalm 48:1-2 and Revelation 11:15). Because of this, it is called the holy city. Yet, the Jews had so corrupted Israel, and especially Jerusalem, with their religious traditions that this verse says that there were at least 4,000 murderers living there! God’s law says that murderers are to be killed (Numbers 35:16-18 and Deuteronomy 19:21). However, the Jews were not following God’s law. They were following man’s traditions. Therefore, Jerusalem was so exceedingly wicked that one man had recently led 4,000 murders out of there! If Israel had executed the murderers in the first place, this never would have happened.

21:39 Paul tells them that he is from Tarsus, which is not a mean city. The implication is that Jerusalem, instead of being the holy city, is now a mean city, thanks to the Jewish traditions that had replaced God’s law.

21:40 The chief captain now knows that Paul can speak both Greek and Hebrew.

22 Paul gives his testimony before the Jews so that they might hear the gospel of grace and believe. Unfortunately, the Jews stop him before he gets to finish

speaking. Acts 9, 22, and 26 all give the same account of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. This shows how important the story is because it begins the dispensation of grace.

22:1-2 Paul's "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). This is the purpose for which he went to Jerusalem, even though he knew he would be bound and afflicted. Paul now has his opportunity to address his fellow Jews.

Note how the Jews "kept the more silence" (22:2) when they heard him speak in Hebrew. This shows that they had not examined the facts. If they knew that he was in the temple for seven days with four, fellow Jews because they all had taken the Nazarite vow, they would have known that he is a Jew. Instead, they just followed what the Jewish religious leaders wanted them to do, which was to drag him out of the temple and try to kill him. Paul cleverly speaks in Hebrew so that they know that he is a Jew. Therefore, they are now listening to him. It is for this opportunity to speak to a large, Jewish audience that Paul was willingly bound and afflicted in Jerusalem.

22:3 The accusation against Paul is that he "teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place" (21:28). This is a false accusation in every respect. He is pro-Jew, as evidenced by his being willing to die to reach the Jews with the gospel (21:13). He is pro-law, as evidenced by taking a Nazarite vow (18:18). He is pro-temple, as evidenced by taking four Jews into the temple with him and staying there seven days to fulfill their vows (21:26-27). Therefore, Paul easily could have said, "The accusation against me is not true. I was in the temple because I was keeping the law by completing a Nazarite vow, and I have four witnesses here with me, which is greater than the two witnesses required under the law. Therefore, let me go." However, Paul does not even address the matter at hand, i.e., his own innocence. Rather, Paul wants to give the gospel to the Jews. He is not concerned about his own well-being.

Therefore, he speaks words so that the Jews might believe in Jesus' death as atonement for their sins. Paul starts off by telling the Jews of the credentials that they would be impressed with. This shows them that he used to be in the same boat as them, as he is very knowledgeable in the law and used to rely upon his fulfillment of the law for his salvation. Note that Paul does not say that he was taught "the perfect manner of God's law." Rather, he says that he was taught "the perfect manner of the law of the FATHERS." He says in Galatians 1:14 that he was "more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of [his] fathers." Therefore, he was "zealous toward God" (22:3) in the sense that he tried to obey God through the Jewish religion. Because he was relying on tradition, rather than God's Word, he did not believe the gospel of the kingdom that John the Baptist and Jesus presented to Israel. This means that he was faithful to the Jewish religion, as these Jews are, but his actions toward God were really the result of ignorant unbelief in God (I Timothy 1:13). When Paul realized his ignorance, he believed the gospel and

was saved, as a pattern to people like those in his audience, who may also now repent of their religion and believe the gospel of grace (I Timothy 1:16).

22:4 Because he was following Jewish tradition, Paul "persecuted this way unto death." The Jews, he is addressing, have just beaten him and tried to kill him because he has believed the gospel (21:31-32). Therefore, they are doing the same thing to Paul that Paul used to do to those who believed the gospel of the kingdom.

22:5 Instead of calling upon witnesses to testify to his innocence, Paul calls upon witnesses (the high priest and the elders) to confirm that he used to beat and kill those saved by the gospel. The reason Paul does this is because he is establishing that he used to do what they are doing to him. That way, they may see that the Lord Himself told Paul to stop. Then, maybe they would believe the gospel, as well.

22:6 Note that Paul says that the great light from heaven came around Paul "about noon." This is the time when there is more light than at any other time of the day. The fact, that this great light made those seeing it afraid (22:9), testifies to how blinding and powerful this great light that Paul saw was. In other words, it was such a great light that it outshone the sun at the brightest time of the day such that those who saw it were afraid! Spiritually speaking, this is a sign of how the light of God was already shining around him in the form of the believing remnant of Israel.

22:7-8 The Jews, in Paul's audience, believe that Jesus was a blasphemer, saying that He was God when He was really just a man. Paul thought this, too, before Acts 9. Note, from verse 8, that Paul knew that, whoever was talking to him, was the Lord. So, when He identified Himself as Jesus, Paul immediately knew that Jesus is God. Perhaps Paul's audience will recognize this and believe the gospel, as well.

22:9-10 Jesus was "sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Those sheep hear Jesus' voice (John 10:27). The fact, that Paul heard Jesus' voice, shows that he was a lost sheep, as opposed to those with him, who did not hear the voice of the Lord. They saw the light, but they hate light because they do evil, while Paul welcomed the light, because he saw his sin in the light and asked the Saviour (John 3:19-21) what he could do (22:10).

22:11 Both Paul and those with him saw the great light (22:9), yet only Paul was blinded by "the glory of that light." I believe this shows the spiritual conversion of Paul. In John 9:41, Jesus told the Pharisees "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." This verse refers to the fact that they think they see spiritually because they trust in their own righteousness. If they realize that they are really spiritually blind, then they would trust in God's imputed righteousness, which means they "should have no sin." Since they do not see this, their "sin remaineth." Applied to Paul and those with him, we see that Paul is blinded by God, seeing that he needs God's imputed righteousness. The men with him are still trusting in their own righteousness. Therefore, they see physically, but their sin remaineth.

22:12 Ananias was a kingdom saint, since he believed the gospel of the kingdom and followed God's law covenant. He could not have been part of the body of Christ, because Paul says that he was the FIRST to be saved into the body of Christ after Israel's program had been put on hold (I Timothy 1:16).

Paul is careful to note that Ananias had "a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there." This would be important to his Jewish audience.

22:14-15 Ananias tells Paul of three things he will receive from God. (Note that it is "the God of our fathers" (22:14), which tells Paul's Jewish audience that he is specifically referring to Jehovah, the God of Israel.) First, he will know God's will. God's will is for "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4). Therefore, it is not just the Jews, who will be saved, as Jewish tradition taught Paul, but it is also Gentiles who are included in God's plan of salvation. Second, Paul will "see that Just One," who is the Lord Jesus Christ. This is fulfilled when the Lord Jesus Christ gave the mystery gospel to Paul (Galatians 1:11-12). The title of "that Just One" is significant. At the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, God declared the Gentiles guilty before God. At the time of Paul's conversion in Acts 9, God had just declared the Jews guilty before God in Acts 7 with their stoning of Stephen. He did these things as the Just One. Now that "God hath concluded them all in unbelief..., He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32). Therefore, the Just One's declaration of guilt of the whole world before Him allows the whole world to now be saved through Him, which is why the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has now come down (Ephesians 2:14). Finally, the third thing Paul receives from God is to "hear the voice of His mouth." This means that He will hear the Word. Specifically, He heard "the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). Part of that mystery is the revelation that God wants all men to be saved. This is accomplished by God first concluding all men in unbelief, which He finished doing in Acts 7.

Now, all men have the opportunity to be saved through belief in the mystery that had been kept secret until revealed to Paul (22:15). That is why Jesus told Paul that he would bear Jesus' name "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (9:15).

22:16 "Why tarriest thou?" (22:16). God is "longsuffering...not willing that any should perish" (I Peter 3:9). At the same time, now that He has started the plan to save all men through the gospel of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, God wants Paul to get a move on. "A dispensation of the gospel" has been specifically committed unto Paul (I Corinthians 9:17), and so he needs to start dispensing the gospel so that the world may be saved.

We should note that, although Paul was the first saved by the mystery gospel (I Timothy 1:16), the mystery was not revealed until Christ revealed it to Paul between verses 22 and 23 of Acts 9. After all, Paul heard the mystery gospel directly from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). Therefore, Ananias did not know the mystery gospel and had to have given Paul the only gospel he knew, the gospel

of the kingdom. That gospel was to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (2:38). That is why water baptism was required, at this time, for his sins to be washed away. After the mystery was revealed to him, he was saved by that program as well, making him the first to be saved by the mystery gospel (I Timothy 1:16). The fact, that he was first saved by the gospel of the kingdom, may explain his passion for the Jews to be saved (Romans 9:3 and 10:1).

22:17-18 These verses tell us why Paul did not reach the Jerusalem Jews immediately after he was saved. It was because God had quickly sent him away from Israel. But, now that he has preached to many of the Gentiles, Paul has come back to Jerusalem to preach the gospel of grace to the Jews.

22:19-20 Religion loves you when you are on their side, but they want to destroy you when you leave them, even if you leave them for God!

22:21 Paul is the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), as opposed to the 12 apostles, who were sent only to Israel, not to the Gentiles (Matthew 10:5-6). Therefore, the Lord sent Paul “far hence unto the Gentiles.” Saved Israel was supposed to be a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles (Exodus 19:5-6), but they did not believe (Hebrews 3:19). When the Lord called Paul in Acts 9, it is as if He said to Israel: “You think you are so great in your own self-righteousness. I will show you. I will get one man to do the work that the whole nation refused to do.”

22:22 The Jews listened to Paul until he said that God sent him to the Gentiles. Such a statement is worthy of death in their minds, as they still think they are God's chosen people, and the Gentiles are the scum of the earth. They do not give Paul the chance to explain the new dispensation of grace by which they may receive eternal life. Once Paul says one thing that goes against their traditions, they stop listening to him and call for his execution. Therefore, they have rejected the gospel before even hearing it. That is what religion does. It seeks to silence immediately anyone who speaks a single word against it. That is why it is a lot harder to share the gospel with religious people than with wicked people.

22:23 Crying out, casting off their clothes, and throwing dust in the air is everything they could do to show their displeasure with Paul. They could not kill him because he was in Roman custody. This shows how proud the Jews are of their religion that they think that a person, who claims that God sent him to preach to the Gentiles, should be killed. How dare Paul seek to bring Gentile dogs into God's eternal kingdom!

22:24 Evidentially, the chief captain does not understand Hebrew (21:40), and so he does not know why the Jews want Paul killed, especially since he does not appear to have done anything wrong. He decides to beat him. In so doing, he hopes both to appease the Jews and to find out what Paul did that got them so enraged. This is not unlike Pilate's tactic with Jesus (Mark 15:15).

22:25 Because Paul is a Roman citizen, he has the right to a fair trial. Paul did not bring this up before because he wanted to share the gospel with the Jews.

However, now that the Jews have stopped listening, Paul mentions his Roman citizenship so as to gain another opportunity to preach the gospel. This time, he will speak to all of the high ranking Jewish religious people without having to worry about them killing him, because he will be in a Roman court.

22:28 Apparently, those born in Rome were automatically Roman citizens. Others had to purchase Roman citizenship. Paul belongs in the former category, while the chief captain is in the latter category. This also pictures the two, spiritual categories of Jews here. Paul was free born spiritually because he believed the gospel. The Jewish religious leaders are trying to buy their way into God's kingdom by obeying their religious system, which will never be enough to purchase eternal life. Only Jesus' shed blood on the cross satisfied the wrath of God in purchasing eternal life for all who believe whatever gospel God has given them.

22:29 Remember that they were going to examine Paul by scourging him (22:24). Therefore, this verse is saying that they will not scourge him, because he is a Roman citizen.

22:30 Still, the chief captain needs to find out why the Jews are so upset at Paul. Therefore, he commands all of the Jewish council to appear the next day for Paul's defense. You can bet that Paul prayed that night for the opportunity to speak the gospel the next day to the top, Jewish religious leaders.

23 Paul gets to speak to the religious leaders about Christ's resurrection, but not for long. Due to the ruckus created, Paul is taken into protective custody and then shipped off to the governor to be tried there.

23:1-2 The high priest commanded Paul to be smitten on the face. Therefore, although the chief captain of the Roman court has ordered this hearing, he is allowing the Jewish leaders to be in charge.

Paul states his innocence, and he is struck on the mouth by the Jews. They have punished a man of whom they have no proof of wrongdoing. Leviticus 19:15 says, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment," which commandment they have broken. This shows how unjust the Jewish religious leaders are. This shows why Jesus said that the Pharisees had "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matthew 23:23).

23:3-5 Paul says he has "lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (23:1). In Philippians 3:6, he says that he was blameless according to the law. The top Jewish religious leaders do not have such a testimony, because they have smitten Paul before he has been sentenced, which is "contrary to the law" (23:3; Leviticus 19:15). In spite of their injustice, Paul maintains his blamelessness under the law, as he will not speak evil of the high priest anymore, because this is contrary to the law, even though the high priest is not following the law himself (Exodus 22:28). Therefore, right away, we can see that the Jewish religious leaders are the guilty ones here, not Paul.

Paul uses the term "whited wall" in reference to the high priest because he typifies what Jesus said about the Jewish religious leaders in Matthew 23:27: "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." This shows that Paul recognizes that the book of Matthew, which had been written at least 15 years prior, is scripture, while the Jewish leaders only recognize the Old Testament as scripture.

An interesting point is that Paul did not know that Ananias was the high priest. In Acts 22:5, he says that, before Acts 9, he had received letters from the high priest to arrest believers. Paul says, in Philippians 3:7-8, that, with regard to his former life, he counted all things loss for Christ. This statement is true because, not only did he give up his wealth and power in the Jewish religion, but he also failed to keep up with changes in that religion, such that he did not even know that there was a new, high priest. (This also may explain why he earnestly beheld the council (Acts 23:1). He was probably looking to see who had left the Jewish religion since the dispensation of grace started.)

This is a lesson for us that we do not need to take an apologetics class and learn about other denominations/cults in order to reach those people for Christ, as most Christians think. Rather, Paul said, "yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" (Romans 16:19). Unfortunately, many Christians would much rather learn about "Christian beliefs" than to be removed from their ignorance regarding sound doctrine for today, as seen by Paul's fivefold admonition of ignorance in his epistles (Romans 1:13, 11:25; I Corinthians 10:1, 12:1; I Thessalonians 4:13).

23:6 In the current, grace dispensation, salvation is by trusting in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for your sins. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). Therefore, Christ's resurrection is vital to the gospel. Therefore, by mentioning his preaching of the resurrection of the dead, Paul is both dividing his accusers and finding a way to preach the gospel in a courtroom setting.

23:8 The grammar of this verse tells us that "neither angel, nor spirit" refers to resurrection. However, the modern translations change this to read that the Sadducees do not even believe that angels and spirits exist!

Using the correct translation, we can deduce that "angel" refers to the body, because an angel has the form of a man (Revelation 21:17). Therefore, the Sadducees believe that there is no resurrection of the spirit or of the body, while the Pharisees believe both are true. Again, this shows that the religious leaders trusted in Jewish tradition, rather than in the Word of God, because resurrection is essential to God's keeping of His promises to Israel's forefathers, and bodily resurrection is seen in the Old Testament, e.g., I Kings 17:21-22 and II Kings 4:34-35. Therefore, the Sadducees do not believe the Word of God, not even the Old Testament.

23:9 Although the Pharisees take Paul's side, their comment shows that they do

not believe Paul. Paul received his instructions directly from the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). Since the Pharisees had Jesus crucified, they refuse to believe that his doctrine comes directly from God. Therefore, they say that "a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him" with the implication that sound doctrine can come from a spirit or an angel. Funny how nothing has changed in the last 2,000 years, as people today say: "God spoke to me," or "I feel impressed that God wants me to _____." If you give them sound doctrine from Paul's epistles, they turn their itching ears away unto fables that make them feel all warm and fuzzy inside (II Timothy 4:3-4). However, in God's WRITTEN Word, He has already "abounded toward us in ALL wisdom and prudence" (Ephesians 1:8). Therefore, we should be guided solely by the Bible rightly divided (II Timothy 2:15), rather than by inner impressions from "a spirit or an angel" (23:9).

23:10 You can visualize Paul being pulled in one direction by the Sadducees and in another direction by the Pharisees. Again, Roman authority has to step in to keep Paul from being killed by Jewish religious adherents. The great thing about this is that, for safety reasons, he is brought to the castle of the Romans, which gives him the opportunity to preach the gospel to a different audience.

23:11 Paul's desire was to go to Jerusalem to preach the gospel to all Jews—both the common Jews and the religious leaders. Through Jewish opposition, he was able to preach to both. Although they cut him short both times, they at least had the opportunity if they would have listened to him. Most Christians would probably view Paul as a moron for going to Jerusalem even though he knew he would be arrested. "What good did it do?" is the attitude. Paul, on the other hand, viewed it as a tremendous opportunity. Instead of having to preach in the Jewish synagogue for three months like he did in Ephesus (19:8) and Greece (20:3) before moving on to the next city, the persecution in Jerusalem gave Paul the audience he wanted in just a matter of days!

Now, Paul gets the good news that he will not die, but that he will go to Rome and preach the gospel there. What a blessing! This also flies in the face of the theory that Paul will make a stupid move later on when he appeals to Caesar (25:11-12). Doing so got him a free trip to Rome to preach the gospel! Paul shows that, when you recognize "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20), your perspective is completely different from the world's perspective and from most Christians' perspective, as well.

Also, from how Paul got a free trip to Rome, we can see how the gospel of the kingdom will go to the whole world during the tribulation period (Matthew 24:14), even though the believing remnant is only supposed to go to the cities of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6,23).

23:12-13 The fact, that more than 40 Jews vow to kill Paul before they eat or drink, shows their great opposition of him. They know that Paul was a top man in their religious system before he was saved (22:3). This means that he knows how evil they are. He knows all of their dirty laundry. That is why most want him killed. They do not want him exposing their corrupt religious system and influence over

the common Jews. Most men, in Paul's situation, would have tried to blackmail their way out. However, Paul is not concerned about preserving his own life or of exalting himself over the Jewish religion. He only cares about sharing the gospel. Therefore, that is all he tries to do. He does not cut a deal. And, now that the Lord has told Paul that he will not be killed in Jerusalem, Paul has no fear over the oath that these Jewish men made, because he trusts God's Word over man's word.

23:14-15 These Jewish religious leaders do not care one bit about obeying the law. This is shown in the fact that those, who made a vow to kill Paul, get the Jewish religious council in on their plan. The Jewish religious council is the law in their religion, and they have the power to stone people for disobeying the law (John 8:59 and 10:31). Plotting to kill someone, according to God's law, is enough to execute them, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22. Their boldness, then, in going to the Jewish religious council with something that they should be put to death for, shows that the Jewish religious leaders do not obey the law. Their number one goal is to kill Paul, not to bring him justice. They tried to kill Paul at first (21:31). Then, when the Romans interfered, they went along to have him convicted by trial. Now that the Romans are protecting Paul, they devise a way to slay him. God's law says that doing so makes them worthy of being killed themselves (Numbers 35:16-18), but they do not care about that, because they think that they are above the law. If the Romans did not interfere, Paul would have been killed a long time ago.

Think, now, about the tribulation period when the Antichrist will be in charge. With the Antichrist being the world ruler from Jerusalem for the last half of the tribulation period, there will be no stopping the killing of believing Israel at that time. That is why Jesus tells the believing remnant that, when the Antichrist sets up the image of the beast in the temple, they are to flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:15-16).

23:16 Since Paul used to be a top, religious leader himself, it makes sense that a member of his family would be in the council or would at least have the connections to find out about their plot to kill Paul.

23:17-22 Paul's nephew helps Paul avoid being killed by the Jews. As such, he is a type of the Gentiles, who bless the little flock, giving them food, clothing, and shelter, during the Antichrist's reign of terror (Matthew 25:34-40).

23:23-24 The chief captain has seen that the Jews are up to no good, and so he believes Paul's nephew, realizing that Paul's life is in danger. Although he still does not know why the Jews want him dead, he does not want to get in trouble with his superiors for not protecting a Roman from being unjustly killed by a bunch of thugs. Therefore, he outnumbers the Jews lying in wait by more than 10 to 1! Paul is taken to the governor, which means he will get to preach to yet another audience! Therefore, Paul is probably thrilled at all of the moving around that is happening.

23:27 This is not entirely true. Claudius Lysias did not know initially that Paul was a Roman (22:25-27). The real reason he arrested Paul was to keep a riot from

happening (21:31-32).

23:28 In all of this, the chief captain still never found out why the Jews want to kill Paul.

24 The Jews falsely accuse Paul before the governor (vs. 2-9), which is obvious to the governor. However, because the governor loves money more than justice, he leaves Paul in jail for two years (vs. 25-27). That is fine with Paul, though, because it means he gets to preach the gospel there for two years.

24:1 It took five days for the Jewish religious leaders to "lawyer up." With Tertullus, their ancient-day equivalent of Johnnie Cochran (OJ Simpson's lawyer), now with them, they are in court ready to connive to get Paul sentenced to death.

24:2-4 No harm in buttering up the judge before talking of the case at hand.

24:5 The best charge the Jews can come up with against Paul is that he is a pest who tries to get people to rebel against the government. This is a terrible argument because they have no evidence to support their argument, but it is the best they can do because Paul is blameless under the law (Philippians 3:6). They try to make Paul look bad by making up a name for his teachings. They call him "of the sect of the Nazarenes." No doubt this name is derived from his following Jesus of Nazareth. However, the name is comical because Nazareth were the first people who tried to kill Jesus (Luke 4:16,24,28-29)!

24:6-7 Their next accusation is that Paul profaned the temple, meaning that he brought a Gentile into the inner court. Of course, they have no evidence that he did this (21:28-29), and this is also something the Roman governor would not care about in the slightest, since it breaks no Roman law.

Like all good lawyers, Tertullus is lying. The Jewish religious leaders did not casually arrest Paul and judge him according to their law. Rather, they were about to kill Paul without a trial (21:31), and the reason the Romans got involved was because they were beating him (21:32). When Paul gives his defense, he could point this out, but he will not, because he is only concerned with preaching the gospel. He does not care about his innocence.

24:9 This short sentence shows the wickedness of the top, Jewish, religious leaders (24:1). The religious leaders and Tertullus had planned in advance what they would say, making them both guilty of conspiracy to murder, since they have lied in order to try to get a death verdict from Felix. However, nothing will happen to them, since Felix is just as corrupt as they are (24:26).

24:10 Under Roman law, Paul had the right to an attorney to defend him, but he chose to defend himself. That is because he wants to preach the gospel, and a lawyer would just try to free him.

24:11-13 In three verses, Paul says that their allegations are false. Then, in the

next, two verses, he will cover the real issue.

24:14-15 In just two, short verses, Paul conveys that: 1) Christianity is not a new religion. Rather, it is a continuation of God's Word found in the Old Testament. 2) The only way to believe "all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" is to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah, come to save them from their sins, as prophesied in the Old Testament. 3) Resurrection from the dead for man to receive eternal life from God comes by believing in Jesus' resurrection, being the firstfruits of the resurrection. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (I Corinthians 15:23). Perhaps Felix is not able to put all of these pieces together from Paul's two verses, but the Jewish religious leaders know enough to figure these things out, if they really wanted to know the truth. Therefore, even in a Roman court, Paul is still preaching the gospel to Jerusalem Jews.

24:16 Your conscience says that you are guilty before God. The only way to purge this guilty conscience is being saved by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14). The first step toward being saved is to recognize what your guilty conscience tells you, which is that you are a sinner (Romans 3:9-12). Therefore, by twice (here and in 23:1) telling his accusers that his conscience is clear before God, Paul is trying to get the Jews to take that first step toward being saved.

24:17 Paul came to Jerusalem to preach the gospel to the Jews, but Paul says that he "came to bring alms." Alms are anything given for nothing to help the poor or needy. Spiritually speaking, that is exactly what Paul did. He gave charity (I Corinthians 13) to the Jews spiritually by giving them the gospel of grace so that they might have eternal life, which they did not have, being poor spiritually. The "offerings" that he brought would be of his body as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). Therefore, Paul is telling the truth when he says that he came to Jerusalem to bring alms and offerings.

24:18 The Jews defiled a purified man (Paul) by taking him out of the temple before his days of purification were accomplished (21:27,30), and yet the Jews are the ones accusing Paul of defiling the temple by bringing Gentiles in there! Similarly, Paul is pure in the sight of God because he has believed the gospel, but the Jews say that they are righteous in God's sight, when they are the real guilty ones.

24:19 The people, who threw Paul out of the temple, are not there in person. That is because they are guilty of attempted murder (21:28-31), and so they are afraid of appearing before the court, lest they be condemned.

24:21 Paul tells Felix that the real reason he is on trial is because he believes that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, offering the same to all who believe on Him. Therefore, Paul is on trial for preaching the gospel. You may think this is not true, and that it is just a clever way for Paul to present the gospel. However, it really is the resurrection life in Christ that is the reason Paul is there. After all, if Christ did not rise from the dead, there would be no power in the gospel, Paul would not be

saved, and he would not be preaching. He would still be in the Jewish religion. Even if he did abandon the Jewish religion, there would be no reason for them to arrest Paul, because his message would not pose a threat to them without the resurrection because there would be no saving power behind it.

24:22-23 Felix probably calls for the chief captain, Claudius Lysias, because the Jews have accused him of interfering in their law process (24:6-8), and so Felix wants to hear Lysias' side of the story. Felix has already determined that Paul is innocent, "having more perfect knowledge of that way" now (24:22). Therefore, he gives Paul some liberties while in jail, which is perfect for Paul. He does not have to work for a living because everything is provided for him, and he has the liberty to preach the gospel and to study God's Word while there.

24:24-26 For the Jews to have such hatred for Paul and such scheming against him, Felix probably figured there must be something to the gospel he preaches. Therefore, he calls Paul, and Paul shares the gospel of grace with him and his wife. The gospel had such a profound effect on Felix that he literally trembled. (The devils also tremble at God (James 2:19). So, this, in itself, does not mean he was saved.) Nevertheless, he loved money more than eternal life; therefore, he kept Paul bound and sent for him many times, in hopes that Paul would bribe his way out of jail, much like the Jewish religious leaders undoubtedly did when the chief captain came and testified that they had lied about their treatment of Paul (24:22).

24:27 Since the Jews paid Felix money and Paul did not, Paul stayed in prison for two years. For Paul, that meant that he had the opportunity to preach the gospel to all those in the governor's house for two years. After all, he was given liberty to have anyone come to him (24:23). Therefore, Paul must have shared the gospel with all employees and all prisoners during that time. That is not a bad deal for Paul, since he got free room and board, while he had to work as a tentmaker in order to make ends meet while he was traveling from city to city preaching the gospel before, e.g., 18:3 and 20:33-34. Therefore, he could devote all of his energies to God's will for all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4).

25 Paul is tried before Festus, and the Jews try to bribe Festus into releasing Paul to Jerusalem so that the Jews can kill him in transport (vs. 2-3). Paul stops this from happening by appealing to Caesar (vs. 10-11), which is how Paul will continue to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Romans, because his appeal keeps him from going to Jerusalem. Festus lets "many days" (v. 14) pass, before sending him to Caesar, because he does not have a good reason for him being held (vs. 26-27). This delay just gives Paul more opportunities to preach the gospel of grace to those around him.

25:1-3 Paul has been in prison for two years, and the Jews are still chompin' at the bit to get their hands on him and kill him. You would think that having him in prison all of that time would have been sufficient for the Jews, but so "desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9) is the flesh that they want "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13) killed.

Another factor is that Paul has probably had an effective prison ministry. Paul is allowed to have whomever he wants visit him (24:23), and so you can just picture Paul's jail cell being the new, grace headquarters to which Timothy, Luke, Silas, Barnabas, etc., are coming to get details of mystery doctrine, ministry advice, and instructions to deliver to churches. The Jews probably thought they would get rid of the grace message by having Paul arrested, but they really helped his ministry. Therefore, they still want Paul dead.

25:4-5 Festus wants to make sure that, if Paul is punished, it is because he has done something against Roman law. Therefore, he tells the Jews to come to Caesarea to try him, if he has done anything wrong. Still, the Jews do have some sway with the Romans, since both Felix and Festus want to do the Jews a pleasure (24:27 and 25:9). Therefore, the Jews have at least some political influence in Rome.

25:6-7 The Jews go with Festus to Caesarea, where Paul is. They have had two years to come up with reasons that Paul should be killed. Therefore, they "laid many and grievous complaints against Paul." The problem was that Paul was innocent; therefore, "they could not prove" that any of their complaints were true. This proves what Paul said in Philippians 3:6 that, in "touching the righteousness which is in the law," he was "blameless."

25:8 The Jews' complaints against Paul must have included that he disobeyed Jewish law, profaned the temple, and incited a rebellion against Caesar, because Paul said that he was innocent of all those things.

25:9-11 In 25:4, Festus would not let Paul be taken to Jerusalem to be tried. He made the Jewish religious leaders come to Caesarea. The reason is because Jerusalem is where the Jews judge people, while Caesarea is where the Romans judge people. Therefore, it makes no sense for Festus to ask Paul to go to Jerusalem to be judged in front of Festus. This tells us that, since the Jewish religious leaders could not prove any of their accusations, they must have offered Festus a bribe to bring Paul to Jerusalem so that they could kill him in transit. Paul must have known that he would be killed by the Jews if he was transported to Jerusalem, just like they plotted to do before. As a Roman citizen, Paul could avoid this trip to Jerusalem by appealing to Caesar. Plus, this gives Paul the further opportunity to bear witness of God in Rome, as the Lord had told him he would do (23:11). This shows that Paul was suffering unjustly at the hands of Festus, which means that Agrippa's statement, in 26:32, is incorrect, when he states: "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."

25:12 Festus probably conferred with the council to see if there was any legal way he could get out of sending Paul to Rome so that he could send him to Jerusalem and receive the bribe from the Jewish religious leaders. With no legal way out, Festus sends Paul to Caesar.

25:13-14 King Agrippa was a king of the Jews, being a descendant of Herod. Since Paul is a Jew and the Jews are up in arms about Paul, Festus tells Agrippa about Paul. Note that 25:13 says that Agrippa came to Caesarea "after certain days," and 25:14 says that he "had been there many days." This shows that, even though Paul had appealed to Caesar and Festus had granted his request, Festus was stalling as long as he could because he wanted that bribe. So, even after his appeal to Caesar, both "certain days" and "many days" pass, and Paul has still not gone to Caesar!

25:16 Now, we get a little more information about the Jews' request in 25:2-3 to have Paul sent to Jerusalem. They did not just want a Roman trial conducted there, but the Jews wanted to judge Paul themselves so that they could sentence him to death by stoning. Of course, they would have killed Paul before he ever got to Jerusalem. However, they cannot do this since Paul is also a Roman, giving him the right to a "fair" trial in a Roman court.

25:18 This shows that Festus is not a religious man. He assumed that Paul must have committed a crime that was against the law, such as murder, in order for the Jews to want him dead.

The Jews' main accusation was that Paul said that Jesus rose from the dead, when the Jews said that he had not risen from the dead (25:19). Surely, if Jesus was still in the ground, this would have been an open-and-shut case, but the Jews "could not prove" (25:7) their case against Paul. This should be proof positive to all people today that Jesus rose from the dead. After all, the Jews had Jesus killed (26:65-66), and they had guards posted at his grave (27:64-66). If He was still in the ground, everyone would know it. Then, if Paul said that Jesus rose from the dead, everyone in Jerusalem would have quickly labeled Paul as a loon, and no one would have listened to him. Instead, Paul had "turned the world upside down" (17:6) by preaching the resurrection, and the Jerusalem Jews could not prove Paul wrong, even though Jesus was buried just outside of Jerusalem. Therefore, Jesus must have, beyond the shadow of a doubt, risen from the dead.

25:19 Festus rightly refers to the Jewish religious system as "superstition," which means that their system of beliefs has no basis in fact. Paul had said that those in Athens were "too superstitious" (17:22). This term applies to all man-made religion, including the Jews' following of the traditions of the elders and Christianity's following of their own traditions today, which are not based on the truth of God's Word.

The Jews also accused Paul of his belief that Jesus is alive. This shows that, when Paul said that he was on trial for believing in resurrection (23:6), they all knew that he was talking about Jesus' resurrection from the dead, which means that they knew the gospel that he was preaching. The bottom line is that the Jews knew that Paul's gospel is true, but admitting that would destroy their religion. Therefore, they would rather kill an innocent man than to admit to the truth.

Note also that Festus says that Jesus "WAS dead" (25:19). He does not say that

Jesus “IS dead.” Perhaps Festus believes Paul. After all, Festus must have known of the events that took place in Jerusalem, and that Jesus was reported to have risen from the dead. Any rational man would conclude that Jesus must have risen from the dead, or else there would be no reason for the Jews to want to kill Paul.

25:20-21 Festus doubted the “manner of questions,” which means that the way in which the Jews asked Paul questions led Festus to believe that the Jews did not have good intentions. Yet, he is willing to release Paul to the Jews to judge him in Jerusalem. In other words, because of the Jews’ political influence, Festus wants to do them a pleasure (25:9). Therefore, he is willing to turn his back and let the Jews do what they want to with Paul, including killing him. Then, if anyone ever questions Festus about it, he can plead ignorance so that he does not get in trouble. Hmm...Festus sounds no different from the corrupt government officials we deal with today. Paul knew what was going on, which is why he appealed to Caesar.

25:23 Paul got to share the gospel: 1) With the common Jews (Acts 22), 2) With the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman chief captain in Jerusalem (Acts 23), 3) With those in the Roman castle in Jerusalem (23:10), 4) With Felix and his court (Acts 24), 5) For two years in Felix's castle (24:27), 6) With Festus and his court (25:6-12), and now 7) With King Agrippa and those in "the place of hearing" (25:23). King Agrippa and Bernice came “with great pomp” and “the principal men of the city” were there, as well (25:23). This means that Paul’s speech before King Agrippa was probably a front-page headline. Therefore, the Jews' effort to stop the gospel of grace from going out from Paul in Jerusalem is actually causing the spread of the gospel to many Jews and Gentiles in both Jerusalem and Caesarea!

25:25 Caesar Augustus died in 14 AD. Therefore, this “Augustus,” before whom Festus will bring Paul, is not the Caesar. Rather, he is a lower ranking official in the Caesar’s government.

25:26-27 Festus has a problem. Paul has appealed to Caesar. The higher court needs good reason why Paul is on trial. Yet, after over two years of being in prison, there is still "no certain thing to write" regarding any wrongdoing that Paul had done. Therefore, King Agrippa examines him to see if he can find a serious charge on which to bring Paul to the higher court.

26 Paul is on trial before King Agrippa, but Paul turns the tables, giving Agrippa his testimony (vs. 4-18) and the gospel (vs. 20, 23), which leads to Agrippa being put on trial spiritually, having to answer if he believes the gospel or not (vs. 27-28).

26:2 An unbeliever on trial before a king with a potential punishment of death would NOT be happy. However, Paul is happy because he has an opportunity to share the gospel with a king. He is not worried about his own life, because “for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

26:3 Paul implies that Agrippa goes to the Jewish synagogue and is familiar with all of their customs. Therefore, he is familiar with the Old-Testament scriptures.

This means that, if Agrippa believes God's Word, Paul just needs to show him how Jesus fulfilled the Old-Testament prophecies of the Messiah. Then, Agrippa will be saved.

26:4-5 Acts 5:34 says that Gamaliel was a doctor of the Jewish law and had a good reputation among all the Jewish leaders. 22:3 says that Paul was brought up in Jerusalem "at the feet of Gamaliel." 22:5 tells us that Paul went on to receive authorization from the Jewish elders to imprison Christians. Therefore, the Jewish religious leaders know Paul well. However, now that he has forsaken Jewish traditions, in favor of God's Word, they want him dead and will not even admit that he used to be on their side.

26:6-8 Critics of right division will say that Paul must have preached the same gospel as the 12 apostles did, because Paul says that his hope is the same as the hope of his Jewish forefathers. However, Paul defines his hope, not as God's eternal kingdom on earth, which is Israel's hope, but as a more general hope, which is resurrection into God's kingdom. For us today, that resurrection is into God's kingdom in heaven (Colossians 1:5). Therefore, just because Paul mentions Jewish forefathers does not mean that Paul is relying upon the same reward as Israel is to receive in the kingdom program.

Regardless of dispensation, the confident expectation, i.e., the hope, of the one trusting in God, is to be raised from the dead to receive eternal life with God. That is the promise that Paul is talking about. Therefore, when Paul says he is "judged for the hope of the promise made of God," he means that he is judged for believing that God will raise him from the dead and give him eternal life. This is the same promise that the twelve tribes of Israel hope in. The difference is that the body of Christ, of which Paul is a member, will have eternal life in heaven, while the twelve tribes will have eternal life on earth.

26:7 Paul says that the twelve tribes are "instantly serving God day and night" (26:7). Since the dispensation of grace has been going on for at least fifteen years at this point, Paul must be referring to believing Israel, who is standing before God's throne in heaven. In other words, Paul is saying that their Jewish forefathers are STILL waiting for God to fulfill His promise to them of eternal life by giving them a new body in the resurrection at Jesus' second coming. This means that it is not too late for those in Paul's audience also to receive the gift of eternal life from God.

26:8 I love Paul's question here because the Jewish religious leaders claimed to be followers of Abraham (John 8:39). Abraham had to believe in resurrection in order to believe in God's promise of giving Him the land, because God told Abraham that it would be at least 400 years before Israel would possess the land, and that Abraham would be in the grave before then (Genesis 15:13-16). Therefore, if the Jewish religious leaders are truly followers of Abraham, they will not find it strange that their Messiah was resurrected from the dead. Yet, they are up in arms over it, wanting to kill the Messiah's messenger, Paul. If they were Abraham's children, they would have believed the gospel, instead of trying to stop

it from spreading.

26:9-11 Paul readily admits that he killed many saints before he was saved. Yet, the Jewish leaders have no concern for these people, because they were the ones who wanted him to kill them. Note the tactics he used. He would go to the synagogue, punish them, compel them to blaspheme, and track them down and persecute them in other cities. These are the same tactics that will be used by apostate Israel during the tribulation period. Many believers will be "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Revelation 6:9). This will start when the Antichrist institutes capital punishment in the middle of the tribulation period for those not worshipping the image of the beast (Revelation 13:15). That is why Jesus told His disciples that, when they see the image of the beast (the abomination of desolation) set up in the temple, they are to "flee into the mountains" (Matthew 24:16). Just like Paul got his authority from the chief priests to kill saints, it will be the Jewish religious leaders under the Antichrist in the tribulation period, who will give the authorization to capture and kill tribulation saints.

When Paul says that he "compelled them to blaspheme" (26:11), he means that he got them to speak something contrary to Jewish traditions. Given the context, this probably means that he got them to admit that they believe that Jesus is the Messiah. A similar confession will be punishable by death under the Antichrist, as well. This shows us that, if the Lord Jesus Christ had not interrupted Israel's program with the dispensation of grace, Paul was well on his way to being the Antichrist. Instead, he repented, and God saved him.

26:13 I think most people do not realize just how bright God's holiness is. They know that Paul saw a light from heaven, but they probably do not think of the fact that that light did not shine in the middle of the night. Rather, the sun was brightly shining at the time, which means that the brightness of God's holiness must be unfathomable, since it overpowered a bright sun. The sun is so bright that you can be permanently blinded if you stare at it for just a short period of time. Yet, the light that Paul saw was even brighter than that! It is no wonder, then, that "no man hath seen God" (John 1:18 and I John 4:12), and God told Moses that "Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live" (Exodus 33:20). The reason is because the eyes are the only exposed internal organs on your body. As such, they take things into your soul. If God's holiness is taken into an unholy soul, God's holiness would be corrupted unless man's sin is dealt with by the punishment of death (Romans 6:23). Thus, Jesus is "the light which no man can approach unto" (I Timothy 6:16).

26:14 God's holiness brings fallen man to his knees. By contrast, believers can "come boldly unto the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16).

With regard to kicking against the pricks, God had separated Paul from his mother's womb and called him by his grace to preach Jesus Christ among the heathen (Galatians 1:15-16). As such, he was God's beast of burden, so to speak. Up until Acts 9:5, Paul had rebelled against God the whole time. The pricks were

things that kept the beast of burden in line. If the beast kicked against them, he was pricked. Therefore, what Jesus was saying to Paul was that He had called Paul, as the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), to serve Him, and Paul's heart kept getting pricked by God because he knew the truth, but rebelled against it.

26:15 Paul's knowing the truth is seen in that he called Jesus "Lord" immediately. He knew the Old Testament well enough to know that Jesus fulfilled Old-Testament prophecies to be Israel's Messiah and Lord. Yet, he rebelled against God. Now, that God has called him out on the carpet, Paul asks the Lord Who He is. His expectation is confirmed when the Lord identifies Himself as Jesus.

26:16 I love how Jesus tells Paul to "rise, and stand upon thy feet." When people claim to have seen an appearance of the virgin Mary, thousands of people flock to the site to get the same religious experience, even though it was not of God. When Paul does see this great light and hear God Himself speaking to him, God tells him to go and preach for Him. In other words, God is not interested in people wallowing in the emotions of a great, religious experience. God wants people saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). Therefore, when a light really does shine from heaven and God really does speak from heaven, believing man's response is to go from there and share the gospel. It is not to flock to the site of the experience, because God wants to save souls—not satisfy the flesh.

Note that Christ promises to appear to Paul later and reveal things to him. Paul records Jesus' first appearing unto him in Galatians 1:17, when Jesus had him go to Arabia to be instructed in the mystery program that God had kept secret since the beginning of time (Ephesians 3:4-5). Later on, Paul says that he was caught up into the third heaven to receive more advanced, mystery doctrine (II Corinthians 12:2-4). Thus, God reveals the mystery to Paul in stages.

26:17 God delivered Paul from unbelieving Israel. This would be "the people" in this verse. He also delivered Paul from the Gentiles in the sense that he would not follow the pagan practices of the Gentiles, but he would follow God and His Word. Since he is "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), he actually goes to the Gentiles with the gospel, even though, spiritually speaking, he has been delivered from them.

26:18 When referring to time past for the Gentiles, Paul says "that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (17:27). The Gentiles had to feel after God in time past, because they did not have the light of God's Word. However, with the dispensation of grace, God told Paul that He was sending him to the Gentiles "to turn them from darkness to light." In other words, the light is coming to them, rather than them having to feel after the light themselves. God was also sending Paul to the Jews, as God says in 26:17 that He sends Paul to "the people and...the Gentiles." "The people" would be unsaved Jews.

With the setting aside of the kingdom program, God had declared that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin (Romans 3:9). As such, the whole world is guilty

before God (Romans 3:19). Therefore, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the dispensation of grace (Romans 10:12), which means that the things mentioned in 26:18 apply to both Jews and Gentiles. Although all the world is now guilty before God, all the world can be saved by God. By having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, both Jew and Gentile can go from darkness to light and from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom to receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance in Christ.

26:20 Paul's preaching in Damascus is recorded in 9:19-23. He preached the mystery there for at least three years, since the "many days" of 9:23 represents three years (see Galatians 1:17-18 and I Kings 2:38-39). Then, he preached in Jerusalem, as recorded in 9:28-29. Then, 9:30-31 records Paul preaching to the rest of Judaea. Then, his going to the Gentiles is recorded beginning in Acts 13. Thus, Paul is summing up his entire ministry in one sentence.

Paul's showing them to "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" may sound like the kingdom gospel minus water baptism. After all, John the Baptist told Israel to "repent" (Matthew 3:2) and "bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8). However, Paul is giving the gospel of grace. The key difference is that Paul says to "turn to God." The word "repent" means to change your mind, as seen in Numbers 23:19. It does not mean to turn from your sins and turn to God, as Christianity would have you believe. That is because we are incapable of turning away from our sins ourselves, because in our flesh "dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). Therefore, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Therefore, Paul was telling people to change their mind about trusting in their own righteousness to save them, i.e., the law, their good deeds, etc., and trust in God's imputed righteousness to give them eternal life. If they did this, the body of sin would be buried with Christ, and they would "turn to God." They would then be empowered by the Holy Spirit to enable them to "do works meet for repentance."

Note that the grammar shows two, independent things going on. "Repent and turn to God" is one action. When they repent, they would believe the gospel of grace, and they would be turned to God by the Holy Spirit baptizing them into Christ's death (I Corinthians 12:13 and Romans 6:3-4) and spiritually circumcising them (Colossians 2:11). They would then be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the second action, which is "works meet for repentance." These are the works of faith that are fitting for someone who has repented. Thus, they are not connected to salvation but are the result of their salvation. Thus, Paul preached salvation plus sanctification, just like God told him to do in 26:18, where we were told that he preached so that people "may receive forgiveness of sins" (salvation), and "inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." (In the case of John the Baptist, he told the Pharisees to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, meaning that, if they believed the gospel of the kingdom, they would have come to him without their fancy robes and phylacteries. This would have demonstrated that they had changed their minds (repented) and could now be water baptized to become part of the believing remnant of Israel. This would be them being justified

by faith plus the works of faith (James 2:24), while, today, we are justified by faith alone (Romans 3:28). Instead, the Jewish religious leaders came to try to get people away from John and to try to stop John's ministry. Thus, John rebuked them.)

26:21 Since Festus is looking for the charges against Paul that have resulted in his appeal to Caesar, Paul is happy to provide those to him. Paul is going to be tried by the highest court in the world because he obeyed the heavenly vision from God to preach a message of salvation and sanctification to the world. How dare he do such a thing!

26:22-23 These verses are also used by those not rightly dividing the word of truth to argue that Paul preached the same gospel message as did the 12 apostles. However, that is not true. Romans 16:25-26 says that Paul's gospel is "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." Peter, and others preaching the kingdom gospel, preached Jesus Christ, also, but their preaching was according to what all of God's holy prophets had spoken since the world began (3:20-21). While Paul preached of Jesus Christ from the Old Testament, he did not preach Him as Peter preached Jesus Christ. Peter preached Jesus Christ as the One Israel had slain by wicked hands (2:23), Who was now sitting on the throne of judgment over them (2:30,36). Paul preached Jesus Christ crucified (I Corinthians 1:23), dying for their sins (I Corinthians 15:3). Both gospels involve showing from Old-Testament scriptures how the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead, but the kingdom message mentions this as bad news—Christ is raised from the dead to judge you. The grace message preaches this as good news—Christ is raised from the dead to save you.

The reason it was important for Paul to show Jesus Christ from Old-Testament scripture was because the Jews had the belief that their Christ would come to overthrow the Romans and set up God's kingdom on earth right then. Christ will still overthrow man's government and set up God's government on earth, as Daniel 2:44 states. However, He will do this at His second coming, not at His first coming, because, at His first coming, He came to die for Israel's sins (Matthew 20:28).

Finally, this verse mentions that Christ would "shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." The Jews had the light of God in His Word, but they forsook it for their own traditions. Therefore, Christ had to "shew light" to the Jews, which Isaiah 42:6 said the Messiah would do, and Luke 2:32 quotes the passage to show that Jesus would fulfill that prophecy for Israel. If they then accepted that light, they would go out to the Gentiles as a kingdom of priests with the gospel of the kingdom (Exodus 19:5-6), which they will still do during the millennial reign. Since they refused to believe, God revealed to Paul a different aspect of God's plan. That is, that Jesus Christ would be a light to the Jews and to the Gentiles through the new, dispensation of grace.

The Acts-2 dispensationalist will say, "You are making this way too complicated by creating something that is not there." However, you have to remember that God

kept the mystery a secret. If He had revealed it beforehand, Satan's forces would not have had Jesus crucified (I Corinthians 2:7-8). So, God revealed His prophecy plan in the Old Testament and had Satan think that God was not going to reconcile heavenly places back to Himself. He would then not be thinking of heavenly places, would have Jesus crucified, and God would reconcile both earthly and heavenly places back to Himself through the cross of Christ. He then revealed to Paul how this Isaiah 42:6 passage applies to the mystery dispensation, and not just to the prophecy dispensation. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

26:24 Much learning of the wisdom of this world does make someone mad. It made the Jews kill their Messiah and kill saints afterward who believed in the Messiah. Much learning of the wisdom of God, however, makes one wise, and rises them above the foolishness of the world. This is what happened with Paul. Festus, on the other hand, being wise in the wisdom of the world, thinks Paul is the one who is crazy. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (I Corinthians 3:19). That is what has happened to Festus.

Note that Agrippa did not speak up. That is because Agrippa is an expert in customs and questions among the Jews (26:3). Granted, he does not believe yet, but he does know that there is truth in what Paul says. In other words, he knows that Paul is not mad, as Festus has claimed.

26:25 We often think of soberness as not being drunk with alcohol. However, Paul uses the word to refer to using the mind of Christ in your thinking. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul contrasts being drunk with alcohol with being filled with the Spirit. Here, then, when Paul says he speaks "forth the words of truth and soberness," he means that he is speaking the truth of God's Word and conveying the specific truths that God would have him use so that his audience may be saved.

26:26-27 Paul is the one on trial, but he is not concerned with defending his innocence. Rather, his only goal is to present the gospel so that people might be saved. Therefore, he asks Agrippa if he believes the prophets. Paul said that Agrippa is an "expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews" (26:3). Therefore, he knows the prophets. He also saw all the events that went on surrounding Jesus. Therefore, he just needed a sober-minded person, like Paul, to connect the two to show him that Jesus is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. Now, the question is, will he abandon his self-righteousness in favor of believing the prophets? His response, in 26:28, shows that he chose not to believe. Similarly today, there are many people who have gone to church and know the Bible, but very few of them actually believe the Bible.

26:28-29 Most Christians take Agrippa's response in 26:28 to be sarcastic in nature, as if he said, "Do you really expect me to become a Christian? You're crazy!" In fact, the NIV and the NLT perversions change Agrippa's statement to reflect this by saying something like: "Do you think I would become a Christian so

quickly?” This shows fundamental Christianity’s belief that becoming a Christian involves a lifelong commitment to work for Christ. Pastors will even say things like this from the pulpit: “You need to count the cost before you decide to become a Christian, because it is not easy.” That statement is utterly false! Becoming a Christian is one of the easiest things you could possibly do. All you have to do is recognize you are a sinner and trust in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection to save you. There is no work in that for you, because Christ did it all (Ephesians 2:8-9). Granted, being led by the Holy Spirit after you are saved is not easy, but that has nothing to do with becoming a Christian.

Getting back to Agrippa’s statement, we know that his statement is sincere for at least three reasons: 1) It ends in a period, which means it is a statement of fact. We know that it ends in a period because God's holy, preserved word, the King James Version, ends his statement in a period, 2) Since we cannot tell tone in scripture, God would have to tell us it was a sarcastic statement for us to know. Since He does not say this, it must be a sincere statement, and 3) Paul's response shows Agrippa made a sincere statement. Paul picks up on Agrippa's word "almost," and says that he wishes that all "were both almost, and altogether" Christians (26:29). In other words, Agrippa carefully considered what Paul said, compared it to what he knew about the Messiah from Old-Testament scripture, and concluded that Paul may be right. We are not told, but I believe it is safe to assume that Paul made such an impact on Agrippa that he researched the matter further on his own. We will not know, until we get to heaven, whether or not Agrippa actually believed.

However, the fact, that Agrippa almost became a Christian with just a short testimony from Paul, shows that Paul is not "beside himself" and crazy, as Festus alleged (26:24). It shows the power of the gospel to penetrate the heart and cause people to believe God. Agrippa's trouble was probably that he realized the ramifications of such a conversion, namely that his being a king would have ended in short order. Would to God that all, who hear the gospel, would count the loss of all things as dung, that they may win Christ (Philippians 3:8). Then, they would be "such as I am," as Paul states in 26:29.

So, what state was Paul in? He was blessed with all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3), adopted as a child of God (Ephesians 1:5), accepted in Christ (Ephesians 1:6), redeemed and forgiven of all his sins (Ephesians 1:7), given wisdom of God (Ephesians 1:8-9), obtained an inheritance from God (Ephesians 1:11), and sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), and that is all just because he believed the gospel. There is even more to add when you count his service for Christ. Moreover, he will experience the exceeding riches of God’s grace in the ages to come (Ephesians 2:7). God’s salvation deal is obviously much better than even being a king on this earth, as Agrippa was, yet most people refuse to believe this is true, because they walk by sight, and not by faith.

We should also note that, the fact that Agrippa used the term “Christian,” shows that, by this time, it was a popular label to use for non-believers to categorize believers.

26:31-32 Having been confronted by the gospel, Agrippa quickly changes the focus from himself to Paul. Agrippa pities Paul, saying that Paul would be a free man if he did not appeal to Caesar. However, Agrippa is the one to be pitied, since his almost becoming a Christian means that he almost made it into heaven. His status of "almost" causes him to miss out on everything that Paul has. Compared with spiritual blessings, being a free man on this earth is nothing. In fact, Paul does not want to be a free man, because he still has work to do in preaching the gospel and edifying the saints in Rome, and his appeal to Caesar will keep him in Rome.

Agrippa and Festus have finally figured out why Paul was beaten and almost killed by the Jews, and their judgment is that he should go free. However, it is too late to free Paul, since he has appealed to Caesar. Agrippa thinks that Paul's appeal kept him from being freed, but it actually kept him from being killed by the Jews. After all, they almost killed him in Jerusalem if the Roman government had not interfered (21:30-32). Now, if Paul goes back there, he will either be killed on the way to Jerusalem (25:2-3), or the Jews will kill him while there, since they will probably be more discrete, so as not to get in trouble with the Roman government. So, Agrippa's statement is incorrect. Instead, Paul gets the blessing of continuing to preach the gospel in Rome, and we will see the book of Acts conclude with him preaching the gospel in his own house for two years with no man forbidding him to do so (28:30-31). That is a much better deal than going to Jerusalem to be killed!

27 Acts is written to Israel. God set aside Israel's kingdom program at the end of Acts 7 due to Israel's unbelief. He then offered them salvation again through the gospel of grace. Acts 9-28 records the diminishing away of Israel. In Acts 28, they will reject the gospel of grace for the final time, and the book ends with Jews not being a part of God's earthly kingdom or His heavenly kingdom. However, all is not lost. After the rapture of the body of Christ, God will resume Israel's kingdom program, "and so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26).

The events of Acts 27 actually happened, but the details are given, not so that we are told a nice, little story, but so that Israel may know that all is not lost for them. As such, Acts 27 tells of Israel's salvation at the end of the tribulation period through the events that take place with Paul and those with him. The sea is a picture of Satan's realm. Because Israel is in a state of unbelief, they will have strayed far away from salvation in the dispensation of grace, as pictured in verses 4-9 with the indirect route they are taking and how they are sailing in Satan's realm for "many days" (v. 7), with "much time...spent" (v. 9), following Satan rather than believing the gospel. God warns Israel that they will lose their lives if they do not believe the gospel (v. 10), but Israel chooses to listen to man, rather than to God (v. 11). And, so Israel keeps sailing in Satan's realm (v. 12) and misses the rapture. Now, they are in the tribulation period, and everything seems to be okay at first. A nice wind is blowing, and they think they have "obtained their purpose" (v. 13). This is in the early stages of the tribulation period, when the Antichrist brings Israel to power, and Israel thinks they have obtained their purpose of ruling with God in His earthly kingdom. But, then, in the middle of the tribulation period,

the Antichrist sets up the abomination of desolation in the temple (v. 14), and Israel cannot "bear up" in the Antichrist's rule. In other words, they cannot overpower him now that they see who he really is, so, they "let her drive" (v. 15), meaning that the Antichrist rules for the whole tribulation period. Israel then trusts in her own self-righteousness to make it into God's kingdom, as shown by the much work they did and the helps they used to undergird the ship, but their own righteousness is like quicksand (v. 16-17). Then, Israel sees that her own self-righteousness will not bring her into God's kingdom, so, she begins casting off the cares of this world (vs. 18-19). Note how they tossed things out of the ship for three days (vs. 18-19), which is a type of how Jesus Christ was in the belly of the earth for three days (Matthew 12:40), tossing aside the weight of sin for Israel that so easily besets them (Hebrews 12:1). The many days of no sun or stars is a type of Israel going through the night of the tribulation period (Psalm 30:5). After many days of still being tossed to and fro by Satan, Israel gives up hope that they will ever enter God's kingdom (v. 20). That is when, "after long abstinence," the Word of God is found (II Kings 22:8), and they find that God's Word to Israel says that "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26), even if all their worldly possessions are lost (vs. 21-24). "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee" (v. 24) refers to all who believe the gospel of the kingdom. This is "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16).

In order to be saved, Israel will have to abandon the Antichrist and believe God's Word, which will cast them upon a spiritual island (v. 26). God will feed them there for the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation period (Revelation 12:6). Because tribulation will be so great, it will seem like they are waiting forever for their salvation to come from the Lord. They will cast anchor in God's Word and wish for the day of the Lord's appearing (v. 29). The shipmen of verse 30 represent the Gentiles, who believe in God's Word, going through the tribulation period. Toward the end of the tribulation period, they are about to abandon God, which is when God will give the warning that they must believe in the gospel in order to be saved (vs. 30-31), as we see an angel proclaiming to the Gentiles in Revelation 14:6-7. Note how Paul says in verse 31 that "Except THESE abide in the ship, YE cannot be saved," showing that salvation comes to the Gentiles through Israel in Israel's program during the millennial reign. This is seen in Mark 7:27: "But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast [it] unto the dogs." Some Gentiles will abandon the Antichrist, cutting off his program, in order to trust in God's program (v. 32).

"The day was coming on" shows that the Antichrist and his kingdom have been overthrown at the end of the tribulation period, meaning that Jesus' second coming is at hand (v. 33). They then need to take on the meat of God's Word so that they have faith in God to save them at His second coming (v. 33); otherwise, they will not be saved (Matthew 24:13). If they do take in God's Word (meat), they will not even lose a hair (v. 34). This should remind us of the three Hebrew boys, who went through the fiery furnace without losing a hair (Daniel 3:27), as a sign of going through the fiery tribulation unscathed, which is also why Jesus told saved Israel that the "very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30).

Verse 33 tells us that they are on day 14 without taking in God's Word (v. 33). It

appears that there are 45 days of darkness between the Antichrist's kingdom being overthrown and Jesus' second coming (the difference between the 1,335 days and the 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11-12). Paul's taking bread, giving thanks, and giving it to those there (v. 35) should remind us of Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 (Matthew 14:19 and 15:36, respectively), which are types of how those knowing the gospel of the kingdom will feed those, who need to go back to that gospel message, as symbolized by the five virgins with oil in their lamps who had to trim their lamps in Jesus' parable in Matthew 25:4-7. In other words, they cast out the cares of this world in order to be saved, as symbolized by casting wheat into the sea in verse 38.

The saved, at the end of the tribulation period, take in the spiritual food of the Word of God so that they can continue to endure unto the end, as they wait for Jesus' second coming, while the world tries to toss them out of believing in God's salvation. "And when it was day, they knew not the land" (v. 39) shows how it takes the Lord Jesus Christ to bring them into God's kingdom. The "certain creek" (v. 39) they discover is a type of the river of life. Following that river leads to God's throne in the kingdom (Revelation 22:1).

Romans 11:26 says, "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." That is what we see in verses 42-44. Verse 42 shows how Satan wants to kill saved Israel, but Jesus Christ steps in, represented by the centurion in verse 43, so that "they escaped all safe to land" (v. 44). Therefore, Israel is in a status of unbelief in both the kingdom program in early Acts and the mystery program in the rest of Acts. However, they will still make it safely into God's kingdom by enduring unto the end of the tribulation period.

27:1 "And when it was determined" tells us that Paul was sitting around in Caesarea for a good while after chapter 26 before they finally shipped him to Rome. The "we" of this verse tells us that Luke is also one of the prisoners being taken to Rome. Luke puts all of the attention on Paul because he is the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). Christians accuse right dividers of putting too much focus on Paul. However, since the Holy Spirit, through the pen of Luke, chose to write about Paul and not really talk about other saints with him, should we not follow the Holy Spirit's lead and focus on Paul, as well?

27:2 The focus has been on Paul, his beating by the Jews, and the trials that he went through. However, now we find out that Aristarchus probably went through similar things that Paul went through. Aristarchus is one of Paul's right-hand men and has also suffered many things for the cause of Christ. In 19:29, we are told he was one of "Paul's companions in travel," and that he was persecuted by the Ephesians when they could not find Paul. 20:4 says that he went to Asia with Paul. He must have traveled to Jerusalem with Paul and went through many of the things that Paul went through, because he is now going with Paul to Rome as a prisoner. This makes Aristarchus one of the unsung heroes of the faith. The same goes for Luke, being there also. This shows that Paul had a few saints with him the whole time from his beating and arrest in Jerusalem to his journey to Rome. When

you get to heaven, there will probably be a big crowd around Paul, so, why not go to Aristarchus instead and hear similar stories from him.

27:3 Paul is a Roman citizen, which means he is not to be treated badly, as long as he has not been found guilty of a crime (22:29). Therefore, Paul is getting a free trip to Rome, and he is able to visit the churches at stops along the way. What a blessing that the government is footing the bill for this apostolic journey!

27:4-8 Satan knows that Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles (Romans 11:13), who has done much harm to his kingdom, is on the ship. Therefore, Satan tries to kill Paul through bad weather. This is sort of the opposite of Jonah's situation. Jonah was tossed on a ship in a big storm by God because he had disobeyed God. Paul was tossed on a ship by Satan because he was doing God's will. However, this is nothing new for Paul, as Paul has already been shipwrecked three times before, including spending 24 hours in the ocean, waiting for rescue (II Corinthians 11:25). In trying to kill Paul, though, Satan actually plays right into God's hand, as they had to sail a more indirect route, sailing slowly and going through more cities. This probably gave Paul the opportunity to witness to at least some people at each dock. It definitely gave Paul the chance to be joyful during the tumult, which is an excellent testimony to the unsaved prisoners and the guards on the ship with him. Similarly today, when we face trials and tribulations, rather than getting us down, we should have "rejoice evermore" (I Thessalonians 5:16), so that others may see and believe the gospel as a result.

27:9 "The fast" refers to the day of atonement, which was an annual fast day for Israel (Leviticus 23:26-32). Since the book of Acts was written to Israel, Luke uses "the fast" as a time marker, so that the Jews would immediately recognize the time of the year and know that it was a dangerous time in which to be sailing.

27:10 Paul has been shipwrecked on at least three, previous occasions (II Corinthians 11:25). Therefore, Paul is experienced enough to know that much damage will happen if they continue sailing, including people being hurt or killed. Paul knows that he will not be killed, because Jesus said he would witness for Him in Rome (23:11). However, others may be killed. If they have not believed the gospel, they will not have eternal life. Therefore, Paul, concerned for their souls, warns them not to continue sailing.

27:11 Paul is more in tune with what is going on than the "experts" are. Similarly, a Bible believer is more in tune with the gospel and the knowledge of the truth than the "experts," who are seminary graduates.

27:14 Evidentially, these storms were so bad that they had invented their own terms to describe them!

27:18-20 Paul told them not to sail, but they sailed anyway. The result is that all of their goods have been taken away from them, and that they are certain that they will die. "All hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (27:20). This is a type of how man, in his pride, will not believe the gospel until he realizes that

he has no hope to save himself.

27:22-24 Before, Paul said that he thought that people would be killed if they continued sailing (27:10). Now that all hope is lost, he gets the official word from God that all will be spared. Their ship and goods will all perish, but all of the people on the ship will be saved. However, they have to believe the word of God spoken by Paul. If they do not believe, they will jump ship and be lost. The only way man can be saved if he trusts in God, and not in the “treasures” of this world.

27:25 “I believe God.” Paul sets the example for the rest of the people on the ship. Similarly, Christians today need to take a stand on God’s Word and believe it, regardless of what man says. Then, others may believe and be saved, as well.

27:31-32 They did not listen to Paul before when he told them to stop sailing (27:10). Now, he makes an unusual statement that the centurion and the soldiers will not be saved if the shipmen flee. Why should this make any difference? However, the centurion now believes Paul, probably because they have not died yet. Therefore, the centurion obeys Paul and keeps the shipmen in the boat.

27:33 Not only do they believe Paul because he has been right so far, but they also believe him because they are still alive, even though they have not eaten for 14 days!

27:36 They are still on the ship, waiting to be rescued. Yet, they are “all of good cheer” (27:36). Why? Because they believe the word that Paul has given to them, and, because they believe, they will be saved. Similarly, even after Babylon falls after the end of the tribulation period, all believers will be of good cheer, because they know that Jesus Christ will bring them safely into the kingdom.

27:37 276 souls were saved. This number must be significant or else we would not be told it. 276 is 12 times 23. 12 is the number of the tribes of Israel. 23 means that God is with them, as seen by “God with us” being found in Matthew 1:23 and the Lord being Israel’s shepherd in Psalm 23, among other scriptural support. It is significant that the numbering of the Levitical priests came out to be 23,000 (Numbers 26:62), because Israel will be a kingdom of priests to the Gentiles in the millennial kingdom (Exodus 19:5-6), and it is Zechariah 8 verse 23 that talks of how the Gentiles will be saved by going with the Jews to Jerusalem. Therefore, the 276 souls is a reference to how God is with His people for all eternity in Israel’s program, and “His people” include both Jews and Gentiles.

28 The Melitians respond to God’s Word based on feelings (vs. 1-10). Then, Paul makes it to Rome (v. 16) and preaches to the Jews there (vs. 17-24). However, they do not believe. Therefore, his ministry to the Jews is over. He will now go only to Gentiles (v. 28), which is why the book of Acts ends. We will now go on to Romans through Philemon, where believers learn sound doctrine for today’s dispensation of grace.

28:1-10 This story represents how people typically respond to the truth of God’s

Word based on their feelings, rather than on an objective look at what you present to see if it is true or not. Therefore, if they have any faith, it is placed in a person, rather than in the word of God, which means that even the “faithful” are not saved. This shows how most people, who attend Christian churches today, will not make it into heaven.

28:1 “Melita” means sweet honey, which is a type of how the Promised Land is “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8,17, 13:5, 33:3, Jeremiah 11:5, 32:22, and Ezekiel 20:6,15).

28:2 The barbarous people help out Paul and the others. Such help is often called “showing Christian love” by Christians. However, the barbarous people were just superstitious people. This shows that, what man labels as Christian love, is really just the human good side of man. Christian love is judging all to be dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1 and II Corinthians 5:14) and allowing sound doctrine for today to work through you so that others may be saved.

28:3-4 Unbelievers use the wisdom of this world, which the Bible describes as “earthly, sensual, devilish” (James 3:15). The barbarians use this “wisdom” to determine that the god of “vengeance” is killing Paul for being a murderer. They have “NO DOUBT” that is what has happened (28:4). Yet, once Paul shakes off the viper, they will conclude that Paul is a god (28:6). This shows how man’s wisdom is based on what he sees and his response is based upon his emotions, rather than on truth.

28:5 Paul’s being bit by a deadly snake but having no harm come to him shows that physical miracles are still happening. I Corinthians 13:10 says, “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” The context shows this verse means that, when the mystery program is fully revealed in God’s written word, there will be no more need for physical miracles. Ephesians 1:8 indicates that “ALL wisdom and prudence” have now been revealed to us today. However, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians were not written until after Acts 28. Therefore, until the end of the book of Acts, physical miracles were still happening to provoke Israel to jealousy so that they might be saved (Romans 11:11).

This snake biting Paul does NOT fulfill Mark 16:18, where Jesus said, “they shall take up serpents,” because the context of Mark 16 is Israel going out to the Gentiles with the gospel in the KINGDOM program. However, what happens to Paul does tell us what Jesus meant when He said, “they shall take up serpents.” That is, He meant it as a physical sign of how Satan’s attacks cannot harm the believing remnant of Israel. He did not mean it as a prideful display of God’s so-called “presence,” as snake-handling churches misuse the passage today. However, Paul’s survival of the snakebite is still a physical sign of how believers today can be unharmed by Satan, the spiritual serpent (Genesis 3:1 and Revelation 12:9), when they use the armor of God against him (Ephesians 6:11-18).

28:6 Within a matter of minutes, these barbarians go from thinking that Paul is a murderer to thinking that he is a god. Spiritual truths are based on faith, not on sight (Hebrews 11:1-6). Therefore, if you rely upon sight to determine your beliefs, they can be wrong, as shown here. They were wrong at first about the god of vengeance punishing Paul for being a murderer, and now they are wrong about Paul being a god because he did not die. But, because their spirits are dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), these barbarians can only rely upon sight.

This is an important lesson for Christians to learn. Because unbelievers are looking at our actions, we need to be walking by faith. Most Christians live in the flesh. If they continue to do evil things, as unbelievers do, the world will conclude they are bad people who need the crutch of religion just to function normally in society. If they do good things in their flesh, unbelievers will see them as hypocrites, because the unbelievers can tell that their behavior is really no better than the unbelievers' behavior. The difference is the few good deeds they do, which is displayed with a prideful, uppity attitude. Therefore, regardless of what Christians do IN THE ENERGIES OF THEIR FLESH, unbelievers will not be drawn to Christ. However, if we recognize that the old man is crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6) and we allow Christ to live in us by believing God's Word rightly divided, allowing the sound doctrine of Paul's epistles to work through us, then "the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:7). Then, unbelievers may become believers.

To repent means to change your mind. These barbarians change their minds here. However, they only changed their minds about Paul. They did not believe the gospel. Since God uses "repent" as part of the gospel, that is probably why the word "repent" is not used here.

28:8-10 Many people are healed of diseases, but they honor Paul, rather than believing the gospel and being saved. Therefore, the physical healings did no good, since they did not result in spiritual healings. Timewise, this is the last recorded instance of physical healings, and it shows why God did not continue the physical healings. Since all people live forever, whether in the lake of fire or in God's kingdom, God is not concerned about lengthening people's physical lives. He is only concerned with their spiritual wellbeing (I Timothy 2:4). Since physical healings are not resulting in people being saved, there is no need to continue the physical healings after the book of Acts.

28:11-14 Paul is not on an official, apostolic journey. Rather, he is a prisoner and was with 275 other people who were on a ship (27:37), comprised of prisoners and guards (27:1). However, Paul has shown that God is speaking through him, and God has saved their lives. Therefore, at this point, it appears that the Roman centurion is willing to let Paul do what he wants to, as seen by them staying with brethren in Puteoli for seven days (28:13-14), as if Paul is on another apostolic journey.

28:15 Note how Paul "thanked God, and took courage" when he saw some

brethren. When compared with the world, believers are always in the minority. It can be discouraging to know that very few people believe the truth like you do. Therefore, when Paul sees brethren who want the truth so much that they travel to meet his ship, he is encouraged. We see another example of this in II Corinthians 7:6-7, when Paul is comforted in knowing that the Corinthians have had a godly sorrow that resulted in their repentance. The world may take comfort in riches and peace, but someone, being led by the Holy Spirit, is comforted by “the God of all comfort” (II Corinthians 1:3), when they see members of the body of Christ diligently seeking and applying the truth of God’s Word rightly divided (Hebrews 11:6).

28:16 Paul may still be a prisoner, but the centurion recognizes that they would have been killed if not for Paul. Therefore, he gets his own room in Rome.

28:17 Paul had appealed to Caesar and must have been waiting trial by Caesar. However, Jesus said that Paul would testify of Christ in Rome (23:11). Therefore, Paul gets to work. Rather than waiting quietly for his trial, Paul uses his freedom to call the Jewish leaders together.

28:19 Paul was almost killed by the Jews (21:31), being falsely accused of teaching against the Jewish temple and the Jewish law and of profaning the temple with Gentiles (21:28). The Jews then told the Romans to kill him (22:22). The Jewish high priest commanded that he be slapped on the mouth (23:2-3). More than 40 Jews vowed not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul (23:12-13). They falsely accused him again in a Roman court (24:5-9). He remained bound for two years thanks to the Jews (24:27). The Jews again tried to kill him (25:2-3). He had to appeal to Caesar to keep from getting killed (25:11), which resulted in many months on a turbulent sea (27). Yet, in spite of all of this, Paul makes the statement: “Not that I had ought to accuse my nation of” (28:19)!

Paul can make that statement because he recognizes that the Jews are just like he was before he was saved. That is, they are dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) and are just acting out of their flesh. Therefore, he could wish himself accursed from Christ so that Israel might be saved (Romans 9:3-4). Only by the love of God being shed abroad in his heart (Romans 5:5) could he not even have an inkling of revenge in his heart and want Israel to be saved at all cost.

28:20 “For this cause,” then, tells us that, the reason he has called the Jews together, is so they do not think that he is mad at them and wants revenge. He then uses this gathering as an opportunity to give them the gospel by saying that he is bound “for the hope of Israel.” This does not mean God’s earthly kingdom for the nation of Israel, since Paul preached the gospel of grace, which involves “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Corinthians 5:1). There are only two other references to “the hope of Israel” in the Bible, and they both refer to the Lord Jesus Christ (see Jeremiah 14:8 and 17:13). Therefore, what Paul is saying is that he is bound because he is hoping in the Lord Jesus Christ to give him eternal life. That hope, at the time Paul was preaching, would only come to Israel if they trusted in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for

sin.

28:21 The Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem probably did not pursue Paul to Italy because it is so far away from Jerusalem, as evidenced by the long journey there. They probably figure that Paul will never make it back to Jerusalem, so, he is out of their hair. Also, 18:3 tells us that the Jews had been commanded to depart from Rome. Therefore, while there are Jews in Rome, they probably do not have any political influence over the court of Caesar there.

28:22 The Jewish religious leaders spoke against Christians everywhere, because Christians were taking good, tithe-paying members away from their synagogues. Note how Christianity was considered to be a sect of Judaism. 2,000 years later, though, Christianity has developed its own profane rules and Judaism has gotten farther away from the Old Testament such that they are now considered to be two, separate religions.

28:23 Acts 2 and Acts 28 dispensationalists see the term “kingdom of God” and immediately think that Paul was preaching the same message as the 12 apostles preached. However, remember that he is preaching to Jews, and he says that he had been arrested for “the hope of Israel,” which we have already seen is the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, we have just been told that these Jews have heard a lot of bad things about Christians (28:22). Therefore, if Paul immediately started talking about a new dispensation and the gospel of grace, they would have rejected him.

Therefore, he goes back to the law and the prophets to go over key prophecies about the Messiah to show that Jesus Christ is their Messiah. Old-Testament prophecy says that the Messiah was supposed to die for the sins of Israel, while the Jews only saw their Messiah as coming to overthrow the Romans and rule the world with the Jews ruling with Him. Therefore, Paul had to get the Jewish religion out of their minds and replace it with sound doctrine from the Old Testament before they could see that Jesus is their Messiah. With that fact established, he could then tell them that salvation now comes by believing in Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as atonement for their sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), rather than by placing themselves under the Mosaic law. Unfortunately, he never gets around to the gospel because they end up rejecting Jesus as their Messiah (28:24-25).

As far as Paul testifying of the kingdom of God is concerned, we have to realize that God’s kingdom is anyplace where God rules, which is both heaven and earth. Even the famous “Lord’s Prayer” says, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), which tells us that God’s kingdom is in heaven. Since they were Jews, Paul spoke to them using Old-Testament scripture. He then would have shared how the Jews had rejected Jesus as their Messiah, leading God to switch His focus back onto His kingdom in heaven. But, since he never got that far and Luke is writing to the Jews, he uses the more general term that he “testified the kingdom of God.” He did not testify of “the dispensation of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:2), because they rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Without that foundation established with the Jews, he could not go on to the gospel for today, because they would have rejected it.

28:24-27 Now, you may wonder why Paul rejected the whole group of Jews, when some of them believed. There are two reasons: 1) He spoke to the group, and the group as a whole did not believe, and 2) The people, who believed, only believed that Jesus is the Messiah. They had not heard and believed the gospel. It is reasonable to assume that Paul shared the gospel with the believers later on, but, when he spoke to the group as a whole, he stated that Israel has rejected the truth.

This is Israel's final indictment, as shown by Paul's quote of Isaiah 6:9-10. They have physical eyes and ears, but they do not spiritually see and hear what God is telling them. They have rejected both the salvation that God offered to them under the prophecy program and the salvation that God offered to them under the mystery program. Now, that is not to say that individual Jews cannot be saved in the mystery dispensation, but it is to say that they are now in the dark when it comes to God's Word, because of their closed eyes and dull-of-hearing ears. Note that it does not say that they are blind and deaf. It just says that they have closed their eyes and their ears are dull of hearing, which implies that they can also open their eyes and unclog their ears if they choose to do so. As such, they are like the Gentiles were in Israel's program before Acts 9. They can "feel after Him, and find him" (17:27) in their darkness and be saved. However, not many of them will do so. The evidence of this is seen in that the body of Christ has predominantly been comprised of Gentiles in the last 2,000 years, and, when referring to the body of Christ, they are usually called "Gentiles" (see Romans 11:13,25).

As a side note, 28:25 says that the Holy Ghost spoke by Isaiah. It does not say that Isaiah spoke. This shows that God's Word is not God giving general thoughts to people, who wrote them down in their own words. Rather, the Holy Ghost Himself spoke EVERY SINGLE WORD found in scripture, which tells us that God's inspiration was a dictation of words, so that everything was conveyed exactly as God intended it to be.

28:28 For the third time in the book of Acts, Paul says that the gospel of grace will not go to the Jews, but it will go to the Gentiles, who will believe it, in contrast with the Jews, who did not believe it. The first two times are found in 13:46 and 18:6. These three "strikes" represent the Jews' being "out" of God's plan now. Granted, Jews can still be saved, but God will now focus on reaching the Gentiles with the gospel. Therefore, the book of Acts ends. People say that it ends in a weird place since it does not finish telling us the details of Paul's life. However, that is not the book's goal. The book was written to the Jews so that they might be saved. It shows the Jews rejecting the gospel of the kingdom in Acts 1-7, and the Jews rejecting the gospel of grace in Acts 9-28. The Jews stumbled at the cross; they fell in Acts 1-7; and they diminished away in Acts 9-28. Now that they have rejected God's good news completely, they are out of the picture. Therefore, the book ends, and we begin reading Romans through Philemon, which are the books of instruction for today's dispensation-of-grace believers, who are primarily Gentiles.

28:29 The Jews' departure symbolizes their departing out of God's will, which is

for them to be saved (I Timothy 2:4). As we learned in Acts 27, the Jews will be saved in the end, but not until after this current dispensation of grace ends with the rapture of the body of Christ.

28:30-31 With the Jews out of the way, no man forbids Paul's preaching, which shows that the vast majority of Paul's persecution came from religious Jews. Again, Paul's preaching of the kingdom of God does not mean he preached the kingdom gospel. He preached the gospel of grace so that people may be saved and become part of the body of Christ, who will occupy the heavenly portion of God's kingdom. When Paul taught the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, he taught what we find in Romans through Philemon, which the Lord Jesus Christ showed him. Namely, he taught salvation by faith in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3-4), and sanctification through the reading of God's Word (Ephesians 5:26; II Timothy 2:15), which allows the Holy Spirit to teach you the things of God (I Corinthians 2:10-14) so that you can use the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16) to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). These are the things we will now learn in Paul's epistles, the only portion of the Bible written directly to us today.