

Acts

1

Summary: *Acts 1 opens with Luke's prologue addressing Theophilus, connecting this volume to the Gospel of Luke. The risen Jesus instructs his apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. After forty days of post-resurrection appearances, Jesus ascends into heaven from the Mount of Olives. The apostles return to Jerusalem and devote themselves to prayer. The chapter closes with the selection of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot, restoring the Twelve.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Luke explicitly frames Acts as a sequel — 'the first account' (ton proton logon) refers to his Gospel. The forty-day period of post-resurrection teaching echoes Israel's forty years in the wilderness and Moses' forty days on Sinai. The ascension narrative is remarkably restrained — no dramatic special effects, just Jesus 'lifted up' and a cloud receiving him. The 'two men in white' echo the angelic figures at the empty tomb (Luke 24:4). The lot-casting for Matthias is the last recorded instance of this Old Testament decision-making method; after Pentecost, the Spirit replaces the lot.*

Translation Friction: *The Greek phrase 'baptized with the Holy Spirit' (baptistesesthe en pneumati hagio) in verse 5 creates the theological foundation for the Pentecost narrative in chapter 2. The question about restoring the kingdom to Israel (v. 6) reveals the disciples' persistent expectation of a political Messiah, which Jesus redirects without directly denying. The criteria for Judas's replacement (vv. 21-22) — someone present from John's baptism through the ascension — defines apostolic witness as eyewitness testimony.*

Connections: *The prologue connects to Luke 1:1-4. The promise of the Spirit connects to Joel 2:28-32 (quoted in Acts 2). The ascension connects to Daniel 7:13-14 (the Son of Man coming with clouds). The replacement of Judas fulfills the Psalms citations in verses 16 and 20 (Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8). The number twelve connects to the twelve tribes of Israel, maintaining the symbolic completeness of the apostolic body.*

¹I wrote the first account, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and to teach, ²Until the day in which he was taken up, following that he by way of the Holy Ghost had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen: ³He also presented himself alive to them after his suffering, with many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While he was eating with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father. "This is what you heard from me," he said. ⁵"For John baptized with water, but you

will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶So when they had gathered together, they asked him, "Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹After he had said these things, while they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. ¹⁰While they were staring intently into the sky as he was going, suddenly two men in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." ¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they arrived, they went up to the upper room where they were staying — Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas son of James. ¹⁴All these were devoting themselves with one mind to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. ¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters — the gathering numbered about one hundred and twenty — and said, ¹⁶"Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry." ¹⁸(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headfirst, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that field was called in their own language Hakeldamach — that is, 'Field of Blood.') ²⁰"For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his dwelling become desolate, and let no one live in it,' and, 'Let another take his position of oversight.' ²¹So one of the men who accompanied us during the entire time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²starting from John's baptism all the way to the day Jesus was taken up from among us. One of these men must join us as a witness of his resurrection. ²³They proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵Indeed, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by sin fell, that he might go to his own location. ²⁶Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *ton proton logon* ('the first account/word') refers to Luke's Gospel. The verb *epoiesameen* ('I made/composed') is a standard literary term for writing a work. 'Theophilus' means 'lover of God' or 'friend of God' — whether this is a real person or a symbolic addressee is debated, though the honorific 'most excellent' used in Luke 1:3 suggests a real patron.
1. The phrase 'began to do and to teach' (*eerxato poiein te kai didaskein*) implies that what Jesus 'began' in the Gospel continues through his apostles in Acts — the ascension does not end Jesus's work but changes its mode.
2. The verb *aneleemphthee* ('was taken up') is the technical term for the ascension, used again in verse 11 and in 1 Timothy 3:16. The phrase 'through the Holy Spirit' (*dia pneumatos hagiou*) can modify either 'given instructions' or 'chosen' — the ambiguity is present in the Greek. We follow the more natural reading linking it to the instructions.
2. The word *apostolois* ('apostles') here designates the specific group Jesus chose, not the broader later usage of the term. Luke uses it as a technical title for the Twelve.
3. The Greek *tekmeriois* ('proofs, convincing evidence') is a strong term from legal and philosophical discourse — these are not casual sightings but demonstrable evidence. Luke the historian emphasizes the evidentiary quality of the resurrection appearances.
3. The forty-day period (*di' heemerōn tesserakonta*) is mentioned only here in the New Testament. It echoes Moses' forty days on Sinai (Exodus 24:18) and Elijah's forty-day journey to Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). The risen Jesus uses this time to teach about the kingdom — a post-resurrection seminar on God's reign.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 24:18 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 19:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The Greek *synalizomenos* is debated: it may mean 'eating together with' (from *hals*, 'salt') or 'being assembled with' (from *syn* + *halizō*). The eating interpretation is favored by many scholars as it emphasizes the physical reality of the risen Jesus sharing meals with his disciples (cf. Luke 24:41-43). We follow this reading.

4. The 'promise of the Father' (teen epangelian tou patros) refers to the Holy Spirit, as clarified in verse 5. This connects to Joel 2:28-29 and Jesus's own promises in Luke 24:49 and John 14-16.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 2:28-29. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. The contrast between John's water baptism and the coming Spirit baptism is a key theme in Luke-Acts (cf. Luke 3:16). The preposition en can mean 'with' or 'in' — 'baptized in the Holy Spirit' and 'baptized with the Holy Spirit' are both valid renderings. We choose 'with' for clarity, though the immersion imagery of 'in' captures the Greek metaphor better.
5. The phrase 'not many days from now' (ou meta pollas tautas heemerass) deliberately avoids specifying the exact timing, building anticipation for the Pentecost event in chapter 2.
6. The imperfect tense eerōtōn ('they were asking, kept asking') suggests persistent questioning, not a single query. The verb apokathistaneis ('are you restoring') carries overtones of the prophetic hope for Israel's restoration (cf. Malachi 4:5-6, where Elijah 'restores' all things). The disciples assume the Spirit's coming means political restoration — Jesus redirects but does not deny the eventual restoration of Israel.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Malachi 4:5-6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Jesus distinguishes two temporal concepts: chronous ('times,' referring to duration or chronological periods) and kairous ('seasons,' referring to appointed moments or decisive occasions). Together they cover both the timeline and the turning points of God's plan. The Father alone holds authority (exousia) over these — this is a boundary on human knowledge, not a denial that restoration will occur.
8. This verse serves as the programmatic outline for the entire book of Acts: Jerusalem (chapters 1-7), Judea and Samaria (chapters 8-12), and to the ends of the earth (chapters 13-28). The Greek dynamis ('power') is the root of English 'dynamite' — the Spirit's power is not passive but active and transformative.
8. The word martyres ('witnesses') is the root of English 'martyr.' In Acts, bearing witness will cost some disciples their lives (Stephen in chapter 7, James in chapter 12). Witness and suffering are linguistically and theologically intertwined.
8. The phrase 'ends of the earth' (eschatou tees gees) echoes Isaiah 49:6, where the Servant of the LORD is 'a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.' Jesus's commission fulfills the Isaianic servant vision.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 49:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The ascension is described with remarkable restraint. The passive epeerthee ('was lifted up') indicates divine action — Jesus does not fly away under his own power but is taken up by God. The cloud (nephelee) echoes the cloud of divine presence throughout the Old Testament: the pillar of cloud in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21), the cloud on Sinai (Exodus 24:15-18), the cloud filling the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11), and the Son of Man coming with clouds (Daniel 7:13). The cloud is not weather but theophany.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 13:21. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 24:15-18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes 1 Kings 8:10-11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 7:13. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The verb atenizontes ('staring intently, gazing fixedly') conveys the disciples' stunned focus — they cannot look away. The 'two men in white' (andres duo en esthesesin leukais) parallels the two figures at the empty tomb in Luke 24:4. Luke identifies them as men rather than angels, though their white clothing signals heavenly origin. Two witnesses fulfill the Deuteronomic requirement for valid testimony (Deuteronomy 19:15).
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 19:15 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The address 'Men of Galilee' (andres Galilaiou) identifies the apostles by their regional origin and echoes the pattern of address used throughout Acts (cf. 'Men of Israel,' 'Men of Athens'). The promise of return 'in the same way' (hon tropon) — visibly, bodily, with clouds — becomes the foundation of the Christian hope of the second coming. The threefold repetition of 'heaven' (ouranos) in this verse emphasizes both Jesus's destination and the direction from which he will return.
12. A 'Sabbath day's journey' (sabbatou echon hodou) was approximately 2,000 cubits or about half a mile (roughly 1 kilometer), the maximum distance one could travel on the Sabbath according to rabbinic tradition. Luke's geographical note serves both literary and practical purposes — the Mount of Olives is close enough that the disciples could quickly obey Jesus's command to stay in Jerusalem.
12. The Mount of Olives (Elaiōnos, 'of olives') was associated with eschatological expectation in Zechariah 14:4, where the LORD's feet stand on the Mount of Olives at the final redemption.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Zechariah 14:4. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

- 13.** The 'upper room' (to hyperōon) was likely a large second-story room in a Jerusalem house, possibly the same location as the Last Supper (Luke 22:12). The list of eleven apostles differs in order from Luke 6:14-16 — notably Peter and John are paired here (as they will be partners throughout Acts 1-8), whereas in Luke's Gospel Peter and Andrew are paired as brothers. Simon 'the Zealot' (ho zeelotees) may indicate former membership in the Zealot political movement or simply intense religious zeal.
- 13.** 'Judas son of James' (Ioudas Iakōbou) — the KJV renders this 'brother of James,' but the Greek more naturally reads 'son of.' This is the same figure called Thaddaeus in Matthew 10:3.
- 14.** The Greek proskarterountes ('devoting themselves, persisting, being steadfast in') is a strong word indicating persistent, wholehearted commitment — not casual prayer meetings but intense, unified intercession. The adverb homothymadon ('with one mind, unanimously') is a favorite word of Luke in Acts, appearing ten times to describe the early church's unity.
- 14.** This is Mary's last appearance in the New Testament. She is mentioned among the community of prayer, not elevated above it. The 'brothers' (adelphois) of Jesus are mentioned — the same brothers who did not believe during his ministry (John 7:5) are now part of the believing community. James the brother of Jesus will emerge as a leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15, 21).
- 15.** The Greek adelphōn ('brothers') is used inclusively here, as the context clearly includes women (v. 14). We render 'brothers and sisters' to reflect the inclusive usage. The number 120 may be symbolically significant — Jewish tradition required a minimum of 120 men to establish a local council (sanhedrin), so the community meets the threshold for self-governance.
- 15.** The phrase ochlos onomatōn ('a crowd of names') is an unusual expression; 'names' (onomatōn) here means 'persons' — a Semitic idiom reflected in the Greek.
- 16.** Peter's speech demonstrates early Christian hermeneutics: the Psalms of David are read as prophetic, spoken 'through' David by the Holy Spirit. The verb edei ('it was necessary') expresses divine necessity — Judas's betrayal, while morally culpable, fell within God's sovereign plan. The description of Judas as 'guide' (hodēgou) for the arrest party emphasizes his active role in leading them to Jesus.
- 17.** The verb kateerithmēmenos ('numbered, counted among') emphasizes that Judas was a genuine member of the Twelve, not an outsider. The word kleeron ('lot, share, portion') is the same word used for the lot-casting in verse 26 — Judas received his allotted portion of the ministry (diakonia), making his betrayal all the more grievous.
- 18.** This parenthetical note (vv. 18-19) is Luke's aside to the reader, not part of Peter's speech. The account of Judas's death differs from Matthew 27:3-10, where Judas hangs himself and the priests buy the field. Various harmonizations have been proposed, but the texts present genuinely different traditions. We render the Greek as given without attempting to reconcile.
- 18.** The Greek preeness genomenos ('falling headfirst/prone') and elakēsen mesos ('burst open in the middle') is graphic and visceral. Luke does not sanitize the scene. The 'reward of wickedness' (misthou tees adikias) echoes the language of Balaam's wages in 2 Peter 2:15.
- 19.** Luke translates the Aramaic name for his Greek-speaking audience. Hakeldamach (κελδαμάχ) represents the Aramaic chaqel dema ('field of blood'). The phrase 'in their own language' (tee idia dialektō autōn) refers to Aramaic, the common spoken language of Jerusalem. Luke's geographical and linguistic notes serve his role as historian writing for a Gentile audience.
- 20.** Peter quotes two Psalms: Psalm 69:25 (LXX 68:26) and Psalm 109:8 (LXX 108:8). The first applies to Judas's vacated place; the second provides the scriptural basis for selecting a replacement. The Greek episkopeen ('position of oversight, office') is the root of 'bishop/episcopate' — the KJV's 'bishopric' is a translation that reads later church structure back into the text. We render it as 'position of oversight' to preserve the original sense.
- 20.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 69:25 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 20.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 109:8 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 21.** Peter establishes the criteria for apostolic replacement: the candidate must have been a continuous companion of the Twelve throughout Jesus's public ministry. The phrase 'went in and out' (eisēlthen kai exēlthen) is a Semitic idiom for daily life and activity (cf. Deuteronomy 28:6, 'when you come in and when you go out'). This defines apostleship as grounded in firsthand eyewitness experience.
- 21.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 28:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 22.** The timeframe spans from John's baptism (the beginning of Jesus's public ministry) to the ascension. The central qualification is being a 'witness of his resurrection' (martyra tees anastaseōs autou) — the resurrection is the core apostolic testimony in Acts. The verb genesthai ('become') indicates appointment to a role, not ordination in the later ecclesiastical sense.
- 23.** Joseph Barsabbas bears three names: his given name Joseph, his Aramaic patronymic Barsabbas ('son of the Sabbath' or 'son of the elder'), and his Latin cognomen Justus ('the righteous one'). The triple naming reflects the multilingual culture of first-century Jerusalem. Matthias (Maththias) is a shortened form of Mattathias ('gift of the LORD'). Neither man appears elsewhere in Acts after this passage.
- 24.** The title kardiognōsta ('knower of hearts') appears only here and in Acts 15:8 in the New Testament. It is ambiguous whether the prayer is addressed to God the Father or to the risen Jesus — 'Lord' (kyrie) can refer to either in Acts. The verb exelexō ('you have chosen') is aorist, implying that God has already made the selection; the lot merely reveals the divine choice.

25. The phrase 'his own place' (ton topon ton idion) is a grim euphemism for Judas's fate after death. The verb parebee ('turned aside, transgressed') suggests a deliberate departure from the path — Judas did not merely fall but actively deviated. The coupling of 'ministry and apostleship' (diakonia and apostolees) defines the role as both service and commission.
26. Lot-casting was an established Old Testament method for discerning God's will (cf. Proverbs 16:33, 'The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD'). This is the last recorded use of lots in the New Testament — after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit provides direct guidance, making the mechanical method unnecessary.
26. The verb synkatepsēphisthee ('was counted together with, was enrolled with') is a compound word suggesting formal addition to the group by common vote or reckoning. Matthias becomes the twelfth apostle, restoring the symbolic number that represents the twelve tribes of Israel.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Proverbs 16:33. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

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Summary: Acts 2 narrates the day of Pentecost: the Holy Spirit descends on the gathered believers with wind and fire, enabling them to speak in the languages of the nations. Peter delivers the first Christian sermon, interpreting the event through Joel 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110. He proclaims Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah whom God has made both Lord and Christ. Three thousand people respond, are baptized, and form the first church community characterized by apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

What Makes This Remarkable: Pentecost was already a major Jewish festival (Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks) celebrating the wheat harvest and, by the first century, also commemorating the giving of the Torah at Sinai. The Spirit's descent on this day reframes Sinai: where the first covenant was given with fire and thunder on a mountain, the new covenant is given with fire and wind in a city. The gift of languages reverses Babel (Genesis 11) — where God confused languages to scatter humanity, God now gives languages to gather humanity. Peter's sermon is a masterpiece of early christological argument, using Israel's own scriptures to demonstrate that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Translation Friction: The nature of the 'tongues' in verses 4-11 (known human languages vs. ecstatic speech) has been debated throughout church history. Luke's description clearly indicates known languages understood by the international audience. The Joel quotation in verses 17-21 follows the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text in several details. Peter's argument from Psalm 16 (vv. 25-28) depends on the assumption that David could not have been speaking about himself since David died and was buried.

Connections: The Pentecost event fulfills Jesus's promise in Acts 1:5, 8. Joel 2:28-32 provides the prophetic framework. Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110:1 provide the christological proof texts. The community description in verses 42-47 becomes the model for church life throughout Acts (cf. 4:32-35). The 'last days' language connects to Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1.

¹When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound came from heaven like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Tongues as of fire appeared to them, distributing themselves, and one rested on each of them. ⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak out. ⁵Now there were devout Jews living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven. ⁶When this sound occurred, the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷They were astonished and amazed, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸How is it that each of us hears them in our own native language? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and visitors from Rome — ¹¹Cretans and Arabs alike — we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages! ¹²They were all astonished and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine." ¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. ¹⁵For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only nine in the morning. ¹⁶Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷"And it will be in

the last days,' God says, 'that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸Even on my male servants and female servants I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below — blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. ²¹And it will be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' ²²"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God through mighty works and wonders and signs that God performed through him in your midst, as you yourselves know — ²³Him, while delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you possess removed, and by corrupt hands have crucified and slain. ²⁴But God raised him up, having freed him from the agony of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵For David says concerning him: 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken. ²⁶Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh also will live in hope, ²⁷Because you will not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt you suffer your Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' ²⁹"Brothers, I can speak to you confidently about the patriarch David: he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn an oath to him that he would seat one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹Indeed, he seeing this prior to spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not departed in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of this we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, ³⁵Until I make your foes your footstool. ³⁶Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified." ³⁷When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" ³⁸Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off — everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." ⁴⁰With many other words he solemnly testified and kept urging them, saying, "Be saved from this crooked generation!" ⁴¹So those who received his message were baptized, and about three thousand people were added that day. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Aw e came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and held everything in common. ⁴⁵They would sell their possessions and belongings and distribute the proceeds to all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together with one purpose in the temple courts, and breaking bread from house to house, they shared their meals with joy and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷They praised God and enjoyed the goodwill of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *symplērousthai* ('to be fulfilled, to arrive in fullness') suggests not merely that the day came but that it reached its appointed fullness — a theologically loaded term. Pentecost (*pentēkostē*, 'fiftieth') fell fifty days after Passover. As a harvest festival (*Shavuot*), it was one of three pilgrimage feasts requiring attendance in Jerusalem, explaining the international crowd described in verses 5-11.
1. The phrase *epi to auto* ('in one place' or 'together') echoes 1:15 and emphasizes the unity of the community at the moment of the Spirit's descent.
2. The Greek *pnoē* ('wind, breath, blast') is related to *pneuma* ('spirit/wind') — the wordplay connects the physical phenomenon to the Holy Spirit (*pneuma hagion*). The wind comes 'from heaven' (*ek tou ouranou*), marking its divine origin. The verb *eplērosēn* ('filled') anticipates the believers being 'filled' with the Spirit in verse 4. The violence of the wind (*biaias*, 'forceful, violent') recalls the theophany at Sinai (*Exodus 19:16-19*) and Elijah's experience at Horeb (*1 Kings 19:11*).
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on *Exodus 19:16-19*. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on *1 Kings 19:11*. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

3. The Greek *diamerizomenai* ('distributing themselves, dividing') describes the fire separating into individual flames — one for each person. The word *glōssai* ('tongues') does double duty: the fire appears in tongue-like shapes, and the result is speaking in tongues (languages). Fire is a consistent symbol of divine presence in the Old Testament: the burning bush (Exodus 3:2), the pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21), and the fire on Sinai (Exodus 19:18). That the fire rests on 'each one' (*hena hekaston*) emphasizes the individual, personal nature of the Spirit's coming — not corporate only but personal.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 3:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 13:21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 19:18 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The passive *eplēsthēsan* ('were filled') indicates divine action — the Spirit fills them; they do not generate the experience themselves. The phrase *heterais glōssais* ('other tongues/languages') is clarified by verses 6-11 as known human languages, not ecstatic speech. The verb *apophthengesthai* ('to speak out, to declare boldly') is rare in the New Testament (used only here, v. 14, and 26:25) and carries the connotation of inspired, prophetic utterance — weighty proclamation, not babbling.
5. The phrase 'from every nation under heaven' (*apo pantos ethnous tōn hypo ton ouranon*) is hyperbolic but reflects the reality that the Jewish diaspora extended throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. These are not tourists but *katoikountes* ('residing, dwelling') — diaspora Jews who had settled in Jerusalem, likely for religious reasons. The word *eulabeis* ('devout, reverent, God-fearing') characterizes them as pious Jews, not yet Christians.
6. The 'sound' (*phōnēs*) likely refers to the sound of the wind from verse 2 rather than the speaking in tongues. The verb *synecythē* ('was bewildered, confounded, thrown into confusion') is a strong word indicating deep cognitive dissonance — they cannot make sense of what they are experiencing. The phrase *tē idia dialektō* ('in his own dialect/language') specifies that this is not generic babbling but precise, recognizable languages corresponding to each listener's mother tongue.
7. The double expression *existanto kai ethaumazon* ('were astonished and amazed') piles up terms for shock. Galileans were known for their distinctive accent (cf. Matthew 26:73) and were generally regarded by Judeans as less educated and culturally unsophisticated. The rhetorical question highlights the incongruity: how can these provincial Galileans speak fluently in the sophisticated languages of the wider world?
8. The phrase 'in which we were born' (*en hē egennēthēmen*) specifies these as mother tongues — the languages heard in childhood, the deepest linguistic identity. This detail rules out the interpretation that the audience merely understood a common language like Aramaic or Greek; they each heard their own distinct dialect.
9. The list begins with regions east of the Roman Empire (Parthia, Media, Elam — modern Iran and Iraq) and moves westward. This geographical sweep represents the entire known world. The inclusion of 'Judea' is surprising in a Jerusalem setting — some scholars emend it to 'Armenia' or 'India,' but the text may simply mean Jews from the Judean countryside as opposed to Jerusalem residents, or it may represent the complete geographical coverage Luke intends.
10. The list continues through Asia Minor (Phrygia, Pamphylia), North Africa (Egypt, Libya/Cyrene), and reaches Rome itself. The 'visitors from Rome' (*hoi epidēmoutēs Rhōmaioi*) are temporary residents or pilgrims, distinguished from the permanent Jerusalem settlers of verse 5. Cyrene in Libya had a large Jewish community; Simon of Cyrene who carried Jesus's cross came from there (Luke 23:26).
11. The phrase 'Jews and converts' (*Ioudaioi te kai prosēlytoi*) is a parenthetical clarification covering the entire list — all these nationalities include both ethnic Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism. The content of the Spirit-enabled speech is 'the mighty deeds of God' (*ta megaleia tou theou*) — not random utterances but coherent praise of God's great acts. This echoes the Hebrew *magnalia Dei* tradition found in the Psalms.
11. The list ends with Cretans (island Mediterranean) and Arabs (the desert south and east), completing the compass-point coverage of the known world.
12. The verb *diēporoun* ('were perplexed, were at a loss') indicates genuine intellectual struggle, not dismissal. These are devout people trying to make sense of an unprecedented event. The question 'What does this mean?' (*ti thelei touto einai*, literally 'What does this wish to be?') sets up Peter's sermon, which will provide the scriptural interpretation.
13. The verb *diachleuazontes* ('mocking, jeering, sneering') is intensified by the prefix *dia-*, indicating thorough mockery. *Gleukos* ('sweet wine, new wine') was unfermented or partially fermented grape juice — lower in alcohol than aged wine. The accusation is somewhat absurd: it would take large quantities of sweet wine to produce drunkenness, especially in the morning. Peter addresses this directly in verse 15.
14. Peter stands 'with the eleven' (*syn tois hendeka*), showing apostolic solidarity — he speaks as their representative, not as an individual. The verb *apophthengesthai* ('spoke out, declared') is the same rare verb used in verse 4 for Spirit-inspired speech, linking Peter's sermon to the same Spirit-empowerment that produced the tongues. The phrase *enōtistashe* ('give ear, listen carefully') is a Septuagintalism echoing the prophetic call to attention (cf. Isaiah 1:2).
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 1:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The 'third hour' (*hōra tritē*) is approximately 9:00 AM by Jewish time reckoning (counting from sunrise at roughly 6:00 AM). Peter's argument from the time of day is practical: even on feast days, people did not drink before the morning prayers and sacrifices were complete. The defense is simple but effective — and it is merely the setup for the real explanation that follows.

16. Peter identifies the Pentecost event as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy — 'this is that' (touto estin to) is a direct identification formula. The preposition *dia* ('through') presents Joel as the instrument through whom God spoke, consistent with the view of prophetic inspiration expressed in 1:16.
17. Peter's quotation modifies Joel 2:28 (LXX 3:1) in a significant way: Joel has 'after these things' (*meta tauta*), but Peter substitutes 'in the last days' (*en tais eschatais hēmerais*), explicitly interpreting Pentecost as the inauguration of the eschatological age. The pouring out of the Spirit is universal in scope — 'all flesh' (*pasan sarka*) breaks barriers of gender (sons and daughters), age (young and old), and as verse 18 will add, social status.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joel 2:28-32. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. Joel's original text has 'servants and female servants' without the possessive 'my'; Peter's version (following the LXX variant) adds 'my' (*mou*), transforming social servants into God's own servants. This universalization of the Spirit breaks the social hierarchy: slaves and free, male and female all receive the prophetic Spirit. The addition of 'and they will prophesy' (*kai prophēteusousin*) is not in the Hebrew of Joel 2:29 — Peter extends the prophetic promise explicitly to the lowest social stratum.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Joel 2:28-32 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. Peter adds 'above' (*anō*) and 'below' (*katō*) to Joel's text, emphasizing the cosmic scope of God's activity. The triad 'blood and fire and billows of smoke' may echo the Sinai theophany (Exodus 19:18) or anticipate the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The Greek *atmida kapnou* ('vapor/billow of smoke') suggests thick, rising columns of smoke, not mere wisps.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 2:28-32. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 19:18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. Joel's Hebrew has 'great and terrible' (*gadol v'nora*); the LXX renders *nora* as *epiphanē* ('glorious, manifest, splendid') rather than 'terrible' — a significant interpretive shift from fear to revelation. The 'day of the Lord' (*hēmeran kyriou*) is a major prophetic concept throughout the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:12, Amos 5:18-20, Zephaniah 1:14-18), originally a day of judgment that Peter now connects to the events surrounding Jesus.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Joel 2:28-32 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 2:12 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Amos 5:18-20 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Zephaniah 1:14-18 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. This is the climactic line of the Joel quotation and the hinge of Peter's sermon. In Joel, 'the Lord' (*kyrios*) translates YHWH — calling on the name of Israel's God. Peter will argue in verses 34-36 that Jesus is this Lord (*kyrios*), so that calling on the name of Jesus is calling on the name of the LORD. The verb *sōthēsetai* ('will be saved') encompasses both immediate rescue and eschatological salvation — the same word Paul will use in Romans 10:13 when quoting this same verse.
21. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Joel 2:28-32. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
22. Peter shifts from Joel's prophecy to its christological application. The designation 'the Nazarene' (*ton Nazōraion*) identifies Jesus by his hometown, grounding the theological claims in historical specificity. The triad 'mighty works and wonders and signs' (*dynamesin kai terasin kai sēmeiois*) covers the full range of Jesus's miraculous activity. Crucially, Peter says God performed these 'through him' (*di' autou*) — the miracles attest God's endorsement of Jesus. The appeal to the audience's own knowledge ('as you yourselves know') grounds the argument in shared public memory.
23. Peter holds two truths in tension without resolving the paradox: Jesus's death was both 'the determined plan and foreknowledge of God' (*tē hōrismenē boulē kai prognōsei tou theou*) and the moral responsibility of those who crucified him. The 'lawless men' (*anomōn*) are the Roman soldiers who physically performed the crucifixion — 'lawless' because they were outside the Torah. But the 'you' (the Jewish audience) are also implicated: 'you put to death' (*aneilate*). Peter does not soften either side of this tension.
24. The phrase 'agony of death' (*tas ōdinas tou thanatou*) literally means 'birth pangs of death' — the image is of death in labor, unable to hold its prey, forced to 'give birth' to the risen Jesus. The LXX of Psalm 18:5 (= 2 Samuel 22:6) uses the same phrase. The declaration 'it was not possible' (*ouk ēn dynaton*) is theologically profound: death's inability to hold Jesus is not merely historical but ontological — it lies in the nature of who Jesus is.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 18:5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes 2 Samuel 22:6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. Peter now quotes Psalm 16:8-11 (LXX 15:8-11), attributing the words to David and applying them to Jesus. The Greek *proorōmēn* ('I saw beforehand, I kept before me') translates the Hebrew *shiviti* ('I have set'). The Lord at the right hand provides stability and protection — 'I will not be shaken' (*mē saleuthō*) expresses unshakeable confidence in divine presence.

25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 16:8-11 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. The LXX has 'tongue' (glōssa) where the Hebrew of Psalm 16:9 has 'glory' (kavod) — a significant textual divergence. The Hebrew kavod ('glory, weightiness') likely refers to the inner self or honor, which the LXX translators rendered as 'tongue' (perhaps reading kavod as kaved, 'liver,' an organ associated with deep emotion). The phrase 'my flesh will live in hope' (hē sarx mou kataskēnōsei ep' elpidi) becomes Peter's key proof text: if David's flesh 'lives in hope,' whose flesh found that hope fulfilled?
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalms 16:8-11. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. Hades (hadēn) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Sheol — the realm of the dead, not the later Christian concept of hell as a place of punishment. 'Decay' (diaphthoran) translates the Hebrew shachat, which can mean 'pit' or 'corruption/decay.' The LXX's choice of diaphthora ('decay, corruption') is crucial for Peter's argument: David's body did see decay (v. 29), but Jesus's did not (v. 31). The term 'Holy One' (hosion) translates the Hebrew chasid ('faithful, loyal, devoted one').
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalms 16:8-11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. The 'paths of life' (hodous zōēs) implies not merely survival but the way to fullness of life — a path through death to resurrection. The final image — 'joy in your presence' (euphrosynēs meta tou prosōpou sou, literally 'gladness with your face') — is the ultimate hope: restored face-to-face relationship with God. The Psalm quotation ends on this note of joy, which Peter will now apply to the risen Jesus.
28. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalms 16:8-11 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
29. Peter's argument is straightforward: David cannot have been speaking about himself in Psalm 16 because David died, was buried, and his tomb is still present in Jerusalem — his body did see decay. The word parrhēsia ('confidently, boldly, with freedom of speech') indicates Peter is making a potentially controversial claim about Israel's greatest king. David's tomb was a well-known Jerusalem landmark, so the point is verifiable.
29. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 16. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
30. Peter identifies David as a prophet, not merely a king and poet — this justifies reading the Psalms as prophetic. The oath refers to 2 Samuel 7:12-13 and Psalm 132:11, where God promises David an eternal dynasty. The Greek ek karpou tēs osphyos autou ('from the fruit of his loins') is a Hebraic idiom for physical descendants. We render this as 'one of his descendants' for natural modern English while noting the idiom.
30. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 2 Samuel 7:12-13 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
30. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 132:11 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
31. Peter now makes the interpretive move explicit: David's words in Psalm 16 were prophetic speech about the Messiah's resurrection. The two key claims from Psalm 16:10 — not abandoned to Hades and no bodily decay — are applied to Jesus's resurrection. Peter's argument depends on the physical nature of the resurrection: Jesus's actual body did not decompose.
31. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 16. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
32. The sentence is emphatic in Greek: 'This Jesus' (touton ton Iēsoun) is placed first for emphasis — this specific historical person, not an abstract concept. The claim to be 'witnesses' (martyres) circles back to 1:8 — the apostles fulfill their commission as witnesses to the resurrection. The 'all' (pantes) includes the eleven standing with Peter, a claim that could be immediately verified or challenged by the audience.
33. Peter connects the ascension (exaltation to God's right hand), the reception of the Spirit from the Father, and the Pentecost event in a single theological chain: Jesus is exalted Jesus receives the Spirit from the Father Jesus pours out the Spirit on his followers. The verb exechēen ('poured out') directly echoes the Joel quotation in verse 17 ('I will pour out my Spirit'). The appeal to sensory evidence — 'what you both see and hear' (blepete kai akouete) — grounds the theological claim in observable phenomena.
34. Peter now quotes Psalm 110:1 (LXX 109:1), the most frequently cited Old Testament text in the New Testament. The same argument applies: David did not ascend to heaven, so these words must refer to someone greater than David. The double 'Lord' (eipen ho kyrios tō kyriō mou) reflects the Hebrew 'the LORD (YHWH) said to my lord (adoni)' — David's lord is the Messiah, who sits at God's right hand.
34. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalms 110:1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
35. The image of enemies as a footstool reflects ancient Near Eastern conquest imagery — victorious kings literally placed their feet on the necks of conquered enemies (cf. Joshua 10:24). The Psalm envisions a period of reigning at God's right hand until all opposition is subdued. Peter leaves the implication hanging: if Jesus is now at God's right hand, then the subjugation of all enemies is underway.
35. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 110:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.

35. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Joshua 10:24 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
36. This is the sermon's climax. The adverb *asphalōs* ('with certainty, beyond doubt') demands intellectual assent, not mere emotional response. 'Lord and Christ' (*kyrion kai christon*) — the two titles Peter has argued for throughout the sermon converge: *kyrios* from Psalm 110:1 and *christos* from Psalm 16. The final phrase — 'this Jesus whom you crucified' (*touton ton Iēsoun hon hymeis estaurōsate*) — is deliberately confrontational, pressing the audience to reckon with the implications of having killed God's anointed one.
36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 110:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 16. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
37. The verb *katenygēsan* ('were pierced, were cut to the heart') is a powerful word describing deep emotional and spiritual conviction — it appears only here in the New Testament. The audience's question 'What should we do?' (*ti poiēsōmen*) is the proper response to conviction: not debate but action. Their address 'brothers' (*adelphoi*) shows they still consider Peter and the apostles fellow Jews.
38. Peter's response contains four elements: repentance, baptism, forgiveness, and the gift of the Spirit. The verb *metanoēsate* ('repent') means to change one's mind and direction — the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *teshuvah* ('return'). The preposition *epi* ('in/on/upon') with 'the name of Jesus Christ' indicates that baptism is performed on the authority of and in connection with Jesus. The preposition *eis* before 'forgiveness' can mean 'for the purpose of' or 'on the basis of' — both translations are grammatically possible.
39. The scope of the promise expands in three concentric circles: 'you' (the present audience), 'your children' (the next generation), and 'all who are far off' (*tous eis makran*). The phrase 'those far off' echoes Isaiah 57:19 and Ephesians 2:13, 17 — it can refer to future generations, to diaspora Jews, or to Gentiles. Peter may not yet fully grasp the Gentile implications, but Luke's reader does. The final clause — 'everyone whom the Lord our God calls' — grounds the universal offer in divine initiative.
39. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 57:19. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
40. Luke summarizes the rest of Peter's sermon rather than recording it fully — 'many other words' (*heterois logois pleiosin*) indicates this is an excerpt. The verb *diemartyrato* ('solemnly testified') carries legal weight, while *parekalei* ('kept urging, exhorting') is imperfect tense indicating ongoing, persistent appeal. The phrase 'crooked generation' (*geneas tēs skolias*) echoes Moses' words in Deuteronomy 32:5 and Jesus's own language in Matthew 17:17.
40. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 32:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
41. The number 'about three thousand' (*hōsei trischiliai*) represents a massive response to a single sermon. The passive *prosetethēsan* ('were added') implies divine agency — God adds to the community. The word *psychai* ('souls/people') is used in the Semitic sense of 'persons,' not in the Greek philosophical sense of immortal souls. The logistics of baptizing three thousand people in a single day likely involved the numerous *mikva'ot* (ritual immersion pools) near the Temple, which have been archaeologically confirmed.
42. This verse is often called the four marks of the early church: teaching (*didachē*), fellowship (*koinōnia*), breaking of bread (*klasis tou artou*), and prayers (*proseuchais*). The verb *proskarterountes* ('devoting themselves') is the same word used in 1:14 — the persistence that characterized the pre-Pentecost community continues and intensifies. 'Breaking of bread' may refer to ordinary communal meals, the Lord's Supper, or both — Luke does not distinguish. The plural 'prayers' (*proseuchais*) may indicate set times of prayer, possibly following the Jewish daily prayer schedule.
43. The word *phobos* ('fear, awe, reverence') here indicates reverential awe rather than terror — the community lived with a sense of the sacred. The 'wonders and signs' (*terata kai sēmeia*) performed through the apostles echo the description of Jesus's own ministry in verse 22, showing continuity between Jesus's work and the apostles' work through the Spirit. The imperfect tense *egineto* ('were being done') indicates ongoing, repeated miraculous activity.
44. The phrase *epi to auto* ('together, in the same place') echoes verses 1 and 1:15 — unity of place reflects unity of heart. The economic sharing described here — 'held everything in common' (*eichon hapanta koina*) — is voluntary community, not enforced communism. The sharing arises from the *koinōnia* described in verse 42, not from external compulsion. Luke presents this as an ideal, not necessarily as a permanent economic model.
45. Luke distinguishes between 'possessions' (*ktēmata*, typically real property like land) and 'belongings' (*hyparxeis*, personal goods and assets). The imperfect tenses (*epipraskon, diemerizon*) indicate ongoing, repeated action — they sold as needs arose, not in a single liquidation event. Distribution was based on need (*chreia*), not equality — a principle of sufficiency rather than uniformity.
46. The early believers maintained a dual pattern of worship: public gathering in the temple (*en tō hierō*, referring to the temple courts, especially Solomon's Portico per 3:11) and private fellowship in homes (*kat' oikon*). They did not abandon Jewish temple worship but supplemented it with distinctly Christian home gatherings. The word *aphelotētē* ('sincerity, simplicity, generosity') occurs only here in the New Testament — it suggests an unaffected, genuine quality of heart free from pretense.
47. The chapter ends with two complementary realities: human praise ('praising God') and divine growth ('the Lord was adding'). The present participle *sōzomenous* ('those being saved') indicates an ongoing process, not a completed transaction — salvation in Acts is both an event and a journey. The phrase *epi to auto* ('to their number, together') echoes the opening of the chapter, creating a literary frame: the community that gathered in verse 1

has grown from 120 to over 3,000.

47. Luke does not use the word 'church' (ekklēsia) here, though the KJV adds it. The SBLGNT simply has 'adding together' — the community is described by its life rather than by a title.

3

Summary: *Acts 3 narrates the healing of a man lame from birth at the Beautiful Gate of the temple by Peter and John. The miracle draws a crowd in Solomon's Portico, and Peter delivers his second major sermon, arguing that the healing was performed through faith in the name of Jesus — the same Jesus whom the people of Jerusalem rejected and handed over for crucifixion. Peter calls for repentance and identifies Jesus as the prophet like Moses foretold in Deuteronomy 18, and as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant promise that through Abraham's offspring all the families of the earth would be blessed.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The healing at the temple gate is the first recorded miracle of the apostolic church after Pentecost. Peter's declaration 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you' (v. 6) has become one of the most quoted lines in Acts. The sermon presents a distinctive christological argument: Jesus is both the Suffering Servant (v. 13, 'glorified his servant Jesus') and the Prophet like Moses (v. 22). The concept of 'times of refreshing' (v. 19) and 'the restoration of all things' (v. 21) introduce eschatological themes unique to this speech.*

Translation Friction: *The Greek pais in verse 13 can mean 'servant' or 'child' — its connection to the Servant Songs of Isaiah (especially Isaiah 52:13) is likely but debated. Peter's accusation in verses 13-15 is direct and pointed ('you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you'), raising questions about corporate responsibility versus individual guilt. The phrase 'restoration of all things' (apokatastaseōs pantōn) in verse 21 has been interpreted variously as universal salvation, cosmic renewal, or Israel's political restoration.*

Connections: *The healing fulfills Jesus's promise that the apostles would do the works he did (John 14:12). Peter's sermon connects to the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:3, 22:18), the Mosaic promise of a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), and the Servant Songs of Isaiah. The 'times of refreshing' language connects to prophetic hopes in Isaiah 28:12 and 32:15. The identification of Jesus as 'the Holy and Righteous One' (v. 14) echoes messianic titles from Isaiah and the Psalms.*

¹Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ²A man who had been lame from birth was being carried, whom they placed daily at the temple gate called the Beautiful Gate to beg for alms from those entering the temple. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked them for money. ⁴Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵He fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I do have, I give to you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!" ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸Leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹Every one of the people noticed him walking and praising God:. ¹⁰They recognized that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple — then they were overflowing with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him. ¹¹While the man clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at what is called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished. ¹²When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this? Why do you stare at us as though we made him walk by our own power or godliness? ¹³The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be given to you. ¹⁵You killed the Author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶And on the basis of faith in his name, his name has made this man strong — this man whom you see and know. The faith that comes through Jesus has given him this complete health in the presence of all of you. ¹⁷"And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your rulers. ¹⁸But what God foretold through the mouth of all the prophets — that his Christ would suffer — he has fulfilled in this way. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and

turn back, so that your sins may be wiped away, ²⁰He will send Jesus Christ, which prior to was preached to you: ²¹Whom the heaven must accept until the times of restitution of all matters, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the present age began. ²²Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to him in everything he tells you. ²³And it will be that every person who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly destroyed from among the people.' ²⁴And all the prophets, from Samuel and those who came after him, as many as have spoken, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed.' ²⁶God raised up his servant and sent him to you first, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The ninth hour (approximately 3:00 PM) was one of the three daily prayer times in Jewish practice, coinciding with the afternoon tamid (daily sacrifice). Peter and John's continued participation in temple worship shows that the early believers remained within Judaism. The imperfect anebanion ('were going up') captures them in mid-journey, setting the scene for the encounter at the gate.
2. The phrase 'lame from his mother's womb' (chōlos ek koilias mētros autou) establishes that this is a congenital condition — not an injury but a lifelong disability, making the healing all the more remarkable. The Beautiful Gate (tēn Horaian) is likely the Nicanor Gate, a massive bronze gate on the east side of the temple connecting the Court of the Gentiles to the Court of Women. Its identification is debated among archaeologists. The man's daily placement at this gate means he was a well-known figure, which matters for the public impact of the miracle (cf. v. 10).
3. The man asks for eleēmosynēn ('alms, charitable gift') — the standard term for religiously motivated charity. He has no expectation of healing; his request is purely economic. The imperfect ērōta ('was asking, kept asking') suggests ongoing, repeated begging — this was his daily routine.
4. The verb atenisas ('looked intently, fixed his gaze') is the same word used for the disciples staring at the sky during the ascension (1:10). Peter's fixed gaze signals that something more than a casual encounter is about to happen. The command 'Look at us' (blepson eis hēmas) is not merely a request for eye contact but a call to attention — something is about to be given that is far more than coins.
5. The verb epeichen ('fixed attention, turned toward') shows the man's responsive engagement. His expectation (prosdokōn) is limited to financial assistance — the gap between what he expects and what he is about to receive creates the narrative tension.
6. Peter's declaration has a poetic rhythm in Greek: argyriōn kai chrysiōn ouch hyparchei moi ('silver and gold do not belong to me'). The phrase 'in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene' (en tō onomati Iēsou Christou tou Nazōraiou) is not a magic formula but an invocation of Jesus's authority and power. The command peripatei ('walk!') is a present imperative — 'start walking and keep walking.' The name of Jesus becomes the central controversy in chapter 4.
7. The physical act of grasping the right hand (piasas tēs dexias cheiros) is both practical assistance and symbolic — the right hand signifies strength and authority. Luke, traditionally identified as a physician, provides medical detail: the baseis ('feet, soles') and sphyra ('ankles, ankle bones') are specific anatomical terms. The verb estereōthēsan ('were made strong, were solidified') indicates instant structural transformation — bones and muscles that had never functioned properly were immediately restored.
8. The sequence of verbs captures the man's escalating joy: exallomenos ('leaping up'), estē ('stood'), periepatei ('walked around'), hallomenos ('leaping'), ainōn ('praising'). The repetition of walking and leaping reflects someone testing and celebrating abilities he has never had. His entrance into the temple is theologically significant: lame persons were excluded from certain temple areas (cf. 2 Samuel 5:8). The healing restores not just physical function but full participation in worship. The scene echoes Isaiah 35:6: 'Then the lame will leap like a deer.'
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 2 Samuel 5:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 35:6: — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. The public nature of the miracle is emphasized — 'all the people' (pas ho laos) in the temple courts witnessed it. This public setting in the temple provides both the audience for Peter's sermon and the provocation for the authorities' response in chapter 4.
10. The verb epeginōskon ('recognized, identified') confirms the man's identity — this is not a stranger but the well-known beggar at the temple gate. The combination thambous kai ekstaseōs ('wonder and astonishment') describes an overwhelming emotional response. Ekstasis (the root of 'ecstasy') literally means 'standing outside oneself' — the crowd is beside themselves with amazement.
11. The healed man 'clung to' (kratountos) Peter and John — a detail of physical attachment that is both grateful and dramatic. Solomon's Portico (stoa Solomōntos) was a covered colonnade along the eastern side of the temple's outer court. It was a traditional gathering place for teaching (cf. John 10:23) and would become the regular meeting place of the early church (5:12). The adjective ekthambol ('utterly astonished') intensifies the amazement already described in verse 10.

12. Peter immediately redirects the crowd's attention from the apostles to God. The two potential misunderstandings he addresses — 'our own power' (idia dynamei) and 'our own godliness' (eusebeia) — represent the temptation to attribute the miracle to human ability or human merit. This deflection establishes a pattern repeated throughout Acts: miracles are not the apostles' achievement but God's work through them.
13. Peter begins with the covenant formula 'The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (cf. Exodus 3:6, 15), anchoring his christology in Israel's covenant history. The word paida ('servant/child') echoes Isaiah 52:13 LXX ('my servant shall be exalted and glorified'), identifying Jesus with Isaiah's Suffering Servant. We render 'servant' rather than 'Son' because the Isaianic servant background is primary here, though the filial resonance is present.
13. The accusation is sharp: 'you handed over and denied' (paredōkate kai ěrněsasthe) before Pilate, who wanted to release Jesus. The contrast heightens the guilt: even the pagan governor judged more rightly than the covenant people.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 3:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
13. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 52:13 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
14. The titles 'the Holy One' (ton hagion) and 'the Righteous One' (ton dikaion) are messianic designations drawn from the Old Testament (cf. Isaiah 53:11, 'my righteous servant'). The contrast is devastating: they rejected the Holy and Righteous One and chose a murderer (andrea phonea) — Barabbas (Luke 23:18-25). The irony is sharp: they asked for the life of a killer while demanding the death of the life-giver (v. 15).
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 53:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The title archěgon těs zōěs ('author/originator/prince of life') is strikingly paradoxical: the source of life was put to death. The Greek archěgos can mean 'founder, pioneer, author, prince, leader' — it appears again in 5:31 and Hebrews 2:10, 12:2. 'Author of life' captures the creative agency implied. The contrast 'you killed... God raised' is the core kerygma (proclamation) of early Christianity, repeated throughout Acts.
16. This verse is grammatically complex, with 'name' and 'faith' mentioned twice each. The 'name' (onoma) of Jesus represents his person, authority, and power — it is not a magical incantation but a relationship of trust. The word holoklěrian ('complete health, perfect wholeness') appears only here in the New Testament — it means total, nothing-missing wholeness, covering both physical healing and restoration to full community membership.
17. After the sharp accusations of verses 13-15, Peter softens with a recognition of mitigating circumstance: ignorance (agnoian). This echoes Jesus's prayer on the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). The inclusion of 'your rulers' (hoi archontes hymōn) extends the ignorance defense to the Sanhedrin and priestly leadership. Ignorance does not remove guilt but makes repentance possible — the door is not shut.
18. Peter claims that the prophets collectively ('all the prophets,' pantōn tōn prophětōn) spoke of the Messiah's suffering. This is a bold hermeneutical claim — the concept of a suffering Messiah was not the dominant expectation in Second Temple Judaism. Peter reads the entirety of prophetic literature as converging on the cross. The verb prokatěngeilen ('foretold, announced beforehand') emphasizes that the suffering was not an accident but a plan.
19. Peter uses two verbs: metanoěsate ('repent,' change your mind) and epistrepsate ('turn back, return'). Together they capture the full biblical concept of repentance: a cognitive change (meta-noeo) and a directional change (epi-strephō). The verb exaleiphthěnai ('be wiped away, blotted out') pictures sins being erased from a record — the same word used for wiping tears from eyes in Revelation 21:4.
20. The phrase kairoi anapsyxěōs ('times of refreshing') is unique to this passage. Anapsyxis means 'cooling, relief, refreshment' — it suggests respite from hardship, a divine breath of fresh air. These times come 'from the presence of the Lord' (apo prosōpou tou kyriou, literally 'from the face of the Lord'). The verb prokecheirismenon ('appointed beforehand, designated in advance') indicates that Jesus's messianic role was established before the events of his earthly life.
21. The phrase apokatastaseōs pantōn ('restoration of all things') is theologically rich and debated. Apokatastasis means 'restoration to a former state' and was later adopted by Origen and others to argue for universal salvation. In Peter's context, it likely refers to the prophetic hope of cosmic renewal — the restoration of all that sin and evil have damaged (cf. Isaiah 65:17, Romans 8:19-22). Jesus remains in heaven 'until' (achri) these times arrive, implying his return will coincide with or inaugurate the restoration.
21. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 65:17. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
22. Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 — Moses' promise of a future prophet who would be 'like me' (hōs eme). In Jewish tradition, this promise was understood to refer to a specific future prophet (cf. John 1:21, 6:14). Peter identifies Jesus as this prophet. The verb anastěsei ('will raise up') carries a double meaning in context: God 'raised up' Jesus both in the sense of appointing him as prophet and in the sense of raising him from the dead.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 18:15. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
23. Peter intensifies the Deuteronomy passage by adding exolethreuthěsetai ('will be utterly destroyed'), which echoes the language of covenant curse (cf. Leviticus 23:29, 'cut off from the people'). The warning is severe: failure to heed the prophet-like-Moses is not mere ignorance but covenant

violation. This sharpens the call to repentance — rejecting Jesus is not a neutral choice but an act with eschatological consequences.

23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 18:19 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Leviticus 23:29 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. Peter extends the prophetic witness beyond Moses to include the entire prophetic tradition beginning with Samuel, traditionally considered the first of the classical prophets (after Moses). The phrase 'these days' (tas hēmeras tautas) is deliberately ambiguous — it includes the present time of fulfillment as well as the future consummation. Peter's point is that the entire prophetic corpus converges on the events now unfolding.
25. Peter quotes Genesis 22:18 (cf. 12:3), connecting the present moment to the Abrahamic covenant. The word diathēkē ('covenant') is the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew berit. The phrase 'sons of the prophets and of the covenant' (huiōi tōn prophētōn kai tēs diathēkēs) means heirs and beneficiaries — the audience stands in the direct line of covenant promise. The word sperma ('seed, offspring') is singular, which later Christian interpretation (cf. Galatians 3:16) applied to Christ individually, though the original context includes collective meaning.
25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 22:18 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. The sermon ends where it began — with God's servant (paida, the same word as v. 13). The word prōton ('first') is crucial: the gospel goes to Israel first, before extending to the Gentiles — a priority that Luke will trace through the entire book of Acts (cf. 13:46). The blessing is defined not as material prosperity but as moral transformation: 'turning each of you from your wicked ways' (apostrephein hekaston apo tōn ponērion hymōn). The verb anastēsas ('having raised up') again carries the double sense of 'appointing' and 'resurrecting.'

4

Summary: *Acts 4 recounts the arrest of Peter and John by the temple authorities following the healing in chapter 3. Brought before the Sanhedrin, Peter boldly declares that the healing was done in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom they crucified but God raised. He proclaims that salvation is found in no one else. The council, unable to deny the miracle but unwilling to accept the message, threatens the apostles and releases them. Peter and John return to the believing community, which prays for boldness. The Spirit shakes the meeting place, and the chapter closes with a description of the community's radical sharing of possessions.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Peter's declaration in verse 12 — "There is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved" — is one of the most definitive christological claims in the New Testament. The Sanhedrin's dilemma in verses 14-16 is striking: the healed man stands before them as undeniable evidence, yet they cannot accept its implications. The community prayer in verses 24-30 quotes Psalm 2 and provides the first recorded instance of the early church interpreting its persecution through the lens of the Psalms. Barnabas appears for the first time (v. 36).*

Translation Friction: *The number of believers reaches 'about five thousand men' (v. 4), raising questions about whether this includes only males or the total community. Peter is described as 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (v. 8) though he was already filled at Pentecost — Luke presents Spirit-filling as repeated rather than one-time. The community's property sharing (vv. 32-37) is idealized and will be complicated by the Ananias and Sapphira episode in chapter 5.*

Connections: *The Sanhedrin trial echoes Jesus's own trial before the same body (Luke 22:66-71). Peter's use of Psalm 118:22 (the rejected stone) connects to Jesus's use of the same text (Luke 20:17). The community prayer's citation of Psalm 2 (vv. 25-26) provides the theological framework for understanding opposition to the church. The sharing of possessions continues the pattern from 2:44-45 and anticipates 5:1-11.*

¹While they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees confronted them, ²They were deeply disturbed that the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming that the resurrection of the dead had been proven through Jesus. ³They seized them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. ⁵The next day their rulers and elders and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, ⁶Annas the elevated priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as numerous as were of the kindred of the elevated priest, were gathered as one at Jerusalem. ⁷They placed them in the center

and began to question them: "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹If we are being questioned today about an act of kindness shown to a disabled man and how he was healed, ¹⁰Be it known to you all, and to every one of the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. ¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved." ¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated, ordinary men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵After ordering them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶"What should we do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a remarkable miracle, and we cannot deny it." ¹⁷But so that it does not spread any further among the people, let us warn them with threats to speak no longer to anyone in this name." ¹⁸So they called them in and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge. ²⁰For we are not able to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." ²¹After threatening them further, they released them, finding no way to punish them because of the people, for everyone was glorifying God for what had happened. ²²For the man on whom this sign of healing had been performed was more than forty years old. ²³When they were released, they went to their own people and reported everything that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴When they heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, you who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵Who by the mouth of your servant David hast stated, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain matters? ²⁶The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' ²⁷For truly in this city there gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸For to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined prior to to be done. ²⁹And now, Lord, consider their threats and grant your servants the ability to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰Indeed, by stretching forth your hand to heal. And that signs and wonders may be done by the name of your holy child Jesus. ³¹When they had prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. ³²Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of their possessions was their own, but they held everything in common. ³³With great power the apostles continued to give their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵Laid them down at the apostles' feet — and distribution was appointed to every man according as he had need. ³⁶Joseph, who was called Barnabas by the apostles (which means 'Son of Encouragement'), a Levite and a native of Cyprus, ³⁷Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and placed it at the messengers' feet.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The 'captain of the temple' (ho stratēgos tou hierou) was the sagan, the second-ranking temple official after the high priest, responsible for temple security. The Sadducees appear as the primary opponents because the apostles' preaching of resurrection directly challenged Sadducean theology, which denied resurrection (Luke 20:27). The verb epestēsan ('confronted, stood over, came upon') has a hostile overtone — this is an official intervention, not a casual interruption.
2. The participle diaponoumenoi ('greatly annoyed, deeply disturbed, indignant') reveals the emotional motivation behind the arrest — this is not calm judicial procedure but irritated reaction. The phrase 'proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead' (katangelein en tō Iēsou tēn anastasin) can mean either 'proclaiming the resurrection through Jesus' (Jesus as the agent) or 'proclaiming in the case of Jesus the resurrection' (Jesus as the example). Both readings are theologically valid.
3. Jewish law prohibited trials at night (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1), so Peter and John are held overnight. The phrase epebalon tas cheiras ('laid hands on, seized') indicates physical arrest. The detail 'it was already evening' (ēn gar hespera ēdē) explains the delay and shows that Peter's sermon lasted through the afternoon.

4. Despite the arrest, the message spreads — Luke consistently shows that persecution cannot stop the gospel's advance. The number 'about five thousand' (hōs chiliades pente) likely refers to the total male believers, not just those converted this day. The word andrōn ('men') may indicate a male-only count following Jewish census conventions, meaning the total community including women and children would be significantly larger.
5. The three groups — rulers (archontas), elders (presbyterous), and scribes (grammateis) — constitute the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council. This is the same body that tried Jesus. Luke's description of a formal assembly emphasizes the gravity of the proceedings.
6. Annas served as high priest from AD 6-15 and remained the power behind the office, which was held by his son-in-law Caiaphas (AD 18-36). Luke calls Annas 'the high priest' reflecting his continued authority and influence. John and Alexander are otherwise unknown — they may be sons of Annas who later held the office. The phrase 'high-priestly family' (genous archieratikou) indicates the aristocratic priestly clan that controlled the temple.
7. The positioning 'in the center' (en tō mesō) reflects formal judicial proceedings — the accused stand surrounded by the seated council. The question about 'power' (dynamei) and 'name' (onomati) is legally significant: they want to know the source of authority behind the miracle. Ironically, their question plays directly into Peter's hands, giving him the opportunity to proclaim the name of Jesus before the highest authority in Israel.
8. The phrase 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (plēstheis pneumatōs hagiou) marks this as Spirit-empowered testimony, fulfilling Jesus's promise in Luke 12:11-12 that the Spirit would teach them what to say when brought before authorities. This is a fresh filling for a specific moment, not a reference back to Pentecost — Luke presents the Spirit's empowerment as dynamic and situational.
9. Peter's opening is rhetorically masterful: he reframes the trial as an absurdity — they are being interrogated for performing a 'good deed' (euergesia, 'act of beneficence'). The word sesōstai ('has been healed/saved') is deliberately ambiguous: sōzō means both 'to heal' and 'to save,' and Peter will exploit this double meaning in verse 12.
10. Peter answers the council's question from verse 7 with maximum directness: the name is Jesus Christ the Nazarene. The parallel clauses 'whom you crucified / whom God raised' compress the entire gospel into a single antithesis. The healed man standing before them (parestēken... hygiēs) is living evidence that cannot be cross-examined away. Peter addresses both the council ('all of you') and the broader nation ('all the people of Israel').
11. Peter quotes Psalm 118:22, a text Jesus himself applied to his own rejection (Luke 20:17). The 'builders' (oikodomōn) are now explicitly identified as the council members themselves — 'by you, the builders' (hyph' hymōn tōn oikodomōn). The 'cornerstone' (kephalēn gōnias, literally 'head of the corner') is the foundational or capstone that holds the structure together. The one the builders rejected has become the most important stone.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalms 118:22. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. This verse is the theological climax of Peter's defense. The double negative construction — 'salvation in no one else' (ouk estin en allō oudeni hē sōtēria) and 'no other name' (oude onoma estin heteron) — is emphatic and exclusive. The word sōtēria ('salvation') now carries its full theological weight, expanding from the physical healing of the lame man to cosmic salvation. The verb dei ('it is necessary, must') indicates divine necessity — salvation through Jesus is not one option among many but the singular provision of God.
13. The word parrhēsia ('boldness, frank speech, freedom of expression') was prized in Greek democratic culture as the right of free citizens. The council expects deference from agrammatōi ('uneducated, unlettered' — meaning without formal rabbinic training) and idiōtai ('ordinary, untrained, laymen'). The final recognition — 'they had been with Jesus' (syn tō Iēsou ēsan) — is both identification and explanation: their boldness comes from the same source as their former master's.
14. The healed man's physical presence is the unanswerable argument. The verb tetherapeumenon ('having been healed') is a perfect participle — the healing is a completed fact with ongoing results. The phrase ouden eichon anteipein ('they had nothing to say against it') captures the council's impotence: they cannot deny the miracle, cannot discredit the witnesses, and cannot refute the theology.
15. The private deliberation (syneballon pros allēlous, 'conferred with one another') reveals the political nature of the proceedings. The Sanhedrin is not seeking truth but managing a crisis. Luke's ability to report their private discussion may come from later sources, possibly including council members who became believers (cf. 6:7, 'a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith').
16. The council's admission is extraordinary: 'a remarkable sign' (gnōston sēmeion) that is 'evident to all' (phaneron) and 'we cannot deny it' (ou dynametha arneisthai). They acknowledge the miracle's reality while seeking to suppress its implications. The word sēmeion ('sign') rather than teras ('wonder') is significant — a sign points beyond itself to a greater reality, which the council refuses to follow.
17. The council's strategy is containment: stop the message from spreading (dianeēthē, 'to spread, to distribute'). Their concern is not theological truth but public order and their own authority. The phrase 'this name' (tō onomati toutō) — they avoid saying 'Jesus' — betrays their awareness that the name itself carries power. The irony is thick: threatening people for performing an act of mercy.
18. The prohibition covers both informal speech (phtheggēsthai, 'to utter, to speak out') and formal instruction (didaskein, 'to teach'). The phrase to katholou ('at all, entirely') makes the ban absolute. This is a direct attempt to silence the apostolic witness — the very thing Jesus commissioned them to do in 1:8.
19. Peter and John's response establishes the principle of divine authority over human authority — when the two conflict, God takes precedence. The phrase 'in the sight of God' (enōpion tou theou) appeals to the council's own religious convictions. The invitation 'you must judge' (krinate) turns the tables: the judges are now asked to judge their own judgment. This principle of civil disobedience on religious grounds echoes the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:17) and Daniel's companions (Daniel 3:16-18).

19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 1:17. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Daniel 3:16-18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The double negative *ou dynametha... mē lalein* ('we are not able not to speak') expresses compulsion: the apostles literally cannot stop themselves. Their witness is not a choice that can be turned off but an inner necessity driven by what they have personally experienced (*eidamen*, 'we saw'; *ēkousamen*, 'we heard'). The eyewitness nature of their testimony is again emphasized.
21. The council is caught between their desire to punish and their fear of the people (*dia ton laon*). Public opinion constrains their power — the same dynamic that protected Jesus during his ministry (Luke 20:19). The phrase 'everyone was glorifying God' (*pantes edoxazon ton theon*) shows that popular sentiment sided with the apostles and their miracle.
22. Luke adds this detail to emphasize the miracle's magnitude: the man had been lame for over forty years, making the healing all the more remarkable and undeniable. The age also echoes Israel's forty years in the wilderness — a symbolic period of waiting that ends in restoration.
23. The phrase 'their own people' (*tous idious*) designates the believing community — a distinct group identity is forming. The apostles' first instinct after release is corporate: they return to the community to share and to pray. The response that follows (vv. 24-30) is communal, not individual.
24. The word *homothymadon* ('with one accord, together') is the characteristic Lukan term for early church unity. The address *despota* ('Sovereign Lord, Master') is distinct from *kyrios* ('Lord') — it emphasizes God's absolute sovereignty and is used in contexts of prayer under persecution (cf. Revelation 6:10). The creation language echoes Exodus 20:11 and Psalm 146:6, establishing God's authority as Creator before addressing the specific crisis.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 20:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 146:6. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. The community quotes Psalm 2:1-2, a royal psalm traditionally read at the coronation of Davidic kings. The attribution is triply layered: God spoke through the Holy Spirit through David — a rich statement of inspiration. David is called *pais* ('servant'), the same title applied to Jesus in verse 27 and 3:13, creating a servant-parallel between David and Jesus. The Greek text here is grammatically difficult in the manuscripts; we follow the SBLGNT reading.
25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 2:1-2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. The Psalm speaks of 'kings' and 'rulers' conspiring against 'the LORD and his Anointed' (*christou*, 'Christ/Messiah'). The community will apply these four categories to specific historical actors in verses 27-28. The phrase 'his Anointed One' (*tou christou autou*) preserves the messianic title in its original context before the christological application.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalms 2:1-2. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. The Psalm's categories are now mapped onto the passion narrative: 'kings' = Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12), 'rulers' = Pontius Pilate, 'nations' = the Gentile (Roman) soldiers, 'peoples' = the peoples of Israel. The verb *echrisas* ('you anointed') connects Jesus's title 'Christ/Anointed' to a specific divine act — God anointed Jesus, making the conspiracy against him a conspiracy against God's own chosen one.
28. The community affirms what Peter stated in 2:23: the crucifixion was simultaneously a human crime and a divine plan. The verb *proōrisen* ('predestined, determined beforehand') is a strong predestination term. 'Your hand and your plan' (*hē cheir sou kai hē boulē sou*) attributes both the power and the purpose to God. The prayer finds comfort not in denying the opposition's reality but in placing it within God's sovereign design.
29. The prayer's request is remarkable for what it does not ask for: they do not pray for the persecution to stop, for their enemies to be punished, or for deliverance from danger. They pray for boldness (*parrhēσίας*) — the same quality the council noticed in Peter and John (v. 13). The word *doulois* ('servants, slaves') expresses their self-understanding as God's owned people, contrasting with the authority claims of the Sanhedrin.
30. The prayer ends by requesting continued miraculous activity 'through the name of your holy servant Jesus' — the very name the council tried to suppress. 'Stretching out your hand' (*tēn cheira sou ekteinein*) is an Old Testament image of divine intervention (Exodus 6:6, Deuteronomy 4:34). The prayer boldly asks for more of exactly what provoked the persecution.
30. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 6:6 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
30. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 4:34 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
31. The physical shaking (*esaleuthē*) of the meeting place recalls Sinai (Exodus 19:18) and serves as divine confirmation of the prayer. This is a second Pentecost-like experience — the community is again filled with the Spirit, confirming that Spirit-filling is repeatable and responsive to prayer. The prayer asked for boldness (v. 29); the answer is immediate: they 'began to speak the word of God with boldness' (*elaloun ton logon tou theou meta parrhēσίας*). Prayer requested, God granted.
31. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 19:18. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

32. The phrase 'one heart and soul' (*kardia kai psychē mia*) echoes Deuteronomy 6:5 ('with all your heart and all your soul') — the community's unity fulfills the Shema's call to wholehearted devotion. The radical economic sharing — no one claiming private ownership — is described as voluntary disposition ('no one said,' *elegen*, indicating attitude) rather than compulsion. This idealizing summary will be qualified by the Ananias and Sapphira episode in 5:1-11.
33. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 6:5. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
33. The twin superlatives — 'great power' (*dynamei megalē*) and 'great grace' (*charis megalē*) — characterize the community. The apostles' central message remains the resurrection (*tēs anastaseōs tou kyriou Iēsou*). The 'great grace' upon them could refer to divine favor, the community's generosity, or both — Luke allows the ambiguity to stand.
34. The phrase 'not a needy person among them' (*oude endees tis ēn en autois*) echoes Deuteronomy 15:4, where Moses envisions a community with no poor 'if you carefully obey the LORD your God.' The early church is presented as fulfilling the Deuteronomic ideal. Property owners voluntarily liquidated assets to fund communal welfare. The imperfect tenses (*pōlountes epheron*) indicate repeated, ongoing action over time.
34. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 15:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
35. Placing funds 'at the apostles' feet' (*para tous podas tōn apostolōn*) is a gesture of deference and trust — the apostles served as administrators of the communal fund. Distribution was need-based (*kathoti an tis chreian eichen*), not equal — the principle was sufficiency, not uniformity. This administrative arrangement will later require modification as the community grows (6:1-6).
36. Barnabas is introduced here and will become one of the most important figures in Acts (chapters 9-15). His given name is Joseph; 'Barnabas' is a nickname meaning 'Son of Encouragement' (*huios paraklēseōs*) or 'Son of Consolation' — the Aramaic *bar-nabas*. The etymology is debated: *nabas* may relate to Aramaic or Hebrew words for 'prophecy' or 'consolation.' As a Levite, he would have had temple responsibilities; as a Cypriot, he represents the diaspora Jewish community.
37. Barnabas serves as the positive example of communal generosity, standing in deliberate contrast to Ananias and Sapphira in the immediately following passage (5:1-11). His action — selling property and giving the full proceeds — illustrates the ideal described in verses 34-35. The fact that Luke names him specifically, among many who presumably did the same, suggests that Barnabas's generosity was especially notable or that his later prominence warranted this introduction.

5

Summary: *Acts 5 opens with the sobering story of Ananias and Sapphira, who sell property but secretly withhold part of the proceeds while claiming to give the full amount. Peter confronts each of them separately, and both fall dead — producing great fear in the church. The chapter then describes the apostles' ongoing miraculous ministry in Solomon's Portico, including healings that draw crowds from surrounding cities. The Sanhedrin arrests the apostles again, but an angel releases them from prison. Brought before the council, the apostles declare they must obey God rather than men. Gamaliel's wise counsel — 'if this plan is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them' — leads the council to release them after a flogging.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Ananias and Sapphira episode serves as a warning parallel to Achan's sin in Joshua 7 — just as the conquest community was purified through judgment, so the church community faces divine discipline for deception. Peter's statement 'You have not lied to men but to God' (v. 4) and the reference to 'testing the Spirit of the Lord' (v. 9) reveal a high pneumatology — the Holy Spirit is identified with God himself. Gamaliel, the great Pharisaic teacher (Paul's mentor per 22:3), provides the most moderate voice on the council. His historical examples (Theudas and Judas the Galilean) frame the Christian movement within the broader context of first-century Jewish messianic movements.*

Translation Friction: *The deaths of Ananias and Sapphira raise difficult theological questions about divine judgment in the age of grace. Peter makes clear in verse 4 that the property was theirs to keep and the proceeds were theirs to control — the sin was deception, not withholding. Gamaliel's historical references present chronological difficulties: Josephus places Theudas's revolt around AD 44-46, after Gamaliel's speech, raising questions about Luke's sources.*

Connections: *The Ananias and Sapphira story connects to Achan (Joshua 7) and to the theme of testing God (Deuteronomy 6:16). The apostles' prison release anticipates Peter's more dramatic release in chapter 12. Gamaliel's 'if it is from God' principle echoes Elijah's challenge on Carmel (1 Kings 18). The apostles' joy in suffering (v. 41) connects to Jesus's teaching in Luke 6:22-23.*

¹But a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. ²Kept back part of the price, his wife as well being privy to it, and brought a specific part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, was it not your own? And after it was sold, were the proceeds not at your disposal? Why is it that you conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to people but to God." ⁵When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. ⁶The young men rose, wrapped his body, carried him out, and buried him. ⁷About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. ⁸Peter said to her, "Tell me, did you sell the land for this amount?" She said, "Yes, for that amount." ⁹Peter said to her, "How is it that you agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well." ¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in, they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹Great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard about these things. ¹²Now many signs and wonders were being done among the people through the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon's Portico, ¹³No one else dared to associate with them publicly, yet the people held them in high regard. ¹⁴Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, ¹⁵To these people a degree that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and placed them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. ¹⁶The people also gathered from the towns surrounding Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. ¹⁷Then the high priest and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees) rose up, filled with jealousy, ¹⁸Placed their hands on the messengers, and put them in the common prison. ¹⁹But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, ²⁰"Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." ²¹When they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. When the high priest and those with him arrived, they convened the Sanhedrin — the full council of elders of the people of Israel — and sent to the jail to have the apostles brought. ²²But when the officers arrived at the jail, they did not find them there. So they returned and reported, ²³"We found the jail securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them, we found no one inside." ²⁴When the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this might come to. ²⁵Then someone came and reported to them, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple and teaching the people." ²⁶Then the captain went with the officers and brought them back, but without force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. ²⁷When they had brought them, they stood them before the Sanhedrin, and the high priest questioned them, ²⁸Indeed, declaring, Did not we straitly command you that you should not teach in this name? and, take notice, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. ²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³²And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." ³³When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴But a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law respected by all the people, stood up and ordered that the men be put outside for a short time. ³⁵He said to them, "Men of Israel, be careful about what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷After him, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew people away after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸So in the present case I tell you: stay away from these men and let them go. For if this plan or this work is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹But if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them — you may even be found fighting against God!" ⁴⁰They were persuaded by him, and after calling in the apostles, they had them flogged, ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and released them. ⁴¹So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored for the sake of the Name. ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The name Ananias (Hananiah) means 'the LORD is gracious' — the irony is sharp given the story that follows. Sapphira (Sapphirē) means 'beautiful' or 'sapphire.' Luke introduces them together because their sin is collaborative. The word *ktēma* ('property, possession') refers to real estate, likely land, connecting to the land-selling of 4:34-37.
2. The verb *enosphisato* ('kept back, embezzled, misappropriated') is the same word the LXX uses for Achan's theft from the devoted things in Joshua 7:1 — Luke deliberately echoes that earlier story of deception within a covenant community. The phrase *syneiduiēs kai tēs gynaikos* ('his wife also being privy to it') establishes Sapphira as a knowing co-conspirator, not an unwitting partner.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Joshua 7:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. Peter attributes the deception to satanic influence — 'Satan filled your heart' (*eplērōsen ho satanas tēn kardian sou*) — using filling language that contrasts with the Spirit-filling of 4:31. Where the Spirit fills for bold truth, Satan fills for calculated deception. The verb *pseusasthai* ('to lie to, to deceive') takes the Holy Spirit as its object, establishing the Spirit as a personal being who can be lied to, not merely an impersonal force.
4. Peter makes two crucial clarifications. First, the giving was voluntary — the property was Ananias's to keep and the money his to control (*en tē sē exousia*, 'in your own authority'). The sin was not in withholding but in pretending to give everything while secretly keeping back. Second, Peter equates lying to the Holy Spirit (v. 3) with lying to God (v. 4) — a direct identification of the Spirit with God that has significant trinitarian implications.
5. The verb *exepsyxen* ('breathed his last, expired') is clinical — Luke does not say God struck him dead, though the implication is divine judgment. The 'great fear' (*phobos megas*) that results is distinct from the reverential awe of 2:43; this is genuine terror at the holiness of God active in the community. The immediate death without opportunity for repentance parallels the judgment on Achan (Joshua 7:25) and on Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2).
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Joshua 7:25 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 10:1-2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. The 'young men' (*neōteroi*) appear to serve as practical helpers in the community — not an official order but an informal group of younger members. The verb *synesteilan* ('wrapped up') refers to preparing the body for burial. Jewish custom required prompt burial, usually on the same day of death. The speed of the burial — no mention of mourning rites — adds to the narrative's severity.
7. The three-hour interval (*hōs hōrōn triōn diastēma*) provides time for the burial and sets up the separate testing of Sapphira. Her ignorance of Ananias's death (*mē eiduia te gegonos*) means her responses are uncoerced — she has a genuine opportunity to tell the truth.
8. Peter's question gives Sapphira an opportunity for honesty — 'for this amount?' (*ei tosoutou*) presumably indicating the amount Ananias had presented. Her affirmative answer (*nai, tosoutou*) confirms her complicity in the deception. She could have told the truth and been spared; the test reveals her heart.
9. The phrase *synephōnēthē hymin* ('you agreed together') reveals a deliberate conspiracy — the same verb gives us 'symphony,' indicating coordinated action. 'Testing the Spirit of the Lord' (*peirasai to pneuma kyriou*) echoes Israel's sin of testing God in the wilderness (Exodus 17:2, Deuteronomy 6:16). Peter's announcement of the burial party at the door is simultaneously a prophecy and a judgment.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 17:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 6:16. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. The word *parachrēma* ('immediately') emphasizes the instantaneous nature of the judgment. The parallel with Ananias's death is exact — the same verb *exepsyxen* ('breathed her last') and the same agents (the young men) performing the burial. She is buried 'beside her husband' (*pros ton andra autēs*) — united in death as they were in deception.
11. This is the first use of *ekklēsia* ('church, assembly, congregation') in Acts. The word derives from *ek-kaleō* ('to call out') and was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew *qahal* ('assembly'). Luke introduces the term at a moment of holy fear rather than celebration. The fear extends beyond the church to outsiders ('all who heard'), creating a double effect: purification within and reverence without.
12. The summary returns to the pattern of 2:43 — signs and wonders accompany the apostles' ministry. Solomon's Portico (*Stoa Solomōntos*) has become the church's regular public meeting place (cf. 3:11). The phrase 'through the hands' (*dia tōn cheirōn*) emphasizes that the apostles are instruments, not the source of the miraculous power.
13. The 'rest' (*tōn loipōn*) likely refers to non-believers or marginal sympathizers who respected the movement but feared full commitment — perhaps because of the Ananias and Sapphira episode. The verb *etolma* ('dared') suggests that joining required courage given the Sanhedrin's opposition and the community's evident holiness. The paradox is that fear kept some away while admiration drew others in.
14. Despite (or because of) the fear, the church grows — 'more than ever' (*mallon*) indicates accelerating growth. Luke explicitly notes 'both men and women' (*andrōn te kai gynaikōn*), a detail that emphasizes the inclusive nature of the community and corrects the male-only counting of 4:4.

15. The detail about Peter's shadow (hē skia) is remarkable — people believed that even his shadow carried healing power. Luke does not explicitly confirm that shadow-healings occurred, only that people sought them. The parallel to Jesus's ministry is clear: people touched the fringe of Jesus's garment seeking healing (Luke 8:44). The two types of beds — klinarion ('small bed, cot') and krabattos ('pallet, stretcher, mat') — indicate both middle-class and poor patients.
16. The ministry expands beyond Jerusalem to the surrounding region, beginning to fulfill the geographical progression of 1:8 ('Judea'). Two categories of affliction are distinguished: physical illness (astheneis, 'sick, weak') and spiritual oppression (ochlounenous hypo pneumatōn akathartōn, 'harassed/tormented by unclean spirits'). The comprehensive result — 'they were all healed' (etherapeuonto hapantes) — mirrors Jesus's own healing ministry (Luke 6:19).
17. The word zēlou can mean either 'zeal' or 'jealousy' — in this context, jealousy at the apostles' popularity is the primary motivation, though it may include religious zeal against perceived heresy. Luke identifies the opposition party as Sadducees, consistent with 4:1 — the resurrection preaching is the primary irritant for this group that denies resurrection. The word haireisis ('party, sect, school of thought') is the root of 'heresy' but does not yet carry that negative connotation.
18. Unlike the previous arrest of just Peter and John (4:3), all the apostles are now arrested. The 'public jail' (tērēsei dēmosia) distinguishes this from private temple detention — this is official civic imprisonment, escalating the conflict. The phrase epebalon tas cheiras ('laid hands on') indicates physical seizure.
19. The phrase angelos kyriou ('angel of the Lord') echoes the Hebrew malak YHWH — a divine messenger acting on God's authority. The prison escape is narrated with minimal dramatic detail, in contrast to Peter's more elaborate release in chapter 12. The angel does not merely free them but gives them a commission (v. 20), indicating that the release serves the mission, not merely the apostles' comfort.
20. The angel's command is direct and defiant: return to the very place where you were arrested and continue teaching. The phrase 'all the words of this Life' (panta ta rhēmata tēs zōēs tautēs) is remarkable — the gospel message is summarized as 'this Life,' identifying the message with the life it proclaims. Some scholars capitalize 'Life' here as a christological reference.
21. The apostles obey the angel immediately, entering the temple 'at daybreak' (hypo ton orthron), the earliest possible hour. Meanwhile, the Sanhedrin assembles in formal session. Luke emphasizes the full body: both the synedrion ('Sanhedrin, council') and the gerousian ('council of elders, senate') — possibly the same body described two ways, or a reference to the plenary session as opposed to an executive committee. The dramatic irony builds: the council sends for prisoners who are no longer there.
22. The hypēretai ('officers, servants, attendants') are the temple police, subordinate to the captain of the temple (v. 26). The empty jail creates a narrative parallel to the empty tomb — divine power has overturned human confinement.
23. The officers' report emphasizes the impossibility of the escape by natural means: the prison was 'securely locked' (kekleismenon en pasē asphaleia), the guards were at their posts ('standing at the doors'), yet the prisoners were gone. Every security measure was intact. The supernatural nature of the release is undeniable, adding to the council's bewilderment in the next verse.
24. The verb diēporoun ('were perplexed, were at a loss') is the same word used for the Pentecost crowd's confusion (2:12). The authorities cannot explain what has happened and fear where events are heading. The phrase ti an genoito touto ('what this might become') reveals anxiety about the movement's trajectory — a concern Gamaliel will address in verses 35-39.
25. The dramatic irony reaches its peak: while the council deliberates about the missing prisoners, the apostles are doing exactly what they were arrested for — standing in the temple teaching. The unnamed reporter's exclamation 'Look!' (idou) captures the absurdity of the situation from the authorities' perspective.
26. The detail 'without force' (ou meta bias) is significant — the temple police feared the people more than they feared the Sanhedrin's displeasure. The ironic reversal is complete: the authorities are the ones afraid, while the apostles who should be afraid are freely teaching. The threat of stoning (mē lithasthōsin) shows how popular the apostles had become.
27. The scene replicates 4:7 — the apostles again stand before the council. The repetition underscores the escalating conflict: the first hearing produced warnings (4:17-18), this one will produce violence (v. 40).
28. The high priest's complaint inadvertently confirms the success of the apostles' mission: 'you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching' (peplērōkate tēn Ierusalēm tēs didachēs hymōn). The phrase 'this man's blood upon us' (to haima tou anthrōpou toutou) is deeply ironic: in Matthew 27:25, the crowd accepted precisely this responsibility ('His blood be on us and on our children'). The high priest avoids saying Jesus's name, calling him 'this man' (tou anthrōpou toutou).
29. This sharpens the principle stated in 4:19. There, Peter asked the council to judge; here, he simply declares the verdict. The verb peitharchein ('to obey, to submit to authority') is a strong term for compliance with authority — the apostles recognize the Sanhedrin's authority but assert a higher one. The word dei ('it is necessary, one must') expresses divine compulsion, not personal preference.
30. Peter again begins with 'the God of our fathers' (ho theos tōn paterōn hēmōn), maintaining the claim that the apostles represent authentic Israelite faith. The verb diecheirisasthe ('killed, laid violent hands on, did away with') is blunt. The phrase 'hanging on a tree' (kremasantes epi xylou) deliberately evokes Deuteronomy 21:22-23, where a person hung on a tree is 'cursed by God.' Peter turns the curse into an argument: Jesus bore the covenant curse, but God reversed it through resurrection (cf. Galatians 3:13).

- 30.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Deuteronomy 21:22-23 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 31.** The twin titles archēgon ('Leader, Author, Pioneer') and sōtēra ('Savior') recall 3:15 ('Author of life'). Jesus is exalted 'at his right hand' (tē dexia autou), echoing Psalm 110:1 and Peter's Pentecost sermon (2:33). The purpose of the exaltation is dual: 'to give repentance' (dounai metanoian) and 'forgiveness of sins' (aphesin hamartiōn). That repentance is something Jesus 'gives' suggests it is a divine gift, not merely a human decision.
- 31.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 110:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 32.** Peter names two witnesses: the apostles ('we are witnesses') and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's witness is not merely internal but observable — the Pentecost phenomena and the ongoing miraculous signs are the Spirit's public testimony. The Spirit is given to 'those who obey' (tois peitharchousin) — the same verb used in verse 29, creating an implicit contrast: the apostles obey God and receive the Spirit; the council disobeys and opposes.
- 33.** The verb dieprionto ('were cut through, were sawn in two') describes a visceral, furious reaction — literally 'cut to the quick.' This is rage, not conviction (contrast the pierced hearts of 2:37). The same word appears in 7:54 at Stephen's trial. The council's impulse is murderous (eboulonto anein, 'wanted to kill') — the conflict has escalated from warnings (4:17) to threats (4:21) to now lethal intent.
- 34.** Gamaliel I (Rabban Gamaliel the Elder) was one of the most respected rabbis of the first century, grandson of Hillel, and the teacher of Saul of Tarsus (22:3). He is the first Pharisee to speak in Acts — significantly, the Pharisees are more moderate than the Sadducees toward the Christian movement, a pattern Luke emphasizes throughout. His title nomodidaskalos ('teacher of the law') and the description timios ('honored, respected') underscore his authority.
- 35.** Gamaliel addresses the council, not the apostles. His opening — prosechete heautois ('take heed to yourselves, be careful about yourselves') — warns that rash action could harm the council's own interests and reputation. His concern is pragmatic wisdom, not theological agreement with the apostles.
- 36.** Gamaliel's first historical example is Theudas, who 'claimed to be somebody' (legōn einai tina heauton) — a vague messianic or prophetic pretension. Josephus records a Theudas who led a movement around AD 44-46 (Antiquities 20.97-98), but that would be after this speech. Either Luke or Josephus has the chronology wrong, or there were two figures named Theudas (not uncommon), or the historical problem remains unresolved. Gamaliel's point is clear regardless: the movement died with its leader.
- 37.** Judas the Galilean is well-attested historically. He led a revolt against the Roman census of AD 6 conducted by Quirinius (Josephus, Antiquities 18.1-10, War 2.118). His movement gave rise to the Zealot ideology that Rome must be resisted as a matter of religious principle. Josephus records that his descendants continued the revolutionary tradition. Gamaliel's point: another self-proclaimed leader, another failure.
- 38.** Gamaliel's counsel is pragmatic: let time decide. If the movement is merely human (ex anthrōpōn), it will collapse on its own as Theudas's and Judas's did. The verb katalythēsetai ('will be destroyed, will be overthrown, will come to nothing') indicates complete dissolution. His argument does not require the council to approve of the apostles — only to wait.
- 39.** The warning theomachoi ('fighters against God, God-fighters') is Gamaliel's strongest word — to oppose what God has initiated is not merely futile but sacrilegious. The compound word theo-machoi appears only here in the New Testament. Gamaliel does not say the movement is from God; he says the risk of opposing it if it is from God is too great to take. His logic is asymmetric: if human, no harm in waiting; if divine, catastrophic to oppose.
- 40.** The council accepts Gamaliel's advice but still inflicts punishment. The verb deirantes ('having beaten, having flogged') refers to the malkot or makkot — the standard judicial flogging of up to thirty-nine lashes (2 Corinthians 11:24). This is not a light punishment; it left the body severely bruised and lacerated. The repeated command 'not to speak in the name of Jesus' (mē lalein epi tō onomati tou Iēsou) echoes 4:18 — the order the apostles have already declared they cannot obey.
- 41.** The apostles' response to flogging is joy (chairontes) — a radical reversal of normal human response to violence. They consider it an honor to 'be dishonored' (atimasthēnai) for 'the Name' (tou onomatos). The paradox is intentional: worldly shame becomes spiritual honor. This fulfills Jesus's beatitude: 'Blessed are you when people hate you... on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy' (Luke 6:22-23). 'The Name' without further specification has become a shorthand for Jesus.
- 42.** The chapter's final verse shows complete defiance of the council's order: 'they did not stop' (ouk epauonto) teaching. The dual venue — temple and homes — continues the pattern from 2:46. The content of their message is precisely identified: 'the Christ, Jesus' (ton christon Iēsoun) — that Jesus is the Messiah. The verb euangelizomenoi ('proclaiming good news') gives us 'evangelizing.' The flogging accomplished nothing; the gospel advances without pause.

6

Summary: *Acts 6 presents the first internal crisis in the church: Greek-speaking Jewish widows are being overlooked in the daily food distribution. The apostles propose that the community select seven men to manage this practical service, freeing the apostles for prayer and teaching. The seven are chosen, all bearing Greek names, and are commissioned by prayer and the laying on of hands. Stephen, described as full of grace and power, performs great signs and engages in synagogue debates. Unable to refute him, his opponents bring false witnesses who accuse Stephen of speaking against the temple and the law. The chapter ends with Stephen standing before the Sanhedrin, his face appearing like the face of an angel.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The selection of the Seven represents the first organizational development of the church beyond the apostles. All seven have Greek names, suggesting the community addressed the complaint by giving the Hellenists oversight of the distribution — a remarkably generous solution. Stephen emerges as a figure whose theological vision will prove more radical than the apostles' own preaching: his accusers claim he speaks of Jesus destroying the temple and changing Mosaic customs. The description of Stephen's face 'like the face of an angel' echoes Moses' shining face after encountering God (Exodus 34:29-35).*

Translation Friction: *The term 'Hellenists' (Hellēnistai) versus 'Hebrews' (Hebraioi) likely refers to a linguistic and cultural division within the Jewish-Christian community: Greek-speaking diaspora Jews versus Aramaic-speaking Palestinian Jews. The Seven are traditionally called 'deacons' though Acts never uses that title. The charges against Stephen in verses 13-14 are called 'false' by Luke, yet Stephen's speech in chapter 7 will arguably confirm some of their substance — the relationship between the false charges and Stephen's actual teaching is complex.*

Connections: *The appointment of the Seven parallels Moses' appointment of elders in Numbers 11:16-17. Stephen's story anticipates and parallels Jesus's passion: false witnesses, a Sanhedrin trial, and a prayer for his persecutors. The Freedmen's synagogue (v. 9) connects to the diaspora communities listed in 2:9-11. The note about priests becoming obedient to the faith (v. 7) represents a remarkable penetration of the gospel into the temple establishment.*

¹Now in those days, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose from the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the twelve summoned the full body of the disciples and said, "It is not right for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴And we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵This proposal pleased the whole group, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert to Judaism from Antioch. ⁶They presented them before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷The word of God kept spreading, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly, and a large number of the priests became obedient to the faith. ⁸Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹But some from the synagogue called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (including Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and people from Cilicia and Asia) rose up and debated with Stephen. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹²They stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him before the Sanhedrin. ¹³They produced false witnesses who said, "This man never stops speaking against this holy place and the law. ¹⁴For we have heard him say that this Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us." ¹⁵And gazing at him, all who sat in the Sanhedrin saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The Greek *gonguysmos* ('complaint, murmuring, grumbling') echoes Israel's murmuring in the wilderness (Exodus 16:7-8, Numbers 11:1). The 'Hellenists' (*Hellēnistai*) are Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, likely from the diaspora, while the 'Hebrews' (*Hebraioi*) are Aramaic/Hebrew-speaking Jewish Christians from Palestine. The complaint is specific: widows — the most vulnerable members of ancient society — were being neglected (*paretheōrounto*, 'overlooked, neglected') in the daily food distribution (*diakonia*, 'service, ministry'). Growth has created administrative strain.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 16:7-8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
1. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Numbers 11:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
2. The Twelve convene the entire community (to *plēthos tōn mathētōn*, 'the full number of the disciples') for a communal decision — this is not top-down decree but participatory governance. The phrase 'wait on tables' (*diakonein trapezais*) refers to the practical administration of the food distribution. The apostles do not disparage this work but recognize a division of labor: their primary calling is the word of God, not logistics. The verb *kataleipsantas* ('having neglected, having abandoned') suggests that attempting both was already causing neglect of preaching.
3. The community selects; the apostles appoint (*katatēsomen*, 'we will install, we will place in charge'). The qualifications are spiritual, not administrative: 'full of the Spirit and of wisdom' (*plēreis pneumatōs kai sophias*). The number seven may echo the tradition of seven elders in Jewish communities, or it may simply be a practical number. The word *martyroumenous* ('of good reputation, well-attested, testified about') means people whose character is publicly verified.
4. The apostles describe their own work using the same word (*diakonia*, 'ministry, service') used for the food distribution — both are forms of service. The two priorities — prayer (*proseuchē*) and the ministry of the word (*diakonia tou logou*) — define the apostolic calling. The verb *proskarterēsomen* ('we will devote ourselves') is the same word used for the community's devotion in 1:14 and 2:42.
5. All seven names are Greek, which is remarkable given that the complaint was about Hellenist widows being neglected by Hebrew administrators. The community's solution was to give the Hellenists themselves oversight — a generous and trust-building response. Stephen is singled out with an expanded description: 'full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.' Nicolaus is identified as a *prosēlytos* ('proselyte, convert') from Antioch — the only non-born-Jew in the list, showing the community's diversity. Antioch will become a major center of the Gentile mission in chapters 11-13.
6. The laying on of hands (*epethēkan autois tas cheiras*) is a biblical gesture of commissioning and empowerment, rooted in Moses' commissioning of Joshua (Numbers 27:18-23) and the Levitical practice of transferring authority. Prayer accompanies the physical gesture, indicating that the power comes from God, not from the apostles' touch. This becomes the standard pattern for church leadership appointment in Acts (cf. 13:3, 14:23).
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Numbers 27:18-23. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. This is one of Luke's periodic growth summaries (cf. 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20). The phrase 'the word of God kept spreading' (*ho logos tou theou ēuxanen*) personifies the word as a growing, living force. The most striking detail is that 'a large number of priests' (*polys te ochlos tōn hierēōn*) joined the faith. Given the thousands of priests who served in rotational courses at the temple, even a 'large number' could represent a significant minority. Their conversion represents the gospel's penetration into the heart of the temple establishment.
8. The SBLGNT reads *charitos* ('grace') rather than *pisteōs* ('faith') found in some manuscripts. Stephen's ministry goes beyond the food distribution — he is performing 'great wonders and signs' (*terata kai sēmeia megala*), the same language used for the apostles in 5:12. The Seven are not limited to administrative roles; they are Spirit-empowered ministers in their own right.
9. The 'Freedmen' (*Libertinōn*, from Latin *libertinus*) were likely descendants of Jews taken to Rome as slaves by Pompey in 63 BC and later freed. These diaspora Jews had their own synagogue in Jerusalem. The list includes Jews from North Africa (Cyrene, Alexandria), Asia Minor (Cilicia, Asia), and Rome — Greek-speaking Jews like Stephen himself. Cilicia is Paul's home province (Tarsus), raising the possibility that Paul was among the debaters. The verb *syzētountes* ('debating, disputing') indicates formal argument.
10. Stephen's irrefutability fulfills Jesus's promise in Luke 21:15: 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.' The phrase 'the wisdom and the Spirit' (*tē sophia kai tō pneumati*) echoes the qualifications for the Seven in verse 3. Unable to win the argument, his opponents resort to other means (v. 11).
11. The verb *hypebalon* ('secretly instigated, suborned, put up to it') indicates a covert operation — the opponents coach false witnesses, exactly as happened at Jesus's trial (Matthew 26:59-60). The charge is twofold blasphemy: against Moses (representing the Torah) and against God. These are the most serious possible accusations in a Jewish context, capable of triggering the death penalty.
12. The verb *synekinēsan* ('stirred up, aroused, incited') indicates a deliberate campaign to turn public opinion against Stephen. For the first time in Acts, 'the people' (*ton laon*) are part of the opposition — previously the people supported the apostles (4:21, 5:26). The combination of popular anger, elder and scribe involvement, and Sanhedrin proceedings creates a judicial lynching atmosphere.

13. Luke explicitly labels these as 'false witnesses' (*martyras pseudeis*), using the same language as Jesus's trial (Matthew 26:60). The charge refines the earlier accusation: Stephen speaks against 'this holy place' (the temple) and 'the law' (the Torah). As with Jesus's trial, the charges likely contain a distorted kernel of truth — Stephen probably did teach that Jesus's coming relativized both temple and law, which his opponents twisted into blasphemy.
14. The specific charges are: (1) Jesus will destroy the temple (*katalysei ton topon touton*) and (2) Jesus will change Mosaic customs (*allaxei ta ethē*). Both echo charges made against Jesus himself (Mark 14:58, John 2:19). The word *ethē* ('customs, traditions, practices') refers to the oral and written legal traditions. Stephen's speech in chapter 7 will address both charges, not by denying them outright but by reframing Israel's relationship to temple and law through salvation history.
15. The chapter ends with this arresting image: Stephen's face radiates like an angel's. The parallel to Moses is unmistakable — when Moses descended from Sinai after meeting God, his face shone (Exodus 34:29-35). The man accused of speaking against Moses now bears Moses' own mark of divine encounter. The verb *atenisantes* ('gazing intently') is the same word used repeatedly for intense, fixed attention in Acts. The council sees divine glory on the face of their prisoner but will refuse to recognize what it means.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 34:29-35 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.

7

Summary: *Acts 7 contains Stephen's monumental speech before the Sanhedrin — the longest speech in Acts at 53 verses. Stephen recounts Israel's history from Abraham through Moses to Solomon, arguing that God's presence has never been confined to a single place, that Israel has a pattern of rejecting God's chosen messengers, and that the temple was never intended to contain God. His narrative moves from Abraham in Mesopotamia, to Joseph in Egypt, to Moses in the wilderness, to the tabernacle, and finally to Solomon's temple — where he turns accusatory. He charges his hearers with being stiff-necked resisters of the Holy Spirit who, like their ancestors, have betrayed and murdered the Righteous One. The council erupts in fury. Stephen sees a vision of Jesus standing at God's right hand, and they drag him out and stone him to death. He dies praying for his killers. Saul of Tarsus appears for the first time, approving Stephen's execution.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Stephen's speech is a radical rereading of Israel's sacred history. He systematically demonstrates that every pivotal encounter between God and his people happened outside the promised land: Abraham received his call in Mesopotamia, Joseph was God's instrument in Egypt, Moses met God at the burning bush in Midian, the Torah was given at Sinai — not in Jerusalem. The heroes of faith were all initially rejected by their own people before being vindicated. The theological implications are devastating: if God has never been bound to a place, the temple cannot contain him; if Israel has always resisted its prophets, rejecting Jesus fits the pattern. Stephen becomes the first Christian martyr, and his death mirrors Jesus's in profound ways: he prays for his persecutors and commits his spirit to the Lord.*

Translation Friction: *Stephen's retelling contains several historical details that differ from the Genesis account: he says Abraham left Haran after his father died (v. 4, but Genesis 11:26, 32 and 12:4 suggest Terah lived another 60 years), he places 75 members of Jacob's family going to Egypt (v. 14, following the LXX) rather than 70 (Hebrew text), and he attributes the purchase of the Machpelah tomb to Abraham rather than to Jacob (v. 16, conflating Genesis 23 and 33:19). These discrepancies likely reflect Stephen's use of the Septuagint and Jewish interpretive tradition rather than strict historical error. We render the Greek as given without harmonizing.*

Connections: *Stephen's speech draws on Genesis 12-50 (Abraham, Joseph), Exodus 1-20 (Moses), Deuteronomy 18:15 (prophet like Moses), 1 Kings 6-8 (temple), Isaiah 66:1-2 (heaven as God's throne), and Amos 5:25-27 (idolatry). Stephen's martyrdom anticipates Paul's persecution-to-conversion arc. The stoning scene echoes Jesus's crucifixion (Luke 23:34, 46). Saul's introduction here foreshadows the dramatic reversal of chapter 9.*

1The high priest said, "Are these things so?" 2Stephen replied, "Brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3Said to him, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and come into the land which I will shew you. 4Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God moved him from there into this land in which you are now living. 5He gave him no inheritance in

it, not even a foot's length, but he promised to give it to him as a possession and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child. ⁶And God spoke in this way: that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land, and that the people there would enslave and mistreat them for four hundred years. ⁷'But I will judge the nation they serve,' God said, 'and after that they will come out and worship me in this place.' ⁸And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. So Abraham fathered Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac fathered Jacob, and Jacob fathered the twelve patriarchs. ⁹The patriarchs, out of jealousy, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰Delivered him out of all his afflictions, and offered him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Then he appointed him governor over Egypt and all his house. ¹¹Then a famine came over all of Egypt and Canaan, with great suffering, and our fathers could find no food. ¹²When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers there on their first visit. ¹³On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴Then Joseph sent and invited his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five persons in all. ¹⁵So Jacob went down to Egypt, and he died there — he and our fathers. ¹⁶Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. ¹⁷"As the time of the promise that God had made to Abraham drew near, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸Till another king arose, which recognized not Joseph. ¹⁹He exploited our people and oppressed our fathers, forcing them to abandon their infants so they would not survive. ²⁰At that time Moses was born, and he was beautiful before God. He was raised for three months in his father's house, ²¹When he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter picked up him up, and nourished him for her own son. ²²Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds. ²³When he was about forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel. ²⁴When he saw one of them being wronged, he came to his defense and avenged the oppressed man by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵He assumed his brothers would understand that God was giving them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. ²⁶The next day he appeared to them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers! Why are you wronging each other?' ²⁷But the man who was wronging his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'Who appointed you as a ruler and judge over us? ²⁸Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹At this remark, Moses fled and became a foreigner in the land of Midian, where he fathered two sons. ³⁰"When forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he approached to look more closely, the voice of the Lord came to him: ³²'I am the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled and did not dare to look. ³³The Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' ³⁴'I have surely seen the mistreatment of my people in Egypt and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to rescue them. Now come, I will send you to Egypt.' ³⁵"This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who appointed you as ruler and judge?' — this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers.' ³⁸This is the one who was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. ³⁹Our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, ⁴⁰Indeed, declaring to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go prior to us — for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. ⁴¹They made a calf in those days, offered sacrifice to the idol, and celebrated the works of their hands. ⁴²But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'Did you bring me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during those forty years in the wilderness, house of Israel? ⁴³You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images you made to worship. I will exile you beyond Babylon.' ⁴⁴"Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as the one who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. ⁴⁵Our fathers who received it in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. It remained until the days of David, ⁴⁶Who discovered favour prior to God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who built a house for him. ⁴⁸Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands, as the prophet says: ⁴⁹'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my

footstool. What kind of house will you build for me?' says the Lord. 'Or what is the place of my rest? ⁵⁰Did not my hand make all these things?' ⁵¹"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵²Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become — ⁵³Who possess received the instruction of Moses by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. ⁵⁴When they heard these things, they were enraged in their hearts and ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶He said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed at him with one impulse. ⁵⁸They drove him out of the city and began to stone him. The witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The high priest's question is brief and procedural — he gives Stephen the formal opportunity to respond to the charges of 6:13-14. The question *ei tauta houtōs echei* ('are these things so?') is open-ended, allowing Stephen to speak at length.
2. Stephen opens respectfully — 'brothers and fathers' (*andres adelphoi kai pateres*) — but his argument will be deeply confrontational. The title 'the God of glory' (*ho theos tēs doxēs*) echoes Psalm 29:3 and immediately establishes the theme: God's glorious presence is not bound to a place. His first point is geographical: God appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia — in pagan territory, far from any sacred site. The Hebrew Bible records God's call to Abraham in Genesis 12:1 while he was in Haran, but Jewish tradition (following Genesis 15:7 and Nehemiah 9:7) understood a prior call while still in Ur of the Chaldees.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 29:3. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 12:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 15:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Nehemiah 9:7. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. Stephen quotes Genesis 12:1 (LXX). God's first command to Abraham was to leave — departure, not settlement, begins the covenant story. The phrase 'the land that I will show you' emphasizes divine initiative and Abraham's trust: he went without knowing the destination.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 12:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. Stephen says Abraham left Haran 'after his father died' (*meta to apothanein ton patera autou*). According to Genesis 11:26, Terah was 70 when Abraham was born; Abraham left Haran at 75 (Genesis 12:4); and Terah died at 205 (Genesis 11:32) — which would mean Terah lived 60 more years after Abraham's departure. Stephen follows the Samaritan Pentateuch and possibly a Jewish tradition that placed Terah's death at 145, or he may simply be following narrative logic. We render the Greek as given.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 11:26. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 12:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. Stephen's point is theologically sharp: Abraham received the promise but not the land. The covenant patriarch lived his entire life in the promised land without owning any of it — 'not even a foot's length' (*oude bēma podos*). This undermines any theology that ties God's blessing to a specific place. The paradox is heightened by the note that Abraham had no child (*ouk ontos autō teknou*) when the promise was given — promise precedes fulfillment by generations.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 12:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. Stephen quotes Genesis 15:13-14. The word *paroikon* ('strangers, resident aliens, sojourners') describes Abraham's descendants as outsiders in someone else's land — again emphasizing that God's people were not defined by their territory. The four hundred years is a round number (Exodus 12:40 gives 430 years). Stephen's retelling emphasizes suffering and displacement as characteristic of God's people.
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 15:13-14. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.

6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 12:40. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The phrase 'worship me in this place' (latreousousin moi en tō topō toutō) is from Exodus 3:12 rather than Genesis 15, where God tells Moses the people will worship 'on this mountain' (Sinai). Stephen may deliberately blur the reference so that 'this place' could mean Sinai, Canaan, or wherever God chooses to meet his people — supporting his argument that worship is not location-bound.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 3:12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 15. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The 'covenant of circumcision' (diathēkēn peritomēs) refers to Genesis 17, where circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. Stephen quickly traces the lineage from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob to the twelve patriarchs (tous dōdeka patriarchas) — the ancestors of Israel's twelve tribes. The rapid genealogical summary moves the narrative toward Joseph and Egypt.
8. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Genesis 17 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
9. Here Stephen introduces his central theme: Israel rejects its own deliverers. The patriarchs — the revered ancestors — acted out of jealousy (zēlōsantes, the same word used for the Sanhedrin's jealousy in 5:17) and sold their brother into slavery. Yet 'God was with him' (ēn ho theos met' autou) — divine presence follows the rejected one, not those who reject. The parallel to Jesus is unmistakable.
10. God rescues the rejected one and exalts him to authority — the Joseph pattern prefigures the Jesus pattern. The terms 'favor' (charin) and 'wisdom' (sophian) echo Stephen's own description in 6:8, 10. Joseph rules over the very nation where he was sold as a slave — divine reversal of human injustice.
11. The famine (limos) drives the plot: the brothers who sold Joseph are now dependent on him for survival. Stephen's phrase 'our fathers' (hoi pateres hēmōn) identifies himself with his audience — he is not attacking their heritage but interpreting it.
12. The word prōton ('first') sets up the pattern: the brothers go to Egypt twice. On the first visit, they do not recognize Joseph. Stephen emphasizes the two-visit structure because it parallels his argument about Jesus: rejected on the first encounter, recognized on the second.
13. The phrase en tō deutērō ('on the second') is emphatic. Stephen's point: the brothers rejected Joseph initially but recognized him on their second encounter. The implied parallel: Israel rejected Jesus on his first coming but will recognize him at his return. The pattern of initial rejection followed by recognition is the interpretive key to Stephen's entire speech.
14. Stephen gives the number as seventy-five (hebdomēkonta pente), following the Septuagint of Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5, while the Hebrew text gives seventy. The difference likely reflects whether or not Joseph's descendants born in Egypt are included. Stephen follows the Greek textual tradition available to his Hellenistic audience.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 46:27. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 1:5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. Stephen moves quickly through the narrative. Jacob and the patriarchs die in Egypt, not in the promised land — again emphasizing that God's people spent their formative period as foreigners in a foreign land.
16. This verse conflates two Old Testament traditions: Abraham bought a burial site at Machpelah from the sons of Heth near Hebron (Genesis 23:3-16), and Jacob bought a plot at Shechem from the sons of Hamor (Genesis 33:19). Stephen appears to combine these transactions, attributing the Shechem purchase to Abraham. This may reflect a Jewish interpretive tradition unknown to us, or it may be a compressed retelling. We render the Greek as Stephen spoke it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 23:3-16. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Genesis 33:19. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. Stephen now transitions from the patriarchal era to the Exodus. The phrase 'the time of the promise' (ho chronos tēs epangelias) introduces the concept of divine timing — God works according to a predetermined schedule. The people's growth 'in Egypt' (en Aigyptō) fulfills the Abrahamic promise of numerous descendants, but in a foreign land under oppression.
18. Stephen quotes Exodus 1:8. The 'different king' (basileus heteros) who 'did not know Joseph' marks a political and social rupture. The word heteros ('another of a different kind') may suggest a change of dynasty. The loss of Joseph's memory leads directly to Israel's oppression.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 1:8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

19. The verb *katasophisamenos* ('dealing shrewdly, exploiting by craft') implies calculated, cunning oppression. The forced exposure of infants (*ta brephē ektheta*, 'making the babies exposed/abandoned') was the standard method of infanticide in the ancient world — leaving newborns outside to die of exposure. Stephen's retelling emphasizes the brutality to heighten the drama of Moses' rescue.
20. The phrase *asteios tō theō* ('beautiful before God' or 'divinely beautiful') uses a dative of reference that intensifies the adjective — Moses was not merely attractive but superlatively so, beautiful in God's sight. This echoes Exodus 2:2 where his mother saw he was 'good' (*tov*). The phrase carries overtones of divine destiny.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 2:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. The verb *aneilato* ('took up, adopted') is a technical term for picking up and claiming an exposed infant — in Roman and Egyptian practice, this constituted legal adoption. Moses is rescued from death by the oppressor's own daughter — a divine irony that Stephen highlights.
22. Stephen's portrayal of Moses trained in Egyptian wisdom is not from Exodus directly but from Jewish interpretive tradition (cf. Philo, *Life of Moses* 1.21-24). The description 'powerful in words and deeds' (*dynatos en logois kai ergois*) echoes the description of Jesus in Luke 24:19. Moses' competence was developed in a pagan environment — again, God works outside Israel's boundaries.
23. Stephen divides Moses' life into three forty-year periods (vv. 23, 30, 36): forty years in Egypt, forty years in Midian, forty years in the wilderness. This tripartite scheme comes from Jewish tradition rather than Exodus directly. The phrase *anebē epi tēn kardian autou* ('it came up into his heart') is a Hebraism suggesting an inner prompting, possibly divine.
24. Stephen portrays Moses' killing of the Egyptian (Exodus 2:11-12) positively — as defense of the oppressed (*ēmynato*, 'defended') and justice for the wronged (*epoiēsen ekdikēsin*, 'avenged'). This sets up the devastating irony of the next verse: Moses acts as deliverer, but his own people reject him.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 2:11-12. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. This verse is not in Exodus — it is Stephen's theological interpretation. Moses expected recognition as God's deliverer, but 'they did not understand' (*hoi de ou synēkan*). This is the critical parallel to Jesus: God sent a deliverer, the deliverer expected recognition, and the people failed to understand. Stephen is building his case that Israel has a pattern of rejecting the very ones God sends to save them.
26. Moses tries to be a peacemaker among his own people. The word *synēllassen* ('reconciled, brought together') indicates an attempt at mediation. His appeal — 'you are brothers' (*adelphoi este*) — invokes shared identity as a basis for peace. But the appeal fails.
27. The verb *apōsato* ('pushed away, rejected, repudiated') is the key word — it will be reused in verse 39 about Israel's rejection of Moses in the wilderness. Stephen quotes Exodus 2:14. The question 'Who appointed you ruler and judge?' (*tis se katestēsen archonta kai dikastēn*) is a challenge to Moses' authority — the same kind of challenge the Sanhedrin makes against the apostles. The irony: God did appoint Moses, but the people refuse to recognize it.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 2:14. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. The accusation forces Moses to flee. His attempt at deliverance is met not with gratitude but with hostility and exposure. Stephen's audience would recognize the parallel: those who should welcome God's deliverer instead threaten and accuse him.
28. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 2:14 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
29. Moses becomes a *paroikos* ('foreigner, resident alien') in Midian — the same word used for Abraham's descendants in verse 6. The rejected deliverer lives in exile for forty years. Stephen's parallel: Jesus was rejected and has departed to heaven (3:21), but he will return.
30. The second forty-year period ends with theophany — but where? In the wilderness, far from any temple or sacred city. God appears at a random bush on a mountain in the desert. Stephen's geographical point is relentless: God's most important self-revelations happen in the least expected places.
31. Moses' curiosity draws him toward the divine presence. The verb *ethaumazen* ('was amazed, marveled') captures the initial wonder. Stephen's retelling follows Exodus 3:3-4, emphasizing the auditory encounter — 'the voice of the Lord' (*phōnē kyriou*) speaks from the bush.
31. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 3:3-4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
32. God identifies himself through the covenant lineage — the same formula used in Exodus 3:6. Moses' response is trembling (*entromos genomenos*) and aversion of his gaze. The God of the patriarchs speaks to Moses in Midian — covenantal identity transcends geography.
32. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 3:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
33. This verse is devastating to Stephen's opponents' theology: 'holy ground' (*gē hagia*) is in the Midian wilderness, not in Jerusalem or at the temple. If God can make pagan desert soil holy by his presence, then holiness is not a property of places but of divine encounter. Stephen is dismantling the theological foundation for temple-exclusivism.

33. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Exodus 3:5 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
34. Stephen quotes Exodus 3:7-8, 10. The phrase *idōn eidon* ('seeing I have seen,' a Hebraism for emphasis) conveys God's intense, compassionate attention to suffering. God both sees and acts — 'I have come down to rescue them' (*katebēn exelesthai autous*). And the instrument of rescue is Moses — the same Moses his brothers rejected in verses 27-28. God is about to send the rejected deliverer back.
34. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 3:7-8. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
35. This is the rhetorical climax of the Moses section. Stephen uses the emphatic 'this Moses' (*touton ton Mousēn... touton*) with anaphoric repetition: the very one they rejected, that one God sent as ruler (*archonta*) and redeemer (*lytrōtēn*). The word *lytrōtēs* ('redeemer, deliverer') echoes the Hebrew *go'el* — the kinsman who rescues family. The parallel to Jesus is now unmistakable: the rejected one is the sent one.
36. Moses' ministry spans three geographical zones — Egypt, Red Sea, wilderness — none of which is the promised land. Stephen continues to emphasize that God's mighty acts occurred outside the land. The third forty-year period begins. The 'wonders and signs' (*terata kai sēmeia*) echo the description of Jesus's ministry (2:22) and the apostles' ministry (5:12).
37. Stephen quotes Deuteronomy 18:15, the same text Peter used in 3:22. The implication is clear: if Moses himself pointed to a future prophet like himself, then Moses' authority is not undermined by recognizing Jesus but fulfilled by it. Rejecting the prophet-like-Moses is rejecting Moses himself.
37. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 18:15. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
38. The word *ekklēsia* ('assembly, church') is used here for Israel's wilderness congregation — the same word used for the Christian community in 5:11. Moses stood as mediator between 'the angel who spoke at Sinai' and 'our fathers.' He received 'living oracles' (*logia zōnta*) — the Torah is described as alive, not dead tradition. Stephen is not anti-Torah; he honors Moses and the law even as he reinterprets them.
39. The verb *apōsanto* ('rejected, pushed away') is the same word used in verse 27 — the pattern repeats. Israel rejected Moses twice: first in Egypt (vv. 27-28), then in the wilderness (v. 39). 'In their hearts turned back to Egypt' (*estraphēsan en tais kardiais autōn eis Aigypton*) — they may have left Egypt physically, but their hearts remained enslaved to it. The accusation builds toward the climax.
40. Stephen quotes Exodus 32:1. The dismissive phrase 'this Moses' (*ho Mōysēs houtos*) on the people's lips contrasts with Stephen's reverent 'this Moses' (*houtos*) in verses 35-38. The demand for 'gods who will go before us' (*theous hoi proporeuontai hēmōn*) is a request for a visible, controllable deity — the opposite of the invisible, sovereign God who appeared in bush and cloud.
40. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 32:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
41. The verb *emoschopoiēsan* ('made a calf') is a single word describing the golden calf incident (Exodus 32:4). The phrase 'the works of their hands' (*tois ergois tōn cheirōn autōn*) is a standard Old Testament description of idols (Psalm 115:4, Isaiah 2:8). Stephen's point: at the very moment God gave the Torah through Moses, the people turned to handmade idols. The pattern of rejection includes idolatry.
41. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 32:4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
41. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 115:4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
41. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 2:8. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
42. God's response to their idolatry is judicial abandonment — 'gave them over' (*paredōken autous*) to the consequences of their choices (cf. Romans 1:24, 26, 28). Stephen now quotes Amos 5:25-27 (LXX), a prophetic critique of Israel's worship. The rhetorical question expects the answer 'no' — even during the wilderness period, Israel's worship was compromised by idolatry.
42. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Amos 5:25-27. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
43. Stephen continues the Amos quotation. The Hebrew of Amos 5:26 has 'Sikkuth' and 'Kiyyun'; the LXX renders these as 'tent of Moloch' and 'Rephan' (*Raiphan*). Amos originally said 'beyond Damascus'; Stephen (following the LXX) says 'beyond Babylon' — an update that reflects the actual Babylonian exile. The point: Israel's history of idolatry led to exile. Stephen implies that rejecting Jesus may lead to a worse judgment.
43. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Amos 5:25-27 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
44. Stephen now turns to the temple issue. He begins with the tabernacle (*skēnē tou martyriou*, 'tent of testimony/witness'), not the temple — the original place of God's dwelling with Israel was portable, not permanent. It was made 'according to the pattern' (*kata ton typon*) God showed Moses on Sinai (Exodus 25:40). The tabernacle's design was divine, but it traveled with the people rather than binding them to a location.

44. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 25:40. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
45. The Greek *Iēsou* here refers to Joshua (the Greek forms of 'Joshua' and 'Jesus' are identical). The tabernacle accompanied Israel through the conquest and the period of the judges — for centuries, the portable tabernacle was sufficient for God's presence among his people. Stephen's implicit argument: if the tabernacle served for over four hundred years, the temple is not essential.
46. The SBLGNT reads 'house of Jacob' (*oikō Iakōb*) rather than 'God of Jacob' — a textual variant with significant theological implications. If 'house of Jacob,' David sought a dwelling for God's people; if 'God of Jacob,' he sought a dwelling for God. Both readings are attested in ancient manuscripts. We follow the SBLGNT. David asked (*ētēsato*) but was not permitted to build — even the greatest king's request was redirected.
47. The sentence is terse and pointed. The adversative 'but' (*de*) sets up the contrast with what follows: Solomon built a house, but... The brevity is striking after the extended narration — Stephen moves quickly past the temple's construction because his argument is that the temple, however magnificent, cannot contain God.
48. This is the theological pivot of Stephen's entire speech. The word *cheiropoiētois* ('made by hands, handmade') is the same word used for idols in Isaiah 46:6 and Mark 14:58. Stephen does not call the temple an idol, but the vocabulary creates an unsettling association. Solomon himself acknowledged this truth at the temple's dedication: 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you, how much less this house I have built' (1 Kings 8:27).
48. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 46:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
48. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Kings 8:27 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
49. Stephen quotes Isaiah 66:1-2a. God's throne is heaven; his footstool is the entire earth. The rhetorical questions — 'what house?' and 'what resting place?' — expose the absurdity of thinking any building can house the Creator. Isaiah's own words undermine temple-centrism from within the prophetic canon.
49. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 66:1-2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
50. The final line of the Isaiah quotation is devastatingly simple: God made everything — heaven, earth, and every material that could be used to build a temple. How can the creature house the Creator? Stephen's argument from Scripture is complete. Now he turns to direct accusation.
50. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 66:1-2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
51. Stephen's tone shifts abruptly from historical narration to prophetic indictment. 'Stiff-necked' (*sklērotracheloi*) echoes Exodus 33:3, 5 and Deuteronomy 9:6 — a charge God himself made against Israel. 'Uncircumcised in heart and ears' (*aperitmētoi kardiais kai tois ōsin*) quotes Jeremiah 6:10 and Ezekiel 44:7 — outward circumcision without inner transformation. The charge of 'always resisting the Holy Spirit' (*aei tō pneumati tō hagiō antipēte*) makes the accusation timeless: not just your fathers, but you too.
51. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Exodus 33:3. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
51. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 9:6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
51. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 6:10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
51. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 44:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
52. The rhetorical question expects the answer 'none' — every prophet was persecuted. 'The Righteous One' (*tou dikaiou*) is a messianic title (cf. 3:14, Isaiah 53:11). The accusation escalates: your fathers persecuted prophets; you have become 'betrayers and murderers' (*prodotai kai phoneis*) of the Messiah himself. These are the most inflammatory words spoken in Acts.
52. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 53:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
53. The final charge is devastating: accused of speaking against the law (6:13), Stephen turns the accusation on his accusers — you received the law and did not keep it (*ouk ephylaxate*). The reference to angels delivering the law (*eis diatagas angelōn*) reflects Jewish tradition that angels mediated the Sinai covenant (cf. Galatians 3:19, Hebrews 2:2, Deuteronomy 33:2 LXX). Stephen's defense is now complete: he has not blasphemed the law; they have broken it.
53. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 33:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.

54. The verb *dieprionto* ('were cut through, were sawn') is the same word used in 5:33 — visceral, uncontrolled rage. 'Ground their teeth' (*ebrychon tous odontas*) is an expression of furious hostility, used in the Psalms for enemies of the righteous (Psalm 35:16, 37:12). The council has become a mob.
54. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 35:16. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
55. While the council rages, Stephen sees a vision. The phrase 'full of the Holy Spirit' (*plērēs pneumatōs hagiou*) echoes 6:5 — the Spirit fills him in his final hour. He sees 'the glory of God' (*doxan theou*) — the *kavod*, the weighty divine presence. Uniquely, Jesus is described as 'standing' (*hestōta*) at God's right hand, not sitting (as in Psalm 110:1 and elsewhere). Interpreters debate whether Jesus stands to receive Stephen, to testify on his behalf, or to vindicate him.
55. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalm 110:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
56. Stephen announces his vision publicly. The title 'Son of Man' (*ton huion tou anthrōpou*) echoes Daniel 7:13-14 and Jesus's own self-designation. This is the only time in the New Testament that someone other than Jesus uses this title. The 'opened heavens' (*tous ouranous diēnoigmenous*) recall Jesus's baptism (Luke 3:21) and Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:1). For the Sanhedrin, this claim is the ultimate provocation — it confirms Jesus's own claim before this same body (Luke 22:69).
56. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Daniel 7:13-14. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
56. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 1:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
57. The council's reaction is primal: screaming (*kraxantes phōnē megalē*), covering their ears (*syneschon ta ōta autōn*) — the physical refusal to hear what the 'uncircumcised in ears' (v. 51) cannot bear — and a collective rush (*hōrmēsan homothymadon*). The word *homothymadon* ('with one accord') is grimly ironic: the same word Luke uses for the church's beautiful unity (1:14, 2:46) now describes a mob's unified violence.
58. The stoning takes place outside the city (*exō tēs poleōs*), following the Levitical requirement (Leviticus 24:14). Jesus was also executed outside the city (Hebrews 13:12). The 'witnesses' (*martyres*) are those who testified against Stephen — Jewish law required accusers to cast the first stones (Deuteronomy 17:7). They remove their outer garments for freedom of movement and place them at the feet of Saul — this is Luke's introduction of the man who will dominate the second half of Acts. Saul's role as garment-guardian indicates approval and likely active participation in the proceedings.
58. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Leviticus 24:14 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
58. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 17:7 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
59. Stephen's dying prayer is addressed to Jesus (*kyrie Iēsou*), not to God the Father — a remarkable expression of early Christian devotion to Jesus as Lord. The prayer 'receive my spirit' (*dexai to pneuma mou*) echoes Jesus's own final words in Luke 23:46 ('Father, into your hands I commit my spirit,' quoting Psalm 31:5), but Stephen directs his prayer to Jesus rather than the Father.
59. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Psalm 31:5. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
60. Stephen's second dying prayer parallels Jesus's prayer on the cross: 'Father, forgive them' (Luke 23:34). The phrase *mē stēsēs autois* ('do not set against them, do not charge to their account') uses accounting language — do not record this sin in their ledger. Kneeling under a hail of stones to pray for his killers is the ultimate expression of the Christ-like life.
60. The euphemism 'fell asleep' (*ekoimēthē*) is the early Christian term for death (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). It implies the expectation of resurrection — sleep is temporary. Among those for whom Stephen prayed was Saul, who would become the greatest apostle. Augustine later wrote: 'If Stephen had not prayed, the church would not have had Paul.'

8

Summary: Acts 8 narrates the aftermath of Stephen's martyrdom. A great persecution scatters the church beyond Jerusalem, fulfilling Jesus's commission to Judea and Samaria (1:8). Saul leads the persecution. Philip, one of the Seven, preaches in Samaria with great success, performing signs and exorcisms. Simon the magician believes and is baptized but later attempts to purchase apostolic power with money, earning Peter's sharp rebuke. The chapter concludes with Philip's encounter with an Ethiopian official who is reading Isaiah 53 on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Philip explains the passage, baptizes the Ethiopian, and is then transported by the Spirit to Azotus.

What Makes This Remarkable: The scattering of the church becomes the mechanism of its expansion — persecution intended to destroy the movement instead propagates it. The Samaritan mission is theologically significant: Samaritans were considered half-pagans by Jews, and the gospel's acceptance there breaks the first ethnic barrier. Simon Magus becomes a symbol of spiritual corruption (the term 'simony' derives from his attempt). The Ethiopian eunuch represents multiple boundary-crossings: he is African, a eunuch (excluded from the assembly per Deuteronomy 23:1), and a Gentile God-fearer — yet he receives the gospel without conditions.

Translation Friction: The relationship between water baptism, the laying on of hands, and receiving the Holy Spirit is complex in this chapter. The Samaritans believe and are baptized but do not receive the Spirit until Peter and John come (vv. 15-17) — a sequence that does not match Pentecost or later conversion accounts. Various theological traditions interpret this differently. The sudden transportation of Philip (v. 39) is one of the most unusual supernatural events in Acts. Verse 37 is absent from the earliest manuscripts and the SBLGNT; we follow the critical text and omit it.

Connections: The persecution fulfills Jesus's pattern in 1:8 (Jerusalem Judea and Samaria). Philip's Samaritan mission connects to Jesus's own engagement with Samaritans (Luke 9:52, 10:30-37, 17:11-19, John 4). The Ethiopian reading Isaiah 53 connects to the Suffering Servant theology of 3:13, 26. Philip's transport by the Spirit echoes Elijah's experiences (1 Kings 18:12, 2 Kings 2:16). The Ethiopian's conversion anticipates the full Gentile mission.

¹Now Saul was in full agreement with Stephen's execution. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. ²Devout men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. ³But Saul was ravaging the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and had them thrown into prison. ⁴Now those who were scattered went about proclaiming the good news of the word. ⁵Philip went down to a city in Samaria and began proclaiming the Christ to them. ⁶The crowds paid close attention with one mind to what Philip was saying, as they heard and saw the signs he was performing. ⁷For unclean spirits came out of many who had them, screaming with a loud voice, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸There was remarkable joy in that city. ⁹Now a man named Simon had previously practiced sorcery in the city and had amazed the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great. ¹⁰Everyone, from the least to the greatest, paid attention to him, saying, "This man is the power of God called 'the Great Power.'" ¹¹They paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his sorcery. ¹²But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed and was baptized. He stayed close to Philip, and when he saw the signs and great miracles being performed, he was amazed. ¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶For as yet he was fallen upon none of them — only they were baptized by the authority of the Lord Jesus.). ¹⁷Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹Declaring, Give me also this authority, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may accept the Holy Ghost. ²⁰But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could acquire the gift of God with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are full of bitter poison and bound by wickedness." ²⁴Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." ²⁵After they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news in many Samaritan villages along the way. ²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. And there was an Ethiopian man, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸Indeed, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet of old. ²⁹The Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join that chariot." ³⁰Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹He said, "How could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of Scripture he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before

its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken from the earth." ³⁴The eunuch said to Philip, "I ask you, about whom does the prophet say this — about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning from this Scripture, proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁸He ordered the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water — Philip and the eunuch — and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through, he proclaimed the good news in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The participle *syneuddokōn* ('approving, consenting, being in full agreement') is stronger than passive tolerance — Saul actively endorsed Stephen's death. The word *diōgmos* ('persecution') is intensified by *meγas* ('great'). The verb *diesparēsān* ('were scattered') uses agricultural imagery — scattering seed — and Luke may intend the irony: persecution scatters the believers like seed, producing a wider harvest. The apostles alone remain in Jerusalem, perhaps because their public profile made them targets who needed to stand their ground, or because they refused to abandon the Jerusalem base.
2. The word *eulabeis* ('devout, reverent') may refer to pious Jews rather than Christians — burying the dead was a sacred duty, and even opponents of Stephen might have ensured proper burial. The 'great lamentation' (*kopeton meγan*) defied the rabbinic rule that prohibited public mourning for those executed by the court (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 6:6), suggesting these mourners considered Stephen's death unjust.
3. The verb *elymaineto* ('was ravaging, was destroying, was laying waste to') is used in the LXX for a wild boar devastating a vineyard (*Psalm* 80:13). Saul's persecution is systematic — house by house (*kata tous oikous*) — and indiscriminate in targeting both men and women (*andras kai gynaikas*). The verb *syron* ('dragging') implies physical violence. This is the man who will become Paul.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References *Psalm* 80:13 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The scattered believers do not go into hiding — they go preaching. The verb *euangelizomenoi* ('proclaiming good news') indicates that mission is not the exclusive work of apostles but the activity of ordinary believers. Persecution accomplishes exactly the opposite of its intention: instead of silencing the message, it multiplies the messengers.
5. This is Philip the evangelist (one of the Seven from 6:5), not Philip the apostle. Some manuscripts read 'the city' (*tēn polin*, a specific city, possibly Sebaste/Samaria or Shechem/Sychar) while others read 'a city' — we follow the reading that treats it as a specific city. The Samaritan mission is momentous: Samaritans worshiped YHWH but rejected the Jerusalem temple in favor of Mount Gerizim, making them the first non-Jewish audience for the gospel.
6. The Samaritan response is positive and unified — *homothymadon* ('with one mind') describes the same kind of communal agreement that characterized the Jerusalem church (1:14, 2:46). The combination of hearing the message and seeing the signs creates a complete witness — word and deed together, as in Jesus's own ministry.
7. The signs parallel those of Jesus and the apostles: exorcisms and physical healings. The unclean spirits (*pneumata akatharta*) cry out as they depart — as they did when confronted by Jesus (*Luke* 4:33-35). The two categories of healing — paralyzed (*parelumenoi*) and lame (*chōloi*) — echo *Isaiah* 35:5-6, the prophetic description of messianic restoration.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on *Isaiah* 35:5-6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. The phrase 'great joy' (*pollē chara*) characterizes the gospel's arrival in new territory throughout Acts (cf. 13:52, 15:3). Joy is the consistent fruit of the gospel wherever it is received.
9. Simon Magus becomes one of the most discussed figures in early Christianity — later tradition (especially the Church Fathers) identified him as the founder of Gnosticism. The verb *mageuōn* ('practicing sorcery/magic') places him in the tradition of pagan magical practice. His self-aggrandizement — 'claiming to be someone great' (*legōn einai tina heauton meγan*) — echoes the description of Theudas in 5:36. The contrast between Simon's magic and Philip's signs will be a key theme.
10. The title 'the Great Power of God' (*hē dynamis tou theou hē kaloumenē megalē*) appears to be a Samaritan religious title, possibly related to Samaritan theology's emphasis on divine power. The phrase 'from the least to the greatest' (*apo mikrou heōs megalou*) indicates Simon's universal influence across all social levels.
11. The phrase *hikanō chronō* ('for a long time, for a considerable period') indicates Simon's established influence — this was not a recent phenomenon. The verb *exestakenai* ('had amazed, had astonished') suggests a hold over the people through supernatural display. Philip's ministry will break this hold.

12. Philip's message has two components: 'the kingdom of God' (tēs basileias tou theou) and 'the name of Jesus Christ' (tou onomatos Iēsou Christou). The kingdom message connects to Jesus's own preaching; the name of Jesus identifies the king. Both men and women are baptized — gender equality in baptism is consistently noted in Acts.
13. Simon's belief (episteusen) and baptism raise the question of whether his faith was genuine. His subsequent behavior (vv. 18-24) suggests his attraction was to the power rather than to the person of Christ. The verb existato ('was amazed') — the same word used for the crowds' response to Simon (v. 9, 11) — now describes Simon himself. The sorcerer is out-astonished by genuine divine power.
14. The apostles' dispatch of Peter and John serves to validate the Samaritan mission and to ensure continuity with the Jerusalem church. That 'Samaria had received the word of God' (dedektai hē Samareia ton logon tou theou) is a landmark statement — the ancient enmity between Jews and Samaritans is being overcome by the gospel.
15. Peter and John pray specifically for the Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit — indicating that the Spirit had not yet been given to them. This raises theological questions: were they truly converted without the Spirit? Various traditions explain this differently. Luke may be emphasizing that the Samaritan church needed apostolic validation to prevent a schism between Jewish and Samaritan Christianity.
16. Luke describes the Spirit as having 'fallen' (epipeptōkos) — a dramatic term suggesting a sudden, powerful descent (cf. 10:44, 11:15). The word 'only' (monon) does not diminish baptism but distinguishes it from the Spirit's empowering presence. The Samaritan situation is unique in Acts and may reflect special circumstances rather than a normative sequence.
17. The laying on of hands (epitithēsan tas cheiras) conveys the Spirit — the physical gesture accompanies the spiritual gift. The reception of the Spirit is described without specifying its outward manifestation, though verse 18 implies something visible occurred that Simon could observe.
18. Simon 'saw' (idōn) something — the Spirit's reception had visible manifestations. His response reveals his fundamental misunderstanding: he treats the Spirit's power as a commodity that can be purchased, like a magical technique. The verb prosēnenken ('offered, brought forward') implies a formal business transaction. The word chrēmata ('money') derives from chraomai ('to use') — Simon sees the Spirit as a useful tool.
19. Simon wants the exousian ('authority, power, right') to confer the Spirit — he seeks control over the distribution of divine power. This is the fundamental error: the Spirit is God's gift, not a human transaction. The term 'simony' — the buying or selling of spiritual offices or privileges — derives from this episode.
20. Peter's response is fierce: 'may your silver perish with you' (to argyriou sou syn soi eiē eis apōleian) is a conditional curse — may your money go to destruction, and you with it. The key theological principle: the gift of God (tēn dōrean tou theou) is exactly that — a gift (dōrea). It cannot be purchased (ktasthai, 'to acquire, to possess'). This verse draws a permanent line between God's grace and human commerce.
21. The phrase 'no part or share' (meris oude klēros) echoes the language of inheritance in Israel — Simon has no portion in the kingdom. The diagnosis is cardiovascular: 'your heart is not right' (hē kardia sou ouk estin eutheia, literally 'not straight') before God. The problem is not the outward act but the inward orientation.
22. Peter offers repentance as a possibility, not a certainty — the phrase 'if possible' (ei ara) introduces genuine uncertainty about whether forgiveness is available for this particular sin. The word epinoia ('intent, thought, scheme') suggests a calculated plan, not a momentary impulse. Peter calls him to repent and pray, leaving the outcome to God.
23. Peter's diagnosis echoes Deuteronomy 29:18 (LXX), where Moses warns against 'a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit' among the covenant people. The phrase 'gall of bitterness' (cholēn pikrias) and 'bond of iniquity' (syndesmon adikias) describe both Simon's internal condition (bitter poison) and his external bondage (chained by sin). Peter sees through Simon's profession of faith to the corruption beneath.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 29:18 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. Simon's response is ambiguous — he asks for prayer but does not repent himself. He asks Peter and John to pray for him rather than praying directly, and his concern is avoiding punishment rather than seeking transformation. Luke leaves Simon's fate unresolved; later patristic tradition (especially Irenaeus and Justin Martyr) developed extensive accounts of Simon as the arch-heretic.
25. Peter and John expand the Samaritan mission on their return journey — they do not merely validate Philip's work but extend it. The phrase 'many villages of the Samaritans' (pollas kōmas tōn Samaritōn) shows the gospel spreading throughout the region, not limited to a single city. The Jewish apostles are now evangelizing Samaritans — a remarkable transformation from the attitudes described in Luke 9:52-54.
26. The divine direction shifts Philip from a successful urban ministry in Samaria to a deserted highway — God's priorities do not always match human expectations. The phrase kata mesēmbrian can mean 'toward the south' or 'at midday'; we follow the directional sense. The parenthetical 'this is desert' (hautē estin erēmos) may describe the road or the city of Gaza itself, which had been destroyed and rebuilt.
27. The Ethiopian eunuch represents multiple boundary-crossings. He is African (from the kingdom of Meroe, modern Sudan), a eunuch (castrated court officials served as trusted treasury administrators), and a God-fearer (he came to Jerusalem to worship but as a eunuch could not fully convert to Judaism per Deuteronomy 23:1). 'Candace' (Kandakēs) is not a personal name but the title of the queen mother who wielded executive power in the Meroitic kingdom, similar to 'Pharaoh' or 'Caesar.' His high position as treasurer (epi pasēs tēs gazēs, 'over all her treasury') indicates great authority and trust.

27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 23:1. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. The eunuch reads Isaiah aloud (ancient practice was to read aloud even when alone). His choice of Isaiah is significant — Isaiah 56:3-5 specifically promises eunuchs a place in God's house: 'I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.' The eunuch's reading is a search for inclusion.
28. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 56:3-5 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
29. Now it is the Spirit (to pneuma) rather than the angel (v. 26) who directs Philip. The command kollēthēti ('join yourself to, attach yourself to, stay close to') suggests walking alongside the slowly moving chariot. Divine orchestration brings the right messenger to the right seeker at the right moment.
30. Philip runs (prosdramōn) — urgency marks Spirit-directed encounters. His question creates a Greek wordplay: ginōskeis ha anaginōskeis ('do you know what you are reading?' — ginōskō and anaginōskō share the root gnō-). The question is not condescending but opens the door for dialogue.
31. The eunuch's response is humble and eager — he recognizes his need for interpretation and welcomes a guide (hodēgēsei, 'will lead along the way'). The verb parekalesen ('invited, urged, encouraged') shows genuine desire for understanding. He invites Philip into his chariot — a foreigner climbing into a court official's chariot represents the breaking of social barriers.
32. The eunuch is reading Isaiah 53:7-8 (LXX), the heart of the Suffering Servant passage. The image of a lamb led to slaughter in silence is the defining portrait of redemptive suffering in the Old Testament. That this particular passage is what the eunuch happened to be reading when Philip arrived is presented as divine providence.
32. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 53:7-8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
33. The LXX of Isaiah 53:8 differs from the Hebrew in some details. 'In his humiliation his justice was taken away' (en tē tapeinōsei hē krisis autou ērthē) — the Servant was denied a fair trial. 'Who can describe his generation?' (tēn genean autou tis diēgēsetai) is ambiguous: it could refer to his descendants (he died without offspring), his lifespan (cut short), or the wickedness of his contemporaries. 'His life is taken from the earth' — a statement of violent death.
33. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 53:7-8 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
34. The eunuch's question reflects genuine scholarly inquiry — who is the Suffering Servant? Jewish interpretation offered multiple answers: the prophet himself (Isaiah), the nation of Israel collectively, a future messiah, or a specific historical figure. The eunuch's question is the right question, and Philip is about to give the Christian answer.
35. The phrase 'opened his mouth' (anoixas to stoma autou) is a solemn introduction to important speech (cf. Matthew 5:2). Philip begins with the text the eunuch is reading and moves from there to Jesus — arxamenos apo tēs graphēs tautēs ('beginning from this Scripture'). The method is christological interpretation of the Old Testament: Isaiah 53 finds its fulfillment in Jesus. Luke does not record the content of Philip's explanation, but the result (v. 36) shows that it included instruction about baptism.
35. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 53 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
36. The eunuch's question 'What prevents me?' (ti kōlyei me) is deeply poignant. As a eunuch, he had been prevented from full participation in Israel's worship (Deuteronomy 23:1). His whole life has been defined by barriers. Now he asks whether there is a barrier to baptism — and the answer is no. The gospel removes the exclusions that the old covenant imposed. Finding water on a 'desert road' (v. 26) adds to the sense of divine provision.
36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 23:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
38. Note: Verse 37 is absent from the SBLGNT and the earliest manuscripts. It appears in later manuscripts as the eunuch's confession of faith ('I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God') and was likely added by scribes who felt the baptism needed an explicit confession. We follow the critical text and omit it.
38. Both Philip and the eunuch go 'down into the water' (katebēsan amphoterōi eis to hydōr), suggesting immersion rather than sprinkling, though the text does not specify the precise method. The baptism of a eunuch — someone excluded from the assembly of Israel — is a powerful statement of the gospel's inclusive scope.
39. The verb hērpsen ('snatched away, carried off, caught up') describes a sudden, supernatural transportation — the same word used for Paul's rapture to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2) and the catching up of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The Spirit literally relocates Philip. The eunuch's response is joy (chairōn) — the characteristic mark of genuine conversion in Acts. He continues his journey to Ethiopia, presumably carrying the gospel with him. Church tradition credits him with founding the Ethiopian church.
40. Azotus (the Greek name for the old Philistine city of Ashdod) is on the Mediterranean coast, about 20 miles north of Gaza. Philip evangelizes along the coastal plain northward to Caesarea, the major Roman administrative center, where he apparently settles (cf. 21:8, where Paul visits 'Philip the evangelist' in Caesarea). The gospel now has a foothold on the coast, opening a corridor from Jerusalem to the wider Mediterranean world.

9

Summary: *Acts 9 narrates the dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. While traveling with letters authorizing him to arrest Christians, Saul is confronted by a blinding light and the voice of the risen Jesus: 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' Blinded for three days, Saul is visited by Ananias of Damascus, who restores his sight, baptizes him, and conveys God's commission. Saul immediately begins preaching Jesus as the Son of God in Damascus synagogues. After escaping a murder plot in Damascus, Saul goes to Jerusalem where Barnabas vouches for him to the apostles. The chapter then describes Peter's ministry in Lydda and Joppa, including the healing of Aeneas (paralyzed for eight years) and the raising of Tabitha (Dorcas) from the dead. Peter stays in Joppa with Simon the tanner, setting the stage for the Cornelius episode in chapter 10.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Saul's conversion is the pivotal event in Acts and is narrated three times (here, 22:3-21, 26:9-23), reflecting its importance. The identification of Jesus with his persecuted church — 'why are you persecuting me?' — is a profound christological statement: to persecute the church is to persecute Christ himself. Ananias's reluctance and God's response reveal Jesus's plan for Saul: 'he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.' The raising of Tabitha parallels Elijah's raising of the widow's son and Jesus's raising of Jairus's daughter.*

Translation Friction: *The three accounts of Saul's conversion differ in details: whether companions heard the voice (9:7 vs. 22:9), whether they saw the light, and whether Saul received his commission directly or through Ananias. These variations likely reflect the different rhetorical settings of each retelling rather than contradictions. Peter's lodging with 'Simon the tanner' (v. 43) is notable because tanning was considered an unclean occupation in Jewish law — Peter is already relaxing purity boundaries before the Cornelius vision.*

Connections: *Saul's conversion fulfills Jesus's statement to Ananias about suffering for his name (v. 16), which will play out through the rest of Acts. The Damascus road experience connects to prophetic call narratives (Isaiah 6, Jeremiah 1, Ezekiel 1-3). Peter's miracles in Lydda and Joppa mirror Jesus's miracles and demonstrate that the apostolic mission continues Jesus's work. The tanner's house in Joppa prepares for the vision of clean and unclean animals in 10:9-16.*

¹Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²He asked for letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found anyone who belonged to the Way — whether men or women — he could arrest them and bring them back to Jerusalem. ³As he was traveling and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵He said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷The men traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, and although his eyes were open, he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was without sight, and he neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹²He has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man — how much harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. Laying his hands on him, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹Following he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the followers which were at Damascus. ²⁰And immediately he began

proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." ²¹All who heard him were astonished and said, "Is this not the man who destroyed those in Jerusalem who called on this name? And did he not come here for the very purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" ²²But Saul kept growing stronger and was confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. ²³When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him. ²⁴But their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night in order to kill him. ²⁵But his disciples took him at night and lowered him through an opening in the wall, letting him down in a large basket. ²⁶When he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described to them how on the road Saul had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸So he went in and out among them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹He spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they were trying to kill him. ³⁰When the brothers learned of this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. ³¹So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. Walking in the fear of the Lord and in the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers. ³²As Peter was traveling through all the region, he came down also to the saints living in Lydda. ³³There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. ³⁴Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed." And immediately he got up. ³⁵All the residents of Lydda and the Sharon Plain saw him and turned to the Lord. ³⁶In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. ³⁷In those days she became ill and died. After washing her body, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the urgent request, "Please come to us without delay." ³⁹So Peter rose and went with them. When he arrived, they took him to the upper room, and all the widows stood beside him weeping and showing him the tunics and garments that Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰But Peter sent them all out, knelt down, and prayed. Then turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹He gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and the widows, he presented her alive. ⁴²This became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³He stayed in Joppa for many days with a man named Simon, a tanner.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The participle *empneōn* ('breathing') creates a vivid image: Saul exhaled threats as naturally as he exhaled air — persecution was his very breath. The combination 'threats and murder' (*apeilēs kai phonou*) intensifies from words to actions. The present participle indicates ongoing, habitual activity. The phrase 'disciples of the Lord' (*tous mathētas tou kyriou*) is the first use of 'disciples' since chapter 6, now describing the broader Christian community.
2. The 'letters' (*epistolās*) from the high priest would authorize Saul to act with Sanhedrin authority in the Damascus synagogues. The term 'the Way' (*tēs hodou*) is the earliest designation for the Christian movement in Acts (cf. 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22) — it identifies Christianity as a path or way of life, possibly echoing Isaiah 40:3 ('prepare the way of the Lord'). Damascus had a significant Jewish population and was within the traditional boundaries of the land of Israel as understood by some authorities, justifying Jerusalem's jurisdictional claim.
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 40:3. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The adverb *exaiphnēs* ('suddenly') marks the divine irruption — there is no preparation, no gradual awareness. The light (*phōs ek tou ouranou*) comes 'from heaven,' establishing its divine origin. The verb *periēstrapsen* ('flashed around') describes light enveloping Saul from every direction. In 26:13, Paul will specify it was brighter than the midday sun. The theophanic light recalls Moses at the burning bush and Ezekiel's vision of divine glory.
4. The double address 'Saul, Saul' (*Saoul Saoul*) uses the Hebrew/Aramaic form of the name (not the Greek *Saulos*), echoing divine addresses in the Old Testament: 'Abraham, Abraham' (Genesis 22:11), 'Moses, Moses' (Exodus 3:4), 'Samuel, Samuel' (1 Samuel 3:10). The question 'why are you persecuting me?' (*ti me diōkeis*) contains the explosive identification: Jesus is so united with his church that persecuting believers is persecuting him personally. This is not metaphor — it is christological reality.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 22:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 3:4. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes 1 Samuel 3:10. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.

5. Saul's question 'Who are you, Lord?' (tis ei, kyrie) uses kyrie, which could mean simply 'sir' at this point — Saul does not yet know who speaks. The response 'I am Jesus' (egō eimi Iēsous) is devastating: the one Saul believed was a dead false messiah is alive and speaking from heaven. The addition 'whom you are persecuting' (hon sy diōkeis) repeats the identification from verse 4. The SBLGNT does not include 'it is hard for you to kick against the goads,' which appears in later manuscripts and in Paul's retelling in 26:14.
6. The SBLGNT omits the initial question 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' which appears in later manuscripts. Jesus's command is simple: go to the city and wait. The phrase ho ti se dei poiein ('what you must do') uses the divine necessity verb dei — Saul's future is determined by God's plan, not his own.
7. The companions hear the 'sound' (phōnēs) but see no one. In 22:9, Paul says they saw the light but 'did not hear the voice of the one speaking to me.' The apparent discrepancy likely reflects the difference between hearing a sound and understanding speech — they perceived noise but not articulate words. The adjective enei ('speechless') captures their stunned inability to respond.
8. The man who set out to Damascus with authority and purpose arrives blind and dependent. The irony is profound: the one who could not 'see' who Jesus was now literally cannot see. His eyes are open (aneōgmenōn tōn ophthalmōn) but perceive nothing — a physical condition mirroring his previous spiritual state. Being led by the hand (cheiragōgountes) reduces the powerful persecutor to the helplessness of a child.
9. The three days of blindness and fasting echo death and burial — Saul's old life as persecutor is dying. The three-day period recalls Jonah's three days in the fish and, most significantly, Jesus's three days in the tomb. Saul's emergence from this period will be a kind of resurrection.
10. Ananias is simply called a 'disciple' (mathētēs) — an ordinary believer, not an apostle or leader. The vision dialogue follows the pattern of Old Testament call narratives: God calls by name, the person responds 'Here I am' (idou egō, echoing Abraham in Genesis 22:1, Moses in Exodus 3:4, Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:4). This Ananias should be distinguished from the Ananias of chapter 5 and the high priest Ananias of chapter 23.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 22:1 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 3:4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 1 Samuel 3:4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The 'street called Straight' (tēn rhymēn tēn kaloumenēn Eutheian) is likely the main east-west thoroughfare of Damascus, still identifiable today. The specific address — Judas's house on Straight Street — gives the narrative historical particularity. The note 'for he is praying' (idou gar proseuchetai) signals Saul's transformation: the persecutor is now a petitioner. God orchestrates a double vision: Saul prays and sees Ananias coming; Ananias receives instructions to go.
12. Saul's vision of Ananias arriving is a confirming vision — when Ananias actually appears, Saul will know this is from God. The divine coordination of the two visions (Ananias's in v. 10, Saul's in v. 12) mirrors the coordination in the Cornelius-Peter narrative (10:3-6, 10:9-16). God prepares both parties for the encounter.
13. Ananias's protest is understandable — he is being asked to visit the most dangerous man in the world for a Damascus Christian. His intelligence about Saul is accurate: 'how much harm he has done to your saints' (hosa kaka tois hagiois sou epoiēsen). The word hagiois ('saints, holy ones') is used here for the first time in Acts for believers — those set apart for God. Ananias's reluctance adds dramatic tension and makes his eventual obedience all the more commendable.
14. Ananias knows Saul's mission: arrest 'all who call on your name' (pantas tous epikaloumenous to onoma sou). The phrase 'calling on the name' echoes Joel 2:32 quoted in 2:21 — the very act of salvation (calling on the Lord's name) is the crime Saul has come to punish. The irony deepens: Saul will soon be calling on that name himself.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 2:32. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The Lord overrides Ananias's objection with a revelation of Saul's destiny. The phrase 'chosen instrument' (skeuos eklogēs, literally 'vessel of election/choice') presents Saul as a container selected by God for a specific purpose. His mission has three audiences: Gentiles (ethnōn), kings (basileōn), and the sons of Israel (huiōn Israēl) — all three will be fulfilled in Acts. The order is significant: Gentiles first, reflecting Paul's primary calling.
16. Saul's calling includes suffering (pathein) — the word dei ('must') makes suffering a divine necessity, not an accident. 'For the sake of my name' (hyper tou onomatos mou) — the name Saul tried to destroy will become the name he suffers for. The rest of Acts will document this suffering: beatings, imprisonments, shipwreck, stoning, and ultimately martyrdom.
17. Ananias's first word to the feared persecutor is 'brother' (adelphē) — a single word of reconciliation that bridges the chasm between persecutor and persecuted. Ananias identifies the Lord who sent him as 'Jesus' (Iēsous), confirming for Saul the identity of the voice on the road. The mission is twofold: physical healing ('regain your sight') and spiritual empowerment ('be filled with the Holy Spirit'). Ananias obeys despite his fear — faith overcomes terror.
18. The 'scales' (lepides, 'flakes, scales') falling from Saul's eyes is both a physical healing and a spiritual metaphor — the blindness that covered his understanding is removed. The sequence is immediate: sight restored rising baptism. The brevity contrasts with the elaborate detail of the vision and conversion — Luke gives the baptism just four words (anastas ebaptisthē), suggesting it is the natural, expected response to faith.

19. After three days of fasting (v. 9), Saul eats and recovers physical strength (enischysen). He immediately joins 'the disciples in Damascus' (tōn en Damaskō mathētōn) — the very people he came to arrest. The persecutor has become a brother. The phrase 'several days' (hēmeras tinas) covers an unspecified period during which Saul transitions from persecutor to preacher.
20. The adverb eutheōs ('immediately') captures the urgency of Saul's new conviction. He preaches in the very synagogues (en tais synagōgais) where he had authority to make arrests. His message: Jesus is 'the Son of God' (ho huios tou theou) — this title appears only here in Acts and represents the highest christological claim. The man who came to destroy the Way now proclaims its central confession.
21. The audience's astonishment (existanto) mirrors the amazement that follows every major event in Acts. The verb porthēsas ('destroyed, ravaged') is a military term describing the sacking of a city — Saul's persecution was remembered as devastation. The rhetorical questions express the shock of radical transformation: the same man, the same name, but everything has reversed.
22. The verb enedynamouto ('was being strengthened, was growing in power') indicates progressive empowerment by the Spirit. The verb synechynnen ('was confounding, was bewildering') means he left them unable to respond — his arguments were irrefutable. The participle symbibazon ('proving, demonstrating, bringing together') suggests logical argumentation from Scripture — Saul was already using the method that would characterize his later ministry: demonstrating from the Hebrew Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.
23. The phrase 'many days' (hēmerai hikanai) covers a significant period. According to Galatians 1:17-18, Paul spent time in Arabia and then returned to Damascus before going to Jerusalem — a period of about three years. Luke compresses the timeline. The plot to kill Saul mirrors the plots against Jesus and the apostles — the pattern of rejection continues, but now directed at the former persecutor.
24. The conspirators watch the city gates (tas pylas) to prevent Saul's escape. According to 2 Corinthians 11:32-33, the ethnarch under King Aretas IV was guarding the city — suggesting cooperation between Jewish opponents and the Nabatean authorities. The surveillance is around the clock (hēmeras te kai nyktos), indicating serious intent.
25. The escape 'through the wall' (dia tou teichous) likely means through a window in a house built into the city wall (cf. Joshua 2:15, Rahab's house). The word spyridi ('large basket') is the same word used for the baskets at the feeding of the 4,000 (Mark 8:8). Paul himself recounts this humiliating escape in 2 Corinthians 11:33. The phrase 'his disciples' (hoi mathētai autou) is remarkable — Saul already has followers of his own.
25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Joshua 2:15 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. Saul's reception in Jerusalem is understandably hostile — 'they were all afraid of him' (pantes ephobounto auton). His reputation as a persecutor preceded him, and his conversion was too dramatic to be easily believed. The verb epeirazen ('tried, attempted') suggests repeated, unsuccessful efforts to gain acceptance. Saul is caught between two worlds: hunted by his former allies and mistrusted by his new brothers.
27. Barnabas, the 'Son of Encouragement' (4:36), lives up to his name by bridging the gap between Saul and the apostles. The verb epilabomenos ('took hold of, took charge of') indicates decisive action. Barnabas vouches for three things: the Damascus road vision, the Lord's direct speech to Saul, and Saul's bold preaching in Damascus. This mediation was crucial for Saul's acceptance and for the unity of the church. Barnabas's willingness to stake his reputation on a former persecutor is an act of extraordinary faith.
28. The phrase 'going in and going out' (eisporuomenos kai ekporuomenos) is the same Semitic idiom used in 1:21 for daily life and activity. Saul is now a full member of the Jerusalem community, speaking with parrhēsia ('boldness') — the same quality the church prayed for in 4:29.
29. Saul engages the same Greek-speaking Jews (Hellēnistas) who had opposed Stephen (6:9). The verb synezētei ('debated, disputed') suggests vigorous intellectual engagement. Their response — attempted murder (epecheiroun anein auton) — mirrors the response to Stephen. Saul has stepped into Stephen's role and faces Stephen's fate, creating a narrative parallel that Luke emphasizes.
30. The community protects Saul by evacuating him — first to Caesarea (the port city) and then to Tarsus (his hometown in Cilicia). According to Galatians 1:21, Paul went to 'the regions of Syria and Cilicia.' Saul disappears from the narrative until Barnabas retrieves him in 11:25-26. The 'silent years' in Tarsus were likely a period of further reflection and teaching preparation.
31. This is one of Luke's major summary statements. The singular 'church' (ekklēsia) encompasses the entire community across three regions — Judea, Galilee, and Samaria — indicating a unified body despite geographical spread. The description includes peace (eirēnē), edification (oikodomoumenē, 'being built up'), reverent living ('walking in the fear of the Lord'), and the Spirit's encouragement (paraklēsei tou hagiou pneumatou). Saul's departure from active persecution may have contributed to the period of peace.
32. The narrative shifts from Saul to Peter, who will dominate chapters 9-12 before Saul/Paul takes center stage. Peter is traveling (dierchomenon, 'passing through') the churches, exercising an itinerant oversight ministry. Lydda (modern Lod) was a town about 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem, on the road to Joppa and the coast.
33. The name Aeneas (Ainean) is Greek, suggesting he may have been a Hellenistic Jew or Gentile. His paralysis for eight years (ex etōn oktō) establishes the chronic, hopeless nature of his condition. The detail 'bedridden' (katakeimenon epi krabattou, 'lying on a pallet') emphasizes his complete immobility.
34. Peter explicitly credits Jesus Christ as the healer — 'Jesus Christ heals you' (iatai se Iēsous Christos) is present tense, indicating Jesus's active power in the present moment. The command 'make your bed' (strōson seautō) is a practical instruction that demonstrates the completeness of the healing — the man who has been bedridden for eight years can now perform ordinary domestic tasks. The healing is immediate (eutheōs), as in Jesus's own healings.

35. The miracle has a regional impact — not only Lydda but the entire Sharon Plain (ton Sarōna, the fertile coastal plain stretching from Joppa to Mount Carmel) responds. The phrase 'turned to the Lord' (epstrepsan epi ton kyrion) describes conversion, using the same language as the Old Testament prophets' call to return to God.
36. Tabitha is explicitly called a 'disciple' (mathētria) — the feminine form of mathētēs, used only here in the New Testament. Her Aramaic name Tabitha and its Greek equivalent Dorcas both mean 'gazelle.' Luke characterizes her by her deeds: 'full of good works and acts of charity' (plērēs ergōn agathōn kai eleēmōsynōn). She is defined not by theology but by practical compassion.
37. The washing of the body (lousantes) was the customary Jewish preparation for burial. Placing her in an upper room (hyperōō) rather than immediately burying her (Jewish custom normally required same-day burial) suggests the community hoped for intervention — they had heard that Peter was nearby in Lydda (v. 38).
38. Lydda was about 10-12 miles from Joppa, a distance easily traveled in a few hours. The urgency of the request — mē oknēsēs ('do not hesitate, do not delay') — suggests they hoped Peter could do something about Tabitha's death, though they do not explicitly ask for a resurrection.
39. The widows' display of Dorcas's handiwork is deeply moving — each garment (chitōnas, 'tunics/undergarments' and himatia, 'cloaks/outer garments') is a tangible memorial of her charity. The phrase 'while she was with them' (met' autōn ousa) is the language of grief — she is no longer with them. The scene echoes Jesus at Jairus's house, where mourners surrounded the dead girl.
40. Peter's actions closely follow Jesus's pattern at the raising of Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:51-56): he sends everyone out, addresses the dead person directly by name, and she rises. The Aramaic 'Tabitha, arise' (Tabitha, anastēthi) is phonetically similar to Jesus's 'Talitha, arise' (Talitha koum, Mark 5:41) — only one letter differs. Peter prays first (prosēuxato), acknowledging that the power comes from God, not from himself. The response is immediate: she opens her eyes and sits up.
41. Peter gives Tabitha his hand (dous autē cheira) — the same gesture he used to raise the lame man in 3:7. He then 'presented her alive' (parestēsen autēn zōsan) to the community — the word zōsan ('living') is emphatic. The distinction between 'the saints' (tous hagious, the believers generally) and 'the widows' (tas chēras, those who especially benefited from her ministry) suggests two overlapping groups.
42. As with Aeneas's healing (v. 35), the miracle produces widespread faith. The pattern repeats: sign testimony belief. Each miracle extends the reach of the gospel geographically and numerically.
43. Peter's lodging with Simon the tanner (Simōni byrsei) is theologically significant. Tanners worked with animal carcasses and were considered ritually unclean in Jewish tradition — their occupation required constant contact with dead animals. That Peter stays with a tanner suggests his purity boundaries are already loosening, preparing the reader for the revolutionary vision that will come in 10:9-16. Joppa (modern Jaffa/Tel Aviv) is on the Mediterranean coast, positioning Peter for the Gentile mission that is about to begin.

10

Summary: *Acts 10 narrates the pivotal conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion in Caesarea, and the dramatic expansion of the gospel to Gentiles. Cornelius, a God-fearer, receives a vision directing him to send for Peter. Meanwhile, Peter receives his own vision on a rooftop in Joppa: a sheet descending from heaven filled with unclean animals, with a voice commanding him to 'kill and eat.' Peter refuses three times, and the voice responds, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' When Cornelius's messengers arrive, the Spirit instructs Peter to go with them. Peter preaches at Cornelius's house, and while he is still speaking, the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentile listeners — astonishing the Jewish believers present. Peter orders their baptism.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *This chapter is the theological hinge of Acts. Luke devotes more space to this episode than to any other single event (it is retold in chapter 11 and referenced in chapter 15), signaling its centrality. The vision of unclean animals does not primarily concern dietary laws — Peter himself interprets it as God showing him 'not to call any person common or unclean' (10:28). The falling of the Spirit before baptism reverses the Pentecost pattern (baptism then Spirit) and removes any human gatekeeping from God's acceptance of Gentiles. The phrase 'God shows no partiality' (10:34) becomes a foundational principle of early Christian theology.*

Translation Friction: *The Greek koinos ('common') and akathartos ('unclean') carry specific Levitical connotations. Peter's vision does not explicitly abrogate Torah dietary laws — it redefines the categories of clean and unclean as they apply to persons. We render the Greek as given without resolving the ongoing theological debate about the vision's implications for food laws versus ethnic boundaries. The term phobeomai ton theon ('God-fearer') describes Cornelius's status as a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God without full conversion — a historically attested category in Second Temple Judaism.*

Connections: The Cornelius episode fulfills Jesus's commission in Acts 1:8 to be witnesses 'to the ends of the earth.' It connects to the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism (Acts 8:26-40) as a progressive opening to outsiders. Peter's sermon echoes the kerygma of Acts 2 but now explicitly includes 'every nation.' The vision of clean and unclean connects to Leviticus 11 and Mark 7:19. The Spirit's sovereign action parallels Joel 2:28-32, quoted at Pentecost.

¹Now there was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of the cohort called the Italian Cohort. ²He was a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave generously to the people, and prayed to God continually. ³About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God come in to him and say, "Cornelius." ⁴He stared at the angel in fear and said, "What is it, Lord?" The angel said to him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have ascended as a memorial offering before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa and summon a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." ⁷When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him. ⁸After explaining everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. ⁹The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet descending, being let down by its four corners to the earth. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³And a voice came to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything common or unclean." ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time: "What God has made clean, do not call common." ¹⁶This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken up into heaven. ¹⁷Now while Peter was puzzling over what the vision might mean, the men sent by Cornelius, having asked directions to Simon's house, stood at the gate. ¹⁸They called out and asked whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹While Peter was still reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Look, three men are looking for you. ²⁰Rise, go down, and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." ²¹Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason you have come?" ²²They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear a message from you." ²³So he invited them in and gave them lodging. The next day he rose and went with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴The following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet to worship him. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also just a man." ²⁷And as he talked with him, he went in and found many people gathered. ²⁸He said to them, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner. But God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹So when I was sent for, I came without objection. Now I ask, for what reason did you send for me?" ³⁰Cornelius said, "Four days ago at this very hour, I was praying at the ninth hour in my house, and a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹Stated, Cornelius, your prayer is listened to, and your alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. ³²Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is staying in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' ³³So I sent for you at once, and you were kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear everything that the Lord has commanded you to say." ³⁴So Peter opened his mouth and said, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵However, in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh moral integrity, is accepted with him. ³⁶As for the word that he sent to the children of Israel, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ — he is Lord of all — ³⁷You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed — ³⁸How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with authority — who traveled concerning doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. For God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses of everything he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰God raised him on the third day and allowed him to be seen openly. ⁴¹Not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, indeed to us, who did consume and feast with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." ⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were

hearing the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷"Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for some days.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. A centurion (hekatontarches) commanded approximately eighty soldiers within a cohort (speira). The Italian Cohort (speira Italiike) was a Roman auxiliary unit composed of Italian-born soldiers stationed in the province of Judea. Caesarea Maritima was the Roman administrative capital, making it a natural location for a Roman military officer.
2. The description 'fearing God' (phoboumenos ton theon) is a semi-technical term for Gentiles who worshiped Israel's God, observed certain Jewish practices, and attended synagogue, but had not undergone full proselyte conversion including circumcision. Archaeological evidence confirms this category in the Second Temple period.
3. The ninth hour (approximately 3 PM) was one of the established Jewish times of prayer. That Cornelius observes this practice confirms his devotion to Israel's God. The adverb phaneros ('clearly, openly') emphasizes that this was not a vague impression but a distinct vision.
4. The language of 'ascending as a memorial' (anebesan eis mnemosunon) echoes the Old Testament sacrificial vocabulary — particularly the memorial portion (azkarah) of grain offerings (Leviticus 2:2). Cornelius's prayers and charity are presented as a kind of sacrifice that has reached God, even though he is uncircumcised.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Leviticus 2:2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. Joppa (modern Jaffa/Yafo) lies approximately 30 miles south of Caesarea along the Mediterranean coast. The angel does not deliver the message himself but directs Cornelius to send for Peter — God orchestrates the encounter through human agents.
6. That Peter lodges with a tanner (burseus) is significant: tanning involved contact with animal carcasses, rendering tanners ritually unclean in Jewish practice. Peter is already crossing purity boundaries before his rooftop vision. Some manuscripts add 'he will tell you what you must do,' but the SBLGNT omits this addition.
7. The devout soldier (stratioten eusebe) reflects Cornelius's influence — his piety has shaped those under his command. The word proskarterounton ('attending, waiting on') suggests personal aides assigned to his service.
8. Cornelius shares the full vision with his servants before sending them — he does not merely issue orders but explains the divine directive. This transparency characterizes him throughout the narrative.
9. The sixth hour (approximately noon) was another established time of prayer. Flat-roofed houses in the ancient Mediterranean provided private space for prayer. Luke carefully synchronizes the two narratives — as Cornelius's men approach, Peter is being prepared through vision.
10. The word ekstasis ('trance, ecstasy') denotes a state in which normal consciousness is suspended and divine vision becomes possible. Peter's physical hunger becomes the occasion for a vision about food — God uses his immediate experience to communicate a deeper truth.
11. The opened heaven (ton ouranon aneogmenon) signals divine revelation — the same imagery appears at Jesus's baptism (Luke 3:21) and Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7:56). The 'four corners' suggest universality, representing all directions and all peoples.
12. The categories echo the creation account in Genesis 1:24-26 and the clean/unclean distinctions of Leviticus 11. The word 'all' (panta) is emphatic — the sheet contains every category without distinction, deliberately mixing what Torah separates.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 1:24-26. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
12. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Leviticus 11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
13. The command thuson ('slaughter, sacrifice') followed by phage ('eat') uses sacrificial vocabulary. The voice does not specify which animals to eat — the command is comprehensive and undifferentiated, challenging the entire clean/unclean classification system.
14. Peter's refusal combines two terms: koinon ('common,' i.e., not sanctified, profane) and akatharton ('unclean,' i.e., forbidden by Torah). His response echoes Ezekiel's protest when commanded to eat unclean food (Ezekiel 4:14). The juxtaposition of 'by no means' (medamos) with 'Lord' (kyrie) captures Peter's inner conflict — he refuses a divine command out of devotion to divine law.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Ezekiel 4:14. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. This is the interpretive key to the entire vision. The verb ekatharisen ('has made clean, has cleansed') is aorist, indicating a completed divine action. God has already declared clean what Peter still considers common. The imperative me koinou ('do not call common, do not treat as profane') directly countermands Peter's categories. As Peter himself will explain in verse 28, the vision is ultimately about people, not food.

16. The threefold repetition recalls Peter's threefold denial (Luke 22:54-62) and his threefold restoration (John 21:15-17). The pattern of three emphasizes divine persistence in overcoming human resistance. The sheet's return to heaven confirms its heavenly origin and authority.
17. The verb diaporeo ('be puzzled, be at a loss') shows that Peter does not immediately understand the vision's meaning. God's timing is precise: the vision's interpretation arrives not through explanation but through the arrival of Gentile visitors. The narrative structure itself teaches Peter — and the reader — what the vision means.
18. The verb xenizomai ('stay as a guest, be hosted') is related to xenos ('stranger, foreigner'). Peter is himself a guest — a stranger in someone else's house — when he is asked to go to another stranger's house. The theme of hospitality across boundaries pervades this chapter.
19. The Spirit speaks directly to Peter, connecting the vision to the arriving visitors. Some manuscripts read 'two men' instead of 'three' (accounting only for the servants, not the soldier). The SBLGNT reads 'three,' which matches the narrative in verse 7.
20. The participle diakrinomenos can mean 'doubting' or 'making distinctions' — both senses are relevant. Peter is not to doubt the Spirit's instruction, and he is not to make ethnic distinctions about his visitors. The Spirit claims responsibility: 'I have sent them' (ego apostalka autous), making the Gentile visitors divine emissaries.
21. Peter's obedience is immediate — he goes down from the rooftop without further argument. His self-identification ('I am the one you are looking for') and his question show readiness to hear what God has arranged.
22. The servants' description emphasizes Cornelius's credentials to reassure Peter: he is righteous, God-fearing, and respected even by Jews. The verb echrematisthe ('was directed, received a divine instruction') is used in the New Testament specifically for divine oracles and revelations (cf. Matthew 2:12, 22).
23. Peter's act of inviting Gentiles in and hosting them overnight is itself a boundary-crossing act — sharing table and lodging with Gentiles violated Jewish purity conventions. The 'brothers from Joppa' (six of them, according to 11:12) serve as witnesses to what will happen at Cornelius's house.
24. Cornelius's faith is shown by his preparation — he assembles a gathering before Peter arrives, fully trusting that God's plan will unfold. The phrase anagkaious philous ('close friends, intimate friends') suggests deep personal relationships. This is not an individual conversion but a household event.
25. The verb prosekunesen ('worshiped, did obeisance') can denote either divine worship or extreme honor toward a superior. Cornelius, accustomed to Roman hierarchy and perhaps viewing Peter as a divine messenger, offers an excessive gesture that Peter immediately corrects.
26. Peter's refusal of worship contrasts sharply with Herod's acceptance of divine honors in Acts 12:22-23. The phrase 'I myself am also a man' (kai ego autos anthropos eimi) emphasizes shared humanity — precisely the lesson Peter has just learned from his vision.
27. The casual verb synomilon ('conversing, talking together') suggests Peter and Cornelius speak as equals. Peter enters a Gentile house — a boundary he would not have crossed days earlier — and finds a large assembly waiting.
28. Peter now reveals his interpretation of the rooftop vision: it was about people, not food. The word athemiton ('unlawful, forbidden') does not refer to Torah prohibitions per se but to the extra-biblical purity traditions that had developed prohibiting table fellowship with Gentiles. Peter's declaration 'I should not call any person common or unclean' (medena koinon e akatharton legein anthropon) applies the categories of his vision directly to human beings.
29. The adverb anantirretos ('without objection, without contradiction') shows that Peter has accepted the vision's teaching fully, at least in principle. His question to Cornelius is not hesitation but an invitation for Cornelius to share his own divine encounter, establishing that both sides have been led by God.
30. Cornelius retells his vision, now describing the angel as 'a man in bright clothing' (aner en estheti lampra). The 'bright clothing' is a standard biblical marker for heavenly beings (cf. Luke 24:4, Acts 1:10). Some manuscripts add 'fasting and' before 'praying,' but the SBLGNT omits it.
31. The passive verbs — 'has been heard' (eisekousthe) and 'have been remembered' (emnesthesan) — use the divine passive: God is the one hearing and remembering. Cornelius's devotion has not gone unnoticed.
32. Cornelius faithfully recounts the angel's specific instructions, including the detail about the tanner's house by the sea. The precision of the directions confirms the vision's divine origin.
33. Cornelius's words 'we are all here in the presence of God' (enopion tou theou) frame the gathering as a sacred assembly. His readiness to hear 'everything commanded' shows complete openness to divine instruction. This is one of the most receptive audiences in all of Acts.
34. The phrase 'opened his mouth' (anoixas to stoma) is a Semitic idiom signaling a solemn, weighty declaration. The word prosopolemptes ('one who shows partiality, respecter of persons') appears only here in the New Testament. It derives from the Hebrew nasa panim ('to lift the face'), meaning to show favoritism. Peter's new understanding directly contradicts the ethnic exclusivism he held before the vision.
35. This verse does not teach salvation by works apart from the gospel — Peter is about to preach Christ. Rather, it declares that God's acceptance is not limited by ethnicity. The person who fears God and practices righteousness, in any nation, is one whom God welcomes to hear the gospel and receive its promise.

- 36.** The grammatical structure is difficult; the sentence begins here but does not resolve easily until verse 37. The parenthetical declaration 'he is Lord of all' (houtos estin panton kyrios) is theologically explosive in this setting: if Jesus is Lord of all, not just of Israel, then Gentiles are included in his lordship. The phrase 'good news of peace' (euangelizomenos eirenen) echoes Isaiah 52:7.
- 36.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 52:7. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 37.** Peter assumes his audience has heard about Jesus's ministry — the events were widely known. The summary that follows (vv. 37-43) is a compressed kerygma (gospel proclamation) covering Jesus's ministry, death, and resurrection, structured similarly to the Gospel of Mark.
- 38.** The verb echrisen ('anointed') connects Jesus to his title Christos ('Anointed One'). The anointing refers to Jesus's baptism and the Spirit's descent (Luke 3:22). The description of Jesus 'doing good and healing' (euergeton kai iomenos) is the most concise summary of Jesus's ministry in the New Testament. The phrase 'God was with him' echoes the Emmanuel theme.
- 39.** Peter claims eyewitness authority (hemeis martyres, 'we are witnesses'). The phrase 'hanging on a tree' (kremasantes epi xylou) alludes to Deuteronomy 21:22-23, where one hung on a tree is 'cursed by God.' This Old Testament allusion appears repeatedly in early Christian preaching (Acts 5:30, Galatians 3:13) as part of the scandal and theology of the cross.
- 39.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 21:22-23. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
- 40.** The contrast is sharp: 'they put him to death' (v. 39) but 'God raised him' (v. 40). Human violence is overturned by divine action. The verb edoken ('gave, caused') with emphane genesthai ('to become visible') suggests that the resurrection appearances were God's deliberate act of disclosure, not something Jesus did independently.
- 41.** The risen Jesus appeared not to the general public but to chosen witnesses (martusin tois prokecheirotonemenois). The detail of eating and drinking with the risen Jesus (synephagomen kai synepiomen) emphasizes the bodily, physical reality of the resurrection — this was not a ghost or a vision but a person who shared meals.
- 42.** Jesus is presented not only as Savior but as judge (krites) — the one who will evaluate all humanity, both living and dead. The verb horismenos ('appointed, designated') is related to the English word 'horizon' — God has set the boundary of final judgment in the person of Jesus.
- 43.** Peter grounds the gospel in the prophetic witness of the entire Old Testament — 'all the prophets' (pantes hoi prophetai). The offer of forgiveness is universal: 'everyone who believes' (panta ton pisteuonta), with no ethnic qualification. This is the climax of Peter's sermon, and the Spirit will dramatically confirm it in the next verse.
- 44.** The Spirit interrupts Peter's sermon — he is 'still speaking' (eti lalountos) when the Spirit falls. God does not wait for Peter to finish, issue an altar call, or baptize. The verb epepesen ('fell upon') conveys sudden, powerful, uninvited arrival. This is the Gentile Pentecost — the Spirit's sovereign act that settles the question of Gentile inclusion before any human decision can be made.
- 45.** The phrase 'circumcised believers' (hoi ek peritomes pistoi) identifies Peter's Jewish Christian companions. Their astonishment (exestesan) reveals how unexpected Gentile inclusion was — even after Peter's vision, they did not anticipate this. The verb ekkechutai ('has been poured out') echoes Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17-18, explicitly linking this event to Pentecost.
- 45.** [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Joel 2:28 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
- 46.** The evidence of the Spirit's presence is the same as at Pentecost: speaking in tongues (glossais) and praising God. This parallel is essential to Luke's argument — the same Spirit, the same manifestation, the same gift given to Gentiles as to Jews. No additional requirement can be imposed.
- 47.** Peter's rhetorical question expects a negative answer: no one can deny baptism to those whom God has already accepted. The phrase 'just as we have' (hos kai hemeis) is the decisive argument — the Gentiles' experience is identical to the apostles' own. Water baptism follows Spirit baptism as confirmation, not as prerequisite.
- 48.** Peter commands baptism 'in the name of Jesus Christ' (en to onomati Iesou Christou), the standard formula in Acts (cf. 2:38, 8:16, 19:5). The invitation to stay (epimeinai) indicates table fellowship — Peter remains in a Gentile household, sharing meals and life with the newly baptized. The barrier has been permanently broken.

11

Summary: *Acts 11 opens with Peter defending his visit to Cornelius's household before the Jerusalem church, which criticizes him for eating with uncircumcised Gentiles. Peter recounts his vision and the Spirit's falling on the Gentiles in sequence, and the critics are silenced, glorifying God that 'even to the Gentiles God has granted repentance leading to life.' The chapter then shifts to Antioch, where scattered believers from the persecution following Stephen's death begin preaching to Greeks (not just Jews). A thriving church emerges, and Barnabas is sent from Jerusalem to investigate. He recruits Saul from Tarsus, and together they teach in Antioch for a year. It is here that the disciples are first called 'Christians.' The chapter closes with the prophet Agabus predicting a famine, prompting the Antioch church to send relief to Judea through Barnabas and Saul.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Luke retells the Cornelius episode a second time through Peter's own lips — an unusually detailed repetition that underscores the event's theological centrality. The Jerusalem church's initial objection is not about doctrine but about table fellowship: 'You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.' The Antioch church represents a new model of community — Jew and Gentile worshiping together — and becomes the launching point for the Gentile mission. The name 'Christians' (Christianoi) appears here for the first time, coined by outsiders in Antioch, probably as a political designation meaning 'partisans of Christ.'*

Translation Friction: *The Greek Hellenistas in verse 20 is textually uncertain: some manuscripts read Hellenas ('Greeks,' i.e., Gentiles), while others read Hellenistas ('Hellenists,' i.e., Greek-speaking Jews). The SBLGNT reads Hellenistas, but the narrative logic — contrasting these recipients with the 'Jews only' of verse 19 — strongly favors the meaning 'Greek-speaking Gentiles' or simply 'Greeks.' We follow the SBLGNT text while noting the issue. The famine under Claudius (v. 28) is historically attested by Josephus and Suetonius, though its exact dating is debated.*

Connections: *Peter's defense echoes and completes the Cornelius narrative of chapter 10. The Antioch church connects to the scattering of Acts 8:1-4 — persecution intended to destroy the movement instead spreads it. The Barnabas-Saul partnership anticipates the first missionary journey (Acts 13). The famine relief establishes the pattern of Gentile churches supporting the Jerusalem church (cf. Romans 15:25-27, 2 Corinthians 8-9). The name 'Christians' connects to the broader Roman political context of the early church.*

¹Now the apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ²So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, ³Indeed, declaring, you wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. ⁴But Peter began and explained it to them step by step, saying, ⁵"I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision: something like a large sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came right down to me. ⁶Looking at it closely, I observed and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of the air. ⁷I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' ¹⁰This happened three times, and then everything was pulled back up into heaven. ¹¹And at that very moment, three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where we were. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³He told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter. ¹⁴He will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' ¹⁵As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?" ¹⁸When they heard these things, they fell silent and glorified God, saying, "Then God has granted even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life." ¹⁹Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰But among them were some men from Cyprus and Cyrene who, when they came to Antioch, began speaking to the

Greeks also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus as good news. ²¹The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²²The report about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose of heart, ²⁴Since he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith — and much those present was added to the Lord. ²⁵Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶After he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it happened that, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the followers were called Christians first in Antioch. ²⁷In those days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that a severe famine was about to come over the whole inhabited world — this took place during the reign of Claudius. ²⁹So the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The news travels fast: the phrase 'the Gentiles also' (kai ta ethne) carries the force of surprise — this was unprecedented. The verb edexanto ('received, welcomed') implies active acceptance, not mere passive hearing.
2. The phrase hoi ek peritomes ('those of the circumcision') here denotes Jewish believers who insisted on maintaining Jewish identity markers, particularly circumcision, as requirements for fellowship. The verb diekrinonto ('contended, criticized, took issue') indicates serious objection, not casual questioning.
3. The charge focuses on table fellowship (synepheges, 'you ate with'), not on preaching or baptism. Eating together implied social equality and religious communion. The phrase 'uncircumcised men' (andras akrobystian echontas, literally 'men having foreskin') is deliberately blunt, emphasizing the boundary Peter crossed.
4. The adverb kathexes ('in order, step by step') indicates a careful, sequential retelling. Peter does not argue from theology but from narrative — he lets the events speak for themselves.
5. Peter retells his vision from Acts 10:9-16 in the first person. The detail 'it came right down to me' (elthen achri emou) personalizes the vision — this was directed specifically at Peter.
6. Peter adds 'wild beasts' (theria) to the retelling, a detail not explicitly mentioned in 10:12 in all manuscripts. The comprehensive list emphasizes the indiscriminate mixture of clean and unclean creatures.
7. The command is identical to 10:13. In the retelling, Peter faithfully reproduces the divine directive that shocked him.
8. Peter's retelling makes the refusal even more emphatic with 'entered into my mouth' (eiselthen eis to stoma mou) — a visceral way of expressing his lifelong observance of dietary law.
9. The addition of 'from heaven' (ek tou ouranou) emphasizes the divine authority behind the command. The principle stands: God's cleansing overrides human categories of purity.
10. The verb anespasthe ('was pulled up, was drawn up') differs slightly from 10:16's anelemphthe but conveys the same idea. The threefold pattern confirms divine insistence.
11. The timing — 'at that very moment' (exautes) — underscores divine orchestration. The vision and the visitors arrive in perfect coordination.
12. Peter specifies 'these six brothers' (hoi hex adelphoi houtoi), indicating they are present in Jerusalem as witnesses. Their presence gives Peter's testimony legal weight — multiple witnesses confirm the events. The phrase 'making no distinction' (meden diakrinanta) can also mean 'without hesitation,' carrying both meanings simultaneously.
13. Peter now incorporates Cornelius's vision into his defense. The double vision — one to Cornelius, one to Peter — demonstrates that God was working from both sides simultaneously.
14. This detail — that Peter's message would bring salvation to Cornelius's entire household — is not explicitly stated in chapter 10's account of the angel's message. Peter either recalls additional detail or interprets the angel's directive in light of what subsequently happened. The household salvation motif is prominent in Acts (cf. 16:15, 31).
15. The phrase 'at the beginning' (en arche) refers to Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter draws a direct line from the original outpouring of the Spirit to this Gentile experience. The parallel is exact and undeniable: same Spirit, same manifestation, same divine initiative.
16. Peter quotes Jesus's words from Acts 1:5. The remembering (emnesthe) is prompted by the Spirit's own action — the event interprets the prophecy. The distinction between water baptism and Spirit baptism is not a contrast between inferior and superior but between preparation and fulfillment.
17. Peter's argument is simple and irrefutable: God acted first, giving the Gentiles the 'same gift' (ten isen dorean). To refuse them would be to oppose God himself. The rhetorical question 'who was I to stand in God's way?' (ego tis emen dynatos kolusai ton theon) is Peter's strongest argument — not theological reasoning but divine fait accompli.

- 18.** The critics' response moves from silence (*hesuchasan*) to praise (*edoxasan*) — a dramatic reversal. The phrase 'repentance leading to life' (*ten metanoian eis zoen*) describes repentance not merely as a human act of turning but as a divine gift (*edoken*, 'granted, gave'). God gives repentance; he does not merely demand it.
- 19.** Luke picks up the thread from Acts 8:1-4. The scattering (*diasparentes*) that began with Stephen's martyrdom has produced a diaspora mission, but initially only to Jews. Antioch, the third-largest city in the Roman Empire after Rome and Alexandria, will become the strategic center for the Gentile mission.
- 20.** The SBLGNT reads *Hellenistas*, which typically means 'Greek-speaking Jews' (as in 6:1), but the context — contrasting with 'Jews only' in verse 19 — demands the meaning 'Greek-speaking Gentiles' or simply 'Greeks.' Some manuscripts read *Hellenas* ('Greeks'), which may be the original reading. These unnamed missionaries from Cyprus and Cyrene initiate the Gentile mission at Antioch independently of the Cornelius episode.
- 21.** The phrase 'the hand of the Lord' (*cheir kyriou*) is a Hebraic idiom for divine power and blessing, frequent in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Kings 18:46, Ezra 7:9). The combination of 'believed' (*pisteusas*) and 'turned' (*epetrepsen*) describes conversion as both cognitive assent and life reorientation.
- 21.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 1 Kings 18:46. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 21.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezra 7:9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 22.** Jerusalem sends Barnabas — not to suppress but to assess and encourage. The choice of Barnabas is strategic: he is a Levite from Cyprus (4:36), giving him cultural affinity with the Cypriots who started the work, and his name means 'son of encouragement.' His generous spirit (4:37) makes him ideal for this mission.
- 23.** Barnabas 'saw the grace of God' (*idon ten charin tou theou*) — grace was visible in the transformed community. The wordplay between *charin* ('grace') and *echare* ('was glad, rejoiced') connects divine grace to human joy. His encouragement to 'remain faithful' (*prosmenein*) with 'purpose of heart' (*prothesei tes kardias*) addresses the challenge of perseverance in a new and vulnerable community.
- 24.** Luke's character summary of Barnabas — 'a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith' — is one of the highest commendations in Acts. Similar language is used of Stephen (6:5). The passive 'were added to the Lord' (*prosetehe to kyrio*) credits God with the growth, not Barnabas.
- 25.** The verb *anazesai* ('to look for, to search out') suggests Saul was not easily found — Tarsus was a large city and several years had passed since Saul's departure from Jerusalem (9:30). Barnabas's initiative in recruiting Saul is one of the most consequential acts in church history.
- 26.** The name *Christianoi* ('Christians,' literally 'Christ-partisans' or 'those belonging to Christ') follows the Latin pattern of political party names (e.g., *Herodianoi*, *Kaisarianoi*). It was likely coined by Roman authorities or the general public in Antioch as a label for this new group. The term appears only three times in the New Testament (here, 26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16). That it was a name given by outsiders, not self-chosen, suggests the movement had become publicly visible and distinct from Judaism.
- 27.** The verb *kathelthon* ('came down') reflects the geographical reality — Jerusalem is at a higher elevation — and the theological convention that one always 'goes up' to Jerusalem and 'comes down' from it. The presence of prophets (*prophetai*) in the early church is well attested (cf. 13:1, 15:32, 21:10).
- 28.** Agabus appears again in 21:10-11, predicting Paul's arrest. The phrase 'the whole inhabited world' (*holen ten oikoumenen*) is a standard expression for the Roman Empire. Claudius reigned AD 41-54. Josephus records a severe famine in Judea around AD 46-47 (*Antiquities* 20.49-53), and Suetonius mentions food shortages under Claudius. Luke's parenthetical note — 'this took place' — confirms the prophecy's fulfillment.
- 29.** The phrase 'each according to his ability' (*kathos euporeto tis*) establishes proportional giving as the standard — not equal amounts but equal sacrifice. The Gentile church in Antioch sends aid to the Jewish church in Judea, reversing the expected direction of benefaction and demonstrating the unity of the body across ethnic lines.
- 30.** This is the first mention of 'elders' (*presbyterous*) in the Jerusalem church, indicating an organizational structure developing beyond the apostles alone. Barnabas and Saul serve as the delivery agents, a mission that brings them to Jerusalem (12:25) and sets the stage for their commissioning in chapter 13.

12

Summary: *Acts 12 narrates the persecution of the church under Herod Agrippa I. James the brother of John is executed by the sword — the first apostolic martyrdom. Herod arrests Peter during Passover, intending to bring him to trial afterward. The church prays earnestly for Peter. An angel appears in the prison at night, wakes Peter, causes his chains to fall off, and leads him past the guards and through the iron gate into the city. Peter goes to the house of Mary, mother of John Mark, where the church is gathered in prayer. The servant Rhoda recognizes his voice but in her joy leaves him standing at the gate. The chapter concludes with Herod's gruesome death: accepting divine acclamation from the crowd, he is struck down by an angel and eaten by worms.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The contrast between James and Peter is stark and unexplained: James is killed, Peter is rescued, and Luke offers no theological explanation for why one apostle dies and another is delivered. This narrative honesty is striking. The scene at Mary's house contains rare humor in Acts — the praying church refuses to believe their prayer has been answered, insisting it must be Peter's angel rather than Peter himself. Herod Agrippa I's death is independently confirmed by Josephus (Antiquities 19.343-350), who describes the same event at Caesarea with additional details.*

Translation Friction: *Herod Agrippa I (here called simply 'Herod') was the grandson of Herod the Great and ruled Judea from AD 41-44. His persecution of the church was politically motivated — currying favor with the Jewish leadership. The 'angel' (angelos) who rescues Peter and the 'angel of the Lord' who strikes Herod represent two sides of divine intervention: deliverance and judgment. The prayer gathering at Mary's house provides the earliest glimpse of a house church in Jerusalem.*

Connections: *James's execution fulfills Jesus's prediction that James and John would share his cup of suffering (Mark 10:39). Peter's deliverance from prison echoes the apostles' earlier prison escape (Acts 5:19-20). Herod's death by accepting divine honors contrasts with Peter's refusal of worship from Cornelius (10:25-26). The mention of John Mark (v. 12) introduces a figure who will feature prominently in 13:13 and 15:37-39.*

¹About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ²He executed James, John's brother by the sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of four soldiers each to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was being made to God by the church. ⁶The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷And suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. ⁸The angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. Then the angel said, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹He went out and followed, and he did not know that what was happening through the angel was real — he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰When they had passed the first guard and the second, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." ¹²When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³When he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴Recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she did not open the gate but ran inside and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. ¹⁵They said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept insisting that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." ¹⁶But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door, they saw him and were astonished. ¹⁷Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Report these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place. ¹⁸When day came, there was no small commotion among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹Herod searched for him and could not find him, and after examining the guards, he ordered them to be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. ²⁰No

w Herod was furious with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's territory for food. ²¹On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat on the tribunal, and delivered a public address to them. ²²And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" ²³Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died. ²⁴But the word of God continued to increase and spread. ²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their mission of relief, bringing with them John who was called Mark.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The phrase 'laid violent hands on' (epebalen tas cheiras kakosai) combines physical seizure with intent to harm. 'Herod the king' is Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, who ruled all of Judea from AD 41-44 under Emperor Claudius.
2. James son of Zebedee becomes the first of the Twelve to be martyred. Luke reports it in a single sentence with no elaboration — a striking restraint. Execution by sword (machaira) was considered a more honorable death than crucifixion. This James should be distinguished from James the brother of Jesus, who leads the Jerusalem church (15:13, 21:18).
3. Herod's motivation is political popularity (areston estin tois Ioudaiois, 'it was pleasing to the Jews'). The parenthetical note about the Feast of Unleavened Bread (immediately following Passover) creates a parallel with Jesus's arrest during the same festival season. The timing also explains why Herod delays the trial — he will not execute during the holy week.
4. Sixteen soldiers (four squads of four, tessarsin tetradiois) were assigned to Peter — an extraordinary security measure, likely prompted by the earlier escape in Acts 5:19. The KJV's 'Easter' is anachronistic; the Greek pascha refers to the Jewish Passover festival. Herod plans a public trial for maximum political effect.
5. The contrast is dramatic: 'Peter was kept in prison, but...' (ho menoun... de...) — human power holds Peter, divine power is invoked through prayer. The adverb ektenos ('earnestly, fervently, unceasingly') conveys intensity and persistence, not merely duration.
6. Peter sleeps soundly on the eve of his expected execution — a detail that suggests either extraordinary faith or exhaustion, likely both. He is chained to a soldier on each side (standard Roman practice for high-security prisoners), with additional guards at the door. The security emphasis makes the coming escape unmistakably supernatural.
7. The angel's appearance is accompanied by light (phos elampen) — a theophanic marker. The angel must physically strike (pataxas) Peter's side to wake him, reinforcing how deeply he was sleeping. The chains falling (exepesan hai haluseis) without waking the soldiers is the first of several miraculous details that bypass the elaborate security.
8. The step-by-step instructions — belt, sandals, cloak — suggest Peter is disoriented and needs explicit guidance. The detail is vivid and personal, likely reflecting Peter's own retelling of the experience. Each instruction must be given individually.
9. Peter's confusion between reality and vision (horama) is psychologically realistic. The experience is so extraordinary that he cannot distinguish it from a dream. Luke's honest portrayal of Peter's disorientation adds credibility to the account.
10. The word automate ('by itself, of its own accord') — from which English derives 'automatic' — describes the iron gate opening without human or visible cause. The angel departs abruptly (eutheos apeste) once Peter is safely in the city, having completed the rescue mission.
11. The phrase 'came to himself' (en heauto genomenos) marks the transition from trance-like confusion to clear awareness. Peter recognizes both the divine source of his rescue and its double significance: deliverance from Herod's power and from the people's expectation of a public execution.
12. Mary's house apparently served as a meeting place for the Jerusalem church — she was likely a woman of means to host such gatherings. John Mark (Ioannou tou epikaloumenou Markou) is traditionally identified as the author of the Gospel of Mark. He is Barnabas's cousin (Colossians 4:10) and will accompany Barnabas and Saul on their first journey (13:5).
13. The name Rhode ('Rhoda') means 'rose.' The paidiske ('servant girl') answering the outer gate suggests a household of some size and status. The detail of her name suggests she was known to the early Christian community and may have been a source for this account.
14. The scene is vividly comic: Rhoda recognizes Peter's voice, becomes so excited (apo tes charas, 'from joy') that she forgets to open the gate, and runs to tell the others while Peter remains standing outside. Luke preserves this detail — likely from eyewitness testimony — with evident delight.
15. The church that has been praying for Peter's deliverance refuses to believe it has happened. The accusation mainei ('you are mad, you are out of your mind') and the alternative explanation 'it is his angel' (ho angelos estin autou) reflect the Jewish belief that each person has a guardian angel who can appear in their likeness. The irony is rich: they would rather believe in an angel's appearance than in an answered prayer.
16. Peter's persistent knocking (epemenen krouon) while the church debates inside adds to the scene's humor and humanity. Their astonishment (exestesan) upon seeing him demonstrates that they were praying without fully expecting the answer they received.

17. Peter gestures for silence (*kataseisas te cheiri sigan*) — the excited group needs calming. The 'James' referenced is James the brother of Jesus, who has emerged as the leader of the Jerusalem church after the apostle James's execution. Peter's departure to 'another place' (*heteron topon*) is deliberately vague — Luke either does not know or chooses not to reveal where Peter went, perhaps for security reasons.
18. Luke's characteristic litotes — 'no small commotion' (*tarachos ouk oligos*) — means extreme agitation. Under Roman military law, guards who lost a prisoner could face the prisoner's punishment, making their distress a matter of life and death.
19. The verb *apachthenai* ('to be led away') is a euphemism for execution — the guards pay with their lives for Peter's escape. Herod's move from Jerusalem to Caesarea shifts the scene to the Roman administrative capital, where his own death will follow.
20. Tyre and Sidon were Phoenician coastal cities dependent on Galilee's agricultural production for grain — an economic reality attested since the time of Solomon (1 Kings 5:9-11). Their need for peace (*eirenēn*) was economic, not military. Blastus's role as chamberlain (*epi tou koitonos*, literally 'over the bedchamber') gave him personal access to Herod.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 1 Kings 5:9-11 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. Josephus describes the same scene: Herod wore a garment made entirely of silver that glittered spectacularly in the morning sun (*Antiquities* 19.344). The *bema* ('tribunal, judgment seat') was the raised platform from which official pronouncements were made.
22. The crowd's acclamation — 'a god's voice, not a man's' (*theou phone kai ouk anthropou*) — is blasphemous flattery. In the Roman imperial context, divine honors for rulers were common, but Jewish sensibility found such claims abhorrent. Herod's failure to deflect this worship seals his fate.
23. The same angelic agency that rescued Peter now strikes Herod. The stated reason — 'he did not give God the glory' (*ouk edoken ten doxan to theo*) — is the opposite of Peter's response in 10:26 when Cornelius worshiped him. The detail of being 'eaten by worms' (*skolekobros*) describes a horrifying death. Josephus similarly reports that Herod was seized with sudden abdominal pain and died five days later (*Antiquities* 19.346-350). Herod Agrippa I died in AD 44.
24. Luke's summary statement contrasts human power with divine word: Herod dies, but the word grows. The verbs *euxanen* ('increased') and *eplethuneto* ('multiplied') are growth language that personifies the gospel as a living, expanding force. This is one of Luke's periodic progress reports (cf. 6:7, 9:31, 16:5, 19:20).
25. Some manuscripts read 'returned to Jerusalem' (*eis Ierousalem*) and others 'returned from Jerusalem' (*ex Ierousalem*). The SBLGNT reads *eis*, but the context — they had gone to Jerusalem with the famine relief (11:30) — means they are returning from Jerusalem to Antioch. They bring John Mark with them, setting the stage for the first missionary journey in chapter 13.

13

Summary: *Acts 13 marks the beginning of the first missionary journey. The Holy Spirit commissions Barnabas and Saul from the church at Antioch. They travel to Cyprus, where they encounter the sorcerer Bar-Jesus (Elymas) and the proconsul Sergius Paulus. From this point, Saul begins using his Roman name Paul, and Paul emerges as the mission's leader. They sail to Perga in Pamphylia, where John Mark departs. In Pisidian Antioch, Paul delivers a major synagogue sermon surveying Israel's history from the exodus through David to Jesus, declaring forgiveness of sins through Christ and warning of judgment on those who reject the message. Many respond positively, but Jewish opposition arises, and Paul and Barnabas announce their turn to the Gentiles, citing Isaiah 49:6. The Gentiles rejoice, but the missionaries are expelled from the region.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch is the longest recorded speech in Acts directed at a Jewish audience and serves as Luke's model for Paul's synagogue preaching. It parallels Peter's Pentecost sermon in structure but with distinctly Pauline emphases: justification, the inadequacy of the law of Moses, and the prophetic warning against rejection. The transition from 'Saul' to 'Paul' occurs mid-narrative (13:9) without explanation — Luke simply begins using the Roman name, signaling the shift toward the Gentile world. The declaration 'we are turning to the Gentiles' (13:46) is one of the most pivotal statements in Acts.*

Translation Friction: *The identity of 'Simeon called Niger' (v. 1) has generated speculation — Niger means 'black' in Latin, suggesting African origin. Lucius of Cyrene is North African. Manaen is described as a *syntrophos* ('childhood companion') of Herod Antipas. This leadership team reflects remarkable ethnic and social diversity. Paul's sermon condenses Israelite history selectively, and his claim that the law of Moses could not justify (v. 39) introduces Pauline soteriology into the narrative. The quotation composite in verses 33-35 draws from Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, and Psalm 16.*

Connections: The commissioning scene (vv. 1-3) parallels Isaiah 6 and Jeremiah 1 as a prophetic sending. Paul's historical survey echoes Stephen's speech in Acts 7. The citation of Isaiah 49:6 ('a light for the Gentiles') connects to Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2:32. The pattern of synagogue preaching followed by Jewish rejection and Gentile reception becomes the template for Paul's ministry throughout Acts.

¹Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been a childhood companion of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant. ⁶When they had traveled through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain man, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, ⁷which was with the deputy of the region, Sergius Paulus, a prudent person. Who named for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to listen the message of God. ⁸But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰stated, O full of all cunning and all mischief, you child of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, wilt you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹And now, look, the hand of the Lord is against you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell on him, and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had happened, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. ¹³Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. But John left them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴But they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue leaders sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, speak." ¹⁶So Paul stood up and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. ¹⁷The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. ¹⁸And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹After destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance ²⁰following that he offered to them judges concerning the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. ²¹Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. ²²After removing him, he raised up David as their king, to whom he also bore witness and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' ²³From this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴Before his coming, John had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵As John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. But after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.' ²⁶Brothers, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. ²⁷For the residents of Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸Though they found no grounds for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰However, God brought him back to life. ³¹He was seen numerous days of them which arrived up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people. ³²And we bring you the good news that the promise made to the fathers ³³God has fulfilled this for us, their children, by raising up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.' ³⁴And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no longer to return to decay, he has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' ³⁵Therefore he also says in another psalm, 'You will not let your Holy One see decay.' ³⁶For David, after he had served God's purpose in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw decay, ³⁷yet he, whom God raised again, noticed no corruption. ³⁸Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹by him all that trust are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. ⁴⁰Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the prophets should come about: ⁴¹'Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish, for I am doing a work in your days, a

work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you."⁴² As they went out, the people urged them to speak about these things the next Sabbath.⁴³ When the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles.⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.⁵¹ So they shook the dust off their feet against them and went to Iconium.⁵² And with the holy ghost, and the followers were filled with joy.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The leadership team reflects extraordinary diversity: Barnabas (a Levite from Cyprus), Simeon Niger (likely of African descent, the Latin cognomen Niger meaning 'black'), Lucius of Cyrene (North African), Manaen (syntrophos, 'foster brother' or 'childhood companion' of Herod Antipas, thus from the ruling class), and Saul (a Pharisee from Tarsus). Barnabas stands first, Saul last — an order that will soon reverse.
2. The verb leitourgounton ('worshiping, ministering') is the root of 'liturgy' and denotes formal, communal worship. The Spirit speaks directly — how is not specified (through a prophet, an audible voice, or communal discernment). The command 'set apart for me' (aphorಿಸate de moi) echoes God's call of the prophets (cf. Jeremiah 1:5, Galatians 1:15 where Paul uses the same verb of his own calling).
2. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Jeremiah 1:5. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
3. The laying on of hands (epithentes tas cheiras) is a commissioning gesture, not ordination in the later ecclesiastical sense. Barnabas and Saul are already prophets and teachers (v. 1); the church is confirming and releasing what the Spirit has directed. The verb apelusan ('released, sent away') suggests both permission and blessing.
4. Luke attributes the sending to the Holy Spirit (ekpempthentes hypo tou hagiou pneumatou), not merely to the church. Seleucia was Antioch's port city on the Mediterranean, about sixteen miles west. Cyprus was Barnabas's homeland (4:36), making it a natural first destination.
5. Salamis was the largest city on the eastern coast of Cyprus. The plural 'synagogues' indicates a significant Jewish population. The pattern of beginning in synagogues becomes standard Pauline practice. John (Mark) serves as hyperetes ('assistant, attendant'), a role that may have included practical arrangements and possibly catechetical instruction.
6. Paphos was the Roman capital of Cyprus, on the western coast. Bar-Jesus (Bariesou, 'son of Jesus/Joshua') is identified with three descriptors: magos ('sorcerer, magician'), pseudoprophetes ('false prophet'), and Ioudaios ('Jewish'). A Jewish man practicing sorcery and claiming prophetic gifts violated Torah prohibitions (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Deuteronomy 18:10-12. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. Luke correctly identifies the governor as anthupatos ('proconsul'), the title for governors of senatorial provinces — Cyprus had been transferred to senatorial control in 22 BC. The name Sergius Paulus is attested in inscriptions. His description as sunetos ('intelligent, discerning') distinguishes him from Bar-Jesus's influence.
8. The name Elymas (Elymas) is presented as a translation or equivalent of his function, though the etymology is uncertain — it may derive from an Aramaic or Arabic root meaning 'wise man' or 'sorcerer.' His opposition is strategic: if the proconsul converts, Elymas loses his position and influence.
9. This is the pivotal moment when Luke introduces the name Paul (Paulos). The parenthetical 'who was also called Paul' (ho kai Paulos) indicates he had both names throughout — Saul was his Jewish name, Paul his Roman cognomen. From this point forward, Luke uses only 'Paul.' The transition occurs as Paul confronts a Roman-world figure, signaling the Gentile orientation of his mission.
10. Paul's denunciation is fierce and deliberate. The title 'son of the devil' (huie diabolou) is a pointed reversal of Bar-Jesus's name ('son of Jesus/salvation') — he is actually a son of the adversary. The phrase 'making crooked the straight paths of the Lord' (diastrephon tas hodous tou kyriou tas eutheias) alludes to Isaiah 40:3-4 and its call to prepare straight paths.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 40:3-4 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.

11. The punishment is temporary ('for a time,' *achri kairou*) and fitting: the one who sought to keep others in spiritual darkness is plunged into physical darkness. There may be a parallel with Paul's own experience of temporary blindness on the Damascus road (9:8-9), suggesting the possibility of eventual restoration and conversion.
12. The proconsul's faith is prompted by what he saw (*idon to gegonos*) but grounded in the teaching (*didache tou kyriou*). Luke distinguishes between the miracle as attention-getting and the teaching as the actual content of faith. This is the first conversion of a Roman official in Paul's ministry.
13. The phrase 'Paul and his companions' (*hoi peri Paulon*) marks the shift in leadership — Barnabas is now subordinate. John Mark's departure (*apochoresas*, 'having departed, withdrawn') is recorded without explanation, but Paul later viewed it as a desertion serious enough to cause a sharp disagreement with Barnabas (15:37-39). Perga was about eight miles inland from the coast of Pamphylia in southern Asia Minor.
14. Pisidian Antioch (distinct from Syrian Antioch) was a Roman colony in the interior of Asia Minor, about 100 miles north of Perga through difficult mountain terrain. Sitting down in the synagogue indicates their role as visitors; speakers were typically seated during instruction.
15. The synagogue service included readings from the Torah (*nomos*) and the Prophets (*prophetai*), followed by an invitation for qualified visitors to offer a 'word of encouragement' (*logos parakleseos*). This was standard practice and gave Paul a natural platform. The plural *archisynagogoi* ('synagogue leaders') suggests a council of leaders rather than a single ruler.
16. Paul addresses two groups: 'Men of Israel' (ethnic Jews) and 'those who fear God' (God-fearing Gentiles who attended synagogue). The dual address reflects the mixed audience and anticipates the sermon's universal conclusion. The gesture of motioning with the hand (*kataseisas te cheiri*) is characteristic of Paul in Acts (cf. 21:40, 26:1).
17. Paul begins his historical survey with the exodus, the foundational event of Israelite identity. The phrase 'with uplifted arm' (*meta brachionos hupselou*) is a classic Old Testament metaphor for divine power in the exodus (cf. Exodus 6:6, Deuteronomy 5:15). The word *paroikia* ('sojourning, stay as foreigners') emphasizes Israel's alien status in Egypt.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 6:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Deuteronomy 5:15. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. The verb *etropophoresn* has two possible readings: *tropophoresn* ('bore with their ways, endured their behavior') or *trophophoresn* ('nourished, cared for them'). The SBLGNT reads the former, emphasizing God's patience with Israel's wilderness rebellion. The forty-year period is standard (cf. Numbers 14:34, Deuteronomy 8:2).
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Numbers 14:34 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Deuteronomy 8:2 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. The seven nations of Canaan are listed in Deuteronomy 7:1. The verb *katekleronomesen* ('gave as an inheritance, allotted') connects the land to the covenant promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21).
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 7:1. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
19. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Genesis 15:18-21. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
20. The 450 years likely covers the period from the patriarchs through the judges, not the judges period alone. The chronology is approximate and theological rather than strictly historical. Samuel serves as the bridge between the judges and the monarchy.
21. Paul, himself from the tribe of Benjamin and originally named Saul, mentions his royal namesake. Saul's forty-year reign is not stated in the Old Testament but is attested by Josephus (*Antiquities* 6.378). The people's request for a king is presented negatively in 1 Samuel 8:4-22.
21. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes 1 Samuel 8:4-22. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
22. Paul's quotation combines Psalm 89:20 ('I have found David'), 1 Samuel 13:14 ('a man after my heart'), and Isaiah 44:28 ('who will do all my will') into a composite testimony. The phrase 'a man after my heart' (*andra kata ten kardian mou*) is the theological apex of the historical survey — David's heart orientation toward God is the quality that defines his kingship.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on 1 Samuel 13:14. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Psalm 89:20. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
22. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 44:28. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.

23. The entire historical survey has been leading to this declaration: Jesus is David's descendant and Israel's promised Savior. The phrase *kat' epangelian* ('according to promise') grounds Jesus's coming in God's covenant faithfulness to David (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The title *sotera* ('Savior') connects to the meaning of Jesus's name ('the LORD saves').
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 2 Samuel 7:12-16 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. John the Baptist serves as the herald (*prokeryxantos*, 'having proclaimed beforehand') who prepared for Jesus's arrival. The 'baptism of repentance' (*baptisma metanoias*) was John's distinctive rite, calling Israel to prepare for the coming Messiah.
25. John explicitly denies being the Messiah and points to one greater. The image of untying sandals describes the task of the lowest slave — John considers himself unworthy even of this menial service for the one who follows him. The verb *eplhrou* ('was completing, was finishing') uses the same root as 'fulfill,' suggesting John's ministry had a divinely appointed course (*dromon*, 'race, course').
26. Paul again addresses both groups — Jewish descendants of Abraham and God-fearing Gentiles. The phrase 'message of this salvation' (*ho logos tes soterias tautes*) identifies the gospel as the fulfillment of the salvation story Paul has been narrating. The passive 'has been sent' (*exapestale*) indicates divine initiative.
27. The irony is profound: those who read the prophets every Sabbath fulfilled the prophets' words by rejecting the one the prophets foretold. Their ignorance (*agnoesantes*) does not absolve them but paradoxically accomplishes God's purpose. Paul presents the crucifixion as both human failure and divine plan.
28. The absence of legitimate charges (*medemianaitian thanatou*, 'no cause of death') echoes the trial narratives in the Gospels where Pilate repeatedly declares Jesus innocent. The request for execution despite innocence heightens the injustice that God's plan nevertheless encompasses.
29. Again, the 'tree' (*xylon*) alludes to Deuteronomy 21:22-23. The verb *etelesn* ('completed, fulfilled') shows that even the enemies' actions accomplished what Scripture had foretold. Paul compresses the burial narrative into a single clause, moving quickly toward the resurrection.
29. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Deuteronomy 21:22-23. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
30. The decisive 'but' (*de*) marks the reversal: human authorities condemned him, but God raised him. This is the kerygmatic core — the same proclamation found in every apostolic sermon in Acts.
31. Paul appeals to the testimony of eyewitnesses (*martyres*) who are still alive and active. He notably does not include himself among the Galilean witnesses, though he will later appeal to his own Damascus road encounter (26:12-18). The phrase 'many days' (*epi hemeras pleious*) refers to the forty-day period mentioned in Acts 1:3.
32. The verb *euangelizometha* ('we bring good news, we preach the gospel') gives the formal content of the mission: the promise to the patriarchs has been fulfilled. Paul presents the gospel not as something new but as the fulfillment of Israel's oldest hopes.
33. The quotation from Psalm 2:7 was originally spoken at the coronation of Israelite kings. Paul applies it to Jesus's resurrection — the 'begetting' is not biological but enthronement. The resurrection is Jesus's installation as the messianic King who fulfills the Davidic promise. The verb *anastesas* ('having raised up') can mean both 'raised to life' and 'raised up as a leader' — both senses may be intended.
33. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalms 2:7 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
34. The quotation from Isaiah 55:3 (LXX) promises the 'holy and faithful things of David' (*ta hosia Daud ta pista*) — the covenant mercies promised to David now fulfilled in Jesus's resurrection. The key point is 'no longer to return to decay' (*meketi mellonta hypostrephein eis diaphthoran*) — Jesus's resurrection is permanent and irreversible, unlike temporary resuscitations.
34. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 55:3. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
35. This quotation from Psalm 16:10 (LXX 15:10) is the same text Peter used at Pentecost (Acts 2:27). Paul now applies the same argument: David's words cannot refer to David himself (who did see decay, v. 36) but must refer to the Messiah whose body did not decay in the tomb.
35. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Psalms 16:10 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
36. Paul's argument mirrors Peter's in Acts 2:29 — David died, was buried, and his body decayed. Therefore Psalm 16 must be prophetic, pointing beyond David to someone whose body would not decay. The phrase 'served God's purpose in his own generation' (*idia genea huperetesas te tou theou boule*) is a concise and dignified epitaph for David.
36. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Psalm 16. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
37. The contrast is stark and simple: David saw decay; the one God raised did not. The argument depends on the historical fact of Jesus's resurrection and the physical preservation of his body in the brief period between death and resurrection.

- 38.** Paul moves from the historical argument to the soteriological application. 'Through this man' (dia toutou) identifies Jesus as the agent of forgiveness. The noun aphesis ('forgiveness, release, remission') carries overtones of the Jubilee year's release of debts (Leviticus 25).
- 38.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References Leviticus 25 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 39.** This is the most explicitly Pauline theological statement in Acts, introducing the concept of justification by faith. The verb dikaioutai ('is justified, is declared righteous') is the cornerstone of Pauline soteriology (cf. Romans 3:21-26, Galatians 2:16). The law of Moses could not achieve full justification; faith in Christ accomplishes what the law could not.
- 40.** Paul shifts to warning, quoting the prophets as a cautionary voice. The imperative blepete ('beware, watch out') introduces urgency — the offer of grace carries the gravity of potential rejection.
- 41.** Paul quotes Habakkuk 1:5 from the Septuagint. In its original context, the prophet warned that God was raising up the Babylonians as an instrument of judgment — an act so incredible that people would not believe it even when told. Paul applies this to the present: God is doing something through Jesus that scoffers will refuse to believe. The word kataphronetai ('scoffers, despisers') replaces the Hebrew's 'among the nations,' adapting the warning to the audience.
- 41.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Habakkuk 1:5. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 42.** The SBLGNT does not specify 'Gentiles' as the ones asking — the request comes from the general audience. The phrase eis to metaxy sabbaton ('on the next/intervening Sabbath') indicates eagerness to hear more.
- 43.** The sebomenoi proselytoi ('devout converts/proselytes') are Gentiles who had fully converted to Judaism, distinct from the God-fearers. Paul and Barnabas encourage them to 'continue in the grace of God' (prosmenein te chariti tou theou) — to remain in what they have received rather than returning to previous ways.
- 44.** The hyperbolic 'almost the whole city' (schedon pasa he polis) indicates an extraordinary response. The curiosity extends well beyond the synagogue community to the broader population of Pisidian Antioch. Some manuscripts read 'word of God' (tou theou) rather than 'word of the Lord' (tou kyriou).
- 45.** The motivating emotion is zelos ('jealousy, zeal') — the crowds' enthusiasm for Paul's message threatened the synagogue leaders' authority and social standing. The verb blasphemountes ('blaspheming, reviling') likely means they spoke abusively about the claims being made for Jesus.
- 46.** The adverb parresiasameno ('speaking boldly, with confidence') characterizes the apostolic proclamation throughout Acts. The theological principle 'to you first' (hymín proton) reflects Romans 1:16 — the gospel goes first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. The phrase 'judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life' (ouk axious krinete heautous tes aioniou zoes) is ironic — by rejecting the message, they pass sentence on themselves.
- 47.** Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6, originally addressed to the Servant of the LORD, and applies it to his own mission. The 'light for the Gentiles' (phos ethnon) echoes Simeon's prophecy about the infant Jesus (Luke 2:32). Paul sees his Gentile mission not as a departure from God's plan but as its fulfillment — Isaiah had always envisioned salvation reaching 'the ends of the earth' (eschatou tes ges).
- 47.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 49:6. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
- 48.** The phrase 'as many as were appointed to eternal life' (hosoi esan tetagmenoi eis zoen aionion) uses the perfect passive participle of tasso ('arrange, appoint, assign'). The divine passive indicates God as the one who appoints. This is one of the strongest statements of divine election in Acts, presented without qualification or explanation.
- 49.** The verb diephereto ('was being carried through, was spreading') again personifies the word as an active agent. The spread is geographic — 'throughout the whole region' (di holes tes choras) — extending beyond Pisidian Antioch to the surrounding territory.
- 50.** The opponents work through influential social networks — 'devout women of high standing' (sebomenas gynaikas tas euschemonas) were God-fearing Gentile women of the upper class who had synagogue connections. By mobilizing civic elites against the missionaries, the Jewish leaders use social pressure rather than theological argument.
- 51.** Shaking off dust (ektinaxamenoi ton koniorton) is a gesture of renunciation commanded by Jesus (Luke 9:5, 10:11), symbolically declaring that those who reject the message bear responsibility for their own judgment. Iconium lay about 80 miles southeast of Pisidian Antioch.
- 52.** The chapter ends not with the persecution but with the persecuted community's joy. Despite the missionaries' expulsion, the new believers remain, filled with joy (charas) and the Holy Spirit (pneumatós hagiou). Persecution has failed to destroy what God has planted.

14

Summary: *Acts 14 continues the first missionary journey as Paul and Barnabas preach in Iconium, where both Jews and Gentiles respond but opposition forces them to flee. They move to Lystra, where Paul heals a man lame from birth. The astonished crowds assume Paul and Barnabas are the Greek gods Hermes and Zeus and attempt to offer sacrifices to them. Paul and Barnabas rush to stop the worship, declaring themselves mere mortals and preaching the living God who made heaven and earth. Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrive and turn the crowd against them; Paul is stoned and dragged outside the city, left for dead. He survives, and they move on to Derbe. After making disciples there, they retrace their route, strengthening the new churches and appointing elders, before returning to Antioch in Syria.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Lystra episode reveals the volatile religious landscape of rural Asia Minor — the same crowd that tries to worship Paul as a god quickly turns to stoning him. The attempted sacrifice to 'Zeus and Hermes' reflects a local legend recorded by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 8.611-724) about these gods visiting the region in human disguise. Paul's speech at Lystra (vv. 15-17) is the first recorded address to a purely pagan audience with no Jewish biblical framework, and it accordingly argues from creation and providence rather than from Scripture. The pattern of appointing elders (presbyterous) in every church (v. 23) shows rapid institutional development.*

Translation Friction: *The identification of Barnabas as 'Zeus' and Paul as 'Hermes' (v. 12) is explained by the fact that Paul was the chief speaker (ho hegoumenos tou logou), and Hermes was the messenger god. Luke uses the Greek names Zeus and Hermes rather than the local Lycaonian equivalents. The Lycaonian language (v. 11) was a local Anatolian dialect distinct from Greek, which explains why Paul and Barnabas did not immediately understand what the crowd intended. Paul's survival of stoning (v. 20) is remarkable — whether by miracle or natural resilience, Luke does not specify.*

Connections: *The healing at Lystra parallels Peter's healing of the lame man at the temple gate (Acts 3:1-10). Paul's natural theology speech anticipates his fuller treatment on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-31). The stoning at Lystra is likely the event Paul references in 2 Corinthians 11:25. The appointment of elders connects to Paul's later instructions to Timothy and Titus about church leadership. The return journey through hostile territory demonstrates the principle stated in verse 22: 'through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'*

¹Now in Iconium they entered the Jewish synagogue together and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ²But the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done through their hands. ⁴But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. ⁵When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat and stone them, ⁶Indeed, they were ware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the region that lieth round concerning:. ⁷In deed, there they preached the gospel. ⁸Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was lame from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰Stated with a loud voice, Stand upright on your feet. Then he leaped and walked. ¹¹When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" ¹²They called Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes, because Paul was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵"Men, why are you doing these things? We too are men with the same nature as you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them. ¹⁶In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." ¹⁸Even with these words they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them. ¹⁹But Jews came from Antioch

and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. ²⁰But when the disciples gathered around him, he got up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then to Iconium, and then to Antioch. ²²Confirming the souls of the followers, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must by way of much tribulation enter into God's kingdom. ²³And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. ²⁴Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵And after speaking the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had now completed. ²⁷When they arrived, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸And they remained no small time with the disciples.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Iconium (modern Konya, Turkey) was a significant city in the region of Phrygia/Galatia. The pattern continues: synagogue first, then broader response. The phrase 'spoke in such a way' (lalēsai houtōs hōste) credits the manner of their preaching, not merely its content, for the large response.
2. The verb apeithesantes ('who refused to believe, who were disobedient') combines unbelief with active resistance. The verb ekakosan ('poisoned, made evil, embittered') describes a deliberate campaign to turn Gentile opinion against the new believers.
3. Despite the opposition, they do not flee immediately but stay 'a long time' (hikanon chronon). The Lord himself is the active agent — he 'bore witness' (martyrounti) to the gospel message through signs and wonders. The missionaries are instruments ('through their hands'), not the source of miraculous power.
4. The verb eschisthe ('was divided, was split') is the root of 'schism.' Notably, Luke here calls Barnabas and Paul 'apostles' (apostolois) — one of only two places in Acts where this title extends beyond the Twelve (cf. v. 14). The city is literally torn between two allegiances.
5. The word horme ('attempt, rush, impulse') suggests a mob action rather than a legal proceeding. The coalition of Gentiles and Jews acting together is notable — opposition to the gospel unites otherwise divided groups.
6. Lystra was about 18 miles south-southwest of Iconium; Derbe about 60 miles southeast. Luke notes that these cities belong to Lycaonia, a distinct cultural region where the local language (v. 11) differed from Greek. Flight is strategic retreat, not cowardice — they continue preaching in the new location.
7. The periphrastic construction euangelizomenoi esan ('they were proclaiming the good news') emphasizes ongoing, continuous activity. Fleeing persecution does not interrupt the mission.
8. The threefold description — unable to use his feet, lame from birth, never walked — establishes the severity and permanence of the condition beyond any doubt, paralleling the description of the lame man at the temple gate (Acts 3:2). The healing that follows will be unmistakably miraculous.
9. Paul perceives the man's faith (pistin tou sothenai, literally 'faith to be saved/healed' — the verb sozo carries both meanings) through careful observation (atenisas, 'looking intently'). The connection between faith and healing echoes Jesus's own practice (cf. Mark 5:34, 10:52).
10. The loud voice (megale phone) makes the command public — this is no private healing but a demonstration before witnesses. The man's response — springing up (helato) and walking (periepatei) — is immediate and complete, echoing the healed man of Acts 3:8 who went 'walking and leaping and praising God.'
11. The crowds speak in Lycaonian (Lykaonisti), a local Anatolian language distinct from Greek, which is why Paul and Barnabas do not immediately understand what is being planned. Their interpretation — gods visiting in human form — reflects the local legend about Zeus and Hermes visiting the region, as recorded by the Roman poet Ovid.
12. The identification of Barnabas as Zeus (the chief god) may suggest that Barnabas had a more imposing physical presence. Paul is called Hermes because he was 'the chief speaker' (ho hegoumenos tou logou, literally 'the leader of the word'), and Hermes was the divine messenger and patron of speech. The KJV uses the Latin names Jupiter and Mercury.
13. The temple of Zeus 'at the entrance to the city' (tou ontos pro tes poleos) was a civic shrine guarding the city gates — a common feature of Greco-Roman cities. The priest brings oxen (taurous) for sacrifice and garlands (stemmata) of flowers for decorating the sacrificial animals and the honorees. This was a formal religious act, not merely spontaneous enthusiasm.
14. Tearing garments (diarrexantes ta himatia) is the traditional Jewish response to blasphemy (cf. Matthew 26:65). The urgency of their reaction — rushing (exepedesan) into the crowd, crying out (krazontes) — shows they understood the gravity of what was about to happen. Again Luke calls them 'apostles' (apostoloi), extending the title beyond the Twelve.
15. The word homoiopatheis ('of the same nature, with the same feelings') emphasizes shared humanity — we are not gods but people just like you. The term mataia ('worthless things, vain things, futilities') is the standard Septuagint designation for idols (cf. 1 Samuel 12:21, Jeremiah 2:5). Paul's appeal is to 'the living God' (theon zonta) who made everything — a creation-based argument for an audience without Jewish scriptural knowledge.

15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 1 Samuel 12:21 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Jeremiah 2:5 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. Paul acknowledges a period of divine forbearance — God 'allowed' (eiasen) the nations to follow their own paths without direct intervention. This does not mean God approved of idolatry but that he did not immediately judge it. The same idea appears in Romans 3:25 and Acts 17:30.
17. God's 'witness' (amartyron) to himself is not Scripture (unknown to this audience) but creation's provision: rain, seasons, food, and joy. This is natural theology — the argument from creation and providence to the Creator. The agricultural imagery is especially appropriate for a rural Lycaonian audience dependent on seasonal rains for their crops.
18. The adverb molis ('scarcely, with difficulty') reveals how close they came to having sacrifices offered to them. The crowds' religious enthusiasm is so strong that even direct denial of divinity barely stops them. The cultural conditioning to honor visiting deities was deeply ingrained.
19. The volatility of the crowd is extreme: they shift from worshipping Paul as a god to stoning him at the instigation of visiting opponents. Jews traveled from Antioch (about 100 miles) and Iconium (about 18 miles) specifically to pursue and undermine Paul — their opposition was persistent and organized. Paul likely references this stoning in 2 Corinthians 11:25.
20. The scene is remarkable: Paul, left for dead after stoning, rises and walks back into the city. Luke does not call this a miracle, but the natural reading suggests something extraordinary. The 'disciples' (matheton) who gather around him are the new Lystran believers — the persecution has not prevented a community from forming. The very next day, Paul resumes the journey.
21. The verb mathetheusantes ('made disciples') goes beyond mere conversion — it implies instruction and formation. Remarkably, they retrace their route through the very cities from which they were expelled, risking renewed persecution in order to strengthen the fledgling churches.
22. The message is honest rather than triumphalist: 'through many tribulations' (dia pollon thlipseon) is presented not as a possibility but as a necessity (dei, 'it is necessary, one must'). Paul and Barnabas prepare the new believers for suffering, not from it. The phrase 'the kingdom of God' (ten basileian tou theou) is the eschatological goal that makes the tribulations bearable.
23. The verb cheirotonestantes ('having appointed, having chosen by raising hands') may indicate either appointment by the missionaries or election by the congregations with apostolic confirmation. The term presbyterous ('elders') follows the Jewish synagogue model of governance. These churches are mere weeks or months old, yet they receive formal leadership. The committing (parethento, 'entrusted') to the Lord acknowledges that the missionaries must leave and the Lord himself must sustain these communities.
24. The return journey moves south through the mountainous region of Pisidia to the coastal plain of Pamphylia, retracing their northward route.
25. On their initial passage through Perga (13:13-14), no preaching was recorded. Now, on the return, they preach there before descending to Attalia (modern Antalya), a port city on the Pamphylian coast from which they can sail back to Syria.
26. They return to their sending church — Syrian Antioch — completing a geographic and spiritual circle. The phrase 'commended to the grace of God' (paradomenoi te chariti tou theou) recalls the commissioning in 13:1-3. The work (ergon) that the Spirit assigned (13:2) has been 'completed' (eplerosn) — the first missionary journey is finished.
27. The report emphasizes what 'God had done with them' (ho theos epoiesen met auton) — not their own accomplishments but God's work through them. The metaphor of an 'opened door of faith' (enoixen thyran pisteos) for the Gentiles becomes a recurring Pauline image (1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, Colossians 4:3).
28. Luke's litotes — 'no small time' (chronon ouk oligon) — means a considerable period. This interval in Antioch provides rest, reflection, and consolidation before the events of chapter 15 bring the question of Gentile inclusion to a head in Jerusalem.

15

Summary: Acts 15 records the Jerusalem Council, the most important deliberative assembly in the early church. Men from Judea arrive in Antioch teaching that Gentile believers must be circumcised to be saved. Paul and Barnabas dispute this strongly, and the church sends them to Jerusalem to resolve the question. Peter testifies about the Cornelius episode, arguing that God gave the Gentiles the same Spirit without requiring circumcision. Paul and Barnabas report the signs and wonders God performed among the Gentiles. James, the brother of Jesus, delivers the decisive judgment: Gentiles should not be burdened with circumcision but should abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from what has been strangled, and from blood. A letter is sent to the Gentile churches. The chapter closes with the sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark, resulting in their separation — Barnabas taking Mark to Cyprus, Paul taking Silas through Syria and Cilicia.

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Jerusalem Council resolves the most explosive question of the early church: must Gentile converts become Jews? The answer — no — is reached through a process combining testimony, scriptural argument, and communal discernment. James's citation of Amos 9:11-12 (from the Septuagint) provides the scriptural basis, arguing that God always intended to include Gentiles. The four prohibitions in the decree are widely debated: are they moral requirements, minimum purity rules for table fellowship, or echoes of the Noahide laws? The Paul-Barnabas split is recorded with remarkable honesty, showing that the early church was not free from personal conflict even among its greatest leaders.*

Translation Friction: *The relationship between the Jerusalem Council's decree and Paul's letters (especially Galatians 2) is complex and debated. Paul never quotes the decree in his letters and seems to handle the food issues differently (Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8-10). The four prohibitions — idolatry, sexual immorality (porneia), what has been strangled, and blood — may reflect the 'laws for resident aliens' in Leviticus 17-18, which applied to non-Israelites living among God's people. James's quotation of Amos 9:11-12 follows the Septuagint, which differs significantly from the Hebrew text. The sharp disagreement (paroxysmos) between Paul and Barnabas is the last mention of Barnabas in Acts.*

Connections: *The Council resolves the tension introduced by the Cornelius episode (Acts 10-11) and the first missionary journey (Acts 13-14). Peter's argument reprises his defense in 11:1-18. James's leadership role confirms his emergence as head of the Jerusalem church (cf. 12:17, 21:18, Galatians 2:9). The decree's four prohibitions connect to Leviticus 17-18. The Paul-Silas partnership launches the second missionary journey (Acts 15:40-18:22).*

¹But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ²And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, the brothers appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others of them to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. ³So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they brought great joy to all the brothers. ⁴When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses." ⁶The apostles and the elders gathered together to consider this matter. ⁷After much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that through my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, ⁹Indeed, put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by way of faith. ¹⁰Now therefore why are you testing God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will." ¹²The whole assembly fell silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. ¹³After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people for his name. ¹⁵And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, ¹⁶'After this I will return and rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins and restore it, ¹⁷That the residue of men might seek following the Lord, and every one of the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, says the Lord, who doeth all these things. ¹⁸Recognized to God are all his labors from the beginning of the age. ¹⁹Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, ²⁰However, that we write to them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from sexual immorality, and from things strangled, and from blood. ²¹For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." ²²Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas — Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brothers, ²³They wrote letters by them following this manner. The apostles and elders and brothers and sisters send greeting to the brothers and sisters which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:. ²⁴Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds — though we gave them no instructions — ²⁵Inde

ed, it was decided by us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our dear Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶People that possess hazarded their lives for the identity of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸For the Holy Spirit and we have decided, not to burden you beyond these essential requirements; ²⁹That you abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from sexual immorality — from which if you keep yourselves, you will do well. Fare you well. ³⁰So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹When they read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³²And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. ³³After they had spent some time there, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. ³⁶After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." ³⁷Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brothers and sisters to the grace of God. ⁴¹He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The issue is not circumcision as a cultural practice but as a soteriological requirement — 'you cannot be saved' (ou dynasthe sothenai) makes it a matter of eternal consequence. These teachers claim Mosaic authority for their position. They are not the apostles' representatives (v. 24 will clarify this).
2. The litotes 'no small dissension' (staseos ouk oliges) means a fierce argument. The decision to take the matter to Jerusalem shows the Antioch church's recognition of the Jerusalem apostles' authority on such fundamental questions. The delegation includes 'some others' — unnamed witnesses who can corroborate the Antioch church's experience.
3. The journey itself becomes a preaching tour — they tell the story of Gentile conversion (epistrophe ton ethnon, 'the turning of the Gentiles') and receive an enthusiastic response. The 'great joy' (charan megalen) of the believers in Phoenicia and Samaria suggests that opposition to Gentile inclusion was concentrated among a specific faction, not universal.
4. The warm welcome (paredechthesan, 'were received, welcomed') and the phrasing 'what God had done with them' (hosa ho theos epoiesen met auton) — identical to 14:27 — frames the report as a testimony of divine action, not human achievement.
5. These are believing Pharisees (ton apo tes haireseos ton Pharisaion pepisteukotes) — they have accepted Jesus as Messiah but insist that Gentile believers must also keep the entire Mosaic law. Their position goes beyond circumcision alone to full Torah observance. The word haireseos ('party, sect') here means 'faction' without the later connotation of 'heresy.'
6. The formal assembly of apostles and elders constitutes what is traditionally called the Jerusalem Council or Apostolic Council — the first church-wide deliberative body. The verb synechthesan ('gathered together') indicates a formal convening, not a casual meeting.
7. Peter speaks after 'much debate' (polles zeteseos), indicating the assembly first heard various arguments. His appeal is to his own experience with Cornelius — 'in the early days' (aph hemeron archaion) refers back to the events of Acts 10, perhaps a decade earlier. He frames it as God's choice (exelaxato ho theos), not his own initiative.
8. The term kardiognostes ('knower of hearts, heart-knower') appears only here and in Acts 1:24. God's knowledge of hearts means he accepted the Gentiles based on their inner reality, not their external status. The repeated phrase 'just as he did to us' (kathos kai hemin) is Peter's decisive argument: identical gift, identical acceptance.
9. The verb diekrinen ('made a distinction, discriminated') directly addresses the issue: if God makes no distinction, neither should the church. The phrase 'cleansed their hearts by faith' (te pistei katharistas tas kardias) is remarkable — cleansing comes through faith, not through circumcision or Torah observance. This is Pauline theology from Peter's lips.
10. Peter characterizes the demand for circumcision and Torah observance as 'testing God' (peirazete ton theon) — acting against what God has clearly demonstrated. The 'yoke' (zugon) metaphor for the law is a Jewish image (cf. Galatians 5:1). Peter's honest assessment that 'neither our fathers nor we' could bear it is a striking admission of the law's inability to save.
11. Peter reverses the expected comparison: he does not say 'they will be saved like us' but 'we will be saved like them' — through grace, not through law. Jewish believers are saved the same way Gentile believers are: by grace through faith. This is the theological climax of Peter's argument.
12. The silence (esigesen) following Peter's speech indicates its persuasive power. Barnabas is named first — perhaps reflecting Jerusalem's greater familiarity with him. Their testimony is experiential: signs and wonders (semeia kai terata) that God performed among the Gentiles confirm divine

approval of the uncircumcised mission.

13. James the brother of Jesus speaks last and gives the decisive judgment. His position of authority in the Jerusalem church is evident — he presides over the Council and renders the final decision. The sequence — Peter's theological argument, Paul and Barnabas's experiential testimony, James's scriptural judgment — represents a complete case.
14. James uses Peter's Semitic name 'Simeon' (Symeon), the only instance in Acts. The phrase 'a people for his name' (laon to onomati autou) is theologically loaded — laos ('people') is the term reserved for Israel as God's covenant people. God is now creating a 'people' from among the Gentiles (ex ethnon), extending the covenant community beyond ethnic Israel.
15. James grounds the decision in Scripture — 'the words of the prophets agree' (symphonousin hoi logoi ton propheton). Experience and testimony have been presented; now comes the scriptural confirmation. The verb symphonousin ('agree, harmonize') suggests that multiple prophetic voices point in the same direction.
16. James quotes Amos 9:11-12 from the Septuagint. The 'tent of David' (ten skenen Daudid) refers to David's dynasty and kingdom, which had 'fallen' with the exile and the end of the monarchy. God's restoration of David's tent is fulfilled in Jesus, the Davidic Messiah. The Septuagint text differs significantly from the Hebrew here, and James follows the Greek version.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Amos 9:11-12. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The critical difference between the Septuagint and the Hebrew is that the Hebrew reads 'that they may possess the remnant of Edom' while the Septuagint reads 'that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord.' The Septuagint, likely reading 'adam (mankind) for 'edom and doresh (seek) for yarash (possess), provides James with a text that explicitly predicts Gentile inclusion in God's people.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Amos 9:11-12. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. This brief phrase — 'known from of old' (gnosta ap aionos) — asserts that Gentile inclusion is not an innovation but something God planned from the beginning. What seems new is actually ancient divine purpose now being revealed.
19. The verb krino ('I judge, I decide') shows James rendering an authoritative decision, not merely offering an opinion. The word parenochein ('trouble, make difficulties for, harass') characterizes the circumcision requirement as an unnecessary burden. Gentile conversion is described as 'turning to God' (epistrepousin epi ton theon) — they are already turning; circumcision is not needed for this turning to be valid.
20. The four prohibitions are: (1) alisgematon ton eidolon ('pollutions of idols' — food offered to idols), (2) porneia ('sexual immorality' — broadly defined), (3) pnikton ('what has been strangled' — meat from animals not properly slaughtered), and (4) haima ('blood' — either consuming blood or possibly bloodshed/murder). These likely correspond to the laws in Leviticus 17-18 that applied to 'resident aliens' (gerim) living among Israelites.
20. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Leviticus 17-18 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
21. This enigmatic verse may mean: (1) Jewish sensibilities must be respected since Moses is preached everywhere, so the four prohibitions preserve table fellowship with Jewish believers; or (2) Gentiles can learn the rest of Moses's teaching from the synagogue readings as they grow. The former interpretation is more commonly held.
22. The decision involves the whole church (syn hole te ekklesia), not just the leaders. Judas Barsabbas and Silas are sent as independent witnesses to confirm the letter's authenticity and to represent Jerusalem's goodwill. Silas (Silvanus) will become Paul's companion on the second missionary journey.
23. The letter follows standard Hellenistic epistolary form: sender, recipient, greeting (chairein). The addressees are specifically 'brothers from the Gentiles' (adelphois tois ex ethnon) in the three regions affected. The use of 'brothers' (adelphoi) for the Gentile believers is itself a theological statement — they are family.
24. The letter explicitly disowns the troublemakers: 'we gave them no instructions' (hois ou diesteilametha). The verbs etaraxan ('troubled') and anaskeuazontes ('unsettling, dismantling') describe the damage done. Some manuscripts add 'saying you must be circumcised and keep the law,' but the SBLGNT omits this addition.
25. The phrase 'having come to one accord' (genomenois homothumadon) emphasizes unanimity. Barnabas and Paul are described as 'our beloved' (tois agapetois hemon), a public endorsement countering any suggestion that they are unauthorized agents.
26. The phrase paradedokosi tas psychas ('having given over their lives, having risked their souls') may allude to Paul's stoning at Lystra (14:19) and other dangers. It is a ringing endorsement of their courage and commitment.
27. Judas and Silas serve as living confirmations of the letter — they can answer questions and provide context that a written document cannot. The phrase 'the same things' (ta auta) ensures consistency between the written and oral messages.
28. The remarkable phrase 'the Holy Spirit and us' (to pneumatikoi kai hēmin) claims divine authority for the decision — the Council's deliberation was guided by the Spirit. The word 'burden' (baros) echoes Peter's 'yoke' language in verse 10. Only the 'necessary things' (ton epanankes) are required, and even these are minimal.

29. The four prohibitions are restated in slightly different order and terminology: eidolothyton ('idol-sacrificed food') replaces the broader 'pollutions of idols' from verse 20. The closing 'farewell' (errosathe) is the standard Hellenistic letter closing, meaning 'be strong, be well.'
30. The delegation goes directly to Antioch and presents the letter to the assembled church. The verb epedokan ('delivered, handed over') indicates a formal presentation.
31. The congregation's response is joy (echarasan) at the paraklesis ('encouragement, consolation'). The letter is received as good news — the Gentile believers are free from the circumcision requirement. The word paraklesis connects to the role of the Holy Spirit as Parakletos.
32. Judas and Silas are identified as prophets (prophetai), giving their encouragement additional spiritual authority. Their ministry goes beyond delivering the letter to active pastoral care — 'many words' (dia logou pollou) of encouragement and strengthening.
33. The phrase 'sent off in peace' (apeluthesan met eirenes) is a formal dismissal with blessing — the Antioch church releases them to return to Jerusalem with goodwill and harmony restored.
34. Verse 34 is absent from the SBLGNT and other critical Greek texts. It appears in some later manuscripts and the KJV tradition ('Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still'), likely added by scribes to explain how Silas was available in Antioch when Paul chose him in verse 40. We follow the SBLGNT in omitting it.
35. The Antioch church has a rich leadership — 'many others' (heteron pollon) are involved in teaching and preaching alongside Paul and Barnabas. The two verbs 'teaching' (didaskontes) and 'preaching the good news' (euangelizomenoi) describe both internal instruction and outward evangelism.
36. Paul's concern is pastoral — he wants to check on the new churches' welfare (pos echousin, 'how they are'). This impulse to revisit and strengthen existing churches, not merely plant new ones, characterizes Paul's missionary strategy throughout Acts and his letters.
37. Barnabas's desire to include his cousin John Mark (cf. Colossians 4:10) reflects his character as 'son of encouragement' (4:36) — he is willing to give the young man a second chance after his earlier departure in 13:13.
38. Paul views Mark's departure in Pamphylia as a disqualifying failure. The verb apostanta ('having withdrawn, having deserted') carries negative connotations. The phrase 'not gone with them to the work' (me synelthonta autois eis to ergon) implies that the mission's demands require reliable companions.
39. The word paroxysmos ('sharp disagreement, irritation, provocation') — from which English derives 'paroxysm' — indicates an intense emotional conflict. Luke does not assign blame to either party. The separation doubles the mission: Barnabas and Mark go to Cyprus (Barnabas's homeland), while Paul takes a new partner. Later, Paul and Mark are reconciled (Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 24).
40. Paul receives the church's commendation (paradotheis te chariti, 'commended to the grace'), while Barnabas's departure receives no such mention — a possible indication that the church sided with Paul's assessment. Silas, as a Jerusalem prophet and Roman citizen (16:37), is an ideal partner for the mission ahead.
41. Paul's route takes him overland through Syria (where Antioch lies) and into Cilicia (his home province, where Tarsus is located). The verb episterizon ('strengthening, establishing') is the same word used in 14:22 — a key element of Paul's pastoral strategy. The second missionary journey has begun.

16

Summary: *Acts 16 narrates the second missionary journey's expansion into Europe. Paul circumcises Timothy at Lystra and recruits him as a companion. The Holy Spirit twice redirects their itinerary — forbidding them from preaching in Asia and Bithynia — until Paul receives the Macedonian vision at Troas: 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' They sail to Philippi, a Roman colony, where Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, becomes the first European convert. Paul casts out a spirit of divination from a slave girl, provoking her owners to drag Paul and Silas before the magistrates. They are beaten and imprisoned. At midnight, Paul and Silas sing hymns; an earthquake shakes the prison open, but no one escapes. The terrified jailer asks, 'What must I do to be saved?' Paul responds, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household.' The jailer and his household are baptized. The next morning, Paul reveals his Roman citizenship, forcing the magistrates to publicly apologize.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Timothy's circumcision (v. 3) seems to contradict the Jerusalem Council's ruling — but Paul circumcises Timothy not as a soteriological requirement but as a strategic concession, since Timothy's Jewish mother made him Jewish by halakhic standards. The Spirit's double prohibition (vv. 6-7) and the Macedonian vision represent one of the most dramatic instances of divine guidance in Acts, redirecting the mission from Asia to Europe. The Philippian jailer episode contains perhaps the most concentrated salvation narrative in Acts: terror, the question of salvation, faith, baptism, joy — all within a single night.*

Translation Friction: The 'we' passages begin in verse 10 (the first in Acts), suggesting the author Luke joined the team at Troas. The 'spirit of Python' (pneuma pythona, v. 16) refers to the prophetic spirit associated with the oracle at Delphi, where the Pythia (priestess) supposedly channeled Apollo's messages. Paul's use of Roman citizenship (vv. 37-39) raises questions about why he did not invoke it before the beating — possibly because the mob action prevented orderly legal procedure.

¹Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. ²He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. ³Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they went through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in number daily. ⁶They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷When they came to the border of Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the good news to them. ¹¹So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹²From there we went to Philippi, the leading city in that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We stayed in that city for several days. ¹³On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵After she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. ¹⁶As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much profit by fortune-telling. ¹⁷She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸She kept doing this for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. ¹⁹But when her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. ²¹They are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²²The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore their garments off them and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³And when they had inflicted many blows on them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to guard them securely. ²⁴Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried out in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹The jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³And he took them that same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. ³⁵When it was day, the magistrates sent the lictors, saying, "Release those men." ³⁶The jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to release you. So come out now and go in peace." ³⁷But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly without a trial, men who are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to send us away secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves and escort us out." ³⁸The lictors reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid

when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹So they came and apologized to them, and they brought them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. When they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Timothy's mixed parentage — Jewish mother, Greek father — places him in a complicated identity position. By rabbinic standards (which determined Jewish status through the mother), Timothy was Jewish. His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois are named in 2 Timothy 1:5. Timothy will become Paul's most trusted associate.
2. Timothy's good reputation (emartureito, 'was testified about') spans two cities, indicating wide recognition of his character and gifting.
3. Paul circumcises Timothy not because it is necessary for salvation (the Jerusalem Council just decided otherwise) but for strategic reasons: an uncircumcised person of Jewish descent would be a stumbling block in synagogue ministry. This contrasts with Paul's refusal to circumcise Titus, a full Gentile (Galatians 2:3). The distinction is between accommodation and capitulation.
4. The dogmata ('decisions, decrees') are the Jerusalem Council's rulings from chapter 15. Paul distributes them to the churches as authoritative guidelines, showing that he recognized the Council's authority despite his own apostolic independence.
5. This is one of Luke's progress reports. The dual growth — qualitative ('strengthened in the faith') and quantitative ('increased in number daily') — shows healthy church development.
6. The Holy Spirit's prohibition (koluthentes, 'having been forbidden') is stated without explaining how it was communicated — through prophecy, inner conviction, or circumstantial closure. 'Asia' here means the Roman province of Asia (western Asia Minor, including Ephesus), not the continent. The Spirit is actively directing the mission by closing doors.
7. The unusual phrase 'Spirit of Jesus' (to pneuma Iesou) rather than 'Holy Spirit' occurs only here in Acts. It may emphasize the risen Christ's personal direction of the mission. The double redirection — forbidden from Asia, blocked from Bithynia — funnels them toward the coast and the crossing to Europe.
8. Troas (Alexandria Troas) was a major port city on the Aegean coast, across from the European mainland. It is the launching point for the crossing to Macedonia — the gospel's entry into Europe.
9. How Paul identified the man as Macedonian is not stated — perhaps by dress, accent in the vision, or direct knowledge. The plea 'help us' (boetheson hemin) is both urgent and communal — it represents an entire region's need. This vision provides the positive direction after the two negative prohibitions.
10. The shift from 'they' to 'we' (ezetesamen, 'we sought') marks the first of the 'we' passages in Acts, indicating that the author Luke has joined the missionary team at Troas. The verb symbibazontes ('concluding, putting together') suggests communal discernment — the team collectively interprets the vision as God's call.
11. The nautical detail euthudromesamen ('we ran a straight course') indicates favorable winds — the same crossing took five days in the opposite direction (20:6). Samothrace is an island midway across the northern Aegean. Neapolis (modern Kavala) was the port city serving Philippi, about ten miles inland.
12. Philippi was named after Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great). Its status as a kolonia ('colony') meant it operated under Roman law with rights equivalent to Italian cities. Luke describes it as 'a leading city of the district' (prote tes meridos poleis) — the precise administrative terminology has been debated but reflects Luke's careful attention to local designations.
13. The absence of a synagogue in Philippi (a quorum of ten Jewish men was traditionally required) meant that the small Jewish community met informally by the river for prayer. The gathering consists entirely of women — Lydia, mentioned next, is among them. That Paul begins his European mission by speaking to women at a riverside prayer meeting is a humble and unexpected beginning.
14. Lydia is identified by her trade — porphyropolis ('dealer in purple goods') — indicating she was a businesswoman of means, since purple dye was expensive. Thyatira (in the province of Asia) was famous for its purple dyeing industry. She is a 'worshiper of God' (sebomene ton theon), a God-fearer. The decisive theological note is 'the Lord opened her heart' (ho kyrios dienoixen ten kardian) — her faith is God's work before it is her response.
15. Lydia's household baptism (ho oikos autes) includes servants and dependents — the household conversion pattern of Acts (cf. 10:48, 16:33, 18:8). Her invitation to stay is confident and assertive — parebiastao ('she prevailed upon us, she insisted forcefully') shows a strong personality. Her house becomes the base of the Philippian church (v. 40).
16. The Greek pneuma pythona ('spirit of Python') refers to the prophetic spirit associated with the oracle at Delphi, where the Pythia served as Apollo's mouthpiece. The girl is doubly enslaved — to a demonic spirit and to human owners who exploit her condition for profit. The word ergasian ('profit, gain') reveals the commercial dimension of her bondage.
17. The girl's declaration is technically accurate — they are servants of the Most High God proclaiming salvation. But the title 'Most High God' (tou theou tou hypsistou) was used in pagan contexts for Zeus or a supreme deity, potentially confusing the gospel message with syncretistic religion. Demonic

testimony, even when factually correct, distorts by association.

18. Paul tolerates the disruption for 'many days' (epi pollas hemeras) before acting. The verb diaponetheis ('greatly annoyed, deeply troubled') combines frustration with spiritual grief. The exorcism is performed 'in the name of Jesus Christ' — the authority behind the command. The spirit's departure is immediate (aute te hora, 'that very hour').
19. The phrase 'their hope of profit was gone' (exelthen he elpis tes ergasias auton) uses the same verb as the exorcism — the spirit 'went out' and so did their profit. Their grievance is economic, not religious, but they will frame their charges in political terms. The agora ('marketplace') was the civic center where legal proceedings took place.
20. The strategoi ('magistrates') are the duumviri, the two chief officials of a Roman colony. The charge plays on anti-Jewish sentiment: 'These men are Jews' (Ioudaioi hyparchontes) is stated as if it were itself an accusation. The verb ektarassousin ('are disturbing, are throwing into confusion') frames the missionaries as public threats.
21. The charge is deliberately vague — 'customs' (ethe) could mean anything. The real issue is the loss of income from the slave girl, but the accusation is framed as a matter of Roman identity ('us as Romans,' Romaiois ousin) versus foreign Jewish practices. Philippi's pride in its Roman colonial status makes this charge effective.
22. The magistrates tear Paul and Silas's clothing off (perirexantes auton ta himatia) to expose them for beating. The rhabdizein ('beating with rods') was administered by lictors, the magistrates' official attendants who carried fasces (bundles of rods). Paul references being beaten with rods three times in 2 Corinthians 11:25.
23. The 'many blows' (pollas plegas) indicates a severe beating. The adverb asphalos ('securely, safely') places the jailer under strict orders — failure to hold the prisoners could cost him his life.
24. The 'inner prison' (ten esoteran phylaken) was the most secure cell, furthest from any exit. The stocks (xylon, literally 'wood') immobilized the prisoners' legs, often in a painfully spread position. The security emphasis — inner cell plus stocks — sets the stage for the dramatic liberation to come.
25. The combination of praying and singing (prosuchomenoi hymnountes ton theon) at midnight, after severe beating and in stocks, is extraordinary. The verb epeokroonto ('were listening attentively') indicates the other prisoners were captured by what they heard — worship from the depths of suffering.
26. The earthquake is comprehensive: foundations shaken, all doors opened, all chains unfastened (panton ta desma anethe). This affects not just Paul and Silas but every prisoner. The supernatural character of the event is evident — earthquakes do not typically unfasten chains and open locked doors simultaneously.
27. Roman law held jailers personally responsible for escaped prisoners (cf. Acts 12:19 where guards are executed). The jailer's suicide attempt is a rational response within the Roman honor system — death by his own hand would be more honorable than execution for dereliction of duty.
28. Paul's shout saves the jailer's life. The fact that all prisoners remain (hapantes gar esmen enthade, 'for we are all here') — despite open doors and unfastened chains — adds to the supernatural character of the event. Paul's concern for the jailer's life demonstrates grace in action.
29. The jailer's progression — calling for lights, rushing in (eisepedesn), trembling (entromos), falling down (prosepesen) — vividly narrates his transition from despair to awe. He recognizes that something beyond natural explanation has occurred.
30. The jailer's question — ti me dei poiein hina sotho ('what must I do to be saved?') — is one of the most famous questions in the New Testament. The word sotho ('be saved') may carry both physical and spiritual meaning: saved from the earthquake's implications and saved in the deeper sense that the slave girl's spirit had proclaimed (v. 17). The address kyrioi ('sirs, lords') reflects deep respect.
31. The response is the gospel in its simplest form: believe in the Lord Jesus. The promise extends to 'your household' (ho oikos sou), not that the jailer's faith automatically saves his family, but that the same promise of salvation is available to all in his household who believe (as the next verse clarifies). The SBLGNT reads 'Lord Jesus' without 'Christ.'
32. The gospel is shared with the entire household (pasin tois en te oikia autou) — faith comes through hearing the message. This ensures that the household's subsequent baptism is an informed response, not merely participation in the head of household's decision.
33. The sequence is powerful: the jailer washes Paul's wounds, then is himself washed in baptism. The physical washing of wounds and the spiritual washing of baptism mirror each other. Everything happens 'that same hour of the night' (en ekeine te hora tes nyktos) — the urgency of faith matches the urgency of compassion. The household (hoi autou hapantes, 'all his') is baptized together.
34. The chapter's emotional arc — from beating and imprisonment to washing wounds, baptism, shared meals, and rejoicing — captures the transformative power of the gospel in a single night. The word panoikei ('with the whole household') and the verb egalliasato ('rejoiced greatly, exulted') describe household-wide celebration of newfound faith.
35. The rhabdouchous ('lictors, rod-bearers') were the magistrates' official attendants who had administered the beating. Their return with the release order shows the magistrates considered the matter closed. Why they decided to release Paul and Silas is not stated — perhaps they felt the punishment sufficient, or the earthquake had unsettled them.

36. The jailer — now a fellow believer — delivers the good news. The phrase 'go in peace' (poreuesthe en eirene) is a standard Semitic farewell, here spoken by a Roman jailer who has just become a member of the new community.
37. Paul now reveals what the magistrates should have ascertained before the beating: he and Silas are Roman citizens (anthropous Romaious). The Lex Porcia and Lex Valeria prohibited beating a Roman citizen without trial. The violation is threefold: public beating (demosio), without trial (akatakritous), of Roman citizens. Paul demands a public escort to clear their names and protect the fledgling church from further persecution.
38. The magistrates' fear (ephobethesan) is well-founded — beating Roman citizens without trial was a serious offense that could result in their removal from office and legal penalties. The tables have turned completely.
39. The verb parekalesan ('appealed to, apologized to, entreated') indicates the magistrates come in a conciliatory posture. The request to leave the city is a face-saving measure — they cannot admit full wrongdoing publicly, but they acknowledge the error by personally escorting the prisoners out.
40. Before leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas visit Lydia's house — the church's meeting place — and encourage the new believers. The 'we' narration pauses here (resuming in 20:5), suggesting Luke may have remained in Philippi to nurture the church. Paul and Silas depart, but the Philippian church will become one of Paul's most beloved communities (Philippians 1:3-8).

17

Summary: *Acts 17 follows Paul through Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. In Thessalonica, Paul reasons from the Scriptures in the synagogue for three Sabbaths, and some Jews and many God-fearing Greeks believe. Jealous opponents incite a mob and drag Jason (Paul's host) before the city authorities, accusing the missionaries of 'turning the world upside down' and proclaiming 'another king, Jesus.' Paul is sent to Berea, where the Jews are described as 'more noble' because they examined the Scriptures daily. But Thessalonian opponents pursue Paul there too, and he is sent to Athens. Alone in Athens, Paul is provoked by the city's idols and engages Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. He is brought to the Areopagus (Mars Hill), where he delivers his famous speech: beginning with the altar 'To an Unknown God,' he proclaims the Creator who does not live in temples, who gives all life, who made all nations from one man, and who now commands repentance because he has appointed a day of judgment through a man he raised from the dead. The response is mixed: some mock, some believe.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's Areopagus speech is the theological and literary centerpiece of Acts — a model of contextual proclamation to a pagan intellectual audience. Paul does not quote Scripture (his audience would not recognize it) but argues from creation, divine providence, and even pagan poets (Epimenides and Aratus). He does not begin with sin but with worship, taking the Athenians' religious impulse seriously while redirecting it. The charge at Thessalonica — 'these men have turned the world upside down' (17:6) — is one of the most striking descriptions of early Christianity's revolutionary impact. The Berean model of examining Scripture has become paradigmatic for responsible biblical study.*

Translation Friction: *The altar 'To an Unknown God' (Agnosto Theo) is attested by ancient sources (Pausanias, Diogenes Laertius), though the exact inscription Paul references has not been archaeologically discovered. Paul quotes from pagan poets — 'in him we live and move and have our being' is attributed to Epimenides of Crete, and 'for we are indeed his offspring' comes from Aratus's Phaenomena (and possibly Cleanthes's Hymn to Zeus). Paul's willingness to find truth in pagan literature while rejecting idolatry demonstrates sophisticated engagement with Greco-Roman culture. The 'politarchs' (politarchas) of Thessalonica (v. 6) — a title once thought to be a Lukan error — have been confirmed by multiple inscriptions.*

Connections: *Paul's synagogue method of reasoning from Scripture (vv. 2-3) continues the pattern of chapters 13-14. The charge of 'another king' (v. 7) echoes the charges against Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23:2). The Areopagus speech develops the natural theology introduced at Lystra (14:15-17). Paul's appeal to God as Creator connects to Genesis 1-2 and Isaiah 40-45. The resurrection as the basis for judgment connects to the apostolic kerygma throughout Acts.*

¹After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³He explained and demonstrated that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and then declared, "This Jesus I am telling you about is the Messiah." ⁴Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the

devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵But the Jews became jealous, and taking some wicked men from the marketplace rabble, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. They attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring Paul and Silas out to the crowd. ⁶When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷Indeed, whom Jason has received — and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar and stated that there is another king, one Jesus. ⁸The people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. ⁹And when they had taken a bond from Jason and the rest, they released them. ¹⁰The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹²Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. ¹³But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵Those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed. ¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. Some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities" — because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." ²¹(Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.) ²²So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human hands, ²⁵And not is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he gives to all life, and breath, and all matters;. ²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷Indeed, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel following him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:. ²⁸Because in him we live, and move, and have our being. As certain also of your own poets have stated, since we are also his offspring. ²⁹Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹Because he has appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. Whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead. ³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Amphipolis and Apollonia were stations along the Via Egnatia, the major Roman road connecting the Adriatic to the east. Thessalonica (modern Thessaloniki) was the capital and largest city of Macedonia. The presence of a synagogue (singular, unlike the plural at Salamis) indicates a Jewish community sufficient for one congregation.
2. The phrase *kata to eiothos* ('as was his custom') establishes Paul's consistent practice of beginning in the synagogue. The verb *dielexato* ('reasoned, discussed, argued') implies dialogue, not just monologue — Paul engaged in back-and-forth discussion. Three Sabbaths indicates at least a three-week ministry, though Paul's total stay may have been longer (cf. Philippians 4:16).
3. Paul's argument has two steps: (1) the Scriptures require a suffering and rising Messiah (*ton Christon edei pathein kai anastenai*), and (2) Jesus fulfills this pattern. The verb *dianoigon* ('opening, explaining') is the same word used of Jesus opening the Scriptures to the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:32). The verb *paratithemenos* ('setting before, presenting evidence') is a legal term for presenting a case.

4. The response is stratified: 'some' Jews believed, but a 'great many' (plethos poly) God-fearing Greeks and 'not a few' (ouk oligai) prominent women. The larger Gentile response becomes the pattern throughout Paul's mission. The 'leading women' (gynaikon ton proton) occupied significant social positions in Macedonian society, where women had more public roles than in many other parts of the empire.
5. The jealous Jews recruit agoraion ('marketplace loafers, idlers') — men who hung around the agora without employment — to form a mob. The verb ochlopoiesantes ('having made a crowd, having formed a mob') is used only here in the New Testament. Jason is Paul's host, likely a Jewish believer (the name is the Greek form of Joshua/Jesus).
6. Unable to find Paul and Silas, the mob seizes Jason as a proxy. The politarchas ('city authorities, politarchs') was the correct title for Thessalonica's magistrates — confirmed by inscriptions found in the city. The famous accusation 'turned the world upside down' (ten oikoumenen anastatosantes) is intended as an indictment but reads as an inadvertent tribute to the gospel's power.
7. The charge is politically framed: 'acting against Caesar's decrees' (apenanti ton dogmaton Kaisaros) and proclaiming 'another king' (basilea heteron). This echoes the charges against Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23:2). Hosting the missionaries makes Jason legally liable. The claim of 'another king' transforms the theological title 'Christ/Messiah' into a political threat within the Roman system.
8. The charge of sedition against Caesar effectively disturbs (etaraxan) both the common people and the officials. In the Roman system, any perceived challenge to imperial authority required a response.
9. The 'bond' (to hikanon, literally 'the sufficient thing') was a financial guarantee — Jason and the others posted bail ensuring that the missionaries would not cause further disturbance. This bond likely explains why Paul could not return to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:18) — doing so would have put Jason at legal and financial risk.
10. The nighttime departure (dia nyktos) is for safety. Berea (modern Veria) lay about 45 miles southwest of Thessalonica. Despite the recent violence, Paul's first action in a new city remains the same: he goes to the synagogue.
11. The Bereans are called eugenestroi ('more noble, more fair-minded, of better character'). Their nobility consists of two things: receptivity ('received the word with all eagerness,' meta pases prothymias) and critical examination ('examining the Scriptures daily,' to kath hemeran anakrinontes tas graphas). They model the ideal response: open hearts combined with rigorous study.
12. The result of the Berean method is widespread belief: 'many' (polloi) Jews believed, plus prominent Greek women and men. The pattern is similar to Thessalonica but more extensively positive.
13. The Thessalonian opponents travel 45 miles to Berea specifically to disrupt Paul's ministry — their opposition is relentless. The same pattern of external agitation disrupts what had been a positive reception.
14. Paul is the primary target; Silas and Timothy can remain safely. The phrase 'to the sea' (heos epi ten thalassan) indicates Paul traveled to the coast, from where he likely sailed to Athens. Timothy reappears here — he was last mentioned in 16:1-3 and has been with the team throughout.
15. Paul arrives in Athens escorted by Berean believers, who carry back his urgent request for Silas and Timothy to join him. Paul's time in Athens begins alone — an unusual circumstance that shapes his experience there.
16. The verb paroxyneto ('was provoked, was deeply stirred') is the same root as the paroxysmos of 15:39 — it denotes intense emotion, here righteous anger and grief. The word kateidolon ('full of idols, overwhelmed with idols') appears only here in the New Testament. Ancient sources confirm that Athens was saturated with religious images and temples.
17. Paul operates in two settings simultaneously: the synagogue (with Jews and God-fearers) and the agora (with whoever is present). Engaging in philosophical discussion in the Athenian agora placed Paul in the tradition of Socrates, who had done the same centuries earlier.
18. The Epicureans (followers of Epicurus, 341-270 BC) emphasized pleasure, withdrawal from public life, and denial of divine providence. The Stoics (from the Stoa Poikile in Athens) taught rational virtue, divine providence through logos, and living according to nature. These represent the two dominant philosophical schools. The term spermologos ('babbling,' literally 'seed-picker' — a bird that picks up scraps) was a derisive term for an intellectual scavenger who picks up bits of ideas without systematic understanding.
19. The Areopagus (Areios Pagos, 'hill of Ares/Mars') served both as a geographic location (the rocky hill northwest of the Acropolis) and as the name of the council that met there. The council had oversight of education and religious matters in Athens. Being brought before it was not necessarily hostile — they want to evaluate this 'new teaching' (kaine didache).
20. The word xenizonta ('strange, surprising, foreign') characterizes Paul's message as novel and unfamiliar. The Athenian appetite for novelty (described in the next verse) makes them curious rather than hostile.
21. Luke's parenthetical observation about Athenian culture — their insatiable appetite for novelty (ti kainoteron, 'something newer') — is confirmed by ancient writers including Thucydides and Demosthenes. This cultural trait provides Paul's opportunity to be heard but also explains the superficial response of some listeners.
22. The word deisidaimonesterous can mean either 'very religious' (positive/neutral) or 'very superstitious' (negative). As a skilled rhetorician, Paul likely uses it with deliberate ambiguity — the audience would hear a compliment, while the deeper meaning carries critique. We render it positively, following the rhetorical convention of beginning with praise.

23. The altar Agnosto Theo ('To an Unknown God') provides Paul's rhetorical point of contact. Ancient sources attest altars to unknown gods in Athens. Paul does not condemn their worship impulse but redirects it: what you worship without knowing, I can identify. The neuter pronoun *ho* ('what') rather than the masculine *hon* ('whom') may be deliberate — Paul begins with their conceptual framework before introducing the personal God.
24. Paul begins with creation — a starting point that both Jews and philosophically minded pagans could engage. The claim that God does not live in temples (*ouk en cheiropoietois naois katoikei*) echoes Isaiah 66:1-2 and Stephen's speech (Acts 7:48), but would also resonate with Stoic critiques of popular religion. This is said within sight of the Parthenon.
24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 66:1-2. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. God is not dependent on human service (*oude hypo cheiron anthropinon therapeuetai*) — a rejection of the temple-cult system that assumed gods needed human provision. Instead, God is the source of 'life and breath and everything' (*zoen kai pnoen kai ta panta*). This echoes both Genesis 2:7 and Stoic ideas about divine self-sufficiency.
25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 2:7 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. The phrase 'from one man' (*ex henos*) — some manuscripts add 'blood' (*haimatos*) — asserts the unity of the human race from a single ancestor (Adam). This directly challenges Greek ethnic pride, particularly Athenian claims of autochthony (being 'born from the earth' of Attica, not descended from outsiders). God sovereignly determines both the times (*kairous*) and boundaries (*horothesias*) of nations.
27. The verb *pselaphesaien* ('feel, grope, touch') suggests searching in darkness or uncertainty — humanity reaches for God imperfectly. The optative mood (a rare grammatical form) expresses hope mixed with uncertainty. But the resolution is encouraging: God is 'not far' (*ou makran*) from any person. The gap between divine transcendence and human accessibility is bridged by God's proximity.
28. Paul quotes two pagan poets. 'In him we live and move and have our being' is attributed to Epimenides of Crete (6th century BC). 'For we are indeed his offspring' (*tou gar kai genos esmen*) comes from the Cilician poet Aratus (*Phaenomena* 5) and possibly also from Cleanthes's Hymn to Zeus. Paul appropriates pagan insight to build a bridge to biblical truth — these poets spoke more truly than they knew.
29. Paul draws a logical conclusion from the poets: if we are God's offspring, then God cannot be less than human — he cannot be mere metal or stone, no matter how artfully crafted. The word *charagmati* ('image, engraving, mark') denotes something produced by *technē* ('craft, art') and *enthymeseos* ('thought, imagination'). The argument moves from the poets' premise to an anti-idolatry conclusion.
30. Paul echoes the principle of 14:16 — God 'overlooked' (*hyperidon*) past ignorance — but adds a decisive 'but now' (*ta nun*). The age of tolerated ignorance is over. The command to repent (*metanoein*) is universal: 'all people everywhere' (*tous anthropous pantas pantachou*). The scope is absolute — no nation, class, or philosophical school is exempt.
31. Paul reaches the gospel's core: judgment, a specific appointed man, and resurrection. He does not name Jesus explicitly (the audience would not know the name) but identifies him through the resurrection. The word *pistin* ('assurance, proof, guarantee') is related to *pistis* ('faith') — God has given grounds for faith by raising this man from the dead. The resurrection is both proof of Jesus's appointment and the basis for universal accountability.
32. The response divides into three groups: mockers, the curious, and believers (v. 34). The bodily resurrection was the stumbling block for Greek thought, which generally held the body in low regard and could not conceive of its restoration. Epicureans denied any afterlife; Stoics held to a dissolution of the individual into the cosmic *logos*. Physical resurrection was offensive to both.
33. Paul departs without being expelled — a contrast with the violent rejections in other cities. The Areopagus encounter ends not with persecution but with a mixture of intellectual dismissal and genuine interest.
34. The converts include Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus council itself — a significant social and intellectual conversion. Damaris is named specifically, suggesting she was well known to the early church. The phrase 'others with them' (*heteroi syn autois*) indicates a small but genuine community of believers. Athens produced a quieter response than other cities, but it produced real faith.

18

Summary: Acts 18 records Paul's eighteen-month ministry in Corinth, the commercial capital of the province of Achaia. Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla, Jewish tentmakers expelled from Rome by Emperor Claudius's edict, and works alongside them at their trade. He reasons in the synagogue each Sabbath. When Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia, Paul intensifies his preaching, declaring Jesus to be the Christ. Jewish opposition leads Paul to declare, 'Your blood is on your own heads; from now on I will go to the Gentiles.' He moves next door to the house of Titius Justus, and Crispus, the synagogue ruler, believes. The Lord encourages Paul in a night vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep speaking, for I have many people in this city.' Paul remains a year and a half. Jewish opponents bring Paul before the proconsul Gallio, who dismisses the case as a Jewish internal matter. The chapter ends with Paul's departure through Cenchreae, a brief stop in Ephesus, and his return to Antioch, before Apollos is introduced in Ephesus.

What Makes This Remarkable: *The Gallio episode is one of the most historically significant passages in Acts. An inscription found at Delphi dates Gallio's proconsulship to approximately AD 51-52, providing the single most important fixed point for Pauline chronology. Gallio's refusal to adjudicate religious disputes effectively establishes a Roman legal precedent that Christianity is a legitima religio licita within Judaism. The Lord's night vision to Paul (vv. 9-10) contains the remarkable promise 'I have many people in this city' (laos moi polys en te polei taute) — God claims a people in Corinth before they have yet believed.*

Translation Friction: *Claudius's expulsion of Jews from Rome (v. 2) is independently attested by Suetonius (Claudius 25.4), who mentions disturbances 'at the instigation of Chrestus' — likely a garbled reference to disputes about Christ within the Roman Jewish community. The dating is typically placed around AD 49. Paul's vow at Cenchreae (v. 18) — shaving his head — is likely a Nazirite vow (Numbers 6), showing that Paul continued to practice Jewish customs voluntarily. The introduction of Apollos (vv. 24-28) raises questions about the diversity of early Christian teaching — he knew only 'the baptism of John' until Priscilla and Aquila instructed him.*

Connections: *Paul's Corinthian ministry produces the congregation to which he later writes 1 and 2 Corinthians. Aquila and Priscilla reappear in Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and 2 Timothy 4:19. Apollos becomes a significant figure in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4-6). The tentmaking detail connects to Paul's principle of financial self-support (1 Thessalonians 2:9, 1 Corinthians 9:1-18). Gallio's legal ruling anticipates the broader question of Christianity's status under Roman law.*

¹After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³On account of the fact that he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought — for by their occupation they were tentmakers. ⁴He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. ⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. ⁶And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." ⁷He left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing Paul, believed and were baptized. ⁹And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰For I am with you, and no man will set on you to hurt you — for I have many those present in this city. ¹¹And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. ¹²But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³Indeed, declaring, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. ¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things." ¹⁶And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this. ¹⁸After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. ¹⁹They arrived at Ephesus, and he left them there. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined, ²¹However, bade them farewell and stated, I must by all means keep this feast that comes in Jerusalem — but I will return again to you, if God will. Then he sailed from Ephesus. ²²When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. ²³After spending some time there, he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. ²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, arrived in Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately. ²⁷When he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome

him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸Since he powerfully demonstrated to the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Corinth, about 50 miles west of Athens, was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia and a major commercial center situated on the narrow isthmus connecting the Peloponnese to mainland Greece. Its two harbors (Cenchreae on the east, Lechaemum on the west) made it a crossroads of Mediterranean trade.
2. Aquila was originally from Pontus (a region on the southern coast of the Black Sea). The expulsion under Claudius (dia to diatetachenai Klaudion) is dated to approximately AD 49. Suetonius reports that Claudius expelled Jews from Rome because of disturbances 'impulsore Chresto' ('at the instigation of Chrestus'), likely garbling 'Christus' — suggesting that disputes about Jesus within the Roman synagogues led to public disorder.
3. The word skenopoiōi ('tentmakers') may refer specifically to making tents from leather or cilicium (a cloth from Cilicia, Paul's home province), or more broadly to leather-working. Paul's manual labor was both practical necessity and theological principle — he worked to avoid being a burden on the communities he served (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:8).
4. The imperfect tense epeithen ('was persuading, tried to persuade') suggests an ongoing process rather than immediate results. Paul's weekly Sabbath teaching addresses the usual mixed audience of Jews and Greek God-fearers.
5. The arrival of Silas and Timothy (likely bringing financial support from the Philippians, cf. 2 Corinthians 11:9, Philippians 4:15) freed Paul from tentmaking to devote himself fully to preaching. The phrase syneicheto to logo ('was occupied with the word, was gripped by the word') suggests an intensification of his preaching ministry.
6. Shaking out garments (ektinaxamenos ta himatia) is a variant of shaking off dust — a prophetic gesture of renunciation. The phrase 'your blood on your own heads' (to haima hymon epi ten kephalen hymon) echoes Ezekiel 33:1-6, where the watchman who warns is absolved of responsibility. 'I am innocent' (katharos ego, literally 'I am clean') declares Paul has fulfilled his obligation. This is the second declaration of turning to the Gentiles (cf. 13:46).
6. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 33:1-6. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
7. The move next door (synomourousa, 'sharing a wall with, adjacent to') to the synagogue is both provocative and strategic — Paul remains visible and accessible to synagogue attendees who might be interested. Titius Justus is a God-fearing Gentile whose Roman name (tria nomina) suggests Roman citizenship.
8. The conversion of the synagogue ruler himself (archisynagogos) is a dramatic loss for the Jewish opposition. Paul personally baptized Crispus (1 Corinthians 1:14). The imperfect tenses episteuon kai ebaptizonto ('were believing and being baptized') describe an ongoing stream of conversions.
9. The Lord's night vision to Paul implies that Paul was experiencing fear — understandable given the pattern of persecution in every previous city. The triple command — 'do not be afraid' (me phobou), 'go on speaking' (lalei), 'do not be silent' (me siopeses) — addresses both emotional fear and the temptation to retreat from proclamation.
10. The promise 'I am with you' (ego eimi meta sou) echoes God's assurances to patriarchs and prophets (Genesis 26:24, Jeremiah 1:8). The promise 'I have many people in this city' (laos moi polys en te polei taute) is theologically striking — God claims a 'people' (laos, the covenant term) in Corinth who have not yet come to faith. Their future conversion is so certain that God speaks of them as already his.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Genesis 26:24 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Jeremiah 1:8 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. Eighteen months is one of the longest stays recorded in Acts (comparable to his three years in Ephesus, 20:31). This extended ministry allowed the Corinthian church to develop roots. It was during this period that Paul likely wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
12. Gallio (Lucius Junius Gallio Annaeanus) was the brother of the philosopher Seneca. An inscription at Delphi dates his proconsulship to approximately AD 51-52, making this the most important chronological anchor for Pauline studies. The bema ('tribunal, judgment seat') in Corinth has been archaeologically identified — a large raised platform in the agora.
13. The charge is ambiguous: 'contrary to the law' (para ton nomon) could mean contrary to Jewish law or contrary to Roman law. The accusers likely intend both — Paul's teaching violates Jewish interpretation and promotes an unauthorized religio. The vagueness of the charge proves to be its undoing.
14. Gallio interrupts before Paul can even speak — he needs no defense because the case has no merit. Gallio distinguishes between adikema ('wrongdoing,' a civil or criminal offense) and rhaidiourgema poneron ('vicious crime, wicked fraud') — matters a Roman magistrate would adjudicate.

15. Gallio classifies the dispute as an internal Jewish matter involving 'words and names and your own law' (peri logou kai onomaton kai nomou tou kath hymas). This is a landmark ruling: a Roman proconsul formally declares that the debate about Jesus is a Jewish theological question, not a Roman legal matter. The decision effectively protects Christian missionaries from prosecution on religious grounds.
16. The verb *apelasen* ('drove away, expelled') indicates a forceful dismissal — Gallio has no patience for what he views as a trivial religious squabble wasting his court's time.
17. Sosthenes, who succeeded Crispus as synagogue ruler, becomes the victim of the crowd's frustration. Whether 'they all' (*pantes*) refers to Greeks expressing anti-Jewish sentiment or to Jews punishing Sosthenes for failing to prosecute successfully is debated. The same Sosthenes may later have become a believer (1 Corinthians 1:1). Gallio's indifference (*ouden touton* to Gallioni *emelen*) demonstrates the Roman attitude toward Jewish disputes.
18. Cenchræe was Corinth's eastern port on the Saronic Gulf. Paul's vow (*euchen*) that involved cutting his hair is almost certainly a Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1-21), demonstrating that Paul continued to observe Jewish practices voluntarily while teaching that they were not required for salvation. Priscilla is named before Aquila here and in several other passages, possibly indicating her prominence in the partnership.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Numbers 6:1-21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. Paul leaves Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus — they will prepare the ground for his later extended ministry there (19:1-41). His brief synagogue visit is a preliminary contact. Ephesus, the largest city in the Roman province of Asia, will become Paul's longest single base of operations.
20. The Ephesian Jews' positive response — asking Paul to stay — contrasts with the opposition in most other cities. Paul declines but will return (19:1).
21. The conditional 'if God wills' (*tu theou thelontos*) expresses Paul's submission to divine direction. Some manuscripts add 'I must by all means keep the coming feast in Jerusalem,' but the SBLGNT omits this addition. Paul's promise to return is fulfilled in 19:1.
22. The phrase 'went up' (*anabas*) without naming Jerusalem almost certainly means Paul visited the Jerusalem church — one always 'goes up' to Jerusalem. 'Went down' (*katebe*) to Antioch completes the second missionary journey's circuit, returning to the sending church. Luke compresses the entire conclusion of the journey into a single verse.
23. This verse marks the beginning of the third missionary journey. The familiar pattern of strengthening (*episterizon*) existing churches continues. The Galatian and Phrygian churches are those founded during the first and second journeys.
24. Apollos is introduced with impressive credentials: Alexandrian origin (Alexandria was the intellectual capital of the Hellenistic world, home to the great library and to Philo), *logos* ('eloquent, learned'), and *dynatos en tais graphais* ('powerful in the Scriptures'). He becomes an important figure in the early church (1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:4-6, Titus 3:13).
25. Apollos's knowledge was genuine but incomplete — he knew about Jesus but only within the framework of John's baptism, which pointed to the coming Messiah without knowledge of Pentecost and the Spirit. The phrase *zeon to pneumati* ('fervent in spirit') may refer to the Holy Spirit or to his own zealous disposition. His teaching was *akribos* ('accurately') as far as it went.
26. Priscilla is named first — again suggesting her leadership role in the instruction. They do not correct Apollos publicly but take him aside privately (*proselabonto auton*, 'took him to themselves'), showing both tact and love. They explain God's way *akribesterion* ('more accurately, more precisely') — completing what was incomplete in his understanding.
27. The Ephesian church provides Apollos with a letter of recommendation for the Corinthian church — an early example of inter-church communication and credentials. The phrase 'through grace' (*dia tes charitos*) can modify either 'those who had believed through grace' or 'he helped through grace those who had believed.' Both readings are theologically valid.
28. The adverb *eutonon* ('powerfully, vigorously') and the verb *diakatelencheto* ('refuted thoroughly, argued down') describe Apollos's formidable debating ability. His strength was in public (*demosia*) scriptural demonstration — proving from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Messiah. His Alexandrian education and scriptural mastery made him an exceptionally effective advocate for the gospel.

19

Summary: Acts 19 records Paul's extended ministry in Ephesus, the major city of Roman Asia. Paul encounters about twelve disciples who knew only John's baptism; he baptizes them in the name of Jesus, lays hands on them, and the Holy Spirit comes with tongues and prophecy. Paul teaches for two years in the hall of Tyrannus, until 'all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord.' Extraordinary miracles occur through Paul — even handkerchiefs and aprons from his body heal the sick. Jewish exorcists attempt to use Jesus's name as a magic formula and are overpowered by an evil spirit. This produces a widespread fear of God, and many practitioners of magic publicly burn their scrolls, valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver. The chapter climaxes with the riot of the silversmiths: Demetrius, whose trade depends on making silver shrines of Artemis, incites the craftsmen against Paul, and the city erupts in

two hours of chanting 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' The city clerk eventually calms the crowd and dismisses the assembly.

What Makes This Remarkable: *Luke devotes more space to Ephesus than any other city except Jerusalem, reflecting its strategic importance. The three-year ministry there (20:31) produced churches throughout the province of Asia (Colossae, Laodicea, Hierapolis — cf. Colossians 4:13). The burning of magic scrolls worth fifty thousand silver coins (roughly 137 years of daily wages) demonstrates the radical economic implications of conversion. The Artemis riot reveals the intersection of religion, economics, and civic identity — the goddess was not just a religious figure but the foundation of Ephesus's identity, tourism, and economy. The temple of Artemis was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.*

Translation Friction: *The 'disciples' in verse 1 who knew only John's baptism raise questions about the boundaries of early Christian identity — were they Christians with incomplete understanding or followers of John who had not yet encountered the Christian message? Luke treats them as the latter. The 'handkerchiefs and aprons' (soudaraia kai simikinthia) in verse 12 are medical and artisanal terms — cloths used for wiping sweat and leather aprons worn during manual labor. The sons of Sceva are called 'a Jewish high priest' (v. 14), but no high priest named Sceva is known; the title may be an exaggeration or a claim to priestly lineage.*

Connections: *The re-baptism of John's disciples connects to Apollos's similar situation (18:25) and raises the question of baptism's sufficiency. Paul's extended teaching ministry parallels Jesus's pattern of sustained instruction. The burning of magic scrolls echoes the Deuteronomic prohibition of sorcery (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). The Artemis riot anticipates the charges Paul will face in Jerusalem. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians during this Ephesian ministry (1 Corinthians 16:8) and likely Galatians and Philippians as well.*

1It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." 4And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7There were about twelve men in all. 8He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. 10This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. 11And God was doing extraordinary miracles through the hands of Paul, 12So that from his physical body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases went away from them, and the evil spirits traveled out of them. 13Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." 14Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" 16And the man in whom the evil spirit lived leaped on them, mastered all of them, and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17This became known to all residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was exalted. 18Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. 19And a number of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. 21After these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." 22And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. 23About that time there arose no small disturbance concerning the Way. 24For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. 25These he gathered together, along with the workers in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our prosperity. 26And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has

persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence — she whom all Asia and the world worship." ²⁸When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹Confusion swept through the whole city. The crowd grabbed Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and rushed together into the theater. ³⁰But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹Even some of the provincial officials of Asia, who were friends of Paul, sent him a message urging him not to risk going into the theater. ³²Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. ³⁴But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ³⁵And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? ³⁶Since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be calm and do nothing rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls — let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." ⁴¹And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The 'interior regions' (ta anoterika mere) likely refers to the inland route through the Phrygian highlands rather than the main coastal road. Paul fulfills his promise to return to Ephesus (18:21). The 'disciples' (mathetas) he finds will prove to have an incomplete understanding of the faith.
2. Paul's diagnostic question reveals the gap: these disciples have no knowledge of the Holy Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost. Their response — 'we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit' (oud' ei pneuma hagion estin ekousamen) — does not mean they were unaware of the Spirit's existence (the Old Testament speaks of God's Spirit) but that they had not heard of the Spirit's new-covenant activity.
3. The connection Paul draws between the Spirit and baptism leads to his diagnostic question about their baptism. Their answer — 'John's baptism' — explains their incomplete understanding. They stand at the threshold between the old and new covenants.
4. Paul distinguishes John's baptism from Christian baptism: John's was preparatory, pointing forward to 'the one coming after him.' John's baptism expressed repentance; Christian baptism expresses faith in Jesus as the one John announced. The baptism of repentance is fulfilled and superseded by baptism into Jesus's name.
5. This is the only clear instance of re-baptism in the New Testament. The distinction between John's baptism and baptism 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (eis to onoma tou kyriou Iesou) is significant enough to warrant a new baptism rather than supplementing the old one.
6. The laying on of hands (epithontos cheiras) precedes the Spirit's coming, connecting apostolic mediation to the Spirit's gift. The manifestations — tongues and prophecy — echo Pentecost (Acts 2) and the Cornelius episode (Acts 10:46), establishing continuity between Jewish, Gentile, and now incomplete believers' experiences of the Spirit.
7. The number twelve (dodeka) may be coincidental or may carry symbolic weight — twelve men forming a new community, echoing the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes. The qualifier 'about' (hosei) suggests Luke's approximation.
8. Three months of synagogue ministry is the longest such period recorded in Acts. Paul's message is summarized as 'the kingdom of God' (tes basileias tou theou) — the comprehensive term for God's redemptive reign inaugurated through Jesus.
9. The term 'the Way' (ten hodon) is the early church's self-designation (cf. 9:2, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22). The scholē Tyrannou ('hall/school of Tyrannus') was likely a lecture hall or teaching space rented from a man named Tyrannus. Some manuscripts add 'from the fifth to the tenth hour' (approximately 11 AM to 4 PM), suggesting Paul taught during the afternoon siesta when the hall was available.
10. Two years of daily teaching from a single urban center produces province-wide impact — 'all the residents of Asia' (pantas tous katoikountas ten Asian) is hyperbolic but indicates extraordinarily wide dissemination. The churches of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13) were likely founded during this period by Paul's associates, not by Paul himself.
11. The litotes ou tas tuchousas ('not the ordinary kind') means 'extraordinary, uncommon.' Luke carefully attributes the miracles to God (ho theos epoiei) working 'through Paul's hands' — Paul is the instrument, not the source.

12. The soudarion ('handkerchief, sweat cloth') and simikinthion ('apron, work cloth') are items from Paul's tentmaking labor. This parallels the healing through Peter's shadow (5:15) and the woman healed by touching Jesus's garment (Mark 5:27-30). Luke reports the phenomenon without endorsing it as normative — the extraordinary nature of these events is emphasized by the unusual vocabulary.
13. Jewish exorcism was a recognized practice in the ancient world (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.46-49). These itinerant exorcists attempt to use Jesus's name as a magical formula — a tool of power rather than an expression of faith. The phrase 'the Jesus whom Paul proclaims' (ton Iesoun hon Paulos kerusse) reveals their secondhand relationship to both Jesus and Paul.
14. No Jewish high priest named Sceva is known from any source. The title archieros ('high priest') may be a self-claimed designation to enhance their exorcistic authority, or it may indicate membership in a high-priestly family. Seven sons practicing exorcism together suggests a family business.
15. The evil spirit's response uses two different verbs: ginosko ('I know' — deep knowledge) for Jesus and epistamai ('I recognize, I am acquainted with') for Paul. The dismissive 'but who are you?' (hymeis de tines este) exposes the exorcists as unauthorized — they have no relationship with Jesus and no spiritual authority. The spirit's recognition of Jesus and Paul contrasts sharply with its contempt for the pretenders.
16. The demonized man's supernatural strength overpowers the exorcists completely. The word amphoteron ('both/all') suggests two or more of the seven were present. They flee gymnous ('naked, stripped') and tetraumatismenous ('wounded, injured') — a humiliating defeat that demonstrates the danger of treating Jesus's name as a magic charm.
17. The failed exorcism paradoxically magnifies Jesus's name — it demonstrates that his name carries real power that cannot be casually manipulated. The 'fear' (phobos) that falls on the city is reverent awe before genuine spiritual authority, contrasting with the fraudulent use of that authority.
18. The confession comes from believers (ton pepisteukotōn) — those who had already professed faith but were still secretly involved in magic. The dual verbs exomologoumenoi ('confessing') and anagellontes ('divulging, making known') indicate both acknowledgment of wrong and public disclosure of specific practices.
19. The ta perierga ('magic arts, curious practices') refers specifically to the magical papyri and spell books for which Ephesus was famous — 'Ephesian letters' (Ephesia grammata) was a technical term for magical formulas. The public burning (katekaion enopion panton) demonstrates radical repentance. Fifty thousand pieces of silver (arguriou myriadas pente) — approximately 50,000 days' wages — represents an enormous financial sacrifice, demonstrating the depth of conversion.
20. Another of Luke's progress reports: 'mightily' (kata kratos, 'according to power') describes the gospel's advance. The word both 'increases' (euxanen) in extent and 'prevails' (ischuen) in power — quantitative and qualitative growth.
21. Paul's itinerary — Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, then Rome — maps the trajectory of Acts' final chapters. The phrase en to pneumatī ('in the Spirit') may refer to the Holy Spirit's direction or Paul's own determined spirit. The word dei ('I must') suggests divine necessity — Rome is not merely a destination but a destiny (cf. 23:11, 27:24).
22. Timothy and Erastus are sent ahead to prepare the Macedonian churches for Paul's visit. Erastus may be the city treasurer of Corinth mentioned in Romans 16:23 — an inscription found in Corinth names an Erastus who paved a street at his own expense. Paul remains in Asia to complete his Ephesian work.
23. Luke's characteristic litotes — 'no small disturbance' (tarachos ouk oligos) — introduces the Artemis riot, one of the most dramatic episodes in Acts. The cause is 'the Way' (tes hodou), the early church's self-designation.
24. Demetrius is an argurokopos ('silversmith, silver-worker') who makes naous argorous ('silver shrines') — miniature replicas of the temple of Artemis or statuettes of the goddess. The temple of Artemis at Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The souvenir trade was a major industry, and Paul's preaching against idols threatened their livelihood.
25. Demetrius assembles not just his own workers but all craftsmen in related trades — a guild meeting. His first argument is economic: 'from this business we have our prosperity' (ek tautes tes ergasias he euporia hemin estin). Religion and economics are inseparable in his appeal.
26. Demetrius inadvertently confirms the success of Paul's mission — his preaching has impacted 'almost all of Asia' (schedon pases tes Asias). Paul's message is summarized as 'gods made with hands are not gods' (ouk eisin theoi hoi dia cheiron ginomenoi) — an echo of Isaiah's anti-idol polemic (Isaiah 44:9-20) and Paul's Areopagus speech.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 44:9-20. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. Demetrius escalates from economics to religion and civic identity: the temple's reputation, the goddess's dignity, and the city's worldwide fame are all at stake. The title 'the great goddess Artemis' (tes megales theas Artemidos) and the claim of worldwide worship (hole he Asia kai he oikoumene sebetai) are not exaggerations — the Artemis cult was one of the most widespread in the ancient world.
28. The crowd's chant — Megale he Artemis Ephesion ('Great is Artemis of the Ephesians') — is a liturgical acclamation that has been found in inscriptions from Ephesus. It combines religious devotion with civic pride. The repetition of this cry (cf. v. 34) creates a mob atmosphere.
29. The theater of Ephesus, seating approximately 25,000, was the largest in Asia Minor and served as a venue for public assemblies. Gaius and Aristarchus are seized as proxies for Paul. Aristarchus reappears in 20:4, 27:2, Colossians 4:10, and Philemon 24, indicating he remained a faithful companion despite this traumatic experience.

30. Paul's courage — he wants to enter the mob-filled theater — is matched by the disciples' wisdom in restraining him. His willingness to face danger personally is consistent with his character throughout Acts.
31. The Asiarchai ('Asiarchs') were prominent citizens who served as patrons of the provincial cult of Rome and the emperor — the highest social rank in the province. That some were Paul's friends (*ontes auto philoi*) reveals the breadth of his social connections in Ephesus. Their warning adds to the picture of danger.
32. Luke captures the chaos of mob psychology with dry precision: most people in the theater do not even know why they are there (*hoi pleious ouk edeisan tinos heneka syneleluthiesan*). The word *ekklesia* ('assembly') is used here in its secular sense of a civic gathering, though it is the same word used for the church.
33. The Jews push Alexander forward, apparently to distance themselves from the Christians and avoid being caught up in the anti-Paul sentiment. Alexander attempts to address the crowd — likely to explain that mainstream Jews are distinct from the followers of the Way — but is shouted down.
34. The crowd's recognition that Alexander is Jewish only inflames them further — they associate all Jews with opposition to their goddess. Two hours (*hos epi horas duo*) of continuous chanting demonstrates the frenzy of religiously motivated mob violence. The scene is chaotic, dangerous, and profoundly irrational.
35. The *grammateus* ('city clerk, town secretary') was the chief executive officer of Ephesus, responsible for public order. The title *neokoros* ('temple keeper, temple warden') was an official civic honor attested in Ephesian inscriptions. The *diopetes* ('that which fell from Zeus/the sky') likely refers to a meteorite or ancient image believed to have fallen from heaven and housed in the Artemis temple.
36. The clerk's argument is pragmatic: Ephesus's status as temple keeper is undeniable, so there is nothing to be agitated about. The word *propetes* ('rash, reckless, hasty') characterizes the mob's behavior as undignified and unnecessary.
37. The clerk makes a legal observation: Gaius and Aristarchus have committed no crime — they are not *hierosulous* ('temple robbers, sacrilegious') and have not blasphemed Artemis. This suggests Paul's preaching, while opposing idols in principle, was conducted without directly attacking the Artemis cult.
38. The clerk directs legitimate grievances to the proper legal channels: *agoraioi* ('court days, assizes') are held regularly, and *anthypatoi* ('proconsuls') are available for jurisdiction. The plural 'proconsuls' may be a general reference to the office or may reflect the specific historical moment when two proconsuls briefly served after the assassination of M. Junius Silanus.
39. The *ennomo ekklesia* ('lawful assembly, regular assembly') was the formal citizens' assembly that met three times a month in Ephesus. The clerk implicitly contrasts this unlawful gathering with the legitimate civic process.
40. The clerk's strongest argument is the threat of Roman intervention: unauthorized assemblies could result in the city losing its privileged status. The word *staseos* ('riot, sedition, insurrection') was a serious charge under Roman law. The phrase 'no cause' (*medenos aitiou*) means they cannot justify the gathering to Roman authorities. Roman suppression of civil disorder was swift and severe.
41. The clerk's authority is sufficient to end the two-hour disturbance. The verb *apelusen* ('dismissed, released') is the technical term for closing a formal assembly. Luke again uses *ekklesia* in its secular sense. The crisis is resolved through civic procedure rather than violence — a pattern Luke highlights to show that Christianity does not inherently threaten public order.

20

Summary: Acts 20 narrates Paul's journey through Macedonia and Greece back toward Jerusalem, including a memorable scene in Troas where the young man Eutychus falls from a window during Paul's midnight sermon and is restored to life. The chapter concludes with Paul's farewell address to the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus — a deeply emotional speech in which he warns of future threats to the community and commends them to God's grace. This is the only speech in Acts addressed to a Christian audience by Paul, making it a unique window into his pastoral theology.

*What Makes This Remarkable: The 'we' narrative resumes at verse 5, indicating the author's presence as a traveling companion. Paul's Miletus speech (vv. 18-35) is structured like a Greco-Roman farewell discourse: it reviews past conduct, warns of future dangers, and entrusts the audience to a higher authority. The quotation of Jesus in verse 35 — 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' — appears nowhere in the Gospels, representing an otherwise unrecorded saying of Jesus (an *agraphon*). The speech's emphasis on 'the whole counsel of God' (v. 27) and elders as 'overseers' (*episkopoi*, v. 28) became foundational for later church governance theology.*

Translation Friction: The Eutychus episode (vv. 7-12) uses language that parallels Elijah's raising of the widow's son (1 Kings 17:21). Whether Eutychus actually died or was merely thought dead is debated — Paul's statement 'his life is in him' (v. 10) could indicate either resuscitation or reassurance. We render the Greek as given without resolving the ambiguity. The terms 'elders' (presbyteroi, v. 17) and 'overseers' (episkopoi, v. 28) are used interchangeably here, though later church tradition distinguished them as separate offices.

Connections: Paul's determination to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost (v. 16) echoes the pilgrimage theology of the Old Testament festivals. The farewell speech connects to Moses' farewell in Deuteronomy 31-33, Samuel's farewell in 1 Samuel 12, and Jesus' farewell discourse in John 13-17. The 'wolves' imagery (v. 29) echoes Jesus' warnings in Matthew 7:15 and John 10:12. Paul's self-description as 'serving the Lord with all humility' (v. 19) connects to his portrait in the Epistles (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-29).

¹After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them and saying farewell, he left to travel to Macedonia. ²After traveling through those regions and giving them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³He stayed there three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia. ⁵These men went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. ⁶We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we joined them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. ⁷On the first day of the week, when we had gathered to break bread, Paul began speaking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹A young man named Eutychus was sitting on the windowsill and was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. Overcome by sleep, he fell from the third story and was picked up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down, threw himself on the young man, and embracing him said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹Then Paul went back upstairs, broke bread and ate, and after conversing with them until dawn, he departed. ¹²They took the young man away alive and were greatly comforted. ¹³We went on ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, where we intended to pick up Paul, for he had arranged it this way, planning to go there on foot. ¹⁴When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵Sailing from there, the next day we arrived opposite Chios. The following day we crossed over to Samos, and the day after that we came to Miletus. ¹⁶For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia, since he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷From Miletus he sent word to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. ¹⁸When they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹I served the Lord with complete humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came through the plots of the Jewish opponents. ²⁰You know that I held nothing back that would be helpful to you. I taught you publicly and went from house to house, ²¹urging both Jews and Greeks to turn to God in repentance and to place their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³Indeed, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city and stated that bonds and afflictions abide me. ²⁴But I do not consider my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus — to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now I know that none of you among whom I went about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷For I have not shunned to declare to you every one of the counsel of God. ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he obtained through his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, ³⁰Also of your own selves will men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away followers following them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one of you with tears. ³²And to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, now, brothers and sisters, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands served my own needs and the needs of those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, 'It is more

blesed to give than to receive." ³⁶When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷And there was much weeping among them all, and they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The 'uproar' (thorybos) refers to the riot of the silversmiths in Ephesus described in chapter 19. Paul's departure is not flight but an orderly transition. The verb parakalesas covers both encouragement and exhortation.
2. The Greek Hellas ('Greece') appears only here in the New Testament. Luke typically uses the Roman provincial name 'Achaia'; the use of 'Greece' may reflect the perspective of a traveling companion.
3. The plot (epiboule) likely aimed to ambush Paul on a pilgrim ship crowded with Jewish travelers heading to Jerusalem for Passover. His decision to travel overland through Macedonia was a practical security measure.
4. This delegation likely represents churches contributing to the collection for Jerusalem (cf. Romans 15:25-26, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4). Each person represents a different region, suggesting an organized multi-church effort. The SBLGNT includes 'son of Pyrrhus,' absent from some manuscripts.
5. The first-person plural 'us' (hemas) marks the resumption of a 'we' section, indicating the author's presence as a traveling companion. The 'we' narrative was last active at 16:17 (Philippi). The author apparently remained in Philippi during the intervening period and now rejoins Paul.
6. The 'we' narration continues, confirming the author's firsthand presence. The reference to the days of Unleavened Bread (the festival following Passover) provides a chronological anchor and shows that Paul continued to observe the Jewish liturgical calendar. The five-day crossing from Philippi to Troas contrasts with the two-day crossing in 16:11, suggesting unfavorable winds.
7. The phrase 'the first day of the week' (te mia ton sabbaton, literally 'the first of the sabbaths') is one of the earliest references to Christian worship on Sunday. 'Breaking bread' (klasai arton) likely refers to the Lord's Supper combined with a communal meal. The gathering appears to be in the evening, following Jewish reckoning where the day begins at sunset.
8. The detail about lamps (lampades) is characteristically vivid eyewitness reporting. The many lamps in a closed upper room would have produced heat and smoke, contributing to drowsiness. The 'upper room' (hyperoon) recalls the upper room of Acts 1:13.
9. The name Eutychos means 'fortunate' or 'lucky' — an ironic detail given his fall, though the name proves apt by the end of the episode. The Greek erthe nekros ('was picked up dead') states plainly that he was dead, not merely unconscious. Luke, who as a physician would be attentive to such distinctions, uses unambiguous language here.
10. Paul's action of throwing himself on Eutychos (epepesen auto) deliberately echoes Elijah's stretching himself over the widow's son (1 Kings 17:21) and Elisha's similar action (2 Kings 4:34). The phrase 'his life is in him' (he psyche autou en auto estin) may announce the restoration of life rather than deny that death occurred.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 1 Kings 17:21 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
10. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes 2 Kings 4:34 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
11. The breaking of bread here completes the meal that was the original purpose of the gathering (v. 7). Paul's continued conversation until dawn (achri auges) — even after the dramatic interruption — underscores the urgency of his message on this final visit.
12. The litotes 'not a little' (ou metrios) is characteristically Lukan — an understatement meaning 'immensely.' The word paida ('boy, young man') may suggest Eutychos was younger than the neanias ('young man') of verse 9 implies, or it may be a stylistic variation.
13. The 'we' narration continues. Paul's choice to walk the roughly 20-mile road from Troas to Assos while his companions sailed may reflect a desire for solitary reflection, or practical reasons. Assos was a coastal city in Mysia with a direct road from Troas.
14. Mitylene was the chief city of the island of Lesbos, a natural stopping point on the coastal route south along Asia Minor.
15. The SBLGNT does not include the reference to Trogyllium found in the KJV (from the Western text tradition). The itinerary shows island-hopping along the Aegean coast — Chios and Samos are major islands off the coast of Asia Minor.
16. Paul's urgency to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost (pentekoste, 'fiftieth' — fifty days after Passover) reflects both practical scheduling and theological significance. Pentecost was one of the three pilgrimage festivals, and Acts 2 records the founding event of the church at Pentecost. Paul's return at this festival creates a narrative symmetry.
17. Miletus was about 30 miles south of Ephesus. Summoning the elders there avoided the delay of visiting Ephesus itself. The term presbyterous ('elders') denotes the recognized leaders of the local congregation — the same group called episkopous ('overseers') in verse 28.
18. Paul's farewell speech begins with an appeal to the elders' personal knowledge of his conduct — a standard rhetorical move in Greco-Roman farewell discourses. The phrase 'the entire time' (ton panta chronon) covers roughly three years of ministry in Ephesus (cf. v. 31).
19. The word tapeinophrosynes ('humility') was not a virtue in Greco-Roman culture, where it often connoted servility. Paul redefines it as a mark of authentic service to the Lord. The 'plots' (epiboulais) refer to opposition Paul faced during his Ephesian ministry, some of which is described in 19:23-41 and alluded to in 1 Corinthians 15:32.

- 20.** The verb *hyposteilamen* ('shrink back, hold back') implies courage in the face of opposition. Paul's teaching operated in two settings: public (*demosia*, in synagogues and lecture halls) and private (*kat' oikous*, in homes), reflecting the dual structure of early Christian community life.
- 21.** Paul summarizes his message in two complementary terms: repentance (*metanoia*, a turning of the mind toward God) and faith (*pistis*, trust directed toward Jesus as Lord). This dual formulation encompasses both the Jewish and Greek audiences of his ministry.
- 22.** The phrase *dedemenos to pneumati* ('bound in/by the spirit') is ambiguous — it could mean Paul's own spirit (his inner resolve) or the Holy Spirit's compulsion. The rendering 'compelled by the Spirit' follows the interpretation that this is divine leading, consistent with the Spirit's role throughout Acts in directing Paul's movements.
- 23.** The Holy Spirit's warnings come 'city by city' (*kata polin*), suggesting prophetic utterances at multiple stops along the journey (cf. 21:4, 11). The word *desma* ('bonds, chains') specifically foreshadows Paul's imprisonment, while *thlipseis* ('afflictions, pressures') is broader.
- 24.** The athletic metaphor 'finish my course' (*teleiosai ton dromon mou*) pictures life as a race to be completed (cf. 2 Timothy 4:7). The phrase 'the gospel of the grace of God' (*to euangelion tes charitos tou theou*) is unique in the New Testament and encapsulates Paul's message: divine favor freely given.
- 25.** This solemn declaration gives the speech its farewell character. The phrase 'proclaiming the kingdom' (*kerisson ten basileian*) — with 'of God' implied — connects Paul's message to Jesus' own proclamation in the Gospels. Whether Paul in fact never returned to Ephesus is debated; the Pastoral Epistles suggest he may have (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3).
- 26.** The declaration 'innocent of the blood' (*katharos apo tou haimatos*) echoes the watchman imagery of Ezekiel 33:1-9, where a watchman who faithfully warns bears no guilt for those who reject the warning. Paul claims to have fulfilled his prophetic responsibility as a watchman over the Ephesian community.
- 26.** [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 33:1-9. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
- 27.** The phrase 'the whole counsel of God' (*pasan ten boulen tou theou*) implies a comprehensive body of teaching — God's full plan and purpose, not merely select doctrines. The verb *hyposteilamen* ('shrink back') repeats from verse 20, framing this section.
- 28.** This verse is theologically dense. The same leaders called 'elders' (*presbyteroi*) in verse 17 are here called 'overseers' (*episkopoi*), demonstrating that these were interchangeable terms at this stage. The phrase 'through his own blood' (*dia tou haimatos tou idiou*) is textually and theologically complex — 'his own' (*tou idiou*) could refer to God's own blood (a startlingly high Christological claim) or to 'his own one' (a term of endearment for Christ). The SBLGNT reads 'church of God' (*ekklēsia tou theou*).
- 29.** The wolf-and-flock metaphor continues from verse 28. 'Fierce wolves' (*lykoi bareis*) echoes Jesus' warning about false prophets in Matthew 7:15 and the threat to the shepherd's flock in John 10:12. The threat comes from outside the community ('come in among you').
- 30.** The second threat is internal — from within the leadership itself. The word *diestrammena* ('twisted, distorted, perverted') indicates not outright falsehood but distortion of truth. Paul's letters to Timothy, who later served in Ephesus, confirm that such internal threats materialized (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-7, 2 Timothy 2:17-18).
- 31.** The 'three years' (*trietian*) provides the length of Paul's Ephesian ministry. 'Night and day' indicates the relentlessness of his pastoral care. The tears (*dakryon*) are a recurring motif in this speech (cf. v. 19), presenting Paul as emotionally invested rather than merely professionally dutiful.
- 32.** The speech transitions from warning to commendation. Paul entrusts the elders not to a human successor but to God and 'the word of his grace.' The language of 'inheritance' (*kleronimian*) among 'those who are sanctified' (*hegiasmenois*) echoes the Old Testament promise of the land reinterpreted as the people of God's shared inheritance.
- 33.** Paul's denial of material greed echoes Samuel's farewell speech in 1 Samuel 12:3-5, where the departing leader calls on witnesses to confirm his financial integrity. The triad 'silver, gold, clothing' represents comprehensive material wealth.
- 33.** [TCR Cross-Reference] References 1 Samuel 12:3-5 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
- 34.** Paul gestures to his own hands — a vivid detail suggesting this speech is based on eyewitness memory. He worked as a tentmaker (cf. 18:3) to avoid burdening the community, a practice he also mentions in 1 Corinthians 4:12 and 1 Thessalonians 2:9.
- 35.** This saying of Jesus is not found in any of the four Gospels, making it an *agraphon* — an unwritten saying preserved in oral tradition. Its attribution to Jesus ('he himself said') by Paul demonstrates that early Christians transmitted sayings of Jesus outside the written Gospel tradition. The word *makarion* ('blessed, happy, fortunate') is the same term used in the Beatitudes.
- 36.** Kneeling for prayer (*theis ta gonata*) was not the standard Jewish posture (which was standing); it indicates special intensity or solemnity. The communal prayer following the speech seals the farewell.
- 37.** The emotional scene — weeping, embracing, kissing — is among the most personal in Acts. The verb *katephiloun* ('kissed repeatedly, kissed affectionately') is intensive, indicating deep affection rather than a formal greeting.

38. The Greek *odynomenoi* ('grieving, being in anguish') is a strong word for emotional pain. The final image — the elders escorting Paul to the ship — mirrors ancient farewell scenes and closes the Ephesian chapter of Paul's ministry with profound pathos.

21

Summary: *Acts 21 chronicles Paul's final journey to Jerusalem against repeated prophetic warnings. The 'we' narrative provides a detailed travel itinerary from Miletus through Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, and Caesarea. At Caesarea, the prophet Agabus dramatically predicts Paul's arrest. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul follows James's advice to demonstrate his Torah observance by sponsoring four men under a Nazirite vow. Despite this conciliatory gesture, Jews from Asia recognize Paul in the temple, incite a mob, and Paul is rescued by Roman soldiers — beginning the chain of custody that will eventually carry him to Rome.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The chapter contains one of the most vivid 'we' sections in Acts, with detailed nautical and geographical information that reflects firsthand travel experience. Agabus's symbolic prophecy — binding his own hands and feet with Paul's belt (v. 11) — imitates the enacted prophecies of the Old Testament prophets (cf. Isaiah 20, Jeremiah 13, Ezekiel 4). The community's response, 'The Lord's will be done' (v. 14), echoes Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42). Paul's arrest at the temple creates a narrative parallel with Jesus' arrest in Jerusalem — both are seized in a holy space, both face Jewish and Roman authorities, both endure a series of trials.*

Translation Friction: *The advice of James to Paul (vv. 23-24) raises questions about the relationship between Pauline theology and Torah observance. Paul's willingness to sponsor a Nazirite vow and undergo purification rites has been viewed as either genuine piety, pastoral accommodation, or diplomatic compromise. We render the text without resolving this tension. The accusation that Paul brought a Gentile (Trophimus) into the temple (v. 29) was false, as Luke explicitly states, but it reflects real anxieties about boundary violations in Second Temple Judaism.*

Connections: *Paul's journey to Jerusalem deliberately parallels Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel. The repeated warnings about suffering (vv. 4, 11) echo Jesus' passion predictions (Luke 9:22, 44; 18:31-33). The Nazirite vow (Numbers 6) connects to the OT purity system. The 'middle wall of partition' in the temple (implied in v. 28) is the barrier Paul describes metaphorically in Ephesians 2:14 as destroyed by Christ.*

¹After we had torn ourselves away from them and set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos, the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ²Finding a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³When we came in sight of Cyprus, we passed it on our left and sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for the ship was to unload its cargo there. ⁴After finding the disciples, we stayed there seven days. Through the Spirit they kept telling Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ⁵When our days there were ended, we left and went on our way, with all of them — including wives and children — accompanying us until we were outside the city. And kneeling on the beach, we prayed. ⁶Then we said farewell to one another, and we went aboard the ship while they returned to their homes. ⁷When we had completed the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. ⁸The next day we left and came to Caesarea, and we went to the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. ¹⁰While we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹He came to us, took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" ¹²When we heard this, both we and the local residents urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴Since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent and said, "The Lord's will be done." ¹⁵After these days we made our preparations and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought us to the home of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to stay. ¹⁷When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. ¹⁸The next day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹After greeting them, he reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰When they heard it, they glorified God. Then they said to him, "You see, brother, how many

thousands there are among the Jews who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law. ²¹They have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. ²²What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³Therefore do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. ²⁴Take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Then everyone will know that there is nothing to what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. ²⁵But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our decision that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality." ²⁶Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice of when the days of purification would be completed and the offering presented for each one of them. ²⁷When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, ²⁸Crying out, Men of Israel, help — This is the man, that teaches all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and has polluted this holy place. ²⁹For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple. ³⁰The whole city was stirred up, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. ³¹While they were trying to kill him, word reached the commander of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³²He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³Then the commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. He inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴Some in the crowd were shouting one thing, some another. Since the commander could not learn the facts because of the uproar, he ordered Paul to be brought into the barracks. ³⁵When Paul reached the steps, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the crowd, ³⁶For the crowd of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. ³⁷As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" The commander replied, "Do you know Greek? ³⁸Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?" ³⁹Paul replied, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city. I beg you, allow me to speak to the people." ⁴⁰When the commander had given him permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand to the people. When there was a great silence, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The 'we' narration continues from chapter 20. The verb *apospasthentas* ('having been torn away') conveys the emotional difficulty of leaving the Ephesian elders. The nautical term *euthydromesantes* ('running a straight course') indicates favorable winds for the island-hopping route along the southwestern coast of Asia Minor.
2. At Patara, Paul's group transfers from a coastal vessel to a larger merchant ship capable of the open-sea crossing to Phoenicia — a voyage of about 400 miles. This kind of detail reflects the eyewitness narrator's travel experience.
3. The nautical detail of passing Cyprus on the port side ('left,' *euonymon*) indicates a course south of the island. Tyre, the ancient Phoenician port city, was a major commercial hub where cargo ships regularly docked.
4. The imperfect tense *elegon* ('they kept saying') suggests repeated urging. The tension between the Spirit's warning and Paul's Spirit-led determination to go (20:22) is not resolved by Luke. The warnings may reveal what will happen rather than commanding Paul to avoid it — prophetic information about danger rather than a prohibition.
5. The scene of an entire community — men, women, and children — escorting Paul to the shore and kneeling to pray on the beach is among the most tender images in Acts. It parallels the farewell at Miletus (20:36-38) and demonstrates that early Christian communities included whole families.
6. The simple narrative — farewell, boarding, returning — closes the Tyre episode with quiet dignity. The phrase *eis ta idia* ('to their own [places]') echoes the same phrase used in John 1:11 and 19:27.
7. Ptolemais (modern Akko/Acre) was about 25 miles south of Tyre. The brief one-day visit contrasts with the seven days at Tyre, reflecting Paul's haste to reach Jerusalem. The existence of a Christian community here shows the spread of the faith along the Phoenician coast.
8. Philip 'the evangelist' is identified as 'one of the seven' — the group appointed in Acts 6:5 to serve the Hellenistic Jewish widows. His last appearance was in 8:40, settling in Caesarea after his encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch. The title 'evangelist' (*euangelistou*) appears only here and in Ephesians 4:11 and 2 Timothy 4:5.

9. The mention of Philip's four prophesying daughters is significant for understanding women's roles in the early church. The Greek parthenoi ('virgins, unmarried women') combined with propheteuousai ('prophesying') indicates an ongoing prophetic ministry. This fulfills Joel 2:28-29, quoted by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18): 'your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.'
9. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Joel 2:28-29. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
10. Agabus previously appeared in Acts 11:28, where he predicted a famine. His arrival from Judea — 'came down,' the standard expression for traveling from the elevated region of Jerusalem — introduces the final and most dramatic warning about Paul's fate.
11. Agabus's enacted prophecy follows the pattern of Old Testament prophetic sign-acts (Isaiah 20:2-4, Jeremiah 13:1-11, Ezekiel 4:1-3). The introductory formula 'This is what the Holy Spirit says' (tade legei to pneuma to hagion) mirrors the prophetic 'Thus says the LORD' (ko amar YHWH). The prediction that Jews will 'hand him over to the Gentiles' (paradosousin eis cheiras ethnon) directly parallels Jesus' passion predictions (Luke 18:32).
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 20:2-4. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Jeremiah 13:1-11. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
11. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 4:1-3. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
12. The 'we' narrator includes himself among those pleading with Paul — a rare moment of personal involvement by the author. The verb parekalouemen ('we were urging') is imperfect tense, indicating persistent entreaty.
13. Paul's response reveals both his emotional vulnerability (they are 'breaking' his heart — synthryptontes, literally 'crushing together') and his resolute commitment. His readiness to die 'for the name of the Lord Jesus' (hyper tou onomatou tou kyriou Iesou) uses the same preposition (hyper, 'for, on behalf of') that characterizes sacrificial language throughout the New Testament.
14. The community's final words — 'The Lord's will be done' (tou kyriou to thelema ginestho) — directly echo Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42: 'not my will, but yours be done'). This verbal parallel reinforces the Lukan theme of Paul's journey to Jerusalem as a parallel passion narrative.
15. The verb episkeuasamenoi ('having prepared, having packed up') replaces the KJV's archaic 'took up our carriages' (which meant 'packed our baggage' in 17th-century English). The verb 'went up' (anebainomen) reflects the geographical and theological ascent to Jerusalem.
16. Mnason is described as an 'early disciple' (archaio mathete) — possibly meaning he was a believer from the earliest days, perhaps even from Pentecost. As a Cypriot, he may have been associated with the Hellenistic Jewish believers of Acts 11:19-20. His willingness to host Paul's mixed Jewish-Gentile group in or near Jerusalem was significant.
17. The warm reception (asmenos, 'gladly, with pleasure') contrasts with the tensions that follow. The 'we' narration confirms the author's presence in Jerusalem. This is the culmination of Paul's long journey from Acts 20:1.
18. James is the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church (cf. 12:17, 15:13). The meeting is with James and the elders — not with the apostles, suggesting they may have been absent from Jerusalem by this point. The 'we' narrator is present at this meeting.
19. Paul attributes the work to God rather than to himself — 'what God had done' (hon epoiesen ho theos). The phrase kath' hen hekaston ('one by one, in detail') suggests a thorough report. This likely included the delivery of the collection from the Gentile churches, though Luke surprisingly does not mention it explicitly.
20. The word myriades ('tens of thousands') may be hyperbolic, but it indicates a substantial Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem. The critical point is that these Jewish believers remain 'zealous for the law' (zelotai tou nomou) — they continue to observe Torah. This sets up the tension with Paul's reputation.
21. The charge is specific: Paul supposedly teaches Jewish believers in the diaspora to abandon circumcision and Jewish customs. This is a distortion of Paul's actual position — he taught that Gentiles need not be circumcised (Galatians 5:2-6) but did not forbid Jewish believers from maintaining their practices (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:18). The word apostasian ('apostasy, rebellion') is charged language.
22. The SBLGNT text is shorter than the Textus Receptus behind the KJV, omitting the reference to the multitude assembling. The rhetorical question acknowledges the practical problem: Paul's arrival will become known and the rumors must be addressed.
23. James proposes a plan to demonstrate Paul's Torah loyalty. The 'vow' (euchen) is almost certainly a Nazirite vow (Numbers 6:1-21), which involved abstaining from wine, not cutting one's hair, and avoiding corpse impurity for a specified period.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Numbers 6:1-21 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. Sponsoring the expenses of a Nazirite vow's completion was considered a pious act in Judaism (cf. Josephus, Antiquities 19.294). The shaving of heads marked the vow's completion (Numbers 6:18). Paul's willingness to do this aligns with his principle of becoming 'all things to all people' (1 Corinthians 9:22).

24. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Numbers 6:18. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
25. James reaffirms the Jerusalem Council's decision from Acts 15:20, 29. The four requirements for Gentile believers remain unchanged. This verse clarifies that Paul's Torah observance for Jewish believers does not contradict the lighter requirements for Gentile believers — the two are not in tension but address different communities.
26. Paul enters the temple to notify the priests of the completion date for the Nazirite vow, at which point the prescribed offerings would be made (Numbers 6:13-17: a male lamb, a female lamb, a ram, grain offerings, and drink offerings). This was a significant financial commitment.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Numbers 6:13-17:. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. The plan fails at the last moment. The 'Jews from Asia' — likely from Ephesus, who would recognize both Paul and Trophimus (v. 29) — initiate the violence. The irony is sharp: Paul is in the temple demonstrating his Torah loyalty when he is accused of violating the temple.
28. The three-fold accusation — against the people, the law, and the temple — parallels the charges against Stephen (6:13) and against Jesus (Mark 14:58, Luke 23:2). The charge of bringing Greeks into the temple was a capital offense; inscriptions in Greek and Latin on the barrier (the *soreg*) warned Gentiles that entry beyond the Court of the Gentiles meant death.
29. Luke explicitly states the charge was based on an assumption (*enomizon*, 'they supposed, assumed'), not on fact. Trophimus was a Gentile from Ephesus (cf. 20:4) whom the Asian Jews recognized. The false inference — seeing them together in the city and assuming they entered the temple together — was enough to ignite the mob.
30. Paul is dragged out of the temple rather than killed inside it — the mob avoids defiling the sacred space with bloodshed. The closing of the doors by the temple police (Levitical guards) was both a security measure and a symbolic act: the temple shuts Paul out. The detail 'immediately the doors were shut' has narrative and theological weight.
31. The *chiliarchos* ('commander of a thousand,' tribune) was the commanding officer of the Roman cohort stationed in the Antonia Fortress, which overlooked the temple from the northwest corner. The fortress's strategic position allowed rapid response to disturbances in the temple courts.
32. The plural 'centurions' (*hekatontarchas*) indicates at least two centurions, meaning the commander brought at least 200 soldiers — a substantial force. The stairway from the Antonia Fortress led directly down into the temple courts, enabling the rapid intervention described here.
33. The two chains (*halysesin dysi*) likely means Paul was chained between two soldiers, a common Roman security measure. This fulfills Agabus's prophecy from verse 11. The commander's arrest is protective as well as custodial — it removes Paul from the mob.
34. The 'barracks' (*parembolen*) is the Antonia Fortress, the Roman military headquarters in Jerusalem. The confused shouting of the crowd prevents any coherent investigation at the scene, a detail that parallels the Ephesian riot (19:32).
35. The steps (*anabathmous*) connected the temple courts to the Antonia Fortress. The crowd's violence was so intense that the soldiers had to physically carry Paul up the stairs — a graphic detail suggesting a near-lynching in progress.
36. The cry 'Away with him!' (*Aire auton*) echoes the crowd's cry against Jesus before Pilate in Luke 23:18 (*Aire touton*, 'Away with this man!'). Luke draws a deliberate verbal parallel between Paul's and Jesus' experiences before hostile crowds in Jerusalem.
37. Paul's ability to speak Greek surprises the commander, who had made a different assumption about his identity (v. 38). The question *Hellenisti ginoskeis* ('Do you know Greek?') implies the commander expected Paul to be an uneducated agitator, not a cultured, multilingual figure.
38. Josephus records an Egyptian false prophet who led a large following to the Mount of Olives, promising that Jerusalem's walls would collapse at his command (*Jewish War* 2.261-263; *Antiquities* 20.169-172). Josephus gives the number as 30,000; Luke's 4,000 may be more accurate. The *sicarioi* ('dagger-men, Assassins') were Jewish militants who carried concealed daggers and assassinated Roman collaborators in crowds.
39. Paul identifies himself by ethnicity (Jewish), origin (Tarsus), and civic status (citizen of a notable city). Tarsus was a major intellectual and commercial center — the phrase 'no insignificant city' (*ouk asemou poleos*) employs *litotes* (understatement) for rhetorical effect. Paul does not yet mention his Roman citizenship, saving that for a more strategic moment (22:25-28).
40. Paul's choice to speak in 'the Hebrew language' (*te Hebraidi dialekto*) — almost certainly Aramaic, the common spoken language of Palestinian Jews — immediately establishes rapport with a crowd that had just been trying to kill him. The 'great silence' that falls over the mob is a dramatic narrative moment, setting the stage for the defense speech in chapter 22.

22

Summary: *Acts 22 contains Paul's defense speech to the Jerusalem crowd from the steps of the Antonia Fortress. Speaking in Aramaic, he recounts his Jewish credentials, his persecution of the Way, his encounter with the risen Jesus on the Damascus road, and his commission to preach to the Gentiles. The crowd listens until Paul mentions the Gentile mission, at which point they erupt again. As the Roman soldiers prepare to examine Paul by flogging, he reveals his Roman citizenship, which immediately halts the proceedings and creates a new legal situation. The commander, Claudius Lysias, arranges for Paul to appear before the Jewish council.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *This is the second of three accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts (cf. 9:1-19, 26:9-18), each tailored to its audience. Before the Jewish crowd, Paul emphasizes his impeccable Jewish credentials: trained under Gamaliel, zealous for the law, persecuting the Way. The Aramaic speech momentarily silences the mob (v. 2). The turning point is verse 21 — the word 'Gentiles' (ethne) triggers explosive fury, suggesting that the inclusion of Gentiles, not Christology, was the primary offense. Paul's Roman citizenship (acquired by birth, not purchase like the commander's) introduces the legal framework that will shape the rest of Acts.*

Translation Friction: *The differences between this account and the Acts 9 version of Paul's conversion (e.g., what the companions saw and heard) are well-documented. These variations likely reflect rhetorical adaptation to different audiences rather than contradictions. Ananias is described here as 'devout according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews' (v. 12) — details absent from chapter 9 but strategically relevant for this audience. We render each account as given without harmonizing.*

Connections: *Paul's appeal to his training under Gamaliel connects to the Gamaliel of Acts 5:34-39. The Damascus road vision echoes Old Testament theophanies (Exodus 3, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1). Paul's citation of his persecution of 'this Way' (v. 4) connects to the earliest designation for Christianity (cf. 9:2, 19:9, 23, 24:14, 22). Roman citizenship law (the lex Porcia and lex Julia) protected citizens from being bound or beaten without trial, which Paul invokes here as he did at Philippi (16:37).*

¹"Brothers and fathers, hear the defense I now make before you." ²When they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. Then he said: ³"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but raised in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as all of you are today. ⁴I persecuted this Way to the point of death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ⁵As also the high priest does bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders — from whom also I received letters to the brothers and sisters, and traveled to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound to Jerusalem, for to be punished. ⁶"As I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹Those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰I said, 'What should I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that has been appointed for you to do.' ¹¹Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. ¹²A certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews living there, ¹³Arrived to me, and stood, and stated to me, Brother Saul, accept your sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. ¹⁴Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth, ¹⁵For you shalt be his witness to all men of what you have seen and listened to. ¹⁶And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.' ¹⁷"When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸Noticed him declaring to me, Make haste, and get you quickly out of Jerusalem — since they will not receive your testimony concerning me. ¹⁹I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being poured out, I myself was standing by and approving and guarding the garments of those who killed him.' ²¹Then he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the

Gentiles." ²²They listened to him up to this word. Then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a man from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live!" ²³As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air, ²⁴The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging. That he might know for this reason they cried so opposed to him. ²⁵But when they had stretched him out for the lashing, Paul said to the centurion standing by, "Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and has not been condemned?" ²⁶When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen." ²⁷So the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." ²⁸The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship for a large sum of money." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." ²⁹Immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him, and the commander himself was alarmed when he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him. ³⁰The next day, wanting to find out the real reason Paul was being accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and the whole council to assemble. Then he brought Paul down and set him before them.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The address 'brothers and fathers' (andres adelphoi kai pateres) mirrors Stephen's speech (7:2), creating a literary parallel between two defendants before hostile Jewish audiences. The word apologia ('defense') is a formal legal term — Paul frames his speech as a courtroom defense.
2. The use of Aramaic (called 'the Hebrew language,' te Hebraidi dialektō) achieves its intended effect: the crowd gives Paul a deeper hearing. The comparative mallon ('more, even more') indicates that the silence deepened when they recognized the language — Paul is identifying himself as one of them.
3. Paul's self-introduction is carefully structured: birth (Tarsus), upbringing (Jerusalem), education (under Gamaliel), and character (zealous). Gamaliel was the most prominent Pharisaic teacher of the first century and grandson of Hillel. The phrase 'at the feet of' (para tous podas) describes the posture of a disciple before a rabbi. Paul's claim to be 'zealous for God' (zelotes tou theou) uses language associated with Phinehas (Numbers 25:13) and the Maccabees — the highest praise for Jewish piety.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Numbers 25:13 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The capitalized 'Way' (hodon) is the earliest self-designation of the Christian movement (cf. 9:2, 19:9, 23, 24:14, 22). Paul's persecution extended to death sentences (achri thanatou) — Stephen's execution being the most notable example (7:58-8:1). The inclusion of 'both men and women' emphasizes the thoroughness of his persecution.
5. Paul appeals to living witnesses — the high priest and the Sanhedrin — who can verify his former anti-Christian activity. The letters of authorization from the Sanhedrin to the Damascus synagogues (cf. 9:2) gave Paul quasi-official standing to extradite believers.
6. This account adds 'about noon' (peri mesembrian), absent from the chapter 9 narrative — the detail intensifies the miracle, since a light that outshines the midday sun must be extraordinary indeed (cf. 26:13). The light 'from heaven' (ek tou ouranou) marks this as a theophany.
7. The double vocative 'Saul, Saul' (Saoul Saoul) uses the Hebrew/Aramaic form of Paul's name and echoes divine addresses in the Old Testament (Genesis 22:11, 'Abraham, Abraham'; Exodus 3:4, 'Moses, Moses'). The question 'Why are you persecuting me?' identifies Christ with his persecuted church.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Genesis 22:11. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
7. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Exodus 3:4. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
8. This account specifies 'of Nazareth' (ho Nazoraios), absent from 9:5. Before a Jewish audience, the Nazarene identification is significant — it anchors the risen Lord to the historical Jesus of Nazareth whom Paul's audience would know by reputation. The emphatic 'whom you are persecuting' (hon sy diokeis) reiterates the identification of Christ with his followers.
9. In Acts 9:7, Paul's companions 'heard the voice but saw no one.' The apparent discrepancy is best understood through the Greek verb akouo, which can mean either 'hear' (perceive sound) or 'understand' (comprehend meaning). In 9:7 they heard the sound; here they did not understand the words. The distinction parallels the crowd at Jesus' baptism in John 12:28-29.
10. Paul's question 'What should I do?' (ti poiesso) portrays him as immediately submissive to the risen Lord's authority. The passive 'has been appointed' (tetaktai) implies divine foreordination — Paul's mission was predetermined.
11. The word doxa ('glory, brightness') adds theological depth — Paul's blindness resulted from the 'glory' of the light, the same word used for God's manifest presence (the Shekinah) in the Septuagint. Being led by the hand portrays the once-powerful persecutor as helpless.

12. This description of Ananias is unique to this account and tailored for the audience. In Acts 9, Ananias is simply called 'a disciple.' Here, before a Jewish crowd, Paul emphasizes that Ananias was 'devout according to the law' (eulabes kata ton nomon) and respected by the Jewish community — a Torah-observant Jew, not a lawless renegade.
13. The verb *anablepson* has a double meaning: 'look up' and 'receive sight.' The healing is immediate — 'at that very moment' (*aute te hora*) — emphasizing divine power working through Ananias. The address 'Brother Saul' (*Saoul adelphe*) indicates Ananias's acceptance of the former persecutor.
14. Ananias frames Paul's commission using thoroughly Jewish language: 'the God of our fathers' (*ho theos ton pateron hemon*) connects to the patriarchal promises. 'The Righteous One' (*ton dikaion*) is a messianic title rooted in Isaiah 53:11 and used for Jesus in Acts 3:14 and 7:52. The threefold commission — know, see, hear — echoes prophetic call narratives.
14. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Isaiah 53:11. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
15. The word *martyros* ('witness') carries its full weight here — Paul is commissioned as an eyewitness of the risen Christ. The phrase 'to all people' (*pros pantas anthropous*) already hints at the universal scope of Paul's mission, though the explosive word 'Gentiles' is not yet used.
16. The command to 'wash away your sins' (*apolousai tas hamartias sou*) connects baptism with cleansing — language that resonates with Jewish purification rituals. The middle voice of both *baptisai* and *apolousai* suggests Paul's active participation. 'Calling on his name' (*epikalesamenos to onoma autou*) echoes Joel 2:32, quoted by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:21).
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Joel 2:32. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. This temple vision is unique to this account — it does not appear in Acts 9 or 26. Paul strategically emphasizes that he received his Gentile commission while praying in the Jerusalem temple, demonstrating that his mission did not originate in opposition to the temple but within it. The word *ekstasis* ('trance, ecstasy') describes the same kind of visionary state Peter experienced in Acts 10:10.
18. The Lord's command to leave Jerusalem — 'hurry' (*speuson*) combined with 'quickly' (*en tachei*) — conveys urgency. The prediction that Jerusalem will reject Paul's testimony is both warning and explanation: Paul's Gentile mission was not Plan B but God's response to Israel's refusal.
19. Paul argues that his dramatic conversion — from violent persecutor to believer — should make him the most credible witness to his own people. The reasoning: anyone who would abandon his previous position so dramatically must have been compelled by overwhelming evidence.
20. The word *martyros* here means 'witness' but is on its way to its later meaning of 'martyr' — Stephen's witness was sealed by his blood. Paul's admission of complicity in Stephen's death (cf. 7:58, 8:1) is the strongest possible evidence of his former anti-Christian commitment. The detail of 'guarding the garments' recalls the stoning procedure where witnesses removed outer garments to throw more effectively.
21. This single verse triggers the crowd's explosion. The word *ethne* ('nations, Gentiles') is the flashpoint. The Lord's commission to Paul — 'I will send you far away to the Gentiles' — uses the verb *exapostelo*, from which 'apostle' derives. Paul is being sent (*apostled*) to the nations. For the Jerusalem crowd, the claim that God commissioned a mission to include Gentiles as equals was intolerable.
22. The crowd's tolerance snaps at the word 'Gentiles.' Their fury — 'he should not be allowed to live' (*ou katheeken auton zen*) — reveals that the real offense was not theology about Jesus but the inclusion of Gentiles. The cry 'Away from the earth' (*Aire apo tes ges*) demands execution.
23. The three actions — shouting, throwing garments, tossing dust — express extreme outrage. Throwing dust may signify cursing (cf. 2 Samuel 16:13, where Shimei throws dust at David) or preparation for stoning. Removing garments echoes the stoning of Stephen (7:58), which Paul himself referenced moments earlier.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References 2 Samuel 16:13 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. The commander could not understand Paul's Aramaic speech and only witnessed the crowd's violent reaction. Roman 'examination by scourging' (*mastixin anetazesthai*) was a method of extracting information from non-citizens — a brutal interrogation technique using leather whips often embedded with bone or metal. It was distinct from the lesser punishment of beating with rods.
25. Paul times his revelation of Roman citizenship for maximum legal effect — when he is already being tied up for flogging. The question is rhetorical: it was emphatically illegal. The *lex Porcia* (c. 195 BC) and the *lex Julia* (c. 23 BC) prohibited binding, beating, or executing a Roman citizen without due process. The word *akarakriton* ('uncondemned, without trial') emphasizes the procedural violation.
26. The centurion's alarmed report — 'What are you about to do?' — reflects the serious legal consequences of violating a Roman citizen's rights. A commander who flogged a citizen without trial could face severe punishment, including loss of rank.
27. The commander personally verifies the claim. Falsely claiming Roman citizenship was a capital offense (Suetonius, Claudius 25), so the claim carried its own credibility. Paul's single-word answer — 'Yes' (*Nai*) — is quietly authoritative.
28. The exchange reveals a social hierarchy within citizenship. The commander (whose name, Claudius Lysias, per 23:26, suggests he obtained citizenship under Emperor Claudius, who was known for selling it) purchased his status. Paul inherited his — his family held citizenship, possibly granted for services to Rome in Tarsus. Birth citizenship outranked purchased citizenship in social prestige.

29. The immediate withdrawal (euthesos apestesan) of the interrogators demonstrates the power of Roman citizenship rights. The commander's fear (ephobethee) is specifically about having already bound Paul (auton en dedekos) — the binding itself was a violation, even before any flogging occurred.
30. Unable to examine Paul by force (because of his citizenship) and unable to understand the charges (because the speech was in Aramaic), the commander convenes the Jewish council (synedrion, the Sanhedrin) to clarify the matter. This sets the stage for chapter 23. The Roman commander's authority to convene the Sanhedrin demonstrates the power dynamics of the occupation.

23

Summary: *Acts 23 opens with Paul before the Sanhedrin, where his claim of a clear conscience provokes the high priest Ananias to order him struck. Paul then strategically divides the council by declaring that he is on trial for the hope of the resurrection, splitting the Pharisees and Sadducees against each other. That night, the Lord appears to Paul and assures him he will testify in Rome. Meanwhile, more than forty Jews form a conspiracy to assassinate Paul, swearing an oath not to eat or drink until he is dead. Paul's nephew learns of the plot, warns the commander, and Claudius Lysias transfers Paul under heavy military escort to the governor Felix in Caesarea.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's appeal to the resurrection as the issue at stake (v. 6) is both theologically true and tactically brilliant — it exploits the well-known Pharisee-Sadducee divide on this doctrine. The Lord's nighttime appearance (v. 11) is the theological center of the chapter, confirming that Paul's journey to Rome is divinely ordained, not merely the result of political maneuvering. The assassination conspiracy and its foiling through Paul's nephew introduces the only family member of Paul mentioned in Acts. Claudius Lysias's letter (vv. 26-30) is a masterpiece of bureaucratic spin — he rewrites events to make himself look better.*

Translation Friction: *Paul's response to the high priest ('God will strike you, you whitewashed wall,' v. 3) and his subsequent claim not to have known Ananias was high priest (v. 5) have been debated endlessly. Possible explanations include poor eyesight, the high priest's lack of distinctive vestments in a hastily convened session, or ironic denial. We render the text without resolving the question. Claudius Lysias's letter significantly distorts the actual sequence of events — he claims to have rescued Paul because he learned he was a Roman citizen, when in fact he learned this only after ordering the flogging.*

Connections: *Paul's claim of a 'clear conscience' (v. 1) connects to his consistent self-defense throughout the epistles (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:12, 2 Timothy 1:3). The Pharisee-Sadducee split over resurrection connects to the Sadducees' challenge to Jesus in Luke 20:27-40. The Lord's assurance 'you must testify in Rome' (v. 11) parallels 19:21 and drives the narrative toward its conclusion. The military escort of 470 soldiers for one prisoner underscores the seriousness of the threat and the strategic importance Roman authorities placed on maintaining order.*

¹Paul looked intently at the council and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day."
²The high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth. ³Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?" ⁴Those standing nearby said, "Would you insult God's high priest?" ⁵Paul said, "I did not know, brothers, that he was the high priest. For it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" ⁶Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial!" ⁷When he said this, a dispute arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. ⁹Then a great clamor arose, and some of the scribes of the Pharisees' party stood up and contended sharply, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" — ¹⁰When the dispute became violent, the commander, fearing that Paul would be torn apart by them, ordered the soldiers to go down, take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks. ¹¹The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." ¹²When day came, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves by an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty who formed this conspiracy. ¹⁴They went to the

chief priests and elders and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵Now then, you and the council must notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to examine his case more carefully. And we are ready to kill him before he gets near." ¹⁶But the son of Paul's sister heard about the ambush, and he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him." ¹⁸So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to tell you." ¹⁹The commander took him by the hand, drew him aside privately, and asked, "What is it that you have to report to me?" ²⁰He said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more carefully about his case. ²¹But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, having bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent." ²²The commander dismissed the young man, ordering him, "Tell no one that you have reported these things to me." ²³Then he called two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready to go to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen, by the third hour of the night. ²⁴Also provide mounts so that Paul may ride and be brought safely to Felix the governor." ²⁵He wrote a letter to this effect: ²⁶"Claudius Lysias, to His Excellency the governor Felix: Greetings. ²⁷This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸Wanting to know the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but had no charge deserving death or imprisonment. ³⁰When I was informed of a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state their charges against him before you." ³¹So the soldiers, according to their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³²The next day they let the horsemen go on with him and returned to the barracks. ³³When they came to Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and presented Paul before him. ³⁴After reading the letter, he asked what province Paul was from, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵I will hear you, stated he, when your accusers are also come. Then he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The verb *atenisas* ('looked intently, gazed') suggests direct, unflinching eye contact. Paul's opening claim — a 'good conscience' (*syneideesei agathee*) before God — is a bold assertion of innocence. The word *pepoliteumai* ('I have lived as a citizen, conducted myself') implies both civic and religious faithfulness.
2. Ananias son of Nedebaeus was high priest from approximately AD 47 to 59. He was known for violence and corruption (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.199-207) and was eventually assassinated by Jewish revolutionaries at the outbreak of the revolt in AD 66. Striking a defendant on the mouth was intended to silence what was considered blasphemous or offensive speech.
3. The epithet 'whitewashed wall' (*toiche kekoniame*) echoes Ezekiel 13:10-15, where whitewashed walls conceal structural corruption. Jesus used similar imagery for the Pharisees (Matthew 23:27, 'whitewashed tombs'). Paul's retort exposes the irony: the judge is the lawbreaker. Jewish law required that defendants be presumed innocent and not struck during proceedings.
3. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Ezekiel 13:10-15 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
4. The bystanders' rebuke appeals to the sanctity of the high priestly office. The verb *loidoreis* ('revile, insult') was a serious charge — insulting the high priest could be construed as violating Exodus 22:28.
4. [TCR Cross-Reference] Echoes Exodus 22:28. See the TCR's OT rendering for the Hebrew behind this passage and the translation rationale.
5. Paul quotes Exodus 22:28 from the Septuagint. His claim not to have recognized the high priest remains puzzling — proposed explanations include poor eyesight (cf. Galatians 4:15, 6:11), the informality of the session, the high priest not wearing vestments, or Paul speaking with irony (implying 'I could not have imagined that a man who acts this way is the high priest'). The text does not resolve the ambiguity.
5. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 22:28 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
6. Paul's declaration is both true and strategic. He genuinely believed in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15), and the resurrection of Jesus was central to his message. But by framing the issue this way, he exploits the fundamental Pharisee-Sadducee doctrinal divide. The Sadducees denied resurrection, angels, and spirits; the Pharisees affirmed all three (v. 8).

7. The verb *eschisthe* ('was split, divided') is vivid — the council literally fractures along doctrinal lines. Paul has successfully redirected the debate from his alleged crimes to an internal Jewish theological controversy.
8. Luke provides this explanatory note for readers unfamiliar with Jewish sectarian differences. The Sadducees' denial of resurrection, angels, and spirits reflected their strict adherence to the written Torah alone, where these concepts are less developed. The Pharisees accepted the oral tradition and later prophetic writings that developed these doctrines.
9. The Pharisaic scribes now defend Paul — a dramatic reversal. Their argument ('What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?') inadvertently validates Paul's Damascus road experience. The SBLGNT text breaks off mid-sentence with a dash, leaving the conditional clause unfinished (aposiopesis) — the sentence is interrupted by the chaos. The KJV's addition 'let us not fight against God' (from the *Textus Receptus*) echoes Gamaliel's words in 5:39 but is not in the critical text.
10. The verb *diaspasthe* ('torn apart, pulled to pieces') is graphic — the commander fears Paul will be literally dismembered as the two factions pull him in opposite directions. This is the second time the Roman military has had to rescue Paul from a Jewish crowd (cf. 21:32-35). The pattern establishes Rome as Paul's unlikely protector.
11. This is the theological pivot of the entire narrative from Acts 21 onward. The divine *dei* ('it is necessary, you must') indicates that Paul's journey to Rome is not a contingent political outcome but a divinely ordained necessity. The word 'courage' (*tharsei*) is the same word Jesus used to calm the disciples on the sea (Matthew 14:27) and to assure the paralytic (Mark 2:5). Everything that follows — the conspiracy, the transfer to Caesarea, the trials, the appeal to Caesar, the shipwreck — serves this divine purpose.
12. The verb *anethematisan* ('bound themselves by a curse, placed themselves under a ban') means they invoked divine punishment on themselves if they failed. The Hebrew equivalent is *cherem* — a self-imposed ban of the most solemn kind. The oath not to eat or drink creates narrative urgency.
13. The number 'more than forty' (*pleious tesserakonta*) indicates a substantial, organized group — not a spontaneous mob but a premeditated assassination squad. The word *synomosian* ('conspiracy, joint oath') emphasizes the formal, sworn nature of their pact.
14. The conspirators approach the chief priests and elders (Sadducean leadership) — not the Pharisees who had just defended Paul. The Hebrew-style emphatic construction *anathemati anethematisamen* ('with a curse we have cursed ourselves') intensifies the solemnity of the oath.
15. The plan involves the Sanhedrin as decoy — requesting a second hearing while the assassins ambush Paul en route. The participation of the chief priests and elders in this conspiracy implicates the Jewish leadership in a murder plot, a serious narrative charge that Luke presents matter-of-factly.
16. This is the only mention of any of Paul's relatives in Acts. The nephew's access to both the conspiracy information and the Roman barracks suggests the family may have had social connections in Jerusalem. How a young man learned of a secret conspiracy of forty men is unexplained — perhaps the plotters were not as discreet as they imagined.
17. Paul's ability to summon a centurion and make requests indicates that his status as a Roman citizen afforded him certain privileges even in custody. He acts decisively, channeling the information through proper military channels.
18. Paul is now referred to as 'the prisoner' (*ho desmios*) — his new identity in the narrative. The centurion faithfully relays Paul's request, and the commander receives the young man personally, indicating that he took Paul's status seriously.
19. The commander's gesture of taking the young man by the hand (*epilabomenos tes cheiros autou*) suggests both kindness and discretion. He recognizes the sensitivity of the information and ensures privacy. The detail is characteristically Lukan in its attention to personal interaction.
20. The nephew relays the plan accurately, demonstrating good intelligence. The phrase 'as though' (*hos mellon*) reveals the deception — the request for a hearing is a pretext for the ambush.
21. The nephew provides specific, actionable intelligence: the number of conspirators (more than forty), the nature of their oath, and their current state of readiness. The phrase 'waiting for your consent' (*prosdechomenoi ten apo sou epangelian*) reveals that the plot depends on the commander's cooperation.
22. The commander's secrecy order protects both the nephew (from retaliation) and his own operational plans. He acts with professional military competence — receiving intelligence, maintaining security, and immediately formulating a response.
23. The escort totals 470 military personnel for one prisoner — an extraordinary force that reflects both the seriousness of the threat and the importance of protecting a Roman citizen. The 'third hour of the night' is approximately 9 PM, ensuring departure under cover of darkness. The *dexiolabous* ('spearmen' or 'light-armed troops') is a rare word whose exact meaning is debated.
24. Multiple mounts (*ktene*, 'animals, beasts') suggests provisions for changing horses to maintain speed. Felix (Marcus Antonius Felix) was procurator of Judea from approximately AD 52 to 59. Tacitus describes him as one who 'exercised the power of a king with the spirit of a slave' (*Histories* 5.9).
25. The phrase 'to this effect' (*echousan ton typon touton*) indicates Luke may be paraphrasing rather than quoting the letter verbatim. This is one of the few embedded letters in Acts (cf. 15:23-29) and provides insight into Roman administrative communication.
26. The letter follows standard Greco-Roman epistolary form: sender, recipient, greeting (*chairein*). The title *kratisto* ('most excellent, His Excellency') is the same used for Theophilus in Luke 1:3 and for Felix and Festus elsewhere in Acts (24:3, 26:25). The commander's full name — Claudius Lysias — appears only here. 'Claudius' was likely his adopted Roman nomen, taken when he purchased citizenship under Emperor Claudius.

27. Lysias's letter strategically rearranges the sequence of events. In reality, he rescued Paul first and only later discovered his citizenship (21:33-34 vs. 22:25-29). By writing 'having learned that he was a Roman citizen,' Lysias makes his intervention appear to be a deliberate act of protecting Roman rights rather than a routine crowd-control operation. This bureaucratic self-serving is a realistic touch.
28. Lysias presents the Sanhedrin hearing as his own initiative to determine charges — a reasonable summary of events that also emphasizes his procedural diligence before a superior.
29. Lysias's assessment — that the dispute concerns Jewish law and involves no Roman crime — is the same conclusion that Gallio reached in Corinth (18:14-15) and that Festus and Agrippa will later reach (25:25, 26:31). This repeated Roman verdict of innocence on matters of Roman law is a major theme in Acts.
30. Lysias transfers both the prisoner and the legal responsibility to Felix. By ordering the accusers to present their case before the governor, he ensures a proper trial while removing himself from a dangerous situation. The SBLGNT omits the closing 'Farewell' (*erroso*) found in the *Textus Receptus*.
31. Antipatris was located about 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem on the road to Caesarea — a hard night's march. The city was rebuilt by Herod the Great and named after his father Antipater. The overnight forced march would put Paul beyond the reach of the Jerusalem conspirators by dawn.
32. Once past the danger zone of the Judean hills, the infantry and spearmen were no longer needed — the horsemen alone could escort Paul through the coastal plain to Caesarea. The remaining journey was about 25 miles. This practical military detail reflects the author's familiarity with such operations.
33. The official handoff is complete: the letter explains the case, and the prisoner is formally transferred to the governor's jurisdiction. Caesarea Maritima was the Roman administrative capital of Judea, with the governor's residence in Herod's former palace (the praetorium).
34. Felix's first question — about Paul's province of origin — is a jurisdictional inquiry. Under Roman law, a governor could either try the case himself or remit it to the defendant's home province. Cilicia was at this time part of the combined province of Syria-Cilicia, but Felix decides to retain jurisdiction.
35. Felix agrees to hear the case but requires the accusers' presence — standard Roman legal procedure. 'Herod's praetorium' (to praetorio tou Herodou) was the palace built by Herod the Great in Caesarea, now serving as the governor's official residence and courthouse. Paul's detention there, rather than in a common prison, reflects his Roman citizenship and the nature of the charges.

24

Summary: *Acts 24 presents Paul's formal trial before the Roman governor Felix in Caesarea. The high priest Ananias and a professional orator named Tertullus bring charges against Paul, accusing him of sedition, being a ringleader of the Nazarene sect, and attempting to profane the temple. Paul delivers his own defense, denying the charges and reframing his faith as the fulfillment of Jewish hope in the resurrection. Felix, who has considerable knowledge of the Way, adjourns the case. He later summons Paul privately to hear about faith in Christ, but becomes frightened when Paul speaks of righteousness, self-control, and coming judgment. Felix keeps Paul in custody for two years, hoping for a bribe, until he is succeeded by Porcius Festus.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The trial follows proper Roman cognitio procedure: accusation by prosecution (vv. 2-8), defense by the accused (vv. 10-21), and adjudication by the governor. Tertullus's speech is a masterclass in forensic rhetoric — flattery of the judge, character assassination of the defendant, and specific legal charges. Paul's defense is equally skillful, systematically denying each charge. The private conversations between Felix and Paul (vv. 24-26) reveal a governor caught between intellectual curiosity, moral fear, and financial corruption. Felix's two-year delay (v. 27) becomes a pivotal factor in the narrative, eventually leading to Paul's appeal to Caesar.*

Translation Friction: *Felix's familiarity with 'the Way' (v. 22) is historically plausible — his wife Drusilla was Jewish (v. 24), and Caesarea had a significant Christian community. His trembling at Paul's preaching on judgment (v. 25) but refusal to release him reveals the complex interplay of conviction and corruption in Roman governance. Luke does not explain why Paul did not offer the bribe Felix wanted — this silence may itself be the point.*

Connections: *The charges against Paul — sedition, sectarianism, temple profanation — echo the charges against Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23:2, 5). Paul's affirmation that he worships 'the God of our fathers' (v. 14) and believes 'everything written in the Law and the Prophets' (v. 14) positions Christianity as the fulfillment of Judaism, not its contradiction. The two-year imprisonment (v. 27) parallels Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem and provides the setting for Paul's prison epistles if the traditional dating is accepted.*

¹Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they presented their case against Paul before the governor. ²When Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began the accusation, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since reforms are being made for this nation by your foresight, ³We acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with deep gratitude. ⁴But so that I may not detain you any further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. ⁵For we have found this man to be a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. ⁶He even tried to profane the temple, so we seized him. ⁸By examining him yourself you will be able to learn about all these things of which we accuse him." ⁹The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so. ¹⁰When the governor motioned to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. ¹¹You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, ¹²They and not discovered me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:. ¹³Nor can they prove to you the charges they are now bringing against me. ¹⁴But this I confess to you: according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down according to the Law and written in the Prophets, ¹⁵Possess confident expectation toward God, which they themselves also allow, that where there is a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. ¹⁶Because of this I also strive to maintain a clear conscience before both God and people at all times. ¹⁷After several years I came to bring charitable gifts to my nation and to present offerings. ¹⁸While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or disturbance. ¹⁹But there were some Jews from Asia — who ought to be here before you to make their accusation, if they have anything against me. ²⁰Or else let these men themselves state what crime they found when I stood before the council, ²¹Indeed, except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing in the midst of them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day. ²²But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, adjourned the proceedings, saying, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case." ²³Then he ordered the centurion to keep Paul in custody but to give him some freedom and not prevent any of his friends from attending to his needs. ²⁴Some days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵And as Paul discussed righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened and answered, "Go away for now. When I find a convenient time, I will summon you." ²⁶At the same time he was hoping that money would be given to him by Paul, so he sent for him more frequently and conversed with him. ²⁷After two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And wanting to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The delegation's five-day delay likely reflects travel time from Jerusalem to Caesarea plus preparation. The employment of a professional rhetor (Tertullus, a Latin name suggesting he may have been Roman or Romanized) indicates the seriousness of the prosecution. The verb *enephanisan* ('presented formally, laid charges') is a technical legal term.
2. Tertullus opens with a *captatio benevolentiae* — flattery designed to win the judge's favor. The claims of 'much peace' and wise 'reforms' under Felix are historically ironic; Josephus and Tacitus both describe Felix's administration as corrupt and violent. Tertullus tells Felix what Felix wants to hear.
3. The accumulation of universal terms — 'every way,' 'everywhere,' 'all gratitude' — is rhetorical excess typical of forensic flattery. The title 'most excellent' (*kratiste*) is the standard address for a Roman governor.
4. The conventional apology for taking the governor's time (*praeteritio*) is another rhetorical device. Tertullus transitions from flattery to the substance of the charges.
5. Tertullus levels three charges: (1) Paul is a 'plague' (*loimon*, literally a disease) — a personal character attack; (2) he incites sedition (*staseis*) among Jews worldwide — a political charge with Roman legal weight; (3) he leads 'the sect of the Nazarenes' (*ton Nazoraion haireseos*) — the only place in the New Testament where Christians are called 'Nazarenes,' a term derived from Jesus' hometown. The word *hairesis* ('sect, party') was not yet negative in itself — Josephus uses it for the Pharisees and Sadducees.
6. The third specific charge — attempted temple profanation (*bebelosai*) — is the most serious because it carried a death penalty even under Roman law. The SBLGNT text is shorter here than the Textus Receptus, omitting the reference to judging Paul by Jewish law and Lysias's intervention. We follow the critical text.
7. This verse is not present in the SBLGNT critical text. It appears only in later manuscripts behind the Textus Receptus/KJV. The SBLGNT moves directly from verse 6 to verse 8. We follow the critical text and note the verse's absence.

8. In the SBLGNT text, 'him' refers to Paul — Tertullus invites Felix to interrogate Paul directly. In the longer Textus Receptus text, 'him' refers to Lysias. The critical text makes better sense of the prosecution's strategy: they are confident the examination will confirm their charges.
9. The verb *synepethento* ('joined in the attack, supported the accusation') indicates that the Jewish delegation collectively endorsed Tertullus's charges. This is formal legal testimony, not mere agreement.
10. Paul's opening is notably restrained compared to Tertullus's extravagant flattery. He offers one factual observation — Felix's long tenure as judge — which is both complimentary and relevant (a long-serving judge would understand the issues). The word *euthymos* ('cheerfully, with good courage') contrasts with the anxiety one might expect from a defendant.
11. Paul appeals to verifiable facts. The twelve days can be roughly reconstructed from the narrative: arrival (21:17), meeting with James (21:18), purification in the temple (21:26), arrest (21:27), Sanhedrin hearing (22:30), transfer to Caesarea (23:23), five days until trial (24:1). His stated purpose for going to Jerusalem — 'to worship' (*proskyneseon*) — directly contradicts the charge of temple profanation.
12. Paul systematically denies the sedition charge across three venues: temple, synagogues, city. He was not debating (*dialogomenon*), not inciting crowds (*epistatsin poiounta ochlou*), and no witnesses can place him doing so. This is a point-by-point factual rebuttal.
13. Paul shifts the burden of proof to the accusers — a sound legal strategy. The verb *parastesai* ('prove, demonstrate, present evidence') is a legal technical term. Paul's point is devastating: the prosecution has no witnesses, no evidence, only assertions.
14. Paul's confession (*homologe*) is carefully worded. He admits to following 'the Way' (*ten hodon*) but reframes it: what they call a 'sect' (*hairetin*), he calls the authentic worship of Israel's God. He affirms belief in 'everything' in the Law and Prophets — the complete Jewish Scriptures. This positions Christianity not as an innovation but as faithful Judaism.
15. Paul identifies resurrection as common ground between himself and his accusers (the Pharisaic members of the Sanhedrin). The inclusion of 'both the righteous and the unrighteous' (*dikaion te kai adikion*) indicates a general resurrection leading to judgment — a belief shared with the Pharisees and rooted in Daniel 12:2.
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Daniel 12:2 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
16. Paul returns to the conscience theme from 23:1. The verb *asko* ('I train, I strive, I discipline myself') implies continuous effort — maintaining a blameless conscience is not passive but requires active discipline. The dual orientation — 'before God and people' — covers both religious and civil responsibility.
17. This is Luke's only explicit reference to the collection for the Jerusalem poor that Paul organized across the Gentile churches (cf. Romans 15:25-28, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8-9). The word *eleemosynas* ('charitable gifts, alms') and *prosphoras* ('offerings') — one for the poor, one for the temple — demonstrate Paul's continued commitment to both the Jewish community and the temple.
18. Paul's factual summary directly contradicts the prosecution's narrative. He was in the temple — but purified (*hegnismenon*), not profaning it. He had no crowd (*ou meta ochlou*) — therefore no riot was his doing. He caused no disturbance (*oude meta thorybou*) — the disorder came from his accusers.
19. Paul makes a devastating procedural point: the actual eyewitnesses — the Jews from Asia who started the riot (21:27) — are absent. Under Roman law, accusers had to appear in person. Their absence fatally weakens the prosecution's case. The dash in the Greek indicates an *anacolouthon* — Paul's sentence breaks off, leaving the implication hanging.
20. Paul challenges his present accusers to name a specific crime from the Sanhedrin hearing. The word *adikema* ('crime, wrongdoing') is a legal term — Paul demands a specific charge, not vague accusations.
21. Paul's defense ends with ironic brilliance. The only 'crime' anyone can identify from the Sanhedrin hearing is his declaration about resurrection — a doctrine shared by the Pharisees on the council. This effectively reduces the prosecution's case to an internal Jewish theological dispute, which Roman law had no interest in adjudicating.
22. Felix's adjournment (*anebaletō*, 'put off, deferred') without a verdict is significant. His 'rather accurate knowledge of the Way' (*akribesteron eidos ta peri tes hodou*) suggests prior familiarity with Christianity, likely through his Jewish wife Drusilla. The reference to awaiting Lysias is a procedural excuse — there is no indication Lysias ever came.
23. The arrangement is *custodia militaris* — military custody with privileges. The 'freedom' (*anesin*, literally 'relaxation, loosening') means Paul was not in a dungeon but in supervised detention. Allowing friends to visit and provide for him was a privilege of his Roman citizenship and Felix's implicit recognition that Paul posed no real threat.
24. Drusilla was the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I (the Agrippa of Acts 12) and sister of Agrippa II (who appears in chapters 25-26). She had left her first husband to marry Felix — a scandalous union that makes the topics Paul addresses in the next verse particularly pointed.
25. Paul's three topics — righteousness (*dikaio synes*), self-control (*enkrateias*), and coming judgment (*krimatos tou mellontos*) — are not random but directly relevant to Felix's life. Felix was notorious for injustice (Josephus), had stolen Drusilla from her husband (lacking self-control), and faced divine accountability (judgment). His fear (*emphobos genomenos*) is a genuine response to conviction — but he chooses delay over repentance.
26. Luke exposes Felix's true motive: bribery. The hope for 'money' (*chremata*) explains why Felix kept summoning Paul — not for spiritual conversation but for financial negotiation. Roman law technically prohibited governors from accepting bribes (the *lex Iulia repetundarum*), but the practice was

endemic. Paul's mention of bringing 'charitable gifts' (v. 17) may have suggested to Felix that Paul had access to significant funds.

27. The two-year imprisonment (dietetias) without verdict is a miscarriage of justice by any standard. Felix's final act regarding Paul — leaving him imprisoned as a political favor to the Jews — reveals that the case was never about law but about politics. Porcius Festus took office around AD 59-60. The word *dedemenon* ('bound, imprisoned') recalls Agabus's prophecy (21:11) and the Lord's assurance that Paul must reach Rome (23:11).

25

Summary: *Acts 25 introduces the new governor Porcius Festus, who inherits Paul's unresolved case. The Jerusalem leaders immediately press Festus to transfer Paul to Jerusalem — concealing a plan to ambush him en route. Festus instead conducts a hearing in Caesarea, where the same unproven charges are repeated. When Festus suggests transferring the case to Jerusalem as a political gesture, Paul exercises his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar. Festus grants the appeal. Subsequently, King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice arrive for a state visit, and Festus consults Agrippa about the case, confessing that he finds no crime worthy of death and needs help formulating charges to send with the prisoner to Rome.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *Paul's appeal to Caesar (v. 11) is the decisive legal act that sends him to Rome, fulfilling the Lord's promise in 23:11. The appeal (provocatio) was a fundamental right of Roman citizens — once invoked, no lower authority could override it. Festus's candid admission to Agrippa that he has nothing substantive to write to the emperor (v. 26) is both politically embarrassing and theologically significant: the Roman governor cannot identify any crime because there is none. The chapter introduces Agrippa II and Bernice, the last of the Herodian dynasty to appear in the New Testament.*

Translation Friction: *Festus's suggestion to transfer the case to Jerusalem (v. 9) is ambiguous — was it a genuine attempt at jurisdictional fairness, or a political concession to the Jews? Luke says he wanted to 'do the Jews a favor' (v. 9), echoing Felix's motivation (24:27). Paul's appeal may have been partly strategic (to escape local politics) and partly providential (to reach Rome). We render the text without privileging one interpretation.*

Connections: *The repeated attempts to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (23:15, 25:3) echo the persistent plots against Jesus in the Gospels. Festus's declaration of Paul's innocence joins a growing chorus of Roman officials who find no fault in him (Gallio, 18:14-15; Lysias, 23:29; Festus here; Agrippa, 26:31-32). This cumulative pattern parallels Pilate's triple declaration of Jesus' innocence (Luke 23:4, 14, 22). King Agrippa II is the great-grandson of Herod the Great (Matthew 2) and son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12).*

1Three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2The chief priests and the leading men of the Jews presented their case against Paul to him and appealed to him, 3Indeed, desired favour opposed to him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. 4Festus replied that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to go there shortly. 5"Therefore," he said, "let those among you who are in authority come down with me, and if there is anything wrong with the man, let them bring charges against him." 6After staying among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. The next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. 7When Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges that they were not able to prove, 8While he answered for himself, Neither opposed to the law of the Jews, neither opposed to the temple, nor yet opposed to Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. 9But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried there before me on these charges?" 10Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. 11If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything deserving death, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar." 12Then Festus, after conferring with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go." 13 After some days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to welcome Festus. 14As they were spending several days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left as a prisoner by Felix. 15When I was in

Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews presented their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation. ¹⁶I answered them that it is not the custom of Romans to hand over any person before the accused meets the accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make a defense against the charge. ¹⁷So when they came together here, I made no delay but took my seat on the tribunal the very next day and ordered the man to be brought in. ¹⁸When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of the kind of crime I was expecting. ¹⁹Instead they had certain disputes with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who had died, whom Paul claimed to be alive. ²⁰Since I was at a loss how to investigate these matters, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. ²¹But when Paul appealed to be held for the decision of the Emperor, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I could send him to Caesar." ²²Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," said Festus, "you shall hear him." ²³So the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience hall, along with the military commanders and the prominent men of the city. At Festus's command, Paul was brought in. ²⁴Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish community has petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this examination I may have something to write. ²⁷For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner without also indicating the charges against him."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Festus moves quickly — within three days of assuming office he travels to Jerusalem, the religious capital, demonstrating political awareness. The verb *anebe* ('went up') reflects both geography and the conventional language of pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
2. The Jewish leaders waste no time — Paul's case is apparently their top priority with the new governor. The plural 'chief priests' (*archieis*) includes the current high priest and former holders of the office who retained influence.
3. The assassination plot from 23:12-15 has been revived, or a new one formed. Two years have passed, but the determination to kill Paul persists. Luke reveals the hidden plot (*enedran poiountes*, 'setting an ambush') that the request to Festus conceals. The word *charin* ('as a favor') exposes the request as political rather than judicial.
4. Festus declines the transfer request — whether from good judgment, adherence to protocol, or simply because Caesarea was the proper judicial venue. His response thwarts the ambush plan without his being aware of it. Providence operates through bureaucratic procedure.
5. Festus invites the Jewish leaders to present their case in Caesarea — proper Roman procedure. The conditional 'if there is anything wrong' (*ei ti estin atopon*) is diplomatically neutral but subtly skeptical. The word *atopon* ('out of place, wrong, amiss') is mild legal language.
6. Festus acts with considerably more dispatch than Felix. The *bema* ('tribunal, judgment seat') was the elevated platform from which Roman governors rendered official judgments. The same word is used for Pilate's judgment seat in John 19:13 and Gallio's in Acts 18:12.
7. Luke's summary is devastating to the prosecution: 'many serious charges' (*polla kai barea aitiomata*) that they 'could not prove' (*ouk ischyon apodeixai*). The verb *apodeixai* ('prove, demonstrate') is the same standard of evidence Paul demanded in 24:13. Two years have produced no new evidence.
8. Paul's defense addresses three jurisdictions: Jewish law, the temple, and Roman authority. This tripartite denial covers every possible basis for charges. The addition of 'against Caesar' (*eis Kaisara*) is new — Paul now explicitly addresses the political dimension, denying any sedition against Rome.
9. Festus repeats Felix's pattern: political calculation overrides judicial integrity. The phrase 'wanting to do the Jews a favor' (*thelon tois Ioudaiois charin katathesthai*) echoes 24:27. Festus offers a compromise — trial in Jerusalem but with himself presiding — but Paul recognizes the danger.
10. Paul's response is legally precise. He asserts that he is already before the proper court ('Caesar's tribunal' — the governor's *bema* represents Caesar's authority). His statement 'you yourself know very well' (*su kallion epiginoskeis*) is a pointed challenge: Festus knows Paul is innocent but is considering a politically motivated transfer.
11. Paul's appeal to Caesar (*Kaisara epikaloumai*) is the legal climax of the narrative. The *provocatio ad Caesarem* was an irrevocable right of Roman citizens, transferring jurisdiction to the emperor's court in Rome. Paul's logic is airtight: if guilty, he accepts death; if innocent, no one has the right to sacrifice him to political expediency. The verb *charisasthai* ('hand over as a favor, grant as a gift') pointedly echoes the 'favor' (*charin*) Festus wanted to do for the Jews.
12. Festus consults his advisory council (*symbolion*) — a standard group of legal advisors who assisted Roman governors. The response has a formal, almost formulaic quality: 'To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.' Once the appeal is granted, the case passes beyond Festus's jurisdiction. The divine purpose declared in 23:11 ('you must testify in Rome') now has its legal mechanism.

13. Agrippa II (Marcus Julius Agrippa, AD 27-c. 100) was the last of the Herodian dynasty. He ruled territories northeast of Galilee and had been granted authority over the Jerusalem temple and the appointment of high priests. Bernice was his sister; their relationship was the subject of scandalous rumors in antiquity (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.145). Their visit to welcome the new governor was a diplomatic courtesy.
14. Festus consults Agrippa because of Agrippa's expertise in Jewish religious matters. The phrase 'left as a prisoner by Felix' (katalaieimmenos hypo Felikos desmios) implicitly criticizes Felix's failure to resolve the case.
15. Festus summarizes events for Agrippa. The Jewish leaders sought a katadiken ('condemnation, guilty verdict') — not merely a hearing but a predetermined outcome.
16. Festus articulates a foundational principle of Roman law: the right of the accused to confront accusers and present a defense. This principle — confrontation and defense — is one of Rome's lasting contributions to Western legal tradition. Festus presents himself favorably to Agrippa as a defender of proper procedure.
17. Festus emphasizes his own efficiency — 'no delay' (anabolen medemian) — in contrast to Felix's two-year procrastination. The detail is accurate (cf. v. 6) and presents Festus in the best possible light before a royal audience.
18. Festus's admission is revealing: he expected serious criminal charges (violent sedition, assassination plots) and found none. The word poneron ('evil, criminal') indicates he anticipated accusations of substantive wrongdoing under Roman law.
19. The word deisidaimonias can mean either 'religion' (neutral) or 'superstition' (pejorative). In a diplomatic context, Festus likely intends the neutral sense. His summary of the case — 'a certain Jesus who had died, whom Paul claimed to be alive' — is a remarkable outsider's reduction of the resurrection to its simplest terms. For Festus, it is a puzzling Jewish dispute; for the reader, it is the central claim of the entire book of Acts.
20. Festus reframes his suggestion about Jerusalem as stemming from genuine perplexity (aporoumenos, 'being at a loss') rather than political favoritism. His version omits the motivation Luke attributed to him in verse 9 ('wanting to do the Jews a favor'). This is diplomatic self-presentation before Agrippa.
21. The title Sebastos (Greek equivalent of Latin Augustus, 'the Revered One') refers to the reigning emperor, Nero (AD 54-68). At this point in his reign (c. AD 59-60), Nero's government was still relatively competent under the influence of Seneca and Burrus. The word diagnōsis ('decision, examination, hearing') is a legal term for the imperial court's review.
22. Agrippa's interest — 'I would like to hear the man myself' (eboulomen kai autos tou anthropou akousai) — sets up the hearing in chapter 26. The imperfect eboulomen ('I was wishing, I have been wanting') suggests Agrippa had already heard about Paul and been curious. Festus's immediate 'Tomorrow' shows eagerness to accommodate the king.
23. The scene is deliberately theatrical: royalty, military commanders, civic leaders — all assembled 'with great pomp' (meta polles phantasias). The Greek phantasia (from which 'fantasy' derives) means 'display, pageantry, spectacle.' Luke creates a vivid contrast: all the power of the world arrayed before one prisoner in chains, who turns out to be the most powerful person in the room.
24. Festus introduces the case to the assembled dignitaries. His description of the Jewish community's united demand — 'shouting that he ought not to live' — frames the intensity of the opposition while implicitly distancing himself from their demands.
25. Festus's declaration — 'nothing deserving death' (meden axion thanatou) — is another in the series of Roman acquittals that runs through Acts. He presents the appeal to Caesar as the reason for the transfer, though his own political maneuvering was a significant factor.
26. Festus's problem is bureaucratic but revealing: he must send Paul to Rome with a written summary of charges, but he has no charges to write. The title 'my lord' (to kyrio) for the emperor was becoming common under Nero, though earlier emperors like Augustus had rejected it (Suetonius, Augustus 53). Agrippa's expertise in Jewish affairs makes him the ideal consultant.
27. The word alogon ('unreasonable, absurd, illogical') is a striking admission. It would indeed be absurd to send a prisoner to the emperor without articulated charges. The irony is thick: Rome's judicial system has failed to produce a single substantive charge against Paul, yet he remains imprisoned and is being sent for imperial trial.

26

Summary: Acts 26 contains Paul's defense speech before King Agrippa II, Bernice, Festus, and the assembled dignitaries in Caesarea. This is the longest and most rhetorically polished of Paul's defense speeches in Acts, and it includes the third and most detailed account of his conversion on the Damascus road. Paul argues that his entire ministry is rooted in the hope of Israel — the promise God made to the twelve tribes — and that the resurrection of Jesus is the fulfillment of that hope. Festus interrupts, calling Paul mad; Paul respectfully disagrees and turns directly to Agrippa with a personal appeal. Agrippa's famous response — 'In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian' — is followed by the private verdict: Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

What Makes This Remarkable: *This third account of the Damascus road experience (cf. 9:1-19, 22:6-16) is the most theologically developed. Jesus speaks at greater length, commissioning Paul in language drawn from the servant songs of Isaiah and Jeremiah's call narrative. The phrase 'it is hard for you to kick against the goads' (v. 14) is a Greek proverb known from Euripides and Aeschylus, appropriate for the educated audience. Paul's speech builds to a direct evangelistic appeal to a king — an audacious rhetorical move. The verdict of innocence in verse 32 ('this man could have been set free') provides the final Roman declaration of Paul's legal innocence in Acts.*

Translation Friction: *Agrippa's response in verse 28 is notoriously difficult to translate. The Greek *en oligo me peitheis Christianon poiesai* can be read as sincere ('you almost persuade me'), dismissive ('in such a short time you think to make me a Christian?'), or ironic. We follow the rendering that captures Agrippa's deflection without resolving the ambiguity. The relationship between this conversion account and the earlier versions involves significant additions (vv. 16-18) not present in chapters 9 or 22.*

Connections: *Paul's commission in verses 16-18 draws on Isaiah 42:7, 16 (opening blind eyes), Jeremiah 1:7-8 (the prophetic call), and Isaiah 61:1 (liberty for captives) — the same passage Jesus read in the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:18-19). The phrase 'the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers' (v. 6) connects to the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12, 15, 17), the Davidic promise (2 Samuel 7), and the resurrection hope expressed throughout the Psalms and Prophets. Paul's appeal that Agrippa believes the prophets (v. 27) echoes Jesus' teaching in Luke 24:25-27, 44-47.*

¹Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: ²"I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that it is before you I am about to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³Especially because I know you to be expert in all customs and questions which are in the midst of the Jews — for this reason I beseech you to hear me patiently. ⁴All the Jews know my manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem. ⁵They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest party of our religion. ⁶And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷To which promise our the Twelve tribes, instantly serving God time and after dark, confident expectation to arrive. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. ⁸Why is it considered incredible among you that God raises the dead? ⁹I myself was once convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And this I did in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to force them to blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities. ¹²"In this connection I was traveling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³Indeed, at midday, O king, I noticed in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round concerning me and them which journeyed with me. ¹⁴When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But get up and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose: to appoint you as a servant and witness of the things in which you have seen me and of the things in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷Delivering you from the people, and from the Gentiles, to whom now I send you,. ¹⁸To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may accept forgiveness of sins, and inheritance in the midst of them which are sanctified by way of faith that is in me. ¹⁹"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰However, shewed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout every one of the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should turn back and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Messiah would suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles. ²⁴As Paul was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane!" ²⁵But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. ²⁶For the king knows about these things, and to him

I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, since this was not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." ²⁸Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to become a Christian?" ²⁹Paul replied, "Whether in a short time or a long time, I would pray to God that not only you but also all who hear me today might become such as I am — except for these chains." ³⁰Then the king rose, and the governor, and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them. ³¹After they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment." ³²Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. Agrippa, not Festus, grants permission to speak — reflecting his superior rank in this setting. Paul's gesture of stretching out his hand (*ekteinas ten cheira*) is an orator's gesture, beginning a formal rhetorical address. This is Paul's most elaborate and carefully structured speech in Acts.
2. Paul's opening compliment to Agrippa is more substantive than Tertullus's flattery of Felix. The word *makarion* ('fortunate, blessed') is genuine — Agrippa's knowledge of Jewish affairs makes him an ideal judge for Paul's case.
3. Agrippa's expertise in Jewish affairs was well-known — he had authority over the Jerusalem temple and appointed high priests. The word *gnosten* ('expert, one who knows') is more than flattery; it establishes that Agrippa can evaluate the theological nuances of Paul's defense.
4. Paul appeals to public knowledge of his upbringing. The word *biosin* ('manner of life, way of living') encompasses his entire pre-conversion existence. His claim that 'all the Jews know' is a broad appeal to common knowledge.
5. Paul identifies Pharisaism as 'the strictest party' (*ten akribestaten haireisin*) of Judaism — a claim consistent with how both Josephus and the rabbis characterized the Pharisees. The conditional 'if they are willing' (*ean thelosi*) subtly implies that his accusers might not be forthcoming about facts that support his case.
6. Paul frames the entire case as being about 'the promise made by God to our fathers' (*tes eis tous pateras hemon epangelias*). This is the same theological move he made before the Sanhedrin (23:6) — centering the trial on Israel's hope rather than on alleged crimes.
7. The phrase 'our twelve tribes' (*to dodekaphylon hemon*) is remarkable — Paul speaks as if all twelve tribes still exist and worship together, despite the dispersion of the ten northern tribes. The word *ekteneia* ('earnestness, intense devotion') describes the persistent worship of the faithful remnant. Paul's rhetorical point is powerful: he is being accused by Jews for believing what all Jews hope for.
8. This rhetorical question cuts to the heart of the matter. Paul shifts from the specific resurrection of Jesus to the general principle: if God exists and is powerful, why should resurrection be considered impossible (*apiston*, 'unbelievable, incredible')? The question implicitly challenges the Sadducean and Greek skepticism about bodily resurrection.
9. Paul now narrates his pre-conversion hostility to Christianity, establishing that his transformation was not the result of prior sympathy but occurred against his own deeply held convictions. The phrase 'the name of Jesus of Nazareth' (*to onoma Iesou tou Nazoraion*) identifies the historical person whose followers Paul persecuted.
10. Paul uses the term 'the saints' (*ton hagion*) for believers — the only time in Acts this Pauline designation appears. The phrase 'cast my vote' (*katenegka psephon*) has been debated: it could indicate Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin with voting authority, or it could be figurative for 'expressing approval.' The reference to multiple executions (plural) goes beyond Stephen's case, indicating broader persecution.
11. This is the most detailed description of Paul's persecution in any of the three accounts. The attempt to 'force them to blaspheme' (*enagkazon blasphemein*) — presumably to curse Jesus — reveals the systematic nature of the persecution. The phrase 'raging fury' (*perissos emmainomenos*) uses the language of madness, which Paul will later turn to ironic effect when Festus accuses him of madness (v. 24).
12. Paul emphasizes the official nature of his mission — 'authority and commission' (*exousias kai epitropes*) from the chief priests — to underscore that his conversion contradicted everything his former authorities wanted.
13. This account specifies the light was 'brighter than the sun' (*hyper ten lamproteta tou heliou*) — an intensification from the earlier accounts. At midday the sun is at full strength, making a light that surpasses it unmistakably supernatural. The detail that the light shone on 'those traveling with me' is unique to this account.
14. Two details are unique to this account: all the companions fell to the ground (earlier accounts differ), and the voice spoke 'in the Hebrew language' (*te Hebraidi dialekto*, i.e., Aramaic). The proverb about 'kicking against the goads' (*pros kentra laktizein*) is well-known in Greek literature (Euripides, *Bacchae* 795; Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 324) — a goad is a sharp stick used to drive oxen. The saying means resisting an irresistible force causes only self-harm. Its use in Aramaic before Paul but reported in Greek for Agrippa shows rhetorical sophistication.
15. The exchange is consistent across all three accounts. The identification 'I am Jesus' (*Ego eimi Iesous*) uses the emphatic *ego eimi* construction that echoes the divine self-revelation in the Old Testament (Exodus 3:14).
15. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Exodus 3:14 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.

16. In this account, Jesus' commission is far more detailed than in chapters 9 or 22. The command 'Get up and stand on your feet' (anastethi kai stethi epi tous podas sou) echoes God's words to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1). The dual role — 'servant and witness' (hypereten kai martyra) — combines the language of Isaiah's servant and the apostolic witness theme of Acts.
16. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Ezekiel 2:1. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
17. The promise of rescue 'from the people and from the Gentiles' (ek tou laou kai ek ton ethnon) covers both Jewish and Gentile opposition — exactly what Paul has experienced. The verb apostello ('I am sending') is the root of 'apostle'; Jesus commissions Paul as his apostle to the nations. The language echoes Jeremiah 1:7-8.
17. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Jeremiah 1:7-8. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
18. This verse is a compressed summary of Paul's entire theological mission, structured in three parallel movements: (1) opening eyes — from ignorance to knowledge; (2) turning from darkness to light and from Satan to God — from bondage to freedom; (3) receiving forgiveness and inheritance — from condemnation to inclusion. The language draws heavily on Isaiah 42:6-7, 16 (the servant opens blind eyes) and Isaiah 61:1 (liberty for captives). The phrase 'sanctified by faith in me' (pistei te eis eme) places faith in Jesus as the means of sanctification.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 42:6-7 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 61:1 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. Paul addresses Agrippa directly, resuming the relationship established in verses 2-3. The phrase 'heavenly vision' (ourania optasia) characterizes the Damascus road experience in terms any educated Greco-Roman audience would understand. Paul's claim is simple: he was obedient to a divine revelation.
20. Paul summarizes his entire ministry geographically: Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, then the Gentiles — an outward-expanding pattern that mirrors Acts' own structure (1:8). His message has two components: repentance (metanoein, inner change) and turning to God (epistrephein, outward reorientation), demonstrated by appropriate deeds (axia tes metanoias erga). This echoes John the Baptist's preaching (Luke 3:8).
21. Paul identifies the real cause of his persecution: his obedience to the heavenly vision, specifically his preaching to Gentiles. The verb diacheirisasthai ('to lay hands on, to kill') is a strong word implying violent intent.
22. Paul attributes his survival to divine help (epikourias apo tou theou), not to Roman protection or personal resourcefulness. His claim to teach 'nothing beyond' (ouden ekτος) Moses and the prophets positions the gospel as the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures — not an innovation but a completion.
23. Paul's summary of the prophetic message has three elements: (1) the Christ must suffer (pathetos ho Christos) — a claim that scandalized Jews who expected a triumphant Messiah; (2) the Christ would be first to rise from the dead (protos ex anastaseos nekron) — not just raised, but 'first,' implying a sequence others will follow; (3) he would proclaim light to both Jews and Gentiles — universalizing the salvation. Each point can be traced to specific prophetic texts: suffering (Isaiah 53), resurrection (Psalm 16:10), and light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6, 49:6).
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 53 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Psalm 16:10 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
23. [TCR Cross-Reference] References Isaiah 42:6 — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
24. Festus interrupts — unable to contain himself at the talk of resurrection. His charge of madness (Maine, 'You are mad') echoes the ironic language Paul used of his own pre-conversion fury (emmainomenos, v. 11). The phrase 'great learning' (polla grammata) could mean 'much study of Scripture' or 'much education generally.' Festus attributes Paul's resurrection claims to intellectual excess rather than divine revelation.
25. Paul's response is calm, respectful, and pointed. He addresses Festus with full courtesy (kratiste, 'most excellent') while firmly denying the charge. The word sophrosynes ('soundness of mind, rationality, self-control') is the direct opposite of mania — Paul claims his words are not the product of frenzy but of clarity and truth.
26. Paul pivots from Festus to Agrippa, who as a Jewish king would understand the scriptural framework. The phrase 'not done in a corner' (ouk estin en gonia pepragmenon) is proverbial — the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were public, not secret. This is both a historical claim and a rhetorical challenge.
27. Paul's direct question to the king is audacious. He answers his own question — 'I know that you believe' — placing Agrippa in a rhetorical trap. If Agrippa affirms belief in the prophets, Paul can argue that the prophets predicted exactly what he has described. If Agrippa denies it, he alienates his Jewish subjects.

- 28.** This famous verse is notoriously ambiguous. The Greek *en oligo me peitheis Christianon poiesai* can be read multiple ways: (1) 'In a short time you are persuading me to become a Christian' (KJV tradition — near-conversion); (2) 'With so little effort you think to make me a Christian?' (dismissive); (3) 'In short, you are trying to make me a Christian' (deflecting). The rendering captures the question as a deflection — Agrippa sidesteps Paul's trap by reframing the exchange. This is the second of only three uses of *Christianos* in the New Testament (cf. 11:26, 1 Peter 4:16).
- 29.** Paul's response is the emotional climax of the speech. He takes Agrippa's deflection and turns it into a genuine wish — not just for Agrippa but for everyone present. The final phrase 'except for these chains' (*parektos ton desmon touton*) is both poignant (he is in chains) and rhetorically powerful (he would share everything about his life except the imprisonment). The gesture implied — Paul likely raised his chained hands — would have been deeply affecting.
- 30.** The king's rising signals the end of the hearing. The order of names — king, governor, Bernice — reflects the protocol of rank. The hearing was consultative, not judicial; Agrippa had no authority to render a verdict on a case appealed to Caesar.
- 31.** The private deliberation produces a unanimous verdict of innocence — from a king, a governor, and the assembled dignitaries. This is the culminating Roman declaration of Paul's innocence in Acts, parallel to Pilate's declaration about Jesus (Luke 23:4, 14, 22).
- 32.** Agrippa's statement is the final word on Paul's legal status: he could have been released (*apolelysthai edynato*) — his innocence is beyond question. But the appeal to Caesar is irrevocable. The narrative irony is profound: the appeal that prevents Paul's release is the very mechanism that will bring him to Rome, fulfilling the Lord's promise (23:11). What appears to be a legal miscalculation is actually divine strategy.

27

Summary: *Acts 27 is one of the most vivid narrative passages in ancient literature, describing Paul's voyage to Rome and the catastrophic shipwreck on the island of Malta. The 'we' narrative resumes with detailed nautical terminology as Paul and other prisoners sail under the centurion Julius's custody. The voyage proceeds through unfavorable conditions — Paul's warning against continuing is overruled. A ferocious northeast storm called the Euraquilo catches the ship near Crete, driving it for fourteen days across the open Mediterranean. Paul receives a divine assurance that all 276 persons aboard will survive. After dramatic scenes of despair, a midnight approach to land, a failed escape attempt by the sailors, and Paul's eucharistic-like meal, the ship runs aground on Malta and breaks apart. All hands reach shore alive.*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The nautical detail in this chapter is so precise that it has been used to reconstruct ancient sailing routes and seamanship practices. The 'we' narrator's firsthand account includes technical terms for sailing gear, wind conditions, navigational techniques, and ship construction that demonstrate genuine seafaring experience. Paul emerges as the de facto leader of the voyage — a prisoner who commands more authority than the captain or centurion because he speaks with divine backing. The divine promise that all 276 souls would be saved (v. 24) inverts the expected pattern: it is the prisoner who saves the ship, not the ship that carries the prisoner.*

Translation Friction: *The chapter presents Paul as having prophetic foreknowledge (vv. 10, 22-26) alongside practical leadership, which some interpreters find in tension. The 'we' sections present a narrator with genuine nautical knowledge — the level of technical detail exceeds what is typical in ancient fiction. We render the Greek maritime vocabulary with modern equivalents where possible. The number 276 (v. 37) is large for an ancient merchant vessel but not impossible for the grain ships of the Alexandria-Rome trade.*

Connections: *The storm narrative echoes Jonah 1 — another prophet on a ship in a storm, where the cargo is thrown overboard and divine intervention saves lives. Paul's breaking of bread (v. 35) echoes the Last Supper and the Emmaus road meal (Luke 24:30). The promise 'not a hair of your head will perish' (v. 34) repeats Jesus' words in Luke 21:18. The entire voyage narrative demonstrates the Lord's promise in 23:11 ('you must testify in Rome') being fulfilled through and despite natural catastrophe.*

¹When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they handed Paul and some other prisoners over to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan Cohort. ²We boarded a ship from Adramyttium that was about to sail to ports along the coast of Asia, and we put to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us. ³The next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius treated Paul kindly and allowed him to go to his friends and receive their care. ⁴From there we put to sea and sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. ⁵After sailing across the open sea along Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. ⁶There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us aboard it. ⁷We sailed slowly for

a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus. Since the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. ⁸Coasting along with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. ⁹Since much time had been lost and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast had already gone by, Paul advised them, ¹⁰Stated to them, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and greatly damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. ¹¹But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the ship's owner than by what Paul said. ¹²Since the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority decided to put to sea from there, hoping somehow to reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there. ¹³When a gentle south wind began to blow, thinking they had achieved their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along the coast of Crete, close to shore. ¹⁴But before long a violent wind called the Euraquilo rushed down from the island. ¹⁵When the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to get the ship's boat under control. ¹⁷After hoisting it aboard, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and so were driven along. ¹⁸Since we were being violently battered by the storm, the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard. ¹⁹On the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm continued to rage, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned. ²¹Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not set sail from Crete. Then you would have avoided this damage and loss. ²²But now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me ²⁴Declaring, "Fear not, Paul. You must be brought prior to Caesar — and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. ²⁵So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. ²⁶But we must run aground on some island." ²⁷When the fourteenth night had come, as we were drifting across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. ²⁸They took soundings and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took soundings again and found fifteen fathoms. ²⁹Fearing that we might run aground on rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. ³⁰When the sailors tried to escape from the ship and had lowered the boat into the sea, pretending that they were going to lay out anchors from the bow, ³¹Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." ³²Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let it drift away. ³³As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having eaten nothing. ³⁴Therefore I urge you to take some food, for this is for your preservation. For not a hair will perish from the head of any of you." ³⁵After saying this, he took bread, gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and after breaking it he began to eat. ³⁶Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷We were in all 276 persons on the ship. ³⁸After they had eaten their fill, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea. ³⁹When day came, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, and they planned to run the ship ashore there if they could. ⁴⁰So they cast off the anchors, leaving them in the sea. At the same time they untied the ropes that held the steering oars, hoisted the foresail to the wind, and made for the beach. ⁴¹But striking a sandbar where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the force of the waves. ⁴²The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them could swim away and escape. ⁴³But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for land, ⁴⁴Indeed, the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it happened that, that they escaped all safe to land.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The 'we' narrative resumes, indicating the author's presence on the voyage. The 'Augustan Cohort' (speires Sebastes) was likely a cohort honorifically named after Augustus, possibly the cohors I Augusta attested in inscriptions from Syria. Julius's later courteous treatment of Paul (v. 3) suggests he recognized Paul's social status as a Roman citizen.
2. Adramyttium was a port city in Mysia (northwest Asia Minor). This was a coastal vessel, not the ship that would cross the open sea to Italy. Aristarchus was one of Paul's traveling companions (cf. 19:29, 20:4), here accompanying Paul voluntarily on his journey as a prisoner.

3. Julius's 'kind treatment' (*philanthropos*, literally 'with love of humanity') of Paul reflects the privileges due a Roman citizen even in custody. Allowing Paul to visit friends in Sidon shows considerable trust. The word *epimeleias* ('care, attention') suggests Paul received provisions or medical attention from the Christian community there.
4. Sailing 'under the lee of Cyprus' (*hypepleusmen ten Kypron*) means they passed north and east of the island, using it as a windbreak against the prevailing westerly winds. This is the opposite direction from the outbound route (21:3), demonstrating the author's awareness of seasonal wind patterns.
5. The route along the southern coast of Asia Minor, using the coastal countercurrent to make headway against westerly winds, is confirmed by ancient sailing manuals. Myra was a major port on the Lycian coast and a regular transfer point for the Egyptian grain fleet sailing to Rome.
6. The Alexandrian grain ship was part of the fleet that supplied Rome with Egyptian wheat — a critical supply line that the emperor monitored closely. These were the largest merchant vessels in the ancient Mediterranean, capable of carrying several hundred passengers plus cargo. The centurion had authority to requisition passage for his prisoner detail.
7. The slow progress and difficulty reflect the prevailing northwesterly winds of late summer in the Aegean. Cnidus is at the southwestern tip of Asia Minor. Unable to round it, the ship turned south to shelter behind Crete. Salmone (Cape Sidero) is the northeastern point of Crete.
8. Fair Havens (*Kalous Limenas*) is an identifiable bay on the south coast of Crete, still bearing the same name. It provided limited shelter but was not a suitable harbor for wintering. Lasea has been identified with ruins about five miles east of Fair Havens.
9. The 'Fast' (*ten nesteian*) is the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), which falls in September or October. After this date, Mediterranean sailing was considered hazardous; navigation typically ceased from November to March. The reference provides a chronological anchor: they are already in the danger period.
10. Paul's warning is presented as practical observation (*theo*, 'I can see, I perceive') rather than explicit prophecy, though it will prove accurate. The word *hybreos* ('damage, injury, violence') refers to damage from the storm. Paul, as an experienced traveler who had been shipwrecked before (2 Corinthians 11:25), had practical grounds for his assessment.
11. The centurion makes the rational decision to trust the professional sailors — the *kubernetes* ('helmsman, pilot') and the *naukleros* ('ship owner, captain') — over a prisoner. The narrative creates dramatic irony: the professionals are wrong, and the prisoner speaks truth.
12. Phoenix (modern Loutro or possibly Phineka) was a better harbor on Crete's south coast, about 40 miles west of Fair Havens. The description of its orientation — 'facing southwest and northwest' (*kata liba kai kata choron*) — matches a harbor open to the west but sheltered from northerly storms. The decision was reasonable but fatally timed.
13. The gentle south wind (*notou*) seemed to confirm the decision to sail — it was exactly the wind needed to coast westward along Crete's south shore. The word *doxantes* ('thinking, supposing') signals that their confidence was premature.
14. The *Euraquilo* (*Eurakulon* in SBLGNT, a hybrid of Greek *euros* 'east wind' and Latin *aquilo* 'north wind') was a fierce northeaster — exactly the worst wind possible for a ship trying to coast westward along Crete's south shore. The word *typhonikos* ('typhoon-like, hurricane-force') indicates extreme violence. The storm hit suddenly, coming 'down from' the island — off the mountains of Crete.
15. The verb *antophthalmein* (literally 'to look against, to face into') is a vivid nautical metaphor — the ship could not 'look the wind in the eye.' The decision to 'give way' (*epidontes*, literally 'giving over') means they stopped trying to sail and let the storm drive them. This is the beginning of fourteen days of helpless drifting.
16. *Cauda* (modern *Gavdos*) is a small island about 23 miles south of Crete. Its brief windbreak gave the crew a chance to secure the ship's boat (*skaphes*) — the small dinghy towed behind or alongside. In rough seas, such boats became waterlogged and could damage the hull or capsize.
17. *Undergirding* (*hypozonnyntes*) involved passing ropes or cables under and around the hull to keep the planking from separating — a well-attested ancient emergency procedure called 'frapping.' The *Syrtis* was the feared sandbank region off the North African coast (modern Libya), a graveyard of ships. The lowered 'gear' (*skeuos*) was likely a sea anchor or *drogue* deployed to slow the drift.
18. *Jettisoning cargo* (*ekbolen epoiounto*) was a desperate measure that sacrificed valuable goods to reduce weight and raise the hull. For a grain ship, this meant dumping hundreds of tons of wheat — a significant financial loss and politically sensitive given the grain supply's importance to Rome. The parallel with *Jonah 1:5* is striking.
18. [TCR Cross-Reference] References *Jonah 1:5* — the TCR OT rendering of that text provides the Hebrew source and explains the translation decisions involved.
19. The 'ship's tackle' (*ten skeuen tou ploiou*) likely included spare rigging, heavy yards, and non-essential equipment. The phrase 'with their own hands' (*autocheries*) emphasizes the desperation — passengers and crew together were heaving equipment overboard, not just the professional sailors.
20. Without sun or stars, ancient navigation was impossible — they had no compass or instruments. The *litotes* 'no small storm' (*cheimonos ouk oligou*) is characteristic Lukan understatement for a catastrophic tempest. The loss of 'all hope' (*elpis pasa*) sets the stage for Paul's intervention — when human hope ends, divine assurance begins.
21. The 'long abstinence from food' (*polles asitias*) reflects both the difficulty of cooking in storm conditions and the seasickness and despair of the passengers. Paul's 'I told you so' (*edei peitharchesantas moi*) is not petulance but establishment of credibility for the prophetic message that follows.

22. Paul transitions from rebuke to encouragement. The promise is specific and extraordinary: every person will survive, though the ship will be lost. This corrects his earlier warning (v. 10), which predicted loss of life — divine revelation has updated the situation.
23. Paul identifies himself by his fundamental identity: he belongs to God and serves God. The angel's visit parallels the Lord's appearance to Paul in 23:11. Before a pagan crew, Paul speaks of 'the God' (tou theou) rather than using Jewish terminology — adapting his language to his audience while maintaining theological substance.
24. The divine dei ('you must') reaffirms the necessity established in 23:11. The phrase 'God has graciously given you' (kecharistai soi ho theos) uses the verb charizomai — Paul's fellow passengers are saved as a gift of grace on account of Paul's presence. The 276 people on the ship survive because of one prisoner's divine calling.
25. Paul's personal declaration — 'I have faith in God' (pisteuo gar to theo) — is the foundation of his confidence. His faith is not in favorable winds or skilled sailors but in the character of God who has spoken. The phrase 'exactly as I have been told' (katho hon tropon lelaetai moi) claims precise fulfillment.
26. Paul adds a specific prediction: the shipwreck will occur on an island. The divine dei ('we must') again indicates necessity. This prediction will prove accurate when they reach Malta (28:1).
27. Fourteen days of drifting places the ship approximately in the central Mediterranean. The 'Adriatic' (Adria) in ancient usage covered a much larger area than the modern Adriatic Sea — it included the waters between Crete, Italy, and North Africa. The sailors' detection of land — probably hearing breakers or noticing a change in wave patterns — demonstrates professional seamanship even in crisis.
28. Sounding (bolisantes, from bolis, 'a lead weight') involved dropping a weighted line to measure depth. Twenty fathoms (about 120 feet) decreasing to fifteen fathoms (about 90 feet) confirms they were approaching a shelving seabed — consistent with the approach to Malta from the east. This detail is so precise that it has been verified against modern charts of St. Paul's Bay, Malta.
29. Anchoring from the stern (ek prymnes) rather than the bow was a deliberate tactic — it kept the ship oriented toward the shore so they could beach it at dawn. Four anchors provided maximum holding power. The phrase 'prayed for daylight' (euchonto hemeran genesthai) captures the desperate waiting of that final night.
30. The sailors' attempt to abandon ship under a plausible pretext — laying bow anchors — is a realistic detail. Professional sailors knew their best chance of survival was in the small boat rather than on the disintegrating ship. But if the sailors escaped, the remaining passengers and soldiers would have no one capable of beaching the vessel.
31. Paul alerts the military, not the captain — recognizing where actual authority lies. His warning that survival requires the sailors' presence balances divine promise with human agency: God has promised to save everyone, but that promise works through the sailors' skill in beaching the ship.
32. The soldiers' drastic action — cutting away the only lifeboat — eliminates the escape route but also ensures the sailors must stay and help. It demonstrates the centurion's trust in Paul over the sailors. The loss of the boat means everyone's fate is bound together.
33. Paul takes practical leadership as dawn approaches. The 'fourteen days without food' likely means fourteen days of irregular, inadequate eating rather than absolute fasting — in extreme storm conditions, preparing and keeping down food would have been nearly impossible.
34. Paul's assurance that 'not a hair will perish from your head' (oudenos gar hymon thrix apo tes kephales apoleitai) quotes Jesus' words from Luke 21:18. The connection is deliberate — the same God who protects his people through tribulation in the end times protects them through a storm at sea. The word soterias ('preservation, salvation') functions on two levels: physical survival and deeper deliverance.
35. The sequence — taking bread, giving thanks, breaking it — echoes the eucharistic actions of Jesus at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19) and the Emmaus meal (Luke 24:30). Whether Paul intended a formal Eucharist or simply a Jewish meal blessing before a mixed pagan-Jewish audience is debated. Either way, Luke's language evokes eucharistic resonance for his readers. Paul thanks God publicly (enopion panton) before a crew that mostly worships other gods — a bold act of witness.
36. Paul's leadership has transformed the mood of the entire ship — from despair (v. 20) to courage (euthumoi, 'cheerful, encouraged'). The prisoner has become the moral authority.
37. The specific number — 276 (diakosiai hebdomekonta hex) — has the ring of an eyewitness detail. Large Alexandrian grain ships could carry several hundred passengers plus crew. Josephus reports traveling to Rome on a ship with 600 aboard (Life 15). The number also recalls the total who survived, fulfilling the angel's promise (v. 24).
38. The wheat (siton) — the primary cargo of the Alexandrian grain ship — is now dumped to lighten the vessel for beaching. This final jettisoning represents the total loss of the ship's commercial value. Having eaten, the passengers have strength for the ordeal ahead.
39. The sailors did not recognize the coast — indicating they were off normal shipping routes. The 'bay with a beach' (kolpon echonta aigialon) has been identified with St. Paul's Bay on Malta's northeast coast, which has a sandy beach within a bay, exactly matching this description.
40. The technical sequence is precise: (1) slip the anchor cables (faster than hauling them up); (2) free the steering oars (which had been lashed during the storm); (3) raise the foresail (artemon, a small sail at the bow) to provide steerage. Each action is the correct seamanship procedure for beaching a disabled vessel. The detail confirms the narrator's nautical competence.

41. A 'place where two seas met' (topon dithalassonon) describes a shoal or sandbar between two bodies of water — consistent with the small island (Salmonetta) in St. Paul's Bay where currents from two directions converge. The ship's bow wedged into the sand while the stern, exposed to the surf, began to disintegrate. The image is vivid and terrifying.
42. Under Roman military law, a soldier who lost a prisoner could face the prisoner's sentence, including death (cf. 12:19, 16:27). The soldiers' plan to execute the prisoners was a rational, self-preserving calculation — brutal but legally grounded. The prisoners' lives depended entirely on the centurion's next decision.
43. The centurion Julius's desire to save Paul (diasosai ton Paulon) overrides military protocol and saves all the prisoners' lives. Paul's influence has grown from that of a mere prisoner to a figure the centurion is willing to take career risks to protect. The evacuation is orderly: swimmers first, then the rest.
44. The final sentence — 'all were brought safely to land' (pantas diasothennai epi ten gen) — fulfills the angel's promise (v. 24) and Paul's assurance (v. 22). All 276 persons survive. The verb diasothennai ('were brought safely through') carries its full theological weight: God's deliverance is complete. The wreckage that kills the ship saves the passengers — a fitting image for the narrative theology of Acts, where destruction and preservation work together in the divine plan.

28

Summary: *Acts 28 is the final chapter of Luke's two-volume work, bringing Paul's journey to its destination: Rome. After the shipwreck, the survivors discover they have landed on Malta. Paul is bitten by a viper but suffers no harm, astonishing the locals. He heals the father of the island's chief official Publius and many other islanders. After three months, the company sails to Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli, then travels overland to Rome, where Christians come out to meet Paul along the Appian Way. In Rome, Paul lives under house arrest for two years, freely receiving visitors and proclaiming the kingdom of God. His final recorded act is a meeting with Jewish leaders in which he quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 — the prophecy of hearing without understanding — and declares that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. The book ends with Paul preaching 'without hindrance.'*

What Makes This Remarkable: *The viper episode (vv. 3-6) inverts the expected pattern: the Maltese first think Paul is a murderer receiving divine justice, then decide he is a god — both assessments are wrong, but Luke lets the scene speak for itself. The final scene in Rome (vv. 17-31) is the theological conclusion not just of Acts but of Luke's entire project. Paul's quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10 — the same passage Jesus quoted in Luke 8:10 and the same one used in all four Gospels — serves as the prophetic explanation for Israel's partial rejection of the gospel. The final word of Acts, akolutos ('without hindrance'), is programmatic: despite chains, trials, storms, and snakebite, nothing ultimately hinders the proclamation of the gospel.*

Translation Friction: *The ending of Acts has puzzled readers for centuries. Luke does not narrate the outcome of Paul's trial, his possible release, further travels, or death. Whether this indicates Luke wrote before the trial's conclusion, chose to end on a theological note rather than a biographical one, or had other reasons remains debated. We render the text as given without speculating about what follows. The Isaiah quotation (vv. 26-27) raises the perennial question of whether Israel's unbelief is divinely caused or divinely permitted — Paul's use of the passage emphasizes the prophetic pattern rather than resolving the theological tension.*

Connections: *The Malta events connect to Jesus' promise in Mark 16:18 (handling serpents and healing the sick). Paul's arrival in Rome fulfills the divine dei of 19:21, 23:11, and 27:24. The Isaiah 6 quotation creates an inclusio with Jesus' use of the same passage in Luke 8:10. The phrase 'the kingdom of God' in the final verse connects to the opening question of Acts 1:3, 6 — the book begins and ends with the kingdom. The declaration that salvation goes 'to the Gentiles' (v. 28) echoes the programmatic statement of 13:46-47 and fulfills the Isaianic servant's mission to be 'a light for the nations' (Isaiah 49:6, quoted in Acts 13:47).*

¹After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. ²The native people showed us extraordinary kindness. They kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and it was cold. ³When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. ⁴When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he was saved from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." ⁵He, however, shook the creature off into

the fire and suffered no harm. ⁶They were expecting him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they waited a long time and saw nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. ⁷Now in the vicinity of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius. He welcomed us and hosted us hospitably for three days. ⁸It happened that the father of Publius was lying sick with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him, and after praying and laying his hands on him, he healed him. ⁹After this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. ¹⁰They also honored us with many gifts, and when we were ready to sail, they supplied us with everything we needed. ¹¹After three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria that had wintered at the island, with the Twin Brothers as its figurehead. ¹²Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. ¹³From there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. After one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. ¹⁴There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. ¹⁵The brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him. ¹⁷After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸When they had examined me, they wanted to release me because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹But since the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar — not that I had any charge to bring against my nation. ²⁰For this reason, then, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain." ²¹They said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything bad about you. ²²But we would like to hear from you what your views are, for regarding this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." ²³When they had set a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning until evening he explained to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them about Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. ²⁴Some were convinced by what he said, but others refused to believe. ²⁵Disagreeing among themselves, they began to leave. Paul made one final statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: ²⁶'Go to this people and say: You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ²⁷For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' ²⁸Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." ³⁰He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹Indeed, preaching God's reign, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

TRANSLATOR NOTES

1. The 'we' narration confirms the author's continued presence. The word *diasothentes* ('brought safely through') echoes 27:44, maintaining the salvation vocabulary. Malta (Melite) was a significant island with a Phoenician heritage and Roman administration. The identification with modern Malta (rather than the Adriatic island Mljet) is supported by the nautical details of chapter 27.
2. The word *barbaroi* ('barbarians, native people') does not imply savagery — it simply means non-Greek speakers. Malta's population spoke a Punic dialect. The *litotes* 'no ordinary kindness' (*ou ten tuchousan philanthropian*) means 'extraordinary, exceptional.' The practical hospitality — fire, shelter from rain and cold — for 276 strangers is remarkable.
3. Paul participates in the practical work alongside everyone else — gathering firewood is not beneath him. The *echidna* ('viper') emerged from the bundled sticks, driven out by the fire's heat. The verb *kathepse* ('fastened on, seized') indicates the snake attached itself to his hand, whether by biting or coiling. No venomous vipers are found on Malta today, but this may reflect habitat changes over two millennia.
4. The Maltese interpret the snakebite through the lens of divine retribution: a man who survived the sea must be a murderer whom Dike (the Greek goddess of Justice) is pursuing. This folk theology — that misfortune indicates guilt — is the same logic Job's friends used and that Jesus challenged in Luke 13:1-5 and John 9:2-3.
5. Paul's calm reaction — simply shaking the viper into the fire — contrasts with the bystanders' alarm. The statement 'suffered no harm' (*epathen ouden kakon*) is emphatic. This recalls Jesus' promise to his disciples about authority over serpents (Luke 10:19) and the longer ending of Mark (16:18).

6. The crowd swings from one extreme ('murderer') to the other ('a god') — the same pattern seen at Lystra (14:11-18). Luke records both reactions without correction, letting the irony stand. The expected symptoms — swelling (*pimprasthai*) or sudden death — are medically accurate for a viper bite. Paul is neither a murderer nor a god, but the scene demonstrates divine protection.
7. The title 'leading man' (proto, literally 'first man') of the island has been confirmed by inscriptions from Malta using the Latin equivalent *princeps*. Publius is a Roman praenomen, suggesting Roman administration. His hospitality of 'three days' for a large group would have been a significant expense.
8. The medical description — 'fever and dysentery' (*pyretois kai dysenterio*) — uses precise clinical terminology that reflects Luke's medical vocabulary (cf. Colossians 4:14). The plural 'fevers' (*pyretois*) may indicate recurrent bouts, consistent with brucellosis (Malta fever), which was endemic on the island. Paul heals through prayer and laying on of hands — the same method used by Jesus and the apostles.
9. The healing ministry extends beyond Publius's father to the broader island population. Luke uses two different verbs: *iasato* ('healed,' v. 8, often used for miraculous healing) and *etherapeuonto* ('were treated/healed,' here, which could also encompass medical care). The imperfect tense suggests ongoing ministry during their three-month stay.
10. The Maltese respond with gratitude — 'many honors' (*pollais timais*) likely included both monetary gifts and provisions. The phrase 'everything we needed' (*ta pros tas chreias*) covers supplies for the remaining voyage to Italy. The shipwrecked travelers, who arrived with nothing, leave fully provisioned.
11. The three months spent on Malta covered the winter sailing closure (roughly November to February). The new ship is another Alexandrian grain vessel, identified by its figurehead: the Dioskouroi (Castor and Pollux), the twin sons of Zeus who were patron gods of sailors. The detail about the figurehead is a characteristically precise eyewitness observation.
12. Syracuse was the chief city of Sicily and a major port on the route from the eastern Mediterranean to Italy. The three-day stop likely awaited favorable winds for the crossing of the Strait of Messina.
13. The verb *perielontes* ('making a circuit, tacking') suggests they had to sail indirectly due to wind conditions. Rhegium (modern Reggio di Calabria) is at the toe of Italy. The south wind carried them swiftly up the coast to Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli), near Naples — the main port for the Alexandrian grain fleet and the gateway to Rome.
14. The existence of a Christian community at Puteoli — one of Italy's most important ports — confirms the early spread of Christianity through trade routes. The centurion's willingness to allow a seven-day stay (another indication of Paul's privileged treatment) suggests Julius was in no hurry. The sentence 'And so we came to Rome' (*kai houtos eis ten Rhomen elthamen*) is quietly monumental — the journey promised in 19:21 and guaranteed in 23:11 is now accomplished.
15. Two groups of Roman Christians come out to meet Paul at different points along the Via Appia (Appian Way): the Forum of Appius (about 43 miles from Rome) and Three Taverns (about 33 miles from Rome). This reception — going out to meet an arriving dignitary — was a formal act of honor called an *apantesis*. Paul's response — thanksgiving and courage (*tharsos*, the same word the Lord used in 23:11) — shows his emotional state after years of imprisonment and a harrowing voyage.
16. Paul's arrangement — private quarters with a single guard (*custodia militaris*) — was the lightest form of Roman custody. The SBLGNT omits the reference to the centurion delivering prisoners to the captain of the guard (found in the Textus Receptus). Paul's ability to receive visitors (vv. 17, 23, 30) confirms this was house arrest, not imprisonment.
17. Paul follows his consistent pattern: he approaches the Jewish community first (cf. 13:5, 14, 17:1-2, 18:4). The three-day interval allowed him to settle in. His address to the Roman Jewish leaders summarizes his case, maintaining that he committed no offense against the Jewish people or ancestral customs — the same defense given throughout Acts 22-26.
18. Paul summarizes the Roman officials' repeated verdict of innocence (cf. 23:29, 25:25, 26:31-32). The phrase 'no reason for the death penalty' (*medemian aitian thanatou*) is the consistent Roman finding throughout Paul's trials.
19. Paul emphasizes that his appeal to Caesar was defensive, not offensive — he is not counter-suing the Jewish community. The phrase 'not that I had any charge against my nation' (*ouch hos tou ethnous mou echon ti kategorein*) is a diplomatic gesture toward the Roman Jewish community.
20. Paul's climactic statement identifies his imprisonment with 'the hope of Israel' (*tes elpidos tou Israel*) — the same phrase used in 26:6-7. The singular 'chain' (*halysin*) refers to the chain binding him to his guard. Paul's point is theological: he is in chains not despite being a faithful Jew but because of Israel's own hope — the resurrection of the dead and the coming of the Messiah.
21. The Roman Jewish leaders claim ignorance of Paul's case — no letters from Jerusalem, no visiting Jews with negative reports. Whether this is entirely accurate or diplomatically cautious is unclear. The winter sailing closure during which Paul traveled may have prevented advance communication.
22. The Jewish leaders' response is notable: they want to hear Paul's views directly. Their characterization of Christianity as a 'sect' (*haireseos*) that is 'everywhere spoken against' (*pantachou antiagetai*) reflects the mixed reception the early church received. The language is neutral to skeptical — they are open to hearing but aware of the controversy.
23. This extended session — 'from morning until evening' (*apo proi heos hesperas*) — demonstrates the depth and seriousness of the engagement. Paul's method is scriptural persuasion: he argues from the Law and the Prophets that Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's hope. The combination of 'the

kingdom of God' and 'Jesus' summarizes the content of all apostolic preaching in Acts.

24. The response is divided — exactly the pattern that has characterized Jewish responses to the gospel throughout Acts. Some are 'convinced' (epeithonto); others 'refused to believe' (epistoun). This divided response triggers Paul's final prophetic declaration.
25. The word asymphonoi ('disagreeing, not in harmony') describes the divided state in which the group departs. Paul's 'one word' (hrema hen) is actually an extended quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10 — the prophetic passage most frequently cited in the New Testament to explain Israel's unbelief (cf. Matthew 13:14-15, Mark 4:12, Luke 8:10, John 12:40, Romans 11:8).
25. [TCR Cross-Reference] This verse quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 — see the TCR rendering of that passage for the Hebrew source text and translation decisions.
26. Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 from the Septuagint. The passage is from Isaiah's commissioning — God tells the prophet that his message will not be received. The Hebrew intensifying construction ('hearing you will hear') emphasizes the completeness of the failure to comprehend. Luke places this quotation at the very end of his two-volume work, giving it climactic theological significance.
26. [TCR Cross-Reference] Quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. The TCR rendering of that OT passage preserves the Hebrew source text and documents the translation decisions behind it.
27. The threefold diagnosis — dull heart, heavy ears, closed eyes — describes a progressive hardening against God's message. The sequence reverses in the potential cure: seeing, hearing, understanding, turning. The verb iasomi ('I would heal') holds out the possibility of restoration — the door is not absolutely shut. In Isaiah's original context, this was a temporary condition, not a permanent sentence.
27. [TCR Cross-Reference] Draws on Isaiah 6:9-10. Consult the TCR rendering of that passage for the underlying Hebrew and the rationale for key translation choices.
28. Paul's declaration — 'this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles' (tois ethnesin apestale touto to soterion tou theou) — echoes his earlier turning points at Antioch (13:46) and Corinth (18:6). The phrase 'they will listen' (autoi kai akousontai) is both a prediction and a contrast with Israel's failure to hear (v. 27). This is the theological climax of Acts: the gospel, offered first to Israel, now goes freely to the nations.
29. This verse is not present in the SBLGNT critical text. It appears in the Textus Receptus and thus in the KJV, but the earliest and best manuscripts lack it. We follow the critical text and note the verse's absence.
30. The 'two whole years' (dietian holen) specifies Paul's house arrest. The phrase 'at his own expense' (en idio misthomati) indicates Paul rented his quarters — possibly funded by the churches or by his own work. The open-door policy — 'welcoming all who came' (apedecheto pantas) — shows unrestricted access despite his custody.
31. The final verse of Acts is its theological summary. Paul's message has two components — 'the kingdom of God' and 'the Lord Jesus Christ' — encompassing the entire apostolic proclamation. The phrase 'with all boldness' (meta pases parresias) echoes the prayer of Acts 4:29. The final word, akolytos ('without hindrance, unhindered'), is the last word Luke writes. Despite imprisonment, opposition, storms, and snakebite, nothing stops the advance of the gospel. The word is adverbial, modifying everything — Paul preaches, teaches, and lives unhindered. It is a quietly triumphant ending: the prisoner is free, and the Word of God is unchained.