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- X. Chapter 10, The Beginning of the Gentile Mission Peter's vision and its consequences (10:1-33) *At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, {2} a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God. {3} About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius." {4} And he stared at him in terror, and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. {5} And now send men to Joppa, and bring one Simon who is called Peter; {6} he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside." {7} When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those that waited on him, {8} and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. {9} The next day, as they were on their journey and coming near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. {10} And he became hungry and desired something to eat; but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance {11} and saw the heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth. {12} In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. {13} And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." {14} But Peter said, "No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." {15} And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common." {16} This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven. {17} Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate {18} and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. {19} And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. {20} Rise and go down, and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them." {21} And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?" {22} And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is 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 what you have to say." {23} So he called them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went off with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. {24} And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his kinsmen and close friends. {25} When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. {26} But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man." {27} And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered; {28} and he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. {29} So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me." {30} And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, {31} saying, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. {32} Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter; he is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the seaside.' {33} So I sent to you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of*

God, to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." {34} And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, {35} but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. {36} You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), {37} the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: {38} how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. {39} And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; {40} but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; {41} not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. {42} And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. {43} To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." {44} While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. {45} And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. {46} For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, {47} "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" {48} And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

A. Outline

1. Prelude - vv. 1-8
 - a. Description - vv. 1-2
 - b. Delight - vv. 3-4
 - c. Directions - vv. 5-6
 - d. Dispatch - vv. 7-8
2. Preparation - vv. 9-16
 - a. Summoning - vv. 9-10
 - b. Schooling - vv. 11-16
3. Procession - vv. 17-24
 - a. Gathering - vv. 17-18
 - b. Goadng - vv. 19-20
 - c. Garnering - vv. 21-23a
 - d. Going - vv. 23b-24a
4. Peace - vv. 24b-35
 - a. Exemplification of equality - vv. 24b-26
 - b. Ending of exclusion - vv. 27-29
 - c. Extending of Explanation - vv. 30-33
 - d. Extolling of equality - vv. 34-35
5. Proclamation (of the Kerygma) vv. 36-43
6. Pouring forth (of the Holy Spirit) - vv. 44-46
7. Performance (of the sacrament) - vv. 47-48

- B. **Caesarea** - a city of Palestine on the Mediterranean Coast north of Joppa and northwest of Jerusalem. The city was built by Herod the Great on the sight of a smaller settlement. It was 12 years building and dedicated in 9 B.C. Thus, the city at the time of this occurrence was almost entirely of new construction in the grand Hellenistic style. Herod also built an artificial harbor to assist in shipping. This made it instantly the main port of Palestine since no other cities had harbors.
- C. **a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort** - this whole incident recalls another Centurion (Centurion = a leader of 100 Men) who sent to the Lord for help in Luke 7:1-10: *Now a centurion had a slave who was dear to him, who was sick and at the point of death. {3} When he heard of Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his slave. {4} And when they came to Jesus, they besought him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, {5} for he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue." {6} And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; {7} therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. {8} For I am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." {9} When Jesus heard this he marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that followed him, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." {10} And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave well.*
- D. **a devout man who feared God** - Luke probably means he was a "God Fearer" . The God Fearers were not full Jewish converts who were circumcised and followed the Law (these were called proselytes). God fearers frequented the synagogue and tried to live as much of the Torah as they could. Nevertheless, he was clearly considered a Gentile but was open and disposed to the Jewish people and religion.
- E. **gave alms...prayed constantly** - these were the terms of traditional piety as expressed in Tobit 12:8; Matt 6:2-6. That he gave alms to the people means the Jewish people and once a gain, this echoes the centurion of Luke 7:5 (see above).
- F. **the ninth hour** - three in the afternoon. This was a set hour for prayer and sacrifice.
- G. **an angel of God coming in and saying** - angels are God's messengers. This opening to the Gentiles is God's initiative. This has been the case all throughout Acts. We have seen how God is directing his Church through the Holy Spirit. The Church is God's work, not man's. Each member of the Church and the various communities within the Church must hear and hear the will of God. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*¹
- H. **"Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.** - Prayers and good deeds go before us to God who holds them in memory. Our good deeds do not go unheeded by God. This is brought out in many ways in the scriptures.
1. *The sacrifice of a righteous man is acceptable and the memory of it will*

*not be forgotten.*²

2. *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"*³

3. *It is well with the man who deals generously and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered for ever.*⁴

I. ***bring one Simon who is called Peter*** - we may ask why Cornelius was not directed to go to Peter. There are several possible answers here to that question.

1. We have already seen how this is an echo of the story of the other centurion in Luke 7. In that case Jesus was summoned as well.

2. We have seen the pattern already in Acts (e.g. Philip is sent to the Ethiopian) that the servant of the Lord is sent to bring about conversion. This is the missionary task of the Church. The Church goes to preach and bring the Gospel of peace to those who are called. Missionaries go forth. It is more seldom that converts approach the Church on their own; at least not in large numbers. The Church must go forth.

3. If Peter is a model for the papacy and, by extension, all Church leaders then the message is clear: leadership in the Church is service. To be the leader of all is to be the servant of all. Hence, Peter is told to go forth, not Cornelius. Peter is the leader to be sure, thus he is the servant of all and the service of Cornelius.

J. ***he called two of his servants and a devout soldier...he sent them to Joppa.*** - Here again is the obedience of faith. Cornelius sends, not just anyone but selected men from his immediate staff who will represent him well. This is especially the case with the devout soldier.

K. ***Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.*** - To our modern ears going up to the roof to pray seems odd. Nevertheless, in the ancient world the rooftops were the equivalent of what front porches were in our culture until recently. The roof was a place of refuge from the dark and sometimes cramped quarters underneath. On the roof there was a breeze and light. Depending on the time of day the rooftop might be a place of solitude or a place of finding company. Peter evidently went up to find solitude in order to pray. He went up at the sixth hour, which is noon on the day following the vision of Cornelius. In the distance the legates of Cornelius approached the city.

L. ***he fell into a trance*** - Peter is here being taught and directed by the Holy Spirit to understand that God has made the Gentiles co-heirs with the Jews; he renders them clean. Peter, a pious Jew is clearly troubled by all this. He is, after all a man of his times and has been raised to consider Gentiles unclean and out of favor with God. But God repeats the vision three times and forces Peter beyond his cultural predispositions. God is preparing him for the decision he will be called to make not based on his own inclinations but the guidance and command of God. Peter has the obedience of faith. The rest of Chapter 10 is very significant for the

2Sirach 35:7.

3Rev 14:13.

4Psalm 112:5.

office and role of Peter and the subsequent understanding that we can see with regard to the Papacy. The basic facts are these:

1. Peter is prepared and instructed by the Holy Spirit to render an important decision that would affect the whole church.
2. The fact that Peter is chosen to render this decision is in accord with what we have already seen. Peter has already been called to decide the important matter of the filling of the office of Judas. Further, it was he who worked the first miracles and preached the first homilies. It was he who represented the Church before the Sanhedrin. Now again Peter is shown in his leadership role in the most significant to effect the Church thus far.
3. After Peter is prepared by the Spirit he is called to Joppa where he is asked to decide. He does decide and indicated that the Gentiles who fear the Lord are pleasing to him. Then, as if by an audio-visual aide, the Holy Spirit moves these Gentiles to speak in tongues.
4. Peter commands that they be baptized.
5. Some of the other disciples who were not present for the baptism were shocked to hear that this had been done. Nevertheless, Peter explained the matter to them and they are submitted to it and glorify God when they hear that the Holy Spirit has gone forth to the Gentiles.
6. This whole scene is very Papal to Catholic eyes. Peter renders a decision, aided by the Holy Spirit and the whole Church is bound by it. Today as well, it is held that the Pope is gifted by the Holy Spirit to lead and govern the Church and to render decisions to which the whole Church is bound. Likewise, just as Peter teaches here, so does the Pope.
7. Papal infallibility is not based upon the brilliance of the Man. Rather, it is based on the power of the Holy Spirit. It is Catholic Teaching that the Pope is graced for his office of teaching and governing by the Holy Spirit. A simplistic notion of how this infallibility is exercised must be avoided. The Pope does not arise in the morning and simply say, "I Think I'll decide a few matters infallibly today." Infallibility extends to solemn teachings proclaimed by the Pope to be binding on all the faithful. This is not exercised in a vacuum. The Pope consults widely with the world bishops. Further, he appeals to scripture and tradition and cannot act contrary to them. As Peter was obliged to listen to the Holy Spirit, so does the Pope have this solemn obligation. He hears this voice through prayer, consultation, tradition and scripture. More can be said of all this in class. But let this point be reiterated: Papal authority and infallibility are seen in their seminal form at work here in Acts 10.
8. Some protestants will want to underscore the disagreement engendered by this decision. The disciples are not immediately mollified when they hear what has been done just because they know Peter has done it. They want an explanation. This point is granted. However, there is no indication given that they are able to overthrow Peter's decision. Even today, some of the Pope's decisions are controversial and debated. People also want explanations to certain Papal teaching. However, none of this friction

equates to a notion that his decisions are not binding or can be ignored. If one really declares this to be the case and moves forward in disobedience that may well be excommunicated (e.g. Marcel Lefevbre). One of the reasons that there is a lot of squabbling over Papal decisions is the sense that his decisions are supreme and binding.

- M. ***to hear what you have to say*** - note that Cornelius, even though an angel has spoken to him, does not presume to tell Peter what he must do. He merely ask to see Peter to hear what he has to say on this matter. he decision is Peter's. Later, when they meet, face to face Cornelius is confident that the Holy Spirit works through Peter since he says: ***we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.*** This is an important insight into the role of Peter. He is not a free agent. He is under God's authority. This has been clear from the start of this story. Peter is told by the Holy Spirit what he must do. This again is a Catholic understanding the papacy. The Pope is not free to nullify divine Law or the scriptures. The Pope is a man under God's authority. Note too how Cornelius does not tell Peter what he has been commanded; that is for Peter to declare.
- N. **Ecclesiology** is a word that refers to a theology of the Church. In other words what is the nature and purpose of the Church according to God's plan. Note again how a Catholic ecclesiology is present in this passage. Cornelius never presumes to take matters into his own hands. Further, he does not even turn to a local Christian to resolve the matter. Rather, he sends for Peter even though Peter is in another town. He does this as instructed by the angel. Thus, it is God's plan for the Church that matters of this importance not be handled merely by personal decision or even local decision by the official Church. Peter is the leader of the Christian community and it is he whom God orders to be consulted. This is all very Catholic and emphatically antithetical to the Protestant teaching of the sovereignty of the individual conscience as directed by the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit were to guide every individual on every matter then why is it directed that Peter be consulted? What's the point? Thus the Catholic ecclesiology prevails in this passage: the Spirit works through the Church (not merely the individual) in a hierarchical fashion.
- O. ***When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man."*** - Some commentators suggest that this gesture by Cornelius was the ordinary reverence done toward a superior in oriental cultures. However, Peter's reaction and response seem to suggest Cornelius had more in mind. Peter rightfully resists any confusion of his status as godlike. Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:15 will encounter the same confused response. When the power of God works through a man there are always some who piously though erroneously mistake the messenger for the one proclaimed.
- P. ***God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean*** - "Unclean" here refers to ritual impurity not to the impurity of original and person sin for which baptism (washing with water) is required. We discussed above the importance of the prior instruction Peter received as part of the office of the Papacy. Now we see that Peter has responded to the teaching and is exercising his

teaching authority. The authority comes from the grace he has received from God. The bottom line of the teaching is that Jews and Gentiles are of equal dignity. Every human being is created by God and by that very fact is acceptable to God and invited to the life of grace. Now this is something new. Jews had not, up until this point thought this way. They knew that all people were created by God, but so what. The Jews were chosen and others were not. Peter has been instructed that this distinction is false and not of God. In the New Covenant, all are invited and called to faith. But Peter does not exactly apply the insight to the question of joining the faithful. Rather he applies it to the fact that he is in the company of Gentiles. There are a couple of steps before the implications of the teaching "no man is common or unclean" is applied to the question of baptism.

- Q. *I ask then why you sent for me.* - This question sets the stage for the speech of Peter to follow. Now this whole dialogue to follow is a bit oblique. The question and answer are never straight to the point. Cornelius is expected to ask something like this: "I reverence God and keep his commandments. I request baptism. What is to keep me from being baptized?" Then Peter would answer, "Fine, it has been revealed to me that this is right and pleasing to God, come to the water..." But this is not the way it happens. There is a roundabout logic at work here. Why? This is common in gospels as well. For example in Luke 7:19-23 John the Baptist sends disciples to ask a direct question of Jesus: "Are you he who is to come or do we look for another?" Jesus does not give a simple "yes" for an answer but says, Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind see again; the lame walk; lepers are cleansed; and the deaf hear..." Again, why not a simple yes or no? The reason is that questions provide an opportunity for teaching. A simple yes or no can short circuit the whole teaching process. Thus Jesus does not simply say Yes but also teaches how he is fulfilling prophecy. Thus the teachable moment is maximized. He not only shows that he is the Messiah but how he is and recalls the true nature of the messiah. This seems to be the same technique at work here in Acts. Peter (and Luke) is not just answering a question, he is teaching. Gentiles are acceptable, but why and what are some of the implications of this teaching.
- R. Peter's discourse (10:34-43) Peter's sermon is a basic summary of the Gospel. Again, he is not directly answering Cornelius' concern but is setting the stage for the answer. More importantly he is calling Cornelius et al. to faith much as we do today in the baptismal ritual when we question those about to be baptized using the creed. Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth? and they are to respond, "I do" and we proceed thorough the rest of the creed in a similar Q and A format. Those to be baptized must declare their faith. This seems to be what Peter does here. Again what would later develop into a specific format is seen here in seminal form. What Peter does is also important since he must know the faith that Cornelius has. Cornelius, up to this point has been described as a pious God-Fearer who follows the tenets of the Jewish faith. This does not mean he knows the Lord Jesus or has faith in him as the Messiah and savior. Hence Peter instructs in the Christian faith and thereby calls Cornelius to that faith. Peter says all this to Cornelius et. al because *God shows no partiality*. Thus, the preaching and teaching is done because Peter has been instructed that all are called. If all were not called, why bother proclaiming the

teaching to them? But, because all are called, the good news are proclaimed.

- S. ***While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word*** - God sends a sign that all perceive at the end of Peter's speech. Nevertheless, spirits must be discerned and so it will still fall to Peter to discern and declare what must be done based on the discernment and the obedience of faith. This whole scene obviously recalls the outpouring of the Holy Spirit back in Chapter 2. Here is a Pentecost for Gentiles.
- T. ***Then Peter declared, "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*** - Here then is the decision. Peter has been prepared for this moment, sent to teach, and finally to act in obedience to the faith. He will declare in Chapter 11 just how this is an act of obedience to the teaching of God given him: ***who was I that I could withstand God?***
- U. There is a question raised by this whole sequence. Catholic theology generally limits the presence of the Holy Spirit to the baptized only. How can the unbaptized receive the Holy Spirit? There are two answers to propose here:
1. Although the Church is bound by the sacraments God is not. Thus the Church cannot confirm or give Holy Communion unless a person is first baptized we cannot say God has his hands tied! Nevertheless, it is usually not presumed that God sets aside the necessity of baptism. It is still a possible explanation here.
 2. There is an action of the Holy Spirit upon the unbaptized known as prevenient grace. This grace and action of the Holy Spirit draws an individual to Christ and makes them open and receptive to the faith. We do not go to Christ he comes to us. *It was not you who chose me it was I who chose you.* This is done through the Holy Spirit. However, prevenient grace does not generally manifest itself through the charisms we see here such as speaking in tongues. Hence this is not a clear example of prevenient grace.
 3. The final solution to the problem is simply to admit that we cannot always project later theological structures perfectly back upon the scriptures which do not represent a systematic theology but proclaim the glory of God. Luke's point is not to present a treatise on the order and administration of the sacraments, it is to show the action of God in the early Church. We do in fact see the sacraments at work in the early Church through Acts. However, most of the teachings about them and other truths are presented, as we have already discussed, in a seminal form. The seed does not look like the tree. Nevertheless, all that the tree will become is in that seed in a mysterious but real way.

XI. *{11:1} Now the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. {2} So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, {3} saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?" {4} But Peter began and explained to them in order: {5} "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, something descending, like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came down to me. {6} Looking at it closely I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. {7} And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' {8} But I said, 'No, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' {9} But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' {10} This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. {11} At that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. {12} And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brethren also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. {13} And he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon called Peter; {14} he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' {15} As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. {16} And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' {17} If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" {18} When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life." {19} Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none except Jews. {20} But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. {21} And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord. {22} News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. {23} When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose; {24} for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord. {25} So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul; {26} and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company of people; and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians. {27} Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. {28} And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world; and this took place in the days of Claudius. {29} And the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea; {30} and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*

- A. Outline:
1. Reaction and review vv. 1-18
 2. Response
 - a. Exclusion - v. 19
 - b. Evangelization - v. 20

- c. Expansion - vv. 21-14
- d. Expounding - vv. 25-26a
- e. Expression - v. 26b
- f. Exemplification - vv. 27-30

- B. ***the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea*** - Luke makes a deliberate distinction between this group and ***the circumcision [in Jerusalem] party [who] criticized him***. The distinction is significant because it implies that the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem and the ordinary believers had no problem with the conversion and baptism of Cornelius. Rather it was only a specific group within the Church (the circumcision party that had a problem with the whole matter. (Actually this is partially an argument from silence since the exact reaction of "the apostles and the brethren" is not described. However, since Luke does describe the reaction of the circumcision party as negative it is inferred that this first group was untroubled).
- C. ***"Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?"*** The question strikes us odd since the real question seems to be "Why did you baptize Gentiles?" The question however is a ritual one. It is not simply a question of eating a meal. Meal were not merely a consuming of food as is usual in the modern secularized setting. Rather, there is a spiritual dimension as well (which is carried over in the modern practice still done by some of saying grace before meals). The sting of the charge, then, is the ancient symbolism of table fellowship. To eat with someone was to share with them spiritually as well. By implication, to eat with Gentiles is to collude in idolatry. This charge was levelled against Jesus as well showing once again how what happened to the Lord happens to his faithful followers. Remember that this is a basic Lucan theme in Acts: The Church imitates Christ and is his mystical body. What happened to Christ, happens to his Church. What happens to the head, happens to the body as well. It is fruitful to read the charge against the Lord which was levelled in Luke 15 and see the response: *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* Note then how the charge is levelled, the answer is given and the proper response is joy. We shall see a similar pattern in what is to follow here in Acts: the charge is made, the answer given, and joy is the proper response.
- D. ***the Spirit told me to go with them*** - Peter indicates that he is under the authority

of God and must do what he is instructed.

- E. ***making no distinction*** - God's instruction is that the ancient and absolute distinction between Jews and Gentiles no longer applies. To Jewish ears this must have seemed stunning.
- F. ***Send to Joppa and bring Simon called Peter; {14} he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household*** - this is an additional detail that we have not yet heard. Back in 10:5-6 it was merely recorded that Cornelius was instructed to send to Joppa for Peter. It was not explained exactly why or what he would do. Now we learn that Cornelius actually did have a bit more detail in the instruction. Although Luke did not give the detail there, it is recorded here since it is more important. The matter under consideration is whether the Gentiles are called to baptism and salvation. This additional testimony of the Angel is added to Peter's own testimony of the Word from the Holy Spirit and thus Peter builds his case and sets forth the reason for his decision.
- G. ***a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' {15} As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them*** - Faith comes by hearing. It is a very important matter to recall the dialogue of faith. Frequently today faith is reduced to a personal matter "between me and Jesus." But this is not how faith is received. Note how Cornelius, even despite the personal contacts from an angel must be submitted to the preaching and ministrations of the Church. He receives "the message" and the faith by which he is saved through the Church. This is the Biblical model for a life of faith. Just as the origins of our faith and its saving message are communicated by God through the mediation of the Church, so too should the life of faith be lived in on-going dialogue with and under the authority of the Church. God did not merely say to Cornelius "C, I think you're a great guy, I see your love and desire; so stand by while I send the Holy Spirit." Rather, God said to Cornelius through the Angel, "Send for the Church."
- H. ***the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning*** - The Greek word *hosper* is emphatic. Peter is concerned to show the identity of these believers with that of the original witnesses. This will be basis for asserting their equality of membership in the community.
- I. ***God gave them the same gift*** - the equality of the gift is the key point here. God, whose initiative this is, has given the same gift to Jew and Gentile. It is the gift faith through baptism that establishes membership in the Church. Hence there is no room for discrimination in the Church based on ethnic origin.
- J. ***Who was I that I could withstand God?*** - Peter is under God's authority. This too reflects the Catholic understanding of the Papacy. The Pope is not his own man. He is not free just to do as he pleases. He is under the authority of our Lord and God Jesus Christ. He must do the will of God. Thus Popes are bound by the Scriptures, Sacred Tradition, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. All of this we have seen here with Peter. Peter is guided by the Holy Spirit to do what he must do. He recalls the tradition: what John the Baptist had said and Jesus reaffirmed (in Acts 1:5), and what happened on the day of Pentecost and is bound by what they testify. Clearly he must interpret them however and discern. This he does by the grace of the Holy Spirit and he acts. Hereafter, all are bound by his decision

including he himself. This is all a very proper Catholic understanding of the Pope and how he exercises his authority.

- K. ***When they heard this, they were silenced. And they glorified God*** - the Greek word is *hesychazo* which more literally says that they grew silent. Here again we see an example of the obedience of faith. When Peter makes an authoritative answer to their concerns they give not only assent of mind but also of heart. This too Catholics are called to do with the Pope. To frequently there has been the problem of dissent from Papal authority in the Church. The Biblical principal given here however calls for assent. When the Pope rules on matters of faith and morals the faithful are called to give free and full assent to that decision. This is what we see happen here in Acts and we shall see it again. The faithful are free to ask for explanations and clarifications but when these are given differences must be set aside and the obedience of faith called forth.
- L. Even though we see assent given here there will still be some implications of the Gentile/Jew alliance to be worked out. The whole issue will be revisited with solemnity in Chapter 15. Further, we see throughout Paul's epistles that it is a recurring theme.
- M. ***Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.*** - As has already been said, this was a startling and difficult things for many Jews to accept. They were well aware of their status as the chosen people. They found such mixing with Gentiles awkward and difficult. Nevertheless, this must not be seen as a radical departure from God's plan even as announced in the Old Testament. Many of these Jews needed to recall their own Scriptures wherein God promises that his salvation would go forth unto the Gentiles. Consider the following passages.
1. Isaiah 56:1-8 (RSV) *Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed. {2} Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil." {3} Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." {4} For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, {5} I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off. {6} "And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant -- {7} these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. {8} Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered."*
- N. The Mission at Antioch (11:19-30) This section picks up the story we left back in 8:1-4. The Church had been scattered abroad due to the persecution that broke out

after the stoning of Stephen. We saw that many seem to have returned to Jerusalem. Nevertheless some stayed in the diaspora and continued missionary work. Luke purpose in picking up the story here seems to be to build a bridge connecting Barnabas and Saul.

- O. ***Phoenicia*** - the area to the far north which includes the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Most ancient authorities included the cities of Joppa and Caesarea within this territory. Hence, Philip and Peter have already made inroads into this territory. Now Barnabas and others continue to push North. Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean tucked under Asia Minor to the North and West of Tyre and Sidon.
- P. ***Antioch*** - This Syrian city will play a major role in the rest of Acts. It was a Major city. Josephus called it "third among the cities of the Roman world." (After Rome and Alexandria). There may have been as many as 800,000 living in Antioch. The city was renowned for its many splendid buildings. It was a center of learning and also had a sizable Jewish population. The city was an important base for Paul and Barnabas in their early missionary work.
- Q. ***Cyrene*** - the chief city of Cyrenica (Modern Libya) in North Africa. It was a Greek colony and had a large Jewish population. This was the city of Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry his cross. We will also meet Lucius of Cyrene in Chapter 13 who will be one of the prophets teachers and missionaries in Antioch.
- R. ***Barnabas*** - We met Barnabas back in 4:36 as one who sold his property and gave the proceeds to the Apostles. Later, Barnabas persuaded the disciples at Jerusalem to accept Paul (9:27). Now He is sent to investigate the state of the Church in Antioch. He will continue to figure prominently in the activities ahead.
- S. ***Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul*** - Saul had been secreted back to his home in Tarsus after the altercation with the Hellenists in Jerusalem (9:30). Now for the second time Barnabas acts as Saul's patron. Now he brings him to Antioch where, for one year they teach profitably there. Barnabas seems to have needed Saul due to the large numbers of converts there.
- T. ***in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians.*** - here is a turning point and a memorable verse. It is interesting that the name seems to originate from those who were not Christians. This is the implications in the use of the passive. They were called Christians (i.e. followers of the *Chrestos* "the anointed one"). They did not call themselves this but the name stuck and prevailed over other possibilities such as "nazorens."
- U. ***Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world*** - this whole occurrence seems a little strange perhaps exotic. But the upshot of the whole matter is that it ends in Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem with the collection. In other words it gets Saul and Barnabas there and thus the event serves as an event to close this scene in Antioch. There are two questions that arise concerning this event
 1. There seems to be little if any historical evidence that there was a famine during the reign of Claudius. Some have tried to resolve the matter by question the extent of the words "over all the world." But the bottom line is that there is no corroborating evidence for such a famine. The fact the collection was brought to Jerusalem could indicate that the famine was more localized that "the whole world." The fact that there is no extra-

biblical evidence does not mean that no famine occurred, it just means that it was not recorded explicitly in secular sources. Thus, the argument from silence should not seem too devastating.

2. Is this collection in any way related to the collection that Paul mentions in his letters. He took a collection for the "saints in Jerusalem and mentions it in several of his letters. It seems that the two collections are not related since the collection Paul took up was delivered years later at the end of his own ministry. Nevertheless, some commentators see some links. Their arguments seem unconvincing.

XII. Herod's persecution and death (12:1-23) *About that time Herod the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. {2} He killed James the brother of John with the sword; {3} and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. {4} And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. {5} So Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. {6} The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; {7} and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. {8} And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your mantle around you and follow me." {9} And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. {10} When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him. {11} And Peter came to himself, and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." {12} When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. {13} And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. {14} Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate. {15} They said to her, "You are mad." But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel!" {16} But Peter continued knocking; and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. {17} But motioning 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, "Tell this to James and to the brethren." Then he departed and went to another place. {18} Now when day came, there was no small stir among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. {19} And when Herod had sought for him and could not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and remained there. {20} Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and they came to him in a body, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. {21} On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and made an oration to them. {22} And the people shouted, "The voice of a god, and not of man!" {23} Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God grew and multiplied. {25} And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, bringing with them John whose other name was Mark.*

A. Outline -

1. Persecution - vv. 1-3
2. Prison - vv. 4-5a
3. Prayer - v. 5b
4. Protection - vv. 6-11
5. Presentation - vv. 12-17
6. Perturbance - vv. 18-19
7. Perversion - vv. 20-23
8. Propagation - v. 24
9. Preparation - v. 25

B. We are coming to a bridge in the story. In future chapters, Luke is going to focus almost exclusively on the missionary activity of Paul. Up to this point Peter has

been the primary focus to the extent that the first twelve chapters might be called The Acts of Peter. This story in this chapter in addition to its own historical value provides Luke with the ability to rearrange his characters. James the brother of John is killed by Herod. This death is passed over quickly but it allows the other James to step to the fore. He will take over the reigns at the Church in Jerusalem as Peter goes forth, (presumably to Antioch and then eventually to Rome). Luke also introduces John-Mark who will figure prominently with Barnabas and Paul in the beginning of the missionary activity. Hence, in the dramatic sense, the curtain is closed on the main stage while the scenery is rearranged. Meanwhile this story takes place in the front of the stage and serves as a bridge to what will begin when the curtain re-opens.

- C. **Herod** - This is the third Herod to enter the narrative. The first was Herod the Great (back in Luke 1:5) who was ruling at the time of Jesus' birth. The second was Herod the Tetrarch who ruled during the time of Jesus' public ministry and death. This Herod is Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great. Herod the Great was "king of the Jews" although he was only half Jewish at best. This was a title he received from the Romans and conferred upon himself. He was hated by most Jews since he was heterodox in his worship of false Gods (even though he kept many external Jewish laws and feasts) and was allied with the hated Romans. Further he was ruthless in many aspects of his rule. In many ways Herod the Great was a paradoxical man. He could be very compassionate. He was very generous in his outreach after an earthquake in 31 BC killed 30,000 people and destroyed many buildings. He rebuilt many cities on a grand scale. Nevertheless he was murderous and ruthless. He killed a substantial portion of his own family and in-laws out of fear that they might have designs on his throne. It was also he, who ordered the slaughter of all the Male children under 2 in the region near Bethlehem. Given all the in-fighting in his family he divided his kingdom upon his death between three sons: Archelaus, Antipas, and Philip. Upon Philip's death, Herod Agrippa succeeded him by order of Caligula, Emperor of Rome. He gradually acquired the rest of the territory back that had been divided. Now here we see him attempting to suppress the Christian sect, partly out of political expediency partly out of his zeal for the Law, even though he lived in a Hellenistic manner, not under Jewish Law!
- D. **James the brother of John** - One of the first followers of Jesus (Luke 5:10) and one of the 12 Apostles. His death signals the end of a short period of tranquillity enjoyed by the Church in Jerusalem after the persecution and death of Stephen. James was particularly close to the Lord among the 12 as can be seen in the following passages
1. Luke 8:51 *And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.*
 2. Luke 9:28 *Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter, James, and John and went up on the mountain to pray.*
- E. **it [the killing of James] pleased the Jews** - The reason lies probably not only in the killing but also in the means of the execution. Beheading was a very shameful way to die. It was reserved for murderers and apostates. It was perceived as a

gesture of solidarity then of Herod with the people on theological grounds. The historian Josephus indicates that Herod's sympathies were with the Pharisaic party of the Jews.

- F. ***he proceeded to arrest Peter also*** - Luke makes it clear that Herod does this especially with political favor in mind. He sought to please the Jews by what he did. However, it also seems he had some theological leanings which also inclined him to this action. Nevertheless, since he vacillated between Jewish Laws and Hellenistic practices it is hard to argue that it was only in zeal for the Law that he did this.
- G. ***four squads of soldiers to guard him,*** - Herod uses a lot of force here. But he may recall the "escape" of Jesus from another guard. Further, he may recall Herod Antipas' dealings with John and how he later thought that Jesus was J.B. redivivus. Lastly, he is probably concerned with any unrest or trouble among Christians and Jews over them matter.
- H. ***earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.*** - given all the security there was little the Church could do to "spring him." Or was there? Prayer is not an ineffective means and we see that it works. The Greek word *ektenos* denotes eagerness and earnestness. Hence the image of prayer here is not of a passing prayer but of an on-going and fervent prayer.
- I. ***Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison*** - the elaborate description of the security makes the escape all the more wondrous. For the escape to have been made by human agency would have required quite a conspiracy among the guards! Hence, the divine agency of the act is underscored.
- J. ***and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell*** the appearance is described as sudden and startling which is always the case with angelic appearances.
- K. ***he struck Peter on the side and woke him*** - the verb struck (*patasso*) is somewhat odd here. But at the end of this section we will raise this phrase again to try to show how it might not be so strange. This will also be the case with the command of the angel to Peter: ***Get up!*** (more literally, Rise!) which is likely a careful choice of words.
- L. ***thought he was seeing a vision*** - the whole sequence to follow does has a dreamlike quality and Luke emphasizes this. But the results are very real!
- M. ***the iron gate...It opened to them of its own accord*** - the Greek word here is *automatos* - the Gate swings open spontaneously. The fact that the gates are made of iron makes the whole thing all the more wondrous.
- N. ***the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting*** - Luke reminds us that it is not Herod only who is the antagonist here. Rather "the Jews" are. Herod and the Jews are linked together. But we must be careful. This use of the phrase, "the Jews" is not to be understood as a condemnation of all Jews. Rather the polemic is directed against those who fail to accept the Lord and who persecute Christians. The same term is used in the Gospel of John. Remember that many Jews did accept the Lord. All the Apostles were Jews. The Mother of Jesus was a Jew and Jesus himself was a Jew. It is not possible for a Christian to reject the Jewish people as a whole and to avoid rejecting Jesus and the whole

community of the first Christians. Jews must be understood here to mean those who reject and persecute the Church. It is not co-extensive with the whole Jewish people.

- O. ***he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark*** - John-Mark becomes an important though contentious figure in the narrative to follow. He joins with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey but is not entirely up to the whole task. Barnabas and Saul differ on how to regard John-Mark and their differences become severe enough that they decide to part company! There is considerable evidence that this John-Mark later became the secretary of Peter and that it is he who wrote the first Gospel that, since he was Peter's secretary the Gospel of Mark is actually the Gospel of Peter. It also appears that Paul was later reconciled with Mark and even calls him useful. This description is important since it directly undoes the criticisms of Paul here in Acts wherein Paul considers him useless. The weak point of all these theories about John-Mark is that Mark was a very common name in Greek. Thus we are not always sure that other references to Mark are referring to the same man. Nevertheless here are a few references to Mark from other places in the scriptures.
1. Acts 15:37-39 *And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. {38} But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. {39} And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*
 2. Colossians 4:10 *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions -- if he comes to you, receive him),*
 3. 2 Timothy 4:11 *Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me.*
 4. 1 Peter 5:13 *She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends*
- P. ***Tell this to James and to the brethren*** - This basically confirms that there has been some transfer of leadership in the Jerusalem. Peter indicates that James is to be told. All of this does not mean Peter has been replaced as the leader of the universal Church but only that the local Church in Jerusalem is now presided over by James. This would follow from the fact that Peter is now moving among the Churches and confirming the brethren in those places. We have already seen him in Samaria, Joppa, and Caesarea. Thus, James has apparently been appointed direct oversight of the Church at Jerusalem. This would be implied by Peter's directive that James be notified. We shall see later (in 15) that Peter retains authority over James since we will see that Peter makes a decision about the disciplines of Gentile converts (over which Peter & James had disagreed). Nevertheless When Peter decided formally what must be done, James deferred and was submitted to the decision.
- Q. **Parallels** - We have seen before how one of Luke's basic themes is to show how what happens to Christ happens to his mystical body the Church. The story of our Lord is the story of the Church in general and of specific Christians as well. This

whole story of Peter illustrates this fact very thoroughly. Consider the following parallels.

1. Like Jesus, Peter was imprisoned at the time of the passover (Lk 22:1; Acts 12:2)
2. King Herod had a role in the event (Lk 23:6-12; Acts 12:1)
3. Both Peter and Jesus are arrested Lk (22:54; Acts 12:3)
4. Both are delivered over (Lk 23:25; 24:7; Acts 12:4)
5. Both are led forth (Lk 23:1,26; Acts 12:4)
6. Both have their sides struck.
7. Jesus rises from the dead and the event is announced by two angels who announce the event to the women (Lk 24:23). Peter, obviously does not rise from the dead but is led forth by the angel who says to Peter "Arise!" (Acts 12:7)
8. The women's testimony is rejected as crazy (Lk 24:11). Mary the Mother of John Mark announces that Peter is standing at the gate and she too is called crazy (Acts 12:15).
9. When the Apostles saw the Lord some cried, It is a Ghost! (Lk 24:37) When the disciples behold Peter some declare he is an angel (Acts 12:15)
10. As Jesus told the women to go to the apostles so Does Peter declare these things to James and the brethren.

R. ***Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon*** This whole next section seems to have nothing to do with the section on Peter's escape. True enough Herod was angry with the soldiers for that escape but his anger with the people of Tyre and Sidon is over some other unknown matter. Luke brings it up to indicate the manner of Herod's death. The quarrel between Herod and the people of Tyre and Sidon was a serious matter for those people. They depended on Herod for at least two things: food and supplies and import/export business. If Herod interfered with either of these matters, they could be in a world of hurt. Thus, whatever the matter was, the people in effect sued for peace. The King's chamberlain Blastus, was contacted. He arranged an audience with Herod whereby Herod would visit the area to settle the matter in a summit. He ends up dying suddenly. Luke gives little detail. However, the historian, Josephus describes that, on the second day of the summit, Herod, who had been feeling quite ill all week, entered the gathering. He was clothed in beautiful garments of gold and silver which reflected the sun with a shimmer. The people, politically astute addressed him as a god, based on this vision. But Herod did not rebuke such a claim as he ought to have and so God struck him. Whatever illness Herod contracted Luke we do not know. However as Luke describes it, it must have included a gangrenous condition which produced maggots (or worms as Luke calls them). Thus, Herod died a terrible and gruesome death. Luke's point in telling of the death is undoubtedly the final triumph of God and his faithful and the horrible end of His enemies: Their lot will be a fiery pool where the worm dies not.

S. Summary (12:24-25) The triumph in this description is particularly evident in the whole setting of the terrible end of Herod. The world passes away but the Word of the Lord remains forever.

T. See the remarks about John Mark above.

XIII. Chapter 13 - The First Missionary Journey *Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. {2} While 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." {3} Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. {4} So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus. {5} When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. {6} When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus. {7} He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. {8} But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith. {9} But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him {10} and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? {11} And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. {12} Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. {13} Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphylia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem; {14} but they passed on from Perga and came to Antioch of Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. {15} After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." {16} So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen. {17} The 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. {18} And for about forty years he bore with them in the wilderness. {19} And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years. {20} And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. {21} Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. {22} And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king; of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' {23} Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised. {24} Before his coming John had preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. {25} And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.' {26} "Brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation. {27} For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning him. {28} Though they could charge him with nothing deserving death, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed. {29} And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb. {30} But God raised him from the dead; {31} and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. {32} And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, {33} this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee.' {34} And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he spoke in this way, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' {35} Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption.' {36} For David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers,*

and saw corruption; {37} but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. {38} Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, {39} and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. {40} Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets: {41} 'Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you.'" {42} As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath. {43} And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. {44} The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God. {45} But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted what was spoken by Paul, and reviled him. {46} And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. {47} For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'" {48} And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. {49} And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region. {50} But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. {51} But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium. {52} And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

- A. Outline - 1st Missionary Journey
1. Commissioning vv. 1-5
 2. Cyprus vv. 4-12
 - a. Reception - vv. 4-7
 - b. Resistance - v. 8
 - c. Rebuke - vv. 9-11
 - d. Reform - v. 12
 3. Cities of Asia Minor
 - a. Perga - v. 13
 - b. Pisidian Antioch - vv. 14-52
 - (1) Place - vv. 14-15
 - (2) Proclamation - vv. 16-44
 - (3) Pettiness - v. 45
 - (4) Persistence - vv. 46-47
 - (5) Praise - v. 48
 - (6) Propagation - v. 49
 - (7) Persecution - v. 50
 - (8) Procession - v. 51
 - (9) Perspective - v. 52

- B. **Antioch** - This Syrian city will play a major role in the rest of Acts. It was a Major city. Josephus called it "third among the cities of the Roman world." (After Rome and Alexandria). There may have been as many as 800,000 living in Antioch. The city was renowned for its many splendid buildings. It was a center of learning and also had a sizable Jewish population. The city will be an important base for Paul and Barnabas in their early missionary work.
- C. **prophets** - these were charismatic members of local churches who wander about making predictions. Paul recognized them as possessing an important charism. (1 Cor 12:28-29; I Cor 14:29, 32, 37; Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11)
- D. **teacher** - probably what we mean by the term catechist today.
1. In the early Church the office of prophet and teacher seem to have been more formalized as an office. Later they disappear from descriptions of Church ministries and tend to be more associated with Bishops, priest and deacons. For example consider this text from the Didache (C.A. 90-110 AD) and see how the two are still considered separately but are already beginning to merge: *Elect for yourselves, therefore,⁵ bishops and deacons, worthy of the Lord, humble men and not lovers of money, truthful and proven; for they also serve you in the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Do not despise them for they are your honorable men together with the prophets and teachers.*⁶ This all helps give us some understanding of the office of prophet and teacher. Why the office disappeared in the early Church is not entirely known but one explanation is that it become more and more synonymous with the clerical offices and is simply conflated with them.
- E. **Simeon who was called Niger** - Niger means black and this bespeaks his African origins. Back in 11:19 we heard that certain men came from Cyprus and Cyrene to Antioch. Perhaps here Luke is being more specific. Simeon is likely from Cyrene which is an African Territory. This would also present him as a likely candidate to be the same person as Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry his Cross (Luke 23:26). Based on this connection many scholars would therefore hold that the Simon who helped Jesus carry his cross was a black African and is the same Simeon (Simon) we have here. The whole matter is a bit speculative but it is not at all unlikely.
- F. **Lucius the Cyrenian** - Nothing more is known of this prophet/teacher unless he is the same Lucius identified in Rom 16:21 as one of Paul's companions. His place of origin is North Africa and he is connected to the group that founded the Christian community at Antioch.
- G. **worshipping the Lord and fasting** - The Greek word for worshipping is *Leitourgeo* from which we get the word Liturgy. Originally the Greek word was expansive to include general civic duties and functions of the citizens. However,

⁵The therefore here links this passage with the discussion that went before it and that discussion concerned the mandate to celebrate the Eucharist. Hence, with this context Bishops and deacons are mentioned together with the prophets and teachers. The context of these offices seem to be essential liturgical and thus clerical.

⁶Didache 15:1.

in the religious context it came to connote more specifically religious observances and services. It may refer just to prayer in general but it is likely more formal than that and may well refer to the celebration of the Eucharist. This is because other early documents (e.g. the Didache 15:1) tend to use it for more formal acts involving Bishops, priests and deacons.

- H. ***they laid their hands on them and sent them off.*** - We have seen in Acts how this gesture is the sign of transmitting power or authority. In modern language this is called ordination. In the Creed we declare that the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. To say the Church is Apostolic is to indicate that it traces its origin and pedigree right back to the Apostles through the laying on of hands. The Apostles laid hands upon their successors and thereby conferred the power and authority they received from the Lord. These men in turn laid hands on others and thereby continued that power and authority. This laying on of hands has continued until this very day. And thus the Church is called apostolic. Only the Catholic Church can claim this for herself since the Protestant Churches specifically discarded this gesture and conferral. Further, no one can call himself to the office. One must be called by the Church. Notice what happens in this passage: ***the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*** Hence Barnabas and Saul did not claim this office for themselves nor did they grab authority for themselves. Rather, God called them. But Saul and Barnabas did not say, "See here, God has called us so now we have authority." Rather, the Church discerned their call through fasting & prayer and then laid hands upon them. Thus God is the giver of all ministries and gifts but the Church is called to discern all gifts and to confer to certain ministries. Although Paul strongly insists that he is an Apostle not by man but through Jesus Christ and that He received the Gospel directly from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:1, 12), it is nevertheless clear in Acts that he received his ministry from others through the laying on of hands. It is also clear, as Paul even admits in Galatians (2:1ff) that he submitted his teaching to the authorities in Jerusalem. Paul is not a lone ranger. He is a minister of the Gospel and must submit himself to the faith of the Church and the authority of the Church. Hence, as we saw earlier in Acts he appears before Peter. As we shall see in two chapters he also appears at the Council in Jerusalem to have his teaching judged by Peter. Paul comes out a winner against the Judaizers but it is Peter who ultimately provides the authority for Paul's position. We shall see this more clearly when we get to Chapter 15.

- I. **The first missionary journey.** The first missionary journey began in the spring of the year 45 and ended almost four years later. The actual journey may be described as follows. (Consult map provided). At Seleucia (the port of Antioch) they embarked for Cyprus, the largest Island in the Mediterranean. They disembarked at Salamis the island's main port city. There they went to the Jewish synagogues on a series of Sabbaths. From here they crossed the island to Paphos which is on the extreme west of the island. This probably took several months because, there were many towns with Jewish communities between the two cities. We are told nothing of details of the evangelization done but there is indication that it was fruitful because Barnabas will later return to Cyprus to consolidate the work done

on this first mission. From Paphos they boarded a ship and travelled north to Attalia. After a few miles they reached Perga in Pamphylia, a barren, inhospitable region at the base of the Taurus mountains. Mark took leave of them here. They went to Pisidian Antioch but this meant a difficult journey of 100 miles through difficult mountain roads. This other Antioch was almost 4000 feet above sea level and was a busy commercial city with a sizeable Jewish community. Christianity planted here would spread along the trade routes. Paul encountered hostility from the Jews here so he turned to the Gentiles. Eventually they were expelled and they headed for Iconium about 80 miles to the southeast and stayed several months. Again they moved on after disturbances among Jews and Gentiles. They fled to the region of Lyconia to the minor cities of Lystra and Derbe. There were very few Jews in Lystra and no synagogue so Paul preached to the local people in the open air. But some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and they stoned Paul and left him for dead. Possibly with the help of Timothy (see 16:1) they managed to reach Derbe where they made many disciples and then set out for the journey home, retracing their steps through Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. On their way back through they confirmed the brethren in the faith and appointed priest and elders for each Church. They then went back to Pamphylia and Attalia where they took a ship for Antioch arriving well into the year 49 AD.

- J. ***they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews*** - It was the fixed practice of the missionary band to preach first in the Jewish synagogues. The fact that the Book of Moses (i.e. the First 5 books of the Bible) was no small factor in preparing the moral groundwork for the Christian message. For the Jewish people there was only the one Temple in Jerusalem and pious Jews tried to go there once a year. However, for their gatherings on the Sabbath they attended the synagogue (a word which simply means gathering). Here the Torah was proclaimed and preached. The service was not unlike the first part of our Mass - the liturgy of the Word. The scriptures were read and then one of the Rabbi's or community leaders commented upon it and applied it to the present. Paul may well have presented himself at these synagogues and been invited to preach. But they were in for a bit of a surprise as he proclaimed Christ! In this he caused much division and even provoked violent responses as we shall see.
- K. ***When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos*** - no small feat since the island was close to 100 miles wide. Although Luke does not mention that they visited other towns his phraseology certainly suggests that they visited other towns at least stopping on Sabbaths.
- L. The whole narrative seems a bit jumbled and truncated here. However here is a summary of the whole matter. Paphos was the seat of the Roman proconsul and it appears that he converted to the Christian faith for Luke indicates that this Jewish false-prophet, Bar-Jesus who is also called Elymas tried to turn him away from the faith. Elymas (Bar-Jesus) seems to have been both a court advisor and magician for the proconsul Sergius Paulus. Elymas was certainly concerned that if his patron, the proconsul received the faith his own services as magician and advisor would no longer be needed. Hence he directly withstands Paul. But Paul works a miracle of imposing a temporary blindness upon him. This creates

wonder and serves to strengthen the faith of the Proconsul Sergius. Here is an irony: Paul, who was himself blinded temporarily now inflicts the same upon another. Perhaps also to bring this magician to conversion? We don't know if the magician was converted but we do know that Sergius' faith was strengthened.

- M. ***a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus*** - it was not usual for Roman officials to have a magician (magos) as a court advisor. True magic at the time closely resembled what we call today philosophy and was considered a fit profession and worthy study although it was probably a bit more exotic than our modern notions of philosophers.
- N. ***Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence*** - Sergius was the administrator of the Roman province. Cyprus had been a Roman province since 22 AD. He is described as intelligent by Luke and one who sought to hear the word of God. This is our first encounter with a Roman official. As was noted at the beginning of these notes, Luke always describes these Roman officials as fair-minded even if most of them are not nearly as open to the Gospel as is Sergius Paulus.
- O. ***filled with the Holy Spirit*** - what Paul is about to say is not merely human anger but is divine righteousness, anger and justice.
- P. ***Saul, who is also called Paul*** - Here Luke introduces us to the name Paul which Saul will bear for the rest of Acts. It is not likely that anything but coincidence links his new name with that of proconsul Paulus. Perhaps the incident and similar names sparks Luke's memory? At any rate the name Paul is used from here on out. For Paul it is not likely anything new. He likely went by Saul in Jewish contexts but by Paul in contexts other than Jewish all along. Just as today we may have different forms to our name depending on the context. For example, among English speakers I am Charles. Among German speakers, I am Karl. Among Spanish, Carlos. Paulus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Saul.
- Q. ***You son of the devil*** - the magician's name is Bar-Jesus which literally means Son of Jesus: a most unhappy coincidence! Hence Paul reverses the name and calls him the son of the devil. Further, his connection with magic, a most sinister thing to Jews, connects him to the kingdom of darkness.
- R. ***will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?*** - a clear allusion to Isaiah 40:3-4 (The crooked ways shall be made straight) but also directly confronts Elymas who tries to "turn aside" Sergius from the faith.
- S. Pisidian Antioch (13:13-52) - This is an extremely important passage because it is the only full-length reproduction of a sermon by Paul that we possess. If it is compared with the sermon by Peter in Acts 2 the essential elements are exactly the same. Thus, we not only have a sample of Paul's preaching but also of the early Christian kerygma (preaching). Here are the basic elements of the sermon:
1. The consummation of history - the coming of Jesus is the consummation of all human history. The Stoic philosophy, common at the time, saw history as something that kept of repeating itself. But the Christian view of history is more optimistic. History is going somewhere according to the purpose of God. We need not cling to fatalistic thinking but see how God can and does break into our history in profound and salvific ways.
 2. The blindness of Men - despite God's decisive action, Man is frequently

blind to this work. This is because he is blinded by sin and pride. The misuse of freedom ends not in liberty but in ruin.

3. God triumph despite this - Although man in his stubbornness rejected and crucified Christ, God could not be defeated. The resurrection is the definitive proof that God can never be overcome by any device or sin of man.
 4. The true prophetic key is Jesus - The resurrection is the fulfillment of prophecies uttered to David but obviously not fulfilled in him. Only Jesus fulfills these prophecies: for David's body did see corruption. Jesus's body alone did not see corruption.
 5. There are two paths, fidelity and faithlessness. The path of fidelity is for those who obey the summons to faith in Christ Jesus. They know they have not been able to keep all the precepts of the Law perfectly and that they need forgiveness. They rejoice because Christ Jesus offers this. But those who reject the summons to faith go from bad to worse. This is because, although they have heard the Gospel and the summons to believe, they still reject it. Thus their condemnation is all the worse. To those who have been given much, much will be expected.
- T. ***Paphos...Perga of Pamphylia*** - The voyage goes northwest from the western end of Cyprus to the coast of Galatia (Present day Turkey) known also as Pamphylia
- U. ***Those with Paul*** - The focus seems now to have shifted to Paul as the leader and away from Barnabas.
- V. ***John separated...turned back*** - No reason for this is given. Yet, his action becomes a bone of contention that causes Paul and Barnabas to part ways later (15:37-39). The Greek verb (apochoreo) suggests something more than a simple return home. It can be used more in the sense of "separating oneself from." The use of the verb in the Greek Old Testament implies a turning back in cowardice (Jer 46:5) or even in apostasy!
- W. ***Antioch of Pisidia*** - the city was actually in Phrygia not Pisidia but the phrase is retained because of long usage.
- X. ***The synagogue on the Sabbath day*** - The setting mirrors Jesus' first discourses. See Luke 4:16-30. Luke tells us it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue and the same phrase is used later for Paul (Acts 17:2). It is a regular pattern for Paul to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath to preach Jesus. (13:42; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). In today's passage we see that what happened to Jesus in Luke 4 happens also to Paul. Paul and Jesus are both driven out of town. See again how Luke shows us a familiar pattern: what happens to Jesus happens to his mystical body. What happens to Jesus happens to his representatives for no servant is greater than his master. Consider some highlights from what happens to Jesus back in the Gospel. Luke 4:15ff *And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are*

oppressed, ...And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."...When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. But passing through the midst of them he went away. Again all this is very familiar to us who have just read the present account of Paul.

- Y. ***Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen*** - what is meant by the phrase "you who fear God" is a matter of some debate. Does Paul mean "God-Fearers" in the sense of Gentiles who kept all or part of the law? Sometimes individuals such as these we in some earshot of the synagogue service. Or is Paul simply using the phrase to reiterate the phrase "Men of Israel" as if to say "Men of Israel who fear God, Listen!" It is not absolutely clear but it is probably the first meaning since shortly enough the Gentiles will enter the scene.
- Z. Paul then goes on to summarize Jewish history along these lines.
- a. The call of Abraham (chose our fathers)
 - b. The Exodus and rescue from Egypt
 - c. The forty years in the wilderness
 - d. The inheritance and life on the land
 - e. The time of the Judges
 - f. The time of the Kings starting with Saul but emphasizing David
 - g. The promises and prophecies related to David and how they are in fact fulfilled in Christ.
2. Once he has finished the historical preaching Paul now goes on to indicate that the forgiveness of sin is offered through this Jesus (vv 38-41) and goes on to warn solemnly about the peril of unbelief. If they reject the gospel, the good News of salvation, it will pass them by and go to others.
3. There is a pause in the sermon and we are told that the sermon had its effects. (vv 42-43) Many begged to hear more. A week later almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God. But some of the Jews grew jealous and stirred up a riot against them.

XIV. The 1st Missionary Journey Continued *Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and so spoke that a great company believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. {2} But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. {3} So 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 by their hands. {4} But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. {5} When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to molest them and to stone them, they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; {7} and there they preached the gospel. {8} Now at Lystra there was a man sitting, who could not use his feet; he was a cripple from birth, who had never walked. {9} He listened to Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, {10} said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and walked. {11} And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" {12} Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, because he was the chief speaker, they called Hermes. {13} And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the people. {14} But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out among the multitude, crying, {15} "Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. {16} In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; {17} yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." {18} With these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. {19} But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium; and having persuaded the people, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. {20} But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city; and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. {21} When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, {22} strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. {23} And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed. {24} Then they passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia. {25} And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia; {26} and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. {27} And when they arrived, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. {28} And they remained no little time with the disciples.*

A. Paul and Barnabas go on to Iconium, about 90 miles to the east. Iconium was a city so ancient that no one could remember or describe its origins. As has been the case they go first to the synagogue and as usual enjoy some moderate success. But also as usual, their success in preaching the Gospel well stirs up the jealousy of their opponents who sought to kill them by siring up a mob to stone them. They

do escape but Paul will not be so lucky in the next town! The rising danger is due to the fact that Paul and Barnabas are entering very remote territory far from the influence of Roman law and order (Pax Romana). Further, the Phrygian people were a passionate people and easily stirred up by the enemies of the Gospel.

- B. ***the unbelieving Jews*** - the Greek word here translated as unbelieving is *apeitheo* and has the further connotation of being disobedient. The Greek version of the Old Testament the word is frequently used to describe the rebellion of the people against God. Hence those Jews (not all Jews) who reject the message of the Gospel are not just lacking in faith, they are disobedient to the Holy Spirit. Recall one of the basic themes we have emphasized (following Luke's own emphasis) is the obedience of faith. Faith is not just an intellectual exercise it is an obedience of the will which submits freely to all that is heard and commanded. Faith and obedience (though distinguishable) cannot be separated from each other, anymore than the yeast can be separated from the bread with a knife. The obedience of faith is a significant biblical theme and very much in need of stress today. Hence, we may consider the following other texts by way of a quick survey of this theme:
1. Romans 1:1-6 (RSV) *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ;*
 2. Romans 6:16-18 (RSV) *Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*
 3. Romans 16:25-28 (RSV) *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith -- to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.*
 4. 2 Corinthians 9:13 (RSV) *Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others;*
 5. 2 Corinthians 10:5-6 (RSV) *We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.*

6. 1 Peter 1:1-2 (RSV) *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*
 7. 1 Peter 1:22 (RSV) *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart.*
- C. ***poisoned their minds*** - every one needs to see the power of gossip and lies to poison the mind and make it "immune" to the truth. Cynicism, suspicion, lies, rumors, gossip, calumny, detraction and so many other sins of speech have a profound effect on the minds and hearts of all who partake of them. We must not kid ourselves, these sins poison the mind and can make the truth seem obnoxious or remote from one's experience. We must seek to take these sins more seriously than we frequently do. They are not light matters, they poison the mind.
- D. ***So they remained for a long time*** - The narrative logic is a bit obscure here. The reader expects something of this logic: Trouble was stirred up, so Paul and Barnabas beat it to the next town. Nevertheless, the emphasis seems to be on the courage of the two (so Luke describes them as "speaking boldly for the Lord"). Since there was trouble, they hung in there and persevered all the more in strengthening the new converts. Since these new converts would face hostilities they should be thoroughly instructed and encouraged in the faith so that they can answer their enemies and be able to render an account for the hope that is within them.
- E. ***the people of the city were divided;*** There are two things to say about division. In the first place, it is a work of the Devil. Our Lord prayed that all be one even as he and the Father were one. The word diabolical comes from a Greek root that means "to tear apart" or "to put asunder." Nevertheless, recognizing the reality of the devil's works and sinful human cooperation our Lord declared in Luke 12:51-53 *Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; for henceforth in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.*" In saying this our Lord does not give approval for such division but simply recognizes that, any time the truth is proclaimed there are people arrayed on both sides. The truth will be delightful to some and obnoxious to others. In this case, it is clear that the truth cannot be sacrificed for the sake of some sort of false unity (it would be false because real unity can only be based on the truth). Hence, our Lord recognizes a sad reality in a sinful world wherein the devil roams like a roaring lion seeking souls to devour. In effect our Lord tells us to have courage and not become bewildered at the opposition we experience when we proclaim the truth; such opposition is bound to happen. What happens to Paul and Barnabas has already happened throughout Acts and also happened to our Lord. The theme of division caused by the truth is a common one in the Gospel of John. Consider the following sample texts.

1. John 7:43-44 *So there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.*
 2. John 9:16 *Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them.*
 3. John 10:19 *There was again a division among the Jews because of these words (of Jesus).*
- F. The opposition and threats rise. Although the courage of the two has thus far been emphasized, there comes a point when prudence directs them to exit the scene. They flee to Lystra. There is a time for martyrdom but there is also a time for well ordered self love and a love for the Gospel wherein one preserves his life today to preach tomorrow. Which call is given (martyrdom or preservation) will depend on the circumstances. But here we see the words of our Lord in action, (Matthew 10:22-28) *...and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master; it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household. "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.* Hence they move off to Lystra. But they will not utterly forsake Iconium for some (in fact many) have received the Gospel of peace. Thus, on their way back they stop in again when things have cooled down (14:21) and appoint bishops and priests to govern and serve the Church there.
- G. Lystra (14:6-20a) - Lystra was a Roman colonial town. Timothy was born and grew up there (cf 16:1-2). Here at Lystra Paul and Barnabas were involved in a strange incident wherein they are mistaken for the gods Zeus and Hermes⁷. The background of the whole incident lies in the legendary history of the region Lycaonia. The people around Lystra knew of a moral tale that once Zeus and Hermes had come to the region in disguise. None in all the land would give them hospitality until at two old peasants Philemon and Baucis who were rewarded by being made guardians of a splendid temple and were turned into two great trees when they died. So when Paul healed the crippled man the people were determined not to make the same mistake.
- H. The incident of the cure of this lame man is very reminiscent of what Peter did back in Chapter 3:1-10. Paul does the same deeds as Peter and Jesus (cf Luke 5:17-26). A further similarity is the emphasis that the man had never walked. It is repeated four times in different ways: he was *sitting, ...could not use his feet;...was a cripple from birth, ...had never walked*. Hence it is clear that the cure is not a temporary recovery of a man who had occasional use of his legs. No, it is the cure of a man radically crippled from birth. Since he had never walked, his muscles would be atrophied. In the medical sense, even if paralysis could be removed, it would take time for such a man to gain strength enough in his limbs to actually walk. Hence the immediate nature of the cure is all the more

⁷Zeus was the king of the gods and Hermes was the messenger of the gods.

miraculous. A further similarity to the cure by Peter back in Acts 3 is that both lame men were sitting "at the gates" of the temple (cf v. 13).

- I. ***seeing that he had faith to be made well*** - we have already discussed the relation between faith and miracles. The Lord never worked miracles if faith were seen to be lacking altogether. Rather he only worked them to build up faith that was already present in some form. recall this passage from the Gospel of Mark 6:1-6: *He went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. {2} And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! {3} Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. {4} And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." {5} And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. {6} And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.* Hence, Paul's working of the miracle is related to faith in the lame man. We have discussed this relationship before and concluded that one of the reasons for the small number of miracles only, is related to the decline of faith in our excessively rational age.
- J. ***the crowds...lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian*** - that the crowds spoke in the local dialect may help explain why Paul and Barnabas were slow in understanding what the people were doing.
- K. ***"The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"*** - we have already discussed the cultural background in #1 just above.
- L. ***the apostles Barnabas and Paul*** Luke describes them both as apostles even though neither was one of the twelve. Hence the title is used in the wider sense here. Paul, considers himself an apostle in virtue of the unique call he received on the road to Damascus when he saw the Risen Christ. Paul insisted he was an Apostle (1 Cor 15:9, 2 Cor 11:5).
- M. ***they tore their garments*** - Jews rent their garments to show shock and disapproval of something and to reject it out of hand. Idolatry and pagan worship are entirely unacceptable to Paul and Barnabas for obvious reasons and insist that the people desist in their flawed thinking. Paul and Barnabas, even though the power of God is upon them, know they are but men and to God alone belongs the glory. .
- N. ***gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.*** - see how Paul appeals to the natural order. it is not likely he would do this when talking to Jews since it was more direct to appeal to scripture. But here, in dealing with the Gentiles, he begins with the created order in order to lead them to the creator.
- O. ***Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium*** - this links the incidents here to what has gone before. The enemies from prior cities group together and pursue Paul and Barnabas. The impression is strongly conveyed that we have here a small band of fanatics who zealously persecute P & B. This also tends to exonerate the local community.

- P. The stoning that takes place is a severe punishment and a capital one. Stoning was unto death. The individual to be stoned was placed in an open pit or ravine. The stoners stood above on all sides and hurled rocks and small boulders at the individual. The one being stoned could not avoid all the stones since they were hurled from all sides. The rocks struck and wounded the person creating contusions and internal bleeding and broken bones. Blows to the head eventually rendered the person unconscious and fractured the skull and they died from their injuries. That Paul survived such a stoning (and being dragged out of the City⁸ (which would have aggravated any injuries he had received)) is not unheard of but quite remarkable!
- Q. Luke does not supply all the details we would like. Was there something about the stoning that could explain its ultimate ineffectiveness? How did the perpetrators fail to see he was still alive? What was the reaction of the disciples when he rose up? Did it take time for him to heal? It must have and yet Luke more than implies that he just got up and the very next day went on to Derbe some 70 miles away! How did all this happen? Perhaps he was carried? When his enemies later saw him alive what was their reaction? Luke tells us none of this to satisfy our modern craving for detail. This passage shows us the terse and episodic nature of ancient narratives. The whole story is very abrupt in nature.
- R. Derbe and return - (14:20b-28) The description of what went on in Derbe is not given except for the fruitfulness of the mission. They then retrace their steps back through the cities where they had proclaimed the Gospel. A quick look at our maps will indicate that it was only a short distance overland back to Syrian Antioch. Nevertheless they see it as essential to retrace their steps and confirm the Gospel as well as to clearly establish the Church in those places. Given the strife they experienced there previously we see underscored again the courage of the two. Luke is silent as to any strife they may have experienced on their way back through but hints at it as he reproduces Paul's exhortation which emphasizes the reality of tribulations if one is to enter the kingdom of God.
- S. ***And when they had appointed elders for them in every church*** - The Greek verb here translated as "appointed" is cheirotoneo which means literally "to stretch out the hands." Thus again, as we have seen we have a laying on of hands which is the essential action of ordination. We have seen similar gestures in Acts 6:6; 8:17; 9:17; & 13:3. Again too, we see the hierarchical nature of the Church. Paul & Barnabas did not merely preach the Gospel and then leave things up to the local congregation insofar as authority and structure were concerned. No, it is P & B who appoint leaders, it is they who ordain them by conferring the power on them that they themselves had received from the 12. The Greek word here is *presbyteros*. From this word is derived the present English word, priests. Thus we see the three-fold level of the sacrament of Holy Orders come into focus. We have already seen bishops (*episcopoi*) and deacons (*diaconus*) and now we see *presbyteroi* - the priests. Note therefore that the leadership in the early Church

⁸Lystra was a Roman colony and thus under Roman Law which prohibited vigilante practices such as this. But since Lystra was an outpost it is unlikely that a Roman guard or magistrate was present. Yet, in case one came by the matter would not go over well and so they discard the body outside of town.

was not some vague sort of thing. Rather, it was specifically controlled and conveyed in a hierarchal manner through the laying on of hands. This is an essential Catholic teaching and what is meant by apostolic secession. No one takes this honor upon himself; it is shared through the laying on of hands as decided by Church leadership.

- T. Note that they did not retrace their steps across Cyprus. Luke does not say why nor does he explicitly say they did not. However, the description seems to exclude it. Perhaps they had accomplished all that was required and, due to the fact that there was less strife there, they had already firmly established the Church.
- U. They return to Antioch in 49 AD. A full four years have passed since they left.