

**Superina Paolo**

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

**PETER AND PAUL  
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**AND**

**THE LETTERS OF  
PETER, JAMES, JOHN  
AND JUDE  
TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**



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**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
AND  
THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNION**

**In the Name of the Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ**



**As, at the beginning, there was perfect harmony between Yahweh and His whole creation, so it will be at the end, when all will live a new life of full spiritual communion with Yahweh and with each other**



**Acts:** Sulmona 04 - 06.2004

**Epistles:** Sulmona - Arenzano 09.2004 - 02.2005

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**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
**AND**  
**THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNION**  
**In the Name of the Father**  
**and of His Son, Jesus Christ**

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**  
**PETER AND PAUL**  
**AT THE BEGINNING OF THE**  
**CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**The most important facts and events in the development of the early Church.**

**AND**

**THE LETTERS OF**  
**PETER, JAMES, JOHN AND JUDE**  
**TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**Peter, James, John and Jude's advices and exhortations, in their letters addressed to all believers.**

**Text based on:**

The Holy Bible. New International Version

The NKJV. Greek-English Interlinear New Testament

**Notes and explanations based on:**

The Study Bible. New International Version

The Daily Study Bible. William Barclay

Thoughts. Superina Paolo

The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Superina Paolo

**Superina Paolo**

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**JESUS CHRIST'S RELATIVES, DISCIPLES, FRIENDS**

**Relatives:**

**Yahweh** (Jesus' Father)

**Mary** (Jesus' mother)

**Joseph** (Mary's husband, from Bethlehem)

**James** }

**Joseph** } (Jesus' younger half-brothers and sisters, children of Joseph

**Simon** } and Mary)[names of sisters are not known]

**Judas** } [see Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55-56; Ac 1:14; 1Co 9:5; Ga 1:19]

**Sisters** }

**John the Baptist** (son of Zechariah and Elizabeth)

**Zechariah** (John the Baptist's father)

**Elizabeth** (John the Baptist's mother; cousin, aunt or other relation of Mary, Jesus' mother)

**James (the Older.** Apostle. Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee and Salome)

**John** (Apostle. Evangelist. Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee and Salome)

**Salome or Mary** (Jesus' aunt, mother of the apostles James and John)

**Zebedee** (Salome's husband, father of the apostles James and John)

**The Twelve Apostles:**

**Peter (Simon,** son of John, called **Cephas** or **Peter** by Jesus, from Bethsaida)

**Andrew** (son of John, Peter's brother, from Bethsaida)

**James (the Older.** Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee called Boanerge -Son of Thunder  
Simon's partner)

**John** (Jesus' cousin, son of Zebedee, called Boanerge -Son of Thunder-Simon's  
partner, evangelist)

**Philip** (from Bethsaida)

**Bartholomew** (called **Nathanael**, from Cana)

**Matthew (Levi,** son of Alphaeus, tax collector, evangelist)

**Thomas** (called **Didymus**)

**James** (son of Alphaeus, called **James the Younger**)

**Thaddaeus** (or **Judas son of James**)

**Simon (the Zealot)**

**Judas Iscariot** (from Keriot)

**Disciples:**

**Nicodemus** (member of the Sanhedrin, has buried Jesus)

**Joseph** (member of the Sanhedrin, from Arimathea, has buried Jesus)

**Matthias** (chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as 12th apostle)

**Joseph** (called **Barsabbas** or **Justus**, proposed to replace Judas Iscariot as 12th apostle)

**Friends:**

**Lazarus** }

**Martha** } (brother and sisters, from Bethany)

**Mary** }

**Mary** (wife of Clopas)

**Mary Magdalene** (from Magdala)

**Mary** (mother of the apostle James the younger and of Joses)

**Joanna** (wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household)

**Old Testament Books**

Genesis	Ge	Song of Songs	Ss
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Numbers	Nu	Isaiah	Isa
Deuteronomy	Dt	Jeremiah	Jer
Joshua	Jos	Lamentations	La
Judges	Jdg	Baruch	Bar
Ruth	Ru	Ezekiel	Eze
1 Samuel	1Sa	Daniel	Da
2 Samuel	2Sa	Hosea	Hos
1 Kings	1Ki	Joel	Joel
2 Kings	1Ki	Amos	Am
1 Chronicles	1Ch	Obadiah	Ob
2 Chronicles	2Ch	Jonah	Jnh
Ezra	Ezr	Micah	Mic
Nehemia	Ne	Nahum	Na
Tobias	Tob	Habakkuk	Hab
Judit	Jud	Zephaniah	Zep
Esther	Est	Haggai	Hag
Job	Job	Zechariah	Zec
Psalms	Ps	Malachi	Mal
Proverbs	Pr	1 Maccabees	1Mac
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	2 Maccabees	2Mac

**New Testament Books**

Gosp. Mark	Mk	Philippians	Php
Gosp. Matthew	Mt	1 Timothy	1Ti
Gosp. Luke	Lk	2 Timothy	2Ti
Gosp. John	Jn	Titus	Tit
Acts	Ac	Hebrews	Heb
1 Thessalonians	1Th	James	Jm
2 Thessalonians	2Th	1 Peter	1Pe
Galatians	Gal	2 Peter	2Pe
1 Corinthians	1Co	1 John	1Jn
2 Corinthians	2Co	2 John	2Jn
Romans	Ro	3 John	3Jn
Ephesians	Eph	Jude	Jd
Colossians	Col	Revelation	Rev
Philemon	Phm		

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL**  
**AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**PERSONAL INTRODUCTION:** What follows is not intended and does not want to be a new or original study of the New Testament books, but simply what I have learned from them and of them, then put in writing.

**Foreword**

When we want to read about the development of the early Church, the only book we can consult is “The Acts of the Apostles.” In effect, if we did not possess this book, we would have, apart what we can deduce from the letters of Paul, no information whatever about the early Church.

The main characteristics of this commented version of Acts are:

- 1- The text is taken from “The Holy Bible. New International Version.” Few alterations were necessary because of some of my personal beliefs, as they are expressed in my work “Thoughts,” or other problems:
  - a- To God is given back His Name: Yahweh.
  - b- NIV’s “Holy Spirit” is always changed into “Holy Spirit of Yahweh” or “Spirit of Yahweh” and followed by [\*] to indicate the “spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”
  - c- Some words and phrases of not immediate understanding are given differently.
  - d- The word “Lord” is always followed by “Yahweh” or “Jesus Christ,” for a better understanding.
  - e- The word “love” (and its derivatives: to love, loved, etc.) is used in many situations and takes on many, even deeply different meanings. In this book it is used only in two cases: 1) In the man-woman relationship. 2) In the parents-children relationship. In all other cases, other words are used, depending on the context: affection, fondness, benevolence, goodwill, to be fond of, to cherish, to like, etc.
  - f- NIV’s “Jews” is changed into “[chiefs of the] Jews,” when it refers to those opposing Paul’s teaching.
  - g- Whatever word useful for a better and more immediate understanding of the text is added into [ ].
- 2- Notes and explanations are mainly taken from:
  - a- The Study Bible, New International Version.
  - b- The Daily Study Bible, William Barclay.
  - c- Thoughts, Superina Paolo.
  - d- The Gospel of Jesus Christ, Superina Paolo.
  - e- Paul’s Thought, Superina Paolo.

**Note:** For a proper comprehension of some New Testament passages and concepts which do not appear to be “Christian” or “Good News,” is important to remember that:

- 1) We usually don't realize how near Christianity was to becoming only another kind of Judaism. All the first Christians were Jews and all their traditions would have convinced them to keep the Good News for themselves, excluding completely the Gentiles.
- 2) All New Testament writers viewed the whole period beginning with Jesus Christ's birth as “the last days.” They understood this period to be the “last” of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Jesus Christ.
- 3) The actual meaning of what they wrote is still too often concealed by considerations derived from Old Testament ideas -it could not have been easy, for the writers of the New Testament Books, to detach themselves immediately and completely from the ideas they grew up with.

### **Introduction to the Acts**

Although the book never says so, from the earliest times Luke has been considered the writer. In the Muratorian Canon (AD 170), there is the explicit statement that Luke was the author of both his Gospel and of Acts. Eusebius, in Ecclesiastical History, 3.4 (AD 325) lists numerous sources identifying Luke as the author. Luke was a non-Jew by birth, well educated in Greek culture, a physician by profession, Paul's "dear friend Luke, the doctor" (Colossians 4:14), and "fellow worker" (Philemon 1:24). He was a companion of Paul from his second missionary journey to his first imprisonment in Rome, a loyal friend (2 Timothy 4:11).

As Luke's Gospel, even Acts is addressed to a man called Theophilus, most probably a high official in the Roman government. The message of Acts was intended for his own instruction as well as the instruction of the other non-Jews among whom the book would be circulated.

In Acts Luke takes pains to show that the Christians are good and loyal citizens of the Roman Empire. Luke was writing in the days when the Christians were disliked and persecuted. In the meantime he wanted to show that Christianity is for all men of every country. But the real purpose of Acts is to report the words of the risen Christ and the descent of the Spirit of Yahweh -spiritual communion Yahweh/man- on all men willing to receive Him.

Luke did write Acts (in Greek language) most probably in Rome and in sequence with his Gospel, which means in the 80s or 90s.

**Note:** The title of the book in Greek is "Acts of apostolic men," not "The acts of the apostles." In effect the book neither claims nor gives an exhaustive account of the acts of all the apostles. It is only about the apostle Peter that the book gives any real information, and very soon he passes from the scene as a leading character, replaced by Paul, whose life and missionary activity are accurately reported.

**The Acts of the Apostles Peter and Paul at the beginning of the Christian Church**

***Jesus taken up into Heaven [Ac 1:1-11]***

*(Ac 1:1) In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning (2) until the day he was taken up to Heaven, after giving instructions through the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] to the apostles he had chosen. (3) After his suffering, he showed himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of Yahweh. (4) On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. (5) John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*].”*

*(6) And, all together, they asked him, “Lord Jesus, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”*

*(7) He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. (8) But you will receive power when His Spirit [\*] comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth.”*

*(9) After he said this, he was taken up [to Heaven] before their eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

*(10) They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. (11) “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into Heaven.”*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 1:1)** *My former Book.* The Gospel of Luke. Acts was addressed to the same man, Theophilus. **(2)** *Taken up to Heaven.* The last scene of Luke’s Gospel and the opening scene of this second volume. *Through the Spirit of Yahweh.* By means of the spiritual communion Yahweh-Jesus-men, which gives men the necessary knowledge, understanding and power. **(3)** *Many convincing proofs.* Jesus’ actions, like eating food, during his appearances. *A period of forty days.* The Ascension occurred 40 days after the Resurrection. **(4)** *The gift my Father promised.* Their continuous spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus. **(5)** *John baptized with water, but... you will*

*be baptized with...* John's baptism was a baptism -a public sign- of repentance, preparatory to Jesus Christ's baptism, that is, to the spiritual communion of a man with Yahweh and Jesus. *In a few days.* The day of Pentecost came ten days later, when the baptism with the Spirit of Yahweh occurred (Ac 2:1-4). **(6)** *Restore the kingdom to Israel?* The disciples were still looking for the deliverance of Israel from foreign domination and for the establishment of an earthly kingdom. **(7)** *It is not for you...* Only Yahweh knows the future. **(8)** *You will receive power.* Their spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus (after Pentecost) will enable them to fulfill the tasks assigned to them by Yahweh. *My witnesses.* Their task will be to teach and preach everywhere the Word of Yahweh, the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh open to all men, and to testify, as physical witnesses, to the reality of Jesus' resurrection. **(9)** *He was taken up [to Heaven].* Even Jesus' Ascension was an act of Yahweh, who always has the full initiative. **(10)** *Two men dressed in white.* A common description of angels. **(11)** *Men of Galilee.* The Twelve -except Judas who was no longer present- were from Galilee. *Will come back in the same way.* In the same resurrected body and coming on the clouds -a sign of great glory.

#### **Matthias chosen to replace Judas [Ac 1:12-26]**

**(Ac 1:12)** *Then they [the apostles] returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. (13) When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. There were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. (14) They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

**(15)** *In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) (16) and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] spoke through the mouth of David concerning Judas [Iscariot], who served as a guide for those who arrested Jesus - (17) he was one of our number and shared in this ministry."*

**(18)** *(With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas [Iscariot] bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. (19) Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)*

**(20)** *"For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms,*

*'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and,*

*'May another take his place of leadership.'*

**(21)** *Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with*



*us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, (22)beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. One of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."*

*(23)They proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. (24)Then they prayed, "You, O Yahweh, know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two You have chosen (25)to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas [Iscariot] left to go where he belongs." (26)Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 1:12)** *Mount of Olives.* The Ascension occurred on the eastern slope of the hill between Jerusalem and Bethany. *A Sabbath day's walk.* 3/4 mile (1200 meters), the maximum distance a faithful Jew was allowed to travel on the Sabbath. **(13)** *The room where they were staying.* Probably the same room where the Last Supper was held. *Peter... Judas son of James.* The Eleven's names are given to indicate that the apostles were the only physical witnesses to Jesus' Ascension. **(14)** *The women.* Those who were following Jesus and his disciples and who were present at his crucifixion. *Mary the mother of Jesus.* Last mentioned here in Scripture. *His brothers.* Jesus' younger half-brothers (James, Joseph, Simon, Judas), children of Joseph and Mary (Gospel of Jesus Christ. Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55-56, where even sisters are mentioned). **(15)** *The believers... a hundred and twenty.* It is from this small group that the Christian Church developed all around the Earth. **(16-17)** *The Scripture had to be fulfilled... concerning Judas...* Both before and after Jesus Christ came, numerous Psalms were viewed as Messianic. Clearly, Jesus' instructions to his apostles included some of these Scriptures. **(18-19)** *Judas [Iscariot] bought a field.* Judas bought the field indirectly: The money he returned to the priests was used to purchase the potter's field. *Fell headlong...* Judas hanged himself. It appears that when the body fell, either because of decay or because someone cut the rope, it was in a decomposed condition and so broke open. *Field of Blood.* Because it was purchased with the money Judas received for Jesus' blood. **(20)** *It is written...* Psalm 109:8 indicates that Judas Iscariot had left a vacancy that had to be filled. **(21-22)** *One... with us the whole time... must become a witness...* Many disciples had seen the resurrected Jesus, and one of them had to be selected to become an official witness to the resurrection, that is, the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle. **(23-25)** *They proposed two men... Then they prayed...* Two

were the most suitable candidates, and the final choice was left to Yahweh. **(26)** *They cast lots.* The apostles used, for the last time in Scripture, the traditional method used to choose the priests assigned to the Temple service.

**The Spirit of Yahweh at Pentecost** [Ac 2:1-13]

**(Ac 2:1)** *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. (2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from Heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) And what seemed to be tongues of fire appeared to them, and separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] enabled them.*

**(5)** *Now there were staying in Jerusalem Yahweh-fearing Jews from every nation under the sky. (6) When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. (7) Utterly amazed, they said: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? (8) Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? (9) Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, (10) Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (11) (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs -we hear them declaring the wonders of Yahweh in our own tongues!" (12) Amazed and perplexed, they all asked one another, "What does this mean?"*

**(13)** *Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 2:1)** *Day of Pentecost.* The 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week, thus the first day of the week. Pentecost was also called the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Harvest and the Day of Firstfruit. *They were all together.* The group of 120 believers (Ac 1:15). *In one place.* Clearly, in a bigger place than the room where the apostles were usually staying (Ac 1:13). **(2)** *A sound... of a violent wind.* Breath and wind were symbols of the action of the Spirit of Yahweh. **(3)** *What seemed... tongues of fire.* Fire was a symbol of Divine Presence. **(4)** *All... were filled with the Spirit of Yahweh.* The fulfillment of Jesus promise (Ac 1:5,8). Beginning with this moment, the spiritual communion with Yahweh, Jesus and all other believers is open

to everybody. *In other tongues*. They were under the spiritual control of Yahweh, and this enabled them to speak in languages they didn't actually know. **(5)** *Yahweh-fearing Jews*. Devout Jews from many countries assembled in Jerusalem for the Feast. **(6-8)** *Each one heard them speaking in his own language*. All the Jews would understand Aramaic and most of them Greek, but more than this was occurring; they heard the apostles (most of them unlearned people) speak in the languages native to the different countries represented. **(9-11)** *Parthians... Arabs*. The inhabitants of the whole known world. **(12)** *What does this mean?*. Clearly all the people who understood the apostles' message were touched by it. **(13)** *They have had too much wine*. But not all the presents were touched by the apostles' message. And, hearing of a "Messiah crucified, dead, resurrected and taken into Heaven," they considered the whole matter with scorn, so much to actually insult those who were speaking.

**Peter addresses the crowd** [Ac 2:14-41]

**(Ac 2:14)** *Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: "Fellow Jews and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you; listen carefully to my words. (15) These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only the third hour of the day [9 AM]! (16) But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

*(17) 'In the last days,' Yahweh says, 'I will pour out My Spirit [\*] on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. (18) For on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit [\*] in those days, and they will prophesy. (19) I will show wonders in the sky above and signs on the Earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. (20) The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious Day of the Lord Yahweh. (21) And everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord Yahweh will be saved.'*

**(22)** *Men of Israel, listen to my words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man, was accredited by Yahweh to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which Yahweh did among you through him, as you yourselves know. (23) This man was handed over to you by Yahweh's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, by the hands of those not having the Law, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. (24) But Yahweh raised him, freeing him from the pangs of death, because it was impossible for it to keep its hold on him. (25) As David said about him:*

*'I saw the Lord [Jesus Christ] always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. (26) Therefore my heart is glad and my*

*tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, (27) because You will not abandon my soul to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay. (28) You have made known to me the paths of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence.'*

*(29) Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. (30) But he was a prophet and knew that Yahweh had promised him on oath that He would place one of his descendants on his throne. (31) Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ [Messiah], that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. (32) Yahweh has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of that. (33) Exalted to the right hand of Yahweh, he has received from the Father His promised Spirit [\*] and has poured It [\*] out, as you see and hear. (34) For David did not ascend to Heaven, and yet he said,*

*'The Lord [Yahweh] said to my Lord [Jesus Christ]: "Sit at My right (35) hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."'*

*(36) Therefore let the whole house of Israel be assured of this: Yahweh has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ [Messiah]."*

*(37) When they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

*(38) Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Spirit of Yahweh [\*]. (39) The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off -for all whom the Lord [Yahweh] our God will call."*

*(40) With many other words he testified and exhorted them saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." (41) Those who accepted his word were baptized, and about three thousand souls were added that day.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 2:14)** *Peter stood up with the eleven.* Immediately after entering in full spiritual communion with Yahweh, the apostles had to face the skeptics, and Peter served as their spokesman. **(15)** *Only the third hour [9 AM].* On a festival day such as Pentecost, the Jews would not break their fast until at least 10 AM. So it was extremely unlikely that a group of men would be drunk at nine AM. **(16-21)** *Spoken by... Joel.* A quotation -with a few variations- from Joel 2:28-32. *In the last days.* In the days of the New Testament

-the last Covenant. *I will pour out My Spirit on all people.* Spiritual communion with Yahweh is for all people, without regard to nationality, age, sex or rank. *Day of the Lord Yahweh.* At the end of “the last days,” after a period of social and cosmic destruction, the present world will end and -after Universal Resurrection- everybody will live for ever in the Kingdom of Yahweh (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh). **(22)** *Accredited... by miracles, wonders and signs.* The works done by Jesus, which were well known to everybody around there, were signs showing that the Messiah had come. **(23)** *Yahweh’s set purpose and...* Everything was due to Yahweh’s initiative, to His plan. *Those not having the Law.* The Romans. **(24)** *Yahweh raised him... it was impossible...* Again, everything was due to Yahweh’s initiative. **(25-28)** *David said...* By quoting -with some variations- Psalm 16:8-11, Peter declared that with these words David prophesied of his own resurrection at the end of time (‘You will not abandon me to the grave’) and of Jesus Christ’s immediate resurrection (‘nor will You let Your Holy One see decay’). **(29-33)** *David... his tomb is here.* In Jesus’ time in Jerusalem there was still the tomb of king David, and it contained his remains. David was a patriarch and a prophet, his prophecies were part of Scripture and known to everybody. David wrote of the resur-rected Messiah, and Jesus was such a Messiah. This passage states that the Cross was not an accident, not an emergency measure taken by Yahweh when everything else had failed; it had always been part of His plan and, as such, the suffering and death of Jesus were the fulfillment of prophecy. It is important to remember that to the Jews it was the Cross which made it completely impossible to believe that Jesus could be the Messiah. To them, the early Christian preachers answered, “If you would only read your Scriptures rightly you would see that all was foretold.” So, the Resurrection was and is the final proof that Jesus was indeed Yahweh’s Chosen One. **(34-35)** *The Lord [Yahweh] said...* A quotation from Psalm 110:1. David, through the inspiration of Yahweh’s Spirit, recognized how great and divine his descen-dant would be. **(36)** *Yahweh has made this Jesus... both Lord and Christ [Messiah].* Not only Jesus was the expected Messiah of Yahweh, he was also appointed by Yahweh Lord of the human race. **(37)** *Cut to the heart.* This phrase reflects both their new belief in Jesus and their regret over their former rejection. **(38)** *Repent and...* Repentance was important in the mes-sage of John the Baptist, in the preaching of Jesus, and in the directions Jesus left just before his Ascension. Baptism as well was important to John the Baptist, in the instructions of Jesus, and in the preaching of the apostles recorded in Acts, where it was associated with belief in Jesus Christ, acceptance of the Word of Yahweh and repentance.

*Be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.* This doesn't mean that baptism can effect forgiveness, as forgiveness is given because and if those undergoing the ceremony of baptism have already repented of their previous sins. *The gift of the Spirit of Yahweh:* Two gifts are given: Forgiveness of sins and spiritual communion with Yahweh. **(39)** *The promise is for...* The gift of the spiritual communion with Yahweh is for all Christians. **(40)** *With many other words...* Peter was doing as Jesus told his people to, trying to convince as many people as possible to believe in him. **(41)** *Were added.* To those who already believed.

**The fellowship of the believers** [Ac 2:42-47]

**(Ac 2:42)** *They [the believers] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (43) Awe was in every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. (44) All the believers were together and had everything in common. (45) Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (46) Every day they continued to meet together in the Temple. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, (47) praising Yahweh and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord Yahweh added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

**(Ac 2:42)** *The apostles' teaching.* What Jesus taught to the apostles, available in written form -the four Gospels- only later. *Breaking of bread.* Done at the end of the communal meal, in remembrance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice and death for the spiritual salvation of all men. **(43)** *Wonders and signs.* Jesus, through their spiritual communion with Yahweh and himself, had given the apostles the power to heal and to drive out demons. **(44-45)** *All... together... everything in common.* In the early -small- Church the believers shared voluntarily to provide for those who were in need. **(46)** *Meet... in the Temple. Broke bread in their homes.* Being in Jerusalem, they continued to worship Yahweh in the Temple, but they met at home for their Christian worship. *Glad and sincere.* Joy and simplicity of sentiments must characterize the mood of the Christians. **(47)** *The Lord Yahweh added...* The initiative is always with Yahweh.

**Peter heals the crippled beggar** [Ac 3:1-10]

**(Ac 3:1)** *Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the time of prayer -at the ninth hour [3 PM]. (2) And a man crippled from birth was being carried to the Temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the Temple. (3) When he saw Peter and John*

about to enter into the Temple, he asked them for money. (4) Peter looked straight at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us!" (5) So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

(6) But Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk." (7) Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. (8) He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping, and praising Yahweh. (9) And all the people saw him walking and praising Yahweh. (10) Then they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the Temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

**(Ac 3:1)** *Time of prayer.* The Jews prayed three times a day: At the third hour (9 AM), at the sixth hour (Noon), and at the ninth hour (3 PM). **(2-5)** *Gate called Beautiful.* Also called the Nicanor Gate, it led from the court of the Gentiles to the court of the women. **(6)** *In the name of Jesus Christ.* Not by their own power, but by the power coming from their faith in, and spiritual communion with, Jesus and Yahweh. **(7)** *He helped him up.* As later declared by Peter (Ac 3:16), the man had faith to be healed. **(8)** *Into the Temple.* From the court of the Gentiles, through the court of the women, to the court of the Israelites. **(9-10)** *All the people... were filled with wonder...* A miracle, not denied by the Jewish authorities (Ac 4:16).

**Peter speaks to the onlookers** [Ac 3:11-26]

**(Ac 3:11)** *While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in Solomon's Colonnade. (12) When Peter saw this, he said to the people, "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? (13) [Yahweh] the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. (14) You disowned the Holy and Righteous One [Messiah] and asked that a murderer be released to you. (15) You killed the giver of true life, but Yahweh raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. (16) It is by faith in his name [Jesus] that this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is his [Jesus] name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, in front of you all.*

**(17)** *Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. (18) And this is how Yahweh fulfilled what He had foretold through*

*all the prophets, saying that His Christ [Messiah] would suffer. (19) Repent, then, and turn to Yahweh, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord Yahweh, (20) and that He may send the Christ [Messiah] -that Jesus- who has been appointed for you. (21) He must remain in Heaven until the time comes for the restoration of every-thing, as Yahweh promised long ago through His holy prophets. (22) For Moses said, 'The Lord [Yahweh] your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers; you must listen to everything he tells you. (23) Anyone who does not listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from among His people.'*

*(24) Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. (25) And you are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant Yahweh made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on Earth will be blessed.' (26) Yahweh, who has raised up His servant [Jesus Christ], sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."*

**(Ac 3:11) Solomon's Colonnade.** A porch along the inner side of the wall enclosing the outer court, with rows of 27-foot-high (9 meters) stone columns and a roof of cedar; the traditional meeting and teaching point. **(12-15) Peter... said....** Peter was the spokesman of the apostles. *The God of Abraham... raised him from the dead.* A very short summary of the main facts leading to, and justifying Christian faith. *The giver of true life.* Jesus Christ is the bringer of a "new life" -a life of spiritual communion in Yahweh's Kingdom- as stated by the angel in Ac 5:20. **(16) It is his [Jesus'] name and the faith... has given... healing.** The man was healed -by the power coming from Peter and John's faith in, and spiritual communion with, Jesus Christ- because he had faith in the possibility of being healed. **(17-18) You acted in ignorance... Yahweh fulfilled...** It was in ignorance that the Jews had crucified Jesus; but -after the proper explanation of the prophecies- that ignorance was no longer possible. **(19) Repent... and turn to Yahweh.** After knowing the truth, the only possible attitude was repentance and full acceptance of Yahweh's will. *Sins may be wiped out, times of refreshing may come.* Repentance has certain consequences: Forgiveness for the past sins and, with it, the "refreshment" of having been accepted by Yahweh. **(20-21) The Christ [Messiah]... must remain in Heaven until...** Yahweh will send again Jesus Christ on Earth at the due time (the second coming, at the end of time). *Yahweh.. promised long ago...* Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Yahweh's promises and prophecies. **(22-25) Moses said...** A quotation from Deuteronomy 18:15,18-19. *Samuel.* Samuel anointed David



to be king (1 Samuel 16:13). *Yahweh.. said to Abraham...* A loose quotation from Genesis, combining parts of v. 12:7 and v. 12:3. *Offspring*. The word is singular, ultimately signifying Christ [Messiah]. **(26)** *Yahweh... sent him first to you*. The Jews were Yahweh's chosen people, and spiritual salvation was offered first to them and, then, to all other peoples (the Gentiles or Pagans).

***Peter and John before the Sanhedrin [Ac 4:1-22]***

**(Ac 4:1)** *Then, while Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the Temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, (2) greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. (3) They seized them and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. (4) But many who heard the Word believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*

**(5)** *The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem, (6) with Annas the High Priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the High Priest's family. (7) They had them [Peter and John] brought before them and questioned them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"*

**(8)** *Then Peter, filled with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people! (9) Since we are being called to account today for an act of kindness to a cripple and by means of who he was healed, (10) then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom Yahweh raised from the dead, that this man stands here, before you, healed. (11) He [Jesus Christ] is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' (12) Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we can be saved."*

**(13)** *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished. And they took note that they had been with Jesus. (14) But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. (15) So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. (16) "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows that a miracle has been performed through them, and we cannot deny it. (17) But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."*

**(18)** *Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or*

*teach at all in the name of Jesus. (19) But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in Yahweh's sight to obey you rather than Yahweh. (20) For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

*(21) Then, after further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising Yahweh for what had happened. (22) For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 4:1) Priests.** Those serving that week in the Temple. *Captain of the Temple guard.* A member of one of the leading priestly families, next in rank to the High Priest. *Sadducees.* A Jewish sect whose members controlled the Temple. The High Priest was always one of them. **(2) Greatly disturbed.** Mainly because the gathering of an excited crowd could easily lead to public disorder, with the intervention of the Romans. **(3) Because it was evening.** Any judgment of the Sanhedrin had to begin and be concluded in daylight hours. **(4) The number of men.** Traditionally, only men were counted. **(5) Rulers, elders and teachers of the law.** The three groups making up the Sanhedrin, Israel's supreme court. **(6) Annas. Caiaphas.** Annas, deposed from High Priesthood by the Romans, was still recognized by the Jews as the true High Priest. Caiaphas, Annas' son-in-law was the High Priest in charge. *John, Alexander.* Members of the High Priest's family. **(7) By what power or...** They did not deny the miracle. **(8-12) Peter... said....** As usual, Peter acted as the spokesman, confirming officially, in front of the Sanhedrin, that they were acting in the name of Jesus Christ. *The stone...* A quotation from Psalm 118:22. **(13) Unschooled.** In the sense that Peter and John had not been trained in the rabbinic schools. **(14-16) But... an outstanding miracle... we cannot deny it.** They could not deny a miracle made in front of so many people. **(17-18) To stop this thing... they... commanded...** They tried to silence Peter and John by the weight of their authority. **(19-20) Peter and John replied...** When it was a matter of choosing between obeying men or Yahweh, they had no hesitation. **(21) They let them go.** It was impossible to punish or imprison them without causing a riot. **(22) Over forty years old.** The healing of a mature man, crippled from birth was really an outstanding, undeniable miracle.

**The believers' prayer** [Ac 4:23-31]

**(Ac 4:23)** On their release, Peter and John went back to their own [brothers] and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. **(24)** When they heard this, they raised their voices together to Yahweh. "Lord Yahweh," they said, "You made the sky and the land and the sea, and everything in them. **(25)** You spoke by Your Spirit [\*] through the mouth of Your servant, our father David:

*'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? **(26)** The kings of the Earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord Yahweh and against His Anointed One [Messiah].'*

**(27)** Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed [Messiah]. **(28)** They did what Your hand and will had decided beforehand should happen. **(29)** Now, Lord Yahweh, consider their threats and enable Your servants to speak Your Word with great boldness. **(30)** Stretch Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

**(31)** After they prayed, the place where they were all meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] and spoke the Word of Yahweh boldly.

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 4:23-24)** Peter and John... they raised their voices... to Yahweh... Here we have the reaction all Christians should have in the hour of danger. All of them, after confirming their faith in Him, asked Yahweh to give them the strength to testify their faith ("Enable Your servants to speak Your Word." Ac 4:29). **(25-26)** Why do the nations... A quotation from Psalm 2:1-2. **(27)** Indeed Herod and... The explanation of the above mentioned Psalm. **(28)** Decided beforehand. Not that Yahweh had compelled them to act as they did, but that He used them and their acts to accomplish His plan of salvation. **(29-30)** Enable Your servants... Stretch Your hand... They did not pretend that they could face the troubles ahead with their own strength, and they put themselves in the hands of Yahweh. **(31)** The place... was shaken. A sign that their prayer had been heard. Spoke the Word of Yahweh. They continued preaching the Gospel despite the warnings of the Council (Ac 4:17-18).

**The believers share their possessions** [Ac 4:32-37]

*(Ac 4:32) The multitude of the believers had one heart and soul. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. (33) With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. (34) There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of the sales (35) and put them at the apostles' feet. Then it was distributed to anyone as he had need.*

*(36) Also Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), (37) sold a field he owned and brought the proceeds and put it at the apostles' feet.*

**(Ac 4:32,34-35)** *One heart and soul. They shared everything. Those who owned lands or houses sold them... and... As a result of their faith and spiritual communion, they practiced a voluntary sharing to provide for those who were in need. (33) Testify to the resurrection.* The most compelling event, the one demonstrating that Jesus was really Yahweh's chosen Messiah -an event about which the disciples had to speak. **(36-37)** *Joseph... called Barnabas.* Here Luke introduces the man who will become an important companion of Paul.

**Ananias and Sapphira** [Ac 5:1-11]

*(Ac 5:1) Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. (2) With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the proceeds, and brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.*

*(3) Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] and have kept [some] of the proceeds of the land? (4) Didn't it belong to you before? And wasn't the proceeds yours? What made you think in your heart of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to Yahweh."*

*(5) When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. (6) Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.*

*(7) About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. (8) Peter asked her, "Tell me, is it for so much that you and Ananias sold the land?"*

*"Yes," she said, "for so much."*

*(9) Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord*

*Yahweh [\*]? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”*

*(10) At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. (11) Great fear seized the whole Church and all who heard about these events.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 5:1-4)** *Kept back part of the proceeds... brought the rest... They had the right to keep back whatever they choose. Their sin was to make it appear that they had given all when they had not, so lying not so much to their fellow-men as to Yahweh. (5-6) Ananias... fell down and died.* His punishment -to the first recorded sin in the life of the Church- came directly from Yahweh. **(7-10)** *Later his wife came in... By confirming to Peter her agreement and participation in her husband’s lie, she confirmed her sin. To test the Spirit of the Lord Yahweh. She fell down and died.* Without the punishment for this sin, the believers could have concluded that Yahweh can be deceived. **(11) Church.** The first time this term is used in Acts. It can denote either the local congregation or the universal assembly of all believers.

### **The apostles heal many** [Ac 5:12-16]

**(Ac 5:12)** *Now many miraculous signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And all [the believers] used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. (13) No one else dared join them, but they were highly regarded by the people. (14) And more and more believers in the Lord Jesus were added, a multitude of men and women, (15) so that people brought the sick into the squares and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. (16) Crowds gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.*

**(Ac 5:12)** *Many miraculous signs and wonders.* At the beginning of the Christian Church, the miraculous healing activity was much more evident than in later times. *Solomon’s Colonnade.* A porch along the inner side of the wall enclosing the outer court, with rows of 27-foot-high (9 meters) stone columns and a roof of cedar; the traditional meeting and teaching point. **(13)** *No one else dared join them.* Because of what happened to Ananias and his wife, no half-hearted followers risked identification with the belie-

vers. Only fully sincere believers were coming to Jesus Christ. **(14)** *More believers... were added... both men and women.* The first specific mention of the equality of sexes in the eyes of Jesus and Yahweh. **(15-16)** *Peter's shadow... and all of them were healed.* Not that the shadow -or any material object- had miraculous qualities, but only because for most of the people it represented the only means of contact with the apostles.

***The apostles persecuted [Ac 5:17-42]***

**(Ac 5:17)** *Then the High Priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, rose up and were filled with jealousy. (18) They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. (19) But during the night an angel of the Lord Yahweh opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. (20) "Go, stand in the Temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all these Words of life."*

**(21)** *At daybreak they entered the Temple, as they had been told, and began to teach.*

*When the High Priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin -the full assembly of the elders of Israel- and sent to the jail for the apostles. (22) But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, (23) "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." (24) On hearing this report, the captain of the Temple guard and the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what could have happened.*

**(25)** *Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple teaching the people." (26) At that, the captain went with his officers and brought them. But they did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.*

**(27)** *Having brought them, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin. And the High Priest questioned them. (28) "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."*

**(29)** *Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey Yahweh rather than men! (30) [Yahweh] the God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead -whom you have killed by hanging him on a cross. (31) Yahweh exalted him to His own right hand as Master and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. (32) We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], whom Yahweh has given to those who obey Him."*

**(33)** *When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to*

death. (34) But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men [the apostles] be put outside for a little while. (35) Then he addressed them: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. (36) Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. (37) After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the day of the census and he persuaded the people to follow him. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. (38) Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. (39) But if it is from Yahweh, you will not be able to stop them; you will find yourselves fighting against Yahweh."

(40) They took his advice. Then they called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

(41) They [the apostles] left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering for the name [of Jesus].

(42) Day after day, in the Temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the Good News of Jesus, the Christ [Messiah].

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 5:17-18)** *The High Priest and... arrested the apostles.* The second arrest of the apostles was inevitable. They had publicly disregarded the order not to teach in the name of Jesus. To the Sanhedrin they were not only heretics but, much more, potential disturbers of the peace. In inflammable Palestine, their preaching could easily have resulted in some popular uprising, and that was something the Sadducees did not want, because then Rome would heavily intervene. **(19-20)** *An angel... Go, stand in the Temple courts...* Clearly, only Yahweh's direct intervention -through one of His angels- and order could give them the courage to go straight back and teach in the Temple. *All these Words of life.* The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the "giver of true life" -a life of spiritual communion in Yahweh's Kingdom- as declared by Peter in Ac 3:15. **(21)** *At daybreak.* When the doors of the Temple were opened and all social and religious activities began. **(22-24)** *The officers... reported...* Clearly, the jail guards were so much trusted that the possibility of them having been bribed was not even considered. **(25-27)** *The*

*men... are... in the Temple teaching. The captain... brought the apostles... before the Sanhedrin.* As ordered them by Yahweh's angel, the apostles had to bring Jesus Christ's message to all the Jews, inclusive of the Sanhedrin's members, the priests and the Temple guards. **(28)** *Make us guilty of this man's blood.* With reference to the apostles' repeated declaration that some of the Jews and some of their leaders had killed Jesus (Ac 2:23; 3:13-15; 4: 10-11). **(29-32)** *Peter... replied...* As usual, Peter acted as the apostles' spokesman, pointing to the fact that they were following the orders of Yahweh -who was giving them, through their spiritual communion with Him, the necessary capability and strength. **(33)** *They were furious.* Because, by accusing them to have killed Jesus -Yahweh's Messiah- on a cross, actually Peter accused them to be Yahweh's enemies. **(34-35)** *Gamaliel... ordered.... consider carefully...* Gamaliel was a Pharisee, the most famous Jewish teacher of the time. He was moderate in his views, a characteristic that is apparent in his cautious recommendation on this occasion. Saul (Paul) was one of his students (Ac 22:3). **(36)** *Theudas.* Nothing more is known of the man and of his activity. **(37)** *Judas the Galilean.* He attempted to raise a revolt -refusing to pay tribute to Caesar- at the time of the census taken by the governor Quirinus in AD 6, but failed. **(38-39)** *Therefore...* The Pharisees believed that all things were in the hands of Yahweh and yet that men were responsible for their actions. Gamaliel's point was that they must not risk to exercise their free-will in case it was going against Yahweh. **(40)** *Flogged.* Beaten with the Jewish penalty of "forty lashes minus one." **(41)** *Rejoicing...* Because they had been able to demonstrate their loyalty to Yah-weh and to Jesus. **(42)** *They never stopped teaching...* The decision of the Sanhedrin left them quite free to go on with their preaching activity.

### **The choosing of the Seven** [Ac 6:1-7]

**(Ac 6:1)***In those days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Grecian Jews among them murmured against the [local] Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. (2)So the Twelve summoned the assembly of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of Yahweh in order to wait on tables. (3)Brothers, choose from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them (4)and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word."*

**(5)***This proposal pleased the whole assembly. They choose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Spirit of Yahweh [\*]; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. (6)They*



*presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

*(7) So the Word of Yahweh spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 6:1)** *The disciples were increasing.* The Church -at this stage entirely Jewish- continued to grow, and this gave rise to inevitable problems. *Grecian Jews.* Those living outside Palestine. *[Local] Jews.* Those living in Palestine. *Daily distribution.* Of food, as most of the widows were in need because they had no one to care for them. **(2)** *The Twelve.* At this early stage, the apostles were responsible for everything. *Tables.* The early Church was concerned about both a spiritual -“the Word of Yahweh”- and a material -“wait on tables”- ministry. **(3-4)** *Choose... seven men...* The assembly elected them (Ac 6:5) and the apostles “ordained” them (Ac 6:6), appointing them to their work. **(5)** *Stephen... Nicolas.* To note that all the men chosen had Greek names. **(6)** *Laid their hands.* Laying of hands -which comes from the Old Testament- here marks the appointment to a new responsibility. It was also used for healing, blessing, ordaining and imparting of spiritual gifts. **(7)** *A large number of priests...* All Jews of Aaronic descent were priests.

### **Stephen seized** [Ac 6:8-15]

**(Ac 6:8)** *Now Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. (9) Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) -Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as of Cilicia and Asia. They began to argue with Stephen, (10) but could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], by whom he spoke.*

**(11)** *Then they sent some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against Yahweh.”*

**(12)** *So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. (13) They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. (14) For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”*

*(15) All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 6:8)** *Stephen... did great wonders and...* After the laying on of the apostles’ hands, at least two of the Seven (Stephen here and Philip in Ac 8.6) did miraculous signs. **(9)** *Freedmen.* Men who had been freed from slavery. *Jews of...* In Libya, north Africa, Egypt, Asia Minor and Syria there were numerous Jewish communities. **(10)** *They could not stand up...* They could not accept Stephen’s preaching. **(11-14)** *Blasphemy against Moses and... Yahweh. We have heard...* Since Stephen was declaring that the worship of Yahweh was no longer restricted to the Temple (Ac 7:48-49), his opponents accused him to attack the Temple, the Law, Moses and, ultimately, Yahweh. **(15)** *His face was like the face of an angel.* Clearly reflecting his deep spiritual communion with Yahweh.

### **Stephen’s speech to the Sanhedrin** [Ac 7:1-53]

**(Ac 7:1)** *Then the High Priest asked him, “Are these charges true?”*

**(2)** *He replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! [Yahweh] the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. (3) ‘Leave your country and your people,’ Yahweh said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’*

**(4)** *So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, Yahweh sent him to this land where you are now living. (5) He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground, but promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. (6) Yahweh spoke to him in this way: ‘Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. (7) But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,’ Yahweh said, ‘and afterward they will come out of that country and worship Me in this place.’ (8) Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision. And [Abraham] became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day. And Isaac [became the father] of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.*

**(9)** *Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him into Egypt. But God was with him (10) and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave him wisdom and grace before the Pharaoh king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and all his house.*

*(11) Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our fathers could not find food. (12) When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers a first time. (13) On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. (14) After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. (15) Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. (16) Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a sum of silver.*

*(17) Then, as the time drew near for Yahweh to fulfill His promise to Abraham, our people in Egypt greatly increased. (18) Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. (19) He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers and forced them to expose their newborn babies so that they would not survive.*

*(20) At that time Moses was born, and he enjoyed Yahweh's favor. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. (21) When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. (22) Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.*

*(23) When Moses was forty years old, he felt the desire to visit his fellow Israelites. (24) When he saw one of them being mistreated, so he went to his defense and avenged him by striking the Egyptian. (25) He [Moses] thought that his brothers would realize that Yahweh was using him to rescue them, but they did not. (26) The next day Moses came upon [two] Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?'*

*(27) But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? (28) Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' (29) When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.*

*(30) After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. (31) When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord Yahweh's voice: (32) 'I am [Yahweh] the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' And Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.*

*(33) Then the Lord Yahweh said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. (34) I have seen the oppression of My people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.'*

*(35) This is the same Moses whom they had rejected saying, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' Yahweh sent him to be their ruler and deliverer, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. (36) He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert.*

*(37) This is the Moses who told the Israelites, 'Yahweh will send you a prophet like me from your own people.' (38) He [Moses] was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us.*

*(39) But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. (40) They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us, for we don't know what has happened to this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt!' (41) At that the time they made an idol in the form of a calf, brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made. (42) But Yahweh turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies, as it is written in the book of the prophets:*

*'Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings for forty years in the desert, O house of Israel? (43) Instead, you have lifted up the shrine of Molech and the star of your god Rephan, the idols you made to worship. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.'*

*(44) Our forefathers had the Tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert, made as He [Yahweh] who spoke directed Moses; according to the pattern he had seen. (45) Having received the Tabernacle in inheritance under Joshua, our fathers, until the time of David, brought it with them into the possessions of the Pagans, who Yahweh drove out before them. (46) He [David] enjoyed Yahweh's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for [Yahweh] the God of Jacob. (47) But it was Solomon who built the house for Him.*

*(48) However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says:*

*(49) 'Heaven is My throne, and the Earth is My footstool. What kind of house will you build for Me? -Says the Lord Yahweh- Or where will My resting place be? (50) Has not My hand made all these things?'*

*(51) You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Spirit of Yahweh [\*]! (52) Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One [Messiah], who now you have betrayed and murdered, (53) you who have received the Law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 7:1-50)** *The High Priest asked... he replied...* Stephen’s method of defense was to take a panoramic view of Jewish history, to show that each step of it was leading, with their continuous disobedience, to the final condemnation of the Jewish nation. **(2)** *Abraham... lived in Haran.* Genesis 11:31 tells that Terah (Abraham's father) moved with all his family from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran. And Genesis 15:7 actually tells that Abraham call actually came in Haran. **(4)** *His father.* Terah (Genesis 11:26-27). **(6)** *Your descendants... enslaved... four hundred years.* The length of Israel’s stay in Egypt. **(9)** *The patriarchs... sold him.* As at the beginning the patriarchs had betrayed Joseph (Genesis 37:12-36), so now the chiefs of the Jews had betrayed Jesus Christ. **(14)** *Jacob and... seventy-five in all.* The seventy mentioned in Genesis 46:27, plus two sons of Manasseh and two sons and one grandson of Ephraim (Genesis 46:20). **(16)** *Their bodies... placed in the tomb...* A greatly compressed account of the fields purchased by Abraham and Jacob and of the burial places at Hebron and Shechem. The tradition said that Joseph’s brothers were not buried in Egypt but in Canaan. **(18)** *Another king.* Probably Ahmose, the founder of the 18th dynasty, who expelled the Hyksos (foreign -predominantly Semitic- rulers of Egypt). **(23)** *When Moses was forty years old.* Stephen’s words agree with the tradition that Moses was 40 years old at his departure from Egypt. **(30-34)** *An angel appeared to Moses... he heard the Lord Yahweh’s voice.* The Hebrew for “angel” means “messenger;” in this case Yahweh’s personal messenger who, representing Him, could speak in behalf of and so be identified with Him. **(35)** *The same Moses... Yahweh sent him.* Israel rejected Moses, just as the Jews of Stephen’s time were rejecting Jesus, their deliverer, sent by Yahweh. **(37)** *A prophet... from your own people.* Jesus Christ, the human Son of Yahweh, His Messiah. **(38)** *The angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai.* According to Jewish interpretation of that time, the Law was given to Moses by an angel’s mediation -in the manner of his original call (Exodus 3:2). **(42-43)** *Did you...* A quotation from Amos 5:25-27, where Stephen replaced Damascus with Babylon. **(44-50)** *Tabernacle... built the house for Him.* Stephen had been accused of “speaking against the holy place” (Ac 6:13). So he concluded his defense with some considerations about the sanctuary. Clearly, Stephen had been preaching that the risen Christ had now replaced the Temple as the “mediator” of Yahweh’s presence among His people and the “one way” through whom they could come to Yahweh in prayer. *Heaven is My throne...* A quotation from Isaiah 66:1-2. **(51)** *Un-cir-*

*cumcised hearts and hears.* Though physically circumcised, they were acting like the un-circumcised Pagan nations around them. **(52)** *They even killed... now you have...* Stephen insisted that the Jews had always persecuted the prophets; and that now they went so far as to murder the Son of Yahweh. **(53)** *The Law... through angels.* According to Jewish interpretation of that time, the Law was given to Moses by angel mediation -in the manner of his original call (Ex 3:2).

### **The stoning of Stephen** [Ac 7:54-60; 8:1a]

**(Ac 7:54)** *When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. (55)But [Stephen], full of the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], looked up to Heaven and saw the glory of Yahweh, and Jesus standing at the right hand of Yahweh. (56)“Look,” he said, “I see Heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of Yahweh.”*

**(57)** *At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, (58)dragged him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

**(59)** *And they stoned Stephen, who prayed saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (60)Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord Yahweh, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

**(8:1a)** *And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 7:54-58)** *When... [Stephen]... said, “I see... the Son of Man...”* A speech like Stephen’s, followed by what to the Sanhedrin seemed the greatest of blasphemies, could have only one end: death by stoning. *The witnesses laid their clothes...* To be more free in their movements, for those who had testified against the accused had to begin the stoning. **(59-60)** *Lord Jesus... Lord Yahweh, do not hold...* Words comparable to Jesus’ words on the cross. **(8:1a)** *Saul was there.* The man who was to become the apostle to the Gentiles fully agreed with the execution of Stephen.

### **The Church persecuted and scattered** [Ac 8:1b-3]

**(Ac 8:1b)** *On that day a great persecution broke out against the Church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. (2)Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. (3)And Saul began to destroy the Church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.*

**(Ac 8:1b)** *A great persecution broke out.* The death of Stephen was the signal for an outbreak of heavy persecution. *All except the apostles... scattered.* For the apostles to stay in Jerusalem would be an encouragement to those in prison and a center of appeal to those scattered. **(2)** *Godly men buried Stephen.* Instead of leaving his body to be eaten by wild animals, as it was usually done. **(3)** *Saul began to destroy...* The Greek word used for “destroy” denotes brutal cruelty.

**Philip in Samaria** [Ac 8:4-8]

**(Ac 8:4)** *Those who had been scattered went around preaching the Word.* **(5)** *Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ [Messiah] to them.* **(6)** *When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.* **(7)** *With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.* **(8)** *So there was great joy in that city.*

**(Ac 8:4)** *Those... scattered went around preaching.* The persecution in Jerusalem had the -good- consequence of speeding up the diffusion of the Gospel. **(5)** *Philip.* One of the Seven (Ac 6:1-7). *The city of Samaria.* Probably the old capital Samaria, renamed Sebaste or Neapolis (modern Nablus). **(6-7)** *Philip... the miraculous signs he did...* After the laying on of the apostles’ hands, Acts reports of two of the Seven (Philip here and Stephen in Ac 6:8) as working miraculous signs. **(8)** *Great joy.* Both for the healing of many people and for learning the Good News of their admission to the Kingdom of Yahweh.

**Simon the sorcerer** [Ac 8:9-25]

**(Ac 8:9)** *Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, (10)and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is that power of Yahweh which is called Great.” (11)They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. (12)Then, when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (13)Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw happening.*

**(14)** *When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the Word of Yahweh, they sent Peter and John to them. (15)When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], (16)*

*because It [\*] had not yet come upon any of them; they had been simply baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (17) Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Spirit of Yahweh [\*].*

*(18) When Simon saw that the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money (19) and said. "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Spirit of Yahweh [\*]."*

*(20) But Peter answered him: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of Yahweh with money! (21) You will have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before Yahweh. (22) Repent of this wickedness, pray to the Lord Yahweh, and perhaps you will be forgiven for such a thought in your heart. (23) For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."*

*(24) Then Simon answered, saying, "Pray to the Lord Yahweh for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."*

*(25) When they had testified and proclaimed the Word of the Lord Yahweh, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in many Samaritan villages.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 8:9-11)** *Simon... power of Yahweh... called Great.* Simon Magus, the "sorcerer" is considered the "father" of Gnostic teaching. He was well known in Samaria for his magic arts and considered himself as the chief representative of Yahweh. **(12-13)** *Then, when... Simon... believed and was baptized.* Clearly, his faith was not genuine, and he followed Philip trying to learn his kind of "magic," as confirmed by Peter's statement that his heart was not "right before Yahweh" (Ac 8:21). **(14)** *The apostles... sent Peter and John.* The apostles had assumed the responsibility of inspecting the new communities of believers. **(15-16)** *Simply baptized.* Baptism -a sign of repentance for adults and of introduction to the Christian community for new-born- is not enough to grant full spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus. **(17)** *Placed their hands on them.* At the time only the apostles were the full representatives of Yahweh and had the power of granting His spiritual communion by the laying of hands. **(18-19)** *Simon... offered them money.* Simon had boasted of having great powers (Ac 8:9-10), and now thought he could buy this new magical power from the apostles. **(20-23)** *Peter answered...* Peter clearly understood that Simon was only interested in the power and prestige this would bring to himself. **(24)** *Simon answe-*



*red...* Simon did not change his mind, for his answer shows that he did not understand the moral seriousness of his request. **(25)** *They returned to Jerusalem.* After fulfilling their responsibility of inspecting and spiritually fortifying the new community of believers.

**Philip and the Ethiopian** [Ac 8:26-40]

**(Ac 8:26)** *Now an angel of the Lord Yahweh spoke to Philip and said, "Go south to the road -the desert road- that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."* **(27)** *And he rose and went. And an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, had come to Jerusalem to worship, (28)and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah the prophet. (29)The spirit [angel] told Philip, "Go up and join that chariot."*

**(30)** *Philip run up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.*

**(31)** *"How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.*

**(32)** *The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:*

*'As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. (33)In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the Earth.'*

**(34)** *The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" (35)Then Philip opened his mouth, beginning from that Scripture, and told him the Good News about Jesus.*

**(36)** *As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" (37)And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of Yahweh." (38)And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (39)When they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord Yahweh [\*]came on the eunuch and the spirit [angel] took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. (40)Philip, then, found himself at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the Gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 8:26)** *From Jerusalem to Gaza.* A distance of about 50 miles (80 km).

(27) *Ethiopian*. In that period Ethiopia corresponded to modern Nubia, from the upper Nile region at the first cataract (Aswan) to Khartoum. *Candace*. The traditional title of the queen, responsible for performing the secular duties of the reigning king -who was thought to be too sacred for such activities. *Had come to Jerusalem to worship*. Most probably he was a Yahweh-fearer -a Gentile who had accepted the high moral standards of Jewish monotheism but did not follow the too many rabbinic regulations- not a convert, as his poor knowledge of Scripture shows (Ac 8:31,34). **(28-31)** *Reading... Philip... heard the man...* It was customary practice to read aloud. **(32-33)** *As a sheep led...* A quotation from Isaiah 53:7-8. **(34-35)** *Philip... beginning from... and told him...* Philip may have identified the suffering servant with the Davidic Messiah of Isaiah 11 and with the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13. *Good News*. The way of spiritual salvation through Jesus Christ. **(36-38)** *If you believe with... I believe that...* At the time baptism was mainly adult baptism of converts and, whenever possible, by immersion in running water to symbolize that, as the water cleansed the man's body, so his soul was cleansed by the grace of Jesus Christ. **(39)** *The Spirit of... Yahweh... came on the eunuch*. A necessary divine intervention, for tradition has it that this eunuch evangelized Ethiopia. **(40)** *Azotus*. A town near the coast, 19 miles (30.6 km) north of Gaza and 60 miles (96 km) south of Caesarea.

### **Saul's conversion** [Ac 9:1-19a]

**(Ac 9:1)** *Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord Jesus' disciples. He went to the High Priest (2) and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. (3) As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from Heaven flashed around him. (4) He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"*

**(5)** *"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.*

**"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. (6) "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."**

**(7)** *The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the voice but did not see anyone. (8) Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. (9) For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*

**(10)** *In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord Jesus called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"*

*Yes, Lord Jesus," he answered.*

*(11)The Lord Jesus told him, “Get up and go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. (12)In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”*

*(13)“Lord Jesus,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. (14)And here he has the authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”*

*(15)But the Lord Jesus told him, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles, the kings and the people of Israel. (16)I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”*

*(17)Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on him, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*].” (18)Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, (19a)and after taking some food, he regained his strength.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 9:1)** *Saul... murderous threats.* After the stoning of Stephen (Ac 7:58), Saul was involved in the death of other believers in Jesus (Ac 22:4; 26:10). **(2)** *Damascus.* Located in the Roman province of Syria, at 150 miles (240 km) from Jerusalem, it had a large Jewish population. *The Way.* A name for Christianity. Jesus called himself “the Way” (Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus the way to the Father. Jn 14:5-14). *Prisoners in Jerusalem.* Where the full authority of the Sanhedrin could be exercised. **(3)** *A light from Heaven.* It was “about noon” (Ac 26:13). **(4)** *You persecute me.* To persecute the Church is to persecute Jesus Christ, because all Christians are in spiritual communion with Jesus and Yahweh. **(5-6)** *Who are you, Lord?* Traditionally, such a voice from Heaven would have been understood as the voice of Yahweh Himself. **(7)** *Heard the voice but did not see...* Furthermore, they “did not understand” what the voice was saying (Ac 22:9). Jesus’ revelation of himself was for Saul only. **(8-9)** *They led him by the hand... he was blind.* Saul, who had intended to enter Damascus like an avenging fury, went in blind and helpless. **(10)** *Ananias.* A Jew-Christian, mentioned elsewhere only in Ac 22:12. The Greek name derives from the Hebrew Haniah (The Lord Yahweh shows grace). **(11-12)** *Straight Street.* The main road, which crossed Damascus from east to west. **(13-14)** *Ananias answered...*

*red...* Clearly, Ananias was quite worried for having to meet one of the worst enemies of Christianity. **(15)** *My chosen instrument.* Saul (Paul), a Jew, a trained Pharisee, a Roman citizen, a man accustomed to Greek customs (he was born and spent his youth in Gentile Tarsus) was the necessary instrument for carrying the Word of Yahweh to the Gentiles. **(16)** *Has to suffer for my name.* Clearly, Paul was told everything by Jesus; what he had to do and what it would cost to him. **(17)** *Jesus, who appeared to you.* The experience on the road to Damascus was not a mere vision. The resurrected Jesus Christ actually appeared to Saul, and on this fact Saul based his qualification to be an apostle (Paul's thought. 1 Co 9:1; 15:8). **(18-19)** *Immediately...* When Ananias placed his hands on Saul, he was healed and put in deep spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus.

**Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem** [Ac 9:19b-31]

**(Ac 9:19b)** *Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. (20) At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of Yahweh. (21) All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" (22) Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that he [Jesus] is the Christ [Messiah].*

**(23)** *After many days had gone by, the [chiefs of the] Jews conspired to kill him, (24) but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. (25) But his followers took him and, by night, lowered him in a basket through the wall.*

**(26)** *When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. (27) But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord Jesus and that the Lord Jesus had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. (28) So he stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. (29) He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. (30) When the brothers heard of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.*

**(31)** *Then the Church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened and, encouraged by the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord Yahweh.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 9:19b-20)** *Saul... began to preach.* Immediately after his baptism. *In the synagogues.* It became Saul's regular practice to preach at every opportunity in the synagogues wherever he went. *Jesus is the Son of Yahweh.* Saul's message was a declaration of what he himself had become convinced of on the road to Damascus: that Jesus was the Messiah of Yahweh and His Son. **(21-22)** *Isn't he the man...?* His drastic change of mind clearly surprised all the Jews living in Damascus. **(23)** *After many days.* Actually, after three years (Paul's thought. Gal 1:17-18), which Paul spent mainly in Arabia, away from Damascus, though the borders of Arabia extended to the environs of Damascus. *The [chiefs of the] Jews conspired to kill him.* After Saul's return to Damascus, the governor under king Aretas ordered his arrest (Paul's thought. 2 Co 11:32). **(24-25)** *Lowered him in a basket.* As written in a letter by Paul himself (Paul's thought. 2 Co 11:33). *Through the wall.* Through a window in the wall. **(26)** *When he came to Jerusalem.* All the apostles were away except Peter (Paul's thought. Gal 1:19). **(27)** *Barnabas... told them...* Barnabas, introduced by Luke in Ac 4:36, will later become an important companion of Paul. He was the first one in Jerusalem who believed to the sincerity of his conversion. **(28)** *Saul stayed with them.* For two weeks (Paul's thought. Gal 1:18). **(29)** *Grecian Jews.* Jews living outside Palestine. **(30)** *Down to Caesarea.* To avoid been killed in Jerusalem, Saul escaped to Caesarea, the headquarters of the Roman procurators, where the chief Jews of Jerusalem had no power. **(30)** *Tarsus.* An important town of Cilicia, where Saul was born and spent most of his youth. From his native town Saul began his ministry in Syria and Cilicia, a ministry which lasted more than four years. **(31)** *The Church... enjoyed a time of peace.* The period between the first persecution (Ac 8:1b) and the second one (Ac 12:1).

### **Aeneas and Dorcas** [Ac 9:32-43]

**(Ac 9:32)** *As Peter traveled about the whole area, he went to the saints living in Lydda. (33) There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. (34) "Aeneas," Peter said to him, "Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. (35) All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord Jesus.*

**(36)** *In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas [Gazelle]), who was always doing good and helping the poor. (37) About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. (38) Lydda was near Joppa; so the disciples, who heard that Peter was in Lydda, sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"*

*(39) Peter got up and went with them, and when he arrived he was taken to the upstairs room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.*

*(40) Peter sent all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, looked at Peter and sat up. (41) He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the saints and the widows and presented her to them alive. (42) This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord Jesus. (43) He [Peter] stayed in Joppa for many days with a tanner named Simon.*

**(Ac 9:32)** *Lydda.* A town north of the road from Jerusalem to the coastal town of Joppa, about 12 miles (19 km) from the sea. **(33-34)** *Aeneas... Jesus Christ heals you.* Peter said these words to make clear to all the presents that the power to heal was not his own, that he was acting in the name of Jesus Christ. **(35)** *Sharon.* A village in the neighborhood of Lydda, bearing the same name as the plain of Sharon -a fertile plain, 50 miles (80 km) long, running along the coast, from Joppa to Caesarea. **(36)** *Joppa.* The main sea-port of Judea, about 38 miles (61 km) from Jerusalem. Today is known as Jaffa and is a suburb of Tel Aviv. **(37)** *Her body... placed in an upstairs room.* In Jerusalem the body had to be buried the day the person died, but outside Jerusalem up to three days were allowed. **(38)** *Come at once!* Peter was urged to hurry -probably more for moral consolation than in the hope of a miracle- in order to arrive before the burial. **(39-40)** *Peter... sent all out of the room... and prayed.* To be in condition of praying, Peter had to send all those noisy women out. And he prayed to make clear that, as in the case of Aeneas, the power to heal was not his own, that he was acting in the name of Jesus Christ. **(41-42)** *Presented her... alive. Many people believed.* Clearly, the main purpose of such a miracle was to convince as many people as possible to come to the faith. Tabitha was already spiritually saved; to prolong her terrestrial life was not so important to her. **(43)** *A tanner.* According to Jewish law a tanner, involved in treating the skin of dead animals, was unclean; so he was despised by many. Peter's decision to stay with him shows his willingness to reject Jewish prejudice.

### **Cornelius calls for Peter** [Ac 10:1-8]

*(Ac 10:1) At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Cohort called Italian. (2) He was devout and Yahweh-fearing, with all his household; he gave generously to the people and prayed to Yahweh re-*

gularly. (3) One day at about the ninth hour [3 PM] he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of Yahweh, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

(4) Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, sir?" he asked.

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before Yahweh. (5) Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. (6) He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

(7) When the angel who spoke to him had gone, He called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. (8) He told them everything and sent them to Joppa.

**(Ac 10:1)** *Caesarea.* Named in honor of Augustus Caesar, it was the headquarters of the Roman forces of occupation. *Centurion.* The commander of a century, a military unit of 100 men. To note that all the centurions mentioned in the New Testament appear to have noble qualities. *Cohort... Italian.* One of the ten regiments in which a Roman legion, composed by 6,000 men, was divided. (2) *Yahweh-fearing.* A non-Jew, who believed in one God and respected the ethical and moral teaching of the Jews, but did not follow all the Rabbinic regulations. (3) *A vision.* Not a dream or trance but a revelation through a messenger of Yahweh. (4) *Memorial offering.* The portion of the grain offering burned on the altar was called "memorial" (Leviticus 2:2). (5-8) *Now send men... Cornelius sent them.* The angel did not justify his order but Cornelius had no doubt and complied promptly. *He told them everything.* Cornelius had no secrets for his Yahweh-fearing subordinates.

### **Peter's vision** [Ac 10:9-23a]

(Ac 10:9) About the sixth hour [Noon] the following day, as they were going on their journey and approaching the city [Caesarea], Peter went up on the roof to pray. (10) He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. (11) He saw Heaven opened and a kind of vessel coming down, like a large sheet being led down to Earth by its four corners. (12) It contained all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the ground and the birds of the air. (13) Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

(14) "Surely not, sir!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

(15) The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call impure what Yahweh has made clean."

*(16) This happened three times, and immediately the vessel was taken back to Heaven.*

*(17) While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius, having asked for Simon's house, stood at the door. (18) They called out, asking if Simon, called Peter, was staying there.*

*(19) While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] said to him, "There are three men who are looking for you. (20) So get up, go downstairs and do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."*

*(21) Peter went down to the men and said, "I'm the one you are looking for. Why have you come?"*

*(22) They replied, "Cornelius the centurion, a righteous and Yahweh-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people, was ordered by a holy angel to have you come to his house so that he could listen to your words."*

*(23a) Then Peter called them in to be his guests.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 10:9)** *They were going...* The men sent to Peter by Cornelius. *Up on the roof to pray.* Palestine houses had flat roofs with outside stairways. The roof was used as a place for relaxation and privacy. **(10-11)** *Fell into a trance.* A state of mind induced by Yahweh to communicate with Peter by means of a vision. **(12-13)** *All the four-footed animals... Kill and eat.* All, both the clean and the unclean (Leviticus 11). **(14)** *Surely not, sir!* The observance of the laws of clean and unclean was so deeply ingrained in Peter that he couldn't obey immediately to the angelic order. **(15-16)** *Do not call impure what...* The animals of the vision were only a pictorial image as, actually, the voice told Peter not to consider unclean anything or anybody Yahweh had decided to make clean. *Three times.* To impress both the image and the words with absolute clarity in Peter's mind. **(17-18)** *Peter was wondering.* Clearly, at this point Peter didn't know yet the actual meaning of his vision. **(19-20)** *The Spirit of Yahweh said to him... I have sent them.* This is the explanation of Peter's vision: Yahweh had made the Gentiles "clean" and Peter had to welcome them in the brotherhood of the Church. **(21-22)** *Peter went... They replied...* They had come because of the order of an angel of Yahweh (Ac 10:3-6), a confirmation that Yahweh had "made them clean." **(23a)** *Peter called them in.* By providing lodging for them, Peter took the first step toward accepting the Gentiles, for such action was contrary to the prescriptions of the Rabbinic law.



**Peter at Cornelius' house** [Ac 10:23b-48]

**(Ac 10:23b)** *The next day [Peter] started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. (24)The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. (25)As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. (26)But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."*

*(27)Talking with him, he went inside and, founding a large gathering of people, (28)said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But Yahweh has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean. (29)So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. Now I ask you, why do you sent for me?"*

*(30)Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at the ninth hour [three PM]. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me (31)and said, 'Cornelius, Yahweh has heard your prayer and your gifts to the poor had been remembered before Yahweh. (32)Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' (33)So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of Yahweh to listen to everything the Lord Yahweh has commanded you to tell us."*

*(34)Then Peter began to speak and said: "I now truly realize that Yahweh does not shows favoritism (35)but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right. (36)[Regarding] the message Yahweh sent to the people of Israel, telling the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, (37)you know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached. (38)Yahweh anointed Jesus of Nazareth with His Spirit [\*] and power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because Yahweh was with him.*

*(39)We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, (40)but Yahweh raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen, (41)not by all the people, but by witnesses whom Yahweh had already chosen -by us who ate and drank with him after his resurrection from the dead. (42)And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he was appointed by Yahweh as judge of the living and the dead. (43)And all the prophets testify about this: everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

*(44)While Peter was still speaking these words, the Spirit of Yahweh [\*]*

came on all who were listening to the Word. **(45)** *The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] had been poured out even on the Gentiles. (46) For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising Yahweh.*

Then Peter said, **(47)** *“Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Spirit of Yahweh just as we have.” (48) So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 10:23b-24)** *[Peter]... arrived in Caesarea. The distance (30 miles, 48 km) required more than one day traveling. Some of the brothers. Six in number (Ac 11:12), they all were Jew-Christians (Ac 10:45). (25-26) Cornelius... fell at his feet. I am only a man. Possibly Cornelius was only intending to honor him, but Peter did not want to allow any possibility for a misunderstanding: no created being has to be worshiped. (27-29) Yahweh has shown me. Peter had understood that his vision (Ac 10:11-16) had a deeper significance than declaring invalid the distinction between clean and unclean food; that the barrier between Jew and Gentile had been finally removed. (30-33) Four days ago. Four, not three, as the Jews counted a part of a day as a day. A man in shining clothes. A common way to describe an angel appearing in human form. (34-36) Yahweh does not show favoritism. Cornelius, who already worshipped [Yahweh] the true God, needed something more: faith in Jesus Christ and in his work of spiritual salvation. (37-40) What has happened... A summary of the most essential facts, from John’s baptism to Jesus’ resurrection. (41-42) Not by all the people, but... by us who ate and drank... Those who ate with Jesus after he rose from the dead -his closest disciples- received unmistakable evidence of his bodily resurrection. He commanded us. They had to bring their physical and spiritual testimony to all people. (43) All the prophets testify. A clear declaration that the spiritual salvation -through Jesus Christ- of all men -both Jew and Gentile- was announced in the Scriptures. (44-46) The Spirit of Yahweh came. Possibly with some visible manifestation as at Pentecost (Ac 2: 2-3). Astonished... even on the Gentiles. Evidently the early Jew-Christians had difficulty to understand and accept that the Gospel -the Good News of the Kingdom of Yahweh open to everybody- was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. (47) Can anyone keep...? After the Yahweh-fearing Gentiles had received the same gift as the Jewish believers, it was clear that they had*

to be fully accepted as brothers. **(48)** *Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.* The fact that they were baptized after entering in spiritual communion with Yahweh (after “receiving the Spirit of Yahweh”) shows what baptism truly is: a ceremony of introduction of a new believer in the Christian Community, symbolizing that, as the water cleanses the man’s body, so his soul is cleansed by Jesus Christ’s grace.

***Peter explains his actions [Ac 11:1-18]***

*(Ac 11:1)The apostles and the brothers living in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the Word of Yahweh. (2)So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him (3)and said, “You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.”*

*(4)Then Peter explained to them precisely from the beginning; (5)“I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw a kind of vessel coming down, like a large sheet being let down from Heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. (6)I looked into it and saw the four-footed animals, the wild beasts and the reptiles of the ground, and the birds of the sky. (7)Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’*

*(8)I replied, ‘Surely not, Sir! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’*

*(9)And the voice spoke from Heaven a second time, ‘Do not call anything impure that Yahweh has made clean.’ (10)This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to Heaven again.*

*(11)Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying. (12)The Spirit of Yahweh [\*] told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. (13)He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. (14)He will tell you words through which you and all your household will be saved.’*

*(15)As I began to speak, the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] came on them as He had come on us at the beginning. (16)Then I remembered what the Lord Jesus had said: ‘**John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*].**’ (17)So if Yahweh gave them the same gift as He gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose Yahweh?”*

*(18)When they heard this, they became quiet and praised Yahweh, saying, “So then, Yahweh has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.”*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 11:1-3)** *The apostles and the brothers... criticized him...* By eating with some Gentiles Peter had broken the ancestral law and the traditions of his people. We usually don’t realize how near Christianity was to becoming only another kind of Judaism. All the first Christians were Jews and all their traditions would have convinced them to keep the Good News for themselves, excluding completely the Gentiles. **(4-16)** *Peter explained...* Peter’s defense was not an argument; it was a statement of the facts (Ac 10: 9-48). Whatever his critics could say, the Spirit of Yahweh had come on these Gentiles, showing what the will of Yahweh was. **(17)** *Yahweh gave them the same gift...* At that point, clearly Peter could not deny the Gentiles the invitation to be baptized (Ac 10:47) and to become full members of the Christian Community. **(18)** *When they heard...* The Jew-Christians were compelled to recognize that Yahweh was going to save the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews. The door to salvation was being opened to the Gentiles by divine action rather than by human choice.

### **The Church in Antioch** [Ac 11:19-30]

**(Ac 11:19)** *Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the Word to none except Jews. (20)Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and spoke to Greeks also, telling them the Good News about the Lord Jesus. (21)The Lord Yahweh’s hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord Yahweh.*

**(22)** *News of this reached the ears of the Church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. (23)When he arrived and he saw the grace of Yahweh, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord Yahweh with all their hearts. (24)He was a good man, full of the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord Yahweh.*

**(25)** *Then he [Barnabas] went to Tarsus to look for Saul, (26)and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the Church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

**(27)** *In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. (28)One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] predicted that there would be a severe famine over the whole land [Palestine]. And this happened during the reign of Claudius. (29)Then the*

*disciples, each according to his means, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. (30) This they did, sending their gifts to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 11:19-21)** *Those... scattered by the persecution... spoke to Greeks.* Some of the Jew-Christians who fled from Jerusalem did not limit their teaching to the Jews only but, pushed by Yahweh (“Yahweh’s hand was with them”) began teaching to the Gentiles. *Antioch.* The third city of the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria). The first largely Gentile local Church was located there, and it was from this Church that Paul launched his three missionary journeys. **(22-24)** *They sent Barnabas...* Clearly, the apostles so much trusted Barnabas that they gave him the responsibility of inspecting this new community of believers. **(25-26)** *Barnabas... brought him to Antioch.* Barnabas immediately understood that a Gentile-Christian Church located in a town as Antioch required the presence and the guidance of a particular man; a man of double background (both Jewish and Gentile) and of strong character. And he knew that Saul was such a man. *Christians.* The term means “belonging to Christ.” **(27)** *Some prophets.* Christians having received the gift of prophecy (either to preach, or exhort, or explain, or foretell -as in this case). **(28)** *Agabus.* Later, he will foretell Paul’s imprisonment (Ac 21:10-11). **(29)** *The disciples... decided to provide help.* This decision shows the spiritual and moral unity of the Christian Church. When one part of the Church was in trouble, other parts took action providing all the help they could. **(30)** *Elders.* In a growing Church, under the supervision of the apostles, they were in charge of looking after the daily necessities of the community.

**Peter’s miraculous escape from prison** [Ac 12:1-19a]

**(Ac 12:1)** *It was about this time that king Herod laid his hands on some who belonged to the Church, to persecute them. (2) He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. (3) Then, when he saw that this pleased the [chiefs of the] Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. (4) After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover.*

**(5)** *So Peter was kept in prison, and the Church was earnestly praying to Yahweh for him.*

(6) *The very night when Herod was to bring him out to the people, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. (7) Suddenly an angel of the Lord Yahweh appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off his hands.*

(8) *Then the angel said to him, "Put on your belt and sandals." And he did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," he told him. (9) Peter went out and followed him, but he did not know that what the angel was doing was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. (10) They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened before them by itself. They went out and walked along one street; and suddenly the angel left him.*

(11) *Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know that the Lord Yahweh has really sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's hands and from everything the Jewish people were expecting."*

(12) *After he had thought over this, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. (13) When he knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. (14) When she recognized Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the door but run in and told that Peter was standing at the door.*

(15) *"You're out of your mind," they told her. But she kept insisting that it was so. They said, "It is his angel."*

(16) *But Peter kept on knocking. And when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. (17) Motioning with his hand for them to be silent, he described to them how the Lord Yahweh had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.*

(18) *In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. (19a) After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.*

**(Ac 12:1)** *King Herod.* Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great and son of Aristobulus. He was a nephew of Herod Antipas -who had beheaded John the Baptist- and the father of Agrippa II, before whom Paul made his famous speech (Ac 26). When Antipas was exiled, Agrippa I received his tetrarchy as well as those of Philip and Lysanias. Later he received also Judea and Samaria. **(2)** *James... John.* The apostles sons of Zebedee. *Killed*

*with the sword. Beheaded. (3) This pleased the [chiefs of the] Jews.* Herod Agrippa had been educated in Rome, but was popular with the orthodox Jews because he kept the law and all Jewish observances. *The Days of the Unleavened Bread.* The week following the Jewish Passover, during which no leaven was allowed. **(4) Four squads.** One company of four soldiers for each of the four watches of the night. *After the Passover.* During the week-long festival no trial or execution could be carried out. **(5-6) Peter was... in prison... sleeping between two soldiers, bound...** The greatest precautions had been taken to see that Peter would not escape. **(7-10) An angel.. appeared...** Here Luke leaves no doubts: Peter's escape was an act of Yahweh. *Went out...* Most probably the tower of Antonia, located at the north-west corner of the Temple -the "barracks" where Paul was later held (Ac 21:34). **(11) Peter came to himself.** Only when he found himself alone in a street of Jerusalem, Peter understood what had happened to him. **(12-16) Mary the mother of... Mark.** The aunt of Barnabas (Paul's thought. Col 4:10). Her house was a gathering place for Christians. **(17) Tell James.** Jesus Christ's brother who, after his death and resurrection had become a leader in the Church at Jerusalem (Paul's thought. Gal 1:19). **(18-19a) No small commotion... Herod... ordered that they be executed.** Herod's intention was to put Peter to death, and the soldiers were executed because it was the law that, if a criminal escaped, his guards should suffer the penalty he would have suffered.

### **Herod Agrippa I's death** [Ac 12:19b-25]

**(Ac 12:19b)** *Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there a while. (20) At that time he had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. Having secured the support of Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.*

**(21)** *On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and made an oration to them. (22) The people shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." (23) Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to Yahweh, an angel of the Lord Yahweh struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.*

**(24)** *And the Word of Yahweh continued to increase and spread.*

**(25)** *Then Barnabas and Saul, having finished their mission, returned from Jerusalem taking with them John, also called Mark.*

**(Ac 12:19b)** *Caesarea.* Both the headquarters of the Roman procurators and the capital of the kings appointed by Rome. **(20) Tyre and Sidon.** The

main cities of Phoenicia (Lebanon today). They were dependent on the grainfields of Galilee for their food. *Blastus*. The treasurer, the officer who managed the household of king Herod. **(21-23)** *On the appointed day... wearing his royal robes...* The Roman historian Josephus writes that during a festival he was celebrating in honor of Claudius Caesar, Herod was wearing a silver robe, dazzling bright. And, when the people acclaimed him as a god and he not denied it, he was seized with violent pains, was carried out and died few days later (Josephus. Antiquities 19.8.2). **(24)** *The Word of Yahweh... spread.* Third summary report of progress (first two in Ac 6:7 and 9:31). **(25)** *Finished their mission.* Saul and Barnabas had been sent to the Church of Jerusalem with the help provided by the Antiochian believers (Ac 11:30). *John... called Mark.* The author of one of the Gospels. He was the young man who fled naked on the night of Jesus' arrest (Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus arrested. Mk 14:51-52). He accompanied Barnabas (his cousin) and Saul on the first part of their first missionary journey (Ac 13:13).

***Barnabas and Saul sent off [Ac 13:1-3]***

**(Ac 13:1)** *In the Church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. (2) While they were worshipping the Lord Yahweh and fasting, the Spirit of yahweh [\*] said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (3) So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 13:1)** *Prophets.* As Agabus (Ac 11:28), they were wandering preachers dedicated to spread everywhere the Word of Yahweh. *Teachers.* As Barnabas and Saul (Ac 11:26), they were the men in the local Churches whose duty was to instruct the converts. *Manaen.* The foster brother of Herod Antipas. **(2)** *Worshipping the Lord Yahweh and fasting...* Paul's first missionary journey did not result from a planning session but from Yahweh's initiative. **(3)** *They placed their hands on them.* A ceremonial act, performed by the visiting prophets (Yahweh's decision probably was communicated by them) to officialize Barnabas and Saul's new mission.

**Note:** Acts 13 and 14 tell the story of the first missionary journey. Paul and Barnabas set out from Antioch in Syria, which was 15 miles (24 km) up the



River Orontes, and sailed from Seleucia, Antioch's port. From there they went across the sea to Cyprus where they preached at Salamis and Paphos. From Paphos they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia where Paul caught malaria. They went inland and came to Antioch in Pisidia. When things grew too dangerous there they went 90 miles (145 km) further to Iconium. When their lives were threatened there they moved on to Lystra, about 20 miles (32 km) away. After suffering a serious and dangerous attack there they passed on to Derbe. From Derbe they set out to home, going back to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia on the way. After preaching in Perga in Pamphylia, they took ship from Attalia, the main port of Pamphylia, and sailed via Seleucia to Antioch in Syria. The whole journey took about three years.

**On Cyprus** [Ac 13:4-12]

*(Ac 13:4) The two of them, sent on their way by the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. (5) When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the Word of Yahweh in the Jewish synagogues. John [Mark] was with them as their helper.*

*(6) Then they traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, (7) who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. He sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the Word of Yahweh. (8) But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the Faith. (9) Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], looked straight at him and said, (10) "You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord Yahweh? (11) Now the hand of the Lord Yahweh is against you. You will be blind and you will not see the sun till the stated time."*

*Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. (12) When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 13:4)** *The two of them.* Barnabas and Saul. *Seleucia.* The seaport of Antioch. *Cyprus.* Many Jews lived there, and the Gospel had already been

preached there (Ac 11:19). **(5) Salamis.** A town on the east coast of the central plain of Cyprus, near modern Famagusta. *John*. Mark, the evangelist, cousin of Barnabas. **(6) Paphos.** At the western end of Cyprus, nearly 100 miles (160 km) from Salamis. It was the headquarters of the Romans. *Bar-Jesus.* “Bar” is Aramaic for “son of.” **(7) Proconsul.** Since Cyprus was a Roman senatorial province, a proconsul was assigned to it. **(8) Elymas.** A Semitic name meaning “sorcerer” or “magician” or “wise man.” *Tried to turn the proconsul from the Faith.* Fearing the end of his good days as private fortune-teller of Sergius Paulus. **(9-11) Saul... Paul.** From now on, the apostle will always be called Paul. *Paul... said, “You will be blind...”* A divine harsh but temporary (“you... will not see... till the stated time”) punishment for his opposition to Paul’s preaching. **(12) The proconsul... believed.** He was convinced by both the miracle and the message.

**In Pisidian Antioch** [Ac 13:13-52]

**(Ac 13:13)** From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John [Mark] left them to return to Jerusalem. **(14)** From Perga they went on to Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. **(15)** After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them saying, “Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, speak.”

**(16)** Then Paul, standing up, motioned with his hand and said: “Men of Israel and you [Gentiles] who worship Yahweh, listen to me! **(17)** [Yahweh] the God of the people of Israel chose our fathers; He made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt, with mighty power he led them out of that country, **(18)** He endured their conduct and cared for them for about forty years in the desert, **(19)** He overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land as inheritance [to His people]. **(20)** All this took about four hundred and fifty years.

After this, Yahweh gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. **(21)** Then the people asked for a king, and He gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. **(22)** After removing Saul, He made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after My own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’

**(23)** From this man’s descendants Yahweh has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as He promised. **(24)** Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. **(25)** As John was completing his work, he said: ‘Who do you think I am? I am not that one. No, but one is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

(26) Brothers, children of Abraham, and you Yahweh-fearing [Gentiles], it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. (27) The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. (28) Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. (29) When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. (30) But Yahweh raised him from the dead, (31) and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

(32) We tell you the Good News: What He promised to our fathers (33) Yahweh has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

*'You are My Son; today I have become your Father.'*

(34) The fact that Yahweh raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

*'I will give you the holy and sure blessing promised to David.'*

(35) So it is stated elsewhere:

*'You will not let Your Holy One see decay.'*

(36) For when David had served Yahweh's purpose in his generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and saw his body decay. (37) But the One whom Yahweh raised from the dead did not see decay.

(38) Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through him [Jesus] the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. (39) Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. (40) Take care that what the prophets had said does not happen to you:

(41) *'Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.'*

(42) As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, they invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. (43) When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of Yahweh.

(44) On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the Word of the Lord Yahweh. (45) When the [chiefs of the] Jews saw the crowd, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.

(46) Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak

*the Word of Yahweh to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. (47) For this is what the Lord Yahweh has commanded us:*

*'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the Earth.'*

*(48) When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the Word of the Lord Yahweh; and all who believed were appointed for eternal life.*

*(49) The Word of the Lord Yahweh spread through the whole region. (50) But the [chiefs of the] Jews incited the Yahweh-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. (51) So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. (52) And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Spirit of Yahweh [\*].*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 13:13)** *Perga.* The capital of Pamphylia, a coastal province of Asia Minor, was 5 miles (8 km) inland and 12 miles (19 km) east of the important seaport Attalia. *John [Mark] left them.* The reason for him going back to Jerusalem is not known, but Paul was very dissatisfied with his departure (Ac 15:37-39). **(14)** *Antioch.* Named after the king of Syria Antiochus. The city, which had a large Jewish population, was a Roman colony, which means that a substantial number of retired Roman veterans was settled there. *Pisidia.* A district located in the northern part of the Roman province of Pamphylia. *Entered the synagogue.* Paul's regular practice was to begin his preaching in the local synagogue as long as the Jews would allow it. **(15)** *The Law and the Prophets.* Sections from the Pentateuch and from the Books of the Prophets were read, followed by expositions and exhortations. *Brothers... speak.* It was customary to invite visitors, especially visiting rabbis (such as Paul) to address the gathering. **(16)** *Paul... said...* The audience was composed by Jews and Yahweh-fearing Gentiles, people who knew Jewish Scriptures. To note that what follows is the only full-length report of a sermon by Paul we possess. **(17-22)** *Yahweh... chose our fathers...* A very short summary of Israel's history focused on showing Yahweh's initiative and continuous involvement in the life of His people. **(23)** *As He promised.* Through the prophets. **(24-29)** *Before the coming of Jesus...* Another very short summary, this time about John the Baptist's activity and Jesus Christ's condemnation and death. **(30-31)** *Yahweh raised*

*him... his witnesses.* Jesus' resurrection, legally testified by many witnesses, was the proof of the salvation plan and of the power of Yahweh. **(32-33)** *What He promised... Yahweh has fulfilled.* His help and deliverance (Isaiah 40:9; 52:7). *You are My Son...* A quotation from Psalm 2:7. **(34-37)** *The fact that...* Here Paul has used a purely Jewish argument: Jesus is Yahweh's Messiah and his resurrection is the fulfillment of prophecy because the promises made to David -which were obviously not fulfilled in him- were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. *I will give you...* A quotation from Isaiah 55:3. *You will not...* A quotation from Psalm 16:10. **(38-39)** *Through him [Jesus]... everyone who believes is justified...* The Jews had tried unsuccessfully to live according to the Law, as no man could ever fulfill it completely. But now, in Jesus Christ, all men can find that forgiving power which sets them free from their deserved condemnation and restores their real friendship with Yahweh. **(40-41)** *Look, you...* A quotation from Habakkuk 1:5. For their ancestors it had been incredible that Yahweh would give them over to the Babylonians. Now the Jews were to be careful not to refuse Yahweh's salvation through Jesus Christ. **(42-45)** *The people invited them...* As usual, plenty of people welcomed the Christian message. Only some of the rulers ("the chiefs of the Jews") refused it fearing to lose their positions of power and authority. **(46)** *We had to speak... to you first... we now turn to the Gentiles.* The Good News of spiritual salvation had to be offered first to the Jews -Yahweh's people- but were not limited to them. So when the Jewish authorities opposed Paul's preaching, he went straight to the Yahweh-fearing Gentiles and to the Pagans. **(47)** *I have made you...* A quotation from Isaiah 49:6. **(48)** *All who believed were appointed for eternal life.* All who have faith in Jesus Christ's spiritual salvation will be admitted to the Kingdom of Yahweh. **(49)** *The Word of the Lord Yahweh spread...* Fourth summary report of progress (first three in Ac 6:7, 9:31 and 12:24). **(50)** *The [chiefs of the] Jews... expelled them.* Not to lose their privileges and their positions of power and authority. **(51)** *Shook the dust.* A formal act, to show the repudiation of those who had rejected their message and were persecuting Yahweh's servants. *Iconium.* Modern Konya; it was an important crossroad and agricultural center of the province of Galatia. **(52)** *Filled with joy and...* The inner joy of being in spiritual communion with all fellow-believers, Jesus Christ and Yahweh.

**In Iconium** [Ac 14:1-7]

**(Ac 14:1)** *At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed. (2)But the [chiefs of the] Jews, who refused to believe, stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.*

**(3)** Yet Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly of the Lord Yahweh, who confirmed His Word of grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. **(4)** The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. **(5)** When there was a plot among the Gentiles and the Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them, **(6)** they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, **(7)** where they continued to preach the Good News.

**(Ac 14:1-5)** A great number... believed. But the [chiefs of the] Jews... At first there was good success, then bitter opposition from the chiefs of the Jews (Ac 14:2). But they evidently failed in their initial attempt, for Paul and Barnabas remained there a considerable time (Ac 14:3). Then a second wave of persecution was planned, involving violence (Ac 14:5). **(6)** *Lycaonian cities.* Lycaonia was a district of the Roman province of Galatia. *Lystra.* A Roman colony (as such, a substantial number of retired Roman veterans was settled there) at about 20 miles (32 km) from Iconium and 130 miles (210 km) from Pisidian Antioch. *Derbe.* A border town in the southeastern part of Lycaonia, at about 60 miles (95 km) from Lystra. **(7)** *They continued.* In spite of the dangerous situation, they never thought to abandon their preaching and turn back.

**In Lystra and Derbe** [Ac 14:8-20]

**(Ac 14:8)** In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. **(9)** He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed **(10)** and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.

**(11)** When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" **(12)** Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. **(13)** And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.

**(14)** When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: **(15)** "Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to [Yahweh] the living God, who made the sky and the land and the sea and everything in them. **(16)** In the past generations, He let all nations go their own way.

*(17) Yet He has not let Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from the sky and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” (18) Even with these words, they had difficulty keeping the crowd from sacrificing to them.*

*(19) Then some Jews came from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. (20) But when the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.*

**(Ac 14:8-10)** *In Lystra...* The first town, in Paul’s journeys, not having a Jewish population (there is no mention of a local synagogue). *A man... crippled... had faith... began to walk.* A miracle demonstrating that faith in Jesus Christ and Yahweh -in Christianity- was open even to men completely Pagans, without any previous knowledge of Yahweh. **(11-12)** *Gods... in human form. Zeus... Hermes.* Most probably this incident was occasioned by an ancient legend about a visit to the same area by Zeus and Hermes. Not having been recognized by anyone except an old couple who gave them hospitality, they wiped out the entire population. And the people of Lystra did not want to make the same mistake again. **(13)** *The priest... wanted to offer sacrifices to them.* Perfectly understandable from the point of view of the Pagans, absolutely unacceptable to Paul and Barnabas. **(14)** *Tore their clothes.* A typical Jewish way of expressing great anguish. **(15-18)** *Men, why...? Yahweh, who made...* These verses are especially interesting because they show Paul’s approach with Pagans not having any Jewish background to which he could appeal. With such people he started from nature to get to Yahweh, the God who was behind it all. **(19)** *They stoned Paul.* So doing they risked to be punished for rioting (Lystra was a Roman colony). This explains why they quickly dragged what they thought was Paul’s dead body out of the city. **(20)** *He got up and went back into the city.* At the best Paul was shocked and injured; still he had the courage of showing himself to those who had tried to murder him. *Derbe.* A border town in the southeastern part of Lycaonia.

### **The return to Antioch in Syria [Ac 14:21-28]**

**(Ac 14:21)** *They preached the Good News in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, (22) strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith, for it is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of Yahweh. (23) [Paul and Barnabas] appointed elders for*

*them in each Church and, after praying and fasting, committed them to the Lord Yahweh, in whom they had put their trust. (24) After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, (25) and when they had preached the Word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.*

*(26) From Attalia they sailed back to Syrian Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of Yahweh for the work they had completed. (27) On arriving there, they gathered the Church together and reported all that Yahweh had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. (28) And they stayed a long time with the disciples.*

**(Ac 14:21)** *They preached... then they returned to...* From Derbe Paul and Barnabas began the return journey, visiting again the towns where they had preached the way on. **(22)** *It is necessary to go through...* The Christians have to know that their way is not the easy one, that they will be ostracized and persecuted. **(23)** *Appointed elders.* They selected and appointed the men who would be in charge of the new Churches. **(24-26)** *Pisidia... Syrian Antioch.* Few words for their long return journey. **(27)** *Opened the doors of faith.* Yahweh had brought the Pagans to faith, that is, had opened to them the doors of His Kingdom. **(28)** *A long time.* Probably more than a year.

### **The Council at Jerusalem** [Ac 15:1-21]

**(Ac 15:1)** *Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." (2) This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. (3) The Church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted, making all the brothers very glad. (4) When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the Church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything Yahweh had done through them.*

**(5)** *Then some of the believers who had belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "They must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."*

**(6)** *The apostles and elders met to consider this question. (7) After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that from the beginning Yahweh made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the Gospel and believe. (8) Yahweh, who knows the heart, showed that He accepted them by giving His Spirit*



[\*] to them, just as He did to us. (9) He made no distinction between us and them, for He purified their hearts by faith. (10) Now then, why do you try to test Yahweh by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? (11) We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

(12) The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders Yahweh had done among the Gentiles through them. (13) When they finished, James spoke up: “Brothers, listen to me. (14) Simon has described to us how Yahweh came, first, to take out of the Gentiles a people for Himself. (15) The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

(16) ‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, (17) that the remnant of [Israel’s] men may seek the Lord Yahweh, and so all the Gentiles who bear My Name, says the Lord Yahweh, who does these things (18) that have been known for ages.’

(19) It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to Yahweh. (20) Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. (21) For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

(Ac 15:1) *Some men.* Probably they had been Pharisees before to become Christians (Ac 15:5). They insisted that before a man could become a true Christian he must keep the law of Moses, and the proof of such compliance was circumcision. They were called “Judaizers.” (2) *Up to Jerusalem to see the apostles.* The apostles had the final responsibility of deciding in Church’s matters. (3) *The Church.* In this case, the Church of Antioch, where the question was raised up. (4) *They reported everything...* The first meeting was only a report about the work done among the Gentiles, without touching the present problem. (5) *Some... said...* Probably the same Judaizers who had gone to Antioch now had returned to Jerusalem to present their case. (6-7) *Peter addressed them...* After a clearly long and heated discussion Peter, the recognized leader of the apostles, spoke and reminded them of his own experience, of how Yahweh had sent him to preach to the Gentiles (Ac 10:28-29). (8) *Giving His Spirit to them.* The irrefutable proof

of Yahweh's acceptance (Ac 10:44-47). **(9)** *He purified their hearts by faith.* Peter's way of confirming what Paul was saying about "justification by faith" (Paul's thought. Ro 5:1; Gal 2:15-16). **(10)** *A yoke.* Moses' Law and all Jewish traditions. **(11)** *We... are saved, just as they are.* Circumcision is not a requirement for salvation; only faith is, for both Jews and Gentiles. **(12)** *Barnabas and Paul telling...* Arriving in Jerusalem, they had reported to the apostles and the elders (Ac 15:4). Now they report to the whole assembly of believers. **(13)** *James spoke up...* James, the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, added proof from Scripture to Peter, Paul and Barnabas' declarations. **(14)** *Out of the Gentiles a people for Himself.* Cornelius and his household (Ac 10:44-46). **(15-18)** *After this I will...* A quotation from Amos 9:11-12, confirming Yahweh's intent to save all men, both Jews and Gentiles. **(19-20)** *Not make it difficult...* Circumcision was not required, but four stipulations were laid down whose observance destroyed the last social barrier between Jew-Christians and Gentile-Christians. **(21)** *Moses has been preached...* Those four directives were included in the Mosaic laws but, actually, were divine directives given before the Mosaic laws.

**The Council's letter to Gentile believers** [Ac 15:22-35]

**(Ac 15:22)** *Then the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers, (23) after writing the following things:*

*'The apostles and elders, your brothers,  
To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.  
Greetings.*

**(24)** *We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. (25) So we all agreed to choose some men and to send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul - (26) men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (27) Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm the same things. (28) It seemed good to the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: (29) You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.*

*Farewell.'*

**(30)** *They were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the Church together and delivered the letter. (31) The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. (32) Judas and Silas, who were*

*prophets, with many words did encourage and strengthen the brothers. (33)After spending some time there, they were sent off by the brothers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them (34)But Silas decided to remain there and only Judas left. (35)Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, were they and many others taught and preached the Word of the Lord Yahweh.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 15:22)** *The apostles and elders, with the whole Church.* At the end of what is known as the Council of Jerusalem (the first of the Christian Church) there was unanimous agreement with the choice of messengers and with the contents of the letter (Ac 15:23-29). *Judas... and Silas... after writing...* Had Paul and Barnabas come back alone their enemies might have doubted that they brought back a correct message; Judas and Silas were official emissaries and guarantors of the decision taken. **(23)** *Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.* Antioch was the most important city of the combined provinces of Syria and Cilicia. **(24)** *Some went out... without our authorization.* A clear and official declaration that the Judaizers’ teaching (Ac 15:1) was not correct. **(25-29)** *We all agree...* It was important to make everybody know that the decision taken was unanimous. *Good to the Spirit of Yahweh and to us.* The decision was taken with everybody’s agreement, under the spiritual influence of Yahweh. *You are to abstain from...* As proposed by James (Ac 15:19-20), circumcision was not required, but four stipulations were laid down whose observance destroyed the last social barrier between Jew-Christians and Gentile-Christians. **(30-32)** *They... went... to Antioch, where.. Judas and Silas...* Their words had an encouraging effect that the simple reception of a letter could never have achieved. **(33)** *They were sent off.* Their mission completed, Judas and Silas were free to go back to Jerusalem. **(34-35)** *Silas remained.* In Antioch, to work with Paul and Barnabas. Later (Ac 15:40-41), Silas will accompany Paul in his second missionary journey.

### **Disagreement between Paul and Barnabas [Ac 15:36-41]**

**(Ac 15:36)** *Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the Word of the Lord Yahweh and see how they are doing.” (37)Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, (38)but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with*

*them in the work. (39)They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, (40)but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord Yahweh. (41)He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the Churches.*

**(Ac 15:36)** *Towns where we preached the Word.* The towns of the first missionary journey (Ac 13:4-14:26). **(37-38)** *Mark... had deserted them.* Mark had turned back at Perga and did not go to Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Ac 13:13). **(39)** *They parted company.* The difference between Paul and Barnabas was so sharp that they never worked with each other again. However, in 1 Co 9:6 Paul names Barnabas as an example in working to support himself. For what refers to Mark, he evidently returned from his work with Barnabas and became associated with Peter (1 Pe 5:13). Then, during Paul's first imprisonment, Mark was included in Paul's group (Paul's thought. Col 4:10; Phm 1:24). And later Paul requested him to come and be with him during his final days at Rome (2 Ti 4:11). **(40-41)** *Paul... Silas... went through Syria and Cilicia.* Paul's second missionary journey.

**Note:** Paul's second missionary journey, which occupied him for about three years, is reported in Ac 15:40 to 18:22. It began from Syrian Antioch. Paul first made a tour of the Churches of Syria and Cilicia. Then he revisited the Churches in the regions of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. Then he went to Troas in Mysia. From there he crossed to Neapolis and Philippi. From Philippi he moved on to Thessalonica and Berea in Macedonia. Then to Athens and Corinth, where he spent about eighteen months. From Corinth he traveled to Jerusalem by way of Ephesus. And then finally to Syrian Antioch, his starting point.

**Timothy joins Paul and Silas** [Ac 16:1-5]

**(Ac 16:1)***He [Paul] came also to Derbe and Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. (2)The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. (3)Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. (4)As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, for them to observe. (5)So the Churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.*

**(Ac 16:1-2)** *Derbe... Lystra.* Paul had approached Derbe on the first trip from the opposite direction, so the order of towns is reverse here. *Timothy.* A very young Christian, since Paul addressed him as a young man some fifteen years later (Paul's thought. 1 Ti 4:12). *Whose father was a Greek.* His father was neither a convert to Judaism nor a believer in Christ. **(3)** *He circumcised him.* An expedient so that his work among the Jews might be more effective. This was different from Titus' case (Paul's thought. Gal 2:3-5), where circumcision was refused because some were demanding it as necessary for salvation. **(4-5)** *Decisions... reached in Jerusalem.* Those written down in the Council of Jerusalem's letter (Ac 15:22-29) which, improving the relationship between Jew and Gentile converts, made easier to accept Gentiles into the Christian Church.

**Paul's vision of the man of Macedonia** [Ac 16:6-10]

**(Ac 16:6)** *Then they traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] from preaching the Word in Asia. (7) When they reached Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] would not allow them to. (8) So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. (9) During the night Paul had a vision. A man of Macedonia was standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (10) After having seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that Yahweh had called us to preach the Gospel to them.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 16:6-7)** *They.* Paul and his companions Silas and Timothy. *Phrygia. Galatia. Asia.* The Hellenistic Phrygia had been divided by the Romans in the provinces of Galatia and Asia. *Kept by the Spirit of Yahweh... not allow them.* In some way -either a vision, the word of a prophet, or other; we don't know- Yahweh had sent a message to Paul. *Mysia.* In the northeast of the province of Asia. *Bithynia.* A senatorial province, west of Mysia. **(8)** *Troas.* Alexandria Troas was a Roman colony and an important seaport for the commerce between Macedonia and Greece on the one hand and Asia Minor on the other. **(9)** *Vision.* One of the ways Yahweh gave directions to Paul. *A man of Macedonia.* There is no indication of who this man was. Macedonia was a Roman province. **(10)** *We got ready.* In this way Luke, the author of the Acts, is informing his readers that he had joined Paul at Troas. *Concluding that...* It is evident that Yahweh's sent visions were taken seriously and obeyed to.

**Lydia's conversion in Philippi** [Ac 16:11-15]

*(Ac 16:11) From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. (12) From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.*

*(13) On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We set down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. (14) A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of Yahweh, was listening. The Lord Yahweh opened her heart to respond to Paul's words. (15) When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us saying, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord Jesus, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.*

**(Ac 16:11) Samothrace.** An island in the northeastern Aegean Sea. It was a convenient place for boats to anchor rather than risk sailing at night. *Neapolis.* The seaport of Philippi, 10 miles (16 km) away; modern Kavalla. **(12) Philippi.** A city in eastern Macedonia named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. It was a Roman colony -many retired Roman veterans were settled there- with few Jews. **(13) A place of prayer.** There was no synagogue in Philippi, and the few Jews who were there met along the banks of the Gangites River -it was customary for such places of prayer to be located outdoors near running water. **(14) Lydia.** A wealthy businesswoman. *Thyatira.* In the Roman province of Asia, 20 miles (32 km) southeast of Pergamum. It was famous for its dyeing works, especially royal purple (crimson). *Worshipper of Yahweh.* Lydia was a Yahweh-fearing Gentile who, like Cornelius (Ac 10:1-2), believed in Yahweh, the true God, and followed the moral teachings of Scripture. *Yahweh opened her heart.* The initiative is always Yahweh's. Then the person is left free to accept or to reject it. **(15) She and... her household were baptized.** At the time it was customary for all family members and their slaves to follow the most important decisions of the housemaster.

**Paul and Silas in prison** [Ac 16:16-40]

*(Ac 16:16) Once when we were going to the prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. (17) This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of [Yahweh] the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." (18) She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he*

turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

(19)When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. (20)They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar (21)by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

(22)Then the crowd joined in the attack against them [Paul and Silas], and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. (23)After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. (24)Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

(25)About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to Yahweh, and the other prisoners were listening to them. (26)Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. (27)The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. (28)But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

(29)He [the jailer] called a light, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. (30)He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

(31)They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved -you and your household." (32)Then they spoke the Word of the Lord Yahweh to him and to all the others in his house. (33)At that our of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. (34)The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in Yahweh -he and his whole family.

(35)When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." (36)The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace."

(37)But Paul said to them: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now they want to get rid of us quietly? Absolutely not! Let them come themselves and escort us out."

**(38)** *The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. (39) They came to appease them and escorted them [from the prison], requesting them to leave the city. (40) After they came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left.*

**(Ac 16:16)** *To the prayer.* To the place near the river (Ac 16:13). *A spirit by which she predicted the future.* The girl was what was called a Phyto, that is, a person who could give oracles -usually quite difficult to understand- to guide men about their future. **(17)** *Rest of us.* Silas, Timothy and Luke. *The Most High God.* A title for Yahweh commonly used in the Old Testament, but not in the New. **(18)** *In the name of Jesus Christ...* All miracles -both physical and spiritual- are by Yahweh through the intercession of His Son. **(19-21)** *They sized Paul and Silas... These men are Jews, and...* To take revenge on Paul, the owners of the girl appealed to the pride in Roman things which was a characteristic of a Roman colony. **(22)** *Beaten.* With rods. **(23-24)** *Thrown in prison... in the inner cell... their feet in the stocks.* For extra security. **(25-26)** *Prison doors... open... chains... loose.* As both the doors and the stocks were fastened by a wooden bar falling into two slots, an earthquake could actually unfasten them. **(27)** *About to kill himself.* If a prisoner escaped, the life of the guard was demanded in his place. To take his own life would shorten the shame and distress. **(28)** *Paul shouted...* He did not want to escape. He did want to complain against the magistrates who had ordered the flogging of two Roman citizens (Ac 16: 37). **(29-30)** *What must I do...?* Clearly, Yahweh was touching his heart. And he accepted Yahweh's invitation. **(31-32)** *Believe in the Lord Jesus.* A concise statement of the way of salvation. As Peter said, "Everyone who believes in him [Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Yahweh] receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Ac 10:43). *They spoke the Word of the Lord Yahweh.* In spite of their physical conditions, Paul and Silas did not lose the opportunity to bring the Gospel of salvation to the jailer. **(33-34)** *Washed their wounds... set a meal.* The jailer immediately proved his conversion by his actions. *He and all his family were baptized.* At the time it was customary for all family members and their slaves to follow the most important decisions of the housemaster. **(35-36)** *Release those men.* For Paul and Silas had not been charged of breaking any roman law. **(37-39)** *They beat us... without a trial... we are Roman citizens.* Such an action was a crime punishable by death. *Let them come themselves.* Paul was not asking for an escort to salve their injured pride but he wanted to establish publicly their



innocence for the sake of the Church in Philippi and its future. **(40)** *Lydia's house*. Her house had become the meeting point of the Philippian believers. *They... met with the brothers*. In order to explain them what exactly had happened.

***In Thessalonica [Ac 17:1-9]***

**(Ac 17:1)** *When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they [Paul and Silas] came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. (2)As his custom was, Paul went there, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, (3)explaining and proving that the Christ [Messiah] had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ [Messiah]."* **(4)***Some of them were persuaded and, as did a large number of Yahweh-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women, joined Paul and Silas.*

**(5)***But the [chiefs of the] Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the assembly of the people. (6)But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the Earth have now come here, (7)and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, Jesus."* **(8)***When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. (9)Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.*

**(Ac 17:1)** *Amphipolis... Apollonia*. Two towns along the road Neapolis-Philippi-Amphipolis-Apollonia-Thessalonica-Berea that crossed northern Greece from east to west. *Thessalonica*. About 100 miles (160 km) from Philippi. It was the capital of the province of Macedonia, with a population of more than 200,000, including a colony of Jews. **(2-3)** *On three Sabbath days*. The time spent by Paul in the synagogue reasoning with the Jews, not the length of his staying there. From his letters to the Thessalonians it appears that Paul had taught them much more doctrine than it would have been possible in few weeks. **(4)** *Some of them... a large number of Yahweh-fearing Greeks... not a few prominent women*. As usual Paul's great success was not so much among the Jews as among the Gentiles attached to the synagogue. **(5)** *Were jealous*. Both for losing some of their own and the financial contributions of the others. *They rounded up... started a riot*. A very immoral -actually, criminal- expedient. *Jason's house*. Nothing is known

of the man but that Paul and his companions had been staying with him (Ac 17:7). **(6)** *Trouble all over the Earth.* The facts happened in Philippi (Ac 16:16-40). **(7-8)** *Defying Caesar's decrees.* Blasphemy was the gravest accusation for a Jew, but treason -to support a rival king above Caesar- was the worst accusation for a Roman. **(9)** *Post bond.* Anyway, following Roman law, Jason was obliged to guarantee the peace of the community, or he would have faced the confiscation of his properties and perhaps even death.

### ***In Berea [Ac 17:10-15]***

**(Ac 17:10)** *As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the synagogue of the Jews. (11) Now these were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, and they received the Word with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if the things were really so. (12) Many of them believed, as did also some of the prominent Greek women and not a few men.*

**(13)** *When the [chiefs of the] Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the Word of Yahweh at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. (14) But the brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed there. (15) The men who were escorting Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.*

**(Ac 17:10)** *Berea.* Modern Verria, located 50 miles (80 km) from Thessalonica in another district of Macedonia. **(11)** *These were...* The chiefs of the Jews in Berea. *Examined the Scriptures...* They were more open-minded; instead of rejecting on the spot Paul's teaching of a crucified Messiah, they went on searching the Scriptures (as Isaiah 53) for a possible confirmation. **(12)** *Many of them believed.* Quite unusual, as in most of the other towns only few of the Jews did accept Jesus Christ. **(13)** *The [chiefs of the] Jews in Thessalonica... went there too...* They had decided to stop Paul's preaching -to them, heretical- in the whole area, not only in their town. **(14-15)** *Immediately sent Paul to the coast.* To avoid troubles as in Thessalonica. The sea was about 20 miles (32 km) from Berea. Then Paul went by sea, reaching Athens. *Sylas and Timothy stayed there.* Evidently, only Paul was considered a dangerous adversary.

### ***In Athens [Ac 17:16-34]***

**(Ac 17:16)** *While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. (17) So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the Yahweh-fearing Greeks, as well in the mar-*

ketplaces day by day with those who happened to be there. (18) A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others, because Paul was preaching the Good News about Jesus and the resurrection, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." (19) Then they took him and brought him to the Aeropagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? (20) You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean." (21) (In effect, all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

(22) Paul then stood up in the middle of the Aeropagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. (23) For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

(24) Yahweh the God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of Heaven and Earth and does not live in temples built by hands. (25) And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. (26) From one man He made every nation of men that inhabit the whole Earth; and He determined the times set for them and the boundaries of their lands. (27) This so that they would seek -even if gropingly- and find Yahweh. In effect, He is not far from each one of us. (28) As some of your poets have said, 'For in Him we live and move and have our being. We are indeed His offspring.'

(29) Therefore, since we are Yahweh's offspring, we should not think that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone; an image made by man's design and skill. (30) Now Yahweh, overlooking the times of such ignorance, commands all people everywhere to convert. (31) For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by rising him from the dead."

(32) When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." (33) At that, Paul left the meeting. (34) But a few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Aeropagus, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

**(Ac 17:16)** Paul was waiting for them. Silas and Timothy had to come from Berea (Ac 17:15). Athens. Athens had been for centuries the greatest city in art, philosophy and literature, and still maintained a leading university in Paul's day. *Full of idols.* It was said that there were more statues of gods in

Athens than in all the rest of Greece. **(17)** *He reasoned in the synagogue... in the marketplaces.* Paul never lost any occasion for preaching Jesus Christ. **(18)** *Epicurean.* They believed that (i)everything happened by chance, (ii)death was the end of all, (iii)the gods were remote from the world and did not care for it, (iv)the supreme good was happiness -but not mere momentary pleasure or temporary gratification. *Stoic.* They believed that (i)everything was God, (ii)God was fiery spirit, (iii)His spirit grew dull in matter but was in everything, (iv)what gave men life was that a little spark of that spirit dwelt in them and when they died it returned to God, (v)everything that happened was the will of God and therefore had to be accepted without resentment, (vi)every so often the world disintegrated in a conflagration and started all over again on the same cycle of events. **(19)** *Aeropagus.* The name means “Hill of Ares,” the Greek god of thunder and war (the Roman equivalent was Mars). It was the site of the meetings of the Court or Council of the Aeropagus, once governing the city-state of Athens. In Paul’s day it retained authority only in areas of religion and morals. **(20)** *We want to know.* The members of the Aeropagus (not more than thirty highly select men) considered themselves the judges of any new teaching that introduced new religions and foreign gods. **(21)** *Doing nothing but talking...* The free men of Athens avoided carefully all kinds of physical work. Their society was based on slave work. **(22)** *Paul stood up...* There, in the most learned city of the world and before the most exclusive of the Courts, Paul had to state his faith. And he did not lose this Yahweh-given possibility to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *You are very religious.* The Greek for “religious” can even mean “superstitious.” The Athenians would not know which meaning to take until Paul continued. In this contest it is clear that Paul wanted to be complimentary in order to gain a hearing. **(23)** *TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.* The Greeks were fearful of offending any god by failing to give him attention; so they felt they could cover any omission by that label. **(24)** *[Yahweh] the God who made...* There is only One God, Maker of everything. **(25)** *Not served by human hands, as if...* Any kind of temple service, with the use of “sacred” objects, is totally useless. **(26)** *From one man...* All people are of one family, the family of Yahweh. *He determined the times... and the... boundaries.* Yahweh is the Designer (things are not left to chance, as the Epicurean thought). **(27)** *They would seek... Yahweh.* Yahweh has made men in such a way that instinctively they long for Him. **(28)** *For in Him...* A quotation from the Cretan poet Epimenides (600 BC) in his *Cretica*. *We are His offspring.* A quotation from the Cilician poet Aratus (315-240 BC) in his *Phaenomena*, and from Cleanthes (331-233 BC) in his *Hymn to Zeus*. Both quotations come with ideas close

to the concept found in Deuteronomy 30:20, Job 12:10, Daniel 5:23. **(29)** *Therefore...* The conclusion of what said above. **(30-31)** *Yahweh, overlooking the times of ignorance... For He has set a day when...* Yahweh did not condemn men for having worshipped false gods in their past ignorance. But now His new intervention (“by the man [Jesus Christ] He has appointed”) signed the end of the time of ignorance. *Proof.. by rising him from the dead.* Without Jesus Christ’s physical resurrection Christian faith would not exist at all. **(32-33)** *When they heard...* Immortality of the soul was accepted by the Greek, but resurrection of a dead body was too much for their mentality. *We want to hear you again...* In this way dismissing Paul. **(34)** *A few men... believed.* Only few, because the idea of bodily resurrection was unacceptable to most of them. *Dionysius.* Later tradition states that he became the first bishop of Athens. *Damaris.* A woman, as such not admitted to the Aeropagus meetings. Clearly, she heard Paul preaching in some other place (synagogue, marketplaces).

***In Corinth [Ac 18:1-17]***

**(Ac 18:1)** *After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. (2) There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, (3) and because he was of the same trade, he stayed and worked with them, for they were tentmakers. (4) Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.*

**(5)** *Then, when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ [Messiah]. (6) But when they [their chiefs] opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” (7) Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshipper of Yahweh.*

**(8)** *Crispus, the Synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord Jesus; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.*

**(9)** *One night the Lord Jesus spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. (10) For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” (11) So he stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the Word of Yahweh.*

**(12)** *While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, all the [chiefs of the] Jews made an attack on Paul and brought him into court. (13) “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship Yahweh in ways contrary to the law.”*

*(14) Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the [chiefs of the] Jews, "If you were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, O Jews, I would listen to you following the law. (15) But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law -settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things." (16) So he had them ejected from the court. (17) Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.*

**(Ac 18:1)** *Corinth.* A leading commercial center 50 miles (80 km) by land from Athens along the isthmus of Corinth. **(2)** *Pontus.* In the northeastern region of Asia Minor, a province lying along the Black Sea between Bithynia and Armenia. *Aquila. Priscilla.* Since no mention is made of a conversion, it is likely that they were already Jew-Christian converts. *Claudius.* Emperor of Rome (AD 41-54). *Ordered all the Jews to leave Rome.* Recorded by Suetonius (Claudius, 25). The expulsion order was given because of "their [the Jews] continual tumults instigated by Chrestus" (a common misspelling of "Christ"). **(3)** *Tentmaker.* A trade Paul was taught as a youth. It was the Jewish custom to provide manual training for sons, whether rich or poor. **(4)** *Every Sabbath... in the synagogue.* Paul's regular practice. **(5)** *Devoted himself to preaching.* Very likely when Silas and Timothy arrived they brought a financial present from the Church at Philippi, which made it possible for him to dedicate his whole time to preaching. **(6)** *When... he shook out his clothes.* A formal act of rejection, leaving the synagogue where he wasn't accepted any more. **(7)** *Titius Justus.* An unknown -to us Yahweh-fearing Gentile. **(8)** *Crispus.* Paul baptized him (Ac 18:8). As usual, not all the chiefs of the Jews were against Paul and Jesus Christ's Gospel. **(9-11)** *In a vision.* Paul had already seen the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ at his conversion (Ac 9:4-6. Paul's thought. 1 Co 15:8) and in a trance in the Temple at Jerusalem (Ac 22:17-18). *Keep on speaking... in this city. Paul stayed for a year and a half.* A clear order, to which Paul fully obeyed. **(12)** *Gallio.* Brother of Seneca, the philosopher. He was proconsul of Achaia in AD 51-52. **(13)** *Ways contrary to the law.* The chiefs of the Jews were claiming that Paul was advocating a religion not recognized by Roman law. **(14-15)** *As Paul was about to speak.* Probably, he could have argued that the Gospel he was preaching was confirmed by Jewish Scriptures and thus authorized by Roman law. *I will not be a judge of such things.* Gallio was well known for his high sense of justice. And here he, the Roman judge, had no reason to judge. **(16)** *Ejected from the court.* Gallio was well aware that Paul and his friends were not guilty of any crime and that

the chiefs of the Jews were trying to use him for their own purposes. **(17)** *They all turned on Sosthenes.* Probably the chiefs of the Jews beat the synagogue ruler -chosen after Crispus had become a Christian (Ac 18:8)- because he was unsuccessful in presenting their case. *Gallio showed no concern whatever.* He did not want Rome to be involved in a Jewish religious question.

***The return to Antioch in Syria [Ac 18:18-22]***

**(Ac 18:18)** *Paul stayed on in Corinth for many days. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. (19) Then they arrived at Ephesus, where he left them. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. (20) When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. (21) But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is Yahweh's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. (22) When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the Church and then went down to Antioch.*

**(Ac 18:18)** *Paul... sailed for Syria.* On the way home, at the end of his second missionary journey, Paul sailed from Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, to Ephesus. *A vow he had taken.* Probably a temporary Nazarite vow (no meat and no wine for thirty days). Such vows were frequently taken to express thanks for deliverance from grave dangers. Shaving the head marked the end of a vow. **(19-21)** *Ephesus.* The capital of the Roman province of Asia, an important commercial city, and the center of the cult of Artemis (the Roman Diana). *Where he left them.* Paul had decided not to stay long in Ephesus this time -he will spend there two years and three months during his third missionary journey (Ac 19:1,8,10). By staying there, Priscilla and Aquila would give him valuable aid at his return, providing advice as to where and how the work there could be started. **(22)** *Greeted the Church.* The explanation "went up... and then went down" means that, after sailing from Ephesus to Caesarea, Paul went to Jerusalem, some 2,500 feet (760 meters) above sea level. *Down to Antioch.* The end of Paul's second missionary journey.

***Apollos [Ac 18:23-28]***

**(Ac 18:23)** *After spending some time [in Antioch], Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.*

**(24)** *Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to*

*Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. (25) He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord Jesus, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. (26) He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him with them and explained to him the Way of Yahweh more accurately.*

*(27) When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. (28) For he vigorously refuted the [chiefs of the] Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ [Messiah].*

**(Ac 18:23)** *Paul set out.* Beginning his third missionary journey. *Region of Galatia and Phrygia.* The same route through Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch he had taken at the beginning of his second journey. **(24)** *Apollos... of Alexandria.* A Jew born in Egypt, in the second most important city of the Roman Empire, where there was a large Jewish population. **(25)** *Baptism of John.* Apollos knew something about Jesus, but his faith (“baptism”) was based on repentance rather than on Jesus’ spiritual salvation. **(26)** *Explained... the Way of Yahweh.* To complete his limited understanding of the Gospel. **(27)** *Achaia.* The Roman Province of Greece with Corinth as its capital. **(28)** *Proving from the Scriptures...* Clearly, Apollos was a man of high knowledge and a great preacher.

**Note:** Paul’s third missionary journey is reported in Ac 18:23 to 21:16. It began with a tour of Galatia and Phrygia to visit the believers there. Paul then moved on to Ephesus where he remained for more than two years. From there he went to Macedonia and to Greece, till Athens; then all the way back by sea from Troas by way of Miletus, Rhodes, Patara and Caesarea to Jerusalem.

### **Paul in Ephesus** [Ac 19:1-12]

**(Ac 19:1)** *While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples (2) and asked them, “Did you receive the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] when you believed?”*

*They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Spirit of Yahweh [\*].”*

**(3)** *So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”*

*“John’s baptism,” they replied.*



(4) Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” (5) After hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And, when Paul placed his hands on them, the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. (7) There were about twelve men in all.

(8) Then, Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of Yahweh. (9) But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them, took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. (10) This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord Yahweh.

(11) Yahweh did extraordinary miracles through Paul, (12) so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Ac 19:1)** *Apollos was at Corinth.* Apollos was introduced at Ephesus (Ac 18:24) in the absence of Paul and he moved to Corinth (Ac 18:27-28) before Paul returned to Ephesus. But later Apollos came back to Ephesus during Paul’s ministry there (Paul’s thought. 1 Co 16:12). *Through the interior.* To visit again the Churches in Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. *At Ephesus... he found some disciples.* Believers with a limited understanding of the Gospel. Perhaps they had received their teachings from Apollos himself in his earlier state of partial understanding (Ac 18:26). (2) *Did you receive...? No...* They were totally unaware of the possibility of being in spiritual communion -through Jesus Christ- with Yahweh. (3-4) *John’s baptism... of repentance.* John’s teaching was preparatory, stressing men’s sinfulness and thus creating a sense of need for the Good News of Jesus Christ. (5) *Baptized.* After receiving the appropriate instruction about Jesus Christ and his action of spiritual salvation. (6-7) *Placed his hands on them.* Laying on of hands -which comes from the Old Testament- here marks the imparting of spiritual gifts. It was also used for appointing to a new responsibility, healing, blessing and ordaining. *The Spirit of Yahweh came on them, and...* The same experience the disciples had at Pentecost (Ac 2:4) and the Gentiles in Caesarea (Ac 10:44). (8) *Entered the synagogue and...* Paul’s regular practice. (9) *The Way.* A name for Christianity.

Jesus called himself “the Way” (Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus the way to the Father. Jn 14:5-14). *Lecture hall of Tyrannus*. A school used regularly by a philosopher called Tyrannus. One Greek manuscript adds that Paul did his teaching from the fifth hour (11 AM) to the 10th hour (4 PM). This was the hot time of the day, when all work stopped and the hall was available. **(10)** *Two years*. Plus the three months teaching in the local synagogue (Ac 19:8); Paul’s longest stay in one missionary location recorded by Luke. *All... in the province of Asia heard...* Paul’s missionary strategy was to set Churches in strategic centers from which the Gospel would spread in the surrounding areas. **(11-12)** *Yahweh did... through Paul*. Yahweh is always looking for hands to use; when Paul was preaching, converting, healing, he was Yahweh’s willing tool.

**The sons of Sceva** [Ac 19:13-22]

**(Ac 19:13)** *Also some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.”* **(14)** *The seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.* **(15)** *And the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?”* **(16)** *Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they run out of the house naked and bleeding.*

**(17)** *When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.* **(18)** *Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds.* **(19)** *A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand silver coins.* **(20)** *In this way the Word of the Lord Yahweh spread widely and grew in power.*

**(21)** *After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.”* **(22)** *He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.*

**(Ac 19:13)** *Jews... driving out evil spirits*. The Jewish exorcists used ancient methods and formulas established by king Solomon. The belief was that if the exorcist knew the name of a more powerful spirit, by pronouncing that name he could overpower the evil spirit and oblige him to depart. And some of them, drawn by Paul’s ability to drive out evil spirits, wanted to copy his work. But Paul, because of his faith, was the tool of Yahweh;

and they weren't. **(14-16)** *Sceva, a Jewish chief priest. Surely a self-given title to make more impression with his magic. Such a beating.* When the exorcists tried to use the name of Jesus without having a deep faith in him, they discovered in the most unpleasant way how wrong they were. **(17-20)** *Jews and Greeks... sized with fear...* As a result of what had happened to the seven sons of Sceva many people became believers and even some of the magicians saw the error of their ways and decided to change radically their lives. *Fifty thousand silver coins.* Greek silver coins called drachmas. A drachma was worth a day's wages of a hired laborer. **(21)** *Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through...* Actually, after staying in Ephesus for two years and three months, he decided to continue his third missionary journey visiting Macedonia and Achaia, that is, Greece. *Rome also.* But Paul would go there only later and as a prisoner (Ac 28:14). **(22)** *He sent two...* To have the collection for the Church of Jerusalem organized before his arrival. *Erastus.* An important person at Corinth, "the city's director of public works" (Paul's thought. Ro 16:23).

### **The riot in Ephesus** [Ac 19:23-41]

**(Ac 18:23)** *About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. (24)A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. (25)He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. (26)And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. (27)There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshipped through the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her majesty."*

**(28)** *When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (29)And the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater. (30)Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. (31)Even some of the Asiarchs, friends of Paul, sent him a message, begging him not to venture into the theater.*

**(32)** *In the meantime, the assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. (33)The [chiefs of the] Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. Alexander motioned for si-*

lence in order to make a defense before the people. (34) But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

(35) The city chancellor quieted the crowd and said: “Men of Ephesus, who is the man who doesn’t know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from the sky? (36) Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. (37) You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. (38) If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. (39) If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in an ordinary assembly. (40) As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today’s events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.” (41) After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

**(Ac 19:23)** *A great disturbance.* A trouble described in the following verses. **(24)** *Silversmith named Demetrius.* Each trade had its guild, and Demetrius was probably a leader of the guild of the manufacturer of silver shrines and images. *Artemis.* The Greek name for the Roman goddess Diana. The Ephesian Artemis, however, was very different from the Greek-Roman goddess. She had taken on the characteristics of Cybele, the mother goddess of fertility worshiped in Asia Minor and was served by many prostitute priestesses. **(25-27)** *A good income... There is danger...* The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and plenty of people came from far to see it. Their purchase of silver shrines and images produced a lucrative business for the craftsmen -which to them was much more important than the “majesty” of Artemis. *The temple of... Artemis.* It was the glory of Ephesus: 425 feet (128 m) long and 220 feet (66 m) wide, having 127 white marble columns 62 feet (18.5 m) high and less than 4 feet (1.2 m) apart. In the inner sanctuary of the temple was kept the many-breasted image of the goddess supposedly dropped from the sky (most probably a meteorite) “her image, which fell from the sky” (Ac 19:35). **(28-29)** *Furious... uproar.* The “great disturbance” of Ac 19:23. *Gaius and Aristarcus.* Macedonian companions of Paul. Aristarcus is one of the men who later traveled with Paul from Corinth to Jerusalem (Ac 20:3-4). He also accompanied Paul on the voyage from Jerusalem to Rome (Ac 27:1-2). **(30-31)** *Asiarcs.* Officials of the province, Greek members of the Roman Council of the province. **(32)** *In confusion.* The classical situation in a riot: many peo-

ple were joining it for diversion, for curiosity or -in the case of the Jews of next verse- for their own purposes . **(33-34) Alexander.** The main spokesman of the Jews. He had to make clear the dissociation of the Jews from the Christians and probably to accuse them of some other offense against the Greek. But the crowd didn't let him speak because the Jews, as the Christians, were not worshippers of Artemis. **(35-41) The City chancellor... said...** He was the most important local official, the chief executive of the civic assembly and representing the Ephesians in front of the Roman authority. He was worried of the Roman reaction to the riot mounting, as the one thing Rome would never stand in any town was civil disorder. *Courts... proconsuls.* As capital city of the province of Asia, Ephesus was the headquarters of the Roman proconsul. *Legal assembly.* The regular meeting ordinarily held three times a month, where to discuss the problems of the town and present major grievances.

**Through Macedonia and Greece [Ac 20:1-6]**

**(Ac 20:1)** *When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-bye and set out for Macedonia. (2) He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement, and finally arrived in Greece, (3) where he stayed three months. Because the [chiefs of the] Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. (4) He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. (5) These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. (6) But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.*

**(Ac 20:1)** *Paul... set out for Macedonia.* As he had already decided (Ac 19: 21). On his way he preached in Troas (Paul's thought. 2 Co 2:12). **(2)** *He traveled through that area.* These words summarize what must have been about a whole year of traveling and preaching. **(3)** *Three months.* Probably a reference to his stay in Corinth. *A plot against him... back through Macedonia.* The chiefs of the Jews were determined to stop Paul's activity. Furthermore, at this time he was carrying the offering for the Christians in Jerusalem, so there would have been a temptation for theft as well. At Cenchrea (the seaport of Corinth) it would have been easy to detect him as he looked for a ship to embark for Syria. **(4)** *Sopater... Trophimus.* These men seem to be the delegates appointed to accompany Paul and the money given

for the needy in Jerusalem. **(5)** *Went on ahead.* It is not stated why they did not travel all the way with Paul. Anyway, Paul was accompanied at least by Luke (“waited for us at Troas”). **(6)** *We sailed from Philippi.* After crossing Macedonia by land, Paul went to Troas by sea.

**Paul’s last night at Troas** [Ac 20:7-12]

**(Ac 20:7)** *On the first day of the week [Sunday], we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. (8) There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. (9) Seated in a window was a young man named Eutycus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up as dead. (10) Then Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “His soul is still in him!” (11) Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. (12) They took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.*

**(Ac 20:7)** *Came together to break bread.* The communal meal, in remembrance of Jesus Christ’s death and sacrifice for the spiritual salvation of all men, was observed regularly (Ac 2:42). *Kept on talking.* It is not that Paul spoke on and on; there would be talk and discussion. **(8-9)** *Eutycus.* A name quite common among the freed slaves. *Asleep, he fell.* It was late in the night and surely the many lamps made the air of the room hot and oppressive. Eutycus who, no doubt, had done a hard day’s work and was tired, succumbed to all that and fell out of the window. **(10)** *His soul is still in him.* Only Paul, of all the presents, understood that Eutycus was not dead, but only senseless (it appears that he was not even injured). **(11-12)** *Then...* As nothing serious had happened, there was no reason for not resuming the discussion and not having the communal meal.

**From Troas to Miletus** [Ac 20:13-16]

**(Ac 20:13)** *We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot. (14) When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. (15) The next day we set from there and arrived off Kios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day we arrived at Miletus. (16) Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.*

**(Ac 20:13)** *Assos*. On the opposite side of the peninsula from Troas, about 20 miles (32 km) away by land. *He was going there on foot*. Luke doesn't explain the reason for this arrangement. **(14)** *Mitylene*. An harbor on the southeast shore of the Island of Lesbos. **(15)** *Kios*. Or Chios, a large island along the west coast of Asia Minor. *Samos*. One of the most important islands in the Aegean. *Miletus*. Thirty miles (48 km) south of Ephesus, the destination of the ship Paul was on. **(16)** *Sail past Ephesus*. If he had come to Ephesus, he would have had to visit a number of families, which would have taken too much time. *Reach Jerusalem... by... Pentecost*. Paul wished to arrive there, with the gifts of the Macedonian, Galatian and Asian Churches, in time for that important celebration.

**Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders** [Ac 20:17-38]

**(Ac 20:17)** *From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the Church.* **(18)** *When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived when I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia.* **(19)** *I served the Lord Yahweh with great humility and tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the [chiefs of the] Jews.* **(20)** *I have never hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.* **(21)** *I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to Yahweh in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*

**(22)** *And now, compelled by the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.* **(23)** *I only know that the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] warns me that in every city prison and hardships are facing me.* **(24)** *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, I only want to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me -the task of testifying to the Gospel of Yahweh's grace.*

**(25)** *Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the Kingdom [of Yahweh] will ever see my face again.* **(26)** *Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men.* **(27)** *For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of Yahweh.* **(28)** *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of the Lord Jesus, which he bought with his own blood.* **(29)** *I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.* **(30)** *Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.* **(31)** *So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.*

**(32)** *Now I commit you to Yahweh and to the Word of His grace, which*

*can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (33)I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. (34)You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. (35)In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*"

*(36)When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. (37)They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. (38)What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 20:17)** *Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders.* The solution of calling them to him allowed Paul to leave them an important message without losing too much time visiting the friends he had in Ephesus (Ac 20:16). *Elders.* All through his ministry, it appears evident the importance Paul assigned to the leadership of the elders. He had delivered the gifts from the Church at Antioch to the elders of the Jerusalem Church (Ac 11:30); appointed elders on his first missionary journey (Ac 14:23); addressed the elders ("overseers") in Philippi (Php 1:1); spoken to the Ephesian elders -here; written down, so-me years later, instructions about the elders' qualifications (1 Ti 3; Tit 1). **(18-24)** *You know...* Immediately, as an introduction, Paul made certain claims on himself: He had always lived independently, spoken clearly and fearlessly, followed faithfully ("compelled by the Spirit of Yahweh") and willingly ("the Spirit of Yahweh warns me") his assigned task ("of testi-fying the Gospel"). **(25)** *None of you... will ever see me again.* Not a pro-phetcy but what Paul -knowing of his enemies in Jerusalem- anticipated of himself. **(26-27)** *Innocent of the blood.* With reference to when he had to leave the synagogue at Corinth and so turned his preaching to the Gentiles (Ac 18:6). **(28)** *Overseers.* The elders, also called shepherds or pastors. **(29-30)** *Savage wolves.* An image used by Jesus himself (The Gospel of Jesus Christ. A tree and its fruit. Mt 7:15). *Even from your own number...* Paul was a hard worker and a realist; he knew that the temptation of personal power and prestige is always there and that many would succumb to it. **(31)** *For three years.* By Jewish reckoning, any part of the year was considered a year; so the actual period of two years and three months (Ac 19:8,10) could be spoken as three years. **(32)** *I commit you to Yahweh.* Leaving them for good, there was nothing greater he could do for



them but entrust them to Yahweh. **(33-35)** *I have not... In everything I did...* A repetition of the claims Paul made on himself at the beginning of his speech (Ac 20:18-24). *It is more blessed...* This is a rare instance of a saying of Jesus not found in the canonical Gospels. **(36-38)** *All of them... prayed. They all wept. What grieved them most...* Through all this scene runs the dominant feeling of a really deep and sincere affection.

**On to Jerusalem** [Ac 21:1-16]

**(Ac 21:1)** *After we had departed from them, we put out to sea and sailed straight to Cos. The next day we went to Rhodes and from there to Patara. (2) We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. (3) After sighting Cyprus and passing by the left side of it, we sailed on to Syria. We landed at Tyre, where our ship was to unload its cargo. (4) Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] they told Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. (5) But after few days, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray. (6) After saying good-bye to each other, we went aboard the ship, and they returned home.*

**(7)** *We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for only a day. (8) Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. (9) He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.*

**(10)** *After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. (11) Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hand and feet with it and said, "The Spirit of Yahweh [\*] says, 'In this way the [chiefs of the] Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"*

**(12)** *When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. (13) Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (14) When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord Yahweh's will be done."*

**(15)** *Few days later, we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. (16) Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 21:1-2)** *Sailed straight to Cos.* Favorable winds took them to a stopping place for the night at this island. *Rhodes.* The leading city of the island of Rhodes, once noted for its Colossus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (demolished over two centuries earlier). *Patara.* On the southern coast of Lycia, where they embarked on a ship going directly to Tyre in Phoenicia. **(3)** *Sighting Cyprus.* The direct, open sea route from Patara to Tyre passed to the south of that big island. *Syria.* The Roman province including Phoenicia. **(4-6)** *Through the Spirit of Yahweh.* Most probably by the words of a prophet, as it happened also later (Ac 21:10-11). *They told Paul not to go.* But Paul felt “compelled by the Spirit of Yahweh” to go (Ac 20:22). **(7)** *Ptolemais.* The modern city of Acco, down the coast from Tyre. **(8)** *Caesarea.* The capital of Roman Judea, the headquarters of the Roman Proconsul. *Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven.* Introduced at his appointment (Ac 6:5), his evangelic work may have focused on Caesarea for almost 25 years, beginning (Ac 8:40) immediately after the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Ac 8:26-40). **(9)** *Unmarried daughters.* Probably they had dedicated their lives to praying and serving in the Church. **(10)** *Agabus.* The same prophet who had been in Antioch prophesying the coming of the famine in Jerusalem some 15 years earlier (Ac 11:28). **(11)** *Took Paul’s belt...* Jewish prophets had a certain custom. When words were inadequate, they dramatized their message. **(12-14)** *We... pleaded with him not to go.* But as already seen, Paul felt “compelled by the Spirit of Yahweh” to go (Ac 20:22). *The Lord Yahweh’s will be done.* Finally, they recognized that it was Yahweh’s will for Paul to go to Jerusalem. **(15-16)** *Mnason.* A believer, mentioned only here.

### **Paul’s arrival at Jerusalem** [Ac 21:17-26]

**(Ac 21:17)** *When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. (18)The next day Paul went with us to see James, and all the elders were present. (19)Paul greeted them and reported in detail what Yahweh had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.*

**(20)** *When they heard this, they praised Yahweh. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. (21)They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. (22)What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, (23)so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. (24)Take these men with you, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will*

*know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. (25) As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality."*

*(26) So Paul took the men and the next day purified himself along with them. Then he went to the Temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.*

**(Ac 21:17)** *Arrived at Jerusalem.* Not more than a day or two before Pentecost, marking the end of Paul's third missionary journey. **(18)** *James.* The brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. **(19)** *Paul... reported in detail...* After an absence of more than two years, he had plenty to report to the apostles and to the men in charge of the Church. **(20-22)** *They said to Paul...* The leaders of the Church in Jerusalem accepted him and saw Yahweh's hand in his work; but rumors had been spread that he had pushed the Jew-Christians to forsake their ancestral faith. This was not true; he had insisted that the Jewish law was irrelevant for the Gentiles, but he never sought to draw the Jew-Christians away from the customs of their fathers. **(23-24)** *Do what we tell you.* The leaders saw a way for him to demonstrate publicly that he was an observer of the law without sacrificing any Christian principle in any act of obedience to the law. *Made a vow.* Evidently, the temporary Nazarite vow -a vow of gratitude for some special blessing. It involved abstention from meat and wine for thirty days, during which the hair had to be allowed to grow. At the end of it there were the purification rites, lasting seven days during which the head was shaved at the altar and certain offerings had to be brought -a year old lamb for sin offering, a ram for peace offering, a basket of unleavened bread and cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, a meat offering and a drink offering. *Join in their purification rites and pay their expenses.* Rites and sacrifices were costly, beyond the resources of many, and it was considered an act of piety for a wealthier person to pay for the expenses of someone taking the vow. *Heads shaved.* Shaving the head marked the end of a vow. *Then everybody will know...* By so doing Paul could demonstrate in a way all could see that he himself was an observer of the law. **(25)** *As for the Gentile believers...* Confirming what they had already written in the Council of Jerusalem's letter (Ac 15:28-29). **(26)** *So Paul took...* There can be no doubt that Paul did not like the matter. But he was ready to subordinate his own wishes for the sake of the Church.

**Paul arrested** [Ac 21:27-36]

*(Ac 21:27) When the seven days were nearly over, some [chiefs of the] Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the Temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, (28) shouting, “Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the Temple area and defiled this holy place.” (29) (In effect, they had seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him and assumed that Paul had brought him into the Temple.)*

*(30) The whole city was aroused, and the people came running. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the Temple, and immediately the gates were shut. (31) While they were trying to kill him, news reached the tribune of the cohort that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. (32) He at once took centurions and soldiers and run down to them. When the rioters saw the tribune and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.*

*(33) The tribune came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. (34) Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the tribune could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. (35) When Paul reached the steps, because of the violence of the mob he had to be carried by the soldiers. (36) And the crowd that followed kept shouting, “Away with him!”*

**(Ac 21:27)** *The seven days.* The days required for the rites of purification. *Jews from the province of Asia.* It was the time of Pentecost and Jews from all over the world were present in Jerusalem. Certain Jews from Asia were there, who no doubt knew how effective Paul’s work in Asia had been. **(28-29)** *Brought Greeks into the Temple.* The Gentiles were allowed only into the outer court, that of the Gentiles. Any Gentile going beyond that was punishable with death. And the Romans allowed the Jews to carry out the death penalty for this crime. **(30)** *The gates were shut.* By order of the Temple officer to prevent further trouble inside the sacred precincts. **(31)** *The tribune of the cohort.* Claudius Lysias (Ac 23:26), commander of a Roman regiment (1,000 men) stationed at the Fortress of Antonia, built by Herod the Great in the north-western corner of the Temple area. His duty was to sedate any possible riot in the city. **(32)** *Centurions.* This means that at least two centurions and 200 soldiers were involved. **(33)** *The tribune... arrested him.* To put an end to the beating and so to the riot. **(34)** *The tribune could not...* In the overall confusion the tribune was unable to extract a coherent charge, so Paul was taken into the Fortress of Antonia (“the barracks”) for

further investigation. **(35-36)** *Violence of the... Away with him.* This time Paul's life had really been in serious danger.

***Paul speaks to the crowd*** [Ac 21:37-40; 22:1-21]

**(Ac 21:37)** *As they were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the tribune, "May I say something to you?"*

*"Do you know Greek?" he replied. (38) "Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led four thousand terrorists out into the desert some time ago?"*

**(39)** *Paul answered, "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people."*

**(40)** *Having received the commander's permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in the language of the Jews: (22:1) "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."*

**(2)** *When they heard him speak to them in the language of the Jews, they became very quiet.*

*Then he said: (3) "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for Yahweh as any of you are today. (4) I persecuted this Way to death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, (5) as also the High Priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. I obtained letters from them to the brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.*

**(6)** *About the sixth hour [noon] as I came near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from Heaven flashed around me. (7) I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'*

**(8)** *'Who are you, Lord?' I asked.*

**'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,'** he replied. **(9)** *My companions saw the light, but did not hear the voice of him who was speaking to me.*

**(10)** *'What shall I do, Lord Jesus?' I asked.*

**'Get up,'** the Lord Jesus said, **'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'** **(11)** *Then my companions led me by hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.*

**(12)** *A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. (13) He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him.*

*(14) Then he said: '[Yahweh] the God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. (15) You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. (16) And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'*

*(17) Then, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the Temple, I fell into a trance (18) and saw the Lord Jesus, who told me, 'Quick, leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'*

*(19) 'Lord Jesus,' I replied, 'these men know that I went in every synagogue to imprison and beat those who believe in you. (20) And when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'*

*(21) Then the Lord Jesus said to me, 'Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'*

**(Ac 21:37)** *Do you know Greek?* Clearly the tribune was surprised that his prisoner -a supposed rebel- was able to speak cultured Greek. **(38)** *The Egyptian who...* Josephus tells of an Egyptian false prophet who some years earlier had led 4,000 men to the Mount of Olives with the promise that he could make the walls of the city fall down before him. In the repression, the Romans had killed hundreds, but the leader escaped, and the tribune had thought that Paul was this Egyptian come back. **(39)** *From Tarsus.* Paul had citizenship in Tarsus as well as being a Roman citizen. *No ordinary city.* Tarsus was one of the most important ports of the Mediterranean, at the end of the road coming all across Asia Minor from the far-off Euphrates. It was also one of the greatest university cities of the ancient world. After Paul had stated his credentials, the tribune knew that, whatever else he was, he was not a revolutionary rebel. **(40)** *Paul... motioned to the crowd... all silent.* This fact -he commanded and obtained silence from the mob that was lynching him- shows the force of Paul's personality. *The language of the Jews.* Aramaic, the most commonly used language among Palestinian Jews. At that time, the Hebrew was only a sacred language -in the synagogues the Scriptures were read in Hebrew and translated in Aramaic. **(22:1)** *Brothers.* Here used to refer to those of common Jewish lineage. *Fathers.* The chiefs of the Jews of the province of Asia (Ac 21:27) and all the other Jewish elders and teachers of the law who were there. **(2-3)** *I am...* Paul's line of defense was not to argue with the crowd but to relate his personal experience. *Brought up in this city.* Under Gamaliel. Paul must have come to Jerusalem quite young, as soon as he was old enough to begin his training under Ga-

maliel, the most famous and honored rabbi of the time, who had died only few years before. *Zealous for Yahweh*. Paul was a trained Pharisee. **(4)** *I persecuted this Way...* As reported in Ac 9:1-2. **(5)** *The High Priest... can testify*. Caiaphas, the high priest at that time, was now dead; but the records of the High Priest and of the Sanhedrin would show Paul's testimony to be true. **(6-13)** *As I came near to Damascus...* And Paul gives the narrative of his conversion (as already reported by Luke in Ac 9:3-9,17-18). *Ananias... devout observer of the law*. Important point to this Jewish audience. He was already a "disciple" when introduced to the Christians (Ac 9:10). **(14)** *[Yahweh] the God of our fathers has chosen you*. Paul was nothing more than an instrument of Yahweh. *To see the Righteous One*. It was the experience of having seen the resurrected Jesus Christ that had convinced Paul of the truth of the Gospel. **(15)** *His witness to all men*. Paul's task was to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all men, without distinction between Jews and Gentiles. **(16)** *Be baptized... calling on his name*. Baptism, which is in the name of Jesus Christ, is the outward sign of Yahweh's grace. The inward result of it is the believer's spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus. **(17-20)** *When I returned to Jerusalem*. After the three years spent in Arabia (Paul's thought. Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:17-18), Paul went to Jerusalem -where he stayed for two weeks (Paul's thought. Paul called by Yahweh. Gal 1:18)- to meet the apostles (Ac 9:26-28). *Into a trance... the Lord Jesus... said to me...* The point Paul makes clear is that he did not want to leave the Jews. So much that, when Yahweh -through His Son Jesus Christ- told him to do so, Paul argued saying that his change of mind -from persecutor to witness- would have been enough to convince all those who knew of him previously. **(21)** *Go... to the Gentiles*. But Paul's assigned task was to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles.

**Paul the Roman citizen** [Ac 22:22-29]

**(Ac 22:22)** *The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the Earth of him! He's not fit to live!"*

**(23)** *As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, (24) the tribune ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and questioned in order to find out why they were shouting at him like this. (25) But when they had tied him up with the throngs, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"*

**(26)** *When he heard this, the centurion went to the tribune and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen."*

*(27)The tribune went to Paul and asked, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”*

*“Yes,” he answered.*

*(28)Then the tribune said, “I had to pay a big price for my citizenship.”*

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

*(29)Those who were about to question him withdrew immediately. The tribune himself was alarmed when he realized that he was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.*

**(Ac 22:22)** *Until he said this. Then...* It was the mention of the Gentiles (Ac 22:21) which upset the crowd. It was not that the Jews objected to the preaching to the Gentiles; what they objected to was that the Gentiles were being offered privileges before they first accepted circumcision and observance of the law. **(23)** *Shouting... throwing... flinging...* Common ways of showing deep disapproval. **(24-29)** *Flogged and questioned.* Under Roman law, it was legal to use flogging to force a confession from a slave or an alien but never from a Roman citizen. *Is it legal for you...?* By law, all Roman citizens were assured exclusion from all degrading forms of punishment: scourging, beating with rods, crucifixion. *I was born a citizen.* We don't know how Paul's father or an earlier ancestor had gained citizenship. Anyway, not only Paul was a citizen; he was born such, whereas the tribune had to purchase the privilege. And the tribune knew that he had been on the verge of doing something that would have involved certainly his dismissals and not improbably his execution.

### **Before the Sanhedrin** [Ac 22:30; 23:1-11]

**(Ac 22:30)***[The tribune] unbound him and, since he wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the [chiefs of the] Jews, the next day he ordered the chief priests and all the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand among them.*

**(23:1)***Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “Brothers, I have acted before Yahweh in all good conscience to this day.” (2)At this the High Priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. (3)Then Paul said to him, “Yahweh will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!”*

**(4)***Those who were standing near Paul said, “You dare to insult Yahweh's High Priest?”*

**(5)***Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not know that he was the High Priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”*



(6) Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.” (7) When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (8) (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.)

(9) There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law, who were Pharisees, stood up and argued vigorously, “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?” (10) The dispute became so violent that the tribune was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away and bring him to the barracks.

(11) The following night the Lord Jesus stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”

**(Ac 22:30)** [*The tribune*] unbound him and... Paul was no longer bound but was still kept by the Romans. Presumably he would have been set free if the Sanhedrin had not wished to detain him. **(23:1)** Paul... said, “Brothers...” By calling them “brothers,” Paul was challenging the Sanhedrin; for the official address to the Court was, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel.” **(2)** Ananias. High Priest (AD 47-59), son of Nebadaeus. He was noted for cruelty and violence. He was assassinated by his own people. **(3)** Whitewashed wall. A metaphor for hypocrite. You... violate the law. To strike the defendant during trial was expressly prohibited by the law. **(4-5)** Insult... I did not realize... When accused of insulting the High Priest, Paul answered with irony: A true High Priest would not have given such an order. Do not speak evil... A quotation from Exodus 22:28. **(6-9)** I am a Pharisee... my hope in the resurrection. In the Sanhedrin there were Sadducees (the High Priest and the chief priests) and Pharisees (the teachers of the law), whose beliefs were often opposed. As a result of Paul’s claim the Sanhedrin was split in two factions, with the Pharisees defending Paul (“We find nothing wrong...”). **(10)** Dispute... so violent that... In the argument that followed Paul was in serious danger, something the tribune could not allow. **(11)** The Lord Jesus stood near. In times of crisis and need for strength, Paul was always given help and clues about his future (here and in Ac 18:9; 22:18; 27:23).

**The plot to kill Paul** [Ac 23:12-22]

*(Ac 23:12) When it was day the [chiefs of the] Jews formed a conspiracy and [some Jews] bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. (13) There were more than forty who were involved in this plot. (14) They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. (15) Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the tribune to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here."*

*(16) But the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, went into the barracks and told Paul.*

*(17) Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the tribune; he has something to tell him." (18) So he took him, brought him to the tribune and said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."*

*(19) The tribune took him by the hand and, going aside, asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"*

*(20) He said, "The [chiefs of the] Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. (21) Don't give in to them, because more than forty men are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent."*

*(22) The tribune dismissed the young man and cautioned him, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."*

**(Ac 23:12-15) Conspiracy... killed Paul.** If a man was considered a danger to public morals and life the Jews regarded it as legitimate to physically eliminate him. *An oath.* To officialize their intent before Yahweh. *More than forty.* Probably they were from the Zealots, a violent faction, whose intent was to get rid of all Israel's enemies. The group of the killers had to be numerous because when they planned to ambush Paul he would be accompanied by many Roman soldiers. **(16) The son of Paul's sister.** Nothing more is known of them. *Heard of this plot.* Surely, Paul's family was informed by some member of the Sanhedrin, as not all of them were against Paul (Ac 23: 9). **(17-21) Then Paul...** Paul was a prisoner; but he was a Roman citizen and therefore the tribune was interested in getting as much informations as possible about his troubles with the Sanhedrin. **(22) Don't tell anyone.** For the boy's own safety and for the success of the tribune's plan to transfer Paul under the cover of the night (Ac 23:23-24).

**Paul transferred to Caesarea** [Ac 23:23-35]

**(Ac 23:23)** Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, “Get ready two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night [9 PM]. **(24)** Provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix.”

**(25)** He wrote a letter as follows:

**(26)** ‘Claudius Lysias,  
To His Excellency, Governor Felix:  
Greetings,

**(27)** This man was seized by the [chiefs of the] Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. **(28)** I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. **(29)** I found that the accusation had to do with a question about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment. **(30)** When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him.’

**(31)** So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. **(32)** The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. **(33)** When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. **(34)** The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, **(35)** he said, “I will hear you when your accusers get here.” Then he ordered Paul to be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.

**(Ac 23:23-24)** *Soldiers... horsemen... spearmen.* The tribune mobilized a small army to see Paul, a Roman citizen, taken in safely to Caesarea -the seat of the Roman government. **(25-30)** *Governor Felix.* Antonius Felix. The Emperor Claudius had appointed him governor of Judea when his brother Pallas was the emperor’s favorite minister. The two brothers had formerly been slaves, then freedmen, then high officials in government. Felix married three princesses in succession, the third of whom was Drusilla (Ac 24:24). *Claudius Lysias.* The name of the tribune commander of the regiment stationed in Jerusalem during that Feast of Pentecost. *For I have learned that he is a Roman citizen.* Not true, because the tribune did not learn of Paul’s citizenship until he was about to scourge him. A statement inserted to gain favor with the governor. *Ordered... to present to you their case.* An order he will actually issue only by next morning. **(31-33)** *The soldiers... as far as Antipatris.* From Jerusalem to Antipatris (35 miles; 56 km)

the road was dangerous and the country inhabited by Jews. From Antipatris to Caesarea (25 miles; 40 km) the country was open and flat, quite unsuitable for an ambush and largely inhabited by Gentiles. So at Antipatris the troops went back leaving the cavalry as a sufficient escort. **(34)** *From Cilicia.* If Paul had come from a province nearby, Felix might have turned him over to another governor. **(35)** *Herod's palace.* Erected as a royal residence by Herod the Great but later used as a Roman Praetorium -the headquarters of the Romans.

**The trial before Felix** [Ac 24:1-27]

**(Ac 24:1)** *Five days later the High Priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. (2)When he [Paul] was called in, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you and by the reforms your foresight has brought for the people. (3)Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. (4)But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly.*

*(5)We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect (6)and even tried to desecrate the Temple; so we seized him and wanted to judge him according to our law. (7)But the tribune Lysias came and with the use of much force snatched him from our hands (8)and ordered his accusers to come before you. By examining him yourself on these things, you will be able to learn the truth about the things of which we accuse him."*

*(9)The [chiefs of the] Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were so.*

*(10)When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation, I gladly make my defense. (11)You can verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship, (12)and they did not find me arguing with anyone at the Temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or in the city. (13)And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. (14)However, I admit that I worship [Yahweh] the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, (15)and I have the same hope in Yahweh as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. (16)So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before Yahweh and man.*

*(17)Now, after several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring alms to my*

people and to present offerings. (18) I was ceremonially clean when they found me in the Temple. Not in the crowd, nor in any disturbance. (19) But some [chiefs of the] Jews from Asia ought to be here before you and bring charges, if they have anything against me. (20) Or these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin - (21) unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.'"

(22) Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned them, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes, I will decide your case." (23) He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and to permit his friends to take care of his needs.

(24) Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. (25) But, as he discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough! Go! When I have an opportunity, I will send for you." (26) At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him some money, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

(27) When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And, desiring to grant a favor to the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

**(Ac 24:1)** Five days later. After the departure from Jerusalem, just enough time for a messenger to go from Caesarea to Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin to appoint their representatives, and their journey to Caesarea. *Ananias*. So much importance the Sanhedrin was giving to Paul that the High Priest himself made the 60-miles (96 km) journey to supervise the case personally. *Elders*. Generically, members of the Sanhedrin. *Tertullus*. Most likely a Jew familiar with the procedures of the Roman court. **(2-4)** Long period of peace... with profound gratitude. The expected eulogy with which to introduce a speech before a judge of that level. In his six years in office Felix had eliminated many bands of robbers, but in general his record was not good. He was recalled by Rome two year later because of misrule. **(5)** *Troublemaker*. To excite dissension in the Empire was treason against Caesar -punishable by death. *Ringleader of the Nazarene sect*. To be a leader of a religious sect without Roman approval was contrary to the law. *Nazarene sect*. Christianity. **(6-9)** *Tried to desecrate the Temple*. The former main charge, now qualified as an "attempt" (Ac 21:28). *We seized him*. Tertullus claimed that the chiefs of the Jews had arrested Paul. But the scene in the Temple court was that of a lynching, not of an arrest. **(10-13)** *Paul replied*.

When it was his turn, Paul spoke directly, without the flattery employed by Tertullus. And he answered each accusation: He was not a troublemaker, he had not been involved in disturbances, and he had only recently arrived in Jerusalem. *Twelve days ago... Five in Caesarea and seven in Jerusalem. (14-16) I worship... Yahweh... as a follower of the Way. I believe everything that...* Paul admitted his part in the Way but, by saying that he believed in the Law and the Prophets and in the resurrection of the dead, he actually said that, from a Roman point of view, Christianity was part of Judaism, not a non-authorized sect. **(17) To bring alms to my people.** The collection for the needy in Judea that was so important to Paul and the main reason for him to be in Jerusalem. **(18) Ceremonially clean.** Paul had “purified himself” in the Temple together with the four men who had taken a vow (Ac 21:26). **(19) Jews from... Asia who...** Their absence showed that they could not substantiate their accusation. **(20-21) Concerning the resurrection.** As in Jerusalem, before the Sanhedrin (Ac 23:6), Paul introduced the point of contention between the Pharisee and the Sadducees, something the Romans were absolutely not interested to. **(22) Well acquainted with the Way.** Felix could not have governed Judea and Samaria for six years without becoming familiar with the existence and the activities of the Christians. **(23) To give him some freedom.** Since Paul was a Roman citizen who had not been found guilty of any crime. **(24) Felix... sent for Paul.** For a private conversation. *Drusilla.* Felix’s third wife, daughter of Herod Agrippa I. At age 15 she married Azizus, king of Emesa, but deserted him for Felix a year later. **(25) Felix was afraid.** Hearing of righteousness, self-control and final judgment, for a short moment Felix looked with sincerity and concern at his past life. *That’s enough...* But lust, pride, greed and ambition made it inconvenient to change. **(26) Offer him some money.** Felix, well known for his corruption, knew of the money Paul had brought to the Jew-Christians of Palestine and supposed he had access to considerable funds. So he wanted Paul to give him money in order to secure his release. But Paul no longer had the money, nor would he offer a bribe to gain his freedom if he had it. **(27) Felix was succeeded...** Felix was recalled to Rome to answer for misrule, such as his handling of the riots between Jews and Gentiles in Caesarea, which ended with the death of thousand Jews and the looting of their houses by the Roman soldiers. *Porcius Festus.* He died in office two years later, and his record for that time shows wisdom and honesty superior to both his predecessor, Felix, and his successor, Albinus. *To grant a favor to the Jews.* Felix did not want more problems with the Jews, and to release Paul from prison would do just that.

**The trial before Festus** [Ac 25:1-12]

(Ac 25:1) Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, (2) where the chief priests and Jewish leaders appeared before him against Paul; and they urged him, (3) asking, as a favor to them against Paul, to have him transferred to Jerusalem, so they could prepare an ambush to kill him along the way. (4) Festus answered that Paul was being held at Caesarea, and he himself was going there soon. (5) And said, "Let some of your leaders come with me and press charges against the man, if he has done anything wrong."

(6) After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he took his seat in the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. (7) When Paul appeared, the [chiefs of the] Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many serious charges, which they could not prove.

(8) Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the Temple or against Caesar."

(9) Then Festus, wishing to do the [chiefs of the] Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

(10) Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I have to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. (11) If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges they brought against me are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

(12) After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

(Ac 25:1-2) Three days after... Festus was anxious to go immediately from his headquarters to the center of Jewish rule to get acquainted with the Jewish leaders. (3) A favor... an ambush. The Sanhedrin tried to take advantage of Festus' recent arrival asking for what looked as an innocent favor. (4-5) Festus answered... Clearly, Festus understood that there was something wrong in their request and, anyway, didn't like the idea of transferring the trial of a Roman citizen to a Jewish religious court. (6) Took his seat. Officially opening the session of the Roman Court. (7) Many serious charges... they could not prove. From the beginning -as the tribune wrote in his letter to the governor Felix (Ac 23:29)- Paul's accusers were unable to give legal proof of their charges. (8) Paul made his defense. From Paul's answer we can deduce the charges they made against him: Heresy, sacrilege and sedi-

tion. No doubt from their point of view the first charge was true -irrelevant as it was to Roman law- but the other two were deliberate lies. **(9)** *Are you willing...?* Festus had no desire to go against the Jewish leaders at the beginning of his mandate, so he tried a compromise asking if Paul would accept the transfer of his case to Jerusalem. **(10-11)** *Paul answered...* Paul knew that for him there would not be a fair trial in Jerusalem, that there his enemies would have taken his life. *I appeal to Caesar!* It was the right of every Roman citizen to have his case heard in Rome, before the Emperor or his representative. This was the highest court of appeal, and winning there would have meant more than just Paul's acquittal. It would have resulted in the official recognition of Christianity as distinct from Judaism. **(12)** *His council.* The legal experts of the Roman Court. *To Caesar you will go!* After Paul's request, Festus had no choice but to grant it.

**Festus consults king Agrippa II** [Ac 25:13-22]

**(Ac 25:13)** *A few days later king Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. (14) Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul's case with the king. He said: "There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. (15) When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and elders of the Jews came and asked that he be condemned.*

*(16) I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over any man before he had faced his accusers and has had an opportunity to defend himself against their charges. (17) When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but took my seat in the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. (18) In his presence, his accusers did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. (19) Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. (20) I was at a loss about a dispute on such things; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these charges. (21) When Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar."*

**(22)** *Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself." He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him."*

**(Ac 25:13)** *King Agrippa.* Herod Agrippa II. He was 17 years old at the death of his father Herod Agrippa I in AD 44 (Ac 12:23). At the Jewish revolt, when Jerusalem fell in AD 70, he was on the side of the Romans. He was the last of the Herods, and died in AD 100. *Bernice.* Sister, one year



younger, of Herod Agrippa II and of Drusilla, the governor Felix's third wife (Ac 24:24). At 13 she married her uncle, Herod of Chalcis, and had two sons. When he died she went to live with her brother. *To pay their respects.* The customary complimentary visit of a king subject to the Romans to a new Roman governor. **(14-21)** *Festus discussed Paul's case with the king...* Here, Luke gives a really clear, true and impartial review of the situation. **(22)** *I would like to hear... myself.* Both for satisfying his curiosity about Paul and for giving an appropriate advice to Festus.

***Paul before Agrippa II [Ac 25:23-27; 26:1-32]***

**(Ac 25:23)** *The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the tribunes and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. (24)Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. (25)I found that he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to August I decided to send him [to Rome]. (26)But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, king Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. (27)For I think it is unreasonable to send on a prisoner without specifying the charges against him." (26:1)Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself."*

*So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: (2) "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense, (3)especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.*

**(4)***The [chiefs of the] Jews all know my manner of life from my youth, spent in my own country and in Jerusalem. (5)They have known me from then and can testify, if they are willing, that I lived as a Pharisee, according to the strictest sect of our religion. (6)And now it is because of my hope in what Yahweh has promised our fathers that I am on trial, (7)that promise the twelve tribes of Israel are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve [Yahweh] day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the [chiefs of the] Jews are accusing me. (8)Why should you consider it incredible that Yahweh raises the dead?*

**(9)***I too was convinced that I ought to do many things to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10)And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. (11)And often, in all*

*the synagogues, I had them punished, trying to force them to blaspheme. In my raging fury against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.*

*(12) Thus, as I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, (13) at about the sixth hour of the day [noon], O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from Heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. (14) We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in the language of the Jews, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’*

*(15) Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’*

*‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord Jesus replied. (16) ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. This is why I have appeared to you: to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you have seen of me and of what I will show you. (17) I will rescue you from the [Jewish] people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, (18) to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to Yahweh, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among the saints who have faith in me.’*

*(19) So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from Heaven, (20) and to those in Damascus, in Jerusalem, in all Judea and to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to Yahweh and perform deeds worthy of their repentance. (21) That is why the [chiefs of the] Jews seized me in the Temple courts and tried to kill me. (22) But I have had Yahweh’s help to this very day, in which I stand here and testify both to small and great. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen -(23) that the Christ [Messiah] would suffer and, the first among the risen from the dead, would proclaim light to the [Jewish] people and to the Gentiles.”*

*(24) As he thus made his defence, Festus shouted, “You are out of your mind, Paul! Your great learning is driving you insane.”*

*(25) “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. (26) The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because this was not done in a corner. (27) King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”*

*(28) And Agrippa to Paul, “A short time more, and you can persuade me to be a Christian”.*

*(29) Then Paul, “Short time or long -I pray Yahweh that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”*

*(30)The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. (31)They withdrew, and while talking with one another, they said, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment."*

*(32)Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."*

**(Ac 25:23)** *Audience room.* Not the judgment hall, for this was not a court trial. It was an auditorium appropriate for the pomp of the occasion, with a king, his sister, the Roman governor and the highest Jewish and Roman leaders. **(24-27)** *Festus said...* Few phrases, to introduce Paul, the Sanhedrin's request ("he ought not to live"), his opinion ("he had done nothing deserving of death"), and his problem after Paul appealed to the Emperor ("I have nothing definite to write"). **(26:1)** *Agrippa said...* It was Agrippa who gave Paul permission to speak because Festus allowed him to have the charge of the hearing. **(2-3)** *King Agrippa... well acquainted with all the Jewish customs.* Agrippa as king controlled the Temple treasury and the investments of the High Priest, whose appointment was his duty. He was always consulted by the Romans on religious matters. This is one of the reasons Festus wanted him to assess Paul. **(4-11)** *The manner of life...* A short report of his life as a Pharisee and as a persecutor of the Christians, yet introducing the point that the center of the Christian message is the resurrection. **(12-18)** *As I was going...* Paul's vision happened when, in his "obsession" he was going to Damascus, looking for Christians to punish. *The language of the Jews.* Aramaic, the most commonly used language among Palestinian Jews. At that time, the Hebrew was only a sacred language -in the synagogues the Scriptures were read in Hebrew and translated in Aramaic. *To kick against the goads.* A Greek proverb for useless resistance. *I am Jesus... I have... appointed you...* Paul's assigned mission was to bring Yahweh's Word of salvation to all men, not only to the Jews. **(19-20)** *I was not disobedient...* Clearly, after such a vision -and his blindness and recovery- the only thing Paul could do was to comply. **(21)** *That is why...* Because the Jews could not accept that Yahweh's salvation was for the Gentiles too. **(22-23)** *What the prophets and Moses said would happen.* Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, and the spiritual salvation of all men was foreseen by the Jewish Scriptures (our Old Testament). **(24)** *You are out of your mind.* The Roman governor felt that Paul's religious education and his continuous reading of the Scriptures had led him to a mania about prophecy and resurrection. **(25-26)** *I am not insane... it was not done in a corner.* Paul's preaching -the Gospel- was based on actual events, lived out in those

times and places. King Agrippa, a contemporary, could himself attest the truth of what Paul had affirmed. **(27)** *Do you believe the prophets?* King Agrippa was faced with a dilemma. If he said “Yes,” Paul would press him to recognize their fulfillment in Jesus; if he said “No,” he would be in trouble with the devout Jews, who would extend his denial to all Prophetic Scriptures. **(28)** *A short time more...* Agrippa’s answer was an evasion of Paul’s question and an anticipation to what Agrippa thought Paul’s next question would be. **(29)** *Short time or long...* Everything is in Yahweh’s hands, and Paul could only ask for His help. **(30-32)** *This man could have been set free.* A logical conclusion, as both Festus and Agrippa had clear picture of the situation.

### ***Paul sails for Rome [Ac 27:1-12]***

**(Ac 27:1)** *When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan Cohort. (2) We boarded ship from Adramyttium about to sail for the ports along the coast of Asia, and we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us.*

**(3)** *The next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius, in kindness to Paul, allowed him to go to his friends so they might provide for his needs. (4) From there we put out to sea and passed to the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. (5) When we had sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. (6) There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy and put us on board. (7) We made slow headway for many days and had difficulty arriving off Cnidus. Then, as the wind did not allow us to hold our course, we sailed to the lee of Crete, opposite to Salmone. (8) We moved along the coast with difficulty and came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.*

**(9)** *Much time had been lost, and sailing had already become dangerous because by now it was after the Fast. So Paul warned them (10) saying, “Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be risky and puts in great danger ship and cargo, and our own lives also.” (11) But the centurion believed more to the pilot and the owner of the ship than to Paul’s words. (12) Since the harbor was unsuitable to winter in, the majority decided that we should sail on, hoping to reach and winter at Phoenix, an harbor in Crete, facing both Libeccio [south-west] and Mistral [northwest].*

**(Ac 27:1)** *We would sail.* Probably Luke did spend the two years of Paul’s Caesarean imprisonment nearby, and now he joins those ready to sail. *Centurion named Julius.* Otherwise unknown. He was given the duty of Impe-

rial Courier, which included delivering prisoners for trial. *Augustan Cohort*. One of the ten regiments in which a Roman legion, composed by 6,000 men, was divided. **(2) Adramyttium**. An harbor near Caesarea. *Ports of Asia*. At one of these stops, the centurion Julius planned to find a ship going directly to Rome. *Aristarcus*. He had been with Paul in Ephesus (Ac 19:29) and had traveled with him from Corinth to Jerusalem (Ac 20:3-4). **(3) Sidon**. A port about 70 miles (110 km) north of Caesarea. *Julius, in kindness to Paul*. The centurion well knew that Paul was not a common prisoner, that he could trust him with some freedom. **(4) To the lee of Cyprus**. They sought the protecting shelter of the island by sailing north on its eastern side, then west along the northern side. *Winds were against us*. Prevailing winds in summer were from the west. **(5) Myra in Lycia**. From Sidon to Myra along the coast would normally take 10 or 15 days. **(6) Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy**. A ship from Egypt with a cargo of grain (Ac 27:38). With the development of navigation, instead of sailing along the coast, more ships were daring to run directly from Alexandria in Egypt to harbors like Myra, in the southern coast of Asia Minor. It was considerably out of the way on the trip to Rome from Egypt, but the prevailing westerly winds would not allow a direct voyage. **(7) Cnidus**. At the southeast point of Asia Minor, at about 170 miles (270 km) from Myra. The trip probably took another 10 or 15 days. *To the lee of Crete*. Rather than to sail directly to Greece, the ship was forced by the winds to bear south, with the island of Crete on the north. *Salmon*. A promontory on the northeast point of Crete. **(8) Fair Havens... Lasea**. A harbor about midway on the southern coast of Crete and a town about 5 miles (8 km) away. **(9-10) Much time had been lost**. Because of the not favorable winds encountered during most of the voyage. *After the Fast*. The Jewish "Day of Atonement," which fell at the end of September or the beginning of October. The Romans considered sailing after mid-September very risky and impossible after the beginning of November. *Paul warned...* Paul was a much experienced traveler, and his advice was taken in serious consideration, but not accepted **(11-12) But... the harbor was unsuitable to winter**. They had to choose between a not enough protected harbor (where anyway the ship could be destroyed by a strong storm) and the risk of sailing about 45 miles (70 km) along the coast of Crete to Phoenix. *Phoenix*. A major city that served as wintering place, having a harbor protected against the storms.

**The storm** [Ac 27:13-26]

**(Ac 27:13)** *When a gentle Sirocco began to blow, they thought they had obtained their purpose; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the sho-*

re of Crete. **(14)** Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the *Euraquilo*, swept down from the island. **(15)** The ship was caught by it and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. **(16)** As we passed to the lee of a small island called *Cauda*, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure. **(17)** After hoisting it aboard, they took emergency measures and passed ropes around the ship. Fearing that they would run aground on *Syrtis*, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. **(18)** As we were violently battered by the storm, the next day they threw the cargo overboard. **(19)** On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. **(20)** When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we gave up all hope of being saved.

**(21)** After we had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this danger and loss. **(22)** But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship. **(23)** Last night an angel of Yahweh, whose I am and whom I serve, stood beside me **(24)** and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar; and Yahweh has granted you all who sail with you.' **(25)** So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in Yahweh that it will happen just as I have been told. **(26)** But we must run aground on some island."

**(Ac 27:13)** *A gentle Sirocco*. A south wind favorable to their plan to winter at Phoenix (Ac 27:12). **(14-15)** *Euraquilo*. The Northeaster, a typhoon-like, east-northeast wind, which drove the ship away from their destination. **(16-17)** *Cauda*. A small island about 23 miles (37 km) from Crete. *Lifeboat*. A small boat which was being towed behind the ship. Since it was in danger of being crashed against the ship by the wind and the waves, it had to be taken aboard. *Passed ropes around the ship*. Crosswise, in order to keep the ship from being broken apart by the storm. *Syrtis*. A long stretch of sandbanks along northern Africa off the coast of Tunis and Tripoli -still far away, but in such a storm the ship could be driven a great distance. *Sea anchor*. The ship mast -or the spare one- with the mainsail attached, dragged behind, to slow the ship progress. **(18)** *Threw the cargo overboard*. To lighten the ship. **(19)** *Ship's tackle*. Equipment and spare parts. **(20)** *Neither sun nor stars*. They could not know where they were and the terror of the Syrtis Sands made them abandon all hope. **(21)** *Paul stood up... and said...* By this time the situation had become really desperate, and all sailors

and passengers -a total of 276 men (Ac 27:37)- had lost hope to come out alive. **(22-26)** *Not one of you will be lost... an angel of Yahweh... said...* Really good news to the ears of such a dispirited company.

**The shipwreck** [Ac 27:27-44]

**(Ac 27:27)** *On the fourteenth night that we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight, the sailors sensed they were approaching land. (28)They took soundings and found twenty fathoms [36 meters]. A short time later they took soundings again and found fifteen fathoms [27 meters]. (29)Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. (30)In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. (31) Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless they stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." (32)So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.*

**(33)** *Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "Today is the fourteenth day," he said, "that you have been in suspense and without food -you haven't taken anything. (34)Now I urge you to take some food. You need it for your salvation. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head." (35) After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to Yahweh in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. (36)Then they were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. (37)Altogether there were 276 of us on board. (38)When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.*

**(39)** *When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. (40)Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. (41)But they struck a sandbar and run aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.*

**(42)** *The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them for swimming away and escaping. (43)But the centurion wanted to save Paul and kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump over-board first and get to land, (44)then to the others [to get there], who on planks, who on pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land in safety.*

**(Ac 27:27)** *Fourteenth night. After leaving Fair Havens (Ac 27:8). Adriatic*

*Sea.* The sea between Italy, Malta, Crete and Greece, in ancient times was called Adriatic. *The sailors sensed.* By the sound of breakers. **(28)** *Took soundings.* They measured the depth of the sea by letting down a weighted line. **(29)** *Prayed for daylight.* Hoping that the anchors would hold until the end of the night. **(30)** *Attempt to escape.* The sailors felt that their chance for survival was better in the lifeboat, leaving the many passengers and the ship to their destiny. **(31-32)** *Unless they stay...* If the sailors had been allowed to desert it, the passengers would have been unable to beach the ship the following day. **(33-34)** *Haven't taken anything.* No regular meal had been eaten since the storm began. *You need for your salvation.* Paul knew that hungry men are not strong and that by next morning they were going to need all their strength. **(35-36)** *Took some bread and gave thanks.* Paul gave two good examples: He ate food for getting some strength and gave thanks to Yahweh for being still alive. **(37)** *276 of us on board.* A number not extraordinary for a cargo ship of that time. **(38)** *Lightened the ship.* They threw overboard even the remaining bags of wheat, which had been kept for food supply, to sail as much as possible into shore by next morning. **(39)** *A bay with a beach.* A good place -without rocks- to beach the ship. **(40)** *Untied the ropes that held the rudders.* In order to lower the stern rudders into place, so the ship could be steered toward the shore. Ancient ships had a steering oar on either side of the stern. **(41)** *They struck a sand-bar.* With the ship aground at a distance from the beach, they had to swim in the rough sea till the safety of the shore. **(42)** *The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners.* They did not want to risk having some prisoner escape for, if a prisoner escaped, his guard must undergo the penalty intended for him. **(43-44)** *The centurion... ordered...* Clearly, he sent first the ship crew and the soldiers, making sure that no prisoner would escape. And, as the angel had told Paul (Ac 27:24) not even one life was lost.

#### ***Ashore on Malta [Ac 28:1-10]***

**(Ac 28:1)** *Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. (2)The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. (3)Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. (4)When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, divine justice has not allowed him to live." (5)But he shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. (6)The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead, but after waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.*



*(7) Nearby there were estates belonging to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably. (8) Then it happened that Publius' father was sick in bed, caught by fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. (9) When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. (10) They honored us in many ways and when we sailed, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.*

**(Ac 28:1)** *Malta.* Called Melita by the Greeks and the Romans. It was included in the province of Sicily and is located 58 miles (93 km) south of that large island. **(2)** *The islanders.* They were of Phoenician ancestry and spoke a Phoenician dialect, but were completely romanized. *Raining and cold.* It was the end of October or the beginning of November. **(3-4)** *A viper... hanging from his hand.* The islanders knew that it was poisonous and saw the fact as a divine punishment. **(5-6)** *Paul... suffered no ill effects. They... said he was a god.* A change of mind perfectly understandable in superstitious and pagan people. **(7)** *Publius.* Otherwise unknown. He was the highest authority of the island. **(8)** *Publius' father was sick... Paul... healed him.* Paul repaid Publius' kindness by using his gift of healing. **(9)** *The rest of the sick... were cured.* As Paul did in other cities; for example in Ephesus (Ac 19:11-12). **(10)** *They honored... and... furnished us.* The islanders were "unusually kind" (Ac 28:2) and, furthermore, clearly grateful for the healing of all their sick.

#### **Arrival at Rome** [Ac 28:11-16]

**(Ac 28:11)** *After three months, we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the Dioscuri. (12) We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. (13) From there we weighed anchor and arrived at Rhegium. After a day the Sirocco wind came up, and so in two days we reached Puteoli. (14) There we found some brothers who invited us to spend a week with them. And so we came to Rome. (15) The brothers there, having heard our news, came as far as Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. At the sight of these men Paul thanked Yahweh and was encouraged. (16) Then, when we got to Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him.*

**(Ac 28:11)** *After three months.* They had to remain in Malta until the sailing season opened in late February or early March. *Dioscuri.* The twin gods "sons of Zeus", Castor and Pollux, the guardians of sailors. **(12)** *Syracuse.* The leading city of the island of Sicily, situated on the east coast.

**(13)** *Rhegium*. Modern Reggio Calabria, a town near the southwestern tip of Italy, opposite to Messina. *Sirocco*. A wind coming from south. *Puteoli*. Modern Pozzuoli, about 200 miles (320 km) north of Rhegium. Situated in the northern part of the Bay of Naples, it was the chief port of Rome, though 75 miles (120 km) away. **(14)** *Spend a week with them*. The centurion had to make a report of his journey and to send all prisoners to their final destination, so Paul had the possibility to spend few days with the local Christians. **(15)** *Forum of Appius*. A small town 43 miles (69 km) from Rome. Some Roman Christians went till there to meet Paul because beyond this point they would not be certain of the way he would come. *Three Taverns*. A small town 33 miles (53 km) from Rome. Other Roman believers met Paul there. **(16)** *To Live by himself*. “In his own rented house” (Ac 28:30). He was not accused of any crime and was not politically dangerous. So he was allowed to have his own living quarters, but a guard -paid by him- had to stay with him at all times.

***Paul preaches at Rome under guard [Ac 28:17-31]***

**(Ac 28:17)** *Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: “Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. (18) They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. (19) But when the [chiefs of the] Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar -not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. (20) For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”*

**(21)** *They replied, “We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you. (22) But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect.*

**(23)** *Then, on an appointed day, many came to him to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he gave explanations, testifying to the Kingdom of Yahweh and trying to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. (24) Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. (25) So, as they disagreed among themselves and began to leave, Paul said only one thing: “The Spirit of Yahweh [\*] was right in speaking to our fathers through Isaiah the prophet:*

**(26)** *‘Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.” (27) For this people’s heart has become callused; they hardly hear with their*

*ears, and they have closed their eyes. Instead, if they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, I would heal them.'*

**(28)** *Therefore I want you to know that this salvation of Yahweh has been sent to the Gentiles, and that they will listen!* **(29)** *After he said this, the [chiefs of the ] Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.*

**(30)** *For two whole years [Paul] stayed there in his own house and welcomed all who came to see him. (31) Boldly and without hindrance he preached the Kingdom of Yahweh and taught the things of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(Ac 28:17-20)** *He called.* Paul was under "house arrest" and could not move from there. *Leaders of the Jews.* The decree of the Emperor Claudius, expelling all the Jews from Rome (Ac 18:2), had been allowed to lapse, and the Jews had returned to Rome. *Brothers...* Even in Rome -after that for so many years in all places the chiefs of the Jews had been doing everything they could to hinder him, even to kill him- it is to them that Paul first offered his message. *The hope of Israel.* The "hope in what Yahweh has promised" (Ac 26:6), that is, the Messiah, the resurrection and Yahweh's Kingdom. **(21-22)** *We... want to hear... your views.* The chiefs of the Jews in Rome were well aware of the dispute over whether Jesus was the Messiah or not, and they wanted to hear Paul's presentation of the matter. **(23-25)** *Trying to convince them, from the Law of Moses and the Prophets.* The only way to convince the Jews was by showing them that Jesus Christ's suffering, death and resurrection was foreseen through all Jewish Scriptures (the Old Testament). *Began to leave.* Those who were not convinced. **(26-27)** *Go... and say...* A quotation from Isaiah 6:9-10 already made by Jesus (Gospel of Jesus Christ. The parable of the sower. Mk 4:11-12; Mt 13:11, 13-15; Lk 8:10) where, in essence, what the prophet had actually said is that, when he came with Yahweh's message to Yahweh's people, they were so dully un-understanding that you would have thought that Yahweh had shut instead of opening their minds, so that when Yahweh's truth came to them they could not see it. **(28)** *This salvation of Yahweh has been sent to the Gentiles.* The Gospel of spiritual salvation is meant for all men. And Paul was chosen to send Yahweh's Message to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. **(29)** *Arguing... among themselves.* Those who had accepted Paul's

preaching, against those who had not. **(30-31)** *For two whole years [Paul]...* The period of waiting for the discussion of his case before the Roman Court.

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**Note 1: Paul's release, 4th journey and 2nd imprisonment**

The Book of Acts stops here, without even saying if Paul was released or condemned. But there are a number of indications that he was released:

-Paul wrote to some Churches expecting to visit them soon; so he must have anticipated his release (Php 2:24; Phm 1:22).

-A number of details in Paul's Pastoral Letters indicate a further return to Asia Minor, Crete and Greece.

-Eusebius says that Paul was released following his first Roman imprisonment (Ecclesiastical History. 2.22.2-3).

-Tradition and early Christian literature indicate that Paul went to Spain (Clement of Rome, Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. 5; Actus Petri Vercellenses, chapters 1-3; Muratorian Canon, lines 34-39). Even if he did not go, the very fact that a tradition arose suggests that, after his first imprisonment, Paul could have taken that journey.

At the end, Paul traveled again to Rome, where he was imprisoned for the second time and where he wrote 2 Timothy from the Mamertime dungeon shortly before he was executed.

**Note 2: Timeline of Paul's life**

Saul at Stephen's martyrdom. Jerusalem, AD 35 (Ac 8:1a).

Saul persecutes the Church. Jerusalem, AD 35 (Ac 8:3).

Saul's conversion. Damascus, AD 35 (Ac 9:1-19a).

Three years in Arabia. AD 35-38 (Gal 1:17-18; Ac 9:22).

Return to Damascus. AD 38 (Gal 1:17).

Two weeks in Jerusalem. AD 38 (Ac 9:26-29; Gal 1:18).

Ministry in Syria and Cilicia. AD 38-43 (Ac 9:30; Gal 1:21).

From Tarsus to Syrian Antioch. AD 43 (Ac 11:25-26).

To Jerusalem with help for the famine. AD 43/44 (Ac 11:30).

Return from Jerusalem to Syrian Antioch. AD 44 (Ac 12:25).

First missionary journey. AD 46-48 (Ac 13:2-14:28).

The Council of Jerusalem. AD 49/50 (Ac 15:1-29; Gal 2:1-10).

Second missionary journey. AD 50-52 (Ac 15:40-18:22).

Writing, from Corinth, of 1 Th -AD 51; 2 Th -AD 51/52.

Return to Jerusalem and Syrian Antioch. AD 52 (Ac 18:22).

Writing, from Syrian Antioch, of Gal -AD 53.

Third missionary journey. AD 53-57 (Ac 18:23-21:16).

Writing, from Ephesus, of 1 Co -AD 55.

Writing, from Macedonia, of 2 Co -AD 55.

Writing, from Corinth, of Ro -AD 57.

Return to Jerusalem. AD 57 (Ac 21:17).

Arrest in Jerusalem. AD 57 (Ac 21:33).

Cesarean imprisonment. AD 57-59 (Ac 23:23-26:32).

Shipwreck voyage to Rome. AD 59 (Ac 27:1-28:16).

First Roman imprisonment. AD 59-61/62 (Ac 28:16-31).

Writing, from Rome, of Eph, Col, Phm -AD 60; Php -AD 61.

Release from first Roman imprisonment. AD 62.

Fourth missionary journey. AD 62-67 (Tit 1:5).

Writing, from Philippi, of 1 Ti and Tit -AD 65.

Second Roman imprisonment. AD 67/68 (2 Ti 4:6-8).

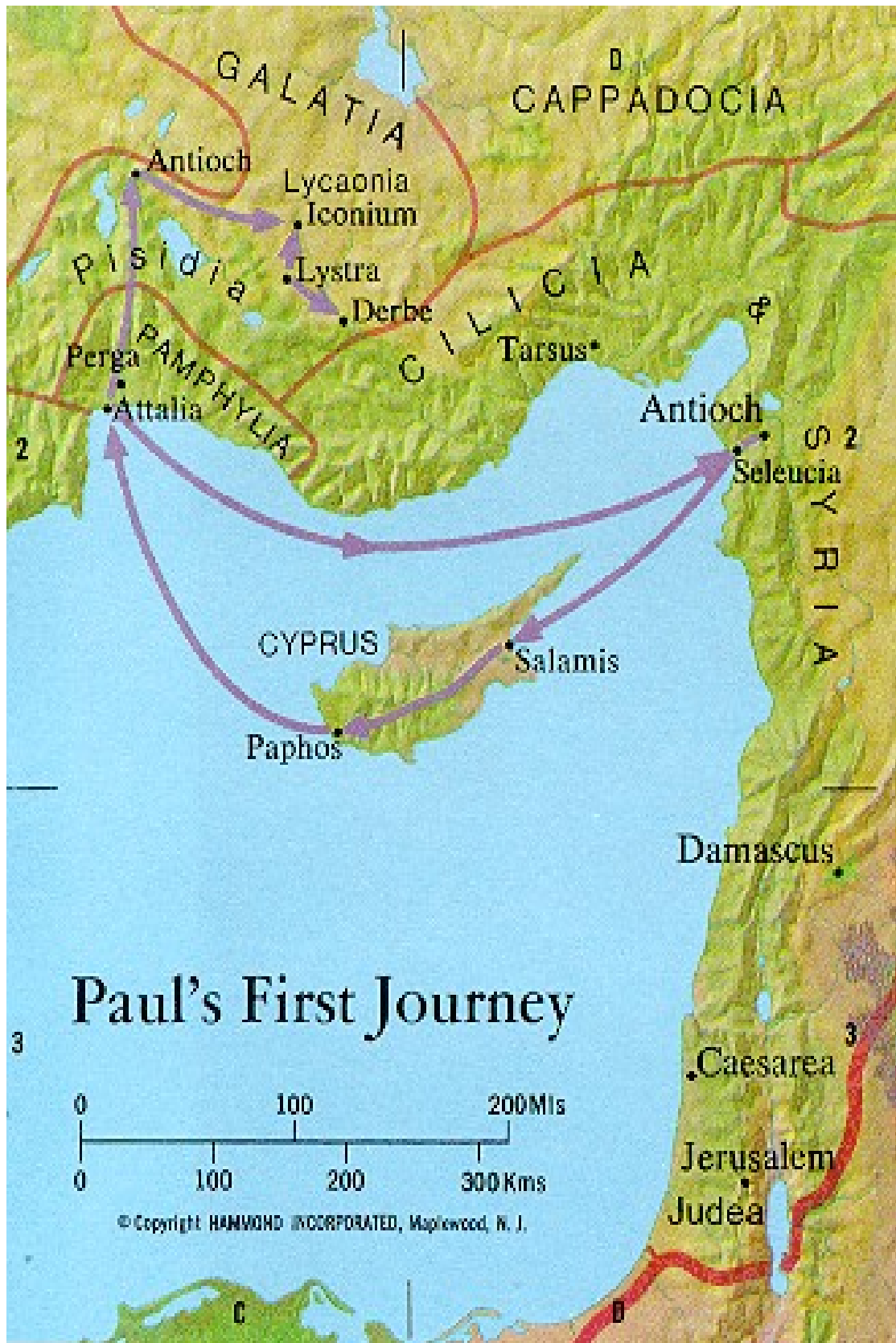
Writing, from Mamertine dungeon, of 2 Ti -AD 67 (2 Ti 4:6-8)

Trial and martyrdom of Paul and Peter. Rome, AD 67/68.

Barnabas or Apollos writes Heb before AD 70.







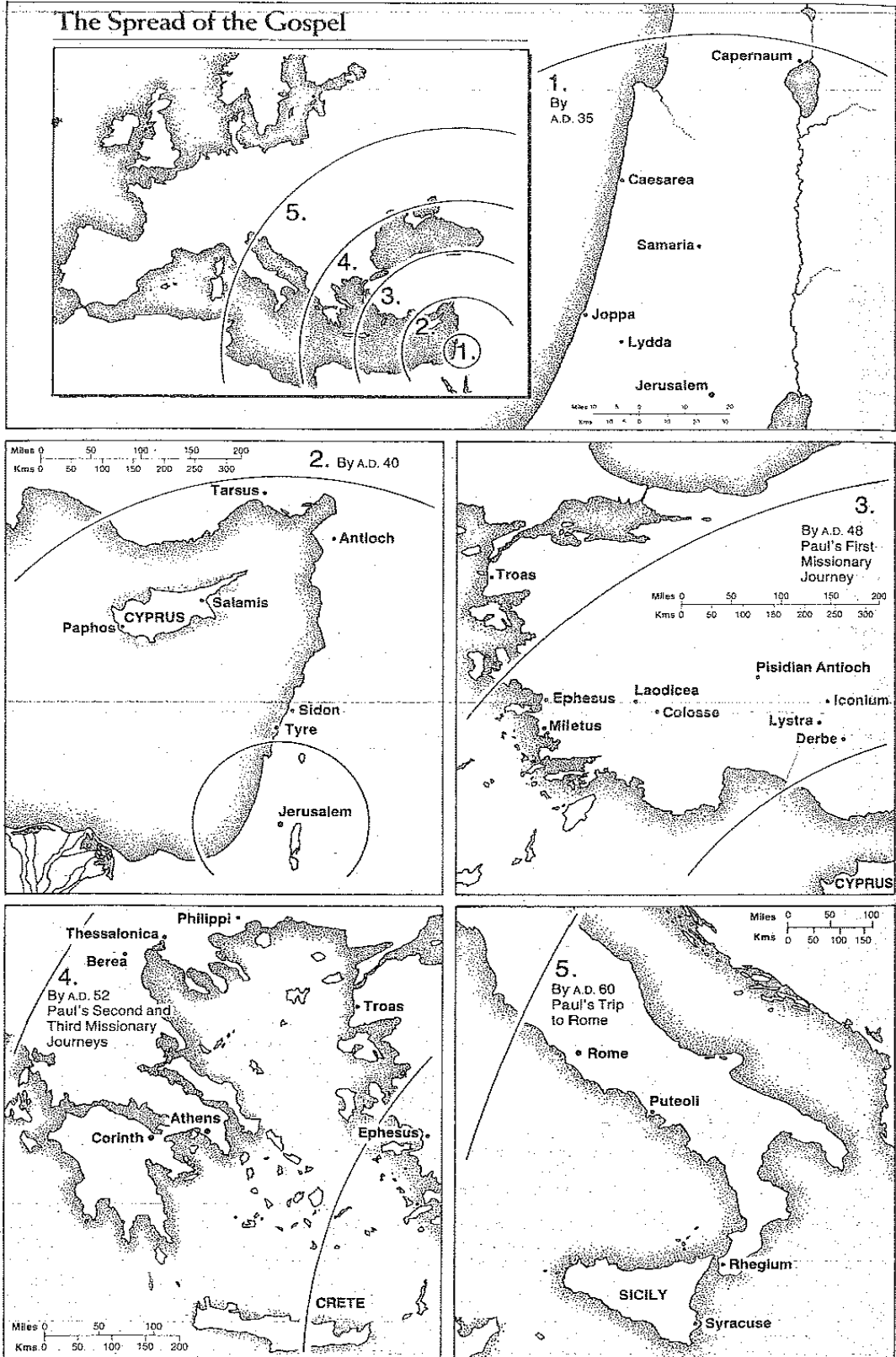
















**THE LETTERS OF**  
**PETER, JAMES, JOHN AND JUDE**  
**TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**PERSONAL INTRODUCTION:** What follows is not intended and does not want to be a new or original study of the New Testament books, but simply what I have learned from them and of them, then put in writing.

**Foreword**

These 7 letters (1 and 2 Peter; James; 1, 2 and 3 John; Jude) are traditionally called General -Catholic, or Universal- because considered epistles addressed to the Church in general -even if, actually, it was not always so (2 John was addressed to an -unknown-Christian lady; 3 John to a Christian man named Gaius.) One interesting fact connected with the General letters is that most of them were at one time among the disputed books of the New Testament (2 Peter, James, 2 and 3 John and Jude were all questioned extensively before being admitted to the canon of Scripture.)

The main characteristics of this commented version of Peter, James, John and Jude's letters are:

- 1- The text is taken from "The Holy Bible. New International Version" and from "The New King James Version. Greek-English Interlinear New Testament." Few alterations were necessary because of some of my personal beliefs, as they are expressed in my work "Thoughts," or other problems:
  - a- To God is given back His Name: Yahweh.
  - b- NIV's "Holy Spirit" is always changed into "Holy Spirit of Yahweh" or "Spirit of Yahweh" and followed by [\*] to indicate the "spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."
  - c- Some words and phrases of not immediate understanding are given differently.
  - d- The word "Lord" is always followed by "Yahweh" or "Jesus Christ," for a better understanding.
  - e- The word "love" (and its derivatives: to love, loved, etc.) is used in many situations and takes on many, even deeply different meanings. In this book it is used only in two cases: 1) In the man-woman relationship. 2) In the parents-children relationship. In all other cases, other words are used, depending on the context: affection, fondness, benevolence, goodwill, to be fond of, to cherish, to like, etc.
  - f- Whatever word useful for a better and more immediate understanding of the text is added into [ ].
- 2- Notes and explanations are mainly taken from:
  - a- The Study Bible, New International Version.
  - b- The Daily Study Bible, William Barclay.
  - c- Thoughts, Superina Paolo.
  - d- The Gospel of Jesus Christ, Superina Paolo.
  - e- Paul's Thought, Superina Paolo.

**Note:** For a proper comprehension of some New Testament passages and concepts which do not appear to be “Christian” or “Good News,” is important to remember that:

- 1) We usually don’t realize how near Christianity was to becoming only another kind of Judaism. All the first Christians were Jews and all their traditions would have convinced them to keep the Good News for themselves, excluding completely the Gentiles.
- 2) All New Testament writers viewed the whole period beginning with Jesus Christ’s birth as “the last days.” They understood this period to be the “last” of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Jesus Christ.
- 3) The actual meaning of what they wrote is still too often concealed by considerations derived from Old Testament ideas -it could not have been easy, for the writers of the New Testament Books, to detach themselves immediately and completely from the ideas they grew up with.

## **Introductions to individual letters**

### **1 Peter**

**Author:** The author identifies himself as Peter the apostle (v. 1:1), and the contents and character of the letter support his authorship. The letter reflects the history and terminology of the Gospels and Acts (notably of Peter's speeches); its themes and concepts reflect Peter's experiences and his associations during Jesus Christ's earthly ministry and in the apostolic period (that he was acquainted, e.g., with Paul and his letters is made clear in 2 Pe 3:15-16; Gal 1:18; 2:1-21.) 1 Peter was recognized as authoritative and as the work of the apostle Peter from the beginning of the Christian Church.

Anyway, it must be noted that the idiomatic Greek of this letter, which was most probably beyond Peter's competence, is clearly due to Silas -as declared by Peter himself in v. 5:12 (It is well known that a secretary in those days often composed documents in good Greek for those who did not have the language facility to do so.)

**Date:** This letter, with the persecution referred to in vv. 4:14-16; 5:8-9, reflects the situation that was developing in Nero's time (AD 54-68). So the letter can be dated in the early 60s. It cannot be earlier since it shows familiarity with at least some of Paul's Prison Letters (Colossians and Ephesians.) And it cannot be later than 67/68, since Peter was martyred at the end of Nero's reign.

**Place:** In v. 5:13 Peter indicates that he was in "Babylon" when he wrote this letter. Now, taking into account that there is no evidence that the term "Babylon" was used figuratively to refer to Rome until Revelation was written (circa AD 95) and that the context of v. 5:13 is not at all figurative or cryptic, it follows that most probably Peter wrote from Mesopotamian Ba-bylon, which, in the first century, was a small town on the Euphrates.

**Recipients:** In v. 1:1 Peter clearly states that he is writing for all Christians (mainly former Pagans, as there is no mention of any question of the Jewish Law, questions that always arose with Jew-Christians) scattered throughout Asia Minor.

### **2 Peter**

**Author:** The author identifies himself as Simon Peter the apostle (v. 1:1), asserts that this is his second letter to the readers (v. 3:1) and claims to be an eyewitness of the Transfiguration (v. 1:16-18).

2 Peter was not ascribed to Peter until Origen's time (AD 185-253); and still Eusebius (AD 265-340) placed it among the questioned books, though admitting that most accepted it as from Peter. Anyway, after Eusebius, it was quite generally accepted as canonical.

The Greek of 2 Peter is quite different than that of 1 Peter because 1 Peter was written “with the help of Silas” (1 Pe 5:12) and 2 Peter, most probably, directly by Peter.

**Date:** This letter was written toward the end of Peter’s life, after he had written another letter (1 Peter) to the same readers (v. 3:1). Since Peter was martyred at the end of Nero’s reign (AD 54-68), 2 Peter was likely written between AD 65 and 68.

**Place:** It is not known but, taking into account the chronology of the events, this letter must have been written in Rome.

**Recipients:** The same of 1 Peter.

### **James**

**Author:** The author identifies himself as James (v. 1:1), and was one of the four brothers of Jesus Christ -the oldest, since he heads the list in Mt 13:55. At first he did not believe in Jesus being the Messiah and even challenged him and misunderstood his mission (Jn 7:2-5). Later he became prominent in the Church -He saw the resurrected Jesus (1 Co 15:7); Paul called him a “pillar” of the Church (Gal 2:9); Paul, on his first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem, saw James, “The Lord Jesus Christ’s brother” (Gal 1:19); Paul did the same on his last visit (Ac 21:18); when Peter was rescued from prison, he told his friends to tell James (Ac 12:17); James was a leader in the important Council of Jerusalem (Ac 15:13). He was martyred about AD 62.

James’ letter was not included in the list of New Testament books until the middle of the fourth century, when Jerome (AD 345-420) included it authoritatively in his Vulgate version of the New Testament -but still felt that there was some doubt as to who the author was. Later, Augustine (AD 354-420) fully accepted the letter as part of Scripture, and was in no doubt that the James in question was the brother of Jesus Christ.

**Date:** There are indications that this letter was written before AD 50 -Its distinctively Jewish nature suggests that it was composed when the Church was still predominantly Jewish; it reflects a simple Church order (officers of the Church are still called “elders” and “teachers;”) no reference is made to the controversy over the circumcision of Pagan converts; the Hebrew term “synagogue” is still used to designate the meetings of the Church.

**Place:** No doubts, this letter was written in Jerusalem.

**Recipients:** The recipients are explicitly identified in v. 1:1: “The twelve tribes scattered in the world,” expression that properly applies to Jew-Christians. Furthermore, a Jewish audience would be more in keeping with the obviously Jewish nature of the letter. The recipients were plausibly the believers from the early Jerusalem Church who, after Stephen’s death, were



scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syrian Antioch (Ac 8:1; 11:19). This properly accounts for James' references to trials and oppression, his intimate knowledge of the readers and the authoritative nature of the letter.

### **1 John**

**Author:** The author is John son of Zebedee -the apostle, also author of a Gospel and of Revelation. He was a first cousin of Jesus Christ (his mother was Salome, a sister of Mary), a fisherman, one of Jesus Christ's inner circle and "the disciple whom Jesus cherished" (Jn 13:23). 1 John does not tell who its author is, and the earliest identification of him as John the apostle comes from Ireneus (AD 140-203), Clement of Alexandria (AD 155-215), Tertullian (AD 150-222) and Origen (AD 185-253). No other identification was ever suggested by the early Church.

**Date:** The date of writing is not known but, since the letter builds on concepts and themes found also in John's Gospel, it is reasonable to set it between AD 85 and 95.

**Place:** The apostle John lived in Ephesus during most of his later years (from AD 70 to 100). Consequently, 1 John was written in Ephesus.

**Recipients:** 1 Jn 2:12-14,19; 3:1; 5:13 make it clear that this letter was addressed to believers, but without indicating who they were or where they lived. This, and the fact that no one is mentioned by name, suggests that it was a circular letter sent to a number of Churches to expose false teachers and to contrast an earlier form of the Gnostic heresy.

### **2 and 3 John**

**Author:** The author is John the apostle, and these two letters, addressed to individuals, have long been viewed as personal appendages to 1 John, which is clearly general in its address.

2 and 3 John were not included in the list of New Testament books until the middle of the fourth century, when Jerome (AD 345-420) included them authoritatively in his Vulgate version of the New Testament.

**Date:** Most probably, 2 and 3 John were written either together or shortly after 1 John, that is, between AD 85 and 95.

**Place:** As 1 John, in Ephesus.

**Recipients:** 2 John is addressed to an unknown Christian lady and her family, giving her advice against false traveling teachers. 3 John is addressed to a Christian man named Gaius, giving him advice against a dictatorial Church leader, Diotrephes.

**Jude**

**Author:** The author identifies himself as Jude (or Judas), a “brother of James” (v. 1:1), that is, a brother of Jesus Christ.

To note that, also neither Jude nor James describes himself as a brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, others did not hesitate to speak of them in this way (Mt 13:55; Gal 1:19).

According to Jerome (AD 345-420), some did not accept Jude’s letter as canonical because of its use of uninspired or Apocryphal literature (vv. 1:9, 14). Nonetheless it was finally accepted as canonical by the Synod of Rome (AD 382) and the Synod of Carthage (AD 397).

**Date:** As it is commonly accepted that 2 Peter makes use of Jude, then Jude has to be dated prior to 2 Peter, probably about AD 65.

**Place:** Jude, the brother of Jesus Christ, is not numbered among the great names of the early Church, and there is no tradition at all of him having been outside Palestine in all his life. As such, most probably he spent his whole Christian life in Jerusalem, with his brother James, and it is from there that he wrote his letter.

**Recipients:** The description of those to whom Jude addressed his letter is very general (v. 1:1) and could apply both to Jew and Pagan converts. As the heresy depicted in vv. 1:4-18 was quite widespread, this was most probably a circular letter sent to a number of Churches to contrast the early Gnostic heresy.

**GNOSTICISM: A 1st and 2nd century heresy.**

**Central teaching:** Spirit is entirely good, matter entirely evil.

**The five main errors:**

1. Man’s body is only matter, therefore completely evil. Yahweh is pure spirit, therefore perfectly good.
2. Salvation of the soul is achieved escaping from the body; not by faith in Jesus Christ but by special knowledge (gnosis).
3. Jesus Christ’s humanity was denied saying that the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at baptism and left him before he died.
4. Since the body is evil, it has to be treated harshly.
5. Since matter -and not the breaking of Yahweh’s law- is considered evil, sinning by the body is of no moral consequence.

**Note:** The Gnosticism addressed to in the New Testament is an early form of the heresy, much simpler than the intricate system developed in the third century.

**The letters of Peter, James, John and Jude to the Christian Church****1 PETER****Introduction [1Pe 1:1-2]**

*(1Pe 1:1) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,*

*To the elects, scattered as exiles in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, (2) chosen according to the foreknowledge of Yahweh the Father, through the sanctifying work of His Spirit [\*], for the obedience to Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of his blood:*

*Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(1Pe 1:1)** *Peter, an apostle.* A clear self-identification of the writer. *Elects.* Because of the opportunity they had to become Christians. *Scattered... in Pontus... Bithynia.* Jew and Pagan-Christians living in Asia Minor, many of whom were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:9-11). *As exiles.* Christians are “strangers” residing temporary on Earth, but whose true home is in Heaven. **(2)** *Chosen... foreknowledge of Yahweh.* Divine “election,” a concept taken from Paul (Peter was well acquainted with Paul and his letters). From ever Yahweh knows who are those who by faith would become His people. *Sanctifying work of His Spirit.* Yahweh’s spiritual influence, that draws a man from sin to holiness. *For the obedience... and the sprinkling of his blood.* Jesus Christ’s obedience to Yahweh’s will and his sacrifice on the Cross made Yahweh’s salvation available to all men. *Grace and peace...* A common Hebrew greeting.

**Praise to Yahweh for a living hope [1Pe 1:3-12]**

**(1Pe 1:3)** *Praise be to Yahweh the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He [Yahweh] has regenerated us, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to a living hope, (4) to an inheritance imperishable, undefiled and unfading -kept in Heaven for you, (5) who through faith are shielded by Yahweh’s power for the salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) Greatly rejoice for this, though now for a little while you will have had to suffer in various trials, (7) so that your faith -of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire- may result in praise, glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (8) Though you have not seen him, you are fond of him; though you do not see him now,*

*you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, (9) for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

*(10) Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched with the greatest care, (11) trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Jesus Christ and the glory that would follow. (12) It was revealed to them that they were servants, not for themselves but for you, of the things that have now been announced to you by those who have preached the Gospel to you by the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], sent from Heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(1Pe 1:3)** *Praise be to Yahweh the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!* A perfectly clear declaration -found so many other times in the New Testament- that there is only One God and that Jesus Christ is subordinate to Him -Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh and of a human woman, the appointed Lord of the human race, is not God. *Resurrection of Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ's resurrection assures his people that they will be resurrected just as he was. *Living hope.* In the Bible, hope is not wishful thinking but a firm conviction; it is faith in the certainty of a future life of universal spiritual communion. **(4)** *Inheritance...* Men, as Jesus Christ's brothers, will inherit eternal life in Yahweh's Kingdom. **(5)** *Faith... shielded...* Who has faith in Jesus Christ and in the final result of his sacrifice on the Cross, is destined -"by Yahweh's power"- to salvation "in the last time" -at the Universal Resurrection. **(6)** *For a little while you will... suffer.* As Jesus Christ had to, so all men have to suffer ("take their cross," in Jesus' words) before to obtain eternal life in Yahweh's Kingdom. **(7)** *That your faith... may result in praise...* Not only faith in itself is precious, but the trial for faith is also valuable. *At the revelation of Jesus Christ.* At his second coming. **(8)** *Though you have not seen him now... you believe...* Similar to Jesus Christ's saying in Jn 20:29, on an occasion when Peter was present. **(9)** *Goal of your faith.* Eternal spiritual life -with their resurrected body- in Yahweh's Kingdom. **(10-11)** *The prophets... searched... trying to find out...* Many times the prophets -who spoke by inspiration- did not understand the full significance of all the words they spoke and later, as anybody else, tried to understand when and how their prophecies -in this case about Jesus Christ's sufferings and ensuing glory- would be fulfilled. **(12)** *Servants, not for themselves, but for you.* What the prophets foresee, was not to happen in their time.

*Those who have preached... by the Spirit of Yahweh.* Those with whom Yahweh entered in spiritual communion at Pentecost (Ac 2:2-4), who brought the message of salvation to the readers of Peter's letter. *Angels long to...* The message of salvation -which refers to all men- has an implication: at the end of time, everybody -all Yahweh's spiritual creatures- will be with Yahweh in His Kingdom -something the angels, who already live with Yahweh, long for.

***Be holy*** [1Pe 1:13-25; 2:1-3]

**(1Pe 1:13)** *Therefore, get your minds ready; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. (14) As obedient children, do not conform to the desires of your former ignorance. (15) But just as the saint [Jesus Christ] who called you is holy, be holy in all you do; (16) for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

**(17)** *And if you invoke as a Father Him who judges impartially according to each man's work, use with fear all the time of your wandering. (18) For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, (19) but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (20) He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in these last times for you (21) who, through him, believe in Yahweh, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, so that your faith and hope are in Yahweh.*

**(22)** *Now that you have purified your souls by obeying the truth, be fond of one another deeply, with pure heart, with a brotherly, sincere fondness. (23) For you have been born anew, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of Yahweh. (24) For, "Each man is like grass, and his glory is like a flower of the field; the grass withers and the flower falls, (25) but the Word of the Lord Yahweh stands forever."*

*And this is the Word, the Gospel, that was preached to you.*

**(2:1)** *Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. (2) Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, (3) for you have tasted that the Lord Yahweh is good.*

**(1Pe 1:13)** *Get... ready...* The first of a long series of exhortations that ends at v. 5:11. *Grace to be given you.* The final state of universal spiritual communion, after the second coming of Jesus Christ. **(14) Children.** The Christians are children of their heavenly Father, Yahweh, and can pray, "Our

Father in Heaven” (Mt 6:9; Lk 11:2). *Your former ignorance.* 1 Peter was written mainly for former Pagans. **(15-16) Be holy.** To be holy is to be set apart -from sin and impurity- to Yahweh. **(17) Him who judges impartially.** Yahweh is the only one who can judge with absolute impartiality, because He is the only one who knows everything -all hidden actions and inner thoughts- of every man. *The time of your wandering.* The time of their earthly life. **(18-19) Redeemed.** In the Bible, to redeem means to free some-one from something bad by paying a penalty, or a ransom. And Jesus Christ has redeemed all believers from spiritual death by sacrificing himself on the Cross. *Empty way of life...* 1 Peter is addressed mainly to former Pagans, whose previous spiritual life was “empty.” *Lamb.* Jesus Christ is the “Lamb of Yahweh,” who takes away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). **(20) Fore-known... made manifest...** Yahweh knew before creation that it would be necessary for Jesus Christ to redeem men, but He has revealed -sent- Jesus Christ to men only in that time. **(21) Through him, believe in Yahweh.** The Pagan-Christians came to know Yahweh by becoming Christians, while the Jew-Christians already knew Yahweh. *Yahweh... raised... glorified him.* The initiative belongs to Yahweh, not to Jesus Christ. As a consequence, Christians must put their “faith and hope” in Yahweh. **(22) Be fond of one another.** Jesus Christ’s command, given to his disciples at the end of the Last Supper (Jn 13:34-35). **(23) Born anew... through the... Word of Yahweh.** Their new, spiritual birth, when they believed to the Gospel (the Word of Yahweh, which is “imperishable”) and became Christians. **(24-25) All men are like grass...** A quotation from Isaiah 40:6-8. **(2:1) Rid yourselves...** Another of the many exhortations of this letter. **(2) Like new-born babies...** An image taken from Paul (1 Co 3:1-2; Heb 5:12-14), where newborn, or infants, are recent converts, who need to receive simple explanations to grow spiritually and become mature Christians. **(3) You have tasted.** After having received the initial instructions, needed to become “newborn” Christians, they have to long for a deeper knowledge.

### **The living stone and the chosen people** [1Pe 2:4-12]

**(1Pe 2:4)**As you come to him [Jesus Christ], the living stone -rejected by men but chosen by Yahweh and precious- **(5)**you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood and offer spiritual sacrifices, pleasant to Yahweh, through Jesus Christ. **(6)**For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a cornerstone in Zion, chosen and precious. And he who believes in him [Jesus Christ] will not be put to shame.”

**(7)**Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

*“The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” (8)and, “A stone who causes to stumble and a rock that makes fall.” They stumble because they disobey the Word [of Yahweh] -which is what they were destined for.*

*(9)But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging [to Yahweh], that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness in His wonderful light.(10)Once [you were] not a people, but now [you are] the people of Yahweh; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

*(11)Dear friends, I urge you, as strangers and pilgrims [in the world], to abstain from carnal desires, which war against your soul. (12)Maintain good conduct among the pagans, so that, even though they speak against you, as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify Yahweh on the day of visitation.*

**(1Pe 2:4)** *Living stone.* A definition of Jesus Christ found many times in the New Testament (Mk 12:10-11; Mt 21:42; Lk 20:17; Ac 4:11; Ro 9:33), where he is also defined as “living water” (Jn 4:10-14; 7:38), “living bread” (Jn 6:51) and “living way” (Heb 10:20). *Rejected by men but chosen by Yahweh.* Peter repeatedly makes a contrast in Acts between the hostility of unbelieving men toward Jesus Christ and Yahweh’s exaltation of him (Ac 2:22-36; 3:13-15; 4:10-11; 10:39-42). **(5)** *You also, like living stones...* This reference to stones reflects Jesus Christ’s words to Peter in Mt 16:18 (Peter is the first “rock” -or stone- of the Christian Church, composed by the believers, who are spiritually alive). *Holy priesthood.* The whole body of believers, as priests, reflects the holiness of Yahweh and of Jesus Christ (1Pe 1: 15; Heb 7:26; 10:10), offering spiritual sacrifices (the necessity of animal or food sacrifices was canceled by the coming of Jesus Christ) to Yahweh through the intercession of Jesus Christ. **(6-8)** *Cornerstone.* The overall image, coming from Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14, is found also in Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17 and Ac 4:11. The cornerstone, which determined the design and orientation of the building, was the most significant stone in the structure. Here we have the image of a structure made up of believers (living stones,) the design and orientation of which are all in keeping with Jesus Christ, the cornerstone. *He who believes in him... those who do not believe...* Two attitudes toward Jesus Christ are evident: Some believe in him (and will be spiritually saved and accepted in Yahweh’s Kingdom); others reject him (and will be subject to -formative and redemptive- punishment in hell.) *What they were destined for.* All men are destined, either in this life or in the next, to recognize Jesus Christ as their

Lord and Savior, that is, to accept Yahweh's Word (the Gospel.) **(9-10)** *Chosen people*. Israel was called Yahweh's chosen people in the Old Testament; now, in the New Testament, all believers are designated as chosen, or elect. *Belonging to Yahweh*. The recipients of this letter, mainly former Pagans, once not the people of Yahweh, now are part of it. **(11)** *Strangers and pilgrims*. Their true citizenship is in Heaven. As such, they are to be separated from the corruption of the world, not following its spiritually destructive sinful desires. **(12)** *See your good deeds*. The Greek word here translated "see" refers to a careful watching, over a period of time. The Christians' deeds are to be seen consistently as good. *On the day of visitation*. The day when Yahweh visits a person with salvation.

**Submission to rulers and masters** [1Pe 2:13-25]

**(1Pe 2:13)** *Submit yourselves for the Lord Yahweh's sake to every human institution: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, (14) or to governors, who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. (15) For it is Yahweh's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorance of foolish men, (16) as free men, without using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but as servants of Yahweh. (17) Honor all men: Be fond of the brotherhood [of believers], fear Yahweh, honor the king.*

**(18)** *Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. (19) For it is commendable if one bears up suffering unjustly because of his knowledge of Yahweh. (20) For what credit is it, if you endure to receive a beating for doing wrong? But if you endure suffering for doing good, this is commendable before Yahweh. (21) To this you were called, because Jesus Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

**(22)** *"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."*

**(23)** *Insulted, he did not retaliate; made suffer, he made no threats; but entrusted himself to Him [Yahweh] who judges justly. (24) He bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, taken away from our sins, we may live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed, (25) for you were like sheep gone astray, but now you have been brought back to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

**(1Pe 2:13-14)** *Submit... to every authority...* The recognition of properly constituted authority -which depends on Yahweh for its existence (Ro 13:1-2)- is necessary for the greatest good of the largest number of people. Of course, obedience to human authority must never be in violation of the Law



of Yahweh. **(15)** *Silence the ignorant talk.* Good Christians counter with their life the false charges made against them and thus commend the Gospel to the unbelievers. **(16)** *As free men.* Willingly, without constraint, and without rebelling to constituted authority (as long as such submission does not conflict with the Law of Yahweh.) **(17)** *Honor all men.* Because every human being bears the image of Yahweh. **(18)** *Slaves, submit...* The context indicates that Peter is addressing Christian slaves. New Testament's writers do not attack slavery as an institution (it wasn't the proper time for that,) but state down the moral principles which ultimately have uprooted slavery. **(19-20)** *Knowledge of Yahweh.* As submission to duly constituted authority is "for the Lord Yahweh's sake" (v. 2:13), one will submit to the point of "suffering for doing good," if this is Yahweh's will. **(21)** *To this you were called.* The patient endurance of injustice is part of Yahweh's plan for the Christians. *Jesus Christ also suffered for you.* Jesus Christ is the supreme example of suffering evil for doing good, and his suffering transforms the suffering of his followers from misery to privilege. **(22)** *He committed no sin...* A quotation from Isaiah 53:9. **(23)** *Insulted... made suffer...* Prominent examples of our Lord Jesus Christ's silent submission. **(24)** *Bore our sins.* Jesus Christ's suffering brought the redemption of the human race. *That... we may live for righteousness.* As a result of Jesus Christ's death on the Cross, believers are "dead to sin" and can live new lives and present themselves before Yahweh. **(25)** *Sheep gone astray... Shepherd.* A concept connected with the wandering sheep of Isaiah 53. The sheep have wandered from their shepherd, and to him (Jesus Christ) they have now returned.

### **Wives and husbands** [1Pe 3:1-7]

**(1Pe 3:1)** *Likewise, wives, be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the Word, they may be won over by the behavior of their wives, without speaking, (2) seeing your pure and reverent behavior. (3) Your adorning should not be outward, from braided hair and wearing of gold jewelry and of clothes, (4) but inner, hidden in the heart, in the incorruptibility of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in Yahweh's sight. (5) For this is the way the holy women of the past that put their hope in Yahweh used to adorn themselves. They were submissive to their husbands, (6) like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him master. You are now her daughters if you do right and let nothing frighten you.*

**(7)** *Likewise, husbands, live considerately [with your wives], being the female body the weaker, and granting them honor as heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be rejected.*

**(1Pe 3:1-2)** *Likewise, wives...* As believers are to submit to government authorities (vv. 2:13-17), and as slaves are to submit to masters (vv. 2:18-25). *Be submissive.* The Greek verb used here (as well as in vv. 2:13,18) calls to submission to a recognized authority, but does not imply inferiority. The submission is one of role or function, necessary for the orderly operation of the society or of the home. *The Word.* The Gospel's message. *Without speaking...* Believing wives are not to rely on argumentation to win their unbelieving husbands, but on the quality of their lives. **(3-4)** *Hair... jewelry... clothes.* Extreme coiffures, exhibit of jewelry and luxury clothes. Christian women should not make use of extreme forms of adornment. *Inner, hidden... of great worth.* Peter pleads for the graces that adorn the heart, which are the only ones having value before Yahweh. **(5-6)** *Holy women of the past... like Sarah.* Isaiah had called Sarah the mother of Yahweh's faithful people (Isaiah 51:2) *Her daughters... nothing frighten you.* Christian women become Sarah's "daughters" when they act like her, doing good and putting all their trust in Yahweh. **(7)** *Likewise, husbands...* As believing wives have to win their unbelieving husbands with the quality of their lives, so has to be for believing husbands towards unbelieving wives. *Heirs with you of the grace of life.* The saving grace of Yahweh is for women and men alike. *That your prayers will not be rejected.* Spiritual communion, with Yahweh and with one another, may be hindered by disregarding Yahweh's instruction concerning human (in this case, husband-wife) relationships.

### **Suffering for doing good** [1Pe 3:8-22]

**(1Pe 3:8)** *Finally, all united, compassionate, fond of the brothers, (9) do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, bless, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit the blessing [of Yahweh]. (10) For,*

*"Whoever would be fond of life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. (11) He must turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it, (12) for the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are on the righteous and His ears attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord Yahweh is against those who do evil."*

**(13)** *Who is going to harm you if you are zealous to do good? (14) But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." (15) But in your hearts sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you the reason for your hope, but with gentleness and respect, (16) keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Jesus Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

*(17) For, it is better, if it is Yahweh's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (18) For Jesus Christ also suffered for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the spirit, to bring you to Yahweh. (19) In this he went and preached also to the spirits in prison, (20) who disobeyed long ago when Yahweh waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built. In it a few people, eight souls, were saved through the water. (21) And that water was the symbol of the [baptismal] immersion that now saves you also -not the removal of dirt from the body but the response of a good conscience toward Yahweh. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who has gone into Heaven and is at Yahweh's right hand -with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

**(1Pe 3:8)** *Finally...* This exhortation is addressed by Peter to all his readers, encouraging them to develop virtues appropriate in their relations with each other ("all united".) **(9)** *Do not repay evil with evil...* Paul wrote similar words in Ro 12:17-21. **(10-12)** *Whoever...* A quotation from Psalm 34:12-16, used by Peter to convince his readers to obey the exhortations of v. 3:9. **(13)** *Who is going to harm you if...?* As a general rule, people are not harmed for acts of kindness. **(14)** *Even if you should suffer.* Even if suffering for righteousness does occur, it brings special blessing to the sufferer, as declared by Jesus Christ himself ("The beatitudes," Mt 5:10). *Do not fear...* A quotation from Isaiah 8:12, saying that Yahweh's people are not to see things as unbelievers do. They are not to be afraid of the enemies of Yahweh. Instead, they are to fear Yahweh (Isaiah 8:13). **(15)** *Sanctify the Lord Jesus Christ.* An exhortation to the readers to make an inner commitment to Jesus Christ, ready to speak when called to defend their faith. *With gentleness and respect.* Christians are always to give "answers" with affection, never in angry terms. **(16)** *Ashamed of their slander.* Showing the "slander" to be untrue and having an affectionate attitude, puts the opponents' bitterness in a bad light. **(17)** *It is better...* Practically, a summary of the concepts expressed in the previous verses. **(18-20)** *Jesus Christ... put to death... made alive... preached also to the spirits in prison.* After Jesus Christ's physical death, his spirit -his soul- went to the "Land of the Dead" to preach to their souls, announcing the Gospel of salvation and declaring the remission of sins, which was received by those who believed in him, in the same way he did on Earth. *Who... in the days of Noah.* Representative of all men who lived and died from the beginning of the human race and who never had the opportunity of hearing of Jesus Christ. **(21)** *That water was the symbol of the [baptismal] immersion.* The water of the Flood represented judgment

for the wicked and salvation for those who believed in Yahweh. The water of baptism as well (at the time by immersion) represents salvation for those who believe in Jesus Christ -and give the “response of a good conscience”- and judgment for those whose conscience does not respond properly. *It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* Of course, believers are not saved by any ritual, but by the power of Jesus Christ’s resurrection. **(22)** *Go into Heaven...* After his death and resurrection, his mission accomplished, Jesus Christ was put by Yahweh in a position second only to Himself.

**Living for Yahweh** [1Pe 4:1-11]

**(1Pe 4:1)** *Therefore, since Jesus Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same thought, because he who has suffered in the flesh is done with sin, (2)so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer by human passions, but rather by the will of Yahweh. (3)For it’s enough the time in the past doing what pagans like to do -living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. (4)For that they are surprised that you do not plunge with them into the same disorderly dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. (5)But they will have to give account to him [Jesus Christ] who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (6)For this is the reason the Gospel was preached even to the dead, so that they might be judged in the flesh according to men, but live according to Yahweh in the spirit.*

*(7)The end of all things is near. Therefore be self-controlled and sober so that you can pray. (8)Above all, be constantly fond of each other, because fondness covers over a multitude of sins. (9)Give hospitality to one another without grumbling. (10)Each one with the gift he has received should serve the others, as faithful administrators of Yahweh’s grace in its various forms. (11)If anyone speaks, he should speak with the very Words of Yahweh. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength Yahweh provides, so that in all things Yahweh may be praised through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

**(1Pe 4:1)** *Since Jesus Christ suffered...* The aspect of Jesus Christ’s physical suffering stressed in this passage is suffering unjustly in spite of doing good. *Arm yourself also with the same thought.* Believers are to be prepared also to suffer unjustly, and have to face abuse with Jesus Christ’s attitude -with his willingness to suffer for doing good. *Because... is done with sin.* Such suffering enables a man to understand his real priorities. Sinful desires and practices that once seemed important, seem insignificant when life is in jeopardy. **(2)** *No longer by human passions... by the will of Yah-*

*weh*. Serious suffering for Jesus Christ actually advances the progress of sanctification. **(3)** *Time in the past*. Their life before converting from Paganism to Christianity. **(4)** *They heap abuse on you*. Because those still Pagan -the vast majority of people, at the time- cannot understand and accept their new kind of life. **(5)** *Him who is ready to judge*. Yahweh -the only one who can judge- has delegated the task of judgment to Jesus Christ (Jn 5:27; Ac 17:31). *The living and the dead*. Jesus Christ judges: During terrestrial life; at the moment of physical death; when offering his Gospel to those subject to -formative and redemptive- punishment in hell; at the Universal Judgment. **(6)** *This is the reason...* All those who didn't hear of Jesus Christ and of his Gospel of salvation during their earthly life, will be judged, at the moment of their physical death, following the moral standards of their society (clearly, the vast majority of them will have to undergo a formative and redemptive period in hell;) and later -in hell- will be offered to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. **(7-11)** *The end... is near*. At the time, the Christians believed imminent the second coming of Jesus Christ. *Therefore be...* A series of exhortations in tune with the belief in the imminent second coming -and in the judgment associated with it.

***Suffering for being a Christian [1Pe 4:12-19]***

**(1Pe 4:12)** *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery fire [that broke out] among you, as though something strange were happening to you. (13) But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, so you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (14) If you are insulted because of the name of Jesus Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], rests on you. (15) None of you should suffer as a murderer or a thief or a wrongdoer or a meddler. (16) However, if [you suffer] as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise Yahweh by that name. (17) For it is time for judgment to begin, by the family of Yahweh; but, if it begins with us, what will the outcome be with those who do not obey the Gospel of Yahweh? (18) And,*

*“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”*

**(19)** *So then, even those who suffer according to Yahweh's will should commit their souls to the faithful Creator through good deeds.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(1Pe 4:12)** *Do not be surprised at the fiery fire...* As Peter already told his

readers (vv. 1:6-7; 2:20-21), they have to expect some suffering -in this case a heavy persecution- in order to obtain the final prize; eternal life in Yahweh's Kingdom. **(13)** *Rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Jesus Christ.* When a man suffers for his Christianity he walks the way his Master walked and, at Jesus Christ's second coming ("when his glory is revealed"), will be glorified with him. **(14-16)** *Insulted because of the name of Jesus Christ... blessed.* As declared by Jesus Christ himself (The beatitudes. Mt 5:11-12; Ro 8:17). *None... should suffer as...* It is Peter's exhortation that, if a Christian has to suffer for Jesus Christ, he must do so in such a way that his suffering brings glory to Yahweh and to Christianity. **(17)** *It is time for judgment to begin.* Peter sees the persecutions the believers were under-going as divinely sent judgment intended to purify Yahweh's people. *What will the outcome be with those who do not obey...?* If Yahweh brings such a judgment on his own people, the judgment He will bring on unbelievers will be much more serious. **(18)** *It is hard...* A quotation from Proverbs 11:31. **(19)** *So then...* A final exhortation to continue to do good and, whatever happens to them, to entrust their lives to Yahweh.

### **To elders and young men** [1Pe 5:1-11]

**(1Pe 5:1)** *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder, a witness of Jesus Christ's sufferings and one who will share in the glory that is to be revealed: (2)Tend your flock of Yahweh overseeing it not because you must, but because you are willing, as is [the will of] Yahweh; not for greed, but eagerly; (3)not for lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. (4)And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

**(5)** *Likewise you, younger people, be submissive to the elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,*

*"Yahweh opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

**(6)** *Humble yourselves, therefore, under Yahweh's mighty hand, that [He] may lift you up in [due] time. (7)Cast all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.*

**(8)** *Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (9)Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same sufferings.*

**(10)** *And [Yahweh] the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Jesus Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. (11)To Him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

**(1Pe 5:1)** *Fellow elder.* Peter, the recognized chief of the apostles, when addressing the elders to the Churches of Asia Minor, does not hesitate to call himself a “fellow-elder.” This shows clearly the importance of the eldership in the early Church. *Witness of Jesus Christ’s sufferings.* Peter had been with Jesus Christ from the early days of his ministry till his ascension to Heaven. *One who will share in the glory.* Both in Heaven and at Jesus Christ’s second coming. **(2-3)** *Tend your flock...* A metaphor employed by Jesus Christ himself (The shepherd and his flock” Jn 10:1-18) and that must have been etched on Peter’s mind (Jesus reinstates Peter. Jn 21:15-17). *Overseeing... not for lording it over...* Even Peter, although he had full apostolic authority, does not “lord it over” the elders he is writing to, but exemplifies the virtues he recommends. **(4)** *Chief Shepherd.* Jesus Christ. At his second coming, he will reward those who have properly served as shepherds. **(5)** *Younger people... submissive to the elders.* Now Peter, after recommending respect to those who dedicate themselves to the life of the community, returns to the thought that the denial of self for the good of others must be the mark of all Christians. *Clothe yourself with humility...* Here Peter had clearly in mind the footwashing scene of Jn 13:1-17. **(6-7)** *Lift you up in [due] time... He cares for you.* Yahweh’s help will come at just the right time. **(8-9)** *Be... alert. Your enemy...* Surely, Peter remembered his own difficulties in keeping awake in the Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46). *Your brothers.* Christians are not isolated, they belongs to a fellowship of suffering. **(10-11)** *Yahweh... after you have suffered... will... restore you...* Finally, Peter speaks of the law of Christian suffering, reminding his readers that, as Jesus Christ’s himself has demonstrated, there is no eternal glory in Heaven (eternal spiritual communion with Yahweh, Jesus Christ and all men) without suffering on Earth.

**Final greetings** [1Pe 5:12-14]

**(1Pe 5:12)** *With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this in which you are is the true grace of Yahweh.*

**(13)** *The chosen [community] in Babylon and my son Mark send their greetings. (14) Greet one another with a kiss of affection.*

*Peace to all of you who are in Jesus Christ.*

**(1Pe 5:12)** *With the help of Silas.* The idiomatic Greek of this letter, most probably beyond Peter’s competence, is clearly due to Silas, who wrote it for Peter (see: Introduction. Author.) *Written... encouraging you and testifying...* A final general description of the purpose of the letter. **(13)** *Baby-*

*lon.* Most probably Peter wrote from Mesopotamian Babylon, a small town on the Euphrates (see: Introduction. Place.) *My son Mark.* The writer of the Gospel. Early Christian tradition closely associate Mark and Peter. **(14)** *Kiss of affection.* The kiss of mutual respect and affection in the Lord Jesus Christ that was public practice of early Christians. *Peace to all... in Jesus Christ.* Peter ends with a reference to the spiritual communion of believers with Jesus Christ.



**2 PETER****Introduction [2Pe 1:1-2]**

*(2Pe 1:1) Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have been given the same faith as ours in the righteousness of [Yahweh] our God and of our Savior Jesus Christ:*

*(2) Grace and peace be yours in abundance, in the knowledge of Yahweh and of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**(2Pe 1:1)** *Simon Peter... an apostle.* A clear self-identification of the writer. *To those who...* The same people as those in 1Pe 1:1. *Have been given.* Again (as in 1Pe 1:2) the concept of “divine election,” a concept taken from Paul (Peter was well acquainted with Paul and his ideas.) From ever Yahweh knows who are those who by faith would become His people. **(2)** *Grace and peace...* A common Hebrew greeting. *Knowledge of Yahweh and of Jesus Christ our Lord.* Again (as in 1Pe 1:3) a perfectly clear declaration -found so many other times in the New Testament- that there is only One God and that Jesus Christ is subordinate to Him -Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh and of a human woman, the appointed Lord of the human race, is not God.

**Make your calling and election sure [2Pe 1:3-11]**

*(2Pe 1:3) With His divine power [Yahweh] has presented us with everything [we need] for life and godliness, through our knowledge of him [Jesus Christ] who called us by his own glory and goodness. (4) Through these he has presented us with his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by covetousness.*

*(5) And, for this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; (6) and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; (7) and to godliness, brotherly affection; and to brotherly affection, affection [for all]. (8) For these qualities, if are present and abound in you, will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) But he who does not have these things, is nearsighted and blind, for he has for-gotten the cleansing from his past sins.*

*(10) Therefore, brothers, do your best to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, (11) and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

**(2Pe 1:3)** *Everything [we need] for life and godliness.* Yahweh has made available all that we spiritually need through the work of Jesus Christ. Peter, who was writing to combat an early form of Gnosticism, insists that the knowledge possessed by those in apostolic circles was entirely adequate to meet the spiritual needs of the Christians. No secret, esoteric knowledge is necessary for salvation. *His own glory and goodness.* For having always obeyed the Father and brought the whole human race to spiritual salvation. **(4)** *Great and precious promises.* That is, eternal spiritual life in Heaven (“participate in the divine nature”) and a morally better life on Earth (“escape the corruption of the world”). **(5-7)** *Faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly affection, affection [for all].* The virtues that will produce a fruitful Christian life. **(8)** *These qualities... will keep you from being... unproductive in your knowledge.* The Christians’ knowledge should affect the way they live. It does not set them free from moral restraint, as the heretical Gnostics taught, rather, it produces holiness and all such virtues. **(9)** *Nearsighted and blind.* Nearsighted, for looking only to present, earthly, material matters. Blind, for refusing to see the guiding light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. **(10)** *Make your calling and election sure.* By being able to cultivate the above mentioned qualities, believers can be assured that Yahweh has chosen and called them. The genuineness of their faith will be demonstrated as they express these virtues. *Never fall.* Those who in this way give evidence of their faith will never fall under Satan’s domination. **(11)** *Receive a rich welcome.* At the moment of their admission to Heaven.

### **Prophecy of Scripture** [2Pe 1:12-21]

**(2Pe 1:12)** *So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. (13)I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in this tent, (14) knowing that I will soon abandon my tent, as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. (15) And I will see to it that even after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.*

**(16)** *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, because we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (17)For he received honor and glory from Yahweh the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, “This is My Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” (18)We heard this voice that came from Heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

**(19)** *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, to which you will do well to pay attention, as to a light shining in a dark place, until*

*the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (20) Above all, you must know this, no prophecy of Scripture came about by a personal interpretation. (21) For prophecy was never due to the will of man, but men spoke from Yahweh, moved by His Spirit [\*].*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(2Pe 1:12-13)** *I will always remind you... I think it is right to refresh your memory.* The duty of an apostle, and of all the elders, is to preach (reminding Christians of what they already know but sometimes don’t remember properly) and teach (to explain concepts whose meaning Christians don’t have properly understood.) *As long as I live in this tent.* As long as Peter was physically alive. **(14)** *As... Jesus Christ showed me.* Peter expected to die soon, remembering what he was told by Jesus Christ (Jn 21:18-19). **(15)** *Always be able to remember these things.* An aim that was realized, either intentionally or not, through the Gospel of Mark (early Christian tradition closely associate Peter and Mark), which is nothing other than a record of Peter’s preaching material; that is, of what Peter preached and taught about Jesus Christ. **(16-18)** *Cleverly invented stories.* Peter’s predication was based on his eyewitness account of the events that marked Jesus Christ’s life. It was not made up of myths and imaginative stories as was the message of the heretics (v. 2:3). *His majesty.* A reference to Jesus Christ’s transfiguration (Mt 17:1-8), as clearly explained in vv. 1:17-18. **(19)** *The word of the prophets made more certain.* The meaning of this phrase is that what Peter, James and John saw on the Mount of Transfiguration makes even more certain that what was foretold by the prophets about Jesus Christ (his life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming) is true. *As to a light...* The prophecies actually give to men some information (a “light”) about Yahweh’s plan for their salvation. **(20-21)** *No prophecy... a personal interpretation... men spoke from Yahweh.* No prophecy of Scripture arose from a merely human interpretation of things, for the prophets were guided by Yahweh. *Moved by His Spirit.* The spiritual communion Yahweh-man typical of the Old Testament, totally due to Yahweh’s initiative, lasting for the necessary time and only reserved to particular individuals, chosen by Yahweh.

**False teachers and their condemnation** [2Pe 2:1-22]

**(2Pe 2:1)** *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying their Lord Jesus Christ who bought them*

-bringing swift destruction on themselves. (2) Many will follow their shameful ways and because of them the Way of Truth will be reviled. (3) And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their judgment has long been hanging over them, and their condemnation will not wait long.

(4) For Yahweh did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into the darkness of Tartarus, to be held for judgment; (5) He did not spare the ancient world when He brought the flood on the world of the ungodly, but protected Noah, as the eighth herald of righteousness; (6) He condemned to destruction the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; (7) and He rescued righteous Lot, distressed by the licentious conduct of the ungodly (8) (for that righteous man, who lived among them, was tormented day after day in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard.) (9) The Lord Yahweh knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for their punishment on the day of judgment, (10) especially those who follow the flesh with its lustful desire of shameful acts and despise the sovereignty [of Yahweh].

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to revile [celestial] glories; (11) yet the angels, although they are greater in strength and power, do not bring slanderous accusations against those [glories] before the Lord Yahweh. (12) But these men, like irrational beasts, naturally born to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, will perish in their corruption, (13) and will be paid back with the punishment of their lawlessness.

They find their pleasure in daily carousing. Blotted and blemished, reveling in their deceits while they feast with you. (14) With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unsteady souls; they have hearts expert in greed; they are accursed children. (15) They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who liked the wages of wickedness, (16) and was then rebuked for his wrongdoing: a donkey -who is without speech- spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

(17) These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. (18) With empty and boastful words, appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. (19) They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity -for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. (20) For, if after they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were

at the beginning. **(21)** *It would have been better for them not to have known the Way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn back from the sacred command passed on to them. (22) It has happened to them according to the true proverbs: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed [returns] to her wallowing in the mud."*

**(2Pe 2:1)** *False prophets.* In the history of Israel there had been a number of false prophets, responsible for leading Yahweh's people astray and for bringing disaster to the nation. They were interested in gaining popularity and money; their usual policy was to tell people what they wanted to hear. *There will be false teachers among you.* Numerous New Testament passages warn of false teachers who are already present or yet to come and whose characteristics will be exactly the same of the Old Testament false prophets. Jesus Christ himself has announced their coming (Mt 24:4-5:11), Paul often wrote of them (Ac 20:29-30; Gal 1:6-9; Php 3:2; Col 2:4,8,18, 20-23; 2Th 2: 1-3; 1Ti 1:3-7; 4:1-3; 2Ti 3:1-8) and so did John (1Jn 2:18-19,22-23). *Destructive heresies.* Divisive opinions or teachings resulting in the moral and spiritual destruction of the community of believers, of the Church. **(2)** *Shameful ways.* The main cause of false teaching is personal ambition, which is absolutely not compatible with Jesus Christ's command of being humble and to be fond of each other. *The Way of Truth.* The Christian faith, which is not only correct doctrine but, even more, correct living. **(3)** *In their greed.* The false teachers are motivated by a desire for money and commercialize the Christian faith to their own selfish advantage. *Their judgment...* Their condemnation was declared long ago, in Old Testament times (vv. 2:4-9), and they will not escape it ("will wait no long".) **(4-8)** *Angels... sinned; ancient world... flood; Sodom and Gomorrah.* Three examples showing that Yahweh rescues the godly and punishes the wicked. *Tartarus.* The Greek term used here designates the place where the most wicked spirits were sent to be punished (yet, why some evil angels are imprisoned till Universal Judgment and others are let free to serve Satan as demons is not explained in Scripture.) *Noah, the eighth herald of righteousness.* A description of Noah found only here in Scripture. Only eight people were saved: Noah and his wife, three sons and three daughters-in-law. *Righteous Lot, distressed by the licentious conduct of the ungodly.* He was considered righteous for having respected the ancient code of hospitality that obliged a host to protect his guests in every situation, even with his own life. **(9)** *The Lord Yahweh knows...* A verse stating the points made in vv. 2:4-8. **(10-11)** *Especially those who follow the flesh...* The heretics of Peter's time will certainly undergo punishment, especially those who also

practice sexual immorality and don't respect Yahweh. *Reville [celestial] glories*. The arrogance of the heretics is such that they dare to blaspheme angels, something the angels themselves never do ("the angels... do not bring slanderous accusations".) **(12) Things they do not understand**. The heresy Peter refers to was an early form of Gnosticism, whose adepts claimed to possess a special, esoteric, knowledge which, actually, was abysmal ignorance and whose result was arrogant blasphemy. **(13) Daily carousing**. These heretics were utterly shameless and, most probably, introduced their immoral practices at the moment of the brotherly kiss that, in the early Church, accompanied the Lord Jesus Christ's Supper. **(14) With eyes full of adultery**. The phrase means that they viewed every woman as a potential sex partner. **(15) Way of Balaam, son of Beor**. As Balaam (Nu 22-24) these false teachers were attempting to extract money from naive listeners. **(16) Rebuked... a donkey... spoke**. This reflects the foolishness of the false teachers of Peter's days. **(17) Springs without water**. A picture of cruel deception. As dry springs offer nothing but deception to the thirsty traveler, who expects cool, refreshing water, so the false teachers promise satisfying truth but in reality have no-thing to offer. *Mist driven by a storm*. Gone before a drop of water falls on the fields. *Blackest darkness*. Hell. **(18) Empty and boastful words**. Words that sound impressive to the new converts but in reality have nothing to offer. *Who are just escaping*. New converts who have recently left their pagan practices, and who have not yet had a chance to develop spiritual resistance. **(19) They promise them freedom**. The very ones who promise freedom from bondage to rules and regulations are in effect slave of their depravity, to which they feel obliged. **(20) If after they have escaped the corruption of the world. Again entangled in it and overcome**. Their heretic ideas and their desire for money and power mark a complete return to the old sinful pattern of life. **(21) Better... not to have known...** Knowledge of the Way increases one's responsibility and his hardness of heart if he then rejects it. *Sacred command*. The message of the Gospel. **(22) A dog returns... A sow... [returns]...** A local proverb, not part of Scripture. The meaning of both is that the change of the false teachers, when they came to know Jesus Christ, was only cosmetic, and soon they went back to their real nature.

### **The Day of the Lord Yahweh [2Pe 3:1-18]**

**(2Pe 3:1)** Dear friends, this is now the second letter I have written to you. Both of them as reminders to arouse your sincere minds, **(2)** that you recall the words already spoken by the holy prophets and the command given by the apostles of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*(3) First of all, you must know that in the last days scoffers will come, following their own evil desires, (4) and saying, "Where is this 'coming' he [Jesus Christ] promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." (5) But they deliberately forget that long ago by Yahweh's Word the sky existed and the Earth was formed out of water and by water. (6) By these same causes the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. (7) By the same Word the present sky and Earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

*(8) But now do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord Yahweh a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (9) The Lord Yahweh is not slow in His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

*(10) But the Day of the Lord Yahweh will come like a thief. In it, the sky will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the Earth and the [human] works in it will be [burned up].*

*(11) Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is necessary that you conduct yourselves in holiness, with works of mercy, (12) as you look forward to and speed the coming of the Day of Yahweh, when the sky, set to fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire. (13) But, according to His promise, we are looking forward to a new sky and a new Earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

*(14) So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to these things, make every effort to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless. (15) Consider our Lord Yahweh's patience as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that Yahweh gave him. (16) And in all his letters, speaking of these matters, there are some points hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

*(17) Therefore, dear friends, you who already know, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. (18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.*

**(2Pe 3:1-2)** *Second letter.* The first was 1 Peter. *Both... reminders... that you recall...* Many times the New Testament writers make clear that very often preaching and teaching are not so much the introducing of new truth but the reminding of what believers already know. **(3)** *Scoffers will come.*

The false teachers described in ch. 2. **(4)** *Where is this 'coming'...?* The early Christians believed in an imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. The false teachers (early Gnostics) did not. *Ever since our fathers died...* From the beginning of Israel's history (from the death of the patriarchs.) **(5-7)** *They deliberately forget that...* They were deliberately ignoring Yahweh's initial act of creation, His interventions in the history of mankind and the final, future, Universal Judgment. In other terms, Jesus Christ will return when Yahweh has decided, not when men are expecting him. **(8)** *Do not forget...* Yahweh does not view time as men do. He stands above time and, since time is purely relative with Him, He waits patiently, while men burn with impatience. **(9)** *The Lord Yahweh is not slow...* Actually, Yahweh is patiently waiting for all to come to repentance (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh). **(10)** *The Day of the Lord Yahweh.* The day of Universal Judgment (traditionally seen as a day of cosmic destruction,) when Jesus Christ returns in glory, will come when nobody is expecting it. **(11)** *Since... it is necessary...* Knowing of the transitory nature of the world ought to make a difference in a man's system of values and priorities. **(12)** *You... speed the coming.* Since Yahweh is waiting for all to come to repentance, the sooner believers bring others to Jesus Christ's salvation, the sooner that day will come. **(13)** *His promise.* New Heavens and a new Earth were promised by Isaiah (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22), and correspond to Jesus Christ's promise to have all men living in spiritual communion in Yahweh's Kingdom (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh). **(14)** *Be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.* Believers, who have peace with Yahweh as a result of being justified by faith (Ro 5:1), have anyway to live as He desires. **(15)** *Yahweh's patience... salvation.* As already seen at v. 3:9. *Our dear brother Paul.* Here Peter confirms their unity of teaching and purpose, abundantly attested in Paul's letters and in Acts. **(16)** *Ignorant and unstable people distort...* The false teachers who, in their ignorance of the truth, bend Scriptures to their own desires. **(17)** *You who already know.* That the false teachers are coming. **(18)** *Grace and know-ledge.* After receiving Yahweh's grace, a believer has to improve as much as possible his knowledge of the truth, to be in condition of rejecting the false teachers' erroneous esoteric knowledge.



**JAMES****Introduction** [Jm 1:1]

**(Jm 1:1)** James, a servant of Yahweh and of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
To the twelve tribes scattered in the world:  
Greetings.

**(Jm 1:1)** James. The oldest of Jesus Christ's four brothers (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55; Gal 1:19). *Twelve tribes scattered...* The Jew-Christian believers who, after Stephen's death, were scattered from Jerusalem as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Syria (Ac 8:1; 11:19).

**Trials and temptations** [Jm 1:2-18]

**(Jm 1:2)** Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face various trials, **(3)** because you know that your confirmation of the faith develops perseverance. **(4)** Perseverance then must finish its work so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking anything. **(5)** If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask for it, with simplicity and without reproaching, to Yahweh, who gives to all; and it will be given to him. **(6)** But he must ask with faith and without doubting, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. **(7)** That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord Yahweh; **(8)** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his things.

**(9)** The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his exaltation. **(10)** But the one who is rich should take pride in his humiliation, because he will pass away like the flower of the grass. **(11)** For the sun rises and with scorching heat withers the grass; its flower withers and loses the beauty of its aspect. In the same way, the rich man will fade away in [the course of] his ways.

**(12)** Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that Yahweh has promised to those who are fond of Him.

**(13)** When tempted, no one should say, "Yahweh is tempting me." For Yahweh cannot be tempted to evil, nor does He tempt anyone; **(14)** but each one is tempted by his own evil desire, by which he is dragged and enticed. **(15)** Then the desire, after having conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin, when accomplished, gives birth to death.

**(16)** Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. **(17)** Every good gift and perfect present is from above, coming from the Father of the lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. **(18)** Of His own will He gave us birth by the Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

**(Jm 1:2)** *Joy... whenever you face... trials.* As taught by Jesus Christ himself (The beatitudes. Mt 5:11-12; Lk 6:22-23). **(3-4)** *Your confirmation... perseverance.* The Christian is like an athlete; the heavier the training he undergoes, the more he is fit (“perfect and complete”) for the competition (an image used many times also by Paul.) **(5)** *If any of you lacks wisdom...* If a man feels he is not strong enough to go through the experiences of life, he has to ask Yahweh (without complaining) for strength. **(6-8)** *But...* Who asks Yahweh for something has to remember two things. First, that he must ask without doubts; he must be sure that Yahweh has the power to give him. Second, that what Yahweh gives -or gives not- is what is really good and right for him. **(9-11)** *Brother in humble circumstances... one who is rich...* The Christian who suffers the trials of poverty is to take pride in his high spiritual value as a believer (v. 2:5); the wealthy Christian, in the trials that bring him low, because they teach him not to depend on his riches and to humbly put his trust in Yahweh. **(12)** *Blessed is the man... under trial.* As declared by Jesus Christ himself (The beatitudes. Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). *Crown of life.* The final price for perseverance in the faith will be eternal spiritual life in Yahweh’s Kingdom. **(13-14)** *Tempted.* Actually, “tested,” to see if the person has the moral strength to resist sin. *Yahweh cannot be tempted.* Because of Yahweh’s very nature, there is nothing in Him for sin (that is, for Satan) to appeal to. *Nor does He tempt anyone.* Yahweh never tempts men to sin (Satan tempts, to make them fall); Yahweh tests men in order to confirm their faith or to prove out their commitment. *Tempted by his own evil desire.* The weaknesses of the flesh are always used by Satan, who exploits a person’s desires to break his resistance. **(15)** *Desire... sin... death.* From a practical point of view, we have to recognize that no man was born without desires. And, if a man encourages his desires, they will inevitably cause him to sin. Then, if a man does not contrast sin, that is the way to spiritual death. **(16-17)** *Every good gift... is from above.* There is nothing coming from Yahweh that is not good. *Father of the lights.* Yahweh is the Creator of the heavenly bodies but, unlike them, He does not change. **(18)** *He gave us birth by the Word of Truth.* Their new, spiritual birth, when they believed to the Gospel (the Word of Yahweh, which is true and imperishable) and became Christians. *Firstfruits.* Just as the first sheaf of the harvest was an indication that the whole harvest would eventually come, so the early Christians were an indication that a great number of people would eventually be born to the Christian faith.

### ***Listening and doing*** [Jm 1:19-27]

**(Jm 1:19)** *Know this, my dear brothers: Every man should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, (20)for man’s anger does*

not work according to the righteousness of Yahweh. **(21)** Therefore, get rid of all filthiness and excess of wickedness and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save your souls.

**(22)** But be doers of the Word, not hearers only, so deceiving yourselves.

**(23)** For anyone who listen to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror **(24)** and who, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he was like. **(25)** But the man who looks into the perfect law, the law of freedom, and perseveres, not as a hearer that forgets, but doing it -he will be blessed in his doing.

**(26)** If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. **(27)** Religion that is pure and faultless before Yahweh our Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

**(Jm 1:19-20)** Quick to listen... slow to speak and slow to become angry. Self-evident characteristics of a really good and wise person. **(21)** Get rid of... accept the Word. To properly accept the Word of Yahweh (the Gospel of salvation) a man has to repent, that is, to abandon his sins and bad habits. **(22-24)** Be doers of the Word, not hearers only... Here James emphasizes vital Christianity, characterized by good deeds and by a faith that operates (genuine faith must and will be accompanied by a consistent life-style.) **(25)** Perfect law. The moral and ethical teaching of Christianity, which is based on the Old Testament moral law, was brought to completion (perfection) by Jesus Christ. Law of freedom. In contrast to the slavery of sin, obeying the moral law gives the Christian the freedom to be what he was created for. **(26-27)** Religious. Here referred to the outward expression of religion in rituals, liturgy and ceremony. Religion... before Yahweh... is... Real worship does not consist in rich and elaborate rituals, but in the practical service of mankind ("look after orphans and widows") and in the purity of personal life ("keep oneself from being polluted by the world".)

**Favoritism is forbidden** [Jm 2:1-13]

**(Jm 2:1)** My brothers, your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ should be without favoritism. **(2)** If a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in, **(3)** and if you pay special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but you say to the poor man, "Stand there" or "Sit at my feet," **(4)** have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

*(5) Listen, my dear brothers: Has not Yahweh chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the Kingdom He promised those who are fond of Him? (6) But you have insulted the poor. It is not the rich who are exploiting you and dragging you into court? (7) Are they not the ones who blaspheme the noble good name called upon you?*

*(8) If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "You'll be fond of your neighbor as of yourself," you are doing right. (9) But if you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. (10) For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at one [point] is guilty of all of it. (11) For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Then, if you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.*

*(12) Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law of freedom, (13) because judgment [will be] without mercy to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumph over judgment!*

**(Jm 2:1)** *Faith... without favoritism.* All Christians -actually, all men- are worthy the same respect, independently of a man's social status, prestige, power or wealth. **(2-4)** *If a man comes... if you pay special attention...* An ever existing and never solved problem. *Judges with evil thoughts.* Showing favoritism in the Church means judging believers for their wealth and not for their moral stand. **(5)** *Has not Yahweh chosen those who are poor...?* As declared by Jesus Christ himself (The beatitudes. Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). **(6)** *But you have insulted the poor.* By showing favoritism. *Exploiting...* Usually by not paying the appropriate salary to workmen. *Dragging... into court.* No doubt for debt. Anyway, it is not riches that James is condemning; it is the standard conduct of rich people. **(7)** *Blaspheme the... name.* Rich Christians who continue to oppress the poor, actually blaspheme the very name by which they are called: Christians. **(8)** *Royal law.* The law of fondness (Lev 19:18; Mt 22:39) is called "royal" because it is the supreme law, the source of all other laws governing human relationships. **(9-10)** *If you show favoritism, you... are... lawbreakers... guilty of all of it.* The law is the expression of the character and the will of Yahweh; therefore to violate one part of the law is to violate Yahweh's will and thus His whole law. **(11)** *For... Then...* An example of what said above. **(12)** *The law of freedom.* The life of the Christians, unlike that of the orthodox Jews and of the Pharisees, is not governed by the external pressure of a whole series of rules and regulations imposed by men. It is governed only by the inner compulsion of affection, because the affection of Jesus Christ makes the Christians desire to do so. **(13)** *Judgment... without mercy to... who has not*

*been merciful.* As Jesus Christ has declared after teaching how to pray (Mt 6:14-15). *Mercy triumph over judgment!* If a man is merciful, Yahweh will be merciful on the Day of Judgment.

***Faith and deeds*** [Jm 2:14-26]

**(Jm 2:14)** *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is naked or without daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does not give them the necessary for the body, what good is it? (17) So, even faith, by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

**(18)** *But someone will say, "One has faith; another has deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I by my deeds will show you my faith. (19) You believe that there is one God? Good! Even the demons believe that -and shudder.*

**(20)** *You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is barren? (21) Was not our father Abraham justified by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? (22) You see that his faith was working together with his actions, and that his faith was made perfect by his actions. (23) And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed Yahweh, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called Yahweh's friend. (24) You see that a man is justified by his deeds and not by faith alone.*

**(25)** *And, in the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute justified by deeds when she received the messengers and sent them off by another way? (26) So, as the body without the spirit is dead, even faith without deeds is dead.*

**(Jm 2:14-17)** *Faith but... no deeds.* Such a faith (that of vv. 2:14-20,24,26) is not the genuine faith in Yahweh and in Jesus Christ, but a mere intellectual acceptance of certain truths, without real trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. *Can such faith save?... Even faith, by itself... is dead.* Through this example, James is not saying that a man is saved by works and not by genuine faith. Rather, that a man is justified (declared righteous before Yahweh) by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone, for genuine faith will always produce good deeds. **(18)** *One has faith; another has deeds.* The claim that faith and deeds can exist independently of each other is false. *Show me your faith without deeds...* Ironic; James denies this possibility. **(19)** *Even demons believe.* Satan and all his fallen angels well know the existence and the unicity of Yahweh. Yet their knowledge can't be called faith, as their

actions demonstrate. It is only through deeds that genuine faith can prove and demonstrate itself. **(20-23) Faith without deeds is barren. Our father Abraham...** Here James means that Abraham's righteous action was evidence of genuine faith, not that he was saved by the action, for the verse he cites ("Abraham believed Yahweh..." Ge 15:6) to substantiate his point says, "Abraham believed the Lord Yahweh, and He credited his faith to him as righteousness." Furthermore, Abraham's act of faith recorded in Ge 15:6 occurred before he offered up Isaac, and that was only a proof of the genuineness of his faith. **(24) Not by faith alone.** Not by an intellectual assent to certain truths. **(25) Even Rahab the prostitute...** A famous Old Testament figure, she had sheltered the spies sent to the Promised Land (Joshua 2:1-21). The fact that she had faith in Yahweh was demonstrated by the risks she took by helping the Israelites. **(26) Faith without deeds is dead.** Practically, a repetition of v. 2:17.

### **Taming the tongue** [Jm 3:1-12]

**(Jm 3:1)** *Not many of you should be teachers, my brothers, knowing that we will be judged more strictly, (2)for we all stumble in many ways. If anyone never stumbles in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.*

**(3)** *When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. (4)And the ships also, which are so large and driven by strong winds, are steered by a very small rudder where the pilot wants. (5)Likewise the tongue is a small member of the body, but it boasts of great things. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small fire. (6)The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil. The tongue is placed among our members, it corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of our life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.*

**(7)** *For all kinds of beasts, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been made docile by man, (8)but no man can tame men's tongue, a restless evil, full of deadly poison.*

**(9)** *With it we praise Yahweh, Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in Yahweh's likeness. (10)Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. (11)Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? (12)My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt [spring] produce fresh water.*

**(Jm 3:1)** *Judged more strictly.* Because a teacher has a great influence, he will be held more accountable. Jesus Christ has spoken of the severe pu-

nishment of the hypocritical teachers of the law of his time (Mk 12:38-40; Mt 23:14; Lk 20:45-47). **(2)** *If... he is a perfect man.* Since the tongue is so difficult to control, anyone who controls it perfectly surely gains control of himself in all other areas of life as well. **(3-5)** *Bits into the mouths of horses. Ships... a very small rudder. The tongue is a small... but... Forest set on fire by a small fire.* James is not saying that silence is better than speech; he is pleading for the control of the tongue which, small as it is, can direct the whole course of a man's life. **(6)** *World of evil... set on fire by hell.* A figurative way of saying that the source of the tongue's evil is the devil. **(7-8)** *All kinds of beasts... tamed... no man can tame...* Man's ingenuity has tamed -in the sense of controlling and making useful- every wild creature, but no man was ever able of taming -making only a good usage of- his and other men's tongue. **(9)** *In Yahweh's likeness.* Since man has been made like Yahweh (Ge 1:26-27), to curse a man is like cursing Yahweh (Ge 9:6). **(10-12)** *Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.* A practical reality of everybody's life. *This should not be.* Every person has to try -and the Christians much harder- to always speak properly (yet knowing that -even for the best of men- this is not possible.) *Can both... Neither can...* Practical examples, to make clearer what said above.

### **Two kinds of wisdom** [Jm 3:13-18]

**(Jm 3:13)** *Who is wise and experienced among you? Let him show by his good conduct and his deeds, in the humility of wisdom.* **(14)** *But if you harbor bitter jealousy and selfish envy in your hearts, do not boast about it denying the truth.* **(15)** *That is not the wisdom which comes down from high but is earthly, psychological, devilish.* **(16)** *For where there is jealousy and envy, there there is disorder and every evil practice.*

**(17)** *But the wisdom [that comes] from high is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.* **(18)** *Then the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who work for peace.*

**(Jm 3:13)** *Wisdom.* True wisdom is not just acquired knowledge but practical insight with moral and spiritual implications ("Good conduct... deeds... humility".) **(14)** *Jealousy and selfish envy.* Here James goes back to the initial recommendation of v. 3:1. A teacher is always under the temptation of regarding his opponents as enemies to annihilate rather than as friends to persuade with affection ("bitter jealousy",) and of displaying himself more than displaying the truth ("selfish envy".) **(15-16)** *Down from high.* Inspired by Yahweh. *There is disorder.* In opposition to Yahweh, for "Yahweh

is not a God of disorder but of peace” (1 Co 14:33). **(17)** *The wisdom [that comes] from high.* True wisdom is not the attainment of man but the gift of Yahweh (“pure... sincere”.) **(18)** *Then the fruit...* The harvest (“fruit”) of true wisdom is true peace among men. And the only people who can “sow” the “seeds” of true wisdom and “reap” a reward from Yahweh are those who sincerely dedicate themselves to the attainment of His peace.

**Submit yourselves to Yahweh [Jm 4:1-12]**

**(Jm 4:1)** *From where [come] wars and quarrels among you? It is not from your passions, that battle in your members? (2) You desire and do not have; you kill and covet, and cannot obtain; you fight and make war; you do not have, because you do not ask; (3) you ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to waist in your pleasures.*

**(4)** *You adulterous, don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity with Yahweh? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of Yahweh. (5) Or do you think Scripture says without reason: “The spirit Yahweh has made live in us yearns till jealousy?” (6) But [He] gives us more grace. That is why [Scripture] says: “Yahweh opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*

**(7)** *Submit yourselves, then, to Yahweh. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (8) Come near to Yahweh and He will come near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord Yahweh, and He will exalt you.*

**(11)** *Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the Law and judges it. But, if you judge the Law, you are not keeping it, but judging it. (12) There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, who saves and condemns. But you -who are you to judge your neighbor?*

**(Jm 4:1)** *Passions.* Or “desires for pleasures.” To note that the Greek for this term is the source of the word “Hedonism” (pleasure as life’s aim.) **(2)** *You desire and...* James warns that, if desire for the pleasures of this world is the policy of life, nothing but strife and hatred and division can possibly follow. **(3)** *You ask... wrongly.* The craving for pleasure shuts the door of prayer because, if a man’s prayer is for the things that will gratify his desires, it is a selfish prayer, and Yahweh will not answer it. **(4)** *Adulterous.* Those who are spiritually unfaithful, who prefer the world rather than Yahweh. **(5)** *Scripture says...* The passage James had in mind is not known.



*The spirit Yahweh has made live in us.* Referred to Yahweh's creation of man (Ge 2:7). *Yearns till jealousy.* Because of the fall, man's spirit "envies intensely," but Yahweh's grace (v. 4:6) allows to overcome such envy. **(6)** *He gives us more grace.* Yahweh's grace gives the believers the strength they need to deny their self for the good of others. *Yahweh opposes the proud...* A quotation from Proverb 3:34. **(7-10)** *Submit... Humble yourself...* These verses contain ten commands, each of which is so stated in Greek that it calls for immediate action in rooting out the sinful attitude of pride. *He will exalt you.* Jesus Christ himself said, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Mt 23: 12). **(11)** *Who speaks against his brother...* To speak against a brother is to scorn the law of affection. **(12)** *Only one Lawgiver and Judge.* Yahweh. *Who are you to judge...?* Jesus Christ's command "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Our Father. Mt 6:12; Lk 11:4), actually forbids a man to judge other men.

**Boasting about tomorrow** [Jm 4:13-17]

**(Jm 4:13)** *And now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." (14) But you don't even know what your life will be tomorrow. You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. (15) Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord Yahweh wants, we will live and do this or that." (16) As it is, now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (17) Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

**(Jm 4:13-14)** *Tomorrow we will go... But you don't know...* The essential uncertainty of the future is a characteristic of life on Earth. Jesus Christ told the story of the rich man who made his fortune and built up his plans for the future, and forgot that his soul might be required of him that very night (Lk 12:16-21). **(15)** *You ought to say...* This uncertainty doesn't have to be a cause either for fear or for inaction. It has to be a reason for realizing man's complete dependence on Yahweh and commit the future and all plans into the hands of Yahweh, as Paul did (1 Co 4:19). **(16)** *You boast in your arrogance... is evil.* The man who does not remember his total dependence on Yahweh is guilty of arrogance. The future is not in the hands of men and no man can arrogantly claim that he has the power to decide it. **(17)** *Anyone...* An important moral consideration: If a man knows that a thing is wrong and still continues doing it, that to him is sin.

**Warning to rich oppressors** [*Jm 5:1-6*]

*(Jm 5:1) And now you, rich people. Weep and wail because of the miseries that are coming upon you. (2) Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes, (3) your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. (4) Look! The wages of the workmen who mowed your fields, which you have defrauded, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of [Yahweh] the Lord of hosts. (5) You have lived on Earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. (6) You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.*

**(Jm 5:1)** *You, rich people.* In this chapter James has two aims. First, to show the ultimate worthlessness of all earthly riches; second, to show the detestable character of those who possess them. By doing this he hopes to prevent his readers from placing all their hopes and desires on earthly things. Even Jesus Christ had similarly warned the rich (Blessing and woes. Lk 6:24-26). **(2-3)** *Wealth has rotted... moths have eaten... gold and silver are corroded...* Jesus Christ said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth, where moth and rust...” (Treasures in Heaven. Mt 6:19-21; Lk 12:33-34). *Hoarded wealth in the last days.* An ironical phrase which actually means, “It is a treasure indeed that you have amassed for yourself for your final judgment.” **(4)** *The wages... you have defrauded...* The selfish rich have gained their wealth by injustice. The daily workers in Palestine lived on the verge of starvation. Their wage was minimum and it was impossible to save anything; if that wage was not paid promptly, they and their family simply could not eat. *The Lord of hosts.* A way to say, “The Lord Almighty.” **(5)** *Lived... in luxury and self-indulgence.* As the rich man of Jesus Christ’s parable of “The rich man and Lazarus” (Lk 16:19-31). *The day of slaughter.* The wicked rich are like cattle that continue to fatten themselves on the very day they are to be slaughtered, totally unaware of incoming destruction. **(6)** *Condemned and murdered...* Here James speaks of the evil man’s instinctive hatred of the good man, hatred that -so many times- is pushed till the extreme, till the actual killing of the morally good.

**Patience in suffering** [*Jm 5:7-12*]

*(Jm 5:7) Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord Jesus Christ’s coming. See, the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, being patient until it receives the first and the last rain. (8) You too, be patient and fortify your hearts, because the Lord Jesus Christ’s coming is near. (9) Don’t*

*grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The judge is standing at the door!*

**(10)** *Brothers, as an example of suffering and patience, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord Yahweh. (11) As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen the conclusion the Lord Yahweh [brought about]. The Lord Yahweh is rich in compassion and mercy.*

**(12)** *Above all, my brothers, do not swear -not by Heaven or by Earth or by any other oath. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No" be no, that you will not fall under judgment.*

**(Jm 5:7)** *Be patient, then...* When the believers are suffering at the hands of the wicked rich, they are to look forward patiently to the Lord Jesus Christ's return. *The first and the last rain.* In Israel the autumn ("first") rain comes in October-November and the spring ("last") rain in March-April, just prior to harvest (Dt 11:14; Jer 5:24; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23). **(8)** *The Lord Jesus Christ's coming is near.* At the time, even the apostles were convinced that Jesus Christ's second coming was imminent. **(9)** *Don't grumble.* James always calls for patience toward believers as well as unbelievers. *The judge is standing at the door.* Another reference to Jesus Christ's -believed imminent- second coming and the judgment associated with it. **(10-11)** *Example of suffering and patience... the prophets. Job's perseverance.* Most of the Old Testament prophets accepted patiently Yahweh's orders. On the contrary, Job was not patient (Job 3; 12:1-3; 16:1-3; 21:4), but he persevered in his faith (Job 1:20-22; 2:9-10; 13:15). **(12)** *Do not swear.* James' words are very close to Jesus Christ's (Mt 5:33-36). *Let your "Yes" ... and your "No" ...* Again, the same words of Jesus Christ (Mt 5:37).

### **The prayer of faith** [Jm 5:13-20]

**(Jm 5:13)** *Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. (14) Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the Church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord Yahweh. (15) And the prayer [offered] in faith will make the sick person well, and the Lord Yahweh will raise him up and, if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (16) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray to each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

**(17)** *Elijah, a man in nature like us, prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. (18) Again he prayed, and the sky gave rain, and the land produced its crops.*

*(19) My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, (20) let him know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

**(Jm 5:13-14)** *Trouble... pray. Happy... sing. Sick... call... to pray.* Here James sets out certain dominant characteristics of the early Church. First, it was a praying Church; as Jesus Christ taught his disciples (Ask, seek, knock. Mt 7:7-12). Second, it was a singing Church; the early Christians were always ready to sing psalms and hymns to express their joy and to thank Yahweh for His grace. Third, it was a healing Church; at the time of the apostles some Christians had the gift of healing the sick by the imposition of their hands -which had always to be accompanied by faithful prayers. *Anoint... with oil.* Oil was one of the best known ancient medicines and James is recommending its use both for its medicinal properties and as an outward sign of the healing to be brought about by Yahweh in response to faithful prayer. To note that for many centuries the Church used anointing as a means to cure and heal the sick and that only later, in the ninth century, the Roman Church began using it as a preparation to death. **(15)** *Prayer... sick person well... will be forgiven.* Here there is still the Jewish idea that all physical and mental sickness is due to sin. Anyway, this is always true for the sickness of the soul. **(16)** *Confess your sins to each other.* In effect, usually it is easier to confess sins to Yahweh than to men; so to confess them to another person represents a better proof of true repentance. *Prayer... is powerful.* After repenting of his sins, a man is again in contact with Yahweh; then he can again pray faithfully. **(17-18)** *Elijah... prayed earnestly... and...* James quotes Elijah as an example of the power of prayer. *Three and a half years.* This period (also quoted in Lk 4:25) is a deduction from 1 Kings 18:1. Anyway, the Old Testament narrative does not say that the drought was due to Elijah's prayers; only that he was the prophet who announced its coming and cessation. **(19-20)** *Wander from the truth.* The wanderer is either a professing Christian whose faith is not genuine, or a sinning Christian who needs to be restored. *Whoever turns a sinner...* A great thought of the New Testament. If a Christian goes wrong and stays away, and a fellow-Christian rescues him from the error and brings him back, that man has not only saved his brother's soul; he has also covered plenty of his own sins. In other words, to save another's soul is the surest way to save one's own.

**1 JOHN****The Word of life** [1Jn 1:1-4]

*(1Jn1:1) That which happened from the beginning [of Christianity], which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched concerning the Word of life, (2) -and the life was manifested; and we have seen it and testify to it; and we proclaim to you the eternal life, that which is with Yahweh the Father and was manifested to us- (3) that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you also may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship is with Yahweh the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. (4) And we write this to you that your joy may be full.*

**(1Jn 1:1)** *That which... we have heard... seen... looked at... touched.* The author of this letter (the apostle John -who doesn't identify himself- also author of a Gospel and of Revelation) testifies about Jesus Christ (the "Word of life",) with whom he had been from the beginning of his public mission (Mt 4:21-22). **(2)** *The life was manifested.* Jesus Christ (the "Word of life", or the "eternal life",) speaking of eternal life in Yahweh's Kingdom, has said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live... will never die" (Jn 11:25-26). **(3)** *Fellowship with us.* Everybody's participation to the spiritual communion of all believers with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. **(4)** *Your joy may be full.* The spiritual happiness of John's readers -and his own- cannot be complete unless they share the true knowledge of Jesus Christ and of his action of universal salvation.

**Walking in the light** [1Jn 1:5-10; 2:1-14]

*(1Jn 1:5) This is the message we have heard from him [Jesus Christ] and declare to you: Yahweh is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. (6) If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, purifies us from every sin.*

*(8) If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, He [Yahweh], who is faithful and just, will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him [Yahweh] out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives.*

*(2:1) My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one Helper with Yahweh the Father -Jesus*

*Christ, the Righteous One. (2)He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.*

*(3)Now, by this we know that we have come to know him: if we obey his commands. (4)He who says, "I know him," but does not keep his commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

*(5)But whoever keeps his Word, Yahweh's affection is truly made complete in him. By this we know we are in Him. (6)He who says he abides in Him must walk as he [Jesus Christ] walked.*

*(7)Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old command, which you have had since the beginning [of Christianity]. The old command is the Message you have heard from the beginning [of Christianity]. (8)Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in him [Jesus Christ] and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.*

*(9)Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. (10)Whoever is fond of his brother lives in the light, and there is no snare in him. (11)But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

*(12)I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his [Jesus Christ's] name.*

*(13)I write to you, fathers, because you have known him [Jesus Christ] from the beginning [of Christianity].*

*I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.*

*I write to you, dear children, because you have known Yahweh the Father.*

*(14)I have written to you, fathers, because you have known him [Jesus Christ] who is from the beginning [of Christianity].*

*I have written to you, young men, because you are strong and the Word of Yahweh abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

**(1Jn 1:5)** *Light... darkness.* Light represents what is good, true and holy, while darkness represents what is evil and false. **(6-7)** *Walk in the darkness... in the light.* A metaphor for two life-styles; one characterized by wickedness and error, the other by holiness and truth. **(8-10)** *If we claim...* Clearly, no man can actually be without sin. *If we confess...* Yahweh is always ready to accept back a truly repentant sinner (The parable of the lost son. Lk 15:11-32). *If we claim we have not sinned.* Addressed to the Gnostics, who denied that their immoral actions were sinful. *We make Him out to be a liar.* The man who says that he has not sinned is in effect doing no-

thing less than calling Yahweh a liar, for Yahweh has clearly said that all men have sinned. **(2:1)** *One Helper with Yahweh*. The Greek word translated “Helper” refers to someone who speaks in court in behalf of a defendant. *Righteous One*. In Yahweh’s court the defender must be, and is, sinless. **(2)** *Atoning sacrifice for our sins... for the whole world*. The effect of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross is not limited to one particular group only; it has worldwide validity. It must, however, be received faithfully, either in this life or in the next one (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh). **(3)** *Obey his commands*. This does not mean that only those who never disobey know Jesus Christ, but refers to those who try their best to live in obedience. **(4)** *He who... does not keep his commands...* Referred to the Gnostics, the heretical sect that claimed to have special knowledge. **(5)** *Yahweh’s affection is truly made complete in him*. This means that Yahweh’s affection for the believer is made complete when it moves the believer to acts of obedience. *We are in Him*. In spiritual communion with Yahweh and with Jesus Christ. **(6)** *He who says...* The true believer has to live as much as possible as Jesus Christ did, that is, trying his best to help the others. **(7-8)** *Not... a new... but an old command*. The Biblical command to be fond is an old one (Lev 19:18). *The Message... a new command*. The old command seemed a new one because of the dramatic demonstration of divine fondness by the Cross; Jesus Christ’s exposition of the Old Testament law in moral terms which seemed new to his hearers; the daily experience of Christian believers as they grew in brotherly affection for each other. *True light*. Jesus Christ has defined himself “the Light of the world” (Jn 8:12). **(9-11)** *Hates... is fond of*. These are moral qualities, that is, practical attitudes expressed in the actions of a believer toward those living around him, not general purpose emotions addressed to far away people. **(12-14)** *I write... I have written to you... because*. By these repetitions John assures his readers that, in spite of all the rigor of the letter, he is confident of their salvation. *The Word of Yahweh abides in you*. All Christian believers are in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ (the Word of Yahweh) and with Yahweh himself.

**Do not get to like the world [1Jn 2:15-17]**

**(1Jn 2:15)** *Do not get to like the world or anything in the world. If anyone is fond of the world, the affection of the Father is not in him. (16) For everything in the world -the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life- comes not from the Father but from the world. (17) And the world and its desires pass away, but who does the will of Yahweh abides for ever.*

**(1Jn 2:15-16)** *The world.* Not the world of people (Jn 3:16) or the created world (Jn 17:24), but the world -the realm- of sin, which is controlled by Satan and organized against Yahweh and His people (Jn 7:7). *The affection of the Father is not in him.* Yahweh's affection is without effect on those who follow Satan. **(17)** *Who does the will of Yahweh abides for ever.* A faithful believer always lives in spiritual communion with Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

**Warning against the antichrists** [1Jn 2:18-27]

**(1Jn 2:18)** *Dear children, it is the last hour, when you have heard that the antichrist will come. And even now many antichrists have come: this is how we know it is the last hour. (19)They went out from us, but they were not from us for, if they were from us, they would have remained with us. But [they went out of us] in order that it would be manifest that they are not from us.*

**(20)** *But you have an anointing from [Yahweh], the Holy One God, and you know all. (21)I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it and because no lie comes from the truth. (22)Who is the liar if not he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son. (23)Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

**(24)** *Therefore, let abide in you what you have heard from the beginning [of Christianity]. If what you have heard from the beginning [of Christianity] abides in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. (25) And this is the promise that he [Jesus Christ] has promised us -eternal life.*

**(26)** *I have written these things to you about those who deceive you. (27) As for you, the anointing you received from him [Jesus Christ] remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. And, as the anointing itself teaches you about all things -and it is true and not a lie- you remain in him [Jesus Christ], just as it has taught you.*

**(1Jn 2:18)** *It is the last hour.* John, as the other New Testament writers, viewed the whole period beginning with Jesus Christ's birth as "the last days." They understood this period to be the "last" of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Jesus Christ. *The antichrist... many antichrists.* John assumed that his readers knew that a great enemy of Yahweh and His people will arise before Jesus Christ's return. That person is called "the antichrist" or "the man of lawlessness"



(2 Th 2:3). But, prior to him, there will be, in every epoch, many antichrist. **(19)** *Went out from us... were not from us...* The antichrists referred to in John's letter were the early Gnostics who, initially, were part of the Church and then, because of their ideas, left it. **(20)** *An anointing.* All believers are spiritually "anointed" when, at their baptism, they enter in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. **(21-23)** *You... know the truth. The liar... is the antichrist, who denies...* The Gnostics denied Jesus Christ's humanity saying that the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at baptism and left him before he died. **(24-25)** *Let abide in you... eternal life.* All Christian believers are in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh and will live eternally in His Kingdom. **(26)** *I have written...* John wrote this letter to expose the false teachers and to contrast an early form of the Gnostic heresy. **(27)** *The anointing... remains in you.* They, who were faithfully following the apostles' teaching, remained in the Church, that is, in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. *You do not need anyone to teach you.* The Gnostic teachers were insisting that the teaching of the apostles was to be supplemented with the "higher knowledge" that they (the Gnostic) claimed to possess. *The anointing... teaches you.* The spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh does not include the revelation of new truth or the explanation of all difficult passages of Scripture to a believer's satisfaction. Rather, it is the development of the capacity to appreciate and appropriate Yahweh's truth already revealed. *All things.* All things necessary to know for salvation and Christian living.

**The children of Yahweh** [1Jn 2:28-29; 3:1-10]

**(1Jn 2:28)** *And now, dear children, abide in him [Jesus Christ], so that whenever he appears we may be confident and not be ashamed by him at his coming.*

**(29)** *If you know that he [Jesus Christ] is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.*

**(3:1)** *Behold what great affection the Father has given us, that we should be called children of Yahweh! And that is what we are! For this the world does not know us, because it did not know him [Jesus Christ].* **(2)** *Dear friends, we are now children of Yahweh, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he [Jesus Christ] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* **(3)** *Everyone who has this hope in him [Jesus Christ] purifies himself, is pure just as him.*

**(4)** *Everyone who does sin practice also lawlessness; in fact, sin is lawlessness.* **(5)** *But you know that he [Jesus Christ] appeared so that he may take away our sins, and that in him is no sin.* **(6)** *Everyone who abides in him*

*does not keep on sinning; everyone who continues to sin has not seen him nor known him.*

*(7) Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he [Jesus Christ] is righteous. (8) He who sins is of the devil, because the devil sins from the beginning. For this the Son of Yahweh appeared: To destroy the devil's works. (9) Everyone who is born of Yahweh does not continue to sin, because His [Yahweh's] seed remains in him; and he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of Yahweh. (10) By this the children of Yahweh and the children of the devil are manifest: Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of Yahweh; and so is anyone who is not fond of his brother.*

**(1Jn 2:28)** *Abide in him [Jesus Christ].* That is, continue to live in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. *Confident.* To be accepted in Yahweh's Kingdom, without having "to be ashamed" for a bad life-style. **(29)** *Who does what is right has been born of him.* One of John's main thoughts: The only way in which a man can prove he is living in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ is by the righteousness of his life. **(3:1)** *Children of Yahweh.* Membership in Yahweh's family is a gift of His grace; it is never a human achievement, yet the imparting of the gift is dependent on a man's reception of it. *The world does not know us... did not know Jesus Christ.* The realm of sin, which is controlled by Satan and doesn't want to recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of Yahweh and the believers as His children. **(2)** *Now children of Yahweh.* Here, when still physically living on Earth. *What we will be has not yet been known.* No man still living on Earth knows what his future life in the Kingdom of Yahweh will actually be. *But we know that... we shall be like him.* After Universal Resurrection, all men will live for ever in Yahweh's Kingdom, not only with their soul, but with their resurrected body (Thoughts. Soul, body, resurrection). **(3)** *Hope.* Not a mere wish, but unshakable confidence concerning the future -confidence that the purpose for which Yahweh has created men will be ultimately realized. *Purifies himself.* By turning away from sin. **(4-5)** *Sin is lawlessness... [Jesus Christ]... take away our sins.* This is directed against the Gnostics, who justified men's physical sins asserting that what happens to the physical body -for them totally evil- has no spiritual importance at all, in this way denying the real value of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross. **(6)** *Does not keep on sinning.* John is not speaking of sinless perfection (no man can be sinless,) but explaining that the believer's life is characterized by his efforts to "not keep on sinning." **(7)** *Do not let...* Do not follow the teaching of the false teachers. *Who practices righteousness...* In opposition to "sin..."

lawlessness” of v. 3:4. **(8)** *The devil sins from the beginning.* From the time of his rebellion against Yahweh (Thoughts. Satan’s existence and activity). *The Son of Yahweh appeared.* To save the whole human race from Satan’s domination. **(9)** *[Yahweh’s] seed.* The picture is of human reproduction, in which the seed bears the life principle and transfers the paternal characteristics. *Cannot go on sinning.* Not a complete cessation of sin, but a life that is not characterized by sin. **(10)** *By this the children... are manifest... By their practical life.*

**Be fond of one another** [1Jn 3:11-24]

**(1Jn 3:11)** *For this is the message you heard from the beginning [of Christianity]: We should be fond of one another. (12) Not like Cain, who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his actions were evil and his brother’s righteous. (13) Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. (14) We know that we have passed from death to life, because we are fond of our brothers. Anyone who is not fond remains in death. (15) Who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

**(16)** *By this we know fondness: He [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (17) If anyone has world’s goods and, seeing his brother in need, shuts off his heart to him, how can the affection of Yahweh be in him? (18) Dear children, let us not be fond with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. (19) By this we know that we are from the truth, and that our hearts will be assured in His presence: (20) Even if our hearts condemn us, Yahweh is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.*

**(21)** *Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, and we have confidence in Yahweh, (22) we will receive from Him anything we ask, because we obey His commands and do what pleases Him. (23) And this is His command: To believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. and to be fond of one another as he [Jesus Christ] commanded us. (24) He who obeys His commands abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us: From His Spirit [\*], which He gave us.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(1Jn 3:11)** *Be fond of one another.* The “new command” given by Jesus Christ to his disciples (Jn 13:34-35). **(12)** *Cain... murdered his brother.* Both brothers brought offerings to Yahweh (Ge 4:2-5). The main reason

for the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice was that it was offered "by faith" (Heb 11:4); and Cain's sacrifice was rejected because he offered it without faith, as a mere formality. **(13)** *The world hates you.* The world is controlled by Satan and, as a consequence, can only hate those who follow Jesus Christ's command to be fond of each other. **(14)** *We have passed from death to life.* Men, by accepting him and his commands, enter in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, gaining eternal spiritual life in Yahweh's Kingdom. **(15)** *Who hates... is a murderer.* Whoever allows hatred to settle in his heart breaks the main command of Jesus Christ and becomes a potential murderer. Therefore, the man who is fond is a follower of Jesus Christ and the man who hates is a follower of Satan. **(16)** *By this we know affection...* Jesus Christ has left an example of true affection, for all men to follow. **(17-18)** *If anyone has... not be fond with words... but with actions.* Fine words will never take the place of fine actions; no amount of talk about Christian affection will take the place of a kindly action to a man in need. **(19-20)** *By this we know... Even if our hearts condemn us...* An over-sensitive conscience, full of doubts, has to know that Yahweh himself has declared active affection -in spite of shortcomings- to be evidence of salvation. **(21-22)** *If our hearts do not condemn us, and...* Those who are trying to act as well as they can may "have confidence" that Yahweh will give them all they need for their spiritual salvation. **(23)** *His command: to believe in the name of...* Here we have a use of the word "name" which is peculiar to the biblical writers. To believe in the name of Jesus Christ means to believe in the nature and character of Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of Yahweh, that he stands in a relation to Yahweh which is univocal to him, that he can reveal Yahweh to men and that he is the spiritual Savior of all men. **(24)** *Who obeys... abides in Him and... His Spirit, which He gave us.* The spiritual communion between a man and Yahweh is possible because Yahweh is spiritually present in all believers.

### Test the spirits [1Jn 4:1-6]

**(1Jn 4:1)** *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test if the spirits are from Yahweh, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2)By this you can recognize the Spirit of Yahweh [\*]: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from Yahweh, (3)and every spirit that does not acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from Yahweh. And this [spirit] is that of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world.*

**(4)** *You, dear children, are from Yahweh and have overcome them, because the one [Jesus Christ] who is in you is greater than the one who is in the*

world. (5) *They are from the world, therefore they speak of the world, and the world listens to them.* (6) *We are from Yahweh, and who knows Yahweh listens to us; but who is not from Yahweh does not listen to us. From this we recognize the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(1Jn 4:1) Spirit.** In this case, both a person whose spirit is in communion with Yahweh or one under the influence -domination- of Satan. *Test the spirits.* Every teaching must be tested, to be sure it is in agreement with the apostles’ teaching. *False prophets.* A true prophet, who is in spiritual communion with Yahweh, “speaks from Yahweh, moved by His Spirit” (2Pe 1:21). On the contrary, the false prophets, as the Gnostics of John’s day, speak under the influence of Satan or of his demons. Jesus Christ warned against the false prophets (Mt 7:15; 24:11), as did Paul (1Ti 4:1) and Peter (2Pe 2:1). **(2-3) Acknowledges.** Not only intellectual knowledge -“for even the demons believe that, and shudder” (Jm 2:19)- but also public declaration of faith. *Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.* Thus John excludes from the Church the Gnostics, who taught that the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at baptism and left him before he died. *This [spirit] is that of the antichrist.* Here, as in “Warning against the antichrists” (vv. 2:18-27), the antichrists referred to in John’s letter are the heretical Gnostic teachers (also called false teachers and false prophets.) **(4) Overcome them.** They did not follow the false prophets, who were inspired by the spirit of the antichrist (v. 4:3). *The one who is in the world.* The devil, Satan. **(5) They are from the world...** The false teachers are part of the community, or system, that opposes Yahweh and those who have faith in Him. **(6) Spirit of truth.** In John’s Gospel the “Spirit of Truth” is nothing else but the Spirit of Yahweh. In effect, both in the Old and the New Testament, the Spirit of Yahweh is also referred to as “the Spirit of Truth” and “the Word of Yahweh” because in His essence (Spirit) and in His action (Word) Yahweh is characterized by Truth. Here, it is the spirit of whoever is in spiritual communion with Yahweh. *Spirit of falsehood.* The spirit of whoever is against Yahweh and His people.

**Yahweh’s fondness and ours [1Jn 4:7-21]**

**(1Jn 4:7)** *Dear friends, let us be fond of one another, for fondness is from Yahweh. Everyone who is fond has been born of Yahweh and knows Yahweh.* **(8)** *Whoever is not fond does not know Yahweh, because Yahweh is*

*fondness. (9)In this the fondness of Yahweh is manifested among us: Yahweh has sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. (10)In this is fondness: Not that we were fond of Yahweh, but that He had been fond of us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (11)Dear friends, since Yahweh had been so fond of us, we also ought to be fond of one another. (12)No one has ever seen Yahweh; but if we are fond of one another, Yahweh abides in us and His fondness is made perfect in us.*

*(13)By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit [\*]. (14)And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. (15)Anyone who acknowledges that Jesus Christ is the Son of Yahweh, Yahweh abides in him and he in Yahweh. (16)And we have known and have believed that the fondness of Yahweh is in us.*

*Yahweh is fondness, and who abides in fondness abides in Yahweh, and Yahweh in him. (17)In this way, fondness is made perfect in us, so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment, because, just as he [Jesus Christ] is, we also are like him in this world. (18)There is no fear in fondness. But perfect fondness drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment, and who fears is not perfect in fondness.*

*(19)We are fond of Him because He [Yahweh] first was fond of us. (20)If anyone says, "I am fond of Yahweh," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For who is not fond of his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be fond of Yahweh, whom he has not seen. (21)And we have [received] from him [Jesus Christ] this command: Who his fond of Yahweh must also be fond of his brother.*

[\*] "Spirit of Yahweh" = "The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh's will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions."

**(1Jn 4:7-8)** *Be fond of one another... fondness is from Yahweh.* Jesus Christ's command, coming from his Father (Jn 13:34-35). *Born of Yahweh.* Those who follow the command to be fond can be called "children of Yahweh" (v. 3:1). *Knows Yahweh... does not know Yahweh.* By being fond, a man demonstrates to be in spiritual communion with Yahweh (v. 3:24). On the contrary, by not being fond, a man demonstrates to be under the influence of the devil (v. 2:9-11). **(9-10)** *In this the fondness of Yahweh is manifested...* By sending and sacrificing His Son for the spiritual salvation of all men (v. 3:16; Jn 3:16). **(11)** *Since Yahweh... we also...* True believers, who are in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh, have to follow the command to be fond of each other. **(12-13)** *If we are fond...* Since hu-

man fondness has its source in Yahweh's fondness, His fondness reaches full expression ("is made perfect") when men are fond of each other. Thus Yahweh, whom "no one has ever seen" can be seen in those who are fond, because Yahweh is spiritually present ("abides") in them. **(14)** *We have seen and testify that...* John was one of the apostles, and he had been with Jesus Christ from the beginning of his public mission (Mt 4:21-22). **(15)** *Anyone who...* Practically, a repetition of vv. 2:23; 3:24. **(16)** *Fondness of Yahweh. Yahweh is fondness.* A repetition of vv. 4:8,12-13; 3:24. **(17)** *Fondness is made perfect.* A repetition of v. 4:12. *We also are like him.* The fact that we are like Jesus Christ in fondness is a sign that Yahweh, who is fondness, spiritually lives in us; therefore "we may have confidence" that we will be saved. **(18)** *No fear in fondness.* There is no fear of Yahweh's judgment because genuine fondness confirms salvation. **(19)** *We are fond of Him because...* A repetition of v. 4:10. All fondness comes from Yahweh; genuine fondness is never self-generated by His creatures. **(20)** *If anyone says...* A repetition of vv. 2:9-11; 1:6; 2:4; 3:17; 4:12. **(21)** *This command.* The command given by Jesus Christ to his disciples (Jn 13:34-35).

### **Faith in the Son of Yahweh** [1Jn 5:1-12]

**(1Jn 5:1)** *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of Yahweh, and everyone who is fond of who bore [that is, Yahweh] is fond of who has been born of Him. (2)By this we know that we are fond of the children of Yahweh: When we are fond of Yahweh and keep His commands. (3) For this is to be fond of Yahweh: To keep His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, (4)for everyone born of Yahweh overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: Our faith. (5) Who is it that overcomes the world if not who believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of Yahweh?*

**(6)** *This is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ. Not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] who testifies, because the Spirit of Yahweh [\*] is the truth. (7)For there are three that testify: (8)the Spirit of Yahweh [\*], the water and the blood; and the three are unanimous. (9)If we accept man's testimony, Yahweh's testimony is greater; because this is the testimony of Yahweh, which He has given about His Son. (10)Anyone who believes in the Son of Yahweh has the testimony in himself. Anyone who does not believe Yahweh has made Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony Yahweh has given about His Son. (11)And this is the testimony: Yahweh has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. (12)He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of Yahweh does not have the life.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(1Jn 5:1)** *Everyone who believes that...* To have faith in Jesus as the Christ [Messiah] of Yahweh is a sign of being in spiritual communion with Yahweh. *Everyone who is fond of...* Who is fond of Yahweh the Father will naturally be fond of His children. **(2-5)** *By this we know...* Who can “keep His commands” -mainly, to be fond of each other- is surely a man who is fond of Yahweh. *His commands are not burdensome.* Not because the commands themselves are light or easy to obey but because through His spiritual communion with the believers, Yahweh enables them to obey. *Overcomes... has overcome.* To overcome the world is to gain victory over its sinful pattern of life. *Victory.* John speaks of two aspects of it. First, the initial victory, leaving the world and looking with faith to Yahweh. Second, continuing, day-by-day to live in a Christian way. *Jesus Christ is the Son of Yahweh.* Again (as in vv. 2: 22; 4:2; 5:1) a declaration of which is the true faith, against the heretical teaching of the Gnostic. **(6)** *Water and blood.* Symbolic: Jesus Christ’s public mission began at his baptism (“water”) and ended at his sacrifice on the cross (“blood”.) *Not by water only, but...* Against the Gnostics (who denied Jesus Christ’s humanity saying that the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at baptism and left him before he died,) John declares that Jesus Christ, the Son of Yahweh, was both human and divine from his birth to his death (and thereafter.) *The Spirit of Yahweh who testifies.* Yahweh has testified that Jesus Christ is His Son when He entered in full spiritual communion with him at his baptism (Mt 3:16-17; Jn 1:32-34). **(7-8)** *Three who testify.* The Old Testament required two or three unanimous witnesses (Dt 17:6; 19:15). Here, the three are: “The Spirit of Yahweh,” that is, the words of Yahweh at Jesus Christ’s baptism (Mt 3:17); “the water,” that is, the new believers’ baptism, by which they enter in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh; “the blood,” that is, the blood shed by the martyrs during the persecutions, which is the greatest demonstration of their faith. **(9)** *Yahweh’s testimony.* His words at Jesus Christ’s baptism (Mt 3:17). **(10)** *Who believes in the Son of Yahweh has the testimony.* Each believer is one of the “three who testify.” *Who does not believe... made Him out to be a liar.* Practically, the same concept found at v. 1:10, against the Gnostic’s teaching. The man who does not believe that Jesus Christ is the human Son of Yahweh, does nothing less than calling Yahweh a liar, because at Jesus Christ’s baptism, Yahweh has clearly declared him to be His Son (Mt 3:17). **(11)** *Eternal life... in His Son.* Eternal life is the life of Yahweh (an infinitely high quality of life in living fellowship with Yahweh -both now and forever;) a life men can possess when



they are enabled to approach Him and live with Him. And we can obtain it only through Jesus Christ, who is the only one who fully knows the Father and, therefore, can fully reveal to us what Yahweh is like (Jn 1:18) and bring us to Yahweh (Heb 10:19-23). **(12)** *Who has the Son has the life.* By believing in Jesus Christ and in the spiritual salvation of all men, a believer acquires “eternal life,” which is a present possession, not something he will obtain only later.

**Concluding remarks** [1Jn 5:13-21]

**(1Jn 5:13)** *I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of Yahweh so that you may know that you have eternal life. (14) And this is the confidence we have in Him [Yahweh]: If we ask anything according to His will, He hear us. (15) And if we know that He hear us -whatever we ask- we know that we can have what we asked of Him.*

**(16)** *If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should ask and He [Yahweh] will give him life -to those who do not sin to death. There is a sin to death, and I am not saying that he should pray about that. (17) All wrongdoings are sins, and there are sins that do not lead to death.*

**(18)** *We know that anyone born of Yahweh does not continue to sin; but the one who was born of Yahweh [Jesus Christ] keeps him safe, and the evil one does not harm him. (19) We know that we are of Yahweh, and that the whole world lies under the evil one. (20) We know also that the Son of Yahweh has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know the True One [Yahweh]. And we are in the True One, and in His Son Jesus Christ. He [Jesus Christ] is the truth of Yahweh and the eternal life.*

**(21)** *Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

**(1Jn 5:13)** *I write this... so that.* Another statement of the purpose of this letter, sent to a number of Churches to expose the false teachers and to contrast an early form of the Gnostic heresy. **(14-15)** *If we ask... according to His will... we can have...* True believers “have confidence” (vv. 3:21-22) that Yahweh will give them all they need for their spiritual salvation. **(16-17)** *If... sin that does not lead to death.* These verses illustrate the kind of petition (the request to forgive wrongdoings, that is, sins not too serious) we can be sure Yahweh will answer. *Sin that leads to death.* In the contest of this letter, the “sin that leads to death” refers to the Gnostics’ denial of the truth and to their immorality. It is this kind of unrepentant and repetitive sin that leads to spiritual death. **(18-20)** *We know.* The letter ends with three fundamental statements, affirming the truths that “we know” and summarizing the major themes developed through the letter.

**2 JOHN****Introduction** [2Jn 1:1-3]

**(2Jn 1:1)** *The elder,*

*To the chosen lady and her children, whom I am fond of in the truth -and not I only, but also all who have known the truth- (2)because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us for ever.*

*(3)Grace, mercy and peace from Yahweh the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and fondness.*

**(2Jn 1:1-2)** *The elder.* In his later years John held the position of elder -Bishop- of the Ephesian Church. *Chosen lady.* An -unknown to us- Christian woman in the province of Asia, clearly prominent in the local Church. *Her children.* Her own children, all the members of her family and of her Church. *The truth... which...* The truth that Jesus Christ is the human Son of Yahweh and that he is in spiritual communion with all believers. **(3)** *Grace, mercy and peace from Yahweh.* A common Hebrew greeting (grace and peace from Yahweh,) with the addition of His mercy, to remind his readers that the main characteristic of Yahweh is mercy, not wrath. *And from Jesus Christ.* John's greeting is addressed to Christian believers, so the benediction comes both from Yahweh and His Son.

**Walk in truth and fondness** [2Jn 1:4-11]

**(2Jn 1:4)** *I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in the truth, just as we received commandment from the Father. (5) And now I ask you, lady, not as writing you a new commandment but one we have had from the beginning [of Christianity]; that we must be fond of one another. (6)And this is fondness: That we walk in obedience to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning [of Christianity]: That you walk in it [fondness].*

*(7)Because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. (8)Watch out to yourselves that we do not lose what we have worked for, but that we should receive a full reward. (9)Anyone who transgresses and does not abide in the teaching of Jesus Christ does not have Yahweh; who abides in the teaching of Jesus Christ has both the Father and the Son. (10)If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house and don't tell him, "Rejoice." (11)For who tells him, "Rejoice," shares in his evil works.*

**(2Jn 1:4)** *Some... walking in the truth.* The very statement that some of her “children” were following Yahweh’s commandment implies that some others were not. **(5)** *Not... a new commandment.* In effect, the command to be fond was an old one (Lev 19:18). **(6)** *This is fondness... This is the commandment...* Fondness is the one remedy for all things. It is an old commandment of Yahweh, confirmed by Jesus Christ’s words (“Be fond of one another” Jn 13:34-35) and action (his sacrifice on the cross.) **(7)** *Many deceivers... do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.* The early Gnostic heresy John had already attacked in his first letter (1Jn) denied Jesus Christ’s humanity, affirming that the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at baptism and left him before he died. *The deceiver and the antichrist.* Here, as in his first letter (1Jn 2:18), John assumed that his readers knew that a great enemy of Yahweh and of His people will arise before Jesus Christ’s return. That person is called “the antichrist” or “the man of lawlessness” (2 Th 2:3). But, prior to him, there will be, in every epoch, many antichrists. **(8)** *Worked for... receive a full reward.* Work faithfully accomplished (good works are a consequence of faith in Jesus Christ and Yahweh) on Earth brings the future “full reward” of eternal life in Heaven in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh (Mk 9:41;10:29-30; Lk 19:16-19; Heb 11:26). **(9)** *Anyone who transgresses... the teaching.* The Gnostics believed that they had advanced beyond the teaching the apostles had received from Jesus Christ. **(10-11)** *Do not take him into your house.* A reference to the housing and feeding of traveling teachers. John’s instruction against providing food and shelter was a warning, since it would have been an investment in the “evil work” of the false teachers.

**Greetings** [2Jn 1:12-13]

**(2Jn 1:12)** *I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.*

**(13)** *The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.*

**(2Jn 1:12)** *Talk with you... so that our joy may be complete.* The spiritual happiness of John’s readers -and his own- cannot be full unless they share the true knowledge of Jesus Christ and of his action of universal salvation. **(13)** *Your chosen sister.* An -unknown to us- sister of the “chosen lady” (v. 1:1) to whom this letter is addressed.

**3 JOHN****Letter to Gaius** [3Jn 1:1-12]

**(3Jn 1:1)** *The elder,*

*To my dear friend Gaius, whom I am fond of in the truth.*

**(2)** *Dear friend, I pray that you prosper in all and enjoy good health, just as your soul prospers. (3) For I rejoiced greatly when some brothers came and witnessed to the truth which is in you, and how you continue to walk in the truth. (4) I have no greater joy than this: To hear that my children are walking in the truth.*

**(5)** *Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, strangers for you, (6) who have given their testimony to the Church about your fondness. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of Yahweh. (7) For it was for the sake of the Name [of Yahweh] that they went out, receiving nothing from the pagans. (8) We ought therefore to receive such [men] so that we may work together for the truth.*

**(9)** *I wrote to the Church, but Diotrephes, who rejoices of his preeminence over them, does not receive us. (10) So, if I come, I will call to mind what he is doing, slandering us with evil words. And, not satisfied with that, he does not receive the brothers, and hinders those who desire [to receive them], and puts them out of the Church.*

**(11)** *Dear friend, do not imitate the evil but the good. Anyone who does good is from Yahweh. Anyone who does evil has not seen Yahweh. (12) Demetrius has a good testimony with all, and even by the truth itself. We also testify, and you know that our testimony is true.*

**(3Jn 1:1)** *The elder.* In his later years John held the position of elder of the Ephesian Church. *Gaius.* An unknown Christian in the province of Asia, clearly prominent in the local Church. *The truth.* The truth that Jesus Christ is the human Son of Yahweh and that he is in spiritual communion with all believers. **(2)** *Good health... your soul.* John was interested both in the physical and the spiritual health of Gaius; in this following Jesus Christ, who, with his healing activity, always showed that men's bodies matter as their souls. **(3-4)** *I rejoiced greatly... my children are walking in the truth.* John's greatest joy as a Christian teacher was to see that the members of Gaius' Church were following the apostolic teaching about Jesus Christ. **(5-7)** *Faithful in what you are doing...* Here we have John's main purpose in writing to Gaius' Church. A group of traveling missionaries was visiting that Church, and John, after thanking Gaius for receiving and giving them proper support, asks him to send them on their way in a truly Christian manner,

because they -who had no other means of support- had left their work, house and friends for the sake of Christianity. **(8)** *We ought... so that...* In other terms, not everyone can be a missionary; but those who aren't can work for Christianity by helping those who are. **(9-10)** *I wrote.* There must have been a previous letter of John -unknown to us- to that Church. *Diotrephes, who...* A Church leader who was exercising dictatorial power in that Church. He must have had a considerable influence since he was able to speak against John ("slandering us"), to refuse to receive the official missionaries ("does not receive the brothers"), to oblige his fellow believers not to receive them ("hinders those who...") and to exclude people from the Church fellowship ("puts them out"). **(11)** *Who does good is from Yahweh.* Implying the continual practice of good, not the mere doing of occasional good deeds. **(12)** *Demetrius.* Most likely the leader of the traveling missionaries and probably the actual bearer of this letter. John gives him a testimonial as to character and ability, to strengthen his position in regard to Diotrephes.

**Greetings** [3Jn 1:13-14]

**(3Jn 1:13)** *I have much to write you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. (14) I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.*

*Peace to you. The friends send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name.*

**(3Jn 1:13-14)** *Much to write you, but...* Clearly, mainly because of Diotrephes' behavior, John's personal presence would have been much more effective than any letter. *Peace to you.* Not a prayer or a wish but a benediction. *By name.* Giving to each individual believer John's greetings.

**JUDE****Introduction** [Jd 1:1-2]

*(Jd 1:1) Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who have been sanctified by Yahweh the Father and kept in Jesus Christ.*

*(2) Mercy, peace and affection be yours in abundance.*

**(Jd 1:1)** *Jude... brother of James.* Usually called Judas, the youngest of Jesus Christ's four brothers (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55). *Those... called.* The Christians. *Have been sanctified.* By Yahweh, who entered in spiritual communion with them at the moment of their conversion and baptism. *Kept in Jesus Christ.* As members of the Christian Community, the Church, they continue to be in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. **(2)** *Mercy, peace and affection.* A common Hebrew greeting (peace from Yahweh), with the addition of mercy and affection, to remind his readers that mercy and affection must be the main characteristics of the Christians.

**The sin and doom of godless men** [Jd 1:3-16]

*(Jd 1:3) Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I had the necessity to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. (4) For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you; godless men, who change the grace of our Yahweh into licentiousness and deny Jesus Christ, our only Master and lord.*

*(5) But I want to remind you, you who already know all this, that the Lord Yahweh delivered His people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. (6) And the angels who did not keep their appointed positions but abandoned their own home -these He has kept in darkness, with everlasting bonds for the judgment on the Great Day. (7) And, as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to prostitution and to another flesh, they are an example of the punishment of eternal fire.*

*(8) In the very same way even those [men], raving, defile the flesh, reject the authorities, slander the glories and blaspheme. (9) But when the archangel Michael was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord Yahweh rebuke you!" (10) Yet these [men] speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and whatever they do understand by instinct, like the unreasoning animals, by these they are corrupted.*

*(11) Woe to them! Because they have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.*

*(12) These are blemishes at your celebrations, feasting with you without re-restraint -caring only for themselves; clouds without rain, blown along by the winds; late autumn trees, without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; (13) wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.*

*(14) Now, also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them, saying, "See, the Lord [Jesus] is coming with his holy myriads (15) to perform judgment on everyone, and to convict all the ungodly among them of all the ungodly acts they have impiously done, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (16) These are grumblers and complainers, they follow their own lusts; their mouth speaks proud words and flatters others for their own advantage.*

**(Jd 1:3)** *Dear friends.* This was most probably a circular letter sent to a number of Churches to contrast an early form of the Gnostic heresy, depicted in vv. 1:4-18, which at the time was quite widespread. *I was very eager to write...* Jude's original intention was to write a general treatise on the doctrine of salvation, but the actual situation obliged him to write against the heresy spread around by the Gnostic teachers. *The faith.* The Gospel of Jesus Christ and all its implications. *Once for all entrusted.* The Gnostic wrongly believed that they had advanced beyond the teaching the apostles had received from Jesus Christ. **(4)** *For certain men...* Jude explains the reason for changing the subject of his letter. *Condemnation... written...* Their condemnation was written "long ago," in Old Testament times (2Pe 2:3). *Secretly slipped in.* The Gnostics affirmed to be Christians and to introduce a better form of Christianity. *Change the grace of Yahweh into licentiousness.* They assumed that salvation by grace gave them the right to sin without restraint because Yahweh, in His grace, will freely forgive all their sins. *Deny Jesus Christ.* The Gnostic denied Jesus Christ's humanity saying that the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at baptism and left him before he died. **(5-7)** *I want to remind you.* In these verses Jude gives three examples of divine judgment: Against those who did not believe that Yahweh would give them the land of Canaan; against the angels who, headed by Lucifer-Satan, rebelled against Yahweh; and against the immoral people of Sodom and Gomorrah. *Punishment of eternal fire.* Eternal, here, has the sense of lasting dramatically long, for the punishment of Hell is formative and redemptive, tuned to bring the sinner to repentance (Thoughts. At the

end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh.) **(8-9)** *In the same way... defile the flesh.* The Gnostics sinned heavily and without repentance, for they affirmed that since matter -and not the breaking of Yahweh's Law- is evil, sinning by the body is of no moral consequence. *Reject... slander... blaspheme. But when the archangel Michael...* This verse is based on an apocryphal work called "The Assumption of Moses" and is quoted only to confirm that nobody has the right to speak badly against men, angels or Yahweh. To note that at the time of Jude many apocryphal books were widely known and used, so his quotation would be very effective. *Yahweh rebuke you.* Judgment has to be reserved only to Yahweh. **(10)** *Whatever they do not understand.* The Gnostics claimed to possess special, esoteric knowledge which, actually, was abysmal ignorance and whose result was arrogant blasphemy. *Like the unreasoning animals.* The Gnostics were using their bodies like irrational animals which, at least, are guided by mere instinct. **(11)** *Woe to them!* A warning that Yahweh's judgment is coming. *Cain. Balaam. Korah.* Three Old Testament examples of the kind of persons Jude warns his readers about. *Way of Cain.* The way of selfishness and greed, of hatred and murder. *Balaam's error.* The error of consuming greed. *Korah's rebellion.* The way of rebellion against Yahweh's appointed leaders. **(12-13)** *These are...* These verses contain six metaphorical accusations: 1- *Blemishes at your celebrations.* The false teachers were taking part in the feasts of brotherly affection that, in every Church, accompanied the Lord's Supper. It is clear that they spoiled these observances with their carousing and took delight in shameless acts. 2- *Caring only for themselves.* Instead of taking care of the believers for whom they were responsible. 3- *Clouds without rain.* Like clouds promising -but not delivering- rain for the dry land, the false teachers promised soul-satisfying truth, but in reality had nothing to offer. 4- *Late Autumn trees, without fruit.* As in autumn -which is harvest time- there are always some good-looking trees which don't produce good fruit, so were the false teachers. *Twice dead.* Spiritually dead; first, before to become Christians and, second, for abandoning the apostolic teaching about Jesus Christ. 5- *Wild waves of the sea.* As wind-tossed waves constantly churn up foam, so these apostates continually stirred up moral corruption. 6- *Wandering stars.* As shooting stars appear in the sky only to fly off, so these false teachers are destined to the darkness of hell. **(14-15)** *Enoch, the seventh from Adam.* Not the Enoch in the line of Cain (Ge 4:17) but the one in the line of Seth (Ge 5:18-24). He was the seventh if Adam is counted as the first. *See, the Lord...* A quotation from the apocryphal "Book of Enoch," which at the time was well known and respected. *The Lord [Jesus] is coming...* Referred to Jesus Christ's second



coming and to his judgment of the wicked. *Ungodly... ungodly... ungodly.* This repetition and the judgment scene that is depicted emphasize the condemnation of the false teachers announced in v. 1:4. **(16)** *These.* The ungodly men mentioned in vv. 1:4,10,12, 14,19. They are the libertine false teachers who pervert the grace of Yahweh.

**A call to persevere [Jd 1:17-23]**

**(Jd 1:17)** *But you, dear friends, remember the words foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. (18) They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” (19) These cause the divisions, are of the world and do not have the Spirit of Yahweh [\*].*

**(20)** *But you, dear friends, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit of Yahweh [\*], (21) keep yourselves in Yahweh’s affection as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.*

**(22)** *And, making a distinction, have mercy of some, (23) but save others with fear, snatching them from the fire -hating even the clothing stained by their flesh.*

[\*] “Spirit of Yahweh” = “The spiritual communion and communication, always due to Yahweh’s will and initiative, between Yahweh and men -and all ensuing actions.”

**(Jd 1:17)** *The words foretold by the apostles.* The coming of these ungodly men should not take believers by surprise, for it had been predicted by the apostles (Ac 20:29; 1Ti 4:1; 2Ti 3:1-5). **(18)** *They said...* The Greek for this phrase indicates that the apostles repeatedly warned that such false teachers would come. *Scoffers.* Both Peter (2Pe 3:3) and Jude say that these false teachers -the Gnostic heretics- are characterized by their selfish lust (“ungodly desires”.) **(19)** *These cause the divisions.* Their teaching created factions in the Church, destroying the spiritual communion which should characterize all believers. *Are of the world.* They are, actually, enemies of the Church, that is, belong to the devil. *Do not have the Spirit of Yahweh.* They aren’t in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. **(20-21)** *But you...* A declaration that by keeping the proper faith -the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all its implications, as taught by the apostles- and praying for Yahweh’s help, they can be sure of their future “eternal life” in spiritual communion with Jesus Christ and Yahweh. **(22-23)** *Have mercy of some... save others with fear.* The Christians have always the duty to save, not to destroy, even the worst heretics; their aim must always be to win them

back, not to banish them from the Christian Church. Anyway, it is necessary to “make a distinction,” and use different methods to save different people. There are the simple minded, who can be saved by showing them mercy. And there are others, those who are strong in their errors, who Jude says are to be saved from the fire even against their will. *Hating even the clothing*. The wicked -who, anyway, are to be saved- are pictured as so corrupt that even their clothing is corrupted by their sinful nature. The actual meaning of this phrase is that, when trying to rescue a heavy sinner, there is always a danger for the rescuer, who, before he can rescue others, must be strong in the true faith. The fact is that the rescue of those in serious error is not for everyone to attempt.

***Praise to Yahweh*** [Jd 1:24-25]

*(Jd 1:24) Now, to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy -(25) to [Yahweh] the Only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty and power, in all the ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

**(Jd 1:24-25)** *Now, to Him who...* After all the attention necessarily given in this letter to the ungodly and their works of darkness, Jude concludes by focusing the attention of his readers on Yahweh who, through His Son Jesus Christ, is the Savior of all men (Thoughts. At the end of time, everybody will be with Yahweh).

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