

# A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

# THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

# OF THE APOSTLES

WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRIES, Associated

*An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely*

## ACTS 5:31-32

*"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."*

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

## Lesson #87

### COMMENTARY ON: 21:10-19

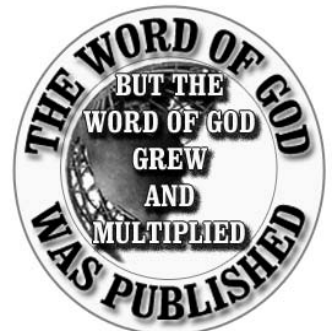
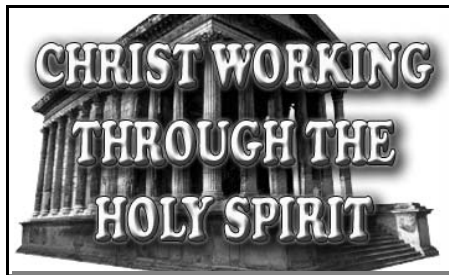
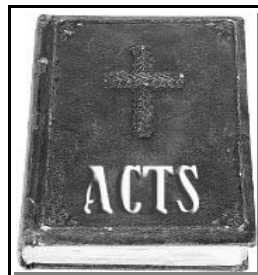
#### ARRIVING IN JERUSALEM

As Paul and company remain for a season at the home of Philip a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea and prophesied Paul would be bound in Jerusalem. After hearing what Agabus said, the brethren with Paul, together with those "of that place" attempted to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem. However, they could not prevail. Recognizing the sacrificial commitment of Paul, they submitted themselves to the will of the Lord, and ceased their attempts to dissuade him. Some from that area then joined Paul, and the eight who were with him, in the journey to Jerusalem, where he and those with him were gladly received. The day after their arrival, Paul went in unto James, the Lord's brother, who was a pillar of the church in Jerusalem. All of the elders were present at the meeting. After saluting them, Paul declared "particularity," or in detail, the great things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. It must have been a memorable occasion, indeed.

## ACTS 17:26-27

*"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."*

"... and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

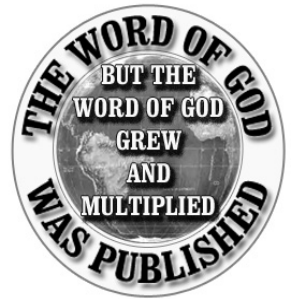


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



## The Book of Acts

### Lesson Number 87



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED =Amplified Bible (1965), ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV=English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GNB=Good News (1966), GWN=God's Word (1995), IE=International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster=The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT=Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----  
**LEXICON LEGEND:** FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# ARRIVING IN JERUSALEM

“ 21:10 ” And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. <sup>11</sup> And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. <sup>12</sup> And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>14</sup> And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done. <sup>15</sup> And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup> There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. <sup>17</sup> And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. <sup>18</sup> And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. <sup>19</sup> And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.” - (Acts 21:10-19)

## INTRODUCTION

### A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

As Paul and company remain for a season at the home of Philip, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea and prophesied Paul would be bound in Jerusalem. After hearing what Agabus said, the brethren with Paul, together with those “of that place” attempted to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem. However, they could not prevail. Recognizing the sacrificial

commitment of Paul, they submitted themselves to the will of the Lord, and ceased their attempts to dissuade him. Some from that area then joined Paul, and the eight who were with him, in the journey to Jerusalem, where he and those with him were gladly received. The day after their arrival, Paul went in unto James, the Lord's brother, who was a pillar of the church in Jerusalem. All of the elders were present at the meeting.

After saluting them, Paul declared “particularly,” or in detail, the great things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. It must have been a memorable occasion, indeed.

### KINDRED SPIRITS

The value of spiritually kindred spirits cannot be overstated. After all, when the Lord placed believers, it was in Christ's “body” (1 Cor 12:18) as well as “in

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heavenly places” where that body convenes (Eph 2:6). Judging from the spiritual climate of our nation, this value has become outdated. The gathering of believers is shrinking in both duration and frequency. The spiritually illogical nature of this trend is seen from several different perspectives.

- ⇒ When there were only two people on the face of the earth, they were together, and were intended to stay together (Gen 2:19-24).
- ⇒ God chose Abraham, then developed a nation through him that were intended to be together. In fact, God gave them their own special land so they could be together (Gen 12:7; 13:15; ; 15:5; 17:8; Ex 12:25 Lev 20:24).
- ⇒ When Israel went into Egypt, they were together (Ex 1:5; Deut 10:22), and when they came out as well (Ex 12:37-38; 13:3; Deut 5:6).
- ⇒ Israel journeyed to the promised land together (Deut 8:15).
- ⇒ Israel entered the promised land together (Josh 3:17; 4:1).
- ⇒ During times of moral and spiritual

decay, those who feared the Lord spoke often with one another (Mal 3:16-17).

- ⇒ When John the Baptist came, he spoke to the people when they were together (Matt 3:5; Mk 1:5; Lk 7:29).
- ⇒ When Jesus ministered, He gathered around him disciples to be “with Him” (Mk 3:14), and multitudes followed Him, gathering to Him (Matt 4:25; 8:1; 13:2).
- ⇒ After Jesus ascended to heaven, and until the Spirit came, the disciples were together (Acts 1:14-15).
- ⇒ Those who were joined to the Lord were noted for being together (Acts 2:44; 4:31; 12:12; 14:27).
- ⇒ The church is “fitly framed together,” and “builded together” for a habitation of God (Eph 2:21-22).
- ⇒ The body of Christ is “joined together” by the effective working of every part (Eph 4:16).
- ⇒ There is a sense in which the saints strive together “for the faith of the gospel” (Phil 1:27).
- ⇒ There is a certain comfort that is ministered when believers are “together” (1 Thess 5:11).
- ⇒ When the righteous are raised, they will be together (John 5:26; 1 Thess 4:16).
- ⇒ When we rise to meet the Lord, it will be together (1 Thess 4:17).
- ⇒ Throughout eternity, the saved will be together (1 Thess 4:17; Rev 14:4).
- ⇒ Now, throughout the book of Acts it

is continually noted that the people of God were together (14:28; 15:6,30; 20:7-8; 21:22 ).

### THE DOCTRINE OF TOGETHERNESS

Doctrinally, believers are said to be members of “one another” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25). Together, they are “the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor 12:27). **The idea of an unassembled body is one that denotes death and decay, as confirmed in the vision of the valley of dry bones** (Ezek 37:1-28). This depicted the whole house of Israel, who were scattered. In the vision, the very first thing that happened in the reclaiming of the people was that the bones “*came together, bone to his bone.*” Similar to the coming resurrection of the dead, the work was performed upon them when they were together. When the bones were together, covered with flesh, sinews, and skin, they were revived, standing up together as a great army.

Believers are to be “perfectly **joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment**” (1 Cor 1:10). Certain holy activities can only be done when the church is “gathered together” (1 Cor 5:4; 11:17-33; 14:26).

**This is the nature of life in Christ Jesus.** That is why the Ephesian elders were sorrowful when they heard they would never see Paul again (Acts 20:38). This is why Paul generally traveled with brethren. It is why he sought out disciples whenever he had the opportunity to do so, to spend some time with them.

Now, however, we are living in a time when all of this sounds strange to many. They cannot see why believers enjoy being together, and profit from such gatherings. To them, it makes more sense to leave the people of God and try to reach others for Christ – at least that is what

**Doctrinally, believers are said to be members of “one another” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25). Together, they are “the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor 12:27).**

**But this was not the environment of our text. There was an undeniable value placed on the people of God, and being with them. It was more profitable to give reports of the working of the Lord to them. It was better to settle matters of concern when these people were together.**

they say they are doing. What they seem to overlook, and conveniently so, is that the early saints who **did** garner many souls, were the very people who met often with one another. They are the ones who sought out disciples, spent time with them, and profited from one another.

**Our times are critical, in that they are conducive to spiritual dulness.** There is a religious environment in which it is most difficult

to take hold of the truth of God, or gain any genuine spiritual advantage. It is also a time when less value is placed on the people of God, which condition mandates infrequent and unprofitable assemblies. Those who are wholehearted toward the Lord will confirm that any advancement in Christ must be made with unusual aggression. Anything that tends to casualness is disarming because it moves people to conduct themselves as though there was peace all around them, when

that is not at all the case. This is why such religious froth is popular. It is why there are shallow and sometimes thoughtless sermons. It is the reason for the popularity of humor and other forms of entertainment. It is why the door has been opened for the creation of earth-centered “gifts” that have little or nothing to do with the gifts Jesus has given to the church.

**But this was not the environment of our text.** There was an undeniable value placed on the people of God, and being with them. It was more profitable to give reports of the working of the Lord to them. It was better to settle matters of concern when these people were together. **Jesus ministered to a greater extent to them while they were together, and they knew it.**

See, all of this is being lived out in our text, confirming the truth of what I have just said.

## A KEY EVENT AT THE HOUSE OF PHILIP

*“<sup>21:10</sup> And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. <sup>11</sup> And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”*

It ought to be noted that Divine direction is more apt to occur, although it is not limited to, occasions when those being directed are among the people of God. Some examples recorded in Acts are as follows.

⇒ **AGABUS.** *“And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar”* (Acts 11:28).

⇒ **SUNDRY SAINTS.** *“Save that the*

*Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me”* (Acts 20:23).

⇒ **CERTAIN DISCIPLES.** *“And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem”* (Acts 21:4).

⇒ **AGABUS.** *“And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles”* (Acts 21:11).

Doctrinally, the body of Christ is addressed concerning prophesying in the assembly – i.e. speaking unto edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor 14:3). This is always addressed within the context of the assembly, or the body of Christ.

⇒ **ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF**

**FAITH RECEIVED.** *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith”* (Rom 12:6).

⇒ **EDIFYING THE CHURCH.** *“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying”* (1 Cor 14:4-5).

⇒ **EFFECTIVE IN AN ASSEMBLY.** *“But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth”* (1 Cor 14:24-25).

⇒ **MAINTAINING A PROPER ATTITUDE.**  
*"Despise not prophesyings"* (1 Thess 5:20).

In part, this accounts for the consistent manner of Paul, finding disciples and spending time with them. **If there was a word of God for him, that was to be delivered by some member of the body of Christ, he would be more apt to receive it while he was with the saints.**

Of course, for those who neglect the assembling of themselves together (Heb 10:25), this is all forfeited. It may make sense to the flesh to isolate oneself from the assembly of the righteous, imaging that in such a case God would direct them privately. I will not deny that such direction is possible, but it is the exception, not the rule. The members are placed within the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:18). This is not a mere technicality, nor is it some kind of general or mystical teaching. The purpose of placing the individual members in the body is that this is the primary area in which sustenance, correction, and direction are ministered. This is the clear teaching of First Corinthians 12:24; Ephesians 4:11-16, Philippians 1:27, Colossians 2:18-19, First Thessalonians 5:11, and elsewhere.

**Who is able to measure the devastating effects of the trendy reduction of both the frequency and duration of holy gatherings?** Who can estimate how much has been forfeited by viewing the gathering of the saints as an inconvenience? What can be said of those who tailor their assemblies for those who are not in Christ, and pretend as though this is pleasing to the God who placed His people in a body.

Our text is confirming the value of the saints being together – not merely in theological persuasion, but in actual company and fellowship. **There is a sense in which spiritual growth is directly associated with the amount of time spent with the people of God.** This is one of the many weaknesses of the position that states believers should make more ungodly friends so they can win them. Such a thought is at variance with sound theology, as well as being impractical. It conveniently ignores the solemn warning of Scripture. *"Be not*

*deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners"* (1 Cor 15:33).

**WE TARRIED MANY DAYS**

*"And as we tarried there many days . . ."* Other versions read, *"stayed many days,"* NKJV *"a number of days,"* NIV *"for several days,"* NRSV *"somewhat lengthy stay."* WEYMOUTH

The word *"many"* is translated from a word than means, *"greater in quantity . . . longer than expected . . . greater in quality,"* THAYER *"many more . . . more and more and on and on."* UBS The idea is that the group had planned to spend an extended period at the house of Philip, but stayed even longer than they had expected. The clear reason was the profitability that was being realized while they remained there.

**I have learned by experience that there are certain blessings and spiritual increase that take place because I lingered in a holy environment.** Such benefits are forfeited by hasty departures, when the person yields to the frailty of the flesh, or seeks for more convenience. While this is a matter to be settled personally, and within the framework of one's faith, it is worthy of attention.

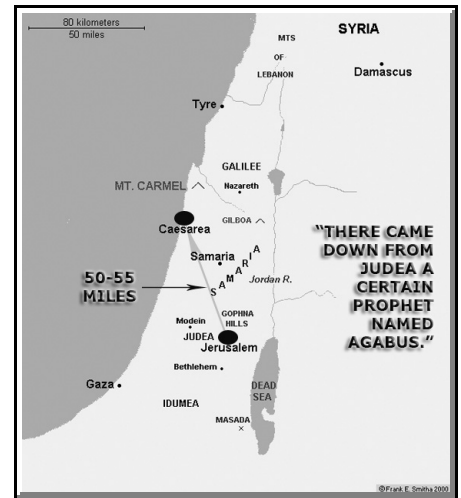
**A CERTAIN PROPHET NAMES AGABUS**

*" . . . there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus."*

As noted before, even though the direction from Jerusalem to Caesarea was north, yet one went *"down from Jerusalem"* to Caesarea. That is a topographical description, highlighting the elevated nature of the region of Judea, and particularly of Jerusalem. You ascended to Jerusalem, and descended from it. In this regard, it is a most fitting parallel to the *"Jerusalem that is above"* (Gal 4:26). You always have to ascend to traffic in that holy realm, and when you leave it, you can only go down.

Now, traveling, probably on foot, a distance of at least 50-55 miles, a *"certain prophet named Agabus"* came to see Paul and company.

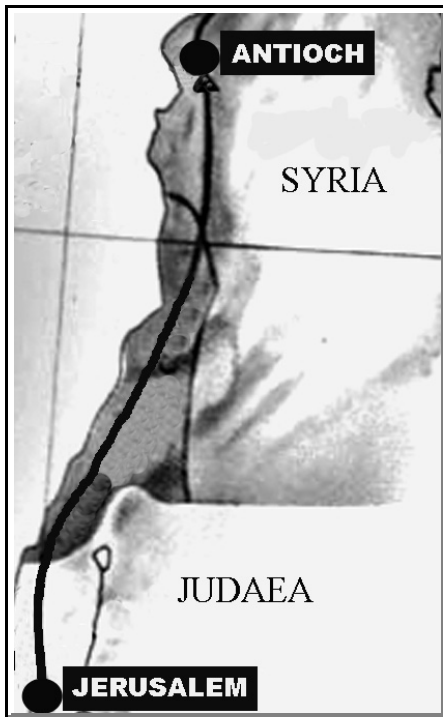
Acts 11:26 informs us that Agabus was a prophet *"from Jerusalem."* When Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch of Syria, Agabus made that long trip from



Jerusalem with some other prophets (about 200 miles). At that time he stood up *"and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar"* (Acts 11:28). As a result of that prophecy, *"the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul"* (Acts 11:29-30). There was also some ongoing support of the saints in Jerusalem that resulted from this prophecy. Paul was associated with the gatherings of offerings for them from the Gentile churches, and mentions it quite often (Rom 15:25-27; 1 Cor 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8:9-15; Gal 2:10). Now, this same man travels to Caesarea to converse with Paul.

News had traveled to Jerusalem concerning Paul's presence, once again highlighting the kind of communication that existed between disciples in those days.

While I do not wish to linger long on this matter, I have particularly noted the lack of this kind of awareness in the Joplin Missouri area. Over the years I have known a number of kingdom dignitaries, noted for their spiritual understanding, that have come to this city. These were men who trafficked in the higher realms of the Spirit. Almost to a man, they have told me that few people were even aware of their presence. A few of them relocated and left this world from here, and still remained largely unknown.

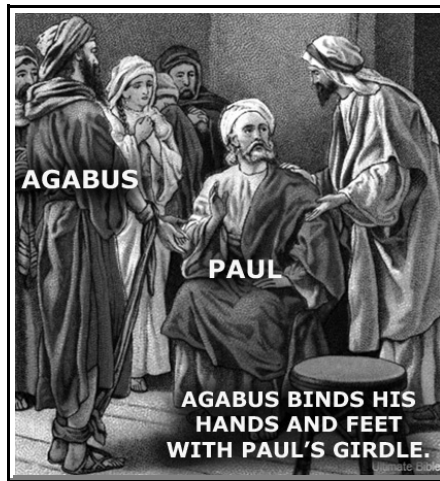


This is certainly not a trait unique to Joplin, yet, owing to the significant number of Christian ministries and churches in this area, it is a rather disconcerting piece of information. I am fully persuaded that if Paul were to reappear in this city, relatively few people would be aware of it, even though he remained for a significant period of time. This was not the kind of environment in which our text took place, and the disciples were not of the caliber with which we are quite often confronted.

**THE JEWS WILL BIND THIS MAN**

*“And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”* Other versions

read, *“took Paul’s belt,”* <sup>NASB</sup> and *“the band of Paul’s clothing.”* <sup>BBE</sup>



Coming in among the those gathered at Philip’s house, Agabus takes the *“girdle,”* belt, or sash, around Paul’s waist and ties up his own hands and feet. Being moved by the Holy Spirit he says, *“This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’”* <sup>NASB</sup> Other versions read, *“The Holy Spirit says these words,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“the Holy Spirit declares,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“The Holy Spirit tells me,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“The Holy Spirit says these things.”* <sup>LITV</sup>

Elsewhere Paul says that the words of the prophets are to be examined by other prophets, not simply taking for granted that they were given by the Holy Spirit. *“Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge”* (1 Cor 14:29). Other versions read, *“let the others pass judgment,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“the others should weigh carefully what is said,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“the others should evaluate,”* <sup>CSB</sup> *“let the others discern,”* <sup>ERV</sup> *“Everyone else should decide whether what each person said is right or wrong,”* <sup>GWN</sup> *“while all the others*

*listen,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“consider carefully what is said,”* <sup>WILLIAMS</sup> *“exercise their judgment,”* <sup>MONTGOMERY</sup> *“pay attention and weigh and discern what is said,”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> *“let others discriminate,”* <sup>EMTV</sup> and *“listening and taking it to heart.”* <sup>MESSAGE</sup>

The Good News Bible, Living Bible, and The Message, as is too often characteristic of them, water-down the text, taking the substance out of it. The word *“judge”* (*“let the others judge”*) pertains to the other prophets, not the congregation in general. The word translated *“judge,”* as it is used here, has the following lexical meaning: *“to separate, make a distinction, discriminate . . . to learn by discrimination, to try, decide,”* <sup>THAYER</sup> *“evaluating the difference between things discern, distinguish, differentiate,”* <sup>FRIBERG</sup> and *“evaluating the difference between things discern, distinguish, differentiate.”* <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

**Judging What the Prophets Say**

In the assembly of the righteous, men are free to speak only the truth. Even then, those with understanding are not to take for granted that what is said – even by a prophet – is the truth. Their words are to be weighed by the other prophets – not with a mind to find fault, but with a godly determination to establish the truth.

In our text, there was a body of people, some of whom were no doubt prophets/prophetesses. I do not doubt that they were weighing what Agabus said – evaluating it. First, his word did agree with others who had spoken by the Holy Spirit concerning Paul’s trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:23; 21:4). Paul is once again made alert concerning what is awaiting him in Jerusalem. Satan will seek to work through this word to dissuade Paul from going, while the Holy Spirit will comfort him, assuring him that he will be able to do what he is being sent to do.

**LUKE AND COMPANY RESPOND TO THE PROPHECY**

*“<sup>12</sup> And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.”*

The brethren with Paul listen to what Agabus has prophesied, and respond to it. Their response indicates their deep love and concern for Paul. **It also confirms that they did not see as far**

**as Paul did.** Nevertheless, they spoke with good intentions.

**WHEN WE HEARD THESE THINGS**

*Paul is confronted with another prophecy of what awaits him in Jerusalem, then continues on the trip, and arrives at the city– by Given O. Blakely*

*“And when we heard these things . . .”* Other versions read, *“heard this,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“heard these words,”* <sup>MRD</sup> *“hearing this,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“as soon as we heard these words,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and *“which thing when we heard.”* <sup>WYCLIFFE</sup>

The idea is that as soon as they heard the words of Agabus, they responded. They were not of either a slow heart or mind.

Such responses are not always favorable. When Jesus spoke in His hometown synagogue, those who heard His words *“were filled with wrath”* (Lk 4:28). On the other hand, when Jesus spoke out on the great day of the feast, those who heard His saying responded, *“Of a truth, this is the Prophet”* (John 7:40). In another synagogue, when Jesus responded to those who thought He should not heal on the Sabbath day, those who heard His words *“held their peace”* (Mk 3:4). Another time, upon hearing Jesus’ answer to their interrogation, the chief priests and scribes *“marveled at His answer, and held their peace”* (Luke 20:26).

**The point is that when there is a word from heaven, men are not indifferent to it.** There is a gravity to the words that demand some kind of response from men. The words of men do not always have this kind of impact.

#### WE AND THOSE OF THAT PLACE

*“. . . both we, and they of that place . . .”* Other versions read, *“we as well as the local residents,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“we and the people there,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“we and those living in that place,”* <sup>BEBE</sup> *“we and the local people,”* <sup>CSB</sup> *“we and the believers who lived there,”* <sup>GWN</sup> and *“we and the people there.”* <sup>PHILLIPS</sup>

It is quite possible that *“we and those of that place”* were a significant number. They would have included:

- ⇨ Eight that came with Paul: Luke, Sopater, Artistarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timotheus, Tychicus, and Trophimus.
- ⇨ Those of Philip’s household: Philip and his four daughters, possibly his wife (5-6).
- ⇨ Possibly certain disciples from Caesarea, the home of Philip, who are

mentioned later (v 16).

This could very well have been a cluster of people exceeding twenty in number. They were in one accord in their desires for Paul. They were not contradicting Agabus, but interpreted what the prophet had said to be an admonition from heaven **not** to go to Jerusalem. **However, both Paul’s**

*“pleaded with him,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“began begging him,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“urged him,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“made request to him,”* <sup>BEBE</sup> *“desired him,”* <sup>DOUAY</sup> *“called upon him,”* <sup>YLT</sup> *“kept begging,”* <sup>IE</sup> and *“entreated.”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

The pleas of the brethren there were strong and extended. They felt that it would be out of order for a man of Paul’s spiritual caliber to walk into such

**Because we have the extended record of Paul’s travels, we do not have to speculate about whether or not he was in the center of God’s will. The remaining seven chapters of Acts put down any arguments that he was out of God’s will.**

**response and the events that followed confirm that this was not a proper assessment, even though it was a conscientious one.**

Solomon said, *“Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Prov 11:14). And again, *“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established”* (Prov 15:22). And yet again, *“For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counselors there is safety”* (Prov 24:6). However, this is **not** true in the Spirit. It is a rule that applies to the order of flesh, and where no word from God has been given. It did not, nor was it intended to, take Divine direction into consideration, but pertained to areas of doubt, and concerning which a word from God had not been given. At the time of Solomon, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to the people of God, for Jesus had not yet come, much less been glorified, as Jesus Himself affirmed in John 7:39. With Jesus enthroned in glory, men reconciled to God through Him, and the Holy Spirit dwelling within, the playing field has been altered significantly.

#### BESOUGHT HIM NOT TO GO UP

*“. . . besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.”* Other versions read,

a danger zone. It was their love of the brethren, particularly Paul, that drove their action, not a penchant for law.

Because we have the extended record of Paul’s travels, we do not have to speculate about whether or not he was in the center of God’s will. The remaining seven chapters of Acts put down any arguments that he was out of God’s will. Following this occasion, Paul had at least three visitations from heaven: twice by the Lord Himself, and once by the angel of the Lord. **Paul was not rebuked for going to Jerusalem on any of these occasions.** Once he was warned of the evil intentions of the Jews at Jerusalem, being told they would not receive Paul’s testimony about Christ (22:17-18 ). Another time the Lord told him that just as he had testified of Jesus in Jerusalem, so would be do in Rome (23:11). The final time was in the midst of a storm, when an angel told Paul he was to appear before Casesar, and therefore God put the people on the ship in his charge – none of them would die, only the ship would be lost (27:23-24).

Those occasions should settle the issue of whether or not Paul was in the will of God. Men may haggle about this matter, but there was no confusion in heaven about it, and there ought not to be any on earth. The full record will confirm this to be the case.

**A STATEMENT OF READINESS**

*“<sup>13</sup> Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

Brethren can confront surface

– a kind of affliction. There is a sense in which a man with spiritual understanding is afflicted when that trait is not found in sufficient quantities in others. Jesus articulated a measure of disappointment when His disciples did not understand what He said. *“Are ye also yet without understanding? . . . Do not ye yet*

*also [even] to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

As used here, the word “ready” means, “readily,”<sup>THAYER</sup> “ready, or willing to,”<sup>FRIBERG</sup> “prepared,”<sup>UBS</sup> “pertaining to a state of readiness - ‘ready, prepared,’”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and “willingly.”<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> This precise Greek word is used in two other texts.

**Brethren can confront surface disagreements with honesty and faith. In such a circumstance, the truth will prevail, and the unity it produces will not be interrupted.**

disagreements with honesty and faith. In such a circumstance, the truth will prevail, and the unity it produces will not be interrupted. Here was an occasion when the majority, if not all, of the brethren present thought Paul should not go to Jerusalem. Yet, he was determined to go. His answer will reflect both his love for the brethren, and his intention to do the will of God.

**WHAT MEAN YE?**

*“Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? . . .”* Other versions read, *“What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart?”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?”*<sup>NASB</sup> *“Why are you weeping and breaking my heart?”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“What are you doing, weeping and wounding my heart?”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“What do you mean weeping and afflicting my heart?”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“What do ye, weeping and crushing my heart?”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart!”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“Why are you crying? Why are you making me so sad?”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart like this?”*<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

**Here is a marvelous commentary on the superiority of faith to intellect and emotion.** The pleas of the brethren were heart-wrenching to Paul. They did not understand his resolve and his mission, and it was crushing the manly part of him

*understand? . . . Do ye not yet understand? . . . How is it that ye do not understand?”* (Mat 15:16-17; 16:9,11). **A person who is merely willing to allow others to have differing opinions of a matter is not so afflicted.** However, when understanding and assurance are wed together by faith and hope, men can as Paul did, without being factious or hateful.

**I AM READY**

*“ . . . for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”* Other versions read, *“For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus,”*<sup>NKJV</sup> *“I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“for I am ready, not only to be a prisoner, but to be put to death at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus,”*<sup>BBE</sup> *“For I am ready not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus,”*<sup>DOUAY</sup> *“For I am prepared, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of our Lord Jesus Messiah,”*<sup>MRD</sup> *“For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem, but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus,”*<sup>LIVING</sup> *“Why are you making me so sad? I am ready to be bound in Jerusalem. I am even ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus!”*<sup>IE</sup> and *“For I hold myself in readiness not only to be arrested and bound and imprisoned at Jerusalem, but*

⇒ **OF PAUL’S READINESS TO GO TO CORINTH:** *“Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you”* (2 Cor 12:14).

⇒ **IN PETER’S TEACHING CONCERNING JESUS’ READINESS TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD:** *“Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead”* (1 Pet 4:5).

The use of this word in other tenses are numerous, and include the following.

⇒ **IN JESUS’ PARABLE OF THE MAN WHO PREPARED A GREAT WEDDING-FEAST FOR HIS SON:** *“Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage”* (Matt 22:4). *“Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy”* (Matt 22:8).

⇒ **IN JESUS EXHORTATION TO BE READY FOR HIS RETURN:** *“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”* (Matt 24:44).

⇒ **IN JESUS’ PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS:** *“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut”* (Matt 25:10).

⇒ **IN PAUL’S EXHORTATION FOR THE CORINTHIANS TO PREPARE THE OFFERING FOR THE POOR SAINTS IN**

**JERUSALEM:** *“Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness”* (2 Cor 9:5).

⇨ **IN PAUL’S ADMONITION CONCERNING BE PREPARED FOR EVERY GOOD WORK:** *“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work”* (Titus 3:1).

⇨ **IN PETER’S WORD CONCERNING THE SALVATION THAT IS READ TO BE REVEALED:** *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Pet 1:5).

⇨ **IN PETER’S EXHORTATION CONCERNING BEING PREPARED TO GIVE AN ANSWER FOR THE HOPE THAT IS POSSESSED:** *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (1 Pet 3:15).

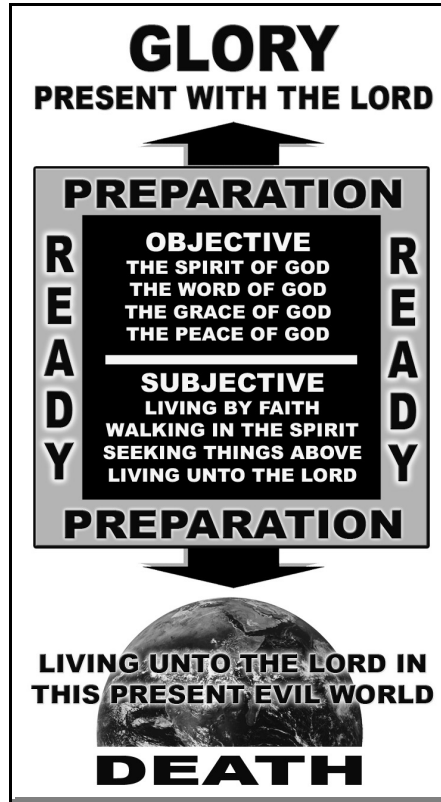
In English the word “ready” means, “in a state of mental and physical fitness for some experience or action (ready to leave at a moment’s notice.” Synonyms are, “prepared, set, and willing.” Related words are “adjusted, qualified, and primed.” Idioms assigned to this word are “all ready, all set.” MERRIAM-WEBSTER

This, then, is a strong word. Paul is not philosophizing – like saying, “Here is what I think,” or “In my

opinion.” When you examine the things for which he was ready, prepared, and willing, the gravity of his words becomes more apparent.

⇨ Ready “to be bound” in Jerusalem.

⇨ Ready “also to die at Jerusalem.”



And precisely how does a person prepare for being bound and imprisoned, or for dying in martyrdom? I do not doubt that some people find it most difficult to think of

either situation. It is simply too difficult for them to consider such things. Frankly, this is because they are living close to this present evil world, and are not as aware of the world to come as they could be.

**When you get right down to it, the same grace that equips you to live, also prepares you for persecution, and even death.** The same spiritual understanding required to live acceptably also applies to going through times of trial, and dying as well. All of this is bound up in the saying, *“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living”* (Rom 14:8-9).

This is the real genius of living by faith, and unto the Lord. **It equips you for receiving the blessing of God when it comes your way, facing the hostility of foes, and even the last enemy of death, which is death, and everything between as well.**

From this perspective, those who immerse us in the affairs of this life have put us at a great disadvantage. Those who major on human experience or the correction of deviant conduct are, in a sense, robbers who are plundering the church of God.

Living by faith and walking in the Spirit are wholly sufficient to address these matters, and do so effectively and efficiently. That is how Paul lived, and that is why he was ready.

**THE WILL OF THE LORD BE DONE**

**“<sup>14</sup> And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.”**

Here is a classic example of brethren temporarily in disagreement, yet not divided. This is because both parties considered the will of God to be the preeminent will.

**HE WOULD NOT BE PERSUADED**

*“And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased . . .”* Other versions read, *“would not be persuaded, we fell silent,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“would not be dissuaded, we gave up,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“might not be moved, we did no more,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“would not be dissuaded we let the matter rest,”* <sup>NAB</sup> *“would not yield to our appeal, we stopped begging him,”*

<sup>WILLIAMS</sup> and *“would not yield to [our] persuading, we stopped [urging and imploring him].”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The unlearned might conclude from this text that Paul was stubborn. However, this is not a fair representation of the text. He was rather determined, being convinced that this was what God

was leading him to do. **Further, his life attests that he did not live in a state of always seeking his own will.** He spoke the truth when he said, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"* (Gal 2:20).

The brethren were thinking of his safety, and therefore sought to turn him from going to Jerusalem. However, they too were living for the Lord. Upon seeing the resolution of Paul, they stopped pleading with him. It was not that they simply saw there was no use in going any further. The next clause confirms that their thinking was on a higher level.

**THE WILL OF THE LORD BE DONE**

*" . . . saying, The will of the Lord be done."* Other versions read, *"The Lord's will be done,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"Let the purpose of God be done,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"Let the pleasure of our Lord take place,"*<sup>MRD</sup> *"the will of the Lord be fulfilled,"*<sup>PNT</sup> *"We pray that what the Lord wants will be done,"*<sup>IE</sup> *"Lord, please make us willing to do what you want,"*<sup>CEV</sup> *"It's in God's hands now,"* and *we said, 'Master, you handle it.'*<sup>MESSAGE</sup>

What did they mean by this statement? It appears to me that this is in perfect accord with the manner in which the Savior Himself taught men to pray. **"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"** (Matt 6:10). It is how Jesus prayed on the night of His betrayal: **"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done"** (Matt 26:42). In fact, some versions of Scripture represent this as a prayer, not simply a phrase expressed to Paul.<sup>IE / CEV</sup>

"The will of the Lord" has to do with His purpose, intentions, and aims. It assumes a kind of spiritual template over everything man does. And reflects what God is purposefully doing, not what man wants to do. Right here there are two contradicting philosophies afoot in the Christian world.

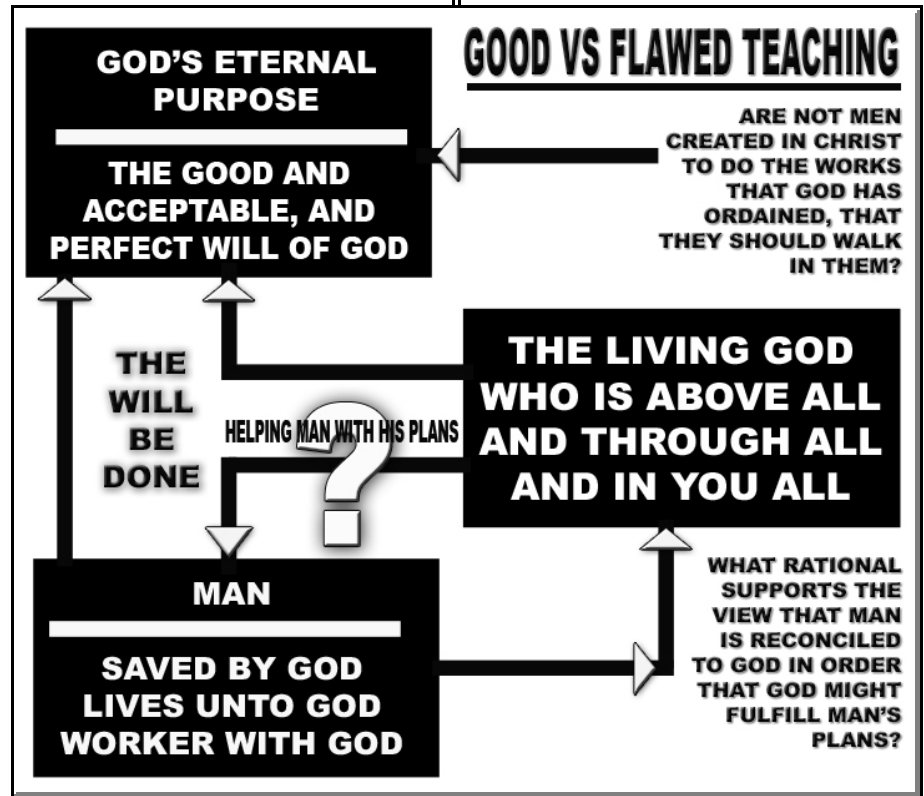
⇨ That God is present to assist man in what he determines to do.

⇨ That man is here to join God in what He has purposed to do.

**Is it really a minor matter for men to think God is pledged to assist them in the fulfillment of their own dreams or purposes?** I am rather of the opinion that such a teaching is a form of idolatry, not of insight into

bodies – not their dreams – to God as a living sacrifice, doing so in order that they might *"discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect"*<sup>NRSV</sup> (Rom 12:1-2)

**In Christ Jesus, men are not soliciting God to help them meet**



the nature and focus of the Almighty. Here we are touching on a matter of revelation. It is written: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Eph 2:9-10).

This is something that concerns salvation: HOW and WHY we are saved. Salvation involves a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). This new creation is in order that men might walk in works God has ordained – not in dreams they have dreamed, pr in purposes they have conceived. **In Christ men are delivered from self-centeredness, no solidified in it.** They present their

**their objectives, but God is employing them to fulfill his aims.** These saints were not asking God to support Paul in his plans, but to work out through Paul what He had purposed.

Admittedly, this kind of thinking is at variance with a considerable percentage of contemporary preaching and teaching. That is because of the wrongness of much of the current preaching and teaching of reference. It, in the very best stance, off-center. **Because of that, it is leading men away from glory, not to it.** I realize that is a most serious allegation, but it is because this circumstance has eternal ramifications.

The disciples that are referenced in this text had a grasp of what was driving all valid activities in the Kingdom.

**It was not the determined will of its citizens, but the firm and unchanging will and purpose of God.**

That is what they wanted to be done. Now that Paul, a righteous man, had been so resolute in his determination to go to Jerusalem, the brethren were more prone to think of his trip in light of the will of God. Had he not been noted for being righteous and self-sacrificing, they would not have thought in this way.

**A WORD ABOUT RESOLUTENESS**

It is in order to say a few words about resoluteness – as compared with inconsistency, vacillation, and hesitation. While there are times when we are cast on the horns of a dilemma, and do not know what to do, that is not a good state in which to remain. **We have several examples in Scripture of holy men**

**who called upon the people to make the right decision.**

⇨ **Moses** called upon the people to make a decision, and to do it right away: *“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live”* (Deut 30:19).

⇨ After entering the promised land, **Joshua** called the people to make an immediate choice, and to do it that very day: *“And if it seem evil unto you to serve the **LORD**, choose you **this day** whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the*

*Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the **LORD**”* (Josh 24:15).

⇨ **Elijah** once asked some wavering Israelites to make an immediate decision: *“How long halt ye between two opinions? **if the LORD be God, follow Him**: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word”* (1 Kgs 18:21). He also called for a immediate decision.

**In my judgment, we could do with a revival of this kind of holy pressure.** We should not be content for the worldly to be the only ones that press people for a decision. This is particularly true in the light of the times, which contain all kinds of indicators that we are on the verge of some great epoch.

**ADDITIONAL BRETHERN JOIN THEM IN THE TRIP TO JERUSALEM**

*“<sup>15</sup> And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup> There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.”*

to speak, I doubt that some would have decided to join Paul and those with him.

**WE WENT TO JERUSALEM**

*“And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem . . .”* Other versions read, “we packed,” <sup>NKJV</sup> “we got ready,” <sup>NASB</sup> “we

WEYMOUTH

The word “carriages” is translated from a word that means, “to carry off one’s personal property or provide for its carrying away,” <sup>THAYER</sup> and “pack up and leave.” <sup>FRIEBERG</sup> Webster’s Bible refers to taking up “furniture.” This is based on one of the meanings of the Greek word employed here (ἀποσκευάζεσθαι): “to remove furniture, to strip of furniture.” <sup>LEH</sup> I doubt that this is the meaning in this text. The reference possibly means refers to loading their baggage on beasts of burden to take it to the ship. <sup>ROBERTSON</sup> Whatever the technical meaning of the word may be, the intention is to report that they prepared for travel, in some way packing what they were taking with them.

**Something to Consider**

There is a rather simplistic view of traveling that is taken by some. They are of the persuasion that no preparations are necessary – that they should simply trust the Lord to provide what they need along the way. However, this is too simplistic for thinking people to embrace.

Early in His ministry, Jesus sent “the twelve” out with instructions **not** to take anything with them. “Provide

**There is a rather simplistic view of traveling that is taken by some. They are of the persuasion that no preparations are necessary – that they should simply trust the Lord to provide what they need along the way. However, this is too simplistic for thinking people to embrace.**

As they continue the trip to Jerusalem, the number of those traveling with Paul continues to increase. This confirms that some confidence had been experienced by those in Caesarea following the response of Paul to their pleas to change his mind about going to Jerusalem. If Paul had said nothing, or if the subject had been left up in the air, so

*made ready,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> “took up our baggage,” <sup>ASV</sup> “having got our effects ready,” <sup>DARBY</sup> “we trussed up our fardels [bundle, or bale of goods <sup>MERRIAM-WEBSTER</sup>],” <sup>GENEVA</sup> “we prepared ourselves,” <sup>MRD</sup> “we made preparations for our journey,” <sup>NAB</sup> “we packed our things,” <sup>NLT</sup> “took up our furniture,” <sup>WEB</sup> “having taken our vessels,” <sup>YLT</sup> and “we loaded our baggage-cattle”

neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat" (Matt 10:10). Mark reports, "And commanded them that they should **take nothing** for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse; but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats" (Mark 6:8-9). Luke records, "And he said unto them, **Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece**" (Luke 9:3). Luke also records the same instructions given to the seventy, whom Jesus sent out: "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way" (Luke 10:4).

Some, seizing upon these texts, affirm that this is still the way in which laborers are to set out in the work of the Lord. This, however, is not the case, for the playing field has changed. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus prepared His disciples for a differing set of circumstances. "When I sent you **without** purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, **But now**, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end" (Luke 22:37).

The word concerning the "sword" was not a call to arms, for Jesus was not assembling an earthly army (John 18:36). **Rather, it was to alert them to the hostility they now would confront.** We know this is the case because later, in the garden, Peter drew his sword, only to hear Jesus say, "**Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword**" (Matt 26:52).

When Jesus ascended into heaven, Satan was cast out (Lk 10:18; Rev 12:7-9). However, he did not enter into a state of inactivity. In fact, those who are in the world are solemnly told, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down **unto you**, having great wrath, because he knoweth

that he hath but a short time" (Rev 12:12). Now Satan is making war "with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 12:17).

That is why these laborers make preparations when they travel. **They are no longer in a kind of safety zone, as the disciples were when Jesus was with them in the flesh.** At that time, no one attacked the disciples, or sought to do them harm. The powers of darkness were held at bay while they became familiar with the mind and will of the Lord. But that is not the case now. While God's people are being kept from falling (Jude 1:24-25), the devil is stalking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet 5:7-8). The followers of Jesus do well to keep that in mind, and do nothing that may be seen from heaven as tempting the Lord their God (Matt 4:7).

#### CERTAIN DISCIPLES

" . . . There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea . . ." Other versions read, "some of the disciples . . . came with us." <sup>NASB</sup>

In Paul's travels, there were frequently believers who joined him along the way. On this particular trip, seven disciples joined him. Earlier, when he was in Asia, Timothy joined them (Acts 16:1-3). When he left Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla joined him (Acts 18:18). Now certain disciples from Caesarea join him.

**All of this confirms the common interest brethren had I the work of the Lord.** It also makes known something of the spirit of Paul, who was willing to travel with other brethren. Much of this kind of spirit has been removed by sectarian interests, thereby confirming how evil they are. The real work of the Lord is always attractive to the real people of God.

This entourage was probably of considerable size, possibly numbering as much as twenty or more. What a holy concourse of brethren it was, and what fellowship they must have had along the way. It is always "good and pleasant" for brethren to be together (Psa 133:1-3).

#### AN OLD DISCIPLE

" . . . and brought with them one

Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge." Other versions read, "bringing with them one Mnason," <sup>ASV</sup> "brought with them a certain Mnason," <sup>NKJV</sup> "taking us to Mnason," <sup>NASB</sup> "brought us to the home of Mnason," <sup>NIV</sup> "taking a certain Mnason," <sup>BEB</sup> "bringing with them him with whom we may lodge, a certain Mnason," <sup>YLT</sup> and "conducting us to the house of Mnason." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Two differing views of the text are presented in the various translations.

⇨ That Mnason went with them from Caesarea to Jerusalem, where he had a home.

⇨ That the group traveled without Mnason to Jerusalem, bringing Paul and company to his home in Jerusalem.

#### What We Know About Mnason

⇨ He, like Barnabas, was originally from the country of Cyprus (Acts 4:35; 21:16).

⇨ He was an old disciple, probably both in the length of his discipleship as well as his age.

⇨ He had a dwelling in Jerusalem in which the traveling company would reside while there.

It is not unreasonable to think of a man from Cyprus having a home in Jerusalem – particularly in view of the commencement of the church there, and its centrality in the lives of those early believers. Mnason could very well have come down from Jerusalem to Caesarea to meet Paul, possibly traveling with Agabus. In this case, it is not unreasonable to consider him to have returned to Jerusalem with the travelers, taking them to his own home, where the travelers would be residing. I therefore take the text as it stands in the KJV. All of the older versions represent the situation in this manner also (Darby, <sup>1884</sup> Douay-Rheims, <sup>1899</sup> English Revised, <sup>1885</sup> Geneva, <sup>1599</sup> James Murdock, <sup>1852</sup> Bishop's, <sup>1595</sup> Revised Webster, <sup>1833</sup> Tyndale <sup>1534</sup> Wycliffe, <sup>1382</sup> Young's Literal. <sup>1862</sup>) Some more modern versions do the same (ASV, <sup>1901</sup> BBE <sup>1949</sup>).

Here was an older disciples still serving the Lord – still maintaining an

interest in the work of the Kingdom – still practicing hospitality with love. **There are some things age cannot take from you.**

We gather from this text that the home of Mnason was of impressive size, adequate to house such a group. Philemon seems to have owned a similar dwelling (Phile 1:2), and Philip the evangelist as well (Acts 21:8). Others whose homes were given to frequent gatherings included Aquila and Priscilla (Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19), and Nymphas (Col 4:15). Gaius, to whom John wrote, was also noted for opening his home to

travelers (3 John 1:5-8). Lydia also brought Paul and those with him into her house, where they remained for a while (Acts 16:15-16).

Behold how the early disciples practiced hospitality. **If they were blessed to have more than enough, they shared it with the household of faith.** In the case of Mnason, he was apparently known for his gracious entertainment of the people of God, and had been designated, or perhaps volunteered, for this large group of people to dwell in his house during their stay in Jerusalem. I assume that this included

feeding them as well as providing comfortable accommodations. If you have ever been the recipient of hospitality in the name of the Lord, you know of the grace that is ministered to the saints through such brotherly consideration.

It is apparent to me that the carrying forth of the work of the Lord involves the practice of godly hospitality (3 John 1:5-8). It is therefore of great concern that this is such a rare trait among the Christians of our times. By the grace of God, there are still brethren noted for this practice, but it is growing more and more rare.

**THE BRETHREN RECEIVED THEM GLADLY**

*“<sup>17</sup> And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”*

there is a sense in which it is not incidental. Something is contained in the words that will have a calculated

*“And when we were come to Jerusalem . . .”* Other versions read, *“arrived in Jerusalem,”* <sup>NIV</sup> and *“reached Jerusalem.”* <sup>CSB</sup>

When you consider the aggression of the devil, arriving in Jerusalem is seen in a whole new light. Satan has launched an aggressive campaign against those who *“keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”* (Rev 12:17). His initiative is of such magnitude that heaven warns, *“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time”* (Rev 12:12). Those in Christ are candidly told, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pet 5:8). Those who are spiritually sleepy, lacking spiritual alertness are told, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Cor 11:3).

As is customary in Scriptural accounts, details are provided only as they serve to clarify the event, or provide insight into the manner of Divine workings. **If a matter is in the record,**

effect upon the heart when duly heeded and perceived.

**WHEN WE WERE COME TO JERUSALEM**

These warnings are issued to all of the people of God in general. But what of those who are involved in Kingdom initiatives? What of those who are *“laborers together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9), and are invading territories over which the powers of Satan have long dominated?

Once Paul wrote of some

significant delays caused by the wicked one. "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; **but Satan hindered us**" (1 Thess 2:18). Another time, when Paul was engaged in the work of the Lord, the assaults were so vicious that Paul despaired of life. "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor 1:8-9).

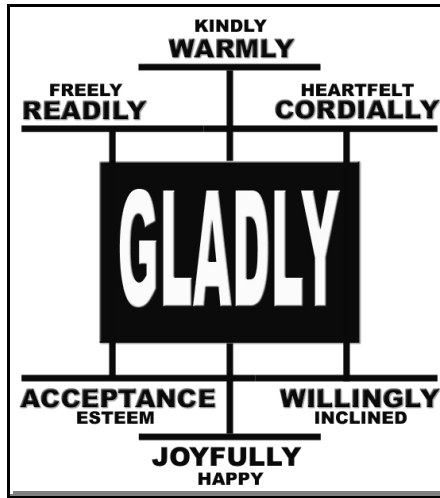
Who can forget the arresting description Paul gave of experiences that took place during some of his travels: ". . . thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep . . . In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren" (2 Cor 11:26).

**Thus, in spite of Satan's hindering influences, the full group arrived in Jerusalem.** This occurred even though Satan is described as "having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time" (Rev 12:12). It took place even though, as an adversary, he "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Even though he has many "devices" (1 Cor 2:11), **the devil could not stop them. That is a perspective of safety and holy accomplishments that must be brought into our thinking,** because "safety is of the Lord" (Prov 21:31).

**THE BRETHREN RECEIVED US GLADLY**

" . . . the brethren received us gladly." Other versions read, "received us warmly,"<sup>NIV</sup> "were pleased to see us,"<sup>BBE</sup> "received us joyfully,"<sup>MRD</sup> "gave us a very warm welcome,"<sup>NJB</sup> "welcomed us cordially,"<sup>LIVING</sup> "were very happy to see us,"<sup>IE</sup> "have us a hearty welcome,"<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> "received and welcomed us gladly,"<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> and "received us willfully."<sup>WYCLIFFE</sup>

The word "gladly" is translated from a word that means "with joy, gladly,"<sup>THAYER</sup> "warmly,"<sup>UBS</sup> "pertaining to experiencing



happiness, implying ready and willing acceptance - 'happily, gladly,'<sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup> and "readily."<sup>LEH</sup> This is a large word, encompassing quite a few attitudes, and reflecting a sense of values as well. This is not the description of a mere formal greeting, nor does it involve the ordinary perception of politeness. **The lives of the brethren at Jerusalem were such as prepared them to receive brethren of the caliber of Paul and his companions.** That alone is a most arresting circumstance. There is such a thing as living so you are never prepared to confront and receive godly people. Some people live in such a manner that any exposure to spiritual people is like an intrusion into their lives. This, of course, is an evidence of a deficiency in a love for the brethren - one of the distinguishing marks of the real followers of Jesus (John 13:35; 1 John 3:14).

If it seems unusual to find this blessed trait in one person, here is an entire body of people in whom it was found. **Keep in mind that the church at Jerusalem was no small assembly.** During this very occasion, James will draw attention to "thousands of Jews . . . which believe," that were present in Jerusalem at that time (Acts 21:20). Many of the people were no doubt from other places, assembled in Jerusalem for the occasion. Yet, we have every reason to believe that the regular assembly there was of considerable size.

**Yet these brethren in Jerusalem had a transcendent unity.** During the beginning years of these brethren, it is said that "the multitude of

them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). Now, several years later, this same spirit is evinced in the hearty welcoming of Paul and company. The brethren in Jerusalem were glad to see them, and received them discerningly as well as lovingly.

**The Focus of These Brethren**

Keep in mind that the context in which these brethren were recognized and received was that of preaching and teaching the Word. The ministry of Paul, and, consequently, of those who traveled with him, was not that of philanthropy - although I do not doubt that they were considerate in meeting the needs of others. However, they were noted for both the fact and substance of what they taught.

**I have noted over the years the relative unimportance that the Christian community attaches to preaching and teaching.** Commendable church leaders are rarely noted for what they say. When those who are enamored of them speak about them, it is generally about some impressive thing they have done - not what they have said, or are, saying. Perhaps they have taken a congregation of fifty, and built it to several thousand. Maybe they have provided a safe haven for the poor, or have assembled the young who were meandering throughout the streets into a common place, where entertainment and wholesome pleasure could be enjoyed. There is certainly nothing wrong with such things - **but they are not where the accent should be placed.** When it comes to what the church actually does, it is primarily "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15) - and "the truth" is always associated with words, and with speaking. Every other ministry it performs is within that context. This should not surprise us, for it is the way the Lord Jesus Himself conducted His ministry. He was a miracle worker, to be sure, but He was primarily a Teacher - "Rabbi" (John 1:38,49; 3:2; 6:25; Matt 5:2; 7:29; 13:54; Mk 1:21; -22; 2:13; 4:2; Mk 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:35). It is said of Him, "And He taught daily in the temple" (Luke 19:47). "When Jesus Himself summarized His activity He said, "I was daily with you in the temple teaching" (Mark 14:49; Lk 22:53). This is not the only thing He did, but it was the

main thing He did – the hub, so to speak, of his total activity! The same was true of our blessed Lord, who was fundamentally noted as a teacher, or “*Rabbi*.” The church must

not allow this perspective to be clouded by developing other priorities. Such priorities, should the church decide to embrace them, will turn them from God.

The report that Paul will give is within the context of teaching, and the results that came from it. That is the means through which the Lord worked.

## PAUL GOES IN TO JAMES

**“<sup>18</sup> And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.”**

The entire group now goes in to James. This gather was also with “*all the elders*.” They come to report the working of the Lord through them. Anyone who is actually doing the work of the Lord is not ashamed to report their activity to notable spiritual leaders.

### PAUL WENT IN WITH US UNTO JAMES

“*And the day following Paul went in with us unto James . . .*” Other versions read, “*Paul and the rest of us went in to see James,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*went in to visit James,*”<sup>NRSV</sup> “*Paul accompanied us on a visit to James,*”<sup>NAB</sup> “*to meet with James,*”<sup>NLT</sup> “*Paul took us with him to meet with James,*”<sup>LIVING</sup> and “*we went with Paul to call on James.*”<sup>WEYMOUTH</sup>

This is not the brother of John, who was martyred by Herod several years prior to the time of this text (Acts 12:1-2). We understand this to be “*James the Lord’s brother*” (Gal 1:19). He was one of several brothers to Jesus – technically half-brothers, for Joseph was their father. The multitudes called Jesus their brother, not believing the father of Jesus was God Himself. “*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him*” (Mark 6:3). Matthew reads, “*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him*” (Mark 6:3). Luke writes that the people said of Jesus, “*And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?*” (Luke 4:22). Thus, the people assessed Jesus to be:

- ⇨ The carpenter
- ⇨ The son of a carpenter
- ⇨ The brother of James, Joses, Juda, and Simon.
- ⇨ The son of Mary.
- ⇨ One who had sisters.
- ⇨ Joseph’s son.

It is interesting to note that

**Neither James (the author of the book of James) nor Jude ever referred to themselves as the Lord’s brother. This is because the relationship they maintained to Jesus was higher than any earthly kinship.**

the doctrine of Scripture never refers to Jesus as the “*Son of Mary*.” Rather, it refers to Mary as His “*mother*” (Matt 1:18; 2:11,13,14,20,21; 16:16; Lk 1:60; 2:33-34; Acts 1:14). As for Jesus, He is declared to be “*the Son of God*” (Matt 14:33; Mk 1:1; John 1:34,39; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Rom 1:4; 2 Cor 1:12; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13; Heb 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5,10,12,13,20; Rev 2:18).

As for Jesus’ brothers, they did not believe on Him in the beginning, even though they knew that He was doing many mighty works. As it is written, “*His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him*” (John 7:3-5). At the time, they were not among His “*disciples*.”

However, there came a time when they did believe on Him. We do not know precisely when this occurred. It is quite possible that Jesus was speaking of

his half-brothers when he told the women, “*Be not afraid: go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me*” (Matt 28:10). And again to Mary Magdalene before that occasion, “*go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God*” (John 20:17).

We do know that following the ascension of Jesus, they were among those who were praying and waiting for the promise of the Father: “*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren*” (Acts 1:14).

Paul refers to the brethren of Jesus as being among those who were traveling about, declaring the Gospel: “*Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?*” (1 Cor 9:5). It is also the consensus of Bible scholars that the author of the book of Jude was one of these brothers, referred to as “*Juda*” in Mark 6:3. “*Judah, Judas, Juda, and Jude* are all forms of the same name. The “*Jude*” who wrote the epistle of Jude refers to himself as “*the brother of James*.” Neither James (the author of the book of James) nor Jude ever referred to themselves as the Lord’s brother. This is because the relationship they maintained to Jesus was higher than any earthly kinship.

**JAMES**

Some notable commentators feel that James the Lord's brother was also an apostle – "*James the Less*" (Matt 15:40), also called "*James the son of Alphaeus*" (Matt 10:2). However, this cannot be, for the text that states his brethren did not yet believe on Him took place after the feeding of the 5,000 – and the twelve apostles had been chosen some time before that (John 6<sup>and</sup>7 with Matt 10:2-4). Matthew records the choosing of the

- ⇨ James, together with Peter and John, were considered to be "*pillars*" in Jerusalem
- ⇨ When Peter was in Antioch with Paul, James sent several brethren from Jerusalem to be with them (Gal 2:12).
- ⇨ In his epistle, James refers to himself as "*a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*" (James 1:1).

- ⇨ When Paul and Barnabas rehearsed their work among the Gentiles to the church in Antioch (Acts 14:26-27). Peter was also at this meeting, together with several sent by James from Jerusalem (Gal 2:11-14).
- ⇨ Fourteen years after his conversion, when Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem to report the working of the Lord among the Gentiles (Gal 2:1-10).

**James is mentioned at least nine times in Scripture. The manner in which He is mentioned confirms that he was a key figure in the church at Jerusalem.**

apostles in the tenth chapter of his Gospel, and the feeding of the 5,000 in the fourteenth chapter. Thus James the Lord's brother cannot be one of the twelve apostles as some allege.

James is mentioned at least nine times in Scripture. The manner in which He is mentioned confirms that he was a key figure in the church at Jerusalem.

- ⇨ When Peter was delivered from prison, and had reported to those who were praying for him at the home of Mary, he told them "*Go and show these things to James, and to the brethren*" (Acts 12:17).
- ⇨ It was James who weighed the report of certain men teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised after the manner of Moses. He then recommended the manner in which that crisis should be addressed, which recommendation was received (Acts 15:13-22).
- ⇨ Our text, in which Paul and those with him went in to speak to James (Acts 21:18).
- ⇨ Paul says there was a special appearance of the resurrected Christ to James (1 Cor 15:7).
- ⇨ Paul conversed with James, the only other apostle with whom he consulted being Peter (Gal 1:18-19).

- ⇨ Jude, in writing his epistle, refers to himself as "*the brother of James*" (Jude 1:1).

This visit is not specified in any other writings. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul mentions going to Jerusalem two times. The first was three years after his conversion (Gal 1:18). Then, it was to see Peter, who is not said to have been at the meeting of our text. The second was fourteen years after his conversion, when he returned with Barnabas to Jerusalem, also taking Titus with him (Gal 2:1-2). Paul had long been separated from Barnabas at the time of our text, and Timothy was with him, not Titus.

**HOLY CONCLAVES**

This is another one of the holy conclaves, or private gatherings, in which weighty matters were considered. There are several such meetings recorded in the book of Acts and the epistles.

- ⇨ At the choosing of a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:15-26).
- ⇨ When Peter reported what had taken place at the house of Cornelius (Acts 11:1-18).
- ⇨ When they gathered with Paul and Barnabas, and several from Antioch, to consider the matter of circumcision (Acts 15:4-30).

There was a fellowship that existed in the early church that has become strange and unusual in our day. The intrusion of sectarianism has robbed the church-at-large of the sweetness of this kind of profitable fellowship.

**ALL THE ELDERS WERE PRESENT**

" . . . and all the elders were present." Other versions read, "*all the rulers,*" <sup>BBE</sup> "*all the elders came there,*" <sup>DARBY</sup> "*all the ancients were assembled,*" <sup>DOUAY</sup> "*all the spiritual leaders were present,*" <sup>GWN</sup> "*all the presbyters were present,*" <sup>NAB</sup> "*all the elders of the Jerusalem church were present,*" <sup>NLT</sup> "*all the elders came together,*" <sup>PNT</sup> "*all the elders also came.*" <sup>YLT</sup>

Elders may have been aged, but not necessarily so. They were men who were mature in the faith, being able to labor in and handle the Word profitably. The following are some of the activities associated with being an elder.

- ⇨ Feeding the flock of God (1 Pet 5:2).
- ⇨ Willingly taking the oversight of the flock (1 Pet 5:2).
- ⇨ Ruling in Kingdom matters (Heb 13:7,17,24).
- ⇨ Speaking the Word of God (Heb 13:7).
- ⇨ Living a life of faith that can be followed (Heb 13:7).
- ⇨ Able to convince the gainsayers (Tit 1:9).
- ⇨ Labor in the Word and doctrine (1 Tim 5:17).

⇨ Setting apart Kingdom laborers (1 Tim 4:14).

We do not have any idea of the number of elders that were in the Jerusalem church. However, they are frequently mentioned, particularly in the book of Acts.

⇨ The early collection gathered for the poor saints at Jerusalem was delivered to the elders there by Paul and Silas (Acts 11:30).

⇨ The apostles and elders came together to consider the matter of circumcision (Acts 15:2,4,6).

⇨ The resolution put forward by James during that meeting pleased the apostles and elders (Acts 15:22).

⇨ A letter was prepared for the Gentile churches to correct misconceptions of circumcision, and establish certain matters of conduct. This was sent by the apostles and elders (Acts 15:23).

⇨ The decree that was written was ordained by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 16:4).

**The unusual qualifications of these men are seen in the fact that they joined with the apostles in making critical decisions.**

Now, at the presence of Paul, all of the elders are present. No apostle is mentioned in relation to this visit to Jerusalem. The words "apostle" and "apostles" do not appear in the book of Acts after chapter sixteen (from Acts 16:4 through the end of chapter 28). Prior to that (1:1-16:2), they are mentioned thirty times. The last mentioning of Peter ("Peter," "Cephas," or "Simon") in the book of Acts is found in Acts 15:7. The last direct mention of the apostle John in this book is found in Acts 8:14. He is mentioned indirectly as James' brother in Acts 12:2. With the exception of Peter, James, and John, the other nine apostles are mentioned a single time in the book of Acts (Acts 1:13). None of the other apostles (with the solitary exception of Matthias; Acts 1:23,26) are mentioned by name after Acts 1:13 (Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James

the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James).

Peter is mentioned twelve times from Romans through the Revelation (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:7,8,9,11,14; 1 Pet 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1). John is mentioned six times from Romans through Revelation (Gal 2:9; Rev 1:1,4,9; 21:2; 22:8). By way of comparison, Paul ("Paul" or "Saul") is mentioned one hundred and forty-six times in the book of Acts, and twenty-nine times from Romans through Second Peter.

And what does all of this mean? Simply this: the **emphasis** was being placed on the Gentile church, and the preaching and activities of Paul. Prior to that, the emphasis was placed on the Jews, and on the church in Jerusalem. This by no means suggests that the twelve apostles and the church in Jerusalem were no longer significant – and no inspired person ever thought that was the case. Notwithstanding, it does appear to amplify somewhat on Jesus' words prior to His death: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mat 23:39). Under ordinary circumstances, it might appear as though this would mean the

## HISTORY ON THE APOSTLES AND KEY MEN

Most of our information about the deaths of the apostles is derived from early church traditions. While tradition is unreliable as to small details, it very seldom contains outright inventions. Eusebius, the most important of the early church historians wrote his history of the early church in A.D. 325. He wrote, "The apostles and disciples of the Savior scattered over the whole world, preached the Gospel everywhere." The Church historian Schumacher researched the lives of the apostles and recounted the history of their martyrdoms.

**Matthew** suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, killed by a sword wound.

**John** faced martyrdom when he was boiled in a huge basin of boiling oil during a wave of persecution in Rome. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the mines on the prison island of Patmos. He wrote his prophetic Book of Revelation on Patmos. The apostle John was later freed and returned to serve as Bishop of Edessa in modern Turkey. He died as an old man, the only apostle to die peacefully.

**Peter** was crucified upside down on an x-shaped cross, according to church tradition because he told his tormentors that he felt unworthy to die in the same way that Jesus Christ had died.

**We know from church history that the other apostles traveled throughout the world, preaching the Gospel and reaping the harvest. Records from church history indicate the following.**

dissolution of the church that was centered in Jerusalem for several years. However, in order to thwart any intentions of the evil one in this matter, the Lord raised up an apostle for the Gentiles, and established several strong churches to carry on the work. Thus the work continued.

We know from church history that the other apostles traveled throughout the world, preaching the Gospel and reaping the harvest. Records from church history indicate the following.

**James** the Greater, a son of Zebedee, was a fisherman by trade when Jesus called him to a lifetime of ministry. As a strong leader of the church, James was ultimately beheaded at Jerusalem. The Roman officer who guarded James watched amazed as James defended his faith at his trial. Later, the officer walked beside James to the place of execution. Overcome by conviction, he declared his new faith to the judge and knelt beside James to accept beheading as a Christian.

**Bartholomew**, also know as Nathanael, was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed to our Lord in present day Turkey. Bartholomew was martyred for his preaching in Armenia when he was flayed

to death by a whip.

**Thaddaeus** may have preached in Assyria (eastern Iraq) and Persia (Iran), before joining with Simon the Zealot and being killed with him in Persia.

**Andrew** was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Patras, Greece. After being whipped severely by seven soldiers they tied his body to the cross with cords to prolong his agony. His followers reported that, when he was led toward the cross, Andrew saluted it in these words: "I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it." He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.

**Thomas** was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church in the subcontinent. Thomas may have laboured for the Gospel in Parthia (including modern Iraq and Iran), but stronger traditions link him with southern India. Indian Christians from the west coast Kerala area claim they were evangelized by Thomas, who was later speared to death near Madras on the east coast. Mount St. Thomas, close to Madras is associated with his name.

**Matthias**, the apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot, was stoned and then beheaded. He may have preached and been martyred in Ethiopia. Other traditions place him in Judea, and later

Cappadocia (eastern Turkey) and the Caspian Sea area.

**Simon** is referred to both as the "Cananaean" and the "Zealot". The titles may refer to him being "zealous", or to his membership of one of the Jewish revolutionary movements known as Zealots. Nothing else is known about him. One tradition is that he first preached in Egypt, before joining Jude and travelling to Persia, where both were martyred. Simon may have been crucified or hacked to death.

The apostle **Paul** was tortured and then beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero at Rome in A.D. 67. Paul endured a lengthy imprisonment which allowed him to write his many epistles to the churches he had formed throughout the Roman Empire. These letters, which taught many of the foundational doctrines of Christianity, form a large portion of the New Testament.

**Mark** died in Alexandria, Egypt, after being dragged by horses through the streets until he was dead.

**Luke** was hanged in Greece as a result of his tremendous preaching to the lost.

**James the Just**, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down

from the southeast pinnacle of the Temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When they discovered that he survived the fall, his enemies beat James to death with a fuller's club. This was the same pinnacle where Satan had taken Jesus during the Temptation.

**Barnabas**, one of the group of seventy disciples, wrote the Epistle of Barnabas. He preached throughout Italy and Cyprus. Barnabas was stoned to death at Salonicia.

**Jude**, the brother of Jesus, was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.

The details of the martyrdoms of the disciples and apostles are found in traditional early church sources. These traditions were recounted in the writings of the church fathers and the first official church history written by the historian Eusebius in A.D. 325. Although we cannot at this time verify every detail historically, the universal belief of the early Christian writers was that each of the apostles had faced martyrdom faithfully without denying their faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*Compiled from Grant R. Jeffry's book, "The Signature of God"*

*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (Rev 14:13).*

## PAUL DECLARES WHAT GOD HAD DONE BY HIS MINISTRY

**19** *And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry."*

Having met with James and the elders from Jerusalem, Paul recounts the working of God through his ministry. In this manner, the Lord will receive glory, and the saints refreshment. He will draw attention to what God is doing.

### WHEN HE HAD SALUTED THEM

*"And when he had saluted them . . ."* Other versions read, *"greeted them,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"said how glad he was to see them,"* <sup>BEB</sup> and *"when he had embraced them."*

<sup>GENEVA</sup> As noted in some previous texts, the word *"salute"* involves the whole person: spirit, soul, and body. There is the embrace bodily, the affection of the soul, and the respect of the spirit. There is esteem in saluting someone, an affinity with them, and a profound spiritual

attraction to them. This is the outworking of the love of the brethren (1 Pet 1:22), preferring one another (Rom 12:10), and highly esteeming others better than self (Phil 2:3).

### HE DECLARED PARTICULARLY

*" . . . he declared particularly . . ."* Other versions read, *"in detail,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"one by one,"* <sup>NASB</sup> and *"a detailed account."* <sup>BEB</sup> Paul did not simply provide a general overview of what the Lord had done through him, but furnished such details as would promote the glory of God.

### WHAT THE LORD HAD WROUGHT

*" . . . what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry."* Other versions read, *"which God had done,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> and *"God had accomplished."* <sup>NAB</sup>

**Having met with James and the elders from Jerusalem, Paul recounts the working of God through his ministry. In this manner, the Lord will receive glory, and the saints refreshment.**

With care, Paul related what the Lord had done, not what he had done. The works were through him, but **not** by him. Thus he gave substance to the doctrinal declaration, *“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen”* (Rom 11:36).

**These days there is an approach to gatherings that is less and less associated with a testimony of the working of the Lord.** There is a fast developing notion that singing together is the preferred mode of communication. As much profit as there is in such activity, when done with grace in the heart unto the Lord (Col 3:16), **gatherings of the saints should include a rehearsal of the wonderful works of God.**

In Deborah’s prophetic song, she spoke of the benefit of declaring the mighty acts of the Lord. *“They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates”* (Judg 5:11).

**Samuel** also did this when he said to Israel, *“Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers”* (1 Sam 12:7).

**David** wrote, *“They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness”* (Psa 145:7). He also affirmed, *“I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings”* (Psa 77:12).

**So it is that Paul, in keeping with people of faith throughout the ages, will declare what the Lord has done.**

All of this makes perfect sense, for Paul had carried the letters that James suggested to the Gentile churches, delivering their message to the people. Now he will report the results.

**Remember the Letters**

The significance of Paul relating

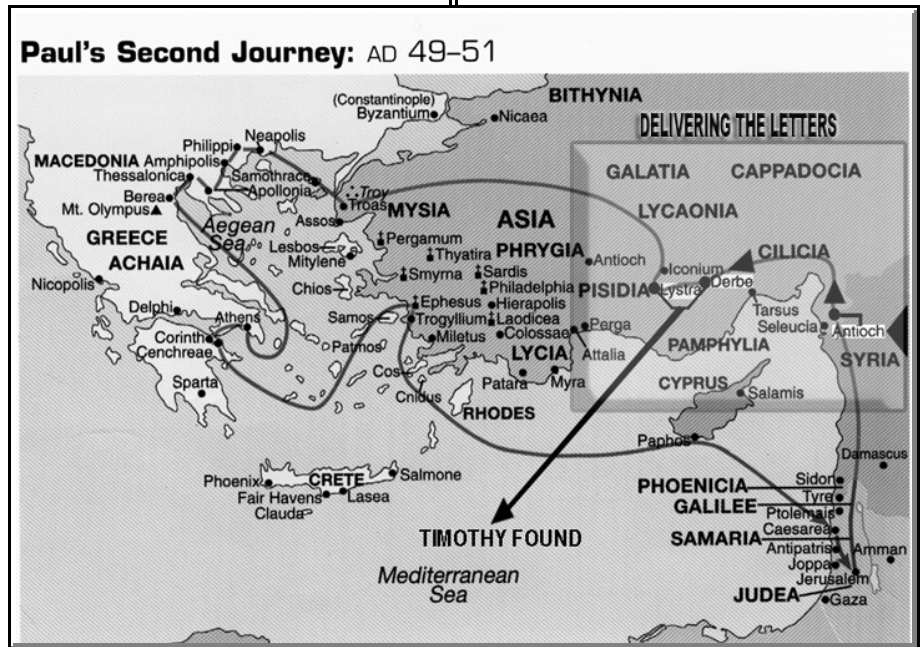
the effects of his ministry goes back to chapter fifteen, when he and Barnabas had gone up to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles and elders concerning the matter of circumcision, and various points of the Law. At that time, letters were prepared for the Gentile churches, instructing them more fully in the ways of the Lord, and what is expected of the followers of Christ. These letters were written to *“the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia”* (Acts 15:23).

When in those areas, it is said of

continued, preaching the word for many days, along *“with many others also”* (15:30-35).

⇒ Paul and Silas went throughout Syria and Cilicia *“confirming the churches”* (15:41).

⇒ Timothy joined them in the Derbe/Lystra area, and they *“went through the cities,”* delivering the decrees *“which were ordained by the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.”* This resulted in the



Paul and those traveling with him, *“And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”* (Acts 16:4).

Some of the things that took place during that time include the following.

⇒ When they read the letters in Antioch, they rejoiced for the consolation. Judas and Silas, prophets from Jerusalem, remained there for a season. After Judas returned to Jerusalem, Silas remained. Paul and Barnabas

churches being *“established in the faith,”* increasing *“in number daily”* (16:4-5).

⇒ Lydia and her household were converted in Philippi (16:12-15).

⇒ A jailor and his entire household were converted while Paul and Silas were in prison (16:25-35).

⇒ After being released from prison they comforted the brethren at Lydia’s house. This was the beginning of the church at Philippi (16:40).

⇒ Some believed in Thessalonica, even though there was some fierce opposition. The church in

**Thus Paul acknowledged the hand of the Lord through his travels among the Gentiles. No doubt, it also cheered the hearts of James and the elders to hear of the unreserved acceptance of their letters. Thus a slice of Kingdom time has been described.**

- Thessalonica was launched at that time (17:1-4).
- ⇒ Paul and Silas journey to Berea, where they ministered in the synagogue, and “*many of them believed*” (17:10-12).
- ⇒ Paul ministers in Athens, and “*certain men clave to him.*” Among them as Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them” (17:34).
- ⇒ Paul ministers in Corinth for a year and a half, persuading both Jews and Greeks. At the word of Jesus, he continued that full time “*teaching the word of God among them*” (18:9-11).
- ⇒ Paul came to Ephesus and reasoned with the Jews. He then left them,. Saying he would return (18:19-20).

- ⇒ After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went over all the country of Galatia and Phygia, “*strengthening the disciples*” (18:23).
- ⇒ Paul confronts some disciples in Ephesus who had been baptized with John’s baptism. After instructing them more perfectly, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, Paul laid his hands on them, the Spirit came upon them, and they prophesied in other languages (19:1-7).
- ⇒ Paul continues for two years in Ephesus, where “*special miracles*” were wrought by his hands. The name of the Lord was magnified, many confessed there deed, burned their books of curious arts, and the Word of God “*grew mightily and prevailed*” (19:9-20).

- ⇒ A devastating blow was dealt to idolatry in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41).
- ⇒ Paul went over parts of Macedonia giving them “*much exhortation*” (20:2).
- ⇒ Paul and company spent seven days in Troaz, where they met with the saints. At this time he raised Eutyclus from the dead (20:6-12).
- ⇒ At Miletus he called for the elders of the church in Ephesus and warned them of the coming apostasy (20:17-38).
- ⇒ Paul and company spend seven days in Tyre, meeting with and comforting the disciples there (21:4-6).
- ⇒ Paul and his comrades spend several days with Philip the evangelist, and others join them there (21:8-14).

Thus Paul acknowledged the hand of the Lord through his travels among the Gentiles. No doubt, it also cheered the hearts of James and the elders to hear of the unreserved acceptance of their letters. They had worked together for the Lord. Thus a slice of Kingdom time has been described.

## CONCLUSION

The chronicles recorded in Acts are a kind of detail that is introduced to us in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. It pertains to holy men and women, with the wicked only being mentioned incidently. The record of sinful people is certainly present: Judas, the Jewish leaders, Ananias and Sapphira, Simon the sorcerer, Herod, Elymas, unbelieving Jews, the silversmiths of Ephesus, and others. **However, they are never the subject of the revelation, and are only mentioned because they were aligned against the holy people of record.** The inspired writer never lingers long upon them, but focuses his attention upon those who have been joined to Christ. He never spends any significant time addressing social or political concerns. There is no official *Christian* stance declared concerning a

recommendation for rulers and political climate. The laws passed by the Roman senate are never the subject of exposition.

The status of families in the various cities of record is not mentioned: Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch of Syria, Caesarea, Antioch of Pisidia, Derbe, Lystra, Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica, Athens, Ephesus, Troaz, Miletus, Tyre, etc. What is it that is said about such key cities? **If it were not for the presence of the saints in them, we would not read of them at all.**

It is not to be denied that an inordinate amount of time is being spent these days in matters that are not directly related to life in Christ Jesus. By “directly related,” I mean aspects of life that are integral to living unto the Lord. Some

may argue that Christians ought to be involved in the business and political facets of life, as a sort of sanctifying element. **However, I do not know that a point is actually made of having influence among men as the result of an intentional effort to be with the ungodly** – unless it be to preach the Gospel to them. Even those examples are very few in Scripture.

And why make such an observation. Is it to be taken as an expression of disinterest in the souls of men? Not at all! When persons actually do live unto the Lord, living by faith and walking in the Spirit, holy influence is exerted wherever they are. Their light does not shine by intention, but because they themselves are walking in that light. Furthermore, as it is written, the Lord

*"will light my candle"* (Psa 18:28), which *"candle"* is man's spirit (Prov 20:27). **If ever the light of God can get into a person, it will not fail to get out, for "a city set upon a hill cannot be hid"** (Matt 5:14). Even men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel – much less does God do such a thing. He does not violate His own principles.

Doctrinally, the focus of human activity is placed upon the identity of the individual with God, through Christ, and by faith. Everything flows from there, because such an association is all-pervading, and cannot be concealed. **If you insist on hiding the fact that you are a Christian, you will not long be one.** That is because spiritual life

requires sustaining as well as initiation. That is the doctrine of Scripture. The book of Acts is a record of that actually being done.

This is a kind of snapshot of the manner of thinking that is to be found among the people of God. It is consistent through all generations.

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/20/09. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Eighty-eighth lesson will cover verses 20 through 30 of the twenty-first chapter: "PAUL JOINS IN THE PURIFICATION RITES OF FOUR MEN." At the advice of James, Paul joins in the purification rites of four Jewish men, and pays the expenses associated with those rites. Although Paul has been criticized by men for this action, in writing up His record, the Spirit laid no fault at his feet. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.**

# *Preaching Festival, 2009*

**AN ANNUAL WEEK-END OF THEMATIC PREACHING**

**Friday and Saturday: NOVEMBER 13-14, 2009**

**Theme: "THE PROMISES OF GOD"**

**Friday: 7:00 PM -- Saturday 1:00 PM**

**at The Blakely Home, 406 S Sergeant Ave, Joplin**

*A time devoted to edification, exhortation, and comfort*

*The Blakely Family: Given, June, Benjamin, and Eva*

*406 South Sergeant Street, Joplin, MO 64801*

Telephone: (417) 782-3063, Email: Given (GivenB@aol.com) June: (JuneE01@aol.com)

ADAH's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/adah.htm> -- EVA's Webpage: <http://wotruth.com/Eva.htm>

Benjamin (Bensvison@aol.com), Eva (Evablakely@aol.com)

Adah Hutchcraft (adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com), Jason Hutchcraft ([hutchcraftj@hotmail.com](mailto:hutchcraftj@hotmail.com))

## **THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP**

WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP Website: <http://wotruth.com/wotf/wotindex.htm>

**A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.**

Additional Website for Word of Truth Fellowship:

<http://www.forministry.com/USMOINDPTWOTFW>

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**WORD OF TRUTH Website: <http://wotruth.com>**

### **BROTHER BLAKEY'S ON-LINE COMMENTARIES**

COMMENTARY on Nehemiah: <http://wotruth.com/nehindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Daniel: <http://wotruth.com/Daniel.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hosea: <http://wotruth.com/hoseaindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Romans: <http://wotruth.com/Romans.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

COMMENTARY on Philippians: <http://wotruth.com/philippiansdindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Colossians: <http://wotruth.com/Colossians.htm>

COMMENTARY on First Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/1sthessindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Second Thessalonians: <http://wotruth.com/2ndthessindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Hebrews: <http://wotruth.com/hebindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First Peter: <http://wotruth.com/1stpetindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on First John: <http://wotruth.com/1stjohnindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Revelation: <http://wotruth.com/revelationindex.htm>

COMMENTARY on Mark: <http://wotruth.com/Mark.htm>

COMMENTARY on Titus: <http://wotruth.com/Titus.htm>

COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

COMMENTARY on Malachi: <http://wotruth.com/Malachi.htm>

COMMENTARY on Malachi: <http://wotruth.com/Galatians.htm>

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## **PARTICIPATING BROTHERS AND SISTERS SPEAKING/LEADING/MINISTERING IN THE ASSEMBLY**

The Word of Truth Fellowship, Joplin, MO

### **A DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES DURING OUR GATHERINGS**

**"Openings and Introductions"** = 7-10 minute exposition of truth to promote spiritual focus; **"Calling"** = 7-10 minute exposition of truth designed to provoke disciplined thought; **"Sermon"** = 45 minute exposition of the things of God as revealed in Scripture; **"Exhortation"** = 5-8 minute challenge to act upon the truth we have heard; **"Table Meditation"** = 8-12 minute exposition of matters relating to Christ's role in salvation; **"Lead Scripture shower"** = Leading of the quoting/reading of Scripture without comment; **"Lead prayer session"** = Presentation of three matters for prayer that are taken from the Word of God; **"Lead Intercessory Prayer"** = A time of focused prayers for personal needs.

### **DURING OCTOBER, 2009**

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|--|---|
| 1. <i>Given O. Blakely</i> (PM Sermon, PM Sermon).   | PM Sermon, Read PM Sermon Text).  |
| 2. <i>Blakely, Jonathan</i> (AM Table Meditation, AM Opening Word, PM Introduction).                               | 16. <i>LaVaine Murphy</i> (AM Opening Word, PM Introduction).   |
| 3. <i>Blakely, June</i> (Lead PM Prayer Session, AM Opening Word, Teach AM Class).                                 | 17. <i>Murphy, Mariah</i> (Special Piano Numbers for PM Message, Lead Scripture Shower, Read PM Sermon Text).             |
| 4. <i>Blakely, Mattie</i> (Lead PM Singing).   | 18. <i>Murphy, Micaela</i> (Read AM Sermon Text).   |
| 5. <i>Blakely, Michael</i> (AM Table Meditation, AM Sermon, Lead PM Singing, PM Table Meditation).                 | 19. <i>Parker, Melissa</i> (AM Calling, Lead AM Singing).   |
| 6. <i>Blakely, Michele</i> (Play Piano, Lead Scripture Shower,).   | 20. <i>Parker, Tony</i> (AM Sermon).  |
| 7. <i>Cobb, Nicole</i> (Lead AM Singing).  | 21. <i>Scalf, Rebecca</i> (AM Calling).   |
| 8. <i>Cobb, Robert</i> (Teach AM Class, Teach AM Class, AM Table Meditation, PM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation). | 22. <i>Sims, Annie</i> (Read AM Sermon Text, Closing Scripture/Benediction).  |
| 9. <i>Dill Sarah</i> (Closing Scripture/Benediction)   | 23. <i>Sims, Baylie</i> (Introduction to AM Sermon, Read PM Sermon Text).   |
| 10. <i>Hill, John</i> (Lead Intercessory Prayer).  | 24. <i>Sims Girls-Annie, Hannah, Rachel</i> (Read AM Sermon Text).  |
| 11. <i>Hutchcraft, Aaron</i> (AM Exhortation, AM Sermon, PM Exhortation, PM Introduction, PM Exhortation).         | 25. <i>Sims, Ricky</i> (AM Sermon, Lead AM Singing, AM Exhortation, Teach AM Class, PM Table Meditation, PM Exhortation). |
| 12. <i>Hutchcraft, Barbara</i> (am Opening Word, Lead PM Singing, Lead PM Singing, Lead PM Prayers).               | 26. <i>Sims, Tasha</i> (AM Calling, Lead Scripture Shower).   |
| 13. <i>Hutchcraft, Debbie</i> (Lead AM Singing).   | 27. <i>Williams, Jeremy</i> (PM Introduction, PM Sermon).   |
| 14. <i>Hutchcraft, Gene</i> (Intercessory Prayer, AM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation, PM Sermon).                 | 28. <i>Williams, Logan</i> (Play AM/PM Lord's Table Interlude, Read AM Sermon Text, Closing Scripture/Benediction).       |
| 15. <i>Hutchcraft, Judah</i> (Lead Scripture Shower, Introduction to   | 29. <i>Williams, Sydney</i> (Read PM Sermon Text)   |
|  | 30. <i>Preparing Lord's Supper</i> (Various sisters).   |

### **THE BODY OF CHRIST**

It is a fact: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor 12:18). He did not set them in the home, but "in the body." He did not place them in society, but "in the body." They are functioning members of the body who fill necessary functions – edifying roles in the solemn assembly (1 Cor 12:19-27). The functioning value and ministry of "the body" is realized when it is "together," not when the people are separated. The ministry of each member is determined by their faith – "a measure of faith" that has been given to them in order to the "profit" of the entire body (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:7). This is how the Lord has put together "the church, which is His body" (Eph 1:22-23). We make no apologies for the ministry of the entire body – publicly, in the assembly, and in order to the edification of the saints. This is all done in an orderly manner, with due thoughtfulness and regard for those who are in Christ Jesus, and who, in faithfulness to God who gave these various abilities. Our assemblies are designed to allow for the various expressions and insightful responses of all who are of honest and good heart, have faith, and are in, and living for, the Lord Jesus.