
The work that Jesus' *apostles did

An EasyEnglish Version with Notes (1200 word vocabulary) of the Book of Acts

www.easyenglish.info

The translated Bible text **has been** through Advanced Checking.

Words in boxes are comments on the text.

A word list at the end explains words with a *star by them.

This is about the book

Luke wrote this book in the year *AD 63. He was not a *Jew but he was a *disciple of Jesus. He was a doctor. Luke was one of Paul's friends. Sometimes he went with Paul when Paul travelled from country to country. He went to Rome with Paul and he stayed there with him.

Luke wrote the book to send to Theophilus. Theophilus was an important *Roman man. This is the second book that Luke wrote for him. The first book is called 'Luke'. In this second book, Luke tells us how God first gave his *Holy Spirit to the *apostles. He writes about the work of the *apostles in Jerusalem and in cities in many other countries. He tells us how more and more people believed in Jesus. He also writes about problems between Christians. Some of these were *Jews and some of them were not.

He also tells us that the leaders of the *Jews did not believe in Jesus. They wanted the *apostles to stop teaching the people about Jesus.

The book is in 5 parts:

A How more people believed in Jesus in Judea and Jerusalem.

1 How the *apostles took God's message about Jesus to the cities near Jerusalem.

2 How the *apostles took God's message about Jesus to the cities in other countries.

The other countries were near Judea.

B How Paul travelled to many countries with the good news about Jesus. He also taught people who were not *Jews about Jesus.

3 Where Paul went on his first journey to teach people about Jesus.

4 Where Paul went on his second journey to teach people about Jesus.

5 Paul's last big journey, when he went to Rome.

Chapter 1

Jesus tells the *apostles that God will send the *Holy Spirit to them

v1 Jesus began to do many things when he was working on earth. He also began to teach people many things. I told you about all these things in the first book that I wrote for you, Theophilus.

That first book is called 'Luke'.

v2 I told you about the things that Jesus did until God took Him up into *heaven. Jesus had chosen some men to be his *apostles. He had told them by the *Holy Spirit what they must do. Then God took Jesus back to heaven. **v3** Jesus had died and then he became alive again. During the 40 days after that, he showed himself many times to his *apostles. He showed himself in different ways. They could then be sure that Jesus was really alive again. The *apostles often saw Jesus, and he talked to them about the *Kingdom of God.

We can read about this in Luke chapter 24 and John, chapters 20 and 21.

v4 While Jesus was still with his *apostles, he spoke to them. He said, 'Do not leave Jerusalem yet. You must wait there for my Father's gift that I told you about. My Father promised to give it to you. **v5** John *baptised people with water, but after a few days God will *baptise you with the *Holy Spirit.'

God takes Jesus up to *heaven

v6 Jesus' *apostles all met together with him. '*Lord', they said, 'will you at this time give the people of *Israel their *kingdom back? Will they now rule their own country again?'

v7 'My Father decides when things will happen in the world', Jesus replied. 'He does not want you to know when this will happen. **v8** But the *Holy Spirit will come to you, and he will cause you to become powerful. The *Holy Spirit will cause your *spirit to be strong. Then you can tell other people about me. You will tell people about me in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and in all other countries.'

v9 When Jesus had finished speaking to his *apostles, God took him up into God's home. The *apostles watched Jesus go. Then a cloud hid him and the *apostles could not see him any longer.

v10 The *apostles were still looking carefully up into the sky when *suddenly two men appeared. The men were wearing white clothes and they stood near the *apostles.

We think that these men were *angels.

v11 Then they spoke to the *apostles. 'You men from Galilee, you should not still be standing here', they said. 'You should not still look up into the sky. God has taken Jesus into *heaven. You saw the way that Jesus went up to *heaven. One day, he will return in the same way.'

All this happened on the east side of the hill called the Mount of Olives. This hill is between Jerusalem and the town called Bethany. *Olive trees grow there.

The *apostles choose Matthias to be an *apostle

v12 Then the *apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of *Olives. The Mount of Olives was about one kilometre from the city. **v13** When the *apostles arrived in Jerusalem, they went upstairs. And they went into the room where they were staying. The names of the *apostles were Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew. The other apostles, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas, the son of James, were also there.

A Zealot or Patriot was someone who fought for his government or against the *Roman government.

v14 The *apostles often met together in a group to pray. They prayed together with Mary, Jesus' mother, other women and his brothers. **v15** A few days after that, about 120 people met together. These people all believed in Jesus. Peter stood up and he spoke to them. **v16** 'My friends', he said, 'Long ago, the *Holy Spirit spoke to King David and David wrote down this message. He wrote about the things that Judas would do.'

We can read more about what Judas did in Luke chapter 22.

'These things had to happen and now they have happened. Judas showed the soldiers how to catch Jesus. Judas helped them to do it. **v17** Judas was in our group, because Jesus chose him. He chose Judas to work together with us.'

v18 The *priests gave Judas some money because he had helped them. Judas bought a field with that money. But he then fell down in that field and he died. His body broke open and the inside of his body fell out. **v19** All the people who lived in Jerusalem heard about the death of Judas. So the people called that field Akeldama in their own language. Akeldama means 'The Field of Blood'.

We can read about Judas and the money in Matthew 27:3-7.

v20 Peter continued, 'King David wrote in the book of Psalms,

"So the house that he had will be empty.

Nobody should live in it." '

We can read that in Psalm 69:25.

'King David also wrote in the same book,

"So, another person must do his work." '

We can read that in Psalm 109:8.

v21 'Because of this, we need to choose another man', said Peter. 'This man must have been together with us from the beginning. He must have been in our group all the time that Jesus was with us. **v22** The man must have been with us when John was *baptising people. He must have stayed with us while Jesus was working. He must have been with us when Jesus went up to *heaven. Then he can say to the people, "I know that our master died. I saw him after he became alive again." '

v23 So the group said the names of two men. One of these men was Joseph, who had two other names. People also called him Barsabbas and sometimes people called him Justus. The other man was called Matthias. **v24** Then the whole group prayed. '*Lord, you know what everybody is really thinking', they said. 'Please show us which man you have chosen. Which of these two men do you want to be an *apostle? **v25** Judas left his work as an *apostle. He has gone to the right place for him.'

v26 Then the group chose which of the men would do the work of an *apostle. It happened that they chose Matthias. So Matthias took the place of Judas and he became the *twelfth *apostle, together with the other 11 men.

They chose Matthias in this way. They wrote the names of Joseph and Matthias on two pieces of stone. Then they put the pieces of stone into a jar. They then poured one stone out of the jar. The stone had Matthias's name on it. This showed that Matthias was the right man to be an *apostle. In those days, sometimes people did this when they had to choose someone.

Chapter 2

The *Holy Spirit comes

v1 Then the day that the *Jews called 'The Day of *Pentecost' came. All the *believers were meeting together in a house in Jerusalem.

The *Jewish Day of *Pentecost was 50 days after they ate the *Passover meal.

v2 Then, *suddenly, as they were sitting together, they heard a noise. The sound came from the sky. It was like the sound of a strong wind. They could hear the noise everywhere in the house. **v3** Then they saw something move, like many small separate fires. The small fires moved in the room and they touched every person. **v4** God filled each person with the *Holy Spirit. Then the *believers began to speak in foreign languages that they had not learned. They spoke like that because the *Holy Spirit helped them.

v5 At that time, other *Jews, who prayed to God every day, were living in Jerusalem. They came from many different countries in the world. **v6** The *believers made a loud noise when they spoke these other languages. When these other *Jews heard this loud noise, they came together in a large crowd. Each person could hear the *disciples speaking in their own language. This confused them. And so they did not know what to think. **v7** But they were very surprised. 'These men who are speaking like this are from Galilee', they said. **v8** 'We do not know what is happening. We can all hear them speak in the language of our own home country. **v9** Some of us are from Parthia, Media and Elam. Some of us are from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia. Some of us are from Pontus and *Asia. **v10** Some of us are from Phrygia and Pamphylia. Some of us are from *Egypt. Some of us are from near the town called Cyrene. Cyrene is in the country called Libya. Some of us are from Rome. **v11** Some of us are *Jews. Some of us do not have *Jewish parents, but now we believe in the God of the *Jews. Some of us are from Crete and some of us are from Arabia. But we all hear these people speaking in our own languages. They are speaking about all the great things that God has done.' **v12** All the people were very surprised. They did not understand what was happening. 'How can we explain all this?' they asked each other.

v13 Other people *laughed at the *disciples. They said to each other, 'These people are drunk!'

Peter speaks to the crowd

v14 Peter was with the other 11 *apostles and he stood up. He began to speak to the crowd with a loud voice. He explained to them what was happening.

'You people, who are also *Jews like us, listen to me. And all you people, who live here in Jerusalem, listen to me. I will explain to you everything that is happening. **v15** Some of you think that my friends here are drunk. But they are not drunk, because it is only 9 o'clock in the morning.'

The *Jewish day began at 6 o'clock in the morning. On the Day of *Pentecost, the *Jews prayed at 9 o'clock. Then they ate their first meal of the day at 10 o'clock. So at 9 o'clock they would not yet have had any food or drink that day. So they could not be drunk.

v16 'Something different is happening here. Joel was a *prophet and he spoke God's words about it a long time ago. He said that one day this would happen. This is what Joel said.'

We can read what Joel said in Joel 2:28-32.

v17 ' "This is what I will do in the last days", God says.

"I will give my *Spirit to all people.

Your sons and daughters will speak my message to people.

Your young men will see pictures from me in their minds.

And your old men will see things in their dreams.

v18 At that time, I will give my *Spirit.

Yes, I will even give my *Spirit to the men and women who are my servants.

Then they will speak my message to people.

v19 I will cause special things to appear in the sky.

I will also cause special things to appear on the earth. They will be powerful things that only I can do.

There will be blood, fire and thick dark smoke.

v20 And the sun will become dark, and it will not shine any longer.
The moon will become dark red like the colour of blood.
These things will happen before the *Lord God's very important day comes.
On that day, my light will shine everywhere.

v21 People will ask me to save them and I will give them new life", God said.'

We do many wrong things. The result is that we are separated from God. God's message is that only Jesus can save us from the result of these wrong things. Jesus can bring us close to God again. We must say sorry to God for all these wrong things that we have done. We must tell God that now we will obey him. Then God will welcome us into his *kingdom. God will give us a new life.

v22 'Now, people of *Israel, listen to what I am saying!' Peter said. 'God sent Jesus of Nazareth to the earth to work for him. God worked by Jesus and did many powerful and special things. Because of this, people should know that God had sent Jesus. You know about all this. These things happened here, and you saw them. **v23** God knew that the *Romans would give Jesus to you. God had decided that this should happen. So you killed Jesus. You let bad men fix him to the *cross. **v24** And so Jesus died. But God caused him to become alive again. God saved Jesus from the power of death. It was impossible for Jesus to stay dead. **v25** A long time ago, King David spoke about Jesus.

"I saw the *Lord in front of me all the time", he said.

"He is next to me, so nothing will cause me trouble.

v26 I am very happy because of this,
so I must talk about it.
I know that I am a man.

But I know that you have promised me these things. So they will certainly happen.

v27 So you will not leave my *soul with all the dead people.

Your servant loves you.

And so you will not let anything destroy his body when he dies.

v28 You have shown me the good paths that lead me to true life.

You are next to me, so I am completely happy." '

We can read this also in Psalm 16:8-11.

v29 'People of *Israel', Peter then said, 'I must speak clear words to you about King David. Long ago he was our *ancestor and king. David died and people buried his body in the ground. The place where people buried him is still here today. **v30** David spoke words from God. He knew what God had promised him. God promised David that a special man from his *family would be a king. This man would be a king like David. **v31** And David understood what God would do in future days. So David spoke about this special man that God would send to the world. When this person died, God would cause him to become alive again. David said that God would not let him remain dead among dead people. He said that nothing would destroy his body. **v32** This man that David talked about was Jesus. Jesus died. But God caused him to become alive again. We ourselves saw this. **v33** God took him back to his right side in *heaven. So now Jesus is sitting in the most important place, next to his Father.'

An *ancestor is a person who belonged to the same *family. But he lived a long time ago.

'God is Jesus' Father, and he gave Jesus the *Holy Spirit. God had promised Jesus that he would do this. Now Jesus has given us the *Holy Spirit today as a gift. You are seeing and hearing the result of this. **v34** David did not go up into *heaven like Jesus did. But David said.

"The *Lord God said to my *Lord:

Sit here next to me at my right side.

v35 While you sit here, I will beat your enemies.
They will be under you, like a place to put your feet.” ’

We can read this also in Psalm 110:1.

v36 ‘All you people of *Israel must be sure to know this. You killed Jesus on a *cross. But it is this same Jesus that God chose as that special person. God caused him to be *Lord.’

v37 The people heard what Peter said to them. Then they had much trouble in their minds. So they asked Peter and the other *apostles for help. ‘Friends, what must we do?’ they said.

v38 ‘Each of you has done wrong things’, Peter told them. ‘You must tell God that you are sorry about that. Then you must stop doing those wrong things. You must obey God and you must do right things. Then someone with the authority of Jesus Christ will *baptise you. And God will *forgive you for all the wrong things that you have done. Then God will give you his gift, which is the *Holy Spirit. **v39** God has promised to *forgive you and your children. He has also promised to give the *Holy Spirit to you and to your children. He has also promised this to people who live in other countries. God has chosen many people to believe in him. He includes all of them in his promise.’

v40 So Peter told the people what they must do. He also told them many other things. He continued to speak with serious words to them. He said, ‘Save yourselves from the *punishment that God will send. God will send it to bad people who are alive now.’

v41 Many of the people who listened to Peter believed his words. So the *apostles *baptised them. About three thousand joined the group that same day. They all believed in Jesus.

This is how the *believers lived

v42 These new *believers stayed with the *apostles so that they could learn more about Jesus. And they all became good friends with everyone else in the group. They prayed together and they ate meals together.

People who believed in Jesus were called *believers. When they ate together they also remembered his death for them.

v43 The *Holy Spirit worked with the *apostles. He caused them to be powerful, so that they could make sick people well. And they could do many other special things. All the people were very surprised and afraid because of these special things. **v44** All the *believers continued to be good friends with each other. They ate meals together, and they learned more about Jesus. They continued to pray together. They gave each other some of the things that they had. **v45** They sold some of their own things. Then they gave that money to other *believers who needed it. **v46** The whole group of *believers met together every day in the Great House of God. They ate their meals together in each other’s homes and they were all very happy together. They thanked God for everything. **v47** The *believers often said how great and important God was. All the other people liked the *believers. And they thought that the *believers were very good people. Every day, more people asked the *Lord to save them. So he was making the group of those who believed in him much bigger.

Chapter 3

This is what happened to the man with weak legs

v1 One day, Peter and John went to the Great House of God in Jerusalem. It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon. This was the time that everyone went there to pray. **v2** There was a man who could not walk. He had never been able to walk. Every day, his friends put him at the gate of the Great House of God. It was called the Beautiful Gate. As people were going through the gate into the Great House of God, the man asked them for money. His friends were carrying him to the gate when Peter and John came to the gate. **v3** Then the man saw Peter and John come through the gate. So he asked them to give him some money. **v4** Peter and John looked at the man's face. And Peter said to him, 'Look at us!' **v5** So the man looked at Peter and John. He thought that they would give him some money.

v6 Then Peter said to the man, 'I do not have any money. But I do have something else that I will give to you. Jesus Christ from Nazareth gave me authority to do this. So I *order you to walk!' **v7** Peter then held the man's right hand to help him stand up. Immediately the man's feet and ankles became strong. **v8** So the man jumped up and he stood on his feet. Then he began to walk about and he went into the Great House of God with Peter and John. He was walking and jumping. And he was saying to God, 'You, God, are very powerful and good.' **v9** A large crowd of people were with Peter and John. They saw the man walking. And they heard him saying good things about God. **v10** 'Look!' they said. 'We know this man. He usually sits at the Beautiful Gate. He used to have weak legs and he asked people for money. What has happened? He can now walk!' they said to each other. They were all very surprised.

Peter speaks to the crowd in the Great House of God

v11 The man was still holding Peter and John as they went to *Solomon's Porch. And the people were very surprised about what they were seeing. So they ran to them there. **v12** Peter saw all the people. They were running towards him. So he said to them, 'People of *Israel, you should not be so surprised about what you have seen. You should not look at us so much. Perhaps you think that we ourselves are powerful. Maybe you think that we are very good people. But we are not so powerful or so good that we could cause this man to walk. **v13** Jesus was the special servant of God. Our *ancestors Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other people prayed to this same God long ago. God gave his authority to Jesus and caused him to be powerful. He showed people that Jesus was a very great and important person.'

We can read about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Bible in the book called Genesis.

'You gave Jesus to the rulers, and you told Pilate bad things about him. You wanted them to kill Jesus even after Pilate had spoken. "I do not believe that Jesus has done anything wrong", he said. "I have already decided that Jesus should leave the prison." **v14** Jesus was completely good and he obeyed God all the time. But you did not accept him. There was also a bad man in the prison who had killed some people. You said to Pilate, "Please let the other man leave the prison. Do not let Jesus go out." **v15** Then you asked Pilate to kill Jesus. But God caused Jesus to become alive again. He is the person who leads people to true life. We ourselves saw Jesus alive again after he had died. **v16** Now, you know that this man here had weak legs. But Jesus is powerful. Jesus' authority caused this man's legs to become strong. This really happened because Jesus is powerful. You can see that. This man believed that Jesus could cause his legs to become strong. So Jesus made him well. And you yourselves can see that he is walking.

v17 People, listen to what I say. You wanted Pilate's soldiers to kill Jesus. At that time, you and your leaders did not know what you were doing. **v18** Jesus was the Christ, the special person that God would send to the world. A long time ago, many men spoke words from God about him. They told people what would happen to the Christ. "Bad people will hurt the Christ, and he will have a lot of pain", they said. God caused this to become true. **v19** So you must say sorry to God for all the wrong things that you have done. You must say that you will obey God. Then God will *forgive you for all the wrong things that you have done. **v20** Then the *Lord will be near to you and he will cause your *spirit to be strong. God has already chosen Jesus for you. He is the Christ, God's special servant, and God will send him back to you again. **v21** Jesus must stay in *heaven until the day that he will make everything new. Those men who spoke words from God a long time ago told us about this. **v22** "God sent me to you", Moses said to the people a long time ago. "He will also send another man later who will speak his words. This man will be one of your own people. You must listen to everything that he says to you. **v23** God will take out from among his people everyone who does not obey this chosen man. God will then kill them." '

We can read what Moses said to the people in Deuteronomy 18:14-20.

v24 'God gave this same message to Samuel many years ago. God then gave it to many other men who came after Samuel. And they all told us what would happen at this time. **v25** The men who spoke God's words told the people about God's promises. God promised these things to your *ancestors, but you are also included in his promises. God said to Abraham. "By your *family, I will do a good thing for all the people on the earth." '

We can read about God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3.

v26 'God chose Jesus to be his special servant. Then God sent him to you first. God wants you to say sorry to him for all the wrong things that you have done. Then you will obey God because he wants to do good things for you.'

Chapter 4

The *priests put Peter and John in prison

v1 Peter was still speaking to the crowd in *Solomon's Porch and John was standing next to him. Then some *priests, *Sadducees and the leader of the policemen of the Great House of God came towards them. **v2** These people were angry because of the things that Peter and John were saying to the crowd. They had said, 'Jesus became alive again after he had died.' This showed everyone that dead people could become alive again. **v3** So the *priests, *Sadducees and the leader of the policemen took Peter and John away. And they put Peter and John in the prison, because by then it was late. They stayed in the prison all that night. **v4** But many of the people in the crowd had believed Peter's message. Soon there were 5000 men who believed in Jesus.

Peter and John stand in front of the *Sanhedrin

v5 The next day, the leaders of the *Jews met together in Jerusalem. The important *priests and the teachers of the *Law met together with them. **v6** They met with Annas and Caiaphas who were the most important *priests. John and Alexander were also there and they were part of their *family. Other men from their *family were with them. **v7** The men in the *Sanhedrin said to Peter and John, 'Stand in front of us!' They said to Peter and John, 'How did you cause that man's legs to become strong? Who gave you the power and the authority to do it?'

v8 Then the *Holy Spirit told Peter what to say to the men in the *Sanhedrin. So Peter answered them. 'All you men are leaders of the people and you are the most important *Jews. **v9** Today you are asking us questions about the good thing that we did for this man. You are asking us how we caused his legs to become strong. **v10** Now I need to tell you and all the people of *Israel some things. Then you will all know how this happened. This man is standing with us in front of you. His legs are strong because Jesus Christ of Nazareth is powerful. Jesus has the authority to do this. You killed Jesus; you fixed him to a *cross. He died, but after that, God caused him to become alive again. **v11** Men who spoke God's words wrote this about Jesus a long time ago.'

“The people who built the house did not want to use one special stone.

That special stone is the most important one.” ’

We can read this in Matthew 21:42. The *prophet was saying that Jesus is like ‘a special stone’.

v12 Then Peter said, ‘Only Jesus can save people from the result of all the wrong things they have done. There has never been another person in the world that could do this. God has not given any other man the authority to save us.’ **v13** Then the men of the *Sanhedrin saw that Peter and John were very brave. They also knew that Peter and John were not important people. They had not been to a special school. So the men were very surprised about how Peter and John spoke. They also understood that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

The teachers of the *Law went to special schools. At these schools, they learned how to teach the people about God. Peter and John had never been to one of these schools. But they knew how to teach the people about God.

v14 The men of the *Sanhedrin could see the man who had had weak legs. And they could see that now his legs were strong. So they could not think of anything to say to Peter and John. **v15** They *ordered Peter and John to go out of the room. Then the men of the *Sanhedrin talked to each other. **v16** ‘What should we do with these men?’ they said. ‘Everyone who lives in Jerusalem knows about these things. They know that Peter and John did a very special thing for that man. So we cannot say that they did not do it. **v17** But we want to stop more people from joining their group. So we must say to these men, “You must stop using the name of Jesus. You must stop speaking to people about Jesus.” ’

The people in Jerusalem knew that Peter and John had done a good thing for the man. The men in the *Sanhedrin had asked Pilate to kill Jesus for them. Now they were afraid of the people. They were afraid that more people would believe in Jesus. Then those people might fight against them.

v18 Then the men of the *Sanhedrin asked Peter and John to come back into the room. They said to Peter and John, ‘You must not speak or teach people again about Jesus. You do not have any authority.’ **v19** Then Peter and John replied to them. ‘You must decide yourselves which of these things God wants us to do. Either we should obey you, or we should obey God. **v20** We must continue to speak about these things. And we must tell people everything that we have seen and heard.’

v21 The leaders of the *Jews spoke in an angry way to them. ‘Peter and John, you must not speak to the people again about Jesus. If you do not obey us, then we will *punish you.’ Then they let Peter and John go away into the street again. They could not *punish Peter and John because they had helped the man to walk. All the people in Jerusalem were saying to God, ‘You are great and good and powerful.’ **v22** The man whom God had caused to become well was more than 40 years old.

All the *believers pray to God

v23 So the leaders of the *priests and the important *Jews let Peter and John go out into the street again. Immediately, Peter and John went back to meet with all the other *believers. They told them what the leaders of the *priests and the important *Jews had said. **v24** And the *believers listened to what Peter and John told them. Then they prayed together. ‘You are God and you rule over everything’, they prayed. ‘You made the sky, the earth and the sea. You also made everything that is in them. **v25** King David, our *ancestor, was also your servant. You sent your *Holy Spirit to help him. And your Spirit told King David to say,

“People who were not *Jews were very angry.

The people made plans that would not happen.

v26 The kings on the earth prepared to fight.

The rulers of the world met together.

They wanted to fight against the *Lord.

They would also fight against the special servant that God chose.” ’

v27 The *believers continued to pray. ‘Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with other people who are not *Jews. They also met with the people of *Israel who were here in Jerusalem. Together they spoke against Jesus. Jesus was your special servant and they all wanted to kill him. You had chosen him to be the *Christ. **v28** Yes, God, you are powerful. And you had already decided what these men would do to Jesus. So they met together. And they did what you wanted to happen to Jesus. **v29** God, you know how the men of the *Sanhedrin want to hurt Peter and John. You know what they said to your servants. So please help us to speak to the people again about you. And please cause us to become brave. **v30** You are strong and you can cause sick people to become well. And you can also do other powerful things. The people will see these things happen when we speak Jesus’ name. You gave your authority to Jesus. He is very good and he is your servant. So please do these things.’

v31 The *believers finished praying. Then, the house where they were meeting together moved about. God filled them all with his *Holy Spirit. And the *Holy Spirit caused them to be very brave and they spoke to the people about Jesus again.

The *believers give their own things to each other

v32 All the *believers thought about everything in the same way. They did not keep any of their own things for themselves. They let all the other *believers use them. **v33** The words of the *apostles were powerful and they told people about Jesus. ‘After Jesus died, God caused him to live again’, they said. They told them what they had seen. God helped the *believers in many different ways. **v34** They had everything that they needed. Some *believers had land or houses, which they sold. They took the money that they received for these things. They brought it to the *apostles and gave it to them. **v35** Then the *apostles gave the money to any of the *believers who needed it.

v36 There was a *believer called Joseph. He was from the *family of Levi. He was from the island called Cyprus. He helped the other *believers to work well. So the *apostles called him Barnabas. **v37** Barnabas sold one of his fields. And he brought the money and he gave it all to the *apostles.

The *family of Levi were servants in the Great House of God, where they worked for the *priests. We can read about them in Numbers 3:5-13.

Chapter 5

What happens to Ananias and Sapphira

v1 But there was a man called Ananias and his wife who was called Sapphira. Together they sold one of their fields. **v2** Ananias gave part of the money that he received to the *apostles. But he also kept part of the money for himself. Sapphira knew all about what Ananias had done.

Ananias gave his money to the *apostles. And then they would give it to other *believers who needed it. Ananias told the *apostles that he had given them all the money. But this was not true. He had only given them part of it.

v3 ‘Ananias, *Satan wanted you to say something that was not true. And you obeyed him’, Peter said to Ananias. ‘You should not have listened to him. You should not tell the *Holy Spirit something that is not true. You sold your field, but you did not give us all the money. You kept part of it for yourselves.’

The *Holy Spirit had told Peter what Ananias had done. Ananias did not need to tell him.

v4 ‘Before you sold the field, it was yours. And after you sold the field, the money was yours. You should not have decided to say that it was all the money. You did not only tell men something that was not true. You told God something that was not true.’

v5 As soon as he had heard Peter say this, Ananias fell down immediately. And he died. This frightened everyone who heard about it. **v6** Some young men came into the room. They put cloths round Ananias's dead body and they carried it outside. Then they buried it.

v7 About three hours later, Ananias's wife, Sapphira, came into the room to see Peter. Sapphira did not know that Ananias was dead. **v8** Peter asked Sapphira, 'Tell me about this money that you gave us. Was this all the money that you and your husband received for your field?' 'Yes', Sapphira answered. 'That was all the money that we received.'

v9 'It was wrong for you and your husband to do this', Peter said to her. 'You should not have told God's Spirit something that was not true. You knew that this was wrong. The men who have just buried your husband are at the door again now. And they will also carry you out.'

v10 Immediately, Sapphira fell down in front of Peter and she died. Then the young men came into the room. They saw that Sapphira was dead. So they carried her outside and they buried her next to her husband. **v11** All the *believers, and many other people, heard about what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. They were all very afraid.

The *apostles do some powerful things for the people to see

v12 The *apostles were doing many powerful things in front of the people. All the *believers met together in a group. They met outside the Great House of God in a place called *Solomon's Porch.

v13 Those people who were not *believers did not sit with the group. They were afraid to do that. There were many people who said good things about the *believers. **v14** More and more people became *believers and they joined the group. So now many men and women believed in Jesus.

v15 People carried their sick friends into the streets and put them on beds and pieces of floor cloth. They did this because of all the special things that the *apostles were doing. Some people only wanted Peter's shadow to pass over their sick friends.

God's *Holy Spirit caused the *apostles to be powerful. They could cause sick people to become well again. In those days, people thought that shadows were powerful. And they thought that Peter's shadow would cause sick people to become well again.

v16 Many people came into Jerusalem from the small towns near the city. They also brought their sick friends with them. They brought other people too. Bad *spirits inside them were giving them trouble. And God caused all these people to become well again.

The most important *priest puts the *apostles in prison

v17 All the people liked the *apostles. And they liked what the apostles did. The most important *priest, his friends, and some of the *Sadducees, were not happy about this. So they decided to do something about the *apostles. **v18** These important men took hold of the *apostles and they put them in the prison. **v19** But during the night, one of God's *angels opened the prison gates and he led the *apostles out. The *angel said to them, **v20** 'Go and stand in the Great House of God. Tell the people everything about this new way to live.'

v21 The *apostles heard the *angel and they obeyed him. Early the next morning, the *apostles went into the Great House of God. And then they began to teach the people. The most important *priest and his friends *ordered all the important *Jews to meet with them. He wanted all the men of the *Sanhedrin to meet together. Then the men of the *Sanhedrin sent policemen with a message to the prison. They *ordered the soldiers to bring the *apostles to them. **v22** But when the policemen arrived at the prison, they did not find the *apostles there. So then the policemen returned to the men of the *Sanhedrin. And they told them what they had seen at the prison. **v23** 'We arrived at the prison', they said. 'We saw that the soldiers had locked the gates. They were standing at the gates and they were *guarding the prison. But when we opened the gates of the prison, we did not find any of the *apostles inside.'

The soldiers at the gates of the prison did not know that the *apostles were not inside.
--

v24 The leader of the policemen of the Great House of God and the leaders of the *priests heard about this. 'We cannot understand what has happened to the *apostles', they said.

v25 Then a man came and he brought them a message. 'Listen to me!' he said. 'Those men that you put in the prison are now standing in the Great House of God. They are teaching the people.'
v26 The leader of the policemen then took his policemen with him to the Great House of God. He said to the *apostles, 'Come back with us!' The policemen did not hurt the *apostles or tie their arms and legs. They were afraid of the people. They thought that the people might throw stones at them.

v27 The policemen brought the *apostles into the room. They caused them to stand in front of the men of the *Sanhedrin. The most important *priest spoke to the *apostles. **v28** 'We *ordered that you must not teach the people again with the authority of Jesus. But now look at what you have done! Now people all over Jerusalem have heard you teaching. And you have taught the people that we *ordered the death of Jesus.'

v29 Peter and the other *apostles answered. 'We must obey God', they said, 'rather than obey men. **v30** The God of our *ancestors caused Jesus to be alive again. You fixed Jesus to a *cross and killed him. But then, God made him alive again. **v31** God put Jesus next to him at his right side. Jesus is now the leader and the person who saves the people of *Israel. Because of this, he helps those who believe in him. He helps them to say, "We are sorry" to God for all the wrong things that they have done. Then God *forgives them and he helps them to do right things. **v32** We tell people what we have seen and heard. He gives his *Holy Spirit to people who obey him. And the *Holy Spirit also tells people what God has done.'

v33 The men of the *Sanhedrin heard what the *apostles said to them. They were so angry that they wanted to kill the *apostles. **v34** But one man did not agree. He stood up in front of the *Sanhedrin. He was called Gamaliel and he was a *Pharisee, a teacher of the *Law. All the men of the *Sanhedrin liked Gamaliel. And they thought that he was a good man. Gamaliel asked the policemen to take the *apostles out of the room. **v35** When they had gone, Gamaliel spoke to the *Sanhedrin. 'Men of *Israel!' he said. 'Be careful about what you want to do. Think again before you kill these men. **v36** Remember what happened to Theudas a few years ago. That man told everyone, "I am a very important leader." Then about 400 men came to join his group. But then somebody killed Theudas, and his men all went away in different directions. Nobody hears about them now. **v37** Remember what happened to Judas from Galilee. That man appeared when the *Romans were counting the people. A crowd also came to help Judas, but somebody killed him. The men who followed Judas also went away in different directions. Nobody hears about them now either.'

Judas from Galilee would not pay money to the *Roman government. People joined Judas's group and they helped him. They fought the *Roman soldiers. These people were called Zealots. This Judas was not the same man that Jesus chose to follow him.

The *Romans were counting the people when Jesus was born.

v38 'Now this same thing is happening again with these men. So I say that you must not do anything bad to them. Leave them alone. Perhaps these men are doing what some man told them to do. If that is true, then their work will fail. **v39** But perhaps God has said that they must do this work. And if that is true, then you cannot stop them. You might even find that you are fighting against God!' So the men of the *Sanhedrin did what Gamaliel said.

v40 They *ordered the *apostles to return to the room. Then they said to the policemen, 'Hit these men with whips!' Then the men of the *Sanhedrin said to the *apostles, 'You must not teach the people again. Do not use the authority of Jesus.' After that, they let the *apostles go out into the street again.

A whip was a stick with long pieces of strong material fastened at one end. Rulers used it to *punish people who did not obey the *law.

v41 So the *apostles walked away from the men of the *Sanhedrin. They were very happy because they thought to themselves, 'God believes that we are good enough to receive *punishment because of Jesus.' **v42** So they continued to teach the people about Jesus. They spoke every day in people's homes and in the Great House of God. They told the people that Jesus was the *Christ, the special servant of God. And so the *apostles told people all the good news about Jesus.

Chapter 6

The *believers choose 7 other men to do special work

v1 At that time, more and more people every day became *believers in Jesus. Some *Jews in Jerusalem spoke the Greek language. Other *Jews in Jerusalem spoke the Aramaic language. The *Jews who spoke Greek had a problem with the other *Jews. Those who spoke Greek said to the other *Jews, 'We have a problem with you. The husbands of some of your own women have died. They receive money from the *apostles every day to buy food. The husbands of some of the women in our group have also died. But the *apostles do not give these women money every day.'

Greek means the language that people spoke in Greece. Or it means someone who comes from that country. The *Jews who were born in *Israel spoke the Aramaic language.

v2 The 12 *apostles heard about the problem. So they asked all those who believed in Jesus to meet together with them. The *apostles said, 'Our work is to teach people the message from God. It is not right for us to stop doing this work. But we are giving out the money to those people who need things. That is not good.' **v3** So the *apostles said to the *believers, 'Our friends, please choose 7 men from among you. You must know that the *Holy Spirit is living inside each of them. And they must know the things about God very well. We will ask these 7 men to do this work for us. **v4** Then we will have more time to pray. We will also have more time to teach the people the good news about Jesus.'

v5 The whole group was happy with the *apostles' words. So first they chose a man called Stephen. Stephen believed God really well. The *Holy Spirit lived inside him. The *believers also chose 6 other men. These other men were called Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus. Nicolaus was from Antioch. He was not born a *Jew, but he had believed in the God of the *Jews. **v6** The group asked these 7 men to stand up in front of the *apostles. Then the *apostles put their hands on each man. They asked God to help the 7 men with their special work.

v7 So more and more people heard the word of God. The number of *believers in Jesus in Jerusalem continued to grow greater and greater. And many of the *priests also believed in Jesus.

A very large number of *priests lived in Jerusalem and they worked in the Great House of God.

The important *Jews take hold of Stephen

v8 God helped Stephen in special ways and caused him to do powerful things. The people saw Stephen do many special things. **v9** But some men did not like Stephen. They did not like what Stephen taught about Jesus. These men were from one of the *synagogues in Jerusalem that was called the '*Synagogue of the Free Men'. The men from this *synagogue were *Jews from the cities called Cyrene and Alexandria. And some of them were from towns in Cilicia and *Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen.

v10 The *Holy Spirit gave Stephen great *wisdom and caused him to speak in a very powerful way. So Stephen spoke to the men from this *synagogue. And they could not say that he was wrong.

v11 So the men from the *synagogue gave money to some bad men. They paid them to say bad things about Stephen. But those things were not true. So the men who received the money said to the people, 'We heard this man, Stephen, say bad things about Moses and about God.'

v12 People heard what these men said. And then the people became angry. The important *Jews and the teachers of the *Law also heard what these bad men were saying. They all became very angry. So they went up to Stephen and they took hold of him. Then they took him to stand in front of the men of the *Sanhedrin. **v13** The important *Jews and the teachers of the *Law brought in some men to say bad things about Stephen. The things that they said were not true. The men said, 'This man, Stephen, is always saying bad things about the Great House of God. He also says bad things about the *Law that God gave to Moses. **v14** We heard Stephen talk about Jesus, who comes from Nazareth. He said that Jesus will destroy the Great House of God. He said, "Jesus will change all that Moses taught the people." But Moses explained to us the right way to live.'

v15 All the men of the *Sanhedrin looked at Stephen. They saw that his face was very beautiful. And they thought that he was like an *angel.

Chapter 7

Stephen speaks to the men of the *Sanhedrin

v1 The most important *priest said to Stephen, 'These men are saying things about what you have taught. Are these things true?'

v2 Stephen said, 'Men of *Israel, listen to what I say. Our God is completely good and very powerful. He appeared to our *ancestor, Abraham, when Abraham was still living in Mesopotamia. This happened before he went to Haran. **v3** God said to Abraham, "Leave your own country and your own *family. Go to a different country that I will show you." '

The country that God led Abraham to was called Canaan. This country is now called *Israel. Jerusalem city is also there.

v4 'So Abraham left his country where people called Chaldeans also lived. Then he moved to Haran and he stayed there. But when Abraham's father died, God said to Abraham, "Leave this place." So God then sent him to live here, in Canaan. This is where we are now.'

Abraham lived with his father in a city called Ur. Ur was in a country called Babylonia, which is now part of Iraq. Abraham moved with his father from Ur to live in Haran.

v5 'At that time, God did not give Abraham any part of Canaan for his own *family. He did not even give Abraham a very small piece of ground. But at that time, God gave a promise to Abraham. "This land will become your own country", he said. "It will also be your children's country." When God said this to him, Abraham did not yet have any children. **v6** This is what God said to him. "Your *family will live in a country that other people rule. The people in that country will cause your *family to be slaves for 400 years. They will not be kind to them. They will hit your *family to cause them to work more." **v7** Then God said, "I will *punish those people who caused your *family to work so much for them. After I have done that, your *family will leave that country. They will come to this place. And here they will tell me how great and important I am." '

We can read about God's promise to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12. Abraham's *family worked in *Egypt for 400 years. Then Moses led them out of that country to the country which became *Israel. Moses was standing on a big hill called Mount Sinai when God spoke to him. We can read about this in Exodus chapter 3.

v8 'Then God told the people of *Israel that they would be his special people. So that they would remember this special promise, God said, "You must *circumcise all your baby boys."

Abraham became the father of Isaac. And Abraham *circumcised his son, Isaac, when the child was 8 days old. Isaac became the father of Jacob. Isaac also *circumcised his son. Jacob had 12 sons. These sons were the 12 important *ancestors of *Israel. Jacob *circumcised all of them.'

Jacob is also sometimes called *Israel. We can read the names of Jacob's 12 sons in Genesis 35:23-26.

v9 'One of Jacob's sons was called Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved his other sons. For this reason, some of Jacob's sons did not like their brother, Joseph. So one day they took Joseph and they sold him as a slave. The men that bought Joseph took him to *Egypt. There they sold him again and Joseph worked in *Egypt as a slave. All this time, God stayed near to Joseph. **v10** God helped him with all his troubles and God gave him great *wisdom. At that time, *Pharaoh was the king of *Egypt. God helped Joseph so that Pharaoh liked him. He saw that Joseph was very *wise, so he *ordered Joseph to rule *Egypt and everyone in Pharaoh's own house.

v11 Then one year there was no rain. The food plants did not grow in *Egypt or Canaan. So many people did not have enough food to eat. Our *ancestors also had no food. **v12** Jacob heard that *Pharaoh had put a lot of wheat seeds in big huts. So he sent his sons to *Egypt to buy food from Pharaoh. This was the first time that they went to *Egypt.'

Wheat is a plant. People use wheat to make bread.

v13 'Jacob then sent his sons back to *Egypt for a second time. This time, Joseph told them that he was their brother. So then *Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had arrived. He heard about Joseph's *family. **v14** After this, Joseph gave a message to his brothers. "Tell our father that I am here. Say that I want him to come. Say that he should bring all his *family from Canaan to *Egypt", he said to them. There were 75 people in Jacob's *family.

v15 So Jacob went to *Egypt with all his *family. And Jacob and his 12 sons lived there until they died.'

The kings of the country of *Egypt were always called Pharaoh. We can read the story of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37 to 50.

v16 'When the people of *Israel left *Egypt, they carried with them the dead bodies of Joseph and his *family. They took them back to Shechem and they buried them in a hole in a rocky hill. Abraham had bought this hole and rock from the *family of a man called Hamor. He had paid money for it.'

Shechem was the place in Canaan where Jacob and his *family had lived. Jacob and Joseph knew that one day their families would return to Shechem. So Jacob asked his *family to take his dead body back to Shechem. We can read about this in Genesis 49:29-33. Much later, Joseph also asked his *family to take his dead body back to Shechem. We can read about this in Genesis 50:25 and Joshua 24:32.

v17 'Now there were many people in Jacob's *family and they all lived in *Egypt. And soon God would cause his promise to Abraham to become true. **v18** At this time, a different king ruled *Egypt. This king did not know anything about the things that Joseph had done. **v19** He told our *ancestors things that were not true. He also did very bad things to them. He said that they must put their small babies out of their homes. He said that because he wanted the babies to die.

v20 It was at this time that Moses was born. He was a very beautiful baby and his mother kept him safe for three months in her own home. **v21** Then Moses' mother put him out of her home. But *Pharaoh's daughter found Moses and she took him home with her. And he lived with her as her own son.'

We can read this story about Moses in Exodus 2:1-10. The people of *Egypt were called Egyptians.

v22 'The *Egyptians taught Moses all the things that they knew. He knew how to speak well. Moses said and did some very powerful things.

v23 One day, Moses went to see how his own people lived. He was 40 years old when he did this.'

Moses' own people were the people of *Israel. They were called Israelites.

v24 'Moses saw one of the *Egyptians, who was hitting one of the *Israelites. So Moses went to help the *Israelite man and he killed the *Egyptian man. He did this because the *Egyptian had hurt one of Moses' own people. **v25** Moses wanted to help the *Israelites to get away from *Egypt. He thought to himself, "The *Israelites will know what I want to do. They will understand that God will use me to do this." But the people did not understand. **v26** On the next day, Moses saw two *Israelites, who were fighting each other. He wanted them to stop fighting. So he talked to them. "Men", he said, "please listen to me. You are in the same *family. You should not hurt each other."

v27 The man who was hurting the other man pushed Moses away. "You have no authority to rule us", he said to Moses. "You have no authority to be our *judge. **v28** Yesterday you killed an *Egyptian man. Do you want to kill me also?" the man asked Moses.

v29 Moses heard what the man said to him. So Moses ran away. He went to the country called Midian and he built a house there. He lived in it, and he and his wife had two sons.

v30 Moses lived in Midian for 40 years. Then, one day, he was in the *desert near the hill called Mount Sinai. He saw a bush there that was burning. An *angel appeared to him in the fire.'

A *desert is a very dry place. There is not much water there and often there is a lot of sand and stones. There are not many plants, and not many people live there.

v31 'Moses was very surprised by what he saw. He went near to the bush so that he could see it better. Then he heard God speak to him from the bush. **v32** "I am the God of your *ancestors", God said. "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses was very frightened. He was too afraid to look at God, so he turned his face away from the bush.

v33 God said to Moses, "Remove your shoes from your feet, because you are standing in a very special place. This is my own place. **v34** I have seen all the bad things that the *Egyptians are doing to my people. I have heard my people. They are crying. And I have come down here to save them. Come here and listen to me. And then I will send you back to *Egypt." '

We can read this story about Moses in Exodus chapter 3.

v35 Stephen said, 'Moses is the man that the people of *Israel would not accept. "You have no authority to rule us", they had said to him. "You have no authority to *judge us." But God did send Moses to rule the people of *Israel. And he did send Moses to save them from the *Egyptians. God sent the *angel that appeared to him. The angel spoke to him from a bush that was burning. **v36** It was Moses who led the people of *Israel out of *Egypt. The people saw him do many special things. He did some powerful things before the people left *Egypt. He did more special things by the Red Sea. Then he led the people through the *desert for 40 years and he did some more special things there also.'

We can read about this in Exodus chapters 7 to 17.

v37 'It was Moses who said to the people of *Israel, "God will send you a *prophet. He will speak words from God. And he will be one of your own *family, the same as I am one of your own *family." **v38** This is the same Moses that was with the people of *Israel in the *desert. They were near the big hill called Mount Sinai. Moses was also there with our *ancestors when the *angel spoke to him on Mount Sinai. He also received the message from God to give to us. God's message was alive.

v39 But our *ancestors would not listen to Moses or obey him. They did not accept him and they wanted to go back to *Egypt. **v40** So the people said to Aaron, "Please make us some gods that we can carry in front of us. Moses brought us out of *Egypt. But now we do not know what has happened to him." '

Aaron was the brother of Moses.

v41 'It was then that the people made something. It would be their god. It was like a young male cow, and the people made it from gold. They killed some animals and they burned them as a gift for their god. The people then had a big meal together because they were very happy. They thought that they had made something beautiful and strong. And they thought that it was powerful.'

We can read about this in Exodus 32:1-6.

v42 'So then God turned away from his people. He let them speak to the stars instead and he let them make gods of them. The people told the stars how great and beautiful they were. The people who spoke words from God wrote this: "God said,

'People of *Israel, listen!

You did not kill and burn those animals as a gift for me.

When you were in the *desert for 40 years,

v43 you carried the house of the god called Moloch.

You also carried something else to put inside this house.

It was a smaller copy of another god of yours.

It was like the star of your god, Rephan.

You made these gods.

And you told them both how great and important they were.

So now I will send you away from your own country.

You will go to live in Babylon.' " ' "

We can read this in Amos 5:25-27. Amos spoke these words from God.

v44 'When our *ancestors were in the *desert, they carried a special tent with them. It contained God's *Laws. It caused them to remember that God was there with them. God showed Moses how he wanted Moses and the people to make this special tent.'

A tent is a house that someone made out of cloth or animal skins. When people travel, they can carry it from one place to the next. God told Moses how to make this special tent. It was the place where they should meet him. There were two flat stones inside a special box in this tent. God had told Moses about his *Laws when he was on the hill called Mount Sinai. Moses wrote the *Law of God on these two stones. The people of *Israel carried the box with the stones all the time. We can read about this in Exodus chapter 19.

v45 'Our *ancestors gave the special *tent, which contained God's *Law, to their *families. They brought it with them when they came to this country. God gave this country to our people. And he caused the people that were already here to leave. At that time Joshua was their leader. The tent remained in Canaan until David became the king of *Israel.'

Many other people were already living in Canaan. But God had promised to give Canaan to the people of *Israel. Joshua helped the people of *Israel to fight the other people in Canaan. And God helped the people of *Israel to win their fights. So the people who had lived there went away from Canaan.

v46 'God helped King David very much, and King David caused God to be happy with him. So David said to God, "You are the God of our *ancestor Jacob. Can I make a special house where you can live?" **v47** But David did not build the house for God. Solomon built it.'

Solomon was the son of King David. God did not want David to build the house for him. But David brought together the materials to build it.

v48 'But this also is true. Our God is of great importance. He does not live in a house that men have made. Isaiah spoke these words from God:

v49 "The sky is like an important seat. I sit there to rule.

The earth is like a small seat. It is like a place to put my feet on.

You could not build a better house for me to live in.

You could not make a better place for me to sit down.

v50 I have already made all these things myself”, God said to his servant Isaiah.’

v51 Then Stephen said to the people, ‘You people do not want to understand about God. You are the same as the people that do not believe in the true God. And you do not want to listen to God’s true message. So you are the same as your *ancestors. They also did not want to obey the *Holy Spirit. **v52** Your *ancestors did bad things to every person who spoke words from God to them. God’s servants spoke about the completely good Man that God would send. But your *ancestors killed those servants. Now you have given to an enemy this true and special servant that God sent. And you have killed him. **v53** You received God’s *Law, which *angels gave you. But you have not obeyed it.’

The men of the *Sanhedrin kill Stephen

v54 The men of the *Sanhedrin listened to Stephen and they became more and more angry with him. They bit their teeth together because they were so angry. **v55** Then the *Holy Spirit filled Stephen with his authority. Stephen looked up to *heaven and he saw how beautiful God is. God shone like a very bright light. Stephen also saw Jesus, who was standing at the right side of God. **v56** ‘Look’, Stephen said. ‘I can see into *heaven. It is open! I can see the Son of Man and he is standing at the right side of God!’

The Son of Man is another name for Jesus. Jesus often called himself the Son of Man when he talked to the people. Jesus was standing up, ready to receive Stephen.

v57 When the men of the *Sanhedrin heard these things, they shouted very loudly at him. They put their hands over their ears. Then together they ran towards him. **v58** They took hold of Stephen and they pulled him out of the city. They removed their coats. And they gave them to a young man to keep them safe. This young man was called Saul. Then they began to throw stones at Stephen. **v59** While the men were throwing stones at him, Stephen prayed to the *Lord. ‘*Lord Jesus’, he said, ‘please accept my *spirit.’ **v60** Then Stephen fell down on his knees. He shouted loudly, ‘*Lord, please *forgive these men because they are doing this to me.’ After Stephen said this, he died.

Chapter 8

v1 Saul was standing there. And he saw everything that happened. Saul said to the men of the *Sanhedrin, ‘It is good that you have killed Stephen.’

Saul puts some of the *believers in prison

On the same day that Stephen died, the *Jews in Jerusalem began to do bad things to the *believers. All those who believed in Jesus left Jerusalem and they went in different directions. Some of them went to Judea and some of them went to Samaria. Only Jesus’ 12 *apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

Some *believers may have remained for a while. Those who were hurting them continued to do so. That is what we think.

v2 Some good men who obeyed God buried Stephen’s dead body. They were very sad that the people had killed him. They cried with loud voices. **v3** But Saul brought great troubles to the *believers in Jerusalem. He wanted to stop people believing in Jesus. So Saul went from one house to other houses. He pulled the *believers out of their homes and he put both the men and the women into prison.

***Believers teach the people in Samaria the message about Jesus**

v4 The *believers who had left Jerusalem went to many different towns. In each town, they told the people the message about Jesus. **v5** Philip went to the city called Samaria. And there he told the people the message about Jesus Christ. He said, ‘Jesus was the special person that God sent.’

v6 Crowds of people came together in the city to hear Philip speak. They listened to him carefully. And they saw him do many special things. **v7** Some people had bad *spirits, which were living in them. Philip sent the bad *spirits out of them. And as the bad *spirits left them, they made a loud noise. Some other people had weak legs, and Philip caused their legs to become strong again. Some people could not move their arms and legs, but Philip caused them to become well again. **v8** The people in that city were very happy.

The *Holy Spirit lived inside Philip. And he helped Philip to speak in a powerful way. Because of this he could do these special things for the people. People who lived in Samaria were called Samaritans.

v9 A man called Simon lived in Samaria. For a long time, he had used *magic to do many things which surprised the people. The people who lived in Samaria had watched him. And they believed that Simon was a very important person. **v10** The important people in the city had watched Simon carefully. And the people who were not important had also watched him carefully. Everyone had said, 'God has caused Simon to become powerful. He is a god himself.' **v11** Simon had used his *magic for a long time. The people watched him. He often surprised them with the things that he did. So they listened to him carefully. **v12** But then Philip told them the message about how God rules as king. He told them all about Jesus. He said that Jesus was the *Christ, God's special servant. Many men and women believed in Jesus, so Philip *baptised them. **v13** Simon also believed the message and so Philip *baptised him. After this, Simon stayed close to Philip. Simon was very surprised at the many powerful and special things that Philip did.

v14 The *apostles were still living in Jerusalem. They heard that people in Samaria had believed God's word. So the *apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria to talk to the people. **v15** Philip had *baptised those who believed. And when the two *apostles arrived in Samaria, they prayed for these people. They asked God to give the new *believers the *Holy Spirit.

v16 Until then, the *Holy Spirit had not yet come down on these people. Philip had only *baptised them. He used the name of the *Lord Jesus when he did this. **v17** When Peter and John put their hands on the head of each person, they received the *Holy Spirit.

v18 Simon saw that the *Holy Spirit came when Peter and John put their hands on each person. So he said to Peter and John, 'Here is some money. I want to give it to you. **v19** Please cause me also to be powerful. I want to do the same things as you. I want to put my hands on other people, so that they will receive the *Holy Spirit.'

v20 Peter answered Simon. 'I hope that you and your money go to the place of *punishment. It is very wrong for you to think, "I can buy with money this gift which God gives." **v21** No, you cannot work with us because you are not thinking the right things. And you are not obeying God. **v22** Tell God that you are sorry about these bad thoughts. Stop thinking like that and think right thoughts. Say to God, "Please *forgive me that I am thinking these bad things." **v23** I can see that you think wrong thoughts. You do not have what the *apostles have. And so you are angry. *Satan is ruling you like a slave.'

v24 Then Simon said to Peter and John, 'Please, will you pray to God for me? Then none of these bad things that you have spoken about will happen to me.'

v25 Peter and John told the people what Jesus had done for them. After Peter and John had told the people a message from the *Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. And on their way, they talked to people in the villages in Samaria. They taught the people the good news about the *Kingdom of God.

Philip meets a man from Ethiopia

v26 Then God sent an *angel to speak to Philip. He said, 'Philip, prepare yourself and go south to the road between Jerusalem and Gaza. The road goes through the *desert.'

It was about 70 kilometres (45 miles) from Jerusalem to the town called Gaza.

v27 So Philip went and he was walking along this road. And, while he was walking, he met an important man from Ethiopia. This man kept Candace's money safe. Candace was the queen of Ethiopia. The man was travelling home. He had been to Jerusalem to visit the Great House of God. He had thanked God that God was so good and great.

Ethiopia is a country in Africa. People who live there are called Ethiopians. Candace was a special name for their queen. We think that the man from Ethiopia was not a *Jew. But now he obeyed the God of the *Jews. The Ethiopian man was riding in a *cart that horses pulled. The *cart would move about as fast as a man can walk.

v28 Now the man was travelling home again in his *cart. And he was reading from the book that Isaiah the *prophet wrote. **v29** The *Holy Spirit said to Philip, 'Go to that *cart and walk at the side of it.'

v30 So Philip ran to the *cart and he walked close to it. He heard the man. He was reading aloud from the book called 'Isaiah'. So Philip asked the man, 'Do you understand the things that you are reading about?'

v31 The man answered, 'I cannot understand it. First, I need someone to explain it to me.' The man said to Philip, 'Come up here and ride along in the *cart with me.'

v32 The man was reading this from the book of Isaiah,

'People led him like they lead a sheep. It is a sheep that they are going to kill.

He did not make a noise.

He was like a young sheep. It does not make a noise,

when a man cuts the soft hair on its back.

He was like that. He did not say anything.

v33 People *laughed at him.

They said bad things about him. They said things that were not true.

Nobody can talk about his children, because he did not have any.

His life on earth has finished.'

We can read this in Isaiah 53:7-8. Isaiah wrote this about Jesus.

v34 The man from Ethiopia said to Philip, 'Please tell me who the *prophet Isaiah wrote about. Was he writing about himself or about another person?' **v35** Then Philip explained to the man the words that Isaiah had written. He told the man the good news about Jesus. **v36** When they were travelling along the road, they came to some water. The man said to Philip, 'Look, here is a place where there is some water. Please will you *baptise me? Is there anything to stop you?'

v37 Philip said to him, 'I can *baptise you if you really believe in Jesus.' The man said to Philip, 'I really do believe in Jesus. I believe that he is the Son of God.'

Most Bibles do not have 8:37. Perhaps Luke wrote it, but then people lost it. Perhaps Luke did not write it. Then somebody else wrote it after Luke had finished writing the book of Acts.

v38 The man from Ethiopia said to the man who was driving the *cart, 'Please stop the *cart.' Then Philip and the man from Ethiopia went down into the water, and Philip *baptised him. **v39** They both walked out of the water again, and then the *Holy Spirit quickly took Philip away from that place. The man did not see Philip again and the man continued his journey. He was very happy.

Philip *baptised the man from Ethiopia because the man believed the good news about Jesus.

v40 Philip saw that he was now in Azotus. So he walked towards the town called *Caesarea. As he went through the towns on the way to Caesarea, he spoke to people. He told them the good news about the *Kingdom of God.

Azotus was a town 30 kilometres (20 miles) north of Gaza. *Caesarea was an important city in *Israel. The *Roman ruler sometimes lived there. *Caesarea was at the coast and it was an important port. It was 70 kilometres (about 45 miles) from Jerusalem. We think that Philip lived in *Caesarea for many years. Philip was still living in *Caesarea when Luke wrote about him again in Acts 21:8.

Chapter 9

Saul knows that Jesus is his *Lord

v1 All this time, Saul was saying that he wanted to kill all the *believers. So he went to see the most important *priest. **v2** 'Please will you write some letters for me?' he said to the most important *priest. 'I can give one of these letters to each leader of every *synagogue in Damascus. Perhaps some people there believe what Jesus taught. And if I find any people like that, I can take hold of them. I can tie them with *ropes. And I can bring all of them, men and women, back here to Jerusalem.'

Damascus was an important city and it was about 242 kilometres (150 miles) from Jerusalem. It was in Syria and many *Jews lived there. Damascus was one of the ten towns that the *Romans did not rule. These ten towns had their own rulers.

Saul needed letters from the most important *priest. Then he would have authority. He could catch any *believers that he found. People called the early Christians 'Those who followed the Way of the *Lord'.

v3 Saul travelled towards Damascus. He was almost at the city when a very bright light *suddenly appeared. The light came from the sky, and it shone all round him. **v4** Saul fell to the ground. He heard someone say to him, 'Saul, Saul, you are fighting against me.'

v5 Saul asked, '*Lord, who are you?' The voice said, 'I am Jesus. And you are fighting against me. **v6** Now you should get up and you should go into Damascus. Someone will come to you when you arrive in the city. He will tell you what to do.'

v7 The men who were with Saul stood still. They did not speak. They could hear that someone was talking. But they could not see anyone. **v8** Saul stood up and he opened his eyes. But he could not see anything. The men who were with Saul held his hand. And they led him into Damascus. **v9** For three days, Saul could not see anything. And for those three days he did not eat or drink anything.

v10 Ananias was a *believer who lived in Damascus. After Saul came to Damascus, Ananias had a dream. But Ananias was not asleep. In the dream, Jesus spoke to him. 'Ananias', Jesus said. Ananias answered him. He said, 'Master, I am here.'

v11 'Prepare yourself and go to Straight Street', said Jesus, 'A man called Judas lives in that street. Go to his house. And ask for a man from Tarsus called Saul. He is praying to God.'

v12 Saul has also had a dream when he was not asleep. In his dream, Saul saw you, Ananias. You came to see him. You put your hands on Saul so that he could see again.'

v13 '*Lord, many people have told me about this man', Ananias said to the *Lord Jesus. 'They told me about all the very bad things that he has done to your people in Jerusalem. **v14** Now he has come to Damascus. And I know that he has brought letters with him from the leaders of the *priests. They have given him authority over everyone who follows you. He will take them away and he will tie them with *ropes.'

v15 But the *Lord said to Ananias, 'Go and do this for me. I have chosen Saul to work for me. He will tell those who are not *Jews and their rulers about me. He will also tell the people of *Israel about me. **v16** Saul will have many troubles because he will work for me. I myself will tell him about these things.'

v17 So Ananias went to Judas's house. He went into the house, and he put his hands on Saul. Then he said to him, '*Brother Saul, the *Lord Jesus himself has sent me here to see you. It was Jesus that you saw on the road to Damascus. You saw him when you were coming here. He sent me to you so that you will be able to see again. God will also give his *Holy Spirit to you.'

Brother is a name that a Christian may call another Christian.

v18 Then immediately something fell from Saul's eyes. It was like bits of fish skin. Then Saul could see again. So he stood up and Ananias *baptised him. **v19** Then Saul ate some food and he felt strong again.

Saul teaches the people in Damascus the good news about Jesus

Saul stayed with the *believers in Damascus for a few days. **v20** He immediately went to the *synagogues. There, he taught the people about Jesus. 'Jesus is the son of God', he said to them. **v21** Many people heard what Saul said. They were all very surprised and they said to each other, 'This is the same man who was in Jerusalem. We are sure about that. In Jerusalem, he killed people who believed in Jesus. Then he came here to Damascus to take hold of the *believers. He wanted to take them back to Jerusalem. There they would stand in front of the leaders of the *priests.' **v22** But then Saul was even more powerful when he taught the people. He said, 'Jesus is the *Christ, the special person that God sent to us.' Saul said all the right things about Jesus. So the *Jews who lived in Damascus could not answer him. **v23** After many days, the *Jews met together. And they decided to kill Saul.

v24 But someone told Saul about this. The *Jews *guarded the gates of the city all day and all night. They wanted to catch Saul and to kill him. **v25** But one night, Saul's friends helped him to leave the city. They put Saul in a basket, and then they put the basket through a hole in the city wall. Then they let the basket go slowly down to the ground.

Paul's friends tied a *rope to the basket and they held the *rope. Then they let the basket go down to the ground.

Saul returns to Jerusalem

v26 When Saul returned to Jerusalem, he wanted to join the *believers there. But they were afraid of him. They did not believe that he was now a *disciple of Jesus. **v27** A *believer called Barnabas helped Saul. He took Saul to talk to the *apostles. And Barnabas then explained to the *apostles what had happened to Saul. Barnabas said to them, 'Saul saw the *Lord when he was on the road to Damascus. And the *Lord spoke to him. While Saul was in Damascus, he bravely spoke to the people with the authority of Jesus.' **v28** So, after that, Saul stayed with the *apostles. He went round all Jerusalem and taught the people in clear words, with the authority of Jesus. **v29** Saul also talked with the *Jews who spoke the Greek language. He argued with them about Jesus. So they tried to kill him.

Greek means the language that people spoke in Greece. Or it means someone who comes from that country. Saul could speak the Greek language. Most people in that part of the world spoke Greek.

v30 The other *believers heard about this. So they took Saul to *Caesarea, and from there, Saul went away to Tarsus.

v31 Now there were *believers in Judea, Galilee and Samaria, and for some time they had no troubles. The *Holy Spirit helped them to become strong. More people became *believers. And they obeyed God in everything that they did.

Peter travels to Lydda and Joppa

Joppa was a town 45 kilometres (28 miles) from Jerusalem. At that time, it was an important sea port in Judea. Joppa was about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Lydda.

v32 Now Peter often travelled to different places and one day he travelled to Lydda. Some *believers lived there, and Peter went to see them. **v33** In Lydda, Peter met a man called Aeneas. Aeneas could not move his arms and legs, and so he lay on his bed all the time. He had done this for 8 years.

v34 Peter said to Aeneas, 'Jesus will cause you to become well again. So stand up and pick up your things.' Immediately Aeneas stood up. **v35** Many people who were living in Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas. And they began to obey the *Lord.

v36 A woman called Tabitha lived in Joppa. She was a *believer. Tabitha is a name in the *Aramaic language. In Greek, her name was Dorcas. Dorcas is the word for a deer. Dorcas did good things and she helped poor people all the time.

A deer is an animal that eats grass. It is like a goat. It can run very fast. Greek means the language that people spoke in Greece. The *Jews spoke the Hebrew and Aramaic languages.

v37 Dorcas became very ill and then she died. Women washed her dead body and they put it in the room upstairs. **v38** Joppa was not very far from Lydda. And the *believers in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda. So they sent two men to him with a message. 'Please hurry and come to Joppa', they wrote in the message.

v39 Peter prepared himself and he returned to Joppa with the two men. When he arrived at Dorcas's house, the women took him upstairs. Many other women were there. Their husbands had died. They were crying and they all came close to Peter. They showed him the shirts and coats that Dorcas had made. She made them while she was still with them.

v40 Peter put all these women out of the room. He went down on his knees and he prayed to God. Then he turned his head towards the dead body. 'Tabitha', he said. 'Stand up!' She opened her eyes. And when she saw Peter, she sat up. **v41** Peter took her by the hand and he helped her to stand up. Then he asked all the *believers and the other women to come into the room. And he showed them that she was alive again. **v42** The *believers told other people what had happened. So then people all over Joppa heard what had happened. And many more people believed in the *Lord Jesus. **v43** Peter stayed in Joppa for many days. He stayed with a man called Simon. Simon was a tanner.

A tanner is a man who works with animal skins. He makes leather from the skins. And people make things from the leather.

Chapter 10

Cornelius asks Peter to come to him

v1 There was a man who lived in *Caesarea. His name was Cornelius, and he was an officer and a leader of 100 men in the *Roman army. His group in the army was called 'the group from Italy'. **v2** Cornelius was a good man. He and all his *family believed in God and they obeyed him. Cornelius prayed to God every day. And he gave a lot of money to help the poor *Jews in *Caesarea.

Cornelius was not a *Jew. But he believed in the God of the *Jewish people and he obeyed the *Law. His *family and all his servants also prayed to God and obeyed him.

v3 One afternoon, at about 3 o'clock, Cornelius had a special dream. But he was not really asleep. One of God's *angels came in and spoke to him. 'Cornelius!' the *angel said.

It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. That was a time when the *Jews prayed to God. Cornelius was not sleeping when he had his special dream. He was praying when he saw the *angel.

v4 Cornelius looked at the *angel and he was afraid. 'Master, what is it?' said Cornelius.

The *angel said to Cornelius, 'God heard you when you prayed to him. And he has seen all the money that you give to the poor people. You make God very happy, and now he is answering you. **v5** Send some men to Joppa. These men will find a man that is staying there. He is called Simon Peter. Your men must ask him to come here to *Caesarea. **v6** He is staying at the house of Simon the *tanner. Simon's house is at the edge of the sea.'

v7 Then the *angel that spoke to Cornelius went away. Cornelius *ordered two of his own servants, and one of his own soldiers, to come to him. The soldier was a good man who obeyed God. He helped Cornelius and he worked close to him. **v8** Cornelius told these three men what had happened. And he told them what the *angel had said to him. Then he sent them to Joppa.

Joppa was about 50 kilometres (30 miles) from *Caesarea.

v9 The next day, at about noon, Cornelius's men were almost at *Caesarea. At this same time, Peter went up on the roof of the house. He went there to pray to God.

In those days, in *Israel, all the houses had flat roofs. People sat up there after they had finished working. It was quiet there.

v10 Peter felt hungry, and he wanted to eat some food. While someone was preparing a meal for him, Peter had a special dream. But he was not really asleep.

v11 Peter saw *heaven open. He saw something like a large piece of cloth with 4 corners. An *angel held it at each corner. Then they let the large piece of cloth come down to the ground next to Peter. **v12** On the cloth there were many different animals. Some of these were farm animals, and some of them were wild animals. There were also some wild birds and things like snakes on the cloth. **v13** Then Peter heard a voice that spoke to him. 'Peter, stand up and kill an animal. Then you can cook it and eat it.'

v14 'No, *Lord, I would certainly never do something like that', Peter answered. 'I have never eaten an animal that your *law does not let me eat.'

We can read about these *laws in Leviticus chapter 11. The animals on the cloth were only ones that the *Law would not let a *Jew eat.

v15 Then the voice said to Peter, 'God has made these animals good to eat. You must not say that God will not accept you if you eat any of them.'

v16 All this happened three times. And then immediately the cloth went back up into *heaven.

v17 Then Cornelius's men arrived from Joppa. They had found Simon's house. Peter was still thinking about his dream when the men stopped at the gate of the house. **v18** The men shouted out, 'Is a man called Simon Peter staying here?'

v19 Peter was still thinking about his dream. Then the *Holy Spirit said to him, 'Simon Peter, there are three men downstairs. They are looking for you. **v20** Get up and go downstairs to them. I have sent these men to see you. And it will be right for you to go with them.'

v21 Peter went downstairs and said to the men, 'I am the person that you are looking for. Why have you come here?'

v22 'We have come from the officer who is called Cornelius', the men answered. 'He is a good man. He prays to God and obeys him. And the *Jews think good things about him. An *angel from God said that he should send us here. The *angel wanted you to return with us to Joppa. Cornelius wants to hear what you have to say.' **v23** Then Peter said to the men, 'Please come into the house and stay here with us tonight.'

Peter goes to Cornelius's house

The next day, Peter travelled to Joppa with Cornelius's men. And some *believers who lived in Joppa travelled with them. **v24** Peter arrived in *Caesarea the next day. Cornelius knew that they would be arriving. So he was waiting for Peter. The *family and friends of Cornelius were also waiting with him. He had asked them to come to his house. **v25** When Peter arrived, Cornelius went to the door to meet him. Then Cornelius went down on his knees in front of Peter. **v26** But Peter said to him, 'Stand up. I also am only a man.'

v27 Peter went into the house with Cornelius and he continued to talk to him. He then saw that many people were meeting together in the house. **v28** He said to them, 'You people know that *Jews do not usually come into the home of *Gentiles. God's *Law does not let a *Jew have someone who is not a *Jew as a friend. But God has now shown me something different. God has shown me that he accepts all men. And so I must accept everyone.'

Peter now understood more about his own dream. He knew that God was teaching him something. The dream was a message from God about all people. All people can be *believers. People can be either *Jews or *Gentiles. God will accept everyone.

v29 Then Peter said, 'So when you asked me to come here, I was happy to come. I knew that it was right. But why did you ask me to come?'

v30 Then Cornelius said, 'Three days ago, I was in my house. It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and I was praying to God. *Suddenly, a man appeared in front of me. He was wearing white clothes that shone. **v31** "Cornelius", the man said to me. "You have prayed to God. You have done many good things for poor people. Now God wants to answer you. **v32** So send some men to Joppa. These men will find a man called Simon Peter. He is staying there. Your men must ask him to come here to *Caesarea. Simon Peter is staying at the house of Simon the *tanner. His house is at the edge of the sea." **v33** I sent the men immediately and they asked you to come. Thank you that you came. Now we are all here together, and God is here with us. We are waiting to hear what you have to say. Do you have a message from the *Lord for us?'

Peter speaks to Cornelius and to his *family and friends

v34 Then Peter spoke to all the people in the room. 'Now I understand that God accepts all people in the same way', he said. 'And I now know that this is true. **v35** God accepts all people who obey him. He accepts all people who do the right things. It is not important to God which country a person comes from. He accepts them all. **v36** God sent this message to the people of *Israel. He told them the good news about Jesus Christ. Jesus is the *Lord of everything. Because of Jesus, we can be close to God again. **v37** You know about the important things that have happened in Judea. These things began in Galilee after John talked to the people. And he *baptised them. **v38** You know about Jesus. He came from the town called Nazareth. God chose Jesus to do special work for him. He gave Jesus his *Holy Spirit and helped him to do powerful things. Then Jesus went to many places. And he helped many people that the *devil was holding. But Jesus did good things and caused all those people to become well again. He could do that because God was with him.

v39 We all saw everything that Jesus did in *Israel and in Jerusalem. Then the *Jews fixed Jesus to a *cross and they killed him. **v40** But then, three days after that, God caused Jesus to become alive again. He caused him to appear to us. **v41** Not everyone saw him. He appeared only to us because God has chosen us to work for him. So we are telling people about everything that we saw. We ate with him after he became alive again. And we drank with him, too. **v42** Jesus said to us, "Go and tell people the good news about me. Tell them that God has given me authority to *judge all people. I will *judge those who are now alive. And I will *judge those who have died." '**v43** Then Peter said, 'The *prophets who spoke words from God a long time ago, spoke about Jesus. They said, "Everybody has done wrong things. But Jesus will *forgive everyone who believes in him. He will do this by his powerful authority." '

Those who are not *Jews receive the *Holy Spirit

v44 While Peter was still speaking, the *Holy Spirit came down on all the people in the room. They were all listening to the message about Jesus. **v45** The *Jewish *believers who had come from Joppa with Peter were very surprised. They saw that God had also given his *Holy Spirit to *Gentiles. **v46** And the *Jewish *believers in the room heard them speaking in other languages. They were also saying, 'God, you are very great and powerful.'

Then Peter spoke. **v47** 'God has given his *Holy Spirit to these people in the same way that he gave him to us', he said. 'So we should *baptise them with water. That is the right thing to do.' **v48** So Peter asked those who came with him to *baptise the new *believers. They spoke the name of Jesus Christ when they *baptised them. And then Cornelius asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Chapter 11

Peter returns to Jerusalem

v1 The *apostles and the other *believers in Judea heard about what had happened in *Caesarea. They heard that *Gentiles had also believed the message from God. **v2** Peter then returned to Jerusalem. Some *Jews there asked him questions to show that he had done something wrong. These *Jews thought that the *Gentiles must be *circumcised. **v3** So they said to Peter, 'You stayed in the house of men who were not *circumcised. You even ate meals with them!'

The *Jews that spoke to Peter believed in Jesus. They thought that Peter had done a wrong thing. He had stayed with people who were not *Jews. And he had even eaten meals with them. They did not understand all that Jesus had done.

v4 Peter told these *Jewish *believers everything that had happened from the beginning. He explained to them, **v5** 'I was staying in a house in the city called Joppa', he said. 'One day, when I was praying, I had a special dream. I saw something that came down from *heaven. It was like a large piece of cloth with 4 corners. An *angel was holding it at each corner. The cloth came down to the ground next to me. **v6** And I looked carefully at it. And I saw that there were farm animals, wild animals, things like snakes, and birds on it. **v7** Then I heard the *Lord speak to me. The voice said, "Peter, stand up and kill an animal. Then you can cook it and eat it."

v8 I answered, "No, *Lord, I would certainly never do something like that. I have never eaten an animal that your *law does not let us eat."

v9 Then the *Lord said to me, "God has made these animals good to eat. So you must not say that God will not accept you if you eat any of them." **v10** All this happened three times. Then immediately the cloth went back up into *heaven.

v11 At that moment, three men from *Caesarea arrived at the house where I was staying. Someone had sent these men to find me. **v12** The *Holy Spirit said to me, "Get up and go downstairs. I have sent these men to see you. It is right for you to go with them." These 6 *believers from Joppa also went with me to *Caesarea. We all went into Cornelius's house. **v13** Then Cornelius told us what had happened to him. He had seen an *angel. The *angel was standing in his house. And he had said to Cornelius, "Send someone to Joppa. They must find a man who is staying there. His name is Simon Peter. **v14** He will come and speak to you. And his message will show you how God can save you. The message is for you and for your family and for your servants."

v15 While I was telling Cornelius and his family the message, God gave them all his *Holy Spirit. The *Holy Spirit came to them in the same way as he first came to us. **v16** Then I remembered what the *Lord Jesus had said to us. "John *baptised people with water, but God will *baptise you with his *Holy Spirit." **v17** So we are sure about this. God gave those who are not *Jews his gift of the *Holy Spirit. He sent him to them in the same way that he gave him to us. He gave the *Holy Spirit to us when we believed in the *Lord Jesus Christ. And God also wanted to do this for those who are not *Jews. I do not have the authority to be against God.'

v18 The *Jews heard what Peter said. And they told him that he had done the right things. So they said to God, 'You are very great and important. You helped those who are not *Jews. So now they also can tell you that they are sorry. They also can stop doing bad things and they can start to obey you. They also can have true life.'

The *believers go to Antioch

v19 After the men of the *Sanhedrin had killed Stephen, the *believers went away to many different places. Some of them went away as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch. They told people in those places God's message. But they only told the message to the *Jews.

v20 Some of the *believers were from Cyprus and Cyrene. These men went to Antioch. There they told God's message to the *Jews. But they also told it to those who were not *Jews. They told everyone the good news about the *Lord Jesus. **v21** God helped these men and he caused them to become powerful. And many people believed the good news about Jesus. They asked Jesus to become their *Lord.

v22 The *believers in Jerusalem heard about what had happened in Antioch. So they decided to send Barnabas there. **v23** Barnabas arrived in Antioch. Then, he saw that God had done good things for the people. Barnabas was happy about this. So he said to the new *believers, 'Continue to obey the *Lord as you are doing. Obey him in everything that you do and say.' **v24** Barnabas was a good man and God's *Holy Spirit was living inside him. He believed God about everything all the time. Many people became *believers.

v25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. **v26** And when Barnabas found him, Saul returned to Antioch with Barnabas. For one year, Barnabas and Saul met together with the *believers at Antioch. And they taught a large group of *believers all about Jesus. Antioch was the first place where the *believers were called Christians.

v27 At this time, some *prophets travelled from Jerusalem to Antioch.

v28 One of these men was called Agabus. He stood up and he told the people a message from God. The *Holy Spirit told him what to say. 'Soon the food plants will not grow for a time all over the world', he said. And that happened when *Caesar Claudius ruled the *Roman world.

*Caesar Claudius ruled the *Roman world from *AD 41 - 54. The food plants did not grow well in many parts of the *Roman world at that time. In Judea, this happened to the food plants in *AD 46.

v29 All those who believed in Jesus wanted to help the other *believers in Judea. So they decided to send them some of their own money. **v30** The *believers in Antioch gave the money to Barnabas and Saul. So Barnabas and Saul took it and they gave it to the leaders of the *believers in Judea.

Chapter 12

King Herod does bad things to the *believers

v1 At that time, King Herod began to do bad things to some of those who believed in Jesus. **v2** Herod sent his soldiers to kill James with a big sharp knife. James was John's brother.

This was the James who was the son of Zebedee. This happened about 10 years after Jesus became alive again.

v3 The *Jews were happy because Herod's soldiers had killed James. Because the *Jews were happy about it, Herod sent his soldiers to catch Peter. This happened during the week when the *Jews made their bread without *yeast.

This was the week before the *Passover meal. They usually made bread with *yeast, flour and water, but not during that week.

v4 After the soldiers caught Peter, they put him in prison. While he was in prison, 4 different groups of soldiers *guarded him. There were 4 men in each group. Herod wanted Peter to stand in front of a *judge. He could not do this until after this special *Passover week had finished.

Each group of soldiers *guarded the prison for 4 hours. When one group stopped the next group started. They did this day and night.

v5 So Herod kept Peter in prison. But while he was in prison, the *believers prayed to God about him.

Peter walks out of the prison

v6 It was night and Peter was in the prison. Herod wanted him to stand in front of the *judge the next morning. The soldiers had tied Peter with *chains. And then they tied these *chains to two other soldiers. So there was one soldier on each side of Peter while he was sleeping. Some soldiers were *guarding the gate of the prison. **v7** An *angel from God *suddenly appeared in the prison. He stood near to the place where Peter was sleeping. A bright light also shone in the prison. The *angel touched Peter's shoulder. He caused Peter to wake up. 'Hurry, Peter! Stand up!' the *angel said. And immediately the *chains fell off Peter's hands.

v8 Then the *angel said, 'Tie your belt round your clothes and put on your shoes.' So Peter did what the *angel asked him to do. Then the *angel said, 'Put your coat on and follow after me.' **v9** So Peter followed the *angel out of the prison. Peter was not sure that all these things were really happening to him. He did not know if he was dreaming. **v10** Peter and the *angel walked past the first group of soldiers in the prison. Then they walked past the second group of soldiers. After that, they came to the big metal gate in the wall of the prison. The city was outside this gate. The gate opened by itself in front of them. So Peter and the *angel walked out of the prison into the city. They walked together along one street and *suddenly the *angel went away.

v11 Then Peter understood what had happened to him. 'Now I know that these things really have happened to me', he said to himself. 'The *Lord sent one of his *angels to me. The *Jews wanted Herod to do bad things to me. And they thought that he would. But the *angel saved me so that Herod could not hurt me.' **v12** When Peter understood all these things, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John Mark. Many people were meeting together in her house. They were praying.

It is possible that John Mark wrote Mark's book about Jesus. Mary was the aunt of Barnabas.

v13 Peter knocked on the outside door of the house. A servant girl called Rhoda came to the door. **v14** She recognised Peter's voice and she was very happy. But she did not open the door. Instead, she ran back into the house and she spoke to all the people there. 'Peter is standing outside the door', she told them.

v15 The people in the house said, 'You are crazy.' But she told them again that Peter really was there. So then they said, 'It is his *angel.'

At that time, some people believed that everyone had an *angel. These *angels kept them safe.

v16 While all this was happening, Peter was still knocking at the door. Then someone opened the door. And they were all very surprised when they saw him there. **v17** Peter put out his hand so that they would all be quiet. Then he explained to them how the *Lord had brought him out of the prison. 'Tell James and all the other *believers what has happened to me', he said. Then he left the house and he went away to another place.

v18 When it was morning, there was a lot of trouble at the prison. The soldiers at the prison did not understand what had happened to Peter. **v19** Herod said to the soldiers, 'Go and look for Peter!' But they could not find him. Herod asked the soldiers some questions about what they had done. And then he *ordered other soldiers, 'Kill these men who let Peter go.'

After this happened, Herod went away from Judea. Then he stayed in *Caesarea for some time.

King Herod dies

v20 At that time, Herod was very angry with the people who lived in Tyre and Sidon. A group of men from these cities went together to speak to Herod about the problem. A man called Blastus was an important servant in King Herod's house. The group spoke to Blastus and they said, 'Please help us when we speak to Herod.' Then the group went to speak to Herod. 'Please stop being angry with our people. We want to have you as a friend', they said to him. 'We must come to your country to buy our food.'

The *Romans ruled Tyre and Sidon. These were not *Jewish cities. And the people did not want Herod to rule them. But they bought their food from Galilee. And the problem was that Herod ruled in Galilee.

v21 Herod decided on which day he would speak to the people. He put on his beautiful clothes and he sat in his special seat. And then he spoke to all the people. **v22** They shouted, 'This is not a man who is speaking to us. He is a god!'

v23 Herod liked what they said. He did not say that only God is very great and powerful. So immediately the *angel of the *Lord caused Herod to become ill. *Worms ate Herod's body and he died.

Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch

v24 Everywhere that the *believers went, they told people the message from God about Jesus. So people in more and more places heard the message and they believed in Jesus.

v25 Barnabas and Saul finished their work and they returned from Jerusalem. And John Mark came from Jerusalem with them.

Chapter 13

The *believers in Antioch send Saul and Barnabas to Cyprus

v1 There were some *prophets among the *believers in Antioch. And there were also teachers who taught the other *believers more about Jesus. These men were called Barnabas and Simeon. People also called Simeon 'the Black'. There was also Lucius who had lived in Cyrene. Manaen and Saul were also among them. Manaen had lived together with Governor Herod when they were children.

A governor is a very important ruler.

v2 One day, the *believers were meeting together. They were praying. And they were saying how very great and powerful God is. They were also *fasting. While they were together that day, the *Holy Spirit spoke to them. 'I have chosen Barnabas and Saul to do a special work', he said. 'Let them go now for me.'

v3 The men finished talking to God and *fasting. And then, they each put their hands on Barnabas and Saul. Then they sent them to start this new work.

We do not know if only 5 *believers were meeting together. Perhaps all the *believers in Antioch were together at that meeting.

What happened when Barnabas and Saul were in Cyprus

v4 The *Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and Saul away from Antioch. They travelled to the coast, to the town called Seleucia. Then they sailed on a boat from there to an island called Cyprus. **v5** They arrived at a town called Salamis. Then they went into the *Jewish *synagogues and they told the people God's message about Jesus. John Mark went with Barnabas and Saul to help them with their work.

v6 They travelled across the island to a town called Paphos. There they met a man called Bar-Jesus. He was a *Jew and he did things by *magic. He said that he spoke messages from God. But that was not true.

In the Hebrew language 'Bar-' means 'the son of' and 'Jesus' is the word for Joshua. So the name Bar-Jesus means 'son of Joshua'. Most *Jews spoke the Hebrew language. Those who were not *Jews usually spoke Greek. Greek means the language that people spoke in Greece.

v7 The ruler of Cyprus was called Sergius Paulus, and Bar-Jesus was his friend. Sergius Paulus understood things well. So he asked Barnabas and Saul to come to him. He wanted them to tell him the message about Jesus. **v8** In the *Greek language, Bar-Jesus was called Elymas. He did not like what Barnabas and Saul were saying. He did not want Sergius Paulus to believe in Jesus. So he tried to stop him. **v9** Then God filled Saul again completely with his *Holy Spirit. Saul was also called Paul. He looked straight at Elymas and he said, **v10** 'You are like a son of *Satan. You do not like anything that is right. Your mind is full of all the bad things that you do. You are always trying to change the good things that the *Lord says. You say that these things are not true. **v11** The *Lord will now touch your eyes and you will not see the light of day for some time.'

Immediately, something like a black cloud covered Elymas's eyes. When he walked about, he needed someone to lead him by the hand. **v12** Then Sergius Paulus saw what had happened to Elymas. He was very surprised about all the things that Barnabas and Saul taught him about the *Lord. And so he believed in Jesus.

Paul and Barnabas go to Antioch in Pisidia

v13 Paul and Barnabas and John Mark sailed from Paphos. They came to the coast at the town called Perga. John left them there and he returned to Jerusalem. Perga was a town in the part of the country called Pamphylia. **v14** Paul and Barnabas left there. And they went on to a town called Antioch in Pisidia. On the *Sabbath day, they went into the *synagogue and they sat down. **v15** First someone read some of the words from the *Law that God had given to Moses. And he also read some of the words that the *prophets had written down. After this, the leaders of the *synagogue sent a message to Paul and Barnabas. 'Friends', these men said to them, 'we want you to speak to the people. Do you have a message that will help them?'

v16 So Paul stood up and he moved his hand towards them. Then he began to speak to them.

From Acts 13:13, Luke begins to call Saul by his new name, Paul. Paul moved his hand towards them so that the people would be quiet. He wanted them to listen carefully to him.

He said, 'Listen to me, you who, like us, are *Jews. You *Gentiles who pray to our God, listen carefully to me.

v17 The God of the people of *Israel chose our *ancestors. While they were in *Egypt, God caused *Israel to become a large group of people. They were foreign people in *Egypt. But because God was so powerful, he brought *Israel out of *Egypt.'

We can read about *Israel when they left *Egypt in Exodus chapter 12.

v18 'They did not show God that they loved him. But God remained with the people of *Israel in the *desert for 40 years. **v19** God destroyed 7 groups of people in the country called Canaan. And God gave Canaan to his people so that they could live there. **v20** The people of *Israel lived there for about 450 years.

After this time, God caused *Israel to have leaders called *judges. They ruled *Israel until the time when Samuel was alive. Samuel was a *prophet. **v21** Then the people of *Israel asked Samuel to choose a king for them. So God caused them to have Saul as their king. Saul was the son of Kish and he was from the *family of Benjamin. And he ruled *Israel for 40 years.'

We can read about Samuel, Saul and David in 1 Samuel chapters 8 to 31.

v22 'Then God caused Saul to stop ruling *Israel. And God caused *Israel to have David as their king instead. God said this about David: "I have watched David, the son of Jesse. He thinks like I think. So I know that he is the right kind of man. And he will do everything that I want."

v23 Jesus was from the *family of David. It is Jesus who saves the people of *Israel. God had promised this to the *ancestors of *Israel. **v24** Before Jesus began his work, John spoke to many of the people of *Israel. He said, “You should stop doing wrong things. You should say sorry to God and then you should obey him. If you do that, I will *baptise you then.” ’

We can read about John the *Baptist and his work in Luke chapter 3.

v25 ‘When John had almost finished his work, he said to the people, “Perhaps you think that I am God’s special man. I am not that man. But listen! He is coming after me. And I am not good enough to remove his shoes.” ’

It was the job of servants to remove their master’s shoes.

v26 ‘I speak to you people here, who, like us, have Abraham as your *ancestor. I also speak to you, who are not *Jews. You also know that God is powerful and important. God gave us this message for all of you. He tells us how he will save us. **v27** The people who live in Jerusalem, and their leaders, did not understand about Jesus. He came to save us. But the people in Jerusalem said that Jesus had done wrong things. And they said that he should die. So they caused the words of the *prophets to become true. And someone reads these same words to you every *Sabbath day. **v28** They could not find any reason to kill Jesus. But they said to Pilate, “Your soldiers must kill him.” **v29** So the soldiers did everything that the *prophets wrote about. Then some of Jesus’ *disciples took him down from the *cross and they buried him. **v30** But then God caused Jesus to live again. **v31** So for many days after this, he appeared to his *disciples. He showed himself to those people who had earlier travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They saw everything and now they can tell the people of *Israel about it.’

We can read about what happened to Jesus in Jerusalem in Luke chapters 22 to 24.

v32 ‘We have come here to tell you this good news. God promised our *ancestors that he would do these things for us. **v33** And now he has also done these things for everyone. He has caused Jesus to live again. We can read about this in the second Psalm. God says,

“You are my son.

Today, I have become your Father.”

v34 God caused Jesus to live again so that *worms did not destroy his body. And he will not die again. This is what God said about it.

“I will also do the good things for you
that I promised to David.”

v35 God also says this in another Psalm.

“Your servant who loves you will not remain dead.
You will not let *worms eat his body.”

v36 While David was king, he worked well for God. Then David died and men buried him next to his *ancestors. *Worms ate his body. **v37** But God caused Jesus to become alive again. He did not die again and *worms did not eat his body.

v38 My friends, I want all of you to know this. We have all done many bad things. I am telling you this message about how God *forgives us. God *forgives us because of what Jesus did. **v39** God can cause everyone to be right with him. Believe in Jesus. And then God will *forgive all the bad things that you have done. The *Law that God gave to Moses cannot do this for you. It cannot make you free. **v40** Be careful then! The *prophets spoke about what would happen. So do what I am saying. And then these things will not happen to you. This is what the *prophets said:

v41 “Listen to me! Many of you speak bad things about what God has said.

Be surprised at what I do. And then die.

I am working now, while you are still alive.

But still you will not believe what I am doing.

Even if someone explains everything to you, you will not believe.” ’

v42 The people spoke to Paul and Barnabas while they were leaving the *synagogue. ‘Please return on the next *Sabbath day’, they said. ‘Then you can tell us more about what you have already told us.’ **v43** When the meeting in the *synagogue finished, many people followed Paul and Barnabas. These people were *Jews and also some who believed in the God of the *Jews. Paul and Barnabas spoke to them. ‘You believe that God has done good things to help you’, they said. ‘You should continue to believe that God will help you.’

v44 On the next *Sabbath day, almost everyone in the town came to hear God’s Message. **v45** But there were some *Jews who saw the crowd. All the people wanted to listen to Paul and Barnabas more than they listened to those *Jews. So those *Jews were angry with the people. And they said bad things about what Paul said. They also said bad things about Paul.

v46 But Paul and Barnabas were not afraid of them. They said to the *Jews, ‘It was right, that we first tell you the message from God. But you say that the message is not true. You did not believe God’s word. And you did not believe that God would give you true life. So we will leave you now. And we will give the message to those who are not *Jews.

v47 We will do that because the *Lord has given us this message for you. He said to us,

“I have sent you out to be like a light to those who are not *Jews.

You must tell people everywhere in the world how God saves people.” ’

v48 The *Gentiles were very happy when they heard this. And they thanked the *Lord for the message about Jesus. The *Lord had chosen some people to have true life. And those people believed his message.

v49 Many people in that part of the country told each other the message about Jesus. **v50** But the *Jews spoke to the important men in the city. They also spoke to many rich women who were not *Jewish. These women believed in the God of the *Jews. But the *Jews caused all these people to think bad thoughts against Paul. So these rulers started to say bad things about Paul and Barnabas. They caused Paul and Barnabas to leave that part of the country. **v51** Paul and Barnabas cleaned the dirt off their feet. This showed to the people in that town that they had refused the message from God. And then they travelled to the town called Iconium. **v52** Those who believed in Jesus in Antioch in Pisidia were very happy. The *Holy Spirit completely filled them.

Chapter 14

Paul and Barnabas tell the good news about Jesus to the people in Iconium

v1 Paul and Barnabas did the same in Iconium as they had done in Antioch in Pisidia. Paul and Barnabas went to the *synagogue. They told the people their message about Jesus and many *Jews and *Gentiles believed it. And these people became *disciples of Jesus. **v2** But some of the *Jews refused to believe their message. These *Jews caused some of those who were not *Jews to think bad thoughts against the *believers. So they began to say bad things about them. **v3** So Paul and Barnabas stayed in Iconium for a long time and they did many powerful things. They were not afraid to tell the people everything about Jesus. And the *Lord showed the people that the message was true. He helped Paul and Barnabas to do powerful things. **v4** The people in the city were in two groups. Some of them believed the message from Paul and Barnabas. But some of them joined the *Jews who did not believe. **v5** Then both the *Jews and the *Gentiles and all their leaders wanted to hurt Paul and Barnabas. They wanted to throw stones at them until they died. **v6** Paul and Barnabas heard about what these people wanted to do to them. So they went away quickly to Lystra and Derbe, where they were safe. These places were cities in the part of the country called Lycaonia. They also went to other places near Lycaonia. **v7** In all these places, they told people the good news about Jesus.

This is what happened in Lystra and in Derbe

v8 There was a man who lived in Lystra. He could not walk because his feet were not strong. His feet had been weak since he was born. So he had never walked. **v9** He was sitting near to Paul and he was listening to Paul's words. Paul could see that the man believed his message. Also the man believed that he could become well. And Paul knew that. **v10** So Paul looked at the man and Paul said loudly, 'Stand up on your feet!' So the man jumped up and he began to walk about.

v11 The crowd saw what Paul had done. So they began to shout in the language of the people who lived in Lycaonia. 'The gods have become like men and they have come down from the sky to us', they said. **v12** They called Barnabas by the name of their god Zeus. They called Paul by the name of their god Hermes because he usually spoke to the people.

Zeus and Hermes were the names of two Greek gods. Zeus was the leader of the Greek gods. And Hermes was the god who gave messages from Zeus to the people. Greek means that they came from the country called Greece.

v13 The house where people prayed to Zeus was very near to the town. The *priest who worked for Zeus brought animals to the gate of the house. He also brought some flowers. The *priest and the crowd thought that Paul and Barnabas were their gods. And so they wanted to kill these animals as gifts to Paul and Barnabas.

v14 Then Paul and Barnabas heard what the people were doing. They tore their own clothes and they ran into the middle of the crowd.

Paul and Barnabas tore their own clothes. Paul and Barnabas were showing the people that they were doing the wrong thing.

v15 'Stop! You people should not do this', they shouted. 'We are only men like you. We are human; we are not gods. We came here to tell you the good news about Jesus. God wants you to stop doing this. Your gods have no value. Our God is alive. And he wants you to obey him. He made the sky, the earth and the sea, and everything else that is in them.

v16 Before this time, God let all people do what they wanted to do. **v17** But even then, God showed everybody that he was there. He has shown this by all the good things that he does for people. He causes the rain to fall from the sky. He causes the food plants to make their fruit and seeds at the right time. He gives you food and he causes you to be happy.' **v18** Paul and Barnabas said this to stop the people. But they still wanted to kill the animals as gifts for Paul and Barnabas.

v19 Some *Jews had travelled from Antioch in Pisidia and from Iconium. And they caused the people to believe them instead of Paul. Then those *Jews threw stones at Paul and they pulled him out of the town. They thought that he was dead. **v20** But the *believers came and they stood round him. Then Paul stood up and he went back into the town. The next day, he and Barnabas went to Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch in Syria.

v21 Paul and Barnabas told the people in Derbe the good news about Jesus. Many people there believed what they taught. Then Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra and from there they went back to Iconium. They also returned to Antioch in Pisidia. **v22** They taught the *believers in these towns more about Jesus. They said to them, 'Continue to believe in Jesus! All people who do believe will have difficult times in their lives. That will happen until God rules the earth.' **v23** Paul and Barnabas chose leaders from each group of *believers. Paul and Barnabas prayed and they *fasted. And then they chose them. So, Paul and Barnabas asked Jesus to help these leaders and to keep them safe. That was because these leaders believed in him. **v24** After Paul and Barnabas travelled through Pisidia, they arrived in Pamphylia. **v25** There they taught the people in Perga the message about Jesus. Then they went down to the town called Attalia.

v26 From there they sailed back to Antioch. It was in Antioch where they had begun their work. The *believers in Antioch had asked God to keep Paul and Barnabas safe as they travelled. And now Paul and Barnabas had finished their work. **v27** When they arrived, they sent a message to all the *believers in Antioch. 'Come and meet together with us!' they said. So the *believers all met together with them. Then Paul and Barnabas told them about their journey. They told the *believers what God had done by them. They said, 'God has made it possible for people who are not *Jews to believe in Jesus.' **v28** Paul and Barnabas stayed with the *believers in Antioch for a long time.

Chapter 15

Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem

v1 Some men came from Judea to Antioch. And they began to teach the *believers there. 'God cannot save you unless someone *circumcises you', they said. 'This is in the *Law that God gave to Moses.' **v2** Paul and Barnabas argued with these men for a long time about this. So the *believers in Antioch said, 'Let Paul, Barnabas and some of the other *believers go to Jerusalem. They should meet with the *apostles and leaders of the *believers there. Then they can talk to them about *circumcising new *believers who are not *Jews.' **v3** The Christians at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. They travelled through Phoenicia and Samaria. And they spoke to the *believers in that part of the country. They said, 'People who are not *Jews are also obeying God.' They were all very happy to hear this news. **v4** When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem they met with the Christians. And the *apostles, all the *believers and their leaders were happy to see them. Paul and Barnabas told them all about how God had worked by them.

v5 Some of those who believed in Jesus were also part of a group of *Pharisees. They stood up and spoke. They said, 'We must *circumcise *Gentiles when they become *believers. They must also obey the *Law that God gave to Moses.'

v6 So the *apostles and the leaders of the *believers met to talk about this problem.

Peter talks to the *apostles and the leaders of the *believers in Jerusalem.

v7 After they had all talked about this problem for a long time, Peter stood up. He said, 'My friends, you know that a long time ago, God chose me from among this group. He wanted me to teach those who are not *Jews the good news about Jesus. God wanted them to hear the message and to believe in Jesus. **v8** God knows what people believe. He gave his *Holy Spirit to those who are not *Jews. He sent him to them in the same way as he sent him to us. So he accepted those who are not *Jews. And he was showing that to us. **v9** He saw no difference between them and us. He caused them to become right with himself because they believed in him.

v10 God has shown us what to do. Let us not make God angry with us. We do not understand why you now want us to do something different. You will be causing problems for the *Gentiles who believe God's message. All these same *laws were too difficult for us and for our *ancestors to obey. **v11** It should not be like that for those who are not *Jews. We are *Jews. And we believed God's message and Jesus saved us. Jesus did this because he was kind to us. And he saves those who are not *Jews in the same way.'

v12 Now everybody in the group was quiet while Barnabas and Paul talked to them. They said, 'God worked by us. And he did many powerful things for those who are not *Jews.' Then they told the group all about these powerful things. **v13** When they had finished speaking, James spoke to the group. 'Listen to me, my friends!' he said. **v14** 'Simon Peter has just explained to us what happened first. He showed how God loved the *Gentiles. God chose a group of people from among the *Gentiles for himself.

v15 These words that the *prophets wrote agree completely with this. The *Lord said,

v16 "Later I will return.

People have destroyed the *kingdom of David, but I will raise it up again.

I will make it strong again.

v17 The other people in the world will then look for the *Lord.

Also the *Gentiles that are called by my name will look for me.

v18 The *Lord, who is doing all these things, says that.” ’

In verse 16, the ‘*kingdom of David’ means the ‘*family of David’. Jesus was also in the *family of David.

v19 James then spoke again. ‘This is what I think’, he said. ‘I think that we should do this: Many who are not *Jews are now obeying God. We should not cause troubles for them and we should not make it difficult. **v20** Instead of that, we should write a letter to them. We should say to them, “Someone may kill an animal and give it to his god. Then, do not eat the meat. The *Lord says that it is not right for you to eat it. Also, do not have sex with anyone that is not your wife or husband. Someone may tie a *rope round the neck of an animal to kill it. Do not eat that meat. The blood of the animal has remained in the meat. Do not eat blood.” **v21** I say this because, for many years, someone has read God’s *Law in the *synagogues. On every *Sabbath day, in every town, someone teaches the people the message from Moses.’

We can read about all this in Leviticus 18:6-23 and 17:10-12.

The *believers in Jerusalem write a letter to the *Gentiles

v22 So then the *apostles, the whole *church and their leaders decided to choose some men. They chose them from their group. These men would go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Silas and Judas, who was also called Barsabbas. Everyone thought good things about both these men. **v23** They sent this letter to Antioch with Judas, Silas, Barnabas and Paul.

‘We, the *apostles, all the other *believers and their leaders say hello to you. We say hello to all of you who live in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We have written this letter to all our *Gentile friends there who believe God’s message about Jesus.’

Antioch was a city, but Syria and Cilicia were large parts of the country.

v24 ‘We have heard that some men from our group have confused your thoughts. The things that they said were not right. So you were not happy about it. But they did not have our authority to say those things to you. **v25** So we all met together and we agreed about these things. We have chosen some men to bring this message to you. And they will travel with our good friends Barnabas and Paul. **v26** These two men, Barnabas and Paul, have worked for the *Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that, other people have nearly killed them. **v27** So we are sending Judas and Silas to you. And they will tell you the same things that we have written in this letter. **v28** We have agreed with the *Holy Spirit about these rules. We do not want to cause problems for you. So these are the only things that we want you to do. **v29** You should not eat any of the meat from animals that people killed as gifts to their gods. And you should not eat any blood. People sometimes tie a *rope round the neck of an animal to kill it. You should not eat the meat from an animal like that. And you must not have sex with anyone that you are not married to. If you do not do any of these things, you will do well. Goodbye.’

v30 So the *apostles and other *believers sent these 4 men to Antioch. When they arrived there, they said to the *believers, ‘Please come and meet together with us.’ And when they all met together, Silas and Judas gave them the letter. **v31** The *believers in Antioch were very happy when they read the letter. They said, ‘This message helps us to obey God.’ **v32** Judas and Silas were both *prophets. They spoke a message from God to the *believers in Antioch. They spoke to them for a long time. Their words helped them to obey God and not to be afraid. **v33** They remained in Antioch for some time. Then the whole group of *believers in Antioch sent Judas and Silas back to Jerusalem. The *believers spoke kind words to them as they left. **v34** [But Silas decided to stay there.]

Many Bibles leave out Acts 15:34.

v35 Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch for a longer time. And, together with many other *believers, they told people the message about Jesus. They also taught the people more about Jesus.

v36 After some time, Paul spoke to Barnabas. 'Let us go back and visit the *believers in all those different cities. We can go to all the places where we taught people about Jesus. We can see how they are.' **v37** Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. **v38** But Paul said to Barnabas, 'John Mark did not remain with us until we had finished our work. So it is not a good thing to take him with us now.' John Mark had turned back and he had left Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia. **v39** Paul and Barnabas argued about whether they should take John Mark with them. They could not agree, so they went in different directions. Barnabas took John Mark with him and he sailed to Cyprus. **v40** And Paul chose Silas to go with him. The *believers in Antioch asked God to keep Paul and Silas safe. **v41** They travelled together through Syria and Cilicia. And Paul taught the *believers in those parts of the country. Then they would be strong in what they believed about Jesus.

Chapter 16

Timothy travels with Paul and Silas

v1 So Paul travelled on to Derbe and Lystra. A man called Timothy lived in Lystra. He was a *believer and Timothy's mother was also a *believer. She was a *Jew, but Timothy's father was a Greek. **v2** All those who believed in Jesus in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy. **v3** Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him. All the *Jews in Lystra and Iconium knew that Timothy's father was a Greek. So Paul *circumcised Timothy.

Timothy's father was not a *Jew. So nobody had *circumcised Timothy when he was a baby. Paul wanted Timothy to go with him to help him with his work. Paul wanted to tell *Jews the good news about Jesus. These *Jews knew Timothy. They knew that his father was not a *Jew. This is why Paul *circumcised Timothy. If he had not done this, the *Jews would not have accepted him. A person from the country called Greece is called a Greek.

v4 Paul, Silas and Timothy travelled through many towns. And they read to the *believers the letter from the *apostles and other *believers in Jesus in Jerusalem. They said, 'This letter tells you what you must not do. The *apostles and leaders of the *believers in Jerusalem agreed about these rules. You should obey these rules.' **v5** So Paul helped the groups of *believers in these towns to believe and to obey Jesus. More and more people began to believe in Jesus every day.

Paul has a dream

v6 The *Holy Spirit did not let Paul and his friends teach the people in *Asia. So Paul, Silas and Timothy travelled through the country between the *regions called Phrygia and Galatia. **v7** They arrived at the *region called Mysia. Then they wanted to go into the *region called Bithynia. But the *Holy Spirit did not let them go there. **v8** So they did not stop travelling and they went through Mysia. They went down to the city called Troas. **v9** Paul had a dream during the night when they arrived in Troas. In the dream, he saw a man from the country called Macedonia. The man was standing next to him. This man said, 'Please, please come across to Macedonia and help us.' **v10** After Paul had dreamed this we prepared ourselves for the journey. We decided that God wanted us to go to Macedonia. He wanted us to tell the people there the good news about Jesus.

Luke met Paul, Silas and Timothy in Troas.

Lydia becomes a *believer

v11 We sailed from Troas. The boat took us across the sea to a town called Samothrace. And then, the next day, we went to a port called Neapolis. **v12** We then walked away from the coast to Philippi. This city is the most important city in the country called Macedonia. The *Romans ruled the people who lived in Philippi. And we stayed a few days in that city.

Macedonia was in 4 parts. Philippi was in one of these parts.

v13 On the *Sabbath day, we went out of the city gate and we walked at the side of the river. We thought that the *Jews would have a special place there. We thought that they would meet there to pray. We did see a group of women. So we sat down and we talked to them.

Not many *Jews were living in Philippi, so they did not have a *synagogue. Instead, they met at the side of the river to pray together.

v14 One of the women was called Lydia and she listened to us. She was from the city called Thyatira. And she sold expensive dark red cloth. Lydia knew that God was very powerful and important. The *Lord helped her to understand Paul's message. So she believed the things that he said.

Lydia's parents were not *Jews.

v15 Then Paul and his friends *baptised Lydia and all the people who lived in her house. After this, Lydia spoke to us. 'If you think', she said, 'that I really believe in the *Lord, then please stay in my house.' And so we went and we stayed there with her.

The *Roman rulers put Paul and Silas in prison in Philippi

v16 One day, we were going to the place where the *Jews prayed to God. On the way there, a slave girl saw us. A bad *spirit was living inside her. This bad *spirit told her what would happen soon. People gave her masters a lot of money when she told them these future things. **v17** She followed Paul and us, and she was shouting, 'These men are servants of the most important God! They are telling you how God can save you!' **v18** The slave girl followed us and she shouted this for many days. But Paul was not happy about it. So he turned round and he spoke to the bad *spirit. 'I am using the authority of Jesus to *order you. Leave this woman.' The *spirit left her immediately.

v19 Her masters understood that the girl could not get money for them now. So they took hold of Paul and Silas and they pulled them to the centre of the city. They brought them in front of the men with authority in the city. **v20** The masters brought them so that the *Roman rulers would *judge them. They said, 'These men are *Jews and they are causing problems in our city. **v21** They are teaching us to do wrong things. These things are against the rules of our city. We are *Romans and so we cannot do them. And we cannot agree that these things are right.'

v22 A crowd there also said bad things about Paul and Silas. So the men with authority said to their soldiers, 'Tear the clothes off Paul and Silas. Then hit them with sticks!' **v23** The soldiers hit them many times and then they pushed them into the prison. The men with authority *ordered the prison *guard. 'Lock the door carefully', they said, 'so that these men cannot leave.'

The prison *guard should not let those in the prison run away. If they did run away, the leader of the soldiers would kill the *guard.

v24 The prison *guard heard this. So he put Paul and Silas in a room deep inside the prison. And he put their feet between big heavy pieces of wood so that they could not move their legs.

v25 In the middle of the night, Paul and Silas were praying and they were singing songs to God. The other people in the prison were listening to them. **v26** The ground *suddenly moved under them. The ground moved about under the prison. Immediately, all the prison doors opened and the *chains fell off all the people in the prison. **v27** The prison *guard woke up. He saw that the prison doors were open. So he thought that all the people from the prison had gone outside. He decided that he should kill himself. So he pulled out his long sharp knife.

The *guard thought that the people in the prison had run away. He knew that this would be a very bad thing for him. If this had happened, the men with authority would kill him. So he decided to kill himself.

v28 Paul shouted to him as loudly as he could. 'Do not hurt yourself! We are all still in here!'

v29 The *guard said, 'Bring me a light.' Then he ran into the room where Paul and Silas were. He was very frightened and he went down on his knees in front of them. **v30** Then the *guard led Paul and Silas out of the room. He said to them, 'What must I do so that God will save me?'

v31 Paul and Silas said, 'Believe in the *Lord Jesus and then God will save you. He will save you and your *family.' **v32** Then Paul and Silas spoke to the man and to all the people in his house. They told them all the good news about Jesus. **v33** So that same hour of the night, the man took them. He led them into another room and he was kind to them. He washed the parts of their bodies that the soldiers had hurt. Then immediately after this, Paul and Silas *baptised the man and his *family. **v34** The man took Paul and Silas into his house. Then he gave them some food. The man and his *family were very happy because now they all believed in God.

v35 The next morning, the men with authority sent their officers to the prison with a message. These officers said to the prison *guard, 'Let those men go.' **v36** The *guard told Paul, 'The men with authority sent a message to me. They said, "Let Paul and Silas go out of the prison." So now you can leave the prison. Nobody will hurt you any more.'

v37 But Paul spoke to the officers who had brought the message. He said, 'The men with authority did not say that we had done anything wrong. But they *ordered their soldiers to hit us with sticks. All the people were watching them when they did that to us. We are special people of Rome but they pushed us into prison. Now they want us to leave the prison. They want this to be a secret. But we will not let that happen. The *Roman officers have authority. They must come here to the prison themselves and they must let us out.'

v38 So the officers returned to their masters with the message from Paul and Silas. The *Roman officers heard that Paul and Silas were special people of Rome. And then they were afraid. **v39** So they went to see Paul and Silas in the prison. 'We are sorry about what we did to you', they said to them. Then they led Paul and Silas out of the prison. The men with authority then said to them, 'Please leave the city now.' **v40** Paul and Silas walked away from the prison and they went to Lydia's house. There they met many *believers. Paul and Silas said good words to them. Then Paul and Silas left the city.

Luke did not go with Paul and Silas when they left Philippi.

Chapter 17

What happened to Paul in Thessalonica

v1 Paul, Silas and Timothy continued their journey. They went through the two cities called Amphipolis and Apollonia in the country called Greece. Then they arrived in a city called Thessalonica. There was a *synagogue for the *Jews in that city. **v2** Paul went to this *synagogue, as he usually did. On three *Sabbath days, he talked to the people in the *synagogue. He talked with them about all the things that the *prophets had written down. **v3** He explained to the people about all these things. 'I can show you that all these things are true', he said. 'God decided to send the *Christ to you. And the *prophets wrote that he would die. After that, God would cause him to live again. I have now told you all about Jesus Christ. He is the man whom God sent to you.' **v4** Some people believed the message and they joined with Paul and Silas. A large number of Greeks also joined this group. These Greeks were not *Jews. But they already knew that God was powerful and important. Many important women in the city also joined the group.

A person was called Greek if he or his *family had been born in Greece. Or perhaps they came from Greece.

v5 The *Jews in the city were angry because many people joined the group with Paul and Silas. So the *Jews found some people who often caused trouble in the city. They asked these bad people to come together in an angry crowd. The *Jews and the crowd made a lot of noise in the streets of the city. They broke down the door of Jason's house because they wanted to find Paul and Silas. They wanted to bring them outside to the crowd. **v6** But the *Jews and the crowd did not find Paul and Silas. So they pulled Jason and some other *believers to the men with authority in the city. The *Jews shouted, 'These men have caused troubles everywhere. And now they have come to our city. **v7** Jason has let them stay in his house. They speak against the *laws that *Caesar has given to us. And they say that there is another king. This other king is called Jesus.'

At that time, *Caesar was called Claudius. Claudius ruled the *Roman world from *AD 41 to AD 54.

Most of the people that lived in Thessalonica were Greek. They were not *Jews. But some of them had heard about the God of the *Jews and they believed in him. Greek means someone who comes from Greece.

v8 When the *Jews shouted all this, the crowd shouted loudly. The men with authority in the city also became very angry. **v9** The men with authority in the city said that Jason and the other *believers must give them some money. And then they could all go. The men with authority let them go after they had paid the money.

Many people in Berea believe Paul's message

v10 As soon as it was dark, the *believers in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived in that town, they went to the *synagogue of the *Jews. **v11** The people at the *synagogue were better people than those in Thessalonica. They were quick to listen to Paul's message. They wanted to understand the message more than the people in Thessalonica. They wanted to hear the message very much. Every day the people read the words in God's book. They wanted to see if Paul's message was really true. **v12** Many of the people in the *synagogue believed the good news about Jesus. Many *Greek men and important *Greek women also believed the message.

v13 But then the *Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea. And they heard that he was teaching the people about Jesus. So they came to Berea. They talked to some of the people there and they caused the people to become an angry crowd. **v14** Immediately, the *believers in Berea sent Paul with some other men to the coast. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. **v15** When Paul left Berea, some men went by boat with him. They went with him as far as the city called Athens. Before these men returned to Berea, Paul gave them a message for Silas and Timothy. He said, 'Please come quickly and meet me here in Athens.'

Paul visits Athens

v16 While Paul was waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy, he was sad and angry. He saw that the people in the city had many gods. **v17** So Paul went to the *synagogue every day and he talked together with the *Jews there. And he also talked with those *Gentiles who prayed to God. He also went to the market place in the city and he talked with the people there. **v18** There were also some Epicurean and Stoic teachers in Athens who talked with Paul. 'Who is this man? He knows nothing', some of these teachers said. 'He thinks that he knows everything.' But some of these teachers said, 'We think that he is talking about the gods of foreign people.' They said this because Paul was talking about Jesus. He had also talked about the time when God will cause dead people to live again.

The Epicureans were *disciples of Epicurus. He taught that there were no gods. Or that the gods were not near to the people.

The Stoics were *disciples of Zeno. He taught that everyone should be good to themselves. They should also do the right things for other people. He taught that God was the *soul of the world.

v19 So these men asked Paul to go with them. They asked him to stand in front of the city's important men on the hill called Areopagus.

These important men were the rulers of Athens and they met together on the Areopagus hill. They decided what should happen in the city.

v20 The important men said, 'We have never heard until now about the things that you are teaching us. Please explain them to us. Then we will understand them.' **v21** (People who lived in Athens talked about many different things. They talked with people who visited the city. They were all telling and listening to the new ideas. They seemed to have time for nothing else.)

v22 So Paul stood up in front of the important men of Athens. He said to them, 'I see that you have many gods. **v23** I have walked through your city. And I have seen that you have built many special places out of stone for your gods. I saw one place where you had cut some words into the stone. These words were, "To the god that we do not know." So you already know that there is another god. You know that he is powerful and important. He is the true God, but you did not know this. So I am now teaching you about him.

v24 The true God made the earth and all the plants and animals on it. He rules the earth and the sky. He does not live in the houses that men have built for him. **v25** Men make things for God. But God does not need anything that men have made. God himself causes everything to live. He gives to living things everything that they need. **v26** He made everybody in the world from one man. Then he caused people to live in different places on the earth. He decided all these things before he made the people. He decided where the people should live. And he also decided how long they should live. **v27** God did all this so that people would look for him. They would try very hard to find him and then they would find him. God is close to all of us.'

People who cannot see use their hands to find things. They find things that are close to them. Paul said that we should also look for God. Then we will find him because he is close to us.

v28 'Someone said, "Because God is powerful, we are alive. We can move about. And we can be what we are." One of your writers has also said, "All of us are God's children."

v29 And because we are God's children, we should also know this. Men are clever and they can cut stones. They can make valuable metals into different shapes. But God is not like these shapes. **v30** At one time, men thought that God was in these stones and valuable metals. But God has decided to forget what men thought in the past. At that time people did not know the true things about God. But now, God says to people everywhere, "Stop doing bad things!" **v31** God has decided on which day he will be the *judge for everyone on the earth. He will *judge so that nobody can say, "God is wrong." He will do this by a certain man that he has chosen. He has shown clearly to everyone that all this is true. He showed it like this: People killed that man. But God caused him to live again.'

v32 Paul had said, 'God caused that man to live again.' When the people heard this, some of them *laughed at him. But other people said to Paul, 'We want you to tell us more about this on another day.' **v33** So Paul left the meeting of the important men of Athens. **v34** And some people joined his group when he left. They believed the good news and they became *believers. One of these people was a man called Dionysius. He was one of the important men of Athens. A woman called Damaris also became a *believer. And some other people also believed Paul's message about Jesus.

Chapter 18

Paul visits Corinth

v1 After Paul had spoken to the important men in Athens, he left the city. And from there, he then travelled to the city called Corinth.

Corinth is a city in Greece, about 75 kilometres (50 miles) from Athens.

v2 In Corinth, he met a man called Aquila. Aquila was a *Jew. And he had been born in the *region called Pontus. He had just arrived in Corinth with his wife Priscilla. They had travelled from Italy to live in Corinth. At that time, *Caesar Claudius had said that all *Jews must leave Rome. Paul went to visit Aquila and Priscilla. **v3** They knew how to make tents. They sold them so that they could use the money to buy food. Paul could do the same work. So he stayed with them and he worked with them.

A tent was a house that people used when they travelled. People made it out of cloth or animal skins.

v4 Every *Sabbath day, Paul taught both *Jews and *Greeks in the *synagogue. He wanted them all to believe the good news about Jesus.

v5 Then Silas and Timothy arrived from the country called Macedonia. After that, the only work that Paul did was to teach the people. He told the *Jews the message about Jesus and he explained everything carefully to them. He said, 'God sent Jesus to be the *Christ.' **v6** The *Jews did not agree with Paul and they said bad things about him. So he cleaned the dirt off his clothes and he said to them, 'If you are lost from God then it will not be because of me. It will be because of you. So I will now go to those who are not *Jews.'

Paul cleaned the dirt off his clothes. This meant that Paul did not want to speak to those *Jews again. Paul continued to teach in Corinth. But now he usually taught those who were not *Jews. Most people who lived in Corinth were Greek. Greek means the language that people spoke in Greece. Or it means someone who comes from that country.

v7 So Paul left the *Jews and he went to stay in the house of Justus. He was not a *Jew. But he was a man who prayed to the God of the *Jews. His house was next to the *synagogue. **v8** A man called Crispus was the leader of the *synagogue. He, and everyone else who lived in his house, believed in Jesus. Many other people heard Paul's message about Jesus. They also believed the message and someone *baptised them.

v9 One night, when Paul was staying in Corinth, the *Lord appeared to him in a dream. 'Do not be afraid', he said. 'Continue to speak to the people here. Do not stop speaking to them. **v10** I am here with you, so nobody will hurt you. There are many people in this city who will believe in me.'

v11 So Paul stayed in Corinth for 18 months and he taught the people God's message about Jesus.

v12 When Gallio became the leader of the government in Greece, the *Jews met together. They held Paul and they brought him in front of Gallio. He would *judge Paul.

The men with authority in Rome caused Gallio to rule Greece in *AD 51.

v13 The *Jews said to Gallio, 'This man is teaching people things that are against our *law. He is asking us to believe some different things about God. But if we did these things we would go against our *law.'

v14 Paul was ready to speak, but Gallio spoke first to the *Jews. 'If this man had done a very bad thing', he said, 'then I would do something about it. **v15** But you are arguing about words and names in your own *Law. So you yourselves must decide what to do about it. I will not be a *judge for these things.' **v16** Then Gallio said to his soldiers, 'Cause these men to go out of this room.' **v17** Sosthenes was the leader of the *synagogue. The *Jews held him and they hit him with sticks in front of Gallio. But Gallio did nothing to stop them.

Paul travels from Corinth to Antioch

v18 Paul remained in Corinth with the *believers for many days. Then he said goodbye to them. And he sailed by boat to the country called Syria. Priscilla and Aquila also went with him. Before Paul sailed, he promised something to God. Because of this promise, he asked someone to cut off all the hair from his head.

God had helped Paul to do many things in Corinth. Maybe he was saying thank you because God had helped him.

v19 Paul, Priscilla and Aquila arrived in the city called Ephesus. Paul left them there, and he went into the *synagogue. And he talked with the *Jews. **v20** Some of them asked Paul to remain in Ephesus with them for a long time. But he did not agree to stay. **v21** Paul said to them, 'If God wants me to come back, I will return to you.' So then Paul sailed from Ephesus to *Caesarea. **v22** When Paul arrived in *Caesarea, he went on to Jerusalem. He said hello to all the *believers there and then he travelled to Antioch in Syria.

v23 He stayed in Antioch for some time. Then, after that, he left Antioch and he travelled through Galatia and Phrygia. He said to all the *believers in these places, 'Continue to love and to obey God more strongly.'

These are some of the things that Apollos did

v24 In Ephesus, there was a *Jew called Apollos. He was born in Alexandria in Egypt. Now he had travelled from Alexandria to live in Ephesus. He could speak well. He knew all the words very well that were written in God's book.

Alexandria was an important city in *Egypt and in the world. And people went there to learn many different things.

v25 Someone had taught him very well the message of the good news about Jesus. He was happy when he was speaking to people about Jesus. Everything that he said was true. But he only knew part of the message. He knew what John said. And he knew about how John *baptised people.

v26 Apollos was not afraid, so he began to teach the people in the *synagogue. Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos teach the people. So they said to him, 'Please come with us to our home. We can explain to you everything about Jesus. We can tell you all about how God wants us to live.' And so they did that.

v27 After that, Apollos decided to go to Greece. So the *believers in Ephesus helped him. They wrote a letter for him to give to the *believers in Greece. They wrote, 'When Apollos arrives, please accept him.' When he did arrive in Greece, he helped the *believers there very much. They had started to believe in Jesus because God helped them. **v28** Apollos argued strongly with the *Jews in front of the people. And he showed them from God's word that the *Jews were wrong. He explained clearly. And he used the words of the *prophets, to show that Jesus is the *Christ.

Chapter 19

Paul speaks in Ephesus about Jesus

v1 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul travelled through Phrygia and Galatia. He then arrived in Ephesus and he found some *believers there. **v2** Paul asked them, 'When you believed the message about Jesus, did God give you his *Holy Spirit?'

'We did not even know that there is a *Holy Spirit', the *believers answered.

v3 So Paul asked them, 'When someone *baptised you, what did you understand?'

'We received the *baptism that John spoke about', they answered.

v4 Then Paul said, 'John *baptised people who listened to his message. These people knew that they had done wrong things. They wanted to stop doing these things and they wanted to obey God. John also said to the people of *Israel, "You must believe in the person who will come soon." This person is Jesus.' **v5** When these *believers in Ephesus heard this, they said to Paul, 'Please *baptise us, and use the name of the *Lord Jesus.' **v6** Then Paul touched each person with his hand. Then God gave them his *Holy Spirit and they spoke in different languages. They also spoke messages from God. **v7** There were 12 men there.

v8 For three months, Paul often went to the *synagogue in Ephesus. He was not afraid to speak to the people there. He argued with them. He wanted them to believe the true things about the *Kingdom of God. **v9** But some of them did not want to understand what Paul said. They would not believe in Jesus. Some of them said bad things about the way of the *Lord in front of the whole group. So Paul stopped speaking to these people. He took the other *believers away from that group. And every day he talked with people in another place. It was in a large room, where a man with the name Tyrannus usually taught the people. **v10** Paul taught the people in Ephesus for two years. In that time, all the people who lived in *Asia heard the message about Jesus. Paul was teaching *Jews and those who were not *Jews.

The sons of Sceva *order bad *spirits to leave people

v11 God was working by Paul and God was doing many powerful things. These were things that nobody had done before. **v12** People took pieces of cloth and clothes that Paul gave to them. Paul had used these things. People took the cloths to those who were ill. After they received them, the sick people became well again. And bad *spirits also left them.

v13 There were some *Jews who travelled about. They also caused bad *spirits to leave people. Now they wanted to use the name of the *Lord Jesus when they did this. These *Jews said to the bad *spirits, 'Paul has taught people about Jesus. So, we use the authority of Jesus to say to you, "Bad *spirits, come out of these people." ' **v14** Sceva was a most important *Jewish *priest in Ephesus. He had 7 sons who were *ordering the bad *spirit to come out of someone in this way. **v15** But the bad *spirit said to Sceva's sons, 'I know who Jesus is. And I also know about Paul. But I do not know who you are.' **v16** A man had the bad *spirit and it was living inside him. He fought strongly with the 7 sons and he won the fight. He had hurt the sons and he had torn their clothes off. So the sons ran away from the man's house.

v17 All the *Jews and *Gentiles who lived in Ephesus heard about this. They were afraid and they said, 'This person called the *Lord Jesus is very powerful. He is very much more powerful than we thought. He is a very important person.' **v18** Many of the *believers then told everyone about all the bad things that they had also done. **v19** Those who had used powerful bad *spirits brought all their books about *magic. Then they burned the books so that everyone could see. They counted that these books had cost 50 000 valuable metal coins. **v20** When these powerful things happened, more and more people heard the good news about Jesus. And they believed strongly everything about him.

Bad troubles happen in Ephesus.

v21 After these things happened, Paul decided to travel through Macedonia and Greece. From there, he decided to travel to Jerusalem. He said, 'After I go there, I must go to see Rome.' **v22** Timothy and Erastus were helping Paul with his work. Paul sent them to Macedonia while he stayed longer in the towns in *Asia.

v23 It was at this time that there were bad troubles in Ephesus. These troubles happened because of the things that Paul taught the people. He taught them how to follow Jesus. **v24** In Ephesus there was a man called Demetrius. He made very small things. Those things looked like the house of the female god called Artemis. He made them out of valuable metal and he paid a lot of money to his workers. **v25** So he asked all his workers to meet with him. And he also asked other men to come. These men all did the same kind of work that Demetrius did. He said to all these men, 'You know that our work has caused us to become rich. **v26** And you can see what this man Paul is doing. You yourselves can also hear what he is saying. Paul says, "Gods that men have made are not really gods." Here in Ephesus, and in all *Asia, many people believe what he says. **v27** It might happen that people will say bad things about our work. It might also happen that the house of Artemis will not continue to be important to people. And people will think that Artemis herself is not important. At this time, everyone in *Asia and the *Roman world thinks that Artemis is very great and important.'

v28 When the crowd heard Demetrius, they became very angry. 'Artemis of Ephesus is really very great', they shouted. **v29** More and more people through the whole city began to shout. Gaius and Aristarchus were from Macedonia and they were travelling with Paul. Some people from the crowd held these two men. They took the men quickly to the open place in the middle of the city where everyone met together.

In this place, the *Roman people met together to watch many different things. It was called a theatre.

v30 Paul himself wanted to stand in front of the crowd. But the other *believers would not let him.

v31 Some important *Roman men in Ephesus were Paul's friends and they sent a message to him. 'Do not stand in front of the crowd', they said.

v32 The crowd was making even more noise. Some people were shouting one thing and other people were shouting something else. Not many of the people knew why they had all met together.

v33 There was a man called Alexander in the crowd. The *Jews caused him to stand in front of the crowd. Some of the people thought that he was the reason for all the noise. He raised his hands in front of him so that they would be quiet. He wanted to explain to the crowd that he and his friends had not caused this trouble. **v34** But the crowd knew that Alexander was a *Jew. So they continued to shout the same words for two hours. 'Artemis of Ephesus is really very great!' they shouted.

v35 At the end of the two hours, an important man from the city caused the crowd to listen to him. 'People of Ephesus!' he said. 'The house of Artemis is here in Ephesus. The special stone that fell from the sky is also here in Ephesus. The people know about both these things and they keep them safely. **v36** Nobody can say that this is not true. So you must not do anything without first thinking about it carefully. **v37** Gaius and Aristarchus did not take anything from the house of Artemis. They did not say anything bad about Artemis. But still you brought them here. **v38** Perhaps Demetrius and his workers think that someone did a wrong thing. If they do, let them speak to a man with authority. The court is open on certain days for this. A *Roman ruler will *judge what he says. The ruler will say if it is correct or not correct. Demetrius and his workers can argue in front of him about what Paul is saying.'

A court is a place where a *judge says what is right or wrong.

v39 'If you want to argue these problems more, go to the meeting of the important people of the city. These people rule in our city. **v40** Today, the people here are shouting and fighting. Maybe the *Roman rulers will hear about this. They will say that we have done wrong things. The people should not shout and fight each other. We could not explain it to them. There is no good reason for all this noise.' **v41** When he had said those things, he said, 'All of you should go home now.'

Chapter 20

Paul visits Macedonia and Greece again

v1 After that, the crowd went home. Then Paul asked all the *believers to meet together with him. He said to them, 'Be strong! Continue to believe in Jesus. I am going away now.' Then Paul travelled on to Macedonia. **v2** He travelled through Macedonia and he talked to the people in different places again. He talked to them about Jesus. Then he came to Greece.

We think that Paul visited Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea among other places.

v3 When Paul arrived in Greece, he stayed there for three months. One day, he was preparing to travel on to Syria. But then he heard news that the *Jews wanted to kill him. So he decided to return to Jerusalem through Macedonia.

Many *Jews travelled by boat from cities in Macedonia to Jerusalem for the *Passover meal. Paul decided not to sail because of the *Jews. Instead, he travelled to Jerusalem by land and some other people went with him.

v4 Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from Berea, went with Paul. Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica also went with him. Gaius from Derbe and Timothy, Tychicus and Trophimus from *Asia also all went with him. **v5** They all travelled in front of us and they waited for us in Troas.

We know that Luke was with Paul and the other *believers on this journey.

v6 We sailed by boat from Philippi after the special meal of bread without *yeast.

This was the week before the *Passover meal. During the week of *Passover *Jews did not eat any food that contained *yeast. We think that they stayed in Philippi for the *Passover. At this time they remembered the time when God caused Jesus to live again. We call it Easter.

Five days after that, we met them all in Troas, where we stayed together for 7 days.

Paul visits the *believers in Troas for the last time

v7 On the Saturday evening, we all met to break bread together. Paul was teaching the people. He was leaving Troas the next day and so he taught them until midnight.

v8 Many lights were burning in the upstairs room where we met together. **v9** A young man called Eutychus was at the meeting. He was sitting next to the window. Paul talked for a long time and Eutychus wanted to sleep. Then Eutychus really went to sleep. He fell out of the window past three rooms to the ground. The other *believers lifted him up off the ground, but he was dead. **v10** So Paul went down the stairs to them all. He lay on top of the young man and held him for a moment. Then Paul said, 'Do not be afraid. He is still alive.' **v11** Then Paul went back upstairs and he ate with the *believers. Paul talked to them until the sun rose. Then he left Troas.

v12 The other *believers led Eutychus to his home. He was alive and they were happy.

Paul travels from Troas to Miletus

v13 We went on in front of Paul to the boat. And we sailed on it to Assos. Paul decided to meet us on the boat at Assos. He was travelling to Assos across the land. He had told us that we should wait for him there. **v14** When he met us at Assos, he came on the boat with us. Then we all sailed to Mitylene. **v15** We sailed from there and we arrived the next day at the coast near Chios. The day after that, we came to Samos and, the next day, we arrived at Miletus. **v16** Paul had decided to sail from there past Ephesus. He did not want to remain in *Asia any longer. He wanted to travel to Jerusalem quickly, because he wanted to arrive there before the day called *Pentecost.

Paul sends a message to the leaders of the *believers in Ephesus

v17 When Paul was in Miletus, he sent someone to Ephesus with a message. This message was for the leaders of the *believers in Ephesus. Paul wrote, 'Please come to Miletus and meet together with me.' **v18** Paul spoke to the *believers from Ephesus when they arrived in Miletus. 'You know about everything that I did in *Asia', he said. 'You saw me from the first day that I arrived in Asia. I was with you for the whole time. You knew all that I did. And you knew all that I said. **v19** I did not say to people that I was an important man. I worked as a servant of God. And I often cried. My life was difficult because the *Jews wanted to kill me. **v20** I taught you in the streets and in your homes. You know that I told you all the important things. I told you everything that would help you. **v21** I taught the same things both to the *Jews and to the *Gentiles. I was serious when I taught everybody. I said to them all, "You must stop doing wrong things. You must also say sorry to God because you have done those wrong things. Then you must obey God and you must believe in our *Lord Jesus."

v22 Now I am going to Jerusalem because the *Holy Spirit is taking me there. I do not know what people will do to me there. **v23** The *Holy Spirit told me in every city about the dangers. He said to me, "People will put you in prison and they will cause many troubles for you." **v24** I may live or I may die. But this is not important to me. The *Lord Jesus gave me some work to do. So it is important that I finish this work. I must tell people the good news about how kind and good God is to them.

v25 I have lived among you all and I have taught you all about the *Kingdom of God. Now I know that none of you will see me again. **v26** So I am being serious with you today. I say this to you. If any of you are lost to God, then it is not because of me. **v27** I have told you everything that God wants you to know. **v28** You should be careful about yourselves, and about what you are doing. Keep safe the people that the *Holy Spirit has asked you to help. Lead all the groups of *believers. Some men have their own sheep. They feed the sheep and they keep them safe. Be like that kind of man. All the *believers belong to God because Jesus died for them. He gave his life blood for them. **v29** I know what will happen. After I leave you, other people will come among you. They will be like dangerous wild animals that attack sheep. These men will cause trouble for the *believers. **v30** Men from your own group of *believers will also teach you things that are not true. These men will want other *believers to follow them. So the *believers will no longer follow Jesus. So they will say things that are not true. **v31** Be very careful! I often cried about my work when I stayed with you. I want you to remember this. I taught all of you for three years, in the day and in the night.

v32 And now I ask God to keep you safe. He has been kind to us. I brought the message about this to you. You will be safe if you remember this message. God will cause your *spirits to be strong. And at the end, he will give to you all the good things that he has for his special people. **v33** I did not want to take money or clothes from people when I stayed with you. **v34** You yourselves know that I worked a lot. Then my friends and I could have everything that we needed. **v35** I have shown you how to live. And I have shown you how to work. Now you know how to be kind to sick or weak people. You should remember what Jesus himself said: "It may make you happy when you receive things. But it makes you more happy when you give things to someone."'

v36 Then Paul finished speaking. He went down on his knees together with all the leaders of the *believers from Ephesus. And they all prayed. **v37** Then they each showed him great love. All the leaders were crying when they said goodbye to Paul. **v38** Paul had said, 'I will never see you again.' And this made them sadder than anything else did. So then they walked with Paul to the ship.

Chapter 21

Paul goes to Jerusalem

v1 We said goodbye to the leaders of the *believers from Ephesus. Then we sailed straight across the sea, and we arrived at Cos. The next day, we arrived at Rhodes, and from there we went on to Patara.

Cos, Rhodes and Patara are small islands.

v2 At Patara, we found a boat that was going to Phoenicia. So we climbed on to the boat and we sailed on it.

v3 We arrived at a place on the sea from where we could see Cyprus. We sailed south of Cyprus, and we arrived in Syria. We left the boat at Tyre and we went on to the land. The boat was carrying many things and, at Tyre, people took all these things off the ship. **v4** We found some *believers at Tyre and we stayed with them for a week. The *Holy Spirit said by these *believers, 'Paul, you should not to go to Jerusalem.' **v5** We had stayed with them for a week. And then it was time for us to leave them. All the *believers, together with their wives and children, went with us out of the city. At the beach, we all went down on our knees and we prayed together. **v6** Then we said goodbye to each other and we went back on the boat. The *believers and their families returned to their homes.

v7 We continued our journey on the ship. We sailed from Tyre to Ptolemais. Here, we met some *believers and we stayed with them for one day. **v8** The next day, we left Ptolemais and we sailed to *Caesarea. We visited Philip in *Caesarea and we stayed with him. Philip taught people in *Caesarea the good news about Jesus. Philip was one of the 7 men that the *believers had chosen in Jerusalem.

We can read about this in Acts 6:1-6.

v9 Philip had 4 daughters and none of them was married. His daughters spoke messages from God.

v10 We stayed with Philip for a few days. Then a man called Agabus came to the city from Judea. He was a *prophet and he spoke messages from God. **v11** Agabus visited us. He took Paul's belt and he tied it round his own feet and hands. He said, 'Listen to this message from the *Holy Spirit. "The *Jews in Jerusalem will tie the man who has this belt. They will tie him in the same way. And then they will give this man to those who are not *Jews." '

v12 When we heard this, we all said many times to Paul, 'Please do not go to Jerusalem.' **v13** But Paul answered, 'Stop crying like this! You are making me very sad! I am ready for men in Jerusalem to tie me up. And I am also ready to die there. I am ready to do all this because I believe in the *Lord Jesus.' **v14** But we could not cause Paul to think in a different way. So we stopped saying to him, 'You should not go to Jerusalem.' And we said to him instead, 'We want what God wants to happen.'

v15 We stayed in *Caesarea for some time. Then we prepared ourselves and we travelled to Jerusalem. **v16** Some of the *believers from *Caesarea also went with us. They took us to the house of a man called Mnason. We had decided to stay with him. His home town was on the island called Cyprus. He had been a *believer for a long time.

Paul visits James in Jerusalem

v17 Then we arrived in Jerusalem, where the *believers were very happy to see us. **v18** The next day, Paul went with us to see James. The leaders of the *believers were also there. **v19** Paul said hello to them and then he told them everything about his work. God had worked by him and God had done many good things for the *Gentiles.

v20 After they had heard Paul speak, they said, 'God is very good and powerful.' Then the leaders said, '*Brother Paul, you can see what has happened. There are now many thousands of *Jews who have believed in Jesus. But they also really want to obey the *Law of Moses.'

Brother is a name that a Christian may call another Christian.

v21 'These *Jews have told us what you have taught people in other countries. They said that you teach the *Jews, "You do not need to obey the *Law of Moses any longer. You do not need to *circumcise your children. *Jews usually do certain things. But now you do not need to do all those things." **v22** Those people will certainly hear that you are in Jerusalem. **v23** You must do what we say. In the city, there are 4 men who have promised something to God. **v24** Now they will go. And they will wash to make themselves clean in front of God. Go with them. And join with them when they do that. You pay the *priest the money for them. Then the men can cut all the hair off their heads. When you do that, everyone will understand about you. People have said that you do not obey the *Law of Moses. But they will see you do this. And then, they will know that it is not true. They will know that you yourself obey the *Law of Moses. **v25** But it is different for the *Gentiles who believe in Jesus. We have sent a letter to them. We wrote, "You must not eat meat from animals that people have killed as a gift to their own gods. People tie a *rope round the neck of some animals to kill them. You must not eat the meat from those animals because the blood did not run out of them. Also, you must not eat blood. And you must not have sex with someone who is not your husband or wife." '

v26 So Paul went with the 4 men. He joined with them when they washed. They washed to make themselves clean in front of God. Then he went into the Great House of God. He told the *priest for how long the 4 men must wait. And after that, each man would kill an animal as a gift for God.

These men had promised something to God. It was time now to cut their hair. This showed that they had finished the time. They had finished what they had said to God. The men had to wait for 7 days, before they went to the Great House of God. The *priests there killed the animal that each man brought as a gift to God.

v27 After 7 days, some *Jews from *Asia saw Paul in the Great House of God. They said some things against Paul to the crowd. So the people became angry and they caught hold of Paul. **v28** 'People of *Israel, come and help us!' the *Jews from *Asia shouted. 'This is the man who travels everywhere. He teaches everyone against the people of *Israel. He also speaks against the *Law of Moses and this Great House of God. Now he has even led some men who are not *Jews into this Great House of God. So now this Great House of God is not clean in front of God any longer.' **v29** (The men said this because they had seen Paul with a man in the city. This man was called Trophimus and he came from Ephesus. He was not a *Jew. And they thought that Paul had led Trophimus into the Great House of God.)

Trophimus was a not a *Jew so he could not go into the Great House of God.

v30 Many other people in the city heard what had happened. They also began to shout about these things. They all ran together and they held Paul. Then they pulled him out of the Great House of God and they closed the doors immediately.

The crowd wanted to kill Paul, but they could not kill him in the Great House of God. That also would have caused the House of God not to be clean in front of God.

v31 The angry crowd was trying to kill Paul. Then someone sent a message to the leader of the *Roman soldiers. The message was, 'People are fighting in the streets all over the city.'

v32 Immediately, the leader of these soldiers went with an officer and some soldiers. And they ran down to the angry crowd. The people saw the leader with his soldiers. So then they stopped hitting Paul.

v33 The leader of the *Roman soldiers went to Paul and held him. Then the leader of the soldiers said, 'Tie two *chains round the arms of this man.' Then he asked the people in the crowd, 'Who is this man and what has he done?'

v34 Some people in the crowd shouted one thing and other people shouted something different. There was so much noise that the leader of the soldiers was not sure about the facts. He did not understand what had happened. So he said to his soldiers, 'Take this man up into the strong building!' **v35** The soldiers then led Paul as far as the steps of the strong building. Then they carried him because the crowd was so angry. **v36** The crowd ran after Paul and they were shouting, 'Kill him!'

v37 While the soldiers were leading Paul into the strong building, he spoke to their leader. 'Please can I say something to you?' he said.

The leader of the soldiers answered, 'I understand now that you speak the *Greek language. **v38** Are you not the man who came from *Egypt some time ago? This man caused the people to fight against the government. He led 4000 of his own soldiers, with arms, out into the *desert. They wanted to kill the *Roman soldiers.'

v39 Paul answered, 'I am a *Jew and I was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. I am a man from an important city. Please let me speak to this crowd.'

v40 The leader of the soldiers said to Paul, 'Yes, you can speak to the people.' So Paul stood still on the steps of the strong building. He raised his hands so that the people became quiet. When the people were quiet, he spoke to them. He spoke in the language that the *Jews used.

Chapter 22

Paul speaks to the crowd in Jerusalem

v1 'Listen to me, you men who are also *Jews. You, our leaders, listen to me! I want to explain to you all that I have done. I have not done anything wrong.'

v2 The crowd heard Paul speaking to them in the *Hebrew language. So they became even quieter.

Paul continued to speak. He said, **v3** 'I am a *Jew. I was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. I lived here in Jerusalem when I was a boy. Gamaliel was my teacher. I learned how to obey the *Laws of our *ancestors. I tried as carefully as you do to obey God. I was like you who are here today.'

Gamaliel was a *Pharisee. He taught boys and young men in the *synagogue.

v4 'I caused great trouble to the *disciples of Jesus. I caused the death of some of them. And I held men and women and I put them in prison. **v5** The most important *priest and all the men in the *Sanhedrin can tell you that this is true. The men in the *Sanhedrin gave me letters for the *Jews in Damascus. So I started my journey to Damascus to catch the *believers in that city. I wanted to put *chains on them and I wanted to bring them back to Jerusalem. The officers here in the city wanted to *punish them.'

Paul tells the crowd how he began to believe in Jesus

v6 'But as I was travelling along the road, I came near to Damascus. About midday, a bright light from the sky *suddenly appeared round me. **v7** I fell to the ground. Then I heard a voice that spoke to me. "Saul, Saul, why are you hurting me?" he said.

v8 "*Lord, who are you?" I asked.

"I am Jesus from Nazareth", he said to me. "You are hurting me." **v9** The men with me saw the light, but they did not hear the voice. They did not hear what it said to me.

v10 "*Lord, what must I do?" I asked. He said to me, "Now you should get up and you should go into Damascus. When you arrive in the city, someone will come to you. He will tell you what God wants you to do." **v11** The bright light hurt my eyes so that I could not see. So the men who were with me held my hand. Then they led me into Damascus.

v12 In Damascus, there was a man called Ananias. He knew God and he obeyed God and our *Law. All the *Jews in Damascus said good things about him. **v13** Ananias came to see me. He stood close to me and he said, "See again, Saul my friend!" And immediately I could see again, so I looked at him.

v14 Then Ananias said to me, "The God that our *ancestors obeyed has chosen you. He will tell you what he wants you to do. He wanted you to see God's special servant, who is completely good. And God wanted you to hear this servant's own voice. **v15** You will work for Jesus. You will tell everybody everything that you have seen and heard. **v16** And now you do not need to wait any longer. Stand up and I will *baptise you. Believe in Jesus. Ask God. And he will remove from you the bad things that you have done." '

The people in the crowd become very angry with Paul

v17 'So, after I returned to Jerusalem, I went into the Great House of God. I was praying. I was awake but I had a dream. **v18** In the dream, I saw the *Lord and he spoke to me. He said, "Hurry. Leave Jerusalem quickly. The people here will not believe what you say to them about me."

v19 "*Lord", I said, "The people here know me very well. They know that I went to the *synagogues. And I caught people there who believed in you. I also hit them. **v20** Stephen told people about you. I myself was there when the people killed him. I told the people that they were doing a good thing. And I held the coats of the people while they killed him."

v21 "Go!" the *Lord said to me. "I am sending you a long way away to the *Gentiles." '

v22 The people listened to Paul until he spoke about the *Gentiles. But then they began to shout loudly, 'Take him away! Kill him! It is not right that he should live any longer!'

v23 They were shouting. They were taking off their coats and they were throwing them about. They also threw dirt from the ground into the air.

The *Jews did this when someone had said bad things about God. They thought that Paul had done that.

v24 The leader of the soldiers said to his men, 'Take this man into the strong building. Then hit him with a whip. We will then know what he has done. He will tell us why the *Jews are shouting so loudly about him.'

The soldiers would hit a person so that he would give them a true answer. A whip was stick with long pieces of strong material fastened at one end.

v25 So the soldiers tied *ropes round Paul and they were ready to hit him. But Paul spoke to the officer who stood close to him. 'You will not be obeying your *laws if you hit me', he said. 'I am a *citizen of Rome. I have not yet stood in front of a *judge. So no *judge has said that I have done anything wrong.'

v26 The officer heard what Paul said. So he went to the leader of the soldiers and he said, 'Do not do what you want to do! That man is a *citizen of Rome!'

v27 So the leader of the soldiers went to speak to Paul. 'Is this true that you are a *citizen of Rome?' he asked Paul. 'Yes', he answered.

v28 The leader of the soldiers said, 'I paid a lot of money to the government so that I could become a *citizen of Rome.'

'But I am a *citizen of Rome because my parents were', answered Paul.

v29 Immediately, the men who would have asked Paul questions moved away from him. The leader of the soldiers was afraid because he had put *chains on Paul's arms and legs. And he knew that he should not do that to a *citizen of Rome.

The leader of the soldiers could hold a *citizen of Rome in prison. But he should not put *chains on the arms and legs of the *citizen.

v30 The leader of the soldiers wanted to find the reason why the *Jews had said bad things about Paul. He wanted to be sure about it. So the next day, he asked his soldiers to remove the *chains from Paul. And he sent a message to the most important *priest and to all the men of the *Sanhedrin. 'Please come and meet together with me today', he said. Then he took Paul to them and he caused Paul to stand in front of them.

Chapter 23

Paul speaks to the men of the *Sanhedrin

v1 Paul looked at the men of the *Sanhedrin and he spoke to them. 'My friends, who are also *Israelites', he said. 'Today I have nothing to be ashamed about before God. I have always lived in a way that makes God happy with me.' **v2** The most important *priest was called Ananias. He said to the men who were near Paul, 'Hit that man on his mouth!' **v3** Paul said to Ananias, 'It is certain that God will hit you. You are like a wall that someone has painted white.'

Paul said this to Ananias, because Ananias was doing one thing. But he was saying something else. Ananias wanted people to think that he was good. White paint would have covered dirt.

'You are sitting there and you are *judging me. You are asking if I obey the *Law of God. But you yourself are not obeying the *Law because you said, "Hit that man!" ' **v4** The men who were standing close to Paul answered him. 'You are saying bad things to the most important *priest.'

v5 'My *brothers, I did not know that he was the most important *priest.' Paul continued. 'I know that the *prophets wrote, "Do not say bad things about the man who is ruling your people." '

Brother is a name that a *Jew sometimes called another *Jew.

v6 Then Paul saw that there were some *Sadducees and some *Pharisees in the group. So he shouted out to all the men of the *Sanhedrin, 'Men, I am a *Pharisee and my father was a *Pharisee. I believe that dead people will live again. God will cause this to happen. And you are *judging me today because I believe that.' **v7** As soon as Paul said that, the *Pharisees and *Sadducees began to argue with each other. **v8** (The *Sadducees do not believe that dead people will live again. They do not believe that there are *angels or *spirits. But the *Pharisees believe in all these things.)

v9 The *Sadducees and the *Pharisees began to shout louder and louder. There were some teachers of the *Law who were in the group of *Pharisees. These teachers of the *Law stood up. They were very angry about what was happening. 'We do not believe that this man has done anything wrong', they said. 'What he says may be true. A *spirit or an *angel may have spoken to him.' **v10** The two groups argued more and more strongly. And the leader of the soldiers thought that someone might hurt Paul. They were pulling him in different directions. So he said to his soldiers, 'Go down into the group and take Paul away from them. Take him back into the strong building.'

v11 That night, the *Lord came and he stood close to Paul. He said to Paul, 'Continue to be brave! You have told people here in Jerusalem the true things about me. You must do the same thing in Rome.'

The *Jews in Jerusalem decide to kill Paul

v12 The next morning, some *Jews talked together in a group about what they should do. And they decided to promise something to God. They would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. **v13** More than 40 *Jews were in the group that decided this. **v14** Then this group went to the leaders of the *priests and the leaders of the *Jews. They said, 'We have decided together to say a serious promise to God. We will not eat anything until after we have killed Paul. **v15** Now we want you to send this message to the leader of the soldiers. "Please bring Paul down to the men of the *Sanhedrin. We want to know more about what he has done." That is the message. We do not really want to ask him questions. We will wait for Paul and we will be ready to kill him. We will do this before he arrives in front of the *Sanhedrin.'

v16 But the son of Paul's sister heard what the *Jews wanted to do. So he went into the strong building and he told Paul about it.

v17 So Paul spoke to one of the officers who came to him. 'Please take this young man to the leader of the soldiers. He has something to tell him.' **v18** Then the officer led the young man to the leader of the soldiers and said to him, 'Paul, who is in the prison, spoke to me. He asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you.'

v19 The leader of the soldiers held the young man's hand. Then he led the young man to a room where there were no other people. Then he said to the young man, 'What do you want to tell me?'

v20 The young man said, 'All the *Jews with authority have agreed together to ask you to do something. They want you to take Paul down to the men of the *Sanhedrin. They will say that they want to ask him more questions. But that is not true. **v21** So do not listen to them. There are more than 40 men who will be hiding somewhere. They are waiting for Paul. They have said a serious promise to God. And they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are now ready to do this. And they are waiting to hear your answer.'

v22 The leader of the soldiers said, 'Do not tell anybody that you told me about this.' Then he sent the young man away.

The leader of the soldiers sends Paul to Felix, the ruler

v23 Then the leader of the soldiers asked two of his officers to come to him. He said to them, 'I want 200 soldiers to prepare themselves. I want them to go to *Caesarea. I also want 70 men to ride on horses. Send with them 200 men. They should each carry a long piece of wood with a sharp point at the end. They should all be ready to leave at 9 o'clock tonight.'

v24 Have some horses ready for Paul to ride on. Keep him safely and lead him to Felix the ruler.'

v25 Then the leader of the soldiers wrote a letter to Felix the ruler. In the letter he wrote,

v26 'This letter is to Felix, our very important ruler. I, Claudius Lysias, am sending you this letter. Hello.

v27 The *Jews caught this man and they wanted to kill him. I learned that he is a *citizen of Rome. So I went, together with my soldiers, and I saved him from them. **v28** The *Jews said that he had done some wrong things. I wanted to know more about him, so I took him to stand in front of their *Sanhedrin. **v29** I found out what he had done. But we could not put him in prison or kill him because of these things. The *Jews said that he had not obeyed their own *Law. **v30** A group of *Jews then decided to kill him. Someone told me about this, so I decided to send him to you. I have said to the *Jews who say bad things about him, "You say that Paul has done something wrong. So, go and tell Felix the ruler about this."'

v31 Then the soldiers did what their leader had asked them to do. They took Paul from the prison. That night, they took him as far as Antipatris. **v32** The next day, the 200 soldiers who had walked with Paul returned to the strong building in Jerusalem. But the soldiers who rode horses travelled on with Paul.

Antipatris was 40 kilometres (25 miles) from Jerusalem. This was a long way for the soldiers to walk in one night. Not many *Jews lived between Antipatris and *Caesarea. So, after that night, the 200 soldiers could return to Jerusalem. They did not need many soldiers to keep Paul safe after this.

v33 They took Paul to *Caesarea and they gave the letter to Felix, the ruler. Then they gave Paul to him. **v34** Felix the ruler read the letter and he asked Paul, 'Which country are you from?' 'I am from Cilicia', Paul answered. **v35** Felix said, 'When the *Jews arrive, they will tell me everything about you. Then I will also listen to you and I will *judge you.' Felix then said to his soldiers, 'Put this man in Herod's house and *guard him carefully!'

Chapter 24

The *Jews say bad things about Paul

v1 Five days after that, Ananias, the most important *priest, went to *Caesarea. Some leaders of the *Jews went with him. A man called Tertullus also went with them. Tertullus knew all about the *law. All these people went to see Felix the ruler. Felix would *judge Paul. So they told Felix what Paul had done. **v2** Felix asked a soldier to fetch Paul. So Tertullus began first to speak against Paul. He said, 'Most important ruler, we know that you are a good leader. Because of you, our country has had no wars for a long time. You have also made new *laws for us. These are all good for our country. **v3** Everywhere, the people are happy about what you have done. And all the time they want to thank you very much for these things. **v4** I do not want you to sit here for a long time. Please be kind to us and listen to me. I will speak for a short time, for all of us.

v5 We know that this man is dangerous to the government. He causes bad problems among people everywhere. He causes *Jews in every part of the world to fight each other. He is the leader of a group called the Nazarenes.'

Tertullus wanted Felix to think that Paul was a problem to the *Roman authorities.

v6 'He also did things in the Great House of God that are against our *Law. So we held him. We wanted to *judge him by what is in our own *Law. **v7** But Lysias, the leader of the soldiers, came to us. He attacked us and he took Paul away from us. **v8** Then Lysias said to us, "Go to Felix. Some people think that this man has done wrong things. They should speak to Felix about it." You, Felix, can ask this man some questions. Then you will learn from him what wrong things he has done. And he will tell you about all the things that we are talking about.' **v9** The *Jews that were with Tertullus then said together, 'All these things that Tertullus has said are true.'

Paul tells Felix his own story

v10 Then Felix the ruler raised his hands towards Paul. This showed Paul that he should speak. So he said to Felix, 'I know that you have *judged the people in this country for many years. So now I am happy to tell you everything. **v11** I went to Jerusalem about 12 days ago. You can check that that is true. I went there to thank God because he has helped me with my work. **v12** And when the *Jews saw me, I was not arguing with anybody in the Great House of God. I was not causing problems among the people in the *synagogues. Nor did I cause problems in other places in the city. **v13** So they cannot say that they have said true things about me. **v14** I do agree that the next thing about me is true. I do obey the God of our *ancestors, but I live in a different way. But these men say that this is not the right way. I also believe in all the *Law of Moses. And I believe also in all the words in the books that the *prophets wrote. **v15** I also believe this. God will cause all men, both good and bad, to become alive again after they have died. These men here also believe this. **v16** I always try not to cause trouble among people. And I always try to be right with God.

v17 I had not been to Jerusalem for several years. And I went there this time to take some money as a gift for my own people. I also wanted to give some animals to the *priest to kill. These were gifts to God. **v18** I was giving these gifts to God in his house when these men found me. I had finished making myself clean in front of God. There was no crowd with me. Nobody was arguing or fighting. **v19** But there were some *Jews there who had come from *Asia. They themselves should come here. They thought that I had done wrong things. So they should come and speak to you about it. **v20** Or these men here should tell you what I have done wrong. Because of them, I stood in front of the men of the *Sanhedrin. **v21** But when I stood there, I did one thing. I shouted, "I believe this. God will cause people to become alive again after they have died." Because of that, you are *judging me today.'

v22 Felix knew all about God's new way that people should live. He told everyone that the meeting had finished. Then he said to Paul, 'Soon Lysias, the leader of the soldiers, will arrive here. And then I will decide what to do with you.' **v23** Felix said to the officer who was *guarding Paul, 'Put this man back into the prison, but continue to *guard him. His friends can come and see him. They can help him and they can bring things for him.'

Felix and Drusilla listen to Paul

v24 After some days, Felix came with Drusilla, his *Jewish wife. He asked his soldiers to bring Paul to them. Paul talked to them. And they listened to everything that he said. Paul spoke about how people believed in Jesus Christ. **v25** Paul continued to speak. He talked about how people could be right with God. He also talked about people who did not stop themselves doing wrong things. And, he said, 'One day, God will *judge all the good and bad things that people have done.' While Paul talked about these things, Felix became afraid. He said to Paul, 'You can leave us now. I will perhaps have some more time to listen to you. Then I will ask you to come here again.' **v26** At the same time, Felix also hoped that Paul would give him some money. That was the reason that he met with Paul again. They often talked together.

Some rulers wanted people in prison to give them money. Then the rulers would let them go. If the rulers did this, they would not be obeying the *law. So Felix often listened to Paul.

v27 This happened for two years. Then Porcius Festus became the ruler and Felix did not rule any longer. Felix wanted the *Jews to say, 'Felix was a good ruler.' So he left Paul in the prison.

Chapter 25

Festus travels to Jerusalem to speak to the leaders of the *Jews

v1 Festus began to rule. Three days after that, he travelled from *Caesarea to Jerusalem. **v2** In Jerusalem, the leaders of the *priests and the leaders of the *Jews told him what Paul had done. **v3** They said to Festus, 'Please hear us. We really want you to bring Paul to Jerusalem. Then we would be very happy.' They wanted to kill Paul while he was travelling to Jerusalem. **v4** 'Paul will remain in prison in *Caesarea', Festus answered. 'I myself will return there soon. **v5** Your leaders should go to *Caesarea with me. Then if this man has done anything wrong, they can say that to him in front of me.'

v6 Festus stayed for another 8 or 10 days with the leaders of the *priests and the leaders of the *Jews. Then he returned to *Caesarea. On the next day, he sat down in the large room to *judge people. He said to his soldiers, 'Bring Paul in here!' **v7** When Paul arrived in the room, all the *Jews from Jerusalem stood close to him. And they began to speak against Paul. They said that he had done very many bad things. But they could not show Festus that this was true.

v8 Then Paul spoke about himself. 'I have obeyed the *Law of the *Jews', he said. 'I have not caused trouble in the Great House of God and I have not said anything bad about *Caesar.'

v9 Festus wanted the *Jews to say, 'Festus is a good ruler.' So he asked Paul, 'The *Jews here say that you have done bad things. Would you be happy to go to Jerusalem? I can decide there if this is true.'

v10 'I am in the place where the officers of *Caesar *judge people', Paul answered. 'This is the correct place to decide if these things about me are true. I have never done any wrong thing against the *Jews. And you yourself know that. **v11** If I have not obeyed the *Roman *law, then I do not refuse to die. Have I done something bad that you can kill me for? If that is true, then I also agree to it. I should die. But the *Jews are not speaking true words against me. You should not give me to them. So I ask you to send me to *Caesar. I want him to listen to our words.'

v12 Then Festus talked to his friends in the government about what Paul had said. And after that, Festus answered Paul. 'You have asked to go and talk to *Caesar about yourself', he said. 'And it is right for you to go.'

King Agrippa and Bernice visit Festus

v13 Several weeks after this, King Agrippa and Bernice came to *Caesarea to visit Festus. They wanted to give him a welcome now that he had become the ruler.

This king was Agrippa the second. He was the son of Agrippa the first. He ruled over a part of Galilee, but he did have some authority over the *Jews. He could decide who would be their most important *priest. Bernice was the oldest daughter of Agrippa the first and she was the younger sister of Agrippa the second.

v14 After they had been in *Caesarea for many days, Festus explained to Agrippa the problem about Paul. Festus said, 'There is a man here that Felix left in prison. **v15** When I went to Jerusalem, the *Jewish leaders and the leaders of their *priests talked to me about him. "That man", they said, "has done some very bad things and you should kill him."

v16 So I said to them, “*Roman rulers do not usually give a man from prison to other people. Some of you are saying that this man has done wrong things. So he must first stand in front of the people who are speaking against him. Then he can answer them himself.” **v17** So the *Jewish leaders and the leaders of their *priests came here. I did not wait. On the next day I sat in the room to *judge people. And I asked my soldiers to bring this man to me. **v18** The men who had said bad things about him stood up. But they did not say what I had thought. They did not talk about any very bad things that he had done. **v19** They were arguing with this man about what they believe about God. They were also arguing about a man called Jesus. They said that Jesus was dead. But Paul says that he is alive. **v20** I could not decide how I could learn more about all these things. So I asked Paul, “Can I take you to Jerusalem? There you can answer these men before me. You can explain what they are saying against you.” **v21** But Paul did not want to go to Jerusalem. He said to me, “Please keep me here. I want the soldiers to continue to *guard me. I want to go to *Caesar. He can decide what to do with me.” So I said to my soldiers, “*Guard Paul until I send him to *Caesar!”

v22 Agrippa said to Festus, ‘I would like to hear this man myself.’

‘You will hear him tomorrow’, Festus answered.

v23 The next day, Agrippa and Bernice came to the large room where Festus talked to people. They wore beautiful clothes and they had many servants with them. *Roman officers and the important men in the city also went into the room with them. Festus said to his soldiers, ‘Bring Paul here to us!’ So they brought Paul into the room. **v24** Festus said, ‘King Agrippa, and everyone here now, listen. You see the man who is standing in front of you. Many *Jews here have spoken to me about him. Also the *Jews who are in Jerusalem have told me about him. They shout loudly, “This man has done wrong things. This man should not continue to live!” **v25** But I could not find a reason to kill him. He has not done anything against our *law. He himself has asked to speak to *Caesar. So I have decided to send him to *Caesar. **v26** But I do not know what to write to *Caesar about him. So I have brought him here to stand in front of you. King Agrippa, it is really for this reason that I have brought him here. Listen to what Paul says. Then I can write something about him for *Caesar. **v27** I can send a person from the prison to *Caesar. But I must tell him what wrong things that person has done.’

Chapter 26

Paul speaks to Agrippa

v1 Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You can now speak about yourself.’

Paul raised his hand as he spoke. **v2** ‘King Agrippa, please listen to me’, he said. ‘I am happy because I can speak to you today. The *Jews say that I have done some wrong things. So I will explain to you all about the things that they say against me. **v3** I can do this because you know all about the *Jews. You know how we live. You also know very well what we argue about with each other. So please be patient and listen to me.

v4 I have lived among the *Jews and at Jerusalem since I was young. So all the *Jews know how I have lived.

v5 They have known me for a long time. And so they know that I was a *Pharisee. I lived as a *Pharisee. I was very careful to obey God’s *Law, in the same way that they do. They could tell you that this is true. They could, if they wanted to tell you. **v6** Now I stand here for men to *judge me. I do this because I believe in God’s promise to our *ancestors. **v7** He promised it to the 12 families of *Israel. They speak to God by day and by night. And they say that he is very powerful and important. And so they hope to receive what he promised. I also hope to receive it. Powerful king, this is the reason that the *Jews themselves say all these things about me. **v8** God causes people to become alive again after they have died. You who hear me think that this is not possible. But I do not see why you should think that.

v9 I myself thought that I should do many things against the authority of Jesus of Nazareth. **v10** So that is what I did in Jerusalem. The leaders of the *priests gave me authority to put many of God's people in prison. And I agreed with our leaders when they said, "These people must die." **v11** Often, I said that my men should *punish these people in the *synagogues. I tried to cause them to say bad things about God. Because I was very angry with them, I travelled to other cities in other countries. Then I could also hurt those who believed in Jesus there.'

Paul tells Agrippa and Bernice about when he first believed in Jesus

v12 'For that reason, I was travelling to Damascus. The leaders of the *priests had given me a letter. They had written, "There are people in Damascus who believe in Jesus. And we have given Paul authority to catch them." **v13** Powerful king, I was travelling along the road at midday. And I saw a light that was much brighter than the light from the sun. This very bright light shone all round me and round all the men who were with me. **v14** All of us fell down to the ground. I heard a voice that spoke to me in the Hebrew language. "Saul, Saul, you are hurting me", he said. "You are like an ox that kicks against a sharp stick. And so you are hurting yourself." '

Hebrew was the language of the *Jews.

Jesus used a picture to show Saul what was happening. An ox is a large animal like a cow. A farmer made his ox pull a *cart for him. He used a sharp stick. It made the ox walk where he wanted it to go. The sharp stick hurt the ox if it went the wrong way. The stick also hurt the ox if it tried to kick it.

v15 ' "Lord, who are you?" I asked.

"I am Jesus", he said. "And you are hurting me. **v16** Now you should get up. Stand on your feet. I have appeared to you because I have chosen you. I want you to work for me. You have seen me today. I want you to tell other people about this. After that, I will show you other things about me that you should tell people. **v17** I will send you to speak to *Jews and to those who are not *Jews. Some of them will want to hurt you. But I will save you from them. **v18** You will help them to understand who I am. They are like people who live in the dark. And so they cannot see. Teach them about me. Then they will be like people who live in the light. Now they are in *Satan's *kingdom and he has power over them. Take them out and put them in God's *kingdom. Because they believe in me, I will *forgive them. I will *forgive them for all the wrong things that they have done. I will give them a place among all the people that God has chosen." '

Paul tells Agrippa and Bernice about his work for God

v19 'And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed the things that I heard from *heaven that day. **v20** First, I taught the people in Damascus and in Jerusalem what they should do. I said to them, "You have done wrong things. You must tell God that you are sorry. And then you must obey God. You must show God that you are obeying him." I also taught this to both *Jews and *Gentiles in many different countries. **v21** This is the reason that the *Jews held me in the Great House of God. This is also the reason that they wanted to kill me. **v22** But God has helped me every day. So now I can stand here. I can tell you what is true. I can speak to people who are very important. And I can also speak to people who are not important. Moses and God's other *prophets told us that all these things would happen. And I am telling you these same things. **v23** People would kill the *Christ that God chose. The *Christ would then first become alive again after death. In that way, he would show everyone that God saves *Jews and *Gentiles from death. That is what the *prophets and Moses said.'

v24 While Paul was telling Agrippa all these things, Festus shouted at Paul, 'Your mind is confused. You have learned many things. But all these things have caused your mind to be confused.'

v25 'Important ruler, my mind is not confused', said Paul. 'Everything that I have said is true. And I am completely clear in my mind. **v26** King Agrippa, I am not afraid to speak to you. I am sure that you already know about these things. I am sure that you have already heard everything. Nobody has hidden these things. **v27** King Agrippa, do you believe what the *prophets said? I am sure that you do believe them.'

v28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'What do you think? Can you cause me to become a Christian in this short time?'

v29 'It is not important if it takes a long time or a short time', Paul answered. 'I pray to God about you and about everyone who is listening to me today. I pray that you will all become like me. But I would not want you to wear these same *chains!'

v30 Then King Agrippa, Festus and Bernice and everyone else stood up. **v31** After they left the room, they said to each other, 'This man has not done anything wrong. We should not kill him, or put him in prison.'

v32 Agrippa said to Festus, 'We could let this man leave the prison. But he has asked to go to *Caesar. So we cannot let him leave the prison.'

Chapter 27

Soldiers take Paul to Rome

v1 Festus decided that we should sail to Italy. So he *ordered a soldier called Julius to *guard Paul. He also gave Julius authority over some other men who had been in the prison. Julius was an officer in the *Roman army. He ruled a large group of soldiers that belonged to *Caesar.

Luke was with Paul on this journey.

v2 We went on to a boat that had come from Adramyttium. This ship was ready to leave. It would sail to the towns on the coast of *Asia. We all sailed on this ship and Aristarchus also sailed with us. He was a man from Macedonia who had lived in Thessalonica.

v3 The next day we arrived at Sidon. Julius was kind to Paul. He said, 'Paul, you can go and visit your friends here. They can give you anything that you need.' **v4** Then we all sailed again from there. But the wind was blowing against the front of our ship. So we sailed round the island called Cyprus. We stayed on the side of the island where the wind was not strong. **v5** When we were near to Cilicia and Pamphylia, we then sailed straight across the sea. We arrived at Myra, in the part of the country called Lycia. **v6** The *Roman officer found another ship there that had sailed from Alexandria. It would sail to Italy. So the officer took us off one ship and he put us on the other ship. **v7** The ship sailed slowly for several days. It was difficult to sail. But in the end we arrived near the town called Cnidus. Because of the strong wind, we could not continue to sail in that direction. So we sailed down the side of the island called Crete. And the wind there was not strong. We passed the point of land called Salmone. **v8** It was difficult to sail, so we stayed close to the coast. Then we came to another place called 'Safe Port'. Ships could stop here and be safe. This port was not far from the town called Lasea.

v9 We remained there for many days. So then it had become dangerous to continue the journey. By then it was already after the Day of Atonement.

If all this happened in the year *AD 59, the Day of Atonement was on 5 October that year. It was dangerous to go by boat after the beginning of October. The winds were very strong. The Day of Atonement was a special day when the *Jews asked God to *forgive them.

So Paul spoke to the army officer and to the men who sailed the boat. **v10** 'I understand that now our journey will be dangerous. The ship may break in pieces and you will lose the things in it. And all the people may also die in the water.' **v11** But the army officer did not believe what Paul said. Instead, he believed what the owner of the ship and the captain said.

The owner was the man who bought the ship. The captain had authority on the ship to sail it and to *order the sailors.

v12 This port was not a good place for a ship to remain during the winter. Most of the men on the ship wanted to continue the journey. They wanted to sail as far as Phoenix, if they could get there. Phoenix was a better port to stay in for the winter. Phoenix was in Crete and it was open to the sea both to the southwest and to the northwest.

Southwest means in a direction between south and west. Northwest means in a direction between north and west.

The ship is in a storm

v13 The wind began to blow from the south, but it was not strong. So the men thought, 'We can do what we wanted to do. We can sail to Phoenix.' So they pulled up the anchor. Then they sailed as close as they could to the coast. They went along the coast of Crete.

An anchor is a heavy, metal weight. People used it to stop a ship moving in the water.

v14 But soon a very strong wind began to blow. This wind was from the northeast (between north and east) and it blew down strongly across the island. **v15** The wind blew against the ship. It was not possible for the men to sail the ship straight into the wind. So they did not try any longer. They let the wind blow the ship along. **v16** We passed the south end of a small island called Cauda. Here we found a place where the strong wind did not blow as much. It was difficult, but we kept the ship's little boat safe. **v17** They lifted it out of the water. Then they put it on the ship and they tied it there with *ropes. Then they tied some more *ropes under and round the ship so that it would not break. The men were afraid of what could happen. There were some places along the coast of Libya where the water was not very deep. The ship might sail on to one of these places and then it might break. So they took the ship's *sails down. And they let the wind blow the ship along. **v18** The big strong storm continued. The ship was carrying many things. So the next day, the men threw some of these things off the ship into the sea. **v19** The day after that, the men themselves threw some of the *sails and *ropes off the ship into the sea. **v20** For many days, we could not see the sun or the stars. The strong wind continued to blow. So then we thought, 'It is not possible for us to remain alive.'

At that time, sailors looked at the sun and the stars. Then they knew where they were.

v21 The men had not eaten any food for a long time. Then Paul stood in front of them. 'Men, you should have listened to me!' he said. 'You should not have sailed from Crete. If we had not sailed, we would not have lost all these things from the ship. **v22** Now I ask you, please be brave. The storm will completely destroy the ship, but not one of you will die. **v23** I know this because last night one of God's *angels came to me. He came from my God who is very great and powerful. **v24** The *angel said, "Paul, do not be afraid. You will stand in front of *Caesar. God will be kind to you because he is good. So none of the men in the ship with you will die." **v25** And so I say to you, "Men, be brave!" I believe in God. So everything will happen in the way that the *angel told me. **v26** But the wind will blow the ship on to an island.'

v27 The storm had continued for 14 days and nights. The strong wind was blowing the ship across the Mediterranean Sea. About midnight, the sailors thought that we were close to the land. **v28** So they tied a piece of metal to a thin *rope. They held one end and they let the metal drop into the sea. They saw from the *rope that the water was nearly 40 metres (120 feet) deep. A short time later they did this again. This time it was only 30 metres (90 feet) deep. **v29** The sailors were afraid that the ship would hit some rocks. So from the back of the ship, they put 4 anchors on *ropes into the sea.

An anchor is a heavy, metal weight that stops a ship moving in the water. They did this to keep the ship in one place.

After that, they wanted the morning to come soon. **v30** Then the sailors tried to leave the ship. They put the little boat into the sea. 'We are going to the front of the ship', they said. 'We will put some more *anchors on *ropes down into the sea.' But that was not true. **v31** Paul said to the army officer and soldiers, 'These sailors must stay on the ship. If they do not stay, you will not be safe.' **v32** So the soldiers cut the *ropes that held the small boat to the ship. The little boat fell into the water and the wind blew it away without the sailors.

v33 Now it was almost morning and Paul said to everyone, 'Please come and eat some food. You have now waited for 14 days for the storm to stop. And you have not eaten anything during all that time. **v34** You must eat some food. Then you will be strong enough to get to the shore. You will be safe. You will not even lose one hair from your head.' **v35** After Paul said this, he took some bread. He prayed in front of them all and he thanked God for the bread. Then he broke the bread into small pieces and he began to eat it. **v36** Everyone became less afraid and they all ate some of the bread. **v37** There were 276 people on the ship. **v38** After everyone had eaten enough, the sailors threw the wheat into the sea. Then the ship was not so heavy.

Wheat is a plant. People use wheat to make bread. But this wheat was not food for the sailors. The ship was carrying the wheat to Rome.

The sea completely destroys the ship

v39 In the morning, the ship was close to some land. But the sailors did not know which island it was. But they saw a place on the shore with some sand on it. They wanted to put the ship on the sand. **v40** So the sailors cut all the *ropes with anchors on them. The anchors went down through the water to the ground. They also removed the *ropes from the oars. Then they raised the *sail at the front of the ship so that the wind would blow the ship along. Then the ship sailed straight towards the shore.

An anchor is a heavy, metal weight that stops a ship moving. Oars were long pieces of wood. The sailors used them to make the boat go where they wanted.

v41 But there was a place where the water was not very deep. The ship sailed on to the sand and it stayed there. The front of the ship stayed on the sand and it could not move. The sea was very strong and it broke the back of the ship.

v42 The soldiers wanted to kill the men who had been in the prison. They did not want these men to swim to the land and then to run away. **v43** But the army officer wanted to save Paul. So he *ordered the soldiers not to kill the men. Instead he said, 'Everyone who can swim, jump into the water first. Then swim to the shore. **v44** You men, who cannot swim, follow them. Hold on to pieces of wood, or pieces of the ship.' This was the way that all of us arrived safely on the shore.

Chapter 28

What happened to Paul on the island called Malta

v1 Then we were on the shore and we were all safe. The people there told us that the island was called Malta. **v2** The people who lived on the island were very kind to us. Rain was falling and the weather was now cold. So the people who lived on the island lit a fire for us. And they welcomed us to their island. **v3** Paul picked up some sticks to put on the fire. A dangerous snake came out from among the sticks. It had felt the heat from the fire. The snake bit Paul's hand and it remained fixed to his hand. **v4** The people who lived on the island saw the snake. It was hanging from Paul's hand. So they said to each other, 'We know now that this man killed someone. He did not die in the sea but it is not right for him to live. The snake will kill him.' **v5** Then Paul caused the snake to fall off his hand. It fell into the fire and it had not hurt Paul. **v6** The people watched Paul carefully. They waited for his hand to become bigger. They thought that perhaps he would die immediately. They waited for a long time. But they did not see anything bad happen to Paul. So then they thought about this in a different way. They said, 'This man is a god.'

v7 The leader of the people who lived on the island was called Publius. There were some of his fields not far from the shore. Publius said hello to us and he was kind to us. We stayed in his house for three days. **v8** Publius's father was lying in bed because he was ill. He was sick and his body was hot. Paul went into his room and prayed for him. He put his hands on the head of Publius's father and he caused him to become well again. **v9** After Paul did this, all the other sick people on the island came to him. And he caused them to become well again. **v10** The people gave us many gifts. Later, they put everything that we needed on another ship for us. And then we left the island.

v11 We had remained on Malta for three months. We then left the island on another ship. This ship was called 'The Twin Gods' and it had come from Alexandria. It had stayed in Malta during the winter.

The 'Twin Gods' were two *Greek gods called Castor and Pollux. Twins are two children with the same mother who are born at about the same time. The people from Greece thought that these gods were very powerful.

v12 We arrived at the port of the city called Syracuse. We stayed there for three days.

Syracuse was a port on the south east coast of the island called Sicily.

v13 From Syracuse we sailed on. And we arrived at the city called Rhegium. The next day, the wind began to blow from the south. Two days after that, we arrived at the town called Puteoli. This was another port.

Puteoli was a port near Naples in Italy. People who wanted to go to Rome sailed here on ships.

v14 We found some people there who believed in Jesus. They asked us to stay with them for one week. After this we travelled on to Rome. **v15** The *believers in Rome had heard about us. So they came as far as the market of Appius and the Three Hotels to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God for them. Paul was very happy that they had come to meet him.

The market of Appius was 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Rome. The Three Hotels was 40 kilometres (25 miles) from Rome.

v16 When we arrived in Rome, the authorities said to Paul, 'You can live by yourself in your own house. But a soldier will *guard you so that you cannot run away.'

v17 After three days, Paul asked the leaders of the *Jews in Rome to meet with him. When they met together, Paul said to them, 'Friends, you are *Jews like I am. I want you to know that I have never done anything bad to our people. Our *ancestors told us many things about how we should live. I always obeyed these rules. But the *Jews put me in the prison in Jerusalem and then they gave me to the *Roman rulers. **v18** The *Roman rulers asked me questions about what I had done. They found that I had not done anything wrong. There was no reason for which they could say, "He must die." So they did not want to keep me any longer. **v19** But the *Jews did not agree with the *Roman rulers. So then I asked the *Roman rulers if I could speak to *Caesar. I had nothing bad to say about my own people. **v20** Because of all that happened, I wanted to talk with you. I believe in the same promise that all the *Jews believe in. And that is why I am in prison here.'

v21 The leaders of the *Jews in Rome said, 'We have not received any letters about you from Judea. No *Jews have come here from Judea and told us news. And no *Jews have said anything bad about you. **v22** We do know that people everywhere say bad things about your group. So we would like you to tell us your ideas.'

v23 So the *Jews decided on a day on which they would meet again with Paul. And on that day, a large number of *Jews arrived. They came to the house where Paul was staying. Paul talked to them about the *Kingdom of God. He spoke from the morning until night and he explained his message to them. He spoke about everything written in the *Law of Moses and the books of the *prophets. And he showed the *Jews that his message about Jesus was true. **v24** Some of them believed that his message was true. But other *Jews who were there would not believe him. **v25** At the end of the day, all the *Jews left his house. But they did not agree with each other about Paul's words. Before they left the house, Paul had said, 'The *Holy Spirit spoke correctly by the *prophet Isaiah. He spoke to your *ancestors. The *Holy Spirit said to Isaiah,

v26 "Go and say to this people,

'You will listen and listen. But you will never understand anything.

You will look and look. But you will never see anything.'

v27 This people do not want to understand anything with their minds.

They still do not want to listen to anybody.

If they wanted to look, they could see.

If they wanted to listen, they could hear.

Then they would also understand.

And then they would obey me.

And I would *forgive them and I would make them well.” ’

v28 Paul then said, ‘I want you to know that God has sent his message about Jesus to the *Gentiles. And they will listen!’ **v29** After Paul had said these things, the *Jews left. They were arguing with each other.

Many Bibles leave out Acts 28:29.

v30 Paul lived for two years in Rome in his own house. He paid money to live in the house. Many people came to visit him and he was kind to them all. **v31** He taught people about the *Kingdom of God and about the *Lord Jesus Christ. Paul spoke his message strongly. He could speak to everyone who visited him. Nobody tried to stop him.

Word List

AD ~ AD 50 means 50 years after Jesus was born.

ancestors ~ the people in a *family who lived a long time ago.

anchor ~ a heavy, metal weight. People used it to stop a ship moving in the water.

angel ~ a servant from God who brings his messages.

apostle ~ a *disciple of Jesus that Jesus chose to do a special job. Their job was to teach other people about Jesus.

Aramaic ~ the language that people in *Israel spoke at that time.

Asia ~ at that time, people used the name ‘Asia’ for the west part of the country that we now call Turkey.

baptise, baptism ~ to put a person into water, or to put water on a person; the person is sorry for all the wrong things that he has done. This shows other people that now he wants to obey God.

Baptist ~ a man who *baptises people.

believer ~ a person who knows and accepts Christ.

brother ~ a name that a *Jew sometimes called another *Jew; or, a name that a Christian may call another Christian.

Caesar ~ the most important *Roman ruler was always called Caesar. He lived in the city called Rome.

Caesarea ~ Caesarea was one of the most important cities in *Israel.

cart ~ a big box with *wheels that animals pull along. People can ride in it. Farmers can move heavy things in it.

chain ~ many metal rings that join to make something like a *rope. People use it to stop a thing or person leaving.

Christ ~ the special person that God chose. God sent him to this world. He sent him to save people from the result of the things that they do against God.

church ~ a group of Christians who meet together. A church is not only the building that they meet in. It can also mean all the Christians in the world.

circumcise ~ to cut the skin from the end of the sex part of a boy or man. For *Jews, this was a special mark. It showed that they belonged to God.

citizen ~ a citizen of Rome was a person with special benefits and help from *Caesar and his officers.

cross ~ two pieces of wood that someone has fixed together. The *Romans fixed people to a cross to kill them. Jesus died on a cross.

desert ~ a desert is a very dry place. Often there is a lot of sand and stones. There are not many plants and not many people live there.

devil ~ the worst enemy of God. God sent him away from *heaven a long time ago.

disciple ~ a disciple wants to do the same things as another person and to learn from them.

Egypt/Egyptians ~ Egypt is a country in Africa. Their king was called *Pharaoh. People who live in Egypt are called Egyptians.

family ~ family included father, mother and children; also grandfathers and those who had been born before.

fast/fasting ~ not to eat any food.

forgive ~ to choose not to remember wrong things that a person has done. To choose not to *punish for a wrong thing. God forgives us for the wrong things that we have done.

Gentiles ~ people that are not *Jews; people that do not know God; people in all countries.

Greek ~ someone who comes from Greece; or, the language that people spoke in Greece. Many people spoke the Greek language at that time, not only in Greece. Greek sometimes meant any person who was not a *Jew.

guard ~ watch carefully so that a person does not run away; or, keep someone safe. A guard is a person with authority to guard another person.

heaven ~ the place where God and Christ are; the future home of the people who know God.

Hebrew ~ the language that the *Jews spoke.

Holy Spirit ~ one of the three persons who are God. He helps *believers to become more like God. We cannot see him. He causes people to be strong in their *spirits.

Israel/Israelites ~ Israel, or the Israelites, are all the people in the *families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God chose Israel to be his special people. The word can also mean the country that God gave to these people. It is also another name for Jacob.

Jew ~ a person who is born from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their children. Some people who were not Jews had decided to obey the *Jewish *Law.

Jewish ~ a word that describes a *Jew or anything that is a *Jew's.

judge ~ to say if people are right or wrong; or, a person with authority to say if another person is right or wrong.

kingdom ~ the people and places where a king rules is his kingdom. The Kingdom of God means the people that God rules; or it means the places where he is king.

laugh at ~ laugh against someone.

law ~ the rules in a country.

Law ~ this is the Law of the *Jewish people, which God gave to Moses.

Lord ~ a name for God or for Jesus.

magic ~ to cause strange things to happen that surprise people. Magic is very bad and it is not from God. A person who uses magic uses *Satan's power.

Old Testament ~ first part of God's book, which the writers wrote before Jesus was born.

olive ~ a tree with small fruits (or the fruits themselves) that people use to make oil. They burned the oil to give them light. They used it in other ways too.

order ~ to tell someone what they must do.

Passover ~ an important day when the *Jews have a holiday. They eat a special meal on this day every year. They remember that God took them away from *Egypt. They were slaves in *Egypt and Moses led them away.

Pentecost ~ an important day when the *Jews have a holiday. It comes 50 days after *Passover. The *Jews thank God for the food that they have brought in from their fields. At Pentecost, Christians remember when God first sent his *Holy Spirit to them.

Pharaoh ~ the king of *Egypt was always called Pharaoh.

Pharisees ~ a group of *Jews. Many of them thought that they were obeying all God's rules. But they were also obeying many rules that men had made. Those Pharisees did not like the things that Jesus taught. They did not like him because he did not obey all their rules.

priest ~ a man who gave gifts to God for the *Jews. He also burned animals to give to God. Priests worked in the Great House of God. The most important priest was their leader.

prophet ~ a person who tells people messages from God.

punish/punishment ~ to hurt someone because they have not obeyed the rules; to cause trouble for someone because they have done bad things.

region ~ a part of a country.

Roman ~ a Roman was a person who came from Rome. Roman was something that came from Rome. Rome was a very important city; it had a strong army. *Caesar lived in Rome and he ruled from Rome.

rope ~ long, thin piece of strong material. People use rope to tie things together.

Sabbath ~ the day when the *Jews rested. They did no work on the Sabbath.

Sadducees ~ a group of *Jewish men. They did not believe that a dead person could become alive again. They only used the first 5 books of the *Old Testament.

sail ~ a large piece of cloth on a boat. The wind pushes against the sail and the boat moves.

Sanhedrin ~ 71 men worked in the Sanhedrin. They were the leaders of the *priests, the important *Jews and the teachers of the *Law. The most important *priest was their leader. They met together and they *judged people. The men in the Sanhedrin had great power.

Satan ~ the worst enemy of God. God sent him away from *heaven a long time ago.

Solomon's Porch ~ a part outside the Great House of God. People often met together there to listen while someone taught them. Only the *priests could go into the Great House of God. Other people remained outside.

soul ~ the soul is a part of a person that we cannot see. Our soul is in us while we are alive. It continues to live after we die.

spirit ~ the spirit is another part of a person that we cannot see. This part can speak to other spirits and to the *soul. See *Holy Spirit. *Satan rules bad spirits.

suddenly ~ when something happens quickly and it surprises us.

synagogue ~ a place or building where the *Jews meet together to pray to God. They also learn about God's *Law there.

tanner ~ a man who works with animal skins. He makes leather from the skins. And people make things from the leather.

tent ~ a house that someone made out of cloth or animal skins. When people travel, they can carry it from one place to the next.

twelfth ~ when we count 12 things, the last thing is the twelfth thing.

wheels ~ round things that help things like cars to move.

wise/wisdom ~ a wise person understands most things well; a wise person knows what to do.

worm ~ an animal that lives under the ground. Some worms eat dead things.

yeast ~ people put yeast into flour and water to make bread. The yeast grows in the bread and it causes the bread to rise.

Book List

Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida ~ A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles ~ United Bible Societies

I. Howard Marshall ~ The Acts of the Apostles ~ Tyndale Bible Commentaries

E. M. Blaiklock ~ The Acts of the Apostles ~ Tyndale Bible Commentaries

J. D. Douglas (Editor) ~ The Illustrated Bible Dictionary ~ Inter-Varsity Press

Bibles ~ NIV, RSV, GNV, CEV, TEV, NRSV, Greek NT

© 1997-2008, Wycliffe Associates (UK)

This publication is written in EasyEnglish Level A (1200 words).

April 2008

Visit our website: www.easyenglish.info
