

## Chapter Five

The first word opening this chapter in the RSV is “but” or *de* which signals a shift in the action. Chapter Four concluded on an upbeat note with new members of the *ekkklesia* who freely had made generous donations of their possessions as well as land as in the case Joseph, a.k.a. Barnabas. In a way, such spontaneous manifestations of generosity sets the stage for the tragedy to follow. Even if we haven’t read the Acts of the Apostles, somehow we feel something looming over our heads not unlike during the summer the way we feel the approach of a thunderstorm not visible but lying just over the horizon. Such is the power of the tiny word *de*.

In this opening verse we have a husband and wife named Ananias and Sapphira, the former being introduced as “a man named.” The way it’s presented in itself raises red flags, for that phrase, along with the just mentioned *de*, is a clear intimation that what will follow won’t turn out to be good. Ananias sold some property or *ktema* (also as possession) but kept part of the money from the sale, having done this with his wife’s knowledge. The noun for knowledge is *suneidesis*, a fuller term in that it implies awareness and cooperation (*sun-* or with) in an endeavor. Connected with it is the verb *nosphizo* or to withhold. Another way of putting this is that the husband wife conspired to keep a nest egg for themselves, *time* being the noun for the sale at hand. That may have been acceptable if they had informed the apostles, however they did not and were about to pay the consequences.

Easily we can imagine what was going through the mind of Ananias as he was laying this *meros* or part of the sale at the feet of the apostles, the plural suggestive of all twelve assembled. Nothing is said of his wife who presumably was absent (cf. vs. 7). With the exception of Peter the apostles were unaware of this couple’s deception but could tell from the expression on their faces that something wasn’t quite right. After all, they were expecting a sizable donation from this sale of property which would go a long way to support the newly formed *ekkklesia*<sup>1</sup>. Then in vs. 3 which begins with another *de* or “but” Peter speaks directly to Ananias telling him that Satan has filled his heart, *pleroo* and *kardia*. This is the first of only two instances when Satan is mentioned in Acts (cf. 26.18 for the other one). In other words, there’s a direct correlation between *pleroo* and *nosphizo* or to withhold of vs. 2. Both are contrary to the Holy Spirit, the one to whom Ananias (and Sapphira) had lied, *pseudomai*, also to

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1 At this early stage we tend to look for a word to describe the apostles and those associated with them, being tempted to use the word Christian. However, that doesn’t appear until 11.26. So in this interim period it can be a bit awkward searching for a word to describe them since we’re so accustomed to used “Christian.”

tell a falsehood. In a direct manner typical of him, Peter puts this to Ananias in the first of four rhetorical questions. He doesn't expect a response because Ananias and Sapphira won't live long enough to answer.

The two were simply shell-shocked and could do nothing except listen to Peter rebuke them four-fold. The other rhetorical questions follow as: the land was their before it was sold, once sold it was at his disposal and finally the punch line. What made Ananias contrive such a deed, the verb *tithemi* or to place? The phrase "in your heart" (*kardia*) is added for emphasis. Peter concludes with the damning words that Ananias had lied to God, not to men, *pseudomai*. This was enough to give Ananias something like a heart attack which made him drop dead on the spot. The verb *ekpsucho* is vivid and fits the situation, literally to make cool from (*ek-*) or to breath.

In vs. 5 we have a second sentence beginning with the conjunctive *kai* or "and" to show the close connection between Ananias' sudden death and the response by the *ekkllesia*. That is to say, great fear (*phobos*) fell upon all who heard of this report. Chances are that Ananias was fairly well known and respected. Having withheld money from the apostles sent a shock wave through the local community and may have to some degree backfired upon the apostles. People may have desired to join them but were terrified that something similar could happen to them even if their intentions were fine. Note that this incident closes in dramatic fashion with some young men coming in, wrapping up the body of Ananias, carrying him away and burying him apparently in an unceremonious fashion.

In vs. 7 what happened to Ananias is about to happen to his wife. After some three hours Sapphira returns, looking forward to be welcomed in to the new, budding community under the apostles' direction. Surely her husband had managed to pull off a deal that would satisfy them as well as taking care of their personal needs. Even before confronting Peter she knew her gig was up. He asked directly whether she had sold the land and for so much. Actually it was her husband who had done this, but Peter wants to put two and two together so as not to make a fatal mistake. She responded with an honest answer but knew Peter was on to her. Strange to say, her husband was absent which made her feel uncomfortable. Then Peter put to Sapphira a rhetorical question with the same force as he had done with Ananias. That is to say, how did she and her husband agree to tempt the Spirit? The verb *sumphoneo* literally as to speak clearly is with *peirazo* or to tempt. In other words, Peter saw right through Sapphira as having conspired with her husband.

In vs. 9 Peter continues with *idou* which the **RSV** translates a bit poetically as “hark” or perhaps more accurately, “behold.” With some dramatic flair he says that the feet of those who had carried out her husband Ananias are right outside the door waiting to do the same with her. Before Sapphira could respond, she drops dead on the spot, the same verb *ekpsucho* as with her husband along with *parachrema*, immediately or at once; literally it reads “beside the thing “or the matter. At least Sapphira was buried beside her husband. These two back-to-back incidents naturally struck fear (*phobos*) into the entire church or *ekklesia* which is used here in Acts for the very first time. The positive sign is that the apostles and those with them are rapidly getting close to establishing a firmer identity. Another group is included, if you will, those who heard what had transpired. And so Luke uses the example of this couple, essentially well-meaning but wanting to have their own way. It’s his way of presenting a cautionary tale for the newly constituted church that in time...most likely a short time...will be modified.

Vs. 12 has another use of *de* which the **RSV** translates as “now.” It’s an important *de* because we just came off the rather frightening incident of Ananias and Sapphira. To many they seemed to have made a generous offering and were severely punished for a relatively minor offense of withholding some money as a nest egg. With the intent to change the subject and leave this somewhat embarrassing incident behind, Luke takes pains to insert not just signs and wonders (*semeion* and *teras*) wrought by the apostles but effected as literally “in the people.” Although they aren’t spelled out we can assume they took the form of healing and perhaps even restoring to life some people from the dead. Vs. 12 concludes with this activity apparently focused within the Portico of Solomon mentioned last in 3.11. Note the adjective *homothumados* as found last in 4.24, *homos* + *thumos*. The latter is noted earlier as heart and mind working as one, this amplified by the adjective meaning one and the same, in common. Again, all the action thus far has taken place within the small confines of the city of Jerusalem.

Vs. 13 reflects both the fear and reverence with which everyone held the apostles, again much of it traceable to the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, not so much the signs and wonders though they may have had played a role. The verb *megaluno* sums it all up, literally to be or to make large. This attitude which is a mixture of truth, fear and exaggeration continues with multitudes of men and women being added. The verb is *prostithemi* with emphasis upon the dynamic nature of the preposition *pros*, direction towards-which. It contrasts with those who stood apart but remained fascinated, this designated by the verb *kollao*, literally to cling. In other words, they dared not cling to the apostles and those with them. Note that Luke takes pains by including women,

not simply men. Use of the present participle *pisteuo* or those believing shows a common growing sense that those so designated have a proper name which as noted above, will come in due time.

One indication of the signs and wonders of vs. 12 is when people carried out onto the streets those who were ill on all types of beds and the like when they got word of Peter passing by. Hopefully his shadow would fall on them and heal them. This wasn't as straight forward than at first glance. Due to the congested nature of the city...tight alleyways and so forth...the sunlight didn't penetrate. If and when the light did, it would be sporadic. Even open air markets were problematic due to canopies and various devices to provide cover from the sun. That leaves the open spaces of Solomon's Portico, but that too might have been covered with portable means of providing shade. With this in mind, the people had to resort to ingenious methods, one might tearing down some of these coverings and another as encouraging Peter to come out at high noon into a garden just off the street with the sun momentarily overhead. That, of course, was siesta time but given the desperation of so many people, they came out regardless.

And so this section concludes with vs. 16 where people not only from Jerusalem brought people out for healing but those from nearby towns. In a way this minor point is significant because it's the first reach outside the city of the apostles' influence even though they still remained inside. As for remaining inside, that meant being in close vicinity to the temple, the holiest place for Jews. Surely some if not all would miss this contact when they made their move to spread the Gospel.

Another instance of *de* translated as "but" by the **RSV** is found in vs. 17. Here it serves to introduce what happens for the rest of Chapter Five, namely, all the apostles being taken into custody for the second time. The interval between the two isn't given, but it seems quite short, the release of Peter and John noted in 4.23. That means the Jewish authorities had been keeping a close eye on the apostles' activities, especially alarmed when they heard about Ananias and Sapphira. What in the world is wrong with the apostles treating people who want to join them like that? Furthermore, something isn't right with so many people holding the apostles in high honor. Surely it must be some kind of cult. If the Romans got wind of it, might as well call it quits. They'd love any excuse to step in and do what they'd do in the near future, destroy not just Jerusalem but the temple and the Jewish religion.

Note that vs. 17 and onward mentions the high priest (*archiereus*) but never his name as in 4.6 (Caiaphas) with the arrest of Peter and John. For him and all the big guns

associated with him at best that experience turned out to be a draw. In the situation at hand we have the unnamed high priest and Sadducees also as in the first arrest though others are simply designated as “all who were with him.” Luke gives the reason for their sudden though not unexpected appearance rendered literally as “filled with jealousy,” *pleroo* and *zelos* also as ardor. Such was the view from the side of the apostles, true but perhaps more accurate to say fear...fear of any repercussions by the Romans as noted so often.

Vs. 18 has the apostles—apparently all twelve of them—arrested and thrown into prison rendered by the adjective *demosios* or common, public and not mentioned with regard to the first arrest. The apostles took this as a golden opportunity to speak of Jesus to any prisoners they happened to be with which overnight transformed that gloomy place into a mini-*ekklesia*. So while this “congregation” must have engaged in common singing or the like, it startled the guards who were trying to figure out what was going on. Then halfway through the night an angel-messenger or *aggelos* of the Lord opened the prison doors and led them out. Apparently nothing was done for the other prisoners, for once again that would trigger an alarm in the praetorium. However, regardless of the fate of the prisoners, some of who were scheduled to be executed, they were transformed which of course attracted wider attention. That in and by itself was an indirect witness just as powerful if not more so than anything the apostles had done thus far.

The angel of the Lord—“Lord” being deliberately added by Luke to assure his readers who’s in charge—brings the apostles from prison, they bidding an emotional farewell to the prisoners as they left. As for the guards, they faced a grim fate due to negligence of duty. Without wasting any time, the angel of the Lord directed the twelve to go straight on to the temple which they still considered Ground Zero. There they are to speak to the people (most likely unaware of the recent arrest) words of Life, *rhema* as expression or saying which here is connected with *Zoe*, life in the physical sense. It may seem a bit odd to use this word but then again, it was delivered by the *aggelos* or the messenger meaning directly from God. He’s responsible for having chosen this word marked by a capital letter. *Zoe* can be taken in a number of ways, for example, in contrast to *Pneuma* or Spirit.

One way of considering *Zoe* as indicative of physical life is that precisely there attention is to be focused. In other words, *Zoe* is where Jesus Christ will be found, not in anything abstract. It’s as direct and personal as could be. This takes into consideration a temptation common to us all where we automatically equate anything abstract with *Pneuma*. Once that association is made, it’s easy to manipulate

any spiritual teaching to our liking. Fortunately *Zoe* avoids this. Admittedly this can be taken as reading into the situation but doesn't go against the text. As for the apostles, they now have a new way to perceive Jesus Christ, this time directly from an *aggelos*.

The *aggelos* simply led the apostles outside the prison a safe distance away before the apostles made their way to (where else?) the temple. They did so at daybreak, trying to get some rest in the interim but could not for obvious reasons. It seems by now the apostles were attempting to assemble as much material about their experience with Jesus Christ whom they believe is with them and working through them. Though it's not recorded, we can imagine all twelve not only asking each other about personal recollections of Jesus but busily going about asking people for information to add to their own store. It'd come as no surprise that the drive to gather all they could about Jesus would be valuable when they decide to move beyond the confines of Jerusalem.

In the **RSV** vs. 21 continues in three significant ways, if you will. First *de* translated as "now," beginning a second sentence and new paragraph. All contribute to showing that the high priest (again, unnamed but Caiaphas) means business. This time he's accompanied with the council and senate of Israel, *sunedrion* and *gerousia*, the former often rendered officially as Sanhedrin and the latter as council of elders (*geron* being an old man). To summon both so early in the morning is unusual, many members not having an idea of what was going on. Again, fear of Roman reprisal had a lot to do with Caiaphas taking this step.

At this stage the authorities had no clue as to what actually took place the previous night. The apostles knew this would be their reaction but were completely unfazed by heading directly to the temple. You'd think the two groups would have crossed paths but did not. Perhaps the *aggelos* who freed the apostles decided to hang around a bit longer to prevent this from happening. During the regular morning rounds the prison officials found the doors opened where the apostles had been while the rest of the prisoners were behind bars. There's no record of asking these men what happened but we can presume if asked, their account would not have been believed but dismissed outrightly. And so all the officials involved were at a loss. Everyone was just staring at each other. The verb is *diaporeo* the verb in vs. 24 where the preposition *dia* or through serves to emphasize the confusion.

More important, however, is the fact that all were afraid and confused as to what would come of all this. Even more afraid...terrified would be better...are the guards

and their boss who would face immediate execution. However, the text doesn't speak of this. Perhaps everyone was too confused. It would come as no surprise that the prison workers would have used this as an occasion to sneak away as quickly as possible. As for the apparent escape, two possibilities could be at hand: that indeed a divine being was on the side of the apostles as the prisoners had testified and if the Romans heard about this incident, they'd used it as an excuse to crack down on the religious authorities.

This state of fear and confusion is both resolved and intensified when someone comes in with a report about the apostles: resolved in that they're physical presence is known and intensified in that they were doing exactly as before which if it continued, would pose a direct threat to the established order. Note the two verbs used together concerning the apostles in the temple, *histemi* and *didaskalo* or standing and teaching the people. The former suggests that the apostles were not just there freely of their own accord but fully confident of what they were teaching. Without further ado, the captain and his offers arrested them but careful not to show any violence, *bia* also meaning strength or energy. They were savvy enough to know the power the apostles had over the people who wouldn't hesitate to stone them on the spot. With this in mind, the officials made a pretense that the high priest would like to interview the apostles, this sounding just fine with those who had assembled there.

Vs. 27 begins prosaically enough as "when they had brought them." Although the distance between the temple area and where the authorities were assembled must have been short, surely more than just bringing was involved. We can imagine that as soon as the captain and his guards got away from the people ready to stone them, they took some delight at having roughed up the apostles. As for actually depositing them, we have the verb *histemi* or to place, to stand with the preposition *en*, literally "set in the council," not unlike shoving them into position, all lined up and left standing there so as to let fear sink into them. The high priest (still unnamed) proceeds to question them. He must have recognized John, for as Jn 18.15 says (though John isn't mentioned by name), "this disciple was known to the high priest." What this means isn't spelled out which in and by itself is intriguing. So all this was familiar to Caiaphas, too familiar in fact for his liking. It was like a reoccurring nightmare unable to stop.

In vs. 28 Caiaphas lets all twelve apostles have it, fully aware of being center stage with his council, senate and other flunkies. He reminds them of their previous meeting when they were strictly charged not to teach "in this name," Caiaphas not

being able to utter the proper name Jesus. The verb is *paraggello* where as noted in 1.4 its root *aggello* means to proclaim prefaced with the preposition *para* or beside, this giving a greater sense of urgency. The noun derived from it is *paraggelia* also as an announcement with regard to something requiring attention. Here it refers to not teaching the people as they had been doing in the temple area. Since it was in the precincts of the Israel's holiest site, such teaching was all the more abominable.

Caiaphas continues in vs. 28, most likely having trouble keeping eyes off John and thinking to himself that somehow somewhere he recognized him but couldn't quite put his fingers on it. John must have felt the same, afraid to be recognized and to a certain degree Peter. After all, he had managed to get into the high priest's court when Jesus was arrested and once in, made a commotion resulting in his denial of Jesus. Anyway, such an incident was minor to Caiaphas who was preoccupied with Jesus but nevertheless noticed it from the corner of his eye, if you will. As for the situation at hand, Caiaphas accuses all the disciples with having filled Jerusalem not so much with teaching (*didache*) about Jesus as in the temple but more to the point, your teaching, which implies something completely false. Joined with this is the supposed attempt by the apostles to bring "this man's blood upon" the religious authorities. Again, Caiaphas can't take himself to utter the name Jesus, "this man" being a derogatory phrase.

In vs. 29 Peter responds to Caiaphas with that *parresia* or difficult-to-define character of boldness, perhaps the most daring occasion to date, when he says that he and his fellow apostles must obey God instead of men. The verb *peitharcho* is interesting; it consists of *peitho* or to persuade, to win over and *archo* or to rule, to govern. To be obedient to those in authority is its essential meaning. In the next verse Peter proceeds to make his point much as one on trial defending himself. He claims that God himself had raised Jesus from the dead whom you...precisely Caiaphas...had condemned to death. This, of course, was a fairly recent occurrence and must have made the high priest feel that he is being put on the spot.

In vs.31 Peter continues his defense, the eleven apostles listening intently as well, for their very lives depended on how he presents his case. His words are familiar. God had exalted Jesus to be at his right hand (*hupsoo*) from where he functions as both Leader and Savior, *Archeros* and *Soter*, the former as having preeminent position and the latter also as a deliverer. This is for the specific function of offering repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel, *metanoia* and *aphesis*: putting one's faculty of *noeo* after (*meta*) or behind or in the past and the act of freeing from something that confines. Peter concludes with saying that we—he and the other apostles plus those



associated with them—are witnesses to these things. *Rhema* is the noun here which fundamentally means word-as-expression. Not only that, the Holy Spirit or *Pneuma* which is *Hagios* joins in. That has been given to all who obey God and by implication, Jesus Christ, *peitharcho* as in vs. 29. And so in a few words we have a mini-catechism of Jesus' relationship with God, that the two are on the same level.

Vs. 33 conveys the response Peter and the others were expecting: enraged = kill or *diapriomai* = *anaireo*. Both verbs are quite vivid. The first means to saw through and the second, to remove or take away. Note the prepositions prefaced to each verb: *dia* and *ana* or through and above connote under destruction as well as reducing to oblivion. Here's where the Pharisee Gamaliel steps in to save the day. He, like many of those present, is described as a teacher of the law, *nomodidaskalos* which combines the two words into one. However, what sets him apart is that he is highly respected not so much by his peers...true...but by "all the people," *timios* also as costly, precious. His very act of standing as mentioned in vs. 34 and ordering the apostles to be put outside is done discreetly and accepted without reservation by all present. As for the two verbs, *anistemi* is more formal, if you will, than *histemi* followed at once by *keleuo* or to order.

Now in vs. 35 Gamaliel addresses the assembly as "men of Israel," a phrase Peter used when he had cured the lame man in 3.12. His initial words are sharp and to the point, namely, that they are to be careful what they intend to do with the apostles, *prosecho* literally to have in the direction towards-which. In other words, Gamaliel knew his confreres all too well, that they were ready to put the apostles to death and hopefully assign Jesus Christ to oblivion. To hell with what the people think. He warns them with two examples of recent memory. The first is a certain Theudas who led a gang of some four hundred men. However, he was killed which made his followers disperse. The second is Judas of Galilee who suffered the same fate. Gamaliel doesn't go into details about both instances which were known to everyone, chances being high that they were of a political nature. To those listening Jesus and his followers were similar if not worse because they were engaged in deceiving the people with regard to religious matters; not just that, but they were doing it smack in the holiest place of them all, the temple.

The conclusion was obvious to those assembled, listening sullenly as their esteemed colleague came to a conclusion. Again, he's not afraid to use strong language, knowing that he can get away with it. He bids them to stay away from the apostles and leave them alone, the two verbs being *aphistemi* and *aphiemi* which both have the preposition *apo-* or from prefaced to them. In other words, very strong words indeed.

Next Gamaliel speaks somewhat abstractly, that is, using the word plan and undertaking with regard to the apostles, *boule* and *ergon* or resolution, decision and work. If both are human in origin, they will literally be loosened down, *kataluo*. On the other hand, should both be of God, forget-about-it. Any attempt at *kataluo* will fail, even with the result of suffering the same loosening-down by opposing God. The adjective is much more powerful and scary, *theomachos* literally as fighting against God.

Fortunately the council took Gamaliel's advice, the verb being *proskaleuo*, another word with the directness of *pros-*. Still, they wanted to give the apostles a good drubbing and decided to beat them, *dero* also as to flay which implies they laid it on them as much as they could. Most likely they did this behind the back of Gamaliel who heard about it later and was appalled, rightly so. After the authorities ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, they were let go. Vs. 41 says they departed rejoicing (*chairō* also to be glad) for having been deemed worthy to suffer as they did for the name of Jesus. The verb at hand is *kataxioo*, the preposition *kata-* here as in accord with such worthiness as implied by the verb. Although the apostles were genuinely joyful, at the same time they needed medical attention which their supporters did at once. Again, *dero* implies a dreadful beating close to being flayed alive.

And so Chapter Five comes to a conclusion which by now is familiar...agonizingly so for the authorities who had just dealt with them. Like homing pigeons they headed directly to the place where they felt they belonged, the temple. There they resumed teaching and preaching about Jesus Christ, *didasko* and *euaggelizo* essentially being the same. What's significant is that both are done at home (singular) meaning they did it as the homes of those associated with them. Obviously the apostles were from Galilee; thus the phrase *kat' oikon* or literally "according to home" doesn't apply to them in the literal sense. Furthermore, use of the verb *pauo* or to stop, to cease, is a kind of in-your-face gesture to those religious authorities who had maltreated them. To be sure, this conflict is destined to continue if not get worse. It'd come as no surprise that some followers asked the apostles, notably Peter, to discreetly tone it down for the purpose of self-preservation. From what we know of Peter, no way. He wasn't going to take advice from anyone.

As for Gamaliel, he fades off the scene but not entirely<sup>3</sup>. That is to say, we can be pretty sure he followed the apostles and wanted to see if what he had said to his fellow Pharisees in the recent assembly would come true. In other words, both he and they kept close eye on each other to see if his words about the apostles would prove true or not. In conclusion, surely Gamaliel, being a Pharisee, must have known his fellow Pharisee Nicodemus and possibly Joseph of Arimathea. If so, their contacts must have been on the sly lest they be accused of sedition with regard to their connection with Jesus Christ and his apostles.

## Chapter Six

This chapter begins with *de* translated as “now” which, as pointed out often, is inserted to show a shift in the action. The same applies with the addition of “these days” which preps readers for the account to follow and designed to keep their attention focused on it. Chapter Six is the shortest in Acts of the Apostles consisting of fifteen verses dealing with the choice of seven men which as a footnote in the **RSV** says, “These are traditionally regarded as the first deacons.” It’d come as no surprise that their wives hesitated when their husbands were chosen. Memories of Ananias and Sapphira were very much fresh in the minds of most people. If a man was chosen, could he end up like them followed by his wife? Furthermore, these men are to deal with widows which raises all sorts of sticky issues. Also Chapter Six is the beginning of Stephen’s long discourse which ends with him being stoned towards the end of Chapter Seven.

*Plethuno* is the verb meaning to increase or to multiply with regard to disciples. The noun for this is *mathetes* which, judging by its verbal root, means someone who is engaged in learning under the tutelage of a person who’s an expert in a given matter. Mention of *mathetes* suggests a growing awareness of some kind of hierarchical arrangement taking place which it seems to be doing all on its own. First we have the apostles who number twelve followed those characterized as *mathetes* and are taught directly by the apostles. Finally we have the as yet unnamed members of the *ekklesia* who comprise the greatest number of the three groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Gamaliel is mentioned one more time, albeit indirectly. In 22.3 Paul pays him homage, having been brought up at his feet. The verb is *paideuo*, difficult to translate, because it implies be raised pretty much as a child and being subject to continued education in the sense of continued growth.

Earlier mention was made that all the action thus far and through Chapter Seven takes place in Jerusalem. Now the first crack in that physically confined space starts to appear by mention of the Hellenists, but these are people who come into the city. They are Jews who were not born in Israel, spoke Greek and were raised in a culture marked by Greek philosophy and customs. Still, many these people came to Jerusalem chiefly to celebrate the various feasts associated with the temple. Some of them gravitated to this new budding sect attracted by their talk about a mysterious man-God called Jesus Christ. This may have fit in nicely with their exposure to Greek philosophical ideas.

Apparently the Hellenists have been associated with the *ekkesia* for some time because widows among them were involved with the distribution of alms which is put in terms of the general term bread. *Diakonia* or ministry is the word here. Apparently these widows, being foreign Jews if you will, were neglected or better, frowned upon. The verb for this is *paratheoreo*, literally to look beside or *para-*. Hence the murmuring, *goggusmos* or as one Greek lectionary put it well, behind the scenes talk. This actually is the first rift within the *ekklesia* compared with external tensions which have already been documented. It's relatively minor but needs attention because it reveals a larger issue at hand, tension between Jews of Israel and Jews from outside Israel or better, those not adhering to all the strict Jewish observances. Despite this rift, it heralds a much larger one that will endure for many centuries, namely, between the Judaeo-Christian worldview and Greek philosophical ideas as well as those from further afield. Nothing, however, is said of anything Roman. For the most part, Rome had been Hellenized ages ago.

As for the murmuring, most likely it started beyond the ears of the twelve disciples who were busy with more pressing concerns. Finally reports filtered in which meant they had to take steps to resolve the *diakonia* issue or more precisely, how to reconcile native Jewish with foreign-born Jews. Also it was a matter of language. The former spoke Hebrew and/or Aramaic whereas the latter leaned more towards Greek. This is where memory of the recent experience of Pentecost comes in handy when people who spoke various languages could understand the apostles. While that may not take place again, the experience may contain a lesson applicable in this situation.

While the issue just noted with regard to proper *diakonia* or service was front row and center, it was both a distraction as well as a test...test in that it showed what was really on the apostles' minds. Above all else they were concerned with how all this fit in with what they perceived as their chief responsibility of preaching the *logos* or word of God. In other words, it's a matter of making a fundamental choice which

involved real people with real lives. The two verbs at hand are *katalambano* and *diakoneo* or to leave behind preaching for performing works of charity, *diakoneo*. Here the preposition *dia-* or through serves to show the action involved. The apostles are getting accustomed to speaking in a diplomatic fashion as well, this being important for future ministry to the Gentiles. That is to say, they throw in the adjective *arestos* translated here as “(not) right” but more along the lines of pleasing. Never would they have used such language before Pentecost!

Another thing to watch in this early development of the *ekklesia* is how two parts of the above mentioned hierarchy step in. The twelve apostles summon the disciples or *mathetes* now designated as a body or *plethos* (also quantity or usually large number). They summoned members of this body, perhaps not all but those whose leadership skills were starting to emerge. The verb is *proskaleo* where the preposition *pros-* is suggestive of the urgency at hand. After the body of disciples were assembled, the twelve apostles asked—presumably through the mouthpiece of Peter—to choose from their own group seven men, *episkeptomai* or literally those who are to give a report upon or *epi-*. The verb is with the preposition *ex* or “from you,” the number of which with regard to these disciples or *mathetes* not given but presumably not large. They seem to have an auxiliary role which can be summoned from time to time as in the present situation.

To be qualified a man must be literally “be a witness” or *martureo* not unlike the twelve apostles and being such means that eventually they will replace them. Here it pertains to holding fast to all which the *ekklesia* adheres. This is important in a delicate matter as the one at hand, women who are vulnerable by reason of being widows. In brief, they can be taken advantage of as well as at risk of being seduced. To prevent this, the seven must be full or *pleres* of both the Spirit or *Pneuma* (Holy not mentioned but presumed) and wisdom or *sophia*. having a good reputation. Such men are to be appointed—first person plural or “we” or the twelve apostles doing it—to the duty of providing for widows. The verb is *kathistemi* which suggests positioning in accord with (*kata-*) the duty at hand described as “this need” or *chreia*.

Vs. 5 says that what the apostles had proposed pleased everyone, that is, their *logos* was pleasing, *aresko* also as to flatter or to give satisfaction. This pertained not just to a few but to everyone. Note the way it’s expressed: before (*enopion*) all the *plethos* or before a large number which implies that the seven men were known by most present. As for widows, at the time they were left to fend for themselves which meant they were basically helpless. To show special concern for them must have made this new faith in Jesus Christ very appealing to women. As for the first and

most noted choice we have Stephen. He's the only one noted as being full of faith, *pleres* noted in vs. 3 with regard to the Spirit. Note too that *pleres* involves the Spirit who is Holy, that designation lacking in vs. 3. The other six must be just as outstanding, but we have no further information about them. However, attention soon will shift to the witness and stoning of Stephen. Once all seven had been set apart, the apostles prayed and laid hands on them, *proseuchomai* fundamentally as to make petition. As for the laying of hands, that goes back to the patriarch Israel or Jacob who at the end of his life did this to Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. Gn 48.14+). This is the first time the apostles had done this, surely recalling Jacob thereby giving an example for the *ekklesia* to follow thereafter.

Vs. 7 begins appropriately enough with the conjunctive *kai* or "and" to both conclude and to continue the spirit of what the previous verses concerning the choice of seven men. Here the *logos* or word of God which increases (*auxano*) is presented almost as if it had an existence independent of those proclaiming it, true insofar as *logos* is a reflection of Jesus as *Logos*. Vs. 7 makes a parallel between *logos* and *auxano* on one hand and the number of disciples or *mathetes* multiplying, *plethuno*. The former suggests increasing from within, swelling as almost by yeast whereas the latter is increasing by way of number. In sum, both are intimately connected. As for *plethuno*, the adverb *sphodra* is added connoting almost excessiveness.

Still, this growth is limited to the confines of Jerusalem. It seems that a critical mass has to be reached before moving outside the city confines, and the agent for it lies in part to various sorts opposition the *ekklesia* is experiencing. They are not unlike birth pangs forcing the *ekklesia* to go outside the womb of the temple to which the disciples continue to be attached. Of significance is the addition of not just priests but a whole crowd or *ochlos* of them, those who minister in the temple. Their shift is described in terms of being obedient to the faith, *hupakouo* with the preposition *hupo-* or under suggestive of being under the direct influence of *pistis* pressing down from above but in the positive sense. Although the text says nothing as to how their confreres responded, we can be sure that it wasn't received well.

In a way the conjunctive *kai* beginning vs. 7 continues through the one in vs. 8. It ties in the double increase (*logos* and *mathetes*) with Stephen described as full of grace and power or *charis* and *dunamis*; compare this with *pistis* or faith and the Holy Spirit of vs. 5. Being so equipped, he was able to do great wonders and signs (*teras* and *semeion*) much along the lines of the apostles as recounted in 5.12. In both instances they were done literally "in the people" which hopefully had a longer term effect of enabling them to join the *ekklesia*. Originally Stephen was appointed along with six

others as caring for widows. However, it seems that he branched out on his own and had success with a much larger audience. It'd come as no surprise that this may have caused jealousy among the six.

Vs. 9 has several groups of Jews—their doctrines and beliefs now long forgotten—first arise and then dispute with Stephen, *anistemi* and *suzeteo*, the latter literally to inquire with. The verb *anistemi* is more than just getting up. It represents thoughtful preparation has been done prior to *suzeteo* without which they would feel insecure. A footnote in the NIV says that Saul (later Paul) may have been among them, Asia being a province in which was located his home town of Tarsus. Mention of these people as Hellenistic Jews suggests that the *logos* so recently spoken of as having increased reached far and wide with the apostles not yet having left Jerusalem. If this conflict was essentially between Jews—Hellenistic and those with whom Stephen is involved—what would it be like if Gentiles were involved? Actually a fearful prospect everyone was aware of. The reason for the conflict isn't given, but what Stephen had to say was at odds with traditional Jewish belief. The apostles had done the same with local religious authorities, Stephen having learned from them. However, throughout his defense we have no mention of either apostles, disciples nor the other six men being present or stepping in to aide his defense.

Vs. 10 sums up the situation which as we'd expect Luke to present it. Those arrayed against Stephen couldn't withstand (*antistemi*: to stand against) his wisdom and Spirit or *sophia* and *Pneuma*, the latter without the modifying *Hagios* or Holy as noted with regard to vss. 3 and 5 above. Both apply to his speaking which was the *logos* of God. The option to counter this? Stephen's opponents got hold of men to claim he was speaking blasphemous words or *rhema* (words of expression) literally “into Moses and God.” That makes it all the worse, *Torah* being inferred as given by God to Moses. They decided on this in secret, the verb being *hupoballo*, literally to cast under or more commonly as to instigate. The fact that this was done apart from the presence of Stephen suggests that the debate at hand took place over an extended period of time, the length of which isn't given.

Vs. 12 reveals what these Hellenistic Jews settled upon which was quite predictable. They stirred up everyone they could lay hold of: people, elders and scribes. The verb here is *sugkineo*, the *sug-* or “with” suggestive of moving all three against Stephen. This is followed by three verbs: *ephistemi*, *sunarpazo* and *ago* or to literally to stand upon, to seize with and to lead. Such vehemence ends with him being brought literally “into the council” or *sunedrion* noted last in 5.41. There they brought forth

false witnesses, the verb being *histemi* or to stand which implies some thought had gone into this whether or not the council members knew it or not.

Once all this had been set in order, the Hellenistic Jews proceeded with their argument in vs. 13 not referring him by name but by “this man” in order to show their contempt for Stephen. In their view he’s constantly speaking words or *rhema* both against the holy place or temple and law, the latter being *Torah* and intimately associated with Moses as noted above. Stephen was simply echoing Jesus’ words about destroying the temple and changing the customs handed down by Moses, the two verbs being *kataluo* and *allasso.*, the former literally as to loosen and the latter as to alter. As for the two references, cf. Mt 26.61 and Mt 5.18. Thus Stephen is accused with subverting the two most fundamental pillars on which Judaism rests.

Despite these severe accusations, Chapter Six concludes on an upbeat note even though it’s a foregone conclusion Stephen’s fate is sealed. All the members of the council gazed at him, *atenizo* which as noted earlier in this document, suggests gazing without extension, that their eyes were on the same level as Stephen’s. Such did not apply to those who had brought him before the council. Their eyes were blind. *Atenizo* is appropriate here in reference to Stephen’s face resembling that of an angel, *aggelos* of course as messenger. Although the council would concur with the Hellenistic Jews, they couldn’t help but see that Stephen was a messenger sent among them. That, of course, made them feel uncomfortable. They, like presumably Saul along them, would come to regret this for the rest of their lives.

## Chapter Seven

The conjunctive *de* at the beginning of this verse translated by the **RSV** as “and” concerns the high priest Caiaphas who now steps in to question Stephen. He isn’t mentioned by name nor as part of those who had come against Stephen but presumably had been present among them all along. That’s why in vs. 1 he steps right in to take the matter in hand. One gets the impression that by not giving a proper name Luke is demonstrating a certain contempt for him. Caiaphas is mentioned last in 4.6 when questioning Peter and John and before that he was tied in with the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Thus he has had a history with these people whom he considered troublesome both in the religious and political spheres. We have no actual words from Stephen to which Caiaphas snapped back, “Is this so?” or literally “these thus?” Stephen obviously had been speaking of Jesus, words



by now familiar to the high priest. All this was becoming a headache that just won't go away, hence the terse, dismissive question.

Stephen continues in response to Caiaphas, this time addressing those who had brought accusations against him and perhaps some if not all those whom he had originally addressed. He calls them all brethren and fathers, words of both familiarity and respect which begin his lengthy apologia occupying most of Chapter Seven. One has to give those present credit for allowing him to continue for so long. Another reason might be that once he spells out his position, it will give his accusers more ammunition to use in other occasions. Stephen knew, of course, that his fate was sealed.

Before recounting Stephen's address, keep in mind the swiftness with which he delivers it, realizing full well that he would be put to death upon completing it. Not just that, he wanted to be as succinct as possible when addresses such important people arrayed against him. As for any supporters being present, most likely there were on the sidelines. All this took place behind close...and locked...doors meaning these supports would have to wait for a break in the action for someone to inform them. Also not that throughout his apologia Stephen makes frequent use of the conjunctives *kai* and *de* or "and" along with the adverb *tote* (then) which move the text along rapidly as well as keeping it coherent.

Stephen proceeds giving a snapshot of salvation history beginning with the common point of origin for Israel, the patriarch Abraham whom he calls "our father." Everything Stephen says from this point on all those present can agree upon, that is, until vs. 51 when he changes his tone. To Abram as he was known then the God of glory had appeared, *doxa* and *horao*, this title appearing in Ps 29.3, "the God of glory thunders." The actual point of contact does not involve Abram seeing the Lord but of listening to him. Compare the two versions of Gn 12.1 cited in vs. 3; first the Genesis verse followed by the one from Acts:

'Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'"

Two examples of the preposition *ek-* or *ex-* (from): *exerchomai* and *ek* with regard Haran which makes this more personal, "your land" as well as "your kindred." The adverb *deuro* is used for "go," more like an exclamation as "come!" In other words, *deuro* offsets the double *ex-*. As for the land to which Abram is to go, he isn't given a clue as to where or what it is though it's mentioned in Gn 12.5 as Canaan. That,

however, wasn't revealed until Abram consented to *deuro*. As for the Lord showing him this land (*deiknumi*), it's as though he brings him to its threshold from which he can view it not unlike Moses much later.

“and said to him, ‘Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.’”

The Hebrew has *lekilekah* literally “go to you,” two “l’s” followed by two “m’s” (the preposition *min* or ‘from’): “from your birth” and “from house.” Abram is to go to a land the Lord which show him, ‘*erets* being used and common applied to one’s native country which Canaan will become.

There seems to be some disjuncture here for lack of a better word. The above two verses indeed are from Chapter Twelve of Genesis pertaining to Abram leaving for Canaan where the Lord will bless him abundantly. However, vs. 4 has Abram leaving the land of the Chaldeans and living in Haran which is in accord with Gn 11.31. There Terah, the father of Abram, took him and others with the intent of going to Canaan. However, there’s no divine intervention to set this in motion. For some reason or other, they stopped in Haran and lived there until Terah died. As for Haran, it’s in southeast Turkey, still some distance away from Canaan. The verb *katoikeo* is used which has the root for the noun *oikos*...to make his house in that land. However, it was to be temporary. Note the unceremonious verb *metoikizo* which also has the verbal root for *oikos* and has the sense of removal, of dwelling-after (*meta-*) the place with which one is familiar. And so this *metoikizo* turns out to be the land in which Stephen’s accusers...“you”...are dwelling (*katoikeo*). Note the two uses of the preposition *eis*: “into this land” and “in which you are now living.”

Vs. 5 continues from the previous verse as an extended sentence, the conjunctive *kai* translated as “yet” in the **RSV**. Although the previous verse ends on a positive note with regard to the promise of Canaan made to Abram, God didn’t give it to him as an inheritance or *kleronomia*. Poor Abram. He’s caught in a kind of no-man’s land: not in his native land but in Haran while being told that he won’t have Canaan as his own, that being reserved for those after him. The noun *kataskesis* or possession is the noun for this; compare with *kleronomia*. To top it off, consider the last words of vs. 5: “he had no child.” As for this promise, the Greek critical text of vs. 5 has in bold the words concerning this inheritance which means it’s a kind of composite of the references given in a footnote: Dt 2.5, Gn 12.7; 13.15; 15.2, 18; 24.7 and 48.4.

In vs. 6 Stephen combines two themes as one, Abram with regard to Canaan and Israel in Egypt though Israel isn't mentioned by name. The basic theme is living in a land not one's own. This was very important for people of the time, they being closely identified with the physical place they inhabited. Not only did God challenge this early on in Israel's history, but Stephen sees that it ties in with the present age and its relationship with the coming of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of heaven which he proclaimed.

Vs. 6 continues on a rather dreary note with regard to Abram saying that no children of his own will become heirs. Instead, his prosperity (*sperma* or seed) is destined to be as aliens living in a land not their own. Compare two words in this verse, *paroikos* and *allogeneis*; the former literally as beside (*para-*) the house or just outside it and belonging to another. Without mentioning it, Stephen is referring to the four hundred years Israel had spent in Egypt where Israel was enslaved and ill-treated, *doulos* and *kathos*. Actually the only record is towards the end of Israel's stay in Egypt. It seems the people enjoyed prosperity for the bulk of their stay. As with vs. 5, the present verse in the Greek critical text has in bold the words concerning this mistreatment.

As with vs. 6, the Greek critical text of vs. 7 more or less paraphrases Ex 3.12 with regard to God bringing Israel from Egypt. It runs as follows: "But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain." Stephen adds the important notion of worship or *latreuo* or to serve in the sense of carrying out religious obligations. It has a specific place or *topos* countering the mountain in the Exodus verse.

In vs. 8 Stephen shifts from Exodus back to Genesis or more specifically where Abram is now called Abraham. Now God gives Abraham the covenant (*diatheke*) of circumcision, this verse beginning with the conjunctive *kai* as "and." It's followed by a second conjunctive in the same verse where immediately Abraham becomes the father of Isaac followed by Jacob who is the father of the twelve patriarchs. Thus in a nutshell Stephen sets forth Israel's history as it will unfold in a fuller form.

Vs. 9 shifts forward from Abraham to the three patriarchs just mentioned. Stephen doesn't present them in a favorable light which concurs with actual history, of how they maltreated Joseph. The connection with Jesus seems to focus around how out of jealousy (*zeloos*) or envy Joseph's brothers sold him into Egypt. However, God was with him and rescued him from all afflictions, *exaireo* and *thlipsis* or to take-from and

distress. The Greek critical text of vs. 10 continues with a paraphrase of Gn 41.37-39, the key word being *kathistemi* or to appoint with regard to being second in command of Egypt after Pharaoh, *oikos* or household being applicable in this case. Such is the result of divine favor which bestowed wisdom upon Joseph, *charis* and *sophia*.

What follows is a straight-forward account of how Joseph saved Egypt which means by now Joseph's accusers...and those of Stephen...were starting to get the point. Joseph, of course, is a forerunner of Jesus Christ who sent for his father and brothers to come and reside in Egypt. After having prospered there—their descendants remained for some four hundred years—a whole new phase in their lives began to take shape. This is indicated by *kathos* beginning vs. 17 translated as “but.” This introduces what Stephen calls the time of the promise where *chronos* equals conventional time and *epaggelia* which extends back to the time of Abraham. At last the divine promise not so much to him but to his descendants to live there is about to take place through the agency of Moses.

Stephen continues with the saga of Moses from vs. 20 through vs. 41, giving him the most attention. Interestingly he doesn't mention the Exodus, Israel's pivotal event. Indeed, Stephen's accusers couldn't help but pick up on that point. Instead, he speaks at some length about Israel's trying experiences in the Sinai wilderness and jumps forward a bit to God's revelation as recounted in 3.14. Then he jumps forward to Mount Sinai and on to vs. 39. Here we have a key point in Stephen's apology, the rejection of Moses with two key words, *hupekoos*, *apotheo* and *strepho*. The first is with the negative *thelo* (did not wish), the second as to reject or to push aside (*apo-* or from) and the third as to turn. *Strepho* is a summation of the first two, if you will, which are negative. It is with two prepositions, *en* followed by *eis* or “in their hearts” (*kardia*) and “into Egypt.” This sets the stage for the people asking Aaron for gods so they may worship them because Moses had been on Mount Sinai for an extended period of time. He seemed to have abandoned them, hence the need to fulfill their desire to worship something...someone...anything.

Stephen adds in vs. 42 that the Lord turned and handed over the people to worship the host of heaven, *stratia* also referring to an army. The shift of worship or *latreuo* or the carrying out of religious obligations is central, intimating that those whom Stephen is addressing are no different from their ancestors. Compare this divine *strepho* with Israel's *strepho* in vs. 39. Here he refers to the prophet Amos (5.25-27). First comes the quote from Amos followed by that of Acts. Note the rhetorical questions in both verses, a lament at being so hurt:

“Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You shall take up Sakkuth your king and Kaiwan your star-god, your images which you made for yourselves; 27) therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.”

“Did you offer to me slain beasts and sacrifices, forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? And you took up the tent of Moloch and the star of the god Rephan, the figures which you made to worship; and I will remove you beyond Babylon.”

From vs. 44 through vs. 50 Stephen continues with a summary of Israel’s history before entering Canaan, speaking of a tent made for the Lord in which to dwell. That remained until King David made a permanent home, the temple in Jerusalem. While this is very important for Israel, Stephen quotes from the prophet Isaiah about divine transcendence. The verses from each are as follows beginning with Isaiah (66.1-2). Note that they are put in terms of two rhetorical questions:

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the Lord, but this is the man to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.’”

“Heaven is my throne and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?”

Despite this gracious condescension of the Lord to dwell among his people, Stephen rips into those he’s addressing. That is, he puts them on the same plane as their ancestors (‘as your fathers’) calling them in vs. 51 stiff-necked, *sklerotrachlos* where the adjective *skleros* also means hard or unyielding. Concomitant with this is being uncircumcised in both heart and ears. All three center around the faculty of hearing which is equated with resistance to the Holy Spirit, the verb being *antipto*, literally to fall against which suggests forcefulness when it comes to this hearing.

In vs. 52 Stephen hits home as he brings his defense to a conclusion. As noted above, he equates his accusers with many of Israel’s ancestors, not a flattering picture. It’s all geared to their rejection of Jesus Christ whom he doesn’t mention by name but calls him the Righteous One (*Dikaios*). Everyone present knew, of course, it referred to Jesus. More specifically, the fathers of those present killed those who had

announced beforehand his coming. As far as fathers goes, that can refer to ancestors going way back, the previous generation or anything in between. Furthermore, they failed to keep the law or *Torah* which was delivered to them by angels. A footnote in the NIV says that while there's no specific mention of this, it is part of tradition. Although Stephen's words enraged everyone present, they hit Caiaphas the high priest home with special force because he was involved with the arrest and execution of Jesus. Everyone present couldn't help but watch him squeam this way and that.

What striking about the remaining verses of Chapter Seven beginning with vs. 54 is that most begin with a conjunctive such as *de*, *kai* or the like. They are inserted so as to show the quick pace of action from Stephen's conclusion to his death. Now action shifts from Stephen to his accusers who naturally were outraged at his words, *diaprio* being the verbal root meaning to cut into pieces and prefaced with the preposition *dia-*, through. The Greek text adds hearts or *kardia* which makes this all the more forceful. Along with this cutting-through they ground their teeth, so loud that it filled the room.

So over and above the horrible sound of teeth grinding in vs. 55 Stephen gazed into heaven while being filled (*pleres*) with the Holy Spirit, the verb *huparcho* literally as to begin under and applies to being in a certain state as so described. Note the role of two verbs pertaining to sight. The first is when Stephen gazed into heaven, the verb being *atenizo* or to look without extension, alpha privative prefaced to *teino* or to stretch...to look without stretching. Next comes *eidon*, to see in the sense of to perceive with regard to God's glory or *doxa* and Jesus.

Without missing a beat Stephen exclaims this to his accusers in vs. 56 using the verb *theoreo* or to see but with sustained attention, this along with *idou* or behold which connotes suddenness. The response? Those present cried out, *krazo* meaning with vehemence while blocking their ears, *sunecho* literally as to hold with. So it's more than blocking their ears; it's almost amputating them so as not to hear him. While this was not to hear Stephen, in actuality they didn't want to see what he was seeing. This led to them rushing at Stephen, *hormao* with the adverb *homothumadon* which is comprised of the *homos* or one and the same or common and *thumos*, usually state of great displeasure.

In vs. 58 Stephen's accusers cast him out of the city and stoned him, the two happening almost simultaneously. They must have enjoyed heckling him as they rushed from Jerusalem as quickly as their legs could carry him. In the meanwhile we can assume that Stephen continued his *atenizo* or looking-without-extension and the

Jews still blocking their ears lest they hear him say anything further. Once outside, in a gesture of obeisance they left their cloaks at the feet of Saul. We can assume that Caiaphas was present as well, the former perhaps being a young protege of the latter. If that's so, he would have had direct knowledge of the trial and death of Jesus. As for Saul, he's not identified but presumed to have been one of those complicit in all this.

While being stoned, Stephen prayed, *epikaleo* literally as to call upon which conveys a sense of urgency all the while engaged in *atenizo*. Although this was directed to Jesus, those stoning him didn't hear a word, their ears still blocked...amputated...and presumably that horrible sound of grinding their teeth continued. In vs. 60 Stephen cried, *krazo* but completely opposite as in vs. 57 asking Jesus not to hold the sin they are doing against them. The verb is *histemi* or to stand, that their sin or *hamartia* not be attributed to them. And so Chapter Seven ends on the upbeat note of *koimao* or to fall asleep as pertaining to Stephen's death.

## Chapter Eight

The conjunctive *de* appears twice in this verse which is comprised of two sentences and is translated in both instances as "and." The reason? To show the close connection between Stephen's death and the aftermath, persecution of the early church. The first verse of this chapter gives the impression of belonging to the last chapter but on second thought, is appropriate here. Although Saul doesn't factor in for the first few verses, he takes center stage in Chapter Nine. And so his menacing presence hovers over what now follows; of course, the high priest Caiaphas is behind this though he isn't mentioned. In the current chapter action shifts to the apostle Philip and the magician Simon. Such is the connecting role of the conjunctive *de* translated as "and." As for the verb at hand, *suneudokeo* consists of the root *dokeo*, to think or suppose prefaced with the preposition *sun-* or "with" and *eu-*, the adverbial form of good.

Vs. 1 continues with a second sentence also with the conjunctive *de* translated as "and" which speaks of the immediate persecution that resulted, literally "in that day." All the pent-up rage of the high priest Caiaphas and religious authorities is now let loose under the guidance of a newcomer, Saul. The noun *diogmos* or persecution is literally "upon the *ekklesia*." Note that it's confined to Jerusalem forcing those within to flee to nearby Judea and Samaria, the verb *diaspeiro* with the preposition *dia-* or "through" indicative of a thorough dispersal. The only ones who

seemed to remain within the city were the apostles. Surely they continued frequenting the temple albeit in disguise. Some kind of arrangement to remain in contact must have been made so that the two groups didn't remain isolated from each other.

Vs. 2 has devout men burying Stephen, *eulabes* also as God-fearing and consisting of the root *lambano* (to take, to receive) prefaced with the adverbial *eu-* as with *suneudokeo* above. In other words, it is a taking hold of well. As for the verb to bury, *sugkomizo* also means to gather as at a harvest and implies that Stephen has ripened and is to be taken in. His burial took place the very day the persecution began which means either these few men remained in Jerusalem or decided to flee. Most likely they chose to remain with the apostles. Also vs. 2 said that they made a great lamentation over Stephen, *kopetos* also as mourning, "great" suggesting that a large number of not yet scattered believers were present.

Vs. 3 begins with the conjunctive *de* translated as "but" as it pertains to Saul who at once commenced a savage persecution, the verb *lumaino* also as to destroy or to ruin with regard to the budding *ekklesia*. This destructive attitude is enhanced by the fact that Saul went from house to house, dragging out anyone he could find and tossing them in prison. Surely Caiaphas approved of this and perhaps the Romans who saw in Saul an indirect agent preventing this particular subversive activity from taking root.

While this persecution was going on within the confines of Jerusalem, those who had been scattered continued to preach the *logos*, *euggelizo*, another word with the adverbial *eu-* as a preface. It's as though they were completely unaffected. It's used with *dierchomai* or to go through in an almost methodical way all throughout the region of Judea and Samaria. The way this is presented within the context of the first real persecution is that the *logos* or word had an existence almost on its own. At least momentarily Saul was focused upon getting those within Jerusalem. Perhaps he figured this movement hadn't as yet spread outside the city walls. Even if he did know of those who had been scattered, he assumed they simply would remain just that, scattered and lacking the ability to coalesce.

Vs. 5 is significant in one way. It's the first time recorded in Acts that one of the apostles (Philip) actually left the confines of Jerusalem. Although vs. 1 says the apostles remained in Jerusalem, we can assume that shortly after Saul began his persecution they decided to send one of their own to both accompany and rally those who have been scattered. Philip headed for a city in Samaria and there proclaimed



the Christ, *kerusso* also to make a public declaration, the first time this verb is used which is so closely associated with spreading Christianity. Interestingly Samaria is a non-Jewish region. Perhaps Philip went there to preach in relative safety because Saul's intent was confined to Jewish believers. The quicker word spread out about Jesus Christ, the quicker more people would believe.

In vs. 6 those who received Philip are described as multitudes or *ochlos* also as crowd, the verb being *sunecho* or to hold with and did so as one, *homothumados* as in 5.12 or *homos + thumos* where the heart and mind are working as one. Both the verb and adjective contrast nicely with *diaspeiro* or the scattered of vs. 1. So while the scattering is undeniable, the spiritual unity remains unbroken, now sustained by the presence of one of the apostles. Not only did Philip preach Jesus Christ but worked signs or *semeion*. Such *semeion* are described in vs. 7 as pertaining to those who were possessed by unclean spirits as well as paralyzed. As for the former, they came out with a loud cry or *boao* which means they were content to have taken up residence in such persons and didn't want to leave. Implied is once they did leave, the person so possessed became clean. Obviously this was cause for much joy or *chara* also as delight.

During Philip's stay in Samaria—and he must have been in frequent contact with Jerusalem—he came across Simon who once had performed magic, *mageuo* involving astrology, interpretation of dreams and other occult practices. He had considerable success, having caused quite a stir, *existemi* which literally means to stand from (*ex-*) oneself. He was so popular that it affected the entire nation of Samaria, *ethnos* also pertaining to a particular people. Not only that, he proclaimed himself to be great in the sense of famous. Note, however, that Simon's practice of magic is in the past which implies when meeting Philip he was not doing it, perhaps being retired. Naturally Simon was drawn to Philip by reason of the signs...time to come out of retirement, if you will.

Vs. 10 says that Simon enjoyed great success and was revered by all in Samaria. He was showered with all kinds of gifts and favors, even being called Great by reason of power or *dunamis* supposedly given by God. It'd come as no surprise that the apostles ensconced in Jerusalem heard of Simon, even being taunted by the inhabitants of Samaria, he as one man being considered a rival to the twelve of the apostles. Besides, here was a Jewish-Samaritan thing right at their disposal. Surely Philip was aware of this. How could he not? Nevertheless, the Samaritans tended to gravitate toward Philip because he offered something more appealing than plain magic, spectacular as that might be. Baptism stands out as an initiation ceremony and entry

into a distinct group of people thereby making permanent what Philip had been preaching the people, *euaggelizo*. In other words, they were attracted by the *eu-* or well-ness of his words.

In vs. 12 the Samaritans are subscribing to both the kingdom of God and name of Jesus Christ which means the two are starting to be reckoned more or less the same, Jesus himself having been big on preaching the former. Simon decides to get baptized. He does this on the spur of the moment showing that he's an inveterate opportunist knowing when to join something he can make use of later on. After this vs. 13 says that Simon continues with Philip, *proskartereo* also as to stick to or be close at hand. The verbal root *katereeo* means to be steadfast and the *pros-* prefaced to it suggests something akin to clinging. While being with him which seems pretty much on a 7-24 basis, Philip continues with signs and great miracles, *semeion* and *dunamis*. Almost in child-like fashion Simon is amazed, *existemi* which is appropriate for his character, he having done the same as noted in vs. 9. Although he disappears momentarily, it's easy to see where this is leading.

As noted earlier, Philip's activity couldn't help but reach Jerusalem still reeling from the persecution directed by Saul. Although Philip had wrought signs and the like and had dealt with Simon, what impressed the apostles above all else was that the Samaritans received the *logos* of God. That was an important sign, for it is precisely the *logos* that prompted them to send Peter and John. That would leave nine of the original twelve left to hold the fort. It showed how much they valued Philip's work, willing to take such a risk. If the apostles got word of what was transpiring in Samaria, chances are it reached the ears of Saul though he doesn't seem inclined to persecute the people there because they are non-Jews. Still, he kept a close eye on the situation should things get out of hand.

Vs. 14 has Peter and John tasked with the express mission to pray for the Samaritans, *proseuchomai*. This is geared toward a special end, namely, that they receive (*lambano*) the Holy Spirit, momentous in and by itself because they are not Jews. In other words, very early on the *ekklesia* previously confined within the limits of Jerusalem started to break out those confines and go to non-Jews. The presence of the Holy Spirit would therefore make firm the baptism wrought by Philip and set the Samaritans on their own two feet within the *ekklesia*. This is something made clear by vs. 16. Note the presence of the verb *huparcho*, literally to begin from under and more generally as to be in existence, that is, with regard to belonging to Jesus Christ through baptism. This verse bears a parallel with the descent of the Spirit with that of Pentecost by two uses of the preposition *epi*: the verb *epiipto* or to fall upon and

*epi* as free-standing...upon-upon. The way the Spirit was transmitted was by the laying of hands as in 6.6.

Simon was present because he witnesses this giving of the Holy Spirit by Peter and John and presumably Philip. Ever the opportunist as noted earlier, he wants a part of it and offered money in exchange. In many ways he's innocent, wanting the Spirit much as a child wants a toy. Once he has this gift, he can do the same as the apostles, imitating them as grown-ups. All three could see right through him and despite his opportunism, they knew he had an inherent goodness. Easily Peter could have crushed Simon on the spot but instead gives him a dressing-down because he sees in him potential for the good. He will have no part nor lot in the matter which is rendered by *logos*, *meros* and *kleros* being just about one and the same. Obviously Simon didn't have his heart right with regard to God, *euthus* as straight or forthwith, a word which describes him perfectly. Nevertheless, his inherent innocence would contribute to setting him aright.

Peter bids Simon to repent in vs. 22, *metanoeo* or literally to have him place his mind after, *nous + meta*. It's comprised of two steps. He is to place his mind after his current way of thinking or in the case at hand, his wickedness, *kakia*. Once done, he is to beseech the Lord for what we might call a tweaking of this *nous + meta*. The verb is *deomai* or to request, usually in a pleading sort of way. If he does this, the possibility exists that his heart's intent may be forgiven. Peter puts this in somewhat indirectly, reproving Simon but not as harsh as he would have if it weren't for the Holy Spirit having come upon him. We can assume that Simon picked up on this and immediately was relieved. *Epinoia* or intent is one of those words difficult to render accurately, consisting of *nous* or mind with the preposition *epi-* prefaced to it, upon the mind, and pertains to the result of a thought process or conclusion of it. *Epinoia* is very intimate in that it takes place upon (*epi-* prefaced to the root) within one's heart or *kardia*.

Peter continues in vs. 23 which for him is a display of remarkable firmness coupled with understanding. The other two apostles looked on and marveled at this as well since they knew his character from the beginning of their relationship with Jesus. He observes of Simon that he's in the gall of bitterness as well as in the bond of iniquity, *chole* and *adikia* being the same. The former also means wrath and thus is similar to *adikia* or more accurately, bound by it, the noun being *sundesmos*, the preposition *sun-* or "with" indicative of something inescapable. Simon concurred wholeheartedly and immediately bade Peter to pray for him, *deomai* with *pros* indicative of directness, so nothing of what he said will come to pass. Here is another example of two uses of

the preposition *epi*: prefaced to *erchomai* and free-standing. The text is strangely silent concerning the outcome. We hear nothing more about Simon who hopefully remained in Samaria and worked on behalf of the apostles where as vs. 9 says, he was well known. Obviously the people heard about all this and were delighted to have him.

Vs. 25 brings to conclusion the mission to Samaria on an upbeat note, Philip, Peter, John and perhaps Simon who both testified and spoken the *logos* of the Lord. The verb is not just *martureo* but the same root prefaced with the preposition *dia-*, a thorough witness, if you will. This is borne out by having preached to many towns within Samaria, *euaggelizo* here paralleling *diamartureo*. Both were especially formidable because three apostles were involved. There's nothing said of any structure put in place to support the Samaritans, but we can assume care was taken to do so. Then the three apostles returned to Jerusalem...actually sneaked into the city...because the persecution begun by Saul was still raging. They figured that if Saul gets his way, at least the *ekklesia* had been established among non-Jews who would see to its growth. Also word of this growth served to strengthen those within Jerusalem, giving them hope that the persecution would finally run its course.

With vs. 26 action shifts to Philip once again who early on had proven himself the first missionary, if you will, from among the twelve apostles. In vs. 5 Philip simply goes to Samaria but presumably with the approval of the apostles though nothing of the sort is mentioned. Here it's very different. An angel or messenger (*aggelos*) of the Lord spoke to (*pros*) Philip directly, telling him to go literally at noon or *mesembria* which also means south by reason of the sun's position which leans in that direction at midday. Philip is to head in the direction of Gaza. Without missing a beat, he rises (*anistemi*) and sets out on this trip. Interestingly he hadn't a clue as to why or what will happen. The angel-messenger simply told him to do so, something the apostles didn't question.

Vs. 27 speaks of Philip's encounter with a high level Ethiopian eunuch, the suddenness of which is conveyed by *idou* or behold. Actually this man who was so intentionally disfigured was in charge of the queen's treasure. As soon as Philip came across him and his retinue, he knew this is why the angel-messenger had sent him. It so happened that the eunuch who remains unnamed throughout was returning from Jerusalem. The verb is *proskuneo*, the root meaning to kiss with the preposition *pros-* prefaced to it, direction towards-which. Just the fact that this eunuch was in a chariot shows his high status, most likely accompanied by a body-guard. Being so highly placed, we can assume that he had business to follow through while in Jerusalem.

The eunuch happened to be reading the prophet Isaiah. Now instead of an angel-messenger intervening, the Spirit told Philip to join the eunuch, *kollao* more as to cling to. He followed at once, having no problem getting past any soldiers protecting him by reason of the Spirit's intervention. Apparently the eunuch was reading aloud which made comprehension of the text easier due to all the bouncing around. Also it was a way of getting the words of Isaiah out so they could sink more deeply into his mind. Philip didn't bother introducing himself, knowing that the Spirit had taken care of such matters. That enabled him to get down to business at once and ask the eunuch if he understood what he was reading. When he heard it was the prophet Isaiah, he was delighted and knew then and there why he was sent to this foreigner. The verb to know is *ginosko* and the one to read is *anaginosko*, the same root prefaced with the preposition *ana-* or above. The eunuch was too puzzled over the text to be bothered with anything else, knowing that when he gets home, he'll be left with feeling uneasy at not having resolved the situation. To him Philip was indeed the very last chance, so without further ado, he asked him for guidance, *hodegeo* meaning to assist in reaching a destination.

The eunuch sensed this was no haphazard meeting, the two not even bothering to ask for their respective names. As for the part (*perioche*) of Isaiah at hand it runs as follows, first from Isaiah <sup>1</sup> and then from Acts:

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?”

*Nagas* and *hanah* or oppressed and afflicted form a pair pertaining to the servant who remains silent throughout. The verb *'alam* or dumb is a more forceful way of expressing this silence which must have infuriated those who were causing it. *Hotser* and *mishpat* or oppression and judgment form another pair where the servant is taken away, the common verb *laqach*, but is more along the lines of being whisked away. Apparently the generation to which the servant belonged was not just ignorant of his plight but was indifferent to it, hence the reason for Isaiah's rhetorical question which rings with greater clarity by the phrase “my people.” *Syach* as considered

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<sup>1</sup> The critical Greek text says this excerpt is from the Septuagint. The passage at hand is from the Hebrew Bible.

applies to meditating or speaking with oneself. In the verse at hand, *syach* has as two objects:

1) That the servant is cut off or *gazar* from the land of the living, the verb connoting the cutting of wood.

2) That he is stricken (*negah*) for a transgression or *peshah*. *Negah* is a noun which applies to a plague and here reads literally, “the stroke of the transgression.” It is used frequently with regard to leprosy in the Book of Leviticus as in 13:2: “When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous disease on the skin of the body.”

“As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken up from the earth.”

Note that one involves death and the other the removal of wool. In the first the preposition *epi* or upon is used with regard to *sphage*, literally “upon the slaughter.” In the second which pertains to shearers, we have *aphonos* or literally without voice. *Tapeinosis* or humiliation also refers to subservience where justice was literally lifted from him, *airo*. As for describing his generation, it’s so disfigured and beyond description, *diegeomai* meaning a detailed account. A second use of the verb *airo* is used with regard to this man’s life being removed from the earth.

In vs. 34 the eunuch conveys to Philip what had been on his mind ever since leaving Jerusalem. Is Isaiah speaking of himself or someone else? Perhaps while in the city he heard about Jesus and a group of people who revered him, this influencing his reading of Isaiah. In response we have Philip first opening his mouth, a sign that he’s to speak with authority about the matter, something the eunuch could sense even before actual words came from his mouth. Right away Philip knew Isaiah was speaking about Jesus, that passage most likely having been a topic of discussion among the apostles after Pentecost. In light of it he conveyed to the eunuch good news about Jesus, *euaggelizo*.

The eunuch was so moved by Philip’s words that when the retinue approached some water, he asked to be baptized. That means their discussion moved from the Isaiah passage to this rite of initiation. Philip was thrilled because if this high official in the court of the queen of Ethiopia was baptized, that forebodes well for extending the *euggelizo* to that country. In other words, a second non-Jewish land would receive the good news, one much larger and powerful. So they stopped and once Philip performed the baptism, the Spirit seized him, *harpazo* also as to plunder. It happened

so quickly that it left no room for further communication between the two men. You'd think that abandoning the eunuch then and there would have harmful consequences, but far from it. He didn't seem phased by this *harpazo*, almost expecting it, as intimated by the joy (*chairo*) he manifested as he continued his journey home. One such example foretells this or with regard to the prophet Elijah: "And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you whither I know not" [1Kg 18.12].

As for Philip, after his *harpazo* he landed in Azotus and continued his preaching of the gospel or *euggelizo* there after which he came to Caesarea, a seaport where the Roman procurator had his headquarters. This snatching from the eunuch to another location happened instantly and without Philip knowing where or why. This is indicated by the passive way it's expressed, "But Philip was found at Azotus," *heurisko* with the preposition *eis* or into. Also he began preaching as if on automatic. Caesarea will play an important role later on in Acts. That's where Peter goes to visit the Roman centurion named Cornelius. The text at hand has nothing to say about Philip and Cornelius meeting nor do we have any mention of this later on. Nevertheless, the prospect of the two meeting isn't excluded. In fact, Cornelius could have been outside the country at the time.

## Chapter Nine

The tiny *de* translated here as "but" signals perhaps the most important event in Acts of the Apostles after Pentecost, that is, the conversion of Saul as he is called at the time. Indeed, he plays a central role not just here but for the bulk of this book though he disappears for several chapters until re-emerging in Chapter Thirteen.

A key word in vs. 1 is *eti* translated as "still" in conjunction with the verb *empneo* literally as to breathe in with regard to the following two nouns: *apeile* or threats of a very intense kind and murder or *phonos* also as slaughter. So all along from when Saul was mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Eight he had been diligently and almost diabolically at work within Jerusalem. As we know later, he will continue in the same vein but on behalf of Jesus Christ. Here the object of his wrath are what the text calls disciples of the Lord, *mathetes* which includes both the apostles and those with them. This time Saul approaches the high priest Caiaphas who isn't named in order to receive letters for synagogues at Damascus. That will give Saul free reign to persecute the followers of Jesus Christ. While the text thus far has the apostles confined within Jerusalem with the exception of Philip, Peter and John having

traveled to nearby Samaria, Damascus is considerably further away. Being a major city, it was only natural for these followers to gravitate there in order to drum up converts. Either one or more of the disciples had gone to Damascus without this being recorded or others had been sent surreptitiously to spread the *logos* of God.

Saul wasn't quite sure if any members of the *ekklesia* were in Damascus as indicated by the words of vs. 2 *hopos ean* or "so that if." What raised his suspicions that some indeed were there was either he had intercepted correspondence between Damascus and Jerusalem or one of the people in his custody had been overheard talking about it. Saul was surprised...rather, shocked...that followers of Jesus had made it to a city some one-hundred and fifty miles away in such a short of time. Indeed, he had to rush in order to snip it in the bud. Damascus had a large Jewish population, so to him it was a prime suspect, if you will. He was prepared to go there to find any people belonging to the Way, this term or *Hodos* also as course and applied here for the first time to the expanding *ekklesia*.

Without hesitation Saul set out for Damascus as though it were next door. He was so singled-minded that distance for him was irrelevant. Besides, like those of the *ekklesia*, he had the advantage of the wonderful Roman road system. That will be essential for him later as he goes about spreading the Gospel. Caiaphas took special delight, thinking to himself that at last he had found the man he had been looking for. Still, it was uncertain whether or not adherents to the Way were in Damascus. If not, at least he would have the satisfaction of knowing the situation there first hand and even leave some spies to keep an eye-out and get back to him. After Damascus, thought Caiaphas, Samaria is next, that having been "infected" by the apostles and people like Simon who still may be active there. Saul possible heard about Simon and how he joined the *ekklesia*, another cause for alarm.

After about two or three days of hard riding, Saul approached (*eggizo*, also to draw near) Damascus when suddenly or *exaiaphnes* which conveys the air of unexpectedness, wham. A light from heaven flashed around him, *periastrapto* not unlike lightning which is what the root means. The preposition *peri-* or around shows that this light totally surrounded him. Following the example of lightning, that means this flash lasted a second or two, no more. However, like lightning, it was extremely strong. Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice calling him by name and asking why he's persecuting (*dioko* or to run after) the person to whom this voice belongs. Saul asks who is speaking, careful to use the title Lord or *Kurios* just in case it was God himself. Although the voice identifies itself as Jesus whom Saul is persecuting, he had an inkling beforehand it would be he. Who else, really? Still, he asked the



question to make sure. Paul was a devout Jew, and if he discovered that he had been persecuting God himself, he would have been mortified beyond description.

Jesus wastes no time. In vs. 6 he bids Saul to get up off the ground and make his way into Damascus which was nearby. Fortunately Saul was in the company of fellow persecutors who helped him, for the lightning-like flash had blinded him. He knew it was temporary because Jesus informed him that once in Damascus he'd be informed as what to do. Those accompanying Saul may not have been struck down but couldn't help but see the light surround him. They too heard the voice of Jesus without seeing anyone else, nor did they know it was he. Although they intended to drop Saul off with local Jewish authorities who had expected his arrival, we can assume that he protested. To their astonishment he kept muttering the name Jesus, the very one considered anathema, they had no choice but to concur. After discreetly making inquiries they dropped him off with a man named Judas. We can only imagine the look on Judas' face when he opened the door. Although nothing is said of how unsuspecting member of the local *ekklesia* reacted, in such an extreme case as this the Lord himself must have clued him in. If it were otherwise Judas would have dropped dead at once from a heart attack.

As for Saul's escort, nothing more is said of them. Did they become followers of the Way or did they simply return to Jerusalem? Chances are they stayed on in Damascus because when word about Saul reached Caiaphas and the Jewish authorities there, they would have all hell to pay. The same would have happened if they approached the religious authorities in Damascus. Talk about being caught between a rock and a hard place. As for Caiaphas, he disappears from the scene, for when he got word, he felt more than frustrated. This Jesus who was handed over to him would simply not go away. All o was cease and desist. Surely the words of Gamaliel were destined to haunt him for the rest of his life: "keep away from these men and leave them alone" [5.39] because if what they're doing is from God, no one will be able to thwart them. At least he had comfort in the thought of having the Roman authorities on his side should things get out of hand. Now let them worry about it.

Vs. 10 has *de* translated as "now" which shifts from Saul being knocked off his horse to those followers of Jesus in Damascus who soon will deal with him. It came as no surprise that Ananias was stunned beyond belief, not believing what had happened. Was it a clever ploy Saul had connived to worm himself into those belonging to the Way? Ananias is introduced as a disciple or *mathetes* which indeed gives proof that either early on some escaped Saul's persecution in Jerusalem and have made their

way to Damascus or had gone there beforehand. Regardless, most likely he was sent by Peter with the consent of the other apostles.

The Lord communicated with Ananias in a vision, *horama* (verbal root *horao*, to see in the sense of behold) who recognized him as such. Note a noun pertaining to vision is used while nothing is seen but instead is spoken. The Lord...the proper name Jesus isn't used...told Ananias to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street. Chances are both men were leaders or sorts and knew each other, Judas having accompanied Ananias from Jerusalem along with their families. Now that Saul was in their very midst, it was like a lion had suddenly appeared in their homes ready to devour them. If any other followers of Jesus knew about this, they'd treat both Ananias and Judas as traitors. Indeed, they had tons of explaining ahead of them.

The Lord knew how Ananias and others would respond, so he took care to carefully couch his words starting in vs. 11 and continues in a conversational manner right through vs. 16. The Lord tells Ananias that Saul was at prayer, *proseuchomai*. That should put him at ease. Then he continued with saying how Saul had seen Ananias who'd come and lay hands on him to restore his sight. There's no mention of a vision or *horama* here as is the case with Ananias in vs. 10. Still, that was no consolation for Ananias, and we can assume the same for Judas. For a moment, picture the scene. Here in Damascus are several members of the fragile *ekklesia* with a man considered the devil incarnate who had come to kill and imprison their friends and families. Again keeping in mind those who had accompanied Saul, we have no record that they too were present. Chances are they hung around (in effect, they had no choice), and once saw that their master had converted, did the same. To return to Jerusalem without Saul would have been suicidal, so they had no choice.

It'd come as no surprise that for a moment or two both Ananias and Judas entertained the thought of killing Saul. It was a perfect opportunity. Nobody knew Saul was in their presence which means they could make up any story such as having been assaulted by robbers when he fell off his horse. Throughout all this Saul's prayer...his *proseuchomai*...was so intense that he didn't hear any words between the two men. In response to the Lord's request to visit Saul in vs. 13, Ananias naturally responded by saying that he has heard far too many reports about him as an agent of Caiaphas. That is to say, he was responsible for having done evil to the saints in Jerusalem, *hagios* or holy being a way of setting apart followers of Jesus. You can tell by use of this word plus followers of the Way that people are in the process of groping for a word to identify themselves, Christians still not coming into common parlance.

Despite the rightful objections by Ananias, the Lord over-rules him with the astonishing words that Saul is (present tense) a chosen instrument or *skeuos*, a general term for a container and *ekoge* being a noun also as special choice. This special-ness is indicated by the preposition *ek-* as “from” prefaced to the root *lego* or to gather, to choose. The Lord spells this out briefly by saying that as a container Saul is to bear his name before the Gentiles as well as kings and sons of Israel. Then he adds words designed to comfort Ananias as well as Judas. That is to say, Saul will repay the damage he has done by much suffering (*pascho*) for the sake of his name which isn’t given but of course is that belonging to Jesus Christ.

With these words, Ananias changed his mind or better, decided to leave matters in the hand of the Lord with regard to that vision noted in vs. 10. And so in vs. 17 he addresses Saul as brother or *adelphos*, this with the intent of putting him at ease, that no one is threatening to do him in. And so Ananias did lay hands on Saul in accord with what Saul had seen in vs. 12 and informed him it was the Lord Jesus who had appeared (*horao*) to him on the road. Not only will his vision be restored, more importantly he will be filled (*pleroo*) with the Holy Spirit, this being a kind of mini-Pentecost because Saul will be known as an apostle, if not greater than them all. As soon as Saul regained his sight, he was baptized, took some food and regained his strength, *enischuo*, the preposition *en-* as “in” reinforcing this.

Vs. 19 continues with a second sentence saying that Saul remained with the disciples at Damascus for a short period of time, Ananias and Judas being responsible for introducing him to people who thought all three had gone mad and rightly so. Surely many intense discussions took place, and would that they had been recorded! What astounded these people was the infused knowledge Saul obtained which will be the most eloquent and persuasive words as yet with regard to Jesus Christ.

Anyway, the purpose of Acts is not to focus upon these details even though we’d like to but on the spread of the Gospel and growth of the *ekklesia*. Thus vs. 20 begins on this note but with one huge exception, Saul proclaiming Jesus as Son of God. *Eutheos* or “immediately” is the key word here, for it will mark Saul’s career from this point until his martyrdom in Rome. Apart from this remarkable transition, even more so is his giving witness to Jesus Christ, something which those associated with him never cease to marvel. Actually Saul went into the synagogue...his natural religious allies...with the intent of winning them over to the *ekklesia*. No small wonder vs. 21 has everyone exclaiming that the one they’re listening to is the same person who had raised havoc in Jerusalem, *portheo* being a strong verb meaning to pillage or to ravage.

After all, Saul was known to have come to Damascus at the request of the high priest to engage in the same thorough scouring.

Vs. 22 says that Saul increased all the more in strength, *endunamai* which contains the root *dunamis* also as power or capacity, the ability to carry out something prefaced with the preposition *en-* or “in.” This suggests that he was constantly being informed by the Holy Spirit which had filled him and maintained him in his preaching efforts. So he, like the apostles, had met Jesus on the road to Damascus and was filled with the Holy Spirit as they had been at Pentecost. No wonder he’s regarded as an apostle. *Sugchunno* is a verb meaning literally to pour together and here as to confuse the Jews whom he was addressing. This he does in order to prove that Jesus was the Christ, *sumbibazo* or to bring together into a unit, the root meaning to mount or to lift up. While such talk was bad enough, coming from a former champion of orthodoxy made it literally intolerable.

Saul had been active for some time in Damascus which means word got back to the high priest and religious authorities in Jerusalem that he has gone over to the enemy. It must have astonished them all completely but not so much Gamaliel who earlier had counseled restraint, that is, at the end of Chapter Five. Furthermore, those who had accompanied Saul and were supposed to help him round up followers of Jesus didn’t return to Jerusalem. Apart from this, vs. 22 says it was only after many days that the Jews took action. This is expressed by the verb *pleroo* or to fulfill and the adjective *hikanos* meaning considerable. We get the impression that they were waiting for the right opportunity to take action, *sumbouleuo* meaning to take counsel with (*sum-*). Of course, that extended or indefinite period of time didn’t mean they had been plotting in the meantime.

Because of the *sum-* or with-ness of *sumbouleuo*, word was bound to leak out. The Jews were watching all city gates 7-24 perhaps on orders from Jerusalem as well as out of fear. Saul became aware of the plot to do him in. Note that vs. 25 has “his disciples” (*mathes*)...not those of Jesus...coming to his rescue by letting him down from the city wall in a basket. This must have been done under the cover of darkness. Apparently the Jews didn’t take any action against the followers of Jesus; they were more intent to get Saul dead or alive, preferably alive, and ship him off, out of their hair, to Jerusalem.

Indeed, Saul shows the same intent as a disciples as when he had been in the service of the high priest, for without hesitation he returned to Jerusalem. The verb is *paraginomai* or to be present beside with the preposition *eis*, “into Jerusalem.” Then again, Caiaphas and company didn’t expect this, so it worked out perfectly well. In

other words, Saul was hiding in plain sight. He tried to join the disciples, *kollao* fundamentally to cling to or to glue but to no avail. The reason for this was obvious, his notorious track record. However, someone with such a ferocious reputation just doesn't stop by and ask to associate with you as Saul had done. Indeed it was odd which made some think that indeed this man had a change of heart. However, they would have to be very, very cautious.

Saul didn't simply waltz into Jerusalem but most likely disguised himself and stayed at a lodging where he'd be among foreigners or those not from the immediate area. Even this was risky because his reputation as a fierce defender of the faith was well known. Saul didn't dare go directly to any followers of Jesus which would have been easy. Having been responsible for persecuting them, he knew most of their hide-outs. Even though he had been absent in Damascus for some time now, there was the possibility he as a persecutor could return any moment. Besides, members of the *ekklesia* could have suspected that he may have left some spies strategically located throughout Jerusalem. Obviously Saul himself had a bounty on his head because by this time he was known to have gone over to Jesus. Naturally this pricked interest among followers of the Way, especially the apostles. However, it was Barnabas who decided that reports from Damascus about Saul were genuine, so he felt sufficiently confident to make contact with him. How this was done is not recorded, but we can presume Saul put out feelers to the *ekklesia* inquiring about them in a more or less disinterested fashion.

Apparently Barnabas had inside information about Saul's experience on the road to Damascus the others lacked. He communicated this to the apostles, especially how he preached boldly about Jesus, *parresiazomai*, the verbal root of *parresia* noted several times earlier. Saul also took on the Hellenists who sought his death, they being Jews coming from outside Israel and heavily influenced by Greek philosophy and culture. So the problem now facing those in Jerusalem was how to handle this former persecutor. They decided on the spot to send him back to his home town of Tarsus. No explanation is given. Perhaps they were too stunned to decide how to make use of him and figured that if he were really converted, there he would preach about Jesus. Besides, it was too risky to keep him in Jerusalem. Interestingly, they didn't send Saul back to Damascus.

Vs. 31 caps off the growth of the *ekklesia* thus far after Pentecost with Saul now firmly on its side which promises further growth. The areas for this growth are Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Interestingly inclusion of Galilee, home turf for the apostles, shows that both they and disciples associated with them had success.

Usually that doesn't happen in such circumstances. Actually all this is expressed with regard to the *ekklesia* as follows:

-In these areas it is at peace, literally as "had peace" or *eirene*.

-It is built up, *oikodomeo* which is comprised of *oikos* or house and *domeo* or to build.

-Walking in the fear of the Lord, *poreuo* also as to go or to travel, *phobos* being equivalent to the Hebrew *yare'* or to fear in the sense of having respect. Connected with *poreuo* suggests movement as growth in such reverence.

-Comfort as associated with the Holy Spirit, *paraklesis* or literally summoning beside, this being from the same verbal root as Paraclete, another name for this Spirit. The notion of summoning-beside suggests growth which here is put as being multiplied, *plethuno*.

The above mentioned three benefits enjoyed now by the *ekklesia* enabled the apostles to move about more freely compared with having been cooped up in Jerusalem. That was fine as a period of incubation. It comes to a conclusion in vs. 32 where Peter at last assumes an active role, very much so bordering upon hyper-activity indicated by two uses of the verb *erchomai* or to come: one prefaced with the preposition *dia-* or through which also has the same preposition as free-standing, literally "through all." In other words, a double through-ness.

The second has the preposition *kata-* which here means down. Actually this verb is used with regard to Peter visiting the saints (*hagios*) at Lydda, the second furthest place after Samaria he or any of the apostles have gone thus far. These saints just didn't pop up here and there. Someone was responsible for summoning them, obviously unknown members of the *ekklesia* at Jerusalem being dispatched. For now Saul is out of the picture, that is, until Barnabas heads off to Tarsus to find him (cf. 11.25). Easily we can imagine he was just as busy if not more so than Peter which as we know is bound to cause some friction between the two.

Vs. 33 has Peter encountering Aenas who was paralyzed and without missing a beat, tells him that Jesus Christ is healing him, *iaomai*. He tops it off by having Aeneas make his bed, symbolic of his cure and the last time he does this, leaving it behind. This cure had an effect broader than expected. It served to make the inhabitants of Lydda and Sharon turn to the Lord, *strepho* prefaced with *epi-* or upon and with another used of the same preposition...to turn upon-upon the Lord.

Next in vs. 36 we have Peter on the move again as indicated by the verbs *dierchomai* and *katerchomai* of vs. 32. He wastes no time going from Lydda to Joppa on the

seacoast and meets even more members of the *ekklesia* who were in great distress over the death of a woman named Tabitha or Dorcas (Aramaic-Greek). She's described as a disciple, *mathetria* being feminine for *mathetes*, the first woman designated as such which means she must have had some influence in the local *ekklesia*. Actually quite a bit of space is devoted to Tabitha, right to the end of Chapter Nine. Tabitha was noted for her good works and acts of charity, literally "full of good works" or *ergon* and acts of mercy which she did," *eleemosune* also as compassion. According to custom, upon her death they laid her out in preparation for burial. Word got out that Peter was in nearby Lydda, so disciples from Joppa sent for him, *parakaleo* here as entreating or literally calling beside or *para-* that he come at once. Apparently they didn't tell Peter that Tabitha had passed away, figuring that they'd let him find out for himself. Part of the reason could have been for fear of informing him directly and that they were only motivated for the sake of their dear friend.

Even before entering the house Peter knew Tabitha was dead. She was so beloved that people could barely contain their grief. One especially touching scene is when widows approached Peter and showed him garments Tabitha had woven when she was alive. To them as well as others these were precious relics they would hold on to forever. With his characteristic brusqueness, Peter literally casts them outside, *ekballo* along with *exo*. He did this after spending time with the widows, chiefly to comfort them. Now it's time to get down to business which everyone could clearly see written on his face. After kneeling down and praying, Peter addresses Tabitha directly, telling her to rise. She did so after looking at Peter who then summoned the widows and saints. Naturally word spread like wildfire throughout Joppa. To Peter the most important thing was that they believed literally "upon (*epi*) the Lord." His focus upon Jesus Christ caused him to remain many days, the adjective *hikanos* suggestive of that which is considerable.

As for Tabitha, nothing more is said of her. Presumably she resumed her acts of charity and was even more a celebrity even against her will. One wonders what happens to people like this. She must have known of Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead and possibly contacted him to share their experiences. Indeed, that would have been a very special relationship. Despite such miracles, a book like Acts of the Apostles is intended to show the growth of faith in Jesus Christ through the apostles and church they established. By now or at the conclusion of Chapter Nine the text has gone through quite a number of individuals as well as whole peoples who became what we not call Christians. In other words, the text moves on with a

relentless though steady resolve, always in motion. It will continue, indeed accelerate, once Saul who'll be known as Paul comes back on the scene.

## Chapter Ten

This chapter starts off right away concerning a Roman centurion by the name of Cornelius in Caesarea. By no means is he a typical representative of the occupying force, vs. 2 taking pains to say that he is a devout man fearing God. *Eusebes* is a difficult word to translate connoting respect both with regard to religious, familial and social obligations or in a word, conscientious. I.e., it's not entirely unlike the Latin *pious*. In addition to this, Cornelius fears God, *phobeo* being equivalent to the Hebrew *yare'* which leans more to having respect. This applies not only to him but to his entire household, *oikos* as house which includes family as well as slaves and others associated with him.

Cornelius also was generous giving alms and praying constantly to God. The verb for the former is *eleeo* and for the latter, *deomai*. The phrase *dia pantos* or literally "through all" is translated as constantly. Although not explicit, implied is that this is within the context of the Jewish religion though as a footnote in the **RSV** says, does not necessarily mean a convert to that faith. It isn't explicit but this was a boon to those over him because it was a way to keep the local pacified. Actually one can't but wonder how he acquired such devotion and if it interfered with relating to his superiors.

It so happened that at the ninth hour or around three in the afternoon Cornelius had a vision (*horama*; from *horao*) of an angel marked by great clarity or *phaneros*, an adverb implying pretty much an in-your-face unavoidability. This angel is specified as coming in to him, *eiserchomai* with *pros* which corresponds to the directness of *phaneros*. Perhaps given the time of day when it was hottest suggests he was inside going about his business as centurion or managing his house. Cornelius simply stared with pure terror at the angel or messenger who addressed him by name, *atenizo* pretty much as looking without extension as was the case with Stephen when he was being stoned. Understandably Cornelius addresses the angel/messenger as Lord (*Kurios*), a title of respect but said just in case it was God himself. This didn't bother the heavenly being in the slightest. He was more interested in having Cornelius make contact with Peter. Also he reassured him that his prayers and alms (*proseuche* and *eleemosune*) have ascended as a memorial before God, *anabaino* with the preposition *eis* or "into" regarding *mnemosunon* also as memory which suggests both have taken up a permanent part with regard to God and are ever present to him.



An angel doesn't appear on his own initiative but does so as sent on a specific mission. Here he's charged with telling Cornelius to send men to fetch Peter in Joppa who is staying with a tanner by the name of Simon. It is this angel who for the first time makes the shift in names which will become permanent, that is, from the name Simon to Peter even though earlier he's called by the latter. Somehow this shift conveyed through the mediation of a divine being has a special way of taking root in the human sphere without the precise details being known. Not only are angels as messengers prevented from doing this, the same applies to humans.

And so off go two servants along with a soldier described as being devout or *eusebes* after the manner of his commander. This implies that a certain number of Romans...foreigners...were sympathetic toward Judaism chiefly as influenced by their commander. Certainly a high-ranking official such as Cornelius must have known the centurion present at Jesus' death on the cross and the piercing of his side. Chances are that formed part of any conversation between him and Peter. In fact, Cornelius may have even known of Peter's denial of Jesus but is too discreet to bring it up.

And so the angel/messenger left as quickly as he arrived, typical of such encounters. With similar speed and urgency Cornelius dispatched those whom the angel commanded, all three specified as from among those who waited upon him, *proskartereo* also as to stick by, to be close at hand. Indeed, Cornelius was careful so as when they meet Peter who has no foreknowledge of this, he will be at ease. Their arrival was bound to take him by surprise as well as causing some hesitation because he felt his mission was to go to the Jews only. However, on second thought, this highly placed official, despite being perceived as representing an oppressive foreign rule, just might offer a golden opportunity.

The journey from Joppa to Caesarea is about a day's walk, a very pleasant one along the seashore of the Mediterranean. Those in Joppa must have been surprised at this official encounter and being Romans, didn't offer any resistance. In fact, once the purpose of their visit was made known, everyone must have gotten along famously. It'd come as no surprise that most people knew about Cornelius and his outstanding generosity. Peter's new-found friends, especially Tabitha, will miss him sorely but knew he would accomplish great things in Caesarea. En route north, the three gave greater details as to why Peter was summoned. Obviously they hadn't any idea who Peter was, even Cornelius, so a lot of explaining must have taken place which made the short journey even shorter. When Peter heard that an angel was involved, he

knew something important was in store both for him, Cornelius and those with whom he is associated. At the same time Peter had to be careful dealing with a Roman centurion despite his reputation for being generous. After all, a Roman is a Roman which means that Peter is in direct contact with a representative responsible for occupying his native land.

Vs. 9 continues with Peter just before the three from Caesarea arrived at Joppa. Around noon or the sixth hour he decides to get away from his friends and especially the widows or friends of Tabitha whom we can assume were hounding him. The roof was an excellent place despite the beginning of the hot time of day to retreat and pray, *proseuchomai*. Besides, Joppa is by the sea which means it must have been ideal to catch refreshing breezes. Surely what to do next and where to go was on top of Peter's mind. He figured that somehow and at some time the Lord would take care of this which indeed did happen.

Since the hour was around noon and the people he was staying with began preparing food, it was natural for Peter to feel hungry. At the same time he fell into a trance, the noun being *ekstatis* or a standing-from with the preposition *epi*, "upon him." While in the state of standing-out (*histemi* with *ek-*), Peter saw heaven opened followed by a large sheet let down upon the earth by the four corners. The verb is *theoreo*, to look with sustained attention. As for this opening of heaven, that means what's above or basically the blueness of the sky split apart. One can ask, how does what appear as nothing do this? It's as though the blueness which is so familiar was torn asunder and something behind it was revealed albeit momentarily or while the sheet was being lowered down. *Othonion* is the noun which means this cloth is made of linen. For it be let down requires something or someone was at each of the four corners. Angels? The text doesn't say. Perhaps the cloth came down on its own but did so slowly, taking care not crashing down on the roof where Peter is located.

Vs. 12 describes the contents of this cloth, that is, all sorts of animals which is a kind of mini Noah's ark. It had to be strong enough to bear them, and once it came upon the roof it had to be quite large and firmly constructed to support it. Peter heard a voice whose source isn't given, but we can say that it came from that split in heaven above which remained open long enough for it to be uttered. It told him to kill and eat, the verb *thuo* more along the lines of making a sacrifice and thus more appropriate for the vision at hand. Peter objected, saying that never has he eaten anything common as well as unclean, *koinos* and *akathartos*. This means right away he saw animals in the cloth which weren't suitable for sacrifice.

For a second time Peter heard a voice saying that what God has deemed clean, he mustn't call common. In other words, God himself had cleansed all the animals let down from heaven meaning they had their roots there contrary to only what Moses had prescribed for sacrifice. The voice repeated the same words three times so it would register in Peter's brain, for it went totally against Jewish religious practice. After this the cloth was raised back into heaven. Nothing is said as to whether the animals were taken or left on earth. As for killing and eating, nothing too said said if Peter had done this. Most likely he did not, being too astonished at the vision.

Vs. 17 has two things going on at once. First, Peter was perplexed inwardly, the preposition *dia-* or through as preface to *diaporeo* suggestive of thorough confusion but not necessarily in the bad sense. The phrase *en heauto* is rendered literally as "in himself" or where this *diaporeo* takes place. It raised a question as to the meaning of the vision which he had seen, *horao* as to perceive or to behold. This is a more comprehensive act of taking in the vision or *horama* which as noted earlier, is derived from *horao*. Interestingly this same verse continues with an *horao*-like expression, *idou* or behold. *Idou* is inserted deliberately because without missing a beat it introduces the three men whom Cornelius had dispatched.

They didn't know where Peter was staying, but given his recent notoriety, it was easy to locate him, the house of Simon the tanner. The verb used for this inquiry is *dierotao*, another instance where the preposition *dia-* (through) serves to intensive the action and is suggestive of persistence in their asking. The three showed considerable politeness, not expected from Romans, by standing at the gate to Simon's house and doing this asking. A lot of observers, both intrigued and worried by their sudden appearance, suspected they were out to nab Peter and haul him away to prison. However, they manifested something different...quite unexpected...politeness not associated with an occupying force as the Romans.

Vs. 19 gets back to Peter on the rooftop. While the three were speaking with Simon the tanner, Peter is still engrossed in his vision, *dienthumeomai* with regard to *horma*. The verb consists of the noun *thumos* which is all-inclusive and referring to soul, breath and life with yet another instance of the preposition *dia-* or through...through this life-force, if you will. In other words, Peter is trying to make sense of the various animals in the cloth let down from heaven. Basically, he was trying to see how these clean and unclean animals fit in with his Jewish sensibility which kept them strictly apart.

The Spirit or *Pneuma* was, of course, looking on, and decided to rouse Peter to see the three men. This was done by *idou*, behold. Peter was instructed to go with these three Romans...hated foreign occupiers in his mind...without having a chance to bid farewell to Simon, Tabitha and others at Joppa. All these people could do was look on, fearful of what would happen to Peter. As for this departure, he is to do it without hesitation, that is, without *diakrino*, yet another word (*krino*, to judge) prefaced with the preposition *dia-*, through. In other words, Peter isn't to ask any questions, just go. But before they set off, he asked why they came to seek him, fearful it was yet another round-up by the high priest Caiaphas. Saul may have been converted, but is someone even more ruthless on the loose?

We can easily imagine that practically the entire town of Joppa came out when they saw the three Romans at the gate of Simon the tanner. At the same time they knew better to keep their distance. Was he suspect or Peter or both? Naturally they watch for any signal before they hauled off Peter bound in chains. Peter wasted no time in asking, somewhat fearfully, why they have come. The three knew this, of course, so immediately sought to reassure Peter by mentioning the centurion Cornelius. They describe him as follows:

- Upright or *dikaios*, also as just
- God-fearing, the verb *phobeo* equivalent to the Hebrew *yare'* connoting respect
- Well-spoken of which is rendered by the verb *martureo* or to give witness.

The third quality is what put Peter at ease. The three continued saying that this *martureo* of their boss is not just flattery from those Jews who know him but added with some exaggeration that the entire Jewish nation thought highly of him. From what we know of Cornelius thus far, he'd find such words embarrassing if he got wind of them. And so the three continue by saying that Cornelius was directed not just by any angel or messenger but one which is holy or *hagios*. The verb is *chrematizo*, to impart or to conduct any type of dealing. So with this and the angel as *hagios* in mind, no better proof of Cornelius' sincerity could be offered. The sincerity of the three sent for Peter was written all over their faces. And so they continued by saying that he wishes him to come to his house, a sign of hospitality and to hear any words (*rhema* or expression of any kind) Peter may offer. After this Peter couldn't help but feel relieved and thrilled at the prospect of a new chapter in his budding ministry. Note that he, not Simon who owned the house, invited the three to stay overnight. It was as if he had taken command.

Vs. 23 continues with a second sentence and a new paragraph in the **RSV**. The three men sent by Cornelius stayed overnight at Simon's house pretty much commandeered by Peter. However, once Simon heard who had dispatched them, he was delighted. Caesarea wasn't far away which means that Cornelius' reputation was well known among the locals. After all, as vs. 22 puts it, he was "well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation" and "whole" of course applies to Joppa. As noted before, the journey to Caesarea is about one day, very pleasant along the Mediterranean shoreline. Because Peter was so well received in Joppa, vs. 23 says that some accompanied him. It doesn't say how many, but we can presume quite a few. Some may have gone part of the way and others all the way to Caesarea. Because of Cornelius' reputation, they wanted to see what he wanted from Peter and how the two would interact. Besides, it would be beneficial for the *ekklesia* at Joppa to have such a highly regarded official on their side.

Perhaps one of the three ran ahead when they got closer to Caesarea to inform their master that they were close. Surely Cornelius was waiting with great expectation and being a centurion, could easily have look-outs posted on the road from Joppa to keep him informed. The verb at hand is *prosdokeo* also as to give thought to something lying in the future. Indeed the prepositions *pros-* prefaced to *dokeo* (to think, to suppose) as direction towards-which applies here as representing Cornelius' eager anticipation. It'd come as no surprise that given the encounter he had with the angel, he didn't sleep a wink the night before. Right away this *prosdokeo* spilled over to summoning his family and close friends, *suggenes* being a broader term as applied to family ties and *philos* modified by *anagkaios* literally "necessary friends," the adjective suggestive of a close relationship needed to function property as well as to share matters of a more intimate nature.

Could we include the centurion present at Jesus' crucifixion as having been invited? An intriguing possibility since there were only a handful of such high ranking officers stationed in Israel, all most likely knowing each other at least on a professional basis. In this case, the relationship certainly was different. Also this centurion could have known Peter or about him having betrayed Jesus. As for Cornelius, we can assume that he had informed these good people in advance about his intent to have Peter pay a visit, and they were just as anxious to meet this man. Surely word about him bringing Tabitha back to life had reached Caesarea almost instantly.

Vs. 25 has Peter at last coming to Caesarea and entering Cornelius' house. We can easily imagine Cornelius and those whom he had summoned peering out the

windows, excited but trying their best not to show it. Note the quick succession of verbs associated with Cornelius when the two met:

-*Sunantao* where the preposition *sun-* or “with” suggests everyone is involved, not just Cornelius.

-*Pipto* or to fall upon his feet; presumably those with Cornelius as above.

-*Proskuneo* or to worship, to give reverence.

Right away Peter lifted Cornelius up onto his feet which prompted the others to rise as well, telling him that he’s simply a man, not a god. This reverence must have resulted from him having raised Tabitha from the dead. Perhaps Peter misunderstood this for showing obeisance, for Cornelius is described as God-fearing and knows enough what’s going on.

The two virtually stumbled over each other’s words, each dying to communicate how they felt about this meeting. Their conversation seemed to be in private after having dismissed others in the room. Surely niceties had no place because each was eager to get down to business and compare notes, Cornelius and his encounter with the angel who bade him to summon Peter and Peter who had a vision though without an angel. Although Cornelius was a Roman, given his track record with the Jewish community, he knew exactly what Peter meant by the animals in the linen cloth. The problem facing both was how to interpret both experiences correctly and go from there.

In the meanwhile others who were outside could barely restrain themselves. Cornelius sensed this so he figured it was about time to introduce Peter. Further conversations between the two men could be done in private. Peter must have felt strange telling those assembled that he is mortal, they thinking he was some kind of god who had restored Tabitha to life. Without mentioning his having denied Jesus three times, now was a time when it proves beneficial. Never did Peter forget this, a constant reminder of how he had acted which kept him from being swept off his feet. After Peter learned how knowledgeable Cornelius was with regards to the Jewish faith and religious customs, he told all present up front that they’re familiar with the fact that it’s unlawful for Jews to associate with Gentiles. That had been in place since God-only-knows-when and has become an accepted fact of life. The verb connoting familiarity is *epistami*, the preposition *epi-* or upon indicative of a good grasp of the situation which here is the adjective *athemitos*, alpha privative with regard to *themitos* or allowed, lawful. This applies to the act of associating or literally clinging (*kollao*) which is putting it in strong language. A verb parallel to this is

*proserchomai*, literally to go in the direction of (*pros-*) people of another tribe or race, *phulon*. Both could apply to Cornelius who must have felt somewhat embarrassed, let alone most present assuming that it was a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles.

In vs. 28 this potentially embarrassing situation is saved by Peter saying *kamoi* translated as “but” and consists of the conjunctive *kai* and first person singular, *moi* or “to me.” The literal translation is “and to me.” If he hadn’t taken this position, chances are he’d be politely asked to move on. Thus Peter says outrightly that God has shown him that no longer can he hold the position that anyone is common or unclean. The verb is *deiknumi* or to set before or to bring to light with regard to *koinos* and *akathartos*, the two adjectives with regard to the animals contained in the linen sheet let down from heaven. In other words, this vision has had a momentous effect upon Peter and changed the course of his life. Fortunately his straight-forward manner of communicating saved the day and unknowingly to Peter and those present, it helped to set a pattern for the *ekklesia* to follow. Peter concluded his remarks by saying he came to Caesarea freely but knew only why upon his arrival. Indeed, the three men sent to fetch him informed him why Cornelius asked for him, but it didn’t become clear until he actually met the man, his family and associates.

Now in vs. 30 it’s Cornelius’ turn to speak. The way it’s presented is that he and Peter, two strangers and of very different cultural and religious backgrounds, not just gave the appearance that they were newly found bosom buddies but in reality were as such forever. This, of course, stemmed from their respective encounters, one with an angel and the other with a vision. Cornelius went first describing to Peter his encounter, feeling it would set him more at ease as to why he was summoned. He had been at prayer (*proseuchomai*) several days earlier when a man...not an angel according to vs. 3...stood before him clothed in bright garments, *lampros* bright in the sense of radiant. He informed Cornelius of the following, more or less a repeat of vs. 4:

-*Proseuche* not just heard but literally “heard into,” *eis* or “into” prefaced to *akouo* implying close attention.

- *Eleemosune* or alms remembered before God, *mimnesko* suggestive of them being set up as a monument before (*enopion*) God so they will be present to him always.

After this, Cornelius was told expressly to send for Peter, even giving instructions to where he was staying, the home of Simon the tanner. In other words, news as to Tabitha had reached Caesarea, so it was easy to locate Peter. Then he acknowledged

that Peter was gracious enough to have come, *kalos* being an adverb also as fittingly, appropriately. He then shifts his remarks to acknowledge all who are present and eager to hear what Peter has to say at the bidding of the Lord, *prostasso* being a command expecting immediate response as by the preposition *pros-*, direction towards-which. It was a natural way of speaking for Cornelius to use being a centurion.

Of all present, Peter appreciated these kind words even though he had a pretty good idea of why he was summoned. So here he was in the house of a high ranking Roman official and a mixed bag of Jews and mostly Gentiles. It must have been unnerving despite reassurances from his dream of clean and unclean animals in one sheet that had been let down from heaven. At the same time Peter was excited since he was on the verge of a new mission, one he didn't quite expect, that is, dealing with non-Jews. And so in vs. 34 he begins addressing all assembled first by opening his mouth, a not uncommon way that something of importance is to follow at once. Here we have the phrase *ep' aletheias* or literally "upon truth" which backs this up. Peter speaks now with a definite tone of astonishment and wonder that he perceives God has no favorites, having deduced this from the vision. However, he refrained from going into details, even with Cornelius, because it would sound too far-fetched. Note the adjective *prosopolemptes* which reads as no acceptor of persons or faces.

Vs. 35 continues as an extended sentence where Peter acknowledges that anyone regardless of his nation who fears (*phobeo* as with *yare'* noted earlier) the Lord and does what is right God is acceptable to him, *dektos* also as to have met with approval, pleasing. The verb *ergazomai* implies making effort with regard to *dikaiousune* or righteousness. Thus no one can simply be *dektos* to the Lord but has to work at it. Actually Peter has launched into a mini-Gospel of sorts which will continue through vs. 43, that is, the mission of Jesus Christ.

In vss. 36 and 37 Peter makes use of two nouns for word, the first being *logos* which God sent to Israel and the second being *rhema* which will be noted below. Perhaps when using *logos* he was thinking of his fellow apostle John who soon will write in his Gospel that Jesus is the *Logos* of God. The **RSV** has in parentheses 'he is Lord or *Kurios* of all', Peter's way of spontaneously giving glory to Jesus. Jesus, of course, was the person responsible for having proclaimed this *logos*, *euaggelizo* being intimately connected with peace, *eirene*. Peter seems to presuppose that those present know (*eido* also as to perceive, to behold) about this *logos*, In fact, it'd come as no surprise that many in the room did hear members of the *ekklesia* speak of it as well as the fact that it was circulating among the population here and there. Almost certainly Cornelius, being a Roman centurion, had knowledge of Saul being appointed by the high priest



Caiaphas to begin persecution of this *ekklesia*. He must have been of the same mind as Gamaliel, and it'd come as no surprise that the two men had met at least on one occasion.

Vs. 37 continues as an extended sentence from the previous verse followed by vs. 38 and puts a different twist on all this. Now we come across *rhema* as word without mention of Jesus. It's proclaimed presumably by the *ekklesia* from Jerusalem, the verb being *ginomai* which leans towards happening in a specific place, that is, "all Judea." Then Peter gets more specific, starting with Galilee after the baptism preached by John, *kerusso*. This verb is associated with a public proclamation as in a town square. Note the three verbs dealing with the same issue as presented here: *euaggelizo*, *gignomai* and *kerusso* or to announce good news, to proclaim and to herald. As for the distinction between *logos* and *rhema*, both indeed pertain to the Word of God, but the former is God's Word objectively recorded in the Bible while the latter is the word of God spoken at a specific occasion.

Now vs. 38 is the third part of that extended sentence going back to vs. 36. Peter says that God himself had anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power. He takes pains to identify Jesus as coming from Nazareth which means he didn't drop down from heaven as a newly delivered package ready to be opened. Note the combination, *Pneuma* and *dunamis* also as strength, force, capacity. Endowed with both which in many ways are similar, Jesus goes about doing good and healing. As for the latter, Peter associates it with being freed from the devil, *diabolos* who can be defined as one who engages in slander, not some being walking around with horns protruding from its head. *Diabolos* is comprised of the verbal root *ballo* of to cast prefaced with the preposition *dia-* or through, to cast through in the sense of upsetting the order of things. The text has the verb *katadunasteuo* translated as oppressed, the verbal root being *dunamai* (to be powerful, to prevail) prefaced with the preposition *kata-* or down.

In vs. 38 Peter brings to conclusion the first part of his mini-Gospel by saying simply that God was with Jesus. In the next verse he speaks not in the first person singular but the plural "we" with regard to him being an eyewitness along with others who are involved, namely the apostles. As for being an eyewitness or *martus*, it is backed up by Peter and the apostles not just associating with Jesus here and there but being with him for three full years. This takes place in two places: the country of the Jews and Jerusalem. While the latter covers a large amount of territory if taken literally, it suggests that Jesus and his disciples moved about to many places. Indeed all this can be backed up by plenty of people in their role of *martus* which perhaps is why Peter

says “in the country of the Jews.” He’s more or less inferring to those present. All you have to do is go out and pick out some who had met Jesus to verify my words.

Peter continues in vs. 39 referring to Jesus being hanged on a tree, leaving “they” as being responsible more or less not identified. However, Cornelius being an important Roman official most likely had inside information the others lacked. Now was not a good time to go into who was responsible for executing Jesus. What follows is more important, that God had raised him from the dead and as vs. 40 puts it, made Jesus manifest. This is the verb *ginomai* or to become with the adjective *emphanos* both as being visible and being known. Quickly Peter specifies this *emphanos*. It isn’t to everyone but only to those who associated with him after his resurrection. He uses the concrete image of eating and drinking with Jesus which is reminiscent of the seventy elders who along with Moses on Mount Horeb who “beheld God and ate and drank” [Ex 24.11]. Surely this example must have come to mind of some present listening to Peter. It made more sense of Jesus having been seen exclusively by the apostles, that is, a way to say this encounter was genuine and not fabricated.

Vs. 42 begins with the conjunctive *kai* or “and,” indicative of Peter who wanted to reassure those with him that the relationship between Jesus and the apostles is not exclusive. That is to say, Jesus commanded “us” or the apostles the following two things, the verb *paraggello* which as noted earlier, the root *aggello* means to proclaim prefaced with the preposition *para* or beside, this giving a greater sense of urgency:

-*Kerusso* or to preach but more as making a public announcement as noted above. This makes more sense in that it’s directed to the people.

-*Diamartureo* or literally to give witness through, *dia-* suggestive of a more thorough job at it.

Both verbs are with regard to Jesus being ordained by God to be judge of both the living and dead. The verb at hand is *horizo*, more to set a boundary, the job description, if you will, of judge or *krites*. Peter backs this up with the authority of not just Israel’s prophets but “all the prophets” who have given witness or *martureo*. This applies to anyone who believes in Jesus and thus obtains forgiveness of sins through his name. Here name or *onoma* can be in the literally sense, Jesus as *Jeshua* or the one who effects *yashav*, to save, to rescue. And so Peter concludes his mini-Gospel without having mentioned the name Jesus since vs. 36.

The important word *eti* or “still” along with the present tense *laleo* or to speak begins vs. 44. *Eti* is inserted because Peter is speaking about Jesus Christ from personal experience when the Holy Spirit fell upon those listening not so much to him but to the word or *logos*. This *logos* is presented as coming from Peter’s *rhema*. The verb here is *epipto* or to fall upon as in 8.16 and resembles the Spirit coming to the apostles at Pentecost though no such word as falling upon is found there. Instead, the Spirit fills the house and sits upon each of them. In other words, there’s a difference between the two with one Spirit or *Pneuma* active which shows the various ways it can blow. So in the verse at hand, this blowing of the Spirit ties in with hearing of the *logos*.

Interestingly vs. 45 speaks of believers from among the circumcised who were with Peter. It suggests that in addition to the three dispatched to fetch him at Joppa non-Jews either tagged along or got word of him going to the well-respected Cornelius at Caesarea. Why not? They had nothing to lose and everything to gain. So we could say that in accord with his vision, Peter was accompanied, as it were, by those persons represented by his vision of clean and unclean animals. These are singled out as being amazed, *existemi* literally as to stand from or *ex-*. The reason for this standing-out is that they witnessed first hand that the Holy Spirit had been poured out, *ekcheo* being another verb with the preposition *ek-* (as with *ex-*) prefaced to it. In other words, we have two “froms” active as one. It’s exaggerated even more, if you will, by the conjunctive *kai* translated here as “even” with regard to the Gentiles.

Another sign of this favoring by the Holy Spirit is that these Gentiles spoke in tongues as the apostles at Pentecost but more importantly, praised God, *megaluno* literally as to cause to be large. This made Peter exclaim with a rhetorical question, that no one can prevent (*kuluo*, also to hinder) these people from being baptized. Then he uses his apostolic authority to command them to be baptized, *prostasso* being the verb, *pros-* as prefaced to the root implying directness or immediacy. The number of those so baptized isn’t given nor do we know the identity of those administering it. Most likely they were members of the *ekklesia* who had recently gravitated to Caesarea by reason of Cornelius’s reputation. No small wonder that this chapter closes with Peter being asked to remain with them. Apparently it wasn’t long because Chapter Eleven begins with Peter returning to Jerusalem.