

More BS from Pj

# The Short Story

ACTS of the Apostles begins or starts off where the **Gospel of Luke left off**. Jesus is **back**.

He~~q~~ baaaaaaaack!!!!

Now that he's **resurrected**, Jesus decides to **hang out** and chat with his disciples (whom Luke calls apostles) for **forty days**. The good old number 40, curious!

The fun can't last forever, though, and Jesus ascends into Heaven on a cloud. What can we say? The guy knows how to make an exit. Exit stage **UP!**

Would you like to ride in my beautiful balloon?  
Would you like to glide in my beautiful balloon?  
We could float among the stars together, you and I

For we can fly, we can fly  
Up, up and away  
My beautiful, my beautiful balloon

The world's a nicer place in my beautiful balloon  
It wears a nicer face in my beautiful balloon  
We can sing a song and sail along the silver sky

For we can fly, we can fly  
Up, up and away  
My beautiful, my beautiful balloon

Suspended under a twilight canopy  
We'll search the clouds for a star to guide us  
If by some chance you find yourself loving me  
We'll find a cloud to hid us, keep the moon beside us

Love is waiting there in my beautiful balloon  
Way up in the air in my beautiful balloon  
If you'll hold my hand we'll chase your dream across the sky  
For we can fly, we can fly  
Up, up and away  
My beautiful, my beautiful balloon

What are the apostles supposed to do now?

Luckily, Jesus left **very specific instructions**. Better than IKEA even!

**First**, they're to **spread his message** to the ends of the Earth.

**Second**, they're supposed to **pick up his dry cleaning**. Jesus loves **freshly laundered robes**. Ok- not so much on that whole second part. I like mine bleached. And change them out every six months and have them laundered every month and always have.

Plus, **the first part** should keep them plenty busy.

So the apostles **get to work**. They get **%busy!**+Hehehe

I ain't worried 'bout nothin'  
I ain't wearin' na-nada  
I'm sittin' pretty, impatient  
But I know you gotta

Put in them hours  
I'ma make it harder  
I'm sendin' pic' after picture  
I'ma get you fired

I know you're always on that night shift  
But I can't stand these nights alone  
And I don't need no explanation  
'Cause, baby, you're the boss at home

You don't gotta go to work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
But you gotta put in work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
You don't gotta go to work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
Let my body do the work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work

We can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh  
We can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh

Let's put it into motion  
I'ma give you a promotion

I'll make it feel like a vacay  
Turn the bed into an ocean

We don't need nobody  
I just need your body  
Nothin' but sheets in between us  
Ain't no gettin' off early

I know you're always on that night shift  
But I can't stand these nights alone (oh)  
And I don't need no explanation  
'Cause, baby, you're the boss at home (yeah, yeah)

You don't gotta go to work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
But you gotta put in work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
You don't gotta go to work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
Let my body do the work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work

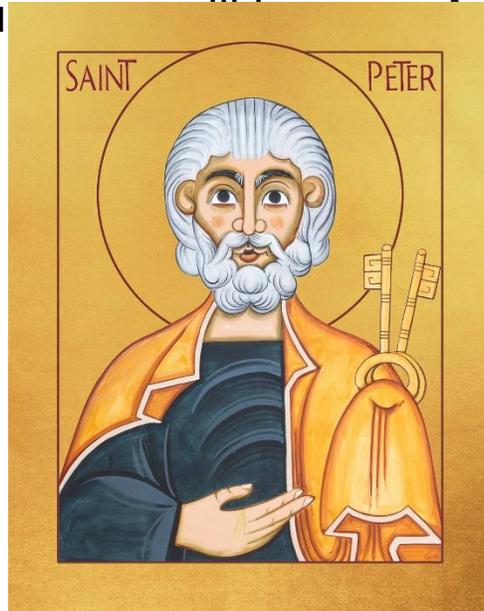
We can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh  
We can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh

Oh, yeah, girl go to work for me (work for me)  
Can you make it clap, no hands for me? (ooh, yeah)  
Take it to the ground, pick it up for me (uh, ayy)  
Look back at it all over me (oh, yeah)  
Put in work like my timesheet (oh)  
She ride it like a '63 (oh-whoa)  
I'ma buy her new Céline (oh)  
Let her ride in a foreign with me  
Oh, she the bae, I'm her boo  
And she down to break the rules  
Ride or die, she gon' go  
I'm gon' juug, she finessin'  
I pipe her, she take that  
Put in overtime on your body

You ain't gotta go to work, no  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
But you gotta put in work (oh)  
Work, work, work, work, work, work (ooh, yeah)  
You don't gotta go to work  
Work, work, work, work, work, work  
Let my body do the work (do work)  
Work, work, work, work, work, work (do work, yeah, yeah)

We can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh  
We can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh  
Yeah, we can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh  
Yeah, we can work from home, oh-oh, oh-oh, yeah

**Peter takes the lead** (that's why we call him **Peter the leader!**) and they all preach and teach about how Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and the fulfillment of everything that Jewish scripture predicted. What's awesome, right?



They also perform **lots of miracles** (your run-of-the-mill **healing and raising from the dead**—no biggie).

Oh, and their preaching also makes the religious authorities in **Judea** very, very mad, upset and disgusted.

**Like master, like disciples!** That's what I always say.

The whole crew **gets arrested** a couple times and no, it wasn't for drunk and disorderly, either—(luckily, angels break them out of prison—angels are crafty like that) and one of the disciples, Stephen, even gets stoned to death.

# You're Under Arrest

## It's a bad time to be a believer.

I thought love was only true in fairy tales  
Meant for someone else but not for me  
Love was out to get me  
That's the way it seemed  
Disappointment haunted all of my dreams

Then I saw her face, now I'm a believer  
Not a trace of doubt in my mind  
I'm in love  
I'm a believer, I couldn't leave her if I tried

I thought love was more or less a giving thing  
Seems the more I gave the less I got  
What's the use in tryin'  
All you get is pain?  
When I needed sunshine, I got rain

Then I saw her face, now I'm a believer  
Not a trace of doubt in my mind  
I'm in love  
I'm a believer, I couldn't leave her if I tried

Oh

Oh, love was out to get me  
Now, that's the way it seemed  
Disappointment haunted all of my dreams

Then I saw her face, now I'm a believer  
Not a trace of doubt in my mind  
I'm in love  
I'm a believer, I couldn't leave her if I tried

Yes, I saw her face, now I'm a believer  
Not a trace of doubt in my mind  
Said, I'm a believer, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah (I'm a believer)  
Said, I'm a believer, yeah (I'm a believer)  
I said, I'm a believer, yeah (I'm a believer)

But because %God likes irony, +one of the guys involved in the death of Stephen gets converted (and blinded) when he's on his way to **Damascus** to persecute some more Christians.

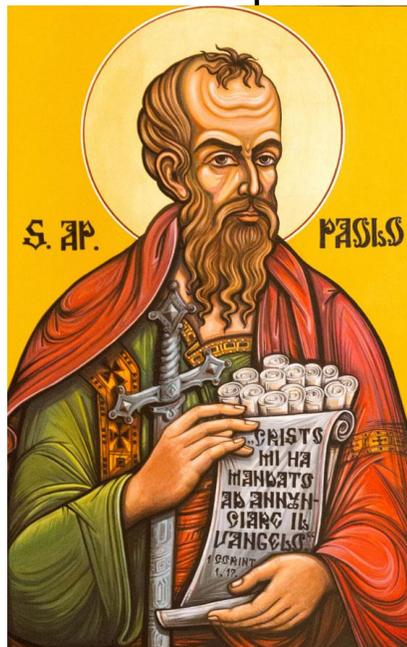
He changes his name to **Paul** and picks up the discipleship torch.

Paul and some friends **travel** all around the **Roman Empire** talking about Jesus non-stop.

He has all kinds of **zany adventures**.

He's stoned, worshiped as a god, starts riots, and talks so long that people fall asleep. He builds a church or two.

He's also pretty good at the whole spreading-the-word-of-God thing and he manages to set up churches in loads of different cities around the Empire. Maybe a church or



twenty! Go, Paul.

Meanwhile, back in Judea, there are **issues**. There's **"always issues,"** right?

When Peter sees a **vision from God**, he realizes that Christians have got to branch out and start trying to convert Gentiles (i.e., non-Jews) as well as Jews.

This is big. Like **Mark Zuckerberg** creating Facebook big.

And Elon Musk taking over Twitter, BIG!



Paul thinks this is a **swell idea**, but he just wants to know one thing. do Gentile converts need to follow Jewish law



and be %circumcised?+



Can you say, %Duch?+We get a lot of talk about circumcision so I will apologize in advance!

Because that's gonna make convincing the **guys** to join up a little bit harder. Ya think??????

Finally, Paul manages to %ick off enough people+and he's arrested when he comes back to Jerusalem to visit.

This time, it's the Jewish people who are against him (they're mad about the whole %you-don't-have-to-follow-Jewish-law-if-you're-Christian thing+). And, probably rightfully so, seeing as the first Christians were Jewish, if that makes sense!

The naysayers haul him before Roman authorities and Paul is tried and held as a prisoner for a really long time. We're talking years and years.

Finally, he gets tired of all the nonsense in Judea and asks to be **shipped to Rome** so he can take all this up with the emperor. (If you are a citizen of Rome, it is your right, to go before the emperor!)

Paul lands on Roman soil and is welcomed by the church there. Yay, Paulus!

He hangs out for a couple years, but we never find out what really happens.

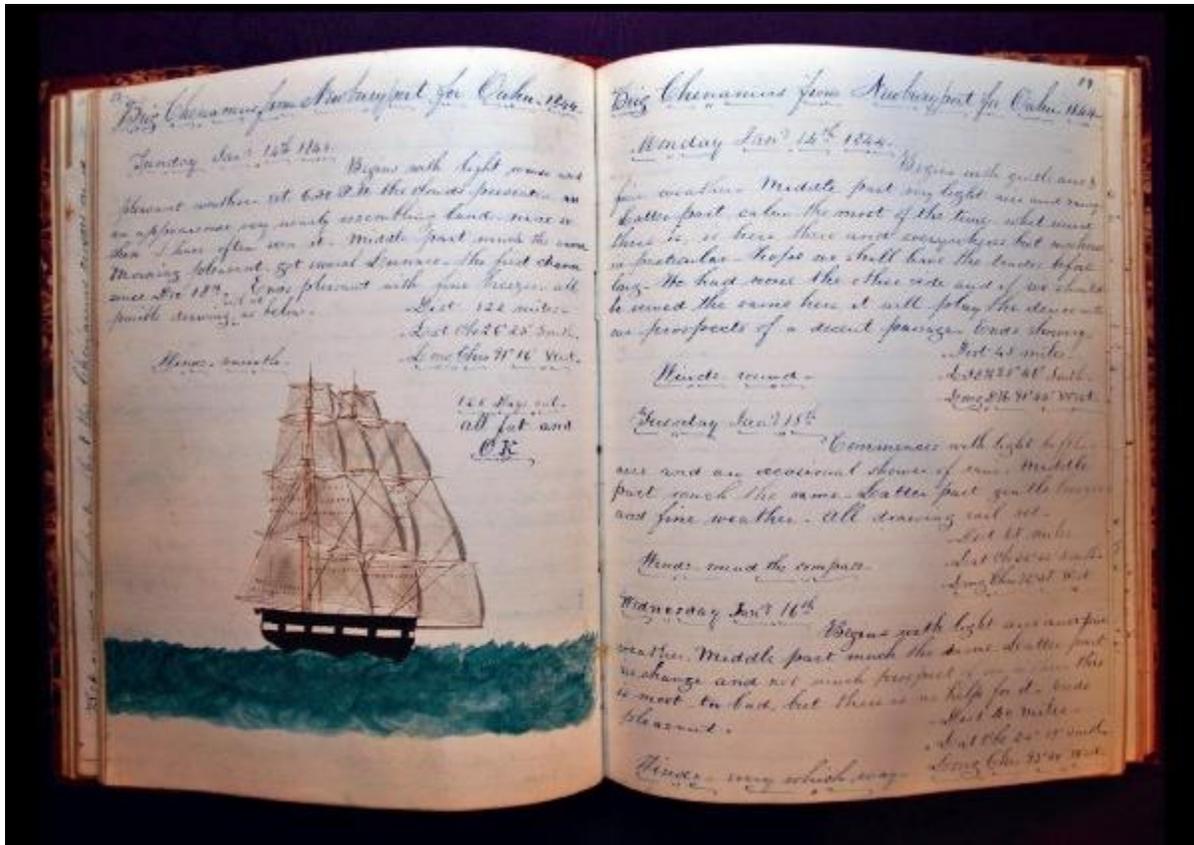
I've got a hunch it's not good, though.

Poor Paulus!

That's about it for my brief overview or summary except for one thing. My favorite part of the book.

I think.

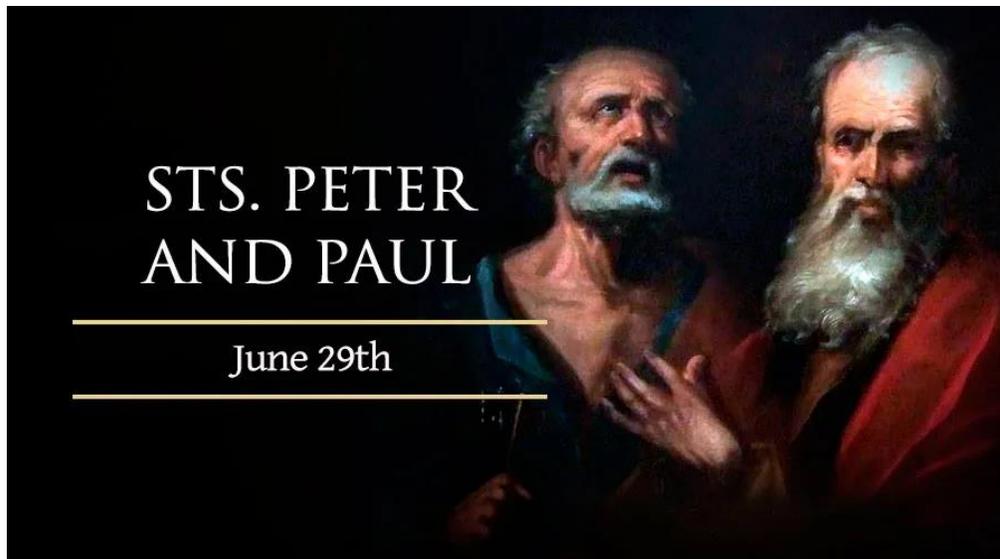
This is so cool. Cooler than cool, actually! The Book of Acts includes in it, an actual ship's log from the first century of the common era. How cool is that! It is like reading someone's personal journal on a trip. It is a writing, two thousand years in the making and it is included in this book. How special is that?



Oh, and I should probably mention that both Peter and Paul are in the city of Rome at the same time, together...and that is probably NOT A GOOD THING!

I hate to tell you this, but there was ~~no~~ bad blood+between them. I can't tell you what it really was about. But they pretty much stayed on opposite ends of Rome. Paul preaching and teaching on one side. And Peter-the-leader, the ~~rightful~~ head of the church+(PAPA) on the otherside.

The two did not mix. They were like oil and water.



Peter, the spokesman for the twelve disciples, later become apostles

And Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul and declared himself to be an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They kept their distance. Pretty much.

They stayed away from each other. Pretty much.

It was Peter and the Jewish Christians versus Saul-Paul and the Gentile Christians. One side still kept the Jewish laws (all 613 of them) and was circumcised, the otherside, didn't keep any Jewish laws and kept their penis intact!

(The snippers versus the non-snippers)

But I am sure their disagreements went a lot deeper than a little foreskin. Well maybe.

I am guessing the issue of apostleship was right up there. Some of the boys just never could trust that guy named Saul-Paul. Never-ever. So summation over.



BOOM!

And OUT!

Except for I am really just getting started!

From hereõ

It is onõ

To the book called Acts of the Apostlesõ

Or for you groovey people, just %Acts.+



## Chapter 1

# Jesus: Part Deux

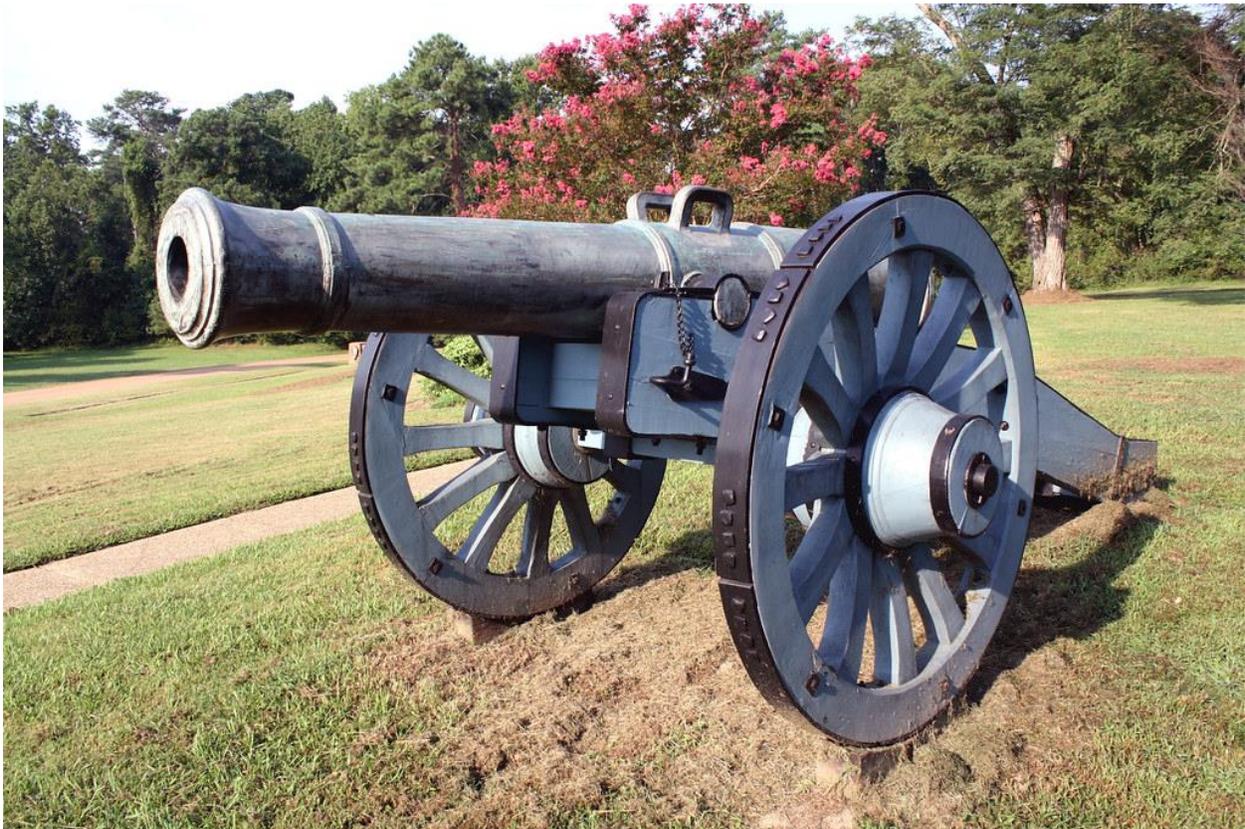
Luke begins by giving ~~us~~ a shout out to Theophilus+and pointing us towards a little gem he wrote called **The Gospel of Luke**.

The name Theophilus means ~~friend~~ of God+. was this guy a mentor, supporter, **sugar daddy**? You know, the guy who paid all the bills?

And I never thought I'd feel this way  
And as far as I'm concerned  
I'm glad I got the chance to say  
That I do believe, I love you  
And if I should ever go away  
Well, then close your eyes and try  
To feel the way we do today  
And then if you can remember  
Keep smiling, keep shining  
Knowing you can always count on me, for sure  
That's what friends are for  
For good times and bad times  
I'll be on your side forever more  
That's what friends are for  
Well, you came in loving me  
And now there's so much more I see  
And so by the way  
I thank you  
Oh and then for the times when we're apart  
Well, then close your eyes and know

The words are coming from my heart  
And then if you can remember  
Keep smiling and keep shining  
Knowing you can always count on me, for sure  
That's what friends are for  
In good times and bad times  
I'll be on your side forever more  
That's what friends are for  
Keep smiling, keep shining  
Knowing you can always count on me, for sure  
That's what friends are for  
For good times and bad times  
I'll be on your side forever more  
That's what friends are for  
Keep smiling, keep shining  
Knowing you can always count on me, for sure  
Cause I tell you, that's what friends are for  
Whoa, good times and the bad times  
I'll be on your side forever more  
That's what friends are for

But the author of this book apparently was also the author  
of the third **canonical** gospel.



**BOOM!**

Ever heard of it?

Basically, that book told the story of Jesus in an orderly fashion hehehehe Dr. Luke, likes order.

All the awesome things he said and did and the super cool way he died and came back to life again.

It's pretty swell. You should definitely check it out sometime.

Anyhoo... Acts starts with Jesus already **back “in it to win it”**...but only for **forty days worth**, then he's outta here!

He decides to hang around with **all his favorite disciples** for forty days. Hmm. 40 days. The length of the season of Easter until the **Ascension**. Throw on ten more liturgical days and you arrive at **Pentecost**, the fiftieth day.

**“ASCENSION” has nothing to do with the healthcare system!**

**Ascension** is one of the largest private healthcare systems in the United States, ranking second in the United States by number of hospitals as of 2019. It was founded as a nonprofit Catholic system.

In 2018, it was the largest Catholic health system, with 165,000 employees, 151-hospitals, and \$552.69 million in income from operations on revenue of \$22.63 billion.



Not typical behavior for a dead guy, but we *are* talking about Jesus here. **Weekend at Bernies**. Once you think of it, there is no erasing it from your memory bank.

So while Jesus is ~~hanging~~ hanging around,+(not literally this time) he gives the disciples (whom Luke calls **apostles**) some advice. Don't leave Jerusalem- good stuff is about to start happening. Also, don't worry so much about how Jesus is gonna fix all the Jewish people's problems. He's totally going to. He's just not telling anyone when or HOW.

## **He Ascended Into Heaven And All That Good Stuff**

**One day**, while ~~hanging~~ hanging on+(I guess I probably should not write ~~hanging~~ on+or hanging around+when it comes to Jesus, that's kind of a touchy topic!) the **Mount of Olives**, Jesus tells ~~the~~ the apostles+(remember, one sent out!) that they're gonna be **his "witnesses** in Jerusalem, in all **Judea** and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Wow. That's a pretty tall order. To the ends of where????

Just then, Jesus is lifted up into the air and a cloud takes him away. Whoa!



The apostles **are all like**, "What the what?" when two other guys dressed in white robes come along. It obviously is **SPRINGTIME**, because no one in their right mind would **wear white** after Labor Day! No worries, the two guys tell the apostles. Jesus went up into Heaven and he's gonna come back in the same way. So look for that. We get the feeling those weren't just ~~two~~ random guys.+

I can feel it coming in the air tonight, oh lord  
And I've been waiting for this moment, for all my life, oh lord  
Can you feel it coming in the air tonight, oh lord, oh lord

Well, if you told me you were drowning  
I would not lend a hand  
I've seen your face before my friend  
But I don't know if you know who I am

Well, I was there and I saw what you did  
I saw it with my own two eyes  
So you can wipe off that grin, I know where you've been  
It's all been a pack of lies

And I can feel it coming in the air tonight, oh lord  
Well I've been waiting for this moment for all my life, oh lord  
I can feel it coming in the air tonight, oh lord  
Well I've been waiting for this moment for all my life, oh lord, oh lord

Well I remember, I remember don't worry  
How could I ever forget  
It's the first time, the last time we ever met  
But I know the reason why you keep this silence up  
No you don't fool me  
The hurt doesn't show, but the pain still grows  
It's no stranger to you and me

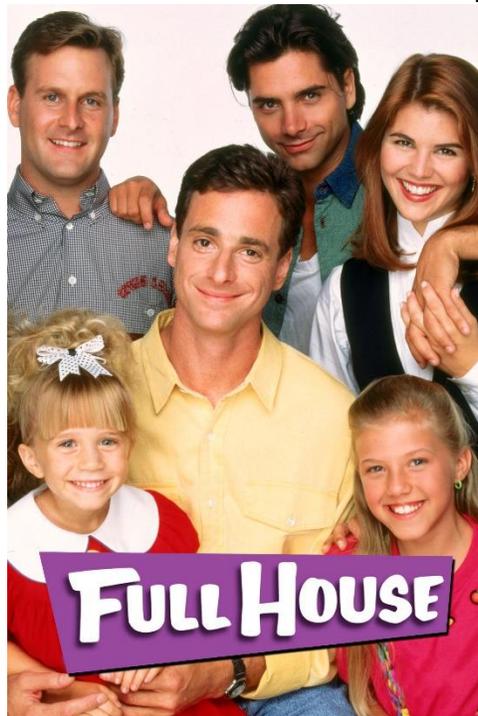
I can feel it coming in the air tonight, oh lord  
Well I've been waiting for this moment for all my life, oh lord  
I can feel it in the air tonight, oh lord, oh lord  
Well I've been waiting for this moment for all my life, oh lord

I can feel it coming in the air tonight, oh lord  
And I've been waiting for this moment for all my life, oh lord  
I can feel it in the air tonight, oh lord, oh lord  
Well I've been waiting for this moment for all my life, oh lord, oh lord  
I can feel it in the air tonight, oh lord, oh lord  
Well I've been waiting for this moment for all my life, oh lord, oh lord

Okay, so after that, the apostles head back into Jerusalem.

There's a whole group of them **staying in a room** in the city. You've got **Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.** That brings their number to eleven. (Judas Iscariot is no longer welcome. He knows why.)

In addition to these dudes, there were also some women who stayed with them, Mary the mother of Jesus, and some of Jesus's brothers, too. It was a pretty **full house.**



**Apostles Wanted**  
**Sad, just sad.**

**NOW  
HIRING**

Around this time, Peter gives a little speech to a crowd of about **120 believers**. Where did they all come from?

He explains that Judas was part of the inner circle before he became a nasty little turncoat. Now he needs to be replaced.

**HELP  
WANTED**

Apparently, in the time between his betrayal of Jesus and now, Judas bought himself a nice piece of land (he had just come into thirty pieces of silver).

But then oops! He took a nasty fall and "burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out." Um, gross.

So, we need a new apostle #12. Who's it gonna be?

Peter lays down the qualifications: **this new dude has to have been hanging around since the baptism of John and until Jesus was taken up into Heaven. Wow, they are not casting a wide net for applicants.**

Surprisingly, two different guys fit the bill exactly- Joseph called Bar-sabbas (which means, son of the Father) and Matthias. Guess which one is going to get it? Hmmm.

The apostles pray for God to help them choose. Then they cast lots (**God, apparently, loves gambling**) and Matthias comes out on top. Casting lots is like throwing dice or picking straws



Don't tell the folks at GA on Thursdays that God loves gamblers! they probably wouldn't believe ya!

Better luck next time, Barsabbas! Ya Loser!

# Chapter 2

## The Easiest Way to Pass Spanish 101

**Fifty days** after Passover, **Pentecost** comes around.

All the ~~%~~apostles+are ~~%~~**hanging around together**+when the sound of a really strong wind rushes through the house. Tornado? Nope.

How many roads must a man walk down  
Before you call him a man?  
How many seas must a white dove sail  
Before she sleeps in the sand?  
Yes, and how many times must the cannonballs fly  
Before they're forever banned?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind  
Yes, and how many years must a mountain exist  
Before it is washed to the sea?  
And how many years can some people exist  
Before they're allowed to be free?  
Yes, and how many times can a man turn his head  
And pretend that he just doesn't see?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind  
Yes, and how many times must a man look up  
Before he can see the sky?  
And how many ears must one man have  
Before he can hear people cry?  
Yes, and how many deaths will it take 'til he knows  
That too many people have died?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Just some "tongues of fire" that drift into the house and then settle on each of the ~~%~~apostles.+No biggie, right?

But the really cool thing is, all the %apostles+ can now speak **in any other language**. (including PIG LATIN!) That's pretty darn handy. Other Jewish folks in Jerusalem hear this **ruckus** and come to check it out.

They're pretty amazed that the %twelve apostles+ who they know are from Galilee- can perfectly speak dozens and dozens of different languages.

Some people are awed and others just think the %apostles+ are a bunch of **crazy drunks**. Crazy drunks who are really good at %ancient Arabicõ +and in Mandrinõ and pig latin.



Crazy  
I'm crazy for feeling so lonely  
I'm crazy  
Crazy for feeling so blue

I knew  
You'd love me as long as you wanted  
And then some day  
You'd leave me for somebody new

Worry  
Why do I let myself worry?  
Wondering  
What in the world did I do?

Oh, crazy  
For thinking that my love could hold you  
I'm crazy for trying

And crazy for crying  
And I'm crazy for loving you

Crazy  
For thinking that my love could hold you  
I'm crazy for trying  
And crazy for crying  
And I'm crazy for loving you

God is just pouring out his spirit so that **everyone** is able to prophecy. Joel said this would all happen before God decides to end the world.

This will also probably involve **the moon turning to blood**. So there's **ALWAYS** that to look forward to.

Peter then goes on to tell them a little bit about Jesus and how he is the fulfillment of everything it says in Hebrew scripture. Jesus is cool like that. Way cool. Like totally!

He quotes a couple **psalms** to prove that Jesus is the Messiah they've all been waiting for.

## **They're Converted (Like Uncle Ben's Rice)**

Some days I just shake my head  
At wear my own head  
Takes me..

□



Apparently Peter's a really good public speaker, because this convinces about **3,000** people in the crowd. **3,000 people!!!!** They all decide to **repent** and **be baptized** so that their sins can be forgiven and all that. As a bonus, they also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It's either that or a **nice set of steak knives**.

These new Christians spend their time hanging with the apostles+and each other, breaking bread together, and praying.

Good times abound! Those crazy party animals! They also sell all their stuff and distribute the money among the whole community so that everyone can be equal. Sounds a bit like a hippie commune.

**Kumbaya.**



**Kumbaya, my Lord**  
(African traditional)

Kumbaya my Lord, kumbaya  
Kumbaya my Lord, kumbaya  
Kumbaya my Lord, kumbaya  
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's singing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's singing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's singing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Oh Lord, kumbayah

Someone's laughing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's laughing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's laughing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's crying, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's crying, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's crying, my Lord, kumbaya  
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's praying, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's praying, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's praying, my Lord, kumbaya  
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's sleeping, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's sleeping, my Lord, kumbaya  
Someone's sleeping, my Lord, kumbaya  
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Hear me singing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Hear me singing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Hear me singing, my Lord, kumbaya  
Oh Lord, kumbaya

## So here we go on week #2

### Chapter 3 Healing Powers

One day, Peter and John are taking a stroll through the temple in Jerusalem when they see a man who can't walk. The poor guy is begging for money at one of the gates.

Hmmm is that the **beautiful gate** that he is lying at?

Peter tells the man **to look at him** and the guy does (he thinks they're gonna give him some much needed cash).

But Peter tells him he doesn't have any money for him (bummer). Instead he does bring some pretty cool miracles in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Oh, tell us more, Peter.

Summer loving had me a blast  
Summer loving happened so fast  
I met a girl crazy for me  
Met a boy cute as can be

Summer days drifting away  
To, oh, oh, the summer nights

Well-a well-a well-a, huh  
Tell me more, tell me more  
Did you get very far?  
Tell me more, tell me more  
Like does he have a car?

She swam by me, she got a cramp  
He ran by me, got my suit damp  
I saved her life, she nearly drowned  
He showed off, splashing around

Summer sun, something's begun  
But, oh, oh, the summer nights

Well-a well-a well-a huh  
Tell me more, tell me more  
Was it love at first sight?  
Tell me more, tell me more  
Did she put a fight?

Took her bowling in the Arcade  
We went strolling, drank lemonade  
We made out under the dock  
We stayed up 'till ten o'clock

Summer fling, don't mean a thing  
But, oh, oh, the summer nights

Well-a well-a well-a huh  
Tell me more, tell me more  
But you don't gotta brag  
Tell me more, tell me more  
'Cause he sounds like a drag

He got friendly, holding my hand  
She got friendly down in the sand  
He was sweet just turned eighteen  
Well, she was good you know what I mean

Summer heat, boy and girl meet  
But, oh, oh, the summer nights  
Tell me more, tell me more  
How much dough did he spend?  
Tell me more, tell me more  
Could she get me a friend?

It turned colder, that's where it ends  
So I told her we'd still be friends  
Then we made our true love vow  
Wonder what she's doing now

Summer dreams ripped at the seams  
But, oh, those summer nights  
Tell me more, tell me more

He grabs the man's hand and pulls him up.

Crazily enough, the dude can walk **NOW**. In fact, he's so strong, **he can jump** and even shoot baskets for the Bucks and shout and praise God all over the temple. Yeah, miracles are pretty awesome! Somersaults all the

way around! Yippie! Skippie! Can I get a hand over here,  
**I've fallen and I can't get up! Oops!**

## **Why So Amazed?**

So, the temple goers see the guy and realize **he's been healed** and they're **pretty darn amazed**.

Peter tells them there's no need to be so **weirded out**. The same God that they worship in the temple brought Jesus into the world. The **%apostles+**now can perform miracles in his name. Simple, right?

Of course, these same folks hanging out in the temple weren't too interested in hearing this a little over **%fifty days ago+**when they turned Jesus over to the Romans to be executed and left to hung out and dry!

Yeah. Peter remembers you guys. Is old Pete a sore sport? Does he hold grudges? Dude you gotta let that stuff go, it will tear you up!

But never let it be said that the disciples of Christ are not the forgiving sort of guys and kinda

If the people repent and get on the **ever-sweet-Jesus-train** their sins are totally gonna be forgiven. Sweet!

Take the last train to Clarksville  
And I'll meet you at the station  
You can be here by 4:30  
'Cause I've made your reservation

Don't be slow  
Oh, no, no, no  
Oh, no, no, no

'Cause I'm leavin' in the morning  
And I must see you again  
We'll have one more night together  
'Til the morning brings my train

And I must go  
Oh, no, no, no  
Oh, no, no, no

And I don't know if I'm ever comin' home

Take the last train to Clarksville  
I'll be waiting at the station  
We'll have time for coffee flavored kisses  
And a bit of conversation

Oh, no, no, no  
Oh, no, no, no

Take the last train to Clarksville  
Now I must hang up the phone  
I can't hear you in this noisy railroad station, all alone

I'm feelin' low  
Oh, no, no, no  
Oh, no, no, no

And I don't know if I'm ever coming home

Oh

Take the last train to Clarksville  
And I'll meet you at the station  
You can be here by 4:30  
'Cause I've made your reservation

Don't be slow  
Oh, no, no, no  
Oh, no, no, no

And I don't know if I'm ever coming home

Take the last train to Clarksville  
Take the last train to Clarksville  
Take the last train to Clarksville  
Take the last train to Clarksville

Peter name checks **Moses, Samuel, and Abraham** to let the people know he means business.

The Jewish people need to **start listening** to Jesus (and, by extension, **his apostles**). Otherwise, things **are not gonna be pretty**. Harsh, God, harsh.

## Chapter 4

# Arrested Development

I guess this is a “thing” and I have heard of it, but I have never watched it, what about you?



As Peter is giving his **big pep talk**, some of the **priests** and **Sadducees** stroll by (you may remember them as the **bad guys** from the gospel narratives).

As usual, they're **pretty ticked** that Peter and John are still going on and on and on about Jesus.

Seriously- didn't they just have that guy killed?

So they have Peter and John arrested.

Nice! Here we go again! No chance of them turning over a new leaf, I guess.

The joke's kind of on them though, because thanks to Peter's little speech, about **5,000 people** decide to start following Jesus.

**Boo-yah!** In your face **Priests and Sadducees!**

## **Preach, Peter!**

(What are you doing next Sunday at 10 a.m. Peter, yer on!)

Hehehehehehe

Please take my place!!!

The next day, the religious authorities get together to **question** Peter and John. It's a **who's who** of guys who killed Jesus.

They want to know exactly **how** Peter and John **healed the man who couldn't walk.**

**How? Tells us! Explain! Tell us plainly!**

**You can tell a doctor wrote this account by his interest in healings.**

**“The Good Doc” wants to know exactly how it was accomplished! Guess who’s pic is on the very next page, go ahead and guess...I bet you can’t...I am so shallow! (hits forehead)**

**Could it be...LUKE?**



### **Forgive me...**

Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit and goes off on another long defense.

When you get older, **it is WHAT you do.**

You talk incessantly, you go on forever! Blah, blah, blah

First of all, what they did was a %good deed+(not a crime).

Second of all, they did it %by the power of Jesus Christ.+

Remember him, haters? The dude you killed!

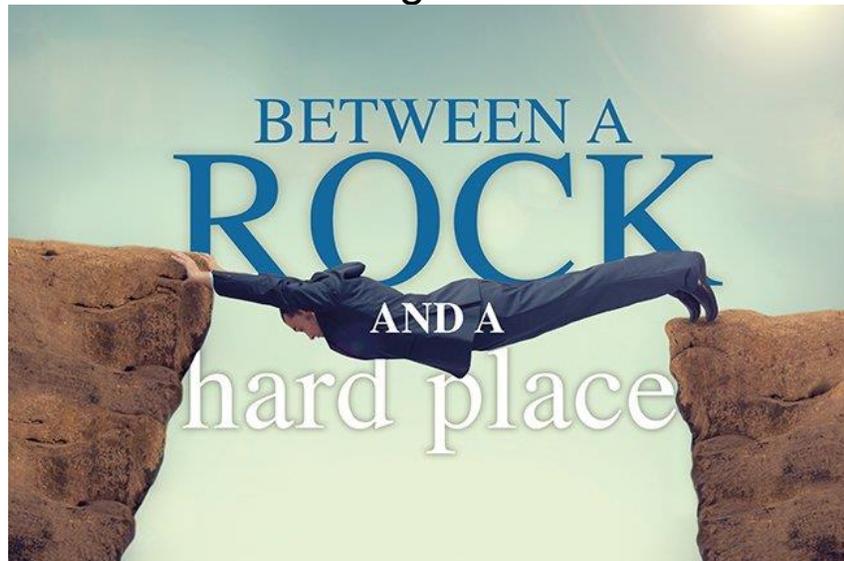
Gotcha!

Jesus was like a piece of stone that these guys said couldn't go into their %holy building,+but now he's become **the CHIEF cornerstone** for the whole project.

Yeah, he's a pretty big deal. So deal with it!

## **Keep It Quiet-SHHHHH!!!!**

Now the religious authorities are caught between a rock



and a hard place.

Between “Scylla and Charybdis.” Between the “hammer and the anvil.” Between “two fires.”

Cornered. In a dilemma. Catch 22. In the middle. In a pickle. In a predicament. No choice. Sitting on a powder keg. Or, how about “Hobson’s Choice” Take it or leave it...a free choice in which only one thing is being offered...it is never a good place to be! Ever!

They **know** (?) that Peter and John were with Jesus from the beginning. How do they know that? Maybe they were told! Knowing old Peter, he probably told them over and over and over again— he did ramble on— sometimes—

They also know that they're just a bunch of **uneducated commoners** (they don't have **fancy degrees** from high priest school). And yet **somehow**, they managed to convert **5,000 people** to their **cause**. Even the guy they healed is standing beside them in their defense.

What are **they** supposed to do?

The religious authorities decide that, if they can't **deny** what happened, they'll just order Peter and John **not to talk about it. (Now, there's a solution!)**

Yeah, this plan should work. Go on leave, get out of here and never speak of any of this again. **OK.**

**Kinda**

Peter and John straight out tell them they're **not** gonna stop talking about Jesus (**it's kind of what they do**).

And its kinda **“who they are, NOW!”**

Then the religious authorities release them since they can't think of any way to punish them. Wow. These guys have really lost their **mojo**. (MORiah JOy!) MOJO! Hehehe



## **They Feel the Earth Move**

I feel the earth move under my feet  
I feel the sky tumblin' down  
I feel my heart start to tremblin'  
Whenever you're around

Ooh baby, when I see your face  
Mellow as the month of May  
Oh darlin', I can't stand it  
When you look at me that way, hey

I feel the earth move under my feet  
I feel the sky tumblin' down  
I feel my heart start to tremblin'  
Whenever you're around

Oh darlin', when you're near me  
And you tenderly call my name  
I know that my emotions  
Are somethin' I just can't tame  
I just got to have ya, baby  
Baby, baby, yeah

I feel the earth move under my feet  
I feel the sky tumblin' down, a-tumblin' down  
I feel the earth move under my feet  
I feel the sky tumblin' down, a-tumblin' down

I just a-lose control  
Down to my very soul  
I get hot and cold  
All over, all over, all over, all over

I feel the earth move under my feet  
I feel the sky tumblin' down, a-tumblin' down  
I feel the earth move under my feet  
I feel the sky tumblin' down, tumblin' down  
Tumblin' down, tumblin' down  
Tumblin' down  
Tumblin' down

Peter and John head back to the ~~to~~ other apostles+and company and let everyone know **what happened**.

## QUE PASO!

Everyone prays that God will protect them from these **naysayers** and let them keep healing people because they're sure as heck not gonna stop doing **his good work**.

After they finish praying, the whole place **starts to shake** and everyone is filled with the Holy Spirit. We're thinking that's a good sign that **God was listening**.

Well, shake it up, baby, now  
Twist and shout  
Come on, come on, come, come on, baby, now  
Come on and work it on out  
Well, work it on out, honey  
You know you look so good  
You know you got me goin' now  
Just like I knew you would

Well, shake it up, baby, now  
Twist and shout  
Come on, come on, come, come on, baby, now  
Come on and work it on out  
You know you twist, little girl  
You know you twist so fine  
Come on and twist a little closer now  
And let me know that you're mine, woo

Ah, ah, ah, ah, wow  
Baby, now  
Twist and shout  
Come on, come on, come, come on, baby, now  
Come on and work it on out  
You know you twist, little girl  
You know you twist so fine  
Come on and twist a little closer now  
And let me know that you're mine  
Well, shake it, shake it, shake it, baby, now  
Well, shake it, shake it, shake it, baby, now  
Well, shake it, shake it, shake it, baby, now  
Ah, ah, ah, ah

Meanwhile, the followers of Jesus keep on living their **communal hippie lifestyle**. No one owns anything; they just pool all their resources together to live.

**Peace, love and tie-dyed shirts! No undies!**

**They share their roaches and dubies...**

People sell their houses and donate the proceeds to the community.

Which means, no stops at the %GOOD WILL!+

No one is poor or needy, and everyone shares everything.

**Awww. Can we sing Kumbaya again?**

**I think we all lived through this stuff once...was that the 60's?**



**Kumbaya my Lord....**

**Kumbaya...**

**Kumbaya my Lord...**

**Kumbaya...**

## **Chapter 5**

### **This Is Where it “Gets Real (Estate)”**

There's this **one guy, though**· **Ananias**· who sells some property in order to pass along the proceeds to his fellow Christians. This is a good story, unless your name is **Ananias**. Then, not so much...

His wife, **Sapphira**, knows about it, but they agree between themselves that, while they will give money to the **apostles**,+**they won't give all of it**. Oh, this plan is not gonna work out well. Uh-oh, just sayingõ

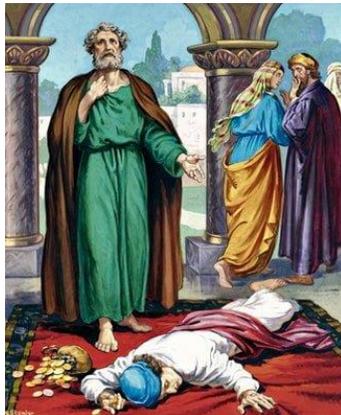
**Ananias** comes to bring the money and Peter instantly knows that the community is being **short-changed**. Peter's second calling might have been **Accounting**

**101õ** or maybe he was in a **number's racket!** Or bet on the **dogs, horses, or Green Bay or maybe the Bucks!!!** Peter calls **Ananias** out as a **liar** and Ananias falls down **dead** right in front of him. Whoa. Peter doesn't mess around. He gets right to the point!

Peter stated that Ananias had lied not to men, but to God. Because of his actions Ananias died on the spot and was carried out. Everyone who heard about the incident feared the Lord.

# Liar, Liar, pants on fire!

Three hours after Ananias' death his wife arrived, unaware of what had happened.



uh oh!

Later, **Sapphira** stops by to check in and Peter accuses her of being **not so great at sharing either.**

She drops dead, too.

Yikes! What is this contagious? So what about those folks that give stuff to Godõ and then, take it back? Hmmmm



The Moral of the story is: **don't lie to God about your real estate transactions...or your taxes!**

**(snicker, snicker!)**

## **Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!**

I think there is a commandment in here, somewhere. Let's see: it aint 5-6-7, perhaps 8! Do you know it?

**Thou shalt NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS!**

What's a little white lie every now and then?

## **In And Out Of Prison**

The **apostles** still keep performing all kinds of awesome miracles. They even go to the temple and manage to win some more believers. **Where's the Monkeys?**

They also **heal** the sick and **EVERYONE** gets cured. Miracles all around!

Do you believe in magic in a young girl's heart?  
How the music can free her whenever it starts  
And it's magic if the music is groovy

It makes you feel happy like an old-time movie  
I'll tell you about the magic, and it'll free your soul  
But it's like trying to tell a stranger 'bout a rock 'n' roll

If you believe in magic don't bother to choose  
If it's jug band music or rhythm and blues  
Just go and listen it'll start with a smile  
That won't wipe off your face no matter how hard you try  
Your feet start tapping, and you can't seem to find  
How you got there, so just blow your mind

If you believe in magic come along with me  
We'll dance until morning till there's just you and me  
And maybe if the music is right  
I'll meet you tomorrow sorta late at night  
And we'll go dancing baby, then you'll see  
How the magic's in the music, and the music's in me

Yeah, do you believe in magic  
Yeah, believe in the magic of the young girl's soul  
Believe in the magic of a rock 'n' roll  
Believe in the magic that can set you free  
Ahh, talking 'bout the magic

Do you believe in magic?  
(Do you believe like I believe?) Do you believe, believer?  
(Do you believe like I believe?) Do you believe in magic?  
(Do you believe like I believe?) Do you believe in magic?

(My bad, I couldn't think of a song that had the word miracles in it...but "magic" came to mind, sorry!)

Naturally, the **high priest** does not like this **at all**. **Good deeds make him really mad**.

He and the other religious authorities have the **%apostles+** arrested. Again. In and out. In and out. They should name a burger place after this. In and Out. hehehehe

But as luck would have it, an angel of the Lord sneaks into prison during the night and **unlocks** their jail cell. It's a prison break! Those sneaky little angelsõ

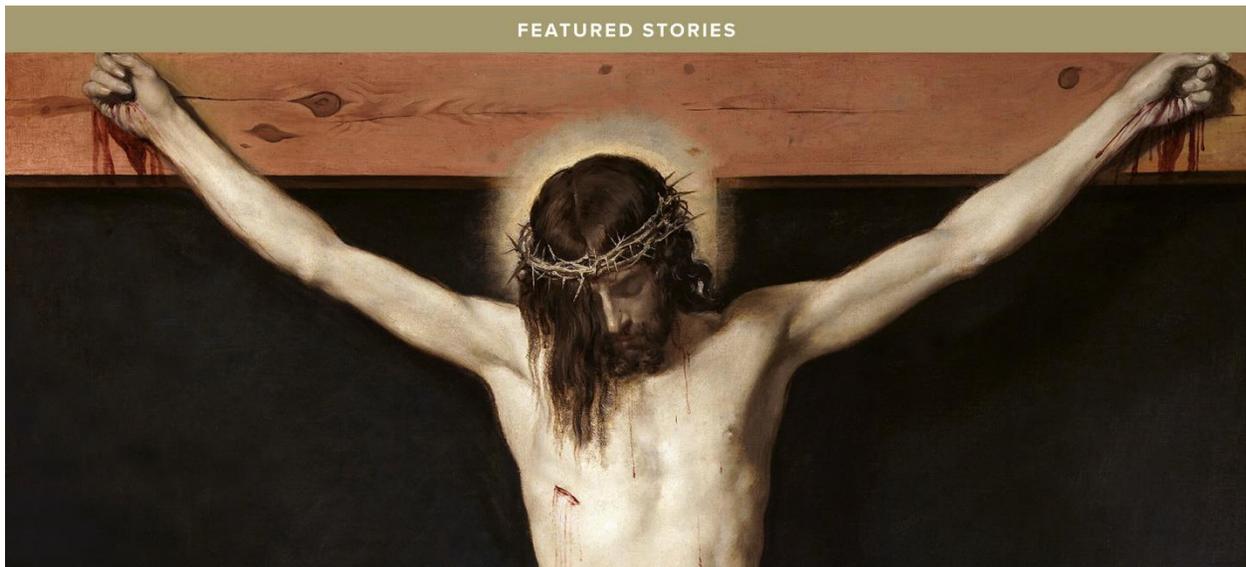
The angel tells them to head up to the temple and **keep on preaching on**.

The next day, when the religious authorities find out that these guys have **broken out** of their cell and are preaching in the temple, **they are not pleased**. Hehehe.

They have the %**apostles**+re-arrested and then start questioning them. **AGAIN!?! Aww man, this stinks!!!!**

The religious authorities are wondering **why** in the heck the %**apostles**+are talking about **Jesus** when they've been expressly **forbidden from doing just that**. **DUH!!!!** These guys are pretty clueless.

The %**apostles**+tell them that they have to listen to God, not ordinary humans. (Ordinary humans who happened to have killed Jesus, I might add.)



Just in case you forgot **HOW Jesus died** ã I thought I ã include a picture ã

Disclaimer time: OK, so there is this slant in Luke's writing. He blames the JEWS. ALL JEWS. EVERY JEW for the death of Jesus. John, the gospel writer will do the same thing. It must be a thing at that time. Maybe the Jews are persecuting Christians, and they are attempting to get back at them!

IF, the Jews had killed Jesus, he would have been stoned to death. Jews do not crucify.

Only the Romans used crucifixion. Jesus was crucified.

Who killed Jesus? End of story. Or, is it just the beginning  
□

After all, the %**apostles**+know about all the amazing things God is trying to do through Jesus. You think they can just shut up about it?

The definitely **cannot**.

At this point, the religious authorities pretty much want the %**apostles**+to go the way of Jesus.

## **This Christian Thing Isn't Really Going Anywhere, Right? I like this!**

One of the Pharisees (his name is **Gamaliel**) stands up and tries to reason with everyone. Christians love this guy!

Look, he says, these so-called prophets come along all the time. Remember **Theudas**? He had a whole bunch of followers, but when he died they all disappeared. Same thing with Judas the Galilean. You can bet the followers of

Jesus are gonna die out soon, too. Oh, **Gamaliel**, if you only knew. **Jesus is the real thing!**

**Gamaliel** tells them **not to worry**. If they're just a bunch of **schmucks** running around preaching about a false messenger, it'll all fall apart on its own. But if, just by chance, they are following God himself, then it would probably be best **not to mess with them**. **Smart move**. **And that's why we love Gamaliel, so much!!!!**

The religious authorities seem okay with this. They have the **%apostles+flogged** and then release them and tell them **not to talk about Jesus any more**. Really guys?

OK, whatever you sayõ

As soon as they leave, the **%apostles+all** start celebrating because they got to suffer for Jesus. Well maybe a teeny bit, they did miss breakfast and lunch.

And they also head right back to the temple and start **talking up Jesus again**. **%Apostles+don't quit, man**.

When it comes to blah, blah, blah, besides your local parish pastor, these are the guys to go toõ blah, blah, blahõ they are the best when it comes to talking about Jesus!



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## Chapter 6

### Let's Form A Committee

Everything is going pretty well for a while, but then a little issue comes up. Uh-oh! Issues in the early church!

Some of the Christians claim that they aren't getting the same quality charity as other Christians. Jealous much?

The twelve **apostles** don't have time for this nonsense. they need to spend time preaching about Jesus and making the religious authorities **stew with anger.**

So, they appoint seven other men to oversee these ministries and make sure everything is running smoothly. Their names are **Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus**. Some of those names would have more staying power than others. Can you tell some of these names sound Greek?

This fixes the issue and the good word about Jesus keeps spreading and more new recruits join up every day.

### Stephen Does Time

So, of this group of seven, **Stephen** is pretty awesome. He can even perform miracles. If only we knew how to pronounce his name ☐

Naturally, some of the **folks in the temple** don't appreciate this too much.

One day they start **arguing** with Stephen. When they can't win the argument fair and square, they get him arrested on

charges of **blasphemy** even though Stephen would *never* blaspheme. He just doesn't roll like that.

Stephen goes before the council and the baddies get people to come foreword and tells **lies** about Stephen and the things he's been saying. People do, do that! They tell lies all the time.

The whole time Stephen just stands there with **the face of an angel**. How could you not acquit him, council?

## **Preach, Brother Stephen**

Then Stephen gets his chance to speak and goes on for **a really long time**. His topic? The Hebrew Bible. The whole speech is kind of **a summary of the story** of the Jewish people. The name Stephen is from the Greek and means, wealth, fame, crown, reward, honor and renown

He goes through highlights on **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon** all in one chapter. Whew! It's not easy packing all of history into one lecture. But, Stephen tries

The point of all of this is that the folks from the temple are **just as stubborn as their ancestors were**. Just like the ancient Israelites didn't always welcome God's prophets and chosen ones with open arms, these guys are doing the same thing to poor Stephen. We guess it's true. Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.

Stephen tells them that they're "**uncircumcised in heart and ears**" (oh, burn!) and that they're opposing God. They've been given God's law, but they're tossing it aside because they're too pig-headed to recognize the truth.

## **They Don't Call Him The First Christian Martyr For Nothing**

Okay, so Bible stories aside, this last assessment does not make the people feel very warm and fuzzy about Stephen.

When Stephen looks up into the sky and says that he sees Jesus in the heavens, it's just too much for them.

The crowd grabs him and drags him into the city to stone him. (Which is just another way to say he was **bludgeoned to death by big freakin' rocks.**) Including the last one, bounced off his noggin! BAM! Lights out, good night, sweet Stephen.

See, I told you, the Jews they stone to death. The Romans on the otherhand, they prefer the cross. They like people dying and hangin around. They like see people going through excruciating pain. Did you it from crucifixion that we get the word excruciatingõ they both come from the same root. There you learned something to NEW today. And you thought this Bible Study stuff was all eating snacks, and yacking, and singing Kumbaya.

Every once in a while, I actually include a learning or two! Such a dealõ see you are never to old to learn something new!



Between **peltings**, Stephen prays that God will receive his spirit and also asks God not to hold this whole stoning thing against the crowd. Wow. **Talk about forgiveness.**

Stephen finally dies from rock-related injuries. Break out the tissues. Pass the Kleenex box around the table.

All the while, there's a guy named **Saul** hanging around thinking all of this is a-okay. He'll become pretty important later. He holds everybodies jackets and robes and stuff.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Persecutions Are Coming**

The same day Stephen is killed, the ~~bad~~ **baddies** start persecuting **other Christians, too**. Cheaper by the dozen? Everyone, except the main **apostles**, makes a run for it to avoid meeting the same **rock-hurling fate** as Stephen. Run, boys, run

Saul is one of the ringleaders of all this.

He's having people arrested left and right all on account of them being followers of Jesus.

Kind of. The **apostles** hear about the headway Philip is making in Samaria, so they send in the big guns, Peter and John to help out. Plus, it is safer in Samaria! In Samaria the Holiday Inn has a pool and a sauna!

Peter and John pray for the Samaritans who converted to receive the Holy Spirit. They put their hands on them and *poof* they have the Spirit. **Hallelujah! Just like that!**

Simon is pretty darn impressed by this, too. He comes up Peter and offers to pay him if he can give him a share of that sweet Holy Spirit summoning power. **Will \$50 be enough?** Um, no!

Peter tells him that you can't buy yourself into God's good graces! Simon better start praying for forgiveness now, because dude has got some wicked thoughts in his head.

**Philip does the dunking**, but when the **eunuch** comes up out of the water, Philip is gone. **Weird! Right?**

# Eunuch

Not a word used everyday!

So, the kids in confirmation read right over the word eunuch and have no clue as to what it means. Trust me, we do not explain it or go into detail

Turns out the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away and sent him to Azotus and Caesarea to keep right on preaching the word. No rest for the weary disciple, I guess.

Hey Mom, what's a eunuch? Uh-oh!



## Chapter 9

# Saul Is Blinded By The Light

Blinded by the light  
Revved up like a Deuce  
Another runner in the night  
[repeat to fade]

Madman drummers bummers Indians in the summer with a teenage diplomat  
In the dumps with the mumps as the adolescent pumps his way in to his hat  
With a boulder on my shoulder feeling kinda' older I tripped the merry go round  
With this very unpleasing sneezing and wheezing the calliope crashed to the  
ground

The calliope crashed to the ground and she was blinded by the light,  
revved up like a deuce, another runner in the night.

Blinded by the light  
Revved up like a Deuce

Another runner in the night  
[repeat to fade]

Some silicone sister with her manager mister told me I got what it takes  
She said I'll turn you on sonny to something strong play the song with the  
funky break  
And go kart Mozart was checkin' out the weather chart see if it was safe outside  
And little Early Pearly came by in his curly wurly and asked me if I needed a  
ride

The calliope crashed to the ground  
And she was blinded by the light  
Revved up like a deuce  
Another runner in the night

Blinded by the light  
She got down but she never got tight  
She's gonna make it through the night  
She's gonna make it through the night

Mama always told me not to look into the eyes of the sun, but mama  
That's where the fun is

Some brimstone baritone anti cyclone rolling stone preacher from the east  
Says Dethrone the Dictaphone hit it in his funny bone and that's where they  
expect it least  
And some new mown chaperone was standing in  
The corner watching the young girls dance  
And some fresh sewn moonstone was messing with his frozen zone reminding him of  
romance

The calliope crashed to the ground  
And she was blinded by the light  
revved up like a deuce  
Another runner in the night

Blinded by the light  
Revved up like a Deuce  
Another runner in the night  
[repeat to fade]

Madman drummers bummers Indians in the summer with a teenage diplomat  
In the dumps with the mumps as the adolescent pumps his way in to his hat  
With a boulder on my shoulder feeling kinda' older I tripped the merry go round  
With this very unpleasing sneezing and wheezing the calliope crashed to the  
ground

Scott with a slingshot finally found a tender spot and throws his lover in the  
sand  
and some bloodshot forget me not his daddy's within earshot save the buckshot  
turn up the band.

Some silicone sister with her manager mister told me I got what it takes  
She said I'll turn you on sonny to something strong ...  
[...fades...]

She got down but she never got tight she's gonna' make it through the night.

# I know you saw that one coming!

(I can be so very shallow!)

Meanwhile, Saul is still hard at work persecuting Christians. Seriously, Saul, give it a rest.

He's on his way to **Damascus** to find even more Christians he can throw in jail, when he sees **a light** suddenly flash from Heaven. It says, no vacancy. Just kidding.

Saul falls on the ground and hears a voice- "**Saul, why do you persecute me?**" Um, good question.



Persecution complex

Saul asks the voice to be more specific. Who's calling, please? Is this a wrong number? Whom were you looking for?

I think you butt-dialed me!

"It's me, Jesus" the voice tells him. Seriously. Did you not see that coming? It's called **dramatic irony**. Duh!

Anyhow, the voice of Jesus tells Saul to keep heading towards the city and that he'll let him know what to do. Maybe stop persecuting people? Just a thought.

Saul gets up and- holy crud- **he's blind...like a bat!** Luckily, he's traveling with a couple other guys (really confused guys who just heard a crazy voice from Heaven). They help him into Damascus, but it's three days before Saul can see anything again.

Hello darkness, my old friend  
I've come to talk with you again  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping  
And the vision that was planted in my brain  
Still remains  
Within the sound of silence

In restless dreams, I walked alone  
Narrow streets of cobblestone  
'Neath the halo of a street lamp  
I turned my collar to the cold and damp  
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light  
That split the night  
And touched the sound of silence

And in the naked light, I saw  
Ten thousand people, maybe more  
People talking without speaking  
People hearing without listening  
People writing songs that voices never shared  
And no one dared  
Disturb the sound of silence

"Fools" said I, "You do not know  
Silence like a cancer grows  
Hear my words that I might teach you  
Take my arms that I might reach you"  
But my words, like silent raindrops fell  
And echoed in the wells of silence

And the people bowed and prayed  
To the neon god they made  
And the sign flashed out its warning  
In the words that it was forming  
Then the sign said, "The words on the prophets are written on the subway walls  
In tenement halls"  
And whispered in the sound of silence

## **Goodbye, Scales; Hello, Discipleship**

There just so happens to be a follower of Jesus named Ananias (not the greedy, dead one from before— a different guy) living in Damascus.

I guess it must have been a common enough name— like Nicanor or something—

Ananias has a **vision** where God tells him to go find Saul and restore his sight.

Ananias is a tiny bit skeptical, though. He's heard of the dude!

Um, God, hasn't Saul been rounding up Christians left and right? Taking them to jail and or prison? Beating the ever-lovin'-crap out of em— .

Are you sure I should just walk in there and introduce myself and heal him in the name of Jesus?

Yeah, it's totally cool, God tells him. Go for it!

He's gonna bring my message to the Gentiles and all that good stuff. And he's gonna suffer quite a bit, too. **I kind of dig irony!**

So, Ananias goes and heals Saul and "something like scales fell from his eyes! Gross, man, just gross—



66 pounds on what planet? Look at the size of those feet!

After that, Saul is baptized and eats a little and then starts to feel better. I can see, I can see! That's when the name change comes in—no longer SAUL, now it's PAUL. Well that was original!

Heavenly visions are a little like a really nasty COVID flu sometimes. Just kidding, I made that up, too!

## **Saul Just Wants To Fit In**

Once he feels better, Saul rushes out into the synagogues and starts “**talking up Jesus.**” Hmm.

In the synagogues! SAUL? The Christian-killer?

The people are pretty astonished. Didn't Saul-Paul come to town to arrest Christians? Now he's become one?

**Weird.**

Naturally, after Paul's/Saul's been preaching for a while and convincing lots of people, the religious authorities hatch a plot to kill him. Don't these guys have anything better to do with their time? The plot thickens—

The disciples find out about it, though, and sneak Paul/Saul out of town at night by lowering him down the wall outside the city in a basket. Those disciples are always thinking.

A-tisket, a-tasket  
A brown and yellow basket  
I send a letter to my mommy  
On the way I dropped it

I dropped it, I dropped it  
Yes, on the way I dropped it  
A little girlie picked it up  
And put it in her pocket

She was truckin' on down the avenue  
But not a single thing to do  
She went peck, peck, peckin' all around  
When she spied it on the ground

She took it, she took it  
My little yellow basket  
And if she doesn't bring it back  
I think that I will die

A-tisket, a-tasket  
I lost yellow basket  
And if that girlie don't return it  
Don't know what I'll do

Oh dear, I wonder where my basket can be  
(So do we, so do we, so do we, so do we, so do we)  
Oh gee, I wish that little girl I could see  
(So do we, so do we, so do we, so do we, so do we)  
Oh, why was I so careless with that basket of mine  
That itty-bitty basket was a joy of mine

A-tisket, a-tasket  
I lost my yellow basket  
Won't someone help me find my basket  
And make me happy again, again

no no no no  
(Was it red?) no no no no  
(Was it blue?) no no no no  
Just a little yellow basket

A little yellow basket

Saul/Paul makes his way to Jerusalem to meet up with his fellow disciples, but they're a little bit skeptical. Um, these are the same guys you were just trying to get killed a while

ago, Saul/Paul. Um, **they do not believe him**. I wonder why? Good going guys! Be extra careful. Some of these guys are sneaky!

Barnabas vouches for him in front of the **apostles**, which puts them a little more at ease.

You know what really puts them at ease though? Sending Saul home to **Tarsus** to do some preaching there instead. Get outta town! Go! See ya! Wouldn't want to be ya! Scram!

## **Peter's Doing Stuff Too, You Know**

**Uh-oh...**

### **Do I detect a little jealousy here?**

Peter's also having his own adventures all over the country. He heals a man who's been paralyzed and converts loads of folks in the process. Score!

When he hears that a disciple named **Tabitha** (her Greek name is **Dorcas**) has died in Joppa, he rushes there and brings her back to life. Whoa. Peter has got **Lazarus-level** healing powers! Whatever you do, don't name your child Dorcus. Male or Female, never Dorcus, promise?

## **Chapter 10**

### **It's God On Line Two**

In Caesarea, there's a guy named **Cornelius** who's a Roman centurion. He's a Gentile, but he observes Jewish

customs and prayers. Basically he's living the Jewish life, but hasn't made things official. Which means he hasn't gotten snipped yet! Ouch! Can you say, **PROSELYTE?**

One day, while Cornelius is praying, an angel of God appears and tells him to send some men to Joppa to pick up Peter.

Cornelius is a little freaked, but he sends two of his slaves and a soldier right away. You don't mess around when God gives you a **divine directive**.

## **He Saw A Vision Of Sheets**

**OH BOY!**

**Not the KKK, I hope!**

(Talk about racially, culturally, intellectually insensitive – this Bible Study has it all!)

Talk about so 1920's-1930's-1940's-50's-60's

But wait, aren't these guys still around today?

Now, some say they are more underground than ever...

Can you even say the letters KKK today?

Do you know there are about 92,000,000 articles about the KKK on the Internet today?



Meanwhile, the next day in Joppa Peter is on the roof praying when he gets a little hungry and sees yet another **vision**.

He sees ~~a~~ **sheet** being sort of lowered down from the sky with all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds running around on it. Um, okay! That's better, you had me scared for a moment! God tells him to go ahead and kill one and eat it.

Nice try, Lord, Peter tells the Almighty. I don't eat **unclean foods**. I keep kosher all the way.

The voice tells him again, *Seriously? I just told you it was fine*. "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."

Profane is worldly, the opposite of sacred

Peter hears this three times and the whole **vision** disappears. Thank God! It is scary having visions

matter what era you live in things can always be misconstrued!

## Peter In Caesarea

Just then, Cornelius's men come into town looking for Peter.

God tells Peter that there are some guys searching for him and he should go ahead and meet them. Get a move on, then, Peter. Skidattle!

Peter meets the guys, they talk, and Peter agrees to head with them to Caesarea the next day. Things are pretty simple when they've been pre-okayed in vision form. That's like pre-approval to buy a used car or to get financing!



When Peter gets there he explains that it's actually against Jewish law for Jews to associate with Gentiles. Who knows what kind of **weird Gentile germs** they could pass on? But Peter decided to come because God showed him

in that **vision** that he shouldn't go around labeling things as **unclean**. Good takeaway.

Cornelius tells Peter about his **vision** and asks Peter to tell him whatever it is that God needs him to hear. This should be good.

Peter tells him that God doesn't play favorites. Jew? Gentile? Gay? Straight? Trans? Left-handed? God is cool with whatever your background is because he's "Lord of **ALL**." Amen. Shh- don't tell the church, that, they aint ready for this stuff yet!

Peter gives a quick backstory about Jesus (lived, died, rose again) and the Holy Spirit falls on everyone who hears him. Nice job, Peter.

Since the **Gentiles** in the group want to be baptized, Peter doesn't see any reason why they shouldn't be. **Equality is awesome. I thought Paul was the Gentile guy!!!!**

## **Chapter 11**

### **Gentiles Are So In**

Back in Judea, word reaches the **apostles** and Jewish followers of Jesus that Peter has been baptizing **Gentiles**. And, right-handed people, too! Oh, the horror!

Later, when Peter comes back into town, he has some 'splaining to do. LUCY, YOU'VE GOT SUM SPLAININ TA DO.

Peter tells them all about **the vision** and that God said unclean things are now a-okay. He explains that it was God who let the Holy Spirit fall on the Gentiles while he was speaking. What was Peter supposed to do?

Stop God from giving out his gifts? Good luck with that.

The other apostles are speechless, but then they realize this is actually a great thing. **God wants to save everyone.** Including the people sitting in church!

## Spreading The Word In Antioch

Lots of disciples are still traveling around. Some only preach the good news to fellow **Jews**, but others started telling **Gentiles**, too. Very few go to left-handed people.

And it's working!

The church in Jerusalem sends Barnabas to **Antioch** to check out the new **Gentile** converts.

Things looks good, so Barnabas heads to Tarsus to pick up Saul/Paul and bring him to Antioch. The two men stay there for a year and help the church get up and running.

This is the first place that the disciples were called "**Christians.**" Memories. Awww.

I got the perfect songõ

Here's to the ones that we got  
Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not  
'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories  
Of everything we've been through  
Toast to the ones here today

Toast to the ones that we lost on the way  
'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories  
And the memories bring back, memories bring back you

There's a time that I remember, when I did not know no pain  
When I believed in forever, and everything would stay the same  
Now my heart feel like December when somebody say your name  
'Cause I can't reach out to call you, but I know I will one day, yeah

Everybody hurts sometimes  
Everybody hurts someday, ayy ayy  
But everything gon' be alright  
Go and raise a glass and say, ayy

Here's to the ones that we got  
Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not  
'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories  
Of everything we've been through  
Toast to the ones here today  
Toast to the ones that we lost on the way  
'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories  
And the memories bring back, memories bring back you

Doo doo, doo doo doo doo  
Doo doo doo doo, doo doo doo doo  
Doo doo doo doo, doo doo doo  
Memories bring back, memories bring back you

There's a time that I remember when I never felt so lost  
When I felt all of the hatred was too powerful to stop (ooh, yeah)  
Now my heart feel like an ember and it's lighting up the dark  
I'll carry these torches for ya that you know I'll never drop, yeah

Everybody hurts sometimes  
Everybody hurts someday, ayy ayy  
But everything gon' be alright  
Go and raise a glass and say, ayy

Here's to the ones that we got (oh)  
Cheers to the wish you were here, but you're not  
'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories  
Of everything we've been through (no, no)  
Toast to the ones here today (ayy)  
Toast to the ones that we lost on the way  
'Cause the drinks bring back all the memories (ayy)  
And the memories bring back, memories bring back you

Doo doo, doo doo doo doo  
Doo doo doo doo, doo doo doo doo  
Doo doo doo doo, doo doo doo  
Memories bring back, memories bring back you  
Doo doo, doo doo doo doo  
Doo doo doo doo, doo doo doo doo  
Doo doo doo doo, doo doo doo (ooh, yeah)  
Memories bring back, memories bring back you

Yeah, yeah, yeah  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, doh, doh  
Memories bring back, memories bring back you

Bet you thought I was going to go all Streisand on you!

Faked you out, didn't I?

Around the same time, a prophet named **Agabus** comes to Antioch and says that there's gonna be a really terrible famine soon. (Where did their mama's come up with those names?) Just wait!!!! In 2030 I bet you hear some doozies!

The disciples decide it's up to them to make sure that fellow believers are cared for if this happens, so they send supplies with Barnabas and Saul. Way to think ahead, guys.

## Chapter 12

### Off With His Head

Around this time, **King Herod** decides to stir up a little trouble for the Christians. **Typical.**

He has one of the disciples, James, **beheaded**. Ouch.

Or was that was sawed in half? Let me check. I will get back to you on this one! There are two men, two disciples named James, you know. St. James the Greater and St. James the Lesser. The symbol of St. James the Greater is an scallop shell. It was said he traveled a great deal to preach the gospel to many people. The scallop shell is a symbol of the traveler because he used this shell to scoop water to drink on his travels. Other emblems include the sword and the shell; the staff and the wallet; the staff and

the hatõ was it a Davie Crockett-coon-skinned-hat? Or, the staff and a sword crossed. That saint James died on July 25<sup>th</sup>.



Cool, now you are going to have nightmares tonight. Let the countdown beginõ

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8

Hehehehe

The other is St. James the Minor, or the lesser, or the shorter, or the lil' guy. His symbol is the SAW like in the movies? SAW? Hegesippus (whoever that is) says that St. James was thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple and his body was sawed in half, just to make sure he was really dead. Other emblems are the three stones and a windmill. (Maybe he went to Holland?) Or maybe he was an early worker on ENERGY EFFICIENCY! This saint James died on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Then he arrests Peter. In case you have forgotten, the ~~HE~~ here is old King Herod. Oh, this is not looking good.

All the followers of Jesus are praying for Peter in prison (he needs it).

Don't drop the soap, Peter! Sorry, I had to.

## Angels Really Know How to Pick Locks

Their prayers are answered in the form of **an angel** of the Lord who appears and releases Peter from his chains.

Think of I DREAM OF Jeannie !  the lady in the bottle!

At first, Peter thinks he's having **another vision** (or just hallucinating), but when the angel leads him outside the gates of the city, he knows it's for real.

He rushes over to Mary's house 8935 South Wood Creek Drive, Apt# 113 . ring the buzzer (she's John's mother) and knocks on the door. The maid, Rhoda, answers and

recognizes Peter right away. (You remember RHODA!) But she's so excited that she forgets to let him in and just runs to tell everyone he's back. Comic relief-plus!

They all think she's nuts or worse, that Peter's dead and she's just seen his angel or something. Some kind of apparition!

Eventually, **everyone opens the door** and sees Peter and starts freaking out. Peter's out of prison! Time to celebrate! Woo-hoo! Get out the Pepsi!

## **Herod Gets His (Lucky guy!)**

The next morning, the soldiers and Herod are pretty confused about what happened to their prisoner. They had chained him up so nicely! And now

Since Herod's a jerk, he questions the prison guards and then has them put to death. What a meanie! That's just the way he rocks and rolls

Later, Herod is sitting in front of his subjects and they start chanting about how he is a god, not just a mere man.

Now it's God's turn to be angry because Herod isn't giving him his props. Uh- oh, you do not want to tick off God, just saying!!! An angel of God strikes him down and Herod is eaten by worms and dies. Graphic and terrible, yet quite fitting for the olqwannabeking. Goodnight, Herod! Sleep tight! Don't let the bedbugs and worms bite!

Even though King Herod's dead, the church lives on and gains even more new members. Take that, ghost of Herod. You can stay put in Christmas Past!

Meanwhile, Barnabas and Saul head back to Jerusalem with their new pal, **John Mark**.

## Chapter 13

### Paul In Cyprus

In Antioch there are a group of prophets and teachers hanging around, but God singles out Barnabas and Saul for some special duties.

The pair head over to **Cyprus** where they run into a Jewish false prophet named **Bar-Jesus**. Not to be confused with **BAR-LOUIE now at Brookfield Square!**

When the Roman governor in the area asks Saul and Barnabas to come chat with him about Jesus, **Bar-Jesus** tells the governor that they're just spewing lies. Oh, **Bar-Jesus**, they way you carry on...you do remember, Bar means ~~son~~ of, +right?

Saul (who, did we mention, is better known as Paul?) tells **Bar-Jesus** that he's a terrible, awful, no good guy and that he's gonna be blind for a while. It matches his spiritual blindness.

Sure enough, **Bar-Jesus** goes blind and the governor believes that what Saul/Paul (Not to be confused with St. Paul and Minneapolis!) said about Jesus must be true.

**After all, if you can blind a guy, you must be holy, right? Huh?**

## **Paul In Galatia**

Paul and friends leave Cyprus and head to **Galatia** where they head straight for the synagogue. The religious officials there invite them to speak (this is a first).

Paul stands up and gives a little speech about the history of the Jewish people leading up to King David. From David, Paul claims, comes Jesus, who is the fulfillment of everything God has ever promised the Jewish people. Yay!

Of course, the folks down in Jerusalem didn't realize this+ (even though it was obvious) and they had Jesus put to death on trumped up charges.

Paul ends by telling that they can free themselves from sin if they put their faith in Jesus (and, of course, God).

Everyone that doesn't listen is going to die. Metaphorically, of course.

As Paul and Barnabas are leaving, the people in the synagogue ask them to come back **next week** to talk some more. (Wow, this visit went well!) Loads of people start to become followers of Jesus, too.

The following week, almost the entire city turns out to hear Paul preach (he's quite a draw).

But there's a group of Jews who aren't so pleased with what's going on, and they let everyone know that they think Paul's full of it.

Paul and Barnabas tell everyone that the good news about Jesus was passed on to the Jewish people first.

But since they're so good at rejecting it, God has asked them to move onto the Gentiles. Don't be upset when you see that they've run out of good spots in Heaven, guys.

Lots of Gentiles start following Jesus after this, but the **naysayers** get someone to spread rumors about Paul and Barnabas and they're forced to leave town and head for **Iconium**. Preaching ain't easy. Working with the people of God aint easy. Dealing with all the individual personalities aint easy! (Or, so I have been told!)

## Chapter 14

### Paul In Iconium

Same thing goes down in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas make some headway getting people to follow Jesus, and then the naysayers start spreading the seeds of doubt. Boo.

When the naysayers threaten to stone them, Paul and Barnabas get the heck out of Iconium.

### Paul In Lystra

They head to **Lystra**, where they meet a man who has never been able to walk. Guess what? Paul heals him and then dude can walk.

The people are amazed (as usual) and decide that Paul and Barnabas must be gods come to Earth. Obviously.

They call Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes and they rush off to the temple to offer a sacrifice to their new gods.

Paul and Barnabas are pretty freaked out when they hear about this. They tear their clothes (so dramatic) and tell all the people that they're just regular guys like them. Their job is to tell people about the one true God, not to become him.

## Paul Is Dead

Later on, some Jewish naysayers come from Antioch and Iconium to speak against Paul and Barnabas. Can't they just leave them alone?

The naysayers get the crowd so worked up that they actually get them to stone Paul.

When the crowd of stone-throwers thinks Paul's dead, they drag him out of the city and leave him there. Bummer.

But when the disciples come to find him, they see that Paul hasn't *quite* been stoned to death. Note to naysayers: use heavier rocks next time.

Paul gets up and walks back into the city. He's crazy like that.

## **Paul Gets Out Of Dodge**

Paul and Barnabas travel around to lots of other places preaching about Jesus and converting Jews and Gentiles alike. Good work, guys.

All the time, they're happy to be persecuted because it means they're doing right by God. God likes people to be unhappy and downtrodden while serving him, we guess.

In the end, Paul and Barnabas head back to Judea and give a report to everyone there on the status of the church around the Roman Empire. Everyone is pretty psyched.

## **Chapter 15**

### **To Snip Or Not To Snip?**

#### **(So Help You God!)**

In Judea, there's a bunch of guys talking about circumcision. Mainly, they're saying that no one can be saved unless they're circumcised. Paul and Barnabas don't agree. Male Gentiles everywhere rejoice.

Paul and Barnabas decide to head to Jerusalem to take up the topic with the twelve apostles and elders to get their opinion on the big snip.

Some of the Christians there say that male converts need to be circumcised. After all, a follower of Jesus still has to follow the laws of Moses.

But Peter stands up and tells everyone that God is cool with the Gentiles. If he wants to give them the Holy Spirit, the fact that their junk is still intact isn't gonna stop him. Besides, they all know that the path to salvation goes through Jesus, not Jewish law.

Paul and Barnabas agree and tell all kinds of stories about how faithful and spirit-filled the new Gentile-Christians are. They're model converts.

James also tells everyone that he agrees with Peter. He decides that there are only a few things Gentiles need to avoid. They shouldn't worship idols, have sex outside of marriage, eat any animal that hasn't been ritually slaughtered, or drink animal blood. Sounds simple enough.

## **The Penis Monologues**

So it is debated, so it is done. The apostles write up a letter that Paul and Barnabas will circulate to the Gentile believers. Judas Barsabbas and Silas also tag along with them.

In Antioch, everyone is glad to hear the news. No animal blood means intact penises all around.

Sadly, Paul and Barnabas have a bit of a falling out over who gets to come to the next town with them. Paul doesn't want John Mark tagging along with them again.

The dynamic duo splits. Barnabas takes John Mark with him and Paul goes on ahead with Silas. It's the end of an era.

## **Chapter 16**

### **Paul Meets Timothy**

Paul's next stop is in Lystra where he meets a Christian named Timothy.

Timothy's dad was Greek, which means he was never circumcised, so Paul goes ahead and asks him to have it done. Ouch. Paul thinks it will strengthen their street cred with the Jews they'll meet in their upcoming travels.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy travel around the eastern part of the Roman Empire spreading the word and winning converts.

One night, Paul has a vision telling him to head to **Macedonia**. Sure thing!

### **Paul In Macedonia**

In Macedonia, Paul meets a wealthy Gentile woman named Lydia who promptly decides that she and everyone who lives in her house will be baptized after talking with Paul. Way to win hearts and minds, Paul.

Lydia invites Paul and company to stay with her. What a lovely hostess.

One day, Paul and friends meet a slave girl who has a gift for fortune-telling. In fact, her owners make a lot of money from her gift.

Every time the disciples pass by her, she yells that they are servants of God who could point you to salvation.

Even though this description is accurate, Paul is pretty annoyed by the constant yelling. He orders the fortune-telling spirit to come out of her and, just like that, it's gone.

Not surprisingly, the owners of the girl aren't too happy. They were making some cash money off that girl's possession.

They drag Paul and Silas in front of the Roman magistrates and tell them that the two are nothing more than Jewish agitators.

The magistrates have them stripped, beaten with rods, and thrown in jail. They don't mess around in Macedonia.

## **It's A Divine Prison Break**

At midnight, while Paul and Silas are praying in their cell (that's some dedication for you), there's an earthquake. All the cell doors open and the chains fall off the prisoners. God has arranged another prison break.

When the jailer wakes up and sees that all the cells are opened he takes out his sword so that he can kill himself for letting prisoners escape on his watch. Yikes.

Paul tells him that they're still there and that he should hold off on offing himself. He has so much to live for, right?

The jailer is so impressed by the two men that he decides to believe in Jesus, too.

The jailer takes Paul and Silas to his house and treats their wounds. Everyone in the whole house decides to believe in God. Pretty impressive.

## **Apology Please**

The next morning, the magistrates send word to the jailer to let Paul and Silas go.

But Paul, who seems to be feeling a little over-confident after the whole earthquake prison break, tells them no way.

*After all, Paul says, we're Roman citizens and you beat and humiliated us in public. You're so gonna pay.*

Okay, so the magistrates totally did not know that and now they're a little freaked out. You do not treat a Roman citizen that way.

The magistrates come and apologize to each of them personally. Paul and Silas head back to Lydia's house with their heads held high.

Way to play the Roman citizen card.

## **Chapter 17**

## Paul Is Thessalonica

Paul and Silas visit **Thessalonica**, and immediately upon arrival they rush to the synagogue to start arguing that Jesus is the Messiah. Of course.

Some Jews and Gentiles are persuaded, but another group of Jewish naysayers is not having it. They form a mob and hunt down Paul and Silas, as usual.

The naysayers are claiming that Paul and company are preaching against the **Roman Emperor**. After all, they *are* saying that Jesus is King. The emperor might not be too thrilled about that.

## Paul In Beroea

Paul and Silas leave town and head to Beroea. The Jews and Gentiles are way warmer and friendlier there, and they enjoy listening to Paul's preaching.

The Jews from Thessalonica find out that Paul is in Beroea though, and they head on over to get some trouble brewing.

## Paul In Athens

The Christians in town send Paul to **Athens**, where he'll be (a little) safer.

When he arrives, Paul is pretty sad to see that the whole city is covered in idols. Second commandment, everyone.

Naturally, he books it to the synagogue to start arguing with everyone about Jesus. Paul is consistent at least.

He moves on to the marketplace and starts to engage some of the non-Jewish Greeks in the crowd. He gives a sermon that's one part biblical and one part Greek philosophy.

Paul tells the citizens of Athens that they are obviously very religious (they have all those idols hanging around, after all), but God is the one who created the whole world and who should *actually* be worshiped. Oh yeah, and He also sent a guy (Jesus) who will lead the way- a guy who *died*, but was raised from the dead. Pretty awesome, right?

The Athenians are intrigued and tell him that they'd like to hear more. Some even become believers because Paul is just that darn good.

## Chapter 18

### Paul In Corinth

Paul leaves Athens, heads over to **Corinth**, and meets a Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla who have just been kicked out of Rome.

The couple happens to be tentmakers (like Paul), so the three of them work together making tents and enjoying the sights in Corinth.

Every time the Sabbath rolls around, Paul heads over to the synagogue to start telling everyone about Jesus. The guy does not stop.

In the meantime, Silas and Timothy meet up with him from Macedonia.

Paul isn't making any headway with the Corinthian Jews, so he decides to go talk to the Gentiles in town.

Paul has better luck among the Gentiles and manages to convert lots of people.

One night, God speaks to Paul in a vision and tells him not to worry. Corinth is a safe place for him because there are lots of sympathetic Christians hanging around.

God is right. Corinth is so safe that Paul stays there for a year and a half.

Later, some of the Jews drag Paul off to the Roman governor, **Gallio**.

But Gallio doesn't think much of their concerns. He basically tells them to figure it out themselves because the Christians aren't breaking any Roman laws.

**Priscilla And Aquila Take The Reins For A Second**

Finally, Paul leaves Corinth and heads for **Ephesus** with Priscilla and Aquila.

He leaves the couple in Ephesus, and travels on to various places.

In Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila run into a Jewish-Christian guy named Apollos.

Apollos is really into Jesus and speaks pretty well, but a couple things he says about baptism aren't exactly right. So Priscilla and Aquila pull him aside and explain where he's going wrong. Problem solved.

The newly-schooled Apollos heads to Corinth to help out there. Way to pitch in, Apollos.

## **Chapter 19**

### **Paul In Ephesus**

After this, Paul comes back to Ephesus.

When he arrives, he runs into a dozen followers of Jesus who don't even know what the Holy Spirit is. Seriously, what are Christians teaching in Ephesus or in Oak Creek?

Paul helps them understand and then baptizes them in the name of Jesus. Then he lays his hands on them and they get the Holy Spirit and start to speak in tongues and prophecy. It's pretty cool.

Paul keeps on preaching about Jesus in the synagogues around Ephesus. Some folks are into it and some are pretty dead set against him. Go figure.

But Paul's got the power. He stays in Ephesus for two years and manages to convert and heal loads of people. Take that, naysayers.

## **The Exorcists**

One day, there are some random Jewish exorcists who are trying to cast out evil spirits in Jesus's name.

The evil spirit is unimpressed. It tells the men that it knows Jesus and it knows Paul, but who are you guys again? The man who's possessed attacks them and runs them out of the house.

**After this, lots of people who practice magic (the kind that doesn't come from God) repent of their evil ways and start following Jesus.**

**Paul decides that's he's ready for another trip. He plans to go through Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem, and then onto Rome. An ambitious itinerary.**

## **I Predict A Riot**

**Paul sends Timothy and Erastus ahead of him and stays back in Ephesus.**

**Good thing too, because a crisis breaks out.**

**There's an Ephesian named Demetrius who worked as a silversmith. His main job was to make statutes of Artemis. Since Paul started preaching about Jesus, production has been down.**

**Demetrius gathers some other silversmiths together and they wring their hands about the danger this poses to their industry (oh, and to the proper worship of the goddess).**

The men start shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" and they drag two of Paul's companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, into a huge theater. It's chaos.

Paul wants to try to calm things down, but his friends urge him to stay away. He does have a habit of creating riots after all.

The people are all shouting and carrying on. Some of them don't even know why they're there. We guess they just like a good mob scene.

Some of the Jews try to have a man named Alexander come forward to silence the crowd, but he doesn't have any luck. Two hours of chanting follows. Seriously. Two hours.

Finally the town clerk gets everyone to quiet down.

*Look, he tells them. Everyone knows how great Artemis is. No one is disputing that. These Christians aren't some crazy criminals or blasphemers, so what's the big deal? If anyone wants to try to take them to court, go ahead. Otherwise, people need to shut up about it.*

Surprisingly this works and the crowd goes on its way.  
You go, town clerk.

## **Chapter 20**

### **Paul In Philippi**

After all the craziness dies down, Paul leaves town to travel a bit more.

He winds up in **Philippi**, where he celebrates Passover with his travelling buddies. I feel a favorite story coming on

One day, Paul is discussing stuff with his companions and keeps going on until midnight. A guy named Eutychus dozes off during his speech and falls out a third-story window. The moral of the story: don't fall asleep when Paul is talking.(Or Pj, for that matter!!!)

Everyone thinks Eutychus has bit the bullet, but when Paul goes down to check out the body, he tells everyone not to worry. He's not dead yet!

Then Paul goes back upstairs and keeps talking until the sun comes up. Everyone else wisely moves away from the open windows.

### **This Is The End**

Paul leaves town. On his way to Jerusalem, he meets with the church elders in Ephesus.

He tells them that he has faithfully served God (even when times got tough). Now he's on his way to Jerusalem and the Ephesian Christians will never see him again. (Jerusalem can be a tough crowd.)

He tells them to stay strong after he's gone, remember everything he taught them about Jesus, and not to let anyone tell them otherwise.

Paul explains that he never took charity and always supported himself because he could. He quotes Jesus's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Naturally, this speech bums everyone out. They're all crying because they're never gonna see Paul again. Tissues all around!



Sorry, I had to!

## Chapter 21

## **Paul In Caesarea**

Paul gets on a ship and starts the journey toward Jerusalem. Bon voyage!

The group stops in a bunch of ports and are well-received by various Christians before arriving in Caesarea.

Upon arrival, Paul meets with Philip (who was one of the seven that was appointed by the apostles in Chapter 6). At Philip's house, a local prophet named Agabus tells Paul that he will be imprisoned and turned over to the Gentiles.

All Paul's friends hear this and beg Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

No way, Paul tells them. He's ready to die if that's what God needs him to do to spread the word. Well, in that case, go ahead, they tell him.

## **Paul In Jerusalem**

When Paul sets foot in Jerusalem, everyone is pretty psyched to see him.

The day after he arrives, Paul heads over to visit with James and the church elders.

He gives them a full account of all the awesome things he's done for the Gentiles in the name of Jesus. Everyone is thrilled.

Not so fast. The group tells Paul that they have lots of faithful Jewish-Christians right here in Jerusalem. Jewish-Christians who really like their Jewish roots.

Word has reached them that Paul's been telling his Jewish converts that they don't have to worry about the laws of Moses anymore. He says they shouldn't circumcise their children or obey Jewish customs. What the heck, Paul?

These folks are gonna find out that Paul's in town and, the elders warn him, once they do all heck is gonna break loose.

James and the elders give Paul some advice: he should go with four other men who are about to undergo a Jewish ritual to purify themselves. Not only should Paul join them, but he should pay their expenses. Paul agrees. What other choice does he have?

## **Paul Makes People Angry**

**(No, Not Paul, say it aint so!)**

When the ritual is almost over (it takes seven days to complete), the non-Jewish-Christians in town see him in the temple and freak out.

They grab Paul and tell everyone that he's been teaching "everyone everywhere" that Jewish law stinks. They also (wrongly) assume that he has· horror of horrors· taken a Gentile into the temple. It's a pretty big no-no.

The Jewish naysayers are all attacking Paul when a group of soldiers comes along and stops them from beating him

up. They also arrest Paul, but hey, it's better than a beating by an angry mob.

The soldiers are trying to figure out what Paul did, but the whole crowd is in chaos. The men lead Paul away while the mob is still trying to get at him.

Before putting him in prison, Paul asks the soldiers if he can address the people. They tell him to have at it and then (we're guessing) sit back to watch Paul get torn apart.

## Chapter 22



### Hi, My Name Is Paul

Paul addresses the crowd in Hebrew (which makes their ears perk up a little) and tells them his life story. This better be good.

He is a Jew who was born in Tarsus and brought up in a good Jewish home where he learned respect for Jewish law and customs. He's a real **mensch**.

He tells them how he persecuted Christians himself (who doesn't love a little persecution) until he saw a light that blinded him on the road to Damascus and heard the voice of Jesus himself. Impressed yet, everyone?

Then he explains that Ananias restored his sight and encouraged him to be baptized. God himself warned Paul that the people in Jerusalem weren't gonna take to kindly to the new and improved him, so he sent him to the Gentiles.

## **Flog Him!**

When the people hear this, they freak out and start screaming that Paul should be killed. The soldiers decide to take Paul aside and flog him.

But before they can start, Paul points out that he was born a Roman citizen and it's not exactly legal for them to flog him.

The Romans are all freaked out by this. If Paul was born a Roman citizen, then tying him up to flog him is a big no-no.

They release him and order him to appear before the Jewish high priests and council.

## **Chapter 23**

### **The Trial Before The Council**

Paul tells the Jewish council that he's always lived a good life and that's he's totally right with God.

The high priest, Ananias, orders some of the others to punch Paul in the mouth. And they do it. What a bunch of followers.

Paul gets angry and calls the high priest a "whitewashed wall." Burn! He also points out that it's against Jewish law to hit him. Check and mate.

But the council tells Paul that he has no right to insult the high priest and then Paul does a 180, agrees with them, and apologizes.

Hmmm. That apology might be a first for Paul.

Paul tells them that he himself is a Pharisee and that he's there because of the things he's been teaching about Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. That's sort of right.

A fight breaks out between the Pharisees and Sadducees who both have different views about the resurrection of the dead. No one can agree on anything apparently in this story. Go figure.

The Pharisees take Paul's side for a bit (good work, Paul), but things start to get out of control and the Romans remove Paul from the room and take him back to prison. Darn. Just when he was making some headway

## **Paul Is Saved**

That night, Paul hears God tell him that things are gonna be fine. Paul's going on a trip to Rome soon to talk up Jesus. A free trip to Rome? Score!

Meanwhile, about forty of the Jews on the council agree that they're gonna kill Paul (and they won't eat or drink until they achieve their goal). They arrange to have him brought back to the council so they can unleash their secret plan to attack and murder him. It's getting really sinister up in here.

Somehow, Paul's nephew hears all about this and manages to find the Roman tribune in charge of Paul's case, Claudius Lysias, and warn him about the plot against Paul's life.

Claudius Lysias has his soldiers take Paul to Caesarea to appear in front of the governor there (named **Felix**). He also sends a nice long letter explaining the whole crazy situation. How polite.

The governor meets with Paul and tells him that he'll arrange a hearing when the Jews from Jerusalem arrive to accuse him of something. Let's not hold our breath.

## **Chapter 24**

### **Paul's Trial In Caesarea**

Five days later, the high priest Ananias, some of the council elders, and a lawyer named Tertullus come up to Caesarea. When the hearing begins, Tertullus accuses

Paul of being an outside agitator who has come in and said blasphemous and profane things in the temple. That's serious business.

Paul defends himself to the governor. This better be good.

He tells the governor that no one in the temple saw him arguing or teaching about Jesus (it's true- he was just there performing his fancy ritual). In other words, the charges against him are straight-up lies.

Paul admits that he is a follower of Jesus, but he's also a Jew who believes in God and the authority of Jewish law and the prophets and all that good stuff. Jesus is just the natural continuation of all this.

Paul explains that when he was in the temple just minding his own business and not upsetting anyone, some Jews from Asia came along and had him arrested.

Basically, this whole shebang is bogus.

## **Felix Wastes Paul's Time**

The governor, Felix, actually knows quite a bit about Jesus, so he tells Paul he'll decide what's going to happen when Claudius Lysias stops by. He also gives Paul some freedom in jail because, apparently, he's cool like that.

A few days later, Felix and his wife Drusilla (who happens to be Jewish) send for Paul and ask him to tell them a little

more about this Jesus fellow. Paul obliges. Jesus is his favorite subject after all.

Over the course of two years, Felix keeps Paul in jail, but keeps talking to him every once in a while about Jesus. Felix isn't very convinced. In fact, he thinks that one of these days Paul will offer him a bribe to get out of jail. But Paul never does. He's so honest.

When Felix retires and a new governor, **Porcius Festus**, takes over, Paul is still locked up.

## **Chapter 25**

### **Festus Takes The Reins**

As soon as Festus takes charge, he makes a little trip to Jerusalem. The Jewish authorities there chew his ear off about Paul.

The religious authorities want Paul transferred back to Jerusalem (where they can finish up their **murder/death/kill plot**). We're guessing they gave up on the whole not-eating-until-Paul-is-dead thing.

But Festus is all like, *No, come to Caesarea and we'll totally do a trial.* Dude, we just did that two years ago. Roman bureaucracy is the worst.

About a week and a half later, everyone is back in Caesarea and it's trial time.

The Jewish guys from Jerusalem say a bunch of completely untrue stuff about Paul. Typical.

Then it's Paul's turn. His defense: not guilty.

Festus says that since it sounds like they're all disputing over Jewish religious stuff, maybe Paul should just head down to Jerusalem and face trial there (maybe then the council members can kill Paul and Festus can cross one thing off his to-do list).

But Paul says he's appealing to the emperor's tribunal in Rome. Darn. He's headed up to the highest court in the land. He hasn't done anything wrong to the Jewish people, so why should they try him? To the emperor it is!

Several days later, **King Agrippa** and his sister, Bernice, come into town and stop by Festus's house.

Festus discusses the case with Agrippa, who decides he wants to meet this Paul guy. Maybe they can figure out something intelligent to tell the emperor about him.

Two heads are better than one.

## **Chapter 26**

### **Paul Before King Agrippa**

When King Agrippa tells Paul to go ahead and talk, he does. Oh, he does.

Paul starts by sucking up to Agrippa a bit (not a bad idea). The king knows about Jewish customs and he should know that Paul has lived a good Jewish life. He even

persecuted Christians for their crazy, wacky beliefs. Oh, Paul.

Everything changed one day when he was on his way to Damascus and— well, you know the rest of that story.

After his conversion, Paul explains that he roamed all over the place spreading the good word about Jesus.

That's why the Jewish authorities had him arrested even though he didn't even do anything wrong. He's only been talking about Jesus this whole time. The same Jesus who Jewish prophets and scripture predicted would come. So what's so terrible and anti-Jewish about that?

## **Don't You Want To Convert?**

Festus tells Paul that he sounds nuttier than a fruitcake.

But Paul says he's not mental, and he asks King Agrippa if he believes in the Jewish prophets.

*Geez, trying to convert me to Christianity already?* Agrippa asks. At least buy a guy a drink first, Paul.

Paul says that he hopes everyone will come to believe in Jesus and to be like him— um, except for the chains he's wearing right now.

Those people could do without.

Agrippa has heard enough. When he leaves with Festus, he tells him that he can see Paul hasn't done anything wrong. Too bad he had to go and appeal to the emperor.

Otherwise they could have let him go free today. Major bummer.

## Chapter 27

### On The Road To Rome

Paul sets sails for Rome. Bon voyage!

He is put on a ship with other prisoners headed for Italy, but the journey isn't quick or easy. When the ship docks in **Crete** for a bit, Paul warns them not to go onto the island. For some odd reason, the soldiers and sailors don't listen to the criminal in their midst.

### Sit Down, You're Rocking The Boat

So I'd like to know where, you got the notion  
Said I'd like to know where, you got the notion  
To rock the boat (don't rock the boat, baby)  
Rock the boat (don't tip the boat over)  
Rock the boat (don't rock the boat, baby)  
Rock the boat

Ever since our voyage of love began  
Your touch has thrilled me like the rush of the wind  
And your arms have held me safe from a rolling sea  
There's always been a quiet place to harbor you and me

Our love is like a ship on the ocean  
We've been sailing with a cargo full of love and devotion

So I'd like to know where, you got the notion  
Said I'd like to know where, you got the notion  
To rock the boat (don't rock the boat, baby)  
Rock the boat (don't tip the boat over)  
Rock the boat (don't rock the boat, baby)  
Rock the boat

Up to now, we sailed through every storm  
And I've always had your tender lips to keep me warm  
Oh, I need to have the strength that flows from you  
Don't let me drift away my dear, when love can see me through

Once they set sail the winds pick up and things are not looking good. It's a northeaster and it rocks the ship around for days. Food and supplies run short. Everyone thinks they're gonna die.

*Um, I told you so*, Paul says. He explains that he saw a vision all about this. The good news is they're all gonna make it in one piece to Rome. The bad news is the ship is not.

After fourteen days of storm and terror, the sailors think they might be near land, so some of them lower boats to escape the ship.

Paul lets everyone know that if people leave the ship it's not going to go well. He reminds everyone about his vision. The whole everyone survives bit is kind of contingent on nobody jumping ship. The men come back and all is well.

As the sun is coming up, Paul offers everyone food. Apparently no one has eaten for fourteen days because they've been busy freaking out at sea. He breaks bread and gives thanks to God and then passes it out to everyone.

The whole ship (all 276 people on board) start to feel better.

## **Land, Ho!**

(Who you calling a "Ho"?)

Finally, the ship comes near land, hits a huge reef, and start to break apart. It's like Titanic, but without the iceberg and way fewer lifeboats.

The soldiers on the ship want to kill all the prisoners so they can't escape and run off once they reach land. But the soldier who's in charge of Paul stops them. He's taken a bit of a liking to Paul during this whole crazy journey.

The head soldier tells everyone to jump overboard and swim for land. Everyone makes it safely off the ship and Paul's vision totally comes true.

## **Chapter 28**

### **Paul In Malta**

Turns out they shipwrecked on **Malta**. Luckily, all the native people are really nice to them and welcome everyone. Awww.

The first night, Paul and company are sitting around a fire with some of the folks from Malta when a viper jumps out and bites Paul's hand. Freaky. Looks like Paul is dead now for sure. That is a poisonous viper.

But you know Paul. He just shakes the viper off into the fire. No biggie. The Maltese are amazed that he hasn't dropped dead yet. They think that Paul might be a god or something. We've heard that before.

A while later, Paul heals a man who's sick with dysentery. After the Maltese people see this, they flock to Paul to get all kinds of cures.

Three months later, when they get a new ship to sail on, the Maltese give Paul and his friends some food and supplies for the journey.

Maltese people are good people.

After making a few more stops (and converting some more folks), Paul and company finally arrive in Rome.

## **When In Rome**

The Roman Christians come out to greet Paul and, even though he's still a prisoner, Paul is allowed to live by himself there (well, along with the soldier that's been guarding him).

Three days after arriving in Rome, Paul decides to meet with the Jewish leaders in town and tell his story. He says he's been wrongly accused by their fellow Jews and sent to Rome to stand trial.

The Jews in Rome have never heard anything bad about him, so they're open to listening to whatever he has to say. That's when Paul is at his most awesome.

He sets up a time to meet at his home (What? No synagogue?) with a bunch of the Jews in town, and he tells them what he knows about Jesus.

Some folks believe him and some think he's off his rocker (as usual).

Before they leave, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. He tells them that God knew they wouldn't believe all the good things he had to tell them.

Now the message has to go to the Gentiles. They're the ones who are gonna listen. Snap.

Paul lives in Rome for two more years and continues to preach and teach about Jesus. No one can stop him. Andõ we're done. Maybe!

Whew!

Just an asideõ we are getting close to the end. And because I am getting cheap, the font is going to diminish in sizeõ sorry, it is more cost effective □

## **What the Book of “Acts” has to say about “Community” More specifically... Christian Community!**

When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers. (Acts 1:13-14, NRSV)

**The first church community. How cozy.**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2:1-4, NRSV)

**Pentecost is something that happens to all the apostles as a group. Not only are the tongues of fire really cool, but the event gives them the ability to speak to people they wouldn't otherwise be able to. Time to grow the community a little bit. Pyrotechnics is always cool! Fire-GOOD!**

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47, NRSV)

**This should just gives us the warm fuzzies. Acts opens with these images of the early Christians living peacefully and happily together. No fights or arguments, just everyone sharing and getting along. The fights would come later. I guess we saved the %best+for the %last!+**

But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property; with his wife's knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. "Ananias," Peter asked, "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God!" Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard of it. (Acts 5:1-5, NRSV)

Okay, so this is what happens when you cross the community. Ananias drops dead because he's selfishly holding money back for himself. He also makes it worse by lying about it. He cheated the group, now he has to pay the price.

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." (Acts 6:1-4, NRSV)

It's not all sunshine and rainbows. A little problem comes up in the community when people start complaining that certain groups are getting more than others. Sure, we're all one big happy family- but that bread should be mine! Mine! The apostles go ahead and appoint new leaders to manage the food stores. Problem solved? For now

When [Paul] had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, brought him to the apostles, and described for them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus. (Acts 9:26-27, NRSV)

Paul wants to be a member of the group, but the rest of the Christians are (probably rightfully) skeptical. Wasn't this guy just persecuting them last week? Someone from inside the community has to vouch for him. Don't mess this up, Paul.

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" When they heard [Peter say] this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, "Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:15-18, NRSV)

**The community is expanding to those outside the Jewish faith. The Jewish-Christians are a little shocked that Peter has let Gentiles in (yuck!). He explains that it was God's doing, not his. You can't fight the Almighty if he wants more folks hanging around.**

Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life, we are now turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread throughout the region. (Acts 13:46-49, NRSV)

**Paul is on board with the Gentile converts, too. More ears means a bigger community. Get ready to build some basilicas, guys.**

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders [ō ] When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary

for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses." (Acts 15:1-5, NRSV)

More in-fighting. This one is actually a pretty big deal. For the first time ever, the church meets to decide some of the rules for membership in the community. Before this, you believed and got baptized and that was it. Now the leadership realizes the growing community needs some clearer guidelines. Boundaries, people, boundaries!

When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) Then a great clamor arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" (Acts 23:6-9, NRSV)

Paul cleverly exploits the divisions within the Jewish community in Jerusalem. Pharisees and Sadducees may be united in hating him, but he's not above reminding them of their differences. This almost works. Almost.

## What the book of "ACTS" has to say about Injustice

"The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses." (Acts 3:13-15, NRSV)

**Jesus is innocent! Even though everyone knows Jesus didn't do anything (and Pilate knew it, too), his enemies somehow managed to get him crucified. Sucks to be them when the Judgment Day comes.**

Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard [Stephen] speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." (Acts 6:11-14, NRSV)

**Since Stephen never does anything wrong, the naysayers are forced to lie about what he's said. It works and Stephen gets a capital punishment. Justice not served.**

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. (Acts 12:1-4, NRSV)

**Herod arrests and kills James, and when he sees that his approval ratings are going up, he does the same thing to Peter. That's not quite on the up-and-up, but Herod doesn't seem to care.**

On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat on the platform, and delivered a public address to them. The people kept shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!" And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to advance and gain adherents. (Acts 12:21-24, NRSV)

Finally we see a bit of justice to counter all the injustice going on. Herod stupidly hams it up while the people praise him as a god and he's struck dead. That's what you get when you mess with the creator of the universe, man.

But when [the slave girl's] owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. (Acts 16:19-22, NRSV)

Paul casts an evil, fortune-telling spirit out of a slave girl and her owners get pretty ticked. You would too, if she was your bread and butter! They get everyone riled up and Paul and friends end up in a mess. It's clear that the owners don't care about what Paul's been saying. They just want payback.

The jailer reported the message to Paul, saying, "The magistrates sent word to let you go; therefore come out now and go in peace." But Paul replied, "They have beaten us in public, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they going to discharge us in secret? Certainly not! Let them come and take us out themselves." The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; so they came and apologized to them. (Acts 16:36-39, NRSV)

Paul points out a pretty big injustice here. By law, he and his friends should have never been roughed up, but they were. Now he's demanding an apology and he gets it. Paul is pretty darn convincing.

When the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, who had seen [Paul] in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd. They seized him, shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple. Then all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. (Acts 21:27-30, NRSV)

**This is either just a misunderstanding (the Jews from Asia think that Paul brought a Gentile into the temple) or an outright lie. It doesn't really matter because Paul's enemies have gotten what they wanted. Paul in the hands of a bloodthirsty mob. Get em. Hang em. Stone em!**

The tribune directed that [Paul] was to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by flogging, to find out the reason for this outcry against him. But when they had tied him up with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who is uncondemned?" When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, "What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen." The tribune came and asked Paul, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." The tribune answered, "It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship." Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him. (Acts 22:24-29, NRSV)

**Again, Paul uses his Roman citizenship card to right a wrong. The tribune knows that this is a pretty big no-no and that Paul's natural-born citizenship outranks his purchased papers. Paul also seems to have learned his lesson from last time- tell them you're a Roman citizen *before* they start to flog you. BEFORE!!!!**

While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, "Brothers, up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God." Then the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth. At this Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?" Those standing nearby said, "Do you dare to insult God's high priest?" And Paul said, "I did not realize, brothers, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a leader of your people.'" (Acts 23:1-5, NRSV)

**It's against Jewish law for Paul to be beaten while being questioned, but the high priest does it anyway. When Paul calls him out on this, he also shows that he doesn't think he's above the law. He did wrong, too, and apologizes, thereby showing himself to be more just than anyone in the room.**

In the morning the Jews joined in a conspiracy and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who joined in this conspiracy. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the council must notify the tribune to bring him down to you, on the pretext that you want to make a more thorough examination of his case. And we are ready to do away with him before he arrives." (Acts 23:12-15, NRSV)

**Another evil plot! This time the forty men all agree to lie to the Roman tribune in order to get Paul in their clutches. It doesn't work, but it sure is sinister.**

Three days later [Paul] called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. When they had examined me, the Romans wanted to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor· even though I had no charge to bring against my nation. For this reason therefore I have asked to see you

and speak with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain." (Acts 28:17-20, NRSV)

Paul is pretty calm about the way the justice system has been working for him. He professes his innocence again and explains that his imprisonment is nothing more than a wicked plan to bump him off (he's pretty much right).

## What the book of “Acts” has to say about Suffering

"The God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One [ō ] and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses [ō ] In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer." (Acts 3:13-15, 18, NRSV)

Yikes. This is a pretty harsh condemnation. God knew that Jesus would have to suffer because God knows that people can be jerks sometimes. Murderous jerks that is.

"Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When [the apostles] had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:29-31, NRSV)

Even in the face of threats and mortal danger, the apostles still pray for the strength to keep going. Good thing, too, because they're gonna need it.

They had [the apostles] flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. (Acts 5:40-42, NRSV)

Woo-hoo! A flogging! High fives all around! The apostles get brutally beaten because of the things they've been saying about Jesus. Do they stop? Nope, they just give thanks and keep on trucking.

They dragged him out of the city and began to stone him [ō ] While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died. (Acts 7:58-60, NRSV)

Stephen is the first Christian (aside from Jesus) to pay the ultimate price. He makes it super classy by going out forgiving instead of cursing. Suffering doesn't have to make you mean.

That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria[ō ] Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging

off both men and women, he committed them to prison. (Acts 8:1, 3, NRSV)

After Stephen is killed, things get a bit tense for a while. Those who can't stand the heat (which is almost everyone) leave town and lay low for a bit. But that doesn't stop Saul, who is determined to make these Christians suffer.

The Lord said to [Ananias], "Go, for [Paul] is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (Acts 9:15-16, NRSV)

It's time for some payback. God chooses Paul, who made the church suffer, and promises to inflict a little suffering on him in return. Oh **irony**, we love you.

The Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket. (Acts 9:23-25, NRSV)

Pretty quickly Paul starts making people mad with this whole Jesus thing. He narrowly escapes from this murderous plot using a really big basket. Hey, why suffer if you've got escape pods on hand?

They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. (Acts 14:19-20, NRSV)

Paul was *this close* to being the second Christian martyr. He decided to hold out for a better position though.

They strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22, NRSV)

Paul and Barnabas head to Antioch and reassure everyone that suffering is just part of the game. You want the keys to the kingdom? Then you've just got to tough it out.

The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:22-24, NRSV)  
Trouble and suffering just follow Paul wherever he goes. This little episode ends safely, but it can't be fun to be stripped naked and beaten in the street.

[Paul] said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that

came to me through the plots of the Jews. I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus. And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace." (Acts 20:18-24, NRSV)

Paul is so hardcore. Here he explains how all that suffering was just part of the package. He's done it before and he's willing to do it again. Some might call it manning up, but it just means Paul never backs down from doing what God wants.

[Agabus] came to us and took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be

bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Since he would not be persuaded, we remained silent except to say, "The Lord's will be done." (Acts 21:11-14, NRSV)

Paul has accepted his fate. Though Acts doesn't record it, he knows that he's gonna end up dying for his faith in Christ. Paul doesn't seem to think it's too high of a price to pay.

## **And Finally, What the Book of “Acts” has to say about TRADITION!**

In those days Peter stood up among the believers [ō ] and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus[ō ] "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; and 'Let another take his position of overseer.'" (Acts 1:15-16, 20, NRSV)

The disciples have to look no further than Jewish scripture (which is a pretty major player when it comes to Jewish tradition) to find all the evidence they need that Jesus is the Messiah. Case in point: David predicted that Judas would betray Jesus and die. Nice prophesying, David.

"Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. And it will be

that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people.' And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days. You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, 'And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways." (Acts 3:22-26, NRSV)

Even thousands of years ago, Moses and Abraham knew Jesus would turn out to be the Messiah. Oh, they're good.

"The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:30-31, NRSV)

Nothing says tradition quite like invoking ancestors. God really wanted Jesus to be the Messiah, but humans didn't agree. Sad, we know. God's still working on it though and he's really excited to bring lots of good things to the Jewish people, just like he always promised he would.

"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. Which

of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it." (Acts 7:51-53, NRSV)

Stephen kind of has a point. If you take a look back at the Hebrew Bible, God's chosen people have been persecuted for a really long time. These current naysayers are just part of that vicious tradition. "Uncircumcised in heart and ears" was a pretty big insult (meaning their hearts weren't properly aligned with God). The crowd stones Stephen for his trouble. Yikes.

The passage of the scripture that [the eunuch] was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:32-35, NRSV)

The eunuch is reading from Isaiah 53:7-8, but we're guessing there probably isn't a Bible verse Philip can't make about Jesus.

Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. (Acts 15:1-2, NRSV)

More in-fighting. This one is actually a pretty big deal. For the first time ever, the church meets to decide some of the rules for membership in the community. Before this, you believed and got baptized and that was it. Now the leadership realizes the growing community needs some clearer guidelines.

There was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead. (Acts 17:1-3, NRSV)

The disciples first try to bring their message to their fellow Jews. Paul's favorite thing when he hits a new city is to visit the synagogue and start arguing about all the things Jewish scripture says about Jesus. It's his tradition to argue with tradition (ha ha). Not everyone is thrilled.

The Jews from Asia, who had seen [Paul] in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd. They seized

him, shouting, "Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place; more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." (Acts 21:27-28, NRSV)

Paul, more than anyone else in the story, really butts heads with Jewish tradition. Because he doesn't see the need to keep following all those pesky Torah laws, he makes his fellow Jews (and even some Jewish-Christians) really, really mad.

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today." (Acts 22:3, NRSV)

Okay, so Paul might not think Gentiles need to be circumcised, but he's no dummy. He's affirming his proud Jewishness here. Paul isn't ignorant of tradition. He just thinks Jesus has improved on it a little.

They said to [Paul], "You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. So do what we tell you. We have

four men who are under a vow. Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law." (Acts 21:20-24, NRSV)

Paul can't even get a break from his fellow Christians. The followers of Jesus who are still devoted to Jewish customs and tradition are pretty ticked at Paul for the things they think he's been saying (and probably the things he *has* been saying). He's gonna have to make a show of proving his Jewish roots in order to appease them.

Paul made one further statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, 'Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn· and I would heal them.' Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." (Acts 28:25-28, NRSV)

Paul is pretty disappointed that his fellow Jews haven't all dropped everything to follow Jesus.

Here, he finds support in Isaiah for moving on to the Gentiles.

Fini