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The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter One

The first book I wrote, Theophilus, was about everything that Jesus started to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he'd chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive in many convincing ways. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, talking about Godde's reign. ⁴When they were together, he instructed them: "Don't leave Jerusalem, but wait for the Mother's promise which you've heard from me. ⁵John baptized in water, but you'll be baptized in the Holy Spirit in a few days."

⁶So when they had gathered together, they asked him, "Lord, is it time for you to restore Godde's reign to Israel?"

⁷"It's not for you to know the times or dates that the Mother has set by her own authority," he told them. ⁸"But you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹After he said this, he was taken up as they watched, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰They were staring into heaven as he went, when two people dressed in white suddenly stood by them. ¹¹"You Galileans," they said, "why are you standing there looking into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will return in the same way that you saw him go into heaven."

¹²Then they returned to nearby Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they entered, they went up to the upper room where they were all staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴With one mind they all devoted themselves to prayer, along with the women and Jesus' mother Mary, as well as his brothers.

¹⁵At that time, Peter stood up among the sisters and brothers (there were about 120) and said, ¹⁶"Sisters and brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit foretold by David's mouth concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷He was one of us and part of this ministry."

¹⁸(Now Judas had bought a field with the reward for his injustice. There he fell headlong, his body burst open, and all his intestines gushed out. ¹⁹Everyone who lived in Jerusalem heard about it, so they called that field 'Hakeldama,' which means in their language 'Field of blood.')

²⁰"It's written in the book of Psalms:

'Let his home become desolate.

Let no one live there.'

And, 'Someone else should take his place of leadership.'

²¹"So it's necessary for someone who's accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – ²²beginning from John's baptism to the day that he was taken up from us – to become a witness with us of his resurrection."

²³They nominated two: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴They prayed, "You, Lady, know everyone's hearts. Show us which one of these two you've chosen ²⁵to take the place in this apostolic ministry which Judas turned down to go to his own place." ²⁶They cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

Chapter Two

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the rushing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Something like tongues of fire appeared and were divided among them, resting on each of them. ⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and started to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout women and men from every nation under heaven. ⁶The crowd gathered in confusion at the sound because everyone heard them speaking in their own language. ⁷They were completely amazed. "Look," they said to each other, "aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Why are each of us hearing them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya around Cyrene, Roman visitors, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabians – we hear them talking in our own languages about Godde's mighty deeds!"

¹²Everyone was amazed and perplexed.

"What does this mean?" they asked each other.

¹³Others made fun of them. "They're drunk!"

¹⁴But Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and addressed them. "People of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, pay attention and listen up! ¹⁵These people aren't drunk, as you think. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ And it will be in the last days, says Godde,
that I'll pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.

Your daughters and your sons will prophesy.

Your young women and men will see visions.

Your old women and men will have dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my male and female bondservants,
in those days I'll pour out my Spirit,
and they'll prophesy.

¹⁹I'll show wonders in the heaven above,
and signs on the earth below;
blood, fire, and billows of smoke.

²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood

before the great and glorious day of the Lady comes.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lady will be given life.'

²²"People of Israel, listen up! Jesus of Nazareth was a man commended to you by Godde with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs which Godde did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³He was handed over according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of Godde. You killed him by letting criminals nail him to the cross. ²⁴But Godde raised him up, having freed him from the agony of death, because it wasn't possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵David says about him:

'I saw the Lady always before me,
because she's at my right hand so that I won't be shaken.

²⁶So my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced,
and my body also will live in hope,

²⁷because you won't leave my soul in Hades
or let your holy one see decay.

²⁸You've made known to me the ways of life.

You'll fill me with gladness in your presence.'

²⁹"Sisters and brothers, I can confidently tell you that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰So, because he was a prophet, he knew that:

'Godde promised to him with an oath
that she'd put one of his descendants on his throne.'

³¹Foreseeing this, he spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that:

'his soul wasn't left in Hades,
nor did his flesh see decay.'

³²Godde raised this Jesus, and we all are witnesses. ³³Exalted to Godde's right hand and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Mother, he's poured out what you're now seeing and hearing. ³⁴For David didn't go up to heaven, but he says:

'The Lady said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand
³⁵until I put your enemies as a footstool under your feet.'"

³⁶So the entire house of Israel should know with certainty that Godde has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart. They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Sisters and brothers, what should we do?"

³⁸"Change," Peter told them, "and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your offenses, and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹The promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lady our Godde will call." ⁴⁰With many other words he testified and urged them, "Rescue yourselves from this crooked generation!"

⁴¹Those who welcomed his message were baptized. About 3,000 souls were added that day. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and partnership, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were performed through the apostles. ⁴⁴All who trusted were together and shared all things in common. ⁴⁵They sold their properties and possessions, distributing them among everyone, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶Every day they devoted themselves with one mind in the temple. They broke bread at home and shared their food with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising Godde and enjoying favor with all the people. Every day the Lady added to their numbers those who were being given life.

Chapter Three

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer – three in the afternoon. ²A certain man who was lame from birth was being carried in. Every day they laid him at the temple gate called Beautiful in order to ask for charity from those entering the temple. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for charity.

⁴Peter looked right at him, as did John. "Look at us," he said.

⁵He listened up, expecting to receive something from them.

⁶But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold, but I give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!"

⁷He grasped him by the right hand and helped him up. Immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. ⁸Leaping up, he stood and started to walk around. He entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising Godde. ⁹All the people saw him walking and praising Godde. ¹⁰They recognized him as the one who used to sit begging for charity at the temple's Beautiful Gate. They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

¹¹While he held on to Peter and John, all the people came running to them in Solomon's porch, full of amazement.

¹²When Peter saw this, he responded to the people. "People of Israel, why are you amazed? Why are you staring at us as if we'd made him walk by our own power or piety? ¹³The Godde of Sarah and Abraham, Rebekah and Isaac, and Leah, Rachel and Jacob – the Godde of our ancestors – has glorified her Servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you denied the holy and just one and asked for a murderer to be released to you. ¹⁵You killed the one who leads to life, whom Godde raised from the dead. We're witnesses to this. ¹⁶By trust in his name, this man whom you see and know was strengthened. Jesus' name and the trust given through him has completely healed him before all of you.

¹⁷"Now, sisters and brothers, I know that you did this in ignorance, as did also your leaders. ¹⁸But Godde has fulfilled what she foretold through all the prophets, that Christ should suffer.

¹⁹"So change and turn around so that your guilt may be blotted out, that times of rest may come from the presence of the Lady ²⁰and that she may send Christ Jesus, who was appointed for you. ²¹Heaven must welcome him until the time of universal restoration, which Godde announced long ago through her holy prophets. ²²Moses indeed said:

'The Lady Godde will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your sisters and brothers. You'll listen to everything he tells you. ²³Anyone who doesn't listen to that prophet will be completely cut off from the people.'

²⁴And all the prophets from Samuel and his successors, as many as have spoken, have predicted these days. ²⁵You're the daughters and sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which Godde made with our ancestors. She told Sarah and Abraham:

'Through your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed.'

²⁶When Godde raised up her servant, she sent him first to you to bless you by turning each one of you away from your evil ways."

Chapter Four

While they were talking to the people, they were approached by the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees. ²They were greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³They grabbed them and took them into custody until the next day, because it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who heard the message trusted, and they numbered about five thousand.

⁵The next day, the rulers, presbyters, and scholars met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all the high priest's relatives. ⁷When they had made them stand in the middle, they asked, "By what power, or in what name, did you do this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, told them, "Rulers of the people and presbyters, ⁹if we're questioned today for showing kindness to someone who was sick, and if we're asked how this one's been healed; ¹⁰then all of you, and all the people of Israel, should know that by the name of Jesus Christ of

Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom Godde raised from the dead – by him this man stands here before you healthy. ¹¹He's:

'the stone which you builders rejected,
which was made the cornerstone.'

¹²There's life in no other, nor is there any other name given under heaven by which we need to be given life!"

¹³Now when they saw the courage of Peter and John, and realized that they were illiterate and uneducated people, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴Since they could see the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say.

¹⁵But when they ordered them out of the room, they conferred among themselves. ¹⁶"What are we going to do with these people?" they asked. "A notable sign has been done through them. It's clear to all who live in Jerusalem, and we can't deny it. ¹⁷But so that this doesn't spread any further among the people, let's warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name." ¹⁸They called them back and instructed them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹But Peter and John answered, "Whether it's right in Godde's eyes to listen to you rather than to Godde, you be the judge, ²⁰because we can't stop talking about what we saw and heard."

²¹When they had further threatened them, they let them go. They couldn't find any way to punish them because of the people, for everyone glorified Godde for what happened. ²²The man who had received this sign of healing was more than forty years old!

²³After they were released, they came to their own people and reported to them what the chief priests and the presbyters had told them. ²⁴When they heard it, they raised their voices to Godde with one mind. "Lady," they said, "you're the one who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. ²⁵You spoke by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David our servant:

'Why do the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶The queens and kings of the earth took a stand
and the rulers gathered together
against the Lady and against her Christ.'

²⁷Because, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, gathered together in this city against your holy servant, Jesus, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your will decided beforehand would happen. ²⁹Now, Lady, look at their threats, and enable your bondservants to speak your word courageously. ³⁰Reach out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant, Jesus."

³¹After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and courageously spoke Godde's message.

³²Now the group of those who trusted were one in heart and soul. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything in common. ³³With great power, the apostles testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴No one among them was needy, because those who owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the sales ³⁵and laid them at the apostles' feet. They distributed to everyone, as anyone had need. ³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "Son of Encouragement"), ³⁷owned a field. He sold it, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Chapter Five

Now a certain man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, sold property. ²With her knowledge, he kept part of the price. They brought a certain part of the proceeds and laid it at the apostles' feet.

³But Peter said, "Ananias, why has the Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the sale? ⁴Before it was sold, wasn't it yours? After it was sold, weren't the proceeds at your disposal? Why did you contrive this scheme in your heart? You haven't lied to women and men, but to Godde."

⁵When he heard this, Ananias fell down and died. Great fear came on all who heard about it. ⁶The young people got up, wrapped him, and carried him out to bury him.

⁷About three hours later, his wife entered. She didn't know what had happened.

⁸"Tell me," Peter asked, "did you sell your land for this much?"

"Yes," she answered, "for that much."

⁹"Why have you agreed together to test the Lady's Spirit?" Peter asked. "Look, the feet of those who've buried your husband are at the door, and they'll carry you out."

¹⁰Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. The young people entered and found her dead. They carried her out and buried her with her husband. ¹¹Great fear came upon the whole community and upon all who heard about it.

¹²By the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were performed among the people. They were all of one mind in Solomon's porch. ¹³None of the rest dared to join them, but the people honored them. ¹⁴More of those who trusted were added to the Lady, crowds of both women and men. ¹⁵They even carried out those who were sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that Peter's shadow might fall upon them as he walked by. ¹⁶Crowds gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing those who were sick and those who were tormented by corrupting spirits, and they were all healed.

¹⁷But the high priest took action. He and all who were with him (i.e., the sect of the Sadducees) were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸They grabbed the apostles and took them into custody. ¹⁹But an angel of the Lady opened the prison doors that night and brought them out. ²⁰"Go and stand in the temple," it said, "and tell the people all about this life." ²¹When they heard this, they entered the temple about daybreak and taught.

Meanwhile, the high priest arrived with his associates. They called the court, together with the whole body of the presbyters of Israel, and sent to the prison for them to be brought.

²²But the officers who came didn't find them in prison. They returned and reported, ²³"We found the prison closed and secured, with the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened it, we found no one inside!"

²⁴Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard this, they were puzzled and wondered what would happen next. ²⁵Then someone came and told them, "Look, the men you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" ²⁶Then the captain went with the officers. They didn't bring them in with force, because they were afraid that the people might stone them.

²⁷When they had brought them, they made them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them. ²⁸"Didn't we give you strict orders not to teach in this name?" he asked. "Look, you've filled Jerusalem with your teaching. You're determined to make us accountable for this man's blood!"

²⁹But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey Godde rather than men and women. ³⁰The Godde of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you hung on a tree and killed. ³¹Godde exalted him to her right hand as a leader and Life-Giver to bring change to Israel and forgiveness of offenses. ³²We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom Godde has given to those who obey her."

³³When they heard this, they were so furious they wanted to kill them. ³⁴But a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Torah respected by all the people, stood up in the council and ordered the apostles out for a little while. ³⁵"People of Israel," he told them, "consider carefully what you're about to

do to these people. ³⁶Not long ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. But he was killed, all his followers were scattered, and it all came to nothing. ³⁷After that, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and attracted followers. He was killed too, and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸So I suggest staying away from these people and leaving them alone. If their plan or undertaking is from mortals, it'll fail. ³⁹But if it's from Godde, you won't be able to stop it, and you'd be fighting against Godde!"

They were convinced. ⁴⁰They called the apostles, beat them, warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹So they left the council, rejoicing that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonor for Jesus' name.

⁴²Every day, in the temple and at home, they didn't stop teaching and announcing the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Chapter Six

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was increasing, the Hellenists complained about the Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily ministry. ²The twelve summoned the crowd of the disciples. "It's not ideal for us to neglect Godde's message to serve tables," they said. ³"So, sisters and brothers, choose from among you seven who have a good reputation, full of the Spirit and Wisdom, to whom we may assign this duty. ⁴We'll be devoted to prayer and the ministry of the message."

⁵The whole crowd was happy with this proposal. They chose Stephen, a man full of trust and the Holy Spirit, as well as Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. ⁶They brought them before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷Godde's message spread and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly. A large crowd of the priests were obedient to the faith.

⁸Stephen, full of grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹But opposition arose from some who belonged to the synagogue of "The Libertines" – Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and people from Cilicia and Asia. They argued with Stephen, ¹⁰but they weren't able to refute the Wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. ¹¹So they secretly got men to say, "We've heard him slander Moses and Godde." ¹²They stirred up the people, the presbyters, and the scholars. They confronted him, seized him, and dragged him to the council. ¹³They produced false witnesses who said, "This person never stops slandering this holy place and the Torah. ¹⁴We've heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses handed down to us."

¹⁵All who sat in the council looked right at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Chapter Seven

The high priest asked, "Is all this true?"

²"Sisters, brothers, mothers, and fathers," he said, "Listen up! The Godde of glory appeared to our ancestors Sarah and Abraham when they were in Mesopotamia, before they lived in Haran. ³She told them:

'Leave your land
and your relatives,
and go to the land which I'll show you.'

⁴So they left the land of Chaldea and lived in Haran. After Abraham's father died, Godde sent them to this land, where you're now living. ⁵She didn't give them an inheritance here, not even a foot. But she promised to:

'give it to them for a possession,
and to their offspring after them,'

even though they had no children. ⁶Godde said that their:

'offspring will live as foreigners in another land,
and will be mistreated in bondage for four hundred years.
⁷I'll judge the people to whom they'll be in bondage,' said Godde,
'and after that they'll come out and serve me in this place.'

⁸She gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. So Sarah and Abraham became the parents of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day. Rebekah and Isaac became the parents of Jacob, and Leah, Rachel and Jacob became the parents of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹"The patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt. But Godde was with him. ¹⁰She delivered him from all his afflictions and gave him grace and Wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Pharaoh appointed him governor over Egypt and his whole house. ¹¹Now a famine spread through all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction followed. Our ancestors couldn't find food. ¹²But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our ancestors on their first visit. ¹³On the second visit, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, and Joseph's family was revealed to Pharaoh. ¹⁴Joseph sent for his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five in all. ¹⁵Jacob went down to Egypt, where he died with our ancestors. ¹⁶They were brought back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of silver from the children of Hamor in Shechem.

¹⁷"As the time drew near for Godde to fulfill the promise she had made to Sarah and Abraham, the number of people in Egypt increased, ¹⁸until 'there arose another king who didn't know Joseph.' ¹⁹This one took advantage of our ancestors and mistreated them. He forced them to abandon their babies so that they wouldn't survive. ²⁰At that time Moses was born. He was beautiful to Godde. He was nourished three months in his parents' house. ²¹When he was abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter took him in and raised him as her own son. ²²So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was powerful in words and deeds.

²³"But when he was forty years old, he decided to visit his sisters and brothers, the children of Israel. ²⁴When he saw one of them suffer injustice, he retaliated and brought justice to the one who was oppressed by striking the Egyptian. ²⁵He thought that his sisters and brothers would realize that Godde was giving them life through him, but they didn't understand. ²⁶The next day he appeared to them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them. 'Listen,' he said, 'you're brothers. Why are you hurting each other?' ²⁷But the aggressor pushed him away. He asked:

'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? ²⁸Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'

²⁹When he heard this, Moses fled and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he and Zipporah had two sons.

³⁰"After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the flame of a burning bush in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the vision. As he approached it to get a better look, he heard the Lady's voice:

³²I'm the Godde of your ancestors,
the Godde of Sarah and Abraham,
of Rebekah and Isaac,
and of Leah, Rachel, and Jacob.'

Moses trembled and didn't dare to look. ³³The Lady said to him:

'Take off your sandals, because the place where you're standing is holy ground. ³⁴I've seen the oppression of my people in Egypt and have heard their groaning. I've come down to deliver them. Now come! I'll send you to Egypt.'

³⁵This Moses, whom they had rejected, asking, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' Godde sent as both a ruler and liberator through the angel that appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶He led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷This is the Moses who told the children of Israel, 'Godde will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your sisters and brothers.' ³⁸He was in the community in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors, who received living words to give us. ³⁹But our ancestors didn't want to be obedient. Instead, they rejected Moses and yearned for Egypt. ⁴⁰They told Aaron, 'Make us goddesses and gods who will lead us. As for this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's happened to him.' ⁴¹At that time they made a calf idol, offered a sacrifice to it, and rejoiced in the works of their hands. ⁴²But Godde turned away and handed them over to serve the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

'Did you offer to me sacrifices and offerings
for forty years in the wilderness, house of Israel?

⁴³You took up the tabernacle of Moloch
and the star of your god Rephan,
the images you made to worship.
I'll deport you beyond Babylon.'

⁴⁴'Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, just as the one who spoke to Moses instructed him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. ⁴⁵Later on our ancestors brought it along with Joshua when they took the land from the peoples whom Godde drove out before them. It was there until the time of David, ⁴⁶who found favor in Godde's sight and asked to provide a dwelling place for Jacob's house. ⁴⁷But Solomon built a house for her. ⁴⁸Yet the Most High doesn't live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:

⁴⁹Heaven is my throne,
and the earth a footstool for my feet.
What kind of house will you build me?' asks the Lady,
'or what is the place for me to rest?

⁵⁰Didn't my hand make all these things?'

⁵¹'You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are uncircumcised. You're always resisting the Holy Spirit! You're doing what your ancestors did. ⁵²Was there ever a prophet your ancestors didn't harass? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One. Now you've betrayed and murdered him! ⁵³You received the Torah instituted by angels, but didn't keep it.'

⁵⁴Now when they heard this, they were so furious they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But filled with the Holy Spirit, he looked right up into heaven and saw Godde's glory and Jesus standing at her right

hand. ⁵⁶“Look!” he said. “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Woman standing at Godde’s right hand!”

⁵⁷But they covered their ears, yelled at the top of their lungs, and rushed at him at once. ⁵⁸They threw him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses left their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, accept my spirit!” ⁶⁰Then he fell to his knees and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, don’t hold this against them!” He died when he said this.

Chapter Eight

Saul approved of his murder. At that time the community in Jerusalem was greatly harassed. Everyone except the apostles was scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. ²Devout people buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³But Saul was destroying the community, entering every house and dragging off both women and men to prison.

⁴Now those who were scattered abroad went around announcing the good news of the message. ⁵Philip went down to a town in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. ⁶When the crowds heard and saw the signs Philip did, they carefully listened to what he said. ⁷Corrupting spirits came out of many, crying out with a loud voice. Many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸There was great joy in that town.

⁹Now there was a certain man in the town named Simon who used to amaze the people of Samaria with his magic, making himself out to be someone great. ¹⁰From the least to the greatest, they all listened to him. “This man is Godde’s great power,” they said. ¹¹They paid attention to him because he had amazed them with his magic for a long time. ¹²But when they trusted Philip announcing the good news about Godde’s reign and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, women and men alike. ¹³Simon himself trusted too and was baptized. He followed Philip everywhere. He was amazed at the signs and great miracles he saw.

¹⁴Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received Godde’s message, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵When they had come down, they prayed for them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because she hadn’t yet fallen on any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money. ¹⁹“Give me this power too,” he said, “so that whomever I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰But Peter told him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could buy Godde’s gift with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this, because your heart isn’t right before Godde. ²²So change from your wickedness and pray to the Lady that if it’s possible, your heart’s intention may be forgiven. ²³For I see that you’re in the gall of bitterness and in bondage to injustice.”

²⁴“Pray to the Lady for me,” Simon answered, “so that none of what you’ve said will happen to me.”

²⁵So when they had testified and spoken the Lady’s message, they returned to Jerusalem and announced the good news in many Samaritan villages.

²⁶But an angel of the Lady spoke to Philip. “Arise,” the angel said. “Go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.)

²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch who was an important official of Ethiopia’s Queen Candace. He was in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸He was returning home, sitting in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹“Go over there,” the Spirit told Philip, “and join this chariot.”

³⁰Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you’re reading?” he asked.

³¹“How can I,” he asked, “unless someone explains it to me?” He invited Philip to get in and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture which he was reading was this:

'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.
As a lamb is silent before its shearer,
so he doesn't open his mouth.
³³In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away.
Who will speak of his descendants?
Because his life is taken from the earth.'

³⁴"Who is the prophet talking about?" the eunuch asked Philip. "About himself, or about someone else?"

³⁵Philip spoke up, and starting from this Scripture, announced the good news of Jesus to him. ³⁶As they were going down the road, they came to some water. "Look," the eunuch said, "there's water here. What's keeping me from being baptized?"

³⁸He ordered the chariot to stop and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water. Philip baptized him.

³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch didn't see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰Philip found himself in Azotus. He announced the good news to all the towns as he passed through on his way to Caesarea.

Chapter Nine

But Saul continued to threaten, and even murder, the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any women or men who followed the Way, he might arrest them and bring them to Jerusalem.

³Now as he got closer to Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice ask him, "Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?"

⁵"Who are you, Lord?" he asked.

"I'm Jesus, whom you're harassing," he answered. ⁶"Now get up and enter the city, and you'll be told what you need to do."

⁷The men who traveled with him stood speechless. They heard the voice but didn't see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he couldn't see anything. They led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he couldn't see, and didn't eat or drink.

¹⁰Now there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord spoke to him in a vision. "Ananias!"

"Look, Lord, I'm here," he answered.

¹¹"Arise," the Lord told him, "go to Judas' house on State Street, and ask for someone from Tarsus named Saul. He's praying, ¹²and in a vision he's seen a man named Ananias come in and lay hands on him so that he might see again."

¹³"But Lord," Ananias answered, "I've heard from many people about this man, how much harm he's done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. ¹⁴The chief priests have authorized him to come here and arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵But the Lord told him, "Go on, because he's my chosen vessel to bring my name before the peoples and queens and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶I'll show him how much he needs to suffer for my name."

¹⁷Ananias left, went into the house, and laid his hands on him. "Brother Saul," he said, "the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹then ate some food and regained his strength.

He stayed several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰He went straight to the synagogues and proclaimed, "This Jesus really is Godde's Son!"

²¹Everyone who heard him was amazed. "Isn't this the man who destroyed the people in Jerusalem who called on this name?" they asked. "And hasn't he come here to arrest them and bring them to the chief priests?"

²²But Saul was getting more powerful and confounding the Jewish leaders who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

²³After many days had gone by, the Jewish leaders plotted to kill him, ²⁴but Saul learned of their plot. They watched the gates day and night so that they might kill him, ²⁵but his disciples took him by night and lowered him in a basket through a hole in the wall.

²⁶When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't trust that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road, that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out in Jesus' name. ²⁸So Saul came and went with them in Jerusalem, speaking out in the Lord's name. ²⁹He spoke and debated the Hellenists, but they were trying to kill him. ³⁰When the sisters and brothers found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

³¹So the community throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and was built up. It grew with the Holy Spirit's encouragement, living in reverence for the Lady.

³²Now as Peter traveled all over, he came down to the holy ones living in Lydda. ³³There he found a certain person named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. ³⁴Peter told him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed!" Immediately he got up. ³⁵Everyone who lived in Lydda and in Sharon saw him and turned to the Lady.

³⁶Now in Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which is translated as "Dorcas"). She was always doing good deeds and making donations. ³⁷Now at that time she got sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her upstairs. ³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him with the urgent plea, "Please don't hesitate to come to us!"

³⁹Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him upstairs. All the widows stood by him, crying and showing the coats and shirts that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

⁴⁰Peter sent them all out, fell to his knees, and prayed. Turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹He gave her his hand and helped her up. Calling the holy ones and widows, he presented her alive. ⁴²This became known throughout all Joppa and many trusted in the Lady. ⁴³Now he stayed many days in Joppa with a certain tanner named Simon.

Chapter Ten

Now in Caesarea there was a certain man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Cohort. ²He and his household were devout and reverent to Godde. He made many donations to the people and always prayed to Godde. ³At about three o'clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of Godde coming to him. "Cornelius!" it said.

⁴He stared at the angel in fear. "What is it, Master?" he asked.

"Your prayers and donations have come up as a memorial before Godde," it told him. ⁵"Now send people to Joppa for a certain Simon called Peter. ⁶He's staying with a certain tanner named Simon whose house is by the sea."

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from his attendants. ⁸He explained everything to them and sent them to Joppa.

⁹About noon the next day, as the travelers got closer to the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰He got hungry and wanted to eat, but while they were making lunch he fell into a trance. ¹¹He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being lowered to the ground by its four corners. ¹²In it

were all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles of the earth, and birds of heaven. ¹³A voice told him, "Rise, Peter. Kill and eat!"

¹⁴But Peter said, "Certainly not, Lady! I've never eaten anything that's defiled or unclean."

¹⁵The voice spoke to him a second time. "Don't call defiled anything that Godde has made clean."

¹⁶After this happened three times, the sheet was immediately taken back to heaven.

¹⁷Now while Peter was trying to figure out what his vision might mean, Cornelius' people appeared at the gate. They had asked where Simon's house was. ¹⁸They called out and asked whether Simon called Peter was staying there. ¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit told him, "Look, three people are looking for you. ²⁰Arise, get down, and go with them without hesitation, because I've sent them."

²¹So Peter went down to them. "Look," he said, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why are you here?"

²²They said, "We were sent by Cornelius, a centurion. He's a just man who reveres Godde, and is highly respected by the whole Jewish nation. He was directed by a holy angel to invite you to his house so that he can hear what you have to say." ²³So he invited them in as guests.

The next day, Peter got up and went with them. Some of the sisters and brothers from Joppa went too. ²⁴The following day they arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them, having called together his relatives and close friends.

²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell down at his feet, and bowed to him. ²⁶But Peter made him get up. "Stand up!" he said. "I'm just human too."

²⁷As he talked with him, he went in and found many gathered together. ²⁸He told them, "You yourselves know how it's unlawful for a Jew to associate with or visit a foreigner, but Godde has shown me that I shouldn't call anyone defiled or unclean. ²⁹So when I was invited, I came without objection. Now may I ask why you invited me?"

³⁰"Three days ago at about this time," Cornelius answered, "I was praying in my house. It was three o'clock. Suddenly someone stood before me in bright clothing ³¹and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your donations are remembered before Godde. ³²So send to Joppa and summon Simon called Peter. He's staying by the sea in the house of a tanner named Simon.' ³³So I sent for you right away, and it was good of you to come. So now we're all present here before Godde to hear everything the Lady has instructed you to say."

³⁴Peter spoke up. "I really understand that Godde doesn't show favoritism, ³⁵but accepts those from every nation who respect her and pursue justice. ³⁶You know the message she sent to the children of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—he's Lord of all. ³⁷You know what happened throughout all Judea, starting in Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed; ³⁸how Godde anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because Godde was with him. ³⁹We're witnesses of everything he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰but Godde raised him up on the third day and revealed him, ⁴¹not to all the people, but to witnesses who were already chosen by Godde – to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He instructed us to proclaim to the people and to testify that this is the one who's appointed by Godde as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him, that everyone who trusts in him will receive through his name forgiveness of wrongdoings."

⁴⁴While Peter was still talking, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶They heard them speaking in other languages and praising Godde.

Then Peter asked, ⁴⁷"Can anyone stand in the way of their being baptized with water? They've received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸He instructed them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

Chapter Eleven

Now the apostles and sisters and brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles had welcomed Godde's message too. ²But when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision bloc argued with him. ³"You went and ate with uncircumcised men!"

⁴But Peter told them the whole story. ⁵"I was praying in the city of Joppa," he said, "and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet lowered from heaven by its four corners. It came right down to me. ⁶When I looked right into it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and the birds of heaven. ⁷Then I heard a voice tell me, 'Rise, Peter. Kill and eat!'

⁸"But I said, 'Certainly not, Lady! Nothing defiled or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

⁹"But the voice from heaven told me a second time, 'Don't call defiled anything that Godde has made clean.'

¹⁰"After this happened three times, everything was pulled back up to heaven. ¹¹Right then, three people who'd been sent from Caesarea appeared at the house where we were staying. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them without hesitation. These six sisters and brothers went with me too, and we entered the man's house.

¹³"He told us how he'd seen the angel standing in his house, telling him, 'Send to Joppa and summon Simon called Peter. ¹⁴He'll deliver a message by which you and your entire household will be given life.'

¹⁵As I started talking, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as she had fallen on us at the beginning. ¹⁶I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized in water, but you'll be baptized in the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷So if Godde gave them the same gift that she gave us when we trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in Godde's way?"

¹⁸When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified Godde. "Then Godde has also enabled the Gentiles to change and live!" they said.

¹⁹Now those who'd been scattered abroad by the oppression following Stephen's death traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, sharing the message with no one except Jews. ²⁰But some of them from Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch talked to the Hellenists, announcing the good news of the Lord Jesus. ²¹The Lady's hand was with them, and a great number trusted and turned to the Lady. ²²News of this reached the ears of the community in Jerusalem, so they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw Godde's grace, he rejoiced and encouraged all of them to remain true to the Lady with all their hearts. ²⁴He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and trust. A large crowd was brought to the Lady.

²⁵Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. ²⁶When he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year they met with the community and taught a large crowd. The disciples were first called "Christians" in Antioch.

²⁷Now at that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted through the Spirit that there would be a great famine all over the world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) ²⁹The disciples decided that each of them would send relief as they were able to the sisters and brothers living in Judea. ³⁰They did this by sending it to the presbyters by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Chapter Twelve

At about that time King Herod lashed out to harm some of the community. ²He had James, John's brother, put to death by the sword. ³When he saw that it pleased the temple authorities, he proceeded to arrest Peter too. (This was during the Unleavened Bread Feast.) ⁴After arresting him, he put him in prison and handed him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. He intended to bring him out to the

people after the Passover. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but the community was fervently praying to Godde for him.

⁶The night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains. Guards in front of the door watched over the prison.

⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lady stood by him and a light shone in the cell. It struck Peter's side to wake him up.

"Quick, get up!" it said.

The chains fell from Peter's hands.

⁸"Get dressed and tie your sandals," the angel told him.

He did.

"Put on your coat," it said, "and follow me."

⁹He went out and followed it. He didn't realize that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰After they passed the first two guards, they came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself. After they went out and down a street, suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹Then Peter came to his senses. "Now I really know that the Lady sent her angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches," he said, "and from everything the Jewish people were expecting."

¹²When he realized this he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John called Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. ¹³Peter knocked at the door of the gate, and a maid named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that she ran back without opening the gate and announced that Peter was standing out there.

¹⁵"You're crazy!" they told her, but she kept insisting that it was true.

"It's his angel," they said.

¹⁶But Peter kept knocking.

When they opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

¹⁷He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet and told them how the Lady had brought him out of prison. He said, "Tell James and the sisters and brothers about this." Then he left and went somewhere else.

¹⁸The next morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. ¹⁹When Herod looked for him and didn't find him, he questioned the guards and ordered them to be put to death. He went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

²⁰Now Herod was furious with the people of Tyre and Sidon. They came to him as a group. They had convinced Blastus, the king's personal servant, to ask for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food.

²¹On the appointed day, Herod dressed himself in royal clothes, sat on the throne, and made a speech to them.

²²The people were crying out, "The voice of a god, not of a human!"

²³Immediately an angel of the Lady struck him down because he didn't give Godde the glory. He was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴But Godde's message continued to spread and grow. ²⁵When Barnabas and Saul finished their mission, they returned to Jerusalem, taking with them John called Mark.

Chapter Thirteen

Now in the community at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, including Barnabas; Simeon called Niger; Lucius of Cyrene; Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch; and Saul. ²While they were

fasting and worshiping the Lady, the Holy Spirit told them, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I've called them."³ So they fasted, prayed, laid their hands on them, and sent them off.

⁴Having been sent by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed Godde's message in the Jewish synagogues. They had John to assist them. ⁶They went through the whole island as far as Paphos. There they found a certain Jewish magician, a false prophet named Bar-Jesus. ⁷He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man who summoned Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear Godde's message. ⁸But the magician Elymas (that's what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹Filled with the Holy Spirit, Saul – also known as Paul – looked right at him. ¹⁰"Son of a devil!" he said. "You're full of deceit and fraud, an enemy of all that's just! Will you never stop perverting the just ways of the Lady? ¹¹Now, look, the Lady's hand is upon you. You'll be blind for awhile and won't even be able to see the sun!"

Immediately mist and darkness descended on him. He went around looking for someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²When the proconsul saw what had happened, he trusted, amazed at the Lady's teaching.

¹³Then Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia. John left them and returned to Jerusalem, ¹⁴but they went from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of the Torah and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent them a message: "Sisters and brothers, if you have any encouraging message for the people, please speak."

¹⁶Paul stood up, motioned with his hand, and started: "Women and men of Israel, and you Gentiles who revere Godde, listen up! ¹⁷The Godde of this people Israel chose our ancestors and supported the people during their stay in the land of Egypt. She led them out of it with great power. ¹⁸For about forty years she put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹After she destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, she gave them their land for an inheritance for about four hundred and fifty years. ²⁰After that she gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹Then they asked for a queen and king, so for forty years Godde gave them Ahinoam and Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin. ²²After she removed them, she raised up Bathsheba and David to be their queen and king. About them she testified:

'I've found Bathsheba and David the son of Jesse,
people after my own heart, who'll do everything I want.'

²³From their offspring Godde has brought Israel a Life-Giver, Jesus, according to her promise. ²⁴Before his coming, John proclaimed a baptism of change to all the people of Israel. ²⁵As John was finishing his work, he asked, 'Who do you think I am? I'm not the one. But look, after me one's coming whose sandals I'm not worthy to loosen.'

²⁶"Sisters and brothers, children of Sarah and Abraham, and you Gentiles who revere Godde, the message of life has been sent to us. ²⁷Because the people of Jerusalem and their rulers didn't recognize him or the voices of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, they fulfilled those words by judging him. ²⁸Though they found no reason for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him killed. ²⁹After they had done everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But Godde raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he was seen by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are his witnesses to the people. ³²We're announcing to you the good news that the promise made to our ancestors ³³has been kept by Godde for us, their children, by raising Jesus. As it's also written in the second psalm:

'You're my Son.
Today I've become your Mother.'

³⁴As for raising him from the dead so that he'll no longer be subject to decay, she's said that 'I'll give you the holy and trustworthy blessings of David.' ³⁵So she says in another psalm too, 'You won't allow your Holy One to see decay.' ³⁶After David had served Godde's purpose during his own time, he fell asleep and was laid with his fathers to decay. ³⁷But the one whom Godde raised saw no decay. ³⁸So I want you to know, sisters and brothers, that forgiveness of wrongdoings (and everything from which you couldn't be justified by the Torah of Moses) is proclaimed to you through him, ³⁹and by him everyone who trusts is justified. ⁴⁰So be careful so that what the prophets said doesn't happen to you:

⁴¹'Look, you who scoff!
Be amazed and perish,
because I'm doing something in your days,
something you wouldn't ever believe, even if someone told you!'"

⁴²As they were leaving, the people urged them to tell them more on the next Sabbath. ⁴³When the synagogue was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked to them and urged them to continue in Godde's grace.

⁴⁴Now on the next Sabbath nearly the whole city gathered to hear the Lady's message. ⁴⁵But when the Jewish leaders saw the crowd, they were filled with jealousy. They contradicted what Paul said and slandered him.

⁴⁶Paul and Barnabas spoke out. "Godde's message had to be spoken to you first," they said. "Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, look, we're turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷That's what the Lady has instructed us to do:

'I've made you a light for the Gentiles
So that you may bring life to the ends of the earth.'"

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the Lady's message. All who were chosen for eternal life trusted. ⁴⁹The Lady's message spread throughout the whole region. ⁵⁰But the Jewish leaders incited devout and respected women and the leading men of the city, stirring up harassment against Paul and Barnabas. They drove them out of their borders. ⁵¹So they shook the dust off their feet in protest and went to Iconium. ⁵²The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Fourteen

In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews and spoke so well that a large number of both Jews and Greeks trusted. ²But the Jewish leaders who wouldn't trust stirred up the Gentiles and turned them against the sisters and brothers. ³So they stayed there a long time, speaking out for the Lady, who testified to the message of her grace by doing signs and wonders through their hands. ⁴But the city was divided. Some sided with the Jewish leaders, others with the apostles. ⁵When some of the Gentiles and Jewish leaders planned to mistreat and stone them, ⁶they found out about it and fled to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia and the surrounding region. ⁷There they announced the good news.

⁸In Lystra there sat a man who couldn't use his feet. He'd been lame since birth and had never walked. ⁹He heard Paul speaking.

Looking right at him and seeing that he had trust to be healed, ¹⁰Paul said in a loud voice, "Stand up on your feet!"

He jumped up and walked around.

¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted out in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the main speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and garlands

to the gates, wanting to offer a sacrifice along with the crowds. ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd. ¹⁵“Friends,” they cried out, “why are you doing these things? We’re mortals just like you, and announce to you the good news, to turn from these worthless things to the living Godde, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. ¹⁶In generations past she let all nations go their own ways. ¹⁷Yet she didn’t leave herself without testimony; she did good things, giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling you with food and your hearts with joy.”

¹⁸Even with these words they hardly stopped the crowds from offering a sacrifice to them. ¹⁹But some Jewish leaders came from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.

²⁰But when the disciples gathered around him, he got up and went into the city.

The next day he and Barnabas went to Derbe. ²¹When they had announced the good news in that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples and encouraging them to continue in the faith. “Through much harassment we must enter Godde’s reign,” they said.

²³After they appointed presbyters for them in every community, they commended them with prayer and fasting to the Lady in whom they had trusted.

²⁴They passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵When they had shared the message in Perga, they went down to Attalia ²⁶and sailed from there to Antioch, from where they had been committed to Godde’s grace for the work they had completed. ²⁷When they arrived, they gathered the community together and reported everything that Godde had done with them and how she had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸They stayed with the disciples there for some time.

Chapter Fifteen

Then some people came down from Judea and were teaching the sisters and brothers. “Unless you’re circumcised according to the custom of Moses,” they said, “you can’t be given life.” ²Now Paul and Barnabas got into a big debate with them. So Paul, Barnabas, and some others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and presbyters about this issue. ³When the community sent them on their way, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria reporting that the Gentiles had come around. This brought great joy to all the sisters and brothers.

⁴When they had arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the community and the apostles and the presbyters, and they reported everything that Godde had done with them.

⁵But some who had trusted from the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “They must be circumcised and instructed to keep Moses’ Torah.”

⁶The apostles and the presbyters met to consider this matter. ⁷After much debate, Peter stood up. “Sisters and brothers,” he said, “you know that some time ago Godde chose me from among you, so that from my mouth the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and trust. ⁸Godde, who knows the heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as she did to us. ⁹She didn’t discriminate between us and them, because she cleansed their hearts by trust. ¹⁰So why are you testing Godde by putting a yoke on the necks of the disciples which neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹But we trust that we’re given life through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are.”

¹²The whole crowd became quiet as they listened to Barnabas and Paul describe the signs and wonders Godde had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³When they stopped talking, James replied. “Sisters and brothers,” he said, “listen up. ¹⁴Simon has described how Godde welcomed the Gentiles as a people for her own name. ¹⁵This is in agreement with the words of the prophets. As it is written:

¹⁶“After this I’ll return.

I’ll rebuild the tabernacle of Bathsheba and David, which has fallen.

I'll rebuild its ruins.

I'll restore it,

¹⁷so that the rest of humanity may seek the Lady;

all the Gentiles who are called by my name,"

says the Lady, who does these things

¹⁸known from long ago.'

¹⁹"So my decision is not to trouble those Gentiles who turn to Godde, ²⁰but to write to them to avoid the pollution of idols, promiscuity, the meat of strangled animals, and blood, ²¹because for generations Moses has been proclaimed in every town, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

²²Then the apostles and the presbyters, with the whole community, decided to choose people from their company and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas – Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, leaders among the sisters and brothers, ²³with this letter:

"The apostles, the presbyters, and the sisters and brothers, to the Gentile sisters and brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴We've heard that some of us, without authorization, have disturbed you, unsettling your minds by what they said. ²⁵So we've unanimously decided to choose people and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶men who've risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷So we've sent Judas and Silas, who'll tell you the same things, ²⁸because the Holy Spirit and we have decided not to lay any burden on you beyond what's absolutely necessary: ²⁹that you avoid what's been sacrificed to idols, blood, the meat of strangled animals, and promiscuity. You'll do well if you avoid these things. Take care."

³⁰So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. There they gathered the crowd together and delivered the letter. ³¹When they read it, they rejoiced at the encouragement. ³²Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the sisters and brothers with many words.

³³After they had spent some time there, the sisters and brothers sent them back with peace to the ones who had sent them. ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, where they and many others taught and announced the good news of the Lady's message.

³⁶Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's return now and visit our sisters and brothers in every city where we proclaimed the Lady's message to see how they're doing." ³⁷Barnabas wanted to take John called Mark with them too. ³⁸But Paul insisted on not taking along someone who had deserted them in Pamphylia and hadn't continued in the work. ³⁹The argument got so bad that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus, ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and left, commended to Godde's grace by the sisters and brothers. ⁴¹He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the communities.

Chapter Sixteen

He went on to Derbe and Lystra, where there was a certain disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jew who trusted but his father was a Greek. ²The sisters and brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well about him. ³Paul wanted him to accompany him, so he circumcised him because the Jews who lived there all knew that his father was a Greek.

⁴As they traveled through the cities, they communicated the requirements that the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem had decided should be observed. ⁵So the communities were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers every day.

⁶They traveled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit didn't let them share the message in Asia. ⁷When they came to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus didn't let them. ⁸So they passed through Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹That night Paul had a vision.

He saw a Macedonian standing and urging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰When he saw the vision, we immediately got ready to go to Macedonia, convinced that Godde had called us to announce the good news to them.

¹¹So we sailed straight from Troas to Samothrace, and then to Neapolis the next day. ¹²From there we went to the city of Philippi, a prominent Roman colony in the district of Macedonia. We stayed in this city several days.

¹³On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to a riverside, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and talked with the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴A certain woman named Lydia listened to us. She was a dealer of purple cloth from the city of Thyatira who worshipped Godde. The Lady opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul said. ¹⁵When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me trustworthy to the Lady, come and stay at my house." So she prevailed upon us.

¹⁶One day, when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a certain girl who had a spirit of divination. She generated much profit for her masters by telling fortunes. ¹⁷She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These people are bondservants of the Most High Godde, who proclaim to you a way of life!" ¹⁸She was doing this for many days. But Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" It came out that very hour.

¹⁹But when her masters saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. ²⁰When they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they're Jews ²¹who advocate customs that aren't lawful for us Romans to accept or to practice."

²²The crowd joined in the attack against them, and the chief magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. ²³After they flogged them severely, they threw them into prison and instructed the jailer to guard them securely. ²⁴When he received this order, he threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to Godde, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶Suddenly there was an earthquake so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken. Immediately all the doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword to kill himself because he thought that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Don't hurt yourself! We're all here!"

²⁹He called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He led them out and asked, "Sirs, what do I need to do to live?"

³¹"Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ," they said, "and you and your household will be given life." ³²They shared the Lady's message with him and everyone in his house.

³³At that very hour of the night, he took them, washed their wounds, and immediately he and his whole household were baptized. ³⁴He led them into the house and fed them. He and his whole household were overjoyed, having trusted in Godde.

³⁵The next morning, the chief magistrates sent the police with the order, "Release those men."

³⁶The jailer reported the message to Paul. "The chief magistrates have ordered that you be released. So come out now and go in peace."

³⁷But Paul told them, "They publicly beat us without charge, even though we're Romans citizens, then threw us into prison! Now they're secretly letting us out? Certainly not. Let them come personally and escort us out."

³⁸The police reported this message to the chief magistrates. They were alarmed when they heard that they were Romans. ³⁹They came and apologized to them. When they escorted them out, they asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰They left the prison and went to Lydia's house. When they had seen and encouraged the sisters and brothers, they left.

Chapter Seventeen

Now after they traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrived at Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²Paul went in as usual and argued with them from the Scriptures for three Sabbaths, ³explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus, whom I'm proclaiming to you," he said, "is the Christ."

⁴Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵But some Jewish leaders grew jealous, rounded up some street thugs, formed a mob, and set the city in an uproar. They attacked Jason's house and tried to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶When they didn't find them, they dragged Jason and some sisters and brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "The people who've turned the world upside down have come here too, ⁷and Jason has welcomed them. They're all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there's another king called Jesus!"

⁸The crowd and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard this. ⁹When they had received bail from Jason and the others, they released them. ¹⁰The sisters and brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas to Berea by night. When they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue.

¹¹Now they were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they welcomed the message eagerly, asking questions about the Scriptures every day to see whether these things were true. ¹²Many of them trusted, as did a number of respected Greek women and not a few men. ¹³But when the Jewish leaders of Thessalonica learned that Paul was proclaiming Godde's message in Berea, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

¹⁴Then the sisters and brothers immediately sent out Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed there. ¹⁵Those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens and left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was very upset when he saw the city full of idols. ¹⁷So he argued with the Jews and devout Gentiles every day in the synagogue and in the marketplace with whomever happened to be there. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers debated with him.

"What is this babbler trying to say?" some asked.

"He seems to be proclaiming foreign deities," others said. They said that because he was announcing the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus. "May we know what this new teaching is that you're talking about?" they asked. ²⁰"It sounds rather strange to us, so we'd like to know what it means." ²¹(Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but telling or hearing the latest new idea.)

²²Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, "People of Athens, I see that you're very religious in every way. ²³For as I walked around and looked at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with the inscription: 'TO AN UNKNOWN DEITY.' So what you worship in ignorance, I'm going to announce to you.

²⁴"The Godde who made the world and everything in it is the Lady of heaven and earth. She doesn't dwell in temples made by human hands. ²⁵Nor is she served by human hands, as if she needed anything, since she herself gives everyone life, breath, and all things. ²⁶From one ancestor she made every nation to dwell all over the earth, having determined their times and the places they would live ²⁷so that they would seek her and perhaps reach out for her and find her, even though she's not far from any one of us. ²⁸'Because in her we live, and move, and exist.' As some of your own poets have said, 'Because we're her offspring too.' ²⁹So being Godde's offspring, we shouldn't think that the Divine can be compared to gold, silver, or stone, an image formed by human skill and imagination. ³⁰Godde has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now she proclaims that all people everywhere should change, ³¹because she has appointed a day when she'll judge the world in justice by the person she's appointed. She's given proof to everyone by raising him from the dead!"

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some made fun of him. But others said, "We want to hear you again about this."

³³So Paul left them. ³⁴But some people joined him and trusted. Among them was Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

Chapter Eighteen

After that, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus who'd recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. He approached them ³and, since he practiced the same trade, he stayed and worked with them – they were tentmakers. ⁴He argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading both Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with testifying to the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶When they opposed and slandered him, he shook out his clothes and told them, "You're accountable! I'm innocent. I'll go to the Gentiles from now on."

⁷He left the synagogue and went next door to the house of a certain man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of Godde. ⁸Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household trusted in the Lady. When they heard, many of the Corinthians trusted and were baptized. ⁹That night, the Lady came to Paul in a vision and said, "Don't be afraid. Don't be quiet; speak out, ¹⁰because I'm with you. No one will attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."

¹¹He stayed there for a year and-a-half, teaching them Godde's message. ¹²But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jewish leaders united against Paul and dragged him before the judgment seat. ¹³"This man," they charged, "persuades people to worship Godde in a way that's against the law!"

¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio addressed the Jewish leaders. "If it really were a misdemeanor or serious crime, it would make sense for me to hear you out. ¹⁵But if it's something about words and names and your own Torah, settle it yourselves, because I don't want to judge such things." ¹⁶So he drove them from the judgment seat.

¹⁷Then everyone seized Sosthenes, the synagogue leader, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio didn't care.

¹⁸Paul stayed a number of days, said farewell to the sisters and brothers, and then sailed to Syria with Priscilla and Aquila. He shaved his head in Cenchreae because he'd made a vow. ¹⁹When they arrived at Ephesus, he left them there, went into the synagogue, and argued with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay longer, he declined, ²¹but as he left, he said, "I'll return to you, Godde willing." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

²²When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the community, then went down to Antioch. ²³After spending some time there, he left and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, arrived in Ephesus. He had an impressive knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵He'd been instructed in the Lady's way. With a fervent spirit he was accurately talking and teaching about Jesus, even though he knew only John's baptism. ²⁶He started to speak out in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him Godde's way more accurately.

²⁷When he wanted go to Achaia, the sisters and brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he came, he was a great help to those who had trusted through grace ²⁸because he vigorously refuted the Jewish leaders in public, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Chapter Nineteen

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul went through the interior regions, arrived in Ephesus, and found some disciples. ²He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you trusted?"

"No," they told him, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³"Then what baptism did you receive?" he asked.

"John's baptism," they said.

⁴Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of change, telling the people that they should trust in the one coming after him – that is, in Jesus."

⁵When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit descended on them and they spoke in other languages and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve of them in all.

⁸He entered the synagogue and spoke out for three months, arguing persuasively about Godde's reign. ⁹But when some became stubborn and disobedient, publicly maligning the Way, he left and took the disciples with him, arguing daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This went on for two years, so everyone who lived in Asia heard the message of the Lady, both Jews and Greeks.

¹¹Godde did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so that even when handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to those who were sick, their diseases and evil spirits left them. ¹³But some of the Jewish exorcists who were going around attempted to use the name of the Lord Jesus to help those who had evil spirits. "We urge you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims!" they said. ¹⁴Seven sons of a certain Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

¹⁵The evil spirit replied, "I recognize Jesus and I know about Paul, but who are you?" ¹⁶The man who had the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and beat them so hard that they fled from the house naked and bleeding. ¹⁷When all the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus heard about this, they were awestruck and they praised the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁸Many of those who trusted kept coming, admitting and revealing what they had done. ¹⁹A number of those who had strange practices collected their books and burned them publicly. When they added up the price of the books, the total came to 50,000 silver coins. ²⁰So the Lady's message was growing and getting stronger.

²¹After all that happened, Paul decided to go through Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem. "After I've been there," he said, "I need to see Rome too." ²²So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in Asia for a while.

²³About that time no small commotion broke out about the Way. ²⁴A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. ²⁵He gathered them together with the workers of the same trade. "My friends," he said, "you know that our prosperity depends on this business. ²⁶Now you can see and hear for yourselves that not only in Ephesus, but in nearly all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people by telling them that goddesses and gods made with hands aren't real. ²⁷This not only endangers the reputation of our trade, but also threatens to discredit the temple of the great goddess Artemis, destroying the majesty of the goddess who's worshipped throughout all Asia and the world!"

²⁸When they heard this they were filled with anger. They cried out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹The city was filled with confusion. They seized Paul's traveling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus from Macedonia, and rushed together into the theater. ³⁰Paul wanted to go into the crowd, but the disciples wouldn't let him. ³¹Even some of the Asian officials, friends of his, sent him a message begging him not to show himself in the theater. ³²The crowd was confused: some shouted one thing, some another. Most people didn't even know why they'd come together. ³³They brought Alexander out of the crowd, whom the Jewish leaders had pushed forward. Alexander motioned with his hand, wanting to defend himself to the people. ³⁴But when they realized he was a Jew, everyone cried out with one voice for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

³⁵When the town clerk managed to calm the crowd, he said, "People of Ephesus, who doesn't know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image which fell down from heaven? ³⁶Since these facts are undeniable, you need to calm down and not do anything rash. ³⁷You've brought these men here, even though they're neither temple robbers nor slanderers of our goddess. ³⁸So if Demetrius and his craftsmen have something against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They should press charges against each other. ³⁹But if you're looking for anything else, it'll have to be settled in a legal meeting. ⁴⁰After what's happened today, we're in danger of being charged with rioting since we can't account for this commotion." After he said this, he dismissed the crowd.

Chapter Twenty

After the riot was over, Paul summoned the disciples, encouraged them, said goodbye, and left for Macedonia. ²He traveled through those regions, encouraging them with many messages, then came to Greece, ³where he stayed three months. As he was getting ready to sail to Syria, the Jewish leaders plotted against him, so he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴He was accompanied by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus from Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia. ⁵They had gone ahead and were waiting for us at Troas. ⁶We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread and joined them five days later in Troas, where we stayed seven days.

⁷On the first day of the week, when we had gathered together to break bread, Paul argued with people. He planned to leave the next day, so extended his message until midnight. ⁸There were a number of lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. ⁹A certain young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window, falling asleep. As Paul went on and on, he succumbed to sleep and fell down from the third story. When they picked him up, he was dead. ¹⁰Paul went down, threw himself on him, and embraced him. "Don't worry," he said. "He's alive!"

¹¹He went up, broke bread, and ate. He talked with them a long time, until dawn, then left. ¹²They brought the boy home alive and were greatly encouraged.

¹³But we went ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were planning to take Paul on board. He had made this arrangement because he planned to go there by land. ¹⁴When he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵We sailed from there and arrived the next day opposite Chios. The day after that we crossed over at Samos, and the following day arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he wouldn't have to spend time in Asia because he was in a hurry to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost if at all possible.

¹⁷From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, summoning the presbyters of the community. ¹⁸When they arrived, he told them, "You know how I lived among you from the first day I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹serving the Lady with all humility and tears through the trials I endured because of the plots of the Jewish leaders; ²⁰how I didn't hesitate to share with you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹testifying to both Jews and Greeks about change toward Godde and trust in our Lord Jesus. ²²And now, look, I'm bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I know only that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, telling me that prison and oppression awaits me. ²⁴But my life doesn't matter to me; I just want to finish my race and complete the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the good news of Godde's grace.

²⁵"And now, look, I know that none of you among whom I've gone about proclaiming Godde's reign will see my face any more. ²⁶So I testify to you today that I'm not responsible for the loss of anyone ²⁷because I didn't hesitate to share with you the whole of Godde's will. ²⁸So watch over yourselves and the entire flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops. Shepherd the community of Godde which she's bought with her own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and won't spare the flock. ³⁰People will arise from among you and say fraudulent things to draw away

disciples after them. ³¹So watch out! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning everyone with tears night and day. ³²Now I commend you to Godde and to the message of her grace, which can build you up and give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. ³³I haven't wanted anyone's silver, gold, or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that I've provided for myself and those with me by my own hands. ³⁵In everything I've done, I've shown that you should work to help those who are weak, and remember what the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It's more blessed to give than to receive.'"

³⁶After he said this, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷Everyone wept a great deal, embraced Paul, and kissed him. ³⁸What most grieved them was his statement that they wouldn't see his face anymore. Finally they accompanied him to the ship.

Chapter Twenty-One

After we left them and set sail, we sailed straight to Cos, then the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ²When we found a ship heading to Phoenicia, we got on board and set sail. ³After sighting Cyprus and sailing south of it, we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, where the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴We found the disciples and stayed there seven days. Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ⁵When it was time to leave, we left and went on our way. All the families accompanied us out of the city. Kneeling down on the beach, we prayed. ⁶After saying goodbye to each other, we got on board the ship, and they returned home.

⁷We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the sisters and brothers and stayed for with them for a day. ⁸The next day, we left and arrived at Caesarea. We went to the house of Philip the evangelist (one of the seven) and stayed with him. ⁹Now he had four chaste daughters who were prophetesses. ¹⁰After we had been there for many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹He came over to us, took Paul's belt, bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'This is how the temple authorities in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt. They'll hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

¹²When we heard this, both we and the local residents begged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³Then Paul replied, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I'm ready not just to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

¹⁴When we couldn't convince him, we gave up. "The Lady's will be done," we said.

¹⁵After that we packed and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶Some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us too. They took us to the house of an early disciple, Mnason from Cyprus, with whom we'd be staying.

¹⁷When we arrived at Jerusalem, the sisters and brothers welcomed us warmly. ¹⁸The next day, Paul went with us to see James. All the presbyters were there. ¹⁹After greeting them, he gave a complete report of everything Godde had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰They glorified Godde when they heard this. "You see, brother," they told him, "how many thousands of Jews have trusted, and they're all zealous for the Torah. ²¹They've been told about you, that you're teaching all the Jews living among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or keep their customs. ²²What can we do? They'll surely hear that you've come. ²³So do what we tell you. We have four men who've made a vow. ²⁴Go with them and purify yourself with them. Pay their expenses so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that there's no truth in what they've been told about you, but that you yourself are keeping the Torah too. ²⁵As for the Gentiles who trust, we've written about our decision that they should avoid what's been sacrificed to idols, blood, the meat of strangled animals, and promiscuity."

²⁶The next day Paul went with the men, purified himself, and went to the temple with them. He gave notice of how many days it would be until the end of the period of purification, when a sacrifice would offered for each of them.

²⁷When the seven days were almost over, the Jewish leaders from Asia saw him in the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him. ²⁸"People of Israel!" they shouted. "Help! This is the man

who teaches everyone everywhere against our people, our Torah, and this place! And besides, he's brought Greeks to the temple and has defiled this holy place!" ²⁹(They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.)

³⁰The whole city was aroused. People rushed together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple. Immediately the doors were shut. ³¹While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the soldiers that all Jerusalem was in confusion. ³²Immediately he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them. When they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³Then the commander came up, arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked him who he was and what he'd done. ³⁴Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another. He couldn't get a definite answer because of the noise, so he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.

³⁵When Paul got to the steps, the violence of the mob was so great that he had to be carried by the soldiers. ³⁶The crowd followed. "Away with him!" they shouted.

³⁷As he was about to be brought into the barracks, Paul asked the commander, "May I say something to you?"

"Do you know Greek?" he asked. ³⁸"Then aren't you the Egyptian who recently started a revolt and led four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"

³⁹But Paul replied, "I'm a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. I beg you, let me speak to the people."

⁴⁰He gave him permission. So Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand to the people. When they were all quiet, he addressed them in the Hebrew language.

Chapter Twenty-Two

"Sisters, brothers, mothers, and fathers," he started, "listen up as I defend myself!"

²When they heard him address them in the Hebrew language, they quieted down even more. He went on, ³"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was instructed according to the strict tradition of the Torah of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for Godde as you all are today. ⁴I harassed this Way to the point of death, arresting both women and men and throwing them into prison, ⁵as even the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify. They gave me letters to the sisters and brothers in Damascus, so I went there to arrest these people and bring them to Jerusalem to be punished.

⁶"Now about noon, as I got closer to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven shone around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice tell me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me?'

⁸"Who are you, Lord?' I asked.

"I'm Jesus of Nazareth, whom you're harassing,' he answered.

⁹"Those who were with me saw the light, but they didn't hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me.

¹⁰"What should I do, Lord?' I asked.

"The Lord told me, 'Get up and go to Damascus. There you'll be told everything you've been assigned to do.' ¹¹I couldn't see because the brilliance of that light had blinded me, so the ones with me led me by the hand into Damascus.

¹²"Now a certain Ananias was a devout man by the standard of the Torah, well spoken of by all the Jews living in Damascus. ¹³He came to me, stood by me, and told me, 'Brother Saul, see again!' That very hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴He said, 'The Godde of our ancestors has chosen you to know her will, to see the Just One, and to hear his own voice. ¹⁵You'll be his witness to all people of what you've seen and heard. ¹⁶Now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your offenses, calling on his name.'

¹⁷"When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance. ¹⁸I saw him telling me, 'Hurry! Get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they won't welcome your testimony about me.'

¹⁹“Lord,” I said, “they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who trusted in you. ²⁰When the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I was standing by in approval, watching the coats of those who killed him.’

²¹“Go,’ he told me, ‘because I’ll send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

²²They had been listening to him up to that point. Then they raised their voices and shouted, “Rid the earth of him! He doesn’t deserve to live!”

²³As they cried out, flung off their coats, and threw dust into the air, ²⁴the commander ordered that he be brought back into the barracks. He ordered that he be interrogated by flogging to find out why they were shouting at him like that. ²⁵But when they stretched him out with the straps, Paul asked the nearby centurion, “Is it legal for you to flog a Roman who hasn’t been found guilty?”

²⁶When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander. “What are you doing?” he asked. “This man is a Roman!”

²⁷The commander approached him. “Tell me, are you a Roman?” he asked.

“Yes,” he said.

²⁸“I bought my citizenship for a lot of money,” the commander said.

Paul said, “But I was born a citizen.”

²⁹Immediately those who were about to interrogate him left. The commander himself was afraid when he realized that he had bound a Roman citizen.

³⁰He wanted get a definite answer about why he was accused by the temple authorities, so the next day he released him, ordered the chief priests and the whole council to come together, and brought Paul down before them.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Paul looked right at the council. “Sisters and brothers,” he said, “I’ve lived before Godde in all good conscience right up until this very day.”

²Then the high priest Ananias ordered those near him to punch him in the mouth.

³“Godde will punch you, you whitewashed wall!” Paul blurted. “You sit there judging me according to the Torah, yet in violation of the Torah you order me to be punched?”

⁴Those near him asked, “How dare you insult Godde’s high priest?”

⁵“I didn’t realize he was the high priest,” Paul said. “As it’s written, ‘You won’t speak evil about a ruler of your people.’”

⁶But when Paul noticed that some of the group were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “People of Israel, I’m a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I’m on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!”

⁷When he said this, an argument broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸(The Sadducees don’t believe in resurrection, angels, or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all three.) ⁹Then there was a great uproar. Some of the scholars of the Pharisees stood up and argued. “We find nothing wrong with this man,” they said. “What if a spirit or angel really has spoken to him?”

¹⁰The argument got so bad that the commander was afraid they’d tear Paul to pieces. So he ordered the soldiers to go down, take him from them, and bring him to the barracks.

¹¹That night the Lord stood by him. “Be courageous,” he said. “Just as you’ve testified about me in Jerusalem, you need to testify in Rome too.”

¹²The next morning, some Jews formed a conspiracy. They bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. ¹⁴They went to the chief priests and the elders. “We have bound ourselves with a solemn oath not to taste anything until we’ve killed Paul,” they said. ¹⁵“Now then, you and the council notify the commander to bring him down to you, pretending that you want to get more accurate information about his case. We’re ready to kill him before he even gets here.”

¹⁶But when Paul's nephew heard about their ambush, and he went into the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷Paul summoned one of the centurions. "Take this young man to the commander," he said, "because he has something to tell him."

¹⁸So he took him and led him to the commander. He said, "Paul, the prisoner, summoned me and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you."

¹⁹The commander took him by the hand and drew him aside privately. "What is it that you have to tell me?" he asked.

²⁰He said, "The temple authorities have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, pretending to want to get more information about his case. ²¹Don't listen to them, because more than forty men are waiting to ambush him. They've bound themselves with an oath not to eat or to drink until they've killed him. Now they're ready, waiting for your decision."

²²So the commander dismissed the young man. "Don't tell anyone that you've told me this," he warned him.

²³Then he summoned two of the centurions. "Prepare two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea," he said. "And take seventy riders and two hundred soldiers armed with spears. Leave at nine o'clock tonight. ²⁴Provide horses for Paul so he can be taken safely to Governor Felix." ²⁵He wrote a letter that went like this:

²⁶"Claudius Lysias to His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings.

²⁷"This man was seized by the temple authorities and was about to be killed by them. But when I learned that he was a Roman citizen, I came with my soldiers and rescued him. ²⁸I wanted to know what they were accusing him of, so I brought him down to their council. ²⁹I found the accusation had to do with questions about their Torah; there was no reason to charge him with anything deserving death or imprisonment. ³⁰When I was informed about a plot against the man, I sent him to you immediately. I've also instructed his accusers to present their case against him before you."

³¹So the soldiers followed their instructions, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³²The next day they let the riders go on with him while they returned to the barracks. ³³When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul to him too. ³⁴When the governor read it, he asked what province he was from. When he learned that he was from Cilicia, he told him, ³⁵"I'll hear your case when your accusers arrive." He ordered that he be kept under guard in Herod's Praetorium.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus. They presented their case against Paul to the governor. ²When Paul was summoned, Tertullus presented his case.

"Through your foresight you've brought a long period of peace and introduced many reforms in our nation," he started. ³"We welcome this everywhere in every way, Most Excellent Felix, with profound gratitude. ⁴I don't want to waste any of your time, however, so I beg you to be kind enough to bear with us briefly. ⁵We've found this man to be a plague, an agitator among Jews all over the world, and a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. ⁶He even tried to desecrate the temple, so we arrested him. ⁸By examining him yourself you'll be able to find out the truth about all these charges we're bringing against him."

⁹The temple authorities joined in the attack too, claiming that all of this was true.

¹⁰When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul responded. "I'm happy to present my defense, knowing that you've been a judge over this nation for many years. ¹¹As you can find out for yourself, it hasn't been more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹²No one found me arguing or stirring up the people in the temple, the synagogues, or anywhere in the city. ¹³Nor can anyone prove

to you the charges being brought against me. ¹⁴But I do confess this to you: as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect, I do serve our ancestral Godde, trusting everything that's in accordance with the Torah, that's written in the prophets. ¹⁵I hope the same hope in Godde that they do, that there'll be a resurrection of both the just and unjust. ¹⁶So I also always strive to have a blameless conscience before Godde and all people.

¹⁷"Now after several years I returned to my nation to make donations to those who are needy and to present offerings. ¹⁸I was found completing the rite of purification in the temple, without a mob or disturbance. ¹⁹Some Jewish leaders from Asia were there. They should've been here to bring charges before you if they had anything against me. ²⁰Or else these people here should explain what crime they found when I stood before the council, ²¹unless it was this one thing that I cried out among them, 'I'm on trial before you today because of the resurrection of the dead!'"

²²Then Felix, who was well informed about the Way, adjourned the hearing. "When Lysias the commander comes down," he said, "I'll decide your case." ²³He ordered the centurion to guard Paul, but to give him some freedom and not to prevent any of his friends from providing for his needs.

²⁴Several days later Felix came with his Jewish wife Drusilla, summoned Paul, and listened to what he had to say about trust in Christ Jesus. ²⁵As he argued about justice, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened. "That's enough for now," he said. "When I have time, I'll summon you." ²⁶At the same time, he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he summoned him frequently to talk.

²⁷But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Felix left Paul in prison as a favor for the Jewish leaders.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ²The chief priests and the Jewish leaders presented their case against Paul. They begged him ³as a favor to summon Paul to Jerusalem, plotting to kill him on the way. ⁴Festus replied that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, adding that he intended to go there soon. ⁵"So," he said, "your leaders should come with me. If the man's done anything wrong, they should bring charges against him."

⁶After he stayed with them no more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. The next day he sat on the judgment seat and ordered Paul to be brought. ⁷When he arrived, the temple authorities who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded him and made many serious charges against him which they couldn't prove. ⁸Paul defended himself: "I haven't done anything wrong against the Jewish Torah, or against the temple, or against Caesar."

⁹But Festus wanted to do a favor for the Jewish leaders. He asked Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

¹⁰"I'm standing before Caesar's judgment seat, where I should be tried," Paul answered. "I haven't done anything wrong to the Jewish leaders, as you very well know. ¹¹If I've done anything wrong and deserve to die, I won't resist death; but if none of their charges is true, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

¹²After Festus conferred with the council, he replied, "You've appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you'll go!"

¹³Several days later, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to greet Festus. ¹⁴Since they were staying there several days, Festus explained Paul's case to the king. "There's a certain man left in prison by Felix," he said. ¹⁵"When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned. ¹⁶I told them that it's not the custom of the Romans to hand over anyone before the accused have met their accusers face to face and have had the chance to defend themselves against the charges. ¹⁷So when they had met here, I didn't delay, but on the very next day I sat on the judgment seat and ordered the man to be brought in. ¹⁸When his accusers stood up, they didn't

charge him with any of the crimes I was expecting. ¹⁹Instead, they had certain arguments with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus whom Paul claimed was alive. ²⁰Since I was perplexed about how to address this debate, I asked whether he was willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial on these charges. ²¹But when Paul made his appeal to be kept in custody and await the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar."

²²Agrippa told Festus, "I'd like to hear this man for myself."

"Tomorrow," he said, "you'll hear him."

²³The next day, Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the auditorium with the commanders and the city's leaders. Then Festus ordered Paul to be brought in.

²⁴"King Agrippa," Festus started, "and all who are present with us, you see this man against whom the entire crowd of Jewish leaders pressed charges, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he shouldn't be allowed to live any longer. ²⁵But I found that he hadn't done anything deserving death, and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶But I don't have anything definite to write to our lord. So I've brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write, ²⁷because it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner without specifying the charges against him."

Chapter Twenty-Six

Agrippa told Paul, "You may speak for yourself."

So Paul motioned with his hand and presented his defense. ²⁴"I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, to present my defense before you today in response to all the charges made against me by the temple authorities, ³especially since you're so knowledgeable about all the Jewish customs and controversies. So I beg you to hear me out patiently.

⁴"All the temple authorities know how I've lived since my youth, first in my own country and then in Jerusalem. ⁵They've known me for so long, if they're willing to testify, that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee. ⁶And now I'm standing trial for the hope of the promise Godde made to our ancestors, ⁷which our twelve tribes hope to receive as they earnestly worship day and night. It's because of this hope, Your Majesty, that the temple authorities are bringing charges against me! ⁸Why would any of you find it hard to believe that Godde raises the dead?

⁹"I myself was convinced that I should oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth by any means necessary. ¹⁰That's just what I did in Jerusalem; on the authority of the chief priests I not only locked up many of the holy ones in prison, I also voted against them when they were put to death. ¹¹Punishing them frequently in one synagogue after another, I tried to make them slander Godde. I was so mad at them that I harassed them even in foreign cities.

¹²"That's why I traveled to Damascus with the authority and commission from the chief priests. ¹³On the way at about noon, Your Majesty, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. ¹⁴All of us fell down to the ground and I heard a voice telling me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you harassing me? It's hard for you to resist my prodding.'

¹⁵"Who are you, Lord?' I asked.

"I'm Jesus, whom you're harassing,' the Lord answered. ¹⁶"But get up on your feet, because I've appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and a witness of what you've seen and what I'll reveal to you. ¹⁷I'll rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles. I'm sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of the Satan to Godde, so that they may receive forgiveness of wrongdoings and an inheritance among those who are made holy by trust in me.'

¹⁹"So, King Agrippa, I wasn't disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus, then Jerusalem, and then throughout all Judea and to the Gentiles, that they should change and turn to Godde, doing deeds worthy of change. ²¹That's why the temple authorities seized me in the

temple and tried to kill me. ²²To this day Godde has helped me, so I stand here testifying both to great and small, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would happen: ²³that the Christ would suffer, and that by the resurrection from the dead he would be first to proclaim light both to these people and to the Gentiles."

²⁴While Paul was making his defense, Festus loudly interrupted. "Paul, you're crazy!" he said. "Your great learning is driving you mad!"

²⁵"I am not mad, Most Excellent Festus," Paul replied. "I'm telling you what's true and reasonable. ²⁶The king knows about these things, so I can speak freely. I'm convinced that none of these things is hidden from him, because this didn't happen in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you trust the prophets? I know that you trust."

²⁸Agrippa asked Paul, "Are you trying to make me a Christian in such a short time?"

²⁹"I pray to Godde," Paul replied, "that short time or long, not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

³⁰The king got up with the governor, Bernice, and those sitting with them. ³¹When they left, they talked to each other. "This man isn't doing anything worthy of death or of imprisonment," they said.

³²Agrippa told Festus, "This man could've been released if he hadn't appealed to Caesar."

Chapter Twenty-Seven

When it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they handed over Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion named Julius who belonged to the Emperor's Cohort. ²We boarded a ship from Adramyttium which was about to sail to ports on the coast of Asia. We put out to sea along with Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. ³The next day we landed at Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly, allowing him to go to his friends to be cared for. ⁴We put out to sea from there and sailed under the lee of Cyprus because the winds were against us. ⁵After we had sailed across the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. ⁶There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy and put us on board. ⁷We sailed slowly for many days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus. Since the wind didn't allow us to go any farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. ⁸We sailed past it with difficulty and came to a certain place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

⁹We had lost so much time that the voyage was now dangerous, since the Day of Atonement had already passed. So Paul warned them, ¹⁰"Friends, I can see that our voyage will be fraught with hardship and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but of our lives too." ¹¹But the centurion paid more attention to the captain and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. ¹²Because the harbor wasn't suitable to winter in, the majority decided to set sail from there and try to reach Phoenix if at all possible so we could winter there. It was a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest.

¹³When a moderate south wind started to blow, they thought they had what they needed, so they weighed anchor and sailed along the coast of Crete. ¹⁴But before long, a strong wind called the Northeaster rushed down from shore. ¹⁵The ship was caught and couldn't head into the wind, so we gave way to it and were driven along. ¹⁶Running under the lee of a small island called Clauda, we were able to secure the lifeboat with some difficulty. ¹⁷They hoisted it and used cables to help reinforce the ship. Fearing that they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and so were driven along. ¹⁸We were so violently storm-tossed that the next day they started to throw things overboard. ¹⁹On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. ²⁰When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued to rage, we gave up all hope that we would be rescued.

²¹After they had gone a long time without any food, Paul stood up in the middle of them. "Friends," he said, "you should've listened to me and shouldn't have set sail from Crete; then we could've avoided this damage and loss. ²²But I urge you to cheer up, because not one of you will be lost – only the ship. ²³Last night an angel of the Godde to whom I belong and whom I serve stood by me. ²⁴Don't be afraid,

Paul,' it said. 'You must stand trial before Caesar. Look, Godde has spared all those who sail with you.'²⁵So cheer up, friends! Because I trust Godde that it will happen just as I've been told. ²⁶But we need to run aground on a certain island."

²⁷Now on the fourteenth night we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea. About midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. ²⁸They took soundings and found twenty fathoms. After sailing a little farther, they took soundings again and found fifteen fathoms. ²⁹Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they threw four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight. ³⁰In an effort to escape from the ship, the sailors lowered the lifeboat into the sea, pretending that they were going to lower anchors from the bow. ³¹But Paul told the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless they stay in the ship, you can't survive." ³²So the soldiers cut the ropes of the lifeboat and set it adrift.

³³Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone to eat something. "This is the fourteenth day that you've been waiting without food; you haven't eaten anything," he said. ³⁴"So I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive, because none of you will lose a hair from your heads." ³⁵After he said this, he took some bread, gave thanks to Godde in front of them all, broke it, and started to eat. ³⁶Everyone cheered up and ate some food. ³⁷(Altogether there were two hundred seventy-six of us on the ship.) ³⁸When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

³⁹When it was day, they didn't recognize the land, but they noticed a certain bay with a beach and decided to try to run the ship aground if they could. ⁴⁰Casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea. At the same time they untied the ropes of the rudders. Hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. ⁴¹But they struck a reef and ran the vessel aground. The bow got stuck and couldn't move, but the stern started to break up by the force of the waves.

⁴²The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners so none of them could swim away and escape. ⁴³But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, stopped them from carrying out their plan. He ordered that whoever could swim should jump overboard first to go toward the land, ⁴⁴and the rest should follow on planks or some other pieces of the ship. That's how they all escaped safely to the land.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

When we were safely ashore, we learned that the island was called Malta. ²The islanders showed us extraordinary kindness. They kindled a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold.

³Paul gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire. A viper driven out by the heat fastened itself on his hand. ⁴When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer, because although he escaped from the sea, justice hasn't allowed him to live." ⁵But he shook off the snake into the fire and wasn't hurt at all. ⁶They were expecting him to swell up or suddenly drop dead, but after they waited for a long time and saw nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

⁷Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to Publius, the leader of the island. He welcomed us and entertained us hospitably for three days. ⁸Publius' father lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, prayed, laid his hands on him, and healed him. ⁹After that the rest of the people on the island who had diseases came and were cured. ¹⁰They honored us with many gifts and when we were getting ready to set sail, they gave us the things we needed.

¹¹After three months, we set sail in an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island. It had "The Twin Brothers" as its figurehead. ¹²We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days. ¹³From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium. After one day, a south wind came up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, ¹⁴where we found sisters and brothers who invited us to stay with them for a week.

So we came to Rome. ¹⁵There the sisters and brothers heard of us and came to meet us as far as The Forum of Appius and The Three Taverns. When Paul saw them, he thanked Godde and took courage.

¹⁶When we arrived in Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself with a soldier guarding him.

¹⁷Three days later Paul called together the Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, he told them, "Sisters and brothers, though I hadn't done anything against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸When they had examined me, they wanted to release me because I wasn't guilty of any crime deserving death. ¹⁹But when the temple authorities objected, I had no choice but to appeal to Caesar, even though I didn't have anything against my nation. ²⁰So because of this I've asked to see you and to talk with you. It's for the hope of Israel that I'm bound with this chain."

²¹They told him, "We haven't received any letters from Judea about you, nor have any sisters or brothers come to report or say anything evil about you. ²²But we want to hear from you what your views are, because we know this sect is criticized everywhere."

²³When they had scheduled a day for him, many came to him in his guest room. From morning to evening he explained to them his testimony about the Godde's reign, trying to convince them about Jesus both from Moses' Torah and from the prophets. ²⁴Some were convinced by what he said, but others didn't trust. ²⁵They disagreed with each other and left after Paul made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit was right to speak through the prophet Isaiah to your ancestors:

²⁶Go to this people and say,
"By hearing you will hear,
and will in no way understand;
seeing you will see,
and will in no way perceive;
²⁷for this people's heart has grown callous,
their ears are hard of hearing,
they have closed their eyes;
or else perhaps they may see, even if they don't perceive;
and they may hear, even if they don't understand,
because they don't want to change their ways and be forgiven.""

²⁸So I want you to know that Godde's life has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen."

³⁰Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house and welcomed all who were coming to him,
³¹proclaiming Godde's reign and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking out unhindered.