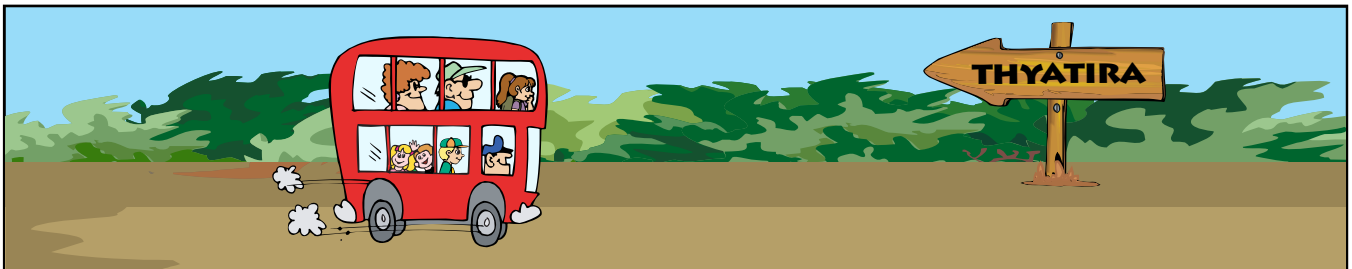


Tour of the Holy Lands - Alexandria Troas



Today, we're driving away from Thyatira along a narrow country road to the Aegean Sea. There we'll visit the ancient city of Troas, sometimes called Alexandria Troas. (The addition of the name "Alexandria" keeps it from being confused with the famous city of Troy, four miles to the north.)

Let's ask some local citizens if they know where we can find some Christians. "Oh, yes," they say. "They meet in that three-story building at the end of the block. We like the Christians here. They express so much love for each other."

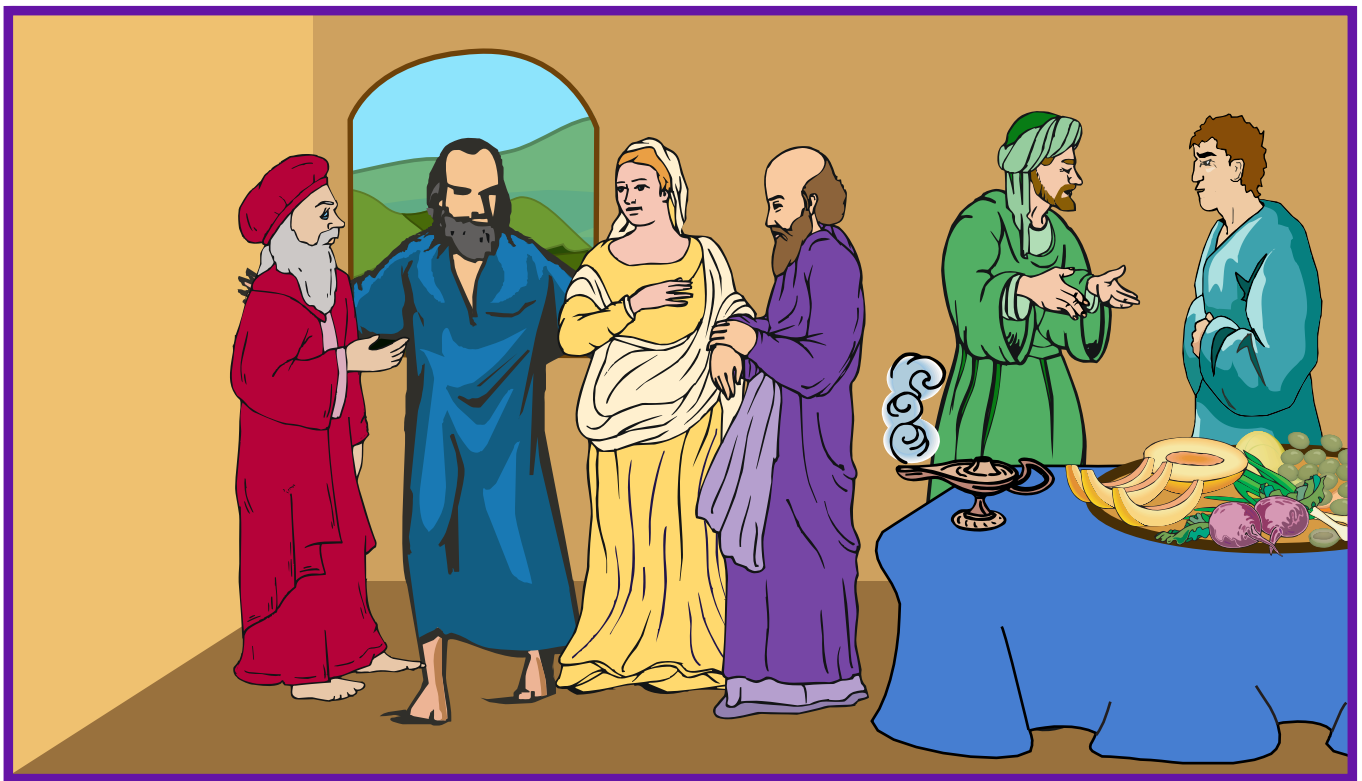




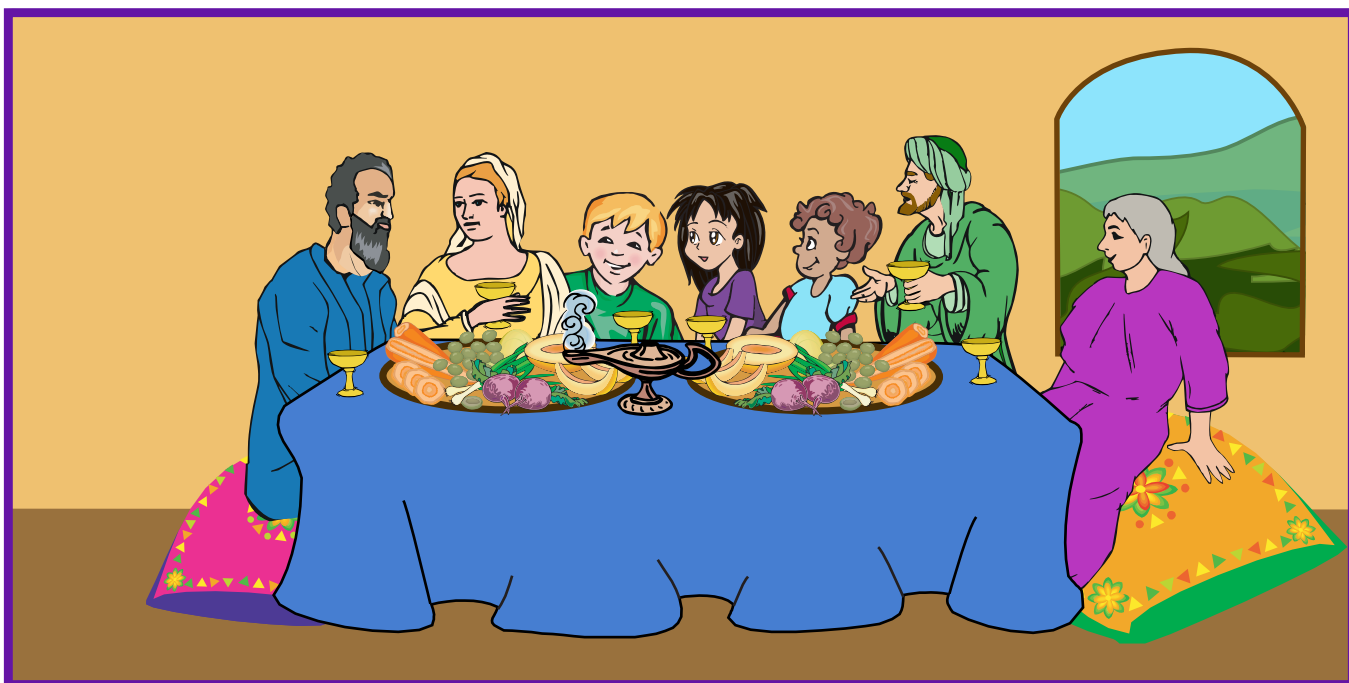
Let's see if we can find someone home. Sure enough, someone is answering our knock and inviting us to come back later for dinner. They have other extra special guests who arrived five days ago from Philippi, one of whom will be speaking after dinner. They call him "the Apostle Paul."

The Apostle Paul! Wow! What a perfect opportunity to learn about early Christianity.

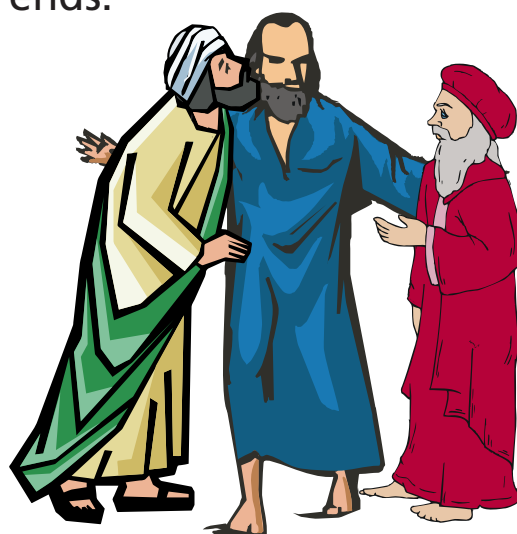
Finally, dinner time arrives. It's the first day of the week, Sunday, and the church members are going to meet at a member's house for their weekly dinner called the "agape" (uh-gaw'pay), meaning "love" in Greek. For us, Sunday is a day of rest, but for them, it's a workday. Why are they meeting on Sunday? Because Sunday is the day of resurrection, a new day, the day Christ Jesus rose from the tomb. After work, the Christians meet for their fellowship meal, prayer and inspired teaching.



Look how happy everyone is! There is a spirit in this community that binds everyone together. They love to belong and they delight in one another – rich and poor, master and slave, all are equal. Gathering together is a way for believers to share their lives and for affection to develop. It's also a way for new Christians to learn the ways of the early believers. They express concern for each other and support each other. They feel responsible for each other. They are a family and call each other "brethren." Nothing mean or unkind is said at these meals. When they speak, it is in a tone that would please their Master, Christ Jesus – as if he is with them.



Every meal is a joyful celebration, praising God. It begins with a prayer and continues with a prayer before each course. It's a simple meal that's provided by the members who can afford to do so. Each person takes a small amount of food and wine. Without utensils, they eat by scooping the food onto a torn piece of flat bread with their fingers. (Hands are washed at the end of the meal.) Everyone is invited to sing, and then to quote from the Scriptures. The meal ends with a prayer. Afterwards, they celebrate the Lord's Supper with bread and wine, and quote the words of Jesus. They give each other a kiss of peace when the gathering ends.





Our group is gathering in a crowded room on the third floor in the home of a wealthy member. The oil lamps make it hot and stuffy. An 8-14 year old boy named Eutychus (yew'ti-kus), meaning "lucky," finds a place to sit on a window ledge overlooking an inner court.

After the meal, Paul preaches and explains the Scriptures. He talks on into the middle of the night because he has to leave the next day, and his audience wants to hear every word. Just then, Eutychus, still sitting on the window ledge, falls asleep and topples out the window onto the pavement below. Many say he is dead, including Luke, who's a physician.

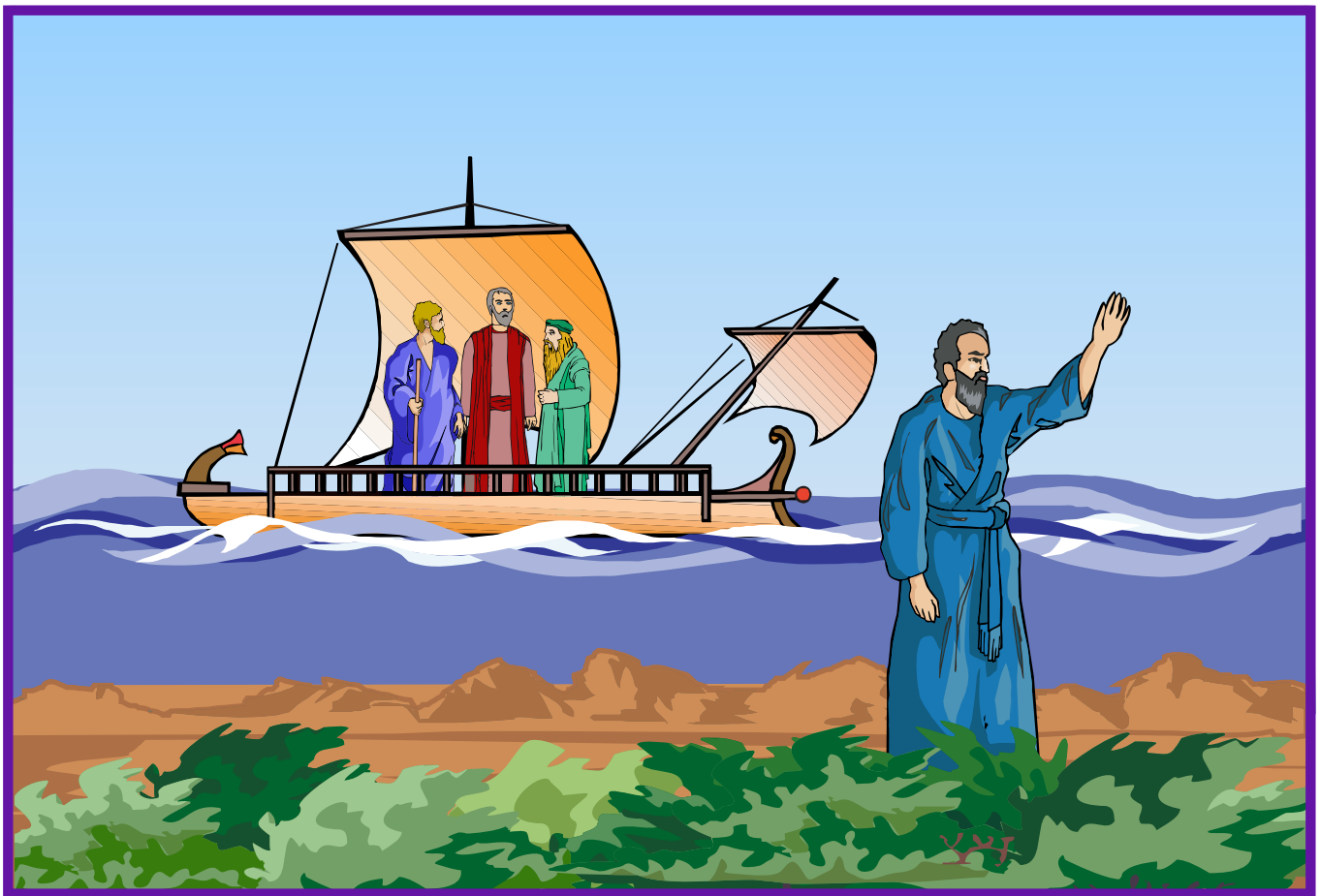


Paul dashes down the outside stairs, bends over him and holds him gently in his arms. The women start wailing, as they do when someone dies. "Don't be alarmed," says Paul. "His life is in him." His tone is matter-of-fact. Teaching and healing go together naturally for Paul. The raising of the boy is just like other resurrections in the Bible. Elijah and Elisha both raise boys in upper rooms.



Paul goes back upstairs, has something to eat and continues talking until sunrise. The boy joins them, safe and sound.

Luke writes later, "They were not a little comforted." That's an old-fashioned way of saying that the church members are relieved and encouraged. They have seen God's power at work with their very own eyes. What fun for us to feel like we were there, too!



In the morning, the travelers board a coastal ship and sail down the coast to Assos. Paul, however, might want to be alone with God since he chooses to walk. What strength he shows to preach all night and then walk 20 miles. And how grateful he must be for a successful visit. Meanwhile, the church members and one young boy stand on the rooftop at Troas and wave until Paul disappears down the shore.