

CHRIST'S
CHURCH
ESTABLISHED

STUDIES
IN
THE ACTS

BY A. S. COPLEY

*"And we are witnesses of all things,
which He did both in the land of the Jews and
in Jerusalem; whom they slew
and hanged on a tree."*

Acts 10:39

PREFACE

This is the 4th edition of this exposition of the book of Acts by the late A. S. Copley.

We dare say there is not another exposition anywhere to compare with this one. The author revised this before he left us, because of the enlarged spiritual riches which his later studies brought to him. There is a great demand for this exposition. We trust this edition may prove to be a great channel of blessing to lovers of the Truth.

If you want a blessing for your soul, read Acts.
If you want the Lord to make you whole, read Acts

REFERENCES USED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- **American Standard Version** (ASV or AV) is a version of the Bible that was released in 1901. It soon came to have other names such as the American Revised Version, the American Standard Revision, the American Standard Revised Bible, and the American Standard Edition. By the time its copyright was renewed in 1929, it had come to be known by its present name, the American Standard Version.
- **Diaglott** is a two-language polyglot translation, of the New Testament by Benjamin Wilson, first published in 1864. It is an interlinear translation with the original Greek text and a word-for-word English translation in the left column, and a full English translation in the right column.
- **King James Version** (KJV) references are used throughout this publication unless otherwise noted.
- **Revised Version** (RV) (or English Revised Version) of the Bible is a late 19th-century British revision of the King James Version of 1611. It was the first and remains the only officially authorized and recognized revision of the King James Bible.
- **Wuest**: Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893–1962) was a noted New Testament Greek (Κοινή) scholar of the mid-20th century...produced his own English translation of the New Testament (the Wuest Expanded Translation – abbreviated WET) based on Nestle's critical text.

Note: *Definitions of references pulled from Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, January 2013.*

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THE INTRODUCTION

"It seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the words wherein thou wast instructed." [Luk.1:3-4]

By comparing Acts 1:1 with Luke 1:3-4, we learn that Luke wrote both books. He was the only New Testament writer who was not "*of the circumcision*," that is, a Jew (see Col.4:11-14). He had written the Gospel of Christ, as "*the Son of Man*," to a man, Theophilus, for all men. How fitting, that now he should write (the book of Acts) the continuation of salvation for Jews and Gentiles.

Although this Book is called **The Acts of the Apostles**, and rightly so, it is the continuation of the deeds and teachings of Christ; note the clause, "*Jesus began*" [Act.1:1]. The same Holy Spirit who filled and led Jesus also filled and led the apostles. Through His mighty power, Christ went on working and teaching by their agency. You will notice also that this book has an informal and abrupt ending; for the works and words of Jesus Christ can never be written fully with pen and ink (compare Joh.21:25). Rather they are written "*on tables that are hearts of flesh*" [2Co.3:3]. Neither does He lack men to carry on His work today. The Book of Acts forms an important bridge work between the Four Gospel records and the Epistles. It is not only historical, but also emphatically prophetic, typical and dispensational. We must look for all these features in the book in order to obtain the greatest profit from our study. Let us always bear in mind, when reading any book of the Bible, that we are reading the mind of God. This is no ordinary account. We are treading upon the supernatural. One is amazed at the depth and breadth of truth contained in the book of Acts, which falls naturally into 2 divisions.

TWO GRAND DIVISIONS

The first 12 chapters comprise the first part; and the remaining 16 chapters, the second part. Each division clusters around one particular character. The first is centered on Peter; the second is centered on the Apostle Paul.

DIVISION 1

The **first part** pertains especially to the Kingdom of God, of which **Peter** was the chief Apostle. The First Division (Acts 1 to 12) summarizes God's dealings with Israel at the beginning of this age and ends typically with the overthrow of Antichrist. This book is not simply biography and history in cold type, but also rich prophecy in letters of fire. The first 12 chapters cover literally a period of about 12 years. Twelve being the full kingdom number, the number of Divine Dominion on earth, is very significant here. While God was preparing to suspend His dealings with His ancient people, Israel, He was also preparing to introduce a new order of things, even the Church.

DIVISION 2

The **second part** pertains to the Church, or Body of Christ, of which **Paul** was the chief Apostle. We cannot easily over estimate the value of seeing this distinction and of holding to it, if we would understand this Book.

The Second Division summarizes the arduous ministry of the Apostle Paul and his co-laborers among the Gentiles, planting churches to which he wrote letters afterward (see notes on Act.13). We consider The Acts a delineator, or pattern book. Here we learn what to do and how to do it.

If we keep to the simplicity of religious operations outlined in this wonderful sample case we will be spared unspeakable failures and unnecessary heartaches. We will not adopt the

religious machinery of carnal men, but go on in the liberty of the glory of God's dear children. The supernatural power of Jehovah will increase in our midst. Signs and wonders will never wane. Never will we have to cry out with shame, "Oh, for the old time power."

OUTLINE OF DIVISION 1, ACTS 1-12

The appearances and ascension of Jesus Christ.	Acts 1
The Lordship of Jesus , even the Man, despised Man of Nazareth, shown by the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit.	Acts 2:36
The Glorification of Jesus as the Son of God, even Jesus of Nazareth, by the healing of the lame man, type of Israel's restoration at the end.	Acts 3-4
The Exaltation of Jesus as the promised Prince, intimated by His judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, and by the many special signs and wonders wrought through the apostles [Act.5; note Vs.31]. The millennium is foreshadowed [Act.5:33-37 with Lev.25]. Jesus as Prince and Savior, rejected by the religious officers .	Acts 5:17-41
Jesus, as the Just One, the Son of Man , rejected by the sects , the people , and the elders typical of the present time.	Acts 6-7
Jesus proclaimed to Samaria and to the Eunuch by Philip, typical of His being proclaimed to Israel and to the Gentiles at the beginning of the next age.	Acts 8
The Salvation of Saul. A new regime in sight.	Acts 9
Jesus proclaimed to the Gentiles in Cornelius' house — the New Age Introduced.	Acts 10-11
Jesus, as the King , rejected by Herod, a type of Antichrist.	Acts 12

READY FOR THE RAPTURE

JESUS SAVES FROM SIN AND CRIME,
 AS HE DID IN OLDEN TIME,
 AND DELIVERS FROM ALL PAIN TODAY:
 FOR OUR SINS AND PAINS WERE NAILED
 TO THE CROSS WHERE HE PREVAILED;
 THRO' HIS BLOOD, ALL ILLS WERE CLEARED AWAY.

AND HE WHOLLY SANCTIFIES,
 WHOM HE SEALS AND TRAINS AND TRIES,
 THAT TRANSLATION GLORY THEY MAY SEE;
 BROTHER PAUL HAS PRAYED FOR THIS —
 PUREST, HIGHEST BRIDAL BLISS —
 SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY BLAMELESS BE.

DO YOU WONDER AT THE FIGHT,
 AS WE WALK IN ALL THE LIGHT?
 SATAN SEEKS TO MAKE US FEAR AND FAIL;
 HE WOULD DIM OUR DOVE-LIT EYES,
 ROB US OF OUR PLACE AND PRIZE,
 BUT THRO' BLOOD, WE SURELY SHALL PREVAIL.

GOD IS FAITHFUL AND WILL DO
 ALL HE PROMISED ME AND YOU,
 IF WE TRUST HIS PREPARATION POW'R;
 SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY ALL,
 READY FOR THE UPWARD CALL,
 HE WILL KEEP US TILL THAT GLORIOUS HOUR.

APPEARINGS AND ASCENSION OF JESUS [ACT. 1]

*"The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach."
[Act.1:1]*

We saw that the Gospel of Luke was addressed to Theophilus [Luk.1:5]. By that fact, we know that Luke wrote this book also. The little verb **began** is full of meaning here. It indicates that the wonderful works and words of Jesus Christ cannot be confined to 3½ years.

Chapter 1 connects the Book of Acts with the Gospels. It intimates Christ's resurrection, which fact is emphasized in the first chapters. The results of "*His passion*" (His death on the cross) [Act.1:3] and of His ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit were dependent upon His resurrection. For this reason, Peter insisted that the number of the 12 be complete, to bear "*witness of His resurrection*" [Act.1:22].

Acts 1:1 is the key verse (see first paragraph of the **Introduction**). Acts 1:3-6 indicate the theme of the first 12 chapters: **The Kingdom**. Acts 1:7 was a concealed portion to those disciples. They did not then see this church age. The query of Acts 1:6 expressed their great concern. The plain and repeated words of Jesus to them made them to hope for His return to reign. Observe the intimate relation of the important facts of this chapter, as if they occurred in immediate succession: Today Christ's death, tomorrow His resurrection, and the next day His ascension, then the advent of the Spirit, and finally Jesus' advent. Indeed it is just that real with God. The disciples did not understand Jesus in saying, "*On this Rock I will build My Church*" [Mat.16]. They expected the immediate return of their Lord. Their language throughout these opening chapters shows forth that fact. The word **church** occurs several times in the first 2 chapters and simply means "*congregation*" or "*assembly*." Compare Stephen's words "*the church in the wilderness*" [Act.7:38] with Leviticus 8:3-5. It plainly means God's people. Be it remembered that these first chapters are primarily occupied with Kingdom matters. Church matters really begin with Acts 13. The Master's answer to the disciple's question of Acts 1:6 shows that He wanted them to be concerned just then with "*the promise of the Father*." He had given them a symposium on the Holy Spirit before [Joh.14 through 17]; but they had to receive Him in order to understand Him and to be "*witnesses unto Christ*."

AN IMPORTANT VACANCY FILLED

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples repaired to the **upper room**, perhaps a chamber in the temple (compare 2Kg.23:12, 1Ch.28:11, Mar.14:15). There they continued with "*one accord in prayer and supplication*." It was in the midst of this prayer time, that Peter announced saying "*One must become a witness with us of His resurrection*." There is no room for question as to whether Peter was in Divine Order. The need was there.

Note: *The number 12 was always the Devine number of Kingdom fullness: 4 (the divisible number of humanity) x 3 (the indivisible number of Deity) = 12 (the comprehensive number of Divine Dominion on earth and of new creation completeness) [study the holy city in Rev.21].*

The Holy Spirit would not come until that vacancy was filled. Wonderful! God had a man in training for that place during all those 3 years (compare Act.2:1 with Mar.4:10). No doubt, Matthias knew it long before even as Moses knew 40 years beforehand that he should lead Israel out. Note that "*He was numbered with the eleven apostles*" [Act.1:26]; also, "*Peter standing up with the eleven*" [Act.2:14]. In Acts 6:2, he is counted with "*the twelve*." But someone who does not

wish to give the Apostle Paul the place that God has given him arises and says that the Apostle Paul should have had that place, that he really became the 12th apostle. Let the Apostle Paul answer for himself. In 1 Corinthians 15, he is recounting the occasions on which Christ was seen and by whom, after His resurrection. He declares that "*He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve*"; later, "*He was seen of James, then of all the apostles*." The next verse proves conclusively that the Apostle Paul did not count himself as one of "*the twelve*" nor as one of "*all the apostles*" for he says, "*Last of all He was seen of me also*." A careful study of the following citations shows that there were 7 other apostles besides the 12, and that the Apostle Paul was one of those 7 (compare Act.19:22 with 2Co.8:18, 23; 1Th.1:1 & 2:6 with 2Co.1:19; also Act.14:14, 1Co.4:6-9 and Phi.2:25). The word **messenger** in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25 is **APOSTLE** in the Greek (see RV). The Apostle Paul was the **chief** apostle of another group, for another and distinct purpose, even as the Apostle Peter was the **foremost** of the 12 apostles.

INTERESTING NOTES

- The "*not many days*" [Act.1:5] were 10 days to which add "*forty days*" [Act.1:3] from Christ's resurrection to Pentecost (see Lev.23:16).
- The word **power** [Act.1:7] is "*authority*."
- The word **witness** (or "*testimony*") occurs about 50 times in the book. It expresses our duty to God.
- The phrase "*one accord*" [Act.1:14] occurs 7 times, a telling feature of those days. It is a musical term. If we walk in the Spirit, there will be harmony among us as Christ's instruments "*making melody in our hearts to the Lord*" [Eph.5:19].
- The word **appointed** [Act.1:23] means "*set forth*" as in Acts 6:6.
- The saying, "*that he might go to his own place*" is the final proof that Judas Iscariot was not saved. He did not "*fall from grace*" [Gal.5:4] nor from his "*own steadfastness*" [2Pe.3:17]. He "*failed the grace of God*" [Heb.12:15]. He had never laid hold of saving grace. By transgression he fell from his office [Act.1:25].
- The word **place** means "*district or region*."

SOME SURE DAY

SOME DAY WE'LL KNOW WHY FRIENDS SEEMED CHILL
 AND STOOD ALOOF WHEN WE FELT ILL.
 ALTHOUGH WE THE PRIZE WOULD WIN.
 SOME TIME WE'LL SURELY UNDERSTAND
 WHY CHRIST SEEMED NOT TO BE AT HAND,
 BUT MISTS AND DOUBTS POURED IN.

SOME DAY WE'LL SEE BEHIND THE CLOUD,
 WHEN WE FELT LONELY IN A CROWD
 WITH NO ONE NEAR TO PRAY,
 THE FACE OF HIM WHO NEVER FAILS,
 WHOSE TENDER HANDS CONTROL THE SAILS
 IN SPITE OF STORM AND SPRAY.

SOME DAY WE'LL BE SURPRISED AND GLAD,
 AND WONDER THAT WE 'ER WERE SAD.
 (OUR TIMES ARE IN GOD'S HAND.)

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS [ACT.2]

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place." [Act.2:1]

Pentecost was the second annual Jewish feast. It occurred early in the 3rd month of the Jewish sacred year. That day came just 50 days from the time that they waved the barley sheaf, or first fruit unto God. That is, the Holy Spirit was poured out just 50 days from the morning of the resurrection of Christ. The many Old Testament types and promises of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit were fulfilled that hour. The Comforter, of whom Jesus spoke freely [Joh.14-17], then came. He became to the disciples the indument with power. Perhaps we can study this chapter in no better manner than by answering several questions.

1. What happened that day? Several striking things:

1st: *"a sound as of a rushing, mighty wind."* That sound was *"from heaven."* It came *"suddenly"* and sovereignly, entirely independently of the people. It went nowhere else, but came and *"filled all the house where they were sitting"* in one accord, waiting for the fulfillment of the last word of the Lord. Does this not speak of the Spirit as a mighty, intelligent One? What if He designs to manifest Himself in such a manner today? Should anyone object? But very many do.

2nd: *"and there appeared unto them tongues, parting asunder, like as of fire";* a strange phenomenon indeed. Had not John foretold of a *"baptism with fire"* [Mat.3]? Yet that too was a surprise. There were not only a few new tongues, but 120, one for each disciple. The tongues of fire were *"cloven"* as if speaking to all mankind.

3rd: *"and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit."* That was the central fact. All the others were accompaniments. For that the disciples were looking and waiting. They did not nor could they understand what the Spirit's advent should mean until they experienced His indwelling. It is even just so today. Yet, those who have not been filled, or anointed with the Spirit as were the 120, attempt to teach others about Him. How can they? How much all saints need this anointing. What a privilege to be filled with God's Spirit. Reader, do you appreciate it? Oh, matchless love! Oh, unspeakable condescension, that He, the spotless Dove, should deign to dwell in this tenement of infirmity! Ah, but the precious blood of another purchased our bodies and made them His temples [1Co.6:19-20]. Thus weakness becomes dynamite.

4th: Dare one name it? *"And began to speak with other tongues."* The devil hates this phenomenon more than any other thing pertaining to the Christian life, except the blood of atonement. Why? What harm can it do? Be it remembered that the speaking in tongues was altogether Divine. The disciples knew nothing about it beforehand. Perhaps they were familiar with Isaiah 28:11-12. They were not waiting for tongues, nor for the other manifestations, but for the Holy Spirit. However they spoke *"as the Spirit"* (who had just come upon them) *"gave them utterance."* Were they to be blamed? Of course not. Well, if I receive the Holy Spirit and speak in another tongue, why do you blame me? If I do not speak in a tongue, how can anyone know that the Spirit has come to me? How do I myself know? What right has any man to tell us that we ought not to speak in tongues? *"Forbid not to speak in tongues,"* exclaimed the dear Apostle Paul.

Why denounce it, as of the devil? Was the Apostle Peter's new tongue of the devil? There is some indication that the devil is not very far off from the folk who fight the sign and manifestation of new tongues.

They "*began to speak*," which implies that speaking in tongues was to be continued, even as what "*Jesus began to do and teach*" [Act.1:1] should be perpetuated by His disciples. "*What is the use of tongues?*" cries the critic. Are you not ashamed to speak so lightly about Jehovah's sovereign acts? Are you not afraid that you might offend His love? Dare you set your carnal, finite ignorance up against Divine, Infinite Wisdom? If you are honestly enquiring, simply run the Bible references and the Holy Spirit will give you a dozen reasons for this peculiar phenomenon. "*Tongues are for a sign*" [1Co.14:22] of the Divine Presence, a sign that the Spirit is poured out; for there were no tongues before the Spirit was sent. They are a distinct sign of Divine Power; for without that power, no one can speak the heavenly language. People beg for money, teach rank error, indulge in chicanery in the Lord's work; but Satan never disturbs them for so doing. Yet, to stop the unruly member from worshipping and adoring the blessed Lord, men write pages upon pages of the most scathing sort. "*Is it not written that tongues shall cease?*" someone asks. Yes, tongues shall cease when the Author of this gracious gift has accomplished all the Father's will thereby, but not until then. And let Jehovah, not men, say when tongues shall cease. (See the tract, "*This Is That*.")

It is very evident that **the advent of the Holy Spirit** was with mighty power, very manifestly supernatural and phenomenal, accompanied with signs and wonders and dynamics. Why should those concomitants ever have ceased? Why do ministers discountenance the supernatural today? Why do they fear the phenomenal? How can they expect the Holy Spirit to continue what "*Jesus began to do and teach*" if He is not allowed to demonstrate His unlimited power and employ the gifts which He brought with Him? Need we wonder that there is no life, no joy, no victory, and no healing balm in most religious circles? Why are prominent men crying out for a revival? Why are they exhorting the church to pray for it? Because they are rejecting the revival which Jehovah sovereignly sent in 1906, and which has been encircling the globe. Sir, you will never have a revival unless you accept God's Revivalist, the Holy Spirit, after His own scriptural fashion.

2. Who received the Spirit?

The 12 apostles and "*certain women*" who were of one accord with them, most likely the 70 disciples, whom Jesus had sent forth, were also there. "*All the apostles*" of 1 Corinthians 15:7 must include the 70. The word **sent** in Luke 10:1 is **APOSTLED** in the Greek [also in Mar.6:7]. Men today would eliminate the women from that company; but they were present and they were filled and prophesied, even as Joel had foretold (see Act.2:17-18). Some men claim that the Gift of the Spirit was for the apostles only; but the first company filled included the apostles, "*the women and the brethren*" [Act.1:12]. Then in Acts 8, 10, and 19, we learn that the Spirit was the Father's Gift for all His people if they would receive Him.

3. What was the effect of the disciples receiving the Spirit?

The answer is plain and full. The multitude were **confounded**; they were all **amazed and marveled**; they were in perplexity, saying one to another, "*What meaneth this?*" Others mockingly said, "*They are full of new wine.*" The God of mighty power was on the scene. The whole city was stirred. But what was the particular fact that **amazed** the people? This is no small query. Three times it is here stated [Act. 2:6, 8, 11] that the people marveled

because they heard the disciples speak in their own tongues. A multitude of Jews from 15 different countries and speaking the dialects (Greek: **DIALEKTO**) of those lands, were assembled in Jerusalem because of the annual Jewish feast of Weeks, or Pentecost (see Lev.23:15-21).

It was the miraculous and unheard of phenomena that aroused the slumbering masses. Oh, if the clergy of our day were only simple enough to be plain ministers of the Christ of apostolic days, what wonders would God do? Alas! They run from the supernatural, the phenomenal; the really spiritual. They rather join those who are "*mocking*" and talk worse than in those days; for they say that "speaking in tongues is of the devil."

4. How shall we account for the outpouring of the Spirit and the speaking in other tongues?

Peter answers saying, "*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*" etc. [Act.2:16-21]. Joel did not say that the recipients should speak in other tongues; but the record declares that they did. Isaiah foretold those days by saying, "*With stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people, to whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing*" [Isa.28:11-12]. The due time came for the fulfillment of both Joel's words and Isaiah's. Peter also announced the death and resurrection of Jesus, confirming the latter by quoting David's words in Psalm 16. Then added this undeniable fact, "*Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit; He (Jesus) hath shed forth (poured out) this, which ye now see and hear*" [Act.2:33]. The will of the Father was done by that outpouring of the Spirit. The will of Jesus Christ was done. It was the will of the other Comforter to come at that moment, and 120 disciples were fully prepared to receive Him. Neither did they object to the manner of His advent, nor the accompanying supernatural sign of speaking in new tongues. By the direct orders of Jesus, 120 were assembled in one accord, waiting for the descent of the promised mighty Holy Spirit. That was not the peak of perfection, as one has written, but rather the peak of power.

PETER'S PENTECOSTAL SERMON

In the Apostle's first Spirit-inspired message, he quotes from 2 Old Testament men: Joel (prophet) and King David. His quotation from Joel falls into 2 distinct parts:

- The first part [Act.2:17-18] refers entirely to the Gift of the Holy Spirit pertaining to this present age and the next age.
- The second part [Act.2:19-20], refers to the beginning of the next age (Acts 2:21 covers both periods).

Let me call particular attention to Acts 2:17, "*And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh*". Men deliberately denounce the present, effective, phenomenal working of God, (known as "*the Latter Rain*") as fanaticism and devilish. Was Peter correct in calling that time "*the last days*"? No one denies his words. In what days are we now? Not one prophetic student denies that we are in **the last days**. What happened in the last days then? If all that Luke records in Acts 2 took place then; how can Acts 2:17 be fulfilled now if these are the last days unless we allow a repetition (continuation) of those happenings today? If those phenomena were the fulfillment of Joel's words then, what else but those amazing supernatural's can be said to be the fulfillment of his prophecy today? How dare any man attempt to garble the Scriptures and introduce a supposed substitute for Jehovah's own sovereign, almighty Gift and confounding accompaniments? How can Bible students conscientiously slip over those plain words "*And it shall be in the last days, saith God*"? If, as the Apostle declares "*God saith,*" it behooves us all to believe it all and to profit by it. And not only

did Peter announce that God **said** it, but He **saith** it. He has been saying it ever since Joel wrote those words, even for over 2,700 years. Happy and victorious are they who "*gladly receive*" Joel's and Peter's words as the words of God.

Note an important difference in the wording. Joel said, "*Afterward*" but Peter says, "*In the last days*." God had first promised material blessings and prosperity, which were to be followed by the pouring out of the Spirit (study Joe.2:18-27). "*Corn and oil and wine*" were promised. He bid the beasts not to be afraid; for the trees should flourish and be fruitful for them. He bid the children of Zion to rejoice; because they should "*eat in plenty and be satisfied*" and never again be ashamed. The material rains, which had been withheld for so many years on account of Israel's disobedience, that is, the former and the latter rains, should be poured out copiously upon the holy land. Then "*afterward*," after those bountiful blessings, the spiritual blessings should flow forth with the advent of the Holy Spirit.

But it pleased the Lord to send the Spirit ahead of the material blessings. The latter did not come upon Palestine before the Spirit was poured out. Therefore, Peter could not say, "*afterward*" but "*in the last days*," which of course include Joel's "*afterward*."

Now, mark 2 noteworthy facts:

- About 1875 A.D. the rains began to fall in the holy land, restoring it to productiveness, at least in some measure as Joel 2:18-27 foretold.
- Then about 1906, the Lord began to visit the Church with the spiritual latter rain, the Holy Spirit with the invincible sign of speaking in new tongues.

Joel's "*afterward*" could not come at the beginning of this age but it has come near the close and is upon us today. Now if Peter could say of the advent of the Spirit, then "*This is that*"; how much more can we shout "*This is that*" because it is more fully the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy than the Pentecost at the beginning. Indeed we can say, "*This is that*," spoken by Joel, and that which came at the first. Not only has it come "after" the material rainfall; but the mutterings of judgment are manifest that the judgments foretold by Joel, which were not fulfilled when the Spirit first came, are sure to come upon the world very soon. "*The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*" [Gen.15:16] in Christ's time; but it is full today, reeking with blatant infidelity and modern idol worship [1Kg.21:26]. Jehovah cannot endure it much longer.

The second part of Joel's prophecy [Act.2:19-20] were not fulfilled after Pentecost at the beginning. They yet await fulfillment. We should expect them to follow the present down-pour of the Latter Rain. It is just before the coming of the day of the Lord that God will show wonders in heaven and signs upon the earth. That coming time of judgment, which Joel termed "*great and very terrible*"; Peter calls "*great and notable*." The latter word is **EPIPHANE** in Greek which means literally "*shining upon*"; hence, "*appearing or manifestation*." Prophetic students frequently term it the "epiphany" in distinction from the "**PAROUSIA**" (Greek), or presence or coming of the Lord. The word **appearing** in Peter's first epistle is not the same as here. There it properly means "*revelation*" [1Pe.1:13]. In the Greek, it is **APOKALUPSEI** ("*an uncovering*"). The Apostle Peter always looked for the unveiling or revelation of Jesus. To obtain a fuller understanding of the word **appearing** ("*epiphany*") [Act.2:20], it will pay the diligent student to compare 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10 and 4:1, 8; and Titus 2:13. In 2 Thessalonians 2:8, the same word is translated **brightness**. From this last citation, we can see readily why Joel calls it terrible; for by the dazzling, outshining of His presence, Christ will destroy His enemies forever. Joel calls the day of the Lord also "*a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness*" [Joe.2:1-2]. Then will the Lord be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (His

whole body), in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ [2Th.1].

"Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades; neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption." [Act.2:26-27]

Peter turned suddenly from Joel to David, who also was a prophet as well as a king. Jesus' burial and resurrection were the fulfillment of David's graphic words. It was the same Peter who wrote afterwards of Jesus' visit to the believers in Hades (or Abraham's bosom) [Luk.16] where He preached unto the spirits in prison—those, of course, who had died believing God and accepting His word [1Pe.3:19-20]. But he was there only a few hours. It was not possible that He should remain subject to death. His holy body could not yield to corruption. Life repels and overcomes death. Light expels darkness. Weakness succumbs to power. Not only did Jesus comfort the prisoners of hope and then depart from their abode; but *"when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive."* "He descended first into the **lower parts** of the earth" (much lower than: the grave, even into Hades) and freed the captives and took them with Himself *"far above all heavens"* [Eph.4:8-10]. No marvel then that the Apostle Paul wrote, that *"to depart and be with Christ is far better"* [Phi.1:23]. There is only one excuse for staying here, as the Apostle declares *"to abide in the flesh is more needful for you"* [Phi.1:24]. The apostles emphasized greatly the resurrection of Jesus, *"This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses"* [Act.2:32]. It was the unanswerable proof to every honest Jew of His Divine Sonship and Messiahship, He was *"declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead"* [Rom.1:4], even Jesus. Having heaped up an array of plain facts, confirmed by Old Testament prophecies, demonstrating the Divine Sonship and call of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Peter concluded his masterful discourse by a burning exhortation. *"Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, (Messiah or Anointed One), this Jesus whom ye crucified"* [Act.2:36].

WAS PETER'S SERMON EFFECTUAL?

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" [Act.2:37]

Yes, the Apostle Peter's sermon was effectual because it was the voice of God. The 120 were together in *"one accord."* Likewise the Apostle's hearers were present as one heart. Their need was one and their cry for help was one. Therefore, the Spirit could enable His servant to give an answer at once. *"And Peter said unto them, Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit"* [Act.2:38]. Israel's repentance and baptism had a particular meaning. They were not *"sinners of the Gentiles"* [Gal.2:15] nor sinners as we commonly say today. They were all God's people, actual worshippers of Him and looking for the promised Deliverer, Messiah, and King. Being zealous for The Law of Moses, they were observing the rites and ceremonies in the temple as set forth in Exodus and Leviticus. Up to the light they had, many of them, no doubt, walked in God's will. But now Christ came as the fulfillment of those rites and ceremonies, which He had said, *"I came not to destroy, but to fulfill"* [Mat.5:17]. *"By mighty works and wonders and signs"* [Act.2:22], God approved of His Son in their midst. But as a nation, the Jews rejected Him (see Joh.5:18 and Joh.10:33). He also had said to them, *"Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of ME: but ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life"* [Joh.5:39].

When the Holy Spirit was poured out, Israel was granted unbounded evidences that Jesus was indeed the Anointed One of the Father. Therefore, they should repent of their former attitude

toward Him and accept Him as their Savior and Prince. By one outward act they could do that and express their faith in Jesus of Nazareth; namely, by being baptized in water in His name. The Apostle Peter did not mean, as some teach, that God would forgive their sins if they yielded to baptism in Jesus' name. That would have been a salvation by works, against which the whole Bible stands boldly and plainly. He meant rather, if they believed on Jesus, they would be baptized in His name. God did not save the Jews one way, partly by works, and the Gentiles wholly by grace. *"He made no distinction between us (the Jews) and them (the Gentiles), cleansing their hearts by faith"* [Act.15:9]. The Apostle Paul's words to the 12 at Ephesus indicate the nature and force of water baptism. He said, *"John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him who should come after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus"* [Act.19:4-5; compare also Luk.7:29]. In both cases, they showed their faith by yielding to baptism. They who hearkened to John and to the Apostle Paul were not pricked, in their heart and did not need to cry, *"What shall we do?"* because they did not resist the truth when they heard it.

The preposition **unto** in the phrase *"unto the remission of your sins"* is **eis** in the Greek. Its radical sense is *"direction towards motion to, in, or into."* Baptism cannot mean more than in the direction toward, or as a motion unto salvation. That is, it expresses faith in Christ as the Savior. Furthermore, John the Baptist had announced *"the axe laid at the root of the trees"* [Mat.3:10]. Both Jews and Gentiles proved themselves unable to bring forth good fruit; for *"there is none good, no not one: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* [Rom.3:12, 23]. Therefore, God's judgment axe, The Law, cut down the trees through Christ's substitutionary death on Calvary; He was *"cut off, not for Himself"* but for all men [Dan.9:26]. *"We thus judge that One died for all; therefore all died"* [2Co.5:15]. Therefore, when Israel yielded to baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, they simply acknowledged thereby that the Man whom they had rejected, is indeed their promised Redeemer, and that through Him only could they have eternal life. Thus they outwardly declared that they could not help themselves, that the rites and ceremonies were only shadows of Christ, and could bring them no blessing, but He was the real Substance. They acknowledged that they died in His death and were raised in His resurrection to live by His very life in them.

We read, *"They then that had received his (Peter's) words were baptized"*; or another translation which is richer, *"Those therefore who gladly had welcomed his words were baptized."* There were added in that day about 3,000 souls. Of course with their heart turned thus to Jesus Christ, they could receive the Holy Spirit quite readily; for He had been given freely already, even poured out upon all flesh and was waiting to be received. *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers"* [Act.2:42]. We just studied the teaching of the apostles [Act.2:38-41]. How blessed it would be throughout all Christendom today if the ministers and people still continued in the same doctrine. Of course the disciples continued in fellowship; for a whole hearted acceptance of the whole truth results in full fellowship among believers. As Jesus gave instruction to the 12 [Mat.26:26-29] and years afterward to the Apostle Paul [1Co.11:23-25], so they observed *"the breaking of bread."* Instead of cutting out this memorial, as some would do today, they continued it. Instead of pronouncing it *"a tradition nailed to the cross,"* as some do now, the Apostle Paul perpetuated the observance of it and gave us the correct interpretation thereof as related to the Church of Christ. Some people are so piously afraid of formality that they would exclude spiritual forms or symbols. They fear that the Spirit cannot be free to operate through what they call forms and ceremonies. Let us remember that the Holy Spirit does not move haphazardly, like a bird in the air. He moves always according to the written Word. If we follow His direction, we too will move thus and we never will be bound by any **dead form**. Every motion of every meeting will be living, shining with beauty, and pulsating with power. Let us fear rather that we might get away from the inspired pattern delineated in this book of Acts. Indeed, it is the record of *"the*

Acts of the Apostles"; but they were filled with and guided by the dear Holy Spirit. When we conform to the pattern, we are moving in the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 11, we read of 2 of the 3 church ordinances. The Greek word **PARADOSIS** translated **ordinances** [1Co.11:2] is translated **traditions** in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 and 3:6. They were not nailed to the cross, because they were given to the Apostle Paul to be observed by the Church. Study these references and learn their importance. Baptism in water is the 3rd ordinance or tradition.

"And the prayers"; that is, the saints in the beginning continued to pray as well as did the apostles. Nowadays, the preacher does the praying, and his prayers are usually as cold as Greenland. There is no real warmth or power in them. Too often they proceed from uncircumcised lips. It appears that the primary purpose of gathering was for prayer. Peter and John went to the temple at 3 p.m. because that was *"the hour of prayer"* [Act.3:1]. Now, the people assemble to hear a list of worldly announcements and a formal talk (lecture). Then the lame were wonderfully healed; now they have no place for the weak and maimed. Then they lifted their hands to God in streaming cries of need and He shook the place of meeting in answer thereto [Act.4]. Many wonders and signs were done in Jesus' name. When Peter was imprisoned later because of his loyalty to the truth, the Church prayed him out [Act.12]. If you want a safe symposium on living, effective prayer, read the Acts.

"All that believed were together and had all things common, and they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all according as any man had need." [Act.2:44-45]

The same facts are stated in greater length in Acts 4:32-37. The conduct of the saints, as expressed in these verses, was the fulfillment of Leviticus 25. Every 50th Jewish year was a jubilee year, which pointed forward to the millennium. That very year in which Jesus died and the Holy Spirit was poured out was a Jubilee year. The disciples supposed that the millennial reign of Christ was due and that He would return very soon. Indeed it was due and He would have come back about 7 years later if the Jews (as a nation) had received Him. Therefore, they acted in obedience to Leviticus 25 and sold their possessions and had all things common, as they will do again when the Lord does return. However, Jesus did not return then but introduced a different order of procedure. The Church was never intended to observe that rule of order given to Israel; therefore, the Apostle Paul, the Church apostle distinctively, never taught the community of goods. For that reason, wherever men have endeavored to introduce such a custom, it always failed. They were not led of the Lord. The unity required of the Church is *"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"*; that is, the 7 **ONE's** of Ephesians 4:3-6. We are not admonished to try to bring it about (for it already exists); but we should *"be diligent to keep the unity."* The gifts and offices have been bestowed that we might *"all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God"* [Eph.4:13].

"And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home; they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people." [Act.2:46]

The breaking of bread here was not a part of the worship as in Acts 2:42. There the prayers are mentioned with it; here not so. Note how rejoicing they were. This also is an earnest of how glad and wholehearted Israel will be in the millennium.

"And the Lord added together day by day those that were being saved." [Act.2:47]

It may be of interest to the Bible student to read this verse exactly as it occurs in the Greek: **AND THE LORD ADDED THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED DAILY TO THE ASSEMBLY.**

If ministers would compare Acts 2:27 with Acts 5:14 and Acts 11:24, they would not stress church joining. At least, they would not attempt to do the adding; for it reads distinctly that "*the Lord added.*" Nor did He add any unsaved people, but those **being saved**. Furthermore, they were not added to any man-made sect or denomination. Even the 2 words **THE ASSEMBLY** (or church) are given by 4 copies only, as found in the Vatican. Doubtless the other 2 citations should settle it as to whom the Lord added the converts; there we read that they were "*added to the Lord.*" That agrees with the Apostle Paul's words of being "*joined to the Lord*" [1Co.6:17]. When He saves people He adds them to Himself. The New Testament admits of no other adding, or joining, except to Himself or by Himself. After the sad episode of Ananias and Sapphira [Act.2:5], "*no man durst join himself to them.*" That ought to be full of instruction and warning to all believers today. The foregoing happenings occurred in the year 33 A.D.

THE GLORIFICATION OF JESUS [ACT.3-4]

"And He took Him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and his anklebones received strength: and leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God." [Act.3:7-8]

People generally are more or less familiar with this healing narrative. How few, however, observe its typical value. If you do not look for typical teaching in the Acts, you will miss much that is yours by Divine Grace. The healing of the lame man at the gate beautiful was an object lesson to all Israel of what God was about to do for them as a nation, if they had received Jesus. It was in His mind also to do the same stupendous things for the Gentiles. That man had been lame for about 40 years [Act.4:22].

Note: *The number 40 speaks of testing. Moses was tested for 40 years as to his faithfulness. Then he was tested as to his qualifications for responsibility. Finally, 40 years more tested his success as a leader and his fitness to receive a full reward. Jesus was tested 40 days in the wilderness.*

The beggar's lameness illustrates Israel's utter helplessness after 1,500 years of tutorage under The Law [Gal.3:21-25]. When Christ came, The Law, the tutor or schoolmaster, was no longer needed. It could not give life nor sustain life. The Law could only chide, correct, curb, and chastise its pupils until Christ should come; but not "*bring us into Christ*" [Gal.3:23]. But He came and proved His readiness and ample ability to heal the people, soul and body, by recovering the lame man. Some of the people believed and received the great blessings. They too went walking and leaping and praising God. Thank God, they who today believe fully on Jesus receive the like fullness of blessing, freedom, and joy. The Law cannot make people walk uprightly, leap, and shout for joy. It cannot heal the sick and alleviate pain. Only grace can bless.

The lame man's wonderful healing foreshadows the healing of the whole nation of Israel, when Jesus comes again. "*Shall a nation be born at once?*," cries the prophet [Isa.66:8]. Yes, the whole nation will be healed and leap and praise God. They will accept the Christ whom they have rejected these 20 centuries (read Isa.25-27, also Isa.35:10, and note the frequent utterances of the phrase "**in that day**"). They will gladly acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God, the Holy One and the Just, the Prince of life, whom their fathers killed. His name, through faith in His name, will give them perfect soundness in soul and body. Dear Peter explained that all the above resulted from the death of Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

AN APPROPRIATE APPEAL

"Repent ye therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things."
[Act.3:19-21]

The Apostle wisely uses the healing of the beggar and the explanation he gave, as a mighty leverage to persuade his audience to accept Jesus. The Spirit made Peter declare that the **"times of refreshing"** promised to them in the Old Testament could only come by the personal return, or **"presence of the Lord."** How true is that? He uttered also another solemn truth—those refreshings were dependent upon Israel's repentance. As we shall see by Acts 7, their refusal to turn to the Lord shut up the heavens and penned up their Lord in the regions above. Therefore, their cry, like a vexed widow [Luk.18:3-8], will bring Him back to deliver them and refresh them beyond measure.

Dear Reader, consider these words most carefully. Today God is visiting the Gentiles and taking out a people for His name [Act.15:14-17]. We can expect nothing more. The Jews must accept Jesus nationally before the world-wide revival can come. The world is not turning to Him. When you hear or read that a whole city is taking a stand for Christ under the ministry of some modern evangelist, you may know at once that the full gospel of the despised Nazarene is not being proclaimed. Ministers and methods that are popular with men are an abomination to the holy God (compare Joh.5:43-44 and 1Co.4:9-13). The greater revival, the world-wide revival for which some claim to be praying, will not arrive until Jesus returns and is received by the Jews. Observe the last verses of Acts 3. *"Ye are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blest."* Note in particular the following: *"Unto you first, God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to bless you in turning every one of you from your iniquities."* Oh, the responsibility of Israel for the salvation of the nations. *"If the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world; what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?"* [Rom.11:15-31].

How rapidly the Spirit sweeps us forward in the unfolding of the Divine Plan. In Acts 2, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit were manifested and the resurrection of Jesus proved. In Acts 3, the return and presence of **"the Prince of Life"** are announced. The entire period of Israel's partial blindness is spanned by this chapter and their deliverance offered to them. Of course, the Apostle did not then know how long the Lord would be detained in the heavens. Doubtless he was made to know later on, by reading Psalm 90:4 and Hosea 6:2, whereby he learned that *"one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day"* [2Pe.3:8].

MERCY REFUSED [ACT.4]

"And as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being sore troubled, because they taught the people and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in ward unto the morrow; for it was now eventide." [Act.4:1-3]

In their addresses, the Apostles constantly aimed to make Israel see that Man, whom the Jews had just crucified, was indeed the Anointed of God. Those Spirit-filled men proved that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Jews' own Scriptures. Thus they were forced to behold the Spirit's perpetual effort to show them God's amazing grace, which their legality hated as poison. Study the rapid growth of their malice, which sought to keep pace with Jehovah's gracious and mighty workings. From *"amazement and marvel"* they go on through *"mockery"* and *"grief."* Then

they are "*filled with indignation*," "*gnash on Stephen and stone him*" to death, thus "*crucifying to themselves Christ afresh*." Peter's first sermon was occasioned by the **amazement and perplexity** of the people, who asked one another saying, "*What meaneth this?*" and by the cry of some saying, "*What shall we do?*" [Act.2:12, 37]. His second message was occasioned by their **greatly wondering**, as if the holiness of the apostles had healed the impotent man [Act.3:11-12]. The present discourse was the answer to a question by the **sore-troubled** officers who said, "*By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?*" That a notable miracle had been wrought, they could not deny; but they did not wish to receive it as Divine.

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit (not filled again, as some would teach), said unto them, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in this name, doth this man stand here before you whole." [Act.4:8-10]

What a comprehensive and convincing reply. Their critical query gave the Apostle the opportunity to emphasize the **NAME which is above every name**. You will observe that the word **name**, as referring to Jesus, occurs 7 times in this chapter. That is very significant. The angel said to Joseph in a dream, "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins*" [Mat.1:21]. From His birth, the Jews hated His name. Peter had rung the changes on His name. The Stone which the Jews rejected, God made the Head of the corner. Note these striking words, "*And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved*" [Act.4:12].

At once it becomes evident why the Apostles exhorted the people to be **baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** from the beginning [Act.2:38]. And this is why we read throughout this book that the people were baptized invariably **in His name** and in no other name. Not once is it written that anyone was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. "*That God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ* (Anointed) [Act.2:36]. "*The God of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus*" [Act.3:13]. Moses wrote of Him, saying, "*Him shall ye hear in all things*" [Act.3:22]. "*Believers were added to the Lord*" and to Him only; "*Him hath God exalted with His right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior*" [Act.5:14, 31]. For these ample reasons, everything was done in Jesus' name. Should baptism in water be an exception? No, verily not! Matthew 28:19 will be observed when the Lord returns with the Church, His Body, of which He is the scriptural Head. Really they who baptize in the name of the Trinity pull the millennial age into this church age which robs Jesus Christ of the exalted and honored place which the Father gave Him, as the Head of the Church (observe also Col.3:17, 23).

Is not the Book of the Acts an inspired record? Did not the 12 apostles and, the Apostle Paul, move in God's perfect will? If they did, what authority do we have to deviate from their mode of operations? If they did not do as the Holy Spirit bid them, why did not the Apostle Paul teach us better? Why do his writings agree with the Acts? Compare 1 Corinthians 1:10, 13; 1 Corinthians 5:4; 1 Corinthians 6:11, and Philippians 2:9-10. The mighty power **of the name of Jesus** was further demonstrated, when the disciples gathered together in prayer, beseeching God to give them boldness to preach, heal the sick and work signs and wonders "*through the name of Jesus*" [Act.4:24-31].

A MILLENNIAL FORECAST

In their petition to the Lord, the disciples quoted from Psalm 2 "*Why do the heathen (Gentiles) rage?*" The opposition and rage of the Jewish and national officers then was only a shadow of how both church and state will be arrayed against our Lord at the opening of the coming dispensation. The earnest of those days is apparent now. The people are **imagining vain things**. The kings are **setting themselves** in array against God's Anointed. Modernism in

Christendom no longer wants Jesus to be the "*Savior*"; and, of course, the kings do not want Him to be "*The Prince*."

Likewise, as intimated in our notes on Acts 2, Acts 4:32-37 are a millennial scene. Israel will be of **one heart** and have all things common. **With great power** will the ministers then witness and **great grace** will be upon them all. There will be many Barnabases in evidence then.

THE EXALTATION OF JESUS [ACT.5]

These events are not simply bits of history; they are profoundly instructive, both as to experience and type. Let us not miss God's deepest thought and purpose in them. Therefore, we are not to see the individual sin of that selfish couple alone here, but the deep seated sin of national Israel. In Luke 12:1, Jesus termed sin "*the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy*." But back of this lay a still deeper sin, which is generally overlooked or treated lightly. Men throw clubs at the evil fruit but fail to see the root. Jesus Christ killed the root. This the old man never likes. Study the last one of the 10 Commandments. Observe the fullness of that verse, and all summed up in one tremendous word **Covet**. The Holy Spirit declares this to be the root-evil. In Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5, the word **coveting** is termed **idolatry** (worshipping another). This is why the Apostle Paul uttered Acts 20:33 and singles out coveting in Romans 7:7. This is the reason for that full lesson on coveting in 1 Timothy 6:1-10, because "*the love of money is the root of all evil*" and money buys all that men covet. The old creation raises a great cry about other sins among men, notably drunkenness, adultery, etc. But the Holy Spirit strikes at the tap-root of sins. Coveting is the mother of drunkenness, adultery, lying, stealing, etc. What is coveting? It is desiring anything out of God's will. It is desiring someone or something else as a source of comfort and support rather than God Himself. It is **idolatry**.

The hypocrisy of Israel "*who say and do not*," who claimed Abraham for their father and the living God as their God, but in their hearts were far from both, is thrown on the screen in the conduct of Ananias and his wife. God's just wrath against hypocrisy, **the fruit**, and coveting, **the root**, is displayed in their sudden cutting off. From the Old Testament writings they knew what to expect. God was still dealing with Israel and His judgment of those two parties was an object lesson to the nation. It should be a warning to us today. In 1 Corinthians 10:5-10 is found the reason for such severe treatment. Chiefly, "*those things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted*." In like manner, Simon was smitten with blindness for a season [Act.13:11], a type of the spiritual blindness which has happened to the whole nation because they refused the Messiahship of Christ [Rom.11:25].

Those early days were a transition from the Kingdom of God on earth to the Church of Christ, seated by faith with Him in the heavenlies. This will appear plainer as we proceed in our studies. Hence, the transitional place of Ananias and Sapphira. Israel, led by Joshua, entered in triumph into the Promised Land. They were progressing finely. God delivered fragrant Jericho into their hands, which typified their provisional conquest of the world. "**BUT**," says the holy penman, it is always a sad day when God has to record that blunt conjunction **BUT**. "*But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing*;" Achan threw a blot and blight upon the scene. He "*took of the accursed thing*." He broke the 7-fold 10th Commandment. He "**coveted**" and God had Achan stoned to death for troubling Israel [Jos.7].

Acts 5 corresponds with Joshua 7. Spiritually, Israel was then in the Promised Land. The world was judged and cursed at Calvary. Those who received the truth were filled with the Spirit. The world lay provisionally at their feet; conquered and subdued. They were meeting with unbounded success. "*The Lord added together daily such as were being saved.*" "But." Here is this same significant blunt conjunction, the first word of Acts 5. What does it mean? Was not the Spirit given? Were the disciples not in the will of God? Do we not read "*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit*"? How could there arise that dreadful blight in such a holy and Spirit-empowered gathering? Acts 5:13 lets us into a secret. Some people attempted to "*join themselves to them.*" Those self-joiners pretended to make a full consecration to God. It soon becomes evident as to whether people are self-joined to the meeting or divinely "*added to the Lord.*" And the manifest love of the world proves men's hypocrisy and coveting nature. The whole world, ruined by sin, was cursed in the death of Christ. It is therefore justly devoted to God for whom it was purchased by His Son's death. When we believe on Jesus Christ, God gives us a nature that loves Him and which uses this world for His glory. We are "*added to the Lord.*" That old nature in all of us, which covets, was condemned and cursed at Calvary, when "*Christ was made a curse for us*" [Gal.3:13]. Constantly admit this fact, count with God; then "*the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life*" will be forever powerless.

"And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them ... and believers were the more added to the Lord."
[Act.5:13-14]

Where the Holy Spirit has His way, and His power prevails, there is no such thing as "joining the church," but people are joined unto the Lord [1Co.6:17]. By that seductive method, the "*four hundred prophets of Baal*" are filling up the creed bound churches and reporting great revivals; but how few are born of the Spirit. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was set at the gateway of this church age as a warning against this subtle religious snare. The religious spirit of the age is so fascinating and powerful in its cunning. It has so much of the truth and, in many respects, is so like the genuine that very few people are not snared by it. Our only safeguard is to take Christ as our life and walk in the fullness of the Spirit and keep filled with the Word.

Bear in mind that the foregoing is typical of the righteous reign of Christ during the millennium. His judgment of those 2 hypocrites suggests the full authority He will possess as the Prince (King of kings and Lord of lords). This explains why similar hypocrites are not judged in a similar manner today as were Ananias and his wife. Now the wheat and tares are allowed to grow together until the harvest [Mat.13:27-30].

JESUS OFFICIALLY REJECTED [ACT.5:17-40]

"But the high priest rose up and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation and laid hands on the apostles and put them in public ward." [Act.5:17-18]

In Acts 4, we saw that the Jewish officials were beginning to take a stand against the apostles; therefore, Peter's third discourse was addressed to the "*rulers of the people and elders*" [Act.4:8]. His former messages were addressed to all the people: "*Men of Judea, or Israel, men and brethren*" [Act.2:14, 22, 29 and Act.3:12]. The answer of the apostles and the continued miracles did not allay their rage. At first they were "*sore troubled*" because of the apostles' teaching [Act.4:1]. Now, they are "*filled with jealousy*" and determined to wipe them off the map. But the Lord came to their rescue and miraculously delivered them from the prison and bid them preach "*all the words of this life.*" Of course they obeyed and an unusual thing happened. They held a "*daybreak*" meeting in the temple.

Oh, what a message! Had they the words of life? Yes, all the words of this life; not this natural life (Greek: **PSUCHE**), but the supernatural, eternal life (Greek: **ZOEN**). It was the new creation life, which had recently sprung out of death. The original reads thus "*all the utterances (Greek: **HRAMATA**) of this life.*" Jesus said to John, "*I am the Living One*" (Greek: **ZAO**) [Rev.1:18]. Therefore, he says, "*He that hath the Son hath the life*" (Greek: **ZOE**) [1Jo.5:12], which he terms **eternal life** in the verse before. We have a wonderful, life-giving, life sustaining message in the Divine Utterances of this eternal life. We do well if we search and see Christ on every page of Scripture.

A COURT OF INJUSTICE

The high priests called the council and all the senate (or elderhood) together. Look at that assemblage: The high priest, captain, chief priests, officers, Sadducees; a religious senate. They had met about 2 months before and had the Son of Man put to death. They again show their enmity against Him by refusing to heed His Spirit-anointed messengers of peace. They were not ignorant but acknowledged that the truth was being proclaimed. They said to the apostles, "*Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine (not denying that it was scriptural), and intend to bring this man's blood upon us*" [Act.5:28]. They deliberately refused the cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb, "*recently slain and yet living*" [Heb.10:20]. Therefore, they knew the inevitable consequence—banishment from God forever. Instead of yielding to conviction and turning to Christ they officially decided to stop the mouths of God's faithful servants who were the channels thereof. But for Gamaliel's wise counsel, they would have slain them immediately, even as later they did Stephen and James [Act.7 and Act.12:1].

"They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ." [Act.5:41-42]

It is worth our while to note how the Church at first met persecution. They prayed. After the first arrest, "*they lifted up their voice to God with one accord*" [Act.4:24]. They comforted themselves by recalling Scripture, which their foes were fulfilling. Instead of being discouraged, they cried for added power and boldness to declare the truth. Likewise after the second arrest and release, they went on with their God-appointed task, rejoicing in their persecutions. Generally people count it a shame to suffer for Christ; but they counted it an honor to suffer dishonor in His behalf. Why? Because they knew that they were fighting for a good cause and for the One who surely will win: Observe also that they did not try to defend themselves. When questioned, they answered and explained. When light was sought, they gave it. They offered neither apologies on the one hand nor resentment on the other. They kept themselves wholly committed to the wisdom and care of the Lord. What an example for His servants today. Let us profit thereby.

GO ON; GO ON; MY FRIENDS: THERE'S ALL ETERNITY TO REST.
AND VERY FEW, WE SEE, ARE ON GOD'S ACTIVE SERVICE LIST.
IN ALL LABOR FOR THE LORD, IT IS WISDOM TO INVEST,
AND NOTHING WILL MAKE UP TO US IF HIS "WELL DONE" BE MISSED.

REJECTION OF JESUS SETTLED [ACT.6-7]

"Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations." [Act.6:1]

Mark the first phrase, "*In these days*" or "*those days*" [Diaglott]. No doubt, a period of about 2 years elapsed from the death of Christ until Stephen's career began. Therefore, we date Stephen's career from 35 to 40 A.D., or about 5 years. In studying Acts 7, we will see reasons for this view. An observance of these dates helps us to valuable typical and dispensational teaching in this book.

The Grecian, or Grecian Jews were either Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith; or Jews born in foreign countries. The Greek word is **HELLENISTON** (that is "*Hellenists*"). They rightly claimed the care of the congregation which began to deviate from the "*all-things-common*" plan with which they started [Act.2 and 4].

The apostles' hands were full of the ministry of the Word. They had no time to serve tables. As the Apostle Paul wrote later to Timothy, they were not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. The Apostle Paul did not always work with his hands; but when occasion required, as for example when entering a new field, he was not ashamed of toil, nor afraid of soiling his delicate hands. As a rule, if divinely-called ministers "*continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the Word*" [Act.6:4], they will have ample employment in spiritual things. The apostles summoned the congregation to select 7 men to look after the needy. Note the cooperation of the ministers with the assembly. Note also that they were not chosen chiefly for their ability to serve but they should be "*full of the Spirit and of wisdom.*" They did not fear the speaking in another tongue in a restaurant in those days. What if some did shake or were prostrated under the power of God? Mark another fact. It is not stated that the Lord directly led to the appointment of those 7; but at least, He permitted it. People who are filled with the Spirit may do many things by permission which are not against the doctrine of the Lord or His clearly defined plan.

Why did they choose 7, no fewer and no more? It was because that was a transitional time. The number 7 is preeminently the number of dispensational fullness and completeness. It is employed distinctly with reference to this church age and with the beginning of the next. Study its constant occurrence in Revelation. Since God was about to do "**a new thing**," and Stephen and Philip were soon to be sovereignly set to be links between the old and the new, 7 men were then chosen to manage the business affairs. Some saints today have erroneously imitated the apostles and appointed, or elected, boards of 7 men and called them elders or deacons. Those 7 were not called either one. Men today call them deacons. In truth the Greek word for **deacon**, sometimes translated **servant**, other times **minister**, applies to spiritual service far oftener than to material service. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul never appointed 7 men as deacons or elders of any assembly. The number 7 will be a millennial number, which Stephen's day figures.

STEPHEN'S SPIRITUAL SERVICE

"And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people." [Act.6:8]

It must have been an interesting sight to behold Stephen praying for the sick while ministering material food. No one was there to object to his laying his hands on a suffering guest. No doubt between meals he was busy casting out demons and recovering the afflicted. At any rate, God's hand was sovereignly upon Stephen and Philip. Men had appointed them to a business career: but the Lord gave them a more important appointment.

Why did the Lord choose Stephen? Were not the ministry of the apostles, Peter, and John satisfactory? Yes, they had performed their part well; but God was introducing a new act which required new actors. The Jews were rapidly drawing further and further away from Christ. Kingdom interests were receding. A transition Period required a transition figure, and

that figure was Stephen. John the Baptist closed the old, shadowy regime and opened the new, substantial one by introducing Jesus Christ. Similarly Stephen arched the way between the 12 apostles and the Apostle Paul or between the Kingdom and the Church. He was not an apostle. Jesus had not chosen him to be such; and yet the Spirit made him a mighty miracle worker, a fiery messenger with an unanswerable message. God sovereignly appointed him to proclaim the truth. Amos said, *"I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit; and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel"* [Amo.7:14-15]. Stephen's call was like that. God did not ask counsel of the Jewish priests, or senate, nor of the 12 apostles. He does what He wills and chooses whom He wills

Here are some stubborn facts. When Jesus came and taught and wrought, the Father expected Israel to hearken to Him. If they refused, He went right on, counting only them His own who followed Jesus. When the Spirit was poured out upon the 120, God moved on with them and with those who received their word. *"The Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs that followed"* [Mar.16:20]. They, who believed the word of the apostles, were counted as the congregation of the Lord. The same ongoing God held Stephen's hearers responsible to accept what he was saying to them; because Stephen's address was the voice of God to them. The same order obtains today. The Latter Rain began to fall 40 years ago. They, who received it and have walked in its power, have the presence and power of God with them. The denominations and other sects have grown formal and dry because they refused to move on with Jehovah in His own sovereign way. The Apostle Paul's full message of grace, which appeared among us, shall be crowned with glory. Those who have received it and are walking in the liberty, joy, power, correction, and hope which it affords are going on with the Lord; the Word of the Lord mightily growing and prevailing. Others are becoming worldly and formal and selfish. I dare say that these are solemn facts. God moves on. If saints do not move with Him and in His way they invariably move backward, lose out, and grow cold.

What is now the Catholic Church was once the true Church of Christ. Alas! She is not such today despite all her claims. God calls her *"the mother of harlots!"* For years the protestant bodies constituted the Church of Christ. Alas! They are certainly not such now. Are they not the harlot's daughters? Only local meetings, few and far between, and individuals, can be counted as of the Church. What about the Pentecostal sects who prefer physical demonstrations to Bible doctrine or man-made dogmas to real Bible truth? Only local assemblies and individual believers can be reckoned as of the Church of Christ.

"But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called that of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen." [Act.6:9]

The Libertines were Jews who had been imprisoned in Rome but were set free and became freedmen in Jerusalem. The second named were Jews from Cyrene. The third were Jews from Alexandria, the largest and most noted city of Egypt (Apollos was from that city). The fourth were Jews from Cilicia and Asia. These, it seems, made up a certain synagogue which became especially incensed against the truth as set forth by Stephen. There was a temporary cessation of hostilities after the second arrest of the apostles; but now these from that particular synagogue stirred up the people, the elders, and the Scribes. They seized him, brought him before the council, and swore falsely against him. Note Stephen's countenance, *"as it had been the face of an angel."* And they all beheld that face. If men will not hearken to the voice of God's Word and Spirit, they will not be moved by the angelic countenance of His messengers.

STEPHEN'S SCRIPTURAL DEFENSE

Acts 7 is a masterful answer to the high priest's question, "*Are these things so?*" It begins with "*God of the Glory*" and consummates with "*the glory of God*." Stephen first called Abraham on the witness stand. Then he traced God's dealings with Israel and their attitude toward Him down to the advent of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. He deftly showed that "*the fathers*" maltreated and resisted God's servants along these 2,000 years. The patriarchs were moved with jealousy against Joseph, a perfect type of Christ [Act.7:9]. Moses' brethren "*thrust him away*" when he sought to deliver them from Egypt, saying, "*Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?*" [Act.7:27]. He emphasized the fact that as God had sent Moses, whom his brethren refused, so God had sent Jesus, the Prophet like unto him of whom Moses wrote. He showed them that Jesus was the Angel who spoke to Moses in the mount [Exo.33:2, 14 and Isa.63:9]. They had raised a great hue and cry in defense of The Law and the holy place, as if Jesus would destroy it. Stephen met that foolish stand by quoting from their own "law" (or holy writings) which they seemed to revere, even 1 Kings 8:27 and Isaiah 66:1-2 (note Act.7:48-50). Having reached that invincible climax, filled with holy indignation by the grieved Holy Spirit, he exclaimed: "*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.*" Those were indeed scathing utterances, provoked by years of hatred against Jesus Christ. Stephen continues, "*Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute and they killed them which showed before the coming of the Righteous One?*" Then he culminates his burning charge by adding: "*Of whom ye have now become betrayers and murders; ye who received the Law as it was ordained by angels and kept it not*" [Act.7:51-53 RV].

STEPHEN'S TRIUMPH AND EXIT

The last 7 verses of Acts 7 are very significant. Be sure that you catch their meaning. At the beginning of his address Stephen's face shown "*as the face of an angel*," because he was filled with God's Spirit and Word. At its end, He was still filled therewith. Like every one thus filled (compare Rev.1:11), "*he looked up steadfastly into heaven.*" What did he see? Ah! Spirit-anointed upward-gazers always behold special and wonderful things. He saw 3 entrancing objects: "(1) *the heavens opened*, (2) *the glory of God*, and (3) *Jesus standing*." He began his sermon, believing God's Word, by declaring that "*the God of glory appeared to Abraham*." This is the first time the phrase the **God of the glory** occurs. It intimates a doctrine and hope of which Israel were ignorant, even "*the mystery...hid in God*" [Eph.3:9]. Now near the end, he sees, by a revelation, the glory of which his faith made him speak.

What did it all mean? Plainly this, Jesus was standing up, ready to return and be Israel's King if they had welcomed Him (see Act.1:11 and Act.3:20). He had not yet "*sat down at the right hand of God*" as we find Him later [Heb.1:3 and Rev.3:21]. God is always slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Probably for about 7 years from His ascension, the Lord Jesus was standing at the Father's right hand, waiting for Israel to invite Him back. Through Peter and John He had spoken to them and wrought mighty miracles. An earnest of millennial blessings, liberty, and power flowed in every direction in Jerusalem; filling the city with the doctrine of the Lord. It seemed that Daniel's last week of 7 years, the last of the 70 determined weeks (or 490 years) was being fulfilled" [Dan.9:24]. The first 3 items of Daniel 9:24 were fulfilled by the death of Christ. The other 3 were due also within that time (from 33 to 40 A.D); but the infuriated council and officers hearkened not to Stephen's words. Their attitude toward him was similar to that against Jesus Himself. Indeed it was their rejection of Jesus. It was their settled official renunciation of Jesus and His message. They crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh [Heb.6]. They virtually said, "*We will not have this Man to reign over us*" [Luk.19:14]. Therefore when we next read of our Lord in heaven, He is "*sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*" [Heb.1:3].

He is there interceding in our behalf during these 2,000 years that we may live down here in victory and reach the glory in triumph [Heb.7:25].

Stephen's own nation cast him out and stoned him, running upon him and stopping their ears against his sublime testimony. Did he resent them? No; he offered 2 prayers to God. First, he cried, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" Either he knew that he was dying, or he desired to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, as the Apostle Paul wrote years afterward [Phi.1:23]. Then, filled with the unselfish Spirit of Jesus [Luk.23:34], "*he kneeled down and with a loud voice cried, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*"; then he fell asleep. What young man was with that rebellious mob? What 2 facts are recorded of him? Why is he mentioned in this connection? Was Stephen's career a failure? Were his utterances fruitless and lost? No! No doubt his ministry was the instrumentality of Saul's salvation. He spoke the Word of God "*who watches over His Word to perform it*" [Jer.1:12 RV]. Also, Isaiah 55:11 must be fulfilled to the uttermost. Hence, he could fall asleep in the sure hope of a glorious resurrection and of the restoration of the kingdom.

DANIEL'S LAST WEEK

In a preceding paragraph, we stated that the first 3 promised blessings of Daniel 9:24 were fulfilled on Calvary. Yes, the Lord "*restrained the transgression, made an end of sins and made reconciliation for iniquity*" on the cross. Full provision for a full and complete salvation was accomplished through Christ, who "*obtained an eternal redemption*" for us as well as for the Jews [Heb.9:12]. The provision was made also for the other 3 promises in that verse. Note then, that the last of the 70 determined weeks (7 years) of Daniel 9:24 were actually fulfilled; but the Jews, by rejecting Christ, forfeited their right to enjoy those blessings. They judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life [Act.13:46].

Because the Jews did not accept Christ at the beginning of this age, it is generally supposed that Daniel 9:24 will have to be fulfilled again. It is held that Daniel 9:27 teaches that; but that is not correct. Daniel 9:27 must yet be fulfilled, but not as a repetition of Daniel 9:24, nor as the fulfillment of the last 7 years of the 490 decreed years (or 70 weeks). Let us give both verses side by side:

Daniel 9:24 RV

"Seventy weeks (490 years) are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city to finish transgression and to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place."

Daniel 9:27 RV

"And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week (7 years) ; and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; and for the over spreading of abominations, he shall make desolate, even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolator."

Observe now, that Daniel 9:24 promised blessings only, and all those proffered blessings came through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and through the Gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Daniel 9:27 offers no blessing but instead foretells distress and desolation. It is important to note all these distinctions. The "one week" of Daniel 9:27 is not said to be the last of the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24. It must mean some other week, or 7 years. The last week of the 70 was "determined" ("*decreed*") with the other 69 weeks; but it is not stated that the "*one week*" of Daniel 9:27 was determined or decreed. Its fulfillment is simply foretold. And yet wrath is "*determined upon the desolator.*" The Lord grants the gracious things of Daniel 9:24; but

"*the prince*" [Dan.9:26], whose ancestors (the Romans) destroyed Jerusalem in 71 A.D., will be the cruel actor of Daniel 9:27. Incited by Satan, he will act squarely against Divine Authority; therefore, "*his end will be with a flood*" [Dan.9:26], that is, in judgment, for wrath will be poured upon him as the desolator. That prince will be the Antichrist, an abominable usurper, who will reign for 3½ years as world-ruler, but will be overthrown and slain in the battle of Armageddon [Rev.16:16]. At the beginning of that week (or 7 years [Dan.9:27]), the Jews will accept the overtures of the League of Nations and thus bring upon themselves unspeakable anguish and pain. They ought to accept "*The Messiah, The Prince*" [Dan.9:25], who brought in the blessings of Daniel 9:24 at His first advent; for He will be the rightful King.

It is very unfortunate that any of us ever fell into the error of calling Daniel 9:27 "The last week of Daniel". Daniel himself never calls it such, nor does any other Bible character. Furthermore, the 70th week, or last 7 years of Daniel 9:24, were fulfilled by the activities recorded in Acts 2 to 9 inclusive. They were an earnest of millennial blessings. Acts 9 records Saul's conversion and anointing with the Spirit. Acts 10 and 11 record God's visit to the Gentiles. While the Lord was preparing the Gentiles for the Apostle Paul through the ministry of the Apostle Peter, He was preparing Saul of Tarsus for the Gentiles through the ministries of Ananias and Barnabas.

A POSITIVE AND IMPORTANT FACT

Christ was crucified in 33 A.D. This view is proven by Daniel 9:24-26. His 70 Prophetic weeks (490 years) measure from 444 B.C., when Nehemiah obtained permission from Artaxerxes to visit Jerusalem; then add 33 and we have 477. Jesus was executed in the first month of the Jewish year; therefore the exact time was 476 years. But the prophets words demand 483 years—"seven weeks and three score and two weeks" (69 prophetic weeks) from the king's commandment to the cutting off of the Messiah. How shall we reconcile this apparent discrepancy? We must reduce the Gentile figures to Bible figures. The sacred calendar has 360 days to a year (see Gen.6-8). Somewhere around Noah's flood, or later, the earth began to travel more slowly around the sun; therefore, our year has 365 days and about 6 hours. We multiply 476 by 365¼ which equals 173,859, the number of days from Nehemiah to Calvary. We divide this number by 360 which give us 483 years plus 21 days. Therefore, other dates for Jesus' death are incorrect because they render Daniel's prophecy null and void, which demoralizes other Old Testament prophecies. Evidently, Jesus was born in the fall of the year 1 B.C. and crucified in the year 33 A.D.

JESUS PROCLAIMED BY PHILIP [ACT.8]

"And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them the Christ." [Act.8:5]

Note: Samaria was 35 miles north from Jerusalem.

The first sentence of this chapter properly belongs to the preceding chapter, for a convenient division. Nevertheless, Saul is the important link in the narrative. He was the chief actor in the "*great persecution*." How those people loved Jesus and the truth! They would rather be "*scattered abroad*" than deny their Lord. Acts 8:4 is very full of meaning: "*They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word*."

They were on the way to fulfill Jesus' words to the apostles [Mat.28:19; comp are Col.1:23]. This is how God overrules and makes good use of even the opposition of Satan [Psa.76:10]. Philip's public spiritual ministry began about 38 A.D., at least his trip to Samaria doubtless dates from then. Note that "*there arose on that day (of Stephen's death) a great persecution*" [Act.8:1 RV].

The fact that they all went preaching is no argument that all who are filled with the Spirit today and speak in new tongues should immediately quit their work and go preaching or attempt it. In the first place, note that they were compelled to go forth or surrender their belief. In the second place, they knew the Word, that is the Old Testament (compare Deu.6:6-9, Psalms 78:4-7, Eph.6:4). In all the addresses and writings of the apostles there are constant references to the Old Testament. That was to them the "Word of God"; therefore, Luke could rightly record that they went "*preaching the Word*." When people get saved today, they do not know the Word of God. How then can they proclaim it? But having received the Holy Spirit, who fills us that He may guide and instruct us in the Truth [Joh.16:13-14], we need to read and search the Bible that we may be able to instruct others also.

Observe further what they proclaimed, Philip "*preached the Christ*" (Christ means "anointed one") and "*Jesus*" [Act.8:35]. He preached "*the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and (concerning) the Name of Jesus Christ*" [Act.8:12].

Accordingly, what did the people receive?

"The Word of God." [Act.8:12]

What were the results?

Demons were cast out; the sick were healed; and great joy prevailed [Act.8:7-8].

Although Philip baptized, baptism was not his theme (compare 1Co.1:17); and, although he wrought miracles in Jesus' Name, yet "*the Name*" was not his theme. Christ Jesus Himself was always the theme of all the apostles; therefore, from the Scriptures they announced Him [Act.8:25, 35]. Of course they declared both the humanity and deity of Jesus [Act.8:32, 34, 37].

Consider who Philip was, and that he was anointed with the Holy Spirit [Act.6:3, 5 and Act.21:8]. He was not Philip the apostle [Luk.6:14]. Who gave him his office? Again consider the results that follow real scriptural ministry [Act.8:6-8, 14-17, 35-38]. Shame on the modern make-believe gospel that knows neither the Scriptures nor the power of God but rejects the former and denies the latter. Do you want more evidence of the emphasis that the Holy Spirit puts on God's Word? Then read Acts 13 and note how often express mention is made of the Word and the results of such emphasis [Act.13:42, 44, 52]. Hallelujah!

THE SPIRIT GIVEN TO THE SAMARITANS

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit." [Act.8:14-15]

Everywhere the Divine Order is, that the Spirit should be received immediately after accepting Christ; thus 2 grave blunders are avoided:

1st: The erroneous teaching, that Christ and the Holy Spirit are received simultaneously. The practical proof of this error is before us, in that its devotees lack the joy and power of the Holy Spirit.

2nd: The second blunder—not receiving the Spirit at once—leaves a gap for Satan to intrude with error, indifference, discouragement, and uselessness. "*Now is the accepted time*" [2Co.6:2] is the wooing voice of the Father.

Observe, that the apostles did not pray that the Spirit be poured out, but that believers "*might receive the Holy Spirit*." We need not pray Him out of heaven. He is here. He came once, over 1,900 years ago. He only waits to be invited into His temple, the believer's body [1Co.6:19; compare Act.19:3-6]. There were 3 days' time between Saul's conversion and his anointing with the Spirit [Act.9:17].

But why did Philip not pray for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit? Why should the apostles come down for that purpose? After the death of King Solomon, the 12-horned kingdom was divided into 2 kingdoms, or the "*kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel*" [1Kg.12]. This division continues to this day, and they will not be united until Jesus comes [Isa.11:12-13; Eze.37:15, 28]. Now when the Holy Spirit came from heaven, He came as the fulfillment of God's promise to the whole house of Israel [Act.2:36]; but Israel were not all represented in Jerusalem nationally when the Spirit was poured out. As Jerusalem was the capitol of the kingdom of Judah, that kingdom only received the Spirit. Israel, or the 10-tribed kingdom, whose capitol was Shechem in Samaria, must also nationally be visited by the Spirit. And, since "*the keys of the kingdom*" were committed to Peter [Mat.16:19], it was officially proper that he should introduce the other Comforter to the 10 tribes in Samaria as well as to the 2 in Jerusalem. Peter also unlocked the heavens for the Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit [Act.10:34-48].

Why was the Spirit not poured out upon the city of Samaria until about 5 years after His descent upon the 120 in Jerusalem? This is an important query. The 10 tribes were the first to depart from the Lord, and they will be the last of the whole nation of Israel to return to Him. When Jesus comes back, He will begin dealing with the 2 tribes first, and they will be the first to receive Him; "*A remnant shall be saved*." Then later the 10 tribes will receive Him, "*So all Israel shall be saved*" [Rom.11:26]. At the beginning of this age, the Lord's dealings with the Jews through the apostles and with the 10 tribes through Philip and the apostles were an earnest of His final treatment of them. And yet, individuals from the 10 tribes were with the Jews [Act.2:22, Act.4:10].

"But there was a certain man, Simon by name, which beforetime in the city used sorcery and amazed the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one; to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." [Act.8:9-10]

The plain essential differences between Philip and Simon are obvious:

- Simon magnified Simon; but Philip exalted Christ.
- Simon proclaimed himself: but Philip proclaimed Jesus.
- Simon's religion was cunning, beguiling, enchanting witchcraft. It was of the devil. Philip's Gospel was simple, comforting, and sufficient. It was altogether Divine.

Simon the sorcerer here is an illustration of those who become religious for the purpose of speculation. "*Simon believed also and was baptized, continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs that were done*." Yes, he believed, or assented to the truth, but he did not "*believe to the saving of the soul*" (see Acts 8:23). It is easy to be baptized and appear religious in view of getting a name and the people's money. His witchcraft had succeeded before; "*giving out that himself was some great one*." Now he sees an opportunity to add to his trickery. "Perhaps I can even get Philip with me," he thinks. Then when he imagines that the power of dispensing the fullness of the Spirit, with the entrancing sign of speaking in tongues, can be bought with money he is engulfed with the hope of unparalleled prosperity. Observe that Peter's rebuke does not induce him to repent. He only selfishly desires to escape judgment.

Fellow Student, consider the most dangerous species of witchcraft, typified by Simon's career. Do you know that the Holy Spirit calls seeking justification by works or seeking the Spirit by the works of The Law is sorcery (bewitching witchcraft [Gal.3:1-5])? "*Are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*" the Apostle asks. Be it ever remembered that the Simon-crew are not all gone yet; their number is a legion¹. It is amazing how men, some of them professedly Spirit-filled, can deceive hungry, needy hearts by their make-believe piety and holy walk. People look up to them as marvels of perfection because they talk boldly of straightening up back tracks, paying debts, keeping the Sabbath, etc. And, because they have learned to throw a religious, pious spell over people by their own peculiar personality, such men get a hearing, get results, and get the people's money. It is simply pious flesh inspired by the devil. God rightly calls it "*witchcraft*."

FLYING EVANGELISM

Philip's further career, his experience with the Eunuch, etc., [Act.8:26-40] are typical of the ministry of God's servants gathering together the dispersed of Israel at the coming of Jesus [Mat.24:31, Rev.14:6].

Study the various ways and means by which God makes His will known to Philip.

It is most probable that as he was "*caught away*" by the Spirit, perhaps bodily borne across the country in that troublous time. So it will be after the Church is taken away to glory; there will be Spirit-anointed men on earth preaching the Gospel of the kingdom and the soon-coming of the King. They will be miraculously sustained and borne to different places; for the time of trouble will be unspeakably terrible. Then, so that the "*elect of Israel*" may be saved from physical destruction, that time of tribulation will be shortened by 250 days [Mat.24:21-22]. Philip's experience with the Eunuch was typical of the Gospel going to the Gentiles, which was officially granted them under Peter's ministry several years later [Act.10], and also of Israel's taking the Gospel to the nations [Isa.52:7, 10; Isa.66:10-12, 19; Luk.24:47; Act.15:16-17; consider Rev.21:24].

Note: *The Ethiopian Eunuch was a descendant of Ham. Gaza was 50 miles southwest from Jerusalem. Azotus (Ashdod) was 40 miles due west.*

SWEET WILL OF GOD

I PRAY, OH LORD, THY WILL BE DONE
FROM MORNING LIGHT TO SET OF SUN.
IN ALL MY LIFE THRU-OUT EACH DAY,
THY WILL BE DONE IN EVERY WAY,
AND I HAVE NOUGHT AT ALL TO SAY.

I PRAY, OH LORD, THY WILL BE DONE
TILL THOU CAN'ST SEE IN ME THY SON.
MY EVERY WORD TO BREATHE THY FAME,
AND EVERY DEED SHOW FORTH THY NAME
AND ALL THY HOLINESS PROCLAIM.

I PRAY, OH LORD, THY WILL BE DONE
UNTIL THE VICTORY HAS BEEN WON,

¹ "The organization of legions varied greatly over time but were typically composed of up to 5,000 soldiers"; taken from Wikipedia.

AND EVERY WHIT OF TEMPLE PRAISE,
IN EVERY MOVE AND EVERY PHASE,
THY MATCHLESS NAME TO ENDLESS DAYS.

THE SALVATION OF SAUL [ACT.9]

A PREPARATORY PARENTHESIS

The first 30 verses of Acts 9 record the beginning days of the most striking career and character in the New Testament, Jesus Himself the exception. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is like a parenthesis in the first 12 chapters of the Acts. But he became a necessary link between Divine Purposes.

Saul's hatred of Jesus Christ was unspeakably great (compare Act.7:58, 8:1 and 9:1-2 with Gal.1:13-14, 1Ti.1:13, Act.26:11). Why did Saul so bitterly persecute the Church? Note the citations again. Religious tradition is a terrible snare. Trace its source [Jer.9:14]. God made His will known to His people but self-will and unbelief leave a great gap for Satan to introduce a false religion. Saul knew by experience how to write, years afterwards, about self-righteous Israel [Rom.9:31-32, 10:2-3]. Note that he magnified God's grace in his salvation [1Ti.1:14-16] and termed himself the "*chief of sinners*," not because he robbed banks, nor was dissolute, or an insurrectionist; but because he was so persistently and successfully religious and outwardly holy. "*As touching the righteousness of the Law, (he was) blameless*" [Phi.3:6]. He endeavored to "establish his own righteousness," which was against God's "righteousness," and thus make void the redeeming work of Christ, making Him out an impostor. He made Jesus out to be "*a blasphemer and injurious*," because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and died to redeem every man, for "*all have sinned*," even righteous Saul who became the nearest of any man to saving himself by fulfilling the righteousness of The Law. He sought perfection, and outwardly attained it, apart from the redemption of the only Perfect Man. Meanwhile, he showed out his heart rebellion against God by persecuting the people of God. This made him "*CHIEF of sinners*." He did not apparently need God or His righteousness. Apparently, he was righteous; but that was only the old condemned creation posing as pious. It was not of faith. It was not based upon the redemption wrought out by another, even Jesus. There was no life; for The Law cannot give life [Gal.3:21]. So...when Saul, enroute to Damascus, saw the Lord, he found himself to be the "*blasphemer and injurious*" to an inexpressible depth. He exclaimed: "*CHIEF of sinners*." Oh, what a view of self-righteousness, the religion of works, the sorcery of Law-keeping that the Apostle Paul obtained; therefore, Christ, received and enjoyed forever by simple faith, was ever afterward his glowing message (compare Act.9:20, 22, 27, 29 with Gal.1:12, 15-16).

Observe 2 great facts which the Lord announced to Ananias to encourage him to instruct Saul [Act.9:15-16] (compare Act.26:16-19, Col. 1:24-25, 1 Cor. 11:23-28).

HIS CONVERSION DESCRIBED

"And Ananias said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." [Act.9:17]

The persecutor was blind for 3 days after he saw the Lord by faith. Jesus looked different to him than when he probably saw Him on earth (compare 2Co.5:16).

There are 5 facts that prove he accepted Christ immediately upon being struck weak and blind:

1st: His own testimony, "*Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision*" [Act.26:19].

2nd: His answer to Jesus, "*What shall I do, Lord?*" [Act.22:10]; (compare Rom.10:9 RV).

3rd: His worship, "*Behold, he prayeth*" [Act.9:11].

4th: Ananias' words of salute "*Brother Saul.*" If he had not yet believed and was not yet saved, why did not Ananias say, "Mr. Saul, repent and believe the gospel" [Mar.1:15], a common exhortation to unyielding Jews. Why did he not say, "Repent and be baptized?" [Act.2:38] or "repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out?" [Act.3:19].

5th: The penitent persecutor's willingness to be baptized in water.

As circumcision meant a complete cutting off from the world and the death of the old creation, so John introduced water baptism as a similar symbolic death. John's ministry summed up and culminated the ministries of the prophets of the Old Testament, buried all the Mosaic rites and ceremonies in Jordan and introduced a new religious regime by dipping Jesus into and lifting Him out of the waters of Jordan. Jesus declared that there was no prophet greater than John the Baptist. It was therefore no small matter for Saul to be baptized in water. Baptism into the name of Jesus, the Chief of the new covenant, meant a complete and eternal cutting off from all the past. He virtually said I am no longer a Jew, but a disciple of Christ, the despised Nazarene. Baptism in water, to a Jew, is the outward expression of death to Moses and of resurrection unto Christ. No Jew will submit to baptism until, with all his heart, he accepts Christ as his personal Savior; and his fellow Jews will not believe that he is saved through Christ if he is not willing to be baptized in water in Jesus' name. Ever afterward, they call him "*The blotted out.*" Saul had already repented and received the forgiveness of his sins before Ananias arrived; therefore, he was prepared to be baptized as a sign and seal to his faith in Christ.

The conversion of Saul is typical of that of Israel; for they will see the Lord descending in glory and will receive Him [Isa.25:6-9]. 1 Corinthians 15:8 is a remarkable statement, "*Last of all He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time.*"

After Jesus was seen of Stephen standing at God's right hand, as if ready to return to Israel if they had received Him, He "*sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*" [Heb.1:3], because they rejected Him in rejecting Stephen. That sitting was to continue 2,000 years, which Hosea 6:2 terms "*two days.*" But for a special sovereign purpose, Jesus arose from His seat of Mediatorship and appeared to the persecuting Saul of Tarsus [Act.8:17]. Saul accepted Christ there and then, and was born again; thus he was born 2 dispensational days (2,000 years) ahead of the due time for the new birth of Israel as a nation (compare Isa.66:8).

Consider closely the radical change wrought in Saul and the theme of his teaching henceforth (study Act.9:20-22, 29). Note also the attitude of his own people toward him after he received Christ [Act.9:23-24]. Why did Saul emphasize the Divine Sonship of Jesus? Because the Divine Sonship of Jesus was the root cause of the Jews' hatred of Him. His claim of being the Son of God they termed blasphemy [Joh.5:18, Joh.10:30-36]. They had scriptural grounds for stoning Jesus if He were not God's Son [Lev.24:16]. Therefore, they took the same bitter stand against His avowed friend, seeking to kill Saul [Act.9:23-24]. We little understand how the Jews could maintain such bitter hatred against the Son of God; but it simply shows the outcome of refusing to walk in the light. Christian people today who reject Divine Light show a similar Spirit because they walk in the flesh which hates Christ who is always spiritual.

THE APOSTLE PETER EVANGELIZING

"And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all parts, he came down to the saints which dwelt at Lydda." [Act.9:32]

After the parenthesis of Saul's salvation, the ministry of the Kingdom apostles in Luke's record is resumed. Two remarkable miracles were wrought by Peter's hands in Jesus' name. Now if Saul's conversion is typical of the conversion of the Jews as a nation when the Lord comes, is not Peter's ministry "*throughout all parts*" typical of the powerful ministry of the Jews to all Israel when Jesus returns? Doubtless the healing of Aeneas, bedridden for 8 years with palsy, foreshadows Israel's deliverance from their long drawn-out spiritual palsy. The raising to life of Dorcas figures the national resurrection of Israel, as outlined in Ezekiel 37, where we hear the rattle of the "*dry bones*." Dorcas is the Greek and Tabitha is the Syriac for "*gazelle*." Indeed, with gazelle-like swiftness, resurrected and restored Israel will spread the glad tidings to the nations. "*Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit*" [Isa.27:6]. As a result of the typical ministry, Luke says, "*Many believed in the Lord*" [Act.8:42]. Just so it will be when Israel turns to the Lord, and Isaiah 35 will be fulfilled, "*The lame shall leap as an hart*." It is quite probable that Peter's letters to the "sojourners of the Dispersion" will be read by them at the end.

CHILD OF DESTINY

SERENE, I FOLD MY HANDS AND WAIT,
NOT MOVED BY TEMPEST, TIDE, OR TIME.
I RAVE NO MORE 'GAINST MEN, OR FATE.
I AM MY LORD'S AND HE IS MINE.

I MAKE NO HASTE, NOR ASK DELAYS;
FOR WHAT AVAILS THIS LITTLE SPAN?
I STAND AND FACE ETERNAL DAYS,
WHILE LOOKING FOR THE CHRIST, THE MAN.

ASLEEP, AWAKE BY NIGHT, OR DAY,
THE LORD I LOVE IS WATCHING ME
NO STORM CAN DRIVE MY BARK ASTRAY.
MY PATH IS MARKED ETERNALLY.

WHAT MATTER IF I STAND ALONE?
I WAIT WITH PATIENCE COMING YEARS;
FOR I SHALL REAP AS I HAVE SOWN,
AND GATHER FRUIT FROM JOY AND TEARS.

THE WATERS KNOW THEIR SOURCE AND DRAW
FROM BROOKS AND SPRINGS AND MOUNTAIN HEIGHT.
SO FLOWS MY LIFE WITHOUT A FLAW
FROM OUT THE AMBER THRONE OF LIGHT.

AS STARS COME NIGHTLY IN THE SKY,
AND SUN AND MOON THEIR LIGHT AFFORD;
NO TIME, NOR SPACE, NOR DEEP, NOR HIGH
CAN SEPARATE ME FROM MY LORD.

JESUS PREACHED TO GENTILES [ACT. 10-11]

"Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always." [Act. 10:1-2]

The date of the events of these 2 chapters was about 41 A.D., or 8 years after the Holy Spirit fell on the 120 in the upper room in Jerusalem. The descent of the Holy Spirit in Cornelius's house was only an earnest of His world-wide out-pouring which will come after Israel receives the Messiah. They will then proclaim Him far and near. The last week (7 years) of Daniel 9:24 had to be fulfilled before the Lord could begin dealing with the Gentiles. This fact occasions the above date. The phrase "*a certain man*" is quite suggestive. The word **certain** occurs about 50 times in this book of Acts. God has certain times for the accomplishments of certain ordained purposes. Bear in mind, that there is nothing haphazard with His plans. He orders men's footsteps. Cornelius was being prepared beforehand for that day and purpose. Therefore, he was not ignorant of the truth concerning Jesus [Act. 10:36-37]. He may have been a proselyte to the Jewish faith. The brief history of his devotion in Acts 10:2 is truly interesting. Hungry hearts find the Lord, and the loving Lord finds folks who will take the truth. The different means employed by the Lord to make His will known, as recorded here, is a profitable study. God used an angel, a vision, the Word, a man, and the Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit is not a proof of knowing everything. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, wrought great miracles, and was the chief of the 12 apostles; yet he did not know until that day that salvation was for the Gentiles, although he had unwittingly declared it before (see Act. 2:17, 39; 3:26). By the Spirit, men often say more than they know, but when we are teachable and pliable to the Holy Spirit, God can show us any new truth. Israel was forbidden to eat swine's flesh and certain other creatures because they were not so wholesome. However, all those sanitary rules, Mosaic rites and ceremonies were written to convey invaluable spiritual lessons. Indeed, a great spiritual truth was just then to be uncovered to Peter and his people. Surely that vision of the sheet let down from heaven is ample proof that God meant His people to see, on the one hand, how He abominates the old creation, and how, on the other hand, He has made all men provisionally clean by the redeeming act of His Son:

"Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air." [Act. 10:12]

Note that the sheet with its freight of apparently unclean creatures—"all manner of ... beasts"—came down from heaven. The new creation came up from the grave in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it also comes down from heaven. All who believe are "*born from above*". God "*hath concluded all under sin* (all in unbelief; Jews and Gentiles, or as wild beasts, creeping things, etc.), *that He might have mercy upon all*" or provisionally cleanse them, and actually cleanse them that believe on Jesus Christ [Gal. 3:22, Rom. 11:32]. This truth of God's gracious sovereign provision and offer of salvation ought to grip us. "God granted repentance unto life" to Jews and Gentiles [Act. 11:17-18]. Once for all, Jesus "*put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*" [Heb. 9:26]. All men are clean provisionally; all are actually clean the moment they believe on Jesus Christ, even "*sanctified in Christ Jesus*" [1Co. 1:2, Heb. 10:10]. Oh, glorious news!

The voice (of the Spirit, of course) said the second time to Peter,

"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" [Act. 10:15].

Study Peter's address. He preached peace and healing through Jesus Anointed; Jesus crucified, buried, raised, and the coming Judge; and remission of sins for those who believe.

"To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." [Act.10:43]

We call particular attention to this verse, because some people claim that Peter and John taught a salvation by works mixed with grace. They hold also that those apostles had authority to remit sins, which we do not have, basing their view on John 20:23. However, Acts 10:43 plainly shows how the apostles "retained" (forgave) men's sins. The apostles simply declared that everyone who believes on Jesus Christ shall be saved, and we do the same. What happened while Peter was declaring such good news?

"While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the Gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." [Act.10:44-46]

The Holy Spirit always accompanies the preaching of the Christ in His fullness. That was, of course, the official advent of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles as was His advent to the Jews on the day of Pentecost [Act.2:4]. That was the third time that Peter turned his official key of the Kingdom [Mat.16:19] for the descent of the Spirit (compare Act.2 and Act.8:14-17). What was the satisfying proof to the 6 Jews with Peter that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit? *"They heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God."* How else shall we know today that people have received the Spirit? If the Bible samples are our guide, there is no other distinctive sign of being anointed with the Holy Spirit than speaking in another tongue.

PETER'S REHEARSAL

"When Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them." [Act.11:2-3]

People, even believers, are slow to receive new unfoldings of truth. There is something in our make-up that practically says: "What I have not experienced, or seen, is not to be experienced or seen." In irony, Job addressed that element in man, saying: *"No doubt but ye are the people and wisdom shall die with you"* [Job 12:2]. Of course, that **something** is of the old creation, which is blind, deaf, and dumb to the truth. Because his friends censured him for preaching to the Gentiles, Peter related his experience in detail. It was effectual.

"When they heard these things, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." [Act.11:18]

Three men, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, peopled the earth after the flood; and, 3 saved men were employed to begin the peopling of the earth with a new creation stock. They were the Eunuch of Ethiopia (a Hamite [Act.8]), Saul (a Shemite [Act.9]), and Cornelius (a Japhite [Act.10]). *"Repentance unto life"* is a Divine Gift. Men imagine that they can repent at will and by doing so appease God's wrath against their sins. Salvation is a gracious gift from God. He owes no man His salvation. And no one would, nor could ever repent if the Lord Jesus had not appeased the just anger of an offended God by His own sacrificial death on the cross. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit enables men to repent and believe.

"By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." [Eph.2:8-9]

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen [Act.8:1-5] traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only." [Act.11:19]

The remaining verses of Acts 11 are extremely interesting and comprehensive. The hidden purposes in the Spirit's workings fill and thrill one's heart with wonder when we read with opened eyes. God is bringing one program to a close; meanwhile, He is using its final performances to pave the way for another. In His wonderful wisdom, God is planning for that special ministry of that special man with a special message, even the Apostle Paul.

Those scattered abroad were supposed to preach to the Jews only, but in spite of themselves, *"some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spoke unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus"* [Act.11:20]. Why? Because the Holy Spirit was directing them and *"the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord"* [Act.11:21]. Thus an assembly was begun by those whom Saul had persecuted, which afterward became the glorious center for His Spirit-filled operations. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas thither, who later became the Apostle Paul's first associate. A sweet thing is recorded of Barnabas:

"When he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." [Act.11:23]

Why was he like that? *"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."* What was the result? *"And much people was added unto the Lord"* [Act.11:24]. God surely had a hand in directing Barnabas.

"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." [Act.11:25-26]

These verses are full of spiritual meat; the last sentence being especially replete with meaning. The disciples were called *Christians* ("anointed ones") first in Antioch; not in derision, as some suppose. The Holy Spirit gave them that name because that is what believers really are. For *"as He (Christ, our Head) is so are we in this world"* [1Jo.4:17]. All believers are called to be sons of God, but most of them remain babes in experience because they do not grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. Similarly, we are all called to be "*Christians*" (for the *"promise is unto you and to your children,"* etc. [Act.2:39]) but how few avail themselves of their blood-bought rights. While the disciples of Jesus may be called "*Christians*," yet those only who actually receive the anointing with the Spirit and live in His power are Christians truly in experience. Oh, how many saints live way below their privileges! Antioch was the proper place for the disciples to be called Christians, because that was the real Church center. Men give many vain interpretations of the Holy Writ, robbing the truth of its true meaning and the blessed Holy Spirit of His glory.

Jerusalem was the Kingdom center, both national and local. Now, because the restoration of the Kingdom was to be postponed and the Jews were to be scattered, there had to be another center for the Church. That it was to be a new center emphasized the fact that the Church of Christ is not a local or national body but a worldwide spiritual body.

"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch ... that there should be great dearth throughout all the world." [Act.11:27-30]

This great famine was due to the fact that Israel, as a nation, had rejected the Son of God and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. The phrase, "*all the world*" means all the inhabited earth. That, too, was typical of the sore trial, world-wide, from which the full overcomers shall be delivered at the close of this age [Rev.3:10]. Thank God, after Jesus comes and Israel receives Him, there will be no more dearth but abounding plenty (see Joe.2:19-27)!

THE ROCK

THERE IS ONE AMID THE CHANGES,
WHO STANDS FAST, EVER FAST,
CHRIST ABIDES.
HE COVERS FUTURE, PRESENT, AND THE PAST,
CHRIST ABIDES.
DECAY AND CHANGE IN ALL CREATION VAST,
YET CHRIST ABIDES THRU EVERY STORMY BLAST.
THE ROCK OF AGES HOARY, FIRST AND LAST.

BY MARY M. BODIE

JESUS REJECTED AS KING [ACT. 12]

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." [Act.12:1-2]

In Mark 11 and 12, we find mentioned all the pronounced representative enemies of Jesus Christ:

- the chief priests, scribes, and elders;
- the Pharisees and Herodians, and
- the Sadducees or infidels.

The religious world was arrayed against Him first; then the political world. These two united to put Him to death. The same order occurs in our present lesson. First, the Jews (the religious world), then Herod, representing the national powers, show their hatred of Christ by seeking to kill the apostles. During the opening years of the Kingdom Age, there will be a huge religious-national combine arrayed against our Lord, but He will overthrow them and reign in peace. Of course, we are studying history, and Acts 12 records God's final dealings with national Israel in the beginning of this age. Therefore, this chapter closes the biography of the 12 apostles. A new record of them will have to be made when Jesus comes and they "*shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" [Luk.22:30]. The Holy Spirit was preparing the way for a new order of things entirely, and to bring on the scene another body of believers.

However, in these narratives, there is more than history. The Spirit can cause men to write history in such a manner that it also becomes prophecy...more wonderful than the history. This is just what we have before us in Acts 12. The consummation of this present age and the introduction of the next age are clearly foreshadowed here. Oh, how marvelous is God's precious Word!

In the Gospel records, Peter and John are always found associated; so also in the Acts (compare Act.3:1, 3; 4:13, 19; 8:14, 25). After their official trip to Samaria and after the conversion of Saul, John was no more in evidence. Even at Joppa (where Peter "*tarried many days*") John was absent. All this is freighted with deep meaning.

Peter's ministry at the last two points mentioned, is typical of a similar ministry of one, or more, who will bring God's Message to Israel during the 7 years of tribulation, which will be the first years of Christ's millennial reign. Doubtless they will speak from Peter's epistles.

On the other hand, John was given a message (the Book of Revelation) to the Church of this entire period and to Israel at the beginning of the next age. Accordingly, John's absence in Acts 12 typifies the catching away of the Church, positively foreshadowed by his ascension through the open door into heaven, in his vision of the coming of Jesus [Rev.4:1]. John especially typifies the translation of the full overcomers, of whom he wrote [Rev.3:7-12].

The killing of James, recorded here, typifies the cruel death of those who will fall at the ruthless hands of Antichrist, because they will refuse the "*mark of the beast*" [Rev.13:7, 15; 14:12-13; 15:2].

Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison is a type of those of Israel who will refuse the mark of the beast, but will be supernaturally delivered from the power of the Antichrist and will "*endure to the end*" of those awful tribulation days [Mat.24:13, 21-22; Rev.2:26].

Each of these men is a type of what he teaches, as if the Lord made them to act out in miniature the great things which they foretell shall come to pass.

James [mentioned in Act.12:17], was the Lord's brother [Gal.1:19]. He wrote the epistle of James and was the pastor of the congregation in Jerusalem (compare Act.15:13).

HEROD'S PART IN THE DRAMA

Herod is a striking picture of Antichrist. His grandfather sought to slay the baby Jesus, because the spirit of Antichrist dominated him [Mat.2]. This world never has been friendly to God and His people, and never will be. "*The carnal mind is enmity against God*" [Rom.8:7], because Satan made it so in Adam's fall. Because they continued to proclaim the right of Jesus Christ to be the King of empires Herod slew the Apostle James and he aimed to kill Peter also. Consider closely Acts 12:20-23 and see how marvelously they figure the present closing days of this age and the opening days of the next. The people of Tyre and Sidon "*asked for peace*" with Herod. Indeed, ever since the great war of 1914-18 the nations have been endeavoring to establish universal international peace by means of perfecting a "peace and safety league." Will they ever succeed? No doubt, they will meet with surface success; the Scripture declares that "*they (the nations) will say, Peace and safety*" [1Th.5:3]. This was Herod Agrippa, the 3rd of the 4 New Testament Herods. He was king from 37 to 44 A.D.

How forcefully "*Herod arrayed in royal apparel upon his throne*" speaks of the reign of Antichrist. The shout of the people saying, "*It is the voice of a god and not a man*" agrees with Revelation 13:3 and 2 Thessalonians 2:4 where we read, "*All the world wondered after the beast*" and "*the man of sin who exalteth himself above all that is called God*" As it was with Herod, so it will be with the Antichrist. Herod reigned only 7 years (about the length of Dan.9:27), the period of international usurpation. The Antichrist will reign as universal despot for 42 months [Rev.13:5]. At the very pinnacle of his pride, pomp, and power, suddenly "*he shall come to his end and none shall help him*" [Dan.11:45]. For it is written, "*When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape*" [1Th.5:3]. When the peace pact shall be packed with regulations and international agreements, which will be supposed to insure "peace and safety" throughout the world, certain nations ("*tidings out of the east and out of the north*" [Dan.11:44]) like an angry volcano, will belch forth in fury against the world ruler. The peace and safety pact will suddenly be unpacked and scattered to the four winds. Instead, unparalleled devastation will ensue.

The beast, the Antichrist, and the second beast (the false prophet) will be slain and cast into the lake of fire forever. *"An angel of the Lord smote Herod, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost"* [Act.12:23]. Herod glorified himself instead of God. Just so, the Antichrist will glorify and deify himself and even attempt to dethrone Jehovah; but Almighty Jehovah will hurl him down forever. Herod died the horrible death described here in 44 A.D.

"But the Word of God grew and multiplied." [Act.12:24]

Yes, thank God, no matter what men may do or say, the Lord watches over His Word to perform it" [Jer.1:12].

After the above named international engagements, after the overthrow of the 2 beasts and after Satan is cast into the pit of the abyss, the Word of God will grow and multiply throughout the whole world for 1,000 years. Israel will again be a kingdom and dwell in their own land. They will worship God without hindrance. A great world revival will follow. The Gentiles will seek the Lord in fabulous numbers [study Act.15:16-18].

"And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled with ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark." [Act.12:25]

Their ministration was taking help to the famine sufferers in Jerusalem [Act.11:29-30]. Barnabas and Saul became the direct transition characters from Kingdom affairs to Church affairs. They are seen last in Kingdom affairs and first in The Church. The following 16 chapters of Acts record a new order of spiritual activities under the superintendence of a new company of Spirit-filled men. Not one of the leading men of the Kingdom regime was employed by the Spirit in establishing Gentile churches. Years later, John, by the Spirit, wrote in the Book of Revelation to the churches which the Apostle Paul had planted.

DIVISION 2

The 2nd division summarizes the arduous ministry of the Apostle Paul and his co-laborers among the Gentiles, planting churches to which he wrote letters afterward (see notes on Act.13).

OUTLINE OF DIVISION 2, ACTS 13-28

The Apostle Paul's 1st gospel tour.	Acts 13-14
Legality is hushed forever.	Acts 15
The Apostle Paul's 2nd gospel tour.	Acts 16-18
The Apostle Paul's 3rd gospel tour.	Acts 19-20
The Apostle Paul's Last visit to Jerusalem.	Acts 21-23
The Apostle Paul is imprisoned in Caesarea.	Acts 24-26
The Apostle Paul's visit to Rome.	Acts 27-28

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S 1ST GOSPEL TOUR [ACT. 13-14]

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene {Herod's foster brother}, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." [Act.13:1]

The date of our present lesson was about 45 A.D., or 12 years after Pentecost. The most interesting portion of the Acts is just before us. We are entering upon the study of a career of special importance to us. We do well to move here with special deliberation that we may thoroughly understand the mind of God in these chapters. If we look with **Dove's eyes** (by the Holy Spirit) at the place that brother Paul occupies in God's plans, we will also learn the deep things revealed to him for us, especially by reading his writings.

First then, observe the founding of the assembly in Antioch [Act.11:19-21]. Saul of Tarsus was the primary actor in the persecution of the saints who were scattered from Jerusalem. But the result of his persecution was the planting of a church in Antioch out of Jewish stock; "*for they preached the Word unto Jews only.*" God was planning a new order of affairs; therefore, they preached to Grecians also, of whom "*a great number believed and turned unto the Lord*" [Act.11:21] A Jewish-Gentile assembly was the fitting foundation for this new scheme. How wonderful are the ways of God! Compare Ephesians 2:20-22.

As soon as the saints in Jerusalem heard this good news, they sent a tried disciple to encourage them, "*who, when he was come and had seen the grace of God, was glad*" [Act.11:23]. Still, the Lord was leading. "*Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul*" [Act.11:25]. Notice how continually that "good man" Barnabas clave to the "young man Saul," from the time he first took him in (compare Act.9:27 and Act.12:25). Note the high honor that Paul accorded Barnabas years afterward [1Co.9:6]. As outlined in our present lesson, it is evident that Saul was at least 5 years in Divine Training before he was launched upon his special mission. He received Christ and was anointed with the Spirit in Damascus. There he boldly declared his faith, then went into Arabia for a short season, and returned into Damascus for a Bible course of several years under the instruction of the Holy Spirit (see Act.9:19-23 and Gal.1:17-21). Then he came back to Jerusalem; but being imperiled by his own countrymen, the disciples sent him to his own home. It is quite probable that they did not take readily to his new doctrine, which no doubt was already burning in his heart and beginning to flow from his lips. They drew back from the strange teaching of the young prophet. He saw in some measure the depth of the grace of God. He saw it for the Gentiles, to whom Peter, at a later date, announced salvation [Act.10]. "*The mystery of Christ*" was possessing Saul and those saints could not understand him. But the Lord did not let him stay long in Tarsus; He sent Barnabas after him. Having brought him to Antioch... "*a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people*" [Act.11:26].

We mention the foregoing facts, because too often, when the Lord calls his children to a particular line of service, they run ahead of His perfect will, unfitted and unempowered from on high. To go in the will of God is to go in the power of God; to go out of His will is to go without His power. In the will of God, we find an "*open door which no man can shut*" [Rev.3:8]. Success is certain in God's will; failure is sure out of it. If we could see the wasted lives, the fruitless efforts, the harmful ministries, on account of premature, unscriptural "**work for God**," as God sees them we would faint with horror. All that rubbish must "*be burned*" [1Co.3:15]. O, what a bonfire! Paul heard the call enroute for Damascus. He learned the message while pondering the Old Testament writings during those 3 years in Damascus. Then he received his commission from God through the assembly in Antioch, as the first verses of this chapter declare. In Acts 11:26, we saw an interesting and necessary link between Peter's ministry and that of Paul. The disciples were called **Christians** first in Antioch because Antioch, and not Jerusalem, was to be the radiating center for the new school of apostles. It was no accident that the word **Christian** was assigned to them by the Holy Spirit. The word **Christians** (Greek: **CHRISTIANOUS**) means "*anointed ones*" (compare 1Jo.2:20-27). We are truly the anointed ones of God.

PAUL'S COMMISSION RECEIVED

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." [Act.13:2]

There were 2 cities by the name of Antioch. One was in Pisidia, a country of Asia Minor; the other, the starting-point of Paul's operations, was about 300 miles north of Jerusalem in Syria. It was fitting that ...

- Jerusalem was represented at that little meeting by **Barnabas** ("the son of consolation"),
- Northern Africa by Lucius and Simeon of Cyrene (see Mat.27:32),
- Asia by Saul of Tarsus, and
- Galilee by Manaen.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted," our chief and first ministry is not to preach but to worship. The Father seeketh worshippers. If the Lord can get good spiritual worshippers He soon can get able laborers, teachers, and preachers. What a deep delight this ministry becomes as we learn to yield to the holding, waiting, preparing power of the Spirit. What eternal profit we afterwards see therein. This word **minister** (Greek: LEITOURGEO) means to serve as a priest at one's own expense; to worship by choice, cheerfully. Our English word **liturgy** also comes from this Greek word (compare Rom.15:16; Heb.1:7, 8:2, 10:11). Yes, they fasted; however, fasting is not some laborious, rigid refusal to eat. It is a spontaneous cessation of everything that might interfere with a prolonged waiting upon the Lord (see God's view of fasting in Isa.58:3-7).

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted the Holy Spirit said "*separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*" Truly, God can make known His will when we wait upon Him. Five men in conference with the Lord were authorized to separate two men. Which two? Those whom "*I have called.*" Can anyone deny that Jehovah definitely calls certain persons for certain tasks? He does not leave this important matter to finite man. How dangerous and foolish for others to interfere with the course of the conduct of such called-ones. If they do, they are going against God Himself.

For what were they called? "For the work." They were not called for pleasure, money-making, nor fame-getting; nothing for the old man (compare Luk.10:2). Neither was this the work by which they should earn their salvation or eternal life. No! They were already wonderfully saved and filled with fire and the Holy Spirit.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained {prepared} that we should walk in them." [Eph.2:10]

"*Good works*" are possible only by those who have eternal life; "*good works*" are those only which God ordains.

COOPERATION OF THE CHURCH

"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." [Act.13:3-4]

Here is a very important item. Notwithstanding, all Paul's inward holy fire, his knowledge of the truth, and the full, deep conviction of his call, he kept in the background. He followed

Barnabas and waited for the cooperation of the assembly in entering upon his distinctive mission. The Holy Spirit "*called*" independently of others; however, He "*separated*" and "*sent*" through others. The sending forth by the brethren was the sending forth by the Holy Spirit. What was the lasting result? They ever after stood with him in faith (see Act.14:26-28 and Act.15:35, 40). This is the Divine Plan, and it should always be observed. The Lord makes the saints to know who is called and when he should go. "*A man's gift maketh room for him*" [Pro.18:16]. The Lord may sovereignly choose and send someone; especially when the people of God are not walking in His perfect will, or when He purposes to do a new thing.

Consider John the Baptist, Stephen, and Philip.

"They preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews." [Act.13:5]

Yes! Yes! "*The Word of God*" was their message; how often this is declared in the Acts. They went to the Jews first and also to the Gentiles; this is God's order (see Act.3:26, Rom.2:9-10, 1Pe.4:17).

Our God is the God of emergencies, and He finds those who will prove Him and also be proved at such times. Elymas the sorcerer withstood the apostles. We should never be alarmed at opposition nor quail before hardship. It is our opportunity; it is God's opportunity. That was God's time for His own glory to put Saul in the lead. Would Saul rise to the occasion? Was Barnabas a little shrinking? Who would prevail? The legalist (of whom the sorcerer is a type) or Jehovah? **Saul** means "*asked for*." The tall, stately fellow for whom Israel asked a thousand years before egregiously failed. Will this Saul fail? No! Why not? His name is changed to **Paul** meaning "*the little*." He had already learned that Christ alone was his life and strength. He depended upon God only. He gloried in weaknesses [2Co.12:9-10].

OPPOSITION OF SATAN

"Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" [Act.13:9-10]

We should not only be filled with the Spirit but also yield to Him absolutely. God never fails the believer who acknowledges his own weakness, yet at the same time counts on Him who is all-sufficient. Saints often miss God's best because they fail before a test. He knows when we are in a hard place. He could make it easier; but He seeks our development. He wants to show what He can do for us and through us if we count on Him. He would make us warriors of steel. Elymas was full of the spirit of Satan; but Saul was full of the Spirit of God; therefore, he overcame him. The sorcerer's birth name was **Bar-Jesus** ("*Son of the Savior*"); but he was not true to his name. In his walk and life-work, he was Elymas "the sorcerer." Saul was true to his new name, **Paul** ("*the little*"), by depending on the Lord; therefore, he prevailed in the fray.

Compare the phrase "*son of the devil*" with the phrase "*the sons of disobedience*" [Eph.2:2-3 RV]. For them there is no salvation. They have grown in their surrender to Satan and have become his sons. What a terribly solemn fact is this. All of us who are saved were once "*by nature children of wrath*" [Eph.2:3] but not children of the devil much less sons. Thank God, by the new birth we became children of God; now, it is our privilege to "*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior*" [2Pe.3:18] and thus become sons of God, "*led by the Spirit of God*" [Rom.8:14; contrast Joh.8:44]. Observe that the blindness of Elymas is typical of Israel's religious blindness for this age [study Rom.11:10, 25]. Their pharisaical teachers, who taught that men must be circumcised and keep The Law of Moses in order to be saved, were the worst kind of sorcerers. Some

saved Jews partook of this heresy. They "*bewitched*" young saints into a religion of works [Gal.3:4]. Here, Paul's words declare that such a doctrine is subtle, mischievous, an enemy of all righteousness, and is of the devil. Of course it perverts the right ways of the Lord, which are ways of faith and grace. The teaching of Barnabas and Paul was rightly termed "*the doctrine of the Lord*" [Act.13:12], which deeply impressed the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The doctrine was manifested through the power of God. Too many people ignore the doctrine, but run after the power of God. What is sometimes supposed to be the power of God is only the gesticulations² of the flesh. Man's carnal display is erroneously called "*the manifestation of the Spirit*" [1Co.12:7]. Real truth grips honest hearts. Real truth, the doctrine of the Lord, results in real "*manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*" [1Co 12:7].

THE APOSTLES MOVING ON

"Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem." [Acts 13:13]

Of the 7 points visited on Paul's first Gospel tour, we have already noted 2. It is not stated whether they preached in Selucia or not. **Selucia** ("*white light*") was doubtless unlike the city morally considered; but it was so-called because it was a seaport town. **Salamis** ("*shaken*") was shaken indeed in a new way when the apostles there proclaimed the Gospel. **Paphos** ("*which boils*") was a pot of religious iniquity which Elymas stirred with his ladle of sorcery. However, the apostles introduced a pot of oil that was being heated by the fire of God's Word and boiled with the glory of God. **Perga** ("*very earthy*") needed the Gospel, as do all places for the same reason. They may be bright, beautiful, and promising in the natural; but they are nothing to God without Christ. **Pamphylia** ("*mingled people*") was therefore a fine place to spread the glad tidings, thereby reaching different nationalities. We should not study these narratives as history only, but also as full of typical and spiritual lessons; therefore, the attention we give to the meanings of the names.

"John departing from them." The youthful John Mark could no longer endure to be only an "attendant" of those men who hazarded their lives for the truth. He could not stand "*the work*" [Act.15:38]. It is always easier to go to Jerusalem where there is a crowd (many thousands of Jews that believe); where there is "something doing" as the superficial say. How few stand for the truth, crowd or no crowd, results or no results. The truth will bring results, even fruit that will abide, if we are willing to toil and suffer in the will of God. **John** means "*the gift*" or "*favor of God*" and **Mark** means "*the polite*" or "*shining one*." It required more than an excellent and beautiful name to keep him going on in such a strenuous way. However, the time came, when even John Mark had to rally to the standard and write of Jesus Christ as the faithful Servant of Jehovah—even the Gospel of Mark. God wrought faithfulness in him and made him willing to be a servant, even under Paul, and "*profitable for ministering*" [2Ti.4:11]. Herein lies a rich lesson. John's first period of service with Barnabas and Paul was that of an attendant, an underling officer (Greek: **HUPERETEN**; called officer and servant in John 18:12, 22, 26). After he became willing to serve in that capacity, the Holy Spirit made him a minister of a more spiritual character, even a **deacon** (Greek: **DIAKON**).

If you desire promotion, be content with your present ministry and serve faithfully in it. You will be promoted for God's glory when you deserve it. Yet, if John had continued with Paul from the first, he would not have needed to return by the humiliating route of being brought by Timothy, who was younger in the Lord than himself and probably younger in years. Young man, take warning and courage from John Mark.

² A deliberate and vigorous gesture or motion.

"But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." [Acts 13:14-15]

The rest of this long chapter is devoted to the apostles' labors at that place which was several hundred miles from Antioch in Syria from where they started. Study Paul's mode of operation and testimony here. Observe that he spoke profusely from the Old Testament in addressing that Hebrew community. First, the apostles "*Sat down*." Full of truth and fire we may be, yet it is usually wise among strangers to sit and wait (compare Isa.30:7).

Note that Paul addressed them as "*men and brethren*." By a tactful historic recital, Paul brought his hearers to the birth of Christ, the offspring of David. Acts 13:23 is therefore a new item of history to them.

"Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." [Acts 13:23]

In Acts 13:26 Jesus is call "*this salvation*." Paul announced Him to be glad tidings and the fulfillment of their own holy writings. Scripture explains Scripture. The statement in Psalm 2, "*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee*," is here explained to mean Christ's resurrection [Act.13:33]. You will find "*the sure mercies of David*" (described in Psa.89) as God's promise of Jesus' millennial reign.

Observe that Paul taught, not only forgiveness of sins, but also justification [Act.13:38-39]. Here, for the first time in the Acts, we read of this marvelous doctrine of justification. You ask, "What is the difference?" The difference is great. An offended party can forgive an offence because he chooses to do so; but he cannot justify the offence or the offender. In fact, the offender remains an offender forever. The offence was committed once forever; but the offended Jehovah can justify the offender. He not only forgives our iniquity, but He "*covers our sins*" [Rom.4:7], so that offended justice can see them no more. The, ungodly, when forgiven, stands as if he had never been ungodly; the offender is counted as never having offended. He stands righteous before the highest tribunal in the universe. It is "*God that justifieth*" [Rom.8:33]. In Romans 3:23 and 5:9 we learn how this was made possible. Because Christ paid our debt in His death for us, God no longer imputes sin to us but instead imputes righteousness [2Co.5:19, 21] to us the moment we believe on Jesus [Rom.4:3 and Rom.5:1]. Reader, if you really believe that you are thus justified before God, you can never deliberately, designedly harm your brother [Rom.8:33]. This is grace [Act.13:43]. Learn Paul's invincible doctrine of justification in his epistle to the church in Rome.

Note how the Gentiles hung on Paul's words [Act.13:32, 43-44, 48]. Observe also the emphasis put upon the Word of God. The only salvation taught in the Bible is "*everlasting life*" [Act.13:46], and some "*were ordained to it*" [Act.13:48]. This ordination is not arbitrary on God's part. By listening to the Word, they arranged themselves to it. Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2 and see that faith and obedience is required on our part...the "*obedience of faith*." God opened the door of faith unto us and we enter in by choice [Act.14:27]. What is the heart attitude of those who do not believe and why don't they [Act.13:45-50 and Act.14:2, 5, 19]? When people close their heart against Christ and the truth they leave an opening for Satan to enter.

What is the result of believing the "*word of God's grace*"?

"And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." [Act.13:52]

How strange then, that man will not believe (see 2Co.4:4).

THE DIVINE ORDER ALWAYS

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." [Act.13:46]

Therefore, whenever Barnabas and Paul went to a town, they first offered their goods to the Jews. On this particular occasion, they began to be more pronounced in carrying the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Spirit was showing them that the Jews would not receive it.

Study the phrase, "*judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life*". What a solemn and strange statement. That was the way the Lord looked upon their rejection of salvation through His Son. Do not many Gentiles who accept Christ today judge themselves unworthy of eternal life? If not, why do they try to make themselves worthy? Why do they attempt to perfect themselves and earn eternal life by thinking to hold out faithful? Most of the saints, even after they see the grace of God, still deplore the fact that they are unworthy. They still wish that they had some merit, but there is no merit, no worthiness, in the old creation. In Christ, we are wholly worthy because we are a new creation in Him. The new life is His life, which can only be worthy and accepted. Again, we revert to Acts 13:39. He, whom God justifies, is accepted because his very righteousness is the spotless righteousness of Christ counted to him when he believed.

"For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." [Act.13:47]

The Apostle is quoting from Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 to prove to the Jews that the Gospel should go to the Gentiles also. It is a fine thing to know the Scriptures. A "*thus saith the Lord*" makes our teaching unanswerable. Observe, however, that Paul identified himself with Jesus Christ. Isaiah wrote of God's Son, that He should be for a light to the nations; but here, Paul declares that he himself is that light, as if Isaiah had written of Paul. Did not Jesus say to His disciples, "*Ye are the light of the world*" [Mat.5:14]? Then we read, "...*whom ye shine as lights in the world*" [Phi.2:15]. Not only did Paul represent Jesus Christ among the Gentiles, but he labored in their midst as Christ. It is not enough to represent Christ, to reflect Him in the world (as some put it), but we are here as He. Those who apprehend this truth cannot be false to Jesus; they cannot flirt with the world, court its favors, or make merchandise of the Gospel.

THE APOSTLES IN ICONIUM [ACT. 14]

"And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." [Act.14:1]

Despite the bitter opposition of Satan through the unbelieving Jews, while the missionaries were in Antioch the Word of the Lord spread abroad throughout that entire region [Act.13:49]. "*I will work, and who shall let it?*" [Isa.43:13] saith the Lord. When He allowed the chief men of the city to cast them out of their borders, they came to Iconium. Here they had great success and continued for a long time.

"Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands." [Act.14:3]

The persecution seemed to fire them anew to proclaim the truth because they spoke boldly in the Lord. Observe the phrase "*the Lord, which gave witness unto the Word of His grace,*" If the reader does not like the message of grace, closely consider this statement. That we emphasize the glad tidings of grace may not impress or interest you; however, God's witness to it should

convict every Law-keeper deeply. Many times, however, he resents it and throws off the conviction. How does the Lord bear witness to the Word of grace? The answer is simple, by granting "*signs and wonders to be done*" by the hands of His servants. In spite of this saying, and of other similar Scriptural statements, some men, even some who claim to see the grace of God, ignore and repudiate the Lord's manner of witnessing to His grace. What Bible proof do they have that they are proclaiming the Gospel?

IN LYSTRA

"They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about." [Act. 14:6]

The enemy could not endure the prosperity of the Word in Iconium so the Jews and Gentiles sought to stone the Apostles; therefore, they went on to other points. Satan could not stop them. No, No! The sun is a great ball of fire. Nothing can hinder it from shining, although men may try to hide from its light and heat. Just so with men filled with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Nothing can extinguish the fire in their bones, although some may reject the flames that leap from them.

"And there they preached the gospel." [Act. 14:7]

Lystra was a Gentile town; therefore, at first the Apostles did not quote so freely from the Old Testament. "*There they preached the Gospel*," that is, they announced Jesus Christ to be the Son of God and the Savior of men without especially trying to prove it from the Scriptures. Note that it is not said that they went into the synagogue of the Jews, as in other cities.

Then the Lord confirmed their wonderful message by healing the impotent man. Modern missionaries ought to study the travels of those first missionaries. They certainly never would talk of sending medical missionaries. Such language is a misnomer in the Bible. The physical impotency of that man in Lystra expresses the inward impotency of all mankind. All men are crippled in their feet from birth. None have ever walked uprightly before God since Adam and Eve stumbled and fell.

- All have sinned.
- All have come short.
- All are helpless apart from Christ.

His healing also is a beautiful picture of how the Lord lifts up all those who believe on Him and enables them to stand, leap, and walk by giving them a new life and making them new creatures in Him. Observe 2 important facts here:

1st: The Gospel message begets faith in the hearts of its hearers.

2nd: Paul did not attempt to heal everybody that was ailing; but he was ready to deliver those who had faith. The faith of God is not presumptuous, but waits and operates on prepared soil.

What was the public effect of the healing of the impotent man? The answer is in the next verse:

"And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius {Mercury}, because he was the chief speaker." [Act. 14:12]

Jupiter (Greek: **ZEUS**³ or **JOVE** meaning “father”; the Roman name is “Saturn”) was the supreme deity among the Greeks and Romans. He was regarded as the king and father of gods and men. He was the son of **Cronos**⁴ and **Rhea**; he was considered the ruler of time and the ages (compare Act.19:35). **Mercury** (Greek: **HERMES**; Latin: **MERCURIUS** meaning “eloquent,” “learned,” “crafty”) was supposed to be the son of Jupiter and Maia. In Homer, he is called by the various names: the giver of good luck, the god of secrets and cunning, the conductor of ghosts to Hades. Later, Mercury was worshipped as the god of learning, trade, the arts and sciences, and eloquence.

“Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.” [Act.14:13]

Barnabas was older than Paul (see Act.7:58), and doubtless of a larger physique: His powerful fatherly presence impressed the people; but Paul's learned eloquence (his invincible words in the Spirit) arrested them. We can see at once why those ignorant, needy people called them gods. They knew that only a god could perform such a miracle as the healing of the impotent man. But did the Apostles accept the people's deification of them? That is what many Christian workers today incite ... they want the admiration and applause of the public. They count it the highest honor and a proof of spirituality to be borne aloft like kings on the hands of their hearers. Not so with Barnabas and Paul. Instead we read,

“Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions (nature) with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.” [Act.14:14-16]

They avoided everything that would cause their auditors to be occupied with them. They sought to make them see the Lord and His wonderful goodness seeking nothing for themselves. They were seeking the good of the citizens and the glory of God. Every faithful minister of God today follows in their steps. In Acts 16, we will learn of a choice youth who believed about this same time.

“And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.” [Act.14:19]

As the Jews had done elsewhere, so they did here. No doubt, the Apostle Paul refers to this experience in 2 Corinthians 1:8-10. He takes occasion thereby to set forth an excellent item of truth for practical use. He said, “*We have had the answer (sentence) of death within ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us out of so great a death, and doth deliver.*” On the surface, it would seem that he had the sentence of death in his body at that time when he was taken up for dead. Is there a deeper truth, a background fact here? Doesn't our brother also mean that we all have had the sentence of death pronounced upon us on the cross? When do we cease to trust in ourselves and absolutely trust in the God of resurrection? Is it when we really believe with all our heart that there is nothing in the old creation to be trusted? Yes, we accept the sentence of Calvary and then go forth to prove it in

³ Zeus was the supreme god and ruler of Olympus. He was known by many titles: Lord of the Sky, the Cloud-gatherer, the Rain-god and Zeus the Thunderer, all of which show which force of nature was considered to be the most important in Ancient World—rain. [www.zeus-publications.com].

⁴ Cronus was occasionally interpreted as Chronos, the personification of time ... the identification of Cronus and Chronos gave rise to "Father Time" wielding the harvesting scythe. [Wikipedia]

actual experience. If the God of resurrection had not intervened how often would death have been our portion.

"And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many {Greek: made many disciples}, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch (in Pisidia)." [Act.14:21]

Covering a period of several years, 8 points were visited with the glad tidings which resulted in many converts to the Christian faith and the founding of assemblies. Going homeward, was their gospel bell cracked? How did it ring? It rang loud and clear in 3 distinct, particular tones of (1) confirmation, (2) exhortation, and (3) instruction [Act.14:22].

"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." [Act.14:23]

They left the saints in good hands in every place. They appointed elders in every church. The word **appointed** or **ordained** (Greek: **CHEIROTONEO**) means "*to elect by stretching out the hand.*" Assembly order is scriptural but not organization. There is not the first intimation of any carnal bounds set about the saints.

"And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled." [Act.14:26]

There is no question as to which Antioch; for Luke says, "*from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled.*" I find 2 meanings of the word **Antioch**: "*driven against*" and "*speedy as a chariot.*" Both meanings aptly apply to the assembly there. They sped on with the Lord, and of course, the enemy drove his chariots against them. Do you see to what Barnabas and Paul had been committed? It was the grace of God. This would not suit most ministers today. They prefer to be committed to some official board or district elder or general overseer. Thank God, under His grace we find the Trinity a reliable official Rock, tested by the ages. We find a kind and wise General Overseer in our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and a powerful and cooperative District Superintendent in the Holy Spirit. For 20 years, the writer has demonstrated the scripturalness of these statements with ever increasing profit, power, and joy. In brokenness of spirit and overwhelmed with awe, I can only exclaim, "*What hath God wrought!*"

"And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples." [Act.14:27-28]

Oh, how full of meaning and nourishing meat is every portion of God's Word! What the eyes of my heart see in this Book of Acts would fill a thousand pages; but time and space forbid. The church did not know the Apostles were coming. They could not telephone or telegraph, much less teleface. The city was not stirred carnally by the news of their arrival. The assembly only was concerned with them, and they were interested chiefly in the assembly. Note how those dear men said nothing of themselves or of what they had done. Paul seldom spoke in his letters about his troubles and persecutions; yet, who had more than he had? They simply recited God's dealings with them, which necessitated a bare mention of opposition. A door of faith opened to the nations was the great marvel. Who did that? Did eloquent Paul? Did big father Barnabas? No, God did it; and it pleased Him to employ Paul and Barnabas to spread the good news.

The word **tarried** (Greek: **DIATRIBO**) literally means "*to rub between*" and comes from **DIA** meaning "*through*" or "*thoroughly*" and **TRIBO** meaning "*to rub, bruise, grind.*" **Tarried** also

means “to abide, to tarry, to spend time” and it occurs only 5 times in the New Testament, twice in Acts 14. For example, in Acts 14:3 we learn the nature of their tarrying. They were not idle. They were not engrossed with the things of the world. They ground out some of the old corn of the land of Canaan. They rubbed out the Word of God in between the times of laboring with their hands and praying for the sick and ministering to the saints in spiritual things. I dare say that those who learn the rare art of rubbing between; grinding out a little meal; snatching a morsel of truth now and then; eating, sleeping, and visiting less; reading less of other things but searching the Word more always become beacon lights.

LEGALITY IS HUSHED FOREVER [ACT. 15]

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” [Act. 15:1]

Moses' reign was ended [Exo.12:43-49]. There is scarcely a more important portion of Scripture than this chapter. The only general council recorded in the New Testament met to settle questions which have disturbed the peace of saints in this age. If the teachings of that council were really believed and practiced, there would be no need of the many convocations today.

Paul and Barnabas had spent a whole year in Antioch. Afterward they established assemblies in 7 other places; teaching salvation by faith alone, wholly apart from works. It was after they returned to Antioch and had been a "long time" there that those troublers came down. It was more than 18 years after Pentecost (compare Gal.1:18 and 2:1-2) when this unannounced conference was held in Jerusalem to deliberate on the way of salvation. All the apostles, including Paul and Barnabas, were there.

“When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” [Act. 15:2]

Necessity was upon Paul and Barnabas to have the question of “salvation by faith alone wholly apart from works” settled. They had prolonged and labored discussions with the legalists, who stubbornly withstood them. Therefore, the brethren at Antioch appointed that they and certain others should go up to Jerusalem and confer with the apostles and elders there about the subject. Paul wrote afterwards, that he “*went up by revelation*” to that conference; taking Titus with him [Gal.2:1-3]. He was fully persuaded that he was scriptural in his teaching and toil. He had a clear grasp of the utter helplessness of The Law to save or bless, and was thoroughly persuaded that salvation was absolutely by grace (note Act.13:38-39, which we have studied). Therefore, if the Lord had not definitely revealed to him that he should go and interview the kingdom apostles, he would not have gone. For the Apostle Paul, the perfect will of God was his constant purpose; hence, he went up.

“But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.” [Act. 15:5]

When they arrived in Jerusalem, certain of the Pharisees met them with the same legal opposition. Indeed they had been to Antioch and persisted in their error. Yes, legality withstands the grace message everywhere.

“And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.” [Act. 15:6]

The problem was not to be solved so easily. Legality is Satan's strong religious fortification; therefore, it fights tiger like and hangs on like a leach. The conference began and proceeded

with "*much disputing*" (discussion). Sure! Legalists are fine talkers and they never seem to grow weary.

PETER FIRST ON THE FLOOR

"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." [Act.15:7]

After 3 years of fellowship with Jesus on earth, and after a score of successful years of Gospel ministry in the wisdom and power of the Spirit, Peter boldly declared the way of salvation for Jew and Gentile to be by faith alone. Hear him: "*God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe*" (see Act.10-11). Mark the invincible proof he gives:

"And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." [Act.15:8-9]

Observe the exact phrases: "*even as unto us*" and "*no difference*." For 20 years, Peter witnessed that people, Jews or Gentiles, received purity of heart—salvation (the Gift of the Holy Spirit)—by faith alone in Jesus. Not the slightest tinge of works was admitted. Note his stern rebuke.

"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" [Act.15:10]

My Friend, do you see what it means to bring in works (self-effort) as a means of salvation, or of perfecting believers? Water baptism, Sabbath-keeping, feet-washing, making restitution, lopping off habits, changing your dress, trimming your beard or hair...All these are acts of "*tempting God*" if they are done in order to be saved, to receive the Spirit, or to keep saved. To teach thus is to "*put an unbearable yoke on the neck*." It proved unbearable to the fathers; it is unbearable to everybody. Jesus had said:

"Come unto Me all ye that labor (working for salvation), and are heavy laden (with Law-keeping); take my yoke (faith) upon you, and learn of Me; for My yoke (grace) is easy and my burden (faith) is light." [Mat.11:29]

Yes, God be praised! "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth*" [Joh.1:14]; "*and of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*" [Joh.1:16-17]. Then observe Peter's unanswerable conclusion:

"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." [Act.5:11]

BARNABAS AND PAUL NEXT

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." [Act.15:12]

Whether these 2 apostles made any doctrinal statements or not, Luke does not say. The only proof they gave that the grace-way was the Divine Way, was the results of their labors everywhere they had gone. They needed no other proof. If their testimony of 15 years of effectual service, seeing many hundreds saved and filled with the Spirit and unspeakable miracles and wonders wrought, all thorough simple faith, would not convince the legalists,

nothing else would. They certainly rang the changes in declaring that all that had been done under their ministry, God Himself did it according to His grace. Their addresses were beyond question the most interesting of all.

JAMES ON THE PROGRAM

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written." [Act.15:13-15]

First, Peter proved that salvation was by faith through grace by showing the beginning of God's plan for this age. Then, Barnabas and Paul demonstrated that salvation was by faith through grace by their invincible witness to God's mighty works. Finally, James confirmed the arguments of those 3 faith-warriors by Old Testament prophecies. He introduced his remarks by recalling what Peter had said. Then he made known 3 vital truths:

1st: During this age. God is "*taking out a people for His name.*"

2nd: At the end of this age, "*the residue of the mer*" (that is Israel Act.12:11) will seek the Lord.

3rd: "*And all the Gentiles*" (nationally all, but not literally every individual); some will yield feigned obedience [Psa.18:44, 66:3, 81:15]. Study closely Acts 15:14-18].

Today, men talk of converting the whole world. They exclaim very religiously, "the whole city for Christ." Despite all the headlines that the whole city turned to the Lord, there is no record of any entire city being saved. The nearest to such a victory was in Paul's time, when "*almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of the Lord*" [Act.13:44]. But did they all believe? If they did, why did they expel the Apostles from their midst a few weeks later? Bear in mind that God is only making a visit to the earth during this age in order to gather out a Body and build a Bride for His Son. Men look in vain for a world-wide revival in view of ushering in a democratic millennium, and that without the Christ.

THE DIVINE OUTLINE

"After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up." [Act.15:16]

James is here quoting from Amos 9:11-12. The personal return and presence of the Lord, not simply as a visitor, but as a permanent resident, is the promise of God and the hope of believers. That only can bring in the millennium. He must come and rebuild the tabernacle of David. Then, Israel will be restored and the longed-for world-wide revival will be the order of the day...even of the millennial day. Jesus must be sitting upon the throne of universal dominion, His lovely Bride with Him, for these things to be accomplished. Not popular evangelism but Christ and His people will convert the world during their honeymoon. Hallelujah!

THE COUNSEL OF JAMES

"Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God." [Act.15:19]

James was the pastor of the kingdom congregation in Jerusalem. His words following Peter's words had weight with both Jewish and Gentile believers; curbing the Jewish and comforting the Gentile believers. Observe that he terms the teaching of legality "*trouble*," just what Paul called it afterward in Galatians 6:17. He put himself on record as believing that Gentiles "*are turned to God*," even under Paul's ministry. Those were hard blows against the law-keepers; but the Holy Spirit was moving him to speak. In Acts 15:20, James advises further that they give 4 simple cautions to Gentile converts:

1. "*That they abstain from the pollutions of idols.*" Of course, they could not worship the true God and other gods also. There is only one God; He alone is who they should worship (1Co.10:19-22 is a commentary on this statement). Idol-worship is in fact doing homage to Satan; for "*the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons*" [1Co.10:20]. By dividing up their devotions between idols and the Lord, they provoked "*the Lord to jealousy.*"
2. "*And from fornication.*" No man should have more than one wife, and no woman should have more than one husband. Why? Because the husband symbolizes Christ, the Head of the Body (the Church), and the wife symbolizes the Church (the Body of Christ). How fitting that these 2 exhortations should be given. The first refers to God, the supreme object of worship, and the second refers to the Lord, our exalted assembly Head. Each is rightfully jealous of His official relation to the saints.
3. "*And from what is strangled.*"
4. "*And from blood.*"

These last 2 precautions stand together. The second gives the reason for the first. Flesh with the blood in it was forbidden to be eaten, not only under Moses' Law [Lev.17:10-12], but long before [Gen.9:4] "*The blood is the life.*" If we drink blood, we are drinking the life and strength of the old creation. Here, again, our God is jealous. He has provided that we should live by the life of His Son, who shed His blood for us. He identified Himself with us in our ruin and died in our stead. In pouring out His own life-blood, He emptied out all our old creation life and strength. God sees the blood, even the blood of animals, as corrupt and spilled on the ground. Therefore, we are not to drink any blood. Furthermore, strangled meat was not to be eaten because the blood was still in it. Spiritually, we do not live by the life of one who was killed by strangling. Jesus Christ laid down His life voluntarily, He said, "*I lay down my life* (Greek: *PSUCHEN* not *ZOEN*) *for the sheep. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself*" [Joh.10:11, 15, 17-18]. We, who believe on Jesus, live by His resurrection life. Oh, what a wonderful and glorious truth this is!

UNANIMOUS ACCEPTANCE AND COOPERATION

"Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:" [Act.15:22]

There were no pharisaical legalists among these chosen to carry the comforting news of the decision of the council. Oh, if our brethren, who are under law, or mix law and grace, would study the conduct and conclusions of that council, their law-keeping would flee forever. Alas! Legal hearts refuse to read lest they be converted from their error.

"And they wrote letters by them after this manner..." [Act.15:23]

Read closely Acts 15:23-29. They termed the Judaizers to be "*troublers and subverters of souls*," and they had never given them orders to teach. In that conference we read that they "*came to one accord*" on the question. Note that they regarded Barnabas and Paul as "*beloved*" and as having "*hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*."

Do not overlook this saying, "*For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things*" [Act.15:28]. They put the Spirit first. It would be a joy indeed to attend a conference of leaders, led and controlled by the Holy Spirit, in perfect harmony with the Word of God. "*Necessary things*" did not mean that they were essential to getting saved, or to keeping saved, but in order to "*do well*." Laxity in those practical matters would hinder growth in Divine Things. Paul wrote about them in his epistles later on, warning against everything that would impede progress in grace. The "*necessary things*" are not stern demands of The Law, or drawn swords of justice hanging over our heads; they are finger-boards of love, to guard and guide us on our present pilgrimage.

James, in his epistle, written after that invaluable conference, called this grace-way of salvation "*the perfect law of liberty*" [Jas.1:25]. Paul pronounced it "*the liberty wherewith Christ hath-made us free*," and admonished us "*not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage*" [Gal.5:1]. On that council floor, Peter dared legality to be an unbearable yoke!

- If the 2 top zealots for Law-keeping, Peter and Paul, threw off that yoke of bondage with its clumsy brood of deadly doings, should we not shun it as a most deadly viper?
- If Spirit-filled apostles and elders and the first Pentecostal assembly met in a conference 20 years after Pentecost and boldly declared that salvation is by grace only and always, should we not also hold a bold stand in its favor?
- If salvation by grace alone, wholly apart from human effort, was our beloved brother Paul's doctrine (before and after that conference), how can we proclaim any other gospel than that of absolute grace?

Let us exclaim with Zechariah, "*Grace! Grace!*"

THE CONSOLATION DELIVERED

"So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation."
[Act. 15:30-31]

The further importance of that conference is shown by the fact that Judas and Silas were sent with Paul and Barnabas to deliver the conclusions reached. They exhorted the saints and confirmed them in the truth. It is worthy of note, that those saints of Antioch were already so deeply grounded in the truth of grace that the council did not bring them any added light. Its deliberations brought them "*consolation*" only, for which "*they rejoiced*." When Paul's gospel is known and believed, there is little hope of anyone else bringing any further information. His message encompasses all the truth.

"Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still." [Act. 15:34]

The revised version unwisely relegates this verse to the margin. By doing so, an interesting link in God's wonderful chain of providence is cut out. "*It pleased Silas to abide there still*" because the Lord had given him a special love for Paul and his gospel. God knew that Paul would soon need a new associate (yoke-fellow) in the work.

Observe that on the conference floor and when James spoke, the order was Barnabas and Paul [Act.15:2, 26]; however, when Luke records the proceedings of the conference and other events, the order was Paul and Barnabas [notice Act.13:9, 13, 16, 43; 46, 50 and Act.14:19]. Was that by accident? Did Paul just happen to be called "*the chief speaker*" [Act.14:12]? Do you think that Paul, coming more and more to the front, was easy for Barnabas to bear? For every effect there is a cause. Did it comfort dear, weary, tried Barnabas to see Silas staying close to Paul, and Paul reciprocating his attentions? You see, we are being prepared for the next lesson.

PAUL'S 2ND GOSPEL TOUR [ACT. 16-18]

"And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." [Act.15:36]

From Acts 15:36 to Acts 18:22, we find recorded the 2nd missionary journey of the Apostle Paul; it began about 51 A.D. He had a heart of warmest love for his converts. He felt responsible for the care and growth of the children born again under his ministry. Therefore, like every true, loving father he purposed to visit them. However, before he could go on this journey, some difficulties arose. Ponder thoughtfully the closing verses of Acts 15.

A SHARP CONTENTION

Reader, are you perplexed at the separation of Barnabas from Paul and the way in which it occurred? Paul wrote, "*As much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men?*" Yes, but peace must lie in **both** parties. Barnabas was older than Paul, a man of wealth, who at one time stood high among the Jerusalem saints; he had befriended Paul after the latter's conversion. When the Lord was pushing Paul to the front with a new distinctive message, Barnabas was slow to see that it was God. Why should He give such a revelation to one who had blasphemed and wasted the Church instead of one who had always been true to the truth?

God gets the greatest glory in choosing unlikely men to accomplish His purposes. Even Jesus was the son of Joseph, a common carpenter, and from Nazareth, a place despised (so said the critics).

Reader, do not cast everything into the wastebasket as error because you have not seen it before or because some reputed person has not taught it. Weigh it in God's scales. It may be the "scripture of truth." Do not limit the infinite God. The same Holy Spirit, who came to guide us into all the truth, can show you and me (as well as Martin Luther or John Wesley) new things in His Word. What man dare stand up and say that he has explored the limits and has delved into the deepest depths of Divine Truth? Barnabas may have thought that what Peter, James, and John had not learned (from Jesus and through the Holy Spirit, by whom they were empowered) was not to be learned. Behold, what mighty men they were, what miracles they wrought, etc.

Then, added to his personal feelings, his nephew John Mark was ready to join them, again: however, Paul thought it not good to take him because he had left them when the work was so difficult and he was so greatly needed. You can see how easy it was for John to go along now. They were going to visit established assemblies. Personal preferences, family ties; nothing should be allowed to come between us and the will of God. The sequel proves who was in the right. Barnabas took **Mark** ("*the polite, shining one*") and went to **Cyprus**, ("*fairness*") his own home. Nothing is said of them until long after Paul made his 2nd missionary journey (see 1Co.9:6 and 2Ti.4:11).

"And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."
[Act. 15:40]

Paul chose **Silas** ("one who considers") and departed; not to his home but to labor with and to confirm the churches. God always proves who is in His will. All those men suffered. Paul, because he moved in the will of God, suffered with Christ. The other 2, going in their own way, suffered defeat and loss; Mark served Paul at last (see 2Ti.4:11).

It speaks well of God's ministers, when they go forth "*recommended by the brethren*." Barnabas and Mark also went forth, but without a recommendation. The Divine Order always is, that we first have a Divine Conviction to go, impelled by the flaming truth within. Then, that we need the Divine Empowerment, the anointing with the Holy Spirit. Finally, we need Divine Cooperation and Confirmation of the assembly of saints. Thus we can advance with confident certainty and unconquerable strength. The sequel proved the divinity of the course of Paul and Silas.

Furthermore, observe that they were "*recommended unto the grace of God*." That is no small item. Have you ever heard of such a send-off in modern times? Everywhere they went, the "riches of grace" was their unspeakable message. If you have a feeling of shyness or laxity toward the grace of God, study the Divine Purpose of redemption through grace. Paul declares that it was, "*that in the ages to come* (this age, the millennial age, and the eternal age), *He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" [Eph.2:6-8].

THE APOSTLES ON THE WING

"Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." [Act. 16:1-2]

How do we know that Timothy was the product of Paul's former visit to Derbe and Lystra? Because Paul calls him his "*son*" [2Ti.1:2]. Being "*well reported of by the brethren*" there, Paul took him along; he afterward proved to be a loyal, faithful student, and preacher of the Word. Why did Paul have him circumcised? Because his mother was a Jewess and his father was a Greek (Gentile). This is an illustration of his teaching: "*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" [1Co.9:22]. He knew that observing this rite would not affect Timothy's standing with God, but it would give him more freedom among the Jews who were still weak in the faith. Paul was weak with them that were weak. We must remember that "*the decrees for to keep*" [Act.16:4] were delivered to Gentile believers only (see Act.15:19-20, 24, 30 and Act.16:4).

"And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." [Act. 16:5]

How different from modern reports were the report of the labors of those men. They are always exceedingly brief. The character of their teaching and toils is seen by the 2 results: The first result mentioned is that they were "*established* (strengthened) *in the faith*" which most naturally leads to the second "*increase*." There is criminal neglect today in this respect. Very few ministers have sufficient love for the saints to feed them on the life-sustaining bread, the Word of grace, wisely taught. Most of them itch to lead big revivals, so as to get a big name and a big bag of greenbacks or silver. Oh, how different were those men, who hazarded their lives for the Gospel. Both will have rewards. The one have their rewards here and now, it will be worldly. Paul and his company will have their reward hereafter, it will be eternal.

A LESSON ON DIVINE GUIDANCE

Study the 3 means used here by the Spirit to plainly show the apostles the will of God. Behind them is the great command of Jesus: "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel.*" This they were heeding. God has a certain time for each plan and person; He is calling out a people for His Name and He knows when the people are ready for the truth.

"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." [Act.16:6-7]

These may seem like strange words, "*forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach,*" "*but the Spirit suffered them not.*" Happy for us to be so well acquainted with the Spirit's voice and so yielded to Him that He can make us to know His will. Because of this lack, many a fruitless word has been spoken, many a vain trip made. It is not enough to say, "Well, He knows my heart;" we'll get no reward and God gets no glory for that either. We should know God's heart concerning us. If Paul knew it, we may know it too. If there is within us the persistent purpose to know and to do the perfect will of the Lord, no matter what the cost to us or to others, He will see that we have it. Then, we shall prove that it is exceedingly beyond all that we could have asked or even thought. Do not limit the Holy One by your own meager conception of His will.

"And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." [Act.16:8-10]

- 1st:** The prohibition to not preach in Asia or go into Bithynia.
- 2nd:** Having yielded to that; there followed a practical vision of the "*man of Macedonia.*" Paul was not visionary; therefore, God could reveal His will to him in this manner if He saw fit.
- 3rd:** They assuredly gathered (concluded) from these various experiences and providences "*that the Lord had called*" them into Macedonia. The Holy Spirit employs the Word, providences, people, visions, and dreams, as well as His own interior conviction (voice) to direct our steps.

Some folks imagine that they should never act or speak unless they are seized by an irresistible impression (power) as if God regarded us as machines. No! The life and walk in the Spirit is most natural, easy, and simple. "*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God*" [Rom.8:14].

A CHURCH PLANTED IN PHILIPPI

"Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief {the first} city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days." [Act.16:11-12]

Samothracia ("*sign of rags*") by its great need might have detained the apostles. **Neapolis** ("*new city*") with its promising features might have appealed to them. Not so! They had heard a clarion call into Macedonia, and as soon as they could into Macedonia they went. Oh, what an example to us of prompt and persistent obedience. Observe, that they sought a central point, the chief city, from which to sound out the Gospel in that country. We would do well if we follow their example.

What was the result of that definite leading? Days of discouraging waiting, a prayer meeting found, a demon cast out, imprisonment and stocks, an assembly in grace founded, and a most excellent and needful apostolic letter for our edification...the epistle to the Philippians. We do not always meet with immediate success when we are led by the Spirit.

"We were in that city abiding certain days." Saints often lose a great victory because they do not hold in faith by "*abiding*" until it comes. It is easier to run than to abide. Men can go in their own strength; but they can never stand still except in God's might, which is always at hand when we need and want it. Praise His Name!

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.." [Act.16:13]

This verse is rich and sweet. They found a prayer-band of Sabbatarians; that is, women who were Jews and had not yet heard of the first advent of Jesus and of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they were observing the shadows. The apostles went to that prayer meeting on the Sabbath not to endorse Sabbath-keeping, but that they might bring the truth to those women; the truth which was the fulfillment of what those women needed. People who sincerely pray to God are sure to be heard. Indeed, it was that prayer meeting which moved the Lord to send the apostles to Philippi. Pray on, hope on; you shall have the answer to your prayer at last. Hallelujah!

"And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination {of Python} met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. [Act.16:15-16]

What a small beginning for such faithful, untiring "*servants of the most high God*" [Act.16:17]. In the natural, one would suppose that God would have led them to rent the largest hall in the city and advertise the old time religion. No, not so with God's best. Analyze the record: "*out of the city, by a riverside, prayer was made, we sat down, spake unto women.*" Oh, Paul, are you not mistaken? Did the Spirit actually lead you? Ah yes, God led! Cowper wrote: "God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform."

The first to receive the truth was not an inhabitant of that city but "*Lydia of Thyatira*" [Act.16:14]; through whom an assembly was afterwards founded in Thyatira (see Rev.2:18-29). The Lord opened her heart and she received the Word and the apostles into her home. That was their first encouragement. They continued to attend the prayer meeting.

Luke writes, "*as we went to prayer.*" An apostle or saint who does not love a prayer meeting but wishes only to preach, or be preached to, is not reliable. It was on the way to prayer that a demon-possessed woman met them. Yes, too often believers turn back and go home missing the mutual fellowship of the saints and of God. Do not neglect the assembling of yourselves together as is the manner of some. Mary lingering at the empty tomb should be a lesson to us all, not to be in a hurry but to wait [Joh.20:11-15].

"The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, these men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." [Act.16:17-18]

How we need to try the spirits. The demons know the truth and God's true men (compare this verse with Act.19:15). "*A flattering mouth worketh ruin*" [Pro.26:28]. Here we learn the source of

flattery and its purpose. Sooner or later, Spiritual believers sense flattery. "*Many days*" the soothsayer followed the apostles and annoyed them with her vain compliments. Finally, when moved by the Spirit, Paul rebuked the demon in the name of Jesus Christ and cast it out. Why didn't Paul act sooner? He was led by the Spirit. Whenever we loose one from satanic bondage, Satan puts us in bondage in turn, if God lets him; therefore, the disciples were imprisoned. Thank God that the hard place, the circumscribed condition, the opposition of darkness, is faith's opportunity.

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." [Act. 16:25-26]

How insufficient is carnal security. God never sleeps; and though faith always rests, it never sleeps either. While the jailor slept the apostles wrestled and prevailed. Prayer turned to praise and the victory was won.

*"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**"* [Act. 16:27-31]

An earthquake shook the building, divine glory shook the apostles, and conviction shook the jailor. Suddenly he knew that he was lost. He cried, "*what must I do to be saved?*" The simple and prompt answer, the apostles' remedy always for sin-sick souls, was: "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" An appropriate sermon on salvation by grace through faith followed.

*"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, **believing** in God with all his house."* [Act. 16:32-34]

The prison house was made a place of liberty in Christ Jesus. The jailor expressed his faith in God by being baptized "*he and all his, straightway.*" He expressed his gratitude to the apostles by washing their stripes and by giving them an early breakfast. Of course he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. Study the depth and immediateness of the conviction. Study the brief, simple, direct, and all-sufficient mode of salvation. One word—*Believe*—at the beginning and end of the record, expresses the process. No human merit; all of grace. No works; all of faith. No human power; God alone saved the jailor [Act. 16:31, 34].

"And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul. The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, they have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans." [Act. 16:35-38]

When men are defeated, but do not wish to acknowledge it, they seek an easy way out. The authorities said: "*Let those men go.*" But Paul being innocent, and deserving the protection of the government, would not be thrust out and have it go on record that they were troubling the

cities. God gives us an inward courage that commands the respect of magistrates for His own glory, which we should seek continually.

"And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed." [Act.16:40]

The last verse of the chapter is interesting. It will be of special profit to the student to read in this connection that valuable letter of Paul to the Church which grew out of his visit to Philippi at that time; namely, the epistle to the church at Philippi.

THESSALONICA TO ATHENS

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." [Act.17:1-3]

Note the meaning of these 3 cities: **Amphipolis** ("around the city"), **Apollonia** ("utter destruction"), and **Thessalonica** ("victory over the tossing of law or falsity"). Such a victory is required to become an overcoming assembly, as the saints in Thessalonica grew to be. As always, Paul's theme in that city was the fundamental truth of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which he urged upon the worshippers in the synagogue from the Old Testament. Some of the Jews believed. A great multitude of Greeks believed also. There, as usual, the truth met with bitter opposition. Truly as a poet has written, "This world is no friend to grace."

Observe, however, that the religious world is the champion of persecution.

- At Philippi, it was the devotees of "*a spirit of divination*" whose possessor was used to make men rich [Act.16:16].
- In Thessalonica, it was the professed people of God who did the persecuting.

Note how in both cases, they deftly made use of the rulers of the city [Act.16:19-21, 17:6-8]. Believers have the hardest time when the magistrates (those in authority) are against the saints, incensed especially by the religious populace.

"But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." [Act.17:5-6]

The charge in Acts 17:6 was exaggerated, although it was true that these "*turned the world upside down.*" And yet, sin turned the world upside down; but salvation turns it right side up. Observe that national jealousy was the root of the persecution.

"Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." [Act.17:7]

The apostles preached "*another king, one Jesus.*" Thank God, the day is not far distant, when that Jesus will indeed be King.

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews." [Act.17:10]

It is no sign of cowardice or defeat to move on in the will of God. The mind of the Spirit is always victory however humiliating it may appear. Their course of action fully agreed with Acts 15:14 "*God visited the Gentiles to take out a people for His name.*" The Lord never intended His church to erect costly, elaborate buildings for worship, as if they would stay here forever. Ours is a pilgrim life; we are "*pilgrims and strangers on the earth.*"

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." [Act.17:11]

Whom does Jehovah call noble? "*Those that receive the Word with all readiness of mind.*" In the eyes of the flesh, they are called noble who can command attention and respect by their skill, affluence, pomp, eloquence, self-control, and masterful leadership, intermixing enough of Christ to stamp it as "Christian." Bosh! Bunk! Sham! Shame on such pulpit dress-parade! What will the harvest be? "*Wood and hay and stubble*" [1Co.3:12], rolling up in blinding volumes of smoke, even as their ministry is blinding many eyes to the real truth. Oh, if we can induce people to search the Word of God daily and honestly for themselves, they will be convinced and believe because they will thereby be enlightened through the operation of the Holy Spirit, who always hovers over those who honestly delve into the Word. This is why Paul wrote to Timothy, just before he departed for heaven, saying "*Preach the Word*" [2Ti.4:2]. If we heed his admonition, we do well for time and eternity. Again, being opposed, those dear men of God moved on.

PAUL IN ATHENS

"Now while Paul waited for them (Silas and Timothy) at Athens, his spirit was stirred (provoked) in him, when he saw the city wholly {full of idols} given to idolatry." [Act.17:16]

Young's Concordance gives 51 A.D. as the date when Paul was brought before the Supreme Court in Mars' Hill (the Areopagus). If that is correct, then it was 6 years from Paul's commission [Act.13:1-3] until he came to Athens.

As was his custom, he first preached in the synagogue, because God's order is "*to the Jews first and also to the Greek*" [Act.3:26, Rom.1:16]. Then, daily he visited the market-place with his new and burning message. It was in Athens that the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. These 2 religious schools, directly opposed to each other in their beliefs, sprung up over 300 years before Christ. Paul's discourses on "Jesus and the resurrection" aroused them.

- **Epicurus**, the founder of the Epicurean school, sought for happiness and pleasure at the expense of truth. He relied upon experience rather than reason as the test of his theory. The Epicureans held that the world was made by chance; that there is no providence, no resurrection, no immortality; and that pleasure is the chief good.
- The **Stoic** philosophy was founded by Zoan. It took its name from the Stoa, a porch in Athens, where the school met. The Stoics were lofty pantheists; that is, they claimed that the whole creation is God. Their chief religious boast was to be severely indifferent under all circumstances; neither rejoices over blessings and pleasure nor winces under pain. Our English word "**stoical**" came from that religion.

Of course, both these religious theories had their roots in Cain's self-effort. Self-will is at the bottom of all false religions. Is Cain's doctrine still in evidence? Are there any Epicureans and Stoics around today? Yes. All self-made men are Cainites. All self-righteousness, all self-improvement, all self-perfection, even though it is styled as "entire sanctification," is Cainish because it robs Christ of His glory. **Stoicism** ("*self-killing*") is another word for legality.

Epicureanism is another way of spelling lasciviousness. Do as you please; have a good time; spare yourself; eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die. Both of these religious philosophies have imbedded themselves in Christendom. If believers do not learn the precious secret of recognizing Christ within as their life, they will almost invariably end up in one of these cults. Some saints grow weary of victories and defeats, and finally give up to a life of ease. Others, strong in themselves in certain things, seem to cultivate self-control and graduate into an ascetic, make-believe piety. Both grieve our dear Lord, who deigns to be the victorious life in all His people.

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill {the court of the Areopagites}, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." [Act.17:22-23]

When they had pulled him into the Aeropagus, the hill where the supreme court of justice met, the Apostle Paul opened gospel fire on them. They accused him of setting forth strange gods, or demons; but he declared them to be very reverential to demons in all things. Superstition means demon worship; therefore, we should flee from it. The Apostle's proof of his statement was the inscription on their altar, *"To an unknown God."* Surely the world is full of Athenians today. They abound in Christendom. Oh, the sadness of it. Everybody is religious. Everybody goes to church on Sunday. But God is to the most of them *"unknown."* They ignorantly worship; if the empty, hypocritical form may be called worship.

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." [Act.17:24-25]

Study Paul's manner of teaching among the Gentiles. He did not first quote from the Old Testament, as when speaking to the Jews. He began with their own religious habits; then pointed out the true and living God and introduced them to Jesus as the Savior of men. God made man to be a worshipper of Him; but Satan induces man to worship himself. All false religions really eventuate in the worship of the devil. All error, all that is spurious in Christendom today, however pious, only glorifies Satan and robs Christ. The Apostle uttered an important truth in saying that *"God dwelleth not in temples (sanctuaries) made with hands, neither is He served with men's hands, as though He needed anything" [RV]*. Those who believe on Jesus become living sanctuaries for the habitation of the living and true God. Their eyes are not fixed on costly places of worship made of stone and steel. Those who really understand God's grace plan do not serve Him and beg for His work as if He were poor. They trust Him as being rich and able to finance all His enterprises. They worship Him as the adorable One, whose love and help they need continually.

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." [Act.17:26]

Paul was no evolutionist. He taught that God *"made of one (Adam, the first) every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" [RV]*. Adam did not evolve from some infinitesimal germ in the unmeasured distant past. Only the Satan-blinded wise (?) believe such insanity, God *"giveth to all life and breath and all things" [Act.17:25]*. If all have descended from Adam, why should white men be abusive to black men? Why should the rich lord it over the poor? Why should the learned despise the ignorant? "Why should any mortal be proud?" Because of sin, all are black by nature (the old creation). They only are truly white (the new creation) who have been washed in Jesus' blood. Those who know the Lord are the only rich and wise in God's reckoning. Praise His name!

"And hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord" [Deu.32:8 RV] must be considered in this connection— "The Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam. He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel; for the Lord's portion is His people: Jacob is the lot of His inheritance."

This is a wonderful truth. God always antedates His own. He knew how many Israelites there would be and set the boundaries of all the nations in view of their comfort and welfare. Then the Lord ordered the geography of the nations, not that they might become rich and great, and vie with one another and fight for one another's territory, but that *"they should seek the Lord."* God has sought to reveal Himself, through His Son Jesus Christ, to all the nations that out of them He might gather a people for His name. But Satan has busied himself in blinding men to the truth in view of inducing them to follow and worship him.

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." [Act.17:28]

If that is true of all men, in the sense that all men are His creatures (the offspring of God); how much more radically true is it of those who are *"His offspring"* by the new and heavenly birth. They live and move consciously in God. Their *"life is hid with Christ in God"* [Col.3:3]. God overlooked the times of humanity's ignorance up to the Cross; but now since Christ has redeemed men and made it possible for all to be saved through faith in Him, He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repeat. This is why the Gospel has been published during this age throughout the world [Rom.10:18, Col.1:23]. God has not left His Son without witness. Nations can never complain that they have not heard the Gospel. Why does God declare that men should repent? Acts 27:31 answers that question.

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world (Greek: THE INHABITED EARTH) in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." [Act.17:31]

This also is proof that mankind has heard the glad tidings. Since the Holy Spirit has been poured out, He has been reproving the world of the sin of not believing on Jesus (study Joh.16:8-11). Therefore, judgment will be necessary and that judgment will be just. It will be most fitting that Jesus Christ be the competent Agent of judgment, because He has proven Himself the competent Savior. Men are left without excuse.

Here the Apostle adds a beautiful and significant statement, proving the certainty of the judgment: "Whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." By His resurrection, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God. He was raised from the dead for our justification. He offers full salvation to all who will receive Him. Therefore, as surely as He arose from the grave so surely He will judge the world. What was the result of Paul's faithful ministry in that court room?

"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them." [Act.17:32-33]

Ah, did they? No; for Paul went out from among them. The healthy, wealthy, wise and great of this world seldom accept the lowly Nazarene. They are self-sufficient and do not feel their need of a Savior. However, Paul's ministry in Athens was not altogether without fruit.

"Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." [Act.17:34]

Dionysius ("divinely touched") is styled the Areopagite, doubtless because he was a judge or some other important personage in the court. The meaning of his name agrees with his religious pedigree. Church history states that he was at Heliopolis in Egypt at the time of Christ's death; on observing the supernatural darkness, he exclaimed, "Either the God of nature suffers, or sympathizes with one who suffers." He was burnt as a martyr for the truth in 95 A.D. **Damaris** ("little woman" or "a yoke-bearing wife") must have become a striking Christian character in that heathen city; otherwise why does the Holy Spirit single her out and quote her in connection with Dionysius. Her name beautifully describes the Bride of Christ. She is little, apparently, when compared with the world's women. She is not afraid of toil and burden-bearing. *"Her price is far above rubies"* [Pro.31:10].

RECAPITULATION

We have just been studying very interesting visits to 4 different cities. We found religious people in all of them and they were the chief persecutors. *"A man's foes are they of his own household"* [Mat.10:36] applies to the household of faith as well as to a family. In the natural, Spiritual saints learn this painful fact by experience. Later on, the Apostle wrote letters to Philippi and Thessalonica, which we do well to read, ponder, and heed. Why didn't he write to the Berean saints, who were nobler than some others, searching the Scriptures daily while Paul was there? Maybe they ceased searching after he left. Maybe they were not as needy as others. Why didn't he write to Athens? Possibly there was no assembly planted there. We might conjecture many things. One thing is certain, the Holy Spirit sovereignly led Paul to write certain epistles to certain assemblies; setting forth certain portions of truth, for certain divinely ordained purposes. All those epistles were written for the fullest enlightenment and highest good of all the Church during this age.

ACTS 18

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them." [Act.18:1-2]

Being Jews from Pontus, the north east province of Asia Minor, it is quite probable that Aquila and Priscilla heard Paul when he preached in that country [Act.13:13-14 and Act.16:6-7]. Were they present in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit was poured out [Act.2:9]? Did they sow the gospel seed in Rome? They had just been driven from that city to Corinth [Act.18:2]. No doubt they had already prepared the soil for the Apostles in Corinth before their arrival. Paul and Silas did not find some of their own spiritual kinfolk in every new place with whom they could lodge and have fellowship. We infer that Paul followed his trade of tent making in Corinth as a side-line; but his chief business was to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and get men saved. If many young, ignorant fellows today were less ambitious to preach and more willing to make tents, or work otherwise with their hands, it would be far better for the people and the Gospel. Very few are willing to labor and give out the Word at the same time. They would rather pose as evangelists, hold big meetings, and get the hard earnings of the people, who very often know the Word and the Lord better than the evangelists. *"The laborer is worthy of his hire"* but very many are not laborers but loungers—religious loafers.

"And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ {is the Christ}. And when they

opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.” [Act.18:5-6]

As usual, Paul’s message was met with bitter opposition; therefore, *"he shook his raiment,"* and withdrew to the house of Justus, near the synagogue. Despite the persecution, the Apostles’ ministry was fruitful. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed the Lord with all his family; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized. Sosthenes, another ruler of the synagogue, also believed on Jesus, and became an apostle and was associated with Paul in writing a very valuable letter to the church at Corinth (compare 1Co.1:1).

“...and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.” [Act.18:8]

Immediately upon accepting Christ, baptism in water was always observed by the Apostles. Separation between the old and the new creations, between Egypt and Canaan, between the world and the Church, indeed, between Satan and God, is forcefully symbolized by water baptism. Death and resurrection, "the great gulf fixed" between these 2 eternal opposites, is very fittingly figured by immersion in water. Of course, any other so-called mode of baptism figures nothing. By immersion, we go down into death and the grave in symbol, and come up again alive in symbol. Water baptism is the first manifest act of reckoning ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ. We begin to *"walk in newness of life"* [Rom.6:4] the moment we are born again and we show it outwardly by baptism.

Did Paul contradict himself in saying, *"Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel"* [1Co.1:14-17]? Oh no! He simply held the memorial of baptism, as a symbol, in its relative place and value. Sometimes undue stress is put upon baptism; therefore, the Apostle’s caution is very timely. The writer was once a strong advocate of pouring and sprinkling, having been sprinkled at an altar-bench at the age of 16. But, upon seeing by God’s Word [Rom.6:6] that *"our old man is crucified with Him,"* dead and buried with Him, there was no baptism for me but by immersion...I was buried in Lake Erie. But I was not any more fully saved, nor more really justified before God, after being baptized, than I was 20 years prior, when God pardoned my sins; but I had *"the answer of a good conscience"* [1Pe.3:21] having observed the loving, memorial request of my Savior.

Various queries come to us about water baptism. The Apostles were baptized in the name of Jesus, or Lord Jesus, because He is the Divinely Ordained Head (Lord) of the Church (the Body of Christ). We are asked, "If one has been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, must he be baptized again?" We do not see any reason for so doing; but the candidate should decide that matter. If baptism in Jesus’ name is the New Testament way, can anyone be saved if not thus baptized? I answer by putting a query to you. How did Jesus and Paul say we are saved?

- Is it by grace through faith, or
- by grace through water, or
- by faith in water?

Consult John 3:16, John 5:24, Acts 16:31, and Ephesians 2:8.

As Acts 18:9 suggests, the enmity and persecution from the Jews must have been unusually strong to cause Paul to be sorely tempted with fear.

"Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." [Act.18:9-10]

The Apostle believed these comforting words. He boldly exclaimed to the Christ-rejecting Jews, *"Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean. From henceforth, I will go unto the Gentiles."* Having found a warm welcome in the home of Justus, he dwelt in that city 1 year and 6 months, teaching the word of God among them. Literally, he sat down there; that is, he rested safely in the Lord, determined to continue there and teach his converts as long as God bid him do so. What an example of patience and persistence in hard toil in the midst of stout resistance from Satan. Often ministers pack up and run, under the pretext of an urgent call elsewhere by people or a great need. However, if they are faithful to the truth, they will find a bug in the ointment in any new place. Distance lends enchantment to the eye, but facts tell the tale. Study the historian's words of Paul's ministry in Corinth. They suggest an outline to a great message. He reasoned, persuaded, testified; he wrought by day and taught by night and sat 18 months. God's Word filled him and fired him with unflagging zeal.

Now, if Bible students desire the fullest benefits of Paul's visits to Corinth, let them study diligently his 2 letters written to the Church of Corinth. 1 Corinthians is really a setting in order of the Church of Christ. 2 Corinthians is that well-ordered Church fulfilling her mission on earth—ministering as a company of priests in the things of God; for we are made *"a kingdom of priests unto God"* [Rev.5:10].

HOMeward BOUND AGAIN

"And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.." [Act.18:18]

In Corinth, the Apostle left behind him nearly 2 years of a laborious and far-reaching ministry. His host and hostess went with him as far as Ephesus. He was hastening to the annual Jewish feast of Pentecost to be held in Jerusalem. He always longed to be there every year if possible. Did he need to meet the other apostles or be at some large gathering to be refreshed and strengthened? Big meetings are too often the poorest place to obtain help. No! Christ was his freshness and strength; and the sheep of his own pasture brought him more comfort than any others. Why then be present at Pentecost? He sought every opportunity to bring the glad tidings to his own people, the Jews. Those Jerusalem gatherings afforded him a rare chance to reach many Jews at one time.

"And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus." [Act.18:19-21]

He visited the synagogue in Ephesus with his gospel message. There he had an exceptional reception at first. They asked him to tarry longer; but he declined saying, *"I will return again unto you if God will."* It is to be observed that Paul always obtained the object of his expectations, because he could say as David did, *"my expectation is from Him (the Lord)"* [Psa.62:5]. No doubt his hope of reaching Spain [Rom.15:28] was realized. He left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to sow that Asiatic town with gospel seed, while he hastened on to Jerusalem. Later, we will see a very special reason for their tarrying.

"And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch." [Act.18:22]

Caesarea was a seaport town on the Mediterranean 70 miles northwest from Jerusalem. From there he went inland, or up to Jerusalem. Note that he barely "*saluted*" the assembly there. Did they not let him preach? Did they not invite him to give them a 10-day campaign "*speaking the mystery of Christ* [Col.4:3]? If our beloved brother Paul ever had such an invitation from any of the churches in Judea, it is not recorded. They allowed too much legality to give him a hearing with his transporting message of grace, even as is the case with legalists today. True it is, and a pity that it is true. Grace does not even have a chance to offer a salutation.

How differently it went with him at Antioch. There he "*spent some time*." There he was welcomed warmly, as he was every time he returned. That was his spiritual home, his headquarters on earth. Thus Paul's 2nd Gospel tour ended. The Assembly in Antioch had recommended Paul and Silas to the grace of God several years before [Act.15:40]. Their believing prayers had followed them and sustained them during their absence. It speaks well for the Apostle that he never lost the confidence of the saints whom the Holy Spirit used to launch him on his career [Act.13:1-4]. He began his ministry in a gale of victory by the direct appointment and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. And, he continued in the same fiery, intrepid, energetic manner through another successful journey. There is not one lapse, or hint of failure, recorded of Paul. We never read of him being sick, daunted, or discouraged. As his letter indicated, even in prison, he was the same buoyant, victorious soul as he was on the missionary field.

Paul wrote both letters to the Thessalonians from Corinth after Silas and Timothy returned from them [1Th.2:17].

"And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ {is the Christ}."
[Act.18:23-28]

Paul's father-heart longed to have his children grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. He knew that they were weak, and had many heathen practices to be delivered from. He knew that Satan and self-seeking religious men would endeavor to ruin them. Therefore, he visited the churches with words of comfort and instruction. On this trip, he met the accursed heresy of the religion of works. He resolved to correct and safeguard the saints of Galatia against that destructive teaching; therefore, he wrote that masterpiece epistle—Grace against Law—to the Galatians. On this journey, the phrase "*all the brethren which are with me*" [Gal.1:2] (together with Acts 20:2-4 where the 7 brethren are named) indicates that the Apostle Paul wrote that epistle from Corinth. Thank the Lord for that letter; because in experience, the most of us were once in Galatia. Christendom has needed it greatly; for all Christendom has been and is still in bondage, more or less, to legality.

In the Revised Version we read: "*Now a certain Jew, named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.*" If the Holy Spirit eulogizes a person who would dare object? But we should not seek after eulogy from men.

These 5 verses about Apollos are rather parenthetical. However, they are necessary because that "*certain Jew*" was to perform an important part on the Divine Program with Brother Paul. The Holy Spirit omits no necessary links and permits no superfluous ones.

- Was that eloquent Jew saved before the tentmakers met him?
- Can a man be saved knowing only the baptism of John.
- Can all the other things recorded here of him be said of an unsaved man?

Let the Word answer: Acts 19:4 declares that "*John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance* saying unto the people that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus. By submitting to baptism in water, they acknowledged their sins (and hence, deserving of death) and their faith in the One then coming. What was the result? Did they thus become saved? Zacharias, filled with the Spirit, said to his baby, John, "*and thou, child, shalt ... give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins*" [Luk.1:76-77]. According to that language, Apollos enjoyed the forgiveness of sins and the knowledge of salvation if he believed on the One coming after John. No marvel then, that he had been instructed in the way of the Lord and was fervent in the spirit and spake and carefully taught the things concerning Jesus although he knew only the baptism of John. Remember, in experience he was not where Saul of Tarsus was when Jesus met him. Saul had not accepted the baptism of John because he was self-sufficient and self-righteous. Apollos had heard of and accepted John's glad tidings but had not heard of the death and resurrection of Christ and of the descent of the Holy Spirit until he met Aquilla and Priscilla in Ephesus. Do you see now why the Holy Spirit led Paul to leave them there while he went up to Jerusalem?

How unlike the fanatical stand of some today, who insist that no one is saved until he speaks in tongues. Aquilla and his wife gladly recognized what the young prophet enjoyed, and "*expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly (carefully)*" [Act.18:26]. If they had been sectarian, they would have refused his fellowship until they had converted him and induced him to join their sect. There is a vast difference between pounding error into a man and expounding truth to him. Where is the modern enthusiast who will retire to a lowly tent shop and sit at the feet of those that are commonly called "laymen"? Most workers are content only when sitting at their own feet. "*He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*" [Luk.18:14] is always true. That was the beginning of days for the eloquent Jew from Alexandria. Henceforth, we read only good of Apollos. Paul associated him with himself in writing his epistles on church order [1Co.3:4 and 1Co.4:6], and desired his companionship in visiting other saints [1Co.16:12].

"And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ {is the Christ}."
[Act.18:27-28]

These last 2 verses indicate that Apollos accepted the tent-builders' wise instruction and was anointed with the Spirit while with them. Only those who have experienced the Pentecostal fullness can pass it on scripturally and effectively to others. No one can tell the difference between the tastes of a sun kissed orange and a Jonathan apple if he has not eaten them both. It is laughable how learnedly unanointed Bible students speak and write of Pentecost and its accompaniments, and condemn the Latter Rain as fanaticism or satanic. Poor fellows! What they miss! And what their followers also miss because of their learned ignorance.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S 3RD GOSPEL TOUR [ACT. 19-20]

PAUL IN EPHESUS [ACT. 19]

"And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus and found certain disciples. He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." [Act. 19:1-2]

Paul was in Corinth, 52-54 A.D. and in Ephesus, 54-57 A.D. The 12 disciples, whom Paul met in Ephesus, were evidently the fruit of Apollos' ministry there before he received the Holy Spirit under the tent-makers' added light. By some means, Paul perceived that they were saved; but there was in his mind a doubt as to them having the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he said unto them, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed? Paul knew that people did not then receive Christ and the Spirit by one act of faith, as many today claim. Otherwise, his question would have been impertinent. The Authorized Version expresses the Apostle's meaning exactly *"Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?"* That those 12 had believed on Jesus unto salvation, there can be no doubt. Therefore, their answer proves that they had not yet received the Spirit. They said, *"Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given."* The Greek word *ἄν* is translated "when" (AV), "since" (RV), and "whether" in the same verse. Let the critic consider.

Like all believing Jews, they knew that the Spirit had been promised in the Old Testament and should be sent sometime; but they had not learned that the promise had been so graciously and wonderfully fulfilled. They had not heard that the anti-typical Pentecost had come. Beyond a doubt, they were thirsting for the fullness of the Spirit, as newly born babes in Christ usually are. Therefore, as soon as they heard from Paul's lips that the promised Messiah and Holy Spirit had come, they gladly *"were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus"* [Act. 19:5]

There is no hint here that those today, who have been baptized under the formula of Matthew 28:19, must be baptized again. The value of water baptism to the candidate does not depend upon the words used by the baptizer, but upon what baptism means to the one being baptized. Those 12 had been baptized into John's baptism only, which pointed forward to Christ. Now that He had come, it was most proper that they should acknowledge their belief in that fact, and express their faith in the fact of His death, burial, and resurrection in their behalf. Would they say an eternal goodbye to Judaism with all its forms and ceremonies and accept the despised Nazarene as their Savior and Lord forever? If so, they would be baptized in this new name; and so they were. It is sad how ignorant teachers bewilder ignorant saints on this subject because they think to undo one baptism by being baptized under another formula. It is all child's play. Baptism into Christ did not contradict and aim to undo John's baptism. Nay, it supplemented and confirmed it. Sectarianism and man-rule are the roots from which spring modern modes of baptism. Men itch to be leaders and make a vain show. They seek their own glory not the glory of God. If ministers make the meaning of water baptism plain to the people, no one will be able to muddle them on the subject.

12 ANOINTED ONES

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve." [Act. 19:6-7]

This agrees with Acts 8, where Peter and John prayed that the Samaritan converts might receive the Holy Spirit. In neither case did they pray for the Spirit to come from heaven, He

had already, but they laid on hands and prayed that the saints might receive the Holy Spirit. It is our privilege to do the same. Observe also that here, as in Acts 8, the Holy Spirit did not come on sinners but on believers or disciples. Children only have a right to a father's gifts. Our heavenly Father never promised the Comforter to sinners but to His own dear children. This is the 5th instance of the Gift of the Spirit recorded in our study book, and in every case, they were consciously saved prior to receiving the Spirit.

- Who received the Holy Spirit?
- Were they sinners?
- Had they believed beforehand?

We ask and answer these queries because many ministers teach that all who believe on Jesus unto salvation also receive the Holy Spirit at the same time. This is both unscriptural and unexperimental. The 4 Gospel Records clearly show that the 120 apostles and disciples were whole-hearted believers long before Pentecost came. They had been with Jesus and were taught by Him. To the 12 (Judas Iscariot excepted) He said, "*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*" [Joh.15:3]. In John 17, His prayer to the Father bristles with a dozen or more positive proofs that the 11 were all saved men before Pentecost. The women and the 70 were no less devoted to Him. Furthermore, all the other recorded instances of the anointing with the Holy Spirit teach the same satisfying truth—they had believed unto salvation as a definite experience, **then** received the Holy Spirit afterwards as a distinct experience. In Samaria, they "*had received the Word*" which resulted in "*great joy in that city*" [Act.8:5]. Peter and John went and prayed for them, not that they might be saved, but "*that they might receive the Holy Spirit.*" Ananias was sent to Saul, not that he might be saved, but that he might receive his sight and "*be filled with the Holy Spirit*" [Act.9:17]. We saw other evidences of Saul's 2 distinct experiences that Cornelius was a true believer before Peter visited him and the Holy Spirit came upon him.

This plain interpretation offsets another error, similar to that mentioned above, that no one is saved until he is filled, or as they term it, baptized with the Spirit. Bible teachers ought to understand that sinners cannot receive the Spirit because He is not the Savior. Nowhere is it written, except in some men's minds, "*Believe on the Holy Spirit, or receive the Holy Spirit and thou shalt be saved.*" Nay, for Jesus is the Savior. He died for sinners. He is God's "unspeakable Gift" to a lost world [Joh.3:16 and 2Co.9:15]. The Holy Spirit is "*the Promise of the Father*" [Act.1:4, Luk.24:49] and the distinctive gift of the Father to His own people [Joh.14:16]. Peter's words in Acts 2:39 declare the same truth "*the promise is unto you,*" that is, to Israel, and to Israel's offspring that would believe on Christ. And that promise was extended to "*all that are afar off*" (the Gentiles). Israel was "*nigh*" because of God's promise to Abraham; but the Gentiles were "*afar off*" until they were "*made nigh by the blood of Christ*" [Eph.2:13-17]. Provisionally, all men were brought near to God by the death of Christ on the Cross. God gives the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him [Act.5:32] and people must be saved before they can obey Him.

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." [Act.19:6]

"*And they spoke with tongues.*" Shall we pass over this statement because speaking in tongues is not popular? When once we become small enough, and weak and needy enough, to be willing to be anointed with the Holy Spirit as were the saints in the beginning, we do not disdain and belittle the scriptural sign of other tongues. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Brainy men claim to have the Spirit; but the strong rebuttal of their own spirit against the Holy Spirit's invariable sign proves that they have never even tasted the Pentecostal pudding. The Holy Spirit in one fellow cannot be against the same Holy Spirit in another.

- Did Peter and John speak in tongues when the Spirit fell on them?
- Did those in Cornelius' house speak in tongues in Acts 10:46?
- Did Paul speak in tongues in 1 Corinthians 14?
- Is there any recorded instance of learned opposition to speaking in new tongues in the beginning?

There is no honest way out of the perplexity but to acknowledge that the Biblical anointing with the Spirit requires the sign of speaking in new tongues. The writer wanted the Holy Spirit; but his little head (not the Head) wanted him to believe that he could be filled without the Biblical evidence of speaking in tongues. However, faith finally ascended the throne, ruled out reason, and the dear Comforter, the mighty Holy Spirit, the Dove Divine, came in to abide forever as Jesus had promised. Yes, and I spoke in a tongue and magnified God with a glory, a depth, height, and rapture of glory altogether unknown to me before. Truly, I ate of the pudding and was filled. I am still eating and speaking in new tongues.

"And all the men were about twelve." [Act.19:7]

What does Luke mean by this statement? Were they all bachelors? Were there no women in that company anointed with the Spirit? The verse does not say that all who were filled were about 12 men, but all the men that were filled were about 12. Why is Luke not specific in this instance as he usually is? Quite likely there were more than 12 or he may not have been certain as to the number. The Holy Spirit was leading Luke and controlling his pen. The answer to these queries is suggested by Revelation 21:12-14 where we read that the holy city will have a great high wall, having 12 gates and upon them 12 angels, and the names of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel inscribed thereon. That wall will have also 12 foundations and in them the names of the 12 apostles. This shows that the foundations and wall of the holy city will be wholly of Israel; while the city itself will be "*out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation*" [Rev.5:9]; "*neither Jew, nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male, nor female*" [Gal.3:29]. The number of the Bridal Company (city) is not given. The Kingdom, or Hebrew number, is 12 or a multiple of 12. Now, consider that the church in Ephesus was designed to be the model. Therefore, in Paul's letter to her we find her calling, her wealth, her bridal qualifications, her warfare, and her armor outlined. Ephesians 5:24-33 is entirely Bridal teaching, informing us as to who will compose the holy city.

If the saints at Ephesus are the foregleam of the holy city, then the foundation of that church should be of Israel as the foregleam of the foundation of the holy city. In studying the book of Acts, always remember that we are not studying history and biography only, but prophecy and types also. The basis of the church in Ephesus was of the stock of Israel; but the assembly as a whole was of Gentile stock (note Eph.1:12-13, 2:11, 3:1).

PAUL PLOWING AND PROSPERING

And he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." [Act.19:8]

That was God's order and the Apostle Paul's custom. He continued 3 months as that was sufficient time for a clean-cut ministry of the Word to decide the attitude of the Jews. The Word of God spoken in the wisdom and power of the Spirit softens the hearts of those who believe but hardens them that believe not. Paul separated the disciples from those who boldly opposed the truth. Too often, saints make a mistake in remaining where the truth is not wanted just because the professed people of God assemble there. Because of their name and profession, they entertain an unscriptural regard for them and generally become ensnared,

cool off, and compromise with error or with the flesh. "From such turn away," saith the Lord [2Ti.3:5]. We may learn from the conduct of the Apostles what to do and what not to do and how to do.

The phrase "*concerning the kingdom of God*" is quite significant. Paul spoke first to Jews, the kingdom people; he sought to assure them that their promised Messiah and King had come. He could not speak in the synagogue of church truth. A church must first be planted. Many workers unwisely talk to sinners about an overcoming life and of the Bride of Christ. As a rule, you cannot approach nominal Christians thus because they will not understand you; much less the unsaved. Always find where your auditor stands; then address him accordingly. "*Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves*" [Mat.10:16].

"And he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus." [Act.19:8-9]

Those 12 disciples with Aquilla and Priscilla doubtless and others were standing by Paul as he proclaimed the truth for 3 months in the synagogue. When some of the Jews spoke "*evil of that way before the multitude*," he accepted the invitation of Tyrannus to conduct his meetings in his school building. **Tyrannus** ("prince," "Lord"); our English words **tyrant** and **tyranny** are derived from this Greek word. It is not likely that he was a Jew, but a Greek, therefore not one of the particular 12. Evidently Tyrannus had a private school in which he taught rhetoric and kindred studies. The Holy Spirit opened his heart to the glad tidings and led him to open his school house to Paul's ministry for 2 years. We may infer that he became one of the faithful and useful members of that assembly. From that place, "*all they which dwell in Asia* (the Roman province) *heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks*" [Act.19:10].

Ephesus was the most prominent city of that province and the center of its trade. The Apostle Paul likewise made it the center of his operations for Christ. That assembly is a type of the most fully developed believers; therefore, Paul wrote to them as he did. They are the first on the list of the 7 representative churches to which John wrote. Reader, have you studied the 2 letters addressed to that Ephesian congregation?

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth)." [Act.19:11-13]

The word **body** used here is the Greek word **CHROTOS** meaning "skin". Ephesus was the center of witchcraft and magic by which the sorcerers claimed to work miracles. The Lord proved Himself to be the real miracle worker by delegating to His servant, Paul, special power against sickness and demons. The devil had such mighty entrenchments there through the magic arts and through the moon god Diana and her temples that extraordinary divine dynamics were necessary to awaken the people. Be it remembered that such a ministry was granted to the "chief speaker" of the matchless message of Divine Grace.

Our own assembly took hold of this same power, being imitators of Paul as he bid us to be [1Co.4:16, Phi.3:17], and many people have been delivered from Satan's power through the laying on of kerchiefs sent to different points, near and far. Oh no; Paul did not cease to work miracles when he became spiritual and was teaching the deep things of God, as some erroneously claim. If men knew the Scriptures with the heart and the power of God by experience they would not speak so foolishly. The age of miracles is past to only those who

do not avail themselves of Divine Miracle-Working Power. What a joy it is to lay our hands on a kerchief and pray over it and then send it through the mail, believing with the suffering one that he shall be healed. "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever*" [Heb.13:8].

COUNTERFEIT MIRACLES

"Then certain of the vagabond (strolling) Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so." [Act.19:13-14]

Satan seeks to counterfeit the work and power of the Lord, and he uses duped men to do so. Apparently it is the flesh imitating the Holy Spirit.

There were 7 sons of Sceva, a Jewish priest, whom the devil employed at that time. That narration of defeat is a fulfillment of Jesus' words, "*if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand*" [Mat.3:25]. If those would-be devil drivers had succeeded against the demon-possessed man, Satan would have had occasion to crow over the truth. The evil spirit was wiser than the priest's sons. He said, "*Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?*" [Act.19:15]. What a rebuke to the professed people of God. Yes, the devil and his imps know who has the real genuine spiritual goods. That is why our wrestling is as described in Ephesians 6:12:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood {Gr. blood and flesh}, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness {wicked spirits} in high {heavenly} places."

Let us learn a lesson here: Do not attempt by our own strength to repulse demons or cast out sickness. Let us not make a fleshly use of the name of Jesus. Yelling at demons with multiplied words of apparent authority, stamping the floor vehemently, gesticulating as in a frenzy, etc, is not necessarily the power of God. That only provokes a grin from evil spirits. Spiritual forces must be met with spiritual weapons. Faith is the victory; faith in God's Word. Faith employing the "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" [Eph.6:17] defeats the foe. "*The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds*" [2Co.10:4 RV]. Therefore, we need to "**walk in the Spirit**" lest we attack the enemy at the wrong time or in a wrong manner. Paul waited and did not grapple with the spirit of divination until the Holy Spirit led him [Act.16:16-18].

Let us learn, also not to have anything to do with the occult religions which claim to have power over sickness in Jesus' name. Their deliverances glorify the devil and not the Lord. Some people innocently and ignorantly fall in with these cults and obtain healing, but not by the cult. Their faith in God's promise, which the evil system often quotes, brings the victory. Sooner or later such honest hearts are made to understand that they are in the wrong atmosphere and they walk out. They get deliverance from devilish doctrine and false prophets as well as from disease. Let us not condone these evil systems by saying, "Well, they do lots of good." No, they do great harm!

And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." [Act. 19:17-20]

The defeat of the sons of Sceva was a great victory for the truth among both the Jews and the Greeks. "*Fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.*" Many who had practiced

magic made a bonfire of their curious books, valued at *"fifty thousand pieces of silver."* The Greek word ARGURION (*"a piece of silver"*) was the common term for money in general. In a number of citations it is translated **money**; e.g., Matthew 25:18. The phrase *"pieces of silver"* occurs very many times in the Old Testament and agrees with the same phrase in the New Testament. This is evident by comparing Zechariah 11:11-12 with Matthew 27:9. In Hebrew, it was sometimes called a SHEKEL (in U.S. currency about \$0.55). Consider Abraham's purchase of a burying ground [Gen.23:15-16]. If that is correct, then \$27,400 went up in smoke that day. What a financial loss to the flesh; but what a financial triumph to the Holy Spirit and the truth. Is that not a material picture of the gigantic spiritual bonfire which will roll up as a monument of religious folly when the building of wood and hay and stubble shall be burned by the fire of God's Word [1Co.3:12-16].

Over against that conflagration will stand *"a holy temple in the Lord"* [Eph.2:21], made up of living stones, each one a building from God, *"a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* [2Co.5:1], even the holy city, a majestic monument proving that *"the Word of the Lord has prevailed."* Oh Glory!

Observe 3 interesting statements concerning the progress of the truth as recorded in Acts:

1. About the beginning of Stephen's ministry (35 to 40 A.D.), *"the Word of God increased"* [Act.6:7]. That was under the powerful ministry of Peter, James, John, and Stephen and others working with them. During the next 9 years, great persecution arose against the disciples, who were scattered in various directions.
2. Stephen was stoned to death by the Jews. James, one of the 12 apostles, was slain by Herod. *"But the Word of God grew and multiplied,"* says our historian [Act.12:24].
3. Saul of Tarsus was saved and trained for his life work, which began about 45 A.D. After 12 years of pioneering with the gospel of grace amidst the most adverse conditions, Luke chronicles that *"So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed."*

From increase to growth, from growth and triumph was the astounding power and progress of the Word. Note that the last citation declares that it was *"the Word of the Lord"* rather than the Word of God. That is, the Church message, the gospel as revealed to Paul, was the one which especially grew and prevailed. His gospel must again grow mightily and prevail in these closing days; because thereby the saints are built up and obtain an inheritance [Act.20:32].

The city of Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor. It was its greatest city and the chief point of trade for that country. Ephesus and Smyrna were termed the "eyes of Asia." It was under the Roman government, but it was a free city; it was ruled by its own magistrates.

That was the city which Paul chose as the center of a very effective ministry. History records that the assembly in Ephesus was a very influential one. It is said that Asia Minor became the stronghold of Christianity. The heathen temples were deserted. The animals of sacrifice could not be sold. Apparently all the people became Christians. We need not marvel then that Luke says, *"So mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed"* [Act.19:20].

Five times, Paul speaks of the gospel of grace and glory, as contrasted with the Gospel of the kingdom which was preached by Peter and his co-workers, and calls it *"My Gospel"* or *"Our Gospel."* To the Church in Rome, he wrote saying that God is able *"to establish you according to my Gospel"* [Rom.16:25]. He said also to them, *"God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel"* [Rom.2:16]. How can believers slip slightly over such solemn

statements? He said to the Thessalonians that God had "*called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" [2Th.2:14], reminding them also that "*For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*" [1Th.1:5, 2Th.2:14]. To the Corinthians the same faithful Paul wrote saying:

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." [2Co.4:3-4]

Therefore, we need not marvel at his self-sacrificing language in Acts 20:24. And God must have some unflinching heralds of "*our gospel*" in these end-time days. Shall brother Paul be the only one to say, "*Neither count I my life dear unto myself?*" [Act.20:24]. Shall not we too finish our "*course with joy and the ministry, received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God?*" What higher honor can one have? What nobler purpose, than to believe and declare the glad tidings which he proclaimed? What greater reward for service can be expected than for making known the full gospel of Divine Grace and of heavenly glory? Certainly, it must be recorded again, even with the culmination of this evil age that "*so mightily grew the Word of the Lord and prevailed.*"

FIERCE PERSECUTION WAGED

"And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." [Act.19:23-25]

Paul was looking toward Rome. However, he desired to see the saints again in Jerusalem before going to Rome. Therefore, he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia the way by which he intended to reach Palestine. After those brethren had gone, Demetrius began his mob raid against the Apostle and his friends. Paul's untiring service in the gospel was affecting the most lucrative enterprise in the city and country. Demetrius and others might soon be minus a job. Observe by Acts 19:35-41 that the city officials were not the aggressors in the opposition but the craftsmen were alarmed. The disciples were seized by mob violence; and, as is always the case in such gatherings, the crowd was in confusion and knew not wherefore they were come together [Act.19:32]. How blessed of the Holy Spirit that He restrained the Apostle Paul from leaving Ephesus any earlier. He was greatly needed just then to comfort and strengthen the saints.

The mob cried "*great is Diana of the Ephesians*" [Act.19:28]. That was the frenzied whoop of the angry worshipers of their goddess Artemis (Diana). The craftsmen, however, were not so much concerned about the goddess as about their pocketbooks. Their wealth and trade was being severely interfered with; something like the swine raisers in Jesus' time who bid Him leave their coasts. No doubt, the burning of the books of magic caused the first note of alarm. The following statements indicate somewhat of the greatness of their business.

The **shrines** (Greek: **NAAUS**) were the cells (inner part) of a temple in which the image of the god was placed. It is said that those shrines were models of various sizes of the temple of Diana and had on them an image of the goddess. They were made of terracotta or marble for the poor people and of bronze and silver for the wealthy. It is said that many of the cheaper kind are still found in that region. The shrines were worn as charms on the body or set up in the house and worshipped. They were supposed to ward off sickness and trouble. History records that the Apostle John and Mary (the mother of Jesus) spent their last days in Ephesus. The shrines were dedicated as offerings to the goddess Diana and put into her temple. Today,

in some parts of the East, offerings are placed about the image of the virgin Mary as thank offerings for her favors or as peace offerings which are supposed to obtain answers to prayer. Is it no more idolatrous in God's sight to worship the goddess Diana than to make a goddess of Mary?

The name **Diana** is the Latin of the Greek **ARTEMIS**. It is said that the Ephesian Diana was a distinct goddess from the Greek Diana. The Greek Diana was a virgin, a huntress, and a personification of the moon even as Apollo was of the sun. The Ephesian Diana was like an erect idol. The upper part of the front of the body was covered with rows of breasts, symbolizing her as the universal mother of all life. The lower part was merely an upright block, rudely representing robes, covered with symbols and figures of animals. The worship of the goddess was of course abominable. Farrar says,

"Many a time must Paul have heard from the Jewish quarter the piercing shrillness of their flutes and the harsh jangling of their timbrels. Many a time must he have caught glimpses of their detestable dances and Corybantic processions, as, with streaming hair and wild cries and shaking torches of pine, they strove to madden the multitude into sympathy with their drunken worship, which was but too closely connected with the vilest debaucheries."

The temple of Diana was considered the crowning glory of Ephesus. It was known world-wide as one of the 7 wonders of the world. Her influence was far reaching. Many people came from distant points to behold her shrine and to do her homage. Of course, they purchased the portable shrines of silver, or terracotta, which occasioned a large manufacturing enterprise.

"And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre." [Act. 19:29]

Concerning the 2 companions see notes on Acts 20:4. The Greek word **THEATRON** is here translated **theatre**, and it occurs only here and in 1 Corinthians 4:9, where it is rendered **spectacle**. It means "*the performers*" or "*the place where the actors perform.*" That theatre was the great Colosseum whose capacity was 50,000 people. It was built for men to have combats with wild beasts or other men. It was also used for public meetings of various kinds.

Let us consider 1 Corinthians 4:9 in this connection. "*For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last {us the last apostles}, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle {Greek: theatre} unto the world, and to angels, and to men*" (see also the 4 verses that follow, 1Cor.4:10-13).

The Diaglott offers the following interesting note on this and the succeeding verses. It suggests that Paul is "*alluding to those last exposed on the theatre, to fight with wild beasts, or with one another, and who were devoted to certain destruction.*"

The **ATIMOI** ("*despised*" [1Cor.4:10]) were held to be outlaws, and might be slain as well as ill-treated with impunity. The Greek words **PEREKATHARMATA** ("*filth*") and **PERI-PSEEMA** ("*offscourings*") [1Cor.4:13] are thought to allude to those human expiatory sacrifices which were offered to infernal deities among the Greeks and Romans, selected from the lowest of the people and loaded with curses, affronts, and injuries. "*I fought with beasts at Ephesus*" [1Co.15:32]; doubtless the Apostle has reference to the combats in the Arena, to which he likens his contests with Satan in the form of wicked men.

WORSHIP OF THE IMAGE FORECAST

"So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought {brought into disrepute or contempt}; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipping." [Act.19:27]

"And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper {Greek: the temple keeper} of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?" [Act.19:35]

The city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana and of the image which fell down from Jupiter whom all Asia and the world worshipped. What a contrast! The highest type of believers, who had learned from Paul the deepest New Testament teaching, lived in Ephesus. The Ephesian Assembly was the model assembly; but Ephesus also had the shameful dishonor of being a great center for devil-worship. Acts 19:23-41 foreshadows the 7 years of national and ecclesiastical rebellious usurpation commonly called "*the last week of Daniel*" [Dan.9:27]. The Antichrist and false prophet [Rev.13] are intimated by "*the beasts at Ephesus*" with which Paul fought.

Who is Jupiter but Satan himself? The heathens named their gods after the planets in heaven and those Ephesian citizens believed Jupiter to be somewhere in heaven. The devil is there now [Rev.12]. They supposed that the image which they worshipped had fallen from heaven as a boon to them. All Asia (that is, Asia Minor) and the world did homage to that image. John informed us that an image of Antichrist will be set up by Satan's authority and power [Rev.13:14-15]. That will be "*the abomination of desolation, standing in the holy place,*" of which Daniel and Jesus spoke [Mat.24:15]. The entire world will wonder after the beast, the Antichrist, and worship his image, or be slain. History informs us that in Rome there was a full-length, complete image of the goddess Diana. What a forecast of those 7 years of a counterfeit (mock) millennium. How remarkable that the devil should have a forerunner of the coming image in Rome, the probable home of the beast and false prophet. Oh, let us "*flee the wrath to come.*" Let us look up and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

PAUL AIMING FOR ROME [ACT.20]

"And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia." [Act.20:1]

The Holy Spirit was pulling the indefatigable soldier of Christ on toward the capital city of the then world empire. However, before going there, he must see once more his dear children in the Lord in various parts and once more witness to his own nation in Jerusalem. Concerning the latter he said, "*I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart for my kinsmen according to the flesh*" [Rom.9:1-2 RV]. Acts 24:17 gives a good reason for his trip to Jerusalem; therefore, he journeyed in that direction. After visiting different points, he returned and sailed by Miletus (a seaport town of Ephesus) where the elders came out to bid him a last farewell. That was doubtless in 58 A.D.

Of course the Apostle visited the choice assembly in Philippi, the chief city of that state. To them he wrote a sweet and comforting epistle afterward, from Rome. He called on other saints in those parts also. He loved them all and "*gave them much exhortation*" or comfort as in 1 Thessalonians 4:18. Then he went to Greece where he spent 3 months. His purpose was to sail directly east, then southeast toward Tyre, where he arrived later. But because the Jews

laid a plot for him, he turned north again; their bitter hatred for the dear Messiah had not subsided. Oh, what a glorious day for the Jews is just about to dawn.

And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe (see Act.19:29), and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus."
[Act.20:4]

These were 7 faithful men who had received the gospel message from Paul and loved him dearly.

While in Corinth, Greece, Paul evidently wrote that valuable and needful letter to the churches in Galatia. During his 3 years in Ephesus, he either visited them from there or learned otherwise of them falling into the snare of legality; or, he may have called on them on this last trip into those parts. The writer has a strong suspicion, if not proof, that he wrote to them from the house of Gaius in Corinth because in Romans 16:23 he calls Gaius "*mine host*." And the statement in Galatians 1:2 "*all the brethren which are with me*" (those who were with him when he was writing that splendid letter) must mean the 7 men with him in Corinth and who went with him to Asia. Also, at that same time, he wrote that unique epistle to the assembly in Rome, announcing his coming thither. How do we know this? We gather it from the names of those who send greetings to Rome with Paul's epistle [Rom.16:21-23]:

- **Gaius**, whom Paul baptized in Corinth [1Co.1:14] (this Gaius is not one of the 7 named above).
- **Erastus**, who abode in Corinth [2Ti.4:20].
- **Lucius** (Luke), who joined Paul in Philippi when he came into Macedonia as stated in Acts 20:1.
- **Timothy**, one of the 7 named above.
- **Jason**, of Thessalonica, although not named with the other 2 from there.
- **Sosipater**, the Sopater of Berea.
- **Quartus**, doubtless also of Corinth.

A further word about Luke and Gaius:

The last mention we had of **Luke** ("*luminous*," "*white*") was Acts 16:11-17. Note the change of pronouns. In those 7 verses, we find "**we**" and "**us**." After that it is "**they**" and "**them**" until Acts 20:5-6, where again we read the pronouns "**we**" and "**us**." We infer therefore that Luke remained in Philippi, possibly as shepherd of that young flock during that time, about 6 years. They were highly favored indeed by having him with them.

Gaius ("*lord*," "*an earthly man*") is given in our text as from Derbe; however, 1 Corinthians 1:14 and Romans 16:23 indicate a Gaius from Corinth, whence those 7 men started for Syria. Timothy is the only one of the 7 in Acts 20:4 whose home is not mentioned. The Greek construction of that verse admits us to read of those 2 men in direct connection with the 2 preceding, thus "*of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus and -Gaius; and of Derbe, Timothy*." Thereby the Gaius of Macedonia [Act.19:29], who was rushed with Aristarchus into the theatre, becomes this same Gaius of Acts 20:4. Furthermore, why should we assign Gaius to Derbe, and find no nativity for Timothy, when we know that Timothy was from Derbe (Lystra) nearby [Act.16:1]? This Gaius traveled with Paul. The Gaius who resided in Corinth [1Co.1:14] was Paul's host while he tarried there 3 months [Rom.16:23]; he probably did not travel. He joined the Apostle in sending greetings to Rome; however, the other Gaius was one of the 7 brethren with

him when he wrote to the Galatians. The Gaius of 3 John is evidently Paul's host in Corinth. 3 John 1:6-8 suggests that he was hospitable to God's servants.

THE APOSTLES ON THE WING

"And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days." [Act.20:6]

The 7 brethren of Acts 20:4 went ahead and waited at Troas for Paul and Luke. The time of the year of their visit in those parts was spring (probably the spring of 58 A.D.), indicated by the phrase "*days of unleavened bread*." That visit to Corinth was the fulfillment of Paul's hope expressed in 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 2 Corinthians 13:1. What an unselfish and fatherly spirit all his writings breathe. Pity those who can read them without deep delight and great profit.

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." [Act.20:7]

The narrative of their stay in Troas is especially interesting and instructive. Should one day be regarded as more sacred than another? If the custom of the disciples settled the question, we might think that the 1st day of the week demanded the preference, rather than the 7th day; for upon the first day of the week, they were gathered together to break bread. However, in Romans 14, we learn that days are esteemed alike to those who know the truth and have grown up in Christ. Do you remember that Christ arose from the dead on the 1st day of the week? Do you know that the Holy Spirit descended upon the waiting ones in Jerusalem on the 1st day of the week? Study Acts 2:42 with 1 Corinthians 16:2. The 1st day of the week, being the resurrection day, thus became the 8th or new creation day. The new creation was begotten on the 1st day of the week. Eternity will be the 8th dispensational day. "*Behold, I make all things new*" [Rev.21:5]. It is therefore fitting that the 1st day of the week be observed as a special day of worship; however, that does not make it more sacred than other days. Is it proper to call Sunday, or the 1st day of the week, the Lord's Day? By no means. Call it Sunday, even as we call the day before it Saturday and the day after it Monday. **The Lord's Day** is 1,000 years long (study 2Pe.3:8 and see the study book on Revelation).

That time, the Apostle's brief ministry in Troas is a beautiful pen-picture of his whole ministry throughout this age. Knowing that he would not again pass that way in person, he seems to have endeavored to crowd much truth and service into a small compass. Consider the following statements: "*ready to depart on the morrow*," "*continued his speech until midnight*," "*was long preaching*" and "*talked a long while, even until break of day*." He yearned to give them as much truth as possible in the limited time allotted to him. That was all typical of the perpetuation of his message, which came down to the midnight of his age, the beginning of the Dark Ages (500 to 1500 A.D.) The age began in the upper rooms [Act.2:1-4]. Paul lived in the higher upper room, "*the heavenlies in Christ*."

Eutychus ("*fortunate*," "*well to do*") sat in a window and was borne down with deep sleep. Yes, as Peter declared, this Pauline gospel is "*hard to be understood*" [2Pe.3:16]. People become drowsy when reading or hearing it because they do not believe it. If they believed with all their heart that it is God's Word, they would keep wide awake. While asleep, Eutychus fell from the third loft.

"And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." [Act.20:10]

The Church fell from her exalted position in the heavenlies in Christ. Ephesus "*left her first love.*" Four movements downward from Paul's doctrine are (1) drowsiness, (2) sleep, (3) a fall, and then (4) death (fellowship severed). But Paul was not asleep. He seized the opportunity of displaying God's mighty grace. He went down with intent to raise the lad from the dead but instead found that his life was still in him. He did not lie about him, nor even exaggerate, in view of a big headline in the papers. Grace is never ambitious for numbers. Grace never pronounces men unsaved, or on the way to perdition, in order to swell her report. Never! Grace falls in pity over them and embraces them in mercy. Grace recognizes life, if there is any; or seeks to impart life to those dead in trespasses and sins. Grace greatly blesses but boasts not in the least.

As the Apostle presented the fallen lad alive to the joy of the saints in Troas; just so his message of grace aroused the slumbering life in the Church about 1400 A.D. In 1500 A.D., Martin Luther began to proclaim justification by faith alone, wholly independent of works. Eutychus was alive. The real Church was "*not a little comforted.*" The very message, whose rejection brought a sleepy condition, descends to the deepest need of the lowest and weakest and presents them alive. Truly, the fruits of Divine Grace are alive. What men hope and vainly hope to do by their own efforts, the announcement of wondrous grace actually does.

The meanings of the names of the 6 points touched from Troas to Ephesus may be of profit to the Bible student:

Assos ("approaching")	Mitylene ("purity")
Chios ("opening")	Samos ("sandy bluff," "full of gravel")
Trogyllium ("a cache, a hold in the ground for preserving food")	Miletus ("scarlet")

The association of these names holds in its grasp some beautiful spiritual lessons. Luke writes:

"When he (Paul) met us at *Assos* ("approaching"), *we took him in, and came to Mitylene* ("purity")" [Act.20:14]. Grace is on the lookout for hearts that are coming near to the right way. Instantly, such hearts take grace on board; they are brought to purity of doctrine and on to purity of practice and power.

"*And the following day,*" how short the journey; they arrive "*over against Chios*" [Act.20:15], an opening into vast areas of truth and divine riches. No marvel that the "*next day*" after that, Samos, a sandy gravely bluff, should loom before them; but they only "*touched*" that point; because it is no stopping place for the spiritually minded. Trogyllium was considered too insignificant by the revisers, so they pushed it into the margin. But saints pass along the way of such enticements and have to get the victory over the earthly receptacles of earth's treasures. Many a person has been snared by the contents of an outdoor cellar. Of course those Gospel soldiers "*tarried at Trogyllium*" long enough only to get their supper and breakfast, present necessities for these bodies of humiliation. Their objective was Miletus, the place of safety and plenty, purchased by the scarlet line, or blood of the Lamb. They were there before; for they all started by faith in the cross.

INTERVIEW WITH EPHESIAN ELDERS

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons." [Act.20:17-18]

Miletus was a seaport town of Ephesus. There the Apostle had his last conference with those representatives of the Ephesian assembly, which he loved so deeply. The record of that conference is full of interest and profound instruction. It falls nicely into 7 divisions:

1. Paul's Past Career in Ephesus	Act.20:18-21, 27, 33-35
2. Paul's Objectives	Act.20:22-23
3. Paul's Fortitude under trial	Act.20:24
4. Paul's Forecasts (2)	Act.20:25, 29-30
5. Paul's Exhortation to the Elders	Act.20:28- 31
6. Paul's Committal of the Elders	Act.20:32
7. The Parting Moments	Act.20:36-38

1. PAUL'S PAST CAREER IN EPHESUS [ACT.20:18-21, 27, 33-35]

The Apostle must have been an overcomer in his walk and proficient in his work, or else how could he so boldly remind the elders of his past life in their midst? He calls attention to 12 telling items of his conduct and toil, and fairly challenges them to gainsay them. The preface to his review gives a gist thereof: *"After what manner I was with you all the time."* The first item is rare...*"serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind,"* a trait that ministers should covet as an absolute prerequisite for usefulness in God's work. The *"many tears"* indicate the reality and depth of the Apostle's humility. He barely mentions the fact of *"the trials which beset him by the plots of the Jews."* How few men dare say, *"I shrunk not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable."* Truth was truth with him, and he wished only to know the mind of the Spirit, and he obeyed no matter the consequences. *"The whole counsel of God"* had to be proclaimed [Act.20:27]. We cannot doubt that Paul did in his own person *"teach publicly and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks..."* and not simply by means of others, as one has suggested. He did literally what he exhorted others to do; and thus he could say, *"Be ye imitators of me, as I imitate God."*

We must not overlook Acts 20:33-35. *"I coveted no man's silver, nor gold, nor apparel."* Let no one chide the Jews for their thirst after wealth. What Gentile gospel herald is free from *"the love of money?"* What means the bleating of the sheep? The herald insists on having his bread and butter, and up-to-date furnishings, whether the sheep have sufficient of the bread of life, well-buttered or not. Who can exclaim, *"I have not coveted?"* Point out a gospel minister who dares say, *"Ye know that these hands (holding them up, no doubt) ministered unto my necessities."* Most men are unwilling to do that, they only want to speak and teach and to large crowds. Where is their humility of mind? But Paul's own hands ministered also *"to them that were with him."* As in the natural, the father and mother work for the children, so Paul did for his helpers. He became servant of all. *"In all things, I gave you an example,"* he added, and exemplified the words of Jesus, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* Did Paul hear Jesus utter those words when he was teaching [2Co.5:16]; or, did the Holy Spirit reveal them to him as the Master's saying? Not only did the elders from Ephesus hear those words of reminiscence, but the 8 itinerants, who were with him. Not one could gainsay any of them.

2. PAUL'S OBJECTIVES [ACT.20:22-23]

"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me {wait for me}." [Act.20:22-23]

In the next chapter, we learn that he was warned of coming trouble. Also he knew by past experience and by the witness of the Holy Spirit, that "*bonds and afflictions*" awaited him in every city. But did anything daunt him?

3. PAUL'S FORTITUDE UNDER TRIAL [ACT.20:24]

His fortitude was wonderful. *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."* Oh, Reader, let these words speak deeply to our hearts, "Go, and do likewise," as Jesus said.

4. PAUL'S FORECASTS (2) [ACT.20:25, 29-30]

The Apostle Paul's forecasts are 2-fold:

1st. He announced to the elders that they were looking upon him then for the last time. God had made him to know that fact, although not all the future was revealed to him. One of the missions of the Holy Spirit is to show us "*things to come*" [Joh.16:13].

2nd. He gave a shuddering warning: "*Grievous wolves, shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*" The Nicolaitans thrust in their deeds [Rev.2:6]. They were self-appointed religious rulers of the people. Pretending to come in as shepherds, they lorded over the flock; instead of feeding them, they fleeced them. Did the "*grievous wolves* (the Nicolaitans) all die in the first century? No! They abound all around today. Assemblies should be very cautious about receiving strangers. Better go on without a pastor, having simple prayer meetings and Bible readings alone, than be torn and left bleeding by unprincipled religious run-arounds.

"And from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." [Act.20:30]

Were those perverters before him then or were there others in the assembly? In either case, how can men, knowing Paul's self-sacrificing life and his wonderful gospel of grace and glory with its attendant rewards, stoop to the groveling plane of turning saints from known truth, even acknowledged and proclaimed, for the one purpose of personal gain or advantage? How? Of course such workers do not count the old man dead and out. Christ is not practically their life. They have no scruples of conscience before men and no fear before God.

5. PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS [ACT.20:28-31]

The Apostle's counsel to the Ephesian elders is of special value. Let us not pass over it lightly. *"Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of the Lord, which He purchased with His own blood"* [Act.20:28]. The failure of God's servants (whether bishops or evangelists) is due chiefly to not hearkening to the first part of this entreaty. They do not take heed to themselves in the proper way. They consult their own feelings, seek their own comfort, and follow their own reasonings or that of some other brainy

fellow. As ministers, whether local or general, we should take heed to ourselves in several basic particulars:

- 1st:** We need to learn the way of victory over the world and sin; else we cannot help others over hard places. "*Flee youthful lusts*" [2Ti.2:22] has a ministerial meaning as well as a physical meaning. Some who have been on the way for years, still yield to carnal clerical desires. Sometimes the temptations are stronger in later years than at the beginning.
- 2nd:** We need to learn the Word of God as to doctrine and practice, so as to make full proof of our ministry. Most brethren are criminally careless about their knowledge of the Truth. Study is hard work. Therefore, they yield to laziness, preferring to give to the people the opinions of others, without investigating closely whether their teachings or interpretations are correct or not. Paul could say, "*We are not ignorant*;" therefore, half a dozen times he exclaims, "*I would not have you ignorant*⁵." We ought to be able to say the same things.
- 3rd:** We should exemplify the Gospel we preach, and demonstrate the doctrine we teach by our own holy walk, even by "*walking in the Spirit*." Some men and women are fine talkers in public. They can gather and hold a crowd; however, their daily walk contradicts their Sunday talk. They teach the power and joy of the Holy Spirit boldly in public; but in private they fail to walk in the Spirit, instead they "*walk after the flesh*." The Holy Spirit is not only to be yielded to and be filled with in meeting; but He is to be trusted and yielded to out of meeting also. He is a practical Guide and every day Comforter. We bishops and evangelists must know Him thus practically in our every-day shoes. "... *be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation* (manner of life), *in charity* (love), *in spirit, in faith, in purity*" [1Ti.4:12]. If we teach Divine Healing to the people, they ought to rebuke us if we go around the corner to a drug store for a plaster or a pill. A gospel which is not practical is a weak gospel. A gospel that is not sufficient for the dispenser of it is not worth dispensing. While the barber was shaving a customer, he waxed eloquent in praises of a hair remedy which he had for sale. Suddenly, the customer saw that the barber himself was bald and he exclaimed, "Why don't you use some of it on your own head?"

What is the purpose and place of service? "*To feed the flock of the Lord?*" Oh, yes! That is the supreme purpose, to "*feed the flock*." Jesus said to Peter, "*Feed my lambs ... feed my sheep*" [Joh.21:15-17]. The foregoing is absolutely necessary for us to become good feeders. A smooth tongue; a bold front; an attractive air; a smiling, and a flattering face are all that is needed to entertain the masses, especially in this shallow time. But on the part of God's servant, to "*feed*" hungry hearts of the new creation and to nurture and foster and build them up requires a heart full of unselfish love and of the truth. From every direction there is a cry for real soul food. "*Send us someone to feed our hungry hearts*," comes to us again and again. It is a burning shame that men dare to claim to preach the Gospel and be shepherds of flocks, and yet have little or nothing to bring them from God's Word. Why is that? Are they never impressed with the exhortations of Jesus and of Paul? Have they never read them?

Let us consider this question: **Whose flock is it?** "*The flock of the Lord, which He purchased with His own blood*." "*My lambs ... my sheep*;" Jesus died to redeem them. He poured out His life in their

⁵ Phrase is not exact in all references of Rom.1:13, Rom.11:25, 1Co.10:1, 1Co.12:1, 2Co.1:8, 1Th.4:13.

behalf. Surely, if men would only take it to heart who their people are and what infinite price purchased them, they would seek with all their heart and soul to feed and care for them.

"The Holy Spirit hath made you bishops." The word **bishop** ("overseer") is EPISKOPOS in Greek. It occurs 7 times in the New Testament. Once it is applied to Jesus Christ [1Pe.2:28]. In Luke 19:44, it is translated **visitation**. The word literally means "*an overseer, a watcher, a guardian; especially, a public officer sent as inspector; or overseer of a subject state.*" Observe the close relationship between the **elders** (presbyters; Greek: PRESBUTEROS) and the bishops. Acts 20:18 records that the elders were summoned from Ephesus; it also states that the Holy Spirit had made them **bishops** (overseers). The Greek term PRESBUTEROS (elders) was borrowed from the Jewish synagogue. It was in common use under both the old and the new covenants. Etymologically it implied that, as a rule, the person so designated was pretty well advanced in life. The Greek term EPISKOPOS (overseer) was borrowed from the polity of the Grecian States and indicated the responsibility of the elder to look after the spiritual welfare of the Church. Peter expressed the gravity of the office in calling Jesus *"the Bishop of your souls"* [1Pe.2:28].

The office of **bishop** (overseer) was no doubt either local or general. The bishopric of the apostles was general [Act.1:20]. Their office was not limited to one place. Hence, Peter and John were called to Samaria to pray that Philip's converts might receive the Holy Spirit [Act.8]. Peter was used of the Lord to introduce Pentecost among the Gentiles [Act.20:10]. Paul never named himself an overseer by that term; but he really did so by announcing himself as a **steward** (Greek: OIKONOMOS) or house-keeper of Divine Things [1Co.4:2]. His words in Titus 1:7 convey the same meaning, *"The bishop must be blameless as God's steward."* The overseership of those elders in Ephesus was probably local; whereas the overseership of Paul and Titus was general (consider also *"the bishops and deacons"* of Phi.1:1).

Not all who are called bishops are bishops by divine appointment. The sacred office has been made an instrument of carnal authority and even wicked lordship. It was never God's purpose that men be ecclesiastical overseers. Organization is sure to develop lords who exalt themselves at the expense of their weaker fellows. This is just as certain in religious organizations as in those of the world. What a precious caution Peter gave to the elders over whom his apostleship extended:

"Tend the flock of God which is among YOU, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock." [1Pe.5:3 RV]

With such profound and solemn entreaties from those who had laid down their lives for the people and verified them by their unselfish conduct, we marvel that Acts 20:29-30 could ever come to pass (see Act.20:33-35). But, if the old man in preachers is not judged, they become the meanest old man of all, capable of doing the greatest harm.

6. PAUL'S COMMITTAL OF THE ELDERS [ACT.20:32]

How tender and loving was the Apostle's committal of those elders

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." [Act.20:32]

To my mind, this is one of the most powerful portions of Holy Writ. Its huge importance is magnified by the criminal oversight and vaunting neglect thereof by the brethren. Paul did not

flatter those elders because they were made overseers by the Holy Spirit. He did not make them feel that they were full-grown; but he put them back on the only means of up-building (edification) even the sure Word of grace. One is surprised at how much is said about being built up in Christ. There are 9 citations that mention the word **building** as referring to the saints and 20 times the same Greek word is translated, **edify** or **edification**. Either exhortations to edification are given or warnings as to how men should not build on the sure foundation. Being built up (edified) by the blessed Word of God is absolutely necessary in order to obtain the promised inheritance.

Salvation is not an Inheritance There is an inheritance for believers. Salvation from sin is not the inheritance. Salvation is God's free gift to undeserving, guilty men when they repent and believe the Gospel. A rich young ruler came to Jesus, thinking to inherit eternal life by doing something [Luk.18]. The Lord showed him at once what he would have to do, if he would gain it by his own works. He was very sorrowful because he was very rich. He would not trade his wealth for the lasting riches of eternal life. No, he would not if he could; *"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"* [1Co.2]. He could not if he would; *"for by grace are ye saved through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast"* [Eph.2:8-9]. Jesus proceeded to show him and the disciples that salvation is not obtained by inheritance but by faith in Jesus, the world's sin-bearer. By faith in Jesus, we become children of God [Joh.1:12-13]; *"and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together"* [Rom.8:17]. In the natural, children justly inherit (are heir to) their parent's riches; likewise, God's children are His rightful inheritors. Parents divide their possessions to their children usually upon certain deserving conditions such as good behavior, etc. Likewise, God's children will come into the divine inheritance upon certain prescribed scriptural conditions. Sinners are saved by faith upon the merit of Christ, because of His death in their behalf; but believers will obtain an inheritance because of their own merit, by divine enabling, of course. If this is not the truth, why Paul's exhortation to give heed to the Word of grace? If eternal life is the inheritance; if believers shall all obtain an inheritance by the fact only of their being saved, there is no meaning to the Apostle's words here. Observe closely that the joint heirship with Christ hereafter, depends upon joint suffering with Him here. Being glorified together with Jesus depends upon our suffering and groaning in fellowship with Him on earth. Romans 8:17-39 teaches that or nothing at all (also study 2Ti.2:9-14).

Let no Christian worker imagine that he will inherit alike with others, and be rewarded on a par with others, no matter how he lives, or labors, or what he teaches. Let no believer think that he can live after the flesh and expect an inheritance and a reward after the Spirit. Impossible! Unreasonable! Unjust! Unscriptural! Children cannot remain babies and receive an inheritance. They would not appreciate and enjoy it if they did receive it. So it is in the spiritual. Neither can babies be of much use in service; therefore, for them there is little reward. *"Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever any man soweth, that shall he also reap"* [Gal.6:7]

What Is the Inheritance? Revelation 21:7 answers this question in a comprehensive way, giving also the chief condition upon which the inheritance is obtained. *"He that overcometh shall inherit all things."* There is a present inheritance for those who are born again; all that the death of Christ has purchased, as for example, divine healing for the body and the anointing with the Spirit. The latter is the earnest of our inheritance in its fullness [Eph.1:14]. Through faith and patience, saints inherit the promises [Heb.6:12]. Now, if you wish to know what is the full inheritance of the Church study Paul's epistles. If you would know the rewards of the saints, study also the 7 letters to the 7 churches in Asia [Rev.2-3]. In those various writings we learn also upon what conditions both will be obtained.

7. THE PARTING MOMENTS [ACT.20:36-38]

These last 3 verses scarcely need any comment. They are self-explanatory. A praying Apostle Paul produced a love-bound eldership in hope of a self-denying bishopric. That was the last time that Paul prayed with them; it was not the last time that he prayed for them, nor was it the first time. Who ever interceded in behalf of a flock as did dear Paul? "*The care of all the churches*" always bore heavily upon his father heart [2Co.1:28]. Let us as deacons, elders, pastors, and bishops be imitators of him.

Such was the finale of the 3rd and last evangelistic tour of the heroic herald and pioneer of the invincible gospel of grace and glory. We have barely touched the narration of events which we may ponder with profit all our days. We have glanced at the sample missionary and sample modes of missionary operations. May we walk in Paul's steps in our surrender to Christ, in our love for the truth, and in our unselfish devotion to the edifying and nurturing of God's people.

THE FAITHFUL OX

MARY M. BODIE

PULL ON, PULL ON,
THE LABORERS ARE FEW, WE CANNOT STAY,
WHILE LOOMS THE HARVEST IN ITS VAST ARRAY:
FOR TO EACH SERVANT DOES THE MASTER SAY,
"GO WORK TODAY; GO WORK TODAY."

PULL ON, PULL ON,
ALTHOUGH FRUITLESS SEEMS THE TOIL, AND VERY VAIN;
THE HUSBANDMAN HATH PATIENCE FOR THE RAIN,
TILL ALL AROUND HIM WAVES THE GOLDEN GRAIN.
OUR WAY IS PLAIN, OUR WAY IS PLAIN.

PULL ON, PULL ON,
NO TIME FOR REST TILL GLOWS THE SETTING SUN
ACROSS OUR PATHWAY, WHEN THE RACE IS RUN,
AND WE'VE HEARD THE MASTER'S VOICE, "YOU HAVE WON."
"WELL DONE, MY FRIENDS; WELL DONE, WELL DONE."

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S LAST VISIT TO JERUSALEM [ACT.21-23]

"And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present." [Act.20:17-18]

The date of these events was the spring of 58 A.D. Luke, the recorder of these thrilling happenings, was with the Apostle Paul all of those days. No delay was allowed enroute from Miletus to Jerusalem. His purpose was to visit Jerusalem once more and then to see Rome was burning in his bones [Act.19:21]. He was glad to find a freight ship beading for the country of Phoenicia which landed them in Tyre.

There certain disciples sought to hinder him from going up to Jerusalem; but he and his crew pressed on their way. At Caesarea, they met evangelist Philip and his 4 gifted daughters. Who dare say that women may not proclaim the Word of grace? Did Paul rebuke them? There is no account of it, if he did. Why has the Spirit recorded the fact of their public ministry, if they were out of divine order? Ah, they simply fulfilled the prophecy of Joel 2:28. Condemn them, who dare?

The prophet **Agabus** ("grasshopper") leaped down from Jerusalem and showed the Apostle Paul how he would be bound if he went thither. His fellow journeymen and the disciples there sought to dissuade him from going to the city; but he would not be hindered.

"And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." [Act.21:4]

"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, the will of the Lord be done." [Act.21:14]

Does Verse 4 contradict Verse 14? Apparently, it does. Sometimes the Lord seems to set before us 2 objects of choice, informing us of the outcome of both. He lets us take either one, not condemning us, whichever one we choose. In either case, we would move in God's will. Paul would have been in God's will if he had yielded to the pulling back of the Spirit through the disciples in Tyre. He would have reached Rome, no doubt, without the 2 years' imprisonment in Caesarea. But who dare arise and condemn Paul? Sometimes God speaks through abject silence. Moreover, God's word to Ananias was thus fulfilled:

"But the Lord said unto him, go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." [Act.9:15-16]

The Lord did not condemn nor censure the Apostle for his visit to Jerusalem or for his conduct there; instead, He comforted him [Act.23:11]. The attitude of Luke and the other workers who traveled with Paul is a fine example for us. They said, "*the will of the Lord be done.*" Agabus signified what suffering and persecution Paul would have to endure if he persisted in going to Jerusalem. But Paul knew that for greater suffering and for hotter persecution he would obtain a greater reward; therefore, he would not be dissuaded from going there. When we do not understand, when we cannot quite agree, let us say as did they "*the will of the Lord be done,*" because we might be wrong. How much trouble and strife will then be avoided?

PAUL'S RECEPTION IN JERUSALEM

There were some brethren in Jerusalem who received Paul and his message concerning "*the mystery of God.*" All the elders were present when he interviewed James. Were Peter and John there? It is not so recorded. When Barnabas and Paul were there 8 years before to discuss whether salvation is by law or by grace, "*they were received of the church and the apostles and elders*" [Act.15:4]. Had the Jerusalem saints then thrown off the yoke of legality and discarded the shadows Paul would not have had such a fearful fight on this last visit there.

We are here confronted with a most powerful and conclusive demonstration of legality. How unconquerable it is? James was the pastor of the assembly there. This James wrote the epistle of James. He was one of the 120 filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and a very prominent participant in the conference just referred to earlier in Acts 15. He then agreed that salvation is by grace alone apart from works. Yet, he seemed to be swayed more or less by law-keepers. Oh, the daring subtlety and binding power of that religious witchcraft, legalism, that hydra-headed ghost, self-righteousness. Is it any wonder that Martin Luther wrote a book of 1,000 pages against it (see his notes on Galatians)? Can we blame the Apostle Paul for shouting out, "*I am set for the defense of the Gospel*" [Phi.1:17]?

"And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry." [Act.21:19]

He taught the same Gospel of grace which had been his theme before the former meeting, the conference. He could report the same wonderful results. Indeed, he could say, as Luke wrote in Acts 19:12, that God had wrought special miracles by his hands. When they, James and the elders, heard it, they "*glorified the Lord.*" What else could they do? But...they also had a report. Do you ever hear people say "Yes, *but?*" They admit your testimony but in the same breath add "Yes, *but.*" Beware of the "Yes, *but*" folk. If possible, they will entangle you and get you into dire trouble.

"And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:." [Act.21:20]

Today, the same thing can be said of the Gentiles. How strange! What a conglomeration! Men believe on Jesus...the embodiment of grace, the Savior by His grace, the absolute fulfillment of the Mosaic code...but are zealous for the very law of which "*...Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" [Rom.10:4]. Oh, how ignorance and self-righteousness rob Christ of His dearly bought glory. Paul did not teach either the Jews or the Gentiles to "forsake Moses;" but everywhere he taught that Christ was the living substance of which Moses' dead letter was only the shadow. Why go on with a type or a shadow when the real satisfying substance had come? Cold, cruel legality habitually carries a pail of paint and brush seeking to blacken the pure white truth of Divine Grace. We are often accused of saying or writing things which are absolutely false. Christ is our theme, from whom we never deviate, but seek to glorify Him to the uttermost.

Today, people do not continue the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, or walk after the customs; instead they continue the spirit of the types and shadows. Some insist on water baptism or Sabbath keeping or feet washing, etc., as necessary to salvation. Others insist that after we are born again through faith in Jesus [Joh.1:12-13] we must keep The Law of Moses or be damned at last. Reader, how often have you broken The Law since you were saved? Did you mend that break by keeping The Law afterward; or, did you come to the Father through the "*Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous*" [1Jo.2:1]? Do you know that if you break God's law, you must be forgiven of Him, and no keeping of it afterward can atone for or pardon that offence? Why not rest forever on Hebrews 7:24-25:

"But this man (Christ), because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Oh, thank God for the efficacy of the death of Christ and for the constancy and sufficiency of His intercession in our behalf. All that is grace, needed grace, abounding grace.

PAUL IN THE TEMPLE

Paul stemmed the tide of legality, "*the enemy of the cross,*" at the expense of his life. He died daily for the Gospel of grace. Eight years before, Peter had declared boldly saying "*Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*" [Act.15:10].

However, afterwards, when in Antioch, Peter compromised and Paul had to reprove him [Gal.2:11-14]. At the conference, James advised that no one should trouble the Gentile converts with legal requirements. But here he too fails and compromises. Those who seemed to be pillars of the truth weakened and cringed in the crucial hour.

That James and the Jewish elders still observed the Mosaic rites is evident. They besought Paul to prove to the multitude that he practiced circumcision, walked orderly after the customs, and kept The Law of Moses. They knew that he did not; he practiced what he preached. If he had been doing so, he would have been building again the things which once he destroyed. Thus, he would have been making himself a transgressor and Christ the minister of sin [Gal.2:17-18].

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.." [Act.21:26]

Acts 21:6 is a stumbling block to Bible students. How could Paul permit an offering to be offered up for him after announcing Christ (for over 20 years) to be the one only real sin offering? Had he not preached Him as "*the Lamb of God?*" Indeed he had. How then could he go back to the shadows? We must note the Apostle Paul's motive because God looks on the heart. Abraham's offering Isaac was apparently an act of murder; actually it was an act of "worship" because God bid him do it. "*What is not of faith, is sin.*" Likewise Paul "*went up to Jerusalem to worship,*" and to bring-alms and offerings to his nation [Act.24:11-17]. He "*purified himself*" because he sought to be "*made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" [1Co.9:22]. For a similar reason, because of the Jews in those parts, he had Timothy circumcised [Act.16:3]. He did those outward shadowy things not as a compromise and not because he feared the Jews (as Peter did in Galatians 2:12), but that he might explain them and give their spiritual application.

NO COMPROMISE IN PAUL

It is very evident that the Apostle was unswerving for the truth. His address before Felix 12 days later proves it. The inference is that he waxed bold near the end of the 7 days in declaring the resurrection of Christ (compare Act.21:27 with Act.25:19 and Act.26:8-9, 23). To Felix he said:

"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy (a sect), so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." [Act.24:14-15]

He must have declared to them that Christ had come, had died, and been raised from the dead. What did he tell the governor that had stirred the Jews? Simply that he stood and cried, saying, "*Touching the resurrection of the dead, I am called in question this day*" [Act.24:14-21]. But his remarks about the resurrection would not have aroused their hatred if he had not shown them that there could be no resurrection except through the death and resurrection of the promised Messiah, which he declared was Jesus Christ. Felix afterward said to Agrippa concerning Paul, that the accusers "*had certain questions against him of their own religion, and of one Jesus, who was dead, who Paul affirmed to be alive*" [Act.25:19 RV]. Finally, Paul's own words before Agrippa are unanswerable evidence that he never flinched nor swerved from the truth for one moment:

"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people (Israel), and to the Gentiles.." [Act.26:22-23]

Do you think for one moment that the fiery Apostle Paul, with the vision of Christ and fellowship he had with Him, could spend 7 days in the temple without defining his position? Unthinkable! The sequel proves that for whatever reason he purified himself in the temple he was firm for the truth. Study the shameful treatment the Jews gave him similar to that they gave to Christ. If he had compromised, would they not have hailed him with wild delight? Would they not have announced it far and near? Would not the Holy Spirit have recorded divine censure against him somewhere? No, there is not even a hint of it, nor intimation that Paul ever regretted his visit to Jerusalem or his conduct in the temple. Indeed, we have the positive proof of divine approval:

"And the night following (second night after he was taken from the temple) the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." [Act.23:11]

This ought to place his integrity and the divinity of his conduct beyond all dispute. After reaching Rome, he wrote that invaluable letter to the Hebrews and sent a copy to them in Jerusalem (compare Heb.10:32-34 and Heb.13, 23-24 with 2Pe.3:15-16).

Furthermore, after Jesus returns and the Jews receive Him, they will again offer sacrifices, not in unbelief as if He had not come but as a memorial of faith that He has come [Isa.60:6-8, Zec.14:21]; even as we observe the memorials of baptism and the Lord's Supper today. Most conscientiously could Paul allow those sacrifices to be offered for him as a type of how the Jews will offer them in memoriam of Him who had come? Study the seemingly ridiculous things that God required of His prophets to symbolize the condition of His people and His dealings with them [Eze.4, Hos.1-2].

PAUL ARRESTED AND TRIED

"And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith (straightway) the doors were shut." [Act.21:30]

It was the last offer of mercy to the Jews. It was their last opportunity to accept or reject Paul's message of grace. In rejecting that, they rejected Christ Himself. Any wonder that "*straightway the doors were shut?*" They thought to close the doors of the temple to the Apostle; but in doing so, they shut themselves out from Jehovah. Oh how sad, that men either walk away from the light or chase the light out from their presence.

The Jews rendered Paul the same treatment they had given his Lord nearly 30 years before. No doubt they were the same parties where the multitude cried, "*Away with him.*"

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE THE MOB

"Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I make now unto you." [Act.22:1]

At the Apostle Paul's own request, the chief captain allowed him to speak to the people from the stairs leading up to the castle. Mark the respectful manner of his address, "*Men, brethren and fathers.*" That should have softened their hearts toward him. He named the place of his birth and his early religious training. He recited his persecution of the followers of Jesus; then described the nature of his conversion [Act.22:2-15]. This account (and in Acts 26) is his own public testimony. Each account records some items omitted by the other; therefore, the importance of studying them together. Before considering the Apostle's testimony here, read Luke's account in Acts 9:17-19, and the notes thereon. Here we read that Ananias said,

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." [Act.22:16]

Does this notation contradict that of Acts 9? By no means. Some quote this verse to prove that water baptism is essential to salvation. It is the only Scripture that seems to teach that; yet, the whole tenor of Scriptural teaching is against it. Salvation is by faith in the blood of Christ apart from any works, even wholly apart from the beautiful symbol of baptism in water. By comparing the 3 records, we find that the chief point emphasized is that God chose him to be a witness of what he saw and heard and should hear. Two of the accounts declare that Ananias came to Paul that he might receive his sight; and one, that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Be it remembered that in Acts 22, Paul is recorded as addressing his own people, the Jews. Compare Peter's words in Acts 2:38 of *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."* Observe that the exhortation to *"repent"* was distinctly said to Israel because of their stout reluctance to accept Christ as their Messiah (study Mat.3, Mar.1, Luk.3, Act.3, and Act.26:20). Baptism in water was the one bold and convincing expression of real repentance. An unwillingness to be baptized was equivalent to saying, "I do not believe in Jesus Christ; I will not have Him to be my Messiah and King." Baptism to a Jew means an eternal cutting off from the shadowy forms and ceremonies of the old covenant. It means an acknowledgement that all was fulfilled in the despised Nazarene, whom they had crucified with wicked hands. Ananias' question implies that Saul of Tarsus hesitated to be baptized, not because he had not yet believed on Jesus, but because he knew what persecution would follow his baptism in water. He shrank from the suffering.

The moment he settled that point, saying yes to whatever consequences we read that *"he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized"* [Act.9:18]. Notice that his sight came before he was baptized, as God's witness to his full surrender and wholehearted acceptance of His Son. His baptism was his own witness thereto and his bold confession of faith (study Paul's own interpretation of baptism Act.19 4). Let us look at the exact grammar of Verse 16, as given in the Diaglott:

"And now why dost thou delay? Having arisen, be thou dipped and wash thyself from the sins of thee, having invoked the name of Him."

Ananias exhorted Saul to do 2 things: (1) *"be baptized"* and (2) *"wash."* The participial phrase, *"having invoked,"* etc., of necessity modifies the verb *"wash,"* which immediately precedes it. Observe also that the invoking (calling on the Lord) is in the past perfect tense. That means Saul had called fully on the name of the Lord before he was exhorted to be baptized. His sins were really washed away when he called on the Lord, not when he was baptized. This same Saul, afterward called Paul, taught this doctrine, saying, *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* [Rom.10:13]. Also, he wrote that we are

- *"cleansed by the washing (laver) of water with the Word"* [Eph.5:26],
- *"saved through the washing (laver) of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"* [Tiu.3:5].

He does not once intimate baptism as a means of salvation. Instead, he speaks positively against it [1Co.1:17], saying, *"Christ sent me NOT to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."* Elsewhere, he writes of baptism in water as a *"baptism of repentance"* [Act.19:4] and a *"baptism into Christ, into death, a burial into death"* [Rom.6:3-5]. Therefore, it follows that Ananias meant nothing more by his entreaty than that Saul should symbolize the washing away of his sins by being baptized in

water, and boldly and publicly confess that he believed his sins to have been cleansed away when he before invoked the name of the Lord. Peter wrote of baptism as a "*figure*" [1Pe.3:21].

Furthermore, if the above view is not correct, and if water is essential to salvation, then the Holy Spirit must have been unwise in coming upon the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius before they were baptized [Act.10]. And Peter was unscriptural in endorsing it. How unworthy of the blessed Comforter is such a thought, and how unkind toward the Apostle to whom were given the keys of the kingdom. But such is the inevitable conclusion to which undue stress of baptism brings us. Every truth is precious when held in right relation to all other truth; but any truth is weakened and brought into ill repute when it is pushed beyond its proper limits. Saints become confused, divisions arise, the Spirit is grieved, and Christ is robbed of His glory. Then, error never travels alone.

Unspeakable harm has been done through magnifying water baptism out of its beautiful place as a symbol and exalting it as a savior. If Christ by Himself alone could not save a sinner, He would be a puny savior indeed. It is a deplorable fact that not one person in five hundred understands the importance of water baptism because the ministers themselves do not understand it. Very often the common people, in their simplicity, grasp its meaning; but some fanatical ignoramus turns them away from the plain truth. When believers clearly and fully see the purpose and meaning of this beautiful memorial, they will suffer no one to put them under the water 3 and 4 times. They will not be confused as to whether they should be dipped face foremost or back downward; whether dipped once or thrice; and their faith will not be in the formula which the baptizer pronounces but in the Savior who saves by grace and not by water.

PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL

After reciting his conversion, Paul relates a vision in which the Lord gave him the call to minister to the Gentiles [Act.23:17-21]. The enraged mob cried out, "*...Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live*" [Act.23:1]. Then the chief captain ordered him to be brought into the castle (of Antonia) and be examined by scourging, an experience similar to our Lord's experience in the same place about 25 years before. When they learned that he was a Roman, they left off the scourging and gave him leave to speak [Act.22:22-29].

The satanic hatred of the Jewish officers was terrific. Paul began his address by saying that he had lived in all good conscience before God, which they knew that they had not done. Then the high priest commanded him to be smitten on the mouth; whereupon he exclaimed, "*God shall smite thee, thou whited wall*" [Act.23:3]. The bystanders called out, "*...revilest thou God's high priest?*" Then Paul with ironical courtesy replied, "*I wist not, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*" [Act.23:5]. The Apostle no longer recognized Ananias as the high priest because his priesthood ended when Christ's priesthood began — Jesus Christ was the only real High Priest. They were speaking evil of Him, God's acknowledged Ruler of the people in the synagogue. Smiting Paul was equivalent to smiting Him, for Paul was His representative.

Then a division arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, because Paul exclaimed that he was called in question on account of his hope of the resurrection of the dead, which the latter did not believe, although they were supposed to be orthodox Jews, as well as the rest. Of course there arose a great clamor.

"And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." [Act.23:11]

This verse proves God's good pleasure toward Paul while in Jerusalem. The dear persecuted warrior of grace needed those comforting words because the enemy was plotting his death. How good and wonderful it is that the Lord knows all that men are doing. He goes before and is also the rearward of His holy ones. More than 40 blood-thirsty foes of the cross banded themselves together under a great curse to eat nothing until they had slain Paul [Act.23:12-13]. Paul's nephew heard of it and at once informed his uncle, who had him brought before the chief captain to make him know of the plot; therefore, that night the captain dispatched the Apostle directly to Felix the governor in Caesarea by means of 200 soldiers, 200 spearmen, and 70 cavalymen [Act.23:16-24]. The captain also addressed a letter [Act.23:26-30] to the governor concerning Paul and the Jews' attitude toward him.

THE APOSTLE PAUL IS IMPRISONED IN CAESAREA [ACT.24-26]

THE APOSTLE BEFORE FELIX [ACT.24]

"And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul." [Act.24:1]

At this time, God's word to Ananias that Paul should witness to kings [Act.9:15] began to be fulfilled. He never forgets his own, nor His promises to them; therefore, the Apostle Paul appeared before Felix, the governor. The Jews brought with them an orator, whom they supposed would overpower Felix with his eloquence and persuade him against Paul. He began his oratorical flight by endeavoring to flatter the governor.

He accused Paul of being a pestilent fellow, an insurrectionist, and of trying to profane the temple. But Paul was absolutely innocent of all those charges. Therefore, he spoke boldly in his own defense, for he had no attorney to plead his cause, save Jesus Christ, who of course was on his side, saying that he had come to Jerusalem to worship not to make trouble. He bought alms and offerings to his suffering brethren in Jerusalem even as he had done before [Act.11:27-30]. A famine was occasioned by the fact of the Jews not accepting Christ as their Messiah. When once they receive Him, the world will no longer know want and sorrow.

The Apostle freely acknowledged his doctrine, showing why he was arrested; thus he made the governor hear his wonderful gospel. He said,

"But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves (the Jews) also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." [Act.24:14-16]

His enemies admitted those truths but did not believe them with the heart; however, Paul did and they were bitter against him. His testimony convicted them, to which they had to yield, or walk away from, or fight against. Because Paul believed the Bible with all his heart and sought only the good of his people, he could frankly say, *"Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."* They could accuse him of only one thing, that he *"cried standing among them, touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day"* [Act.24:21]. Of course that was no accusation. It seems that his fervent testimony silenced the orator and all his foes.

"And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter."
[Act.24:22]

We do not read that Lysias ever came; however, Felix came later; bringing his wife Drusilla, and heard Paul concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. As the invincible herald "*reasoned of righteousness and temperance and the judgment to come*" [Act.24:25] Felix was terrified but he did not repent and believe the Gospel. He had a number of interviews with Paul, not because he was interested in Paul, nor his doctrine, but he hoped that Paul would give him money and thus purchase his deliverance. Felix knew that Paul was innocent; but he did not have the courage to dismiss the case and release him, because he desired to gain favor with the Jews [Act.24:27].

Paul had many friends, in many parts, which visited and brought him provisions and money. The governor was impressed with the fact that he had alms to take to his brethren in Jerusalem. But Paul rested in God's hands. He would bribe no one to obtain freedom. When in prison, he was God's free man; when free, he was God's bond slave.

THE APOSTLE BEFORE FESTUS [ACT.25]

"Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought."
[Act 25:1-6]

After Paul was kept imprisoned by Felix for 2 years, Festus became governor. He visited Jerusalem and the principle men of the Jews brought a complaint against Paul and desired Festus bring him back to Jerusalem for a trial; they were still lying in wait to kill him. Festus, however, said that they should appear before him in Caesarea, where he was going in a few days. That they did. "...*the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove*" [Act.25:7]. Paul denied all the charges. Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews (no doubt they offered him large sums of money if he would deliver Paul to them), asked Paul if he were willing to be judged before him in Jerusalem. The Apostle answered frankly and firmly, saying,

"Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender (wrongdoer), or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar." [Act.25:10-11]

After conferring with the Jewish council, he granted to Paul his request.

Many days afterward, Felix informed King Agrippa and Bernice of Paul. Verse 19 shows how the Apostle witnessed of Jesus in his presence; for he lost no opportunity to proclaim his glorious Lord. His primary purpose was not to defend himself, but he was "*set for the defense of the gospel*" [Phi.1:17] as he wrote later from another prison cell. Festus said to the king, that the Jews had "*certain questions against him of their own religion (or superstition), and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive*" [Act.25:1-9]. Festus knew of Jesus and of his death but doubted His resurrection; therefore, he said that Paul affirmed Him to be alive. This testimony of Festus concerning Paul is strong evidence that the Apostle was uncompromising while in the

temple. He purified himself only in view of explaining to the Jews the purpose of all those Old Testament types and shadows and that they had been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he could not speak effectively of the resurrection of the dead without bringing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, as stated before, the Lord God found no fault in His beloved servant but gave him comfort again and again.

"And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth." [Act.25:23]

It must have been humiliating to dear Paul to be ordered around by wicked men so many times; however, he knew that he was there in his Father's will. All the time, he was fulfilling the Lord's words to Ananias [Act.9:15]. "*With great pomp*," the king and his wife appeared because they were to hear the defense of a noted prisoner of whom they had heard so many conflicting reports and who seemed to be a very unique character. Festus felt that he could not send him to appear before the Emperor, the Augustus, without signifying well-grounded charges against him.

THE APOSTLE BEFORE AGRIPPA [ACT.26]

"Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself." [Act.26:1]

Still the Apostle had no human attorney. All those days of severe trial, continuing over 2 weary years, he had to plead his just cause himself. Who could do it more effectively than he? He was filled with the Spirit, fired with the truth, strengthened by the Lord's presence, impelled by the need and ignorance of the people, and pulled on by the same eternal reward which comforted his Master: "*who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*" [Heb.12]. Now, let us read his masterful address.

"I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews." [Act.26:2]

How could one speak thus, after those many months of unabated cruelty against him, if he were not absolutely innocent and empowered by the comforting Holy Spirit. Again he declared that for the very hope, which was dear to every honest Jew, he was brought to trial, that is, the hope of the resurrection of the dead. His question to the king is clear and pointed. "*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*" [Act.26:8] as if the king had questioned it. Then he related how that he had once persecuted the Jesus way. Then he gave the experience of his arrest by the Lord [Act.26:9-18]. Note his comprehensive commission:

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (faith in Christ, who had spoken thus to him). Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." [Act.26:17-20]

The Apostle waxed eloquent in the Spirit. He did not fear the king, the governor, nor others of high estate; he was fulfilling God's Word that he should witness before kings. His testimony confirmed his former fiery witness and proves that in Jerusalem, as well as everywhere else,

by the Old Testament he showed that "*the Christ must suffer and be raised from the dead*" [Act.26:23]. Festus was stirred to the depths and accused Paul of being mad. But Paul's answer was, "*I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness*" [Act.26:25].

The man in bonds was the real king.

He was "*reigning in life by One, Jesus Christ*" [Rom.5:17], as he wrote a short time before. His anointed message of grace silenced the world rulers and commanded them to extend to him the highest respect, and well nigh converted Agrippa. In the council of the rulers, it was settled that God's man was innocent, and had done nothing worthy of death, or even of bonds. More than 2 years rolled around in which infuriated Jews had sought by every conceivable manner to wipe "the chief speaker," the giant of divine grace, the housekeeper of the mystery of God, off the map; but all in vain. He that does the will of God is as safe as God Himself; his "*life is hid with Christ in God*" [Col.3:3]. Finally, Agrippa remarked, "*This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar*" [Act.26:32]. But God had already said to Paul, "*So must thou bear witness also at Rome*" [Act.23:11]; and, the Lord made the Roman government pay Paul's traveling expenses.

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S VISIT TO ROME [ACT.27-28]

"And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band." [Act.27:1]

The Lord often employs humiliating means to accomplish His purposes. Paul had an ignominious escape from Damascus—he was let down from a window in a basket. We do not read that God's great man ever rode in a Pullman sleeper; neither did God's own well-beloved Son. Both of them were despised and rejected of men. Satan would often have cut them off if the Father had not supernaturally protected them.

Paul's trip to Rome was an exceedingly perilous one. It was also one of the most meaningful types in this book of Acts. It is a very prolific picture of the journey of the Church from Pentecost to the coming of Jesus. At first, **Julius** ("*downy*") seemed to figure the Holy Spirit as a tender, heavenly Porter. He gives us liberty and makes life pleasant for us. Our bondage to Jesus Christ is a serfdom of warmest love through the comfort and joy of the Spirit. **Rome** ("*strength*") was the capital city of the then world empire which is where Paul and his friends were now embarking to go. However, he had embarked years before the Rome of the universe, the city of real strength, the throne-room of Him whose name is "**Strength**," Jehovah Almighty. **Adramyttium** ("*the court of death*," "*not in the race*") was the ship in which the Apostle started for Rome. What a pronounced picture of ecclesiasticism, which invariably has induced spiritual decline and finally death to its passengers. No, indeed; it is not in the race for the prize of the high calling. They who would win Christ as Bridegroom must sail in an entirely different ship. A spiritual and heavenly race demands a spiritual ship. In such a ship Paul embarked and sailed for glory. He never rode on any religious or ecclesiastical Adramyttium, He was always absolutely free.

Luke ("*a light*") was a passenger with Paul, as the phrase "*with us*" in Acts 25:2 indicates. He was true indeed to the meaning of his name and became an accurate chronicler of two great careers: Those of Jesus and of His chief imitator the Apostle Paul. **Aristarchus** ("*a good prince*," "*the best ruler*") was another passenger and a fellow prisoner with Paul. He was one of the 3 Jews who were a "*comfort*" to him while he was imprisoned in Rome [Col.4:10-11]. He shared the Apostle's persecutions and sorrows for Christ's sake. Will he not also share in his glory? May we not choose a similar place of fellowship with Paul as those brethren had?

By knowing the meanings of the proper names here, the Bible student may derive some sweet spiritual lessons:

- Sidon ("hunting")
- Cyprus ("love," "blossom," "fairness")
- Cilicia ("haircloth")
- Pamphylia ("many tribes")
- Myra ("myrrh," "myrtle juice," "I flow")
- Lycia ("wolfish")

As they supposed, many people have started for heaven in some religious organization, an ecclesiastical Adramyttium, but became disappointed and dissatisfied with it and left it. Not understanding God's perfect and safe way of travel, they went aboard another organization. Some ministers have done so, taking with them their congregation. **Alexandria** ("helper of men"); a religious institution that promises to help and defend mankind always appeals to people. Newly born babes in Christ readily run into a church like that. Julius, who seemed before to typify the Comforter, now proves to be simply a wise (?) human influence, which always sets bounds around the saints of God instead of letting God Himself be the boundary.

"*And he put us therein*" has proved the beginning of unspeakable bondage and grief to thousands of the children of God. The history of the sects tells the tale of religious woes. The meanings of the names of the various points touched on during this the voyage all agree as figures of the tempestuous history of Christendom during this age. **Cnidus** ("dedicated to Venus," "nettled"). They could not reach that port because "*the winds were contrary*." The citizens of such a town become nettled at the very sight of a Gospel ship. **Crete** ("fleshy"), **Salmone** ("from the surging"), and **Lasea** ("rocky," "shaggy"). With difficulty they came to Fair Havens, where Paul advised them to winter, because the Holy Spirit showed him what would befall them if they went on toward **Phoenix** (**Phenice** meaning "palm land").

The Fair Havens of Paul's Gospel is the only place of real and lasting safety; however The Church feared the waves of persecution that were splashing and surging about them. The rugged, rocky, shaggy heights did not appeal to the leaders...It is just so today.

"And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete." [Act.27:12-13]

If you want to get nowhere, or to the wrong somewhere, just vote on your movements. "*The more part*" will advise you contrary to the Apostle every time. God has ordained that certain members of the Body of Christ should be "eyes" to the assembly and have "the word of wisdom." The Holy Spirit makes the Father's will known to the whole crew by means of one or a very small few who have the burden of responsibility.

PAUL, THE REAL PILOT

God appointed the Apostle Paul to be the house-keeper of the Church of Christ throughout this age. His doctrine and practice should have been allowed to pilot the saints over the sea during the past 1,900 years. His writings are preeminently to and for the assemblies of Christ. Alas, how foolhardy men have been to reject, or even to neglect them. . The deceiving "*palm lands*" and the "*soft south wind*" of ease and compromise with the world overcome those who fear the surgings of opposition around the shaggy cliffs of Divine Truth; Paul's "*some things, hard to be*

understood' [2Pe.3:16]. But oh, what revelations of grace and what experiences of peace and glory envelope those who receive his doctrine. Tongue can never tell the depth and height and breadth of the present wealth and joy which flows into the heart that accepts his gospel and goes on with him. God rides on the billowy crest of Salmone to our help; He sits on the dizzying pinnacles of rugged Lasea, inviting us to dwell above the fog and mist of an ease-loving church and to enjoy His deep abiding fellowship. To those who go on with Paul, there can come no real "*hurt and much damage*," which Christendom has actually suffered.

The "*palm trees*" of **Phenice** ("*palm land*") always appeal to the carnal. One of the most subtle features of self-righteousness is an aspiration for a glorified state on earth. Some claim that their flesh is so dead that they suffer no pain and have no longer any "natural affection," and, that they have nothing to do save to enjoy the cool, balmy shade of self-congratulation and mutual admiration. Some people become "over much righteous," too holy (?) to serve others, or mingle with other saints. No one can actually daily follow dear Paul and shrivel up into pusillanimous religious vanity, which has no boast except its own hard sanctity, obnoxious attire, and legal tenets of doctrine before which Graces blushes and flees away.

OUR PILOT ENCOURAGED

"And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship." [Act.27:22]

"Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." [Act.27:24]

Wonderful! The so-called Christian system goes to pieces, there is the loss "*of the ship*" but "*there shall be no loss of any man's life among you.*" Here, in symbol, is the truth of eternal life. If God saw to it that not one of those prisoners perished; how much more will He see to it that not one who believes on His Son will ever perish forever? Brother, with whom are you sailing? Do you say with Paul, "*Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me*" [Act.27:25]. Happy are all those who do.

"Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour (under the pretense) as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship." [Act.27:29-30]

How unbelieving men are even though they are convinced by actual experience and observation that God is with Paul. The shipmen were about to flee out of the ship. Yes, the majority of saints keep their distance from Paul, the very man whom Jehovah has ordained to bring to us the greatest truths and the fullness of blessing; nevertheless, here is a marvelous statement: "*Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved*" [Act.27:31]. There was no physical salvation from drowning that day except by obeying Paul's word; neither is there salvation for any man save by believing Paul's gospel. The curse rests upon those who preach any other gospel [Gal.1:8-9]. Paul wrote, "*God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel*" [Rom.2:16]. The place and power of his message is tremendous; it is incalculable, invaluable.

Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat." [Act.27:32-36]

Oh, let us "*cut off the ropes of the boat*" of apostatized Christianity. The day is coming on. Let us freely "*take some meat: for this for your health.*" Take it from Paul's hand. Men are writing about "meat in due season;" but they either reject this man's teachings, or "wrest them to their own destruction." Beware of them.

"*They are all of good cheer*" who receive Paul's wonderful message. The calamity awaiting those who refuse it will be appalling. They "*will be saved as by fire.*" Their works, their unsavory teaching, "*will be burned*" (see 1Co.3). The 2 gigantic religious seas (Catholicism and Protestantism) will meet at the end of this present period. They are practically one now. Catholicism has "*stuck fast and remained unmovable*;" it remains undivided to this day. Protestantism has been "*broken with the violence of the waves*" of religious heresies, or unscriptural doctrines, and is divided into many sects, all claiming to be the right system. They will all perish at the hand of Divine Justice (compare Rev.3:16 with Act.17 and 18); however, all believers will be saved. "*Those who can swim*," or who trust God absolutely, and depend only upon His grace, "*first get to land.*" Paul was a good swimmer; he was accustomed to the water [2Co.11:25; compare Phi.3:11-14]. Reader do you choose to be in his rank? And the rest, "*some on boards and some on pieces of the ship*," or basic fragments of the whole truth get to land.

THE FINAL REVIVAL FORESHADOWED [ACT.28]

"And when we were escaped, then we knew that the island was called Melita" [Act.28:1]

Paul and his crew reached Melita about February 61 A.D., where they continued several months; then they arrived in Rome in the spring. We should expect the translation of the full overcomers to take place some year before Easter; because Jesus will take His throne in heaven just before the Passover and the overcomers must meet Him in heaven at the time of His enthronement (note that the Jewish year begins at that time, see Exo.12). Methinks the Archangel is standing now on the veranda in heaven, polishing His trumpet, and getting ready to blow. Oh, let us keep our ears clean and polished also, that we may not fail to hear the come home call. Paul's arrival in Rome typifies the translation.

Melita ("*affording honey*") how significant! Our bitter experiences in God's will are followed by sweetness. A life of hard, bitter toil here will be rewarded by sweet fellowship with God and all the holy ones in heaven forever, of which our fellowship on earth is only an earnest. What a glorious hope is ours in Christ! I fear that very few really appreciate it.

The Apostle's experience on the island of Melita foreshadowed a revival of the truths of Grace and Pentecost at the close of this age. During his 3 month stay there, the Gospel went forth effectively. The signs of Mark 16:17 followed in confirmation thereof, as at the beginning. Thus, wherever Christ is preached, not in word only, but in the power and joy of the Holy Spirit, the whole counsel of God is made known and the fullness of Divine Blessings is experienced. Some modern teachers condemn Luke for emphasizing divine healing, in his record, instead of salvation. How wise the natural man poses to be when he turns religious. It is still the "*wisdom of this world*," however pious it may seem to be, which the Lord abominates. Jesus Christ secured the attention of the people by the healing of their maladies. Paul and the other apostles followed in His steps. We do well to learn God's plan and manner of ministering to the world by studying their conduct as recorded by the Spirit. Another huge blunder is foisted against Paul by some would-be Bible teachers. They claim that he became so spiritual after reaching Rome, that he discarded Divine Healing altogether. Their only evidence of such conjecture is his silence on healing in his letters written to the churches from Rome.

Do they not know that those epistles were written to saints who had learned long before to trust God for their bodies and knew the truth of Divine Healing? They do not, because they

themselves have not yet learned that valuable lesson. They prefer to patronize some carnal, skeptical doctor in time of sickness. Not only had those saints learned the art of Divine Healing, but they learned Christ as their very life. Of course, healing is a part of salvation.

Furthermore, how dare any sane man intimate that Jesus Christ was not spiritual at any time? Let them consider Luke 4:1, 14-15; Acts 10:38; and Matthew 17:5. What colossal conceit and high-handed effrontery which presumes to say that dear Paul was not moving in the Spirit during those many years of pioneering. If that were true, how could we accept the epistles, which he wrote at different times within those years, as Divinely Inspired? For example, the books of Galatians, Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Romans. The Apostle did not leap suddenly from carnality to spirituality after arriving in Rome (see Rom.1:11). We grow spiritually as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. Men who reject the Latter Rain, and hence, are not filled with the Holy Spirit, ought to blush before Jesus and Paul, if not before those who are now walking in the Spirit and living true to God's Word. No one today can be spiritual, who has not received the Spirit as did the apostles. By their own folly, such teachers put themselves in the class of the "*five foolish virgins*," who will miss the rapture of the last rank of those that shall be caught away to be at the wedding in the air. Readers beware, oh beware!

PAUL REACHING ROME

And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome." [Act.28:13-14]

Puteoli ("*abounding in wells*" or "*mineral springs*"). The natural surroundings seemed to be in harmony with the supernatural; for there they "*found brethren*." The brethren in Rome heard that the Apostle and his company were nearing the city and they came out to meet them at Appia Forum and the Three Taverns [Act.28:15]. Yes, the people who are in fellowship with God's springs of living water always learn of Paul's coming. Here is the only mention made of the Church in Rome. Paul had written to them several years before of his coming. He was not the founder of that assembly; yet he desired to visit them. In his letter he said, "*I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established*" [Rom.1:11].

The remainder of Acts 28 records the Apostle Paul's instructions to the Jews concerning the kingdom of God and the teaching of Jesus Christ. There is a typical suggestion here that Paul's gospel must be proclaimed to Israel after the rapture of the Church (compare Mat.24:14 with Rev.14:6-7). In his letter to the Church in Rome, he writes as if his chief purpose in going there was for the sake of that church; but in these closing verses in Acts he seems to be oblivious to the Church and instead is occupied with Israel. Of course, being in prison, he could not minister to the Church.

Paul had purposed to go to Spain after visiting Rome [Rom.15:24-28]. There is no positive proof in the Bible that he ever realized that hope; however, Acts 28:28 suggests that he did. Church history testifies that he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome and reached Spain. There are abundant circumstantial evidences that Paul was delivered from prison once, and went abroad to proclaim his wonderful gospel.

1st. His faith expected it as expressed in Philippians 1:25, 2:23-24 and Philemon 1:22. Hebrews 13:23 implies that he was released.

2nd. The Apostle's letters to Timothy and Titus do not seem to have been written during the period recorded in the Acts. His language in Second Timothy concerning his imprisonment is so different from that in his other epistles. In it, he expressed no hope

of release. He knew that his life work was ended and the time of his homegoing had come. Finally, the following quotation from Plumptre about Josephus (Life c, 3) is at least suggestive and interesting:

"Josephus came to Rome about the second year of Paul's confinement. He was shipwrecked on his voyage, picked up by a ship of Cyrene, landed at Puteoli and made his way to Rome. His main object in coming was, he says, to obtain the release of certain priests, who had been sent to Rome by Felix as prisoners, and he accomplished his purpose through the influence of Poppaea."

God may have used that very providence to deliver His servant, Infuriated Jews occasioned his bondage, and a Jew, Josephus, may have released him.

END OF PAUL'S JOURNEY

Is it not a significant fact, that the people of Israel, on whom the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost, came from the very regions which Peter, Paul, and John visited, and where Paul founded Christian assemblies? Parthia, Mede, and Elam, lying east of Palestine and Mesopotamia northeast, were the only exceptions [Act.2:9-11].

We believe that Paul's visit to Rome is typical of his gospel going to all Christendom because religious Rome is the mother of Christendom. He yearned to minister to his Jewish brethren as God yearns over His scattered people. Consider the following language.

"I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away ... for ye are not my people and I will not be your God." [Hos.1:6-9]

Note the apparent contradiction that immediately follows.

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered." [Hos.1:10a]

Observe now exactly where this will occur.

"And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." [Hos.1:10b]

Acts 28:30-31 indicates the freedom with which the real Gospel will yet reach the people, although its devotees are handicapped. The servants of God are bound; however, *"the Word of God is not bound"* [2Ti 2:9]. When Paul was free, he ministered to all men; but as *"the prisoner of Jesus Christ,"* he brought to the whole Church, for all this age, the richest, deepest, and sweetest portion, even that which was necessary to prepare the Bride of the Lamb for her Bridegroom. The epistles to the assemblies at Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, Philemon, and the second one to Timothy, were written by Paul while in Rome.

Once more, note that Acts ends without a benediction. Why? Because it records the beginnings of the operations of the Spirit through His people as samples and types for this entire age and probably the millennial age (note the word *"began"* in Act.1:1, 2:4, 8:25, 10:37). We must wait until Revelation 21:5 for the benediction.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan." [Mat.4:23-25]

As I read these verses, I am impressed with their typical meaning and purpose. They are a wonderful picture of the present world-wide revival, especially of the wide-spread healing wave, which is the last great phase of the Latter Rain movement that began about 1907. The Lord Jesus Christ did those things when He was on earth, as did also His disciples; and today He is doing the same things through His representatives.

Observe that Jesus preached "the gospel of the Kingdom" not the gospel of the Church. The healing of the people by His mighty power and by the power of God through the disciples was a preparation of Israel for a new age which was just about to dawn. Immediately after Jesus was crucified and taken back to heaven the Holy Spirit was poured out and a new age was introduced. Apparently it was the millennial age, which it would have been if Israel had received Jesus then as their Messiah. For several years, the mighty miracle working power of God, which will grace the beginning of the millennium, was displayed. Until God showed them differently, the apostles believed that the reign of Christ was due and that He would return immediately. But the Jewish nation rejected Christ; therefore, He had to postpone His coming to reign. Instead, this church age, like a vast parenthesis, was introduced.

Now, what Jesus and His disciples did before Pentecost is again before us but on a far larger scale. The "*greater works*," which He foretold, are being accomplished. As their ministry prepared Israel and the world for an earnest of the millennial period so His ministry today, through representatives, is preparing the people for the actual, soon-coming millennial age, the new age of which we hear so much said. Today the many are preaching "*the gospel of the Kingdom*" rather than the gospel of the Church. Comparatively few are really looking for and qualifying for translation; many who are expecting translation also expect to return and reign on the earth.

I want to emphasize this fact that Jesus did not preach the gospel of the Church. He did not declare the doctrine of the "upward calling" and of the "heavenly kingdom." Neither did the 12 apostles, even after Pentecost. It was not then time for that message. That was left for the Apostle Paul, who should bring on the stage another line of gospel ministers. Jesus announced the gospel of the Kingdom of God on earth because His message was preeminently to an earth-dwelling people, who entertained terrestrial hopes and glory. Peter, James, and John also preached the same kingdom gospel and no other; they knew no other. This church gospel was "*a secret hidden in God*" [Eph.3:9] and afterwards revealed to Paul. God confirmed the ministry of Jesus and of the apostles by granting mighty signs and wonders. Returning to our text, notice:

"Jesus went about all Galilee." **Galilee** ("*circuit*") represents the world, or at least where God has a people. Through His Spirit-filled ministers, Jesus Christ has been going everywhere the last few years, working mighty signs and wonders, getting the people ready for His advent and 1,000 years reign. At this point, consider a remarkable statement of our Lord's. "*But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come*" [Mat.10:23]. That was fulfilled when He was transfigured before

them sometime afterwards [Mat.17]. As 2Pe.1:16-18 plainly shows, the transfiguration was "the power and coming" of Jesus in type.

Now, mark this and marvel at the verse before [Mat.10:22] which proves that Jesus spoke of the end of this age; He said, "*He that endureth to the end shall be saved.*" He uttered identical words in His end-time address [Mat.24:13]. Furthermore, if His transfiguration was typical of His revelation then also those local cities were typical of saint-inhabited cities today throughout the world. The career of Jesus and His apostles before Pentecost was typical of the great revival now taking place. As they failed to reach all the cities of Israel before His transfiguration likewise before all the modern cities of Israel can be reached with the kingdom gospel, the Lord will have come. It is a common thing to read, or hear saints exclaim, "We must hurry and give the gospel to the world before Jesus comes."

"Healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." You may believe me or not; but the great majority of Pentecostal preachers are emphasizing the kingdom message. I repeat it. Their message is the gospel of the Kingdom. They little understand Church truth. They comprehend little as to the purpose and plan of God concerning the Church, the Body of Christ. They little know what it means to be joined to Christ and to actually be one with Him. I dare say that this is a strange doctrine with most of them. The oneness of Christ with His people; what a precious truth, but who grasps it? Therefore the precipitation of Pentecostal power and the healing of the sick are generally the supreme task with the ministers. They are fitting men for the advent of the Lord.

"His fame went throughout all Syria." Syria represents the Gentile world. In like manner today, the fame of Jesus, as the all-sufficient Healer of men's bodies, is spreading world-wide. Truly He deserves the honor. God will see to it before the awful judgments fall upon the world, that men will find absolutely no excuse for rejecting His dear Son.

"And they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with demons, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them." Is that not what is happening today? Are they not bringing to the famous evangelists all those who are sick of various diseases and torments? Are they not being cured? Oh, I praise God that the same mighty works are being wrought today as in the beginning.

That is why Paul wrote to us, saying, "*Rejoice if Christ is preached, whether of good will or of envy.*" Whatever the motive of the preacher may be; if he preaches Christ, let us rejoice. If he calls the attention of the people to Jesus Christ, even by announcing only part of the Gospel; we ought to rejoice. When we consider that today ministers stand in their pulpits and blaspheme God, His Son, and His Word; they belittle the atonement and set aside the inspiration of the scriptures; they deny the Deity of Jesus Christ and His resurrection. When we know that so-called Christian ministers blasphemously insult and reject the Holy Spirit, we should be glad that there are some who still hold fast to the fundamentals and preach Christ sufficiently to get men saved and healed in body.

"And there followed great multitudes." He fed as many as 14,000 at one meeting. This explains why large companies gather to hear some men today. That was a picture of the end time. God's infinite grace is back of it all to bring this wicked age face-to-face with the mighty Redeemer, Savior, and Physician before the end comes. This explains the phenomenal success of some world-famed evangelists today. They preach Christ as the Savior from sin, sickness, and hell, in view of the soon coming of Him whose right it is to reign. God seems to wink at some of the methods which they use, methods that more spiritual workers could not employ. He takes advantage of every providence to attract a lost world to His dear Son that men may be saved

and escape the terrible things that are about to envelope this world. Oh, wondrous grace! Oh, boundless love!

There are many false prophets and false remedies and false healers everywhere. It is even being announced that within this very year the world's emancipator will arise. Do you wonder that God is moving men to sound out the Name of Jesus, the only Name that can save and heal? Jesus only is the true Emancipator. He will not arise from somewhere; He will come from heaven, flashing forth like the lightning. *"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God"* [2Th.1:7-8].

A NEW PROGRAM IN DISGUISE

Jesus did not always address large gatherings. Now and then He spoke to a select company, invariably very small. Near the end of His career, He intimated a different order of things. What did Jesus mean by *"My Church?"* [Mat.16:18 and 18:17]. Mary and Martha [Luk.10:38-42] are figures of 2 grades of believers in evidence today. What is the meaning of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, learning His word? A later visit with Martha and Mary [Joh.12:1-9] (not in Martha's house, however, as in the other cases), plainly pictures the heavenly banquet, which we hope soon to enjoy.

Likewise, there are those here now, who preach, not alone the gospel of the Kingdom of God on earth, or Christ's reign with Israel over the nations, but they also preach the gospel of *"His heavenly Kingdom"* [2Ti.4:18], *"the high (upward) calling of God"* [Phi.3:14], *"the gospel of the glory"* [1Ti.1:11 RV]. They expect to meet the Lord *"in the air"* and sit with Him on His *"throne set in heaven"* [Rev.4:1-2]. Some saints do not expect to return from heaven and sit on a throne in Jerusalem in Palestine. They hope to occupy *"the new Jerusalem"* [Rev.3:12], and reign over the earth, through other believers who will be under them in Christ.

Accordingly, the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fullness brings far more than salvation from sin and healing for the body. It brings more than the Pentecostal anointing and power from on high. Yes, it means far more than receiving the various gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, gifts of healings, working of miracles, etc.

None of these or all of them together is the sufficient test of growth in grace, of the knowledge of God, and of deep spirituality. Nor will such saints obtain the highest reward. Suffering with Christ is the price of rulership.

When the Latter Rain fell and people were being filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues, it was thought that they were then perfect and full grown. We supposed that we had reached the pinnacle of the possibilities of grace. Alas! Very soon, we found that although we were endued with power from on high, we were only babes in Christ. We had only received a new spring suit (proof of Christ's resurrection) and were dressed up to go to school. We were ready for the primary department and began to take lessons from our heavenly Tutor, the Holy Spirit. Oh, glory to God! A deep longing was awakened in some of us to know the Scriptures and to thereby *"grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord"* [2Pe.3:18].

As we went on to study the Word, we saw that so it was in the beginning of this age. First, many people were filled with the Spirit, mighty miracles were wrought, and all were looking for the Lord to return and set up His kingdom. But there came a radical change in the great panorama. Another scene, hitherto unknown, was soon enacted. Another group of actors were brought upon the stage. The Great Director arrested a man enroute to Damascus, called him aside for a private course of training, and set him on the stage as the chief actor with an

entirely new play. That man was Saul of Tarsus, "*the chief of sinners*," who afterward was known as Paul the "*chiefest apostle*."

Therefore, that same Paul commenced to teach that Christ is the Head of His Body, which is the Church, and that the Church is the fullness of Christ and that Christ and the Church "*fill all things*." He taught that in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and that God Almighty dwells in His people by the Holy Spirit during this age.

Then we saw that the Holy Spirit was given to us to "*guide us into all the truth and show us things to come*" [Joh.16:13]. The Holy Spirit was given to unfold unto us the Word of God that we might "*grow up into Christ in all things*" [Eph.4:15] because God had planned that a company of saints should constitute the Bride of the Lamb. Before there could be this Bride there must be a Body, just as in the case of Adam and Eve. Eve was a rib "*builded*" out of Adam's side. A deep sleep came on Adam and God performed the first operation that was ever performed on a human being. He took a rib out of Adam's side and builded that rib into a woman. That woman became Adam's wife, his bride. I want you to notice that God did not constitute Adam's whole body a wife. He just used a rib.

People are teaching that the whole Church is the Bride of Christ. If that figure back there means anything, it contradicts such teaching. Note another illustration from the Word, which shows that the whole Church is not the Bride of Christ. In a family are husband and wife, father and mother, and children. A large family has many children. Here is a man that is looking for a throne. He is also looking for a wife; for a king needs a queen. Does he marry all the girls in that family? No; one at a time is enough for him. They are all in the family, one family; but he selects one woman out of that family and she becomes his bride. Just so, here is "*the family of God, the household of God, the household of faith*." Jesus Christ is going to choose a company that will constitute His Bride; but He will not marry the whole family of God. Do you see how sensible this is? It is scriptural; that is why it is sensible. Not all the children in a family are of marriageable age. Sometimes they lack wifehood qualifications, even though they are old enough. It is just like that in God's family. Jesus will certainly not marry a babe. None that are loose in their habits, selfish in their living, worldly or carnal in their walk, cold and distant toward Him in their fellowship, and critical in their spirit toward other saints need expect to be in the bridehood of the Lamb. Most surely they will be disappointed, for Christ will marry a chaste virgin [2Co.11].

Furthermore, the Church, the Body of Christ, has a different destination than the citizens of the Kingdom on earth. Mark that. Put that down on your tablet. The citizens of the earthly Kingdom of God will dwell on the earth. To them, God has promised "*a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*" [2Pe.3:13]. But the citizens of the Church shall dwell on high. They shall enjoy the "*new heaven*," of which "*the New Jerusalem*" will be the capital city. Ours is "*a high calling* (the upward calling) *of God in Christ Jesus*" [Phi.3:14]. That is, we are called to go up; we are not called to stay on the earth. That is why in the writings of Peter and James, they never speak of the translation of the saints nor of the glory on high. They wrote especially to people who shall dwell on earth. They never spoke of our union with Christ or of our wealth in Him. They wrote nothing of bridal hopes or relationships. Confusion reigns in Bible study where these facts are not observed.

My friends, this will explain to you why there are so many companies of believers on earth and they do not seem to agree and get along well together. It is something like an incident of which I heard:

A widower with several children wedded a widow who had several children. To this newly married couple, other children were born. One day the wife exclaimed very excitedly, "Husband, your children and my children are quarreling with our children."

That is the way it is in Christendom. There are different sets or grades of children. Yet, they all belong to the same great family, "*the household of God*." It seems like the saints fight and bite one another and that they cannot agree. They fail to see eye to eye. James said, "*Brethren, these things ought not so to be*." But the Holy Spirit made Paul to know that so it would be; because some will not seek the Lord with all their heart.

I want to tell you that the people that really are filled with the Holy Spirit, and under His tutorage, fill up on the Word of God, according to Paul's doctrine. These people understand all other grades of Christian experience because they are seated in the heavenlies and believe it. If you want to look all over the city and see all the sky scrapers and the manufacturing plants of Kansas City, just get in an airplane and go up a few hundred feet and look down. Well, that is just the way it is in this spiritual realm. Some saints have learned by Paul's writings how they are seated in the heavenlies in Christ. By faith, they accept it.

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances." [Col.2:20]

If ye be raised with Christ, why as though living on earth are ye subject to ordinances? That implies that we are not living on earth, we are living in heaven; raised up and seated together with Christ Jesus in the heavenlies. We look at things as God looks at them. We are not there in our bodies; we are there in our spirit by faith. Instead of sitting down here and looking up, we are up there looking down and we understand what is going on. "*He that is spiritual judgeth (discerneth) all things*" [1Co.2:15].

I want you to know that I understand something of what is going on in Christendom. As far as this great world of Christianity is concerned I am little and unknown, but I know what is going on. I understand the signs of the times and by the Bible I am able to tell what is coming to pass and just about when it is going to come to pass. That is the profit now of being seated in the heavenlies. It is wonderful when we grow up into Christ and are led by the Spirit of God and get our teaching and training from this Book.

I say, it is wonderful how we can locate other Christian people. We classify them instinctively. Their "speech betrayeth them." We are not with them very long or read much of their writings until we know in what class they belong; we cannot help ourselves. Discernment is instinctive. A rose smells differently from a lilac and both of them differently from a potato blossom; you cannot help noting the difference. I say it humbly not critically; men in the Lot class cannot understand us. Why not? Because they live on too low a plane. They reject the Gift of the Spirit, or if they receive Him they fail to walk in the Spirit and conform to God's Word. They do not "*grow up into Him (Christ) in all things*" [Eph.4:15].

Some even admit that they are still babes in Christ, as if that were humility; whereas, the Word rebukes those who are always babes and have need of milk when they ought to be teachers [Heb.5:12-14]. "*Everyone that useth milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe*" even though he claims to be a teacher. It is to be feared that the land abounds with ministers who are yet only prattling babes. They ought to be what they are supposed to be, "teachers"; but because they are only milk-bottle Christians, "*they have need that one teach them what are the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God*" [Heb.5:12]. That is, they need milk instead of solid food. What a shame!

Such believers are so ignorant of the truth that they do not know that they are infants; or they refuse to yield absolutely, unconditionally to the Spirit of God. They turn away from the Word when they read it or hear it. When we surrender absolutely to God and let the Spirit fully have His way in our lives then He begins to lift us up and illuminate our minds. As we continue to yield to Him He leads us on. The higher up in the scale we go the smaller our company; until finally it culminates in Jesus Christ and His Bride. Jesus will have the highest place; yet there is a company of believers, joined so closely with Him (His Bride) who will share all His glory. They are the ones that understand what is going on now on the earth. It is just wonderful, friends. We need to be charitable towards people that do not see what we see. We need to pray for them. We see things that the majority of Christians do not see. God has not revealed it to them. Often they are to blame, because when He has revealed light to them they refuse to walk in it. If He gives you a ray of light today and you turn away from it, you probably will not get another ray of light tomorrow because each ray of light prepares for another step. I am so glad that God has revealed all His truth to us and we can preach the same gospel that the Kingdom gospelizers preach, but far more. We believe in the fundamentals. We agree with the fundamentalists. We have no fault to find with Doctor Torrey, the Plymouth Brethren, or the Moody Institute as to foundational truth: They preach the grace of God as to the fundamentals, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection. We agree with them; but we go way beyond all those things. Every house has a superstructure as well as a foundation. We take in more and give out more. The building must be complete and perfect. We ought to be glad that God has shown us more, not be mad at them, but glad that God has done it; Praise the Lord!

Finally, beloved...

To **which company do you belong?** Are you chiefly interested in the things of the Kingdom on earth or in the heavenly Kingdom?

What are **your aspirations?** Do you want to do and see big things accomplished here or know and have fellowship with the Big Man in the glory? Which do you love most?

What is **your supreme desire?** Do you want to see many Christians or to see Christ?

What is **your highest ambition?** Do you want to win men to Christ now or to gain Christ as your exceeding great reward in glory?

What is **your eternal hope?** Do you want to be saved from hell or to dwell with Christ in glory? To be with the vast throng who shall wave palms of victory or with a smaller group who shall wear crowns of gold? Do you long only to stand before the throne in heaven or are you yearning to sit with the King of the ages and reign as His queen conjointly with Him forever?

YOU MAY HAVE YOUR CHOICE, MY BROTHER.
AT THE DEPOT TAKE A STAND.
YOU MAY REIGN ON EARTH WITH JACOB,
OR WITH CHRIST IN GLORY LAND.
CHOOSE THIS DAY THE HIGHEST CALLING;
CHOOSE TO BEAR THE HEAVENLY BRAND.