

The Bible Notebook

THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Volume 1

A Verse by Verse Study

By

Johnny L. Sanders, D. Min.

DEDICATION

To

Charles Roberts

Pastor, Teacher, Counselor

&

My friend

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

TITLE

The Divine Author did not give us a title for this book. At various times different people have given it various titles. Among them are: (1) Acts; (2) The Book of Acts; (3) The Acts of the Apostles; and (4) The Acts of the Holy Spirit. As the various titles imply, what we have here is a history of the acts of the Apostles in the power of and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

AUTHOR

Luke, the Gentile physician, wrote both the Gospel According to Luke and The Book of Acts. A brief look at the introduction to both books leaves little doubt as to the author of both the Gospel which bears his name, and the history which chronicles the implementation of the Great Commission in the decades following the death of Christ. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Luke gives us an account of the phenomenal spread of the Gospel, against all odds, from humble beginnings in a remote part of the Roman Empire to a movement that threatened to turn the world upside down for Jesus Christ.

Like all Scripture, the Book of Acts was the product of the mind of God. The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author. At the same time the mind, training, attitude of the human author are clearly revealed. The serious student of the Word may glean a wealth of information about the author from his study of the Scripture.

Luke employed careful research, shared his own observations, and wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He used technical medical terms, as one would expect. He also showed a remarkable knowledge of the politics and religion of the first century. Luke used nautical terms freely and comfortably (though, as some have observed, from the standpoint of a landlubber). His record of the missionary journeys of Paul and his account of the voyage from Caesarea to Rome provide modern students with a good understanding of ancient shipping in that part of the world. Modern discoveries and research have confirmed the authenticity of Luke's record. This is the Book of History in the New Testament, and Luke was chosen by the Lord to write it.

Several years ago I entered a health club and discovered that a rather heated debate was in progress. It was during the time that Iranians were holding American hostages in the American embassy in Teheran. A man, whom I discovered was head of the history department of a state university, had upset several of the men in the club. As I entered, an insurance agent who did some lay-preaching said, "Here's a preacher, Let's ask him." He turned to the first man and said, "Tell him what you said."

With an air of authority the historian launched his attack, “I said you cannot blame the Muslims for their attitude (toward Americans and toward Christians) because as far as they are concerned Christ may not have existed. Can you name one first century historian who mentioned the name of Christ?”

I was caught up in someone else’s debate and I would have preferred to stay out of it because more heat was been focused on the subject than light. Nevertheless, I said, “Yes, I can.” He was enjoying every minute of it. “Name them” he gleefully demanded.

I responded by naming Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He snapped back, “They are not historians; they are gospel writers! Can you name any historian?” I said, “Yes, I can.”

“Name them!”, he demanded. “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John” I repeated. By now he was becoming more arrogant in informing me that they were not historians but gospel writers. I assured him what I was not about to concede this point. The Gospel writers were Christian historians.

Luke’s credentials as an historians have been irrefutably established. The history teacher seemed to have been unaware of certain facts. In the first place, Muslims believe that Jesus Christ lived and that He was a great prophet. But they reject Him as Savior. In the second place, he seemed unaware of the fact that Roman historians, Tacitus and Suetonius referred to Christ (Christus) and the Jewish historian, Josephus, mentions Him. Some historian!

Luke seemed to pay special attention to certain things as he wrote. The role of women in the early church was noted with admiration by the physician. Characteristically, he noted the spiritual atmosphere of the early church (joy, praise, courage, sharing, etc.). He also gave frequent progress reports on the spread of the Gospel which may be studied against the backdrop of the Lord’s words in 1:8 (19:20 is an example).

PURPOSE

Acts is the only New Testament book “designed as a historical and organic connection between the gospels and the epistles. Acts is a unique bridge spanning the gap between the ministry of Christ on earth and the presence of his churches throughout the Roman Empire as they continue what he began” [Eddleman, H. Leo, An Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Acts, after this, HLE].

Luke traces the phenomenal spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem, throughout Judea, Samaria and throughout a major part of the Roman Empire in the decades following the death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. The primary purpose in tracing the spread of Christianity during that period was to “confirm the adequacy, unique power, divine origin, and universality of Christianity as a world religion” [HLE].

Many modern interpreters seem to believe Luke wrote Acts to show how the Gospel overcame racial and ethnic barriers and achieve social victories. This writer is persuaded that Luke recorded spiritual victories. Other victories were in a sense a by-product of these. In one of his

progress reports, Luke wrote, “The Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved” (2:47b). Even though his primary concern was the salvation of men’s souls, Luke is careful to record the social concern and compassion that characterized early believers, either as a secondary purpose, or to show the quality of the new life in Christ and the implementation of the teachings of Christ.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF ACTS

INTRODUCTION - 1:1-5

I. THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY, ACTS 1:6 - 5:16.

A. Foundation and Preparation for Christianity, 1:6-26.

1. Jesus’s final appearance, instructions, ascension, 1:6-9.
2. His immanent return promised, 1:10-11.
3. Business meeting called to elect a replacement for Judas Twelve, 1:12-26.

B. The Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, 2:1-4.

1. Believers together in one place with one accord (united in prayer), 2:1.
2. Sound of a rushing mighty wind, 2:2.
3. Cloven tongues like fire resting on each one, 2:3.
4. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, 2:4.

C. The Spread of the Gospel at Pentecost, 2:5-36.

1. Jews from some seventeen countries heard the Gospel, each in his own native tongue, 2:5-13.
2. Peter answered charges and delivered a powerful defense of the Gospel, 2:14-36.
 - a. Summary of life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, 2:14-36.
 - b. Jesus declared to be Lord and Christ, 2:36.

D. Some Results of the Initial Proclamation of the Gospel, 2:37-47.

1. They asked, "What shall we do?", 2:37.
2. "Repent (all of you) and be baptized (each of you) in the name of Jesus Christ," 2:38.
3. About 3,000 souls were added unto the church, 2:39-41.
4. Realization of Christian fellowship and growth through prayer, 2:42.
5. Many signs and wonders, 2:43.
6. Completely selfless, sharing fellowship, 2:44-46.
7. Souls won daily, 2:47.

E. Peter and John Became Central Figures In the Early Spread of the Gospel, 3:1-4:31.

1. Healing of the lame man provided an opportunity to witness, 3:1-26.
2. Peter and John were thrown into prison by the Sadducees for preaching the Resurrection, 4:1-4.
3. Forced to appear before religious leaders, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and charged them with the crucifixion and again proclaimed the Resurrection, 4:5-12.
4. They were threatened and charged not to preach again about Jesus or the Resurrection, 4:13-18.
5. The Holy Spirit gave believers great courage, 4:19-31.

F. Unity and Cooperation Contributed to the Initial Spread of Christianity, 4:32 - 5:16.

1. Christian love led believers to share all they possessed with those in need, 4:32-35.
2. Barnabas became a dynamic example for the early church, 4:36-37.
3. Ananias and Saphira became hypocrites and lied to the Holy Spirit, 5:1-11.
4. Great signs and wonders manifested the power of the Lord, 5:12-16.

II. CHRISTIANITY SPREADS IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION, 5:17 - 8:40.

A. Opposition by Sadducees and Pharisees, 5:17-42.

1. Peter and John jailed, released by an angel, 5:17-25.
 2. They were arrested again and warned against preaching again, 5:26-28.
 3. They determined to obey God rather than man, 5:29-32.
 4. Gamaliel's advice, 5:33-41.
 5. Peter and John rejoiced in suffering for Christ. 5:42.
- B. Trouble in the Church Was Avoided by Spirit-Led Diplomacy, 6:1-7.
1. A need arose within the church.
 2. Seven men of good report and filled with the Holy Spirit were elected to meet the need.
- C. The Opposition Led to the First Christian Martyr, 6:8 - 7:60.
1. Stephen's preaching aroused Pharisees, 6:8-15.
 2. A dynamic drama of redemption (Stephen's defense), 7:1-53.
 3. Stephen died for the Lord (setting a pattern that would be followed by countless others), 7:54-60.
- D. Persecution Contributed to the Phenomenal Growth Of the Early Church, 8:1-40.
1. Saints in Jerusalem were scattered by persecution under the leadership of Saul of Tarsus, 8:1-4.
 - a. He consented to the death of Stephen.
 - b. He persecuted Christians with fanatical zeal.
 2. Philip, the deacon, went on a witnessing crusade, 8:5-40.
 - a. His witness in Samaria, 8:5f.
 - b. His witness to the Ethiopian, 8:26-39.
 - c. His witness in the coastal regions, 8:40.

III. THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY DURING THE TRANSITIONAL YEARS, Chs. 9-12.

A. The Leader of the Persecution Was Saved and Called to Be a Special Witness, 9:1-31.

1. Paul's conversion, 9:1-9.
 - a. The supernatural elements:
 - (1) A great light from Heaven.
 - (2) An audible voice.
 - (3) Jesus in person.
 - b. The human elements:
 - (1) Paul saw and heard.
 - (2) He repented.
 - (3) He was temporarily blinded.
2. Paul was instructed by Ananias in Damascus, 9:10-19.
3. He immediately became a powerful preacher, 9:20-22.
4. He took time to prepare himself for the mission to which he was called (Gal. 1:15-18).
5. Paul went to Jerusalem where Barnabas persuaded the disciples to accept him, 9:24-29.
6. He then returned to his old home in Tarsus, 9:30-31.

B. The Spread of Christianity under Peter's Ministry, 9:32 - 11:18.

1. Peter's ministry in Judea, 9:32-43.
2. Peter won the household of Cornelius, 10:1-48.
 - a. Preparation of Cornelius for his being won to faith in Christ, 10:1-6.
 - b. Preparation of Peter for winning Cornelius, 10:7-33.
 - c. Peter's message to Cornelius, 10:34-43.
 - d. The response, 10:44-48.
3. Peter's ministry to Gentiles challenged, 11:1-18
 - a. Peter reported to believers in Jerusalem.
 - b. They concluded that God had granted unto the Gentiles "repentance unto life."

C. The Explosive Growth of Christianity Led to the Establishment of a Dynamic Church in Antioch of Syria, 11:19-30.

1. Its membership was both Jew and Gentile, 11:19-21.
2. The ministry of Barnabas, 11:22-24.
3. The ministry of Barnabas and Saul, 11:25-26.
4. They sent relief to the saints in Judea, 11:27-30.

D. THE GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY OPPOSED BY THE KING, 12:1-25.

1. Herod killed James (brother of John) and put his mark on Peter, 12:1-4.
2. Peter miraculously freed from prison in answer to prayer, 12:5-19.
3. Herod's sacrilege and destruction, 12:20-23.
4. Add efforts to destroy the church only contributed to its incredible growth, 12:24-25.

IV. THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL ON PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY, 13:1-14:28.

A. Call and Consecration of the Missionaries, 13:1-3.

B. The Gospel Proclaimed By Paul and Barnabas, 13:4-14:21a.

1. In Cyprus, 13:4-13a. (Elymas blinded).
2. In Perga of Pamphilia, 13:13b (John Mark turned back).
3. In Antioch of Pisidia, 13:14-15 (Paul's great sermon).
4. In Iconium, 13:52-14:6.
5. In Lystra, 14:7-20a (Paul stoned after they tried to worship him as a god).
6. In Lystra, 14:20b-21a.

C. The Return to Antioch of Syria, 14:21b-28.

V. A CONTROVERSIAL RESOLVED AT THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE, 15:1-35.

A. The Controversy Arose When Some Jews Insisted that Circumcision Was Essential to Salvation, 15:1.

B. The Controversy Was Transferred to Jerusalem, 15:2-6.

1. At issue was the adequacy of grace (Gal. 2, 15:2).
2. The question arose because of Gentiles who were coming into the church, 15:3.
3. The church at Antioch sent representatives to Jerusalem because Jews from Jerusalem had raised the issue, 15:4-6.

C. The Conference in Jerusalem, 15:7-21.

1. Peter's address, 15:7-11.
2. Barnabas and Paul spoke to the conference, 15:12.
3. James (bro. of Jesus) offers recommendations, 15:13-21.
4. James's recommendations accepted and sent to the church at Antioch, 15:22-35.

VI. SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL DURING A SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY, 15:36-18:22.

A. The Spread of the Gospel from Antioch of Syria to Macedonia, 15:36-17:14.

1. Paul and Barnabas separated after dispute of John Mark, 15:36-39.
 - a. Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus.
 - b. Paul chose Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia.
2. Paul and Silas revisit churches established on the first missionary journey, 15:40-16:5.
 - a. At Lystra Paul chooses Timothy to join them in their mission work.
 - b. Paul circumcised Timothy, a half Jew, because of the Jews they were trying to reach.
(He does not believe circumcision (or the law) is essential to salvation.)
 - c. The churches (1) were strengthened in faith, and (2) increased in number daily.
3. The call to spread the Gospel in Europe, 16:6-10
 - a. They were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach in the province of Asia.
 - b. They were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to go to Bithynia.
 - c. Paul received a vision of a man from Macedonia pleading for help us."
4. The beginning of Christianity in Philippi, 16:11-40.

- a. Paul's first convert in Europe (Lydia), 16:11-15.
 - b. Paul and Silas thrown into jail after casting evil spirit from a girl, 16:16-24.
 - c. Philippian jailer won to Christ after an earthquake the prison doors, 16:25-34.
 - d. Paul used his Roman citizenship to demand fair treatment, 16:35-40.
5. The spread of the Gospel to Thessalonica, 17:1-9.
 - a. Some of the Jews and a number of Greeks were saved.
 - b. The opposition was very intense, vehement, violent.
 6. The Gospel received in Berea, 17:10-13.
 - a. The people searched the Scriptures daily.
 - b. Many believed, including a good number of Greeks of substance and position.
 - c. Jews from Thessalonica came down to Berea and stirred up opposition to Paul.
 7. Paul left for Athens but Timothy and Silas remained in Berea for a time, 17:14.
- B. The Beginning and Development of Christianity in Greece, 17:15-18:17.
1. Paul's escorts returned to Berea, Silas and Timothy asked to go to Athens, 17:15.
(They probably did go but Paul sent again to Macedonia.)
 2. The preaching of the Gospel in a city that boasted of its religion, (Athens), 17:16-34.
 - a. Paul reasoned in the Synagogue, 17:16-17a.
 - b. He witnessed in the market place, 17:17b-18.
 - c. Paul was given an opportunity to address the men of the city from Mars Hill.
 - (1). Paul preached his famous sermon, "To an Unknown God", on Mars Hill.
 - (2). He declared God to be Sovereign, Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.
 - d. Results of the message, 17:32-34 (No church was established at Athens at this time).
 3. The preaching of the Gospel in Corinth, 18:1-17.
 - a. The church established, 18:1-11.
 - (1) Paul worked with Aquilla and Priscilla, 18:1-3.
 - (2) He preached in the synagogue, 18:4.
 - (3) Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, 18:5.
 - (4) Paul continued in Corinth about eighteen months, 18:6-11.

b. Opposition from the Jews, 18:12-17.

- (1) Paul brought before Gallio, 18:12.
- (2) He was charged with persuading people to worship contrary to the law, 18:13.
- (3) Gallio drives the Jews out, 18:14-17.

4. Paul returned to Antioch of Syria, 18:18-22.

NOTE: The two letters to the Thessalonians were probably written during this 18 month stay in Corinth.

VII. THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL ON A THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY, 18:23-21:17.

A. The spread of Christianity from Antioch to Ephesus, 18:23-19:41.

1. Paul passed through Galatia and Phrygia establishing the disciples, 18:23.

2. Christian beginnings at Ephesus, 18:24-19:41.

a. The ministry of Apollos, 18:24-28.

- (1) This eloquent Alexandrian Jew knew only the baptism of John.
- (2) With guidance from Aquilla and Priscilla he accepted Christ and became a dynamic preacher of the Gospel.

b. Paul's witness to the twelve who did not understand grace, 19:1-7.

- (1) These disciples of John's baptism did not know that the Holy Spirit had come.
- (2) They heard the Gospel, received Jesus, and the Holy Spirit "came on them."
(They spoke with tongues and prophesied (Third ref. in Acts to use of tongues.)

c. Paul's ministry in the synagogue, 19:8.

d. He was forced to leave the synagogue and teach in the school of Tyrannus (for about two years), 19:9-10.

e. "Special" miracles performed, 19:11-12.

f. Jesus Christ won an overwhelming victory over Satan and the occult, 19:13-20.

- (1) Jewish exorcists became victims of an evil spirit.
- (2) Many in the "magic arts" repented and brought their books and burned them.

- g. Paul's future plans include a visit to Rome, 19:21-22.
- h. The riot instigated by a silversmith, 19:23-41.

NOTE: 1 Corinthians was probably written during the stay at Ephesus.

B. The Spread of the Gospel from Ephesus to Macedonia, 20:1-2.

- 1. Ministry in Troas (Read 2I Cor. 2:12-13).
- 2. Ministry in Macedonia (See 2I Cor. 2:13b).

NOTE: 2 Corinthians written about this time. Galatians was written in Ephesus or shortly after Paul left for Macedonia. The Epistle to the Romans was written during this time.

C. The Propagation of the Gospel Continues from Corinth to Jerusalem, 20:3-21:17.

- 1. Through Macedonia and Troas, 20:3-12.
 - a. By this time Christians were meeting on the first day of the week to worship, vs. 7.
 - b. Eutychus raised from death.
- 2. From Troas to Miletus, 20:13-16.
- 3. Paul's farewell address at Miletus, 20:17-38.
- 4. Warnings at Tyre and Caesarea, 21:1-14.
- 5. Paul reached Jerusalem and the disciples rejoiced in the news of victories, 21:15-17.

VIII. THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL DURING PAUL'S PRISON MINISTRY IN ROME, 23:31-28:15.

A. Paul in Jerusalem, 21:18-23:30.

- 1. He renewed fellowship with leaders in the Jerusalem church, 21:18-26.
 - a. He reported on his mission work.
 - b. Wheels of persecution set into motion.
- 2. His experience with the temple mob, 21:27-22:30

- a. Rescued by the chief Roman captain, 21:33f.
 - b. Defense before the chief captain, 21:37f.
 - c. His defense before the Jews, 21:40-22:21 (In Hebrew).
 - d. Cry for blood at mention of Gentiles, 22:22-24.
 - e. He took advantage of his Roman citizenship, 22:25-30.
- 3. Paul before the Sanhedrin, 23:1-10.
 - 4. The Lord cheers Paul, assuring him he will go to Rome, 23:11.
 - 5. Paul escapes murder plot, 23:12-30.
- B. The Spread of Christianity at Caesarea and on the Journey to Rome, 23:31-28:15.
- 1. Witness at Caesarea, 23:31-26:32.
 - a. Paul before Felix, 23:31-24:27.
 - b. Paul before Festus, 25:1-22.
 - c. Paul before Agrippa, 25:23-26:32.
 - 2. On the voyage to Rome, 27:1-28:15.
 - a. From Caesarea to Fair Havens, 27:1-8.
 - b. Paul's warning of danger, 27:9-13.
 - c. Storm at sea, 27:14-41.
 - d. The watchcare of God at Melita, 27:42-28:10
 - e. The journey completed (arrival in Rome), 28:11-15.
 - 3. Two years as a prisoner at Rome, 28:16-31.

NOTE: See Epistles: Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy.

"Preaching and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness..."

ACTS VERSE BY VERSE

INTRODUCTION - 1:1-5

1:1 - THE FIRST NARRATIVE. *“I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach...”* The word “narrative” (treatise in KJV) is used here of an historical record and it denotes the narrative contents of a work like this. The former narrative refers to the Gospel According to Luke, where the Paul’s companion carefully researched all of which he wrote (see Luke 1:1-3). He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Scripture, but he had carefully researched the material.

THEOPHILUS. The word means loved by God or lover of God. It may refer to a “friend of God.” Some think the Book of Acts is addressed in a general way to the lover of God, or to all God-lovers of all ages. Others have suggested that Theophilus may have been a Roman official. He had a Greek name and this suggests that he was a Gentile convert. Regardless of whether the Book was addressed initially to one God-lover or to all God-lovers, the purpose was to set forth a record of the spread of the Gospel for all believers. It is the opinion of this writer that Theophilus was a Gentile convert and an acquaintance of Luke.

BEGAN. This is a favorite word of Luke, used 31 times in the Gospel and 10 times in Acts. The Gospel According to Luke was a record of what Jesus began to do and teach. The Book of Acts is a record of what His disciples, moved by the Holy Spirit, began to do and teach.

TO DO AND TEACH. It was said of the Pharisees, “they say and do not” (Matt. 23:3). The Christian must both say (teach) and do. His works must support his message. Furthermore, what those leaders did back then became the foundation upon which others would continue to build, from generation to generation, and from century to century.

1:2 - UNTIL THE DAY WHEN HE WAS TAKEN UP. *“(U)ntil the day He was taken up, after He had given orders through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.”* Acts takes up where the Gospel of Luke leaves off. In Luke, we read: “Then He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them. And while He was blessing them, He left them and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51).

THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. Jesus’ work on earth was done in the power of, and under the direction of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:18). The Book of Acts is the Book of History in the New Testament. In fact, an appropriate name for it would be The Acts of the Holy Spirit. The student of the Word would do well to make that title the backdrop against which he reads each narrative, follows each missionary venture, and considers each doctrinal issue.

THE APOSTLES. The word translated apostles means “ones sent out.” The word corresponds to the modern word missionary. He chose them to send them out on a mission. We must bear in mind the fact that the Lord commissioned them, sent His Holy Spirit to empower and guide them, and He endowed them with apostolic power, as Paul’s preaching and ministry testify.

1:3 - AFTER HE HAD SUFFERED. *“After He had suffered, He also presented Himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”* This holds before us “The Passion of Jesus Christ”. He suffered, bled, and died for our sins. His vicarious sacrifice lies at the root of all Christian faith and service. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah (see Luke 24:46).

PRESENTED HIMSELF ALIVE. See 9:41, where Peter “presented her (Dorcas) alive.” Great emphasis is placed on the Resurrection in the Book of Acts. The Resurrection inspired and stimulated the disciples and made believers of men and women as nothing else ever could have.

The world over which Satan reigns as prince knows how to place unprepared Christians at a disadvantage, and to keep them there. He attacks believers, using information which the world accepts as scientific, and therefore unimpeachable and empirical. What the average non-believer, under the influence of the devil, is not prepared to do is answer the same kind of charges they make. For example, let the cynic prove that Jesus was not raised from the dead. The evidence was so compelling that the most brilliant religionists of the day could do nothing to stop the spread of the Gospel.

BY MANY CONVINCING PROOFS. The word translated proofs is an unusual word, used nowhere else in the NT. It means “a sure sign or token.” The fact of the Resurrection is irrefutably established by numerous signs and testimonies. Every effort was made in the Scripture to place the fact of the Resurrection beyond reasonable doubt. Paul wrote, “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:17).

APPEARING TO THEM. The verb, found only here in the NT, means to be seen with the eyes. There were many eye-witnesses to the Resurrection. He appeared to various disciples over a period of forty days, many of whom were still alive when this was written. Their testimony has withstood the tests of time and the attacks of sceptics, atheists, and agnostics for two thousand years.

SPEAKING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. We have no way of knowing what Jesus said, but we assume He gave them specific instructions as well as some general instructions and reminders. Emphasis must have been placed on His return as well as the Great Commission.

1:4 - TOGETHER WITH THEM. *“While He was together with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father’s promise. “This,” [He said, “is what] you heard from Me...”* They were gathered together in a compact group, showing the close communion between the risen Lord and His disciples.

HE COMMANDED THEM. He charged them: (1) not to leave Jerusalem, AND (2) to wait for the promise of the Father (the coming of the Holy Spirit). This is a reminder since He had clearly taught them this. With the supreme moment in the history of mankind, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, fresh on their minds, Jesus points to the next great event, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

1:5 - YOU WILL BE BAPTIZED. “...*For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*” As promised in three Gospel accounts, believers would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, in contrast to the baptism of John the Baptist. The forerunner of our Lord said, “I didn’t know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The One you see the Spirit descending and resting on—He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit’” (John 1:33. See also, Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16.

NOT MANY DAYS FROM NOW. Actually, it was ten days. Pentecost was fifty days after Passover and Jesus appeared over a period of forty days.

Pentecost was as much a part of the plan of God for man as the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. Various terminology is used with reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and therein lies some of the confusion about the Holy Spirit. Some believe they must “pray through” to receive the Holy Spirit, some believe they receive “It” as a second blessing, and still others believe they can “get It” or “get Him” from time to time, which implies that they can lose Him. To some, phenomenal manifestations (tongues, for example) must accompany the gift or baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Many sincere believers have prayed for “another Pentecost” for our day, but Pentecost was a once for all gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers. He came at Pentecost to indwell all believers and when one is saved today he or she receives salvation by the grace of our Heavenly Father, through faith in His only begotten Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer is baptized with (indwelt by) the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation, and he or she needs to be filled daily with the Spirit.

I. THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTIANITY, 1:6 - 5:16.

A. Foundation and Preparation for Christianity, 1:6-26.

1:6 - TOGETHER. “*So when they had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, at this time are You restoring the kingdom to Israel?”*” Instead of facing the main issue, (the promise of the Father) they seized on the words “not many days hence” and applied them to their own preconceived ideas about an earthly kingdom and mundane glory. The language implies that this is a different time from that of 1:4. If there are two separate gatherings, this is the one recorded in Luke 24:50, the appearance immediately prior to the Ascension.

RESTORING THE KINGDOM. The Jews had long expected a military/political messiah who

would restore the kingdom of David. After three years with Jesus they should have known better than to ask this question, but they seem to have had a mental and spiritual relapse. Those disciples jumped to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit would come to promote the restoration of national Israel.

1:7 - NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW. *“He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority” (Acts 1:7).* The Savior discouraged useless speculation and empty curiosity about His eschatological plans. There were some things even God the Son did not know while on earth (Mark 13:32). This does not prohibit the sincere study of Scripture related to future events. In fact, a major part of the New Testament deals with end-time events and issues. Our study of those things should promote unity, harmony, and peace of mind rather than divisions, strife, and doubt.

TIMES. The Greek word (*chronos*) is specifically a chronological term. It denotes time as we know it, often meaning a period of considerable duration.

PERIODS. This word (*kairus*) denotes a definite period of time. It means more than the four seasons of the year. The word refers to eras, ages, or a defined epoch. The last of these began with the advent of Jesus Christ. See Hebrews 1:1-2, where the coming of Christ is the beginning of the end. *Kairus* is a definite and fixed period of time, denoting God’s intentional plan for the redeemed - and for the unredeemed.

Some people interpreted this to mean that Jesus is through with national Israel. To others, Israel figures very prominently in God’s end time plans. The simple fact is, this passage does not give us enough information to dogmatize either position. Those who knew him can possibly still hear the late Adrian Rogers saying, “I’m dogmatic, but I’m not bull-dogmatic!” Sadly, there are many sincere believers who are bull-dogmatic when it comes to end-time events and activities - and you had better agree with them or they will part company with you. “The extremism of calendared eschatology is exceeded only by the disposition of those who reject the consummation of revelation from time and history altogether” [HLE:, p. 5]. This passage might be studied along with Romans 11; Luke 21:24; and Amos 9:14-15.

THE FATHER. During His earthly ministry, the Son did not know that which the Father had set under His own authority. Presumably that the Son now knows all that the Father has placed under His authority. Yet it is interesting to note how many finite beings there are who attempt to display inside information gleaned from looking over the Father’s shoulder at His cosmic calendar for some clue about end-time dates and events.

1:8 - YOU WILL RECEIVE. *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).* There is something better than blind speculation and curiosity for these disciples. The world does not understand this! The university may schedule a class in Comparative Religions, but the lost professor has no concept of what it means to be a Christian. What was about to happen

to these early disciples was something new and special and the lost person cannot possibly understand concepts God has designed to reveal only to His followers. That which the believer receives at the point of salvation is neither gleaned nor attained. This Blessing is received as a gift.

In order to appreciate the significance of this, it will help to recall that in the beginning God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day. When Adam sinned a great gulf was formed between God and man and no man has ever been able to span that gulf. Very early in human history God spoke to certain individuals, like Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Moses. At Sinai, God Gave Moses plans for a tabernacle (a tent), which not only served as a place where sacrifices were offered up to the Lord in Worship, but also a place that symbolized His presence with His people.

For centuries the temple symbolized the presence of the Lord with His people. Later when He revealed through Jeremiah His plans to destroy the temple (which occurred in 586 B.C.), He told Jeremiah to tell the people when they returned from the Captivity they were not to rebuild the Ark of the Covenant, because from that time forward the City Jerusalem would symbolize God's presence with His people.

John would be inspired to write, "The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son" (John 1:14). God took up residence with His people in the wilderness and His presence was symbolized by the tabernacle. In Jesus, God took up residence with His people literally, and they saw Him, heard him, and touched Him. John wrote in the First Epistle of John,

"What was from the beginning, what **we have heard**, what **we have seen** with our eyes, **what we have observed**, and have **touched with our hands**, concerning the Word of life—that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us" (1 John 1:1-2, bold added).

One name for Jesus was Immanuel, meaning God with us. The apostles were witnesses to the presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus, however, taught His disciples that it would be better for them when He went back to the Father so that He could send the Spirit. The Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost to indwell each saint - the living presence of God within each individual. It gets even better! In Revelation 21:8, we read of the time when we will be united with Him forever, but we do not have to wait for the Lord's return to be "with" Him, when the Holy Spirit is placed in the heart of each believer at the time of his conversion.

POWER. God knows what we need to live a fruitful life, to face the trials of this life, and be an effective witness for Him. Unlike the so-called mystery religions, we must not major in the dark secrets of the unseen world. We need more than inside knowledge about future events. We need the power which comes only from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Modern man is obsessed with power. The world is concerned about the great military powers. Individuals are intrigued by the horsepower of cars and tractors and various tools. By using overhead cams and electronic fuel injection systems, automobile manufacturers are producing more power from smaller engines. In sports we hear terms like “power play” or “power forward.”

Students of the New Age Movement have discovered that an obsession with power is one of the factors that leads some into some of the cults. Jimmy Furr, a representative of the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention for twelve years, listed three main attractions the occult world holds for young people. He listed them as: (1) power, (2) drugs, and (3) sex. He noted that some people have stated that the reason they got involved with Satanism or witchcraft was that they had seen a manifestation of power in those movements, but they had never seen any power in the church.

A friend of my grandfather’s visited in our home when I was a child. He told us he worked for an electric power company. I think it was Mississippi Power and Light (MP&L). I remembered when we got electricity in our home near Sledge, Mississippi, but this was the first lineman I had ever known and I enjoyed listening to his experiences. This was right after the Second World War and the power companies were running the first lines through rural parts of the state. We lived in the Mississippi Delta, not far from the first steep hills which led from the delta into the hills. When people bought a new car they would boast to their friends that they could climb Valentine Hill in high gear! Our visitor told us that as they ran a power line from the delta into the hills, an elderly man stood along side the gravel road and watched them. He advanced with them toward the first steep hill, taking off only for lunch.

The man would stand and observe the work, and at times walk over to one of the linemen and ask a question which reflected the awe with which he viewed this new power. As they came to the foot of this long hill, the old man tentatively approached one of the linemen and very carefully phrased the question which must have been bothering him all day. He asked, “Mister, do you really think that stuff’s gonna’ climb that hill?”

The linemen were amused at the elderly man’s ignorance of electricity. As I recall, this story was often repeated and people invariably laughed. But it not a laughing matter when we see how many Christians are ignorant of the fact that great spiritual power is available to every believer. Tragically, that source of power remains untapped by most Christians. The average church member goes to church services week after week and sits through services where he hears sermons about God. They do not see any manifestation of spiritual power, nor do they expect any. As a matter of fact if there was much of a demonstration of power some would be very disturbed, and some might start looking for another church.

The late evangelist, Manley Beasley, was in intense pain when this writer heard him preach in a Bible conference. That humble minister has seen the power of God manifested in his own life on many occasions, and he possibly had something like this on his mind when he said, “I would walk a thousand miles to see God; but I wouldn’t walk across the street to hear about Him.” He obviously

meant that when he heard a sermon about God he wanted that sermon to be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. Other ministers have preached in the power of the Holy Spirit but testify that they see very little evidence of that power in the lives of their people.

The risen Lord knew that what those early believers needed most was power from on high. Only Jesus knew how much they would need that power in the days ahead. When then needed that power it was always available.

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS COME UPON YOU. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1:5. The Holy Spirit is Third Person of the Trinity, the One promised by the Father to empower the disciples for the work ahead. In the first sermon ever preached in the Power of Pentecost, Peter quoted from the Old Testament, “I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity” (Acts 2:17). (see also, 2:17, 18, 33). Luke writes that He falls upon believers (8:16; 10:44; 11:15). Here, He “is come upon you.” He will descend upon His people from on high. The reference is to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, but the **Holy Spirit comes upon every believer at the point of salvation** today. No one can separate the Persons of the Trinity. We have one God in three Persons. No one can receive the Son and reject the Father, or receive the Father and reject the Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation, but we must be filled daily with the Spirit.

MY WITNESS. He was not going to make His followers kings, princes, or rulers, but witnesses (martyrs), and servants. They were to be witnesses, testifying to what they had themselves seen, heard, and known. A personal experience must lie behind all true witnessing.

The Great Commission is Christ’s Divine Imperative. It is not optional. All believers are under that divine man date, called The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). This writer once wrote an article for “*Outreach Magazine*”, a former publication of the Southern Baptist Sunday School (now LifeWay Christian Resources). In that article the point was made that Acts 1:8 is a restatement of the Great Commission. Since that time I have become convinced that rather than restating the Great Commission, Jesus is simply stating that His followers shall be His witnesses. The verb is predictive. We are His witnesses; He has no other. We are either effective or ineffective, good or bad, faithful or unfaithful, but we are His witnesses. This takes absolutely nothing away from the seriousness of the Great Commission as stated in Matthew 28:19-20. If anything, it strengthens and reinforces it.

Richard N. Longnecker, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, observes that as Jesus’ last words before His ascension, this commission is final and conclusive. He adds:

This commission lays an obligation on all Christians and comes to us as a gift with a promise. It concerns a person, a power, and a program - the person of Jesus, on whose authority the church acts and who is the object of its witness; the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the sine qua for the mission; and a program that begins at Jerusalem, moves out to “all Judea and Samaria,” and extends “to the ends of the

earth” [EBC: p. 256].

As noted, the word translated “witness” is from the Greek word meaning martyr. I have recently spent a lot of time with a most incredible bit of research by Dr. William R. Cooper of England (OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH). I have shared this unpublished book with some genuine Bible scholars who tell me they have never read anything like this work. Dr. Cooper deals with ancient history of Briton and Rome, showing how the Gospel reached Briton much earlier than many historians believe. He writes about some very interesting people, like the Briton who fought Julius Caesar in hand to hand combat and took Caesar’s sword before Roman soldiers killed him (he was buried with Caesar’s sword). One king, Caradoc, defeated the Romans in thirty pitched battles before he and his family were betrayed by a woman from the royal family. Caradoc was taken to Rome and when his family fell on their face before the emperor, Caradoc stood with his arms folded across his chest and refused to bow. For his courage, he was not only permitted to live, he was sent back to Briton as a puppet king, with his family held in Rome as a guarantee that he would not rebel. Family members were led to Jesus Christ by the lady in whose house they lived and in time they took the Gospel back to Briton with them [COOPER, WM. R, *Old Light on the Roman Church*].

That is interesting, but the thing that leaps from the pages of this work is something with which the modern American believer can hardly identify. The story was often repeated: They were saved, they witnessed for Christ, and they were killed. They were saved, they witnessed, and they were killed.

Witness today in China, North Korea, Iran, and throughout the Islamic world risk their lives when they witness for Jesus Christ. A few years ago, Dr. Jimmy Draper, then president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, sent members of the board of trustees a message in which he quoted a Chinese Christian who said, “Tell people to stop praying for the persecution to stop. That is what keeps us growing.” In many places in the world today, to witness for Jesus is to risk one’s life.

JERUSALEM, JUDEA, SAMARIA. Little could those first disciples have realize that they would be bearing the cross to pagans, that they would be involved in an effort to evangelize Gentiles. The order stated here was followed, with some overlapping, in the spread of the Gospel. It compliments the Great Commission. Christians today are responsible for the witness locally and throughout the world.

Local church leaders often make a practical application of this part of this verse. We teach our people that Jerusalem represents our city; Judea, our county; Samaria, our nation; and then we are to be His witnesses to “the ends of the earth.” Most people do not travel around the world with the Gospel, but they do see people wherever they go. I met Lu while nurses were preparing her mother-in-law for surgery. She had met an American in her native China and married him. Her mother-in-law was having surgery, so she came to America to help with her father-in-law, who has Alzheimer’s, and her mother-in-law, who has cancer.

I was moving back and forth from the surgery waiting room to an ICU on another floor where a long time friend was dying. On one occasion, when I went to the surgery waiting room I had an

opportunity to visit with Lu. This young Chinese woman is very intelligent and articulate. I drove home and picked up a copy of the Gospel of John with the new Mandarin translation on the left side and the HCSB on the right side. I took it to her and went over the Roman Road verses with her. I contacted Phill Burgess at Broadman and Holman and asked for Scripture for Lu to take back to China with her. Her mother-in-law told me that she was really excited when I drove to their home to give two dozen copies to Lu. She was very anxious to give a copy to her mother. I was being a witness, but it only cost me several hours and a little money for gas. The cost for Lu could be much greater is she is not very careful with those copies of John. She is willing to risk it!

1:9 - TAKEN UP. *“After He had said this, He was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”* He was lifted up from their presence in such a way that these eye-witnesses could hardly have been mistaken as to what was happening. What a glorious moment this must have been! The reality of it and its impact on the lives of believers are just as glorious today. Their testimony about what they had seen that day was so compelling that countless individuals who had rejected Him during His earthly ministry embraced him when they were convinced that He had risen. Included in that number were His own brothers!

THEY WERE WATCHING. Special attention is given to the fact that they were eyewitnesses to the Ascension as well as the Resurrection. It is interesting that this follows His words, “you will be My witnesses” (1:8). There is no way they could keep this a secret. In the years ahead their simple, unsophisticated eye-witness account would be repeated over and over - in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the world. They were eye-witnesses to the power and reality of the Resurrection and Ascension and all true believers are personal witnesses to their reality and power of the Resurrection. Our obligation is just as strong as theirs to bear witness of these facts to the lost world.

A CLOUD. Clouds are often associated with the Lord’s presence in the Bible. During the Exodus “the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way...” (Ex. 13:21). At the time of the Ascension, Jesus “was taken up” into a cloud,” as His followers watched intently. They knew what they saw and their testimony could not be shaken - in their day or ours. He most brilliant and determined religious leaders imaginable tried and failed to stop the Good News about the Resurrection.

1:10 - THEY WERE GAZING. *“While He was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them.”* They continued gazing intently as He ascended. The word means to fix one’s eyes on anything with an intense earnest gaze. They were “following Him with their eager eyes, in rapt amazement. Not, however, as a mere fact is this recorded, but as a part of that resistless evidence of their senses on which their whole subsequent testimony was to be borne” [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary - JFB after this].

TWO MEN STOOD BY THEM IN WHITE APPAREL. Two angels also appeared at the time of the Resurrection. Angels are often mentioned in Acts (5:19, 20; 8:26; 10:3-7, 30-32; 11:13-14; 12:10, 23; 27:23). Angels received a lot of attention during the time the long-running

television drama, *Touched By an Angel*, was on TV. Christians loved the program because it was clean and wholesome, but what many did not realize was that the angels presented on the program were more aligned with New Age angels than biblical angels. The angels serve God at His will and according to His purpose. No believer has to wonder about an encounter with an angel. Believers must concentrate on the Word of God and depend upon the indwelling Spirit to guide and make the right application of the Word in daily life, leaving the angels to God's management.

1:11 - YE MEN OF GALILEE. *“They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen Him going into heaven.’”* The angels knew these witnesses. They were Galileans. This might point to the lowly origin of the first disciples, or to the fact that the followers of Christ were primarily those who had followed Him from Galilee. The leaders were certainly from Galilee, more at home in a fishing boat than religious intrigue.

WILL COME. This same chapter which speaks of the Resurrection and the Ascension, now speaks of the Second Coming of Christ. The Second Coming of Jesus is as certain for the future as the Resurrection is in the past. This is the hope of every Christian. John longed for His return in the Revelation experience. It was a primary subject in the Lord's Farewell Discourse (John 14). “In like manner” might refer to the clouds (vs. 9), but more to the point for us, it means that **His return will be visible**. It is difficult to believe that anyone who is familiar with this passage could ever be misled by New Age claims of a secret return of Christ, who has returned and is in hiding until the appropriate time to make His presence known.

It is unfortunate that this blessed hope had been the subject of so much controversy in the church. It is also unfortunate that many have adopted an unchristian attitude toward those who disagree with their position. This controversy may be partly responsible for two disturbing reactions. First, there are those who dwell on future events to such a degree that they ignore the rest of the Scripture. Second, many others avoid the subject. Neither attitude is scriptural.

Some modern scholars have “asserted that looking for the Parousia paralyzes missionary activity and inhibits Christian social action by diverting attention away from present needs to the ‘sweet by and by’ and that the early church only turned to missions when it had to renounce its futuristic eschatology” [EBC: 258]. And there is no doubt that some have gone to seed on this one issue and neglected other important issues. However, this Scripture does not support that claim. Christian missions “must be based on the ascended and living Lord who directs his church from heaven and who will return to consummate what he has begun” [EBC: 258].

The church must place appropriate importance on the Second Coming, and it can do it without taking its eyes off what He has commanded us to be doing until He returns. As a matter of fact, our hope in the return of Christ should be a powerful incentive in carrying out the Great Commission, and our obedience to our Lord in all other areas. Having said that, let me stress that the glorious return of my Savior is the great hope that keeps me going in good times and bad. For more on this writer's position on Eschatology (the study of last things), see my studies in 1 and 2 Thessalonians in THE

BIBLE NOTEBOOK, and fifty sermons from The Revelation in THE SERMON NOTEBOOK, posted on the PastorLife.Com website, Georgia Baptist Convention).

1:12 - THEY RETURNED TO JERUSALEM. *“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olive Grove, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day’s journey away.”* Obedient to their instructions, they returned to Jerusalem *“to wait for the Father’s promise”* (1:4). They returned to the city with great joy because of the promise of the return of the Lord.

FROM THE MOUNT. This is the “Mount of Olives” with which most Bible students are familiar from the KJV, but rendered in the HCSB as “the mount called Olive Grove.” Luke, the Gentile, is writing to Theophilus, another Gentile, and “hence the topographical explanations” [WALKER: 13]. Having witnessed the Ascension at the Mount of Olives, they now returned to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

A SABBATH DAY’S JOURNEY. That was about 3,000 yards, or a little over a half a mile, the distance the Rabbis allowed the Jews to travel on the Sabbath.

1:13 - THE ROOM UPSTAIRS. *“When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.”* NASB has “the upper room.” The definite article might suggest that this was the room in which the Savior kept the Passover with His disciples and instituted the Lord’s Supper.

WHERE THEY WERE STAYING. they were staying in this familiar upper room temporarily while waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. A list of the Apostles follows. Note the groupings here and each time all the apostles are mentioned. Does this suggest organization, or does one simply copy the list from another?

1:14 - ALL THESE WERE CONTINUALLY. *“All these were continually united in prayer, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.”* This is a strong expression. They were continually and steadfastly united in prayer [HEBREW/GREEK Key Study Bible Lexicon]. They persisted in prayer. The word is used of unwearied continuance in prayer (2:42; 6:4). The KJV has “with one accord.” Their wait in the upper room was characterized by unity in their feelings, desires and purpose. They were of one mind and heart.

If every church prayer meeting was characterized by these basic ingredients the power of God would be manifested in the pulpit, in the pew, and in society. When our people all (or most of them) come together with a singleness of mind and heart to pray for something, mountains will once again be moved and the church will once again be accused of turning the world up-side-down. We count nickels and noses every Sunday morning in Sunday School and when someone asks how the church is going, we quote the numbers. How would we answer if people began asking, “How is your prayer meeting?”

IN PRAYER. Literally, “in the prayer.” The definite article suggests that they were praying for that which had been promised them - the coming of the Holy Spirit. This was a specific prayer. They were praying with a purpose, and not, in the words of the late R. G. Lee, “A Polly wants a cracker prayer.” They were not just saying, “Lord, forgive us of any sins we might have committed today, and be with those who couldn’t be with us tonight.”

Many today would like to experience the presence and power of the Lord in their own prayer life, and in the life of the church. Some well-meaning, zealous Christians so long for this kind of prayer meeting that they may try to force their zeal on others. It is possible that, regardless of their commitment and their effort to schedule and impose this kind of prayer meeting on others, that they will create more tension and even resistance if they try to force their schedule or plan on others.

In the first place, one must have a personal prayer life that reflects the “fruit of the Spirit” (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control, (Gal 5:22-23), and not the works of the flesh (strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, Gal 5:20) In the second place, it is the Lord who will control His response to our prayer, and to our prayer meetings. Our roll is submission to Him and a desire to know and do His will, not to force His will and purpose on others. The person who schedules a prayer meeting while the regular church Prayer Service is going on because they are just having a Bible study are as wrong as those who might only want Bible study and not prayer.

WITH THE WOMEN. This is the first of many references to women in Acts. Luke characteristically draws attention to the role of women in the early church. Those who call the Bible a sexist book should study Acts in the context of customs and attitudes of the first century. When we consider the history of the human race it seems obvious to many that the liberation of women began with Jesus - and it will find its end in Him.

HIS BROTHERS. Finally! It was about time. During His earthly ministry he was an embarrassment to them and at one point they went to get Him to take Him home with them. James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas were not believers at first, but apparently became believers only after James received a visit from the risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:7).

1:15 - DURING THESE DAYS. *“During these days Peter stood up among the brothers—the number of people who were together was about 120—and said...”* During the days between the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter addressed the 120 in the upper room).

PETER STOOD UP. Peter had made a complete recovery from his dejection following his denial of Jesus. Here he assumes a position of leadership and a look at his background shows that it was natural for him to take the lead. Apparently the others were also comfortable with it.

ABOUT 120. This was the approximate number of believers waiting in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. There were many others who believed, still in Galilee.

1:16 - BROTHERS. *“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David spoke in advance about Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.”* This was the popular way of beginning a speech in first century Israel, especially when the speaker was addressing fellow Jews.

THE SCRIPTURE. The Scripture he has in mind is Psalm 41:9. If we are to understand the early church we must note their reliance upon the Scriptures and upon the Holy Spirit. In a day when the Scripture has become the battle ground of theologians, we would do well to follow the example of the first believers in reference to the Scripture.

NOTE: I first wrote that last sentence several years before the Conservative Resurgence was launched in the Southern Baptist Convention. Little did I realize the resistance we would meet when the term inerrant was introduced.

THE HOLY SPIRIT...SPOKE IN ADVANCE. Peter believed in the inspiration of the Scripture so much that the Holy Spirit is declared to be the One speaking, with David providing the mouth. Those familiar with both the Old and New Testaments are well aware of how clearly God predicted events hundreds, even thousands of years in advance.

JUDAS. Judas sold out his master and then served as the guide for those who would arrest Him. This was no surprise to the Holy Spirit. One thousand years earlier, He had inspired David to write, “Even my friend in whom I trusted, one who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me” (Ps. 41:9).

Judas’ betrayal of Jesus is viewed as one of, if not the most appalling acts in the history of mankind. The story is read with emotions one can hardly describe. But Jesus is being betrayed by those who profess to be His friend everyday in our society. Every day He is denied by church members who profess Him as Lord, and then live a life that dishonors Him. They not only do not serve Jesus, they submit their lives and their homes to the influence of His arch enemy, Satan.

1:17 - ONE OF OUR NUMBER. *“For he was one of our number and was allotted a share in this ministry.”* He was numbered both among the Apostles as well as among all disciples. There are many in every age who are numbered among believers, but have no part in the salvation of Jesus Christ.

ALLOTTED A SHARE. Judas had received an important office and an opportunity to receive many of the benefits that are available to true saints. However, he rejected the grace that saves one’s soul.

1:18 - THIS MAN ACQUIRED A FIELD. *“Now this man acquired a field with his unrighteous wages; and falling headfirst, he burst open in the middle, and all his insides spilled out.”* The horrible fate of Judas is parenthetically described in verses 18-19. Many interpreters have had some difficulty reconciling this account with the account of the fate of Judas in Matthew

27:3-10. Who bought the field? How did it come to be called “Field of Blood”? The most disturbing question has to do with how he died. Did he hang himself (Matt. 27:5)? Or, do we accept this account: “And falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out” (NASB)? Augustine held both to be true. It is not inconceivable that he hanged himself and then after awhile the rope broke and he fell and his body burst open, spilling out his intestines.

1:19 - THIS BECAME KNOWN. *“This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field is called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.”* The shocking story of the death of Judas would have been repeated with all its gory details in homes and on the streets of Jerusalem for years. Every one knew the story. Since the story was so well known we can be sure that these two different accounts posed no irreconcilable problems for First Century readers. When all evidence agrees in every detail one begins to suspect collusion. Testimonies supporting the appearances of the risen Lord illustrate how persuasive natural variations in accounts can be. One expects that. What one does not expect is for all accounts to agree in every detail.

FIELD OF BLOOD. The purchase of the field and its name should not be too difficult to explain. It seems likely that: “The chief priests bought the potter’s field in Judas’ name with the thirty silver coins belonging to him, and the local Jerusalemites (particularly Christians) nicknamed it “Field of Blood” because they felt it had been purchased with “blood money” [RNL: 263].

1:20 - IT IS WRITTEN. *“For it is written in the Book of Psalms: Let his dwelling become desolate; let no one live in it; and Let someone else take his position.”* See Ps. 69:25 and 109:8. None of this was a surprise to the Lord. He revealed it to the psalmist a thousand years before. Both the apostles’ knowledge of the Scripture and their commitment to it are noteworthy.

To Simon Peter the necessity was based on the Scripture he had just quoted. Some may argue the point that was only Peter’s interpretation, and that the Lord had Saul of Tarsus in mind to take the place of Judas. However, Peter knew the Scripture, he had walked with Jesus, and he had the support of all the believers.

1:21 - FROM AMONG THE MEN. *“Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us...”* Because of the betrayal and consequent loss of Judas as a member of the Twelve, there was an opening. The question is, Why should it matter that they have twelve rather than eleven? Peter will explain that, but we might observe that the number twelve seems to have had special significance in the Bible. There were twelve sons of Israel, twelve Tribes, twelve apostles, and there are twelve gates in the walls of New Jerusalem. Twelve was the number for organized religion.

1:22 - BEGINNING FROM. *“...Beginning from the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of His resurrection.”* Guidelines were established for the candidates who would be considered to take the place of Judas. They must have been full-time followers of Jesus at the time of His resurrection. That is an interesting way of describing the way Jesus intermingled with the believers. At times He

withdrew for prayer and rest, but then came back to equip His followers and to have fellowship with them.

To summarize, the replacement for Judas would (1) have to be one who had been a disciple from the “baptism of John until the crucifixion and (2) he would have to be a witness to the resurrection. He must have seen the risen Lord. They were looking for someone who had been faithful from start to finish.

Today, we need to know something about the people we elect to a position of leadership in the local church. There are practical as well as spiritual reasons for electing teachers and officers with a proven track record. A concerned deacon tells about a man who joined a large church and so impressed the members with his concern for the elderly that he was elected to responsible positions in the church before they discovered that he was both immoral and a con- man. It is disturbing when a weak, inconsistent church member is elected to teach young people because his close friend on the nominating committee believed that if you give him a job he would be more faithful.

1:23 - THEY PROPOSED TWO. *“So they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.”* They counted two among their number who met the requirements. They were fortunate to have had a choice for the people to consider, for the guidelines were very narrow. It is noteworthy that this election was democratic, not autocratic or hierarchal (decision handed down an apostles, or a committee of apostles). This would indicate that the nominations came from the 120.

1:24 - THEY PRAYED. *“Then they prayed, “You, Lord, know the hearts of all; show which of these two You have chosen...”* They really prayed. We all claim to pray about decisions, but so often it seems that we pray without convictions and without a real burden. One reason we pray like that is that we do what we want to do, or what we can persuade others to do and then let the Lord in on it and ask His blessings. It is a different matter to pray until He gives us His program and then ask His guidance in implementing it. These believers were convinced that the Lord had set these two men before them. They were convinced that they knew the mind of God in this matter.

It is interesting that these people were praying - before the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who would help believers with their prayers following Pentecost. These people sincerely desired the Lord’s guidance and obviously expected Him to lead them to the right decision.

1:25 - TO TAKE THE PLACE. *“...To take the place in this apostolic service that Judas left to go to his own place.”* They were electing one to take the place of Judas, who had turned away from them and betrayed his Master. This person would take his place among the twelve. Why was it necessary to elect one to take the place of Judas? Peter believed it was necessary to fulfill Scripture and the others obviously agreed with him. In fact, the purpose in the election is specifically stated. This answers those who have suggested that Peter and the others jumped the gun by making this decision before the Holy Spirit came to lead them.

I once heard a teacher, in an effort to prove that Peter and the others were acting on their own, say that following this vote no one ever heard from the replacement for Judas again. This attitude assumes that Peter and the others were acting on their own, even though they based their decision on Scripture. It also overlooks the fact that many in his day may have known of his work, and it neglects the fact that most of the world had never heard what happened to a number of the eleven Apostles after the betrayal of Judas. It also disregards traditions that tell us Matthias became a martyr for Christ.

1:26 - THEY CAST LOTS. *“Then they cast lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias. So he was numbered with the 11 apostles.”* Matthias was elected by a democratic process to take the place of Judas as one of the twelve.

B. THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST, 2:1-4.

2:1 - THE DAY OF PENTECOST. *“When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place.”* The Greek word Pentecost means fiftieth. The reference is to the fact that the feast celebrated at that time was kept on the fiftieth day after the offering of the barley sheaf on the day following the Passover Sabbath (Lev. 23:15-16). The second of the three great annual feasts, it falls between Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. In the OT it is called “the Feast of Weeks” (Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10); “the Feast of Harvest” (Ex. 23:16); and “the Feast of Firstfruits” (Num. 28:26). It marked the close of the grain harvest but not the entire harvest of the land (which was marked by the Feast of Tabernacles, or Ingatherings).

Pentecost came to be associated with gratitude for deliverance from Egypt, and then for the giving of the Law at Sinai. It occurred in the Spring, and was the most numerous attended of all the feasts because conditions were better for travel. It was an appropriate time for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Walker writes:

Just as the feast of Passover found its fulfillment on the day of the Saviour's crucifixion, so the feast of firstfruits found its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost. It remains only for the feast of Tabernacles to be fulfilled at our Lord's second coming, when the harvest of the earth shall have been completely gathered in [WALKER: 26].

HAD ARRIVED. Or, “was now come”(now being fulfilled). The day was still young and the activities were just beginning. The disciples were watching and praying as the day approached when the Lord's promise would be fulfilled, but no one could have fully anticipated just how glorious that day would be.

ALL...IN ONE PLACE. All the disciples were assemble in one place (the upper room) in Jerusalem. The 120 disciples were together with exceptional unity and harmony. It is interesting to observe the use of the word “all”. They were ALL assembled, ALL filled, ALL preached, ALL

witnessed.

2:2 - SUDDENLY. *“Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying.”* This is **the first great phenomena** associated with Pentecost. Luke tells us that what happened, happened suddenly, which was characteristic of many of God’s works. When you read the Gospels, one word leaps from the page: “Immediately”! Jesus healed a lame man and “immediately” he he stood up and walked. Many things have happened suddenly to change people’s lives for better or worse, but this has to rank with the most significant of all His sudden acts (Creation, Second Coming).

SOUND OF A VIOLENT, RUSHING WIND. The phenomenon must have been more awesome than the reader can imagine. There was probably no movement of air, but the sound of a hurricane or tornado. Usually in the NT the word translated wind means just that, but here the word translated wind is the word for breath. A literal translation would be, “a sound of a might blast borne along” [Walker: 28]. It could not have been ignored.

FROM HEAVEN. Heaven is the source of every good and perfect gift (James. 1:17). We are not told that the disciples knew immediately that the sound was from heaven but they were soon aware of it, and Luke was inspired by the Holy Spirit to note that the sound was from heaven. “Pentecost, like Bethlehem, was **a vertical invasion of earth by the life of heaven**” [HLE: 14, bold added by this writer].

IT FILLED THE WHOLE HOUSE. The sound, that is, not wind, filled all the house. All in the house heard the phenomenal sound immediately, but before long the sound attracted the attention of a multitude. Apparently, people outside the house heard the noise, and were drawn to it.

2:3 - TONGUES, LIKE FLAMES. *“And tongues, like flames of fire that were divided, appeared to them and rested on each one of them.”* The KJV has “there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.” This **second great phenomenon** associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit was also an attention getter, but it was more than that.

The tongues or “*glossai*” were **parting asunder** among them so that one “fiery flame” (flame of fire) let down individual extensions to a point above the head of each believer. Unity symbolized. The “fire” or “*puros*” was luminescent and purifactory. Like the unique seraph (Isa. 6:6) was this fire, visible but not destructive [HLE: 14].

In this phenomenon we have a symbol of power and purity, as well as a symbol of the divine source of the power and the fact that he indwells and empowers each person individually. It has been suggested that the “tongues like as of fire” is a symbol of the aggressive nature of Christianity. The use of the tongue in preaching is also symbolized.

RESTED. The power symbolized by the fire-like tongues had come to abide within each believer:

one Source, with each believer indwelt and empowered.

ON EACH ONE. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was personal, for each individual. The Holy Spirit was not only given to the church as a whole, He was given to each individual member.

2:4 - ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. *“Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages, as the Spirit gave them ability for speech.”* It must be remembered that the external phenomena was subordinate to the supreme internal blessing. **All** those believers (apostles and all the rest) received the Holy Spirit. The third person plural, passive is used stressing that “they” (the 120) were being acted upon. It must be remembered that this filling was at heaven’s initiative, not man’s quest. The Holy Spirit took possession of them, so as to be at home in them, to be the divine Host, not an occasional guest. The text means that they were filled completely.

BEGAN TO SPEAK IN DIFFERENT TONGUES. This is the **third phenomenon** associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit. It seems appropriate that after the supernatural “tongues” sat upon each of them to symbolize their work as witnesses, that they should speak miraculously in other tongues, under the control of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit blessed them and enabled them to speak in “other” tongues (not unknown tongues) and great throngs of people from all over the known world heard them speak in their own native tongue.

In Acts, glossolalia was always at the initiative of the Holy Spirit and never the result of man’s quest, his striving, or even his prayer. It is noteworthy that **some of the experiences recorded in Acts do not fit a pattern**, and cannot be forced into a mold. For example, the believers who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost spoke in other tongues, but in Samaria they did not. Later, in the home of Cornelius they did speak in tongues.

The subjects of “tongues” in the NT has been debated by sincere Christians of the first century as well as the twenty-first century, and it does not seem that we are about to resolve the issue. Every individual must find his answer in the Scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Unger, writing on tongues, says of Pentecost:

Since the Spirit was given and received at the beginning of the new age to inaugurate it, with the resultant blessings of the gift poured out upon God’s new people then, how absurd now to ask for the gift as if it had never been given, or to attempt to receive it when it has already been received for many centuries and its benefits have been made available to every Christian since its original bestowal in Acts 2 [Unger: 16-17].

It is not uncommon to hear someone pray for, or stress the need for praying for a new Pentecost. However, “Pentecost is as unrepeatable as the creation of the world or of man; as once-for-all as the incarnation and the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ” [Unger: 17]. What is needed today is for those who have been baptized with the Holy Spirit (or, indwelt by the Holy Spirit) to yield their

hearts and lives to Him, let Him fill their hearts and empower them to use the tongue He has given them to proclaim His message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

AS THE SPIRIT GAVE THEM ABILITY. The initiative was with the Spirit. Any study of the Holy Spirit must be Bible based. Unfortunately, many modern Christians are appealing to their own experience rather than to Scripture. A person's experiences may be important to him, but it is essential for the Christian to verify his experience by sound exegesis of the Scripture. It is good to share your experience with others, but your experience must be authenticated by the Word of God, or you may easily lead another person astray. Truth, or reality, finds its basis in the Word of God and not our experience.

Proper emphasis must be placed on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. The word "Holy" points to His divine nature. Many people subscribe to a unitary theory of God. They reject both the term "Trinity" and the trinitary view of God. They correctly point out that the word "trinity" is not used in the Bible. The question should not be whether or not the word is used, but whether or not the concept is taught in the Bible. All we have to do is look at the baptism of Jesus to see evidence for the Trinity.

Some who hold a unitary view of God say, "I am the son of my father, husband of my wife, and father of my children. I am one person, but I fill three roles; son, husband, and father." People have been observed nodding in agreement with this explanation as though a fresh ray of light had just broken through to illuminate their mind. It sounds good. But it leaves a lot to be desired. It is not Biblical. The Trinity may be difficult, if not impossible to explain to some people, but that should not cause one to search for misleading explanations and illustrations.

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is seen as a Person, having the attributes thereof, and being coequal, coexistent, and coeternal with the Father and the Son. He was an agent in the creation and maintenance of the universe and vitally involved in the redemptive work of the Father. He is God the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. The hymn is right: "God is three Persons, blessed Trinity." The Bible reveals three Persons on one nature. God is one is essence, three in personality. This is monotheism, and not polytheism as critics claim.

The full significance of the relationship within the Trinity may be unfathomable to man, but we must not forsake the truth for an alternate view because it is easier to explain to another. The late Dr. H. Leo Eddleman was with me in revival services during the time he was writing his commentary of Acts and we discussed this subject at length. This very subject is one of the reasons the former missionary to Israel wrote a commentary on Acts. Another reason was his burden for missions. He wrote concerning the Trinity:

Personalities are distinct but not separate in the sense of being cut apart or isolated one from another. Three in one. Mystery beyond comprehension of finite mind. But so would a rigid but nonbiblical unitary interpretation of God: one Person but three manifestations [HLE: 15].

The unitary view of God would leave us wondering to whom Jesus was praying when He withdrew to be alone with the Father. There are other problems with the unitary theory, but that does not make the subject of the Trinity less difficult to understand. A thorough study of the works of Francis Schaeffer on the Trinity would be profitable for the serious student of the Word.

C. THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL AT PENTECOST, 2:5-36

2:5 - JEWS LIVING IN JERUSALEM. *“There were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.”* The verb usually denotes more than temporary residence. But here it refers to those who sojourn or dwell in a place for a time [HG Key, Lex.: 1702]. The word may refer to Jews of the dispersion who had returned to take up residence in Israel, as compared to those who were just visitors in Jerusalem at the time.

FROM EVERY NATION UNDER HEAVEN. Not literally from every nation under heaven, but a figure, equivalent to “from many lands”. Some seventeen nations were represented, so people were there from all over what was considered the civilized world.

2:6 - THIS SOUND. *“When this sound occurred, the multitude came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language.”* There is some confusion as to whether or not the sound (vs. 2) was heard by others outside the house, or if this simply means that when news of what had happened spread the people came to the house. We do know that a large crowd (multitude) gathered in a short time, so it seems safe to assume that people were attracted to the house by the sound. That is, however, only an assumption. It would have taken a considerable amount of time for the people to go out and call together this great number of people without some accompanying phenomena.

It is interesting that the first church started off with a bang! The worship service was dynamic, dramatic, and explosive. They did not have to advertise on television and in the local paper in hopes of attracting a crowd. They couldn't keep it a secret and they couldn't keep the people away. Leonard Ravenhill once stated that **you cannot advertise a revival, and you can't keep it a secret.**

A church can profit from praise. It can even profit from criticism. If it honors the Lord it must expect criticism. The worst thing that can happen is for the church to be ignored. An ignored church is a powerless church. There was no way that first church was going to be ignored.

WAS CONFUSED. This is from a word meaning “to pour together” and denotes confusion and perplexity of mind. When the church functions in the power of the Holy Spirit, the world will be bewildered today. It is unfortunate that most churches can be explained in terms of organization, finances, programs, leadership. Lost people understand those things. They may not understand the mighty acts of God, but they will still be drawn to the church to see what is happening. Sadly, far too many things that happen in the Lord's church can be understood by the world. When God really moves in a church, or in a nation, the world does not understand. It is the contrast between the world

and the church that draws many to the truth.

IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE. Languages here corresponds to dialects, so they probably spoke not only in different languages, but also in specific dialects. They were understood, regardless of language or dialect.

2:7 - ASTOUNDED AND AMAZED. *“And they were astounded and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?”* Their initial reaction when they heard the disciples speaking in other languages was amazement, alarm, fear, consternation. They continued to be amazed and astounded. They found no immediate answer to what they saw and heard.

GALILEANS. “The Galileans spoke a rude Aramaic (Mark 14:70) and probably crude Greek vernacular also” [Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the NT*, The Bible Navigator, LifeWay Christian Resources - after this, ATR]. The inner circle of disciples were mostly from Galilee and spoke a dialect considered unsophisticated by those in Jerusalem who considered Galilee a comparatively uncivilized district. That those men were speaking fluently in many languages was the most incredible thing one could imagine. These Galileans were speaking in legitimate languages, not unknown tongues. The miracle of languages at Pentecost was one of understanding and communication, not confusion.

2:8 - OUR OWN NATIVE TONGUE. *“How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?”* The freshly indwelt believers were Jews who spoke with a distinct Galilean accent, but each person heard the message in his own language and, it would seem, in his own accent. There was a time when Americans were very conscious of the accent of those from a different part of the country. Those from the far north joked about the accent of those in the deep south, and those in the deep south were often turned off by the fast crisp speech of their northern countrymen. Radio and television has changed a lot of that. I have recently completed a two terms on the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources, serving with people from all over the country. I have friend from Alaska, Michigan, and Hawaii, as well as Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas (a lot of trustees from Texas!). There is very little difference in the speech of Mark Anderson from Jackson, Mississippi and George Moyer from Hawaii, or the accent of Charles Roberts of Lufkin Texas and Bill Henard of Kentucky. There is often a greater challenge for those in north Louisiana to understand the French accent of many in south Louisiana. What those visitors from seventeen different nations hears, they heard in their own language and in their own dialect.

2:9 - PARTHIANS. *“Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia...”* Luke begins the roll call of nations with the Parthians, the farthest to the east, and then

“the enumeration proceeds farther and farther westward till it comes to Judea; next come the western countries, from Cappadocia to Pamphylia; then the southern, from Egypt to Cyrene; finally, apart from all geographical consideration, Cretes and Arabians are placed together. This enumeration is evidently designed to convey an

impression of universality” [Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, the Bible Navigator].

2:10 - PHRYGIA. “*Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes...*” Jewish worshipers had come from all over the known world of the day. Faithful Jews, as well as proselytes to Judaism, would travel for days, even weeks, to be in Jerusalem for Passover, and many would stay in Judea for another fifty days for Pentecost.

2-11 - ARABS. “*Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own languages the magnificent acts of God.*” It is especially interesting that there were worshipers of the true God from various Arab nations in Jerusalem for Pentecost. This was centuries before Mohamed introduced the world to his pagan god and launched a bloody assault on all that is holy, righteous, and godly.

The point in Luke’s roll call of nations is that people were there from all these nations and they all heard the disciples speaking in their own native tongue speaking of the mighty deeds of God. It would be interesting to know the results as these people returned to their homes.

Dr. William R. Cooper of England has published an informative Pamphlet (#357), in which he reveals evidence that the Gospels may have been written earlier than many scholars have believed, and that the Gospel reached his island much earlier than modern scholars have believed until now.

“Gildas, who lived in the 6th century, states that the arrival of the Gospel here in Britain was indeed an early event: ‘This happened first, as we know [*ut scimus*], in the last years of Tiberius Caesar...’ Now, Tiberius reigned from AD 14-37, thus placing the arrival here of the Christian Gospel within just four years of the Resurrection, a by no means impossible event, for news and documents traveled surprisingly fast throughout the Roman Empire, and four years is a very long time, even in their terms. We can only lament the brevity of Gildas’ statement which seems, if we are to believe the “*ut scimus*”, not to have been news to his readers” [Cooper, William R., *The Early Writing of the Gospel*, Pamphlet # 357].

2:12 - THEY WERE ALL ASTOUNDED. “*And they were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What could this be?’*” They were totally amazed and perplexed, finding no explanation for what they were witnessing. One can picture the people asking one another, “What does this mean?” People are still discussing the meaning of the events of that day. For example, there are often cries among sincere believers that we need another Pentecost. Some pray that God will send a fresh Pentecost. The simple truth is that there is no more need for a new Pentecostal than there is for a new virgin birth, crucifixion, or resurrection.

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost to empower the church, which means that all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the point of their salvation. What each believer needs is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Sin will quench the ministry in one’s life, so each person must confess their sin and seek God’s forgiveness daily (1 John 1:9).

2: 13 - BUT SOME. *“But some sneered and said, ‘They’re full of new wine!’”* That is, a different class of onlookers - not the 120, or those who were being saved. These people were skeptical, many were even hostile to what the Holy Spirit was doing through these people.

FULL OF NEW WINE. Robertson notes that this was “Sweet wine, but intoxicating. Sweet wine kept a year was very intoxicating” [ATR]. The miraculous speech is attributed by the skeptics to drunkenness. It did not take long for the world to mock the church. The world has been trying to deny the power of Pentecost ever since. Natural man always seeks natural explanations for supernatural things and it did not end at Pentecost. That is exactly what liberal theologians have been doing for the generations.

PETER’S PENTECOST SERMON. 2:14-36

2:14 - PETER, TAKING HIS STAND. *“But Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them: “Jewish men and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be known to you and pay attention to my words.”* Courage regained! He had denied his Lord to a servant girl, but now proclaims the Gospel of his risen Lord boldly before thousands. Such is the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives and empower Christians.

WITH THE ELEVEN. The Apostles were the early leaders in the worship, ministry, and evangelism as one would expect. It seems appropriate that it would be Simon Peter who would preach the first Christian sermon in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that it would be preached on the Day of Pentecost. He had the prayerful support of the other apostles.

PROCLAIMED TO THEM. He almost certainly spoke in Aramaic since he was addressing the men of Judah and those who lived in Jerusalem. He urgently appealed to them to give heed to what he had to say. Simon Peter is now standing to preach the first sermon ever preached in the full power of the Holy Spirit. That power would soon be manifested before this great crowd.

2:15 - NOT DRUNK. *“For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it’s only nine in the morning.”* The disciples were not drunk, as the skeptics supposed. It was only nine o’clock in the morning. This meant that, (1) they would not be drinking to excess that early in the morning, (2) they usually drank wine with a meal and that only in the evening, and (3) they abstained from food until noon on feast days. The charge, considering all the circumstances, was absurd.

2:16 - THE PROPHET JOEL. *“On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel...”* Peter alludes to Joel 2:28-32. His use of Scripture is significant here. They knew the Scripture and would be able to follow him. Knowing the Scripture, they should have known that what they were witnessing was the work of the Spirit, and not the result of drunkenness.

The preacher today must preach the Word of God. Many of his listeners, however, do not want to hear expository sermons. They find them boring and condemn the preacher. The problem may well

be that his critics do not know the Scripture. There are more opportunities to study the Scripture today than ever and better helps than one could have imagined a generation ago. But most professing Christians remain disturbingly ignorant of God's Word. Others know Bible trivia, but know little about Hermeneutics (how to interpret the Scripture).

2:17 - IN THE LAST DAYS. *“And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.”* Some see the fulfillment of this prophecy in the days immediately preceding the return of Christ. Yet Peter seems to be relating it to Pentecost and the days following. It seems that what he had in mind was the Messianic age, the days beginning with the first coming of Christ and continuing until the Second Coming.

I WILL POUR FORTH MY SPIRIT. The prophecy from Joel was being fulfilled that day before their eyes. The Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the disciples and they were delivering the “Thus saith the world of the Lord” in the full power of Pentecost, the power Jesus promised before His ascension (1:8).

YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS. The Holy Spirit was given, and is given, to both men and women indiscriminately. In the Bible certain distinctions are made in the between men and women as far as roles are concerned, but never in terms of worth or capacity to receive the Holy Spirit. The apostles were men, but there were many women among the disciples of Jesus.

WILL PROPHECY. The word translated prophecy means to speak forth God’s message in preaching and exhortation. From time to time prophets foretold future events. More often they spoke forth the message of God.

YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS. Visions refer to appearances received by those who are awake. They are usually attributed to young men with vigor and strength and alert to every opportunity.

OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS. The word denotes appearances to those who are asleep. These appearances are assigned to the older men. This in not to say that young men cannot dream dreams, or that old men cannot see visions.

2:18 - SLAVES. *“I will even pour out My Spirit on My male and female slaves in those days, and they will prophesy.”* God’s Spirit would fall upon both male and female worshipers (“all humanity”, Vs. 17). Here, emphasis is placed on male and female slaves. The NASB has “bondservants”, and if that is right, the reference could be to any worshiper, male or female, who worships the Lord. The HCSB is a literal, word for word, translation and the word slave is normally used instead of servant. I sat at the table with Dr. Ed Blum, the General Editor of the HCSB and listened to his explanation of why those translators used the word “slave” rather than the more familiar “servant”. First, it is accurate, and second, believers are His slaves - we are bought with a price. Once we are born again, we surrender our will to His will.

This verse, however, seems to point to actual slaves, as indicated by the designation, “male and female.” There were reportedly 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and God loved every one of them. God will pour out His Spirit upon all believers, regardless of one’s social status in society. This shows that there can be no barriers to the gift of God. Slavery, nor servitude of any kind, would be no barrier to the blessings of the Holy Spirit.

2:19 - WONDERS. *“I will display wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.”* The word translated wonders (*teras*) is often associated with the word translated signs (*semeion*). These two words do not refer to two different classes of miracles, but to different qualities of the same miracle [HG-KEY STUDY BIBLE: 1734]. Signs denote miracles with an ethical end and purpose, or a miracle which is used to illustrate a lesson. Great emphasis is placed on signs in the Gospel According to John (water to wine; feeding of the 5,000). Wonders (*teras*) refers to a startling, amazing miracle that is used to get one’s attention and to hold it in his memory.

BLOOD AND FIRE. Robertson says “these words illustrate bloodshed and destruction by fire as signs here on earth” [ATR]. Others attempt to be more specific, stating that this “refers to the signs which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem (see on Lu 21:25-28)” [NCWB].

2:20 - THE SUN...THE MOON. *“The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and remarkable day of the Lord comes...”* Peter is preaching on the Day of Pentecost, and against the backdrop of the phenomenal events of the day, yet these particular signs and wonders did not occur on the day of Pentecost. Is he saying that they were symbolically fulfilled on at Pentecost, or (as some will insist) yet to be fulfilled? To some, it is obvious that the prophecy was to be fulfilled in the future. But, it must be remembered that the first century concept of eschatology more or less telescoped the return of Christ in close to His Ascension. Peter could quote the entire prophecy in anticipation of its immanent fulfillment. They had seen the signs associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit. We still await those associated with the return of Christ and the consummation of the ages. The Believer’s Study Bible Notes will help:

“This portion of the prophecy of Joel was not fulfilled on Pentecost (apart from some extraordinary metaphorical interpretation). This probably means that toward the end of time this portion, and perhaps other portions of Joel’s prophecy, will be fulfilled. This understanding of prophecy is expressive of the twofold truth that: (1) we live in the “now” of messianic blessings, and (2) there is the “yet to be” fullness of messianic blessings to be realized in the return of Christ, the millennial kingdom, and the eternal state” [BSB].

DAY OF THE LORD. This is a well known expression in the Old Testament, used to denote the coming period when God would manifest His glory, power, and justice. In the New Testament it refers to the day when Jesus Christ will return in power, glory, and judgment.

2:21 - WHOEVER CALLS. *“Then whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* This

is the Gospel the church would be preaching in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. The Gospel we preach is not one of universal salvation. Nor did Peter stretch God's sovereign grace to include those who reject Him. "Whosoever will" is the emphasis, not only here but in other passages as well: "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17, KJV).

"Whosoever" corresponds to "all flesh" in verse 17. There are no barriers. Men, women, Jews, Gentiles, slaves and free, may call on His name for salvation.

THE NAME OF THE LORD. In the Bible one's name is more than a word used to identify an individual. It referred to the person's nature and character. In calling on the Name of the Lord, we are, in faith, calling on the Person for salvation. We are not given a magic formula, nor are we given some New Age mantra by which we receive a blessing. We are saved by trusting in the crucified, risen, ascended, returning Christ.

2:22 - MEN OF ISRAEL. *"Men of Israel, listen to these words: This Jesus the Nazarene was a man pointed out to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through Him, just as you yourselves know."* "Men of Israel" seems to be a wider designation than that of verse 14, embracing all the race of Jacob. They were descended from Abraham, but so were many other nations. Here Peter is addressing specifically those who were descendants of Abraham through Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

JESUS THE NAZARENE. This the name by which He was commonly known. Only a few weeks before, this very title had been inscribed as a reproach upon the cross on which He died a humiliating and agonizing death. Let them now think of that Name in a different light - as inscribed in golden letters on the throne of glory!

A MAN POINTED OUT TO YOU. The verb means shown forth publicly, to display, or to accredit. Jesus had been attested to by God with powerful miracles and signs. The Man they had rejected and crucified had been approved or attested by the very God they profess to follow. Since that day countless servants of God, called and approved by Him, have been rejected and persecuted by those who insist they are rendering Him a service.

MIRACLES, WONDERS AND SIGNS. **Miracles** calls attention to the fact that the mighty works of God were done as manifestations of the power of God in their presence (Matt. 11:21,23). **Wonders** denotes them as startling, amazing, exciting works, arresting the attention by their supernatural character. **Signs** points to their ethical end, or moral purpose, and stresses their value in illustrating divine truth.

AS YOU YOURSELVES KNOW. No plea of ignorance is going to be accepted. They were without excuse for rejecting Jesus. They were sinning against the clear revelation of God. Sin against the light and knowledge of God is still inexcusable (John 11:39-41; 15:24-25). Let us stress here that if these people, who had never seen a published copy of the New Testament were without

excuse, there will be no excuse for any person today who rejects Jesus Christ.

2:23 - THOUGH HE WAS DELIVERED UP. *“Though He was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him.”* The word is used with emphasis. “The person whom God the Father delighted to honor and accredit, you have dishonored, rejected and slain” [WALKER: 45]. The man who had thrice denied his Lord only a few weeks earlier confronts those who had plotted, planned, and carried out a sinister conspiracy against the Son of God, whom they professed to serve. Simon Peter is preaching the pure Gospel in the full power of the Holy Spirit here for the first time in the history of the church. Every preacher of the Gospel who stands to preach the Word of God should preach with equal courage and conviction. As one person said, “Preach your convictions, I have enough doubts of my own.”

DELIVERED UP. He was betrayed by Judas, but in reality, God handed over His Son to the enemy that He might be put to death for the redemption of the world (John 3:16). No one could have nailed Him to the cross against His will and purpose.

DETERMINED PLAN. “Christ’s death had been predetermined from before the world’s foundation (see 1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Rev. 13:8)” [NCWB]. Nothing that happened was a surprise to God. The betrayal, trials, and death of His Son had been predetermined - Jesus is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). The word suggests that it was decreed, as though marked out with a boundary. The word “plan” implies will and determination, as well as design.

FOREKNOWLEDGE. The word is peculiar to Peter (1 Pet. 1:2) and Paul (Rom. 8). God has perfect knowledge of all things, past, present, and future. “We must remember that the language is relative and finite, He is the timeless One, before whom all events lie open in one eternal now” [WALKER: 45]. The Bible Knowledge Commentary states that “The point of this verse is clear: the Crucifixion was no accident. It was in God’s set purpose (*bouleô*, “plan”) and was God’s determined will, not merely His inclination. It was a divine necessity (cf. 4:28) [BKC].

NAILED HIM TO A CROSS. Peter boldly charged, “you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him.” Peter accuses his audience of murdering the Christ whom God had sent and whose ministry He had endorsed. Remember that these people were in Jerusalem to worship God on one of the holiest days of the year.

LAWLESS MEN. Those who crucified Christ were lawless men who professed to live by the Law. The word suggests lawbreakers, transgressors. What they did was terrible, but it should be remembered that we are just as guilty of the death of Jesus on the Cross. A young Jewish man told friends that as a child growing up in New Orleans, he was called “Christ killer” by other children. Wonder where children got such an idea? Ask their parents. Sin put Jesus on the Cross - your sin and mine. We are the transgressors for whom God’s precious Son died.

2:24 - GOD RAISED HIM. *“God raised Him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.”* It is significant that in the first sermon preached after the coming

of the Holy Spirit a major theme is the Resurrection. In fact, the early church never missed an opportunity to focus attention on the Cross and the Resurrection, and the promised return of the Lord.

THE PAINS OF DEATH. This may be a missing element in much of the preaching today. The first disciples were deeply touched by the agony of His suffering and death. The Mel Gibson film, *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST*, caused a lot of people to stop and take a look at the “pains of His death.” Walker translates this “the pangs of death,” with the idea of birth-pangs in mind. He wrote, “Death travailed in birth-throes till the dead was raised again” [WALKER: 46].

IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE. It was not possible in light of God’s plan and purpose (2:25-28) for death to hold in its grip the One who is the source of life. To the world it is a miracle that He arose. In eternity it would only have been a surprise if He had not risen.

2:25 - DAVID SAYS OF HIM. “*For David says of Him: I saw the Lord ever before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*” Peter turned to the Scripture for his authority (see Ps. 16:8ff). The Scripture must remain the authority for Christian living and Christian preaching until Christ returns. I was often privileged to hear the man W. A. Criswell called “the prince of preachers”, R. G. Lee, say, “You cannot substitute the thus reasoneth the mind of man for the thus saith the Word of God.” The means of our redemption may not seem reasonable to the World, but it follows God’s predetermined plan.

It is also significant that Peter found Christ in the Old Testament. What is more amazing is that David found Him in the Old Testament! One thousand years before the coming of the Messiah, David was inspired to write about the trials, death (Ps. 22), and ultimate victory of the Messiah (Ps. 24). He could not have known what Peter knew about Christ, but He knew the promise of His coming. This was an essential part of the message of the early church. The Jews, in particular, had to see that He was the long awaited Messiah. The church must find Jesus throughout the Bible.

EVER BEFORE ME. The force of the imperfect tense in the Greek is “I continued looking directly ahead at the Lord in my presence.” There was no mistaking who He was.

HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND. David saw Him continually as One close by his side as protector and helper. The Greeks liked to speak of a “side-by-side” comrade on the right hand, who in battle covered with his shield the man on his left [WALKER: 47]. In court the advocate stood on the right hand side of his client to plead his cause.

2:26 - MY HEART WAS GLAD. “*Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced. Moreover my flesh will rest in hope...*” Based on the position of God by his right hand his heart is heart was glad and his tongue rejoiced.

MY FLESH WILL REST IN HOPE. Literally, it shall tabernacle (pitch its tent) in hope. Hope is His contribution to mankind. Look at the religions of the ancient world and one element that is

missing is the hope we have in Jesus. Hope is not wishful thinking but assurance of eternal life reserved in heaven for believers (1 Peter 1:3-5).

2:27 - YOU WILL NOT LEAVE. *“Because You will not leave my soul in Hades, or allow Your Holy One to see decay.”* The Hebrew word translated, “will not leave” is a strong word meaning to abandon or forsake. Confidence is expressed that his soul would not be abandoned to realm of the dead and left there without resurrection.

HADES. This is the NT equivalent of the Hebrew “Sheol”, the place of the departed spirit. It refers to the unseen realm into which men and women pass at death. This refers to the realm to which all go, even though the destination of the saved is different from that of the lost.

YOUR HOLY ONE. This is one of the glorious titles the Messiah in the OT. Holy means righteous, not polluted with evil. Jesus was the Agent of creation (John 1:1f). He is clearly revealed in the Abrahamic Covenant (2000 B.C.) and the Davidic Covenant (1000 B.C.). Peter’s audience knew the Scripture and he is now revealing that Jesus is the One for whom they had looked from generation to generation.

2:28 - THE PATHS OF LIFE. *“You have revealed the paths of life to me; You will fill me with gladness in Your presence.”* In the NT, the way that leads to eternal life. The word “paths” does not imply that there are many roads to God or to Heaven. In the February, 2007, GUIDEPOSTS magazine, Senior Editor Jim Hinch, writes about meeting three ladies, one Muslim, one Jewish, and one Christian. These ladies have a warm friendly relationship. The story is warm and refreshing, but one does not have to read very far before we encounter a serious problem. Senior Editor Hinch writes that the Muslim lady began a search into the beliefs of the Christian and Jewish faiths. He writes, “To her surprise, she discovered that, though Muslims, Christians, and Jews appear to be intractably at war, they all worship the same God - the God of the Old Testament” [Guideposts, p. 48]. It is understandable that an uninformed Muslim might believe she worships the same God as Christians, but no Christian, including the Senior Editor of Guideposts, should make such a serious error. Christians do not follow the same paths as Jews, and neither Jews nor Christians follow the same paths as Muslims. “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

FILL ME WITH GLADNESS. He anticipates a fulness of joy. The secret of joy is seen in the presence of the Lord. There must be a reverent awareness of His presence, fellowship with Him, and a commitment to obey Him before the believer will experience genuine joy in the Lord.

2:20 - BROTHERS. *“Brothers, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.”* Peter uses a word that is more than affectionate greeting in addressing his audience. He uses the traditional Jewish term which identified himself with his audience (see men of Israel, vs. 22).

THE PATRIARCH DAVID. Peter wants to stress that Psalm 16 does not apply to David, but to

another. David died and was buried in the part of Jerusalem that was known as “the City of David” (I Kings 2:10). They were familiar with his tomb. This prophecy was not fulfilled in David.

2:30 - PROPHET. *“Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn an oath to him to seat one of his descendants on his throne.”* The word is used here in its more technical sense, one inspired to foretell future events. The prophet was also one called to forth-tell divine truth. God had revealed to David that one of his descendants would be seated upon his throne. We find the background for this is the David Covenant of 2 Samuel 7.

2:31 - THE RESURRECTION OF THE MESSIAH. *“Seeing this in advance, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah: He was not left in Hades, and His flesh did not experience decay.”* There is no way we can know just how much David understood of the message God gave him, but there is one thing about which we can be sure. God knew and revealed it a thousand years in advance. As Peter preached, the prophecy had been fulfilled, because His Holy One *“was not left in Hades, and His flesh did not experience decay.”*

We must remember that Peter, though an uneducated fisherman from Galilee, had been a disciple of the Son of God for three years. He had not simply sat under His teaching for an hour at a time two or three times a week. He walked with Him, talked with Him, and was often corrected by Him. Now, he is preaching in the full power of the Holy Spirit.

2:32 - THIS JESUS. *“God has resurrected this Jesus. We are all witnesses of this.”* He is emphatic - this very Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified was resurrected by God the Father. The Resurrection is stressed again. The very Jesus they had put to death, God had raised again. Peter was but one of many witnesses to the fact that God had raised Him. Years later, Paul would stress that there were still many people living who had seen the risen the Lord.

2:33 - EXALTED TO THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. *“Therefore, since He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, He has poured out what you both see and hear.”* The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was followed by the Ascension. Jesus had already been exalted to the right hand of God where He is making intercession for us. He reveals Himself in the Revelation to be the exalted Savior, seated at the right hand of the Father. The right hand of God is the position of power and authority.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Jesus had received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and He passed it on to His followers. In fulfillment of the promise He had now poured forth His Spirit upon His disciples. This is what they have just witnessed.

2:34 - IT WAS NOT DAVID. *“For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says: The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand...”* It was Christ, not David, the Father invited, “Sit at My right hand.” The Davidic Covenant found fulfillment in the Messiah, not in David.

2:35 - UNTIL I MAKE. *“...Until I make Your enemies Your footstool.”* Jesus is the Exalted One,

the King of Kings. All those who oppose Him are His enemies. To make them a footstool means to bring them into absolute subjection to Him. There are a lot of enemies of Christ in the world today, but they will all be brought into complete subjection to Him. This was a picture to which the citizens of Rome could relate, for one king after another had been forced to bow before the Roman emperor, becoming in essence, his footstool. There were few exceptions, but English historian and theologian William R. Cooper tells of one who refused to become a footstool to the emperor. His name was Caradoc.

The story begins in Britain, in AD 43, the year of the Claudian Invasion of this island and the Britons' resistance to it over nine long years under the leadership of Caradoc. We could say much at this point of how Caradoc, time after time, defeated the Roman legions, humiliating their finest generals (including the future emperor Vespasian), in more than thirty pitched battles, so that his fame and notoriety soon reached even Rome itself. But the truly important aspect of Caradoc's life as far as *this* paper is concerned, is what happened to him and his family when finally he was betrayed into the Romans' hands by the Brigantean Queen, Cartimantua. Tacitus, the Roman historian, takes up the story.

The scene is the Roman Senate, before whom are presented the members of Caradoc's household, and, of course, Caradoc himself. In fear and supplication, every member of the household kneels before Caesar, with the sole exception of Caradoc. With summary execution awaiting him, he remains standing in chains, and addresses the so-called masters of the world with such dignified defiance that he wins their applause, their pardon, and a home with his family in the imperial palace. And there modern historians (if they mention him at all) leave him, as if there is nothing more to say. Further enquiry, however, leads us to one of the most important episodes in the history of the early Christian Church, and ultimately it helps to answer a question that has been dogging even fundamentalist Biblical scholars for years concerning the date of the earliest writing of the Gospel.

Caradoc (known to Tacitus as Caratacus) is listed in the Welsh Triads (*Trioedd ynys Prydein*) as *Caradawc map Bran Vendigeit*, or Caradoc the son of Bran the Blessed.⁵ Prior to his leading the Britons against the invading Romans, he was one of the three *cynweissieit*, or "Chief Ministers" of Britain, finally becoming *cynwessiad*, or the Chief Minister mentioned in the *Branwen verch Llyr* [Cooper, William R., OLD LIGHT ON THE ROMAN CHURCH, unpublished research papers, sent to this writer by the author].

Caradoc may not have been have bowed to the emperor, but the day is coming when all will bow before Jesus, and all enemies will become His footstool. As Paul writes, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10f, KJV).

2:36 - LET ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL KNOW. *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!”* Jesus had promised that when the Holy Spirit came upon His disciples at Pentecost they would be filled with power and be His witnesses. If this is any indication of what Jerusalem was to expect from these simple disciples, they were in for a shock. When you read these words, you may recall one word that Luke continues to use - Boldness. One can only try to imagine the great burden Peter had for Israel as he preached that sermon. It was his desire, and God’s desire, for all Israel to know “with certainty” that God had made this Jesus, whom they crucified, both Lord and Christ. Peter charges, “that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!”

Every sermon needs an appropriate conclusion. In homiletics classes the preacher learns to give sermon conclusion a lot of attention. There could hardly be a more powerful conclusion to a sermon than the one before us. He concludes with Christ crucified, raised, and exalted.

Jesus is both **Lord** and **Christ**. Unfortunately, there are many who claim Jesus as Christ (Savior) who do not recognize Him as Lord. Jesus may have come into this world as the Suffering Servant, but today He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is not placing an application with anyone to be his or her servant. He is Lord and Christ. He will indwell and reign as Sovereign over the live of every believer. It has been well said that if He is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all. Many who profess faith in Him have no concept of what His Lordship means.

D. SOME RESULTS OF THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL, 2:37-47.

2:37 - PIERCED TO THE HEART. *“ When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: ‘Brothers, what must we do?’”* The idea is to be pricked, or pierced as by a sharp instrument. They were under deep conviction. Genuine conviction of sin must precede repentance. Many today who profess faith in Christ seldom attend a worship service. You cannot tell them from lost people in the community. Perhaps Leonard Ravenhill was right in his charge that part of the problem is that we no longer have tears in our services. Possibly there is a connection between the shallow commitment of many Christians and the fact that they “joined the church” about the same way they join a civic club. There are few signs of deep conviction and repentance.

I was saved when I was twelve, called when I was thirteen, licensed when I was nineteen. Everyone in my highschool knew I “was going to be a preacher”, so many were on their best behavior around me. In the community, there were a few who loved to try to shock me with their language and conduct, so I was not blind to the sin that was going on around me. I was protected by my parents from influences within our own extended family. They focused our attention on our local church, the Word of God, and the need to minister to others. In time, I pieced together stories of sin, bootlegging, violence, and avarice that would shock a lot of church members today. I have one

picture, given to me by my maternal grandfather that reminds me of what a difference Jesus Christ has made in my life. Copies of that picture of a moonshine still in full operation is a reminder of the effect of sin in the life of key figures in my family tree.

There is one great-uncle in that picture who would never have used profane or vulgar language in the presence of a lady or a child. In fact, if he had heard some of the language used by church members today in mixed company used in the presence of a lady in his day, the offender would have been in serious danger. Some of those men came to know the Lord in time. My own grandfather, the most unforgettable character I have ever known, often told humorous stories about things that happened to friends and neighbors during Prohibition, but he was saved at some point and he was the first person to explain Isaiah 53 to me.

Growing up in the Mississippi Delta after World War II, I was protected, but not blind. When I read recently that **many people outside the church fifty years ago lived a cleaner life than many people in the church today**, the report resonated with me. A lot of people consumed alcoholic beverages in our dry state. They were not held up as good examples to us. There were those who used language as vile then as today, but seldom in the presence of ladies and children. I did not hear the references to body parts and body functions from lost neighbors, in mixed company, that I hear kids in the church use today.

People are not confronted with sin and its consequences from the pulpit. One popular television preacher says that he does not preach on sin or hell, and he does not talk about repentance because he just wants people to feel good! One church asked to see the songs a choir would sing when they came to their church on a tour. They didn't want to hear anything "about blood or anything else that was gory that might offend these people out here." If the preaching of the Gospel does not bring conviction of sin there is something wrong with that preaching. The preacher cannot create the conviction, but if he will preach the Word faithfully the Holy Spirit will take care of the conviction of sin.

WHAT MUST WE DO? This was the right question. They had just heard that they had crucified the Son of God and that God had raised Him from the dead. The Holy Spirit had convicted them of the fact that they were guilty.

2:38 - REPENT. *"Repent," Peter said to them, "and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* This is a critical verse and we must understand what Peter says to those who have asked what they must do. **The word "repent" denotes a change of mind and will which involves a change of conduct.** The Greek shows that God demands an immediate and complete renunciation of sin. Peter is saying, "You need to change your heart and mind and do it now!"

This is important. There are no punctuation marks in the Greek, but the change in the grammatical construction demands a break in action. **The Word "repent" is the second person, plural, imperative, active:** You must (all) take this action.

BE BAPTIZED. There is a break here. **This verb is third person, singular, imperative, passive. Let each person who does repent submit for baptism.** Those who repent, and only those who repent, are to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Those who try to find a contradiction between this verse and the Great Commission fail to understand that no one can dissect the Godhead. We are to be baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but listing only one Name here does not violate the Great Commission.

Baptism is a transliteration of the word which can only mean to immerse, or dip. This was the only mode of baptism which adequately portrays the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and it is the only mode that portrays what has taken place in the believer's heart. It is a symbol of the death and burial of the old life which was dead in sin, and the new life in Christ. Paul wrote, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4, KJV).

LET ME REPEAT: It is very important that we understand something about the two verbs and they way they were used. As we have seen, **REPENT** is second person imperative plural active. What we have here is a Christian absolute, both doctrinally and experientially. They asked what they should do and he answered, "Repent, every one of you!" The imperative means they must take action. They would also understand that he meant do it now.

Now, the verb **BE BAPTIZED** is third person imperative singular passive. There is a break in the thought between "repent" and "let each of you be baptized" that is not indicated by our punctuation. All are commanded to repent. When the first command is obeyed, then each one (who obeys) should be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ. **Baptismal regeneration is not taught in this passage.** Peter is clear about that in 3:19 where baptism is not mentioned. This explanation is consistent with the rest of the NT.

FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS. This might well be translated "upon" the forgiveness of sins or "because of" the remission of your sins. We are baptized after repenting and receiving forgiveness of our sins.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, is promised to all those who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. He is not received through some send blessing at a later time. At the point of salvation the Holy Spirit indwells the heart of the believer - once for all time. This is the baptism in, or by the Holy Spirit. It does not have to be repeated. A distinction should be made between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Christians need to be filled with the Holy Spirit daily. We must confess our sins (1 John 1:9) and ask God to fill us with His Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

NOTE: This verse (1) rejects baptismal regeneration; (2) it rejects a second blessing by which the believer receives the Holy Spirit; and (3) it creates serious problems for hyper-Calvinism. [Does this not create a serious problem for strict Calvinists?

Second person, plural, imperative, active - that means that everyone is commanded to repent, not just a select few! Why would Jesus command all to repent if only a select few could possibly obey Him? - JLS]

2:39 - THE PROMISE. *“For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”* God has pledged to give this gift to as many as receive Him. God cannot break His promise. Every believer will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

YOUR CHILDREN. The same promise is made to your posterity. They must repent, whereupon they will be born again and receive the Holy Spirit, and then they must be baptized.

ALL WHO ARE FAR OFF. The same promise is made to all nations and races. Those who heard Peter that day could hardly have imagined the significance of those words. For that matter, Peter himself had a lot to learn and it would take a special revelation to prepare him to take the Gospel to the home of the Gentile, Cornelius. We can hardly read this without thinking of the conversion and call of Saul of Tarsus to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

2:40 - MANY OTHER WORDS. *“And with many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, “Be saved from this corrupt generation!”* Peter did what preachers are still doing when people are responding to the invitation to trust Jesus Christ. He kept on exhorting them to trust Him.

BE SAVED. Terms like “saved” and “salvation” may seem strange to lost people and to some who profess to be Christians, but it is Scriptural. Sinners still need to be saved. There are arrogant unbelievers who say, “I don’t need to be saved, I am not lost!” They clearly do not know the Scripture: “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Paul also wrote, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

THIS CORRUPT GENERATION. History reveals that to have been a crooked and evil generation. The first chapter of Romans gives us an idea as to the sinfulness of the Gentile world of that day. The unregenerate world is always crooked and ungodly. Is the world any better today?

2:41 - THOSE WHO HAD RECEIVED HIS WORDS. *“So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them.”* Not all who heard the Gospel received Christ as Savior. Those who did receive Him were baptized, by immersion, in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS. Here we have the first OF MANY PROGRESS REPORTS in the Book of Acts. There will be many more. Luke reports that 3,000 people were saved and baptized that day. “Thus the ‘firstfruits’ were gathered in and presented to the Lord on this great day of ‘firstfruits’ [WALKER: 57]. In addition to the phenomenal manifestations of the coming of the Holy Spirit on that day, we now add a phenomenal response to the first sermon preached in the power of the indwelling and empowering Spirit of God.

2:42 - CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES. *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers.”* They “devoted themselves”! These were not fair weather Christians; they were not Sunday morning saints. They had found something more important than Monday night football, or a Saturday night movie. Most church members can only use these words in reference to work, recreation, or their social life. But when believers continually devote themselves to the Lord, they will find that the power of the Holy Spirit has not diminished, and His presence and influence in the life of Christians are just as wonderful today as they were then.

One man talked with me about his church, a mega-church that mushroomed almost overnight, as a former pastor reached out with his church growth plan, which included “marketing” his church in such a way as to make it a “regional church”. Many smaller churches in the area paid the price for it, as young adults left churches in which they had grown up in the area. My friend talked of visions the new pastor had of revival. It is interesting that any church that shows a great increase in members is “having a revival”. There has been no significant revival in America in decades, and there will be no revival until members of our churches repent and take the Gospel outside the walls of the sanctuary and transform their communities. There will be no revival in America comparable to the Great Awakening until Christians truly become the salt of the earth, and a light to a dark world. There will be no revival until church members take the Gospel home with them and apply it where it counts most - in the home. There is no sign of revival when church members seek vile, profane, evil entertainment, or when they permit their children to watch immorality portrayed humourously on television night after night.

Deeply committed parents are often shocked to discover that members of their Sunday School class allow their children to watch television programs or DVDs which are filled with profanity, obscenities, near nudity, disrespect for parents, and other things that should shock a Christian parent. It becomes a problem when children beg to spend the night with each other.

THE APOSTLES’ TEACHING. These people continually devoted themselves to divine truth, to the study of the Word of God. They wanted to know God in a personal and fulfilling relationship. When the Holy Spirit is permitted to direct one’s life there will be a commitment to a study of the Word of God. When I told my brother Mike that I was getting ready to go to a meeting of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources (2001), he asked me to “tell them to stop dumbing down our literature.” I asked him to write down what he wanted me to tell them. He wrote a four page letter, which I gave to then Vice President of LifeWay Church Resources Gene Mims. Gene turned it over to John Kramp, the man who would replace him as Vice President over this very important division which prints a vast assortment literature for 100, 000 churches. John Kramp and his assistants spent a lot of time with Mike’s appeal to give us some “hard core Bible study.” John called Mike and wrote to tell him that he made a valid point and that he was making a commitment to do just that. There is now a new undated curriculum that will take one through the Bible in seven years of serious Bible study.

It may have been at a later meeting in Glorieta, New Mexico that then President and CEO Jimmy Draper shared his list of BAPTIST ESSENTIALS with trustees (noting that Morris Chapman had a similar list). Dr. Draper gave me permission to use his list. He stated that “There are many Baptist distinctives (Baptism by immersion), but there are seven Baptist essentials every Baptist should know.

1. Salvation by grace, through faith, plus nothing (which demands security of believers).
2. Sufficiency of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
3. The Lordship of Jesus Christ
4. Autonomy of the local church
5. Religious Liberty
6. Trinitarian view of God
7. The Great Commission

It would be interesting to know how many Baptists actually know these “essential”, or for that matter, can distinguish between the essentials and the distinctives. Baptists have been called the people of the Book, but most pastors are keenly aware of the fact that the people of the Book know very little about the Book. Some are highly offended if you try to get them into a study of the Bible. They had rather be entertained than hear expository sermons. As the late Vance Havner used to say, “They may sing, ‘I Stand Amazed’, but they had rather sit amused.”

FELLOWSHIP. Fellowship means more than pizza and Pepsi, or Cokes and cookies after church on Sunday night. The word denotes participation in something. In this case, it refers to their participation with each other in worship, prayer, study, communion, evangelism, and ministry.

BREAKING OF BREAD. This denotes the observance of the Lord’s Supper. The term was also used of sharing a meal with others. But the context here holds this to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Dr. Frank Page, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, met with the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources at Glorieta in 2006. He told us that since he was president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and since he was from South Carolina, presidential candidates had already begun calling him to ask for support in the 2008 presidential race. He went on to tell about one of the most recognizable names in America who had called a few days earlier, asking for his support. Page asked the well known politician if he had ever received Jesus Christ as his Savior. The politician said, “Oh yes, I received him last Sunday when I received Communion.” Dr. Page explained that is not what we mean when we talk about receiving Jesus Christ. Sadly, millions are confused about this today.

In Baptist churches one expects to find a communion table in front of the pulpit. If it is uncovered, worshipers can read the words across the front, **THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.** The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is a memorial to the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross for our sins. His body was broken for us. His blood was shed for us. When we place our faith in Jesus Christ we are born-again. We receive eternal life, just as He promised all who believe in Him (John 3:16). The Lord’s Supper is observed very reverently in memory of His sacrifice.

PRAYER. The disciples had asked Jesus to teach them to pray. They did not ask Him to teach them how to pray. These early Christians, now in the power of the Holy Spirit, continually devoted themselves to prayer. The soul that is filled with the Spirit yearns for fellowship with God. These believers were now praying in the power of the Holy Spirit to God the Father, in the Name Jesus Christ. This is the privilege of every Christian today.

Powerless Christians are prayerless Christians, and prayerless Christians are powerless Christians. A powerless Christian can ask God to so fill his heart with the Holy Spirit that he will be taught to pray, and in prayer discover that the Power of Pentecost can be just as real today as it was two thousand years ago.

2:43 - A SENSE OF AWE. *“Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles.”* They lived daily in a sense of reverential fear, a sort of holy awe. The word for awe here is *“phobos”*, which can be used of a crippling fear (phobia), but here it is used of reverence. This is the missing ingredient in many Christians and in many church services today. Paul wrote, *“There is no fear of God before their eyes”* (Rom. 3:18). The same indictment may be made today, and not just of the world. The church in America seems to have no fear of God. We hear reports that indicate that believers in China and in other countries where Christians are persecuted come before the Lord with this sense of reverence today. I was surprised when Ken Stephens, the LifeWay vice president over the B & H Publishing Group (formerly Broadman and Holman) told members of the B & H Committee that there are now more Christians (7%) in China than Communists (5%).

I asked Phill Burgess, vice president of B & H Outreach International (BHOI) for LifeWay Christians Resources, to send me copies of the Gospel of John in a parallel format, with the new Mandarin translation on one side and the Holman Christian Standard Bible on the other side. I had met a very impressive Chinese lady who had flown to America to help her husband’s parents during a very challenging time with health issues. I had called to tell them I was going to drive over to give the young lady about 24 copies of the newly published Gospel of John in Mandarin. While she was reserved and very gracious, her mother-in-law confided that she was very excited about the gift of the Scripture. The picture I made of the very articulate young lady should be on the website for BHOI. There is in her eyes that spirit of awe.

I had sat with her in the surgery waiting room while her mother-in-law was in surgery. Other family members stepped out to get lunch and to bring her a sandwich. I had driven home and picked up a copy of the Book of Romans in a parallel format, with the old Mandarin on the left and the new translation on the right. I showed her the old Mandarin translation, which is not very accurate, on one side and the new translation on the other side. I asked her if she could see the difference and she nodded and said, “Yes.”

When they returned to her mother-in-law’s home, friends from their church began to visit. Ladies announced that they would be bringing meals five days a week while the mother-in-law was going to

Monroe, LA for radiation and chemo-therapy. When someone stopped by to pray with the lady, the Chinese daughter-in-law would rush in from the kitchen to be a part of the prayer group.

The sense of awe and reverence I saw in that lady is not something I see on a regular basis in services today in America. I see it in some worshipers, but not all. We had better pray for the church in China today because they could be sending missionaries to America tomorrow.

I am continually in touch with Bill Pace, a native of Lake Village, Arkansas, who has a home in Dallas, and for several years has taught conversational English in China. In December, 2006, Bill met Wayne Duncan and me at the Cracker Barrel restaurant in West Monroe, Louisiana. We I have made arrangements with BHOI to have two hundred copies of the Gospel of John in the Mandarin/HCSB format sent to his him in Dallas, and I have the same about that number to give him when we meet. Bill sent me the following message on July 7, 2007:

“At the church here where I go there has not been a pastor. We had about 6 different one that preaches and not the same on two Sundays in a row. We now have a pastor that will start in August. He is from America. He preached on the Sunday before we voted and I think he will be a good one. It will be nice to have one pastor that preaches each Sunday. The church hasn’t been here very many years because it wasn’t allowed until about 10 years ago.

“We have two services each Sunday and it is an over flow crowd each service. There are people from over 60 different countries comes to the English services. **Anyone can come but the Chinese. They are not allowed to come to our services.** I wish that would change. There are a lot of my students that want to go to church with me. I go with them sometimes to the Chinese service. I am allowed to go to theirs and they have ear phones that translates it into English” [E-Mail message from Bill Pace in China, bold added by this writer].

WONDERS AND SIGNS. Both wonders and signs continued through the ministry of the Apostles after the Day of Pentecost. Remember that both words might be used of the same miracle. They may denote different qualities of the same miracle. “Wonder” refers to something that captured their attention and holds it in memory. “Sign” points to something beyond the miracle. It points, like a fingerboard, beyond the temporal to the eternal truth.

2:44 - ALL THAT BELIEVED. “*Now all the believers were together and had everything in common.*” There was great unity among these early saints. Today it may be easier to find a church with a name like Unity, Harmony, or Fellowship than it is to find unity, harmony, and fellowship in some churches. As a matter of fact, it would be interesting to know the number of churches that a have adopted names like Unity, New Fellowship, or Harmony that were formed by a split in another church.

Unity is important in a local church. It is important for the organs and systems of the human body to

work in a harmonious conjunction with one another. When there are members or organizations within the church that do not work in harmony with others unity is destroyed, fellowship broken, and the ministry of the church is severely handicapped. That which brings unity to the local church is usually thought to be love, and love for God and other members is crucial, but sound doctrine is essential for unity. Love must be stressed, but sound doctrine must be stressed from the pulpit, in Sunday School, and in other ministries of the church.

ALL THINGS IN COMMON. This was not Communism, or Socialism, as some suggested when Communism was at its peak as a world philosophy. This is a demonstration of what can happen in a Christian community when people put God first, others second, and self last. Communism in the Soviet Union was a miserable failure. One reason was that they denied God. Another was that humanism and materialism cannot produce the fruits of the Spirit required for this to work. Human nature is selfish and this kind of society is based on godly love which places others ahead of self.

This sharing was on a completely voluntary basis, the result of a common faith. This is NT Christianity in its purest form. Over emphasis on high self esteem is not going to promote this kind of community, but genuine Christian love can produce it on a local level today. Two dangers should be avoided: (1) coercion, and (2) communal living.

2:45 - THE BEGAN SELLING...SHARING. *“So they sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need.”* The verbs are imperfect. They kept on selling their possessions and they kept on sharing with others as the need arose. Property refers to “real property”, immovable property, real estate. The word “possessions” denotes personal, movable goods.

2:46 - CONTINUING WITH ONE MIND. *“And every day they devoted themselves [to meeting] together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart...”* This is every bit as miraculous in the moral realm as the healing of a lame person is in the physical realm. When God’s people come together with one accord in prayer, evangelism, worship, and ministry, they will see the power of God manifested in this day. Too many churches are better known for divisions and factions that for the oneness of mind and heart described here.

There was a time when churches were more likely to be divided over ego issues, a power struggle, personality clashes, or a conflicts generated when people could not agree on the color of the carpet. More recently, divisions have developed after the new “worship leader” has thrown out the organ someone’s favorite grandmother donated. Style of worship has become a major source of controversy for some. It is a fact that many older people do not want to change things very much - or very quickly. It is also a fact that in many churches new members have come in and forced change on faithful members who have supported the church for years. Sometimes the older people are wrong for not being willing to change some things. Those who abuse their elders are always wrong. Prayerfully seeking change for the glory of God is a good thing, forcing change on older people can

be very painful and very divisive.

IN THE TEMPLE. They continued to keep the Jewish hours of prayer. No doubt, following the phenomenal results they had seen, they hoped to see masses in Jerusalem and Judea receive Jesus as Savior. They never turned their back on Israel or the Temple. Years later Paul and others would still be going to the Temple. Unfortunately, intense persecution forced some to leave Jerusalem, and it took the destruction of the Temple in A. D. 70 to force many Jewish believers to focus on the ministry of the church.

BREAKING BREAD FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE. The momentum of Pentecost continues, as they shared meals in each other's homes as they met to worship and study God's Word. Note the two attitudes that characterized these meetings: Gladness and simplicity of heart. These attitudes should characterize every service of the church.

2:47 - PRAISING GOD. *"...Praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved."* The disciples of Pentecost were joyful believers, praising God for all He was doing for them and through them. Praise is the response of a grateful heart to God for all His benefits. Christians may sing about praising God and give testimonies about how good God has been to them, but in any service there may be those who are singing His praises with their tongues who do not praise Him with tongues or their lives during the week. Praise must be sincere.

Some feel that praising God involves saying "Amen", or "Praise the Lord" all during the day. Others find other ways to praise Him. We must be careful not to condemn those who praise Him differently. Fellowship is strained when we try to impose our methods and worship style on others.

THE LORD ADDED. The ascended Christ was adding to their number daily those who were being saved. The verb is in the imperfect tense. The Lord kept on adding, day by day, those who were being saved.

THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED. Evangelicals know what it means to be saved, but the lost world, and some more liberal church members, are confused by the terminology. When Jimmy Carter announce his candidacy for the office of President of the United States, he announced that he was a born-again Christian. That term kept the media busy for a while! The Paul states that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23); and that "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Salvation is receiving eternal life through Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

E. Peter and John Lead in the Spread of Gospel, 3:1-4:31.

3:1 - PETER AND JOHN. “*Now Peter and John were going up together to the temple complex at the hour of prayer at three in the afternoon.*” It seems only natural that Peter and John would be the central figures in the initial stages of the spread of the Gospel (3:1-4:31). Luke highlights their ministry in the first part of the Book of Acts, presents a transition, and then follows the ministry of Paul to give us an account of the phenomenal spread of Christianity as the Holy Spirit directed believers who were totally obedient to the Great Commission.

THE HOUR OF PRAYER. It is significant that the Disciples were still going to the temple. They continued to observe the hours of prayer, the third, sixth, and ninth hours (9:00 am, 12:00 noon, 3:00 pm). Since there was no immediate break with Judaism, one might infer that they had every hope of seeing Israel embrace the Christ as the Messiah.

3:2 - LAME FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB. “*And a man who was lame from his mother's womb was carried there and placed every day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so he could beg from those entering the temple complex.*” Luke shows the interest in this man's background one would expect from a physician. He has told us in the introduction to this book that he had researched everything very carefully. This man's illness was not psychosomatic. He had been lame from birth and his condition was well known. Post-Pentecost miracles, while they lasted, were comparable to those of Christ, or greater (John 14:12).

This man was being carried by friends or family members who carried daily to the same place where he could beg alms of passers-by. This was their custom, and his. For years people had seen them carry him and they had seen him begging. This was no old-west medicine show one sees on TV where both the healer and the one healed were strangers to every one in town.

TEMPLE COMPLEX. The NASB has, “the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful.” The temple complex included the sanctuary (the holy place and the most holy place), at least four courtyards (for priests, Jewish men, Jewish women, and Gentiles), numerous gates, and various covered walkways [Bullet notes, HCSB, The Bible Navigator].

Luke, a Gentile believer, is writing to a Gentile, Theophilus, so he provides a little extra information. It was probably the gate to Herod's Temple known as “the gate Nicanor”, on the east sided of the Court of the Israelites which was reached by 14 or 15 steps from the Court of the Women. It was larger and more beautiful than the other gates, all of which were folding doors covered with gold and silver [WALKER: 65].

3:3 - HE ASKED FOR HELP. *“When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple complex, he asked for help.”* Begging was almost an honorable profession in the Near East in that day, as it is today. “Profitableness was escalated in a milieu where ‘works-salvation’ and public display were incentives to the donor” [HLE: 32].

3:4 - LOOK AT US! *“Peter, along with John, looked at him intently and said, ‘Look at us.’”* Peter and John looked intently upon the man (“fixed their gaze” on him) until they had his attention, and then Peter ordered him to look at them. No doubt, he had sat there day after day, year after year, begging, not really looking at those who gave. Peter wanted his undivided attention.

3:5 - HE TURNED TO THEM. *“So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them.”* He looked at them and began paying attention. He was directing his mind toward them in anticipation of what they might give him. He went through the same routine day after day, as great numbers passed by, many making a contribution to his cause. Few ever made it a personal matter, but Peter and John gave him their attention and he anticipated a financial blessing.

3:6 - NEITHER SILVER NOR GOLD. *“But Peter said, ‘I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have, I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!’”* They had no worldly possessions and they placed little value on them. But there was no way their lack of silver and gold could limit the power of God, or His spiritual gifts.

WHAT I HAVE I GIVE TO YOU. In what Peter and John did have there was an abundant supply. They were rich in spiritual gifts. The Lord had blessed them with great power. Today, the church must recapture this awareness of power that Peter and John had. We may not have silver and gold, but of the things the suffering individuals and masses of the world need most, we have an abundance of resources.

IN THE NAME OF. In essence, he is saying, “by virtue of the authority and power of.’ Name stands for the revealed nature, character, office, and authority of the person. The word is used in this sense about 34 times in Acts” [WALKER: 66f]. The miracle was done by virtue of His Name.

JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH. Peter adds the title Christ to His name, and there is no mistaking the name he intended. His is the “name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9). There were others who were named Jesus, but there was but one Jesus Who was the Anointed One, the Messiah.

GET UP AND WALK! The lame man had probably heard a lot of commands, but never in his wildest imagination could he have anticipated what Peter said to him. It was not humanly possible for him to walk, but Peter had the utmost faith in the Name in which the command is given.

The story is told of a Bishop who pointed to the ornate decorations of a great cathedral and commented to a priest, “No longer must the church say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” To which the laconic reply from a priest was, “But neither can it say ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,

walk!”

We might agree with the preacher who said, “What many churches have today, the lame do not need” [HLE: 32]. To expand this thought one might add, “What some churches have today, nobody needs!” That is not to say that the church does not have an answer. We have philosophical answers; we have psychological answers; we have sociological answers; we have economic answers. We can offer the lame man money, we can offer him advice, we can put him in a counseling program. But it would never occur to most believers to say to a lame man, “In the Name of Jesus Christ, walk!” We save that for the Charismatics!

3:7 - TAKING HIM BY THE RIGHT HAND. *“Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong.”* The power was Christ’s, but the hand was Peter’s. This was a natural thing for Peter to do, but there is a sense in which it is an example to us. There are times when we need to do more than offer advice, or promise to pray. We must offer a helping hand in the Name of Jesus.

AT ONCE. At once, on the spot, he stood upright completely healed. There is no evidence of a melodramatic struggle to rise as onlookers stand in awe.

FEET AND ANKLES. Or, feet and ankle bones. The first word literally means the soles of the feet, the latter simply the ankle bone. Both words in the Greek are technical and reflect the interest of a physician.

3:8 - HE JUMPED UP. *“So he jumped up, stood, and started to walk, and he entered the temple complex with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.”* He was completely healed. No therapy was needed for his feet and legs. That might not mean much to one who has never suffered with a severe foot problem, but it means something to this writer. A pinched nerve in one foot, followed by a missed diagnosis and appliances and supports that an orthopaedist would in time explain caused most of my problems provided me with an opportunity to learn the value of therapy. The prescribed shoe supports and inserts, and metatarsal bars created serious injuries and that was followed by a lengthy period of inactivity during which time intense pain and inactivity caused muscles to atrophy. It was only after months of active therapy that I could stand and walk with a normal stride.

This man needed no therapy. When Peter commanded him to walk, it was as though he had never had a problem with his feet, ankles, knees, hips, calves, or thighs. Such was the power of God manifested through the Apostles during this new Messianic Age (“Then the lame will leap like a deer” (Is. 35:6a).

STARTED TO WALK. This is the imperfect tense: he kept on walking! Only one who has never walked, or one who has lost the ability to walk can appreciate what a blessing it is to walk. No one can imagine the relief and joy I experienced when the Lord provided the healing I desperately needed in order to walk into hospitals and nursing homes if I was going to be able to remain in the pastorate. One Monday morning I decided to try a pair of shoes I had tried a number of times before,

and after they caused a set back in my condition, retired them. That morning, I decided to try them one more time and that time I was able to walk into one hospital to visit a patient, and when I returned to my car I realized that there was no additional strain this time. I then drove thirty minutes to another hospital and visited another patient. Within a few days, I realized that the Lord had given me the additional steps I needed to continue in His work.

After sitting on a barstool for twenty-five years, I continued to pray, “Lord, lift me up and let me stand.” One day, while walking down the hall in a hospital, I noticed that was walking better than I had walked a few months earlier. I then noticed that I could stand longer when working in the yard. One Sunday morning, I stood up and preached. The next Sunday, I stood for both services. For seven years now (2007), I have stood to preach. The Lord saved the best for last! I know what it is to rejoice to be able to walk!

ENTERED THE TEMPLE COMPLEX. This would seem like the appropriate place to go celebrate and praise the Lord. He who for years had been seen lying at the gate of the temple begging for alms, came walking and leaping into the temple. He had asked alms of Peter and John and he received a lot more than he was expecting. There is little wonder that the man was rejoicing in a demonstrative way. The wonder is that every person who receives a spiritual blessing does not rejoice and praise the Lord. The real surprise today is the apathy many professing Christians show toward God.

3:9 - ALL THE PEOPLE. *“All the people saw him walking and praising God...”* It was the 3:00 P.M. hour of prayer and there were many people present to witness this great miracle first hand. There would be no question as to the authenticity of the miracle.

3:10 - THEY RECOGNIZED. *“And they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple complex. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.”* They kept on taking note of him, that is, more and more of them recognized him as the cripple beggar they were accustomed to seeing sitting by the Beautiful Gate asking alms of them.

FILLED WITH AWE AND ASTONISHMENT. The late Vance Havner was one of the most amazing preachers of his day. I had read the books and heard the tapes, and I had heard him quoted more often than almost any preacher around, but none of that prepared me for the blessing I would receive when I heard him in person at Luby’s Cafeteria in Port Athur, Texas. He had a gift for stating deep thoughts and facts in simple and unforgettable terms. He once preached a sermon entitled, “The Wonder of It All.” In that message he claimed that a major problem today is that the church has lost the wonder of it all. He may have been the one of the first to say, “We sing ‘*I Stand Amazed,*’ but we had rather sit amused.”

Today many churches have substituted amusement for amazement. We use celebrities, magic acts, power point, to communicate the message, as well as various forms of entertainment to attract people to our services. But if we had a genuine experience of wonder and amazement at the power of

Almighty God in our services, we couldn't keep people away. Leonard Ravenhill, in a taped lecture, said, "**You don't have to advertise a revival. If you have a revival, you can't keep it a secret.**" **3:11 - HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN.** *"While he was holding on to Peter and John, all the people, greatly amazed, ran toward them in what is called Solomon's Colonnade."* Whatever he may, or may not have understood about what had just happened to him, he recognized Peter and John as agents of his blessing. He continued to cling to them.

ALL THE PEOPLE. It did not take long for this demonstration of gratitude to draw a crowd. It is human nature for people to run to anything exciting and these people were "greatly amazed". Think what a difference it would make today if people were being drawn to our churches by the mighty acts of God the way young people are drawn to rock concerts, or the way people are drawn to the scene of an accident.

SOLOMON'S COLONNADE. The KJV has "the porch called Solomon's." Luke, the Gentile physician, could not go past the wall of separation between the court of the Gentiles and the court of the Jewish men, but he had done enough research to provide the information that would interest his friend Theophilus (as well as the modern day reader).

3:12 - WHEN PETER SAW THIS. *"When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this? Or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk?"* Peter saw the people coming together and knew they were looking for an explanation. He could not miss such an opportunity the Lord had given him.

One writer wonders why Luke recorded the "Colonnade Sermon" so close to the Pentecost Sermon. We must never forget that the Holy Spirit is the divine Author of Acts, Luke the human instrument. These two sermons are recorded at the beginning of the Book by divine plan. The content of the sermons is more important than their location in the Book. Both the sermon at Pentecost and this one in Solomon's Colonnade contain a proclamation of Christ as the Messiah and an appeal for repentance. While the Pentecost sermon is given in a little more detail, both "focus on the denial and vindication of Jesus of Nazareth" [EBC: 295]. This sermon "shows a more generous attitude toward Israel, coupled with a greater stress on the nation's responsibility for the Messiah's death than does the Pentecost sermon" [EBC: 295f]. This sermon stresses the necessity of receiving Christ by faith.

The period following Pentecost was a time of opportunity for the disciples. For one thing, the Apostles sought to relate Christ to the OT Scriptures and to show Israel that Jesus of Nazareth really is the Messiah. It was a time to proclaim Christ as the fulfillment of prophecy. The "Restoration hinted at in Genesis 3:15b, prophesied by Isaiah (53:4-12), and inaugurated by Christ (Luke 4:40-41) surfaced every time the church (the mystical body of Christ, and as such an extension of the incarnation) asserted Pentecostal prerogatives" [HLE: 33].

MEN OF ISRAEL, WHY ARE YOU AMAZED. Peter moves quickly to give God credit for the miracle then had witnessed. He is just as determined not to take credit for himself and John. The power to make the lame walk was of God.

3:13 - THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB. *“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.”* Peter and John had not healed the lame man. He was healed by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in order to glorify His Son, Jesus. The mention of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would resonate with this Jewish audience.

HIS SERVANT JESUS. The sermon begins and ends with this title. Using the title “Servant” must have echoed the Servant theme of Isaiah 42-53. Compare the statement that God has “glorified His Servant Jesus”, with Isaiah 52:13: “Behold, my servant...he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” The point is that Jesus is the Servant of Isaiah 42-53.

WHOM YOU HANDED OVER. “You” is emphatic. The God of our fathers glorified Him, but you, **you** delivered Him up to be crucified. Surely now they remember their cries, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” There was a lot of difference between the way God treated His Son and the way they had treated Him. God is still glorifying His Son, but most of the world today might as well be shouting, Crucify Him! Every day, He is rejected, mocked, cursed, slandered, and portrayed obscenely in comedy and art. He is denied by church members, who want to be identified with the church on Sunday, but ashamed of His Name during the week at work, school, or play.

DENIED IN THE PRESENCE OF PILATE. John was right: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Peter was not about to let them off the hook. I heard R. G. Lee tell the story of a business man who arrogantly brushed him off in his office, but later called and asked him to come to see him. The man said, “I have done every evil thing you can think of, except kill any one. I have never killed any one.” Dr. Lee responded, “You have done that, too!” The startled man asked what he meant. Dr. Lee said, “Your sins put Jesus Christ on the Cross. You are responsible for His death.”

We live in what has been called the age of psychology. A lot of time and effort is focussed on helping people get rid of guilt-feelings. Peter was more concerned with their need to get rid of the guilt. What have we accomplished if we get rid of guilt-feelings if the guilt remains? When one accepts Jesus Christ, He will take care of both the guilt and guilt-feelings.

Pontius Pilate , the fifth Roman procurator of Judea, governed Judea from A.D. 26 to A.D. 36. It was neither a glorious, nor pleasant assignment. He had been determined to releasing Jesus but capitulated under pressure from Jewish leaders and the clamor of the mob. The politician collapsed under pressure from these very people whom Peter addressed. To show the enormity of their sin, Peter stresses the fact that Pilate would have released Him had it not been for the hatred of the people and their religious leaders.

3:14 - BUT YOU. *“But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked to have a murderer given to you.”* He is even more emphatic, charging that even Pilate would have released him if they had not persisted in denying Him and demanding His crucifixion.

THE HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS ONE. What a glorious title for our Savior. “He had been recognized and acknowledge as the ‘Holy One’ even by demons (Luke 4:43); and as the “Righteous One’ by pagans (Matt. 27:19; Lk. 23:47); while ‘His own’ people had ‘denied’ and rejected Him” [WALKER: 73]. Holy denotes consecration for God’s service, and Righteous points to integrity of character and conduct.

ASKED FOR A MURDERER. The antithesis is very strong. Not only had they denied the Holy and Righteous One, they actually asked for a murderer (Barabbas) to be released, rather than Jesus.

3:15 - YOU KILLED. *“And you killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.”* This is incredible! He charged, “You killed the source of life.” He was speaking those Jewish authorities, his message points a finger of indictment to us today, for our sins placed Him on the Cross. Those who professed to be holy and righteous had killed the Holy and Righteous One. In essence, he says, “You not only asked for a murderer to be released, you became murderers yourselves!” Remember that he is talking to religious people who have gone to the temple for the hour of prayer.

THE SOURCE OF LIFE. The NASB has “the Prince of life.” There is an amazing paradox in the charge, “You put to death the source of Life.” The word translated “Prince” carries with it two ideas, beginning and rule, or originator and authority. He is the source and author of life - Creator and Sovereign.

WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD. He continues to drive this point home. The focus of the sermon is on God’s Servant, Jesus whom they disowned and killed, but God raised from the dead. It was through His Name and faith in His Name that the beggar was healed. In this case, it was not the beggar’s faith, but the faith of Peter and John.

WE ARE WITNESSES. Peter, John and hundreds of others were eye-witnesses to the fact that God had raised Jesus from the dead. The eye-witness accounts of the Resurrection were very compelling in the first century, both in Jerusalem and in other places. There were many signs and wonders, but the Resurrection was, and remains the crowning miracle of the New Testament. Without a doubt, this is one reason the enemies of the Cross rejected the message about the Resurrection so vehemently. Satan could not refute the evidence but he could lead those under his control to persecute those who proclaimed it.

3:16 - FAITH IN HIS NAME. *“By faith in His name, His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Him has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.”* Is he saying that faith in the Name of Jesus is the instrument of healing, or the grounds for the healing? Or, is it both? Contrary to what some modern faith healers claim, there is no evidence that the healed person here showed faith in the Name of Jesus. Peter and John had enough faith to heal the lame man. We must never confuse this with the faith God gives one so that he might be saved by God’s grace (Eph 2:8). It is important to add that this, and all miracles, come

under the sovereignty of God. He could have healed this man without faith on the part of any person. He responds to faith as Jesus promised, but He not a slave to our faith.

HIS NAME. The only Name whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12) is the very Name by which this man was healed, and strengthened. “His Name” occurs twice; once as the object of faith, and once to denote Jesus, the Person, as the divine subject Who healed the man.

PERFECT HEALTH. Just as the healing was not psychosomatic, it was not partial. He was totally and perfectly healed of the basic handicap and all the secondary complications that accompany a prolonged handicap. If one’s feet are injured so that he cannot walk, muscles atrophy and when that happens other bones and joints can be effected. I was told by an outstanding Orthopaedist, Dr. Henry McDonald of the Fort Worth Bone and Joint Clinic that my leg muscles had shortened both from pain and inactivity to the point that “it is impossible for you to make a step.” I pushed one foot ahead of the other, planting it flat before making another short step. I could cover the handicap for a brief time by walking slowly. I had to go through a period of “active therapy” in order to stretch my leg muscles before I could regain a normal stride. It was still a long time before I could walk without pain and intense burning on the bottom of both feet. God healed this man without his having to go through “active therapy”.

IN FRONT OF YOU. Peter is saying, “There is the proof right before your eyes!” They had been seeing the man begging for alms by the gate for years. Now he was walking and leaping. The miracle was undeniable.

3:17 - NOW, BROTHERS. “*And now, brothers, I know that you did it in ignorance, just as your leaders also did.*” Peter is less formal and more personal as he makes an application of his sermon.

YOU DID IT IN IGNORANCE. Literally, according to a lack of knowledge. He is not trying to offend at this point. They were acting as their leaders had acted. Recall the prayer of Jesus from the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

3:18 - GOD PREDICTED. “*But what God predicted through the mouth of all the prophets—that His Messiah would suffer—He has fulfilled in this way.*” God announced fully beforehand, through various prophets, the suffering through which the Anointed one would go. Prophecy and its fulfillment is a distinction of Christianity which sets it a part from the religions of the world. Pagan religions, and secular prognosticators, can point to some predictions which came to pass, but there has never been anything to compare with what we see in the Word of God. The test of prophecy is total (100%) fulfillment (Deut. 18:22). The Old Testament predicts it and the New Testament records the historical realization.

Peter had for three years been enrolled in the single greatest school in history. He was a disciple of the greatest Teacher Who ever lived. And now he had been in the school of the risen Christ. He was keenly aware of Messianic prophecy and its fulfillment in Christ. The Holy Spirit heightened his awareness and guided his explanation.

HE HAS FULFILLED. God had over-ruled their ignorance and their crime to accomplish His purpose and to fulfill prophecies He had given the prophets.

3:19 - THEREFORE REPENT. *“Therefore repent and turn back, that your sins may be wiped out so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”* On the basis of what he has just said he Peter now commands them to repent. Repentance is a change of mind and heart and a turning from sin to God. This was the message of John the Baptist, the primary message of the Apostles after Pentecost, and the very heart of the Gospel we preach today. Whether or not the preaching of repentance offends the world, it is imperative that we preach the Gospel of repentance from sin, and warn that those who refuse to repent face an eternity of conscious eternal torment the Bible in hell.

TURN BACK. They are commanded to turn from sin to Christ for salvation. This denotes the action which results from the change of mind and heart. This word is used often in Acts (see 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18). People do not repent until they are convicted. That is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Modern social scientists help people deal with guilt, but we must be very careful to avoid any implication that any relief from guilt feelings is tantamount to repentance. One may respond to an invitation to accept Christ in order to escape the guilt feeling without repenting. I am convinced that one reason we have so many lost people in the church is that some people “walk down the aisle” because of the conviction of sin, nod when the pastor asks if they are trusting Jesus to save them, and receive assurance that they are saved when they have not repented.

THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED OUT. The KJV is more familiar: “That your sins may be blotted out.” Compare this with 2:38. This verse in no way implies that baptism can blot out sin. But the result of turning from sin to God is that one’s sins will be blotted out. The word means to wipe off (as one would wipe off a slate), or erase (as one erases a chalk board). The redeemed person should profess Jesus Christ publically and then follow Him in believer’s baptism.

SEASONS OF REFRESHING. Conversion is the beginning, not the end of one’s experience with God. There is a period of time between one’s conversion and the consummation of his salvation. We should thank God that we do not have to wait for our Glorification to experience a time of refreshing. It comes to each person who turns to Christ. Furthermore, “great waves of repentance refresh entire nations and religious traditions. They sustain us with hope pending full consummation of salvation” [HLE: 36].

3:20 - AND HE MAY SEND JESUS. *“And He may send Jesus, who has been appointed Messiah for you.”* The Second Coming is the glorious hope of all believers. The Second Coming is to the first what His resurrection was to His death. Without it the first advent would be incomplete.

APPOINTED FOR YOU. Jesus is the Christ. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the Messiah God has appointed for you. There will be no other.

3:21 - HEAVEN MUST WELCOME HIM. *“Heaven must welcome Him until the times of the restoration of all things, which God spoke about by the mouth of His holy prophets from the beginning.”* Heaven must receive Jesus according to the will and purpose of God, but also because He is God. The grave could not hold Him, the world cannot restrain Him, and Heaven cannot deny Him.

TIMES OF THE RESTORATION. Restoration is a great Christian theme, but often limited to the restoration of the individual to a right relationship with the Father. Here the idea of restoration is eschatological. At the return of Christ there will be a period of restoration. To some, this means simply the consummation of the ages. To others, it means a restoration of all things, including a true theocracy and the “more perfect state of even physical things which existed before the fall” [HLE: 36].

WHICH GOD SPOKE ABOUT. God is given full credit for the Scripture promising the time of restoration. Inspiration of the Scriptures is inferred if not stated. Peter would later be inspired to write that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20).

BY THE MOUTH OF THE HOLY PROPHETS. Peter reveals the high view of Scripture the disciples had learned from Jesus (see Luke 24:45). They had sat at His feet and learned the meaning of these prophecies, and now Peter is emphatic about the Second Coming. Today, it seems that some interpreters want to apologize for the ignorance of these unsophisticated believers.

NOTE: There are believers today who do not place as high a value on the OT Scriptures as did Peter and John. Because I was looking for an answer for someone who asked about this, I had been reflecting on the importance of the OT Scriptures for a few days when a convincing thought came to me. I took the Holman Christian Standard Bible and began thumbing through Matthew, counting the passages in bold print. In the HCSB, every quote from the OT is in bold (the words of Christ, in bold red). I then turned to the Book of Romans and counted the quotes, from one-liners to lengthy passages, and found in one hurried count 45 quotes from the OT in that book alone. Jesus placed great value in the Old Testament Scriptures and here we see that Peter and John did as well. There is no question about the rest of the NT. The OT Scriptures are of the utmost importance to us today.

3:22 - MOSES SAID. *“Moses said: The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your brothers. You must listen to Him in everything He will say to you.”* What we have here is a rather free quote Deut. 18:15, 18, 19. This Jewish audience would listen when they quoted Moses.

A PROPHET. Peter applies the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18 to Jesus Christ. He alone could fulfill its message. However, when you study Deuteronomy 18 it is obvious that a “double futuristic” meaning could include both Joshua and Jesus. The name Jesus is the NT equivalent of the OT name Joshua (the salvation of Yahweh).

LIKE ME. Moses was a “type” (picture or symbol) of Christ in many ways but Jesus transcends Moses in every way. Moses was the servant; Jesus is the Son, as the writer of Hebrews tell us. He is the One to Whom we are to give heed in everything.

3:23 - EVERYONE WHO WILL NOT LISTEN. *“And it will be that everyone who will not listen to that Prophet will be completely cut off from the people.”* The Jewish audience professed faith in, and obedience to the Scripture God gave them through Moses. Peter emphasizes the fact that Moses prophesied that this Jesus, Whom they had put to death, is the Messiah. The consequences of rejecting this prophecy are catastrophic. This solemn warning of the danger of rejecting Jesus is an essential part of the Gospel. Sadly, some of the most popular preachers in America today do not want to offend people by preaching against sin, demanding repentance, or telling the truth about the consequences of rejecting Him. They may have used the word hell in a profane way before they were saved, but both the word and the place would be too offensive to mention it in some modern churches.

SHALL BE COMPLETELY CUT OFF. The KJV has “destroyed,” but the phrase in the Greek is strong and denotes complete destruction. This is just one of more than two hundred such warnings in the NT.

3:24 - ALL THE PROPHETS. *“In addition, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also announced these days.”* Samuel is a pivotal figure in the OT, bridging the gap between the Period of the Judges and the Period of the Kings. The call of Samuel ushered in a new age of prophecy. Peter probably has in mind those writing prophets who followed Samuel. The non-writing prophets may well have “announced these days,” but we know a number of the writing prophets, including both the Major Prophets and Minor Prophets did prophesy about the coming Messiah.

3:25 - YOU ARE THE PROPHETS. *“You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your forefathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* The “you: is emphatic. He is saying, You, of all people, with all your inherited privileges and blessings, ought to give your allegiance to Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of all the prophets.

SONS OF THE PROPHETS. They were of the same race as the prophets, and heirs of all they had foretold of His messianic grace.

OF THE COVENANT. The Messianic Covenant was a vital part of their theology. They were beneficiaries of the covenant, and they longed for its fulfillment. However, when Jesus announced that He was the Promised One, they rejected Him because they wanted a political/military Messiah who would throw off the shackles of Rome.

SAYING TO ABRAHAM. This refers to the Abrahamic Covenant with which every Hebrew

was familiar. The great Messianic Covenant, mentioned first in Genesis 3, and established with Abraham (Gen 12), was the hope of every God-fearing Hebrew. God kept that hope alive and maintained His covenant with them, even when His people were faithless and undeserving.

IN YOUR SEED. There were three promises associated with the Covenant God made with Abraham. God promised Abraham the Land of Canaan, innumerable descendants, and that in his Seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Today millions of descendants of Abraham live in the Middle East, and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob (Israel) not only fill the Promised Land, they are found all over the world. Israelites control only a part of the land God promised their father, Abraham, and a small part of the land God promised in the David Covenant (2 Sam. 7). If they had obeyed the Lord they would possess all the land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River (and control all the oil reserves throughout the region). But they lack one thing, and that is accepting Abraham's Seed, Jesus Christ, the third aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:3f).

3:26 - GOD RAISED UP. *“God raised up His Servant and sent Him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.”* Again, the pronoun is emphatic. Of all the people of the world, the Jews were the first to receive the Gospel of the Resurrection. They were the first to hear news of the risen Christ. It must have seemed inconceivable to Peter that they would reject Him. Their priority in opportunity intensifies their obligation to respond and their accountability for rejecting Christ. Unfortunately, today as then, most Jews do not accept Christ as Lord: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11).

The Jewish people still need to hear the Gospel, but few Christians make witnessing to Jewish people a high priority. Gentile Christians should remember that salvation is of the Jews. It was proclaimed to them first and through them it was proclaimed to the world.

SERVANT. Once again, Peter returns to the Servant theme, with emphasis on the Resurrection. The Gospel of the Resurrection is not threatened by repetition. Jesus fulfilled every aspect of the Suffering Servant prophecy in Isaiah, but when He returns He will no longer be a suffering Servant, but the King of Kings.

SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU. Peter says that God has sent His Son to bless you now. He will send Him again in glory to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God sent His Son to bless them, and He is still the source of all true blessings.

TURNING EACH OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS. “Wicked ways” portrays active wickedness, and denotes a perverse delight in evil. The sermon concludes with emphasis on repentance and the blessings one receives when he turns from his evil ways to accept Christ as Savior. What a great blessing than turning one from evil to Christ!

“They had been looking for a Messiah who would bring outward blessings to Israel as a nation, and through her to the rest of the world. Peter says that Christ came,

instead, to bring salvation from sin” [NCWB].

CHAPTER FOUR

PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

4:1 - AS THEY WERE SPEAKING. “*Now as they were speaking to the people, the priests, the commander of the temple guard, and the Sadducees confronted them...*” The priests and other officials interrupted the sermon, Peter’s second recorded sermon in the power of the Holy Spirit. They thought they had disposed of Jesus once and for all, only to find His followers carrying on His work.

PRIESTS. These were probably priests who were officiating at the temple at the time of the miracle. When the chief priest and members of the family are intended they are usually identified. They were probably priests who had served as high priest by appointment of the Roman governor. Also, the “high priest” is given that designation.

“The priests were primarily Sadducees in their religious affiliation (5:17); so the principal accusers were Sadducees. These people were distinguished by several characteristics: (a) a disbelief in a bodily resurrection and a denial of the existence of angels or spirits (23:8); (b) loyalty to the Roman government; (c) a desire to maintain the status quo; (d) an association with the wealthy class; and (e) adherence only to the Pentateuch. The Sadducees were greatly disturbed by Peter and John’s preaching because it directly opposed the Sadducees’ denial of the resurrection and would also shake the establishment” [BKC].

CAPTAIN OF THE TEMPLE GUARD. This official was the “High Priest’s right hand man, his chief of staff, his executive officer. In particular he had the oversight of the good order of the Temple. When the crowd had gathered it was inevitable that he and the Temple police should arrive on the scene” [BARCLAY: 34]. The temple guard would have been concerned about any kind of disruption in the Temple Complex, and either the guards reported the disturbance to the captain of the guard, or he was on duty in the area and witnessed it himself.

SADDUCEES. This was the most powerful sect in Judaism. The Holman Bible Dictionary defines this sect in this way: “A religious group which formed during the period between the Testaments when the Maccabees ruled Judah. They took their name from one of David’s copriests, Zadok, and claimed descent from him. Their name meant “righteous ones” [HBD].

They were a minority, but “as a wealthy aristocracy, they controlled the temple and were powerful in the government” [FRANK STAGG: 74]. They owned real estate which could be easily confiscated by Rome and this probably accounts for the fact that they were willing to collaborate with Roman officials. The Pharisees, on the other hand, bitterly resisted foreign rule.

Sadducees were descendants of the Hasmoneans, who looked back to Mattathias, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon (168-134 B.C.) as having inaugurated the Messianic Age and saw themselves as perpetuating what their fathers had begun [EBC: 301]. They were a sort of priestly aristocracy, who possessed great political influence. Though few in number, they controlled the Sanhedrin and held a monopoly on the office of High Priest. The High Priest was appointed by Rome at this time and by their collaboration with Roman officials, they were able to have one of their number appointed to the office.

The Sadducees were mostly indifferent to religion, with exception being made for custom and expediency. They were dedicated to the status quo, because this was the best way to protect their interests and their authority. They did not accept the written Law as binding and rejected the resurrection and future rewards and punishment. They did not believe in angels and rejected the supernatural.

The Sadducees were the first to oppose the Apostles, but even those who were bitterly opposed to the Sadducees supported them in their opposition to Christ and in the persecution of His followers. The Sadducees had the most to lose if Rome viewed this new movement as unlawful, or simply a nuisance. They were responsible for law and order and could not afford to give the impression that they could not control this situation. “The Roman government was very tolerant; but on public disorder it was merciless” [BARCLAY: 34].

NOTE: The Pharisees are not mentioned here, but they played a prominent role in the religious life of the Jews. They were more numerous and more vocal than the Sadducees. Whereas the Sadducees rejected the resurrection, the Pharisees strongly defended it. In his commentary on Acts, Dr. H. Leo Eddleman stated:

“Resurrection and immortality are not mutually exclusive terms. Sadducees rejected two orders (dualism): spiritual and material. They slammed the door of the ‘hope of Israel’ to and tore off the hinges. Those who maintain that the O.T. neither assumes nor teaches immortality have lapsed into the same position as the Sadducees. Pharisees were often hypocritical... Hypocrisy is the compliment evil pays good” [HLE: 40].

CAME UPON THEM. They burst upon them violently to arrest them. The guards, under the command of the captain were aggressive, not passive as some law enforcement officers may appear when trying to control a crowd.

4:2 - BEING GREATLY DISTURBED. “...*Because they were provoked that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in the person of Jesus the resurrection from the dead.*” The Greek means “thoroughly pained.” The only other use of this word in the NT is in 16:18 where we read that Paul was grieved when he saw the demented woman at Philippi. The Sadducees were deeply disturbed because:

1. The disciples were teaching the people.
2. They were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
3. If they did not squelch this movement, consequences could be disastrous for them.

TEACHING THE PEOPLE. The priests and scribes regarded religious teaching as their own prerogative. They could hardly believe these ignorant Galileans would be so presumptuous. The Apostles were proclaiming the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Sadducees bitterly opposed this doctrine. Some today are still asking, “If a man die, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14).

4:3 - PUT THEM IN JAIL. “*So they seized them and put them in custody until the next day, since it was already evening.*” They put them in a prison ward, or jail until the next day because it was against Jewish law and custom to hold formal trials at night. It was already evening (past 3:00 P.M., and therefore no trial could be completed before 6:00 pm).

4:4 - MANY...BELIEVED. “*But many of those who heard the message believed, and the number of the men came to about 5,000.*” Every one did not share the opinion of the Sadducees. They could imprison the Apostles, but they could not imprison the Holy Spirit, or nullify the effect of the preaching of the Gospel. Paul would later write, “the word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:9).

“One of the subthemes of Acts is the growth of God’s Word in spite of opposition. Like a juggernaut the message irresistibly moved ahead. Two leading apostles were bound, but the Word of God cannot be bound! (Cf. 28:30-31; Phil. 1:12-14.)” [BKC].

THE NUMBER OF MEN. Here we have one of several **progress reports** found in Acts. The **3,000 of 2:41** had now increased to **5,000 men plus women and children**. There is little wonder that the Sadducees were disturbed.

4:5 - THEIR RULERS AND ELDERS AND SCRIBES. “*The next day, their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem...*” The Sanhedrin was made up of all these officials, or factions. The name Sanhedrin (Council) signifies the ruling body and supreme authority of the Jews. Rome gave the Council far-reaching power in dealing with Jewish problems, both in Judea and in other provinces. They could not, however, pass the death sentence. Luke identifies three groups who were opposed to the followers of Christ:

1. RULERS - the priestly party of the Sadducees.
2. ELDERS - Leading citizens.

3. SCRIBES - Students of the law, mostly Pharisees.

These two simple fishermen were standing before the most powerful - and pompous - self-righteous leaders one could find under Roman control anywhere.

4:6 - WITH ANAS. *“With Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John and Alexander, and all the members of the high-priestly family.”* Annas had been appointed high priest by the Romans in A.D.6 and served until A.D. 15. A son served a term following Annas and at the time of this trial, Caiaphas, his son-in-law, was High Priest. Following Caiaphas four other sons of Caiaphas served in that office [STAGG: 77]. Barclay in pointing out the bribery and corruption associated with the office notes that between A.D. 37-A.D. 67 there were no fewer than 28 High Priests [BARCLAY: 36]. Annas was not the High Priest, but he was still the head of the family.

CAIAPHAS. Caiaphas had been appointed as High Priest in AD 18 and served until AD 37. As the ex officio president, he led the Sanhedrin in condemning Jesus.

JOHN AND ALEXANDER. We are not given any information about these two men, but they must have been prominent members of the High Priest’s family.

OF HIGH-PRIESTLY DESCENT. All of these were Sadducees and many were on the Sanhedrin. There were a number of Pharisees on the Council, but they were not at the forefront in this initial wave of persecution.

4:7 - IN THE CENTER. *“After they had Peter and John stand before them, they asked the question: “By what power or in what name have you done this?”* The temple guard brought Peter and John from their prison cell and placed them before the Sanhedrin. The Seventy (some say 71) sat in a semi-circle and the accused stood before them.

BEGAN TO INQUIRE. They kept inquiring (Imperfect tense). This was a prolonged interrogation. They knew nothing of the protection afforded those who stand before a court in America today.

BY WHAT POWER. Actually, they were asking, “By what kind of power have you done this?” For the Sanhedrin, the real issue was, “by what authority have you done this?” “Authority was a big word in the Roman Empire and in Judaism, politically for one and theologically for the other” [HLE: 41]. They were possibly trying to put the Apostles in the class with those who practiced the magical arts. However, authority was a major concern to the Jewish leaders and some members might have been sincere in asking this.

SPECIAL NOTE: These two simple apostles stood before the most powerful court permitted by Rome in all of Jewry. These officials were highly, and personally motivated to squelch all claims that Jesus was the Son of God, His promised Messiah. They had done everything they could to kill the stories of the Resurrection. Now, they have the two most prominent apostles before them and

they will do everything in their power to discredit them and destroy this movement known at the time only as “the Way”. The world, empowered and motivated by the prince of this world, has continually attacked Jesus, His deity, His humanity, His morality, even His existence. In the closing days of February, 2007, newspapers and news networks were filled with a story about a supposed “tomb” that proves that Jesus was married and had a son. Michael Foust, writing for Broadman Press provides the basic information (in excerpt below):

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The controversial claim by an upcoming television special that researchers have discovered Jesus' “tomb” falls apart under both scientific scrutiny and simple logic, scholars in New Testament and archaeological studies say. The Discovery Channel will air “The Lost Tomb of Christ” -- produced by James Cameron of “Titanic” fame -- Sunday at 9 p.m. Eastern. Among other things, the documentary claims Jesus and his family's ossuaries (or bone boxes) were found in a tomb in the Jerusalem suburb of Talpiot. **The documentary claims those ossuaries belonged to Mary, as well Jesus' “wife” Mary Magdalene and His “son,” Judah, according to the documentary.** There also is a Matthew in the mix, supposedly the apostle. The Discovery Channel already is saying on its website the find could “rewrite the history of early Christianity.” **The ossuaries, though, were discovered in 1980, and archaeologists -- both Christian and non-Christian -- had long ago written off any possibility the ossuaries were tied to Christ.** “This is not new information. These tombs have been known and were published in the archaeological community,” said Steven Ortiz, associate professor of archaeology and Biblical backgrounds at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. **For centuries, Christians have pointed to two empty tombs in Jerusalem as the possible place where Jesus' body was initially placed.** One of the tombs resides within the Church of Holy Sepulchre, which Ortiz believes is the most likely location. **But the documentary challenges the bedrock belief of Christianity -- the bodily resurrection of Christ.** Among the problems with the documentary's claim, experts say, is the fact that the names on the ossuaries were common during biblical times. “Joseph is the second most common male name in the period. Jesus is the sixth. Matthew's the ninth,” Darrell Bock, professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, told Baptist Press. “Mary is the most popular female name -- 21 percent of the female names of the period. So, you're dealing with a lot of familiar names.” According to the documentary's website, the six ossuaries read, “Jesus Son of Joseph,” “Mary,” “Mary known as the master,” “Judah son of Jesus,” “Jose” and “Matthew.” The ossuary for Mary's husband, Joseph, was not found, according to the website. Yet the Bible has no mention of Jesus being married, much less having a son. Also, there is no known relationship of Jesus to Matthew. Mark 6:3 lists four half-brothers of Christ: James, Joses (or Joseph), Judas (not Judas the traitor) and Simon. He also had half-sisters, according to the passage. Although there were ossuaries for a James and a Jose, no other ossuaries with inscriptions for these additional brothers and sisters were found. Stephen Pfann, a biblical scholar at the University of the Holy Land in Jerusalem, told the Associated Press he believes the script on the Jesus' ossuary more likely says “Hanun,” and not

“Jesus” [Broadman Press, 2-27-07, bold added by this writer].

The producers of this documentary will answer for waving the flag of Satan in the face of Jesus, but their motivation is rather thin compared with that which motivated those officials before whom Peter and John stood more than two thousand years ago - only days after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. They were highly motivated and experienced in intrigue. If the life, death, burial, resurrection (or power) of Jesus could have been denied it would have happened right then and right there. **4:8 - PETER, FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.** *“Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders:”* Peter was filled afresh with the Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was a once for all experience, but one needs to be filled daily with the Spirit. This filling is not a general filling for fellowship and edification, but a specific filling for the challenge before him. It is possible that at this time John and Peter recalled the words of their Lord: “For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:12).

RULERS AND ELDERS. Peter began with the appropriate address in recognition of their authority. These officials had tried Jesus, taken him to Pilate, and demanded that He be crucified. They had a lot of power, but they had to be careful how they used it, and how often they tried to force Pilate’s hand to accomplish their purpose.

4:9 - IF WE ARE ON TRIAL. *“If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man—by what means he was healed.”* This was a legal examination, they had not stated the charge against Peter and John, so Peter states them: “a good deed done to a disabled man.” The judges are mildly rebuked, for people are not usually tried for good deeds.

AS TO HOW THIS MAN HAS BEEN MADE WELL. The perfect tense shows that he was made well and continues to be well. The man who had been healed was standing with them. The Council was not convened to determine whether or not that man had been healed. They could not deny the evidence before their eyes. They wanted to know how it was done, and by what power. Peter is not asking if that is what they want to know. He knows it is.

4:10 - LET IT BE KNOWN. *“Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing here before you healthy.”* Peter boldly takes advantage of his opportunity to proclaim the Gospel, even in this citadel of cynicism and religious passion. One can only imagine the Apostles’ desire to see these religious leaders accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

BY THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST THE NAZARENE. Peter answers any question they might have concerning the name by which this man was healed. He is also reporting his exact words in commanding the man to walk (3:6).

WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED. Peter had only one sermon! And he just kept preaching it wherever he found an audience. He continues to drive his point home. Emphasis on the personal

pronoun suggests, “You, and not the Roman soldiers, really crucified Christ.” The Cross is an essential part of the Gospel. We must confront people with the fact that we are all guilty of the death of Christ.

When the Mel Gibson movie, *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST*, came out, there was a debate across America after some people called the movie anti-Semitic. Critics demanded to know if Jews were being accused of crucifying Jesus. These Jewish leaders demanded His crucifixion, and stirred up the crowd to demand his crucifixion. The Romans carried out the sentence, since the Sanhedrin had no authority sentence one to death. The point we must make today is that our sins put Jesus on the Cross. We are all guilty of His death.

There was a time when if you had asked evangelicals across America who they had rather hear preach than anyone else in the country, there is little doubt that the majority of those polled would have said R. G. Lee. He preached one sermon, *Pay Day Some Day*, over 1200 times and I heard him preach it twice. It was my privilege to hear him every Sunday on TV. We attended a mission church and we got out in time to get home just as Dr. Lee began his sermon, or in time to hear the special music before preached.

I believe it was Adrian Rogers, who was pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church about as long as Dr. Lee, who told the story about the time Dr. Lee stood with other tourist at the traditional site of the sepulcher of Christ. The guide asked, “Has anyone ever been here before?” Dr. Lee raised his hand and when the guide asked when he had been there, he said, “Two thousand years ago.”

WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD. The One Whom they killed, God raised. Think how it would feel to be told that one you had killed has been raised from the dead by God Himself - and that the One you put to death was none other than the Son of God. In this case, we have to add other factors. They had, indeed, planned His death and they had done it illegally. They did not believe in a resurrection, but evidence that the One they put to death is now alive was mounting and they could not refute it. In addition, a man they all knew to be lame had been healed in the Name of Christ.

THIS MAN STANDS HERE ... IN GOOD HEALTH. Here, before their very eyes was proof of everything he was saying. Before them they could see an object lesson in the power of the risen Christ. How else could they account for the miracle?

4:11 - HE IS THE STONE...REJECTED BY YOU. *“This [Jesus] is The stone despised by you builders, who has become the cornerstone.”* He is emphatic: He, whom you rejected and crucified, is the promised Stone of Psalm 118, Isaiah 28, and Zech. 3:9. They knew the prophecy, but refused to believe that Jesus was that Stone. “The rejected Stone (Christ rejected by the nation in their crucifying Him) is the Capstone, the resurrected Lord” [BKC].

CORNER STONE. They knew the value of the corner stone to the Temple. The reference is to the capstone upon which the rest of the building depends structurally. Jesus is the Corner Stone, the

strength and crown, of the superstructure of the spiritual temple (See. Matt 21:42-46). “Christ, who was ‘despised and rejected of men’ is turning out to be the keystone of prophetic Judaism and the foundation of Christianity” [HLE: 42].

4:12 - SALVATION. *“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”* Peter moves from the healing of the lame man to the salvation of the soul. He is our salvation. The world needs to hear the Gospel of eternal salvation that is in Jesus and in Him alone.

THERE IS NO OTHER NAME. He assumes the offensive, which was typical of the spiritual giants of the early church. Universalists do not like to hear this. Sadly, a lot of people who profess to be Christians are rejecting this today. It is too narrow for them. To these people, intolerance of the beliefs of others is the greatest evil they can imagine. They insist there are many paths to heaven, and that Jesus is just one of them. They reject the idea that Jesus is the only way to be saved, but it is Scriptural. There is but one way to be saved and that way is Jesus. This message may not be popular with some people, but it is the eternal truth. Eddleman is right:

The strong posture of Christianity in its primitive years toward other religions was grounded in divine compassion. Its theology as recorded and transmitted, is absolute.

Only one way: this is Christ. The teachings of Christ, or the Christ idea, do not suffice. Only experiential faith in the historical Jesus can save [HLE, 43].

We must state this biblical truth without compromise today. It is not popular, but it is the truth. God is distinctly exclusive.

“The statement that there is no salvation “in any other” reveals the exclusive nature of the theology of the early church. There was, and there is, “no other name” through which men can be saved than the name of Jesus. YAHWEH does not operate with two standards or avenues for salvation, one for the Jews and one for the believers in Christ. Only faith in Jesus of Nazareth saves Jew or Gentile (Rom 4:16ff.). Two standards would require two scarlet threads instead of the one made crimson by the blood of Christ. In an era of religious pluralism, this verse indicts the modern spirit and requires a reassessment of dangerous trends which undermine the basis for global evangelism.” [BSB Notes].

4:13 - OBSERVED THE CONFIDENCE. *“When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and knew that they had been with Jesus.”* They were observing the confidence of Peter and John all the time they were standing before the Sanhedrin. Normally, a prisoner standing before the Sanhedrin would have been nervous and intimidated.

UNEDUCATED AND UNTRAINED. Peter and John were not educated in the Law and sacred writings and could not be expected to understand the Scripture like the scribes or rabbis. They

lacked professional training required to defend their views in this forum.

THEY WERE MARVELING They kept on marveling. This was their forum and they were used to seeing frightened prisoners stutter and stammer nervously before this intimidating body. There was a marked difference with these two Galileans.

HAVING BEEN WITH JESUS. Herein is the key, but these religious leaders could hardly have appreciated it. They were keenly aware of the fact that these men were untrained in Jewish Law, but they had been with Jesus. Amazingly, they thought they had gotten rid of Jesus once and forever. Now they would have to deal with Him in these disciples. They were marveling from the beginning and then they began to recognize that what set them apart was that they had been with Jesus. There is a holy boldness about those who have been with Jesus. So it was with Peter and John, and so it should be with us today. If that holy boldness is not there, it might be an indication that we have not been with Jesus. Too many are better characterized by the word *compromise* than the word *boldness*.

4:14 - SEEING THE MAN. *“And since they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in response.”* His presence was one testimony they could not dismiss, refute, or deny.

THEY HAD NOTHING TO SAY. The promise of Luke 21:15 is fulfilled: “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”

4:15 - THEY BEGAN TO CONFER. *“After they had ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, they conferred among themselves...”* They could not answer the Apostles with the healed man standing with them, so they ordered them to go outside the Council. Then they kept on conferring, looking for an answer.

4:16 - A NOTEWORTHY MIRACLE. *“...Saying, “What should we do with these men? For an obvious sign, evident to all who live in Jerusalem, has been done through them, and we cannot deny it!”* They were searching for an answer, but they could not avoid one conclusion: a notable miracle had taken place. It was apparent, not only to them, but to all Jerusalem.

WE CANNOT DENY IT. Clearly, they would have denied it if they could. However, the man was standing in front of them and they knew him to be the man who had been healed.

4:17 - THAT IT MAY NOT SPREAD. *“But so this does not spread any further among the people, let’s threaten them against speaking to anyone in this name again.”* The best they could hope for was that “it may not spread any further among the people.” They did not want the word of the miracle and the Gospel message it supported to spread any further. Their approach was the Barney Fife approach: “nip it in the bud”. But it was already beyond that stage. They decided not to fan the flames of this new movement. It was too late for that. It was going to get a lot worse!

LET’S THREATEN THEM. They decided to threaten them. Mocking them failed. Arguments

failed. Now they would see if threats would stop them from speaking (public speaking, or preaching) “in this name.” Note that they could not bring themselves to say the name Jesus, so they just said, “this name”.

4:18 - THEY COMMANDED THEM. “*So they called for them and ordered them not to preach or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*” In these matters the decision of the Sanhedrin was binding, and to disobey was a dangerous course to follow.

NOT TO PREACH OR TEACH AT ALL. The word translated preach does not mean not to utter any sound at all, but rather to utter a loud and clear sound. In other words, do not preach in the Name of Jesus. The word for teach means to instruct in such a way as to influence or persuade the person taught. Every effort was being made to repress the Name of Jesus.

4:19 - RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. “*But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God [for us] to listen to you rather than to God, you decide...”*” They had an order from Sanhedrin, but they had a higher command - from God. The higher authority had to be obeyed, regardless of the consequences. The choices were very clear to Peter and John. Many times today the choices are just that clear, and only become hazy when people begin to rationalize, or compromise.

4:20 - WE CANNOT STOP SPEAKING. “*...For we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.*” “We” is emphatic. A moral and spiritual necessity is stressed. They had their marching orders; they had to speak. They stand in sharp contrast to those church members who absolutely refuse to speak to the lost in the Name of Jesus.

WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD. A true witness can testify only to what he has seen and heard first hand. Those who know Jesus Christ personally should feel compelled to witness to others. John Bunyan’s young daughter was permitted to visit him every day in Bedford jail. She begged him to come home and the authorities told him that he could go home if he promised not to preach again. He responded, “If you let me out, I’ll be preaching before sundown.”

Thomas Helwys was one of those early English Baptists who fought for freedom of religion for those of his day as well as for all people of all ages. He might have remained in the safety of Holland, but instead, he returned to England and wrote a powerful book, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*, and sent a copy to King James, with a handwritten dedication on the inside cover. This copy is in Oxford’s Bodelian Library today. Considering the number of people who had been martyred for the cause of Christ in their recent history, one would wonder if Helwys had lost his senses when he wrote that note and sent it directly to King James.

That was either the dumbest thing one could possibly have done, or it was the most courageous thing one can imagine. Michael Farris (*FROM TYNDALE TO MADISON: How the Death of an English Martyr led to the American Bill of Rights*, B&H, 2007) quotes another writer (Jordan):

“Helwys gave to religious toleration the finest and fullest defense which it had ever received in English... But Jordan understates the case. Helwys did not call for mere toleration, which implies the continuation of compelled orthodoxy with official permission for certain dissenters to differ in certain particulars. Helwys called for religious freedom for everyone - not just Baptists and not just Protestants, but Catholics as well. And he went even further than that: ‘Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.’

“This little-known book is not only one of the most important works on religious freedom in the English language, but it is without doubt one of the most courageous acts of conscience in the annals of mankind. Helwys was asking King James to consider the cause of liberty. But his ideas were far too dangerous. He was promptly thrown into prison where he remained until his death [FERRIS: 136f].

Farris asks why Helwys would have risked his life by returning to England and sending his book directly to King James, with a hand written dedication in the front, when he might have remained in Holland and sent the book from the safety of that country. He concludes that “Helwys was willing to sacrifice his freedom and his life to offer others the truth.” [Ferris: 140]. The answer for Thomas Helwys was that, like Peter and John, he must listen to God rather than man.

4:21 - THREATENED THEM FURTHER. *“After threatening them further, they released them. They found no way to punish them, because the people were all giving glory to God over what had been done...”* They could find no grounds to hold them or to punish them. Not only had they seen the evidence, the people had seen it and while they might have disregarded the evidence, they could not risk a general uprising. The people were all “giving glory to God for what had been done.” There was only one thing they could do, and that was to try to silence them with threats. While it would be interesting to know what threats the members of the Council used against the Apostles, it is noteworthy that they were not intimidated.

4:22 - THE MAN. *“...For the man was over 40 years old on whom this sign of healing had been performed.”* The evidence of the miracle stood before the people, as well as the Sanhedrin. The man was more than forty years old, he had been lame, and now he had been miraculously healed. There was no denying it! The miracle of the healing of this man proved a great opportunity for the early disciples. Peter and John came out well in their first skirmish with the law. That would not always be the case.

4:23 - TO THEIR OWN FELLOWSHIP. *“After they were released, they went to their own fellowship and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.”* When Peter and John were released by the Sanhedrin and the temple authorities, they went immediately and reported everything to “their own fellowship.” Robertson points out that this denotes

“Their own people as in John 1:11; John 13:1; Acts 24:23; 1Ti 5:8; Tit 3:14, not

merely the apostles (all the disciples). In spite of Peter's courageous defiance he and John told the brotherhood all that had been said by the Sanhedrin. They had real apprehension of the outcome" [ATR].

The report would both encourage believers who knew about their arrest and prepare them for future trials for their faith. It is important to note that this report did not spread fear through "their own fellowship", but courage and joy. Dr. Eddleman asked a reasonable question: "What does it take for a church to learn the difference between a mission of helping humanity and merely trying to keep its established and in business?" [HLE: 46].

4:24 - RAISED THEIR VOICES. *"When they heard this, they raised their voices to God unanimously and said, 'Master, You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them.'" The fellowship of believers responded by offering praise to the Lord for the victory He had given Peter and John when they stood before the Sanhedrin. This is amazing, considering the fact that it had only been a few weeks since this same group had tried Jesus and pressured Pilate to sentence Him to death, leaving the disciples in a state of fear, confusion, and defeat. What was the difference? The Resurrection. Jesus was victorious, just as He had promised. Then there was Pentecost. They had been empowered by the Holy Spirit.*

MADE THE HEAVENS. They raised their voices in praise to God "unanimously" and praised him as "Master, the One who made the heaven and the earth..." God begins the revelation of Himself to us with the account of creation. The world rejects the Genesis account of creation and the church cannot, or will not defend it. As a matter of fact, it does a very poor job of proclaiming it. Pastors and Sunday School teachers have been trained in public schools where evolution reigns as supreme and special creation is dismissed as religion or myth.

The story of creation is revealed in Genesis by the only eye witness there was, is, or ever has been to the event. The creation account was basically accepted by those who professed faith in the God of the Bible until recent generations when many in the some fields of science began teaching evolution. The ACLU staged a trial, the Scopes Trial, in 1925, and used this trial to get out the gospel of evolution. What evolutionists sought to do in that trial was to have evolution taught as an alternate theory to creation in public schools. Within ten years, evolution was forcing creation out of the public schools. Within another ten years, creation could not be taught as an alternative to evolution.

We may have lost the right to teach creation in public schools in America, but there is nothing to prevent us from teaching our children about creation in our churches. The average pastor knows very little about creation science and the average Sunday School teacher knows much less. It is imperative that we teach our children about creation, and it is imperative that we teach them to praise the One who created "the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and everything in them."

Let me stress here, as I often do, that if you do not have a Creator at the beginning you do not need a Redeemer in the middle because you will not have a Judge at the end. If He is Creator He is sovereign, He is Lord. Here is an exercise I would recommend to any Christian: Buy Bible, (King

James, New American Standard Bible, or the Holman Christian Standard Bible) and take a highlighter and highlight every reference to creation or the Creator in the Bible. Pay close attention to the Yahweh speeches in Job and the praise for the Creator in the Psalms.

4:25 - THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. *“You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Your servant: Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot futile things?”* The point is clearly made that David was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write about the Messiah one thousand years before the Incarnation.

“According to the Greek, David’s mouth is in apposition to the Holy Spirit; this indicates that David’s prophetic utterance was the same as the Holy Spirit’s (GAM). The quote comes from Psalm 2:1, 2 in which David showed the conflict between the heathen nations and the Messiah, the anointed One. Here the believers see Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel rejecting the Messiah (3:13)” [NCWB].

4:26 - THE KINGS OF THE EARTH. *“The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers assembled together against the Lord and against His Messiah.”* The list of kings and rulers who have assembled together against the Lord is a long one, beginning with Egypt and the Pharaoh of the Exodus, and continuing through the wanderings in the wilderness (Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites), the Conquest (Canaanites tribes), the Period of the Judges (Philistines and Canaanites), and the Period of the Kingdoms (Philistines, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome).

The kings and rulers of the earth have continued to rage against the Lord and His Messiah. Many still living today remember Adolph Hitler and the Nazi assault on the free world. We were reminded for decades of the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were brutally murdered. Sadly, the world seems to forget that Hitler killed 22 million people, many of whom were Christians. Stalin led in an even more deadly campaign against God in his quest for a godless, stateless, classless society. Communism was the devil’s tool and his weapon, used to try to destroy the church (China, Cambodia, Cuba, Viet Nam). Today, the threat to the world is primarily from Islam. Islamic terrorists are seeking to strike fear in the hearts of people around the world through threats, propaganda, suicide murders, and assaults on Americans and Jews anywhere in the world. No matter how the media portrays Islam, it is still the greatest threat to peace in the world today.

The enemies of the Lord may be assembled against the Lord and His Messiah, but this is neither a surprise to God, nor will it ever be a threat to His throne. The day is coming when Jesus will return and wage war against all the enemies of the Lord and they will be utterly destroyed. Those who have read the Revelation should not fear evil but rejoice in the coming victory.

4:27 - ASSEMBLED TOGETHER. *“For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, assembled together against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed...”* These early believers move from the nations of the world to leaders with whom they are familiar. They had conspired together to force the hand of Pilate, who involved Herod in the trials and death sentence for Jesus. All satanic attacks are ultimately against God’s holy

Servant Jesus.

4:28 - TO DO WHATEVER. “...*To do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place.*” This is prayer and praise from surrendered hearts. These believers are surrendered to the will and purpose of God. Some people may be uncomfortable with the word “predestined”, but most serious Bible students can see how God has accomplished His pre-determined goals and fulfilled His promises so as to accomplished that which He has predestined from a time before the world was created. Believers today should be greatly encouraged that what God proposes, God accomplished.

4:29 - SPEAK YOUR MESSAGE. “*And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your message with complete boldness...*” There is always a temptation for believer to pray that God will spare them persecution and martyrdom. These believers, however, know that their commitment is going to bring many of them before rulers and councils where they will be threatened, imprisoned, or killed for the cause of Christ. They do not pray for deliverance from persecution; they pray God would equip them and empower them to speak His message with “complete boldness.”

4:30 - WONDERS TO BE PERFORMED. “...*While You stretch out Your hand for healing, signs, and wonders to be performed through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.*” One commentary interprets this to mean that Peter and John prayed for power to heal and to perform signs and wonders, but in verse 24 we read that in response to the report from Peter and John, the fellowship of believers “unanimously” raised their voices to God. The Bible Knowledge credits Peter and John with this appeal:

Just as God’s sovereign power and will had decided beforehand that Christ should be opposed, so now Peter and John prayed for God’s power to be manifested in great boldness for the apostolic church. They also petitioned the Lord for supernatural ability to heal and to perform miraculous signs (seômeia; cf. 2:43) and wonders (terata; cf. 2:43) through the name of... Jesus” [BKC].

4:31 - WHEN THEY HAD PRAYED. “*When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s message with boldness.*” Peter and John had reported to the fellowship of believers that God had given them wisdom and courage when they were questioned by the Sanhedrin, and the people responded by praising the One who created the heavens and the earth. They then prayed for the manifestation of His power through signs and wonders. In response to their prayers, “the place where they were assembled was shaken.” No effort is made to identify the place where they were assembled - it doesn’t matter. No effort is made to explain what “shaken” means - we can use our imagination. What is revealed is that the place was shaken.

FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. We need to distinguish between the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the point of

salvation, but we need to be filled daily with the Holy Spirit. Here, though we are not given a rigid order or a prescription, we learn that the people were praying when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The Believer's Study Bible Notes that the threefold result of the prayer of the apostles and the church after the deliverance from the Sanhedrin:

(1) "the place where they were assembled together was shaken"; (2) "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"; and (3) "they spoke the word of God with boldness." The filling of the Holy Spirit here should not present a problem, as it was simply a fresh in-filling comparable to the one on the Day of Pentecost. These believers had already been filled with the Holy Spirit then, and they would be filled many times after. It is, therefore, not a "second blessing"; it is simply God's refueling His servants according to their needs in new situations. At the time of this prayer (which began in v. 24), they needed "boldness"; that was what they received (v. 31)" [BSB].

BELIEVERS SHARE WITH OTHERS

4:32 - OF ONE HEART. *"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common."* There are periodic progress reports in the Book of Acts, but normally they have to do with numerical growth: from 3,000 to 5,000 men. At first the Lord added unto the membership, and then the number was multiplied. Here we have possibly an even more phenomenal progress report. There must have been something especially significant about this unity that set this fellowship of believers apart from other groups, including the various sects within Judaism. Within the context of this Scripture, there were various factors which would have contributed to this unusual and marvelous unity. First, they were filled with the Holy Spirit; second, they continued in prayer; third, they were facing persecution; and fourth, they had the leadership of the apostles, with Peter and John apparently being the primary leaders.

HELD EVERYTHING IN COMMON. This was an unusual group and the sense of community for some period of time was indeed phenomenal. The key is that this was a fellowship of believers in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, and committed fully to the ministry He had given them.

NOTE: There have been claims by those with Communist or socialist leanings and that this community was a Communist society. That could not be further from the truth. First, they had a deep faith in God, whereas Communism seeks to establish a godless society. Second, they joined in this fellowship and ministry voluntarily, whereas Communism is spread by revolution. Third, the Christian community placed a high premium on human life, whereas Communism sees man as a machine or tool. Fourth, these believers shared because of a love for the Lord and a love for one another, whereas Communism takes from the haves to give to the have nots. Fifth, this fellowship was filled with joy, whereas Communism spreads misery, suffering, death, and defeat.

4:33 - WITH GREAT POWER. *“And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on all of them.”* Jesus had promised that when the Holy Spirit came upon these believers they would be receive power and that they would become His witnesses. The world had never seen anything like this. One may wonder why we do not see this kind of power today. Neither the presence nor the power of the Holy Spirit has been diminished in any degree. In fact, His power is being demonstrated in China at this moment in a phenomenal way.

I delivered to a lady from China (mentioned elsewhere in this volume) 24 copies of the Gospel According to John in the new Mandarin translation. This is especially significant to me because I had the privilege of casting my vote for the Holman Christian Standard Bible in my first Broadman and Holman Committee meeting as a member of the board of trustees for LifeWay Christian Resources. It was also my privilege to cast a vote for the new Bible Society and for B & H Outreach International as our response to nine/eleven attacks by Islamic terrorists (we were meeting at the Glorieta Conference Center in New Mexico on 9-11-01).

We left a meeting of the trustees with LifeWay leaders at the Ridgecrest, North Carolina LifeWay Conference Center in 2005, knowing that Ken Stephens, President of B & H Publishing Group, and Vice President Phill Burgess were flying to Tokyo to meet with Chinese scholars to talk about a new Mandarin translation. The Gospel of John had been completed, as has the Epistle to the Romans. It is hoped that the entire New Testament will have been completed by the end of 2007.

Here is the amazing thing: There are now more Christians in China than Communists (as mentioned elsewhere). That growth has taken place in home churches across China, even though the Communist government has done everything within its power to stamp it out. A friend, Sherrie Whitehead told me that when she was in China with family they had to show their passport to get into a church. This was the government’s way of keeping Chinese people out of the church. There is more: Ken Stephens reported to us that the old Mandarin they were using was something like 47% accurate.

TESTIMONY TO THE RESURRECTION. These believers were united in “giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the crowning miracle of the New Testament. Without the Resurrection nothing else matters. Peter had one basic sermon outline which he used both here and on the Day of Pentecost:

1. God sent the Messiah He had promised through the prophets.
2. “You” killed Him.
3. God raised Him from the dead.
4. We are witnesses to the life, teachings, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

4:34 - NOT A NEEDY PERSON. *“For there was not a needy person among them, because all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of the things that were sold...”* The fellowship of believers was not only united spiritually, they were united materially. They sold

houses and land and brought the proceeds of all they sold to the apostles so that they could help meet the needs of those who were less fortunate. When Jesus said, “The poor you will always have with you,” He did not mean that we should not help the poor. This is the best example we can find of the attitude of Christ for those in need. Add that to His instruction that in as much as you do good for others you are doing it unto Him.

Why were there so many in need this early in the history of the church? Some may well have been turned out of their homes or fired from jobs when they embraced Jesus Christ as Savior. Some of those in need were Hellenistic Jews, rather than Palestinian Jews, and may not have had family members who would support widows, especially after they turned to Jesus.

4:35 - DISTRIBUTED TO EACH PERSON. *“...And laid them at the apostles’ feet. This was then distributed to each person as anyone had a need.”* Those who sold land and houses brought the money and presented it to the apostles for distribution. The Lord brought together those who were in need with those who had something to share. They set an example for the church in any age, and it might be good for us to examine our hearts to see how well we are doing today.

Sean Hannity interviewed an atheist on his Sunday evening program on Fox News, and while I do not remember the man’s name, I had seen him on Hannity and Colmes before, and the man made a statement on both programs that demanded an answer but no one actually refuted his misrepresentation. He said that atheists give more to needy people than Christians do. I wish someone had pointed out the fact that millions of Christians give their tithes and offerings each Sunday and a percentage of that is used to help meet the needs of people around the world. Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita we heard what FEMA, the Red Cross, and the Salvation Army was doing to help the victims. The Red Cross and the Salvation Army asked people to send money to help them.

What no one was told was that Southern Baptists ranked third, right behind the Salvation Army in disaster relief, and a large percentage of the meals served were Southern Baptist meals. In fact, a disaster unit from the Arkansas Baptist Convention was in Laurel, Mississippi two days before the Red Cross. Southern Baptists served 12 million meals to hurricane disaster victims over the next year after the hurricanes hit the Gulf coast. That is just one Christian denomination and we know there were many others, Methodists, Catholics, Assemblies of God, Presbyterians, and many others who were helping. That atheist conveniently forgot to mention them. Immediately after Katrina hit south Louisiana and south Mississippi, Dr. Jimmy Draper contacted members of the board of trustees and asked us to be prepared to deal with a motion he would make to send five million dollars for disaster relief. When we arrived in Nashville, Dr. Draper told us that he believed we needed to do more and recommended that we send six million dollars immediately, and then assess the needs and respond accordingly after that. LifeWay Christian Resources made a commitment to help churches that had lost Bibles, books, hymnals, literature, sound equipment, audio-visuals, pews, and pulpit furniture to replace them, either at a greatly reduced cost or at no cost. I was not aware of any atheist who helped with any of those needs.

The Bible tells us that the Son of Man had no place to lay his head. Have we become too materialistic to help others? Is it possible that other groups today may be doing more for the needy than the church? We support missionaries around the world, but how well do we minister to those in the shadow of the church?

4:36 - BARNABAS. *“Joseph, a Levite and a Cypriot by birth, whom the apostles named Barnabas, which is translated Son of Encouragement.”* Joseph was apparently given the nickname Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement, because of his character, his willingness help others, and to encourage those who needed it.

4:37 - SOLD A FIELD. *“Sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”* What we know is what we are told here: Barnabas sold property and brought the money to the apostles for them to use to help those in need. What we do not know is how a Levite could own property as Barnabas did. Were the Levites not prohibited from owning property? (See Num. 18:20, 24.)

“The answer may be that whereas the Levites were not to hold land in Israel, they could own land elsewhere. Apparently Barnabas, being from the island of Cyprus, owned land there. It is also possible that his wife owned land in Israel and that they together sold it. Most probably the restriction in Numbers 18:20, 24 was no longer observed, as seen in the case of Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 1:1; 32:6-15)” [BKC].

NOTE: After the victory before the Sanhedrin, and after successfully dealing with an economic crisis, the church was now set to continue its implementation of the Great Commission

NOTE: SEE VOLUME II FOR A VERSE BY VERSE BY VERSE STUDY OF CHS. 5-8.

