

# Acts

*Walk-thru*

**Study series as posted at the website  
and originally e-mailed to the subscribers.**

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

# Acts

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## ***Introduction*** (Acts 1)

"The former account (Gospel of Luke) I made, O Theophilus, of everything that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (vs1-3)

"...to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us...[from the reports of] eyewitnesses...it seemed good to me also, having closely followed all things from the very first, to write it to you in orderly fashion, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of the words which you were told." (Lk1:1-4)

Acts is a book of -HISTORY-. The full name is "Acts of the Apostles". With the use of various synonyms we might also say the: "deeds", "works", "activities", "accomplishments", "behavior", "enactment", "conduct", "comportment", "doings" ...OF THE APOSTLES.

The Gospels: Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Mark, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. John, "the Word was God". They are narratives about Jesus Christ: His birth, His life and ministry, His death and resurrection. When Jesus taught something, we know it was directly FROM GOD, because "he who has seen [Jesus] has seen" God. (Jn14:9, Heb1:3)

On the other hand Acts is about -men-; Jesus' disciples, yes; but nevertheless... -men- who were still in these bodies of "flesh and blood" and "corruption" (1Co15:50) who were still of "dust" (Ps103:14) Where Jesus could claim, "I always do those things that please [the Father]" (Jn8:29) because He -was- 'very' GOD, the men of Acts could not make such claims. Where Jesus was perfect, the men of Acts were fallible.

In terms of the subscribers and the weekly mailings, this series in Acts is following on the heels of series in Joshua, Judges and Ruth. What we see in Joshua and Judges is a nation, Israel, called out by God beginning with Abraham; but although having this Godly legacy, continually rebelling and going aside after pagan idols, and the resulting judgments from God through pagan enemies. But even in the midst of idolatry, there were - individuals- in Israel who remained faithful, or in the days of Elijah, the "7000". (1Ki19:18) And throughout the course of history, finally in the ends times, the promise that Israel will be saved and restored IN THEIR HEARTS. (Jer31:31-34)

And so, with this series in Acts, we'd like to look at the early CHURCH. The Church, by definition, being indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom8:9) -are-

True Believers; which was not always the case with Israel; as Paul said, "For not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b), and "with most of [Israel] God was not well pleased" (1Co10:5) But the Church, being of "dust", also are beset by getting our feet dirty from time to time (Jn13:10, 1Jn1:8), nevertheless -are- the "righteousness of God in [Christ]" (2Co5:21)

I'm sure there's been upteen b'zillion books and studies written on all the flowery 'positive' aspects, and the Great Accomplishments of the early Church. We don't need to add more of our own "two cents' worth" to what surely must be a long litany. Instead, this series will look at the -failings- and -weaknesses- of the early Church Believers, and how God used 'frail' -men- to cause...

"...all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom8:28)

It is important to remember that Acts is -history-. It is NOT a book of Doctrine. Certainly, Doctrine can be found in the book as it records what the apostles did and taught. But where the men were prone to periodic mistakes, we cannot take -everything- they did and said, and conclude Right Doctrine in all aspects.

While WW1 led to the excesses of the "Roaring 20s", in this country the 50s and 60s, following WW2, were years of the growth of out-n-out rebellion of the youth against authority. Rebellion against civic authority also bled over into the 'church' and rebellion against Biblical Doctrine. By the 70s charismania was in full swing, combined with the hippy rebellions, as the world's rock-n-roll was bashing on the church doors. The book of Acts was one way they would fight against Sound Doctrine. One of the musical groups of the day was even called "2nd Chapter of Acts". And as they continually spoke of Love, love, luuuuv, there was also the group "Love Song"; many of whose songs were deliberate infiltrations and perversions of anything Biblical. They would sing about the old stodgy preacher who would preach "about the Bible"...but they just came "to praise the Lord". And their "Little Country Church" praised the fact that that old stodgy preacher was finally "coming around", learning to hang loose and a little bit of -everybody- could now be seen 'in church'. And as they would read in Acts about the church meeting "from house to house" (Ac2:46); but the official church wasn't yet fully embracing 'tongues' and 'healings'; they would have (what they called) "New Testament Churches" that met in homes, and they would babble in tongues, and would make sure to "heal" such that everybody had both legs of 'equal length'. They would read how they had "all things common" (Ac2:44, 4:32); and seeing as how Marxism was gaining a foothold through the hippy movement, and there was the embracing of the concept that nobody -owned- anything of their own (what's mine is yours, what's yours is mine); the "christian hippies" would set-up "christian communes", those who had jobs would bring the money for collective use, and others frolicked together in the commune. Just as the hippies had "free love", many of the communes

would instead call it "ministry"; males and females were "ministering" to each other. Back in 1998 we did an expose on one such group, "The Family" [www.a-voice.org/discern/chrchsex.htm](http://www.a-voice.org/discern/chrchsex.htm)

The main point of all this paragraph is to say that pretty much everything they did was based, in some fashion, on twistings of the narrative in the book of Acts. For many of them, one could just as well have thrown out the rest of the Bible... Acts -was- their Bible! Even, throw out the rest of the book, but keep chapter 2! Such was the extent of their theology... forget Doctrine: -just- Worship, Praise the Lord and Jabber in tongues.

But if those early Believers in Acts did things that were wrong, or made mistakes... does somebody today imitating those deeds suddenly make them right? If something was wrong then, it is wrong today. Just because the Holy Spirit came to indwell, did not suddenly make them -more- "saintly" or 'error-free' in their words and proclamations. Paul reminds us that the "...spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." (1Co14:32) We are to function with "sound minds" (2Ti1:7, Tit2:6, etc) Just because we have the Holy Spirit within is no excuse to abandon "self-control" (Ga5:23, 2Pt1:6) of our own senses, decisions and actions. Many people who sin try to pass the buck: "the devil made me do it". In the same way, much aberrant behavior in 'the church' has been blamed on the Holy Spirit: the Spirit "took over" and "I couldn't help myself". No. We do things based on what is in our minds, thus God also invited, "Let us -reason-together..." (Is1:18) Paul did not pray for the Holy Spirit to 'overcome' his hearers and for them to become "spirit-filled", but it says that he "-reasoned- with them from the Scriptures" (Ac17:2)

Thus, if we can understand some of their goof-ups, perhaps we can understand a bit better from where some of today's errors originate, and not maintain those errors.

Now... since we brought up the subject, but might not touch on it when we get there (since it was not in error), and since there are some today who are stuck on their own false twist of "not forsaking the assembling" (Heb10:25) with the view to make sure everybody appears at -their-'building' everytime the doors are open, let us clarify one point, before we continue.

Back in the 60s and 70s it was not very hard to find a church (meeting in the building) with a Godly Biblical pastor. Back then there were, yet, men-of-God who proclaimed "Thus says the Lord". The same cannot be said today, however! Back in the 70s, when these 'home' groups were popping up, it was not because a Biblical assembly could not be found; like is often the case today. It was because those, meeting thusly, were in rebellion against God's Word. The pastors were still resisting charismania, and they still held to holy decorum in the assembly, and would NOT ALLOW what they wanted to do. So they went off and did "their own thing" (what was right "in their own eyes" Jdg21:25, Is5:21) But as Love Song would sing,

with the constant pounding at the doors, the hippies finally wore down the Godly resistance in the name of "love" (Jn13:35), and what was going on in the little "house churches" finally infiltrated the Godly assemblies, and now today the "whole camel" is in the tent, and the "Arab" is outside.

This infiltration was such a severe and -huge- event, that I fear some current Biblical preachers (the few that remain) are erroneously distrusting of -any- small group meeting in a home. Back in the 70s, pretty much -anything- meeting in a home was of the hippy charismatic ilk. Thus, generically, the "home church" movement was evil... IN THE 70s. But now that most 'churches' (meeting in their buildings) have become totally what the 70s Acts groups were (those who were pounding down the doors are now inside, have taken up residence, and changed everything all around topsy turvey, and those in attendance now think what they do is 'normal'), where does a True Believer meet, if there is even a handful of Believers -to- meet? The act of meeting in a home is not sin. Once past Acts, we see Paul mentioning the church "that is in their house" more than once. (Ro16:5, 1Co16:19, Col4:15) And any mentions we see in Acts (16:32, 2:46, 20:20) we should keep in mind were NOT what the hippies were doing in the 70s.

So...

As the narrative begins, we see Jesus giving some final exhortations before He ascends to Heaven about: the Holy Spirit, Israel's Kingdom, and their Testimony. The angels: about His Return.

1) WAIT in Jerusalem for the PROMISE OF THE FATHER. (vs4) That's the Holy Spirit. (vs5) He had spoken of this in John...

"However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all Truth; for He will not speak things originating from Himself, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will make known to you things to come." (Jn16:13)

Jesus tells them to -wait-. Will they wait?

2) the KINGDOM? They ask, essentially: is it -now- time to restore the kingdom to Israel? (vs6)

"It is not yours to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (vs7)

When Jesus earlier had said, "of that day and hour no one knows" (Mt24:36), some people today say: We don't know the day or hour, but we can know the "season". Notice Jesus here includes "seasons". How many times in history have not christians been excited, seeing world events, and those who appeared to be evil (like antichrist).

Will they keep Jesus' answer in mind when preaching their first sermons?

### 3) WITNESSES

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (vs8)

As one goes through the book, I think it becomes obvious that they followed this directive, as the world noticed that they had "turned the world upside down" with the Gospel. (17:6)

### 4) JESUS' RETURN

"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into Heaven, will so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." (vs11)

Notice that this is a different event from the "kingdom"; as Paul speaks of "His 1) appearing and His 2) kingdom" (2Ti4:1) Two events. He also speaks of, "the 1) coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of our 2) gathering together to Him" (2Th2:1)

Notice that the angels speak of Jesus being taken up FROM YOU. - THEM-, gathered on the Mt. of Olives. Believers. This is a different event from the Kingdom of Israel. (vs6) Israel is yet in unbelief and continues to rebel as they did in the OT, and will not be fully restored (Rom11:26) until Jesus comes as KING of kings and gives them all a new heart. (Jer31:31-34, Ezk36:26)

But there are those today who deny that Jesus is coming for the Church. Not only do they not believe in a (so-called) "pre-trib" Rapture... they believe in NO RAPTURE AT ALL. They are busy trying to prepare Jesus' -kingdom- on this earth, and hopefully when they have made all the preparations, -then- Jesus will come and be welcomed to earth BY THEM, to rule over a world THEY have prepared. I guess they don't want what Jesus promised when He said...

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (Jn14:2b-3)

Receiving us -to- where Jesus is, is not the same thing as Israel's -earthly-'kingdom'.

Thus... their commission is to

- ?? Wait for the Holy Spirit
- ?? Don't be concerned about Israel's kingdom (that's God's business)
- ?? Be Witnesses to the world

With the promise that Jesus -will- return. In other words: Evangelize the world under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

How much of this do they follow in those first days? How much of this does today's church follow?



## **Matthias** (Acts 1:15-26)

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, Men and brethren, this Scripture needed to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who took Jesus" (vs15-16)

First of all, -when- is "in those days"? Is it not obviously -after- Jesus has ascended back up to Heaven. They have left the Mt of Olives and been in the "upper room" (vs13) But it is also -before- ch2 and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus ascended to Heaven 40 days after the resurrection. (vs3) Pentecost (next chapter) is 50 days. The waving of the sheaf of firstfruits was the day after the Sabbath (Le23:11); just like the Resurrection. And then they were to count "seven Sabbaths"; 50 days to the day "after the seventh Sabbath" for the "new grain offering" (Le23:15-16) Thus, between Jesus' ascension to Heaven, and Pentecost, was ten (10) days.

Let's have a good look at this. Remember? Jesus said to go to Jerusalem and "wait". Wait for what? The Holy Spirit. As we know from the record, the Holy Spirit will come at 50 days. It is not yet 50 days. They are in the holding pattern that Jesus told them to "wait".

But Peter stands up and starts to proclaim. Is this the Holy Spirit speaking? Well... no. The Holy Spirit hasn't come yet. But Peter is talking.... -leading-. Under what authority? Is he -waiting-? Peter has always been the 'antsy' one, ants-in-the-pants... can't sit still. Gotta be -doing- something. Hasn't learned how to "wait upon Jehovah" (Is40:31, etc)

Certainly, Peter understands the betrayal of Judas. He seems to have a handle on the prophecies that foretold it. He sees the prophecy that says, "Let another take his office..." (vs20, Ps109:8)

So therefore... since -another- is to take his office -WE- must select somebody to fill the vacancy. (vs22) After all... Jesus is gone, He's left -us-'in charge'. If -we- don't make the selection, who will? Right?

REALLY?

B'but...they've been PRAYING! They've been engaged in continual prayer meetings. (vs14) Are not decisions that result from -prayer- the "right" ones? Is that not how Barnabas and Saul were sent out to missionary service? (13:2)

Well...King Saul's excuse for disobedience in the OT was also that he was going to -sacrifice-, but what does Samuel retort?

"Has Jehovah as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in to obey the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." (1Sa15:22)

What had Jesus told them to do? Select a replacement for Judas? ...or to - WAIT-? To WAIT. How could they possibly know -what- to do, correctly, until the Holy Spirit came with instructions?

Who was God's choice? How did Jesus pick the disciples? He called them (read through the Gospels) individually...personally. Jesus prayed all night and then the next day personally designated who were the twelve. (Lk6:12-13) B'but... Jesus is gone. -How- is He going to pick a replacement personally?

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" (9:4)

Who is that? "Who are you, sir?"

"I am Jesus, whom you persecute." (9:5)

And later, how does Paul introduce himself?

"Paul, appointed an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God..." (1Co1:1)

And where did Paul receive his apostolic training?

"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)...I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." (Ga1:1,16-17)

Is Paul's parenthetical comments a little jab at what Peter did? A bit later in the epistle he also gives Peter a tongue lashing in front of everybody, for not being straightforward regarding the Jew/Gentile relationships. (2:11) Paul -was- appointed by Jesus Christ, -personally-, as an apostle.

In the OT Joshua used the lottery to distribute the territory to the tribes of Israel. (Josh18) God used lots for equity regarding which goat was sacrificed, and which was the scape goat. (Le16:8) But where did God -ever- use the lottery to choose His servants? He personally called Abraham. Moses He called to from the bush, and spoke with him in the tent of meeting. God calls to Samuel as he was sleeping next to the Ark in the Holy of Holies (1Sa3:3); who then personally anoints David as king. God revealed Himself to Isaiah and Ezekiel through visions of Himself and His glory. And on and on... Many of these without a -personal- "Jesus"

face-to-face, but through visions. The twelve Jesus actually -did- pick personally, face-to-face.

So then, to replace Judas for such an important task as 'apostle' in the early Church... why would God suddenly change His method of appointment? He didn't. He chose S/Paul.

And notice that, after this incident, the name "Matthias" never again appears throughout the NT. But Paul, God's choice, writes nearly the rest of the NT!

Peter did NOT -WAIT-.

Sacrifice does not replace -obedience-. Neither does "prayer". If a person is in disobedience, they don't need to "pray about it"! They need to repent and obey.

## ***Peter Preaches*** (Acts 2-3)

"And when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as being borne along by a rushing violent wind, and it filled the whole house...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance...

And "Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them...

"...THIS IS WHAT WAS SPOKEN by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out from My Spirit upon all flesh... I will pour out My Spirit in those days... I will present wonders in the heavens above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord" (~vs1-20)

But what does Joel say?

"...and it shall come to pass -AFTERWARD-" (Joel2:28)

-AFTER- WHAT? A reading of the first parts of Joel ch2 sound an awful lot like the days and events of "Jacob's trouble" (Jer30:7) Perhaps the events of the latter part of Daniel's "70th week". (Dan9:27) The things written in Zechariah, etc., and then Restoration.

Israel has certainly been -dispersed- for many centuries since Peter preached these words, and experienced pogroms and holocausts. But has she ever yet experienced what Joel ch2 describes? How about the pillars of smoke, the blood moon, the sun going dark? Has the "great and glorious day of the Lord" yet come? Is Israel yet, even to this day, fully restored in belief in their hearts? Have they yet acknowledged Messiah? No? Then, is it not obvious that the event on the day of Pentecost was -NOT- "what was spoken by the prophet Joel" In terms of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit there might have been similarities. But "all flesh" of Israel (nor of the world) did NOT receive Messiah: at Pentecost, and clear until Paul proclaimed...

"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (28:28)

And since then, the Church has become primarily a -gentile- entity.

Even a bit later where Peter and John heal the lame man at the temple, and it turns into an opportunity to preach, Peter still associates those present events to the "restoration of all things" (3:21) which is the state of

affairs after Messiah has set up the Kingdom; things as described in the latter parts of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc.

Why is Peter doing this? Remember the question?

"...will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (1:6)

And what had Jesus answered?

"It is not yours to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (1:7)

But Peter is preaching as though he has now been given that information. As though this event, the coming of the Holy Spirit, is the -same- as those END TIME EVENTS, which he asked about, but which Jesus said were not his to know.

The Restoration of the Kingdom was/is to the Jewish mind, what the Rapture is to the Church. How many preachers have proclaimed dates (for the Rapture) and names (for antichrist), to have their proclamations proven false! Preachers proclaimed that Hitler was antichrist. When Clinton hosted the "handshake" on the Whitehouse lawn in 1993, some were proclaiming that to be -the- "covenant", and also believing a post-tribulation rapture, that 2000 would be the Rapture. Well, here it is, 2010; that wasn't it, was it. Some have now been prognosticating things related to the Mayan calendar for December, 2012. A more recent thing I've read has to do with June, 2017 being the 50-year Jubilee since the liberation of the Temple Mount in June, 1967. Thus, since 2010 is seven years before that, I suppose some are going to suggest that June, 2010 will be the Rapture? (This is being written in April) Obviously, the Rapture -will- happen, and -when- it happens, that will have been THE DATE. As this is being written, I'm not going to try to speculate. Just as Jesus told the disciples that it was not theirs to know, He said the same about His coming...

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of Heaven, but My Father only." (Mt24:36)

But Peter was proclaiming... AS FACT... "THIS IS WHAT WAS SPOKEN" History since then has proven him wrong, just like the modern-day preachers proclaiming about Hitler, 1993, 2000, etc.

When I have made this observation in the past about Peter's message, some have come back with something on the order of: How -dare- I say Peter was wrong?! He was filled with the Holy Spirit. You mean to say that the Holy Spirit was wrong? Why would the Holy Spirit tell him to say what he did, if it wasn't true?

Remember previously we observed Paul's words...

"The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1Co14:32)

Paul said that to carnal Corinth who had the same problem many from charismania today have. Corinth was letting loose from the "mind" (1Co14:15) and letting the spirit "fillings" from their old pagan ways (1Co12:2) take over, like the pagans do. And so they assume that Pentecost was the same sort of event as their pagan demon-possession, where the 'possessed' person is minus self-control.

Notice that the Holy Spirit did NOT induce the disciples to babble with gibberish. It says they were given the gift, and their hearers heard the message spoken in their "own dialect in which [they] were born" (2:8) The Holy Spirit was not usurping the disciples, giving them hallucinations, and causing them to "peep and mutter" (Is8:19) like sorcerers and fortunetellers. They were proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in clear - understood- languages.

Just as Christians today, when some major event happens in the news, get all excited... "The Lord's coming is soon!" Peter, still having the "kingdom of Israel" on his mind, seeing this supernatural -sign- happening from the Holy Spirit, is similarly excited... It's here, it is now...THIS IS IT! Listen everybody! Here we go!

We might chide Peter for his error. But what he did was no different than preachers do regularly today, in excitement and anticipation of the Lord's return.

We can be excited about the Lord's return. But what did Jesus say should be our demeanor regarding it?

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes." (Mt25:13)

We won't need to proclaim it, as Peter was trying to do. It is not ours to know. Nor is it ours to proclaim. Why? Who is going to proclaim it?

"For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shouted command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God." (1Th4:16)

There's a song from years ago that used to say something about "If I could preach like Peter or pray like Paul". Well, I'll tell you what! It's gonna take a MUCH LOUDER VOICE than Peter's to proclaim adequately, when Christ comes!!

But did Peter's goof stop the Holy Spirit's working in the hearts of his hearers? Peter might have had his eschatology mixed up, but he had the Gospel message RIGHT ON! He preached the message that most of today's preachers neglect.

Rather than offering a "new car!" to everybody in attendance, he told it like it was.

"God has made this Jesus, WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, both Lord and Christ" (2:36)

The Holy Spirit was allowed to "-convict- them of sin" (Jn16:8) And as their hearts were smitten (pierced), and ask "what shall we do?" (2:37) Peter gives it to them straight...

"Repent, and let every one of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ to the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38)

Now, as we know that salvation is "not of works" (Eph2:9), thus Peter was not proclaiming "baptismal regeneration"; we should keep in mind that Peter's audience was all -JEWISH-. They were, at that moment, in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost. The "new grain offering" and firstfruits. (Le23) It was a time of animal sacrifices and various things. One of the cleansing traditions to prepare oneself to approach God was the Mikvah, the ritual purification where they dipped in water to wash ceremonially. In keeping with that tradition, Peter exhorts them to do the Mikvah "in the name of Jesus Christ to the remission of sins".

Peter was excited about the Lord's coming. But the real fulfillment of that day was SALVATION. That which they had been observing year after year, that day was fulfilled. And as they prepared the bread "with leaven" (Le23:17), it symbolized the 'growth' in the Holy Spirit; as happened that day.

So... what does God require? A perfect man with full understanding? Peter might have messed up on eschatology, but he got the "witness" (1:8) part right.

Jesus told them that when the Holy Spirit came they would be empowered to witness. Peter certainly did that! 3000 souls were saved that day.

But what does today's (so-called) "church" do with what they claim is the "Holy Spirit"? Is their goal to evangelize and witness for Christ? No... they work themselves into trance-like states to become "spirit-filled". To what end? To achieve self-deity. Reduce all the mumbo jumbo that they double-talk, down to its core, that is it. To achieve a state of god-likeness where they HAVE POWER to 'wield'.

So, we might be able to nit-pick at Peter's inattention to Jesus' words regarding the Kingdom of Israel (Peter always had a short attention span, and would excitedly spout off with words, before properly thinking through what he was saying); but when the Holy Spirit came, Peter did not go

about attributing the glory to himself. He boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ. When people were swarming around to praise him, Peter, for the lame man's healing, he says, "why do you gaze on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" (3:12) When brought before the religious leaders he boldly proclaims...

"let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in Him this man stands here before you whole. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men that is required for us to be saved" (4:10,12)

So... was Peter wrong in talking about the Kingdom, or Israel's restoration? Of course not. No more than it is wrong for the Church to be in anticipation of the Rapture. Where he was mixed up was in declaring that THAT EVENT, THAT DAY -WAS- the event. It was -an- event, fulfilling OT types. Just, not the one Peter was hoping for. Roman soldiers were still roaming around in their occupation. Israel was not free 'politically', like Peter had hoped.

Neither is it wrong for the Church to anticipate the Lord's return. But is it 2000? 2012? 2017? It is not for us to know what is in God's authority. What -are- we exhorted to do?

"WATCH THEREFORE, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes." (Mt25:13)



## ***Lying to the Holy Spirit*** (Acts 5)

"Now the multitude of those believing were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.... Nor was there anyone needy among them; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and placed them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need." (4:32-35)

Back in the (aforementioned) 70s, after graduation from university, I began to make myself available to churches for concerts. I accompanied myself at the piano, sang with accompaniment tapes that I had both recorded and purchased. This necessitated a moderate collection of sound equipment, which was setup in this one church where I was -the- special music for a missions conference. Along the way, the church choir needed to rehearse, and the equipment was in their way; so instead of asking me to move it, somebody took it upon themselves to move it. And when I found out, I verbally made my displeasure known. (If a person doesn't know what they're doing, they can 'break' stuff; and I'm a steward of what the Lord had provided) Later, this otherwise pleasant-seeming girl cornered me and berated me for having made the fuss... the equipment wasn't "mine". And why was I so concerned about -things-. Why was I making as though I 'owned' it. And if something 'broke', so what? (or words to that effect. It's been so many years ago, I've forgotten the 'verbatim') [vw: Just try handling equipment in a recording studio, or music store, without proper authority, and see what happens! :]

You see, in those days everything was about "love" (Jn13:35) And anything, even the slightest hint, of anything 'negative' or 'non-complimentary' was taboo, because any act of chiding somebody was not "loving". The hippy motto of the day was "live and let live", and to "do your own thing, man!" And this "anything goes" mentality also infiltrated the church and its definition of "love". Anything else was "judgmental". Holding to rules, morality and doctrine was "judgmental".

And for the church, that attitude was derived from these verses just quoted.

Was what they did in those early church days to be the 'norm' forever thereafter? Was it something Jesus had commanded? Did God even command it in the OT? God had set up rather strict rules about the "landmark" of land ownership.

"Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen!" (De27:17)

"You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which the men of old have set, in your inheritance which you shall inherit in the land that Jehovah your God is giving you to possess." (De19:14)

Notice the words "to possess". That means "ownership". A person who possesses something can rightfully say, "That thing is -MINE-." Titles and deeds are the official documents that record ownership of larger value items like land, buildings, autos, etc. Unless the relationship is such, a person does not just go walking into somebody else's house unannounced or uninvited. Try getting into somebody's car to drive it away, and see what happens. God setup the "ownership" concept. God, Himself, is a very jealous God (Ex20:5,34:14) And being made in His image, mankind is also given ownership rights. The "landmark" indicated property boundaries.

What was going on in Acts was a very unique time in history. Judaism's leadership continued in their rebellion; but many Jews, having come to Jerusalem from all over that region of the world for the Feast, were hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. At Passover they had yelled out "crucify Him!" ... but now as they are back, they are realizing that He had risen from the dead. (4:2) Thousands more are coming to Faith in Christ. (4:4) All these people are gathered here and there, meeting in homes, and being taught Doctrine and growing in the Lord...and how are they to eat and be sustained during this time? Those who -have-, seeing the need, out of the generosity of their hearts, are selling properties; if you will, a temporary "cash for clunkers" or "cash for gold" program to raise quick money to provide for everybody. It obviously could not continue indefinitely, otherwise the money would eventually run out, and there would be no more property to sell. People eventually would have to go back home to their jobs and livelihoods.

Well, of course, as some are contributing, some are quite wealthy, and their gifts are receiving attention due to the huge -pile- of money they are depositing, and they are being praised for their magnanimity. And Joses Barnabas, apparently being wealthy, receives special notice. (4:36) The act of -giving- seems to be receiving notoriety for those who give. A great act of "christianity". So others, seeing the giving of some, try to emulate them. You know... like the 'fund drives' in churches, with the 'thermometer'. Have -you- given yet? No? Why not??? I gave so-much! And so those less fortunate are looked down upon, and the ones who gave a lot are invited up to the platform in the sight of all, to have praise lavished upon them; or their names are called out from the pulpit and the person asked to 'stand' from the pew to receive recognition. So, the goal is to be LIKE THEM... or if not, to make it LOOK LIKE one is like them.

So here come Ananias and Sapphira. They have land, sell it and bring -part- of the sale price to the apostle's feet. (5:2) Here, everybody, LOOK! Ananias has just sacrificially brought the money after selling his property! No?

"But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you put this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last." (vs3-5)

How do -we- know they brought only 'part' of the price, and that they had -contrived- this scheme? Because a bit later the wife comes along: Did you sell the property for such-n-such a price? Yes. (vs7-8)

"How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out" (vs9)

The thing about the hippy days of the 70s? The -reality- was that there was not nearly as much "what's mine is yours" as there was "what's yours is mine". If truth be told... -theft-. If somebody stole from a stranger, there was no feeling of remorse: It's not really his anyway, so I'll just take it. The bigger reason for hippies condemning those who "owned" property was not so much that they 'owned' it, but that they owned it and would try to prevent them (the hippies) from stealing it, without making a "big deal" of the case.

You see, in those early days, people with wealth, from the purity of their own hearts, saw a need, and set about to -give- freely. They were possessed of true "love" for the brethren. (1Pt1:22)

And as Peter says, it was not -wrong- to keep back part of the price. It was -their- property. Even after the sale, the money was still -theirs-. (vs4) But apparently they contrived, husband and wife together, to bring part of the sale price and represent it as having been the -whole- price. After all, if a person gives away ALL THEY HAVE, is that not considered a big 'sacrifice'; of higher estimation before others. As Jesus said of the rulers, "to be seen by men" (Mt23:5) Jesus taught, when doing a good deed...

"But when you do a deed of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does, that your deed of mercy may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." (Mt6:3-4)

And what was the result of their lie? Death!

The Holy Spirit is not to be trifled with! No, we do not pray to the Holy Spirit. He does not take on glory to Himself. (Jn16:13) But the one who blasphemes the Holy Spirit also is not forgiven. (Mt12:31-32)

Ananias and Sapphira received -physical- death. Did their lie also indicate hearts that were not truly Saved? The passage doesn't say. Was this a

"sin unto death" of a Believer? (1Jn5:16-17) Or was their judgment a forever death?

In ch8 we will observe Simon who "believes", but then Peter tells him his heart is full of evil. Just because somebody claims to have believed, doesn't mean it is so in their heart. As Paul would say, "For not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b) Or as we say around here: Not all [c]hristians are [C]hristian. Not all the [c]hurch is the [C]hurch of Jesus Christ.

But what a totally -opposite- set of circumstances from what today's 'church' strives to promote, or the attitudes of the 70s "love" generation. Don't judge, don't criticize, don't tell anybody they have done wrong. You might chase them away!

"So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.... Moreover none of the rest dared join them, but the people magnified them." (vs11,13)

See??? Fear. After all, doesn't the apostle of love say,

"There is NO FEAR IN LOVE; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment. But he who fears has not been made complete in love." (1Jn4:18)

And yup! Might chase them away? They were so full of fear that they DIDN'T -DARE- JOIN THEM. But doesn't Jesus -invite- to 'come one, come all'? Well... Not lying pretenders!

The Church doesn't need more Ananiases and Sapphiras, or Simons (ch8) But it welcomes those who in humility (Ja4:10, 1Pt5:6) understand God's holiness.

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb10:31)

But what was the result of all this holy Godly FEAR and NEGATIVITY?

"And more believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women..." (vs14)

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God for pulling down strongholds" (2Co10:4)

## ***Mixed Multitude?*** (Acts 6-7)

"Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily service." (6:1)

"And a mixed multitude also went up with [Israel out of Egypt], and flocks and herds; exceedingly many cattle." (Ex12:38)

"And the mixed multitude who were among them lusted after their lusts; and the children of Israel turned back and wept, saying: Who will give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our soul is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Nu11:4-6)

Who were the Hellenists? They were people who had adapted to Greek ways, philosophy, literature and culture. And the dictionary says, "especially Jews of the Diaspora".

And in conjunction with that the Jewish Hellenists had what they called the "Synagogue of the Libertines" (vs9) Certainly, one can study the details from history books, but the dictionary, again, gives us a concise nutshell: "1) One who acts without moral restraint; a dissolute person. 2) One who defies established religious precepts; a freethinker"

Hmmm! Sounds a lot like the 70s Hippies, and what much of today's "church" consists of, eh.

And these people were Cyrenians, Alexandrians and those from Cilicia. (vs9) And if I remember correctly from history, I believe the greatest concentration existed around Alexandria, Egypt.

What do we know about the Jews in Alexandria? How did they get there? A reading of Jeremiah chs 42-44 tells us that they were the rebels whom God had exhorted, through Jeremiah, to stay in the land. Nebuchadnezzar left the poor in the land, and God encouraged them to stay, and live there. But no! They refused, and decided to go down to Egypt. And ch44 tells how they -specifically- retorted against God, saying that they -would- continue to worship the Queen of Heaven and make the sacrificial cakes to her, etc. The women said they would continue, and the men said their wives had their blessing in the endeavor.

Alexandria is where most of the -extra- "gospels" come from, that the religious 'scholars' and 'intelligentsia' cling to. It is the root and source of the perverted texts from which today's perverted Bible translations come. And if a person were to study the matter in greater depth than I have, I would not be surprised but what it is likely a major 'key' to how the pagan

Babylonian and Greco-Roman religions blended together to become what is today the catholic religion with their worship of "Mary" as Queen of Heaven. Catholicism certainly looks to all those Alexandrian sources as the scholarly foundation of their "christianity" of what they call "the church". It is where their Apocryphal books of -their- 'bible' come from; which were also included in the original 1611 KJV. Alexandria is the seat and 'seed' of apostasy.

Clear picture here?

These Hellenists start complaining that they aren't getting their FAIR SHARE of all the loot. Well, it sounds more innocent: Widows aren't getting food. But when they establish a committee to oversee the distribution, Stephen turns out to be a firecracker of an arguer, and the Libertines aren't able to refute his wisdom from the Holy Spirit. He's not - just- sticking to dispensing food; he is also preaching and reasoning against the world's ungodly wisdom. He's in the middle of the people where they live, and sees what they are about, and refutes them. And so, what do liberals typically do when they can't argue with facts? It was the same then as it is today. They contrive false accusations, get everybody all stirred up, start a riot, and drag Stephen before the same body of leaders that had asked Pilate to crucify Jesus.

So, with his life on the line, what does Stephen do? Wimp away and speak 'positive' things, apologize profusely "if he had offended anybody", and stay clear of being so "judgmental"?

"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always oppose the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they, who received the Law by the command of angels and did not keep it, killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers. When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth." (7:51-54)

And if you read the text, we know the outcome. They stoned Stephen to death. But that was not the end of it.

"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word." (8:1,4)

Several things to notice here.

What happens when the world is allowed entrance in-amongst the Church? Most of all the rebellions of Israel in the wilderness were stirred up by the "mixed multitude"; and it resulted in most of Israel being "scattered in the wilderness" (1Co10:5). When a person reads through the

rest of Acts, when Paul is persecuted, it is usually a few who stir up the multitudes against him. And it says they were the "unbelieving Jews" (14:2) That's what the Hellenists were... unbelieving Jews. Nothing but evil comes from letting the mixed multitudes oppose the Church fellowshipping, "Bring the mixed multitudes to Jesus"? Noth if they were no sayved.

"...give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will deliver both yourself and those who hear you." (1Ti4:13,16)

"No one serving military duty entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him." (2Ti2:4)



## ***Different Spirit*** (Acts 8)

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the many signs which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously used sorcery in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And they heeded him because he had amazed them with his sorceries for a long time. But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were immersed." (vs5-12)

Persecution arises, the new Believers are scattered from their cozy 'communal' living AND TRAINING in the Lord. Among them is Philip, who goes to Samaria. Remember, Jesus had exhorted them to go to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the world. Jerusalem was the -center-. Now, in spreading out, Samaria is next. Jerusalem, especially at Feast time, was mostly Jews. Samaria was a group from intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles; typically looked down upon by -pure- Jews, because they were not pure. And the rest of the world, gentiles, well, they were "dogs". (Mk7:27-28)

In Samaria was demonstrated the difference between satan's power and God's. Simon the sorcerer had been shamanizing all sorts of demonic tricks to amaze the people. People would see his supernatural tricks and proclaim, "This man is the great power of God" (vs10) When people do not 'discern' (test) the spirits (1Jn4:1), when they see something beyond human abilities, they gullibly accept that it is FROM GOD. They do not stop to consider that there is both Good and Evil in the spiritual realm.

Typically, sorcerers seem to have to 'conjure'. If they are brewing a potion, they have to include the correct ingredients. Or if they are doing verbal conjuring, they have special incantations. Or they will go into physical gyrations and hand movements (sleight-of-hand), as Naaman was expecting Elisha to do to heal him. (2Ki5:11)

But Elisha had simply told Naaman to go to the river and 'dip' seven times. Jesus would cast out demons "with a word" (Mt8:16), and His healings were often accompanied by Him saying, "I say unto you".

And so, from that precedent we can assume Philip is doing similarly. Healing people, casting out demons "with a word". Not going into all sorts of sleight-of-hand dog-and-pony show routines. He's -just- 'healing' people, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Simon is impressed. He realizes that Philip has something -beyond- what he's been fooling the people with. And it says that Simon "believed" and was immersed. (vs13)

Oh, wonderful! See? Even a person entrenched in demon worship is also saved! Mmmm? Let's continue...

The Samaritans are now a new 'category' of people to receive the Gospel. Peter and John go down from Jerusalem to lay hands on the new converts for them to receive the Holy Spirit. (vs15)

Remember: Acts is "history". Notice here that the Samaritans did NOT speak with tongues. There were four major events of bestowing the Holy Spirit on people; three which included tongues, and two in which "hands" were laid.

- ?? Jews at Pentecost (ch2) with tongues (no hands)
- ?? Samaritans (ch8) no tongues (hands)
- ?? Gentiles (ch10) with tongues (no hands)
- ?? Jews of inter-testament period of John (ch19) with tongues (hands)

And then, individually, Saul (a special case... APOSTOLIC APPOINTMENT) had Ananias lay hands on him. (ch9)

So, how does this compare to Paul's teaching...

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom8:9)

Were these Samaritans NOT -REALLY- SAVED until hands were laid on them? Is the laying on of hands a requirement today? Does this support the notion in some circles today that a person is SAVED, and -then-, at some later event, with enough "prayer" and commotion, one receives the Holy Spirit? And then the 'sign' of them having received the Spirit is them jabbering in tongues?

Again... REMEMBER: Acts is a book of -history-. The "signs" aspect of much of this was for the benefit of the Jews.

"Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah has given me, are for signs and for wonders IN ISRAEL, from Jehovah of Hosts who dwells in Mount Zion." (Is8:18)

In the OT when the "seventy" were filled with the Spirit it says they "prophesied...although they DID NOT DO SO AGAIN" (Nu11:25) It was a ONE-TIME "sign" to the rest of (rebellious) Israel that -God- had selected

them for service. As we are going to see in ch11 when the gentiles receive the Holy Spirit and are Saved (ch10), the Jewish Believers are going to contend with Peter for having gone to gentiles. Throughout the course of events, even though they are saved, Jews have THICK-HEADS. They are like donkeys, which, the only way to get their attention sometimes and get them to understand is with a 2x4 across the top of the head. Remember: Acts is not a Doctrinal book. Once past this book, none of the rest of the NT teaches a doctrine about "Laying Hands" to receive the Holy Spirit; nor does it teach "speaking in tongues". In fact, Samaria, a demonic stronghold, did -NOT- experience tongues. And Paul's teaching to Corinth -AGAINST- tongues (ch12-14) was in front of the backdrop of their -past- in demonic experiences. (1Co12:2)

But as Peter defends the experience at Cornelius' house, he says that the Gentiles received the Spirit... "God gave them the same gift AS HE GAVE US..." (11:17) In other words, these new Jewish Believers understood what God had given them. They, the Jewish Believers, needed to understand that God was now expanding His ministry TO THE WORLD. God was no longer just the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" Their commission was to "go into all the world". Gentiles no longer needed to come to Jerusalem, to the temple, be circumcised, and sacrifice animals. (We'll get to that in ch15) God was reaching out to them, through the Holy Spirit.

Thus, apparently, the Laying on of Hands, and Tongues... these "signs"... was how they were made to understand. Of course, the unbelieving Jews, even though they saw the signs, did not believe. (1Co14:22) To the Jewish mind signs were also an indication of God's judgment...and ultimately Paul would declare...

"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (28:28)

As he then teaches how Israel has been "broken off" for awhile "until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in" (Rom11:17,19,20,25)

Acts is a book of -TRANSITION-. The Law, under Moses, was introduced amidst many signs and wonders. The same was the case transitioning from the Law (Israel) to Grace (Church). And there will be again when it is time for Israel's restoration, as prophecy foretells. Again... Acts is "history", not Church "doctrine". Just because Joshua split the waters of the Jordan, doesn't mean we do the same. Thus, just because the apostles laid hands, doesn't mean we do the same. Apostles, by definition, were "pioneers" of (as the dictionary says) a new "movement"

So, let's go back to Simon...

Simon is like many of today's practitioners. They put their hands up to their heads, squint their eyes, blow on people, bop them on their foreheads,

push them to the floor, beat on them...and they are performing "miracles". All they are giving is a "performance". Simon was seeing the REAL THING...and...HE WANTS IT!

Let's see, didn't it say that Simon "believed"? (vs13) Well, the demons also "believe" and are in terror. (Ja2:19) Simon offers Peter -money- to get this -power-. And isn't that what today's charlatans do? I see snippets of this "Campmeeting Hour" a lot: Send in your "seed". Plant your seed. Do it now, don't wait, get on the phone and call it in. And when you do you will "reap a harvest". What does Peter retort? (He's not very 'positive' or 'uplifting' to this NEW CONVERT)

"Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not upright before God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in bitter wickedness and bound by unrighteousness." (vs20-23)

My, My, My! HOW JUDGMENTAL! Peter, How -DARE- you condemn God's child like that! How -DARE- you criticize a 'brother'. Don't you remember Jesus' teaching (whom, if you remember, you denied three times, so just get off your high-horse already! You're not so perfect yourself!) about the twig in -his- eyes, vs the beam in -your- eyes? Aaah yes! The 70s (and today's) retorts!

Paul hasn't written it yet, but Peter already understands the "witness" (Rom8:16) that "we are the children of God". Like we say periodically: If you don't know whether or not you have the Holy Spirit, you don't. You are not saved. Peter -has- the Holy Spirit, and he "witnesses" that Simon does not.

Notice also that this is about a "gift". The Holy Spirit is a gift. Salvation is a "gift of God; not of works" (Eph2:8-9) Thus, why would someone seek to -purchase- it with money?

But let's close this section with one final observation. There are many today who hold, not to Scripture, but to the teaching of the (so-called) Church 'fathers' of the Reformation. Among their doctrines is the one called: Sola Fide. Faith Alone. When they are shown the Scriptural doctrine of "repentance", they say the Bible doesn't teach it... that the Bible doesn't teach the "WORK of" repentance. Some of the staunchest KJ-onlyists proclaim it. Some say that repentance is "too confusing", so its proclamation should be ignored. Too confusing in that: How does one know when they have repented -enough-? Confusing Biblical "repentance" with Babylon's "penance".

Penance is the -doing- of certain things to try to atone for one's own sins.

Repentance, on the other hand, is a state of mind and heart, figuratively at the foot of Jesus' cross where He, Jesus, made atonement -for- us; and we plead: "God, be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk18:13) Unlike at Pentecost where Peter proclaimed for them to repent, here it doesn't say that Simon did so. He just "believed". But was he saved?

Again... the demons believe. They believe and confess Jesus Christ: "I know who You are; the Holy One of God" (Mk1:24) But they are in terror, because they know that the Lake of Fire was prepared "for the devil and his angels" (Mt25:41) "...Did You come to destroy us?" (Mk1:24)

Peter proclaims to Simon the wickedness that is within him. He is "bound" by unrighteousness.

Something I have noticed (just a personal observation here) about those who used to be in satan worship (there is, of course, the case where they got saved and burned the books of witchcraft in Ephesus 19:19) that the cases of -REAL- CONVERSION of former satanists is extremely rare. Most that I have known of seem to not be able to get -both- feet out of satanism. They try to be "christian", but the other foot seems stuck in satanism. A fellow years ago, whose e-mails I would read, or articles at his website, could never seem to extricate himself from the occult thinking of numerology and occult symbols. Somebody I knew personally years ago, his wife would teach Bible classes and continually lusted after tongues...and he would regularly try to revert back to his former demonism. And usually, if they claim to be "saved" and become involved in "church", the churches they tend to get involved with are the charismatic, pentecostal or Calvary Chapel types: the ones where they babble in tongues, pretend to do miracles, prophesy future events and have visions of themselves going to hell and having 'Jesus' explain to them why they were given the "hell experience", etc.etc.etc.

So, if you see such people, and 'wonder' about their "other foot" that seems to still be stuck in hell, perhaps it is a case like Simon? Went through the motions and 'believed'...but did not truly repent unto Salvation. (2Co7:10) If Peter could make the observations about Simon as he did, we can be pretty sure there are similar cases today, as well.

Again: "Not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b) And not all [c]hristians (who make "claims for Christ") are [C]hristian.

## ***Saul's Call*** (Acts 9)

"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word." (8:3-4)

"Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder toward the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." (9:1-2)

Paul? Who wrote most of the rest of the New Testament? This is how he started out. His violence against the Church was so great that later he would say...

"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." (1Co15:9)

Does past sin in one's life preclude effective service for God? How many in service to God must confess: I slept with another man's wife. So did David. I denied the Lord. So did Peter. I murdered a man. So did Moses and David. I lied and put my wife in jeopardy to save my own skin. So did Abraham and Isaac. I doubted the Lord. So did Thomas and Zacharias.

Is murdering and persecuting the Church worse than sleeping with another man's wife? Paul considered himself "least" because of it.

In what state does God -call- to Saul? As a pious church-going saintly individual, who smiles at the songleader, and says "Amen!" a lot to the pastor's sermon topics? No. He is ON-HIS-WAY to persecute more Christians. He's got a whole swarm of bees in his pants, and is rushing to imprison more of those #\$\$@# Christians. If he was "compelling them to blaspheme" (26:11), don't you imagine he did much of his own.

So God knocks him to the ground...

"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? And he said, Who are You, Sir? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (vs4-5)

Now, I suspect Saul would likely have known about, or even seen Jesus prior to, and around the crucifixion. After all, he later says to Festus, "...this thing (crucifixion and resurrection) was not done in a corner" (26:26) If he was taught by someone as eminent as Gamaliel (22:3), he would not have been in the dark about Jesus. But he was a gung-ho disciple of the pharisaical party-line that crucified Jesus.

But Jesus, who is supposedly -dead-, is now confronting him. And with Saul's reply we can see that Saul likely actually had a pure heart, only had been misdirected, brainwashed and deceived. He had done it...

"...ignorantly and in unbelief" (1Ti1:13)

And so as he is experiencing God's grace, his humbled heart asks...

"Lord, what do You have in mind for me to do?" (vs6)

Notice his choice of words. It's not "what -must- I do?" as the Philippian jailer. (16:30) Or as at Peter's preaching, "what -shall- we do?" (2:37) Saul is not being hog-tied and dragged into Salvation. He is a young intelligent and highly educated man. As God had invited Israel "let us -reason-together" (Is1:18), and as Paul would do later, "-reason- from the Scriptures" (17:2), Saul is understanding the futility of "kicking against the goads". He's been wound up tighter than a clock spring, going off half-cocked in his own ideas of how to deal with the 'problem' of the new Church. Now he meets the Lord face-to-face. OK, obviously I've been wrong, doing what -I- thought was right, fighting against You. (Obviously: You are who You said You were. You -did- rise from the dead.) Here I am... What do -You- want from me?

We don't hear Saul saying the -words- "I repent". He doesn't say, "I believe, I believe". The transformation has already taken place in his -heart-. He knows it, the Lord knows it, so now... What's next? As if to say: I'm saved... what now? The expression "what do You have in mind" is the wording of somebody who has become 'familiar' with the person being asked... dare we say... 'friends'? (Jn15:15) If you will... "prayer" at its core; what prayer is meant to be. Perhaps why that old song used to say "preach like Peter, -PRAY- like Paul"?

Saul's development now goes in stages. Saul's -fame- is already great, as a -destroyer-. Ananias, being asked of God to go to Saul, who is "praying" (vs11) objects, "I have heard...how much evil he has done" (vs13) But the Lord says,

"Go, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (vs15)

So Ananias lays hands on Saul, he regains his sight and receives the Holy Spirit, and...

"...immediately he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God" (vs20)

and "increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ" (vs22)

What had been the accusation by the Jews against Jesus?

"For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a man, make Yourself God. (Jn10:33)

"We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." (Jn19:7)

And so as Saul is saved, and starts debating with his former associates, the matter of Jesus' -DEITY- is the point he proclaims. They had crucified Jesus for it, but Saul has now met Jesus, and knows it is true, so he does not shy away from proclaiming it. With the same gusto he had come to Damascus to -kill- Christians, with the same gusto he is now 'confounding' the Jews with the truth. The word "confound" carries the idea of "confusion". What's the deal with this guy? First he's arresting Christians. Now he -is- one!?

But those who are in rebellion don't want facts. Like the old saying my dad used to quote: My mind is already made up, don't confuse me with the facts. Saul "proved" to them Jesus' Deity. And so they plot to get rid of him. (vs23)

The disciples let him down outside the wall in a basket and he escapes to Jerusalem. Tries to join up with the Believers. Hey, I'm one of you now! YaRight! And it takes Barnabas to 'introduce' Saul to the Believers as a Christian. (vs27)

So now he "disputed with the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him" (vs29)

Ah yes....we've come full circle. We first heard of the Hellenists arguing with Stephen, and they stirred things up, and Stephen was stoned. Saul had been there collecting the coats of those who stoned Stephen. So now, those who gave their coats to Saul, want to kill Saul, too. Saul just isn't being a nice peaceful quiet 'positive' person. He sees something wrong and wants to get in there and -convince- people of what is right. If we were to make this a series -about- "Paul", we would see this same tendency when other disputes arise, as he wants to go into an arena where people are shouting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" (ch19), but the other disciples have to restrain him. (19:30)

So here, in Jerusalem, Saul has stirred up controversy again and the other Believers lead him to Caesarea, which was a shipping port, and sent him off to his home town, Tarsus. (vs30)

Then at some future date Barnabas goes to Tarsus, gets Saul, and brings him to Antioch where the Church is now headquartered. (11:25-26) Saul was in the middle of where the 'action' was, where "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (11:26) When we, today, speak of Bible



manuscripts from which translations are derived, we already noted that Alexandria is where the perversions originate. And Antioch was the center from where the correct texts originated.

When Paul speaks in Galatians ch1 of getting his doctrine directly from God, not the men who preceded him in Jerusalem, did that happen between Acts 9:30 and 11:26? He had started out gung-ho, but immediately had attempts on his life, so goes away back 'home'. Is that where he has his "wilderness" time to learn from the Lord? Moses, thinking to redeem Israel on his own, killed an Egyptian, and spent 40 years on the run in the wilderness. Jesus, even though being God, spent 40 days in the wilderness in preparation for ministry.

But notice when Saul was sent -away- to Tarsus, it says...

"Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and were built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (vs31)

When Stephen was stoned, while it was certainly the Hellenists who stirred things up, Saul was present, and in the middle of things. Saul was the ring leader of the persecution that erupted. But even when he was saved, he was still stirring up things. Certainly, he was 'witnessing'...but his -style- was of a 'charging bull' nature that tended to rile people up, and want to see him dead. And what was going on with Saul, affected everybody around him. When he was gone, there was peace.

Was it Saul's -own- experience that contributed to his exhortation later to...

"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure." (1Ti5:22)

This "Laying Hands" was the Jewish way of 'commissioning' or 'appointing' to service. In other words, was Paul recognizing that, even though fired up for the Lord, that those early days also had elements of "sin" due to immaturity?

"not a new convert, that he not be puffed up with pride and fall into the same condemnation as the devil." (1Ti3:6)

Paul later speaks of his "thorn in the flesh" by which the Lord kept him from "being made haughty" (2Co12:7)

He -knew- a lot, and like many who go on for advanced education degrees, they rely on their vast -knowledge- and -debating- skills, rather than the humility that comes with a right proper relationship with the Lord, through the Holy Spirit. Years ago at Bible school, choir tour one of the years went to Salt Lake City, and so the local missionary (to the Mormons) took us on a tour of all the significant Mormon sites. I still remember the

terrible "unease" I felt when some of the fellow choir members, ones who were more 'scholars' than I was, took on the Mormon guides in - argumentation-. In my spirit it just did not FEEL RIGHT, what they were doing. Of course later, they were all "pumped up" (patting themselves on the back) about the fact that they had been "witnessing" to the Mormons, and the Mormons could not answer back to their 'arguments'.

Jesus said...

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." (Mt10:16)

Saul was in the midst of wolves, and so he started out barking and growling back. What happens when you yell at a barking dog to "SHUT UP!!!" ?? It only barks louder and more ferociously.

Thus we see the record: after Saul had been in Tarsus awhile, and wherever else he was in his wilderness training, and had learned to 'calm down' in the Lord, rather than "confounding" and "disputing", it says that he...

"-REASONED- with them [Jews in the synagogues on the Sabbaths] FROM THE SCRIPTURES" (17:2)

## ***Gentiles Saved*** (Acts 10-11)

"Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter...He will tell you what you need to do" (10:5-6)

"Jehovah searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. IF YOU SEEK HIM, HE WILL BE FOUND BY YOU..." (1Ch28:9)

The history of missionary work is also a history of God's grace to the far reaches of the globe. Scoffers often taunt the Christian about the "pagans who have never heard". But not only do the natives have their stories and traditions of things like Noah's flood, some here and there also know about Jesus. How? When missionaries would arrive, they would find that the indigenous tribe to whom they came already knew some of the Gospel, and in the visions by which they knew the Gospel, they were also told that strangers would come, who would teach them further. And so, when the missionary would come, and start sharing the Gospel, the natives would recognize that the missionary was the fulfillment of the promise.

Cornelius, in this current study, is the first in that litany. We can know that these missionary accounts are not fiction, or speculate that God -wouldn't- work in that way... because He -did- so with Cornelius.

If we read the passage, we see a man who is -seeking- after God. He prays. Does he know God by name? We are not told the extent of his faith. But God sends an angel, with instructions to send for Peter.

Of course, God is not going to 'spring' this on Peter, and leave it for Peter to decide what to do in his own wisdom (like picking Matthias). While Cornelius' men are on the way, God prepares Peter. Around noon Peter is praying and sees a vision. A 'sheet' let down before him, filled with all the creepy crawly animals that Israel ever since Moses have considered "unclean". Nevermind that Jesus "purified all foods" based on the digestive 'elimination' argument. (Mk7:19) That it is not -food- that defiles a person, but what is in the -heart-. Nevertheless, Peter is a Jew. Remember, he was still stuck on the "kingdom" in his preaching, even though Jesus had exhorted them to 'never mind' that, but to preach the Gospel. God had not directed the picking of Matthias, but what comes next -is- God's directive. And so, in typical Jewish fashion, God gives Peter a "sign". A vision. A vision that repeats three times. One (1) vision might be something. To Pharaoh He -doubled- the dreams to emphasize the message. (Ge41:32) But to the eastern mind, to have it repeat three (3) times, meant it was something to pay attention to.

"Arise, Peter; kill and eat" (vs13)

"By no means, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean"(vs14)

In other words: NO WAY, (J)HOSEY!!

"What God has cleansed do not consider unclean" (vs15)

And while Peter is pondering this, Cornelius' men arrive, and the Spirit says...

"Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise, therefore, go down and go with them without hesitating; for I have sent them." (v20)

A couple of things here...

First of all, has Peter by now figured out that he had been hasty in going ahead of the Lord in picking Matthias? He had absolutely no hesitation to jump ahead and do that. But neither had the Lord given him instructions to do it.

But here, he is balking; and here's the other point. To eat something unclean...? That goes against -EVERYTHING- we grew up believing and doing. We never done it that way before! Part of Jewish identity was embodied in the kosher foods. Peter is being prepared to go meet with some "dogs". That's what they (traditionally, nationally) considered non-Jews. And Samaritans were the -worst- sort, because they were 'mixture', half-breeds, impure. And don't people today cling to their own racial bigotries: in this country over the years it has been the Ja-s, Ni-s, N---rs, Ch--ks, Kr--ts, to mention a few. When Israel went into Canaan under Joshua, God had told them to wipe out all the indigenous nations. Why? Because of their idolatry. So what did Israel do? Cast the pagans aside as "dogs", and embraced their idolatry. Just the opposite of God's intention!!

But God desires "all men to be saved and to come to a full true knowledge of the truth." (1Ti2:4)

So -Godd

-

"Look out! No! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Do homage to God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Re19:10)

"Now see here! No! For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the Words of this Book. Do homage to God." (Re22:9)

I'm just a 'guy', too!

"Then he said to them, You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?" (10:28-29)

At this moment Peter was -NOT- a "Jew". He was a -man-, God's messenger, sent to preach the Gospel. The "things commanded...by God" (vs33)

And how does Peter begin?

"Then Peter opened his mouth and said: In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. The Word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)" (vs34-36)

Paul began one of his messages about their devotion to the "unknown God" (17:23) and goes on introducing the Greeks to the Creator. Here Peter introduces to Cornelius' household the fact that there is no difference between Jew or Gentile... that God seeks any who seek after Him.

And as Peter is preaching, the Holy Spirit comes upon those gathered. Peter does not stop and issue an "invitation". It was not Peter's to know their hearts. He was sent to preach. And then the Holy Spirit did His job. And to Peter and the Jews he took along, the witness of the "sign" of them speaking in tongues and praising God. Notice again that the tongues was not unintelligible gibberish; it was -understood- as "magnifying God"

This was not -Peter's- work, it was the Holy Spirit's. Peter obeyed and went where God sent him, and God did the work in the hearts. Salvation is not about pulling on -emotional- 'heart strings' with salemanship and badgering. Won't you p'leeeeeeease receive Jesus "into your heart"! No! In fact, remember how many times Peter would tell his hearers, "You crucified Jesus!" Here he just preaches the Gospel, and the Holy Spirit did the rest.

We should take note of this. If people stream forward at "altar calls" and are emotionally crying and sobbing, after the leader has waxed 'dramatic' and 'emotional', it is easily likely that those people are not really being saved. Many people also cry upon seeing emotional movies or dramatic presentations, but that has nothing to do with Salvation from sin. If their coming is not because of their yielding to the Holy Spirit, it is not true Salvation. Not that they might not weep in sorrow for their sin. But weeping is not -the- gauge of True Regeneration by the Holy Spirit in the heart. (Tit3:5)

So, Peter and company return to Jerusalem and... Praise the Lord! The Gentiles are also saved! Hmm?? Amazingly, no!

"You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" (11:3)

Shame on you! How could you?! It doesn't matter that the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles....You ate with the uncircumcised! That was as bad to the Jews, as in apartheid countries for some white folk to go collaborate with blacks. Don't be surprised when a brick comes flying through your living room windows, you go outside and see a burning cross, and see the white hooded thugs getting into their trucks and driving off, etc.etc.

So Peter retells the whole thing, blow-by-blow. And Peter had taken along the "brethren" who were also corroborating witnesses. And Peter then sums up with...

"Then I remembered the Word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed immersed in water, but you shall be immersed in the Holy Spirit. If therefore God gave them the SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE US who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, WHO WAS I TO BE ABLE TO PREVENT GOD?" (vs16-17)

This was not Peter 'standing up' and saying, 'We need to choose a replacement for Judas!'. This was -God's- work! God sending the angel to Cornelius, God sending the visions to Peter, and God sending His Holy Spirit. Peter was -merely- the messenger.

And Silence...

"Then God has also granted to the Gentiles REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE" (vs18)

For all the different ways in which the Gospel is maligned and distorted today, including the Reformation doctrine of "sola fide", notice their succinct nutshell description of Salvation.

**-REPENTANCE- UNTO LIFE**

"The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is longsuffering toward us, NOT purposing THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH but that -ALL- should come to REPENTANCE." (2Pt3:9)

## ***Effectual Prayer?*** (Acts 12)

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to oppress some from the church. And he killed Jacob the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. (And it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.) So when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after Passover. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. And behold, the Angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, Arise quickly! And his chains fell off his hands." (vs1-7)

This lesson will be relatively short. What we observe today is something we have observed on other occasions when speaking of "prayer". Nothing 'new' today.

Peter has been taken into prison and Herod is intending to kill him after Passover. Herod, having already killed Jacob, is trying to garner brownie points with the (unbelieving) Jews. The -very- night before Peter is to be taken out, the Lord releases him from prison, and he shows up at the door where the rest have been holding a non-stop (constant) prayer vigil.

One would think that, when Peter appears at the door, they would all jump up and down, squealing with delight, "Our prayers have been answered!! Peter is free!!"

What happens when Rhoda comes and tells them that "Peter is at the gate"? Aw, you silly girl, you're crazy! (vs15)

"But Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, **THEY WERE AMAZED**" (vs16)

Why in the world were they "amazed"? Had they not been praying? Or did they think that prayer is just something to be done to -feel- 'holy' for having done it? That's what the pagans do. As Jesus said,

"For they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Mt6:7)

Apparently these disciples didn't even think they would be heard. Their 'amazement' indicates that their prayer was NOT in faith. They did NOT expect Peter to be freed.

They were like Jacob's description...



"But let him ask in faith, doubting nothing, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. FOR LET NOT THAT MAN SUPPOSE THAT HE WILL RECEIVE ANYTHING FROM THE LORD; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (Ja1:6-8)

Was it their -prayer- that saved Peter? ...through the "-power- of prayer"? ...or God's -own- 'purpose'... IN SPITE OF their -faithless- 'prayer' rituals.

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Is faith able to save him?" (Ja2:14)

The assumed answer: NO

What is the result of faithless prayer? Is such prayer effectual?

The assumed answer: NO

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man is mighty. Elijah was a man with feelings like ours, and he prayed to God that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth sprouted its fruit." (Ja5:16-18)

"Now this is the CONFIDENCE that we have in Him, that if we ask anything ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, He hears us." (1Jn5:14)

Faithless prayer is of absolutely NO BENEFIT. And as we learned way back at the beginning, prayer also does not change disobedience into something blessed by God. Picking Matthias was not God's choice, just because they were praying. And something that many like to -use- prayer for today... it is also not for the purpose of -justifying- one's own position in a dispute against another person when there is disagreement. Prayer is not a 'tool'. I dare say that "prayer" is one of the most abused activities in the 'church'. It was in Acts, and it is today.

But as we saw two lessons ago, when Saul met the Lord, he didn't need 'lessons' in -how-to- pray. He had just met the Lord, they were talking face-to-face, and Saul communicated accordingly, "what do You have in mind..?" Prayer is like was said of Moses in the tent of meeting,

"And Jehovah spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." (Ex33:11)

And Jesus said...

"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (Jn15:14)

## ***Moses' Law and Gentiles?*** (Acts 15)

"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (vs1)

Here, now, we get to the one doctrinal issue which is taught in Acts. It was introduced a couple lessons ago when the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles. But here we get to a very important specific. Is Salvation by "grace through faith" (Eph2:8), or by "works" (vs9)? ...by the deeds of the flesh; the Law? (Rom3:20) or the "hearing of faith"? (Ga3:2,5)

There are people today of the "Hebrew roots" and (so-called) "Messianic" fellowships who seem not to have read this passage, nor Galatians. They will come along and tell (gentile) Christians that they are not experiencing God's fullness unless they -also- keep the various Jewish rituals. They will take certain selected passages and presume to impart GREATER (richer) TRUTH from a Hebrew perspective. They will take some verses that are VERY CLEAR in their meaning, when taken straight forward, and will claim to know -special- (secret) meanings based on Hebrew traditions and history, such that the verse doesn't really mean WHAT IT SAYS, but some other thing, based on their 'twistings'. (2Pt3:16)

Well... Jesus already berated the Jews of His day...

"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by reason of your tradition?" (Mt15:3)

"Full well you set aside the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.... making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down." (Mk7:9,13)

This was the very thing over which Paul gave Peter a public tongue lashing...

"But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to Judaize?" (Ga2:14)

What was going on there? The very same argument from a couple lessons ago. Not only were Jews holding to 'separatist' feelings toward Gentiles, these feelings came forward in actions as Jews would hold themselves aloof from Gentiles in joint gatherings. Even Peter, who had first gone to Cornelius, and given a description of the events, and the leaders concluded that God had granted to Gentiles "repentance unto life", when Jews of the separatist persuasion were around, Peter, even though having

blazed the trail, would be aloof with his Jewish buddies so as not to be chastised by them.

This term "judaize" is interesting. As I read various e-news sources, some from Israel, the thing I read between the lines is that Judaism in Israel, even today, is not about a -heart- condition before God. It is not "repentance unto life"; whether to Jesus, or 'God' as they knew Him through Moses. When immigrants make Aliyah today, there are programs to induct them "into -Judaism-"; to make sure they know all the right proper rituals, customs and traditions in the RELIGION of -JUDAISM-. Typically I read very little that their -hearts- are turned to God. It's all about "judaism". They make sure to "judaize" those who make aliyah. But they are still in unbelief!

As an aside here: Many today boast how Jerusalem is 'home' to the three "major religions", Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In their minds "christianity" is represented by the buildings and statues of Rome. Judaism is this judaized religion we're talking about. And Islam is to the moon. NOT ANY of the three are God-fearing!

So... why 'circumcision'? That was the very first (original) ritual covenanted between God and Abraham. (Ge17:10) And as Israel is being led out of Egypt by Moses, and the Law is given, before Jesus came and died to fulfill the Law (Mt5:17), the provision for non-Jews to approach God in things like Passover was, to be circumcised, just like Israel was. (Ex12:48) And according to the OT Law, anything to do with worship, if a "stranger" lived amongst Israel and wanted to partake of the temple service, God told them,

"just as you do, so shall he do...One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who sojourns with you" (Num15:14-16)

But with the Church God gave something -new-. It is a "New Covenant" in Jesus' blood. (Mk14:24) When a 'new' is given, the old becomes obsolete. (2Co3:13-14) And the Holy Spirit was given... not to all the Judaists, but to Jesus' disciples. The new Church was called "Christian" in Antioch (Ac11:26), which is where the Church was now headquartered. Antioch was in Syria, a 'gentile' nation. The name CHRIST-ian, based on Jesus the 'CHRIST'. Jesus, whom the Pharisee (vs5) Judaists had crucified, and they had martyred Stephen and imprisoned and beaten some of the leaders. Notice it says "certain -men-" came from Judea; not "brethren" or "disciples". These were unbelievers, coming along to stir things up. (Like the Hellenists had done earlier) Like today's Hebrew Roots and Messianists do. Perhaps some of today's Messianists actually -do- know the Lord? It is not mine to judge, when I don't know their individual hearts. After all, Paul did write to the "brethren" of Galatia about these same things

But true to form, a big argument erupts. It says "much dispute". (vs7) And so Peter gets up and reminds everybody how he had gone to Cornelius, at the direction of God, and how gentiles had received the Holy Spirit, just like they had. And God had made "no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (vs8-9) In other words, Cornelius and his gathered family and guests had NOT been circumcised when the Holy Spirit was given. According to the OT way, under Moses, the temple and worship rituals could not be partaken UNTIL circumcision had -first- been performed. Since it was -God- bestowing the Holy Spirit, and He did so without the old Abrahamic/Mosaic ritual, does not even logic understand that the ritual is NO LONGER NECESSARY.

One wonders if this conference happened -before- or -after- Paul's tongue lashing to Peter? What Peter says next is almost identical to what Paul said to him. Did that incident happen, and now this one is taking place?

"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, in the SAME MANNER as they" (vs10-11)

As Paul wrote...

"Tell me, you who desire to be under the Law, do you not hear the Law?" (Ga4:21)

And had said to Peter publicly...

"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through the faith of Jesus Christ, even we believe into Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified." (Ga2:15-16)

This meeting is happening at Jerusalem where Paul and Barnabas had been sent with the question from the leaders at Antioch. Thus the apostles (who stayed in Jerusalem when persecution arose 8:1), including Peter, and Paul and Barnabas are all in the same room. Apparently, even though the Church is now headquartered in Antioch, the -chief- leaders, the apostles, are still in Jerusalem. So Barnabas and Paul, having come for the meeting, tell how the Lord has been working among the Gentiles. (vs12) Remember how Saul was commissioned by the Lord -to- the Gentiles. (9:15)

So, by now, it appears that Jacob has become a prime leader. Likely Jesus' earthly brother? The one who wrote the epistle? (Mt13:55, Ga1:19) Not having been selected as one of -the- "twelve" by Jesus, since he was still in unbelief until after Jesus was crucified. (Jn7:5) But is now a non-apostolic leader, seemingly -over- the apostles? When Peter is released

from prison, he tells the people gathered to be sure to tell Jacob (12:17) And, according to vs13 it seems that when Jacob speaks, the rest listen.

"Simon has declared how God at the first looked upon the GENTILES to TAKE OUT OF THEM A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things. Known to God from eternity are all His works." (vs14-18)

As Paul will write later...

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, that you not be wise within yourselves, that hardness in part has happened to Israel until the FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES comes in." (Rom11:25)

So Jacob makes a suggestion, which becomes a doctrinal decision and position as they become of "one mind". (vs25) The gentiles are not held to the same Jewish standards. And even though they are writing this up to send to the gentiles, we will later still see Paul, even though an apostle to the gentiles, observing Jewish traditions: Pentecost (20:16) and vows (18:18, 21:23) So what is decided for Gentiles to observe?

- 1) Keep from idols
- 2) Keep from sexual perversions
- 3) Keep from things strangled
- 4) Keep from blood

1) "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Mt22:37-40)

These are Jesus' words.

If a person loves God, BY DEFINITION they will not worship idols.

2) "...the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were pleasing; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose... There were giants on the earth in those days. And also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them, these were the mighty men from antiquity, men of renown." (Gen6:2,4)

By this means human genetics was messed up to such an extent that God destroyed the world with the flood, and saved Noah and his family who was "perfect in his GENERATION" (Gen6:9)

But also, if one loves one's "neighbor as one's self", they are not going to sleep with their neighbor's wife.

3 & 4 are related. After the flood God gave what some call the "Noahide laws", which included the command not to eat blood with animal flesh; and regarding murder. (Gen9:3-6) To keep "from blood" is easy to understand. "Strangled" is related because it kills the animal by stopping the blood flow to the brain, WITHOUT DRAINING the blood out of the body. The animal is dead, but the blood is still in the body. They are both about 'blood'.

And again, if one loves one's neighbor as one's self, they will not murder that neighbor.

So, in reality, there were only three items to the early Church doctrine of behavior; things related to idolatry, sex and blood. And really, if we were to summarize all of earth's evils down to their basics, are these not at the root and core.

In the beginning there were few laws. Through Abraham and Israel were all the multitude of laws and rituals. Back to gentiles, simplicity. A different context, but Paul speaks of the

"simplicity that is in Christ" (2Co11:3)

If our love for God is with "sincerity", then the keeping of His will is also "simple" in our "conscience" (2Co1:12) When a couple truly 'love' each other, there is no need for "law" between them. They -naturally- do those things that are pleasing to each other. The Church is the "bride" of Christ. (Eph5:30-32)

What is in the -heart-? God prefaced the Law with

"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God, Jehovah is one. And you shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, with all your soul, exceedingly in every way. And these Words which I am commanding you today shall be in your heart." (de6:4-6)

The Church is not about Law, but something which OT Israel seemed to miss... the HEART.

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteousness of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the naturally uncircumcised, if he fulfills the Law, judge you who, though having the writings and circumcision, are a transgressor of the Law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision

is of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom2:25-29)

"For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Rom10:4)

## ***Dispute: Parting of Ways*** (Acts 15:36-41)

"Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they are holding on. Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. And the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God." (vs36-40)

For context:

"and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem" (13:13)

What sort of person does it take to be in ministry? Ministry is more strenuous than -merely- the Christian life, which Paul likens to a "race"; to "Run in such a way that you may obtain [the prize]" (1Co9:24) But to the minister, Timothy, he likens service to military duty.

"No one serving military duty entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him." (2Ti2:4)

Around the time this is being drafted, they've had these ads on TV for a device to attach to one's door, and do exercises. The ones they show working out have absolutely 'ripped' bodies. Muscles bulging from places I didn't know there were muscles. Certainly they didn't gain those 'buffed' bodies from the device being advertised. But they work hard to build up such muscles. I've also seen documentaries on various military training: the hard work and rigors they go through. Being held under water to near-drowning, faces shoved into the sand...straining their bodies to the absolute maximum. I've never served in the military, and there are some questions of 'practical' matters I would like sometime to ask somebody who has; but one thing I cannot imagine is being engaged in combat and not sticking it out, side-by-side with comrades-in-arms, and not turning tail and run (unless the command was given). The stories are told about some dictatorships that have certain men -behind- those doing the fighting. The fighting men fight, and as for these other men, their sole purpose is to shoot and kill any of the fighting men, should they turn tail and run.

What we've seen of Paul is one who is gung-ho, gets in there and 'fights'... whether to kill Christians; or once he was saved, to refute the error.

On the other hand, what sort of person is Barnabas? What sort of person does it take to lift up someone who is downtrodden and hurting? If a person has an open gaping wound, one does not -grab- them and -yank- on them. One uses more -gentle- means. People who are -helpers- of



others are often called "a Barnabas", because Barnabas was a more sensitive and empathetic individual. When nobody else was receiving Saul, Barnabas took him and introduced him to the assembly as a new convert.

But one thing Barnabas was NOT, was a 'quitter'. He and Paul travelled all over in ministry, even through persecutions. When Antioch sent them to Jerusalem about the matter of Jewish rituals and Gentile converts, they - both- got into the argument. (15:2)

But John Mark was a quitter. It was his mother, Mary, whose house was more substantial to host the prayer vigil for Peter (12:12) A bigger house might suggest greater wealth? Barnabas and John were "cousins" (Col4:10); and Barnabas had also been one of those mentioned, who had land, sold it, and brought the proceeds to the apostles. (4:36-37) Perhaps wealth ran in the family? Greater wealth might suggest that John hadn't been forced to work much? With the family wealth, it hadn't been necessary? Or if the house belonged to "Mary", where was his father? Perhaps he was a mama's boy? Grown up more 'tender'? Not learned toughness? After all, if he had continued travelling, he would have seen Paul stoned to 'death' and such things. (14:19) Missionary work is not for the faint-hearted.

In addition, something a people-watcher, such as myself, notices is that when wealthier people become part of a congregation, they tend to be the ones voted to positions of greater prominence and authority. In the world when those with money talk, people listen; and that tendency seems to spill over into the church.

So...for as much as Barnabas is to be commended for bringing Saul into the assembly, and going with S/Paul on missionary journeys, was his 'leadership' perhaps a bit "self-made"? Was he perhaps over-extending his own authority? Don't know. Just asking and speculating.

And... where does one learn -to- be a missionary? By working under someone who is one? What sort of person goes, in the first place, into missionary work? People who go into military, police, detective, firefighter, astronaut, etc work typically are tested, to see of what sort they are. Not everybody is CUT OUT TO BE a soldier. Not everybody can withstand the rigors of going into space. It would take, I imagine, a special sort of persona to be couped up in the Space Station for months at a time, not being able to open the door and go "outside" for some "fresh air and sunshine" and to hear the birds chirping. And if a person is not "cut out" for certain work, they don't get accepted, to then go into training.

Paul is a -practical- sort of person. Barnabas is more -empathetic-. Both traits have their place. But Paul has already gotten a taste of Mark, and knows he's not suited to the rigors. Barnabas, being the 'caring' sort of

person he is, and it is his cousin, wants to -nurture- Mark. But what is the -purpose- of missionary work? To nurture one's self, or to preach the Gospel to others? There's certainly -other- things Mark can do for the Lord... but apparently -NOT- missionary work.

There was a certain school that years ago boasted a -huge- percentage of their graduates going to the mission field. They taught and preached missions, missions, missions. But then, also, their missionaries also had the highest percentage drop-out rate. Not everybody is cut out to be a missionary, even if emotionally badgered to do so by the one preaching from the pulpit.

And so Paul and Barnabas have sharp "contention", each being persuaded in their own view of the matter. So after the long relationship they've had, they part company. Paul takes Silas, and Barnabas takes John. Paul has already been stoned. Next chapter Paul and Silas will be beaten and put in jail. How would John have held up to that?

Who was right? Paul or Barnabas? There are many who "care" alot, and when a "Paul" comes along, they accuse Paul of not being "more loving". So strict. So harsh. So unbending.

Remember our mention of Peter's aloofness from Gentiles, over which Paul had given him the public tongue lashing? (Ga2:13-14) As it so happens, this hypocrisy was so serious an incident that it says,

"...so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy."

While love and empathy are good qualities to have, one weakness often manifests itself. Such people also always seem to try real hard to "look for the -good- in everybody". Generically speaking... when evil is present, it often requires a twisting of reality in order to find the "good". A lot of 'hoping', that... in spite of all the evil that is visible, the -hope- and 'wishing' that good is also present. And so, there is often a purposeful (perhaps unconscious?) 'blinding' of one's self to the evil, in order to see the good. It is this desire for "good" that often blinds couples who are "in love". They say that "love is blind". How many end up in bad marriages because each sees only the "good" in the other person, not the 'reality'. And even if others try to bring the 'problems' to their attention, they willfully blind themselves, because they are "in love".

Well, this is the last we hear of Barnabas in the book of Acts. And it is Paul and Silas who are "commended by the brethren". (vs40) Perhaps they also understood why Paul didn't think John was yet 'fit' for duty?

However, given some years, and Paul is now in prison, looking to the end of his life, writing epistles here and there. To Timothy...

"Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry." (2Ti4:11)

So, apparently John Mark did a little "maturing"?

But while Barnabas was training up John Mark, Paul finds Timothy (16:1) who travels with him, and whom Paul sends on missions, and to whom he writes epistles on "pastoral" issues.

## **Forbidden** (Acts 16:6-15)

"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul during the night: A man of Macedonia stood and begged him, saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them." (vs6-10)

Is it -always- the right time to witness? Is -everybody- we meet a potential 'target' for witnessing? Since Peter says that it's not God's purpose for "any to perish" but that "all" should come to repentance (2Pt3:9) Shouldn't we also 'pray' for -everybody- and their salvation?

How do we know the person's heart? Do we know people as God does? What about the person who has "blasphemed the Holy Spirit" such that there is "no forgiveness" (Mk3:28-29) If we prayed for and witnessed to such a person, would we not be going against their eternal judgment? God told Jeremiah NOT to 'pray' for Israel. (Jer7:16, 11:14, 14:11) Israel was in rebellion, and their judgment was sealed. How do we know but what a person is one of the mixed genetics creatures prophesied in Dan2:43, whose judgment is sealed just as those of Noah's day? (2Pt2:4)

Over the years I've had arguments with a few people who were gung-ho 'witnessing', and because I was not doing -what- they were doing, I was out of the Lord's will. Years ago I dropped out of college a couple of quarters to 'refresh' and work at jobs to earn money. I had worked myself to a frazzle the prior three years, about to wear myself out; but now was back, sitting in the student union building, waiting for an appointment at the registrar's office. And there he was. One of those campus 'ministry' guys, going around and button-holing people, with this 'pad' in one hand, and pencil in the other. I sat there watching him for awhile, wondering if he would come over and approach me; thinking about my own 'strategy' to psych him out, see what he was up to, and see what kind of conversation we might have. And... yup! He eventually got to me. I guess the Holy Spirit didn't inform him that I was already saved. The 'pad' was a "questionnaire". This questionnaire was their means to break the ice to introduce the topic of "Jesus". I decided to play along, 'dumb', to see how he would work the conversation around. Apparently, I'm not all that good an 'actor', because it didn't take very long and I had had it with his stupid questions, and he soon knew that I knew the Lord. So now, rather than trying to 'save' me, he began brow-beating me for not having a 'pad' in my own hands, and going around to people LIKE HE WAS DOING. Since that was the method they were using at that time, apparently that was the -only- way to witness for the Lord, and -everybody- better be carrying around a 'pad', or they were out of the Lord's will. He said as much about

me. Of course, once they get to actually "sharing Christ", their 'method' for that was the "Four Spiritual Laws", which is doctrinally flawed

There are also those others... the SOUL WINNERS. They meet every week and go knocking on doors. And pity the fool who doesn't join them in that 'count coup' venture. Or, they always have a stack of tracts, and give them to everyone they see, and 'litter' them all over in various places. And if they see a Christian -NOT- participating in what they are doing, they assume that person has NO WITNESS.

What did Jesus say? If the Holy Spirit does not guide the meeting of soul winner and sinner, of how much use is it?

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him"  
(Jn6:44)

Conversely, if the Father is -not- 'drawing' an individual, does not the Holy Spirit know this? And so, the Spirit guides the Believer into witnessing situations; and He also -prevents- other situations.

Paul and company try to go here and there, and the Spirit does not allow them. Then Paul has the Macedonian vision. And that's where they go.

How does a person know when -not- to witness? Sometimes it is the Spirit's 'witness' with one's own spirit. Sometimes it is the setting or circumstances.

But likely the more important question is: How does a person know -when- TO witness? Again, the Spirit guides. Philip was told to "go join the chariot" (8:29) The Lord just puts you in the company of the person, and the door opens. As Abraham's servant praised...

"As for me, BEING ON THE WAY, Jehovah has led me to the house of my master's brethren." (Ge24:27b)

If we are living IN GOD'S PRESENCE, in the Holy Spirit, we will be "on the way"; we will be -where- God wants us; and when the door opens, we will walk through and obey.

But if the door is shut, we daresn't go banging, lest we be found going contrary to God's will. Sometimes God's word to the sinner is...

"There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." (Is48:22, 57:21)

## ***Greatly Disturbed*** (Acts 16:16-40)

"And it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortunetelling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation. And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly disturbed, turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out that very instant." (vs16-18)

Well, now... SEE? Isn't this what we keep saying? Paul, you're so full of 'hate'. You don't just go calling people "demon-possessed" just because you don't like them. Sure, this girl is a bit annoying; but can't you look at the -person- that exists behind the troubled exterior? God loves her, too. You shouldn't criticize until you know her background and know what she's been through. And, after all, isn't she -helping- your ministry by 'informing' everybody who you are? She's providing you with FREE ADVERTISING. People already 'trust' what she says, so her words are adding 'credibility' to your ministry.

What are some of the worst things to call people? Liar? Demon-possessed? In fact, the way society is today, it seems like it is -more- of an insult to call somebody a "liar" when they've been lying, than "demon-possessed". With the popularity of Harry Potter, Avatar, and such things, some would likely be -proud- to be called "demon-possessed", and as such, associated with the underworld and such things.

In fact, Paul -FREED- the girl from her bondage. Her "masters" (vs19) had been -using- (pimping) her to gain wealth. Divination and Fortunetelling. If ever there was a clear Scripture on the subject, this is it. The stuff people like to dabble around and play with, and they wear jewelry representing it... it is from the pits of hell. Video games and kiddie TV cartoons are loaded with all these concepts, both in story lines, as well as imagery and game plots. If you dabble in it, or you allow your children to do so, you are partying with the devil. And remember...

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Pr22:6)

If you 'allow' your children to dabble in these things, you might as well be actively 'training' them in it; and that's how they will grow up

It is what Paul writes...

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against authorities, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." (Eph6:12)

Well, I guess I agree with Paul....I get upset and say "aw shut up!" a lot when confronted by the evil spirits. When I'm at home and see it on TV, I 'yell' at the TV. When I see it when I'm out and about, I let it "seethe" underneath. When I see it in traffic, I mutter the words to myself. As it says of Paul

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was -PROVOKED- within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols." (17:16)

When Paul says... "BE ANGRY, but do not sin..." he is in agreement with David,

"Surely You will slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, you men of blood. For they speak against You maliciously; Your enemies are lifted up with vanity. Do I not hate them, O Jehovah, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies." (Ps139:19-22)

No, we are NOT to make 'friends' with the devil and his followers. Satan is God's enemy; thus Satan is -our- enemy. And for those who -specifically- serve satan (as many do), they are also our enemy.

And until Jesus comes on the White Horse, "conquering, indeed in order to conquer" (Re6:2); we are not commissioned to fight back with "carnal" weapons. (2Co10:4) Jesus spoke of turning the cheek and such things. (Lk6:29) When Jesus went to the cross it says of Him, "He -gives- his cheek to him who strikes him" (La3:30); and Jesus spoke, not of fighting (Jn18:36), but of "fleeing". (Mt10:23)

And so, Paul enjoined the (spiritual) skirmish by casting out the demon. How did satan counter? Grabs Paul and Silas, drags them before the magistrates, and they are soundly beaten and thrown into jail.

But God did as God often does. In Peter's case Jesus came to let him out of prison. In this case He sends an earthquake. And where satan was upset because he had been cast out of the jail, when he punished Paul and Silas, it turned out instead that the whole jail full of people heard the Gospel, and the jailer and his family were saved.

So now, it's the next day. The magistrates send the message, "Let those men go". (vs35)

Apparently their 'crime' wasn't serious enough to press charges or bring them before a judge. After all, Agrippa and Festus would say, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or bonds" (26:31) Even when the shrine makers to Artemis were upset that the preaching of the Gospel was harming their business, the verdict is...

"For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess. Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another." (19:37-38)

Paul had -freed- the girl, released her from satan's -bondage-. So now her masters have lost that part of their livelihood through her slavery to them.

But Paul doesn't let it drop that easily. He says about the "carnal" weapons: God's power is greater than weapons of flesh. Our methods in ministry do not take after the world's methods. But he also says

"Therefore I urge you, be imitators of me." (1Co4:16)

And also...

"Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you are able to be made free, RATHER USE IT." (1Co7:20-21)

Which he also does when being strapped down for a flogging...

"And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and not condemned by trial?" (22:25)

Paul also teaches...

"Let every soul be subject to the higher authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are ordained by God." (Rom13:1)

Here, the magistrates did not exercise 'due-process'. Roman citizens had certain rights, and Paul was a citizen. As a citizen he exercised his rights.

"But Paul said to them, They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they drive us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and lead us out. And the floggers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. Then they came and begged them and brought them out, and asked them to depart out of the city." (vs37-39)

Not only -could- Paul have 'sued' for what they did, the magistrates could have been executed. They are scared spitless. I can almost -see- this little procession, possibly with some of the same spectators that had witnessed the beating the previous day: Likely much bowing, scraping and back-peddling and "kissing up" as they 'escort' Paul and Silas out of town.



Paul was MAKING A POINT. Was he -complaining- at having been persecuted? Was it the magistrates' fault the girl was demon-possessed? He would see more persecution, and also express the willingness to die for the Lord. (21:13) But he was confronting their hypocrisy, using the political civic tools that were already in place for such purposes.

This was not only related to preaching the Gospel, but about -existing- in this world. I experience a bit of opposition from the enemy for what I do with this ministry: sometimes it might be an obnoxious would-be customer, perhaps the way traffic is moving, perhaps things in the neighborhood where I live, or interaction with strangers while shopping. The Believer often needs to, as the saying goes, "live and let live". I follow my Master, they follow theirs. But a year ago when an incident with the neighbor's vicious dog (that had already bitten me once before) got totally out-of-hand, there were lying false accusations, and somebody related to them called me anonymously (with spoofed caller-id) to threaten my life (he was 'tough' enough to threaten me, but not face-to-face, nor so the police could trace his call)...that's when I made use of Caesar's authority, and filed a police report.

Like the bumper sticker I saw years ago, the driver if I remember correctly, covered in tattoos and wearing dark clothing, words something to the idea: "The only reason you're alive is because it's illegal for me to kill you". In that case Caesar's restraints against what were obviously demonic desires.

On the other hand, like has been suggested from time to time: When the time comes, as has happened at other times in history, that they come to the door to haul the Christians (as 'subversives') away to detention camps, what does the Christian do? Defy them with "I have my constitutional rights!"? Jesus -gave- Himself to those who arrested Him. I've suggested on a few occasions that Believers should be preparing their hearts even -now- for 'how' they will comport themselves when that time comes. When that time comes, the prince of this world will have decided that we are no longer "citizens" of this world. Our dual-citizenship is over. We are citizens of Heaven, captive in hostile territory.

So... is it clear to understand the 'complexity' that exists in living in this world as Believers into Jesus Christ. On the one hand we are following our Master, Jesus Christ. Sometimes what comes against us is spiritual, and we don't use carnal means to retaliate. But sometimes the world reacts to spiritual issues with carnal means. And sometimes as earthly subjects of Caesar we might suffer according to others' manipulations of Caesar's rules; and other times we can -use- Caesar's legal provisions to our benefit. This is how Paul taught, by his own example, which he encouraged others to "imitate".

## ***Apollos from Alexandria*** (Acts 18-19:7)

"Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the immersion of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." (18:24-26)

"...Paul...came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, Since you believe, did you receive the Holy Spirit? And they said to him, We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit. So he said to them, Into what then were you immersed? And they said, Into John's immersion" (19:1-3)

There is one basic lesson in this section; but there are also a lot of what seem like loose ends, which if we could know the specifics well enough, we might be able to determine a bit better the cause-and-effect.

First of all, Apollos is from Alexandria. This suggests a lot, considering everything else we've seen from there. Even though it says he was "mighty in the Scriptures" (18:24), we also know it is the source of perverted texts. Certainly, a person can be saved by reading those texts, seeing as how they -contain- God's Word. (We have also often observed that a person can be saved in a catholic or mormon church, insofar as they read the Scriptures. Is55:11) But Alexandria was a haven for much false doctrine.

It makes a point of informing us that Apollos only knew of John's immersion. What do we know about John's ministry? For one thing he was the "voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of Jehovah..." (Is40:3, Mt3:3) He was the embodiment of the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk1:17, Mal4:5)

And Jesus said of him

"For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John." (Mt11:13, Lk16:16)

Law and Prophets was another way, in those days, of referring to the OT Scriptures. In other words, the Old Testament 'ended' with John. Was that John's entire life? Or was it just the days preceeding Jesus' introduction, ministry, death and resurrection? Since Jesus told the disciples to "wait" for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and before John started preaching, the general population was none-the-wiser about anything, it would seem to make sense to me that the 'inter-testament period' was that period of approximately 3 1/2 years, from John's preaching, through until Pentecost.

The immersion John performed was not the OT "mikvah". The OT had ended. But neither was it the NT immersion representing 'burial and raising with Christ'. (Rom6:3-4) It was an immersion "unto repentance". It was not yet the "immersion..in the Holy Spirit and fire" (Mt3:11) as happened at Pentecost. It was not the Old Testament. It was not the New Testament. It was IN-BETWEEN.

And this is what Apollos was preaching. He was still back in the days of John. He hadn't yet progressed into the Church.

And so Aquila and Priscilla take him aside and

"explained to him the way of God more accurately" (18:26)

As the context unfolds, since the passage singles out his "John immersion" doctrine, and Aquila and Priscilla -correct- his doctrine, does not the passage assume that they would, thus, be telling him about immersion into Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. After all, did Paul make tents with them (18:3) and they did NOT speak doctrine? Do we not know Paul well enough by now, that anybody he is in contact with for any length of time is going to hear correct doctrine? Thus, one assumes they were giving Apollos -correct- doctrine.

So, Apollos; having received 'corrected' doctrine, has been preaching in Ephesus. And then moves along to Corinth; and in his travels, Paul comes along to Ephesus... following where Apollos has already been preaching. Finds some disciples who know only -John's- immersion. They know nothing about the Holy Spirit. That's what Apollos had been preaching - before- he was corrected.

Or... Did Aquila and Priscilla explain things to him, but he DIDN'T ACCEPT IT? Is Apollos stuck in his own expertise? Is he so "eloquent", and if he is from Alexandria, too much of a 'scholar' the same way today's scholars are who hold to the texts from Alexandria, to accept instruction from a simple/lowly husband/wife team? After all, scholarship knows more than the "laity" does. Often, those who are "eloquent" are proud in their own eloquence. They know it all, and nobody can tell them any different. I wasn't there. But between the lines...?

In another context it seems that he may not have cared for anybody else's authority over him?

"Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but it was not at all his desire to come at this time; however, he will come when he has opportunity." (1Co16:12)

Paul, trying to encourage Apollos in something, but he's got a mind of his own?

Just because somebody is a great speaker, doesn't mean they necessarily know what they are talking about. A -dynamic- preacher might just be proclaiming false doctrine. And, sad-to-say; and years ago I went through the 'search' process to seek a church to pastor, and so know the kinds of things church search committees list, that they are looking for... One of the most-repeated items was for somebody to help them "grow their church". But they also wanted a "dynamic" preacher. Very few would say anything about adherence to "doctrine". Certainly, some would specify KJV-only; at the time I didn't yet realize there was such a thing as a KJV-only cult, so I would see those mentions, and wonder to myself 'what' that was about.

There was this one church in a suburb of Spokane (where I now live) that I actually candidated at. Then a couple years later, and a couple moves, we actually moved -to- Spokane, for other reasons. I looked up that church, and they had -just- closed their doors. Hadn't found a pastor to their liking; and they couldn't afford to pay much for salary. I went to the building as a couple of the fellows were nailing boards over the windows, and offered to preach for them for 'free', so that the witness would not die; suggesting that if God's Word were proclaimed, that fact would cause the "growth" they were looking for. The one older man somewhat bitterly muttered that he'd never heard of any church ever growing -just- from preaching.

They didn't want the Doctrine of God's Word. They wanted 'programs' and "dynamics" and (numerical) growth.

But one of the 'questions' I wonder about: Aquila and Priscilla. Notice Paul stays with them, and reasons with the Jews in the synagogue on Sabbath. But when he testifies that Jesus is the Christ, and they blaspheme, he shakes out his garments against them, and also "departed from there", and goes to the house of Justus. (18:3-7) Why did he leave the house of Aquila and Priscilla when the Jews blasphemed? And also, it is Aquila and Priscilla who take Apollos aside... but even after they are finished, he is still preaching false doctrine? Was there something not quite right about their ministry...that Paul would leave them, and that Apollos was still presumably preaching wrong doctrine?

And yet, as Paul is passing along greetings to Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla, and their house church, is a greeting he passes along. Questions.

You see... like we began this series... the Church is made up of fallible men. Barnabas went away and we stopped hearing of him, and yet he had nurtured Saul in his early days. Apollos preaches doctrine that is NOT QUITE 100%. We have questions about Aquila and Priscilla. John Mark was a quitter, but later Paul would ask Timothy to send him. Timothy would get discouraged and need propping up. You see, we are not perfect. Like the bumper sticker that says, "Christians are not perfect... just forgiven". As Jesus said, we sometimes need to have our feet washed, although otherwise we are clean. As the psalmist says, that God knows that "we are dust". (Ps103:14)

Just because a Believer doesn't know -everything-, is not reason to NOT witness. We -grow- in the Lord. A little child falls many times while learning to walk and run. It does not mean they are "bad". It means they are -learning-. As Paul also says...

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are complete, be of this mind; and if in anything you think differently, God WILL REVEAL EVEN THIS to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind." (Php3:14-16)

These fallible Believers are not berated like Peter did to the unbeliever Simon. (ch8) They are not ones Paul tells to turn over to satan for the destruction of the flesh. (1Co5) These are not the ones Paul 'wept' over because they were "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Php3:18) God does not NOT use us because we are not yet 'perfect' and 'flawless'. Until we are glorified into Heaven we -will- be imperfect. Apollos may have not had everything quite right... Paul considered himself to be "least" because he had persecuted the Church, and recognized his own tendency to pride, thus the Lord allowed satan to give him the "thorn". (2Co12:7) And yet Paul says something like...

"I planted, Apollos watered... but God made it grow" (1Co3:6)

## **Separated** (Acts 19)

"And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not obey, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he DEPARTED from them and SEPARATED THE DISCIPLES, reasoning daily in the school of a certain Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." (vs8-10)

In keeping with Paul's mission "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom1:16) he spends time in the synagogue, speaking boldly. But just like with much of the church today, the -regulars- are of hardened hearts. Paul does not do like so many, claiming to be Believers, do. There are so many Christians who will whine and complain about the hard hearts they see; and truth be told, how many of those 'hard' hearts are actually 'unregenerate'? But they will refuse to do as Paul did... to 'leave'. They figure if they stay, they can win "at least one". They fear the recriminations of the "not forsaking the assembly" crowd.

But Paul leaves, takes the Believers with him, and they meet in a facility that is setup for learning... a 'school'. And in two years "all who dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (vs10) You see... leaving the old establishment actually helped spread the Gospel. This 'sanctifying' (if you will) of the ministry resulted in several things...

### UNUSUAL WORKS OF POWER:

Most translations say "miracles". But the Greek is "dunamis", from which dynamite or dynamic come. While what was happening was miraculous, in that it was 'not explainable by the laws of nature', that's not what the text says. And as the dictionary definition includes a quote, "Miracles are spontaneous, they cannot be summoned, but come of themselves"; that was definitely NOT the case. (please read the passage) It was not that pieces of cloth were brought from Paul, and SOMEHOW, WE DON'T KNOW HOW, people were being healed and demons were coming out of those possessed. No! -GOD- was working. As Paul himself wrote, God's power is "toward" us. (Eph1:19) It is not our own power. It is God's!

This is not the stuff Simon was doing and wowing the people of Samaria. This was not hocus-pocus, wave the hands around (like Naaman was upset because Elisha didn't do it for his leprosy; just told him to go dip in the Jordan River 2Ki5:11). Paul was not even -present- where people were healed, to receive accolades like Peter and John got. (Acts3) Just quietly, the clothes would go to the sick people, and God healed them.

I don't know where they came up with the idea to do this, but they did. Does this mean that today's so-called "healers" should do the same thing?

Many do; "because it was done in Acts". Is "sending cloth" a -method- of healing? Is the power -in- the 'cloth'? It was no more in the cloth, than it was -Paul- 'doing' the healing. It was -God's- power. -God- was doing the healing. In the same way Jesus healed the centurion's servant, from a distance, without going and personally laying hands. (Lk7:2-10)

#### COPYCATS:

Apparently Judaism then was like it is today. Did they call it Kabbalah back then? Judaism's version of charismania. And they did it the same way charismania does it. You see, charismania did not -begin- in the 1800s. It's been around for a loooong time. They did it...

"We command you by Jesus whom Paul preaches" (vs13)

What comes next, I've never yet heard of it happening today...

"Jesus I know, and Paul I am acquainted with; but who are you?" (vs15)

And then the demon-possessed man attacked them and gave them a good sound whoopin'. I wonder if the demon-possessed man's eyes 'glowed', like they depict in modern sci fi, Stargate, and "angel" shows?

But notice the incident resulted in "fear". (vs17) Remember back when Ananias and Sapphira lied and were struck down dead, the result was 'fear'. Here, when unbelievers were dabbling in the spirit world, unqualified to do so, and were punished; again, fear. If your master is satan, you better not be -playing- with him, pretending to cast him out of people. The only one the demons fear is God, and God's qualified servants. They don't even fear the righteous angels... they are bold enough that they fight with them. (Re12:7) Don't be like the charismatics. Judas describes them...

"But these speak evil of things they do not know; and whatever they understand naturally, like animals without reason, in these things they corrupt themselves." (Ju1:10)

#### BOOK BURNING:

People in Ephesus saw the -reality- of the spiritual warfare, and recognized their own sin. Apparently Ephesus was a witchcraft haven. They come confessing their witchcraft and bring the books and have a huge bon fire. The value of 50,000 pieces of silver. What is today's equivalent of a "piece" of silver? According to Easton's Dictionary it might have been actual -pieces- of silver, not coins. Nevertheless, it was a -lot-.

Notice that they did not -archive- the books for historic posterity, for the sake of scholarly pursuits, to be "informed", to understand better the "depths of satan". (Re2:24) How does one witness to a satanist unless one

-knows- what they believe? Hogwash! Paul did not say, "That I may be well-versed in all the belief systems of the world". No! He said,

"that I may know Him [Jesus] and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Ph3:10

It says, as these books were burned, that...

"the Word of the Lord grew mightily and was powerful" (vs20)

This is what Israel had been commanded to do with the objects of the pagan idolatry in the land...

"But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and chop down their groves" (Ex34:13)

Not... leave them as archaeological artifacts. Nor to study them...

"...take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." (De12:30)

RIOT:

But this series of events has caused a sort of 'explosion' of the Gospel in Ephesus. People are being saved -AND- being 'holy'... separating themselves from their pasts in idolatry. They are not clinging to their pagan ways. The Gospel that is being preached is not like the one that many are preaching today: God loves you and -accepts- you JUST AS YOU ARE...you DON'T NEED TO CHANGE A THING!!! No! No! No! They are saved and being "-TRANSFORMED- by the renewing of their minds" (Ro12:2) They are now "IN CHRIST, they are..."

"..NEW CREATION[S]; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2Co5:17)

And so many people are coming to the Lord that it affects the local economy. When people are becoming Christians, they are no longer buying the pagan jewelry....the shrines to Artemis. You can read the passage... a big riot erupts in the theater.

Of course Paul, always wanting to persuade people to the Truth, wants to go in and talk to the crowd. But he is restrained. (vs30-31) Considering what else Paul has experienced, can you imagine how he would have been pulled to pieces by the mob. Such is his love for the Truth... he doesn't -think- about his own safety.



You can read the verses: the city clerk quiets the crowd and talks about the rule of law, not mob justice. After all, many gathered there didn't even know 'why' they were there. (vs32) Mob justice is fanned by emotions and unreason. So he exhorts, if Dimitrius has a complaint against Paul, take him to court. But reviews that Paul and his associates have not robbed anybody, nor even blasphemed the goddess.

This Ephesian crowd was behaving much as Islam does today, and as Catholicism has done over the centuries. Don't you dare talk against my religion or I'll kill you. But you see, the explosion of the Gospel was -God's- doing. He was healing people. What's wrong with that? The falseness of the pretenders was exposed. What's wrong with that? People were seeing God's -Truth-, were convicted, and being converted.

You see... that's why catholicism for so many years since Pope Innocent in the 1200s outlawed the reading of the Bible. If people read the Bible, they will know the Truth. And as Jesus said, "...the truth shall set you free" (Jn8:32) That's why today's Godless world seeks to squelch the Bible from every public forum...for the same reason. And that's why the apostasy promotes their perverted "bibles", because to whatever degree the text is defiled, by that much the Truth is watered down, in favor of satan's lie!

But Paul did not compromise. He separated the disciples from Judaism's apostasy, the heathens heard the Word and were saved, and even though it angered the merchants, since they had not broken any laws, they had the legal approval of Caesar to preach.

The way the world is going today, I often fear that it is going to be the ones like Chuck Baldwin, who is allegedly a -pastor- of a big church in Florida, but who keeps dabbling in politics (ran for president in 08) and exhorting pastors to preach -politics- from their pulpits (he's the one who tries to raise up the "black regiment"; mentioned in the next lesson), that Caesar is going to come after True Believers sooner than they might otherwise. Jesus said to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and the things of God to God. (Mt22:21)

I experienced just such a thing right out of college. Until I got into professional music in Canada, I drove city transit bus in Bellingham for a time. Just about the same time I got the job, this other "christian" also got a job; we went out to the training range at the same time. In the driver roster we were 19 & 20, if I remember correctly. I tried to 'live' the Christian life. He 'preached' it; he came from this local "street preaching" cult. We both proclaimed faith in the same God, but he would not shut his mouth when he was supposed to be working. Due to his ways, and I believed the same God, I was lumped as a "whacko" along with him. At the time I was also still directing this particular church choir, and the choir had a little week-end get-away before the new year, which I had made advance arrangements with the bus driving boss to be sure I was not scheduled to drive, because as the "choir director" I -really- 'should' be at this choir get-

away, and when it was sure I would not be scheduled, the thing was planned. No problem. Then, about a day before this get-away, my name was put on the driver schedule. I had made prior arrangements to be off...it was not a normal sort of schedule that they ever had me drive anyway. So the main boss pontificated to me: Make up your mind if you want to be a "bus driver" or "play church"! Because of the guy's big-mouth: They had 'set-me-up'!

My consequence was not like Daniel, to be thrown to lions. But when forced to make a choice, there -was- 'no' choice; I walked away from the job...when they had specifically -worded- it as they had. I was not 'fired' from the job because of my performance, but because I was a "Christian"...because there was this person, claiming to be a Christian, who was making himself obnoxious. He was serving Caesar (the job), but trying to make it a platform for service to God (preaching).

Today, what are those like Chuck Baldwin going to do to the rest of us? He needs to decide: is he a preacher of the Gospel, or a politician? Or is he just going to stir things up and be a trouble-maker?

Paul did not serve Caesar. He served the Lord Jesus Christ. When speaking before kings he did not tell them how to run the Roman empire. He preached "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1Co2:2)

He did not tell the pagan gentile silversmiths how they should run their businesses. He preached "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"

When amongst those of pagan Judaism he tried to give them the Truth, as they claimed to know from the Scriptures. But when their hearts were hard, he did not get embroiled in their synagogue politics and try to take over the local Rabbi position. He left, took the Believers along with him, and he preached "Jesus Christ and Him crucified"

## ***Final Exhortations*** (Acts 20)

"For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. So, from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I lived among you all the time..." (vs16-18)

Paul is now headed back to Jerusalem, where he will be taken into custody. He has taken several missionary trips. We haven't covered them, because that was not the purpose of this series. We've been studying the -character- of these early Church leaders; how they were obedient, and how they were sometimes less-than perfect but nevertheless the Lord used them, their -hearts- being of a willingness to serve God. And also, in the way these "walk-thrus" work, we've addressed a few other things, as well, skipping here and there.

But Paul now calls all the leaders together for one final exhortation. He explains his own ministry among them, and gives them warnings.

EVERYTHING THAT WAS NEEDED:

"For I have not shrunk back from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (vs27)

"I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house" (vs20)

After all the years he spent preaching and establishing congregations, if a person were to take all those words and consolidate them into one concise nutshell, WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

"TESTIFYING BOTH TO JEWS, AND ALSO TO GREEKS,  
REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD AND FAITH TOWARD OUR LORD  
JESUS CHRIST" (VS21)

There are those who claim that the way to Heaven has been different at different times in history, or depending on which group of people was under consideration. Old Testament vs New Testament. Jew vs Gentile. Even in the NT people will reject Paul's writings and take the rest of the NT. They will say that Salvation was by Law and -then- by Grace. They will say that the two major leaders in the NT taught different things, thus some side with Peter, some with Paul. But if you click this link [www.a-voice.org/ga/2gospels.htm#two](http://www.a-voice.org/ga/2gospels.htm#two) "Two Gospels in the Bible?" you will see that they both taught the same thing.

Paul might have been the apostle "to the Gentiles"; but if you read through the book, whenever he went to a new place it repeatedly speaks of how he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. His ministry was "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Ro1:16, 2:9-10)

The message was the -SAME- to both Jew and Greek. Nowhere does he ever say something like: This is the message for you Jews; OK now you gentiles, here's your message. No. It was the -same- message. The Church is comprised of...

"...one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one immersion; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph4:4-6)

And so the Salvation message is this:

- 1) Repentance toward God
- 2) Faith toward Jesus Christ

To Gentiles was -also- granted "repentance unto life" (11:18) But we also "believe into Christ Jesus" (Ga2:16) -- "we believe through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, IN THE SAME MANNER AS THEY" (15:11)

There are those who say that salvation is NOT through repentance, because you don't find the word once in the Gospel of John. That John only speaks of BELIEVE and FAITH. If I may wax vernacular a moment: WELL DUH!!! What is the primary topic of the gospel of John? Jesus Christ as the Son of God. What did Paul just summarize? Toward Jesus Christ is what? "Faith". Thus, a book that speaks of Jesus Christ is going to speak of...what? Think real hard now! "Faith"

But our sin debt is not owed -to- Jesus. Jesus came to pay the debt that we owed. To whom was the debt owed? The Father...God. To whom is repentance due? Jesus, the One who paid the debt? Or the One to whom the debt was paid? Thus, "repentance toward God".

You see, Daniel speaks of the "Ancient of Days" (Danial ch7) When the Great White Throne judgment occurs, Jesus is at the Father's RIGHT HAND. (1Pt3:22) If Jesus is -at- the "right hand", that means he is not the -main- One. The One whose right hand He is sitting at is the main One. Jesus is there to "confess...before [the] Father" those who "confessed [Jesus]" (Mt10:32) If one is confessing before someone, the one TO WHOM confession is made is 'greater' than the one making confession.

The sinner's debt is before God the Father. He is the One to whom the sinner repents. God has provided the Savior...

"...the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world" (Jn4:14)

Does the sinner -believe- that the Son can save him?

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those believing into His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."  
(Jn1:12-13)

See the relationship between Repenance and Faith? They -both- are required for Salvation. And this is what Paul says. "I kept nothing back" This is it...these two things.

HEADED TO BONDS:

"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me." (vs22-23)

And later as he travels along the prophet Agabus comes and...

"took Paul's waistband, binding his own hands and feet, and said, Thus says the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this waistband, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles"

And so, when everybody hears this, they try to persuade Paul NOT to go to Jerusalem. Like in the TV show "Flash Forward", some scientific technical event occurs, which blacks out everybody for a couple minutes; but during the blackout time they see themselves many months into the future. So, the story line is about many of these people trying to -change- the events as they saw them, because in some cases they were killed; hoping to keep from being killed. But how does Paul react?

"What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (vs13)

So the rest: Shrug the shoulders and, Oh well, then. "The will of the Lord be done" If we can't change your mind, then the Lord's will be done. Think about that verse just a bit and consider WHAT's WRONG with their attitudes. What is it? Our 'persuasion'? ...or God's will?

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (vs24)

Paul's attitude about death was...

"For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you." (Php1:23-24)

#### FAITHFUL SERVICE:

"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found FAITHFUL. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human day in court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord." (1Co4:2-4)

How many in ministry today can make the following claims?

"I am blameless from the blood of everyone" (vs26)

If a person within hearing of his voice went to hell, the blame could not be placed on Paul. He preached to them faithfully.

"For I have not shrunk back from declaring to you the WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD" (vs27)

Nor could anybody who heard him claim "I didn't know!"... he didn't tell me everything!

I often -SHUDDER- to think of many of today's preachers standing before God. Many are "wolves" and not even saved. But what about those who - are- saved, themselves, but did not "give warning".

"When I say to the wicked, You shall die the death, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul." (Ezk3:18-19)

"How beautiful are the feet of those preaching the gospel of peace, bringing glad tidings of good things." (Ro10:15)

-- 'God loves you and accepts you JUST AS YOU ARE. You don't need to change a thing' That is -NOT- the Gospel.

-- 'God looks at you and sees all the good that is in you, how much you are worth to Him. That is graaeesss' That is -NOT- the Gospel.

-- 'God wants you to prosper and be wealthy. All you need to do is "plant your seed and reap the harvest"' That is -NOT- the Gospel.

-- 'God is raising up warriors. We need to raise up the "black regiment" (black-robed preachers like in colonial times) and take back the corrupt government' That is -NOT- the Gospel!!!

And there's many other 'gospels' being proclaimed. But Paul declared...

"But even if we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Ga1:8-9)

VICIOUS WOLVES:

"For I know this, that after my departure vicious wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (vs29-30)

Where's all the Lovey Dovey from Paul? After all, they are weeping and crying because he is leaving, and they won't ever see him again. (vs38)

What is more important... to give hugs and kisses, and "I love you"s; or to see the enemy lurking in the shadows and GIVE WARNING?

You see...the Christian life is a FIGHT TO THE FINISH. A FIGHT TO THE DEATH. It is a "stretching" to the finish line in the race. (Php3:13) The devil is like a lion. He is seeking the lives of anybody he can get. He's got -most- of humanity. But he doesn't want God to have anybody. He doesn't even want to relinquish the "few" to God. (Mt7:14)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1Pt5:8)

Some of the wolves will even be -within- the assembly. As I've learned over a lifetime, many of those in my younger life I 'trusted' as Believers, now in retrospect I have come to realize were not saved. So now, when I meet somebody who -says- they are a Believer, I no longer swallow their claim hook-line-and-sinker. I wait for further conversations and indications of True Life. If I see the world dangling off the fringes of their garments, I wait to analyze if that is merely dirty feet, or if that extends clear up to the heart. Remember, just because the girl proclaimed Paul and Silas to be "servants of the Most High God, who proclaim the way of Salvation" didn't mean she was a Christian. She was demon-possessed. And truth-be-told, there are -many- demon-possessed in the churches today.

Unlike today's wolves, Paul did not come asking for money. (vs33) He did not sit in his ivory tower expecting a salary, but also often -worked- with his own hands. (vs34)

And so, as Paul leaves, how does he leave them?

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (vs32)

What is it that strengthens the Believers and the assemblies? Growth programs, soul-winning campaigns, and dynamic preaching? (Paul was accused by the carnal ones: "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account" (2Co10:10) He was not a "dynamic speaker") No!

The "WORD OF HIS GRACE"

"All Scripture is breathed by God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2Ti3:16-17)



## ***Headed to Rome*** (Acts 23)

"Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the Law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the Law? And those who stood by said, Do you revile God's high priest? Then Paul said, I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people." (23:1-5)

What was going on here? The way I've heard it suggested from another scholarly source is that this was a 'kangaroo' court. According to the dictionary: "a mock court set up in violation of established legal procedure" Why did Paul, with all his extensive background as a pharisee, NOT KNOW that it was the high priest that he told off? Because he was not wearing his priestly garments as -should- have been the case with a properly convened court. In this country when a person goes to court, it is obvious -who- the judge is: they are the one with the robe, sitting at the bench, with the gavel next to them. You don't go mouthing off the judge unless you want to be held "in contempt". In other words, to deal with Paul, this was not really a proper hearing. It was a gathering of the "good ol' boys club", like southern KKK style... let's just mete out our own 'justice'. And thus Paul mouths off to -condemn- their proceedings.

Here we see Paul practicing what he preaches. When Paul says to be "subject to the higher authorities" and to give "honor to whom honor" (Rom13:1,7), some question: What if the judicial system is totally corrupt? Does one submit to corrupt rulers and judges?

When the identity of the high priest is made known, Paul back-tracks his comments. I notice he doesn't apologize. They are clearly in the wrong. But he softens his rhetoric and is more conciliatory, and respectful.

If you read from here to the end of the book, which we are not going to cover, we see that this is the beginning of Paul's travels, in bondage, which ultimately place him in Rome.

"But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good courage, Paul; for as you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." (vs11)

Notice that God doesn't chide him for his outburst. I suspect God also knew the "kangaroo" nature of the proceeding.

And later as they are in a storm at sea God assures him...

"Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you" (27:24)

He's not going to die before reaching Rome. But we all know; it is not recorded in Scripture; although Paul speaks of being close to it in 2Tim4:6; that he dies in Rome. Tradition says he was beheaded with a sword.

But as we close this series... we began by discussing how Acts is a book of 'history'. The 'acts'... what the apostles 'did'. We also discussed how Acts is a book of 'transition': from OT Law to NT Church. It also transitions from Jew to Gentile. As Paul discusses in Romans ch11 how Israel has been "broken off" (Rom11:17) for a time, until the "fullness of the gentiles comes in" (Rom11:25)

The book began -all- 'Jewish'. Throughout the book one can read how as Paul went here and there, he would first go to the synagogues, and when the message was rejected he would "shake" out his robe or the dust off his feet. (13:51, 18:6) And several times he would reply that, since they had rejected, "we turn to the gentiles" (13:46, 18:6)

Well, Paul is now in Rome, in his own rented house, under Roman guard; and receives those who come to him. He summons the Jewish leaders in Rome, and asks them if the complaint from Jerusalem has reached them. No it hasn't. (28:20-21) But they want to know more about this new 'cult'. Paul preaches, and many of them disbelieve. So Paul closes with a final proclamation to them, the Jews living in Rome; which also closes the purpose of the book, as the transition is complete from Jew to Gentile. In a couple more years Rome is going to overthrow Judea, and the Jews will be exiled for the next (approximately) 2000 years, and become what is known as the Diaspora.

"So when they did not agree among themselves, they were dismissed after Paul had said one word: The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the

"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." (Rom11:26-27)

Which of course harks back to Jeremiah...

"Behold, the days are coming, says Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them, says Jehovah. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says Jehovah, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall no more teach each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Jehovah. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer31:31-34)

Amen!