LESSON ONE * PART I

ACTS 1:1 - ACTS 4:37 - "GOD'S SECRETS"

Transcriber's note: As I transcribed this lesson, I noticed this is also where we started in Book 17, Lesson 3, Part 3. But after reviewing the study, I found that although the Scriptures are the same, Les has used a different approach and his commentary is completely different. I think you will find it to be very enjoyable as I did.

We just got back from Indiana and Ohio where we got to meet and share with so many of you, our viewers. It just thrilled our hearts. It was so nice to put a face on a name that before we had just known by letter or telephone. In Ohio we had a chance to speak to a Christian High School, and for about three hours those kids just ate it up. We had hands in the air by the dozens constantly. And it was hard to stop even after three hours. It was exhausting. I was totally beat when I got out of there, but what a thrilling experience to see those kids come alive and search the Scriptures. The headmaster was in my class that night and he said, "You know Les, they didn't stop all day long." He said, "They were still looking up Scriptures all afternoon." The third and fourth grade were taken out after the first hour and they complained all day long because they couldn't stay and participate. When people begin to see what the Scriptures say it inspires them.

I hope as you study with us that a spark will ignite and you'll have that desire to study the Word. If you can prove me wrong from Scripture, that I'm not teaching correctly, then I'll have an open ear. Because everything I teach, I teach from God's Word, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. But I'm so confident that after all these years of teaching, and seeing so many people literally turned around, either by Salvation, or seeing their Christian life become exhilarating, then I know what I teach is the Truth. Now open your Bibles to Acts Chapter 3.

In our last program we were in Acts Chapter 2, and I closed the program with the definition of the word 'Church.' Whenever you see the word 'Church' in the New Testament it is not always applicable for the Church which is the Body of Christ. Remember the word Church came from the Greek word "ecclesia" which is translated "a called out assembly." Moses with Israel in the desert was a called out assembly. Stephen in Acts Chapter 7 refers to them as a Church in the wilderness. And we know that wasn't the New Testament Church by any stretch of the imagination. And I feel the same way with these Jews in Jerusalem. They have not
heard the Gospel of Grace as we know it. They have not comprehended that the death, burial, and Resurrection of their Messiah was now intended to go out to the Gentile world. And so they are still correctly confining it only to the Jew and I'm going to show you in a little bit why they are and why God is having them do just that.

So as we go out of Chapter 2 into Chapter 3 nothing has changed. It's still an extension of the Old Testament program, only The Messiah that they should have and could have accepted as their King in His earthly ministry, they have crucified. God has raised Him from the dead; called Him back to glory to sit at the Father's right hand; but He's still dealing with the Nation of Israel under that same set of circumstances that began with John the Baptist. So Peter admonishes in Chapter 2, ye men of Israel over and over. I've told my classes for over twenty-four years, how can you push Gentiles into those verses when Gentiles are not even mentioned. I maintain that is all still very Jewish. Now let's read:

Acts 3:1

"NOW Peter and John went up together into (the church on the corner of First and Grand? Did they? No. But where did they go? To the Temple. The Temple hasn't been closed down, they are still practicing the Law; no one has told them they didn't have to. And not only did they go to the Temple but on the required hour. See how that is stipulated? These men are still under that Jewish habit and ritual of going to the Temple at the ninth hour to pray.) the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour."

Now there is nothing that stipulates in this Church Age that at such and such an hour you and I must go to prayer. The Muslims do, they have their hour of prayer throughout the day. Now as Peter and John go to the Temple there lay a lame man. Verse 2:

Acts 3:2

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms (beg) of them that entered into the Temple."

We know that The Lord Himself must have passed that lame man during the three years of His earthly ministry. And the reason He never healed him was the Sovereign God does everything with a purpose. In John's Gospel, when Lazarus was sick, and Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that he was sick, what did Jesus do? He purposely delayed responding to them so that Lazarus would die. Then Jesus could go back and raise Him from the dead. Had He gone immediately, as Mary and Martha
had wanted Him to, then Lazarus wouldn't have died and we wouldn't have had that account. But you see everything is done for a purpose, even today. This lame man had been lame from his mother's womb and he was over forty years old. And so Jesus had purposely bypassed him so Peter and John could precipitate these series of events that are now going to take place. Now verse 3:

Acts 3:3-5

"Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the Temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, 'Look on us.' And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them."

Acts 3:6

"Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee (note carefully: I'm going to read it differently from what your Bible says only for the sake of making an impression. "In the name of Jesus Christ Who has died for your sins, and has been raised from the dead get up and walk." Is that what Peter says? No. He says): In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

Peter doesn't even mention His death, burial, and Resurrection. For us today this is the epitome of everything that God began to do when He created Adam and Eve. And that was to bring the world to a knowledge of the crucified, buried, and risen Christ. But Peter has never been told that. And why do I say that he doesn't know it yet? Because God has not revealed that. It is still a secret, and will be revealed to the Apostle Paul a little later.

Let's stop and look at some of the references about God's ability to hide things. First to the Book of Deuteronomy. God never told everything all at once, but revealed a little bit at a time all the way through the Bible. And the only way we can study Scripture correctly is with the idea that only periodically does God reveal something that those Old Testament people didn't understand. The same with Peter and John in these early chapters of Acts. They still haven't had an understanding of what God was going to reveal in the death, burial, and Resurrection of Christ. As of yet all they understood was that He was The Messiah; He was The Son of God; He had proved it with His miracles; but it was only for the Nation of Israel. It wasn't that God had overlooked the Gentiles. Not at all. But He was going to use that favored nation to reach out to these pagan, idolatrous Gentiles at the appropriate time.

Deuteronomy 29:29
"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God" (I make the point that the term of Deity, "The everlasting God," is capable of hiding things. Even the Psalmist asked the question, "Lord why do you hide these things?" Well, He's Sovereign, and has the right to do as He pleases); but those things which are revealed (keep that word `revealed' in your mind. Another word that comes from the same root is `revelation.' Paul is constantly referring to the revelations that he got from the risen Lord) belong unto us and to our children..."

Not that much had even been revealed to Moses. But as much as had been revealed they were to believe. Now let's go to Luke 18, verse 31. This shocks people the first time they see it. John tells us the same thing. This passage occurs in Northern Israel just shortly before the Passover and the Crucifixion. It's the end of Jesus' three years of earthly ministry.

**Luke 18:31-33**

"Then he (The Lord Jesus) took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles (the Romans), and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.'" Is that plain language? It's as plain as you can get it. But look at the next verse:

**Luke 18:34**

"And they (the Twelve, who had been with Him for three years) understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."

Who hid this from the disciples? God did. It wasn't time for them to know. This immediately substantiates that they had no idea when He was hanging on that Cross, that three days later He would be alive. I'm always making the point, had they had any understanding that He was going to die, and yes, He would be buried, and yes, on the third day he would be raised from the dead, where would they have been that early Sunday morning? Outside the tomb! But they weren't; they had all given up, and thought it was all over. When Mary Magdalene went to dress the Body with the spices, she was bewildered because the Body was gone. She had no idea that He was alive. God had purposely hidden these things from them, because He is going to reveal them in His own time, and use faith in Jesus' death, burial and Resurrection as the Gospel for the Gentile Church. It would be revealed to the Apostle Paul. Always remember Peter and the eleven preached only what was revealed to them. Paul
preached what was revealed to him. This will open the Scriptures to you. Let's look at another occasion in the Gospel of John Chapter 13.

**John 13:6,7**

"Then cometh he to Simon Peter; and Peter saith unto him, `Lord, dost thou wash my feet?' Jesus answered and said unto him, `What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'"

Let's go all the way to Ephesians Chapter 3, to the writings of Paul. He writes from a different perspective. He writes now as one who has had these revelations revealed to him. And that's the word he calls it - `revelation.' And in Chapter 2 Paul has just written about Salvation. For example, in Ephesians 2:8 he says:

**Ephesians 2:8**

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" And now Ephesians Chapter 3, verse 1:

**Ephesians 3:1-4**

"FOR this cause (in other words everything he had just written in Chapter 2 concerning our Salvation). I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," That's us as believers today.

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward:"

"How that by [here it is] revelation he made known unto me the mystery [a secret]; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge [as a result of revelations] in the mystery of Christ)"

**Ephesians 3:5**

"Which in other ages (or generations, or administrations, or dispensations, they all come from the same root word) was not made known (do you see how plain that is in light of Deuteronomy 29:29, and the other references we looked at. It all fits so beautifully. These things were not made known because God was keeping them secret) unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;"

**Ephesians 3:6-9**
"That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world (Age) hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

Now you can't get it any plainer than that. These things have never been revealed before, because they have been hidden. God has kept it secret and that is His prerogative. I'm doing this to show that when Peter and John go up to the Temple to pray, they had no concept of what we call the Church Age. They were still under the legal system of Judaism. They were still an extension of Christ's earthy ministry, and when we get back to Acts and see the miracles they perform, it's nothing different than that which Christ had been doing for three years. But let's continue with keeping things secret until God is ready to reveal them. Turn to the Book of Colossians Chapter 1, verse 24. Remember Paul is writing to Gentile believers. Colossi is up in Asia Minor.

Colossians 1:24,25

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Do you see the difference in language? Here it is the Church which is the Body of Christ. This is the one you and I are acquainted with.

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you to fulfil the word of God;"

Just as surely as God gave the Law to Israel through Moses, He also gave the Age of Grace to Paul for us the Gentile Body of Christ. The Scripture is so clear on that. God didn't give Israel the Law directly, He gave it through Moses. Moses took it down Mount Sinai and then shared it with the Nation of Israel. Consequently in His earthly ministry when they came and asked Jesus doctrinal questions He didn't answer them, but rather said, "You have Moses." In other words, go back and read it yourself. You have all you need to know because Moses has written it. He has done the same thing for us today in the Church Age with the Apostle Paul. I know once in a while someone will complain that I make more of Paul than I should. No, I don't. I don't make any more of Paul than the Scriptures do, nor any more than they made of Moses. In fact, I maintain that Moses and Paul are the two greatest men other than Christ Himself in all of Scripture.
One Sunday morning, Iris and I heard a guest speaker in our church. He was a denominational leader with quite a few degrees behind his name. It just thrilled me as he opened his message by saying, "I'm going to be taking my message from the Apostle Paul, whom I feel is the greatest man that ever lived other than Christ Himself." I'm even going to temper that. I don't call Paul the greatest, but rather I put him on the same level with Moses. But I'm not alone when I say we have to listen to what this Apostle says because he is writing to us, to Gentiles. Now look what he says in verse 26. Look at verse 25 again first:

Colossians 1:25,26

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery (secret) which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:"

Let's go back to Acts Chapter 3. And in that light, as I understand the Scriptures, I say that Peter and John did not have any knowledge of the Church which is the Body of Christ. They are still associated with the Judaism that Christ dealt with, and that John the Baptist preached; that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent and be baptized by believing Who Jesus was. This is all that Peter and the eleven men here in these early chapters of Acts know.

Throughout these whole early chapters of Acts, many study Bibles will even head a chapter the "First Church," or "The beginning of the Church," or "The First Christians." But there is not a word of church language in here. There's not a word about deacons, bishops, and pastors. There's not a word in here about how to behave in the House of God. So I don't care what denomination people may be from, where do most local Churches get their idea of church government? From Paul. He describes the office of the deacon and elder. He describes the requirements to be a pastor. But here in Acts you don't find anything like that. This is an extension of Judaism. Temple worship; prayer at the ninth hour; unlawful to go into a Gentile home; keeping the Jewish feast days; and now they are healing a lame man. Not on the power of the Resurrection, but on the power of The Messiah, The Christ, The Lord Jesus of Nazareth, The Son of God. And now read on:

Acts 3:6

"Then Peter said, `Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.'"

Appropriate? Absolutely. Because Peter and John are just continuing on with what Christ has been doing for three years. And that was the whole idea in Acts 1:8 when
the Holy Spirit came, they were to have power. What kind of power? To do what Jesus had been doing. Remember Jesus told the Twelve that the Holy Spirit would not come until He left. And so the transition of power went from The Lord Jesus to the Holy Spirit. Now in the moment we have left let's look at Acts Chapter 5.

Acts 5:30,31

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel,..." Do you see that?
In Acts Chapter 3, we have Peter and John healing the lame man by using the name of Jesus in verse 6. And immediately in verse 8, the lame man leaps to his feet and goes with them into the Temple. And in verse 9 all the people see him walking.

Acts 3:10

"And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."

Now what amazes me, especially with the Nation of Israel, is that throughout their history they had seen manifestations of the power of their God and it seemed to have so little effect on them. Even coming out of Egypt with the tremendous miracles that were surrounding them... the pillar of fire by night... the pillar of cloud by day to give them shade... God holding back the Egyptian army... opening the Red Sea and many other miracles. Yet it seemingly didn't sink in what a great God they were under. And that's the way it was all the way through their history - miraculous event after miraculous event. And it just seemed to roll off like water off a duck. And then you come to Christ's earthly ministry, miracle after miracle for three years. In fact John tells us there were so many that the world couldn't hold all the books it would take to record them. And still they couldn't comprehend Who He was. And now again, this event we are reading about is only days after His Crucifixion, probably 7-10 weeks. And they can't comprehend a lame man being healed? This is amazing to me. Now verse 12:

Acts 3:12,13

"And when Peter saw it (the amazing reaction of these Jews) he answered unto the people (watch the language here, and don't let anybody push in here what isn't in here. There is no mention of Gentiles, there is no mention of anything except the Nation of Israel. And Peter says), Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Now look at verse 13. Is that Gentile language? No.

"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob (did those names mean anything to Romans? Or the Greek philosophers? But it meant everything to a Jew. They hung everything on Abraham! And this is what Peter is saying), the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up,..."
In our last lesson, when Jesus spoke to the Twelve up there in Northern Israel, I hope you caught it that when He was relaying to them the things that would take place, He said He would be beaten and scourged by what people? By the Gentiles. But here, Peter is laying the blame on Israel. So I always have to be careful that people don't get the idea that only the Jews brought about His death. We all know better than that I trust. The Jew participated in it. They demanded it, but Rome carried it out. And that's exactly what Psalms 2 foretold. Jew and Gentile together would reject Him and put Him to death. When I emphasize that Peter is pointing the finger at Israel, I'm not taking away the Gentiles part in it all.

Unfortunately, Martin Luther evidently rode on this. He hated the Jew with a passion in spite of all his great spiritual enlightening. For Martin Luther said it was doing God a favor to kill a Jew, or burn down his business. Some of you are aware of the Nuremberg trials after Hitler's holocaust. Those Nazis used the writings of Martin Luther to substantiate what they had done to the Jew. And it wasn't until the last year or two that officially some of the Lutheran bodies have been apologizing for that. The Roman Catholic Church for centuries referred to Jews as Christ killers and they were sincere in making that charge. They, too, have been apologizing and making amends just the last few months with the present day Nation of Israel for this attitude over the centuries. But, no doubt, Peter does point the finger. Verse 13 again:

Acts 3:13-15

"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you (Barabbas); And (you) killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."

The language here is so totally opposite of what Paul speaks of in His letters. Paul never points the finger at Jew or Gentile and says you killed The Christ. But Paul tells us for example in the Book of Galatians Chapter 1. and in Ephesians Chapter 5, the following:

Galatians 1:4

"Who gave himself for our sins,..."

Ephesians 5:25

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"
See the difference? Peter doesn't say that. Why? These things were still hidden in the mind of God, and consequently, Peter couldn't go any further than what God had revealed. Now I need to make a point. Let's talk about faith for a moment. Biblical faith is taking God at His word. If faith is taking God at His word, what does God have to do before we can believe what He says? God has to say it. He has to reveal it. You can't place your faith in something that He has never said. That's why Peter is in perfect accord with Almighty God here. He is not out in left field by confining his remarks to Israel, or by accusing Israel of what they have done. Because God has not said a word yet, that they are not under Law, but Grace. Romans 10:17 backs me up. So many times (and I have found it in my teaching years) people come up and say, "Can't we assume that the Twelve knew that Christ was going to die and be raised from the dead, and make it the Gospel they preached? Can't we just assume that they knew that." Absolutely not. You can't assume what God is going to do or say. We have to wait until He's spoken it, then believe it like Deuteronomy 29:29 said, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God:..." But the things He has revealed are for us.

Romans 10:17

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

The Word of God isn't some mish-mash floating around in the ethereal. The Word of God is something that The Almighty God has spoken. The Old Testament prophets were constantly saying that. The Word of The Lord came to me, Ezekiel will say for example. And what did Ezekiel do? He believed it and wrote it. And during our Lord's earthly ministry, when He spoke these things, if the Twelve were supposed to understand it, He made it clear and they could believe it. God always does things for a purpose. In Acts Chapter 3 God hasn't said a word yet about shutting down the Temple, that they are no longer under Law, but under a new manifestation of God's Grace. He didn't expect Peter and the eleven to believe something He hadn't said. So never think they must have been negligent in their duty. They didn't know that God was going to turn to the Gentiles and call out a people for His name and call it something totally different. "The Body of Christ" There's not a word in here of Church structure or a word concerning the Gospel based on Christ's death, burial, and Resurrection. It's still all based on Who He was. Remember Peters confession in Matthew 16.

Matthew 16:13-16

"...Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias, and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.' He saith
unto them, `But whom say ye that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, `Thou art The Christ, the Son of the living God.'"

And remember Martha speaking with Jesus, just before Lazarus is raised from the dead.

**John 11:25-27**

"Jesus said unto her, `I am the Resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, Believeth thou this?' She saith unto him, `Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art The Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.'"

And how about the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts Chapter 8. Philip had explained about Jesus to this fellow.

**Acts 8:35-37**

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, `See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?' And Philip said, `If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' And he answered and said, `I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'"

The Ethiopian Eunuch doesn't say, **"The one who died for me and rose again."** That hadn't been revealed yet. Their statement of faith was believing that Jesus was The Christ, The Son of God, The King of Israel. Now back to Acts Chapter 3, verse 15. Peter says:

**Acts 3:16**

"And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong,"

What is Peter neglecting to mention here? We think His death, burial and Resurrection. Peter is only reminding these Israelites Who Jesus really was. And it was to be faith in that Name that made this man whole. Now verse 17:

**Acts 3:17**

"And now, brethren, I wot (know) that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."
For this we must go back to Israel's ancient history, back when they were under the Law, and the year of Jubilee, the cities of refuge, and so forth. If someone killed a person the penalty was death. But if someone killed a person by accident and he was being accused, he could run to a city of refuge and at that city, if the city fathers determined that he had killed that man in total ignorance, they would send him back home a free man. Now you see all through the Crucifixion account from Christ's own words from the Cross, which were, "Father forgive them." Why? "They know not what they do." What was Christ pleading? Their ignorance.

Peter says, "You killed him but you were ignorant, you didn't know what you were doing." I call it "God's loophole" for the Nation of Israel. Because, had they known Who they were killing, God would have had to destroy them. Another reference is I Corinthians Chapter 2. Here we have the Apostle Paul with the same basic truth. Not only concerning Israel but even Rome, the Gentiles.

_I Corinthians 2:7,8_

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery (see there's that word again. It pops up throughout all his epistles. Which is a secret that has been revealed to him), even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:" I'm sure that he is speaking of himself.

"Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they know it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." So where did God put them? Ignorance. They didn't know. Otherwise God would have zapped the whole human race - Jew and Gentile alike. Now back once again to Acts Chapter 3. So Peter claims that same thing. And so does Stephen. Stephen, when he was being killed, said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Ignorance.

_Acts 3:17,18_

"And now, brethren, I wot (know) that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But (the flip side) those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."

Anytime something is written in prophecy it has to be fulfilled to the last jot and tittle, or it would make God a liar. Always remember that. Every written prophecy has to come to pass. So this is what Peter is saying. Christ had to die, because prophecy had foretold it.

_Acts 3:19,20_
"Repent ye therefore (the same format that he chose in Acts 2:38) and be converted (change your direction and thinking), that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

Now if God is going to send Christ back to earth, then we now know from the Book of Revelation (and we didn't get the time element for the Kingdom from the Old Testament or even in the early part of the New Testament), that here again is the ability of God to keep things secret until He revealed this to the Apostle John who wrote Revelation. When Christ returns and this Kingdom is set up and becomes viable and visible, it wouldn't be immediately eternal, but would last 1000 years. But see nothing in Scripture indicates that thousand year time frame until we get to Revelation. The final revealing. But here Peter is speaking in terms of the Kingdom promised all the way back to Abraham. That when their Messiah would return, based on Israel's repentance and believing Who Jesus is, then yes, God would have sent Christ right here in verse 21. But first there had to be that seven-year period of Tribulation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. Now that is the time of restitution that is spoken of here.

Acts 3:21

"Whom the heaven must receive until (a time word) the times of restitution (tribulation) of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

Now what's the Old Testament full of? That before The King and Kingdom could come on the scene, Israel especially would have to go through those seven horrible years of restitution of all things. And what was it? The lifting of the curse, the Tribulation and the defeat of Satan, and the earth would be regenerated and made glorious and beautiful again for that Kingdom reign. So Peter is in full agreement with the Old Testament. That yes, Christ had gone back to the Father's right hand. Psalms 110:1, "Come sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." That would be during the Tribulation. And Peter is expecting it. We are all capable of forgetting the bad things if we want to. But very seldom will we forget the good things. Now if you remember in the closing remarks of the Gospel of John, Jesus indicated that Peter would suffer a very ignominious death. But I'm sure at this point in time Peter has totally forgotten about that. He is totally enraptured with the idea, that if he could just see Israel repent and yet believe Who Jesus was, then their Messiah would return and they could yet have the Kingdom. The Twelve could then take their seat ruling the Twelve Tribes of Israel as Jesus had promised. Let's look at it again in Matthew Chapter 19. I told you it's hard to forget the good things, and Peter is remembering this. I'm sure he has forgotten what kind of death he would die. But
this part was ever present in his mind, and you can't blame him. He could see it just over the horizon. He knew there would be seven years of bad times, but the end would be worth it.

Matthew 19:27

"Then answered Peter and said unto him, `Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?'"

Now Peter had his Salvation, that wasn't what he was asking about. He's wanting to know what he's going to have for rewards. I left my home and fishing business to follow you. What am I going to have? And The Lord didn't rebuke him. He answered him.

Matthew 19:28

"And Jesus said unto them, `Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration (that's when the earth will be regenerated and brought back to like it was in the Garden of Eden) when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory (King of Kings), ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"

Is that plain language? Why, you can't get it any plainer than that. And you see this is what's on Peter's mind. Oh if Israel would just repent and be converted and recognize that the One they killed was their Messiah.

There is nothing in here about the power of the Resurrection. There is nothing in here about the shed blood Atonement, although in the mind of God that was all there. But God is still dealing with the Nation of Israel if they would repent of their nation's sins, and just believe Who Jesus was, God would have brought in the Tribulation to run its course; Christ would have returned and Israel could have had their Kingdom. Then Peter and the eleven knew when that was fulfilled then they could take the Gospel of their God of Abraham to the Gentile world, but not until. And that is what you have to keep in mind. These twelve men do not leave Jerusalem. Not even under pressure. Why? Because it's to Jerusalem, to the Mount of Olives, that their King was going to imminently return.

And then to see what was to happen after His return, let's go back to a verse in Zechariah 8 (other examples are Isaiah 49:5,6 - Isaiah 59:20 through 60:3 and many others in the Old Testament). For now we'll just study this one in Zechariah Chapter 8. After Isaiah has said that the Gentiles would be coming to the light of Israel, and that Israel's light would be The Messiah, then in fulfilling of all of that we have the following.
Zechariah 8:20-23

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; `It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts (where) in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.'" Now verse 23: You can't kick this out of your Bible. Here it sits in concrete:

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; `In those days (when Israel will have her King) it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you (why?): for we have heard that God is with you.'"

The `you' here is believing Israel. A redeemed Israel. A regenerated and repentant Israel. And remember Exodus 19:6 says every Jew was to become a priest. And what's a priest? A go-between. And so every Jew had the prospect of being a priest of God to the Gentiles.
LESSON ONE * PART III

ACTS 1:1 - ACTS 4:37 - "GOD'S SECRETS"

We continue with Peter and John dealing with the events surrounding the healing of the lame man in Acts 3:21. The Temple rulers are upset by how it happened, and Peter and John are trying to explain that it was through the power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth Whom they had crucified. Consequently, in verses 19-21, Peter had said that if the Nation would just repent of that awful sin of rejecting their Messiah, as well as their other national sins, then God would have immediately instituted the Tribulation, and brought in The King and Kingdom for them. Peter knew there would have to be a Tribulation period of seven years as prophesied by Daniel. That is why Peter said in verse 21 that, even though The Lord was ready to return if Israel would repent, it would still have to wait until that period of restitution of all things in the Tribulation. In verse 22, Peter's still speaking to this great crowd of Jews.

Acts 3:22

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, `A prophet shall the Lord of your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me;...''"

That takes us back to the role of Moses in the life of Israel. He was the deliverer. He was in so many words "the redeemer." He led them out of slavery and captivity, and brought them unto Abraham's God. So even as Moses was the deliverer in type back there, Peter says the real Deliverer has come; they've killed Him; God raised Him from the dead, but He is still willing to come and fulfill the promises. A few years ago I noticed that Peter is still on Covenant grounds. It's so obvious, yet I missed it for many years.

Acts 3:23

"And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet (the one Moses foretold, which was The Christ), shall be destroyed from among the people." In other words, what did Jesus say in the Gospel of John Chapter 3?

John 3:3

"...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This is a follow-up on that. If Israel would have repented (and as we will see in the last verse in this Chapter every one of them would have had to become a believer),
then there would have been no problem. Remember that no unbeliever will ever go into the Kingdom of Heaven. Here is the verse that totally changed my thinking.

**Acts 3:24**

"Ye, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken (and that includes all the Old Testament prophecies), have likewise foretold these days" This is only eight or nine weeks after the Crucifixion - only 3 years and a few months surrounding what Peter is making reference to: that all of these things that have happened in these days were all in fulfillment of what God had said going into verse 25.

**Acts 3:25**

"Ye are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with our (that excludes you and I as Gentile believers. Gentiles aren't in the lineage of Israel.) fathers, saying unto Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.'"

That was through the work of The Messiah, but through what Nation did The Messiah come? Israel. And Israel was to be the vehicle all along. Let's go back to Isaiah 42:1. I want everybody to get the concept now, that God hasn't forgotten about the Gentiles. He's been dealing only with the Nation of Israel to be sure, but He still has the Gentiles in view. As so much of Scripture indicates, it's all tied to the Nation of Israel. In fact, before we read Isaiah 42:1, look at Deuteronomy 32:8 again. Some verses must be seen over and over before we can understand what they are talking about.

**Deuteronomy 32:8**

"When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people (that is all the other nations) according to the number of the children of Israel."

So who is at the very core of the whole human experience? Israel! God's Covenant people. Everything else will fall in place as it begins with Israel. And even today, why is that tiny nation in the news every day? Why is the whole world so concerned about Israel making peace with their neighbors? They don't know, but it's the Sovereign God at work, and the nations stumble over that little nation. They will stumble over Jerusalem until Christ comes and becomes The Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords. Until then, the world can't comprehend why this little nation of only a few million people are the center of the whole operation. Now back to Isaiah 42. And so God was only planning to deal with the Gentiles all the way up through the Old Testament
through the Nation of Israel. They were the ones who would take Salvation to the Gentiles.

**Isaiah 42:1**

"BEHOLD my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment (rule) to the Gentiles." So Who are we referring to? The Christ, The Messiah. Chapter 49 states so plainly:

**Isaiah 49:6,7**

"And he (God) said, `It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the(what people?) Gentiles, that thou mayest be my Salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One (Messiah), to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.'"

Now Isaiah Chapter 59. I wish people could see this, and then apply it as it was intended to be for the Four Gospels and early Acts. That would make the Book of Acts come alive. It's like putting it under a microscope. It just jumps at you when you understand that this is how God had originally laid it out to the Nation of Israel. And it's not that the Nation of Israel had trouble with this, they knew they couldn't go to the Gentiles until the whole nation became a Nation of Priests. Peter and the eleven knew that. But it's mankind today that can't see it. In God's total purpose as Paul speaks of it in the Book of Ephesians, God is looking beyond to when He would go to the whole human race without Israel, which He has done. But first things first. We've got to take it as the Scripture unfolds it. And here He is dealing with Israel.

**Isaiah 59:20,21**

"And the Redeemer shall come to Zion (Jerusalem), and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob; saith the LORD. `As for me, this is my covenant with them,' saith the LORD; `My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.'" Those are the promises given to the Nation of Israel. Now Chapter 60, verse 1:

**Isaiah 60:1a**

"ARISE, shine; for thy light is come,..."
Jesus said to the Israelites, "You are the light of the world." And that was to have been their role. He also told them they were the salt of the earth. So, in the Four Gospels, it was God dealing only with the Nation of Israel under the Law, but we can come in and make applications. You and I as believers are the light of the world.

**Isaiah 60:2,3**

"For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth (spiritual darkness), and gross darkness the people (Israel): but the LORD shall arise upon thee (Israel), and his glory shall be seen upon thee (Israel). And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,..."

And who was to be Israel's light? The Messiah, The Christ Who came in the flesh in the Four Gospels. It was for all the world, but it had to come through the Nation of Israel. Previously, we read the passage in Zechariah, where nations will take hold of the skirt of a Jew. If you want to look at it again, it's Zechariah 8:20-23 and it ties all this together. Now back to Acts Chapter 3, verse 25 again:

**Acts 3:25**

"Ye are the children of the prophets (Peter says to these Jews), and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."

The Abrahamic Covenant was basically three promises, and within those three promises all the other covenants are involved. The first one was a promise to Abraham, that out of him would come a nation of people: the Nation of Israel. The second was, when they became a nation of people God would put them in their own geographic area of land, the Promised Land, as we understand it in Scripture. And the third promise was when they were in a geographic area, they had to have a government, and so God Himself would come and be their Messiah, King, Redeemer and Savior. It had to be Salvation as well. There is the Abrahamic Covenant in a nutshell. All the other covenants are wrapped up in this one. I always make the qualification you cannot have a viable Kingdom without a King. On the other hand a king is of no earthly use unless he has a Kingdom. These two always have to come together.

When Jesus came and John the Baptist presented Him as Israel's King, what was in the long view? The Kingdom. And this is what Israel was to have understood. Their King was there, and He was ready to bring the whole Abrahamic Covenant into fruition by ushering in the Kingdom. But Israel rejected The King and thereby rejected the Kingdom. And so The Lord went back to Heaven. The Kingdom is centered in Heaven, and according to Colossians 1:13 you and I as believers are
translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son the moment we are saved. But it's the same Kingdom, because it is yet going to come back on the earth and we are going to reign and rule with Him.

It's funny how people are always running ahead of me. For a long time they couldn't wait till I got to the Book of Acts. Now that I'm in the Book of Acts, they're writing that they can't wait until I get to Paul's Epistles. But we've got to be patient. We're going to be taking it one step at a time. But Paul's Epistles are coming. And we're going to teach them verse by verse. But it's thrilling when you get into the Book of Romans and see how God is now dealing with you and I as Gentiles. Not under the Mosaic system, but under Grace. For now, we've got to see what it took before God revealed all those new doctrines or teachings which were in His mind since day one. He had kept them secret. So let's finish the Chapter. Acts Chapter 3 verse 26. Covenant ground. Peter is resting on that Abrahamic Covenant, on the Davidic Covenant, on a Palestinian Covenant, on a Mosaic Covenant. And now he says:

Acts 3:26

"Unto you first (see that? Talking about the Nation of Israel) God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you (how?), in turning away (watch this. How many Jews had to turn?) every one..."

Every one. That was the prerequisite for The King. Every Jew had to repent of their sin. Had to follow it with water baptism. Acts 2:38 is appropriate still. And then Christ would have ushered in the Tribulation, lifted the curse, brought in the Kingdom. Israel could have gone out and evangelized the nations and brought them to His knowledge. It was a valid offer. Because God knew that Israel wouldn't do it. So God knew that He would be going to the Gentiles without Israel. Remember that from the time of the Crucifixion to the destruction of the Temple by the Roman army was forty years. Don't ever lose sight of that. The Book of Acts is a forty-year time when God is still dealing with His Covenant people. Even though He's going to start going to the Gentile people before that forty years is up. But at the end of that forty years (which in Israel's history has always been a period of testing), Israel is still adamant in their unbelief.

So what does the Sovereign God permit? Rome to come in and destroy the city in the most awful siege in all of ancient history. They destroyed the Temple and Israel was sent into a dispersion amongst all the nations of the world, which you and I have finally seen coming to an end. It hasn't ended yet for the most part, but a lot of nations now are completely devoid of Jews. Albania doesn't have a Jew left in it. Syria, I think, is down to less than two hundred. And so many of the Eastern European nations are down to relatively small numbers compared to what they were. But the Jew, you
see, is finally returning to the Nation of Israel. It's been slow, but there's going to be something again that will trigger it. There's going to be a great influx of Jews into the little Nation of Israel, in order to prepare for the coming of their Messiah. In verse 26, Peter admonished everyone to believe and confess their sins.

Chapter 4. Peter and the rest of these men are continuing to preach that this Jesus Whom they had crucified had been raised from the dead. That just flew in the face of one group of religious leaders, the Sadducees. They did not believe in a Resurrection of the dead. They did not believe in a life hereafter. They believed that you live to the best of your ability and the only eternalness they could conceive of was that you would pass it on to the next generation. That was what they thought of as eternal life. They saw nothing of a Resurrection of the dead. So when Peter and John and the rest began to proclaim the Resurrection of Christ and the hope of Resurrection for other believers, it caused a hornets nest.

Acts 4:5,6

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem."

There is not a Gentile in that verse. They are all next of kin to the high priest, and the high priest had to be a Jew. All right, verse 7. So now all these Jews that were in Jerusalem:

Acts 4:7

"And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, `By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?'"

What are they still talking about? The healing of that lame man. They can't get it out of their craw. How did you do it? Read on:

Acts 4:8

"Then Peter,..."

Peter is always the spokesman throughout his earthly ministry. I don't agree that Peter was the first Pope and I don't make any bones about that because Peter never had a ministry among the Gentiles. And even though our dear Catholic friends might disagree with me, that's their privilege. And so now he's filled with the Holy Spirit.
This still reverts to just a few weeks ago during the day of Pentecost. And now under the power of the Holy Spirit he again speaks forth, and he says:

*Acts 4:8-10*

"...Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel (and he doesn't say and you Romans and you Gentiles. No, he's talking to the Jews), If we this day be examined of the good deed done to this impotent man, by what means he is made whole (now look at verse 10): Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel (does that include any Gentiles?) that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,..."

When Peter keeps emphasizing the Name, the Name, what does that imply? I always give this illustration. If I were to name Bill Clinton, what would be the first thing that flashes in your mind? Whether you like him or not, that's beside the point. He's still Bill Clinton, the what? The President. And immediately your mind pictures the White House. Because he is the President. And when you mention his name then his position flashes in your mind. All right, this is what Peter is driving at. When they heard the Name, Jesus of Nazareth, or Jesus The Christ, what did Peter immediately want to associate that with? Who He was. His office. And what was He? The Messiah, The King, The Savior, The Redeemer of Israel. Again, watch the language here. There isn't a single reference here to His Atoning blood; to His death; to His Resurrection or to His power. Not a word. Only that Israel had killed Him. That He was Who He said He was. He had proven it. God had raised Him from the dead. And He was still waiting in Glory to fulfill that which He had begun. Alright, read verse 10 again:

*Acts 4:10*

"Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified,..."

Now if Peter was on Church ground, what should he have said there? He should have said, "*Who died for your sins.*" But he doesn't. He says, "*whom you crucified,*" You see how plain it is when we just look at it.
Acts Chapter 4 where we left off at verse 11. Never rest on what I say, but rather what The Book says. I'll never forget one of the first teaching experiences I had a long time ago. Our pastor was aware of a couple coming into our church who were married but from diverse church backgrounds. They were having marital problems over it. He asked me to go to their home each week and teach them from The Book. The first opposition I got from the lady was, "Well Les, we have always been taught that it isn't the Bible that is the authority, it's our church." Now how are you going to overcome that? It took a lot of patience as her husband had a totally different view. Between the three of us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, within about 6 months, we finally got them squared away and they both came to know The Lord. And to this day they are both active in a local church, and their children are all believers. Every time I go see them, it's so nice to think that I had a small part in all of that. But it was such a learning experience for me.

I have said so often, you can't go by what someone else tells you. But open The Book, and read carefully. Look at every word. See what's in The Book and what's not in The Book. There are lots of groups that go strictly by what the church and/or pastor tells them. And you can't do that. A couple of years ago, a class member came back from her denominational convention, and said, "Les, just read this first paragraph because this is shocking." And the long and short of that paragraph was this: "Don't you try to interpret Scripture on your own - wait until you hear it from the pulpit." That is where people are getting led down a primrose path. Some pulpits are all right, but there are many that aren't. So you need to get to the place where you can discern the Scriptures. I never want people to say, "Well, that's what Les said." I want people to be able to see where I've shown them what the Scriptures say and then they can say, "This is what it says." And that is the reason I teach, to get people into The Book. Now back to our study, verse 11. Peter is continuing his message to the religious leaders of Israel.

Acts 4:11

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

There is an interesting legend about the cornerstone of Solomon's Temple. It's not in Scripture, but is certainly applicable. When they were building Solomon's Temple, there was never a hammer sound at the Temple site. It was all done out at the quarry. Every stone was so perfectly pre-cut that they could just set it in place. In ancient
architecture, especially arches, the final stone that goes in is the one at the center of the top of the arch. The rest of the arch rests against that one, and it becomes the chief cornerstone. Legend has it that this chief stone had come to the building site and for some reason they couldn't find a place for it. Not knowing what to do with it, they dragged it out into a vacant lot, where the weeds grew up around it and there it lay. But every time someone would go through that vacant lot to take a shortcut, they would stumble over that stone. Now, that story is a legend, but is so apropos. This is the analogy that Peter is using.

Israel was the builder of God's kingdom and their Christ was to be The Messiah of it, the Chief Cornerstone which would hold it all together. They rejected that Stone and like the builders, threw it out into a vacant lot. And what has Christ become to the Nation of Israel ever since? A Stone of stumbling. Over and over, beginning back in the Psalms, Israel is warned that their Chief Cornerstone would be rejected and laid aside, and He would be their Stone of stumbling. There is so much departing from the truth of Scripture that people can be saved outside of faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this is dangerous. There is no such thing, according to Scripture. I know that it's a narrow concept but it's a narrow Book.

I remember talking to a man whose particular group was vast in numbers. He was convinced his was the only group that had Salvation. I said, "Wait a minute Jimmy, I have a Scripture verse that proves you wrong." He said, "Show me." We sat down and checked the verses where Jesus said in Matthew:

Matthew 7:13,14

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it."

This is a fact of Scripture and of the whole human race. God has only had a remnant. Even in Israel, the Covenant people, how many Jews were true believers? Only a small remnant. And even today there may be a lot of talk and a lot of preaching, but how many are genuine believers today? It's getting fewer every week. Because we are getting so much false teaching coming in and people are flocking to it. People will always flock to the false before the truth. So Peter says so clearly here in verse 12, that which still spills over into our Gospel:

Acts 4:12

"Neither is there Salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
There's a lot of good sincere folks who are following cult leaders - Buddha, Mohammed, or whatever. This verse is narrow. It brings it right down, that there is only one way. For the Jew in this particular time that Peter is dealing with, they had to recognize that Jesus was The Christ. And only Jesus. It's amazing that the Jews of our present day, for the most part, the orthodox especially, refuse to admit that the Jews ever followed Christ. But we know that thousands of them did. Archaeology is proving it. A lot of Jews embraced Christ as their Messiah and their Redeemer. But granted, the vast majority rejected Him and God went to the Gentiles without them. Now continuing on with verse 13:

Acts 4:13-17

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men (in other words, they weren't taught by the rabbi's. They hadn't been in a seminary, but they had been in the presence of Christ for three years), they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

"And beholding the man which was healed standing with them (proof positive that they had a power the religious leaders couldn't touch), they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, 'What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further...''"

You see how Satan uses religious people to stop the truth. Human history abounds with wars that were fought over religion. War after war. Yugoslavia's war, what is it? It's religion. The Middle East. The basic controversy is religion. And so it hasn't changed. Religious people will often be tools of Satan to resist the truth of God. These rulers thought they were keeping the Law. But when we get to the Book of Romans we'll see how futile that is. That human beings can't keep the Law. Now verse 18:

Acts 4:18

"And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

It would have been easy for Peter and John and the others to agree and say, "Well, alright, we'll go back to our fishing and just mind our own business." That's what a lot of Christians do today. It's easy to give up and say, "Well, alright. Let them have their way." But that's not God's will for any of us. Jude says that we are to contend for the faith. Now we're not to be contentious for its own sake. But we are to
contend or stand up for the truth of the Word of God. And God gives us the Grace to do so. Verse 19:

**Acts 4:19-22**

"But Peter and John answered and said unto them, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done (the healing of that lame man. And now we find him again in verse 22). For the man was above (or over. And there's that number. How old?) forty years old,..."

Again, what did this man's life span indicate? A time of testing. And Israel is on trial here, and is going to be on trial until we come to the end of the Book of Acts. God is not going to wait all the way to the end of their forty years to start calling out a people for His Name as we'll see in Chapter 15. Now those of you who watched the tapes of our programs two or three years ago, saw we digressed a little bit from the Book of Genesis and went to Acts 15. We've had such a response to that tape (which is number 6). James in Acts 15 recognized that Paul indeed had a ministry among the Gentiles that Peter and the others knew nothing of. So he made that classic statement that, "Yes, God is going to call out from the Gentiles, a people for his name." And that is what He has been doing for the last 1,900 + years. Whereas Israel has been blinded. And now, of course, we see the stirring of a nation preparing them for God to pick up where he left off. Now back to the text. Verse 23. Peter says:

**Acts 4:23**

"And being let go, they (Peter and John) went to their own company,..." Back to that group of believing Jews in Jerusalem.

I want to make you search the Scriptures. Now I read a lot of good men's works - all the famous authors that you know. Over and over I see these men refer to these Jewish men as Christians. Now I'm going to give you something to look for. You find in your Bible that the Word of God calls them Christians, and then I'll admit that you were right and I was wrong. But the Word never refers to these Jewish believers as Christians. Acts 11 says that the Gentile believers up there at Antioch, were first called Christians.

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

That's what The Book says. But the best of theologians are constantly ignoring that statement and are calling those Jewish believers Christians. I refuse to do so. They were Jewish believers under the Covenant promises, the same as John the Baptist's followers. The same as those that came under Christ's ministry. Those that were saved at Pentecost, and those that were saved under this Jewish economy. And you cannot call a person a Christian who has not been saved according to the Gospel of the Grace of God: That Christ died for our sins, He rose from the dead and He has ascended. What a difference. All right, let's go on:

**Acts 4:24-28**

"And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, 'Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hadst said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? (Psalms 2) The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ (do you see how that involved both Jew and Gentile? Psalms 2 says the same thing). For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles (Peter is tying Jew and Gentile together? It isn't just Israel. The whole human race is guilty), and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

"We've looked at that in Acts 2:23 before but let's look at it again. It's very important. And most people never see it, but here it is.

**Acts 2:23**

"Him (speaking of Jesus of Nazareth) being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Was God caught by surprise? No. Did anything happen that God didn't foreordain? No. It was all in eternal purpose. He came to be Israel's King. Now Ephesians Chapter 1, verse 11. And the Apostle Paul is writing this. After all these further revelations and here it comes.

**Ephesians 1:11**

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"
Now did you catch the word purpose in there? According to his own purpose. Let's see what that purpose is that Paul is talking about. II Timothy Chapter 1, verse 9. Paul is writing to a fellow believer, a Gentile with the name of Timothy. Though he may as well have been writing to us. Look what he says:

**II Timothy 1:9**

"Who (God, of verse 8) hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works,... In other words, our merit doesn't mean a thing. He didn't call us as people who have earned something, but the call goes out to every son of Adam. He has not called us according to our works, ...but according to his own purpose..."

If you are a child of God, do you know why you are a child of God? Because it was in the purpose of God. You were saved for a purpose. You were saved for a reason. Everyone of us. We have to understand that we were already in the mind of God before He ever created Adam. So we have a distinct purpose. I have a couple in my class who, in God's Divine Sovereignty, came half-way across this country to a place they would never have thought to live in. The only reason they started coming to my class was because the husband was running for mayor. He heard that there were usually forty or fifty people meeting every Tuesday night, so he thought that would be a good place to go and gain some votes. That's the only reason he came and he's not embarrassed to tell everybody this. But God had more than just a run for mayor in mind. God had two people in mind. He brought them from Phoenix, Arizona to a little town in Oklahoma so that they would hear The Gospel. And that's the eternal purpose of God.

I imagine that all of us can look back and see how God meticulously brought us along and got us to where He could get hold of us. There's another gentlemen who wouldn't mind me using him as an example either. He came to my class for three years, ungodly as they come. He will tell you he was. Ungodly, and yet he would still come. Finally he said, "Les, we've got to talk." He came up to the house one night and we took him down the Roman road and led him to The Lord. And what a change in his life!

One night I was teaching, where Martin Luther had made the statement that the work of the Holy Spirit is the hound of Heaven. Any of you who know anything about Beagle hounds know they don't give up until they get their quarry. So he used that analogy. I went back and used the Psalm, where David said, "My heart panteth after thee oh Lord, like a deer panteth after a bubbling brook." And we had a gentleman come up afterward who said, "You know, that was me. I was doing everything but what God was wanting me to do. Finally He latched on to me and
now I can't get enough." He said, "The last thing that I do before I fall asleep at night is to study this Book." Imagine! The most ungodly man in the community, but that's how God works. Back to Acts. They've now rehearsed with their fellow believers all that has taken place.

Acts 4:31

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

Now verse 32 to the end of the Chapter. Read it carefully, word by word and tell me if this is the local church that we are associated with. I made a statement that if you found a perfect church, like in Acts Chapter 2 and 3, I'll join it. Somebody afterwards said, "Don't you do it Les, because that would spoil it." And that's so true. If there were a perfect church out there and you or I were to go and join it, it would no longer be that good. Because there is no perfect church. And if your church measures up to this then I'll say I was wrong. But I don't think it does.

Acts 4:32

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul (in other words, no argument): neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

This is pure Biblical socialism. They sold what they owned and put it in a common kitty. They shared it out as needed. You find a Church that does that today and then I'll tell you that I was wrong. This isn't Church language. We know better than that.

Acts 4:33-37

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus (yes, that He was still alive and that He could still be their kings): and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things there were sold, And laid them down at (who's feet? Not the pastor and the deacons') the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land (clear out there in the Mediterranean, on the island of Cyprus), sold it, and brought the money, and laid it (where?) at the apostles' feet."
Now is that church language? Not the way I understand church language. This isn't what we are expected to do. I've never had a Pastor ask me to sell my land and cattle and bring it to the Church.
God left us this Book to study and enjoy and hopefully you and I as ordinary believers can see what it really says. I think it was either William Tyndale or John Wycliffe, when being burned at the stake said that he wanted The Bible to be in the print and language of the common man so that every plowboy in England could have a copy of the Scriptures. Since God has seen fit to do that, it behooves us to study and read it on our own. In this first lesson I want to do a little review of the timeline (see page 6) to see more clearly how The Book lays out the whole program of God. We will start with the creation of Adam at 4004 B.C. That is the date usually ascribed to his creation, but not necessarily the planet. And then half-way in between Adam's creation and the birth of Christ is the appearance of the man Abraham, at approximate 2000 B.C. And then from Abraham (about 400 years in round figures approximately 2400 B.C.) that brings us to the time of the flood. So from Adam to the flood is approximately 1600 years. Then about 200 years after the flood, when mankind is beginning to multiply abundantly, we find the Tower of Babel. Then 200 years later is the call of Abraham at approximately 2000 B.C.

From Adam to Abraham, God dealt with one race of people. In other words, all the things God had taught Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel were appropriate for that whole race of people for that first 2000 years. There was no organized system of worship, Temple or written Law. It was simply based on man's conscience that if they knew they had sinned, they were to bring a blood sacrifice by faith, and if their faith was real, then it was their faith that saved them just like it's our faith that saves us today. But we know that the human race completely fell apart until it got so wicked and rebellious that God had no remedy but to destroy it. With the advent of Noah and his three sons, Ham, Shem and Japheth, we can see God split the human race into three races. Those that will come out of Ham. Those that will come out of Shem and those out of Japheth. This was the beginning of the separation of the one race. However, they really did not scatter until they got to the Tower of Babel. Even at that time they were still of one speech. It wasn't until God came in with the language confusion that they began to scatter into the prescribed areas of the planet. Then we find 200 years later out of the line of Shem comes this man Abraham at 2000 B.C.

To the man Abraham God promises what we are always referring to as the Abrahamic Covenant. **And I've maintained down through the years that unless you understand the Abrahamic Covenant you will never understand The Bible or even the New Testament.** Because when God called this man out of idolatry, his
whole family was, as well as the whole human race was steeped in idolatry. I've had people ask me about Shem. The Bible is silent about Shem. A lot of those old Patriarchs probably for one reason or other lost their testimony. I know Noah did. After Noah built the vineyard and drank the wine and got drunk, you never hear another word about Noah. I don't think he lost his Salvation, but he lost his testimony. The same thing may have happened to Shem. I don't know. But other than that I've always felt comfortable teaching that after the Tower of Babel (until Abraham came along), every human being, with maybe an exception or two, had now succumbed to idolatry, and to pagan worship of the mythological gods and so forth.

So God tells Abraham, I'm going to make of you a nation. And this is what I always refer to as the three parts of the Abrahamic Covenant: "I'm going to make out of you a Nation of people. I'm going to put you into a geographical area of land." Those two promises didn't take all that long. And then the third part was, that someday down the road, "I will come Myself and be your King over a glorious Kingdom." A Kingdom not up in Heaven, but on the earth. God called Abraham (usually when putting this on the black board I just pull that little nation out of the main river of humanity), because He is going to make the little nation a separate, special race of people, or as we have come to know them, the Jew. I always put it this way, "Jew only, with exceptions" God will make exceptions during this 2000 year period of time, but they are rare.

The rest of the masses of humanity will go on like the river, but out of this great river of humanity God pulls this little stream, the Nation of Israel. The whole object lesson was that He would use the Nation of Israel to penetrate the nations of the world, and bring them to a knowledge of their God. That was their opportunity and option, but we know now they rejected that. Turn to Psalms Chapter 2. With the beginning of the Abrahamic Covenant, we come back to Genesis 3:15 with the promise of the Seed of the woman. But the Seed of the woman would come through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then out of Jacob's twelve sons, the son of Judah. Out of Judah comes David and Solomon, then the other Branch of the tree brings us all the way up to Joseph and Mary.

When Israel has the opportunity of going to the Nations with the knowledge of their God, they reject Him and crucify Him. As we saw in the early Chapter of Acts, even though everything has been consummated for the Salvation of the whole human race, God continues to deal with the Jew. I probably fly in the face of most traditionalists, that He does not immediately go to the Gentiles, but for a few years continues to deal with the Nation of Israel in the early Chapters of Acts, until we are introduced to the Body of Christ, the Church. You only hear that phrase from Paul. You don't see that terminology until that revelation is given to him. After his conversion on the road to Damascus, The Lord told Ananias:
Acts 9: 15

"But the Lord said unto him, ‘Go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles,...’"

Now that's the turning point in God's dealing with the human race. He raised up that Jew, Paul, the thirteenth Apostle if you want to call him that, and He sends him specifically to the Gentiles. And then after the Church Age is completed and the Body of Christ is full, God has to take the Body out of the way so He can pick up again with the Jew in particular in those final seven years of the Tribulation. Next we have the Second Coming of Christ, and then we then have the thousand-year reign and rule of Christ in the Kingdom. Now this is the way we understand the whole seven thousand years of time that God has laid out prophetically, and a lot of it is already historical. In Psalms Chapter 2 let's start reading at verse 1, and hopefully we can make a run through the Scriptures and show from the Old Testament perspective that this part about the Church Age was never mentioned. The rest is brought out so beautifully. As soon as Christ was crucified, a short period was to elapse, then the Tribulation was to come in, Christ was to return, and the Kingdom was then to be set up to the Nation of Israel.

Psalms 2:1,2

"WHY do the heathen (Gentiles) rage, and the people (Jews) imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,"

In Acts, Peter's constantly accusing the Nation of Israel for crucifying their Messiah. "You killed Him. You murdered Him" But the Scripture says both Jew and Gentile were guilty of the Crucifixion.

Psalms 2:3

"Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."(-)

Now that was what the human race said concerning The Messiah. We will not have this man to rule over us. Away with Him, crucify Him So they cast off God's reign from them. Now verse 4:

Psalms 2:4-6

"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision." That's the result of the Crucifixion.
"Then (after they reject The Messiah, the offer of The King and the Kingdom) shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." That's the Tribulation. Do you see anything in between those two verses of the Church Age? It's not in there. So the Psalmist continues on with the prophetic program. In verse 6, notice the next event. The Kingdom.

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

To get a grasp on what I'm teaching, turn to Luke Chapter 4:17. The setting is The Lord in His earthly ministry. He's gone into the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth. He stands up to read:

**Luke 4:17-21**

"And there was delivered unto him the book (or Scroll) of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written (in other words, he looks for this particular portion of Scripture), `The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down, And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, `This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.'" Isaiah 61:1 is identical to what Jesus read here in Luke.

**Isaiah 61:1,2**

"THE Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD (-), and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;"

In Luke there was a period at the end of the acceptable year of The Lord. But notice here it is a comma, so the verse goes right on to say the day of vengeance of our God. And according to Psalms Chapter 2 what was that? The wrath and vexation of the Tribulation. Do you see that? So this prophecy like Psalms Chapter 2 just flows right on through, and the last part of the verse says to comfort all that mourn. What's that? The Kingdom age. So our Lord reading in Luke Chapter 4 knew the end from the beginning. He knew where to stop. He said this is fulfilled in your ears, the rest of it He knew wouldn't be until later.
To show where these prophecies have been fulfilled, we will put a dash with parenthesis around it (-) indicating the rest is unfilled to date. This symbol (-) would be in verse 2 after the last `LORD.' Look at Psalms Chapter 2 again, and stop after verse 3 to put the symbol (-) because that is as much as what happened. They rejected The Messiah, and crucified Him and then verse 5 hasn't happened even yet. Go to Psalms 118 and we will do the same thing. The Old Testament will just continue on with the prophetic plan, but we know it's been interrupted with the Church Age.

Psalms 118:22

"The stone which the builders refused (-) (that happened at His Crucifixion. Who is the Stone of Scripture? Christ is. He was the Head of the corner, but what did they do with the Stone? They cast It aside, not knowing Who He was. So that's all that was fulfilled, but what does the rest of the verse say?) is become the head stone of the corner." That hasn't happened yet so put your symbol (-) in the middle of the verse.

Isaiah Chapter 9:

Isaiah 9:6

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given (-), and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Only the first part has been fulfilled. The rest is still future, so put your break (-) after the word `given.' Next is Isaiah 61:1 and we used that as our example. The next one will be Daniel Chapter 9:26. This is the Chapter on Daniel's seventh week. Now verse 26 and the description of the coming of The Messiah:

Daniel 9:26,27

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off (His Crucifixion), but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary(-) (this happened in 70 A.D.) and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he (the Anti-christ) shall confirm the covenant with many..." That hasn't happened yet, so you can put your break in this verse right after the word `sanctuary.' The next one is in Joel Chapter 2.

Joel 2:28-30

"And it shall come to pass afterward (after His rejection), that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:" Verse 29. "And also upon the
servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit (-)." Now verse 30. "And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke." Did verse 30 happen? No, but verse 28 and 29 did. Now Zechariah Chapter 9:

Zechariah 9:9,10

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having Salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass (-) (did that happen? Yes!)." Verse 10. "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea (The Kingdom, and we know that's not happened yet), and from the river even to the ends of the earth." So the break goes between verses 9 and 10. The next one is in Luke Chapter 1:

Luke 1:31,32

"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS (-) (did it happen? You bet it did)." Verse 32. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:" Verse 32 still hasn't happened, but it's going to. So naturally the break on this one will be between 31 and 32. One more in Luke Chapter 21:


"And they (the Jew) shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations (that happened at the siege of Titus): and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (-). And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;"

I try to show by putting breaks in verses that this Old Testament program was suddenly interrupted with this Age of Grace we are now in, and the rest is still future.
LESSON TWO * PART II

ACTS CHAPTER 5 - TIMELINE - "OUR GOSPEL"

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

Let's turn to Acts Chapter 5. Recently, I was going through one of my old teaching Bibles, and an article fell out that I had copied out of a book written by William R. Newell. Those of you who like to read might want to take down the title and author. Newell was a great and famous Bible teacher in the Chicago, St. Louis and Detroit areas back in the 1920's and 30's. In this book which is titled "Paul Versus Peter" you will find on page ten that he writes this: "Is it not strange that 16 or 17 Chapters of the Book of Acts (if we include Chapter 9 and of course that is where Saul is converted), is given to that apostle who was not one of the original twelve. He was not converted until long after Pentecost. Must there not be a deep reason for this? And what is the reason? One thing is certainly evident already, and that is we Gentiles have a relation to Paul that we do not have to the other apostles. Exactly what that is we must prayerfully seek to discover." And that says it in a nutshell. I've read that to sort of settle folk down who think I make too much of the Apostle Paul. And I also make a point of separating Peter and Paul. But to me it's the only way you can understand Scripture. You see, until you can separate the ministries of those two men you are going to be like most of the rest of Christendom and that is total confusion. And that is the reason for the confusion. We have to get to the place that we can see that in all of these early Chapters of Acts Peter is constantly ministering to the Jew.

By inspiration, we are told in many places, that Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles and that he is the example for the Gentiles. (I Timothy 1:16 and Philippians 3:17) I told the class before we started that I was anxious to get to Chapter 9 and the conversion of Saul so we can see more obviously these vast differences. But it's just amazing that folks can't understand that as Peter is the Apostle to the Jew, God is going to lay out so clearly that Paul is the Apostle of the Gentiles. Now those are two different groups of people, and two different doctrines, but the same God. Everything is all fitting together as we showed you in the last lesson. But nevertheless we have to understand that Peter is still under the Covenant program that began with Abraham. And all through Christ's earthly ministry, why was He ministering to the Jew? To prove to them that He was The King coming in fulfillment of that Abrahamic Covenant. Gentiles weren't involved in that (Matthew 10:5 also Matthew 15:24 and Romans 15:8) until The King was in place and then they could flow into it as Isaiah says. Then they would flow to Jerusalem. It was a valid offer to the Nation of Israel, but that didn't happen because of the rejection of The Messiah, and the dispersion of the Jew after the stoning of Stephen.
In Chapter 5, I'm going to make the statement which I hope doesn't make folks angry, because I've said often enough on this program that I don't expect everyone to agree with me. And if you don't agree with me I won't call you a heretic and vice versa. Just because I'm a little different don't call me a heretic, because I'm still blood bought. I'm still a firm believer in the death, burial, and Resurrection of Christ, and that is what's fundamental to all of this. But for now let's review just the closing verses in Chapter 4 and then into Chapter 5. I maintain this is not Church ground or the Body of Christ as the Church. This is the Jerusalem assembly, primarily Jewish believers of the fact that Jesus was The Christ. There has been no mention yet of a Salvation based on His shed blood, on His death, burial, and Resurrection. It's only on Who He was. He was the promised Messiah. Now the closing verses of Chapter 4.

Acts 4:34-37

"Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet (the Twelve): and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

None of that is Church language. I've always maintained as long as I've been teaching, how long could a pastor keep his congregation under his wing if he would ask them to cash in all their property and bring him the money? Well he wouldn't last to Monday morning, not if he has intelligent people. But you see this is what they were doing, and there was nothing amiss. It was expected. If Chapter 5, telling about the death of Ananias and Sapphira, is Church ground then there wouldn't be a believer left on this earth. Because the minute they committed the sin of even lying, what happened? They were gone. How many believers haven't done much worse than this, and they're not gone. Why? Well we are under a whole different set of circumstances. But here this is approaching the Kingdom. I didn't make this point in the last several Chapters, and I should have. The reason they are so willing to sell their property and turn it into cash and bring it to the apostles' feet is because they knew that as soon as The King would set up the Kingdom they wouldn't have to worry about houses and land. In the Kingdom there will be no poverty, everyone would have everything. And so this was their prospect, they were looking for the Kingdom just over the horizon. Remember, according to Psalms Chapter 2 and the Old Testament program, not long after they would reject The Messiah, then would come the wrath and vexation, and then would come The King. Well with that in view they were not worried about keeping their property. So they gladly sold and brought the money to the apostles, because the more
the apostles could preach the Kingdom the more Jews would be brought in as believers and then they would have The King and Kingdom.

And little did they know that it would all come to nothing. Now that should also give you a little insight. Why do you suppose that every place that Paul went among his Gentile congregations that he would always take up a collection? For the poor at Jerusalem who had sold everything, but since Christ hadn't returned, the kitty had run dry. And where did it leave them? Destitute. But God in His mercy still reckoned with the fact that they had done all of that in obedience and so God takes care of them then with the offerings from Paul's Gentile converts. Now does that all make sense? I hope so. And so here again we come into Chapter 5 and Peter is still dealing with these Jewish believers there in Jerusalem.

**Acts 5:1-4**

*BUT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,*" Just like Barnabas did, but they made their big mistake. verse 2:

"*And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it (she knew what was being done), and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

*But Peter said, 'Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?''*

"*Whiles it remained, was it not thine own (in other words it was up to you. You didn't have to bring it all, but why did you lie and say that you had when you hadn't)? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."*

Now that wasn't all that big a deal. I dare say the average believer tells a bigger lie than that at least once in his life time. And if this is Church ground then we would all be gone. That is if you are going to say this is part of the Church, and use it as an example. But this is a better example of the circumstances in the Kingdom. We know that death is possible in the Kingdom. Not very likely, but if someone commits a horrendous act of rebellion against The King, that is his potential fate, he will be suddenly taken off the scene. So I prefer to think that this is what these Jewish believers had to understand. That they were getting ready to come under the authority of The King Who is going to rule with an iron hand. You don't fool Him. You don't even so much tell a white lie to Him, for if you do you are going to be out of here. And so this is really the lesson for these Jews. They were now coming under a set of circumstances where their King was going to rule with absolute power and
knowledge. You wouldn't be able to hide anything from Him. You all know the account of what happened. Verse 6.

**Acts 5:6-11**

"And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, 'Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?' and she said, 'Yea, for so much.' Then Peter said unto her, 'How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt (or test) the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out (now that's shocking isn't it? That would be enough to shake up any group of people).' Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church (or assembly as I like to refer to the Jewish believers), and upon as many as heard these things."

**Acts 5:12**

"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;...."

Now come back with me again to Acts 1:8, so we don't lose sight of what I have been trying to bring out. This is when The Lord was speaking to the eleven disciples just before He ascended. And remember what He told them.

**Acts 1:8**

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

They were to receive power. What kind of power? Miracle working power. They were to be an extension of Christ's earthly ministry. Every thing that He and the Twelve had performed in those three years, Peter and the eleven were to continue, because they are dealing with the same people. They're dealing with the Nation of Israel, and trying to convince the nation that Jesus was Who He said He was. And He was still going to fulfill His promises if they would just simply believe. Now verse 12 again:

**Acts 5:12**
"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord [where? In the church down on First and Grand? No, but rather] in Solomon's porch...)

And where's Solomon's porch? In the Temple. They're still meeting in the Temple; still taking their sacrifices; they haven't stopped Judaistic rituals. The only thing that's been added to it is now they have believed that Jesus was Whom He said He was.

Acts 5:13,14

"(...And of the rest [of Judaism] durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)"

I'm thankful for the archaeologists. They are finding more and more evidence that there were thousands of these first and second century Jews who were still practicing their Judaism, but had embraced Jesus of Nazareth as The Messiah. And that's what they are uncovering. Now they were not Gentile adherents of Paul's Gospel of Grace, but rather they were Jewish believers who were still believing the Gospel of the Kingdom. Now I'll have to explain that. For the first three or four years after I began teaching, I was never comfortable teaching the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts, and I would just skim over them. And then one day I stopped in at my parents' house for a morning cup of coffee, and on Mom's coffee table was one of those little booklets from the old radio program called "The Radio Bible Class." It's now called The Day of Discovery. Anyway, one of their guest preachers from time to time throughout the year, was a gentleman by the name of Paul VanGorder. And the title of his little booklet was "Which Gospel When?" I was just bug-eyed at that, and said, "Mom could I have this little booklet?" She said, "Yes, I'm through with it." I took that little book home with me, and it was a compilation of his one month of four Radio Bible Class sermonettes. In those four lessons he laid out that during Christ's earthly ministry it was the Gospel of the Kingdom. Not the Gospel of Grace. When Paul comes on the scene, then it goes to the Gospel of the Grace of God. And that just totally changed my whole concept of Scripture.

This is how God works. I had no more than finished reading it, when someone gave me a copy by Sir Robert Anderson of a book titled the "Silence of God." I've made reference to that book before on this program, and if you get a chance, read it. Now Sir Robert Anderson does the same thing. He just lays it out so clearly that in the Four Gospel accounts and the early Chapters of Acts, it's the Gospel of the Kingdom. And that's what Jesus called it over and over. And then when you get into Paul's letters you never see that term again. Why? The Gospel of the Kingdom faded off the scene, and the Gospel of Grace took its place. And that's just exactly what William R. Newell
also wrote. So all of this evidence just kept piling up, and finally I decided this is where it's at. So all of a sudden the whole thing started to make sense. That's when you come from the Jewish program, the Gospel of the Kingdom, based on the Covenants and based on Christ's earthly ministry. and Israel continues to reject it, then God turns to the Gentiles with that other apostle which will be introduced in Chapter 9. But here in this Chapter we are still dealing with the Twelve, who are ministering to the Nation of Israel. Now verse 14:

*Acts 5:14-17*

"(And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)" And now verse 15, and if this isn't a repeat of the Four Gospels then I don't know what is.

"Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." That was the Jewish program.

"There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem (we're not talking about Cairo, Athens or Rome; this is Jerusalem), bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed (how many?) every one."

"Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,"

You know religious people haven't changed. There is nothing that upsets religious people more than to hear the truth. I've learned that over the years. Religious people do not want the truth. They want their religion. And some of you have shared with me that you have tried to go back to some of your religious church members and they won't listen to you. Why not? They don't want to be bothered. I'm comfortable, leave me alone. The world is full of religion. For example, take the Hindu religion. They say the same thing - leave us alone. I don't care what religion it is they will have that same stock answer. "Leave me alone, I'm comfortable, I think I'll make it." But then we like to come back and say, "Wouldn't you like to know that you'll make it?" That's the difference! Verse 18:

*Acts 5:18,19*

"And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth,..."
I've always asked this question ever since I read Sir Robert Anderson's book, the "Silence of God." He made the point: Do you know of a single account in Church history that angels came down and delivered God's people? In Church history? No. Now I'm not saying that God isn't a God of miracles, don't misunderstand me. I know that God can still answer prayer and God can still perform the miraculous. But I'm talking about the kind of miracles that Israel experienced. Angels coming in and opening prison doors. Earthquakes that could be so controlled that it would release all the prisoners who were in stocks and not kill any of them. Now that's the supernatural that I'm talking about. That doesn't happen any more. And it's not going to happen until God begins once again to deal with the Nation of Israel. But here we have such a supernatural intervention in the affairs of men, that an angel comes in and opens the prisons doors and let's the apostle out. And you all know the account of how the rulers were greatly disturbed and wondered how these things happened. Now they've got to do something to stop it. Now verse 27:

Acts 5:27,28

"And when they had brought them (the Twelve); they set them before the council (religious leaders of Israel): and the high priest asked them,"

"Saying, `Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name (do you see there's no mention of the shed blood, or His death, burial and Resurrection, but only His Name. I've stressed over the years when you are to recognize a name, what is attached to it? The position. And in this case with Jesus, when they heard this Name, they were suddenly to know that here was the One Who had performed all of these miracles, Who had claimed to be the promised Messiah, The King, and this was what His Name was to imply. And that is all they are stressing: Who He was)? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.'"

Well indeed, what had they done? They had murdered Him. Didn't they have a right to have vengeance taken on them? And I think the Nation of Israel has suffered for it ever since.

Acts 5:29,30

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, `We ought to obey God rather than men, The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.'"

That throws a curve at some people. What does that sound like? Like they killed Him first, and then hung Him up on a tree. Now why does Peter use that kind of language?
In Deuteronomy 21:18-23, if there was a rebellious son in Israel, and he was so wicked that the parents couldn't do anything with him, they were to turn him over to the authorities and say here is a rebellious son, he's a drunkard, and we can do nothing with him. Then the Jewish authorities would order him to be stoned. But it didn't stop there. To make him a public spectacle so that people would get the lesson, they would then hang that corpse on a pole. The end of verse 23 reads, "(for he that is hanged is accursed of God;)

Peter is bringing that picture to the Nation of Israel. That this is what they had really done with their Christ. They had considered Him like a rebellious drunkard, wicked son. And they killed Him and hung Him on a tree. Now we know that in actuality He became that on our behalf. "He who knew no sin became sin for us." If you go into Hebrews 13, you will find that the Crucifixion was awful. We have glamorized it with our jewelry, the golden Crosses and all of that, but the Crucifixion was not beautiful. It was accursed, because God laid on Him the sins of the whole human race.

But here, Peter says, "Whom you slew and hanged on a tree," to show the degradation of His death. Not that He Himself was guilty of any of that, but that He became the innocent Lamb of God on Whom all the guilt of a sinful world was laid. Remember Isaiah 52 says that of anyone who ever lived, He was more marred as He hung on the Cross than anyone who had ever lived.
LESSON TWO * PART III

ACTS CHAPTER 5 - TIMELINE - "OUR GOSPEL"

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

It's always so good to hear from our listeners. Recently we received a letter from a gentleman who told us that he now could see the difference between the teaching of Peter and Paul. Another gentleman in our class reminded me that it had been a while since we had shared Paul's Gospel with you, the television audience, as outlined in I Corinthians 15:1-4. He said, "Those were the verses that opened my eyes, and before the afternoon is over maybe you could share with us again." I believe this would be as good a time as any to do that since I never have a prepared format or lesson plan. Turn with me to I Corinthians Chapter 15. This may open the eyes of someone else who needs these verses. When I stress that Peter did not preach Paul's Gospel of Grace, I'm sure that there are some out there would ask, "Well what is the Gospel that I have to believe for my Salvation." Well here it is in plain language. And I'm glad we are doing this because as we continue on these next few Chapters in Acts, be aware that you do not see this kind of language. This is unique only to Paul, because Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles, and writing to the Gentile congregation at Corinth.

I Corinthians 15:1-4

"MOREOVER, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel (not just a gospel, but The Gospel) which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;"

"By which also ye are saved (it's believing the Gospel that saves us), if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." In other words you have to understand and know what you believe. Now here is Paul's Gospel:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received (from the risen Lord), how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;" It was in such vague language in the Old Testament that they couldn't understand, but it was there.

"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:" Now that, beloved, is the Gospel that saves you. Believing in His death, burial, and Resurrection for your Salvation.

To see how Paul puts his emphasis on that, go to Romans Chapter 1. It has been a while since we shared the plan of Salvation and after all, that is what we're here for: to
help people understand how to get right with God. How to have the assurance that if we die in the next hour that we will be in His presence.

**Romans 1:16**

"For I am not shamed of the gospel of Christ: for it (The Gospel) is the power of God unto Salvation (that leaves our works out of it. We can't touch this) to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Do you see what that puts aside? The works that so many people are hanging on to just fall away. But it's to everyone that believeth for their Salvation. Come back to I Corinthians Chapter 1 for another example.

**I Corinthians 1:18**

"For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

When I present Salvation, I always refer to Israel coming out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Here they were at the shore of the Red Sea, with impassable mountains on the right, and populated areas to the left, the Egyptian army behind them, and the Red Sea in front of them. They're in a dilemma! Does God say to hurry up and do something? Does He tell Moses to get out the boats and transport the Israelites? No! It's unbelievable what God tells Moses to do - stand still. Do nothing! That's contrary to human thought and to most of Christendom. But God tells us the same thing. When we realize that we are in a dilemma, there is no way out except to stand still and believe that The God of Scripture can get us out of our dilemma. And how? By believing.

**I Corinthians 1:23,24**

"But we preach Christ crucified (now think back. What has Peter been saying? "Oh, you killed Him, but God has raised Him from the dead and He can still be your King." Peter isn't preaching Crucifixion as a means of Salvation, but rather Peter is teaching Crucifixion to prove that God had overcome what they had accomplished, and that He could still fulfill His Covenant promises. Paul looks at the whole thing from a different perspective, and that is He did it for us that we might have life eternal), unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Now again go back to the Red Sea. What opened the Red Sea? Well not Moses, but rather God's supernatural power. And when we believe the Gospel God works supernaturally and gives us a whole new nature. A divine nature we can't touch. We
can't put it in there, but God does. That's where faith comes in. It's by faith, not by doing anything at all. But by believing. Another one is in Paul's writings in Ephesians Chapter 2. These are verses you all know.

Ephesians 2:1

"AND you (remember Paul always writes to believers, for the unbelievers' benefit of course) hath he quickened (or made alive), who were dead in trespasses and sins;"

Remember the first Law that God laid on Adam? The day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. In the Book of Ezekiel he tells us that the soul that sinneth shall surely die. Paul comes back and says you are dead in trespasses and sins, but God makes you alive. Now come all the way down to verse 8:

Ephesians 2:8-10

"For by grace are ye saved through faith (and what's faith? Believing! Nothing else - just believe the Gospel); and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God:" There is nothing we can do - we are hopeless. But we believe, and God does everything that needs to be done. Now verse 9:

"Not of works, lest any man should boast." But it doesn't stop there. We are not saved just to sit down and say, "I'm not going to hell anymore." That's not it, that's only a small part of it. What does the next verse say?

"For we are his workmanship,..."

Now what does that mean? God's divine fingers have now come into our life and He has put us together as a new creature. For what purpose? To bring glory to Him. We are not to live for self. Now the world ridicules that, but the world only has 70 years on the average to try to enjoy life. That's their Heaven, but listen we have ages upon ages ahead of us. And it's going to make this old world at its very best seem like a smelly pig pen. That's the best way I can put it. The most beautiful thing you can find on this earth by comparison is just a smelly old pig pen. The Scriptures say that things are awaiting us that we can't even imagine. Eyes have not seen, and ears have not heard the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. So I don't really care that we go through this life of seventy years without much. I don't need it, because the best is yet to come. And it's not just for me, it's for you and everyone that believes. Now let's go on a little further in Chapter 2, verse 11, 12, and 13. This falls right in with what I have been teaching in the Book of Acts: that Peter is still on Jewish ground. He's still preaching to the Nation of Israel, everything is still based on the
promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Gentiles are not included, but now look at what Paul says to us Gentiles.

_Ephesians 2:11,12a_

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision (Gentiles) by that which is called the Circumcision (Jews) in the flesh made by hands;" In other words that was the way a Jew would refer to a Gentile. Now verse 12:

"That at that time..."

Now I'm a stickler for language. What time? When the Jew was still uppermost in God's program, and the Jew was looking down on the Gentile as the uncircumcised dogs of humanity. The Jews were in the driver's seat. Remember, all the way from Abraham to the Apostle Paul, who is uppermost in Scripture? The Jew. The Nation of Israel. But now read on:

_Ephesians 2:12_

"That at that time ye (Gentiles) were without Christ, being aliens (non-citizens) from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the (what?) covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"

Now did you think I am crazy when I say it was Jew only, with exceptions. Not really. I think I got it pretty straight. Because this confirms it. That while God was dealing with Israel the Gentile was out there without hope, and without God in this world, because he was not a part of the Nation of Israel. But don't stop there.

_Ephesians 2:13_

"But now (from Paul's day) in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh (not by keeping the Law, not by Temple worship, not by animal sacrifices, but by what?) by the blood of Christ."

Do you see that? That's what makes the difference, and now it is announced to us Gentiles that everything that has been done has been done for us. Now since I've gotten this far I might as well answer the question that has already been coming in over the phone. _"Les you have been saying that you don't believe that the Church began at Pentecost."_ I used to teach it that way but I've never been comfortable teaching it that way. I've been showing why, with the language throughout those Chapters. I know that 90% of preachers and theologians who may listen to me are
disagreeing and that's their privilege. But people say, "If the Church didn't begin at Pentecost then where did it begin?" Well, there was a period of time when I had to say I don't know, but I'm looking. Then one night several years ago as I was reading my Bible I ran across the Scripture in I Timothy Chapter 1 that blew my eyes wide open. And I've shared it with folks ever since. When they say "When do you think the Church the Body of Christ began?" I tell them I think it began with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Here is my reasoning:

I Timothy 1:15.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Now let's break this verse down.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation (no room for argument), that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (now wait a minute, hold everything. Way back when John the Baptist announced Christ, he did say, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," but that was almost lost in the dust. But what did John the Baptist really proclaim that Christ had come for? To become The King. The King is here. But Paul doesn't mention Him being The King, nor setting up an earthly Kingdom. Paul says He came into the world to save sinners. But the next part is what I want you to see, and every sermon I have heard preached on it the preacher would say that Paul proclaimed himself to be the worst of sinners, by virtue); of whom I am chief."

But all you have to do is get a Greek dictionary or Strong's Concordance and look up every place in the New Testament where this word `Chief' is found, and it comes from the same Greek word, and in every instance it is referred to as the "Chief man of the Island" (The Governor) "The Chief Priest" (The High Priest). Paul and Barnabas were in a pagan city and they called Paul "Mercurius" because he was the "Chief Speaker." Now does any of that indicate something bad? No. It denotes a place of leadership. The head of the line. Have you got that? So read it like this: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am at the head of the line." Now look at the next verse:

I Timothy 1:16

"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Now let's also break the verse down.

"Howbeit for this cause (ask yourself questions as you read. What cause? That He came to save the chief of sinners) I obtained mercy, that in me (what's the next
first (now what does first mean? It means first! There is no way you can foul that word up) Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering (mercy or Grace), for a pattern (now ladies, when you are sewing a dress what do you use? A pattern. What's a pattern? It's the outline of the original. It's the first. Now if you're going to make three dresses, you use the pattern to cut out the first dress. What do you use for the next pattern - the piece of material or the original pattern? The original pattern. I can remember when I was young and I was building a small outdoor building, and I was busy cutting rafters. That was long before everything is as modern as it is now, and I was still cutting them with a hand saw. And I had four or five of them all ready cut when my dad came along, and he said, "Which one is the pattern?" I said whichever one I used last. And he said, "Les you're going to have a roof that will have all kind of bows and sways in it." I said why? He replied, "Because every time you make a little mistake you will multiply it in the next one. Always use the first for a pattern."

I had to learn like all the rest of us. Now it's the same way here, there could only be one original pattern of a sinner saved by Grace. And who was it? The Apostle Paul. Have you ever seen the likes of the Grace of God as it was poured out on that rebel on the way to Damascus. There is nothing like it in human history. And he was saved! - the least meritorious of any human being I'd say that was living at that time. He had caused people to be thrown into prison, caused people to be put to death, and then God saves him. He did it without a cause, but by Grace. Now read on. And remember Paul is now the original pattern) to them which should hereafter (that means from this point on. This goes forward from Paul. Now this next word is very crucial, does it say to repent and be baptized? No but that's what Peter says in Acts 2:38. But Paul says to ) believe on him to life everlasting." Reading the verse again.

I Timothy 1:16

"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

I don't call someone a heretic if they disagree with me and still adhere to the Jews at Pentecost as being Christians. I've said over and over The Bible doesn't call them Christians. The Bible doesn't call people Christians until the Gentiles at Antioch. But here I think the Apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is laying out so clearly that at that Salvation experience on the road to Damascus that God saved the chief of sinners. Not the worst necessarily, although he was apologetic for that all through his letters. But God saved the leader of sinners, and that everyone who now comes into the Body of Christ, the Church, is going to come patterned after him. And will follow him.
I made a comment several years ago in my McAlester OK class. We were studying Peter going up to the house of Cornelius. Those of you who know your Bible know that's in Acts Chapter 10. And we had just studied Saul's conversion in Acts Chapter 9. So the next week when I got into Chapter 10 and I was ready to start teaching about Cornelius, I said "Praise The Lord that Chapter 10 follows Chapter 9." Well everybody laughed, they thought I was trying to say something that was funny, but I wasn't. I wasn't talking about the numerical following of 10 after 9, but the content. Because in Chapter 9 the chief of sinners is saved, he's the pattern, he's at the head of the line, now what's in Chapter 10? The Salvation of a house full of Gentiles. Do you see that? Now if Cornelius would have been saved in Chapter 8, then all of this would fall apart. And I wouldn't stand here and teach it. But it doesn't come in Chapter 8, it comes in Chapter 10. And then as we go on through the Book of Acts, we're going to find that with the conversion of Saul, God's going to take him down in to the desert for three years and reveal to him all these doctrines of Grace associated with the Church. Things that are a mystery and have been kept secret. I've been stressing on this program for a long time Deuteronomy 29:29. This is so fundamental to our understanding. Why did God hold some of these things from Peter and the eleven? Why couldn't they have heard it and comprehended it? Because God is Sovereign.

Deuteronomy 29:29

"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us..."

Now what do you do with a secret when you reveal it? It's no longer a secret, everybody knows it, but until it's revealed it is a secret. Do you remember back in Genesis one of the names of God implies that He is not only Sovereign, but He has the right and ability to keep things hidden, or a secret, until He reveals them.
LESSON TWO * PART IV

ACTS CHAPTER 5 - TIMELINE - "OUR GOSPEL"

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4

Let's go back to where we left off in our study of Acts a couple of lessons ago and start in verse 28 of Chapter 5: After the High Priest had said in verse 28:

Acts 5:28,29

"Saying, did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?... Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'"

Acts 5:30,31

"The God of our fathers (notice the language here is all Jewish. That term didn't apply to Gentiles. The God of our fathers was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." And we told you earlier that goes back to Deuteronomy 21:18-23 And then verse 31:

"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour (He was going to be the political King, as well as the Spiritual Savior); for to give repentance to Israel (see any Gentiles in that? No, only Israel, that's what The Book says. I'm not twisting it, I'm just leaving it where it is), and forgiveness of sins."

That reminds me, come back again to Luke Chapter 1, and see how appropriately this all fits together. My, if only folks could just understand that the Scriptures are like a fine-tuned watch, and I've used that analogy more than once. It is so meticulously put together, but so many people throw monkey wrenches in it and try to move the Scripture around to make it fit their belief. Just let the Scriptures sit where our Lord intended them to be. Now here in Luke Chapter 1 compare with what Peter has just said in Acts 5:31. That He was to be a Prince and Savior, and to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sin. In Luke 1:67, Zechariah one of the believing priests, the father of John the Baptist, says:

Luke 1:67,68

"And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost (why? Because what he says is not going to be just the mouthing of a good Jew, but the Word of God coming forth. The Spirit is prompting him to say what he says), and prophesied, saying,"
"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people," Who are His people at this time? The Nation of Israel!

**Luke 1:69-71**

"And hath raised up a horn of Salvation for us (Israel) in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world (Age) began: That we should be saved from our (not sins in this verse but what?) enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us,"

Their enemies then were the same ones that are their enemies tonight. The same ones who had been their enemies for almost 2000 years. They included the Romans, Greeks, and everybody else that lived around them. They all hated the Nation of Israel, and so Zechariah is just speaking in plain language again.

**Luke 1:72,73**

"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant (what Covenant?); The oath which he swear to our father Abraham."

This is all Covenant ground and what I'm referring to when I say that everything is on the basis of the Covenants made to Abraham. And Zechariah is repeating it by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

**Luke 1:74-77**

"That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies (physical enemies), might serve him (This King, and Messiah, This God) without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways (now look at verse 77); To give knowledge of Salvation unto his people (Israel) by the remission of their sins,"

Notice nothing has changed between here and Acts Chapter 5. Peter is saying practically the same thing in Acts, that Zechariah did in Luke Chapter 1. That Christ had come to give them remission of sins but also to be their King, if they would just repent of what they had done, and that was having killed their Messiah. Then everything would still come along as God had intended it.

**Acts 5:33**
"When they (the religious leaders who have Peter and the eleven on trial) heard that, they were cut to the heart (oh, the Spirit is working, even on these religious leaders. And remember religionists always hate the truth. And religionists only have one way to deal with their enemies and that is what? Kill them. That's what religion does. Now this may shock a lot of people but this Book never uses the term religion in a good way. Never. Religion is a bad word according to this Book. When Paul says in Galatians Chapter 1, how he profited in the Jews religion, it was bad thing. And the same way here. These people were the religious leaders of Israel, and as soon as they saw the truth of what Peter and the eleven were proclaiming, they have only one option), and took counsel to slay them,"

Acts 5:34,35

"Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, (he's the one who taught the apostle Paul Judaism) a doctor of the Law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space: And said unto them, 'Ye men of Israel (do you see the language), take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.'"

And then Gamaliel goes on and gives examples of what had happened before. It didn't amount to anything, and nothing came of it. So Gamaliel says of this present situation, "Don't worry about it. If these guys are nothing but a bunch of heretics and a bunch of loonies, forget about them. Nothing is going to come of it. We don't have to do anything drastic." And in verse 38 he says this:

Acts 5:38,39

"And now I say unto you, 'Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.'"

We were looking at a verse last night that speaks to you and I today. Let's look at it now because it just comes to mind. And what a promise! We are in such a minority that we almost get a little fearful, and get a little timid, and I'm probably as guilty as anybody, but look at the promise here in God's Word. Just like Gamaliel said concerning the Twelve, Paul says we can take the same approach.

Romans 8:31

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"
Oh men may dare, and they may get by for a while, but listen God is Sovereign, He's in control, and He is going to be the final Avenger. That's why Paul says in this same Book of Romans, "Avenge not yourselves." We don't have to, God will do it for us.

_Romans 8:32_

"He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Well, if God was willing to give the best that ever inhabited Heaven, if God was willing to put Him to the shame and the suffering of the Cross for you and I, is there anything else that He can withhold? No. He will give us everything that we need.

_Romans 8:33_

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect (to the believer)? It is God that justifieth." In Acts, in the Jewish economy, it's the same God. God hasn't changed. Just because He changes His program of dealing with the Jew to the Gentile, God doesn't change. Now back to Acts Chapter 5:

_Acts 5:40_

"And to him they agreed (these religious leaders listened to Gamaliel): and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go."

There again, they were not to preach the Name of Jesus. Now had they been dealing with Paul, I think they would have said, "Don't you ever again preach death, burial, and Resurrection." There were many people who couldn't believe in resurrection. But here they tell the Twelve not to ever again teach in the Name of Jesus.

_Acts 5:41,42_

"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the (where?) Temple,..."

The Temple was still operating, and still the center of Jewish life. That hadn't changed. Oh, I want you to see that. Now when we get to Paul I know there is going to be a time or two when he is going to take a Jewish vow in order to reach Jews. But you see Paul has nothing to do with the Temple in his missionary journeys. He doesn't tell his new converts up there in Asia-Minor (which is present day Turkey) to be sure and get to the Temple the first chance they get. No, he doesn't do that. But instead
what does he do? He sets up little congregations of believers in homes, small groups of believers. I have been blessed now for over twenty years by being able to teach these small groups outside the church environment. I'm not against the church, not at all, and those of you who know me personally know that. I have never told anyone to quit going to their church. Quite a few years ago, I was teaching in a college here in Oklahoma. It was an evening Bible class in their adult education section. We always had a paid enrollment of between 40 and 45 people in that college class room.

We taught there for thirteen years, just exactly the way I teach to you. No opposition at all. The dean of academics would come when he could. One night after class he said, "You know Les, I had an interesting experience several weeks ago, my own pastor stopped me on the street and said, 'Doctor what kind of a kooky Bible class do you have there at your college anyway?'" And the dean told me that he didn't even try to argue the point with him. He just said, "Pastor, I'll just get a roster of Les' class, and the next time I see you I'm going to show it to you." He said about three days later he met the Pastor on the street again and said, "Oh by the way, Pastor, that kooky Bible class you were asking about? Here's Les' roster of class people." The Pastor went down that roster, almost turned pale, and said, "That's mostly Deacons and Sunday School Teachers." But this is exactly what most of my classes have been. Most of you are active in your various churches. I have never encouraged anyone to leave their particular church, and they certainly don't have to leave to follow me. We teach so they can go in and teach and share these things with other folks.

But getting back to the original Church. Paul didn't set up huge congregations on a corner place, but rather a little group of believers in a home. I've come to the conclusion that maybe there's a reason for teaching small groups, as there are many at the present time doing that. I'm always reminded of Watchman Nee. He was a Bible teacher in China, just before the communist took over. And he did much the same as I and many others are doing. He never taught that much in the local organized church. He taught in little home Bible classes, all over Shanghai in particular. And he was preparing them, without them knowing it, for the day when the organized church doors were locked. But these little Bible studies could just continue on. Consequently, when we went back into China a few years ago, because the doors had somewhat opened, the western world was aghast at all the believers that were in China. Why? Because of these underground little home Bible studies.

We may face the same thing in our own beloved America some day, where our churches will be locked, and we will be forbidden to worship. But it will be difficult for them to stop three or four families to meet and study the Word in homes. But anyway, that's how the Church was started by Paul. It was small group meeting in a home atmosphere. In verse 42 they are still meeting in the Temple. They're still under
Judaism, but have separated themselves from the mainstream of Judaism, by recognizing Who Jesus was. Now remember they have been selling all their goods, and land they have been cashing in their C.D.'s and they are putting all their money in the common kitty, and they are all living out of it. Now everything has been going just great for about 7 years after Pentecost now. No discord, no disagreement of doctrine, the Twelve are under complete control of the whole thing. And now in Chapter 6, I call it "The first signs of trouble in paradise."

Acts 6:1

"AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, (quite a few thousand of them) there arose a (what?) murmuring (now you haven't seen language like that in the first five Chapters. It said they were all of one mind, and in one accord. No one lacked anything, everyone had all they needed because the kitty was full. But I don't imagine they had 20% interest in those days either, and so what happened? The kitty was getting a little short. So now we have the first sign of trouble) of the Grecians against the Hebrews, (now here is where we have to be careful. Definition is so important. Greeks are pure Gentiles. The Hebrews are self-explanatory - that's the Jews. A Grecian was simply a non-Palestine Jew. Remember all the Jews didn't return from the Babylonian captivity. They went into many different countries. After they had become citizens in those various nations, naturally they would take that nation's language for their own, but kept their Judaistic practices. Those people who would come to Jerusalem were the Grecians! They were Jews but they had been a generation or two outside the land of Palestine) because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." So these Grecian widows were being cheated, they were being pushed aside. They were what we call today `outsiders.'

Acts 6:2

"Then the twelve (notice the Twelve are in control of all of this) called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, `It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.'"

I know a lot of people and commentaries will say the first deacons were selected here. The Bible never calls the seven men deacons. They played much the same role as a deacon, but The Bible doesn't call them deacons. It just says we need someone to serve tables, because we need to continue to preach the Word. Read on:

Acts 6:3-7

"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost (watch this language) and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this
business (to bring back fairness in the distribution). But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen (now watch this language), a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

These Jews were responding to Peter and the eleven and are becoming part of the Jerusalem assembly of Jewish believers.

Acts 6:8

"And Stephen, full of faith and power did great wonders and miracles among the people. The continuation of that same Jewish program. It was an extension of Christ's earthly ministry.

Acts 6:9-14

"Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, `We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council (they were like a mob, and brought him before the religious leaders), And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the Law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.'"

What had Stephen been talking about? The coming of The King and the Kingdom, and naturally, when The King would come this whole format of the Mosaic system of Law and Temple worship would fall by the way side, because The King, and the new Covenant would become a reality, and they would no longer have to study and witness. Everybody would be in the right relationship with God. And when Stephen and the rest of these Jewish believers were proclaiming that, the religious section of Judaism said, "No way! We are not going to let anything change the way we have always done things"
LESSON THREE * PART I

ACTS CHAPTERS 6, 7 & 8

It thrills us to receive letters telling us we are teaching on a level that almost anyone can comprehend. We always try to teach on a common man level. I believe that is the way The Lord wants us teach. We trust as you study with us, The Lord will bless you and hearts will be opened. We especially appeal to those who have never been saved, that you might understand that the Gospel is so simple (I Corinthians 15:1-4), and yet so complex that I'll never understand it all (nor will any other human being). In Acts Chapter 6, Stephen's brought before the religious leaders of Israel. I have stressed, contrary to tradition, that the early Chapters of Acts are still to the Nation of Israel - no mention of Gentiles. The language is Jewish, everything is there in Jerusalem.

Acts 6:15

"And all that sat in the council (this religious leadership), looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

They could see there was something beyond the natural here. Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, as is mentioned several times in Chapter 6 and 7. Now as you come into Chapter 7, the Jews had many accusations they had put forth against Stephen.

Acts 7:1,2

"THEN Said the high priest, `Are these things so?'"

"And he (Stephen) said, `Men, brethren, and fathers (again, analyze those three words, there is not room for a Gentile here. Stephen was referring to the Nation of Israel), hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran (before he moved from Ur)."

Stephen is saying, by inspiration, that God actually appeared to Abraham in a form that he could see with his eye. Back in Genesis 12:1 it says, "NOW the LORD had said unto Abram,..." It doesn't clarify it like it does here. We now see that God not only spoke to Abram, but He appeared to him in a human form which we call a "Theophany." Chapter 7 is a beautiful review of Israel's history. Beginning with Abraham, Stephen keeps building and building, as we have tried to do coming through the Old Testament; how that God was constantly unfolding and revealing, and preparing the Nation of Israel for the coming of their King, Messiah, and Redeemer.
Stephen starts with Abraham and shows how he came out of the land of the Chaldeans in verse 4.

Acts 7:4

"Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Charran (Haran): and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell." Now verse 6:

Acts 7:6,7

"And God spake on this wise, `That his seed (his offspring, the coming generations) should sojourn in a strange land (Egypt): and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years (this is all back in Genesis 15), And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.'"

Let's go to Genesis Chapter 26 and 46 so we will know what Stephen is talking about. All of these things are fundamental to our understanding of even the New Testament. That's why I spent as much time in Genesis as I did when we first started this Through the Bible study. If folks don't understand Genesis, they will never understand the Gospel of Grace. In Genesis 26:1 God has made this Covenant agreement with Abraham, and now He is conferring it to Isaac, the true son of promise.

Genesis 26:1-5

"AND there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar (down on the border between Canaan and Egypt) And the LORD appeared unto him (Isaac), and said, `Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of (the Promised Land. Everything connected with Canaan was based on the Promise of God): Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father (the Abrahamic Covenant); And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries (or tribes living in Canaan), and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice,...'"

In Chapter 46, Joseph is in Egypt. He has all kinds of food and grain stored up during this famine that was covering that region of the world. Jacob has been invited together with the sons and the rest of the family to come to Egypt, and take part in all the food that had been supplied. Here, The Lord is talking to Jacob:
Genesis 46:2,3

"And God spake unto Israel (Jacob) in the visions of the night, and said, `Jacob, Jacob.' And he said, `Here am I.' And he said, `I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt for I will there make of thee a great nation:'"

God had told Abraham and Isaac to stay in the land of promise and He would bless them. But now in a future generation, it's time for the Nation of Israel to explode with population. God had told Abraham that would occur in Egypt. Now God comes back to Jacob and tells him to not fear going down into Egypt. Here is what I want folks to understand. This statement tells us where the Nation of Israel began to bloom. It was in Egypt. You see that in the last part of verse 3. Up until now the Nation of Israel is composed only of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob comes back with the twelve sons and their children, but that's still not much of a nation is it? When they end up in Egypt, in those years of slavery (beginning when they go in under Jacob with about 75 people), they will come out under Moses with several million people. So note that Israel became a Nation of People down in Egypt. Back to Acts Chapter 7:

Acts 7:7-10

"And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place (that's Canaan). And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house."

I'm taking this verse by verse as we can learn some things from the Old Testament to prove some things in the New Testament.

Acts 7:11-13

"Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance (you know the story). But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt he sent out our fathers first. Ten of the sons. In verse 13 is a statement you need to underline. "And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh."

Let's Go back to Genesis once again. You all know the account of how Joseph, when he was wearing that coat of many colors, would share his dreams with his older brothers and how it would infuriate them, that they would have to bow down to him.
And then he had another dream that made it even worse. A dream where he saw eleven stars, with the sun and moon. And they also bowed to Joseph. Now it's coming to fruition. I don't put any stock in dreams today. I had someone ask me the other night if I knew anything connected with believing what dreams say. I said none whatsoever. If it were true, I'd be in a mental institution - I think we all would. Don't tie anything to dreams. But back here in the Old Testament economy, God did speak through dreams - no doubt about it.

Holy Bible, King James Version

*Genesis 42:1-3*

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, 'Why do ye look one upon another?' And he said, 'Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.'" And again you know the story. They come before Joseph in verse 8:

*Genesis 42:8*

"And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him."

Just as soon as those ten men stepped into his presence, Joseph immediately knew who they were. But did they know him? No! Now what's the analogy? Christ at His first coming. The Lord knew Israel from their very beginning. He presented Himself to them in language that was clear as day. But did they recognize Him? No! And this is exactly what Stephen is driving home. Now let's read the second event in Chapter 45. The brothers have come back the second time to refill their sacks with grain.

*Genesis 45:1-4*

"THEN Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, 'Cause every man to go out from me (the Egyptians).' And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself know unto his brethren (see that? Look at the results). And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, 'I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?' And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, 'Come near to me, I pray you.' And they came near. And he said, 'I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.'" Down to verse 15:

*Genesis 45:15*

"Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."
You have an emotional reunion here. And I mean it was emotional. When after all these years they are finally brought back together. What's the analogy? Before we go back to the Book of Acts let's stop at the Book of Zechariah. At His first advent, Israel didn't recognize Jesus as their Messiah, but He knew them. And that analogy draws all the way through Acts Chapter 7. And they said, "Away with Him, we will not have Him rule over us." So He went back to glory, sat down at the Father's right hand. But He's coming again to the Nation of Israel, whether they believe it or not. He's coming again! There will be that same emotional reunion when Israel recognizes their Messiah. I was reading in the Jerusalem Post that the ex-mayor, who is now in his eighties, said the first thing he was going to ask The Messiah when He comes is, "Have you been to Jerusalem before?" And that's their hang up; they can't recognize that He has been here before. They know He's coming, but they can't see it as a second event. Well, here in the Book of Zechariah we see the emotional turn of events when He will return.

**Zechariah 12:10-12**

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced (a reference of the Crucifixion), and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem,... And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;"

I don't think this is a mourning of grief, but a tearful mourning of reunion that they have their Messiah. Another is in Chapter 13:

**Zechariah 13:6**

"And one (the house of Israel) shall say unto him, 'What are these wounds in thine hands?' Then he shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends,'" This is Old Testament.

Back to Acts Chapter 7. Stephen is stressing the fact that at Christ's first Advent they didn't know Who He was. So far as Israel is concerned, it's a good thing they didn't. Because had they performed the rejection that they did, knowing Who He was, then God would have had to destroy the nation. There wouldn't have been any excuse. But even as Christ hung on the Cross, one of those seven statements that He made on the Cross was, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." And as Stephen is stoned, he, too, will say the same thing. Forgive them because of their ignorance. I always tell my class people, that everything rests on the Old Testament economy.
Back in Israel's history if someone was killed by accident, that person that killed could flee to a city of refuge. If he had done the deed through ignorance then he could tell his situation to the city fathers. If the city fathers maintained he was innocent of doing anything intentional, then he was set free to return home. He was not guilty if he did what he did through total ignorance. That's the backdrop for Israel's response to their Messiah. Had they have known Who He was, and then demanded His Crucifixion, they would have been put to death like a common murderer. But they escaped that because they did not know what they did. Keep that in mind. A verse I usually associate with that thought is found in I Corinthians Chapter 2:

I Corinthians 2:7,8

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory (Paul is speaking of his own ministry): Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it (Who He was), they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." They just didn't know, so The Lord could rightfully say, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." And it is the same way when they kill Stephen. Stephen will say the same thing. Now back to Acts 7:13:

Acts 7:13-16

"And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, And were carried over into Sychem (in Israel), and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

Now this is interesting because this is the very same burial site that is a holy site in Israel today for the Moslems as well as the Jews. And it's the very same burial cave where a Jewish doctor a few months back killed all of the Moslems in their time of prayer. It's the burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Rebecca and others. Abraham bought it from the Canaanites and Jacob had to pay for it again, but nevertheless, this is the same burial place that is still held in reverence by the Jews and the Moslems. Now verse 17:

Acts 7:17,18

"But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.
I trust you will see what The Book says, but also what it doesn't say. We hope you learn to enjoy this Book. Someday we will stand before The Lord and be judged on this Book, and nothing else. So that is why it behooves us to know what The Book says, and know where to find the places pertaining to your Salvation. Now Acts 7:

Acts 7:19

"The same (the new Pharaoh) dealt subtilly with our kindred (the Children of Israel), and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live."

Again I'm going to hammer home what I've been trying to teach for the last 6 or 7 Chapters - that it is all Jewish. Nothing in these chapters deals with the Gentiles except, of course, Egypt, and you certainly don't won't to align yourself with Egypt. But here Stephen is addressing the Nation of Israel. Now verse 20:

Acts 7:20

"In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair (that doesn't mean that Moses was a pretty baby, although he may have been. Moses was a special child in God's line of service. His parents took special steps to save his life), and nourished up in his father's house three months:"

In Acts Chapter 7, we pick up details that are left out in the Genesis and Exodus account. There are many in just this one Chapter.

Acts 7:21,22

"And when he was cast out (upon the river), Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son." The next verse gives us some things that the Old Testament does not.

"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (that stands to reason, being raised in the palace of the king. But Scripture gives us knowledge that Moses was the top man in Egypt under the King. He was highly educated and he had a lot of power), and was mighty in words and in deeds."

Then we have the breakdown in Moses' life that is not in the Old Testament. It was in periods of forty: forty years in Pharaoh's palace; forty years on the back side of the desert herding sheep; and forty years leading the Children of Israel.
Acts 7:23

"And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel."

This is the first time Moses will approach the Children of Israel as their deliverer. God did not specifically instruct him here, but Moses, using his own position and power, by faith, knew that Israel had to be taken out of Egypt.

Acts 7:24,25

"And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them:..."

When Moses went out as the second man in Egypt, with all the power and wisdom that he had, he honestly thought he was going to lead the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. He supposed they would have understood that God, by using him, would deliver them. What's the rest of the verse say? "...but they understood not."

Now do you see what a parallel you have when Christ came to the Nation of Israel the first time? He came and presented Himself as their Messiah and King, but they never comprehended Who He was. Only a few did. Remember, Stephen's whole purpose of this sermon is to bring the Nation of Israel to the knowledge that the One they had killed was The King. This is the whole premise of the early Chapters of Acts. Yes, they killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead, and He can still be their King if they will just believe it and repent of that awful deed. Peter, in Chapters 2 and 3, states it plainly. "You killed Him! You murdered Him!" And Stephen is going to make the same accusation. Stephen is laying the groundwork for this conclusion: "Why do you always have to have the second offer." Joseph showed it. Moses is showing it. Christ has already accomplished it. Now you'll have to wait until He comes the second time. Remember Moses had hoped the children of Israel would have understood in verse 25, but they didn't.

Acts 7:26,27

"And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, `Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?'"

"But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying (this is exactly what they said to Christ), `Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?'" And Stephen is driving
this point home. Over the years I've said Stephen is sort of putting the dagger into the heart of the nation, twisting it and making them squirm.

**Acts 7:28-30**

"Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons (here is another time element), And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush."

You all know the story of Moses and the burning bush. How God sent him back to Egypt and his confrontations with Pharaoh. Stephen is rehearsing it with the Nation of Israel's religious leaders. Let's go to the end of Stephen's sermon. Verse 47:

**Acts 7:47-50**

"But Solomon built him (The Lord) an house (the first Temple)," See how Stephen is coming up through Israel's history.

"Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in Temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?"

Stephen is emphasizing the fact that this Messiah that they crucified was the promised Son of God, The King of Israel, The Son of David. All of these terms filled the Old Testament promises.

**Acts 7:51**

"Ye stiffnecked (stubborn) and uncircumcised (not in the flesh, they certainly kept that. But what were they lacking?) in heart..." Which is that part of Salvation in any dispensation. That when a person came to believe, then God exercises a spiritual circumcision. And Israel knew nothing of that. They knew the physical, they kept that to the last jot and tittle. Reading again:

**Acts 7:51,52**

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye."

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?..."
What's that in reference to? The Old Testament economy. The prophets would come, even as Jesus put it in the parable of the vineyard and husbandman. The husbandman planted a large vineyard and went into a far country, and as the fruit was about ready for harvest he sent servants back to his vineyard. And what did they do with the servants (Prophets)? They killed them. And then he sent his son, saying surely they won't kill him. But they killed the son also (Christ). Stephen is showing them the same thing. The prophets came to their forefathers and they killed them. Remember Jeremiah was thrown into one of the dankest, deepest, wettest dungeons in Jerusalem, because the Nation of Israel didn't like what he was prophesying about them. The same thing may happen here in America. When people don't like what they hear they get rather nasty. Now finishing the verse:

Acts 7:52-55

"Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One (Stephen is speaking mainly to the religious leaders of Israel); of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:" Now that's not very kind is it? But that's what Israel was guilty of. They had killed their Messiah.

"Who have received the Law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." What did they do with it? They didn't keep it. Now verse 54, Stephen has been building his case against the Nation, and God is convicting their hearts.

"When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." People never get more vicious than in the name of religion. These are religious Jews, civilized people, but because of their religion, they suddenly lose it all. They went berserk because of their convictions.

"But he (Stephen), being full of the Holy ghost (and here is another place we have all three Persons of the Godhead in one verse), looked steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Usually, we think of Christ seated at the Father's right hand, after His ascension. And Scripture says so. But here Jesus is standing. Most people never catch that, but these Jewish religious leaders did. Stephen saw Him standing rather than sitting.

Acts 7:56-58

"And said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.'" At that statement: "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord. And cast him out of the city, and stoned him:..."
Now just think. Why was Jesus standing at this point, rather than sitting as all the rest of Scriptures say? In Acts Chapter 3, Israel could still have their King and Kingdom if they would only believe. Christ is alive! God has raised Him from the dead and called Him back to Heaven. But He is ready to return and set up the Kingdom. Of course the Tribulation would have to run its course.

Acts 3:19,20

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (that's the fulfilling of the Covenant promises and Kingdom promise); And he (God) shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:"

Israel was aware of what Peter and the rest of the disciples had been preaching, that they killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead, and He can still be our King because He's alive. Now Acts Chapter 7. In verses 55 and 56 we see Jesus standing on the right hand of God. Turn to Psalms Chapters 67 and 68. I don't know if this is the exact answer for this, but it's the one that I'm comfortable with. Something was attracted to the fact of Stephen seeing Jesus standing that aroused the Jews' anger. The religious leaders knew their Old Testament, And I think this was the cause.

Psalms 67:1-7

"GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth, Selah." (what's this referring to? The Kingdom, when He would come and set up His Kingdom) Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Now there is the setting of the promises of the Kingdom, when He would yet be their King.

Psalms 68:1,2

"LET God (remember God The Son is just as much God The Father, and God The Spirit) arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." This struck those Jews Stephen was preaching to. Stephen was saying that He had arisen from His seated position, and He was ready to come.

"As smoke is driven away, so drive them away (His enemies): as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" Was Israel ready for that?
No, and they knew they weren't. So rather than bring down conviction and a Godly fear, it aroused their anger. Back to Acts 7. They weren't ready for Christ to return. They were too happy with their own religion.

Acts 7:58

"And cast him out of the city, and stoned him (under Roman government there was no way a Jew could get away with stoning a Gentile. But this was a Jewish situation and the Romans let the Jews pretty much handle their own religious matters. Jews were permitted to kill their own in the name of religion): and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

Now remember as we have come up through the Book of Acts it's been Jewish, Jewish, Jewish. But here at the stoning of Stephen, Israel has come to the crescendo point of her rejection. We'll not have this Man rule over us. So as they reach their pinnacle of rejection, we see God introduce Paul to the scene. The man who will now go to the Gentiles, without benefit of Israel. The man who will make all the difference to the rest of the world. A few years ago even one of our news magazines gave the Apostle Paul credit for the influence that he had upon the world. And for being the one that introduced Christianity. Normally everyone will say Jesus The Christ introduced Christianity. Always remember that Jesus is the very foundation and basis of it, but it was the Apostle Paul who took it out to the Gentile world. Now, as Saul is introduced, he's not in a very good light is he? He is standing there holding the garments of those that are throwing the stones.

Acts 7:59,60

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit.' And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Acts 8:1

"AND Saul was consenting unto his death...." He was more than consenting, he was driving it. Let's go to the Book of Galatians to shed some light on that.

Galatians 1:13

"For ye have heard of my conversation (my lifestyle) in time past in the Jews religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it." That was the Jewish assembly there at Jerusalem. Saul wasn't just a casual onlooker here at Stephen's stoning. Rather he was the leader of it. And he hated anything concerning
Jesus of Nazareth. Why? Because he was a good religious Pharisee, and thought Jesus was an impostor.
LESSON THREE * PART III

ACTS CHAPTERS 6, 7 & 8

Now back to Acts Chapter 8, where we left off in the last lesson. For some time, I never liked to teach the Book of Acts. But now I just love to. The Book of Acts just comes alive when you are able to see that God was still dealing with the Nation of Israel during these early Chapters, and how Israel rejected the message. Then God in so many words said, "I'll just turn to the Gentiles without you." That is exactly what happened. In Chapter 8 we are still pretty much on Jewish ground. In the last lesson we have just seen the stoning of Stephen, and Saul of Tarsus consenting unto his death. He was actually promoting and leading the assault on these early Jewish believers. So let's begin with verse 1:

Acts 8:1

"AND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church (assembly of Jewish believers) which was at Jerusalem; and they were all (I'm a stickler for every word of Scripture and when it says they were all scattered, I'm sure that every Jew who had embraced Christ as The Messiah is in that word `all') scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria except the apostles."

Now analyze that verse for a moment, exactly as it is. I'm not going to try to be a theologian or do like some rabbi's do with the Old Testament, trying to think of a million ways I can interpret it. But rather, I'm just going to take it for what it says. Every believing Jew now had been scattered out of Jerusalem because they had to run for their life or else Saul would have had them. And yet the very leaders of those Jewish believers sat tight. I've got another question. Remember we are about seven years after Pentecost, and according to Matthew 28:19, where should these Twelve men have been by now? They should have covered the whole Roman empire in those seven years. Even in the transportation of that day they could have covered a good portion of the then-known world. But where do we find them? Having never left Jerusalem. Are they derelict in their duties? No. They knew they could not go beyond the borders of Israel until Israel had her King. They still had that hope that Israel would yet repent of their national sin of having crucified their Messiah, and then Christ could return and set up the Kingdom. Zechariah 8 is as clearly put as any Scripture in the Old Testament regarding what Israel was to have done, getting the message of Salvation to the Gentile world.

Zechariah 8:20
"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass (it hadn't happened at this time because they hadn't had the Kingdom yet. Oh, they had the glory of Solomon and David but they hadn't had what God had been promising, so it's still future), that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities;"

Zechariah 8:21-23

"And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations (we're dealing here with Gentiles) shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.'"'Now verse 23, and you don't have to twist this and analyze it.

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass (which days? When Christ is ruling in Jerusalem. His Kingdom is set up) that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, 'We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.'"

And indeed He will be. And this was the prospect for the Nation of Israel. Resuming Acts Chapter 8, we find then these Twelve men were not derelict in their duties, they know their role, and they know they cannot have a ministry to the Gentiles until Israel has come to recognize that the One they crucified was their Messiah. Then He could have returned and set up His Kingdom. I've always used this analogy. You go to an airport to meet a loved one, but the announcement comes that the flight is late. So you're tempted to go somewhere else for awhile. But what's uppermost in your thinking? "Just as sure as I do the plane will come in and I won't be here to meet it." I think that's the thinking of the Twelve. They weren't about to leave Jerusalem because they knew that Christ would return to the Mount of Olives from where He had left them just as the angel had told them in Acts Chapter 1. And they were going to be there when this happened. So in spite of all the pressure of persecution that old Saul of Tarsus could bring to bear, those Twelve men sat tight. They're still in Jerusalem seven years after Pentecost. Turn to Acts Chapter 11 and let the Scripture speak for itself.

Acts 11:19

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word (Old Testament) to none but unto the Jews only."
That's what The Book says plainly. They knew they couldn't minister to Gentiles, the Old Testament Scriptures wouldn't permit that until the whole nation was a Kingdom of priests. So they didn't go to the Gentiles, they didn't go down into Egypt or over to Greece, (if they did it was to Jews). They were still preaching to Jews only. Remember the Old Testament was used to prove that the One that Israel crucified was The Christ. That was the Jewish message all the way through here. Now how in the world can you put Gentiles into anything in that first few years, when the Scriptures says they preached to none but Jew only. Back to Acts Chapter 8, verse 2:

Acts 8:2,3

"And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul (you will see more and more of him now), he made havoc of the church (this assembly of Jewish believers), entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."

Saul was ruthless in the name of religion. He is a religious Jew, and everything he does he thinks he is doing it for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Let's look at Acts Chapter 26. And remember there are three accounts of the conversion of Saul in the Book of Acts. Now that tells me that three is an important number all through Scripture. And here this sort of puts the capstone on it. Here Paul is talking to King Agrippa in particular.

Acts 26:9,10

"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He hated that Name. Because he thought it was making inroads into Judaism, and it was.

"Which thing I also did in Jerusalem (see how that fits with Acts 8:1?): and many of the saints (now those are Jewish saints) did I shut up in prison, having received authority from (not from Rome but rather) the chief priests;..."

Rome let the Jews take care of their religious Laws, even Laws concerning death sentences. You may ask, "How about Christ's death?" Well, prophecy said that Jew and Gentile would both be responsible for that. Secondly, all Scripture intimated a lifting up, a Crucifixion. Remember the serpent in the wilderness? What did Jesus say in John Chapter 3?

John 3:14
"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:"

So there had to be that kind of death. Stoning would not have fulfilled those prophecies. Now Paul continues on in the first person as the Apostle, he is reflecting back. Now reading verse 10 again.

Acts 26:10

Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priest; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them"

They actually killed some of these Jewish believers in the name of religion. If Rome was so benevolent toward the Jewish religion, then why did they turn so vehemently against Christianity? Here they put up with the Jewish religion until 70 A.D., with Rome never giving them opposition. But as soon as Christianity made itself known, then Rome did everything it could to stamp it out. And here is the reason. Rome, pagan as it was, had respect for any ancient religion, whether their own or someone else's. And in the eyes of Rome you see, Judaism was as ancient as you could get it. But when Christianity came on the scene, that wasn't anything ancient, that was something new, so that they couldn't go for it. But I want you to realize that Paul makes it plain that he voted to have these Jewish believers, not just thrown in prison but put to death.

Now that reminds me of something that came up in a class last night. Was Paul ever married? I think he was, even though the Scripture never gives any indication. But does Peter ever talk about his wife and family? We know he had a wife because of his mother-in-law. But the main reason I think Paul was married and must have had children was that in order for him to vote here in Chapter 26, he must have been a member of the Sanhedrin. And in order to be a member of the Sanhedrin, what was one of the qualifications? You had to be a husband and a father. Because if you weren't a husband and father how could you pass judgment on what parents had to deal with? In the Book of Philippians we know Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee of the Tribe of Benjamin. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin, but what happened to his wife and family? Who knows? The Scripture is silent. Now back to Acts Chapter 8.

Acts 8:4

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." Now don't forget in Acts 11:19, they preached to none but Jew only.
Now we are going to see a change of venue. Philip now goes to Samaria. You want to remember that Israel is a small country where everything is close. Samaria is only a few miles due north of Jerusalem. So let's look at verse 5:

**Acts 8:5**

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria (that's north of Jerusalem), and preached Christ unto them."

Now let me show you a comparison. Look at I Corinthians, and see how Paul puts it. And this is just for comparison sake. So that we don't put them both into the same kettle. It just won't mix. Philip goes down to Samaria and he preached Christ.

**I Corinthians 1:17,18**

"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel:... For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

**I Corinthians 1:23**

"But we preach Christ (notice Paul doesn't stop at 'Christ' like Philip did. Paul continues with) crucified,..."

Now can you see the difference? Philip goes to Samaria and preaches Christ. But for Salvation he doesn't preach Christ crucified. The Jewish message has been from Pentecost on that Jesus was The Christ. Remember all the references I have given you? Peter's confession back in Matthew 16:

**Matthew 16:15,16**

"He saith unto them, 'But whom say ye that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art The Christ, the Son of the living God.'" And then Martha at Lazarus' death in the Book of John Chapter 11:

**John 11:25-27**

"Jesus said unto her, 'I am the Resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.' She saith unto him, 'Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art The Christ the Son of God,...'"
There was never any mention of death, burial, and Resurrection in any of these confessions of faith. And then we have the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts Chapter 8:

Acts 8:37

"And Philip said, `If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest (be water baptized).' And he answered and said, `I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'"

And we will see Saul of Tarsus at his conversion on the road to Damascus, he is going to go into the synagogue after his conversion and preach, but he's not going to preach Christ crucified, but rather the following:

Acts 9:20

"And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."

Now can you see the difference? Oh, it's all the difference in the world. Remember faith in our Lord's death, burial and Resurrection for Salvation had been kept secret, until He revealed it to Paul in Arabia a short time later. Now back to Acts Chapter 8: So we see Philip in Samaria, preaching Christ unto them. In other words, that He is The Christ, their Messiah.

Acts 8:6

"And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." So you see nothing has changed? No! Miracles are still used to convince the people, Jesus and the Twelve did the same thing. Remember in I Corinthians 1:22:

I Corinthians 1:22

"For the Jews require a sign,..."

And Samaritans are basically more Jew than Gentile. They were half-breeds. They see the miracles and pay attention to Philip.

Acts 8:7

"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed."

Here's something for you to think about. I don't set these things in concrete. But someone sent me some information the other day about exorcism, casting out demons.
I'm not comfortable with it. The reason I'm not comfortable with it is because the Apostle Paul never once gives the Grace-age believer any instruction in dealing with demon possession. That's just something for you to think about. My own personal belief is that the person must need Salvation, and if we can present them with the plan of Salvation and see them genuinely saved, then I think that will take care of their demon possession. But here Philip has that same power that Jesus had in His earthly ministry.

Acts 8:8-10

"And there was great joy in that city." The next verse starts with "But." You notice that when everything starts going well, the devil comes in and there is a flip side. We just can't escape it. He'll never let us get away with good things very long.

"But there was a certain man called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria giving out that himself was some great one:" Because of the miracles he could perform.

"To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, `This man is the great power of God.'"

Was he? No, but rather the power of Satan. Now never lose sight that this is not new. Remember when Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh, and they did as God instructed. And when they threw their rod on the ground it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh's magicians did the same thing. Fortunately the one serpent from Aaron's rod swallowed up the other serpents. Which shows us and them that God's power is greater than Satan's. But listen, don't you ever sell Satan short. I can remember missionaries coming back from some of the dark uncivilized tribes of this world back when I was just a kid. And they would rehearse the power of some of those witch doctors and they had great power. It wasn't a gimmick. It was Satanic. And don't ever sell it short. And so it was the same way here. Old Simon was performing miracles, and he had the people confused thinking he was some great one. But it wasn't the power of God, but rather the power of Satan. Read on:

Acts 8:11,12

"And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God,..."

Some people will question what the difference is between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven? The Kingdom of God is that whole sphere of God's
influence, which is to the very outer reaches of space, all of Heaven and all of earth. The Kingdom of Heaven is that sphere of influence concerning the earthly Kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven is within the Kingdom of God like Oklahoma is within the United States of America.
LESSON THREE * PART IV

ACTS CHAPTERS 6,7 & 8

Let's pick up in Acts Chapter 8. We had been introduced to Simon the sorcerer, who had been bewitching the Samaritans. Remember he was using Satanic power to accomplish that. Now verse 12:

Acts 8:12

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

Does Philip or any of these people say anything about our Lord's death, burial and Resurrection which is the very core of our Gospel. Our Gospel is that we have to believe that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose from the dead. Philip doesn't mention that. He was preaching that Jesus was The Christ, The Messiah, The Son of the living God. And then they were baptized. John the Baptist started with, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, repent and be baptized." That was the Jewish message. It was tied to it. I would be the last one to say you can separate it back there in that economy. Today I maintain that baptism has no part in Salvation. It has to be the finished work of the Cross plus nothing. Otherwise we are telling God, "You didn't quite finish it. I have to complete it with my baptism." So here is where we have to be so careful. When someone questions my stand on baptism, I tell them,"Don't ever make it part of your Salvation, because then you are adding to the finished work of the Cross. We rest totally on what Christ accomplished on our behalf." But here in this passage, this is not the message yet. That revelation hasn't been revealed.

Acts 8:13

"Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptized (Simon went the whole nine yards; he professed believing; evidently did his repenting, and was baptized) he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."

What is Simon majoring on? Signs and miracles. What's he minoring on? The Person of Christ. Our priorities have to be based on Scripture. But since that had been Simon's trade, it was right down his alley to have signs and miracles. He jumped on that bandwagon and said, "Hooray, this is my kind of thing!" But was Simon a true believer? No! He's a fake. He's a counterfeit. Now read on:

Acts 8:14-17
"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem (that would be the Twelve. This Philip is one of the seven if I understand Scripture correctly) heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:" James is dead already because as a rule it was always Peter, James and John.

"Who (Peter and John), when they were come down, prayed for them (these Samaritan believers), that they might receive the Holy Ghost."

"(For as yet [in spite of all of the success of Philip's preaching] he [The Holy Spirit] was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)" Why aren't they given the Holy Spirit? God had His reasons. Let's look at verse 17:

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

Amazing isn't it? Why did God withhold the Holy Spirit from these baptized Samaritans believers until Peter and John came down? Go to John's Gospel, Chapter 4. Here we have the account of Jesus and the woman at the well, and you all know the story:

**John 4:15-20**

"The woman saith unto him, `Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.' Jesus saith unto her, `Go, call thy husband, and come hither.' The woman answered and said, `I have no husband.' Jesus said unto her, `Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband:' (Sounds familiar doesn't it?) in that saidst thou truly. `The woman saith unto him, `Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

We've got to go back into Israel's history, when the Kingdom was divided under Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The Temple was in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and it carried on as usual. So what did the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom set up? A secondary temple worship. They had their own counterfeit as it were. The presence of God wasn't in it. It was another man-made religion. They didn't realize that God was dealing with Israel at the Temple in Jerusalem. Now I need to make another point as we go along. All through Israel's religious history, Jerusalem is the headquarters of God's operation. For the New Testament Church there is no earthly headquarters. That's the vast difference. The Church today is headquartered not on earth, but in Heaven! And even though Antioch was more or less the fountainhead of where the Gospel went out to Gentiles, yet the Scriptures never place Antioch as the
headquarters of the New Testament Church. Nor is Jerusalem. There is no headquarters of the New Testament Church.

But under Judaism, Jerusalem is understood that that is where Christ dealt with His people. But the Samaritans said, "What's the difference?" Now with that kind of historic mentality what did God have to show these Samaritan believers? That Jerusalem was the headquarters of God dealing with the Nation of Israel. The Samaritan believers were certainly saved by the preaching of Philip, yet they did not get the full frosting on the cake until representatives of Jerusalem (Peter and John) came and manifested their divine office. By the laying on of hands, they received the Holy Spirit. What did that tell the Samaritans? Jerusalem is where we have to worship, not Samaria. Now back to Acts Chapter 8 again. Old Simon is seeing all of this, and he is the curious one.

Acts 8:18

"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given (and remember under this economy when the Holy Spirit came down there was visible evidence of it), he offered them money,"

Doesn't that show where his heart is? He has been gaining wealth for years in performing the miraculous. But now he sees something that was even better than what he had been able to do. It had more power. Simon wants to buy into this. Now here is where you have every right to discern the spiritual condition of this man Simon. As a true believer would he make a statement like that? No way! But he's not. Oh he made a profession, but it was as empty as a bucket. It had absolutely nothing that was life-changing. He had even gone through baptism. Does that ring a bell? We've got millions doing it all time. They go through the process, they get baptized, they join the church, and they are as lost as ever. Why? Because there hasn't been a change of heart.

Acts 8:19-21

"Saying, 'Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.'" Simon wasn't concerned about the Spiritual aspect of the Holy Spirit. All he could see was the money he could reap. Peter sees right through Simon.

"But Peter said unto him, 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.'" They're both going down the tube, not just the money, but Simon too!
"Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter (do you see what that says? Even though it says in verse 13 that he believed, yet Peter brings us to the truth of the matter. It wasn't any real belief, he was a fake. He was in it strictly for what he could get out of it): for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."

Let's go to Romans Chapter 10. Recently, we taught in this Chapter, and I came away just knowing that hearts were really touched by the Gospel. These are verses that I think every servant of God uses when dealing with someone in the area of Salvation.

**Romans 10:9**

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe (where?) in thine heart (not just in the head) that God hath raised him from the dead (now what does that imply? He died, was buried and rose from the dead. If you believe that with all your heart), thou shalt be saved." That's the Gospel by which we are saved.

Not if, maybe, or hope so, but when we believe that God promised it as a fact. Thou shalt be saved. And that's a promise. What does God expect us to do with promises? Rest on them. Not doubt them nor wonder. But we have every right to say, "God, that's what you told me, and I believe it." God calls that faith. This is one place where we can hold God accountable, if I may put it that way. Because He said it we can hold Him accountable.

**Romans 10:10a**

"For with the heart (not with the head; not with the mind) man (what?) believeth unto righteousness;..."

Now do you see a lot of things that people think should be in there but are not? Paul doesn't even allude here to some of the things here in the Book of Acts. But all he says is that if we believe with all our heart that God in Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead, we shall be saved. That's a promise, but it has to be in the heart. Now back to Acts. Simon didn't believe in his heart. He just saw what was to be gained materially and said, "I want that." Read on. In verse 22 Peter says to Simon:

**Acts 8:22**

"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."
Scripture doesn't give the slightest hint that Simon ever changed his mind. We read a book recently saying Simon probably was the promoter of what was later called Gnosticism - a counterfeit of Christianity. He went from Samaria, according to some archaeological and historical findings, and became an enemy of the Gospel. I believe it as he was Satanically endowed. Peter says in Verse 23:

**Acts 8:23**

"For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."

Is that the description of a believer? No way. Salvation breaks the bond of iniquity. Salvation breaks those chains of Satan. Salvation sets us free! I often tell my classes that back in the sixties during the hippie movement, they thought they were free. They thought their lifestyle had broken all bonds of social behavior and they could do as they pleased. Those people weren't free. They were in the very bonds of Satan himself. They were bound. But, the believer is truly set free. All those shackles are broken by the power of God. But Simon couldn't believe. He only saw the material.

**Acts 8:24a**

"Then answered Simon, and said, `Pray ye to the Lord for me,...'"

Does that work? No way. Let's go back to Romans 10. Over the years I believe that God has given the majority of my teaching for the benefit of the believers. But that doesn't mean we don't recognize there are many lost people that we touch, and we've seen a lot of people come to know The Lord. I know I don't express a lot of evangelistic output in my teaching, and I am the first to admit it. That might be a failure on my part, but here it is in Romans 10:

**Romans 10:11,12**

"For the Scripture saith (no one else but The Word, saith), `Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed (he brings in this which got Paul in trouble with the Jews). For there is no difference between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all (not in a blanket effect, but to whom?) that call upon him.'"

Then you come to that great verse 13. Here, I'm reminded of a lady in Minnesota who years ago, when we brought her through all these verses down to verse 13, through her tears said, "I never saw this verse before." She claimed to be a Sunday School teacher for years. But see, here's the capstone of the whole thing; when we believe what The Bible says about ourselves, that we're sinners. **Romans 3:23**, "For all have sinned..." Being sons of Adam. When we take that verse by faith that God has called
me a sinner, then I can believe that Christ died for my sin. He died in my place, and God expects us to believe it and recognize it verbally. You don't have to shout it to a crowd or shout it from a housetop. But even in the privacy of your own prayer closet, or driving down a road or washing dishes in the sink. You verbally say, "Lord, I'm a sinner. Save me because I believe that you have done everything that needs to be done." That's what verse 13 means.

**Romans 10:13**

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord (and what's the promise? That person) shall be saved."

I can't understand it. I don't think that you can. But that's what The Book says. That if we call upon him, we shall be saved. I've always given the old, simple, childlike illustration of a swimming pool on a hot summer afternoon. The kids are screaming and laughing and having a ball. There's so many heads in there that you can't see one from the other. But a lifeguard who knows what he or she is doing, even though they may be carrying on a conversation with some one, what is their ear constantly trained for? That feeble cry, "Help." And then Bingo, that lifeguard is in the water saving that child. This is a perfect picture of God. He is constantly listening for the feeble call of a sinner who says, "I am wanting to be saved." And the second that God hears that cry, He's there. That's what Salvation is all about. And as I left that lady, I told her, "Now tomorrow, Satan is going to come back and cast doubt, and make you say, 'Now did anything really happen?' And you come right back and open your Bible to Romans 10:13 and you again, verbally, just say out loud, 'God you promised it.'" That's what faith is all about. God promised and I did what He said to do. I called upon Him, believing the Gospel. Now I want the assurance that it is true.

I've had so many people long after the fact tell me, "This is what I did, and what a difference." I've always told my class, if you have any doubt about your Salvation, drop to your knees and just say, "Lord, if I'm not truly saved, I want you to save me right now." Don't go through life doubting. Am I going to make it? Am I alright? The Scripture says, "Make your calling and election sure" And that's one way of doing it. Briefly, let's go to Acts Chapter 8:

**Acts 8:25**

"And they (Peter and John), when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord (where did they go?), returned to Jerusalem,..."

They didn't keep on going because they knew they had no ministry to Gentiles until Israel had The King and the Kingdom, so they went back to Jerusalem.