It is always so good to hear words of encouragement from our television audience, and the comments that you are learning. And as you know, the only reason I teach is to help you to enjoy your Bible. So let's pick up again in Acts Chapter 8. In the last lesson we found Philip in Samaria preaching the Gospel. This is not the Gospel of Grace that you and I enjoy today, it had not been revealed. We have so many people who are now beginning to realize that these two Gospel's are not one and the same as many people teach. The Gospel of the Kingdom, believing that Jesus was The Christ, repentance and baptism was going to the Nation of Israel by way of Jesus and the Twelve. And now Philip was continuing it. The reason I stand on that premise is we can find no mention of Salvation by the finished work of the Cross. There is no mention of believing in His death, burial and Resurrection for Salvation as proclaimed by the Apostle Paul in this Age of Grace. But they are still emphasizing that the One they crucified was indeed The Christ, and always watch for that. Always pay attention to what is said, not what you think they might have said.

In the last lesson we covered old Simon who made a non-real profession of faith. It was a counterfeit and fake. But for those who had truly believed Philip's message that Jesus was The Christ, it took the laying on of hands of Peter and John before these believers received the Holy Spirit. This was a slight departure from what had taken place before, but as we emphasized that was to show the Samaritans that the authority rested in Jerusalem in the Twelve and nowhere else. In verse 25 after Peter and John have seen these Samaritans respond, you would think they would have said, "Now it's time for us to spread out and go across the Roman Empire." But do they? If they were carrying out what we call the great commission, at least after this experience, you would think they would have taken off for Egypt, and Greece and all points outside of Israel. But this is not the case. They go back to Jerusalem.

Acts 8:25

"And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." That is as they returned to Jerusalem. Now we arrive where Philip will be supernaturally transported from the area of Samaria and Jerusalem down into the area of Gaza.
Acts 8:26

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, ‘Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.’" Gaza is about fifty miles southwest of Jerusalem, near the Mediterranean Sea. It was the normal trade route into Egypt. Philip's instructed by the Lord to go there.

Acts 8:27

"And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia (I have always taught that this man was an Ethiopian proselyte, however these nations would use gifted and talented men especially from Israel, so he could very well have been a Jew. For example, Daniel was the second man in Babylon, and Joseph was the second man in Egypt. Even today in America Jews are in key positions of government. And where could a better qualified person be found to keep the treasury of a nation than a Jew? They have a natural knack for business, money and investment, so he very likely was a Jew. If he wasn't a Jew then he had to be a proselyte because we see), an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship." The Temple is still in operation. The Law had not been set aside. We are only about seven years after the Cross, about 36 A.D. The Temple is not destroyed until about 70 A.D. So this gentleman has been to worship and is on his way back home.

Acts 8:28-31a

"Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet." We know from the verses that he is reading Isaiah Chapter 53, which is still an appropriate portion of Scripture for approaching Jews about the finished work of Christ and His First Advent and so forth.

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, ‘Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.’" As I reflect on everyday events in our own day and time, as well as the events in Scripture. I'm always made aware of the Sovereignty of God. God is Sovereign and He is in control of every detail that He wants to control. Now you see God has an intrinsic interest in this situation, and so the Holy Spirit directs Philip to this particular person. Now verse 30:

"And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, ‘Understandest thou what thou readest?’"

"And he said, ‘How can I,...’"
That hasn't changed. I've maintained over the years that God did not leave His Word under the control or in the hands of angels. He did not leave it in the control of highly educated seminarians, but rather God has placed his Word with the leading of the Holy Spirit into the hands of every person that wants to handle it. And for those who are going to be made aware of the plan of Salvation, God uses common ordinary people. Over the years I've been watching and listening, and I only know one or two people who have claimed to come to a knowledge of the plan of Salvation by themselves, by simply reading The Bible. But usually without exception, it normally takes a human instrument to lead someone to a knowledge of Salvation. That is the case here in this verse. Philip is that human instrument. Now here the Holy Spirit is evident, but the Holy Spirit did not choose to show this Ethiopian the plan of Salvation without using the human instrument. Always remember that, but also remember that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. And here we have it. The eunuch is reading Isaiah, but he can't understand it. But Philip is now being used to explain Scriptures. That is where you and I are to come in even today, we must always be ready to explain the Scriptures to someone who is interested and is seeking. Verse 31:

Acts 8:31-34

"And he said, `How can I, except some man should guide me?' And he desired Philip that he would come and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, `He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:'" Now that is Isaiah 53 plain and simple. Read on.

"In his humiliation his judgment was taken away (His authority, and of course it's in reference to Him being crucified); and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. (He was put to death). And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, `I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?'"

They ask the same question today. I remember a gentlemen I led to the Lord several years ago, and that was the first question he asked as we opened our conversation, "Who in the world is Jesus Christ?" Now we think that's a terrible question. No, it isn't. I wish more people would ask, "Who is He?" Why do we in the 1990's still maintain that the Person Who died 2,000 years ago has everything to do with us? A lot of people don't know. But they have to be brought to the place of understanding that He wasn't just a prophet, or just another individual, or just a martyr. He was the Creator God. He was the One Who alone could purchase man's Salvation and people have to be made aware of that.
Acts 8:35

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

Remember the New Testament isn't written yet. Philip couldn't read to him out of Romans like we would have done. Philip couldn't even take him to Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. These books haven't been written yet and so the only thing that Philip could use was the Old Testament. And so from the Old Testament he preached unto him Jesus. I'm a stickler for what The Book says and what it doesn't say. And he does not preach unto him Jesus crucified and resurrected from the dead. It doesn't say that.

Acts 8:36

"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?'"

Now from that you can gather what Philip had been telling him? That Isaiah 53 was speaking of Jesus, Who had just a few years ago, walked those three years in Palestine; had been put to death; had been raised from the dead and God was still ready to let Him be the King of Israel. But Israel's responsibility now, under the Law, was to repent, especially of that sin of Crucifixion, that was the biggest one. And they were to prove that repentance with water baptism. This is why after Philip has explained all of this to the eunuch, that the eunuch says, "Look, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Now, look what Philip says in verse 37:

Acts 8:37

"And Philip said, `If thou believest (how?) with all thine heart, thou mayest.'"

Remember the situation up in Samaria with Simon. He believed but not with his heart. He was just believing with the head because he could see the material gain. But here again the Scripture makes it so plain, and as Paul does in Romans 10 that we have to believe with our whole being. Our innermost being - the heart. And it's always been that way. I can always take people back to Cain and Abel. They were both, I suppose of the same stock, and they probably had, more or less, the same values. And they had both come to realize they had both sinned and God had told them what to do when sin came. And so here they come - Abel with the required sacrifice, as God has instructed it, because he had faith to do what God said to do. But nevertheless, Cain came with something. He didn't just turn his back and say, "I'm not going to do anything about it." But you see, Cain's big problem was that he didn't do what God told him and so
that made him without faith. **And without faith it is impossible to please God** and there the balls starts rolling. Now, the same way here. The Ethiopian eunuch has not heard what God has required for Salvation. He has believed it with all of his heart and is not just doing like Simon and trying to make some material gain. But he is believing it. Now, let's go on:

**Acts 8:37**

"And Philip said, 'If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.' (that is be baptized) *And he answered and said* (now here is the crucial part of this whole account. What did the eunuch believe? Now watch carefully because I'm going to throw you a curve. *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Who died for me, was buried and rose from the dead.*' Does your Bible say that? Everybody likes to think it does. But he didn't mention death, burial and Resurrection. What did he believe?) *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*"

Now let's compare Scripture with Scripture. I've done all of this before but when you have new listeners coming in every week you have to do some of this again for their benefit. Let's go back to John Chapter 11. This is in Christ's earthly ministry when Lazarus died. You all know the story. Martha is weeping and is almost distraught that Jesus could have come a little sooner and spared him, but He didn't. So here is the conversation. Verse 23 of John 11:

**John 11:23-27**

"Jesus saith unto her, 'Thy brother shall rise again.' Martha saith unto him, 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' 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?'" (now look at her response and compare it with what the eunuch said in Acts Chapter 8) *She said unto him, 'Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art The Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Does she mention anything about his death, his Resurrection? Not a word! Of course that hadn't even happened yet so how could she? But nevertheless, her profession of faith was, Who Jesus was. Turn to Luke 18 for just a minute, to show why these people back here at this point in time do not attribute Salvation to death, burial and Resurrection. God has not revealed it yet! And we cannot expect anyone to believe something that God hasn't said. **Faith is taking God at His Word!** Faith can't operate until God speaks it. To illustrate, did Noah start building the ark about six months before God told him to? Did Noah assume that he was going to need an ark and start working on it? No! When did he start hewing the lumber? After God said to build the
ark. Did Moses presuppose, as he led the children of Israel out of Egypt, that they were going to have to have a system of Law and the Ten Commandments? Did Moses start laying the groundwork? No! What did he wait for? **For God to give him the instructions.** And so it's always been throughout human history that God has to speak something before that generation, or whatever, can believe it. Now let's look at Luke 18. This is shortly before Jesus' Crucifixion. They are on their way from Galilee, northern Israel, down to Jerusalem.

**Luke 18:31-34**

"Then he 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 Song of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, 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.'" You can't make it any plainer than that. But now look at the next verse:

"And they (the Twelve) understood none of these things... (they never comprehended a word of that. Why? Because they didn't want to listen? No, because God had not yet seen fit to reveal it)...and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Plain enough?

In other words, a Sovereign God does not reveal a truth until He's ready to reveal it. Look at another confession during Christ's earthly ministry. This time from Peter in Matthew 16. We've done this many time over the past few years, but for the benefit of new listeners who are probably jumping and thinking that I'm way out in left field, I have to qualify what I'm saying from the Scriptures. And again, Jesus and the Twelve are up in northern Galilee, in Caesarea Philippi, the head waters of the Jordan River. Verse 13:

**Matthew 16:13-16**

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, `Whom do men say that I the Son of man am (now, there are three accounts of this in the Gospels so this isn't a little quirk of Matthew. This is repeated in Luke and Mark and to a certain extent, even in John)?' 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.'"

Who died for me, was buried and rose from the dead? No! It doesn't say that. So what's the confession here? **Thou art The Christ, the Son of the living God.** This is
all the way through Christ's earthly ministry as far as Acts Chapter 8. We're even going to see it in Chapter 9. **Because God has not revealed the tremendous plan of Salvation based upon Grace, that Christ died for the sins of the world and that He was buried and that He rose from the dead.** (Reference I Corinthians 15:1-4)

Up till now they were to believe Who He was and that's the Gospel of the Kingdom. Now let's go back to Acts Chapter 8. Now verse 38:

**Acts 8:38,39**

"And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him (there's no room for argument. He baptized him just as John the Baptist baptized his converts). And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he (the eunuch) went on his way rejoicing."

Of course he did. He was coming back from Jerusalem steeped in religion and still wrapped in his sin. But after believing that Christ was indeed The Messiah, The King and everything associated with that First Advent, he experienced Salvation. And so he too could go on his way rejoicing, even as we saw they did up in Samaria. Verse 40 gives us a little hint of what's going to happen when the 144,000 begin their ministry during the Tribulation. They won't have to get airline tickets. I think they'll have to depend on earthly transportation, yet we know they're going to get into every tongue and tribe around the globe in less than seven years. How are they going to do it? I think by the same glorious means of transportation that Philip experienced right here. But Philip was found at Azotus. Gaza is down there at the southwest curve of the Mediterranean Sea and then about half to two thirds of the way between Gaza and Jerusalem was the city of Azotus which today we call Ashdod. Suddenly, not by walking or camel riding or any other way, Philip is transported from one place to another. And I think this is how the 144,000 men are going to cover the world in less than 7 years during the Tribulation.
LESSON ONE * PART II

ACTS 8 - ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH:

ACTS 9 - SAUL'S CONVERSION

Acts Chapter 9 is one of the most important chapters in the whole Bible. This is the big turning point in the Book of Acts. Up until now it's been all Peter and the eleven. It's been all Jewish. They are worshiping at the synagogue and Temple. These Jews that have become believers are assembled (the word in the Greek is "Ecclesia"), but all ecclesia really means is a "called-out assembly." The word is used in various ways of terminology. Stephen referred to that church which was in the wilderness. It was not a church as we understand the word `church,' but it was a "called-out assembly." It was Israel called out of Egypt and so was an ecclesia. But up in Ephesus when the mob got out of control because of Paul's preaching the Gospel and it was affecting so many of the pagans that they were beginning to throw away their idols, the silversmiths precipitated a riot and they ended up in the amphitheater and it, too, was called an ecclesia. It certainly wasn't a church or anything godly. But it was still called an ecclesia - a called-out assembly.

The same way with these believing Jews at Jerusalem. Sure they were an ecclesia. They are a called out assembly. They are called out of Judaism and they are meeting apart, but they are still under the total umbrella of Judaism. They haven't separated themselves from the Law and Temple worship, but they are assembling as believing Jews. Now it's against these believing Jews that Saul of Tarsus began his rampage when Stephen was martyred in Chapter 7. And now we find Saul not satisfied with what he had accomplished in Jerusalem and Judea. He wants to go after the believing Jews at Damascus. Now remember, Saul is doing all of this in the name of religion. He thinks he is doing his God a service by stamping out any believing in Jesus of Nazareth. That's the background.

Acts 9:1

"And Saul, yet (in other words he hadn't even stopped since Chapter 7) breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest."

The word `disciples' is simply used of believers of whatever format. These are not such as the Twelve apostles that we normally call the disciples. These were simply Jews that had embraced the Gospel of the Kingdom: that indeed Jesus was The Christ. Now let's look at verse 2:
Acts 9:2

"And he desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues (he wants official orders to go to Damascus to arrest and bring back to Jerusalem Jews who've embraced this Gospel that Jesus was The Christ), \textit{that if he found any of this way} (if he's going to go to the synagogue, what kind of people is he after? Jews!) \textit{whether they were men or women, that he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem}.

Damascus isn't all that far from Jerusalem. You go through the land of Palestine and along the Jordan River Valley and around the shores of the sea of Galilee. Then just a little way north and about 25 or 30 miles to the east of this imaginary border, there is the city of Damascus. So Saul has left Jerusalem and is impatiently making his way down to Damascus, probably on horseback.

Acts 9:3,4

"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth and he heard a voice saying unto him, \textquoteleftSaul, Saul, why persecutest thou me\textquoteleft\"

Now I can't impress enough on people that this man is totally religious. He is an absolute believer in the Old Testament. He believes in Judaism, in the Mosaic Law; he's a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and of the tribe of Benjamin. He is a Jew through and through. But he hated with a passion Jesus of Nazareth, because he felt He was an impostor Who was trying to destroy that which, to him, was his whole life. People are no different today. If they love their particular religion, they love their hierarchy and maybe they have a personal interest in someone at the top. Is someone going to come in and make snide remarks without raising their ire. No way! That's just human nature. And so Saul of Tarsus felt that Jesus was destroying the very bulwarks of Judaism and the only way he could do God a favor was to stamp it out with persecution. \textbf{He's doing it in the name of religion.} And he is fervent, sincere and devout.

Now, the Lord from Heaven has to look at this man who is like a raging bull. That's the best way I can explain the energy that he exerts to stamp out these believing Jews who have trusted Christ as their Messiah. I know that maybe I shouldn't even make the analogy, and forgive me, but if we would have been in God's place, as the Sovereign Almighty God, what would you and I have done with a man like Saul? We'd have rubbed him out and put him away. Now keep that in mind as we look at this whole situation: that the Sovereign God could have removed Saul of Tarsus and he would have been nothing but a grease spot or a memory. But God's Grace rises to the occasion. Here is the epitome, the very high point of the pouring out of God's
Grace on a sinful man. Who was fostering his rebellion and energizing this man? The devil was. Because he was not working in the will of God in thwarting everything Jesus had tried to do. It was under the Satanic power of opposition, and yet God in Grace does not wait for this man to have second thoughts, or to stop and say, "Wait a minute. Am I being overzealous?" No, Saul never thought like that. He was still intent on getting those believing Jews from Damascus. It didn't make any difference whether they were men or women or children. He would take them back to Jerusalem and commit them to prison or death.

But now, God in His Grace, stops the man in his tracks with this penetrating light from Heaven. I think it knocked him from his horse. Probably from his prostrate position on the ground he looks up, knowing that the shining light is coming from Heaven. Where does any religious person normally think of as the abode of his god? Heaven! So as Saul saw this penetrating light coming from above, I think second nature told him that his God was dealing with him (The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph).

**Acts 9:5a**

"And he said, `Who art thou Lord?'"

When we were teaching back in the Old Testament, what was the synonymous name for Lord? Jehovah! But a good Jew wouldn't even breath that word out loud. They had too much reverence for it, and so he uses the term `Lord.' But Jehovah is on his mind. That's Who his God is. Jehovah was the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And so at least mentally, Saul of Tarsus is saying, `Who are you Jehovah? Who are you Lord?'

Now look how the man must have felt when he heard the answer. Read on:

**Acts 9:5b**

"And the Lord said, I am Jesus who thou persecutest (I'm the One that you are fighting against): it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks (or against the goads)."

It's just like kicking your feet into a bunch of spikes. Every time he tried to exercise some persecution, he was the one who wound up hurting. God is showing him now, that he was fighting a losing battle. Can you put yourself in Saul's shoes? When the very One he thought he was hating; the very One he thought he had to stamp out any memory of His name; of His miracles; of His ministry; was the same Person as his Jehovah from the Old Testament! This is why I always like to teach people from Genesis on. Beginning back in Genesis Chapter 2 verse 4, all of a sudden after reading, "God did this, and God did that, and God said this," in Chapter 2 we have
the Lord God. And that was the beginning of the reference to Jehovah. God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. **And so all the way up through the Old Testament we understand that God the Son and Jehovah are One and the same Person. He became flesh by way of the virgin birth and now Jehovah's name is Jesus. They are both the same.** And now this man suddenly realizes that the One he was trying to stamp out was the same One that he worshipped. What a revelation! No wonder the man was able to go through everything he went through for the rest of his life, just flashing back to this tremendous experience. God's Grace saved him there on the spot. But he's going to suffer for it because he's caused so many of God's choice servants to suffer during the persecution. So the first thing God does is what? Strike him blind.

*Acts 9:6*

"And he trembling and astonished said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' And the Lord said unto him, 'Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.'"

See where God has Saul now? All the way up through Biblical times, through human history, what kind of men did God choose to use? The lowly. And if they began in a high position, where would He take them? To the low spot. Look at Moses. The second man in Egypt was totally educated, learned the wisdom of the Egyptians, the second man in power. God couldn't use him that way, and so providentially again, the Sovereign God had Moses end up on the back side of the desert herding sheep, of all things, where he actually became an abomination in the eyes of an Egyptian. And then after 40 years of herding those smelly sheep and no contact with big population centers, God can approach the man and say, "I'm going to send you back to Pharaoh." What was Moses' response? He said, "**Lord, I can't because I'm a nobody. I can't talk.**" But that's where God wanted him.

King Saul was a proud individual. He was the best looking young man around. He had military talent and so forth but didn't amount to a hill of beans. But who did God finally use? A little shepherd boy, David. Now, the same way with Saul of Tarsus. He was the big man in Judaism. You read in Galatians that he profited in the Jews' religion, he was in the upper echelons. God couldn't use him there. So where does He put him? On the dust on the road of Damascus, where he is now a nobody. And he has nothing to claim that he is worthy. So trembling, shaking in his boots he said, "**Lord, what would You have me to do?**" And the Lord told him to get up and go into the city. There he would be told what to do. Could the Lord have told him directly? Yes! But what does God intend to do? Use another person, Ananias, as the go-between.

*Acts 9:7-9*
"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days (that crucial time again. See how that keeps popping up in Scripture?) without sight and neither did eat nor drink."

What's happening? **Saul is going through a death, burial and Resurrection even in his own life.** He's going from the big man in Judaism to that lowly servant, which he says in Ephesians Chapter 3 "is a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." How long was Jonah in the whale's belly? Three days and nights, then he was a changed man and could go to Nineveh. Saul is now going to become Paul and he, too, is going primarily to the Gentiles. Now as Saul makes his way up to Damascus, just a little north of the Sea of Galilee, the amazing thing is that all Twelve of the original disciples were chosen within the borders of the then-known Palestine. Not one was chosen from Gentile territory. They were all commissioned while was Jesus was in His earthly ministry within the borders of Israel.

Saul is unique in more than one way. Saul, by birth was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. But as we find out later in the Book of Acts, Paul was also a Roman, by birth, by citizenship, because his father was. I'd like to point out here that Saul, or Paul as we will now know him as the Apostle, had absolutely no connection with the Twelve. Many theologians over the years have thought that Peter was remiss and got in a hurry and shouldn't have let Matthias take the place that Judas left, but should have waited for Paul. That would never have worked. Paul would never have fit in. I have read good men, highly educated theologians, who have thought that Peter was totally out in left field by not waiting for Paul to fill Judas' place. Let's go back to Acts Chapter 1. Paul had nothing to do with the Twelve. He separates himself from them. He has no connection with the Twelve, they were apostles of Israel. They were chosen within the borders of Israel. **This man is going to be the apostle of the Gentiles. And so God chooses and commissions him on Gentile ground.** He takes a man who is not just a Jew, but is also a Gentile by citizenship (he's a Roman). Acts 1 is where Peter lays out the qualifications for the man that is going to take Judas' place. And all I ask is would Saul of Tarsus ever fill the requirement? No way! Here it is.

**Acts 1:21,22**

"Wherefore of these men (the 120 gathered in the upper room) which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us (40 days after the Crucifixion), must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."
So, who had to be the one to take Judas' place? Well, it had to be someone who had been converted from John's baptism; been a follower of Jesus throughout His whole three years of ministry; had witnessed His Resurrection; had heard Him speak in those forty days before His ascension; or otherwise he wasn't qualified. Saul of Tarsus doesn't come close to any of this. He hasn't become a believer until just now. He's been an enemy of it. So he is totally separated from the Twelve. We'll probably come to this at a later time, but turn to Galatians for a moment. I've had one or two letters over the last few months that are wondering why I am not going by what Peter says. When Peter says be baptized in this particular way, or in another particular way, and Peter this and Peter that. Well, because Peter was the apostle of the Jew and Paul is the apostle of the Gentile. Paul separates himself by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Galatians Chapter 1 beginning in verse 11.

Galatians 1:11,12

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." What's he intimating? He didn't go back to Jerusalem and check with the Twelve. That would have been the logical thing to do. They had spent three years with the Lord and so that's the place to go and get instruction. "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

`Revelation' in Scripture means just what it says. God revealed directly to this man these doctrines of Grace. He wasn't taught it from the Twelve, nor from the chief priests or Rabbis. He got it from supernatural revelation from the ascended Lord in glory.

Galatians 1:13,14

"For ye have heard of my conversation (or manner of living) in times past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church (the ecclesia) of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion (he was in the hierarchy and probably on a big salary) above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

You know the Scripture hates that word `tradition.' It's going to doom more people than any one thing you can think of except maybe the word `pride.' And this is what God had to break Saul away from. The traditions of the fathers. Now verse 17:

Galatians 1:17

"Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia...."
I want you to see how Paul, as he writes his letters, disassociates himself from the Twelve, so far as their doctrines and their Gospel were concerned. Because God has revealed something to this man that no one else has heard before. I've been stressing the fact that God keeps things secret until He is ready to reveal them. That's the way to look at the things given to Paul. God saw fit to keep them secret. The Twelve couldn't comprehend it. But Paul does, and consequently, God is going to designate him as being the apostle of the Gentiles. Whereas the Twelve were apostles of Israel. Now come back to Acts Chapter 9. Let's look at verse 6 again.

Acts 9:6-11

..."Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And so the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias (keep that name up in mind); and to him said the Lord in a vision, 'Ananias,' And he said, 'Behold, I am here, Lord.' And the Lord said unto him, 'Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.'"

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; and kings, and the children of Israel.'"
LESSON ONE * PART III

ACTS 8 - ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH:

ACTS 9 - SAUL'S CONVERSION

In our last lesson in Acts Chapter 9, we talked about the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a religious Jew, who was a fanatic and a zealot. But we saw the Grace of God stop him in his tracks and save him because he had no merit whatsoever, and that's Grace. But how much does Saul know on the road to Damascus? That Christ died for his sins and that he rose from the grave for him? No! That isn't the basis yet. He has only recognized Who Jesus really was. So let's start where we left off. God is dealing with Ananias in verse 10:

Acts 9:10-14

"And there was a certain disciple (or believer) at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, 'Ananias,' And he said, 'Behold, I am here, Lord.' And the Lord said unto him, 'Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth (Saul is on communication ground now with the Lord Himself).' And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, 'Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here, he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.'" In Chapter 22, we see what kind of man Ananias really was. Paul is speaking in the first person many years after the Damascus experience, and is recounting his conversion to the multitude of Jews.

Acts 22:11,12

"And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias (the one spoken of in Chapter 9), a devout man according to the (what?) Law!...."

So what is Ananias? He is a believing but Law-keeping Jew. No one has told Ananias yet, "You're not under the Law, you're under Grace." No one has told these Jewish believers to quit Temple worship and stop legalism. They have maintained their Judaism, but they have also recognized that Jesus was The Christ. Do you see the difference? That is what we call the Gospel of the Kingdom - that Christ was the King of Israel; He was ready to give them the Kingdom, but they had to repent and be water baptized in order to be ready for that Kingdom. So Ananias is a believer that Saul was
coming after. Turn to Chapter 26. Again, Paul is rehearsing in the first person all of this. Come down to verse 9:

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 never got over it. But nevertheless, he had to recognize that this was what he had to go through before God could use him.

"Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints (these Jewish believers) did I (he takes responsibility for it himself. So he had to be a pretty big wheel in Judaism to have that kind of authority) shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death...."

They actually killed those Jewish believers as being heretics, they were offscouring of Judaism and they put them to death. And Paul takes responsibility for it. We often wonder how the Jews maintained the kind of authority that could keep their Temple going. In fact, I was reading a book just a few weeks ago, where every Jew out in dispersion would send fairly good-sized sums of money back to the Temple. The Romans never intercepted any of that. The Romans actually guaranteed safe delivery for these offerings of these Jewish people that went back to the Temple in Jerusalem. So, Rome sort of condescended to Judaism. They even gave permission to put their own people to death and that's why Paul could say that he put them in prison and voted to put them to death. Rome would never have allowed that to happen to a Gentile. But you see, they put up with Judaism. The best explanation I've read on it is that the Romans had great respect for ancient religions, including their own mythologies. And Judaism is an ancient religion.

But when Christianity made its appearance under the Roman empire, that was not an ancient religion, that was something new and so they tried every which way to stamp it out. That's why Christians came under such massive persecution under Rome. And yet the Jews didn't. But notice that Paul even recounts in his own experience how he persecuted those Jewish believers, but they were Jews still under the Law. When we get to Chapter 10 I'll show you that Peter is still a Law-keeper. But that's for another time. Let's move on. The Lord is speaking to Ananias here.

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, and kings, and the children of Israel.'"
We haven't seen that name 'Gentile' much before because it's been all Jewish. But here is the big turning point in the Book of Acts. I'm going to send him, God said, to the Gentiles. He's also going to kings and the children of Israel. Let's go on to verse 16. And if you know anything about Paul's missionary journeys you know how that man suffered. Starvation, deprivation, imprisonment, stoning, wrecked at sea, and it was all, I think, a flashback on how he himself had caused so many to suffer, for God says, in verse 16:

Acts 9:16-18

"I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake (in the ministry. And he was finally martyred because of it.)."

"And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house (the house that was of Judas,' back in verse 11) and putting his hands on him said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus (see how he's emphasizing who He is), that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost (that hadn't happened yet).' And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." Of course there's no doubt about it, he was baptized because he was still under that Jewish economy that demanded it. Now verse 19:

Acts 9:19,20

"And when he had received meat, he was strengthened, Then was Saul certain days with the disciples (these believing Jews) which were at Damascus." Now let's look at verse 20. Highlight it, or underline it, or do something with it so you won't lose it.

"Straightway (in other words, from his receiving strength, his sight and his baptism, he is now ready to get after it. Now watch the text again carefully) he preached Christ in the (marketplace? among the Gentiles? No, that's not what it says. It says he preached Christ in the) synagogues,..."

So who is he preaching to? Jews! He preached Christ to the Jews. What did he preach? That he is the Son of God, Who died for him and rose from the dead? No! What am I trying to drive home? Even Saul of Tarsus was saved under the Kingdom Gospel, believing Who Jesus was. And Who was He? The Son of God. The Messiah of Israel. The promised One out of the Old Testament as coming to the Jews under the Covenant promises. That's all he understood because that's as much as God had revealed to him this time. Remember, this man is not going to continue just preaching to the Jews in the synagogue. God's got a path for him among the Gentiles. So what is He going to have to do? He's going to have to get him out of town to some
place where he can enlighten him as to what He wants. Let's see what happened. Again, remember that verse 20 was the same confession that Peter spoke, Martha spoke and that all the others spoke, including the Ethiopian eunuch. But that's not enough now, so God's going to move him out.

**Acts 9:21a**

""But all that heard him were amazed, and said, 'Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem...'"

You see what I emphasized in the early chapters of Acts? What did they place their faith in? His Name! And what did His Name indicate? Who He was! He was The Christ, The Son of God.

**Acts 9:21b-22**

"...and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews (he isn't going to Gentiles yet) which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this (Jesus) is very Christ."

This was the whole purpose of that miraculous three years of earthly ministry, to prove to the whole Nation of Israel Who He was. And to those Jews who could believe, they had Salvation and became disciples. This is as much as even Saul knows at this time - that Jesus was The Christ. But God's got greater things for him to understand. And so God is going to have to pull him out and how does He do it? Verse 23 explains that. It is so easy to understand. God has to get Saul out of town. He could have done it like He moved Philip, but He didn't, He used circumstances. In fact when people ask me, "Well, Les, how can I know the will of God?" Do you know what my first answer is? "Circumstances." When God slams the door in your face, what are you to realize? That's not where He wants you. And every time He closes the door, He opens another one. And so you follow your circumstances, as well as the Scriptures and prayer. But God is going to move in circumstances, and that is what He is doing here. Circumstances are going to arise, and Saul is going to have to move out. And what is it? Verse 23:

**Acts 9:23-25**

"And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him." There is a conspiracy about. Not from the believing Jews, but the orthodox, the ones who were still back where Saul was before he was converted.
"But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him." Somebody let the cat out of the bag, and Saul found out about it. There's a bunch of Jews out to kill him. Those people were just as normal as we are today, What does Saul do? He makes arrangement to get out of Damascus.

"Then the disciples (those Jewish believers) took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket."

So Saul takes off, and God is going to lead him. Between verse 25 and verse 26 we've got a three-year gap in here. We have to go back to the Book of Galatians Chapter 1 to pick that up. When people have doubts or wonder about my approach to the difference between Peter and Paul, I usually ask them to read Galatians Chapters 1 and 2 carefully and slowly, and with an open mind. Don't read a commentary. Don't listen to what I say, but just read these two chapters very carefully, and if that doesn't open your mind then I don't see how anything else can. Galatians Chapter 1. Drop down to verse 16, where Paul now many years later is writing this little epistle to the Gentile believers up there in Galatia.

Galatians 1:16,17a

"To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen (Gentiles the non Jews); immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:" In other words, in Damascus after his conversion, there were several days involved, but time-wise it was short. "Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me;...."

Paul didn't go back to Jerusalem and check in with the Twelve. He didn't go back and ask Peter to fill him in regarding the three years Peter was with The Lord, or the forty days after His Resurrection. Paul didn't say, "Fill me in so I can go out and preach with some authority." He makes it so plain that he did not do that. He did not have contact with the leadership in Jerusalem.

Galatians 1:17b

"...but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

From Damascus he made his way down to, I'm sure, Mount Sinai in Arabia. The reason I think that, is because in Galatians Chapter 4, Paul is using the allegory of Ishmael and Isaac. And look at the geography that comes up in verse 25:

Galatians 4:25a

"For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia,..."
We know that Mount Sinai was the place where God gave the Law to Moses. Isn't it appropriate to feel that this is the place in Arabia that God took Saul to reveal to him the doctrines of Grace? Three years he spent in a private seminary. No one except him and the Lord so far as we know. That's a long time. But he had a lot to soak up and, consequently, from this three years of being alone with the ascended Lord, out of it comes this Apostle prepared to go to the Gentiles, not with Judaism and the Law, but with Grace. **Not with just the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus was The Christ, but with the Gospel of Grace which is that Jesus is The Christ, The Son of the living God, Who died for our sins, shed His blood, was buried, and rose from the dead.** Do you see the difference? That is all that Paul can write and talk about. I had a letter recently that asked, "**Didn't Peter ever come to understand Paul revelations; his uniqueness as an Apostle?**" Yes he did, it took a while, but come back for a moment to Peter's little epistle and I'll show you. Peter is writing this little epistle just shortly before he is martyred. This would be about 66 or 67 A.D. or about 30 years after Saul's conversion. So at least thirty years have elapsed since Peter and Paul had their meeting in Jerusalem. Let's begin at verse 15:

**II Peter 3:15a**

"**And account (understand) that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation;...**"

That's what the whole Bible is about. Beginning in Genesis, as soon as man fell, God begins to put a plan of Salvation on the human race. He's not willing that any should perish. Cain and Abel certainly didn't understand crucifixion, but Abel did what God said to do. Moses and the Law didn't understand what we call the Gospel of our Salvation that Christ died for our sins. But they did what God told them to do. Let's see what Peter says in verses 15 and 16:

**II Peter 3:15,16**

"**And account (understand) that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him (by revelation from the Lord Himself) hath written unto you;**" Do you see where Peter is putting Paul? Not as some heretic, but someone who has now been part and parcel of the very working of God Himself.

"**As also in all his epistles** (now what part of your Bible is that? Romans through Hebrews. That's the heart of our New Testament), speaking in them of these things (that's Salvation in verse 15); in which are some things hard to be understood,..."
Thirty years afterwards, Peter is still having trouble with Paul's message, and Paul's going to the Gentiles. But he has to agree. Paul is on the right track. Now why was it so hard for Peter to understand? He was steeped in Judaism, and legalism. You know this is what is so hard for people even today. It's like pulling teeth to see someone come out from under legalism, and step into the glory of God's Grace. They fight it tooth and nail. And Peter's no different. Bless his heart, I'm anxious to see old Peter, and I don't think it will be that much longer. We as Christians are all going to be meeting one another. But Peter still couldn't quite comprehend that God would save those pagan heathen, without at least coming in to embrace the Mosaic system, keeping the Law, circumcision, and every other command that was demanded of a proselyte. But to save them by Grace plus nothing was hard for him to understand.

**II Peter 3:15**

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest (twist), as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Are people twisting the scriptures? You'd better believe it. Peter is saying, "**Look, if you want Salvation today read Paul's writings.**" He doesn't say go back to the Four Gospels, or Christ's earthly ministry or to Pentecost and his great sermon. Peter doesn't say to look at what he told the Nation of Israel, but rather to go to Paul's epistles. In them you will find Salvation, the Christian walk, and all the things that God expects of a believer today. Now let's go back to Galatians Chapter 1 verse 17 again:

**Galatians 1:17,18a**

"Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and (now the last part of this verse is there for a reason, and I don't know why. If it wasn't there it could be explained so much easier, but it's there) returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem..."

If Paul hadn't put in that he returned to Damascus in verse 17, then you could follow his course more easily. We know that he left Damascus over a wall in a basket and went to Mount Sinai in Arabia where he spent three years. From there, with all these new revelations, it would be logical to expect that he stopped in Jerusalem, visited with Peter, went up to Caesarea, probably took a ship up the river that came down from Cilicia, and then went back to his home city of Tarsus. So that's the route now that Paul will be taking as he begins his ministries to Gentiles in his home area of Tarsus.
LESSON ONE * PART IV

ACTS 8 - ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH:

ACTS 9 - SAUL'S CONVERSION

We are dealing with Saul's conversion in Acts Chapter 9. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul writes this letter to the Galatians concerning his tremendous turn-around. He had been a zealous Jew, practicing Judaism (a man quite high in the religious hierarchy). Yet as a result of God's Grace saving him on the road to Damascus, we are going to see him become the Apostle to the Gentiles. So turn to Galatians Chapter 1.

Other than Christ Himself, I think that Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul), and Moses were two of the greatest human beings that ever lived. Moses, of course, on the other side, and Paul on this side of the Cross. Here in Galatians Chapter 1, Paul has been explaining his past, and how God called him by His Grace, brought him from Damascus, and took him down into Arabia as we explained in our last program, probably to Mount Sinai. Now verse 18:

*Galatians 1:18-20*

"Then after three years (that's where we get that he was in Arabia or Mt. Sinai for three years, and that's a long time when you are alone. God was just pouring out all the things that now will come from the Apostle's pen in these epistles, except for the prison epistles, which we feel are a further revelation, probably while he was in prison in Caesarea. Paul goes on to say) I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."

"But other of the apostles saw I none (in other words, he still doesn't confer with the Twelve or the leaders of Judaism), save James the Lord's brother." We will see in Acts 15 that James has replaced Peter as moderator of the Twelve.

"Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not."

Now it's rather interesting that throughout Paul's Epistles he has to constantly defend his Apostleship. If Paul were alive today he would still have to be doing it. There are so many conservative Christians that won't give Paul the time of day. They are so remiss in treating it that way. Let's turn back to Romans Chapter 11. This is a verse again that has opened the eyes of so many people who have come into my classes. Most never knew that this verse was in their Bible, and yet it is so plain.

*Romans 11:13*
"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles (Paul
doesn't share his Apostleship with anyone else. When it came to going to the Gentiles,
he was the Apostle. And he wasn't one of the Twelve, because they went to the Nation
of Israel, the Jew), I magnify mine office: " He is going to make the most of his office,
and indeed he did. Alright, now with that as the back drop, flip back to the Book of
Galatians. So Paul is defending his Apostleship and says, "I lie not." Over and over
he's going to say, "I guarantee what I say unto you has come from the ascended Lord."
Now Galatians 1:21:

**Galatians 1:21**

"Afterwards (that three years of seminary training at Mount Sinai) I came into the
regions of Syria and Cilicia;" That would be Antioch and Tarsus.

After he left Sinai, it seems that he went back to Damascus for a short time, but we
want to pick him up primarily here in Jerusalem. He meets with Peter for two weeks
and also meets James, the Lord's half brother. Then he is taken up to Caesarea again
because the Jews are out to kill him, and from Caesarea he goes to Cilicia, which is a
river valley where his hometown of Tarsus is located. Now let's pick it up. Verse 22:

**Galatians 1:22-24**

"And was unknown by face unto the churches (assemblies of Jewish believers) of
Judaea which were in Christ:" Remember all believers are in Christ.

"But they had heard only, `That he which persecuted us in times past now preached
the faith which once he destroyed.'" Of course that would be that Christ was Who He
said He was. But Paul now in his new revelations, which he refers to over and over as
the 'mysteries,' will reveal that not only was He The Christ, but He died for the sins of
the world and He arose from the dead in power and is able to justify all them that
believe.

"And they (even those Jewish believers came to the place where they) glorified God in
me."

Let's look at Chapter 2. When we get to Acts Chapter 15 you will see that Acts 15 and
Galatians 2 fit perfectly together. They both record the same event, and that is the
council in Jerusalem (we will come to that in a future study). Look at verse 2 of
Galatians 2:

**Galatians 2:2**
"And I went up (that is from Antioch to Jerusalem, and Antioch is where Paul is dealing with Gentiles and the believing Jews didn't like it. So Paul is called on the carpet and the Lord instructs him to go) by revelation, and communicated (when you communicate something, you get things across, and that is what he is saying here, that he got some things across to those people at Jerusalem) unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles,"

Do you see what that says? There would be no need for language like that if he was preaching the same Gospel message that Peter did. But Paul is not preaching the same thing that Peter did. He's enlarging on it. So that's why he says, "That Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles." And if only people could see that even today. That's where you see that great separation now from Peter and Paul. Now verse 5. We'll take this in detail in a future lesson.

**Galatians 2:5**

"To whom (the leaders at Jerusalem, the Twelve) we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour (do you know what that means? When Paul was under subjection, what's he talking about? They were still trying to refute everything that he would say. And they were telling him that he was wrong, and they were subjecting him to that kind of pressure. But he says that he didn't give in. And why didn't he give in?); that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Gentiles.

Do you know what Paul is really saying? That if these Jewish believers at Jerusalem would have succeeded in putting Paul down and stopping his ministry among the Gentiles (which was what they really wanted to do), what would have happened for our chances of Salvation? We would not have had any, and that is exactly what he is saying. He withstood all this pressure that the Gentiles might continue to receive this Gospel of Grace. So everyone of us ought to thank the Lord that the Apostle Paul was true to his commission of taking the Gospel to our Gentile forefathers as well as to us. Now let's read on for a little bit.

**Galatians 2:6**

"But of these who seemed to be somewhat (the Twelve in particular, thought they were still in control of the situation, and they didn't realize that their program was slipping through the cracks. God was now turning to the Gentiles and, in just a few years, Israel is going to lose the Temple, the priesthood, their city, and their nation, and are going to be dispersed into every nation on the earth. So the Twelve were not aware of that), (whatsoever they were it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:" When the Twelve started to add two and two they couldn't add anything to what
Paul knew. They never had near the revelations that he now has so that's why he said, "In conference they added nothing to me:" And I love that next verse:

**Galatians 2:7,8**

"But contrariwise (on the other hand what could they do for them? Oh, he had so much to tell them that they had never heard of) when they saw (but it took awhile) that the gospel of the uncircumcision (Gentiles) was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision (Jews) was unto Peter;" Do you see that? And they understood that these were two separate entities.

"(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same [that same God] was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)" God never changes.

**Galatians 2:9**

"And when James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who seemed to be pillars (Paul won't let us forget that), perceived the grace that was given unto me (when they finally saw that, yes, God was doing something special through this Jew, Paul), they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship (they shook hands on the deal. And what did they agree on? This is so plain how can people miss it?); that we (Paul and Barnabas) should go unto the heathen (Gentiles), and they (Peter, James, and John) unto the circumcision (Jews)." See how plain that was, it was a gentlemen's agreement that this is the way God intends, we are to stay with the Jew with the Gospel of the Kingdom, and you go to the Gentiles with the Gospel of Grace. Now verse 10: Paul says they only put one requirement on Barnabas and himself.

**Galatians 2:10**

"Only they would that we should remember the poor; they same which I also was forward to do."

Now that brings up another point. Remember back in Acts Chapter 2 and 3, what did all those Jewish believers do with their material goods? They sold them and put the money in a common kitty. And remember I pointed out the reason they did that with such exuberance, was because they thought the Kingdom was just over the horizon, and who would need houses and land when the Kingdom would come in! There would be no poverty, poor, or need for personal wealth. Everybody would enjoy the wealth of the Kingdom so they did it gladly. But remember Israel didn't respond to the message. The Kingdom didn't come in, and what happened to their kitty? Theirs ran dry. Once you have relieved yourself of all your material wealth, and it's gone, then it's pretty hard to start over isn't it? And it was back then. So they became poor. But
God was gracious enough recognizing that those people had done it all under good intention, so He is going to take care of them for the rest of their physical lives with the offerings now from Paul's converts among the Gentiles. Now come back to Acts Chapter 9 and we will study Galatians more in detail when we study Acts Chapter 15. But in the meantime you can read for yourself Acts Chapter 15 and Galatians Chapter 1 and 2. Just read them carefully and begin to compare and you will see they dovetail together so beautifully because they are the same event. Let's begin with verse 26: So after that three years have gone by:

Acts 9:26-29

"And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed (or intended) to join himself to the disciples (Jewish believers there in Jerusalem); but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles (the Twelve), and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians (remember these are not Gentiles. They were non-Palestine Jews): but they went about to slay him."

They couldn't stand anyone doing anything against Judaism. and so as you know there is nothing that stirs up murderous attitudes faster than religion. If they had opposition to Judaism, the best way to get rid of that opposition was to kill them, and that is what they attempted to do with Saul. Now verse 30:

Acts 9:30

"Which when the brethren knew (when Barnabas and some of the others found out what was planned for Saul by the unbelieving Jews) they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus."

He has come back from his three years at Sinai, and has stopped in Jerusalem for those two weeks with Peter. And now they send him up to Caesarea which was a seaport town. From there he went up to the area of his home city of Tarsus and began his ministry to the Jews and Gentiles. I think Paul always went first to the synagogue of the Jew, but then when they would reject his message, he would go to the Gentile. And it's amazing, we are going to leave Saul for a little while, and go back to Peter in Acts Chapter 10, but when we pick Paul up again in Chapter 11, that's when it gets interesting again. As soon as the church at Antioch is beginning to show signs of Gentile interest, then good old Barnabas, led Sovereignly by the Holy Spirit, will go up to Cilicia in the area of Tarsus, and he is going to look for Saul. Look for him, the
Scriptures says, and that means he had a purpose. And when he had found him, what does he do? He brings him back to Antioch and that's where Gentile Christianity begins to flower. **And it was at Antioch the Scripture says that the believers were first called Christians. (Reference Acts 11:26)** Never do you see The Bible call these Jewish believers in Jerusalem Christians. At least mine doesn't and I don't think your does. So Gentiles were the first to be called Christians. Verse 31:

**Acts 9:31**

"Then had the churches (assemblies of Jewish believers) rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria (because the chief persecutor was now a saved believer), and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Now archaeology is supporting that. There were thousands of Jews who became adherents to the fact that Jesus was The Messiah. They embraced that, and of course they were under constant pressure from the Judaising Jews, but nevertheless we know a lot of Jews became believers, by believing that Jesus was indeed their Messiah, The Christ. Now in verse 32 we leave Paul, he's had his seminary experience and is back home in Tarsus. And we pick up with Peter again.

**Acts 9:32-38**

"And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy and Peter said unto him 'Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed,' And he arose immediately (what are we back to? Peter is ministering to Jews and performing miracles). And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber (ready for burial)."

**Acts 9:38-42**

"And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, 'Tabitha, arise,' And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up (now that's a miracle. She was dead! This was a carry-over from Christ's earthly ministry). And he
gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was know throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord (remember these are all Jews). And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner."

Now the Sovereign God is setting the stage for the next great event in the Book of Acts. And again it's going to be so evident that God is not just looking at the near term, but also the long term. I always like to point out, this experience in the house of Cornelius doesn't really have an impact on Christianity (that is, the Gospel going to the Gentiles), until we get to Acts Chapter 15. And that will be twelve years later. When Peter goes up to the house of Cornelius and witnesses the Salvation of that Gentile household, he goes back to Jerusalem, and there is no indication that now he's had his eyes opened and he can go to Gentiles. But on the contrary, he forgets about it until twelve years later in Acts Chapter 15 when Paul is called on the carpet by the Jewish leadership (The twelve) for going to Gentiles. Finally, after a lot of disputing and arguing that Paul was wrong and that he was a heretic, we find old Peter coming to Paul's defense. And what does Peter say?

**Acts 15:7**

*And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, `Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago (twelve years ago) God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.’* And that is what spared Paul's ministry.
LESSON TWO * PART I

ACTS 10 AND 11 - SAUL CHANGES TO PAUL

In the last program, we had just finished one of the turning points in the Book of Acts and that was the conversion of Saul in Chapter 9. Remember, the Book of Acts is a transitional book. We start the book with just an extension of the Jewish program right after the Crucifixion, and Resurrection of Jesus. Peter and the eleven are still appealing to the Nation of Israel to repent of the worst sin they had ever committed, and that was killing their Messiah. Those are the words Peter uses, "You killed Him, you murdered Him. Repent and God would yet pick up where He left off, He would send The King, and then you can have the Kingdom." And then we came to the stoning of Stephen who also had been appealing to the Nation of Israel, "Just realize and believe that the One that you killed was indeed The Messiah, The Christ. The Son of the living God." But what did Israel do? They stoned him and laid their clothes at the feet of Saul of Tarsus.

And that introduces us to Saul of Tarsus. He was a Jew, a Pharisee of the Pharisees who hated the very name of Jesus of Nazareth, not because he was a blasphemer per se, but because of his religious convictions. Saul of Tarsus honestly thought he was doing God a favor in trying to stamp out these early Jewish believers who believed that Jesus was The Messiah. So at the height of Saul's rebellion, we find him in Gentile territory in Damascus, not going to put Gentiles under arrest, but rather Jews. So he's planning on going to the synagogues to bring back the believing Jews to Jerusalem so that they might be put in prison or put to death, because they were following Who Saul thought was an impostor.

Just outside of this Gentile city of Damascus, on Gentile ground (not on Jewish ground as the Twelve were called), we find God in Grace reaches down and saves this man. I call him a raging bull for his religion. God immediately informs him that He is going to send him to the Gentiles, and that is the first indication we have in the Book of Acts, that God is going to bring the Gentiles into the picture. Not that it was something new because the Old Testament was full of it: that Israel's Messiah was to be a Light unto the Gentiles, but only through Israel. But now since Israel has had these seven years of constantly rejecting Peter and the eleven and their appeal, God, you might say, gives up on the Nation of Israel, and sets them aside. In just a few years after all this takes place, we know that the Roman armies destroy the Temple and Jerusalem, and the Jewish people go into a dispersion that has lasted until our generation. They have been coming back into the land of Israel since the early 1900's. In 1948 they became a sovereign state again, and everything that has been taking place now for the past 40 years has been getting ready for the fulfillment of the prophetic word.
I always emphasize that there is no prophecy directed to the Church, rather all prophecy is directed to the Nation of Israel. And so as yet, God is not dealing with the nation. We are not seeing prophecy per se being fulfilled, we are merely seeing the stage set, all the props are being put into place, all the players are getting ready. The curtain will rise at the signing of that seven-year treaty by the Anti-christ and the Nation of Israel. Then the seven-year period of Tribulation, in which God will again be dealing prophetically with the Nation of Israel.

Now coming through the Book of Acts transitionally, we saw Saul converted and how God took him out of Damascus. I feel He took him down to Mount Sinai, the same mountain where He gave Moses the Law. And for three years in a private solitary seminary training, if you want to call it that, God revealed to Paul the `Mysteries,' and these mysteries become that whole sphere of Grace doctrine. I have emphasized ever since I started in the Book of Genesis that you will find nothing of the Church in the Old Testament. You will find nothing of the Body of Christ in the Four Gospels, but rather it is strictly a Pauline revelation given to him by our resurrected Lord. Paul is constantly appealing to us on that behalf. It was to him that these revelations of Grace doctrines were revealed. Until that time they had been kept secret, hidden in the mind of God. In the Book of Genesis, at the time of Abraham one of the names of Deity was that He is the eternal Sovereign Creator God, but also a God Who could hide things if He wanted to. I've used Deuteronomy 29:29 so often. Through Moses God said:

**Deuteronomy 29:29**

"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever,..."

So you will see this all the way up through Scripture, that God has kept things secret, but when He reveals them He expects the human race to believe it whether it be Jew or Gentile. That's enough of a short review. Now we come to Chapter 10 to Peter. We will only touch on Peter here in Chapter 10 and a little in Chapters 11, 12 and 15, and then Peter fades off the scene in the Book of Acts never to be heard from again. It's going to be filled with the Apostle Paul and his dealing with the Gentiles with the doctrines of Grace. Now of course Peter is going to write his little epistles at the back of our Bible, but remember they are written just shortly before Peter and Paul are both martyred. That occurs shortly before the Romans destroy the Temple in 70 A.D. Saul has been converted as the head of the Gentile converts as I showed you in I Timothy. Paul maintained that he was the leader of sinners saved by Grace to be the pattern or example to those who become believers, but here in Chapter 10 Peter comes into the scene:
Acts 10:1

"THERE was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,"

He was a Gentile, a Roman officer in charge of 100 men. He was going to be sovereignly touched by the Grace of God, because the Apostle to the Gentiles had just been saved and so Gentiles can now be placed into the Body of Christ. You will see Gentiles coming on the scene more and more. There is a particular reason for Peter going up to Cornelius' house other than just the Salvation of that household, although that was important. Remember, God always has the big picture; we only see the little one. But the big picture here is that God is going to prepare not just the house of Cornelius, but He is going to prepare Peter for an event that will take place twelve years down the road. The Scriptures don't bring it out here and we won't catch it until we get to Acts Chapter 15. Now in the next verses we find Cornelius being approached by an angel, but in verse 2 let's see what kind of a man Cornelius was.

Acts 10:2

"A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always."

But Cornelius was lost. That might shock people, but he's lost. Religious yes, even praying to the right God. He is not praying to one of the Roman Gods, but praying to God. You might say, "Well, how do you know that?" Well let's go over to Chapter 11. In this chapter Peter has already been up to Caesarea, back down to Jerusalem, and is sharing all the events with his fellow Jews who are believers. While sharing with them, look what he says:

Acts 11:12-14

"And the Spirit bade me go (I've always said that Peter never would have gone up there on his own, but God made it so evident he didn't dare say no) with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter (now here in verse 14 is the indication they were lost); Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house (the next word is future) shall be saved."

So Cornelius in spite of his praying, giving, believing in God was lost. Do you see that? Now what's the lesson there? It's the same way today. Our churches are full of people like Cornelius. They are devout, sincere, they pray, they give but they are lost.
It's a sad story, but so true. In fact, I've said over and over that the hardest person for God to bring to a place of Salvation is this kind of person. They are so good and religious, and see no need of any salvation, but they need it, and so did Cornelius. Now let's go on:

**Acts 10:3-6**

"He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day (about 3 o'clock in the afternoon) an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, 'Cornelius.' And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, 'What is it, Lord' (How many times back in the Old Testament pagan people would refer to the God of Abraham as Lord, but they didn't know him as Lord. It was just a term. And it's the same way here. Cornelius couldn't call him Lord by virtue of a personal experience or relationship with Him. It was just a term)?' And he said unto him, 'Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.'"

Because most of you know this story even better than I do, let's go to Peter down at Joppa. Remember Israel is small and Caesarea to Joppa probably is no more than 60 miles.

**Acts 10:8-12**

"And when he (Cornelius) had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour (that's noon time): And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they (I imagine the women of the house) made ready, (the food), he fell into a trance (now God is going to work here supernaturally, because this is a supernatural situation), And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth. Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air."

Now in the Book of Leviticus, Chapter 11, God had defined which type of animals, fowl, and fish the Jews could eat that were clean. But this sheet doesn't just include the clean animals, it's everything, the clean and unclean together. Now read on.

**Acts 10:13,14**

"And there came a voice to him, 'Rise, Peter, kill, and eat.' But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.'"
Why does Peter say that? He's under the Law. Most people might miss that. We know that I put a vast chasm between Law and Grace. Hopefully I'm being known for it. **You cannot mix Law and Grace in the Church Age.** But Peter is still practicing the Law, and it will surprise you how many people won't admit that. Is Peter mixing Law and Grace? No! He hasn't been told to stop Temple worship. Peter hasn't been told that he is no longer under the Law, but rather Grace. Peter is simply like the followers of Christ in His earthly ministry. He's a Jew who believed that Jesus was The Christ. Peter had no doubt repented of his sins and been baptized. He was the typical Jewish believer. He is not yet aware of the doctrines of Grace, but he is very much aware of the Law as indicated here:

**Acts 10:15-17**

"And the voice spake unto him again the second time, `What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.' This was done thrice (or three times): and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,"

Our God is a God of perfect timing! Just as the men who had made the journey from Caesarea to Joppa are at the gate asking for Simon Peter, Peter has just come through this vision of the sheet. And it all comes together just at the right moment. Now verse 19:

**Acts 10:19,20**

"While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, `Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.'"

I have asked my classes over the years, if it had not been for such a supernatural environment, the trance, the men at the gate, the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking, do you think Peter would have gone to Caesarea? No way. Because as far as Peter was concerned, Gentiles were still dogs, and God could have nothing to do with them. I always remind people what we have learned before. Come back to the Book of Matthew. You see Peter was not some stubborn Jew that should have known better. Peter was a Jew who knew what was expected. Peter was not way out in left field, he was being absolutely in accord with the program thus far. In Matthew Chapter 10 we have the very onset of Christ's earthly ministry. In verse 2,3, and 4 He has chosen the Twelve, up there around Galilee. And now Jesus gives them their marching orders.

**Matthew 10:5,6**
"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'"

Is that plain language? You bet it's plain. Now come over to the other account that is so clear, where He deals with the woman at Canaan in Chapter 15. Here we have a Gentile lady who also wanted the Lord to do something for her. So she approaches Jesus during His earthly ministry in verse 22.

**Matthew 15:22**

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' But he (Jesus) answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, 'Send her away, for she crieth after us.'"

Now that was the Twelve. But what are the Twelve aware of? What Jesus had told them back in Chapter 10. "You are to have nothing to do with Gentiles, go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." They are under God's control, they're not being bigoted Jews, and the whole purpose as I have stressed since we started in Genesis is in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. Israel was to be a nation of people, established in an area of land in which God Himself would come and be their King. And that was only for the Jew. And then Israel could go out and evangelize the nations, but not until that happened. They were to be a Kingdom of Priests. So these Jews are correct in their mentality that they were to have nothing to do with Gentiles. Now back to Acts Chapter 10. I really want you to understand that if it hadn't been for God really putting the pressure and the proof on Peter that this is where he was supposed to go, then Peter would have never gone. He would have been more rebellious than Jonah ever thought about being. And you know what Jonah thought. "How in the world can I ever go to those Gentiles? They are our enemies." But God was in control and had something else on His mind. And so here God tells Peter, "**Go with these men.**" They start for Caesarea.

**Acts 10:23-25**

"Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him." In Chapter 11 we will find that there were six believing Jewish brethren that went with Peter, and that makes a total of seven - God's perfect number. See, everything fits.

"And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in,
Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him." What does that tell you about Cornelius? He's pagan, you don't worship a fellow man, but he tried to.

Acts 10:26-28

"But Peter took him up, saying, 'Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together (Gentiles). And he (Peter) said unto them (now watch this), 'Ye know (these Romans knew the Jewish customs) how that it is an unlawful (what is Peter coming back to? The Law) thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.'"

When did God show him? In the vision he had with the sheet of the clean and unclean animals. And then Peter understood. He's not talking about eating food, He's talking about the human race. Now you remember the Apostle to the Gentiles was saved in Chapter 9, and so now the gates are being opened to Gentiles. And when we get into Chapter 11 it's going to get wider. And then all of a sudden in Chapter 13, Paul and Barnabas go out on their missionary journeys. And for the most part they go to Gentiles; most Jews reject them. So keep all these things in your mind. Peter was uncomfortable going into the house of Cornelius, because it was unlawful for a Jew to go into a Gentile's house But Peter says, God has shown me I cannot call anybody common or unclean.
LESSON TWO * PART II

ACTS 10 AND 11 - SAUL CHANGES TO PAUL

Now let's pick up again in Acts Chapter 10. We will skip a verse or two and pick up at verse 33. It's always such a joy to see people that are interested in The Book. In our teachings we always try to compare Scripture with Scripture, and it's so refreshing to see people study the Word of God. As a Christian society, I'm afraid we may have gotten to spending too much time in reading a lot of books, rather than spending quality time in The Book. There are a lot of people who think I'm wrong in some of my teachings, and I have yet to have one person prove me wrong, but I'm always ready to listen to all points of view as long as it's Biblical. But our main purpose for teaching is to get people into The Book, to see what The Book really says as well as what it doesn't say.

In our last lesson, Peter and six other believing Jews have by Sovereign intervention made their way up to Caesarea to a house of a Roman army officer, and all of his relatives and friends. This is new ground for Peter to be going into the house of a Gentile, but remember, God has pushed the issue and Peter has no choice. I'm sure he was almost shaking in his boots at the thought of having to go into this Gentile house. It was unlawful for a Jew to do this. But nevertheless he went in and Cornelius tells Peter all that had happened to him, and then Peter has confidence that indeed God is going to evidently deal with this Gentile. Let's start in verse 33 - Cornelius has finished his part of the conversation.

Acts 10:33

"Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Remember I mentioned previously that God has seen fit to leave His Word not in the hands of angels, but rather in the hands of fellow men. He has chosen to let the Word be promoted by you and I. So it's available to any human being that will pick it up. It's not limited to theologians, seminaries, or the monasteries, or anything else. Now when Peter realizes that God is in this situation he speaks.

Acts 10:34

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:"
Did he think that a week ago? Why heavens no! And rightfully. Let's go all the way back to the Book of Exodus. Here the plagues are unfolding on the Egyptians, and we come down to the end of the third plague and that would be in Chapter 8. Now the first three plagues fell also on the children of Israel, but now God is going to do something different.

**Exodus 8:22,23a**

"And I will sever (or separate) in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth (and then He repeats it in verse 23). And I will put a division between my people and thy people:...."

Do you see those words?. That was the beginning of God totally mandating that the Nation of Israel would remain separated from the other nations of the world. And that never left them. All the way up through the Old Testament, with the exception of when they went so far down into idolatry that they lost their belief in God. But anytime they had a knowledge of God and His Word, Israel was kept a separated people, and as soon as they lost that separation then God's judgment fell. You remember the account of Balaam the false prophet, when he was supposed to curse the children of Israel for Balak, the King of Moab. God forbade Balaam from doing that, but old Balaam had another Satanic inspired thought and he told the Moabites to put their prettiest girls out there where those Jewish young men could be seduced by them. And it worked, and remember God's judgment killed 23,000 of these Jews for committing those acts. They had lost their separated character. And so all the way up through here you have to understand that it wasn't that the Jew had become bigoted or proud, but God had mandated that they remain a separated people.

Now I also have another verse concerning this. You will find this one in the Book of Acts Chapter 22, where Paul has now been out among the Gentiles and he is more or less being called on the carpet for it there in Jerusalem. As he makes his appeal to the whole multitude of Jews, he goes through the whole scope of his own conversion, and how God had saved him on the road to Damascus. Then how God had told him in verse 21 the following.

**Acts 22:21,22**

"And he (The Lord Jesus from Heaven above) said unto me, `Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles' (look at the next verse).' And they gave him audience unto this word (what word? `Gentiles' in verse 21), and then lifted up their voices, and said, `Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live.'" This word caused a riot there, because Paul dared to mention the word Gentile.
Now that's how separated they understood they were to be as a nation of people. And that was what God had instructed. So now let's return to Acts Chapter 10. When Peter comes to Cornelius with this trepidation you can understand why. And as we saw in verse 34, Peter says that God is no respecter of persons.

**Acts 10:35-38**

"But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel (it still came to Israel first), preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached: How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good (with all His miracles), and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (that is Jesus the Messiah)."

**Acts 10:39**

"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem (what did Peter leave out? Gentiles. Jesus didn't go outside of Israel, because He came to fulfill all of the Abrahamic Covenants and promises); whom (Israel) slew and hanged on a tree:"

**Acts 10:40-43**

"Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Now what I want to point out is that it's just as important to understand what This Book does not say, as what it does say. Now it does not say one word here that Christ died for them, that He shed His Blood for them, and that He arose from the dead as a means of Salvation. Not a word. If you can find it please show me. All Peter is rehearsing again is Who Jesus was. And at this point and time in Scripture what was He? The Messiah of Israel. The Son of God, the One Who was to be The Redeemer and The King of the chosen people in fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. And Peter knew nothing more than that. That is all that has been revealed to him. Why? Because everything concerning what we call the Gospel of Grace is still hidden at this time in the mind of God. And I've said it over and over and will say until the day I die or am Raptured, that you can't believe something that someone has never said. And
how can you believe something that God hasn't said? Well you can't. No one ever
took God ahead of time and said, "Well I know that's what He's going to say." They
believed it after He said it, and the same way here. God has not yet said that He's
going to save the whole human race based on Jesus' shed blood, and His death, burial,
and Resurrection. So Peter couldn't say it. Now let me show you what I'm talking
about. Turn ahead to Romans the last chapter. I know that it takes a while for a lot of
this to soak in, but once people see it their eyes are opened and they wonder why they
had never seen it before. But here it is plain as day, and I won't twist the Scriptures.
but rather just let them sit where they are. I won't try to interpret it, but I'm going to let
you read it in your Bible. Here Paul is writing to this Gentile congregation in Rome.

Romans 16:25

"Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the
preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept
secret since the world began," Do you see how plain that is? Paul is preaching
something that God had kept secret. Peter didn't know it. Now let's look at Ephesians
Chapter 3. This took me a long time, I'll admit it. I was as jumbled up as everybody
else. But all of a sudden everything just starts to separate out, and you wonder why
you haven't seen it before.

Ephesians 3:1,2

"FOR this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard
of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

How did God give the Law to Israel? To Moses at Mount Sinai. Moses came down
and gave it to Israel. Here it's the same procedure. He has given the doctrines of Grace
to the Apostle Paul and Paul is taking it to the Gentiles. It's just as plain as day.

Ephesians 3:3-5

"How that by revelation (not by the teaching of some theologian or anyone else but
from the risen Lord) he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few
words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of
Christ); Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now
revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;"

There were others that followed right behind Paul. We know that Barnabas was his
right hand man as well as Silas. Verse 9:

Ephesians 3:9
"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery (Secret), which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

And one of the names of Deity back in the Book of Genesis is that God is a God Who is everlasting to everlasting, but He is also capable of hiding things. And that's God's progression. And so God kept this also hidden until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul. There is another one in the Book of Colossians.

**Colossians 1:24-26**

"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 (remember Paul almost always uses the term "The Body" which is His Church or The Church which is His Body): 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 which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:"

Now let's come back to Acts Chapter 10. Peter hasn't had any revelation of the mysteries. This is even before Paul has received it all. He's out there in Arabia with the risen Lord. Paul was converted in the last chapter and he's already down in the desert for his three years of revelations. But while God is dealing with Paul in the desert, He is starting the ball rolling with the Gentiles up here in Caesarea, and he is also setting Peter up for a crucial situation about twelve years down the road. Now verse 44:

**Acts 10:44-48**

"While Peter yet spake (he hadn't even finished, he probably thought that he was just getting wound up) these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Now who was that? Cornelius and all these other Gentiles. Now verse 45, if you will analyze this carefully you can't help but see it.

"And they of the circumcision which believed (these six Jews had believed for their Salvation that Jesus was The Christ, their Messiah. They had traveled with Peter from Joppa and) were astonished (this was something that had never happened before: Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit), as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Continuing on:

"For they heard them speak with tongues (or languages), and magnify God. Then answered Peter: `Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which
have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...."

What's happened? Well the procedures have been changed. They have totally flip-flopped. What am I talking about? Let's look at Acts Chapter 2 verse 38, with Peter preaching to the Jews. Let's just compare. **Now as we read this verse watch the order.**

*Acts 2:38*

"Then Peter said unto them, `Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'"

Now what was the order? **They had to repent, be baptized, and then they received the Holy Spirit.** What happened in Chapter 10 with Peter preaching to Gentiles? There was a total reversal. **Peter hadn't even finished preaching yet, and the Holy Spirit is evident. Let alone baptized them, or hearing their repentance.**

And then after the fact Peter says, "**Wait a minute, we've got to do everything right, let's baptize them.**" Do you see the difference? Why? Because Acts is a transitional Book. We are moving out of that Jewish program and Law. We are moving more and more with God dealing with the Age of Grace. Now Chapter 11 verse 1:

*Acts 11:1,2*

"AND the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem,..."

I'm going to stop right there. After this glorious experience among Gentiles, why in the world did Peter go back to Jerusalem? Why didn't he head out to the regions beyond? Or maybe head up into Syria, or Asia Minor, and Greece? Why didn't Peter call for the other disciple and say, "**Hey, fellows, things are happening among the Gentiles, let's get down into Egypt.**" Does he? No! Where does he go? Back to Jerusalem. And that is where he is going to stay for ever so long. Do you see what I'm driving at? Peter was not commissioned by our Lord to go to the Gentiles in general. Only to the house of Cornelius for the purpose that I'll show you in the next lesson. Now verse 2 again:

*Acts 11:2,3*

"And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision (believing Jews in this case) contended with him (what does that mean?"
They argued with him. They put up a fuss, and said) Saying, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."

Now just think. What's the mentality of these believing Jews at Jerusalem? It's still Law! You can't get around it. You can't sit down and eat Gentile food, it's not kosher. You can't go in and visit with Gentiles, they're uncircumcised dogs. So that was still the mentality of the believers in Jerusalem, and this is eight years after the Cross. Why? God hasn't revealed the secret of Grace going to the Gentiles. He's been dealing with the Nation of Israel under the Law. Remember Ananias in Chapter 22?

Acts 22:12a

"And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law,..." So even Ananias is a good Law-keeper, even though he was up there in Damascus. So these are things you have to sort out to become a good student of the Word.
LESSON TWO * PART III

ACTS 10 AND 11 - SAUL CHANGES TO PAUL

Let's go right back into the Book of Acts and carry on our study of this Book of transition. I told you when were back in Chapter 10 that Peter by a Sovereign God was sent up to the house of Cornelius, a pagan Gentile. We know that God had more in mind than that little group of people in Caesarea. God had in mind the whole sphere of Christianity. And now in Acts Chapter 15, we also see the other reason for using Peter to minister to this Gentile. And I have told you before that Acts 15 is a parallel chapter to Galatians Chapter 2. Paul has now been out among the Gentiles for several years, establishing the churches up there in Asia Minor, and especially in Antioch. The believing Jews at Jerusalem are still not accepting that. They were still Law-keeping, and they still had that mentality that nobody should be going to the Gentiles unless The King and Kingdom had been established here on the earth. They were really having a problem with this.

Acts 15:1

"AND certain men (these were believing Jews from Jerusalem) which came down from Judaea taught the brethren (at Antioch), and said, `Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses (what?), ye cannot be saved.'"

Do you see that? This is now 51 A.D. That's 23 years after Pentecost, and these believing Jews are still telling the Gentiles up there at Antioch that they cannot be saved unless they keep the Mosaic Law, and circumcision. Now verse 2:

Acts 15:2

"When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation (Paul and Barnabas had to just literally dig in and tell these fellows that they were wrong, and they couldn't put circumcision and legalism on these Gentiles believers) with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."

So Paul and Barnabas had to go with them to Jerusalem to settle the question. They met with the Twelve and the elders of the believing element of what we call the Jewish Church at Jerusalem.

Acts 15:3-5
"And being brought on their way by the church (that is the congregation at Antioch), they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church (the believing Jews), and of the apostles and elders (that would be the Twelve), and they declared all things that God had done with them." That is among the Gentiles.

"But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees (this was not the "whited sepulchre" Pharisees that Jesus had to deal with, but rather) which believed (they had believed that Jesus was The Christ. They were members of that Jerusalem Church), saying, `That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.'"

That's what it says. Not just in my Bible, but it says it in your also. And this remember is 22 years after Pentecost, so time has been going by. Paul has been out among the Gentiles since 40 A.D. That's after his three years down in Arabia, so for 12 years Paul has been laboring among the Gentiles Now verse 6:

Acts 15:6,7

"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter."

"And when there had been much disputing (I don't know how long this had been going on, but I think for several hours, they just couldn't come to an agreement. Paul and Barnabas weren't buying into circumcision and keeping the Law for their Gentile converts and finally), Peter rose up,..."

I think for most of this dissension and discussion they were on their feet. While this is going on, I can picture Peter sitting down off to the side. Maybe even sulking a little bit, because you have to understand that by now Peter has lost his role as the head honcho. He’s not even the moderator of this meeting. James, the half brother of Jesus is the moderator, and he wasn't even one of the Twelve. And all this just shows how this Jewish system was slipping and we will see it finally just slips off the scene. In fact this Chapter is the last that is mentioned of Peter and the Twelve, until Peter writes his little epistle just before he is martyred in about 67 A.D. And you know that in 70 A.D. the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed and the Jews were sent into dispersion to every land. The Jewish program was slipping through the cracks, and the sad thing is they didn't know it. You can pick this up so graphically in Galatians Chapter 2 But now back to verse 7. Finally Peter takes the floor.

Acts 15:7,8
"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, `Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago (how long ago? Thirteen years since he had gone to Cornelius' house) God made choice among us (the Twelve), that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;''

Remember last lesson when the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household? And this was before they were even baptized with water. This is what Peter is referring to in verse 8. Now verse 9:

*Acts 15:9,10*

"And put no difference between us (as Jews) and them (as Gentiles), purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples (up there at Antioch), which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

What's Peter saying? Even Israel couldn't handle the Law. The Law was so severe, it was a yoke, it was bondage, and so Peter said don't put something on them that we couldn't comprehend.

*Acts 15:11,12*

"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they (now verse 12, here's the secret to the whole thing). Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them."

Now let's go to Galatians Chapter 2, and see what Paul says about this situation. It's the same event we have just read about. And here is how you figure out the chronology on some of these things.

*Galatians 2:1-3*

"THEN fourteen years (he had just been rehearsing his apostleship and how he was commissioned on the road to Damascus, and we have placed that event at 37 A.D., and 14 years after that event you get 51 A.D., the disputing in Jerusalem) after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also."

"And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel (do you see how he identifies his Gospel?) which I preach among the Gentiles (see how he's
differentiating?), but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain." Now come all the way down to verse 5:

"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour (what's Paul talking about? The same thing that Acts Chapter 15 said: that there was much disputation and these Jewish believers were coming down on him trying to push circumcision and Law on these Gentile believers, but Paul says that they didn't back down. Why?); that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." That is you, Gentiles.

Now here is what I'm trying to say. Why did God send Peter to the house of Cornelius? For this event right here. Because you see, if Peter had not come to Paul and Barnabas' defense, the rest of those Jews would have squashed them, and it would have stopped Christianity in its tracks, and they would have been no longer able to go to the Gentile world with the Gospel of Grace. But Paul says, "I did not give in, I stood my ground." Now read on:

**Galatians 2:6**

"But of these who seemed to be somewhat [now what does he mean by that statement? Now that's Holy Spirit inspired; Paul isn't being nasty here. But you see the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem are not realizing that the whole Jewish program was slipping away from them, and the Gentile program was ascending. It was a transition, but they didn't realize it. And that's exactly what Paul is saying here], (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:"

What does "in conference mean?" When they really started to compare everything that had been unfolding. All the Old Testament promises and covenants, the revelations of Paul and his commission to go to the Gentiles with the Gospel of Grace, they put all of this together and compared notes and Paul could say, "It added nothing to me." The Twelve couldn't add anything to Paul's revelations from the risen Lord. Paul had more than they did.

**Galatians 2:7,8**

"But contrariwise [on the other hand], when they [the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem] saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision [that Gospel in verse 2 that Paul preached to the Gentiles] was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision [Jew] was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the Circumcision [Jew], the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)" Do you see how plain that is?
Galatians 2:9

"And when James, Cephas (Peter), and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen (Gentiles), and they unto the circumcision (Jew)."

Now this was all decided in 51 A.D. Thirteen years after Peter had gone to Cornelius, and all this time those Jewish believers at Jerusalem are still maintaining Gentiles can't be saved unless they become proselytes of Judaism. And you and I can thank God that we have this tremendous Gospel of Grace, because the Apostle Paul did not give in. Now do you get the picture? I also have another little analogy, that God did something way back in time for something that will come much later. And while we are looking at it, go to Galatians Chapter 4 for just a moment, for the two tie together. Remember Galatians was written for the purpose of telling these Gentile believers that they are not under the Law, but rather Grace. The Judaisers were following Paul everywhere he went, and they are not going to give up. They will still maintain that these Gentiles can't be saved unless they embrace Judaism and keep the Law. So he had to hurriedly write this little letter to the Galatians, to admonish them not to give in. Now coming into Chapter 4 is one of my favorite studies. If I were ever given the opportunity to talk off the cuff for a few minutes, or give a devotion, this is the Scripture I would use. Paul says in verse 22:

Galatians 4:22

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman." Who were they? The bondmaid was Hagar and she had a son named Ishmael, and the freewoman was Abraham's wife Sarah and she had Isaac. Those are the two sons that are going to be used as an allegory.

Galatians 4:23

"But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh (now you remember the setting? God didn't tell Abraham to go into Hagar and have a child by her. That was Sara's idea, and not God's. And so it was of the flesh. But you see God had been promising the son Isaac for twenty-some years, and they had to patiently wait, and even when they were past time for child bearing, then God miraculously gave them Isaac); but he of the freewoman was by promise." Even though Sarah was 90 and Abraham was a 100 years old.

Galatians 4:24-26
"Which things are an allegory (they are a picture, but you see God set it all up. Paul couldn't have written this if this hadn't happened. But it did happen): for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar." Now that Covenant was "Law" The Mosaic Law of which Ishmael is the picture. Now verse 25:

"For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia (that's where I get the idea that Sinai is not close to Egypt but rather out in Arabia. And Paul said he went there after Damascus) and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Paul is writing this before the Temple is destroyed. The Temple in Jerusalem with all their animal sacrifices is still going full steam ahead at this point in time.

"But Jerusalem which is above is free (now what's that? That's the heavenly situation in which you and I are now situated. We are citizens of the heavenlies Paul writes) which is the mother of us all." So Isaac is a picture of Grace! Now verse 28:

Galatians 4:28,29

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Where does the promise come in? God promised Christ, that as a result of His going to that Roman Cross and dying and shedding His blood and being raised from the dead, this multitude of believers would be brought in.

"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." And that is the way it has always been between the believers and unbelievers.

Galatians 4:30a

"Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son:..." What do they picture? The Law and legalism. Now let's go back in our minds at least to the Book of Genesis. Remember when Hagar was first pregnant? She hadn't even had her child yet, and already she begins to torment poor old Sara. Making life miserable for her by gloating that Sara can't have a child and that she can. And finally Sara can't take it any longer, and tells Abraham to get rid of her. And Abraham did. He sent her away. But you see God intervenes. God goes out there in the desert and tells Hagar, "You go right back to Sara's tent, and you just stay there." Thirteen years later God would tell Hagar and Ishmael to go right back where he brought her from in the first place. Out in the desert. Now why? Well, if they hadn't gone back to Abraham and Sara's tent, and if Ishmael had not been on the scene when Isaac came, then Paul would not have the allegory. Have you got the picture? So way back there in
Genesis, God set the stage for the two boys Ishmael and Isaac to be raised for a while in proximity and then set apart, so Paul could say, "Now look this is exactly what we have to do with the Law." We have to treat the Law and legalism the same way that Abraham treated Ishmael. And remember, God didn't tell Abraham to give Hagar and Ishmael a tent next door. But where did He send them? Clear out into the desert. What was the purpose? Law and Grace won't mix. Now verse 31:

**Galatians 4:31**

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." Now go into Chapter 5 verse 1:

**Galatians 5:1,2**

"STAND fast therefore in the liberty (and remember, I always stress that liberty is not license. That doesn't mean we are free to do as we please. But we are under the full exercise of our free will) wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." When someone tells you that you must keep the Law to be a child of God, then you run, because that is false teaching. Now verse 2:

"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised (that is for Salvation), Christ shall profit you nothing."

Now that's scary. That tells me that every individual, whether he's a Church member, devout, sincere, or just like Cornelius, who prayed and gave; if he is doing something to fulfill his Salvation or put the frosting on the cake, he is as lost can be. The Book says so. Christ can profit you nothing if you try to receive Salvation any other way than believing the Gospel."Faith + Nothing." So we have to warn people, "Don't depend on something that you can do." I don't care what it is. In this case it was circumcision, but it can be anything. It can be Church membership, it can be a baptism, it can be anything that you can do in the flesh. And when you do it as part of Salvation it is no salvation at all, and insults the work of the Cross. And always remember that. When Christ said, "It is finished," He meant what He said! Everything that we need was accomplished on that Cross.
LESSON TWO * PART IV

ACTS 10 AND 11 - SAUL CHANGES TO PAUL

It just thrills our heart to have people write and tell us they are following our references and are studying The Word. If you will get serious with God's Word, the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth to you. As so many have written, "I've read The Bible all my life but have never been able to understand it before now." And we just give the Lord the praise for that.

Now let's begin our study again and pick up in Acts Chapter 11. Peter has come back to Jerusalem from the home of Cornelius. Peter is still not going out to the Gentiles; and he knew that he was not supposed to. Peter was correct in every way that had to do with the Jewish system. He only did what God told him to do. He was to confine his ministry to the Jew as we saw in the last lesson in Galatians 2:9. And it had been agreed that Paul would go to the Gentiles. Now remember that Acts is a transitional Book and here we are going to see the transition kick into a little higher gear. So far it's been all Jewish. We saw the conversion of Saul on Gentile ground outside of Damascus. And we saw Peter in Chapter 10 go up to the house of Gentiles at Caesarea. Here in Chapter 11, we are going to see a little more of the transition to the Gentiles and a little more of the slipping away of the Jewish program. Verse 19:

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 to none but unto the Jews only."

Now that is the one verse that opened my eyes some twenty years ago. Because I had always been of the mindset that as soon as you got into the New Testament then you were into Christianity. And that the whole world was now being given the Gospel. Not so, as you can see. It had been confined to Israel, and even these Jewish believers have no concept of going to Gentiles. Let's look at the persecution that arose about Stephen in Chapter 7 for a few moments. Here Stephen has given that long lesson on Jewish history leading up to the coming of their Messiah and he, like Peter, accused them of having killed Him. They finally turn on Stephen and stone him to death. We call it Stephen's martyrdom. That happened in 36 A.D. and in verse 59 we see:

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." Now then verse 1 of Chapter 8:

Acts 8:1a

"AND Saul was consenting unto his death..."

That is Stephen's death. Now when Paul writes in his letters that it just plagued him throughout the remaining portion of his life, that he had persecuted the Church of God, it was this Church at Jerusalem. You see he was the leader of this terrible persecution to stamp out any Jews who had embraced Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. We will come back here in a moment but for now let's go over to Chapter 26. Paul's conversion experience is rehearsed three times in the Book of Acts and this is one of them. He is recording in the first person, how on the road to Damascus the Lord brought him to the realization that Jesus was The Christ and converted him. Let's begin at verse 9:

Acts 26:9,10

"I verily thought with myself (Paul is talking in the first person), that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which things I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them."

Paul takes full responsibility for his actions. Remember, there is no one so vicious as a religious person. That's religion. I'm not talking about Christianity, but rather religion. Look at the wars raging around the world today and it's all in the name of religion. And the same way here, these Judaisers were so wrapped up in their Old Testament religion, they were ready to kill anyone who opposed them. Paul at that time was so glad to see these Jewish believers condemned to death that he thought he was doing God a service. Just get them off the scene, because they were impostors and blasphemers. Now back to Chapter 8. This is the persecution that arose about Stephen.

Acts 8:1

"AND Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen's) death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church (or I prefer to call it assembly) which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."
Now think, **if they were embracing the great commission, where should they have been six or seven years ago?** Throughout the whole Roman empire. And where are they? Still in Jerusalem. Not only are they there, but they won't leave even under intense persecution. Now that should tell us something. Why won't they leave? They knew they had no God-given right to leave. They were to stay and present this Gospel of the Kingdom to the Nation of Israel. With the hope that Israel would still accept their King and then Christ could have come and set up His Kingdom. They understood that once they had The King and the Kingdom then they could bring Gentiles to The King, their Messiah. They knew what the Old Testament taught about that. They knew a lot more than many people do today. Remember what it says in Zechariah Chapter 8?

*Zechariah 8:23*

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts;  `In those days 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.'" In the person of The King of course.

But these twelve disciples are not going to leave Jerusalem, but all the rest of the believers did. Now back to Acts Chapter 11. We did all that so you could get the timing. Here we have a flashback to the seven years after Pentecost, at the time of Stephen's death. But in chronology we are already up about 41 or 42 A.D. This is twelve or thirteen years after Pentecost. Some of these believing Jews are migrating up to Antioch, up north of Palestine in the area we would call Lebanon today. Now verse 20:

*Acts 11:20*

"And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus."

A Grecian was a Jew who was a native of Palestine. A Greek was a Gentile. So it wasn't unusual for Grecians to be approached with this. We had Grecians back in Chapter 6. But here in verse 20, most Bible teachers, scholars and I believe Grecians should have been translated Greeks. Because this would have been something totally different for a Greek to hear and believe. But things are quickly changing in this Book of Acts.

*Acts 11:21,22*
"And the hand of the Lord was with them (indeed, because God was ready to move things out to the Gentile world): and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch."

What was the problem again? Gentiles being saved! This is only for the Jews. It's the same way today. If your denominational headquarters heard there was a heresy out there in one of their churches, what are they going to do? They would send some people down and check it out and ask, "Are you people really following this kind of false teaching?" And it was no different there. So when they at Jerusalem heard what was going on up at Antioch, they sent Barnabas to check out what they were doing up there because it was not right according to Jewish thinking. Now verse 23, and isn't it amazing how God always chooses the right man for the right place at the right time.

Acts 11:23

"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

As an attribute of God, Grace has always been there. When Adam and Eve were hiding behind their fig leaves in the bushes there in the Garden of Eden, Who went looking for them? God did. Why? Grace! He could have just forgotten about them. Zapped them and started over, but His Grace took Him to pursue them. So His Grace has always been evident, but if you want to search the Scriptures, just count the number of times Grace is used, and you'll get something like thirty or forty times. That is until you get to Paul, and then count how many times the word Grace appears and you will get something like two hundred. And what's the reason? Because beginning with Paul, "It's the Grace of God that takes the pre-eminence" Before that it was just more or less mentioned as one of God's attributes.

So now good old Barnabas saw the Grace of God in verse 23. Very few people today understand God's Grace. If you are not accused of teaching people they are free to do as they please with the liberties God gives us, then you are probably not preaching and teaching the Gospel of Grace. And Paul said the same thing. He said that he was falsely accused of preaching that just because God's Grace is great, then go ahead and sin as you wish. But that's not what Grace means. I have said it a thousand times that Grace is not license. But on the other hand, very few people comprehend that the Grace of God is greater than any person's sin. It's always Grace, and so here again these Gentiles no doubt had come out of immoral idolatry, and yet God saved them by His Grace, and Barnabas is seeing it happen. Now verse 24:

Acts 11:24
"For he (Barnabas) was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."

That's at Antioch. Now verse 25, I love these tidbits, that's what makes studying the Scriptures so interesting. When Barnabas saw the sudden influx of Gentiles into the assembly at Antioch, the Holy Spirit moves him and who does he go looking for?

Acts 11:25

"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:" Why? Because he has the message for the Gentiles. Now Antioch was located a few miles inland, almost on the Mediterranean Sea up in Syria, and just around the corner of the Mediterranean in this river valley was the city of Tarsus in the country of Seleucia. So Barnabas, who had come from Jerusalem to Antioch, makes his way up the river valley on which Tarsus is located for the sole purpose of finding Saul. Saul is the one who has had three years of revelation from the risen Lord. He's the one with all the answers. Now verse 26:

Acts 11:26

"And when he had found him (Barnabas left to look for Saul and he found him), he brought him unto Antioch (can't you just see those two men as they met, and Barnabas says, "Saul, things are happening down there at Antioch, and I know, as God has revealed to me, that you are the man we have to have. You are the one who has the message now for these Gentiles. God has opened their hearts. God has opened the door, and evidently God is going to move out into the Gentile world. We can see it coming." Now reading on). 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 (what's the next word?) first in Antioch."

Why not Jerusalem? The Jerusalem Church had been in operation for about twelve years already. The Bible never calls them Christians. Why? They were under the Judaistic umbrella. They had believed for their Salvation that Jesus was The Messiah of Israel. But these Christians at Antioch believed for their Salvation that Jesus had died for them, that His blood had been shed for their sins, and that He had been raised from the dead. In other words Antioch is being presented with Paul's Gospel. And he differentiates it from anything that had ever gone before, because it was a secret hidden in the mind of God until He revealed it to the Apostle Paul while he was in Arabia. And now God is going to do something totally different. He's going to save the whole human race, Jew and Gentile, by the Gospel that Christ died, was buried, and rose from the dead. (Ref: I Corinthians 15:1-4)
I've always said, and I've been guilty of it also, that too many times we have reduced the Gospel to cliches. Do you know what a cliche is? A little frame of words we use that's handy. For example, "Come and take Jesus into your heart," "Just believe in Jesus," or "Take Him as your personal Saviour." Now those are all well and good as far as they go, but that's not the Gospel. Multitudes have been invited to come down the aisle of a Church building to take Jesus as their Saviour. Just take Jesus into your heart. Folks that's not the Gospel by which you are saved according to the Apostle Paul. I'm going to stand and proclaim that the Gospel is only one thing. And that is - that Christ died for me and He died for you. He paid my sin penalty. He suffered in my place. His divine pure blood was shed in total payment for your sin and mine. He was buried, he was really dead. And He arose from the dead, powerful, victorious, and because He lives, you and I know that we live and will live. And that my friends is the Gospel and you can't shortcut it one bit.

Now once a person understands that and believes it, then, yes, you are taking Christ into your heart. Then He becomes your personal Saviour. But most people are never told that. I don't hear the Gospel, I hear everything but the Gospel, so be aware of that. And no wonder the Church has become powerless. I'm afraid that too many people are reading too many books instead of The Book. Because how many books have I read, myself, where they neglect this part of the Gospel. They talk about how to cope with all my problems, and how to get along with my wife and kids. Hogwash! You get into The Book and all these problems will take care of themselves. But the old devil is using every ploy that he can, trying to steer you from The Book.

In Matthew 24, the disciples ask Jesus what were the signs of His coming and the end of the age. Do you know what word He started out with? 'Deception!' Beware, be not deceived. The world is set up for the biggest deception that has ever hit the human race. They are gullible, they are falling for anything and everything that comes their way. But they refuse to get into this Book and search for the truth. And you and I have to warn people. Listen, we are living in an age where Satan is the master deceiver. And he is doing a tremendous job of it, even in the Church. He doesn't mind if you go to church as long as you don't hear Paul's Gospel. And I'm not pointing my finger at any one group or congregation. I'm saying in general terms that Satan is infiltrating the Church with everything except what the Church needs. I'm so concerned because people are being given something less than the truth. And it's up to you and I to let them know what the truth is. Let's try to finish the chapter. They were called Christians first at Antioch, because these are Gentiles who are being saved by Paul's beautiful message of God's Grace.

Acts 11:27-30
"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples (Gentile believers), every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

Why the believers in Judaea? Back in Acts Chapter 2, the believers sold what they had and brought it to the feet of the Twelve to be used as a common kitty. And it was glorious, everybody had enough, but when you start to live out of a common kitty, pretty soon it will run dry. And it did.
LESSON THREE * PART I

ACTS 12 THROUGH 17 - PAUL'S JOURNEYS TO THE GENTILES

We get lots of mail, and once in a while I like to share a letter with you from our television audience. This letter comes from Indiana, and part of it says, "We appreciate your teaching and how you can show everything in The Bible fits together. Questions I have had for years have been answered when separating Peter and Paul's teachings. Oh, how I wish everyone could see this." And so do I. Because that's when the Scriptures open up, when you can see how all these things are progressively unfolded. You can't jumble them all together, but you must keep them completely separated.

This past week we had a couple of phone calls from people who have been in cults for years. One young lady from the Minneapolis area said that she had been raised in a cult. She told me that she had watched the program for three weeks, and the way I used the Scriptures just totally opened her eyes to where she could now see where she has been misled. She went on to say how she appreciated all the references. I'm not here to show you how much I know, but to prove that what I teach is not based on just a verse here and there. I like to use lots of references from Genesis Chapter 1 to Revelation Chapter 22. Everything fits, and if it doesn't fit then you're on shaky ground. This Book was written by the Almighty God for the purpose of fitting everything together. It all dovetails so beautifully. If you have questions where something doesn't fit then something is wrong. Go back and search the Scriptures.

In our last lesson we finished Acts Chapter 11. For a bit of recap, we saw the stoning of Stephen and were introduced to Saul of Tarsus (Acts Chapter 8). In Chapter 9 we had the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus. Almost immediately God sent him out into the desert in Arabia, where He revealed to him the doctrines of Grace, over what we think was a three-year period of time. During that time God commissions Peter to go up to the house of Cornelius. I always say I thank God that Acts Chapter 10 follows Acts Chapter 9. Not numerically, but in content. Because this again makes everything fit so beautifully. Had the content in Chapter 10 taken place before Saul's conversion, then I couldn't teach the way I do. But it didn't. Saul was converted in Chapter 9, as the head of that long line of sinners that will be saved by Grace (Ref. I Timothy 1:15,16). In the next chapter, God sends Peter to Cornelius' Gentile house. Though Peter couldn't comprehend it, he had to admit that God did save Gentiles without bringing them into contact with Judaism. So the transition out of Judaism proceeds, with God dealing with Israel. Now He's going to the Gentiles.

Then we saw that many of these Jewish believers who had been chased out of Jerusalem, as a result of Saul's horrible persecution, got as far as Antioch, close to the
Mediterranean Sea in Syria. There God began to generate interest among Gentiles for
the first time. You don't catch that back in the earlier chapters of Acts, that Gentiles
were coming and asking about things concerning the God of Israel. But up in Antioch
Gentiles had become interested. When the Jewish believers at Jerusalem heard about
that, they got shook up, and sent Barnabas to check it out. Then when Barnabas, God's
man at the right time, saw indeed that God was beginning to deal with Gentiles, he
went looking for Saul. He didn't just accidentally run into him, but rather went
looking for him, and when he found him he brought him back to Antioch. And then
Paul and Barnabas ministered to that Gentile congregation for eighteen months.

In Chapter 12, still in transition, we leave Paul and Barnabas for a while, and come
back to Jerusalem and Peter. Most of you are familiar with this chapter. Peter is in
prison, and all those Jewish believers are praying for him. If it wasn't so pitiful, it
would almost be funny. Here they are having a prayer meeting in the home of one of
the believers for the release of Peter in prison. The angel does open the prison doors
and escorts Peter to the street. Peter goes down and stands at the gate where the prayer
meeting is being held. When a young lady goes out to see who is knocking, she
doesn't even let him in, but runs back into the house to tell them, "Peter's at the
door!" Did they believe her? No! They had been praying fervently for his release, and
when it happens, they couldn't believe it. We're no different today. We pray and pray,
and most of the time we really don't believe it's going to happen. But you had better
believe it, because God is a prayer-answering God.

So throughout Chapter 12, God has been dealing with Peter and the Jewish believers
in Jerusalem. Now to Chapter 13, where again we go back to Paul up in Antioch. With
the exception of that little interlude in Acts Chapter 15, we found it to be a parallel to
Galatians Chapter 2. From this point on, you won't see another word concerning Peter.
Not a word. Isn't that amazing! In the first eight chapters, it was all Peter, and nothing
of Saul of Tarsus. In Chapter 9 Saul is converted on the road to Damascus, but in
Chapter 13 Peter fades off the scene, never to be heard from again, except for that one
instance in Chapter 15, which is in 51 A.D. So everything concerns Paul and his
ministry to the Gentiles. In his early ministry he's going to go first to the synagogues
of the Jews, because Romans 1:16 says by inspiration:

Romans 1:16

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto
salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." So
throughout his early years of ministry, Paul goes to the Jews first. He always starts at
the synagogue. When they reject it, he goes to the Gentiles. Now verse 1 of Chapter
13.
Acts 13:1

"NOW there were in the church that was at Antioch (a Gentile Church under Paul's teaching. Finally, we're dealing with the Church we are acquainted with. The real New Testament Church, which is the Body of Christ. That consortium of every born-again believer, whether we are Jew or Gentile, we are all placed into the Body of Christ the moment we are saved) certain prophets and teachers (Paul never claims to be the only one, he merely claimed to be the first, the leader [Ref. I Timothy 1:15-16] and there were others that followed in his foot steps); as Barnabas, and Simeon that was call Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul."

Acts 13:2-4

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them (God is providential here. He is in complete control).' And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (that is out into the Gentile world). So they (Paul and Barnabas), being sent forth by the Holy Ghost (this is the work of God), departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."

Always remember that the Church which is His Body has no earthly headquarters. Oh, remember that. Denominations may have their headquarters, but the Body of Christ, the true Church, has no earthly headquarters. It's in Heaven. Now Judaism, and Israel under the Law had Jerusalem as the headquarters. Everything funneled into and out of Jerusalem concerning the Jew. Never get hung up that there is an earthly headquarters for the Church. Remember way back when I started in Genesis 1:1.

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

Do you remember how I tied that together? That all the way through Scripture, we have these two areas in which God works. God's earthly people, Israel, and God's heavenly people, the Body of Christ. You can't mix them. God's earthly people were predominately under Law. God's heavenly people are under Grace. And there's that chasm that keeps them separated. And so, consequently, as Jerusalem was the head of everything concerning the Jew, Heaven is the headquarters of the Church. Not Antioch or Rome or Jerusalem nor any other city that you can name. So they left with the Holy Spirit being the Sender. And they departed unto Seleucia and they sailed to Cyprus, the island. Now verse 5:
Acts 13:5-7

"And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews (He always goes first to the synagogues): and they had also John to their minister (John Mark, the young man who wrote the Gospel of Mark). And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos (at the other end of Cyprus), they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet (and a what?), a Jew, whose name was Barjesus (watch this closely because it's very prophetic to a certain degree): Which was with the deputy (governor, the political leader, a Roman) of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God."

We see this constantly where Gentiles, by the urging of the Holy Spirit, show an interest in God's Word. Even this Roman deputy indicates to Paul and Barnabas he wants to converse with them.

Acts 13:8-11a

"But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith." Elymas was probably his right hand man. And he tried to keep Paul and Barnabas from sharing the Gospel with this Sergius Paulus." Verse 9:

"Then Saul (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him (that is this Jewish sorcerer), And said, `O full of all subtility and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord (now here is the prophetic part)? And now, behold the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun (not forever but) for a season....'"

This Elymas is a perfect picture of the Nation of Israel as a whole. Because everywhere that Paul went, who were his strongest opposition? The Jews! Some Jews became believers, but for the most part they opposed Paul with their legalism. Let's compare this with the Book of Romans Chapter 11. Now remember, Elymas wasn't stricken blind for the rest of his life but only for a season. And the same way for the Nation of Israel. They have been blinded, but it's not a permanent blindness; it's temporary, although it's been 1900 + years. One day the spiritual eyes of Israel are going to be opened.

Romans 11:7
"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it (what did every Jew want deep inside? The King, The Messiah, The Redeemer. A few of them recognized Him. That's what it means here. A few became the election. But the majority rejected Him), and the rest were blinded." I'm not accusing Israel of anything, but The Book is.

I was listening to a tape by a Rabbi who was pointing out the differences between Christian doctrine and Judaism. Naturally he was under Judaism. He said Christianity teaches this and that, but Jews just can't agree with that. But, he said, "Maybe it's like the Book of Romans says, maybe we have been blinded." There is no maybe about it; they have been. Most of them reject the basic truth even in the Old Testament. They refuse to believe that Jesus was The Christ, The Messiah. They simply can't see it. But a Jew can be saved today just like a Gentile if he will open his eyes and his spiritual heart and believe it. For the most part, the nation has been blinded because of their rejection of The Messiah. So, this Elymas is a perfect picture of the Nation of Israel as a whole. But one day Israel's eyes will be opened and they will see the truth of their Messiah. Isaiah says the Nation of Israel will be born in a day.

Acts 13:12

"Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

Turn to I Corinthians. Remember that everyplace Paul went he preached the finished work of the Cross. And though every instance may not be real graphic, I want you to rest assured that every place that Paul went, this was the main theme of his message. Most of the time he will say if you believe that Christ died for your sins, was buried and rose again thou shalt be saved. And that's what he preached to this deputy. Let's look at I Corinthians 1:17:

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 (the preaching of the Cross, the Gospel) is the power of God."

I Corinthians 1:22,23

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom (they're philosophers): But we preach Christ crucified,..." That's Paul's theme throughout his letters. So, like it says in Acts 13:12, when the writer talks about the doctrine of the
Lord having come from the lips of Paul you know what it was: how Christ died for the sins of the world. Now Acts 13:13:

**Acts 13:13**

"Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John (Mark) departing from them returned to Jerusalem."

This will be a point of contention a little later in Paul's ministry, because evidently John Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, wavered when he got to the underbelly of Asia Minor. Going into those semi-civilized areas of barbaric-type people, Mark chickened out. That just plain English. Mark was fearful of what was out there. So he turned around and went back to Jerusalem. So later on when John Mark, a nephew of Barnabas, had matured and Barnabas insisted that they take John Mark with them again, Paul says, "**No way! He chickened out on us once and that's enough.**" Maybe Paul might have been a little unforgiving, I don't know. But anyway, this is why Paul and Barnabas had their falling out, and again we have to recognize that God must have been on Paul's side, because it isn't Paul who disappears from the scene, but Barnabas. And who takes Barnabas' place? Silas. After that event, it's Paul and Silas.

As they go up into Asia Minor they go up into that area where all of the basic early churches were located. All the churches that are listed in Paul's letters and here in the Book of Acts were all in that western half of Turkey. Back in Biblical times that was called Asia Minor. And that went all the way to the western coast of Turkey where Ephesus was located. But in that area of Asia Minor was where Paul had his greatest work. All the cities that you are acquainted with, Colosse, Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira, they were all in that same graphical area. In our next lesson we will take a look at the tremendous message that Paul preached in the synagogue up there in Antioch of Pisidia. This is not the same as the Antioch of Syria which he and Barnabas left from.
Now back to our study in the Book of Acts. We always enjoy teaching The Book, and trust you will get interested in the Word of God and study it, and as I have said so often before, you don't have to agree with me on everything. There's room for disagreement, except when it comes to the plan of Salvation. That is set in concrete, and no one can change that. I'll never compromise it, not one bit. We are saved by the finished work of Cross plus nothing. And that of course is appropriated by faith. That's by believing in Christ's death, burial, and Resurrection for Salvation, and nothing else. Ref: I Corinthians 15: 1-4.

Let's just jump right in where we left off in our last lesson, and that would be in Acts Chapter 13. Paul and Barnabas have left Antioch of Syria for their first missionary journey, they have touched the island of Cyprus, and have come to what I call the underbelly of Asia Minor (what today we call Turkey). In Paul's day Ephesus was out on the west coast, as was Sardis, and then inland was Antioch of Pisidia where they have gone first. And then Derbe, and Lystra. Up on the coast is Troas, and along the Black Sea we will see the land of Bithynia where Paul had intended to go, and then go on back down through Asia. But instead, the Holy Spirit led him across to Greece. These will be some of the cities that will be coming up in the Book of Acts. They will go across to Troas, to Philippi, to Thessalonica, down to Berea, down to Athens, over to Corinth, and then he will be going back to Antioch where they started from.

On another trip Paul will come back and retrace all of this. In his prison experience he's going to be leaving Caesarea in Israel, and again touch Cyprus. They will have the storm at sea, and are tossed to and fro and finally end up on the little island of Malta. Then he goes up the coast and finally will end up at Rome in the closing part of the Book of Acts. So this is the area of the world where Paul spent most of his time, and these are the Churches that are addressed in his letters. This is where most of them are in the Book of Revelation, those seven Churches in Chapters 1-3. So that will give you a little glimpse of how the geography lays in that Mediterranean area.

So now we find them at Antioch of Pisidia in the center of Asia Minor. Paul, like Stephen in Chapter 7, is going to rehearse the whole history of the Jewish nation beginning with Abraham. I'm not going to take it verse by verse, but there is a little gem of basic doctrine in this chapter that I want you to see that should solve a lot of confusion. What does the Scripture mean by the "Only Begotten Son of God?" We use the term so often, but I think most Church members and most Christians think of the Only Begotten Son of God as His birth at Bethlehem. Nothing could be further from the truth. That is not where Christ became the Only Begotten Son of God. Not at
all. But here we have the explanation of what it really referred to. In Acts 13 Paul has come all the way through Christ's earthly ministry, His Crucifixion and then in verse 30:

**Acts 13:30-32**

"But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers."

That takes us back to Abraham in Genesis 12. Those promises were repeated to Isaac, and Jacob and the Twelve sons of Jacob. And then the prophets beginning with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, all spoke of His first coming.

**Acts 13:33**

"God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that (now watch this) he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, `Thou are my Son, this day have I begotten thee.'"

Now let's go back and look at Psalm Chapter 2, because a lot of people just don't comprehend that God the Son was so vividly portrayed back here in the Old Testament. This is the little Psalm that we use as the benchmark of prophecy, or, as I always refer to it, as the outline of the Old Testament program. This chapter foretold His rejection, and his death by Jew and Gentile together.

**Psalms 2:1-7**

"WHY do the heathen (Gentiles) rage, and the people (Jews) imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers (of Israel) take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying `Let us break their bands (the Godhead) asunder and cast their cords from us (we won't have You rule over us).'

He (God) that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them (the Jew and Gentile Nations) in derision. Then (notice these are all time words) shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure (tribulation). Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion (thousand-year Kingdom rule still future). Now here is what Paul is quoting. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, `Thou art my Son (Christ): this day have I begotten thee.'"
Now lock that in. "This day have I begotten thee." That's what God the Father says. Now let's come back to Acts and get the definition. What's He talking about? Well He's not talking about Bethlehem, He's talking about something far different.

Acts 13:34

"And as concerning that (now you have to read carefully or you will miss it. Concerning what? That thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee) he raised him up from the dead (do you see that?), now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." To put the cap on that turn to Romans Chapter 1. There's no doubt the Scriptural account of the only begotten Son of God is the Resurrection! When He arose from the dead He became the only begotten Son of God in power, as Paul says here in Romans.

Romans 1:1-4

"PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh (Mary was of the seed of David, as was Joseph); And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

That is as plain as I can make it. It was the power of God that raised Him from the dead, that declares Him to be the only begotten Son of God. This is why the Resurrection stands at the heart of the Gospel. I don't know how many people have approached me over the last twenty-five years who have a pastor, or Sunday School teacher, that believes that Christ died on the Cross and is the Saviour of the world, but have trouble believing in His Resurrection. I always say I have a problem understanding that they are even saved. Because if you haven't got the power of the Resurrection as the basis of your Salvation, then you have none. Because it all rests on that! That God raised Him from the dead!

When we were in the Gospels, I pointed out when Peter was confronted at the time of Christ's arrest, what did he do? He cursed and turned away, and denied that he ever knew Christ. He ran scared and so did the others. But after the Resurrection he wasn't afraid of Rome, the Jews or anybody. Why? Because he had now witnessed the power of the Resurrection. And that is the bedrock of our Gospel. It's not enough to believe that Jesus was a good man. It's not enough to believe that He died by Crucifixion. We must take it to the whole fruition of the Gospel and that is: "He was raised from the dead." Victorious over sin, hell, death, and everything. As we get into the Book of Romans in the next few weeks, we will see that this is what Paul
trumpets to the world. That we are what we are because not only did Christ die, but He arose victorious over our enemy, and was able to break the bonds and shackles of sin and death. Let's continue with our study in Acts.

Acts 13:43,44

"Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God (not in the Law of Moses which had been the custom). And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."

Now remember we are still in that transitional phase, so Paul will do things we just can't comprehend. He is still bending to the Jew, but realizing that he is the apostle to the Gentile. So when you see these things that seem more Jewish, just recognize that Paul is going to the Jew first, during the first part of his ministry. Then when Israel continues to reject, he'll finally just turn almost completely to the Gentiles. So when you run into these things that seem still part of Peter's preaching and teaching, and Paul seems in line with it, it is just because he's still dealing transitionally with Judaism. But it's coming out of that into what we would call the Age of Grace.

Acts 13:45

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes (of Gentiles), they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming."

Now let's go back to the Book of Romans and this time in Chapter 11. Unfortunately, it wasn't long after Christianity began to spread throughout the Roman Empire, that instead of causing the Jew to envy, it caused the Jew to hate them. Why? Because Christianity began to hate the Jew. Because they were accusing them of being The Christ killer. And to get rid of the Jew would be doing God a favor. If you were a Jew, how would you feel? The same way. They began to hate anything connected with Christianity. But in the early days, as Paul and Barnabas are witnessing to these Gentiles and they are being saved, they still have a love for the Jews and the Jews are filled with envy. And that's what God wanted. Now look at Romans 11:

Romans 11:7-11

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election (those that did believe) hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and
ears that they sh
should not hear;) unto this day [see it hasn't changed; even today they
are that way]. And David saith, 'Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a
stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they
may not see, and bow down their back always[now this is speaking of the Nation of
Israel, not the individual Jew].' I say then, 'Have they stumbled that they should
fall [that God would kick them out of His sight]? God forbid: but rather through their
fall [Israel had every opportunity to have The King and the Kingdom and their
Messiah but they rejected it, and through that fall as a result of rejection] salvation is
come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.'

And never lose sight of that, Why did God open the windows of Grace to us Gentiles?
Because Israel rejected it. And they fell from that place of pre-eminence of being the
Covenant favored nation. So Salvation is come to us Gentiles to provoke the Jew to
jealousy or envy. So it was working. Now come back to Acts Chapter 13. So as the
Gentiles are now hungry for The Word, and Paul and Barnabas are laying out The
Word that Christ died for them and rose from the dead for them. The Jews are seeing
all this happen among the Gentiles and they become envious. Now verse 46:

Acts 13:46

"Then (after the Jews showed their envy, and are blaspheming) Paul and Barnabas
waxed bold, and said, 'It was necessary (had to be) that the word of God should first
have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you,...'"

You know what scares me about our beloved America? In a lot of ways you can make
the comparison between Israel (when she was still under God's leadership; when they
were still the Covenant people) and America today. I can't help but draw that analogy.
America has had so much opportunity to have the truth of the Word of God, but what
are they doing with it? They are throwing it out, they are rejecting it. People have sent
me material from their own denominational headquarters, from some of these very
liberal people, and it's enough to make you vomit. Some of what these people are
putting out contains more pornographic language than I've ever had in my house.
Language that is filthy, and they are promoting it throughout their huge denomination.
God's not going to stand for it. Unless we have a tremendous turning back to the truth
of this Book, then we are doomed. I hate to say it but we are doomed. I don't care how
much the planner can work. I don't care how much the politicians can labor, we are
doomed if America does not wake up, because God is not going stand for it. Here
again, Paul speaking in verse 46:

Acts 13:46,47
"...but seeing ye put it from you (in unbelief), and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life (now Paul says), lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Just that simple "...we turn to the Gentiles." Verse 47:

"For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, `I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.'"

We looked at all these verses when we came up through the Old Testament, how Israel was to have been a light to the Gentiles. Israel's Messiah was to have been a Light to Israel, but in turn a Light to the whole world. But they couldn't have that situation unless they believed, and we know they rejected it. And so now Paul is rehearsing all of this. Now verse 48:

Acts 13:48

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." And people can't swallow that today!

I was just talking to someone recently where they had heard a sermon just last Lord's day, that they had to do this and do that and then hope they're saved. Listen, that's not what this Book teaches. This Book teaches believe that Christ has done it all. I told a couple over the phone recently to just simply believe that when Christ finished the work of the Cross, and rose victorious over the grave and death, there is nothing more we can do.

We had an interesting question come up and I'm always so thankful for these questions. It ended up in a super evening of discussion. And the question was this: "Is it still necessary to beg the Lord for forgiveness?" No! I had another call from Tennessee, "Do I have to pray the sinner's prayer to be saved?" "God be merciful to me a sinner." No! And I know some people won't like this, but if you still have to beg for mercy and forgiveness, then this Book is a lie. Because this Book says, "That all the mercy of God was poured out on that Cross." God has already forgiven all human beings of all sin. It was paid for in full, and He doesn't expect someone to beg to be forgiven. He says you are forgiven - Believe It! The other word He uses in II Corinthians 5 is what? Reconciled. The world has already been reconciled to God. Now after we become believers and when we recognize that we have sin, we need to confess it to Him. I never want anyone to think I am promoting license to sin just because you are forgiven. Never! I don't think anyone teaches more plainly the separated walk of the believer that God demands.
Turn to the Book of Hebrews Chapter 2. We have to understand that the work of the Cross was enough for every human being from Adam to the end of time. Every sin has been already paid for, and now the only thing that God asks is to believe it.

_Hebrews 2:9_

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

Now let me tell you something. Do you know what is going to make the eternal doom of the wicked so awful? It's not the heat of the flames. It's not the appetites unsatisfied. It's going to be an eternity of regret. "I didn't have to be here. This was all paid for and I rejected it. To spend an eternity in torment and constant regret that there was no need to be here, it was all paid for and I walked it underfoot." There's nothing worse than regret. This is what the world is doing today, they are walking it underfoot. They are rejecting a pardon. That's what lost mankind is doing when they reject Salvation. They are rejecting a pardon. Do you know what a pardon is? A pardon is a decree that sets you right back as if you had never broken the Law in the first place. It's completely wiping the slate clean. And that is what God has done for us.
LESSON THREE * PART III

ACTS 12 THROUGH 17 - PAUL'S JOURNEYS TO THE GENTILES

It thrills us to see folks studying the Word of God, like the Berean Christians in Acts who searched the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul and Barnabas said was so. Now the final verses in Acts 13:

Acts 13:50-52

"But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coast (or their borders). But they (Paul and Barnabas) shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. And the disciples (these Gentile disciples) were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."

Now in Chapter 14 they are going to stop at the little city of Iconium which is in the central part of Asia Minor. Verse 2:

Acts 14:2-6

"But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city, was divided: and part held with the Jews (that Paul and Barnabas were false teachers), and part with the apostles (and became followers of Paul and Barnabas). And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, They were aware of it, and fled into Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:" Well they go on up to the next little town which is Lystra and much the same thing happened. And now come down to verse 19:

Acts 14:19

"And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead." Turn to II Corinthians Chapter 12. Because the timing is identical, I like to think that while Paul was unconscious, after being stoned and dragged out for dead, that God gave him an even greater experience: Paul got a glimpse of glory. I envy him, but God never let him share it.

II Corinthians 12:1,2
"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord [and of course he shares them in various ways in his epistles]. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago [that's identical to the time when he was in Derbe and Lystra in Acts Chapter 14], (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven."

Scripture has three areas called heaven. One is the atmosphere of the birds of the heavens. Another is the area of the stars and planets, and the third Heaven is the abode of God. That's the three heavens of Scripture. So Paul now is caught up into the very abode of God. The Heaven of the heavens. Now verse 3:

II Corinthians 12:3-6

"And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth), How that he [Paul is speaking of himself] was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter [he heard the language of Heaven]. Of such an one will I glory [Paul would have liked to share it, but God wouldn't permit it]: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory [or brag], I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth; but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me."

Paul often put himself down. Because of his appearance, he had nothing to brag about physically, and he knew that. Contemptible and the least, was the way Paul wanted to be remembered.

II Corinthians 12:7,8

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh (in other words, God allowed a human suffering on the body of Paul to keep him humble, lest he get proud and feel exalted), the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice (three times), that it might depart from me."

But did it? No. God didn't heal him of whatever it was. I've got an idea what it was (a repulsive disease; a painful disease) and yet he took it with him all the days of his life. Because God said in verse 9:

II Corinthians 12:9
"And he said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee' (and we know it was. It carried Paul all the way through his ministry. Shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, cold and nakedness. God's Grace was always sufficient. And that's what you and I as believers must rest on. Regardless of what God sees fit to take us through, we know He's going to take us through it, and He'll be with us when we reach the other side); for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

When Paul said, "for my strength is made perfect in weakness," this is why God chose never to use the great men of the world. He didn't use wealth, and kings, but He always used the common man. He used the people who had nothing in their flesh to offer. In Genesis, Moses, the second man in Egypt, bless his heart, thought he was going to be God's man. He had all the power and pomp and circumstance of Pharaoh behind him. He thought he could lead the children of Israel out of bondage. But God couldn't use him in that position. So God sent him to the back side of the desert to herd sheep for forty years. Then as a lowly shepherd (probably kind of smelly), now God could say, "Moses I'm going to send you back to Egypt." That's the way God works. He can't use the pomp and circumstance of this world.

Let's briefly go through Chapter 15. It is in this chapter that Paul and Barnabas are called to Jerusalem, after their missionary endeavors throughout Asia Minor, and they are back at Antioch. More Gentiles are coming into that congregation and the news of it reaches Jerusalem. Peter, James, and John and the rest of them, just can't comprehend that God is doing this with Gentiles. So in Chapter 15 we have what we call "The counsel at Jerusalem." This took place in 51 A.D. twenty-some years after Pentecost. And these Jewish believers are still not ready to accept Gentiles being saved by Paul's Gospel aside from keeping the Law of Moses. But Peter came to Paul's defense, as he remembered that at the house of Cornelius, God indeed saved Gentiles. The multitude of Jews quieted down and gave Paul and Barnabas audience.

Acts 15:13,14

"And after they had held their peace (the Jewish believers), James (the moderator, the half brother of Jesus) answered, saying, 'Men and brethren, hearken unto me:'"

"Simeon (or Peter) hath declared how God at the first (now when was that? Well just the chapter after Saul's conversion. They were the first Gentiles that were approached) did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name."

The Church, the Body of Christ is now going to be called out of that mass of Gentiles. When Peter preached to the Nation of Israel, how many had to respond? Everyone. But when Paul goes to the Gentiles the Scripture says to
save "some." A calling out of a sampling of the masses of the Gentile people. He is going to call out a people for His Name. Now verse 15, you see the order?

Acts 15:15,16

"And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written," This comes from the Book of Amos.

"After this (well after what? The calling out of the Church, the calling out a people for His Name in verse 14. After that has been accomplished, and as Paul teaches, it has to be lifted off the earth. Then God can start working with the Nation of Israel once again. Do you see how plain that is?) I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David (the Temple), which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

This is all in Israel's future. God's going to finish what He started with Israel. The Jew in Palestine is the beginning of all this. They are coming from every nation under Heaven and God is getting the little favored nation ready for the appearance of first, the Anti-Christ, and then, seven years later, the true Christ.

Acts 15:17,18

"That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Know unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

When the Jewish leaders at Jerusalem gave an agreement that they would recognize Gentiles could be saved by Paul's Gospel, aside from Judaism in adhering to the Law of Moses, they agreed to it provided that these Gentile believers were taught as in verse 20.:

Acts 15:20

"But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, (that doesn't mean all that much to us today, because we don't have rank idolatry around us, and people making sacrifices to pagan gods. But in Paul's day everywhere they went that's all it was. All these great temples to the pagan gods, were blatant idolatry. And these sheep and goats that these pagan offered would end up in the marketplace. So the Gentile believers were not to partake of those that had been offered) and from fornication (immorality in all of its form), and from things strangled, and from blood." And that goes back to Genesis Chapter 9, when Noah and his three sons came off the ark. Up until that time nothing was ever killed to be eaten, they ate only that
which grew naturally. But after the flood, God said they could eat the flesh of animals provided that it was bled. And God's Law still holds. I've read in hunting and fishing magazines over and over, that if you want your game to be good eating the first requirement is to bleed them. It's Biblical. God has mandated that man not partake of the blood of anything.

Acts 15:21

"For Moses of old time hath in every city (throughout the Roman Empire) them that preach him (the Law of Moses), being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. "

These Gentile believers could not just fly in the face of all that, because it would be destroying their testimony. It's no different today. You know what the biggest detriment to true Christianity is today? Careless Christians. No wonder the world says they are a bunch of hypocrites. You can't hide behind hypocrites, like my wife always says: "You've got to be smaller than they are." And that's so true. But nevertheless the world is watching us. Now verse 28:

Acts 15:28

"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:"

Then Paul repeats it in verse 29. Now verse 30:

Acts 15:30,31

"So when they were dismissed (with permission to go and preach that Gospel of Grace to the Gentiles), they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation."

That they didn't have to keep the Jewish Law. They were free from all of that.

Acts 15:32-35

"And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still (God knew that Paul and Barnabas were going to have a falling out, so He caused Silas not to go back to Jerusalem with the rest of them). Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also." Now from verse 36 to 41 we have the falling out between Paul and Barnabas, because of John Mark. Barnabas slips off the scene and Silas takes his place with Paul, and in Chapter 16 we are going to come all the way over to verse 6.
Acts 16:6

"Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia (they have covered the whole central part of Asia Minor, now they are in Troas. Paul has plans to go back through Bithynia and I imagine back through Asia and then to Antioch where they had started from. But look what happens here at Troas. This is on the shore of the Aegean Sea), and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia," Now isn't that something? God had something else in mind.

Acts 16:7-11

"After they were come to Mysia, they assayed (or had planned) to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia (that's northern Greece), and prayed him, saying, 'Come over into Macedonia, and help us.' And after he had seen the vision, immediately we (Luke is with them) endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;"

Now what's happened? God had long before ordained that this Gospel of Grace should not go east of the Orient, but to the west and Europe. And I've told my classes for twenty-five years now, that in your prayer time, you thank God that He sent Paul over to Europe rather than back to Asia. Because when the Gospel went to Europe, it went to our forefathers. And it was the Gospel that set everything moving in Europe. All the reformations and the industrial revolutions, all the technology that came out of Europe and later America, here's where it all began. Christianity is what set everything free. Christianity is what gave mankind the freedom to pursue his own ideas. Christianity is what set the female gender free. That was the beginning of true feminism when Christianity put women on the same level in God's eyes as man. And so over and over thank the Lord for this vision that said, "Go to Macedonia."
I never lift a verse out of the text and just comment on one verse. If I can't leave everything together then I'll leave it alone. And there are some places where I don't have all the answers but I'm not going to twist them and try to figure out what I think they should mean. When I teach I leave everything exactly where it is. I had a letter the other day that asked the question, "Why are there so many contradictions?" There are none! There are no contradictions in Scripture. Now there is a change in operations, or programs. What God told Israel under the Law is a contradiction of what He tells us under Grace. That is why it is so important to understand where the Church is in the Scripture. Also remember that Law and Grace can never mix. Let's go to Chapter 16. In the last lesson Paul and Silas have been called from Asia to Europe. It is the turning point of God going to the Gentile world. By virtue of this vision that Paul was not to go back to Bithynia, but to go to Macedonia. And they immediately did. So here they are at Troas, and they are going to go across and stop at Philippi, then over to Thessalonica, down to Berea, down to Athens and over to Corinth.

Acts 16:11-13

"Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city, abiding certain days. And on the sabbath (here is one of the occasions where Paul goes back to his Jewish background) we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither."

No doubt Philippi did not have a full blown synagogue. The Roman authority probably had given them permission to meet in a park along the river where they could have their devotions. Evidently there weren't any men. It was just a small group of women, and so Paul and Silas approach them.

Acts 16:14a

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God (like many people today who worship God, here is another person who worshipped God, was devoted, and sincere, but she was lost), heard us; whose heart the Lord opened,...."
As you pray for me and the ministry, I hope you will pray that as I teach, the Lord will open hearts as directed by the Holy Spirit. What I say means nothing. But if the Spirit opens hearts of people who need to see the light, then that is what it is all about. In the last week we have seen two people out of cult background that the Lord opened their hearts and now they can see they were totally wrong. I showed from the Scriptures the real truth of Salvation. That's the work of the Holy Spirit, and that's where your prayers come in. **The Lord** opens hearts.

*Acts 16:14b*

"...that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

A few lessons ago I said God didn't leave The Word in the hands of Angels, but in the hands of mankind. He has almost always used one human instrument to lead another human to a knowledge of Salvation. That's the way God works. That is why I want you to learn to be skilled in the Scriptures so when opportunity arises to share this with someone, you won't stumble, but simply say this is what The Word says. Get a few verses and be able to show someone what The Word really says. In verse 15 she became a believer:

*Acts 16:15*

"And when she was baptized, and her household (in that transition period, baptism in the early days of Paul is still part and parcel each time he has a convert. We'll see this again with the Philippian jailer, but I maintain as Paul goes into deeper and fuller revelations, the importance of water baptism drops away. Many won't agree with me but that's their prerogative. Here, he was still practicing water baptism the moment she believed), she besought us, saying, `If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.' And she constrained us."

Now again we have the opposition of a demonically inspired young girl. Later, Paul will demand that the demon come out of her. But let's be careful. This is still in the Book of Acts and none of Paul's letters have been written yet. I think Paul's earliest letter was written about 58 A.D. So all these things are taking place before he writes his epistles. Always keep that in mind when you are studying Acts. But as he has revelations and is instructed to write his epistles which become The Word of God, then you no longer see so much of this, as you do here in his early ministry. Just check it out. So now they are in Philippi, and have cast the demon out of this young girl. Paul never gives us instructions to cast out demons in any of his epistles. So aside from leading someone to Salvation, I personally think that we are to leave exorcism alone. I've seen people who got too involved with this and it totally destroyed their ministry. So just take that for what it is worth. Now verse 19:
Acts 16:19-22

"And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers (now remember this is a Gentile city under Roman authority). And brought them to the magistrates, saying, 'These men being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans:' And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them."

Acts 16:23,24

"And when they had laid many stripes upon them (this is just one of several that Paul suffered throughout his ministry. And each stripe probably had eight or nine leather tongs with bits of metal on the ends, so when they got through with Paul and Silas they were like hamburger), they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: " Now the jailer being what he is, if he is going to keep them safely, he doesn't leave them up on ground floor, but rather down in the dungeon.

"Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."

I'm sure it was wet, and cold; their backs like hamburger; no antibiotics and no soothing salve. Yet in the next verse we find Paul and Silas, in spite of their circumstances, are able to sing. That's hard to comprehend, but that's the Grace of God. I remember years ago, I asked a pastor, "What if real persecution should come, can I take it?" He said, "Don't worry about it, today you probably can't, but when the time comes the Grace of God will be sufficient." I have never forgotten that. That must be the case, because how else did millions of Christians suffer the rack, burning at the stake, and they didn't scream and carry on. I think God's Grace so flooded these two men that they didn't feel their wounds, or pain, and were able to sing praises to God. Now verse 25:

Acts 16:25,26

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

God can even control the effect of an earthquake, doing nothing more than opening the doors of the prison and loosening everyone's bands. Now that's the God that we
serve. And He hasn't changed. Now God isn't doing this kind of miracle today, I grant you, but He could if He wanted to. Here the prisoners didn't lose their lives; they could have fled, but they didn't. Amazing isn't it. They all stayed right there in prison with the doors open.

Acts 16:27-29

"And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." Under Roman law, if you lose a prisoner, then you are also a dead duck anyway, so you might as well hasten the operation. Now verse 28:

"But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, `Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,"

Now reflect a moment. This jailer was a citizen of Philippi. Where do you suppose he was that afternoon before he came on duty as the jailer? I personally think he witnessed the scourging of Paul and Silas. I think he heard them preach up there in the street. And so I don't think it was totally new to the jailer when Paul and Silas approached him with what's going on. Now read on:

Acts 16:30

"And brought them out, and said, `Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"

I'm always emphasizing the pronoun `I' here. For now let's turn to Acts Chapter 2. This is what I call comparing Scripture with Scripture. I know a lot of the theologians like to take the Greek and twist it all out of shape to make it mean what they want it to mean. They can do it, but I refuse to do so. I'm just going to stay with what the translators did. I feel the King James translators were over two hundred years closer to the Greek than our scholars of today are. Granted, they didn't have computers, but nevertheless I still trust the King James translators. Here in Acts 2:37 it says (Peter has been addressing only Jews through out the whole chapter):

Acts 2:37

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, `Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"

Notice the pronoun `we.' That's the Nation of Israel on trial asking, "What must we do?" Chapter 16 is Gentile ground, and we are dealing with an individual, so he
says, "What must I do?" Do you see the difference? Now we are dealing with individual Gentiles. God does not save people in lumps. He saves us one at a time. That's why we stress the personal aspect of Salvation. I made a statement that I think some people had a hard time swallowing. "When we believers get into eternity, I think we will have our own personal time with the Lord." I don't know how, but I think every believer is going to be an individual in God's sight. Remember, eternity is a set of circumstances beyond our comprehension. We are victims of time. But in eternity there is no such thing as time. So things are possible in eternity that we can't begin to understand, so I think that, just as sure as we were saved individually, we will be able to converse with Him individually. In Acts Chapter 16, the Philippian jailer asks, "What must I do to be saved."

Acts 16:31

"And they said, `Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.'"

What was at the heart of Paul's message? The Gospel, that Christ died for your sins and He arose from the dead. So when Paul merely says to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was he implying? That He died for you and rose again. (Ref. I Corinthians 1:23) Let's make another comparison with Acts Chapter 2. The question is, "What must we do?" The answer is, "Repent and be baptized every one of you." Do you see that? But Paul doesn't say a word about repentance and baptism. He says, "Believe." That's not a contradiction, that's a change in programs. We are on Gentile ground and under Grace. In Acts 2 they are still under the Law and Kingdom program. Nobody has said a word about stopping Temple worship, or that you are no longer under Law. But now this is all Paul knows. "You're not under Law, but rather Grace." So to the Philippian jailer who is a Gentile, Paul can say "Believe." Believe everything has been accomplished that needs to be done.

Acts 16:33,34

"And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway, And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

He wasn't just believing that God existed. He was not just believing everything that Paul had stated concerning God dealing with mankind. And that He was the eternal Creator God (we have to believe that He is, and we have to believe that He's the one we have to deal with). There is only one way of approach and that's through the work of the Cross. So this Philippian jailer had a full understanding of that. That's why I'm sure he must have heard Paul and Silas the afternoon before they were thrown into
prison. Now they want to get rid of Paul and send him out of town and what does Paul say? No way. You can't do that, if you beat me openly as a Roman then you have to deal with me as a Roman. And that shook them up as they didn't know that Paul was a Roman citizen.

Acts 16:38-40

"And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans (they had gone contrary to Roman law by punishing these men without due process), And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

In Chapter 17, Paul goes down the coast line of present day Greece. Then through Thessalonica, and from there to Berea. After being driven out of Thessalonica by the Jews who wouldn't let them preach in the synagogue or elsewhere, they come to Berea.

Acts 17:10-14

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews (as they always did in these early days). These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures. I love for people to check me out. I don't want someone to say, "Well, that's what Les said." I want them to search the scriptures because that's what they did here.

"Therefore many of them believed (they had searched the scriptures); also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

We've got to stop at Athens at verse 15, which was the very seat of culture in those days. Iris and I were at Mars Hill one evening and I could just see the little old Apostle Paul as he stood there, and looked out over that pagan city. On that path up to the Acropolis were all of their idols of gods and goddesses. I can just imagine that Paul's heart sank, that the whole city was steeped in idolatry. To have this seat of learning, of intellectual people following false religions. How can people who are
intelligent, people who can read, follow some of this stuff? How can they believe such things.

Acts 17:15-18

"And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him, And some said, `What will this babbler say?' other some, `He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods:' because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." Paul never preached anything else. He never separated them.

Acts 17:19-21

"And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, `May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know therefore what these things mean.' (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.). The world is the same today, ready for anything that tickles their ears or sounds good. It was the same way here. They were philosophers, they were intellectual, but they were pagan.

Acts 17:22-24

"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill, and said, `Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions (systems of worship), I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD (they had an inkling that there was somebody out there they didn't know about. Paul tells them He's the One that he's revealing to them). Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;''"

Acts 17:27

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."