

Bible Study: Acts

(Part 6- Chapters 11-12)

by Gary T. Panell

Chapter 11

(1-3) "It is surprising that in a short book Luke would devote so much space to a second recital of the conversion of Cornelius. This indicates that Luke considered this event one of the most important in the life of the early church. News of the reception of the Gospel by the Gentiles reached the apostles and the Jewish Christians in Judea. Peter was apparently called to Jerusalem, and some of the Jewish Christians there disputed with him over the propriety of entering into such fellowship with Gentiles as to eat with them. It is likely that the expression, **those of the circumcision**, has a somewhat different connotation than the same phrase in 10:45. [It would mean Jews, but in this context they, it seems, thought they were better than the Gentiles.]

"While the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were discussing the significance of the salvation of the Gentiles, there emerged one party who later took the position that Gentiles must keep the Jewish law in order to be saved (15:1).

"This conservative party criticized Peter, for they recognized that a **Jew** who had table fellowship with Gentiles was in effect setting aside Jewish practices, and thereby ceased to be a Jew. They were not prepared to approve such a course of action; they believed that Jewish believers should not give up their Jewish practices." (*Wycliffe*)

"At times 'brothers' is used to refer to those of common Jewish lineage (2:29; 7:2), but in Christian contexts it denotes those united in Christ (6:3; 10:23). In matters of deep concern, the apostles did not act alone. The divine will gave guidance, and the apostles interpreted and exhorted, but the consent of the whole church was sought ('the whole group,' 6:5; 'apostles and the brothers,' 11:1; 'the church,' 11:22; 'the church and the apostles and elders,' 15:4 cf. 15:22).

"11:2 *circumcised believers*. Jewish Christians. 11:3 *uncircumcised men*. The Gentiles who would not observe the laws of clean and unclean food and would violate Jewish regulations concerning food preparation." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(4-15) "By way of reply Peter related to the Jerusalem church the story of his vision of the sheet from heaven, his visit to Caesarea, and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles as upon the Jews on the day of Pentecost (v. 15)."

(16-18) "The **gift** of tongues made it clear that God had given the same gift to the Gentile believers as he had to Jewish believers when they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. To refuse Gentiles baptism would have been to refuse to accept God's work and would in effect have been to withstand God. Peter's recital satisfied the circumcision party for the time. But the question of the status of the Gentile Christians in the church was destined shortly to arise again and to create a serious problem." (*Wycliffe*)

Some Christians would claim this is the end of the Holy Spirit's baptizing or filling of believers. But what about what happened later in Acts 19:1-7, where 12 disciples of John the Baptist were rebaptized, in the name of the Lord Jesus? Then Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. This is played down by those who want to deny that the filling of the Holy Spirit is for today.

We know from a simple study of Scripture that the **GIFT** (the 'gift' is the Holy Spirit's fullness of power or filling) of the Holy Spirit is still for today. Paul taught about the Holy Spirit's filling; Joel, Peter, and Jesus prophesied about the GIFT. "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13) Will we not ask Him? If we will not ask, are we not being ungrateful and disobedient? Yes, we will receive all He has to offer!

"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...' (Acts 2:16-21)

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the **gift** of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'" (Acts 2:38-39) Paul said, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18)

Holy Spirit Gifts and Power

Paul Walker

"Without a doubt, the Pentecostal revival of the early 1900s and the Charismatic renewal, which had its beginning in the late 1950s, together constitute one of the most innovative and impactful spiritual renovations in history. But when we investigate this phenomenon we must ask: 1) Why has this happened? 2) What is this doing? And 3) How can spiritual integrity be maintained?

Why Has This Happened?

"The first reason has been an evident need for renewal of mission and purpose throughout the church and among its individual members. Second, in view of this need for renewal, there has been a definite movement on the part of sincere believers to recover the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit, which transformed and empowered the early Christians. Emerging from this movement has been an inbreaking of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by speaking in tongues, among believers in every major denomination, demonstrating that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not a denomination or a movement but an experience that brings endowment of spiritual power for intensified service.

"Third, this inbreaking of the Holy Spirit has linked both the mainline Protestant and the traditional Pentecostal movement to the worship practices of the first century through what has appropriately been referred to as the Charismatic movement (derived from *charismata*, the Greek word used, for example, in 1 Corinthians 12:4, 30 for the gifts of the Holy Spirit).

What Is This Doing?

"Renewal then raises the question, What really happens when the gifts go to church? In attempting to answer, attention must be given to the scriptural foundation, the traditional context, and the contemporary witness.

The Scripture Is Being Fulfilled

"First, the Bible unequivocally declares, 'Be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18). An analysis of the Greek verb translated 'be filled' shows that it is in the present tense, indicating that this blessing is one that we may experience and enjoy now. The fact that the verb is a command (imperative mood) does not leave the responsive disciple an option in the matter. However, since the verb is in the passive voice, it is clear that being filled with the Spirit is not something the Christian achieves through his own efforts, but is something that is done for him and to which he submits. Hence, the Scriptures depict a theocentric view of the Holy Spirit's filling, in which the Higher reaches down to gather up the lower into ultimate communion.

"Clarity on this point dismisses the criticism or misunderstanding of some who seem to see this experience as something merely conjured up by human suggestion, proposition, or excitement.

The Person of the Holy Spirit Is at Work

"Second, the Bible reveals that the Person of the Holy Spirit has been the primary agent in all of the ministry of the Word throughout the centuries. The Scripture states clearly that the triune Godhead operates coequally, coeternally, coexistently, as one unit. But it also has been suggested, and with validity, that we might view this unity of activity with an eye toward the special function of each member of the Trinity: the executive is the Father, the architect is the Son, and the contractor is the Holy Spirit." [I would just like to add that the blueprint is the book of Acts, and that the Church should use the book of Acts along with the Gospels, and the Letters of the New Testament to build correctly in the Church Age.]

How Can Spiritual Integrity Be Maintained?

Establishing Our Perspective

"First, the Pentecostal or Charismatic sees the baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit as an experience subsequent to Christian conversion: one that comes about through a process of yielding the complete person into the guidance and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We agree that the Holy Spirit is operative in every believer and in the varied ministries of the church. Still every believer must answer the question of Acts 19:2, 'Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?'

Two expressions should be qualified here

"1. It should be understood that by 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' the traditional Pentecostal/Charismatic does not refer to that baptism of the Holy Spirit accomplished at conversion, whereby the believer is placed into the body of Christ by faith in His redeeming work on the Cross (1 Corinthians 12:13). Thus,

no biblically oriented Charismatic ever views a non-Charismatic as 'less saved' or less spiritual than himself.

"The baptism in or with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33; Acts 1:5) was and is directed by the Lord Jesus to be 'received' (John 20:22; Acts 1:8) as a 'gift' given following His ascension (John 7:39; Acts 2:38, 39). However, should any prefer to dismiss this terminology, we contend that to experience the Holy Spirit's fullness in the spirit of unity is more important than to separate company or diminish our passion for His fullness over differences in theological wording or practice.

"2. By 'a process of yielding the complete person' the Pentecostal/Charismatic does not mean either (a) a passivity of mind or (b) a self-hypnotic or trancelike state. Rather, this terminology refers to an assertive prayerful, heartfelt quest for God. The mind is active, worshiping Jesus Christ, the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). The emotions are warmed, as the love of God is poured forth into our hearts (Romans 5:5). One's physical being participates, as worship is spoken and expressed, with upraised voice in prayer (Acts 4:24) or upraised hands of adoration (Psalm 63:1-5)" (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

At this point, I would like to move from the theological basis for the filling of the Holy Spirit, to hear from some who have experienced what happened in Acts, in their own lives today. This section is taken from the true story *The Cross and the Switchblade* by David Wilkerson. "Shortly after we became interested in the Holy Spirit's role in helping a boy rid himself of an addiction to narcotics, we had a visit at the Center from a Jesuit priest. He, too, wanted to know more about the baptism. He had heard our young people at a street rally and was so impressed that he wanted to know their secret.

"We spent the afternoon with Father Gary at the Center, exploring with him the deep meanings of the baptism. The first thing we did was to show him the references to the experience in the Douay Version of the Bible. 'The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a denominational experience,' I said. 'We have Episcopalians and Lutherans and Baptists and Methodists working with us, all of whom have been filled with the Holy Spirit.'

"In its essence, we told Father Gary, the baptism is a religious experience which gives you power. 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,' said Jesus when He showed Himself to His apostles after His death.

"In my office, Father Gary and I bent over the Bible. 'The first reference to this special experience comes in the early part of the Gospel story. The Jews, you remember, wondered for a while if John the Baptist were the Messiah. But John told them, 'there cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed,' he said, and this is the important prediction, 'I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.' (Mark 1:7-8)

"From the beginning of Christianity, then, this baptism of the Holy Ghost has had a special significance because it marks the difference between the mission of a mere man, no matter how bold and effective, and the mission of Christ: Jesus would baptize His followers with the Holy Ghost. In His last hours on earth, Jesus spent a great deal of time talking to His disciples about the Holy Ghost who would come after His death to stand by them, comfort them, lead them and give them that power which would allow them to carry His mission forward.

"Then, after the crucifixion, He appeared to them and told them not leave Jerusalem. 'You must wait,' He said, 'for the promise made by my Father, about which you have heard me speak: John, as you know, baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and within the next few days you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.' (Acts 1:4-8 *New English Bible*)

"And then we turned to the second chapter of Acts. 'It was immediately after this,' I reminded Father Gary, 'that the disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. 'While the day of Pentecost was running its course they were all together in one place, when suddenly there came from the sky a noise like that of a strong driving wind, which filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues like flames of fire, dispersed among them and resting on each one. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them power of utterance.' (Acts 2:2-4 *New English Bible*)

"This experience at Pentecost is where we Pentecostals get our name. We place a tremendous store in the baptism of the Holy Spirit as it was foretold by John, promised by the Father and experienced at Pentecost. I'm sure you've noticed the vast change that took place in the apostles after this experience. Before, they had been timid and powerless men. Afterwards, they did receive that power that Christ spoke about. They healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead. The same men who had hidden themselves at the crucifixion went on after this experience to stand up to the hostile world with their message.

"Then I told Father Gary about the gigantic revival which swept the United States, Canada, England, and South America in the early 1900's. At the heart of this revival was the message that the power given to the church at Pentecost had for the most part fallen into impotency, and could be brought back through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. 'The Book of Acts tells of five different times when people received this experience,' I said, 'and the early Pentecostals noticed that in four out of five of these times, the people who were baptized with the Holy Spirit began to 'speak in other tongues.'

"Father Gary wanted to know what speaking in other tongues was like. 'It's like talking in another language. A language that you don't understand.' One by one I pointed out to Father Gary the places in the Bible where this experience followed the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"The disciples spoke in tongues at Pentecost; Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit after his Damascus Road conversion and subsequently spoke in tongues, saying, 'I thank my God, I speak in tongues more than ye all'; (1 Corinthians 14:18) the members of Cornelius' household were baptized with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues; the new Christians at Ephesus were similarly baptized and began to speak in tongues. 'Even in the story of the fifth baptism, at Samaria, Simon the magician saw something so extraordinary happen that he wanted the power himself and offered money for it, 'that when I lay my hands on anyone, he will receive the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 8:19) Doesn't it seem logical that the experience he saw was also speaking in tongues?'

""That would make sense I suppose if it happened in all the other baptisms. When did you have the experience yourself?' 'It's been a tradition in our family for three generations.' And then we talked a while about my wonderful, fiery old grandfather. He first heard this message in 1925. He preached against it, too, at every occasion he could find.

"But then one day,' I recounted, 'while he was in the pulpit preaching against the Pentecostals, he himself began to tremble and shake, which is one of things that happens often when people first have this power flow into them. It's something you feel, a little like a shock, except that the sensation is not at all unpleasant. Anyhow, Grandpa was the most surprised person in the world when this happened to him, and he himself received the baptism and began to speak in tongues.

"From that day on he preached Pentecost whenever and wherever he could, because he saw personally what power the experience held. My father received it when he was twenty-five, and I received it when I was only thirteen; all three generations of us breadth this message today.' Father Gary wanted to know what the actual experience was like.

"Why don't you ask the kids?' I said. We invited him to have lunch with us, and over chicken and salad, Father Gary listened as several of our young people described for him what it had been like when they were filled with the Spirit.

"The first was a twelve-year-old girl named Neda. We had found her in Coney Island, wandering around as if lost. Linda Meisner learned from her that sex and alcohol were the centers of her revolt against her family. 'I used to drink a lot,' she said now, 'and to run around with any boy who looked that way at me. I hated my parents, especially my mother. Linda brought me here to the Center and I sat in the chapel and listened to all the other kids talk about how Jesus helped them when they were tempted.

"When I had problems, like being with a boy, I used to break up and get disgusted, but these dope addicts had problems, too, worse than mine. 'We still get tempted,' they say, 'but now we always run into the chapel and pray.' When they prayed, they spoke in another language but they looked happy and were sure of themselves. And when they got up from their knees, their temptation was gone.

"So they made me want the same thing. I went into the chapel one day to pray by myself. I started telling God all about my problems and I asked Him to come into my life like he had to those drug addicts. Like a blinding light, Jesus burst into my heart. Something took over my speech. It made me feel like I was sitting down by a river that somehow was flowing through me and bubbled up out of me like a musical language. It was after this that one of the workers showed me in the Book of Acts what it was all about. It was the most wonderful thing that ever happened.'

"Father Gary just sat listening and nodding his head and sometimes saying, 'Yes, yes,' in recognition of what she was saying.

"The next boy especially brought this reaction from Father Gary. 'First of all,' said John, 'I know this is real. And you know how? Because afterward Jesus Christ seemed to come right out of the Bible. He became a living person who wanted to stand with me through my problems.'

"Yes,' said father Gary. 'This is wonderful.'

"With me,' said a boy named Joseph, 'he helped me get rid of drugs. I used goof balls and marijuana, and I was beginning to skin pop heroin. I already had the mind habit and I had to do this thing. When I heard about Jesus it kind of shocked me that He loved people in spite of all their sins. It stirred me when I heard that he puts real teeth behind His promises, by coming into us with this baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, they told me. When I thought of comfort I thought of a

bottle of wine and half-a-dozen goof balls. But these guys were talking about comfort out of Heaven where I could feel clean later.

"So I got to wanting this, just like Neda. In the chapel,' he turned his head toward the door of the chapel, 'I cried to God for help, and that's when He came around. He took over my lips and tongue and I was speaking in a new language. At first I thought I was crazy, but all of a sudden I knew I couldn't be, because something was happening too. I wasn't lonely any more. I didn't want any more drugs. I loved everybody. For the first time in my life I felt clean.'

"On and on the kids went, each wanting to tell what had happened to him. You had to make them take turns talking. When Father Gary left an hour later, he was still saying, 'Yes, yes!' He said he wanted to talk the experience over with some of his friends at Fordham University. I only wish he had stayed a little longer because that same night another boy received the baptism, and he could have witnessed the experience for himself." You can read the rest of the wonderful accounts of salvation and fillings for yourself in *The CROSS and the SWITCHBLADE* by David Wilkerson. I wanted you to see that what we are talking about is not just some theory. It is something every Christian can experience for themselves!

(19) "This section marks a new stage in the extension of the church from a Jewish fellowship in Jerusalem to a universal community. Previously, Luke related the inclusion of the Samaritans in the church and the conversion of the single Gentile family of Cornelius. Now he describes the beginnings of the first independent Gentile congregation in Antioch, which was to become the 'Mother church' of the Gentile mission in Asia and Europe. The narrative resumes the events of 8:4 and the persecution of Saul.

Phoenicia is the narrow strip of land bordering the Mediterranean. It extends north of Caesarea some 120 miles and includes Tyre and Sidon. The preaching of the Gospel was still limited to Jews, for the early church was very slow in realizing the universal character of the Gospel mission." (*Wycliffe*)

Phoenicia [is] a country about 15 miles wide and 120 miles long stretching along the northeastern Mediterranean coast (modern Lebanon). Its important cities were Tyre and Sidon. Cyprus [is] an island in the northeastern Mediterranean; the home of Barnabas (4:36). Antioch [is] the third city of the Roman Empire (after Rome and Alexandria). It was 15 miles inland from the northeast corner of the Mediterranean. The first largely Gentile local church was located here, and it was from this church that Paul's three missionary journeys were launched (13:1-4; 15:40; 18:23)." (*NIV Study Bible*)

Antioch was the capital of Syria, and in the Roman Empire only Rome and Alexandria were larger. It was a very busy and beautiful city, located on the river Orontes. It was also cosmopolitan and very immoral. With a large colony of Jews, it was natural that many of the scattering Hellenistic Jews would come there arriving by water first from the Phoenician coastlands as they traveled north, with some turning aside to sail to the isle of Cyprus. The preaching of these Hellenistic Jews from Jerusalem soon resulted in the conversion of many Jew in the synagogues at Antioch and the establishment of a church at Antioch." (*The Defender's Bible*)

(20) "Some of the believers who had come from the island of Cyprus and Cyrene in North Africa (cf. 13:1) came to Antioch and launched the Gospel in a new direction. Antioch was the third largest city of the Roman Empire and the residence of the Roman governor of the province of Syria. While a large Jewish colony existed in Antioch, the city was primarily Gentile and Greek. The cult of the pagan deities,

Apollo and Artemis, whose worship included ritual prostitution, had headquarters nearby. Antioch was notorious for its moral degradation.

"Grecians or Greeks (RSV) [Hellenists NKJV] in this context refers to pure Greeks rather than to Greek-speaking Jews. The Gospel preached to the Gentiles proclaimed not primarily the Messiahship of Jesus but his Lordship. Messiahship was a Jewish concept that would not have been meaningful to Gentiles who had no Jewish background.

(22-24) "This new venture was immediately successful, and the mother church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to supervise and confirm the new church as Peter and John had superintended the new work in Samaria (8:14-17). Barnabas, as his name suggests, was gifted in providing encouragement to new Christians, and he exhorted the new converts that with purpose of heart they would be faithful and would persevere." (*Wycliffe*)

"Barnabas, whose name meant 'Son of encouragement,' was truly 'a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith' (Acts 11:24), an ideal person to send to encourage and strengthen the new church in Antioch. He was a wealthy but unselfish Levite (Acts 4:36, 37) and had helped Paul become accepted by the skeptical Jewish believers at Jerusalem (Acts 9:27). At Antioch, he was instrumental in winning so many to the Lord that the teaching work became greater than he could handle alone. He decided that the best teacher he could get was Paul."

(25-26) "Saul (soon to be known as Paul Acts 13:9) had been sent away from Jerusalem several years earlier (Acts 9:30), and Barnabas had lost touch with him, so that he had to 'seek' him when he went to Tarsus to get him. Tarsus was Paul's home town, but he may have been disinherited by his family when he returned there as a Christian 9he testified that he had 'suffered the loss of all things' because of his conversion Philippians 3:8)." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"Barnabas soon realized that the growing church needed additional guidance, and his mind turned to Saul of Tarsus, who had undoubtedly been engaged in missionary work in the vicinity of his home city (9:30; Galatians 1:21). After some difficulty, he found Saul and brought him to Antioch, where they spent a whole year working in the church. The word Christians occurs in the NT only here, in 26:28, and in 1 Peter 4:16. The word is formed with the Latin suffix which designates 'follower or partisan of' (cf. 'Herodians' in Mark 3:6). There is no adequate reason to think that the term was used in derision. It simply means people who follow Christ." (*Wycliffe*)

"whole year. Luke notes definite periods of time (18:11; 19:8,10; 24:27; 28:30). Christians. Whether adopted by believers or invented by enemies as a term of reproach, it is an apt title for those 'belonging to Christ' 9the meaning of the term)." (*NIV Study Bible*)

Christians. To the Jews in Jerusalem, the name 'Christ' was a title, meaning 'the anointed one,' the Jewish Messiah. However, the Greek-speaking believers in Antioch soon became known as followers of Christ, or Christians, and this has been customary ever since." (*The Defender's Bible*)

(27) The growing importance of the church in Antioch is illustrated by the ministry rendered to the mother church in Jerusalem at a time of famine. Prophets are mentioned in 13:1; 15:32; 21:9,10. They were not ordained official leaders but laymen who declared the will of God or future events under direct will of God or future events under direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. See 1 Corinthians 14:29-39.

Prophets ranked next to apostles in the early church (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Revelation 22:9)." (*Wycliffe*)

"prophets. The first mention of the gift of prophecy in Acts. Prophets preach, exhort, explain or, as in this case, foretell (see 13:1; 15:32; 19:6; 21:9-10; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 13:2,8; 14:3,6, 29-37; see also notes on John 3:2; Zechariah 1:1; Ephesians 4:11)." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(28-30) "Agabus appears again in 21:10. The days of Claudius. Roman historians refer to several famines during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54), while Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentions a severe famine in Judea in A.D. 46." (*Wycliffe*)

"Agabus. Later foretells Paul's imprisonment (21:10). In Acts, prophets are engaged in foretelling (v. 27; 21:9-10) at least as often as in 'forthtelling' (15:32)." (*NIV Study Bible*)

"Elders. Here is the first mention in Acts of these Christian officials. Luke gives no hint as to how the office of elder came into existence or by what means elders were chosen. A group of elders ruled over each Jewish synagogue, and it is probable that the Christian church adopted the Jewish pattern. Probably the believers constituted a number of house congregations in several homes, and the elders may have been the leaders of these several congregations (see Acts 15:6, 23).

"Many scholars think that this famine visit was the journey mentioned in Galatians 2:1-10. The 'revelation' of Galatians 2:2 may refer to the prophecy of Agabus. If this is so, fourteen years (Galatians 2:1) had intervened since Saul's first visit to Jerusalem, and he was already a mature Christian and an experienced leader." (*Wycliffe*)

Chapter 12

(1) "King Herod, as described in this chapter, was Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, the cruel king who slaughtered the babies at Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1,16), and the father of Herod Agrippa II, who in turn was the King Agrippa who later tried Paul (Acts 25:13-26:32). Another Herod, Herod Antipas, was one of the sons of Herod the Great, and he was tetrarch of Galilee during the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. Another son of Herod the Great, Aristobulus, was the father of Herod Agrippa I the Herod who had James executed." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

(2) James' martyrdom had been indirectly prophesied by Jesus. "Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. And He said to her, 'What do you wish?' She said to Him, 'Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.'" (Matthew 20:20-23) (also Mark 10:39)

James, the son of Zebedee, it turns out was the first martyr of the twelve apostles, but John his brother lived to a ripe old age. John did suffer many things, so he did truly fulfill Jesus' prophecy about them being "baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with."

"James the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of John, and a relative of our Lord; for his mother Salome was cousin. to the Virgin Mary. It was not until ten years after the death of Stephen that the second martyrdom took place; for no sooner had Herod Agrippa been appointed governor of Judea, than, with a view to [pleasing the Jews], he raised a sharp persecution against the Christians, and determined to make an effectual blow, by striking at their leaders.

"The account given us by an eminent primitive writer, Clemens Alexandrinus, ought not to be overlooked; that, as James was led to the place of martyrdom, his accuser was brought to repent of his conduct by the apostle's extraordinary courage and undauntedness, and fell down at his feet to request his pardon, professing himself a Christian, and resolving that James should not receive the crown of martyrdom alone. Hence they were both beheaded at the same time. Thus did the first apostolic martyr cheerfully and resolutely receive that cup, which he had told our Savior he was ready to drink. Timon and Parmenas suffered martyrdom about the same time; the one at Philippi, and the other in Macedonia. These events took place A.D. 44." (*Fox's Book of Martyrs*)

This is the last mention of John (the younger brother of James) in the book of Acts, so let's look at what happened to him later in his life. "The 'beloved disciple,' was brother to James the Great. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, were founded by him. From Ephesus he was ordered to be sent to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled him. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death." (*Fox's Book of Martyrs*)

There was a rumor that John would not even die, because that is what they thought Jesus had said about him, but he corrected this mistake at the end of his Gospel. "Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following [John], who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, 'Lord, who is the one who betrays You?' Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, 'But Lord, what about this man?' Jesus said to him, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.' Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?'" (John 21:20-23)

(3-4) "For a time the Christians had been in favor with the Jews (Acts 9:31). This seems to have changed after Gentiles were admitted into their company. Herod wanted to curry favor with the Jews, so he intended to execute their leader after the festival week was finished. Easter This word is actually the "Passover," following the 'days of unleavened bread.' Because Christ's resurrection occurred immediately after Passover, Easter has traditionally been near the time of Passover. The term 'Easter' itself, however, is probably derived from Eastre, the Teutonic goddess of spring." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

Our pastor says it is better to use the name 'Resurrection Sunday' rather than the word Easter. First, he says because we are using the reference to a pagan goddess in saying the name, and secondly because most people in the world don't know what we mean when we say 'Easter.' In using the term 'Resurrection Sunday,' we leave no doubt about what we are referring to. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Christians around the world started using this name?! We can make changes in the Church if we have courage enough to. Many have, and are suffering for the name of Christ, are we willing to take a little ridicule?

More Christians are suffering for their faith in our day than at any other time in history. "A 24-year-old man known only as Hasanuddin has admitted planning the savage, October 2005 beheadings of three Christian girls in Poso, Indonesia, as a 'gift' to Muslims in celebration of Idul Fitri, the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

"The girls were ambushed as they walked to school. Their severed heads were wrapped in black plastic bags, one of which was deposited on the steps of a church. The two other heads were left near a police station. Another girl was seriously injured but survived.

"Hasanuddin expressed his sorrow at murdering the girls, according to a newspaper article: 'With honesty and sincerity coming from my heart, I ask for forgiveness from the families of the victims. I promise to never repeat it again.'

"If saying 'I promise to never repeat it again' seems to be too little too late, the response of some of the parents of the victims was timely and a surprise to many onlookers. In the Muslim world, such an atrocity demands revenge. What is not expected is forgiveness, which is exactly what was extended to the killers.

"Compass Direct said Asia News has reported that the parents of the three girls met with Hasanuddin and his accomplices in November 2006 and that all three said they had repented and were sorry.

"The mother of one of the girls in return said that she was ready to pardon them. The families embraced the terrorists and shook hands as a sign of peace,' Compass Direct reported.

"The act of forgiveness, unknown in so many countries when violent crimes are committed, is one thing that separates true Christianity from other religions. And it is one reason why the testimony of persecuted Christians so often makes a powerful impact on the persecutors.

"Muslim converts to Christianity tell how they were taught from childhood to hate Jewish people, Christians, and especially Israel. This unfortunate truth has been borne out by young Arabs, indoctrinated in the ways of jihad, who commit suicide bombings inside Israel. It mystifies them when they discover that their sworn enemies operate entirely differently, and that they do so because of the love and forgiveness they have found in Christ.

"It was Jesus who taught His disciples in this way:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." (Matthew 5:43-44)

"So when the mother of a teenage daughter embraces and forgives the man who mutilated her child, she is manifesting the teachings of Jesus. And in a most wonderful way, she is expressing what the Holy Spirit has placed in her heart." (Israel My Glory by Elwood McQuaid taken from the article: *A Look at the Persecution of Christians Around the World* March/April 2007 Page 9)

(5) The last time the Church was in a crisis they had prayed and "the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with

boldness." (Acts 4:31) So now again they see the need to pray; of course, we should pray all the time, but there are those times when we really get serious about it!

Prayer. without ceasing. The Greek word may mean either continuing prayer or earnest prayer. The same word is used in Luke 22:44 of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane." (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*)

(6) "In spite of his miserable circumstances and the probability of being executed the next morning, Peter was sleeping so soundly that the angel had to strike him and lift him up. Even then, Peter still thought he was dreaming until the angel left him outside in the street (Acts 12:10). Peter surely experienced the reality of Psalm 121:3, assuring him that "he that keepeth thee will not slumber," and of Psalm 127:2, which says, "He giveth his beloved sleep."

(7-11) Peter had been let out of prison by an angel before, Acts 5:19-20, so he was at rest in God's perfect will for him. We should think the same way today if we are walking in the light. I am afraid, though, that many Christians today would not be able to sleep if they knew they might die the next day. They would have to be busy all night getting right with God for all the missed opportunities, all the evil things they have watched on videos, and movies, etc. That is no way to live; many Christians around the world are ready to die for the Lord at any moment. They live holy lives for the Lord, knowing they are in the center of God's will for them. No wonder they experience more miracles of healing than we do today in the West.

God help us as Christians here in the States and in other countries where we have everything. We have freedom to witness, but we don't do it. We have money to help missions and the needy, but we don't do it. We have the Bible, God's Holy Word in our hands, but we don't read it. Oh, we may go to church services some, we may give some money, we may give some time, but we certainly are not sold out to the Lord. No wonder we don't see the miracles they saw in the book of Acts.

You may even have said, as you have been reading, I don't see the miracles happening Gary talks about in this study; I can't believe that the book of Acts is a blueprint for today. Miracles must be just for the early Church, they can't be for us today in America or elsewhere. This is where you are wrong, miracles don't happen as much today in some places in the world as they should be happening, because we are not living holy lives! John Wesley said as much in his book *The Holy Spirit and Power*. When real revival comes, there will be no limit to what God will do, even in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and in all the countries of the world!

In the December 2006 issue of *Christianity Today*, in the article *Tidings* by Ted Olsenit has this survey about what really unites Pentecostals, they noted: "In all 10 countries surveyed, large majorities of Pentecostal (ranging from 56 percent in South Korea to 87 percent in Kenya) say that they have personally experienced or witnessed the divine healing of an illness or injury.' Outside of the United States and South Korea, the percentage was above 70 percent."

(11-13) "Peter now came to himself, for he had been walking as though in a trance. For the first time, the true significance of what had occurred came home to him. He first hurried to the place where the Christians were gathered in prayer. This house of Mary was one of the chief meeting places of the church.

["Mary. The aunt of Barnabas (see Col 4:10). Apparently her home was a gathering place for Christians. It may have been the location of the upper room where the Last Supper was held (see Mk 14:13-15; see as Ac 1:1:13) and the place of prayer 4:31." (*NIV Study Bible*)]

"Churches," or buildings erected for Christian worship, are not known in the NT. John Mark (12:25; 12:5,13; 15:37-39; Colossians 4:10; Philippians 2:1; 2 Timothy 4:11) is here introduced for the first time. Good tradition relates that he later became Peter's interpreter in Rome and that his Gospel is based on Peter's preaching. He was probably one of the sources of Luke's information." (*Wycliffe*)

"This was most likely the same upper room where they had been praying before the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:13), and where they had observed the last supper with the Lord (Luke 22:12). Mark had probably been in the house with them both times." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

(14-17) "In spite of the fact that they had been praying without ceasing for Peter's release (Acts 12:5), they at first could not believe that God had answered their prayers. It is his angel. There are, indeed, guardian angels assigned to believers (Psalm 34:7; Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 1:14), and it was evidently believed that each such angel could, if appropriate, assume the appearance of his particular charge. There is no Scriptural basis anywhere for the pagan belief that those who die still linger as ghosts. Besides, the Christians knew that Peter was not scheduled for execution until after the Passover (Acts 12:4), so there is no reason to think that, by 'his angel,' they meant 'his spirit.'" (*The Defender's Bible*)

"his angel. Reflects the belief that everyone has a personal angel who ministers to him (cf. Mat 18:10; Heb 1:14), adding the idea that such an angel occasionally showed himself and that his appearance resembled the person under his care." (*NIV Study Bible*)

James, the brother of Jesus, had become the acting head of the Jerusalem church, but he was not with assembled church at this time. The brethren may be the elders of 11:30 who shared the rule of the church with James. After reporting his escape to the church, Peter 'went underground,' and Luke no longer traces his activities. However, the tradition that he went to Rome is refuted by Acts 15:2, for Peter was present at the council in Jerusalem." (*Wycliffe*)

(18-23) "Caesarea was the Roman capital of the province of Judea; but Judea is used here not of the Roman province but of the dwelling place of the Jews.

"Although Tyre and Sidon were free cities, they were dependent for their food upon the rain of Galilee in Herod's kingdom. For some unknown reason Herod was angry with these two cities. And so, to make peace with him, they presumably bribed Blastus to intercede with the king and gain a hearing for them.

"The set day, according to Josephus, was a feast in honor of the Emperor. To receive the delegates from Tyre and Sidon in state, Herod arrayed himself in robes made entirely of silver. Pagans commonly attributed divine attributes to their rulers. Josephus relates that after delivering this oration, Herod was struck down with a violent pain in the stomach and was carried to the palace, where, after five days of suffering, he died. His death occurred in A.D. 44, and Judea was then placed under Roman governors, two of whom (Felix and Festus) appear in the later narrative of Acts." (*Wycliffe*)

"On the appointed day. A festival Herod was celebrating in honor of Claudius Caesar (Josephus, Antiquities, 19.8.2). wearing his royal robes. The historian Josephus describes a silver robe, dazzling

bright, that Herod wore that day. When people acclaimed him a god, he did not deny it. He was seized with violent pains, was carried out and died five days later (*Josephus, Antiquities*, 19.8.2).

"angel of the Lord. See note on v. 7. eaten by worms. A miserable death associated with Herod's acceptance of acclaim to be divine, but may also be seen as divine retribution for his persecution of the church." (*NIV Study Bible*)

(24-25) Luke now goes back to the history of the Church (see 11:30). "Barnabas and Saul had been sent to Jerusalem by the church at Antioch, bringing material aid to the Christians there during the hard times occasioned by the recent famine (Acts 11:27-30). Whether they were with the believers praying for Peter in Mark's home is not stated, but it is there they must have counseled with Mark and decided to take him back to Antioch with them. [Check out our links: *Gleanings for the Hungry*, or *Food for the Hungry*.]

"John Mark was a nephew of Barnabas (although some say he was a cousin-Colossians 4:10) and evidently a close friend of Peter (the early church fathers said much of what Mark wrote in his gospel was obtained from Peter.) He probably was a Levite, like his uncle and thus well instructed in the Scriptures, as well as from a prosperous family (Acts 4:36)." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"John . Mark. See v. 12. He was perhaps the young man who fled on the night of Jesus' arrest (Mk 14:51-52). He wrote the second Gospel (see Introduction to Mark: Author; John Mark in the NT) and accompanied Barnabas and Saul on the first part of their first missionary journey (see notes on 15:38-39). (*NIV Study Bible*)

"But the word of God grew and multiplied." We will soon get into chapter 13 of Acts, part seven of our study. "Chapter 13 brings us to the second half of Acts. In the first half, Jerusalem is the center of the narrative, and the main theme is the extension of the church from Jerusalem throughout Palestine. Now Jerusalem drops into the background, and Antioch becomes the center of the narrative because it sponsored the extension of the church in Asia and Europe. This extension was accomplished by three missions by Paul, each beginning and ending in Antioch." (*Wycliffe*)

But before we leave this section, I feel it is fitting that we have a discussion of missions since that is what Acts, and for that matter, the whole Bible is about! Here I want to quote Harold R. Cook and what he has written in his book *An Introduction to the Study of CHRISTIAN MISSIONS*.

Why People Oppose Missions

"Of course you can expect people who are not Christians to oppose missions. It would be strange if they approved. After all, we don't believe in propagating what we think is not true. We may not mention our disbelief when we are arguing against missions, but it can't help being the main factor. So we're not going to bother with this kind of opposition.

"What does concern us more is the opposition from those who claim to be Christians. These are people who say they believe the Christian message, yet they oppose trying to win other people to the same faith. Why?

"When we try to find the reasons, we run into some arguments that are really excuses instead of reasons. We could call them 'camouflage reasons,' because they only serve to hide the real reasons. You will usually hear them expressed with catch-words or phrases picked up from somebody else and glibly repeated. 'Charity begins at home' is probably the most common. (As if that meant that charity ought never to leave home!)

"There are at least four basic reasons why many people oppose missions, and we ought to give them some attention.

"The first, and perhaps the chief reason, is one that you might have a hard time getting the objector to admit. It is the lack of a personal and vital experience of Christ. It's safe to say that most of the members of our churches in the homeland have never had a deep religious experience. Their parents were members of the church, and at the proper age they too joined. There was no deep conviction about it; it was just the thing to do. Many hardly ever attend church services, but they still count themselves Christians. Others are very faithful to the church, very active in all its affairs, just as they would be in a club.

"Now such people find it hard to understand missions. Christianity is good, they will admit. It is even better than other religions. But why try to force our religion on other people? It is rather silly to get so wrought up [excited] about religion. Who knows but what their religion is really better for them than ours?

"Naturally the one who looks at the church as he would at a club will not be deeply concerned about spreading its ministry to the ends of the earth. Maybe you can even persuade him to give a little help in a membership campaign. But that would be just for the local chapter. After all, membership in the club is nice, but it isn't a life-and-death affair.

"How can such people comprehend those young men and women who are ready to bury themselves in out-of-the-way places and give their very lives to win others to Christ?

They think it absurd. But the measure of Christ's importance to us is the extent to which we will go to make Him known to others. So we can say that many are not interested in missions because their own faith doesn't mean much to them, and of course it wouldn't be worth much to others.

"A second reason for opposing missions is a preoccupation with self. Bluntly put, it is selfishness. It is not the grasping sort of selfishness that tries to seize all the best for one's self. It is a more passive type that we might call self-centeredness. It is the kind that becomes so absorbed in its own affairs that it is blind to the needs of others.

"Some of those who oppose missions are more than nominal Christians. They have had a deep religious experience. They are seriously concerned about spiritual needs that affect them personally or touch the local church to which they belong. But when it comes to missions, they say they 'just can't see it.'

"Such a statement is more accurate than they realize. Indeed they 'can't see it.' That difficulty is the lack of vision in themselves. They see well at short range only. The needs of people beyond their range of sight do not concern them. Nor can they understand why others should feel concerned. ["Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18)]

"A third reason is ignorance of actual conditions in mission lands. It's strange that we are always objecting that foreigners get a false picture of life in our land from the movies they see. These movies were made right here in this country [United States] and by our own countrymen. Yet at the same time we are quite willing to take our ideas of life in other lands from the movies. But they are movies made by our people, and as often as not they are shot right there at home. Some of them are about as far removed from real life in those lands as they can be.

"Some of course don't get their ideas from pictures but from books. Then it depends on the book. If the book is fiction the setting may be just as fictional, just as artificial as the plot.

"The usual author will do one of two things when he writes about natives [nationals] of other lands. He may picture them as good-natured, contented, childlike people on whom the American traveler looks with condescension. His servants and helpers he calls his 'boys.' Or he may picture them as altogether vicious, unprincipled rogues, who need to be treated like the villains they are.

"With the first picture the author succeeds in giving the impression that missions are actually harmful. The native leads a carefree, happy-go-lucky life until the missionary comes to change his way of living and spoil his Garden of Eden. A young journalist in the South Pacific had such an idea. He saw some young Papuans with black bands around their sleeves and at once condemned the missionaries for teaching the natives 'our rotten idea of wearing crape.' What he didn't know was that their former practice had been to lop off a joint of a finger whenever a relative died. This was one of the 'charming native customs' which the missionaries had changed.

"The second picture makes the natives out as hopeless and missionaries as useless.

"A final reason for opposing missions is one that, in its older form, no longer bears much weight. I suppose it is because people are no longer much interested in questions of theology. For the reason is theological.

"There are two types of theology which are not friendly to missions. The older one is a type we sometimes call hyper-Calvinism. In its extreme form it emphasizes the sovereignty of God to such an extent that man seems to be nothing more than a puppet. Its classical expression of opposition to missions is in a statement that an elderly minister is said to have made to William Carey, back in the eighteenth century: 'When God wants to convert the heathen, He'll do it without your help or mine!'

"But there is also a modern type of theology that opposes missions, at least in the sense of our definition. It is a theology that calls itself 'liberal' but is so liberal that it can hardly be called Christian. In its view Christianity is not unique. It is not the true religion, it is only one of many. And religion is only man's attempt to find God. Other religions are just other roads to the same end. So missionary work is wrong. The religion of other peoples might not suit us, but it fits them. Why unsettle them by trying to get them to worship our way?

"We can only remark that if this be called Christianity, it is certainly not the Christianity of the New Testament. Neither is it the Christianity of the historic Church. It is simply Satan's original lie in a new garb.

"How did foreign missions get started? Was it a part of Christianity at the beginning? Or did it come later? Did Christ Himself have anything to say about it? Is it a necessary part of the faith?"

"You will see that missions don't really need justifying. It is taken for granted. In the New Testament missions is the normal expression of vital Christianity.

Christianity is by Nature Missionary

"The New Testament pictures for us a faith which is by its very nature missionary. In other words Christianity to be Christianity has to be missionary. It is strange that so many fail to see this. That is, it is strange until we realize that many people's ideas of Christianity have only a remote connection with the New Testament.

"[Many countries]...say that everyone is free to believe as he chooses and, in the privacy of his own home, to worship as he pleases. But he may not make any public or even semipublic show of his faith. Neither may he speak of his faith to others. This they call religious freedom. But of course that is only when they are talking of other religions than their own.

"Actually there are very few religions that one can profess and practice privately. Such a religion would have to be mostly a matter of ritual, like some lodge ceremonies. It could not change the daily conduct of the worshiper. If it did, it would affect others. Besides, if his religion changed a thief into an honest man, he would have to explain how it happened. Nor could a private religion aim at any changes in society, good or bad. It would have to be a religion content with things as they are. As a religion it would be a sham.

"But this is far from true of Christianity. It has a great deal to do with personal conduct. It aims to transform lives. And through changed lives it tries to work changes in society, sometimes revolutionary changes. That is why Christ said that He came 'not to send peace but a sword' (Matthew 10:34)

"And when it comes to Christianity, we have a strange phenomenon. It began among the Jews, but most of the Jews have never accepted it. It began in the orient, but its strongest centers today are in the West. Its Scriptures are very little read in the original languages, but they are read around the world in more than a thousand other tongues.

"No, Christianity cannot be simply a matter of private concern. Neither can it be limited to one country, one race, one type of culture. At least not the Christianity of the New Testament.

"There are at least two major things that make Christianity missionary by nature: its exclusive claims, and its view of mankind.

"First, the exclusive claims of Christianity make it missionary.

"The Romans of early centuries and the unbelievers of today both have resented Christianity's claim to be the one true religion. The Romans would have been willing to give it a place among the many religions of the empire. In the same way the unbelievers of today will usually admit that it is, on the whole, a good religion. But they both object to the exclusiveness of the Christian faith. They resent its saying that all other religions are false.

"Now there can be no doubt that the New Testament claims exclusiveness for the Christian message. It doesn't picture God as a God; He is the only God. Paul says, 'We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one' (1 Corinthians 8:4 KJV). Further, it doesn't present Jesus Christ as a savior; He is the only Savior of men. For as Peter said, 'There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12 KJV). This is the witness of the whole New Testament.

"How does this make Christianity missionary? In just this way. If Christianity is a religion and Christ is a savior, then my obligation to tell people about Christ and His salvation is relatively small. After all, there are other ways of salvation open to them.

"But, if Christianity is the only true religion; if Christ is the only Savior; if the gospel is the only message that can offer men eternal life--then how can I keep quiet? Can I rejoice in my own salvation, knowing that others are dying without that salvation? Must I not feel as Paul did when he wrote to the Romans, 'I am a debtor to preach the gospel to you' (Romans 1:14-15 KJV)?

"To our civilized pagans [today], they are acquainted with the words 'crime,' 'delinquency,' and 'error.' But to them 'sin' is only a theological term used by old-fashioned preachers and straight-laced killjoys.

"Yet unquestionably sin is a major theme of the New Testament--sin and salvation from sin. Sin has alienated the whole world from God, has corrupted the nature of man, has brought condemnation and death. No one is free from it; no one can save himself from it. Only in Christ is there salvation, a salvation provided by God himself. This is the New Testament message.

"If we deny the New Testament view of man and his sin, we do not need to be missionary. If men, after all, are fundamentally good, though they do make some mistakes; if sin is not the desperate thing the New Testament makes it out to be; if its results are not so disastrous; or even if we can plead that ignorance of the Gospel relieves people from guilt and condemnation; then missions are not imperative.

"But no man can fully believe the New Testament picture of mankind apart from Christ, and remain indifferent. If he really believes it he cannot help feeling constrained to make the message of salvation known--known to lost men everywhere.

Jesus Christ and Missions

Jesus Christ taught missions. It was not only at the beginning, when He called His first disciples and said, 'Follow men, and I will make you fishers of men' (Matthew 4:19 KJV). Nor at the end of His earthly ministry, when He urged, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature' (Mark 16:15 KJV). The whole tenor of His life and ministry was missionary. Look at the purpose of Christ's coming.

"Sometimes we hear it said that Paul was 'the greatest missionary of all time.' Among those who have followed Christ that is probably true. But greater yet as a missionary was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

"The New Testament leaves us in no doubt about the missionary purpose of His coming into the world. In fact, this is one thing that makes it different from the birth of any other man. His coming was voluntary, and it had a definite, clear-cut purpose.

"The Lord Himself told of that purpose when He said, 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10 *KJV*). Again He said, 'I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me' (John 6:38 *KJV*) And John wrote much later that 'God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him' (1 John 4:9 *KJV*).

"Jesus Christ, then, was a missionary, a 'sent one.' He was sent with a purpose. And that purpose was the same as that of His missionaries today. It was to save those who were lost-- those who were 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Look, too, at the character of Christ's life.

"Even when Christ says, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' He says it without boasting or egotism. In fact He is exalting the Father, for He adds, 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me' (John 14:6 *KJV*). The same is true when He says, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father' (John 14:9 *KJV*). Actually this last is a clear statement of His missionary character--He stood before them in the place of the Father.

Foreshadowings of Foreign Missions under the Spirit

"The New Testament presents the Holy Spirit both as the Initiator and as the one controlling factor in missions. He is prominent even in the foreshadowings of that movement. There were at least two such foreshadowings in the early chapters of the Acts.

"The first is in Acts 2, where we have the account of the coming of the Spirit upon the believers after Christ's ascension. It is significant that the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost was the feast which, perhaps more than others, brought to Jerusalem Jews from 'every nation under heaven.' It was as if the Spirit wanted to make it clear that the Gospel they began to preach that day should reach all nations.

"Again, in the eighth chapter we have a most unusual account. We call it the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip, one of the first deacons of the church, had preached the Gospel in Samaria with remarkable effect. But now the angel of the Lord told him to leave that work and go down to the desert road that led from Jerusalem to Gaza. He saw a chariot to which the Spirit directed him. The man in the chariot was a foreigner, an Ethiopian by birth and residence, but apparently a convert to Judaism. Philip led him to faith in Christ and baptized him.

"In both these cases they were foreshadowings of a work to come in other lands and among Gentiles who had never professed the Jewish faith. But they were only foreshadowings. The real work among the Gentiles had not yet begun. But even in the foreshadowings it was the Holy Spirit who directed the work.

Five Spirit-Directed Steps

"In spite of Christ's teaching, the Church did not at first see clearly that the whole world was to be its field. It had to be led out, step by step, into its world-wide missionary ministry. We can distinguish five such steps. They are represented by five crucial acts in which the Holy Spirit played a leading part. We suggest that you read them for yourself in the Book of the Acts. Before the first step was taken, Christianity was limited to Jews and Jewish converts. After the last step it was obvious that Christianity was for the whole world.

"Step one: Peter preaches to Cornelius (Acts 10).

"Step two: the church in Gentile Antioch (Acts 11:19-26).

"Step three: Barnabas and Saul sent forth (Acts 13).

"Step four: the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

"Step five: to the regions beyond in Europe (Acts 16).

"The first step toward a full proclamation of the Gospel among the Gentiles was taken when Peter preached to Cornelius. The last was when Paul went to Macedonia. And all along the way it was the Holy Spirit who was directing the movement."

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