

# BIBLE STUDIES

**"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17. 11)**

**NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION  
(Acts 1-15)**

**NOTES ON THE PSALMS**

**VOLUME 38**

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# BIBLE STUDIES

<sup>k</sup>A Magazine for the exploration of **the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).** '

VOLUME 38

JANUARY, 1970

## EDITORIAL

Last year's study of "Origins in Genesis" led our thoughts back to the furthest bounds of divine revelation. In the nature of things human thought is limited, and fails to comprehend all that God has chosen to disclose about the origin of the world and His vast spiritual purposes in relation to it. Yet certain clear impressions stood out—God Himself the original Cause, the perfection of His handiwork in the world, the entrance of false principle through the arch-enemy, and the ensuing alienation of man from God. We discerned then the origin of divine promise towards ultimate reclamation, and the beginnings of His deeper purposes, flowing on like great under-currents, regardless of the tempestuous surface of human affairs.

Those purposes of salvation found their climax in the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God. Within a mere fifty days of His resurrection a great new beginning dawned. With a momentum which shook Jerusalem at Pentecost and made its impact felt to the uttermost parts of the earth, the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in this age of grace flowed on. Here were new beginnings, new spiritual conceptions, bursting the narrow confines of Israel, a new intensity of spiritual light, a new spiritual revelation of the mystery which had been hidden in the heart of God from times eternal.

To this rich field of study we now turn our attention, keenly anticipating (D. V. ) the benefit of sharing one another's thoughts in study of the word together through another year. *G. P. Jr.*

## OLD TESTAMENT FORESHADOWINGS OF THE NEW DISPENSATION

Divine dealings with men flow on from age to age "according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1. 11). It had been a feature of God's plan of revelation to prophesy later developments long before they occurred (1 Peter 1. 10-12). This was effected in the Old Testament not only by direct prophetic statements (e. g. Isaiah 53. 7-9) but also by foreshadowings in historical and ceremonial types. A typical historical foreshadowing was the sequence of events in the life of Joseph, plainly prefiguring the Lord Jesus Christ in His unique relationship with the Father, His rejection by those to whom the Father sent Him, the sufferings from which resulted world-wide salvation, and the ultimate accountability of all to Him. Remarkable ceremonial types are seen in the Levitical offerings, which present rich veins of truth as to the seriousness of sin and the efficacy of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. For the purpose of this study, however, attention will be focussed on the dispensational foreshadowings which may be traced in the annual "calendar" divinely appointed for Israel in the Mosaic law. This has a special relevance

to "new beginnings in the new dispensation" because it shows that God had those beginnings clearly in view as a consequence of the death and resurrection of His beloved Son.

The festivals we refer to especially were (1) the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, (2) the Day of the Wave Sheaf of Firstfruits, (3) the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, (4) the Blowing of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month, (5) the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month, and finally (6) the Feast of Tabernacles which lasted for seven days beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. On three of these occasions all the men of Israel were to gather together before the LORD.

This divine legislation was given according to divine principle, and was not only truth for the time it was given, but affords light and instruction for every age. If these festivals are considered in the light of events that have taken place they are clearly seen to have had, for these events, a prophetic significance. Those that have not yet found fulfilment of their prophetic significance clearly foreshadow events that in the purpose of God will yet take place.

We are left in no doubt as to the event which the Passover foreshadowed. Paul wrote, "Our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ" (1 Corinthians 5. 7). There are very many shadows in the Passover of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. First, as the paschal lamb was left among the flock, the Lord lived a life of comparative obscurity until that day when John the Baptist pointed Him out as "The Lamb of God". Then as the chosen paschal lamb was in view for all the household to see for the four days, so the Lord was before the public eye for a period. Like the lamb He expired on the Cross "between the two evenings". At the ninth hour He gave the triumphant shout and yielded up His life. As the Passover was the redemptive sacrifice for Israel so the Lord died to redeem us.

For the eight days that succeeded the Passover the Israelites were instructed to keep the days of unleavened bread. Paul again makes plain the instruction for us contained in these eight days. He enjoins us to keep festival with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5. 8. R. V. M. ). As there was no place for leaven in the Hebrew home during those days, so no place should be given to insincerity or untruth in the Christian life. The feast lasted for eight days. This would point to a perpetual state in our lives today.

Leviticus 23. 9-14 gives instructions regarding the wave sheaf of firstfruits. The only pointer as to when this should be offered is that it is to be the first of the harvest. The day of the week on which they were to offer it is clearly stated. It was the day after the Sabbath; in New Testament language, "the first day of the week". The student of Scripture does well to note the significant place of the morrow after the sabbath in the Mosaic covenant. The wave sheaf of firstfruits foreshadowed the resurrection of the Lord Jesus very clearly. Paul again makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 15. 23, "Christ the Firstfruits". The picture of the wave sheaf presented before God affords striking instruction in regard to the Lord rising from the dead and being presented to His Father. Was it this that caused Him to restrain Mary when she met Him on the resurrection morn? If it was only this consideration that led us to mark out the first day of the week, how precious it becomes!

The next event that God marked out in this calendar is the Feast of Weeks, when two wave loaves were to be made of fine flour, baked with leaven, for firstfruits unto the LORD. These were to be presented in association with a new meal offering and certain burnt offerings, plus a sin offering and peace offering (Leviticus 23. 15-21). The offering of these loaves was to take place exactly fifty days after the presentation of the wave sheaf. Again we are considering an event closely connected with the first day of the week. It is obvious that the events of Acts 2 took place on the day of Pentecost, according to the R. V. Margin, "when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled" (verse 1). Thus it is clear that God marked out in the Old Testament feast the very day that the Holy Spirit should come upon the disciples. Whilst on all other festival days special offerings were offered on the altar, on this day an offering was made of two wave loaves. These could not be offered on the altar for they contained leaven. Note that leaven could be offered to God as a sacrifice of firstfruits (Leviticus 2. 11, 12), and we submit that this cannot possibly suggest that anything evil can be offered to God. Rather we submit that in this case leaven illustrated the fact that we can bring to God the firstfruits of our lives. Yet as leaven was only to be brought as firstfruits, and the sacrifice on the altar made atonement, so we are only acceptable to God through Christ. The two loaves were to be baked of new meal, fresh from the harvest. In typology we must be careful not to force issues. Thus, suggestively, we submit the old corn was finishing and the new was taking its place. This is seen at Pentecost, the Old Covenant was passing away, and the New was to take its place. James said, "He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (1. 18). Some, accepting that the loaves speak of the New Covenant people, have seen in the two loaves the association of Jew and Gentile.

After the day of Pentecost during the wheat harvest there was no day marked out until the seventh month. During this period the harvest continued, though it was not completed until the Feast of Ingathering (or Tabernacles). Our studies this year will relate to the events that took place early in the Christian era, but let us appreciate that the harvest that began then is continuing and we need to be exercised to continue the work in the harvest field. The period from Pentecost to the seventh month was a period in Israel of intense activity. Let it be likewise in our case as we serve by the power of the same Holy Spirit, preaching the same Lord and Saviour.

The events we have had before us thus far have been those which have already found fulfilment. Now our contemplations must take a prospective view.

The seventh month was ushered in by the blowing of trumpets. Whereas for the Feast of Unleavened Bread and for the day of Pentecost all the men of Israel were to gather together, on this day there was no special gathering of the nation. The Hebrew word translated by the phrase "blowing of trumpets" (*Teruah*) is also rendered in other passages by other English words—alarm, shout, joyful sound, jubile. Is not the similarity to the language of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4. 16 striking—"a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"? Thus faintly shadowed in the Old Testament we see the mystery of which Paul gave full revelation—the coming of the

Lord to the air. If this is accepted we cannot look for any prophetic event to find fulfilment before the Lord comes for His own. The Israelite of old could see from the seasonal indications that the first day of the seventh month was approaching and it is abundantly clear to the child of God today that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

On the tenth day of the seventh month there was a solemn assembly. All the men of Israel were gathered together (verse 27). Atonement was made for their sins. The day was to be marked by affliction and mourning. The soul that was not afflicted on that day was to be cut off from his people. The Scriptures make clear that the Israel nation will be restored to God in repentance. From Zechariah 12. 10 we see that it will be both an individual repentance and a collective experience. Indeed in the things of God we should look for individual exercise as the source of collective exercise. Isaiah 53 will be the language of the repentant nation in that day. Thus the tenth day of the seventh month foreshadows very clearly the restoration of the Jews to the kingdom. While this is so we must appreciate that there are many facets to the Scriptures, and precious lessons for the present lie in the details of the Day of Atonement. The Hebrews epistle makes very plain that we can only fully enjoy the privilege of worship in the light of the teaching it offers.

The final festival was to begin on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, namely the Feast of Tabernacles (or booths) (verse 34). During this seven-day period the nation was to dwell in such constructions as would remind them of the days in which their fathers lived in the wilderness. Deuteronomy 16. 13-15, marks this occasion as one of joy, "Thou shalt rejoice" and "Thou shalt be altogether joyful". It was the climax of the year, the Feast of Ingathering, the harvest home. The history of Israel has been marred by suffering and sadness owing to their own folly, but the grand climax of divine purpose for the nation is one of unalloyed millennial joy. The Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows this in a remarkable manner.

These things, written aforetime, provide instruction for the student of Holy Scripture. Thus we close with Peter's words, "We have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1. 19). Let us govern our lives in the light of these divine foreshadowings!

*A. H. Jones*

### AHITHOPHEL AND JUDAS

The similarities between Ahithophel and Judas are remarkable. These men were two of a kind. Ahithophel came from Giloh, and Judas was of Kerioth. Ahithophel's name means "foolish brother". He was a privy counsellor in the court of king David, renowned for his wisdom, yet when Absalom preferred the counsel of Hushai the Archite at the time of David's rejection, Ahithophel returned to his home in high dudgeon, and hanged himself. It is significant that Ahithophel, like Joab, is not mentioned in the roll of honour of David's mighty men in 2 Samuel 23 and 1 Chronicles 11. The name of Eliam his son is mentioned in 2 Samuel 23 as one of David's mighty men.

Judas was blessed among men to have been privileged to be in the company of the Lord during the years of the Lord's ministry, yet he

sold the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Psalms 41. 9 and 55. 12-14 primarily refer to David and Ahithophel, but prophetically point forward to Christ and Judas. Psalm 109. 8 speaks of Judas Iscariot. Ahithophel was the Judas of the Old Testament. Ahithophel followed David. Judas followed Christ. Ahithophel turned aside to follow Absalom; he stole the hearts of the men of Israel from the king. Judas sold and betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. Ahithophel hanged himself and Judas did the same. Judas went to "his own place" (Acts 1. 25), lower Sheol. *J. Peddie*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### The Fifty Days' Preparation

#### Acts 1

**From Birkenhead.** —John the Baptist foretold that Christ would baptize in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3. 11). This could not be fulfilled until the Spirit was poured forth at Pentecost (John 14. 16). Sometimes baptism in the Holy Spirit is confused with the filling of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12. 13 makes it clear that all believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit and by this means they become members of the Church which is Christ's Body.

The conversations of our Lord with His apostles during the forty days were of very great importance. He instructed them carefully as to the work in which they should be engaged after His return to the Father. We noted the scope of the task with which they were entrusted and its world-wide character—unto the uttermost part of the earth. The power to carry out their task would be supplied when the Holy Spirit came upon them. They would be clothed with power from on high.

The simplicity of the account of the ascension is striking. It was pointed out that this was a private event, unknown to the world. The words "in like manner" are consistent with the outline given in 1 Thessalonians 4, when the Lord will come to the air for His saints; but when He comes as Son of Man, "every eye shall see Him".

We discussed the appointment of Matthias to fill the place of Judas. We did not support the view advanced by some that the eleven were too hasty and should not have taken this action in view of the later call to apostleship of Paul. The united witness of twelve men who had companied with the Lord in the days of His flesh, beginning from the baptism of John (Acts 1. 22), was thought to be in accord with the divine plan. The casting of lots caused us some difficulty but it was noted that this method was adopted in conjunction with united prayer.

*Trevor Sands*

**From Methil.** —We believe that Luke is the writer of this latter treatise, the Acts of the Apostles, the former treatise being the Gospel by Luke. Luke records the things that Jesus began both to do and to teach, surely the model for all who would minister the word, that they practise beforehand what they would teach. The Acts of the Apostles is the divine record of events after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, and reveals the progress of the kingdom of God. It has been

called the acts of the Holy Spirit. Most certainly we see the Spirit's mighty work through the apostles.

The fifty days between the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and Pentecost were very important. During forty of them He showed Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs (1 Corinthians 15. 5-8; Mark 16. 9-14; John 20) and taught them the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Two major truths can be traced throughout the Acts of the Apostles, namely clear testimony to Jesus as the Christ, and kingdom of God teaching and practice. The term kingdom of God is used more than thirty times in the Acts. We understand that the kingdom of God in this context means divine rule on earth among God's gathered people. We do not think that the Remembrance was kept between the Resurrection and the day of Pentecost. For the Lord was with them, the Holy Spirit had not yet come, and the very first church of God was at Jerusalem and commenced from Pentecost. At that time the disciples had a limited understanding of the kingdom of God (Acts 1. 6). They were still thinking in terms of Israel: "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel" (Luke 24. 21). Times and seasons refer to Israel as a nation. But the kingdom was being removed from Israel and was about to be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matthew 21. 43).

About 120 "names" (as in A. V. and R. V. M. ) were numbered together, and these formed the nucleus of the new expression of the kingdom of God; to this end the Lord Jesus taught and instructed them. They were to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. Among them was Mary, the mother of Jesus, not to be worshipped, but herself following the Lord's instructions, by waiting for the Holy Spirit to come. Present also with her were some of the Lord's brothers but there is no mention of His sisters. We understand this is the last time that this Mary is mentioned in the Scriptures. While they waited, they continued steadfastly in prayer.

*Neville Coomer*

**From Glasgow (Parkhead).** —The disciples asked the Lord Jesus Christ, "Dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1. 6). They should have understood by the parable of the vineyard that the Lord, being rejected, was now giving the kingdom of God to another nation which would bring forth the fruits of the vineyard, and of which His disciples should be the nucleus. So the Lord Jesus assured them that when He left them to go unto His Father He would send them the promise of His Father, even the Holy Spirit, who would indwell them with power so that they could become living witnesses. As their Lord was received out of their sight into heaven they stood looking up, when the word of the angels came to them to comfort their hearts assuring them that they would see Him again. The disciples returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet to go to an upper chamber. The names of certain disciples were recorded, and also the women who continued with them in the prayers. Here we find them all in unity in prayer. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133. 1). It was a delight to the heart of God to see the company in Jerusalem dwelling together in unity, with one aim and purpose, waiting to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit.

*Fred Harvey*

**From Paisley.** —The forty days of waiting and teaching may be compared with Moses **being** instructed in the Law forty days. He was given all that was necessary for the people of God to be able to serve and worship God till the coming of the Messiah. So the "things concerning the kingdom of God" may be viewed as the teaching necessary for the establishment and maintenance of churches of God, till He come.

The apostles were anxious about the kingdom being restored to Israel, but the Lord Jesus directed their minds to the new structure, which envisages Jew and Gentile together in unity. Their witness is to be to the "uttermost part of the earth", not merely to Judaea, though it was to "the Jew first". Having given this commission, the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven. The first reaction of the apostles seems to have been that their Lord's ascension was irreversible. However, two men standing by (presumably angels) affirmed that He would return as surely as He went. With this assurance they returned to the upper room to watch and pray.

In comparison with the three thousand at Pentecost their gathering of a hundred and twenty was small. But the Lord Jesus had instructed them not to evangelize until they were clothed with power from on high. Neither do we read of their keeping His remembrance in the breaking of the bread until Acts 2. The basic order of their gathering was simple, consisting of fellowship and prayer. In summary, the fifty days were a preparatory period of confirmation and a natural transition between the old and the new. So Israel and the little flock set their faces towards Pentecost, the one trusting in Moses and the tradition of the fathers for the deliverance of Israel, the other trusting in Christ and waiting for the promise of the Father towards the evangelization of the world.

*T. Summerhill*

## IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also received from Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Birmingham, Denmark Hill, Derby, Edinburgh, Hamilton (Ontario), Lagos, Liverpool, Portslade, Teesside and Vancouver. The following further points are taken from their papers.

The Acts and Genesis (our last year's study) are both books of beginnings. Luke wrote two treatises about the Lord, his Gospel, addressed to "most excellent Theophilus", and Acts, addressed to the same person, but no longer using the title "most excellent". Possibly the title denoted an office which he had relinquished; Felix and Festus were addressed in the same way. Theophilus means, "lover of God".

The closing chapters of the Gospels portray the apostles as dispirited men with no hope, but after the period of preparation they were different men, capable of turning the world upside down (Acts 17. 6). The key to the change was the Lord's resurrection, which was demonstrated to the apostles **by** many proofs (*tekmerion*, sure signs, infallible proofs, A. V.).

Although there are five records of this period in Scripture, they give little detail of what the Lord said to His disciples. We have clearly the great commission in Matthew 28; there is reference in Luke to the opening of their minds to understand the Scriptures; and the Lord's

words in John as to their receiving the Holy Spirit. These three diverse things reflect a wide range of topics which must have come under review during the forty days.

The fifty days of preparation may be thought of as forty days of communion and ten days of prayer, a wonderful soul exercise prior to their being filled with the Spirit for the great work that was to follow. The principle of preparation before service was emphasized, and interest shown in other occurrences of the number forty in a similar connexion, such as Moses' forty years in Midian and the Lord's forty days and nights in the wilderness.

In the choice of Matthias we see God's sovereignty; his name means 'gift of Jah'. It was necessary for him to have witnessed the baptism of John, accompanied the twelve during the Lord's ministry, and to have been with the eleven until the fortieth day after the Lord's resurrection.

Peter's account of the death of Judas seems to differ from that recorded in Matthew, but the explanation may be that the rope used by Judas to hang himself broke, with the result stated in Acts 1. 18.  
*Eds.*

### EXTRACTS FOR COMMENT

L "Reference to fifty days is found in Leviticus 23. 15, 16: 'From the day ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering;... shall ye number fifty days'. On the fiftieth day they were to offer a new meal offering of two wave loaves. The sheaf of the wave offering speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the two loaves are generally believed to represent that both Jew and Gentile are found in the new holy nation" (Hamilton, Ont. ).

The typical application of the two wave loaves is also brought out in this month's leading study article. Three interesting points emerge for discussion: -

- a. Is it correct to say that the new meal offering (verse 16) comprises the two wave loaves (verse 17), since the latter contain leaven? For according to Leviticus 2. 11, 12 no meal offering... shall be made with leaven, and no leaven was to be burned as an offering made by fire unto the LORD; it was not to come up for a sweet savour on the altar. Would not the new meal offering rather find its place in association with the sacrifices of verse 18, the "bread of firstfruits" (as the two wave loaves are described in verse 20) being waved before the LORD and "holy to the LORD for the priests"?
- b. Whereas many incline to the view that Jew and Gentile are seen typically in the two loaves, can further scriptural support be found for this?
- c. What is the significance of the leaven in the two loaves?  
Further contributions are invited from any who wish to offer help on these points.

2. "Christ taught that the kingdom would be taken from Israel and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Was there a distinct cut-off point when the change took place?... John preached repentance

and baptism. Peter preached repentance, baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2. 38). In Acts 10 the order was repentance, believing, the indwelling of the Spirit and then baptism. This shows the possibility of overlap of dispensations" (Vancouver).

There were necessarily special features in the closing days of the Mosaic dispensation as a result of the Lord's presence among Israel. But He upheld and practised the law of Moses (Matthew 5. 17, 23. 1-3), honoured the Temple as the house of God (John 2. 16, 17), and even so late in His ministry as Matthew 21. 43 the taking away of the kingdom of God from Israel was still future (The Greek verbs for 'shall be taken' (*apthesetai*) and 'shall be given to' (*dothesetcd*) are both in the future indicative passive). Concurrently of course He was preparing within Israel the material for the new spiritual kingdom (Luke 12. 32). Israel's rejection and crucifixion of the Lord finally confirmed the nation's attitude, leading to the introduction of the new dispensation on the day of Pentecost. This was a definite landmark in divine purpose, the start of the new dispensation, the beginning of the new spiritual kingdom, the day when the foundation of the new spiritual house was established. There was not "an overlap of dispensations". Some other explanation of the contrast between Acts 2. 38 and 10. 47, 48 must therefore be sought. This lies rather in God's special dealings with the formerly privileged people of the Mosaic dispensation at the very beginning of the dispensation of grace. Where sin had abounded in their rejection of God's Son, grace abounded more exceedingly in the offer of salvation first to the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 3. 26). That on the day of Pentecost Peter urged an outward evidence of genuine repentance (i. e. a public act of baptism) was appropriate to the background of the recent rejection of Christ.

3. "We concluded that Theophilus was probably a Gentile convert to Christ, and that Luke's purpose is to convey to him a greater knowledge of Christian origins and an outline of the extension of the early church from Jerusalem to Rome via Samaria, Antioch, Asia and Europe. The Person and work of the Holy Spirit is the overriding theme of the book, but two other themes emerge—(1) the rejection of the gospel by the Jews and its acceptance by the Gentile nations; (2) the persecution of the early church and the influence of Satan in this connexion" (Edinburgh).

Attention is drawn to the indefiniteness of the expression "the early church". Although popular with commentators, it lacks precision, and tends to blur the distinctive uses by the Spirit of the word *ekklesia* in the New Testament. Is there not some imbalance in this summary of salient themes in Acts? For one of its major themes, distinct from though supplementary to the preaching of the gospel, is the concern of the apostles fully to implement the great commission, and so bring into being a spiritual kingdom composed of churches of God dedicated to the will of the resurrected Lord.

4. "The number of the names together was 120 (a known list of names)... The meeting at which an apostle was chosen to replace Judas seems to have been attended by men only, for although Peter might have used the address 'brethren' in speaking to a mixed company, there is no reason why the word 'disciples' could not be used

(verse 15), if both men and women had been meant. Some thought that we were assuming a lot to say that the 120 together were all the believers in Jerusalem... It was also thought by some that the 120 did the selection, while others thought that it was the *men* brethren who selected Matthias" (Liverpool).

In some contexts the term "brethren" (Greek, *adelphoi*) applies to "believers, apart from sex" (Vine), e. g. Romans 1. 13; 1 Thessalonians 1. 4; Hebrews 3. 1. But in Acts 1. 16 Peter addresses "*andres adelphoi*" that is *male* brethren. It seems consistent then that it was a group of men who discussed and dealt with the selection of Matthias. The parenthetical statement in verse 15 about the number of names together (and this is true to the Greek) indicates the approximate number of committed disciples who were known to have associated themselves with the apostles and who were waiting in obedience to the Lord's word. This does not imply that there were no other believers in Jerusalem. There may have been many, but at this point they were not associated together with the 120.

5. "The Lord, having taken them out to the mountain near Bethany, gave them the great commission as recorded in Matthew 28. 16-20. Having blessed them He was taken up into heaven" (Liverpool).

Is not the great commission of Matthew 28 associated with the mountain of Galilee (verse 16) rather than the final scene on the mount of Olives near Jerusalem (Luke 24. 50; Acts 1. 10-12)? While it may be possible to suggest a break in the continuity of events between verses 17 and 18 of Matthew 28, the passage would more naturally read as one incident from verse 16 to the end. The declaration of the commission may seem more appropriate to the Lord's final meeting with the apostles, but even after that ten days of waiting ensued. So the commission could well have been given on a mountain in Galilee at an earlier phase of the Lord's appearances. Compare the timing of the Lord's words in John 20. 22, 23, although we understand that this refers to an ecclesiastical aspect of forgiveness which would not be exercised until after Pentecost. It is possible also that the Lord expressed charges similar to the great commission on different occasions.

G. P. Jr.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Acts 1. 25: does "he" refer to Judas or Matthias? (Glasgow, Parkhead).

"That he might go to his own place" must refer to Judas, since the place to be taken by Matthias is clearly stated at the beginning of the sentence, "To take the place... from which Judas fell away". The construction of the sentence is such that no other interpretation is possible. All the well-known versions give this sense. L. B.

2. Is the coming again of the Lord Jesus, referred to in Acts 1. 11, His coming as Son of Man, or to the air for His saints? (Glasgow, Parkhead).

The words "in like manner" appear to me to point particularly to the Lord's return to the air for His saints. For where is the likeness to

His return as Son of Man?—"as the lightning cometh forth from the east... unto the west", "with power and great glory" (Matthew 24. 27, 30), "in flaming fire, rendering vengeance" (2 Thessalonians 1. 8), "every eye shall see Him" (Revelation I. 7). The emphasis in Acts 1. 11 is upon the comfort of the promise of His return to those who loved Him. It was a private departure, unseen by the world. That the Lord ascended from the mount of Olives seems relatively incidental.

*G. P. Jr.*

3. Was it necessary to choose another apostle before Pentecost to take the place of Judas, or should the vacancy have been left for someone like the apostle Paul? (Methil, Denmark Hill, Liverpool).

It is difficult to understand why Peter's action should be questioned by some commentators. The inspired Scriptures record an official pronouncement by Peter to the disciples concerning the necessity for Scripture to be fulfilled in the falling away of Judas and the appointment of another to take his place. The new apostle was to have qualifications which Paul could not possibly have possessed (Acts 1. 21, 22). Verse 24 implies that God, not men, chose Matthias. It is agreed that nothing more is written in Scripture about the service of Matthias, but the same applies to most of the twelve.

*L. B.*

4. 1 Corinthians 15. 5: "He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve". Was Matthias included in the twelve at that time although not publicly declared so until after the ascension? (Derby).

Matthias must have seen the Lord in resurrection in order to qualify as an apostle (Acts 1. 22), and to be an effective witness more than one appearance would probably have been necessary. It therefore seems likely that the proposition in the question is correct. It should be noted that the expression "the eleven" was normally used of the apostles after the defection of Judas, so that I judge the scripture referred to probably includes Matthias.

*L. B.*

I would understand that since Matthias was numbered with the twelve after the ascension, the apostles are spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15. 5 as God ever does of Israel—twelve tribes, never more nor less than twelve.

*J. B.*

5. What was involved in casting lots? Would it be proper to cast lots today? (Derby, Atherton and Leigh).

The casting of lots to determine a matter in Old Testament times probably consisted in throwing dice or pebbles of different sizes or shapes. It should be noted that the incident in Acts 1 was before the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the casting of lots was preceded by united exercise before the Lord as to the result. It is not commended as a present-day practice by any scriptural example after Pentecost.

*L. B.*

6. Were there more than the eleven on the mountain when the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven (Luke 24. 50-53; Acts 1. 2)? (Liverpool).

The apostles are mentioned in Acts 1. 2 and in the succeeding verses the personal pronouns "they, them" are used, referring back each time

to the apostles. **Verse 13 records their return to the upper chamber and lists the eleven by name.** The emphasis of the **Acts** account is upon the eleven throughout this section. **Yet this does not necessarily mean that no others were present at the more important appearances.** It would seem strange, for instance, if such men as Matthias had not been eye-witnesses of the Lord's ascension. *G. P. Jr.*

**I.** "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" seems a strange question to ask at the end of forty days of instruction by the Lord (Hamilton, Ont. ).

It is clear that some aspects of divine purpose dawned only slowly upon the disciples' understanding. It was not until **Acts 10** that Peter and his brethren understood that God willed to grant repentance unto life to Gentile as well as to Jew. The hope of Israel's national glory under a conquering Messiah loomed large in the Old Testament prophecies, and it was natural for the apostles to enquire about this. *G. P. Jr.*

**8.** Does verse 6 indicate what aspect of the kingdom of God had been emphasized by the Lord in the "speaking" of verse 3? (Atherton and Leigh).

Yes, indirectly! Having dealt in detail with the aspect of the kingdom to be expressed in churches of God, the Lord may well have omitted much special reference to the future aspect of the kingdom associated with Israel's national glory. The enquiry of verse 6 and the Lord's brief reply set that aspect in perspective. The immediate and major concern of the apostles was with the spiritual kingdom of this dispensation. *G. P. Jr.*

**9.** Was the cloud referred to in **Acts 1. 9** a symbol of the Shekinah glory of God (Exodus 33. 7-11, 40. 34; Mark 9. 7)? (Edinburgh).

Both aspects of the second coming of the Lord are associated in Scripture with clouds (Daniel 7. 13; Matthew 26. 64; Mark 14. 62; Revelation 1, 7; I Thessalonians 4. 17). It therefore seems appropriate that the ascension should also be associated with a cloud, especially in view of the angels' promise that He will come in like manner as He went into heaven. Note that these scriptures refer to "the clouds" and "the clouds of heaven", so indicating that natural clouds are meant. A natural cloud might, however, be a symbol of something else, and there does appear to be some connexion between the glory of God's presence and the cloud on the mount of transfiguration (compare Mark 9. 7 with 2 Peter 1. 17, 18). If therefore the references to "a cloud" in Mark 9. 7 and Acts 1. 9 are capable of being equated, there may be some force in the suggestion made in the question. *L. B.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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## EDITORIAL

In its early days the church of God in Jerusalem set an example in Christian living for all believers in churches of God. In Acts 2. 42 the conduct of the saints is commended to all who desire to live godly in these terms, "And they were continuing steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in the fellowship, in the breaking of the loaf and in the prayers" (Marshall's literal translation). We accept that it is sometimes unsafe to make deductions from literal translations since Greek and English modes of expression vary considerably. Thus in John 19. 30 the Lord exclaims literally, "It has been finished", but in both A. V. and R. V. the rendering is "It is finished", otherwise the impression might be given to the English reader that the Lord was speaking about some long past event. But in Acts 2. 42 there are four parallel expressions, each beginning with the words "in the", so it is hard to understand why most translators have kept the definite article in three cases and omitted it before the word "fellowship", so changing the emphasis from the thought of participation in a community to an undefined partnership. The difference may not be considered by some to be of great significance, but at least the literal translation does provide a positive link with 1 Corinthians 1. 9, where the community is given a name, "The Fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord".

"Fellowship" is one of the words used in the Revised Version to translate the Greek word "*koinonia*" which is well worth further study. With its related words *koinos* (common), *koinonos* (partner), *sun-koinonos* (a partner with), *koinoneo* (to act as a partner), *sun-koinoneo* (to act as a partner with), it covers every aspect of corporate life in churches of God. It is the bond which binds believers together in service to their Lord.

L. Burrows

## THE HOLY SPIRIT—POWER AND CONTROL

The Lord Jesus "was received up, after that He had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom He had chosen" (Acts 1. 2). So while the book is fittingly called the Acts of the Apostles, it does in effect record the acts of the Holy Spirit through them.

### Revelation by the Spirit

When the Lord Jesus ascended from Mount Olivet He left behind men having spiritual life, and to whom for forty days He had spoken the things concerning the kingdom of God. Understanding the words of the Lord Jesus did not rest upon their natural attainments; it resulted from the work of the Spirit, of whom the Lord had already said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you... He shall guide you into all the truth;... He

shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 14. 26, 16. 13). His work is to reveal, teach, lead and guide. Herein lay their ability or power to grasp divine truth. When Saul was converted Ananias said, "The Lord... hath sent me, that thou mayest... be filled with the Holy Spirit" (9. 17). Paul's ancestry, academic training and religious upbringing would be of little use apart from the indwelling Spirit, and his readiness of heart to do God's will. "Rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do... and Saul arose" (9. 6, 8).

### **Enablement by the Spirit**

On the day of Pentecost the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled. A band of ignorant and unlearned men in the city of Jerusalem were filled with the Spirit, and soon the city was filled with perplexed and marvelling multitudes (4. 13). The boldness and power of the apostles rested on the two fundamental facts that they were willing to do His will and that they relied entirely on the enablement of the Spirit of God. Stephen was an outstanding example of this. Of him it is recorded, "They were not able (powerless) to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake" (6. 10). In his address to the Sanhedrin he accused the leaders of Israel of resisting the Holy Spirit as their fathers had done. Spiritual power was manifested in Spirit-filled and Spirit-led men and women.

### **Direction by the Spirit**

Just as the Spirit enlightened and empowered, so He directed in spiritual service. It was by His direct leading that Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch (8. 29). Chapter 10 provides a further illustration of a Spirit-directed man willing to do, and who would surely know. Peter had not comprehended the development of the purpose of God in regard to the Gentiles, but at the critical juncture when "the Spirit said unto him... Arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting... Peter went down" (10. 19-21). The brethren at Antioch similarly responded to the Spirit's direction in the sending forth of Barnabas and Saul (13. 1-3). Paul and Silas showed remarkable sensitiveness to the leading of the Spirit as to their movements in the work of the Lord (see in illustration, 16. 6-10).

### **The Spirit's Leading in Development of Divine Purpose**

The will of God may not always be apprehended immediately, nor is it to be received by a course of religious instruction. Usually there is a progressive understanding, each step having to be taken before another is revealed. There is an interesting application of this principle during the early days of the churches of God. The Acts reveals development in stages. In the first seven chapters there was a great multiplication of disciples in the Jerusalem area, and the clear indication of the steps which they were to follow (Acts 2. 41-42). It was the Spirit of God who brought about the unity of believers in Jerusalem by directing spiritually minded individuals along these lines of divine truth.

But the Lord had said, "Ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1. 8). Had the apostles lost sight of this? In any case it was

the Spirit of God who through the martyrdom of Stephen and the ensuing persecution brought about the scattering of the disciples (8. 1), and a further development of the work of God.

The next step in the overall pattern of growth was when Philip went down to Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ (8. 5). Very remarkably the gift of the Holy Spirit was withheld from the Samaritan believers until Peter and John had gone down and prayed for them (8. 14-17). This demonstrates the close control of the developing work by the Spirit, lest there should be any perpetuation within churches of God of the ancient strife between Jew and Samaritan.

The Holy Spirit's direction was again prominent when the time came for the next step to be revealed. Through Peter's responsiveness in the matter of Cornelius the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles. Even strong contention by those that were of the circumcision had to give way in the face of Peter's testimony: "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning" (11. 15). About the same time this phase of development found expression in Antioch, and Barnabas, a man full of the Holy Spirit, was sent to confirm reports of the Lord's working in that Gentile city. From this great new centre Barnabas and Saul were shortly to be sent forth by the direction of the Spirit of God, and the cycle was not completed until they returned to Antioch to demonstrate to their brethren that God had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles (14. 27). When this vast development towards the Gentiles was so seriously challenged by the Judaistic teachers (15. 1), the Holy Spirit's control of the gathering of apostles and elders in Jerusalem was a marked expression of His directing the great purposes of God. The conclusions of the Jerusalem conference could truly be described as having seemed "good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (15. 22-29).

Clearly then, all the activities of the early disciples, the individual pattern, the steps of disciples together, were an integral part of a wider growth under the overall direction of the Spirit of God. Paul well summarizes what is the result of full response to God's spiritual purpose as illustrated in the Acts—testifying the gospel of the grace of God, preaching the kingdom, declaring the whole counsel of God (20. 24-28).

### **Consistently Walking by the Spirit**

One who has received spiritual life by faith is expected to walk according to his attainment level: "Only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk" (Philippians 3. 16). In the Acts are records of some who lived and walked according to the Spirit's revelation, and of others who failed to live up to the standard already attained. The one hundred and twenty whose names were together lived in the light of the instruction that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait (1. 4). They had little idea of the significance of the fiftieth day. There were no doubts left in their hearts when the Spirit came to abide in them. It was *He* who filled them and gave them utterance (2. 4). To them there was one supreme rule: "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (4. 20). Their actions were with boldness (4. 13); their witness was with great power (4. 33). In contrast to this, Ananias and Sapphira did not walk by the rule unto which they had attained, and they suffered dire judgement (5. 1-6).

After Paul's conversion his rapid spiritual progress is summed up in the words, "But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews" (9. 22). Thereafter he consistently maintained a very high standard. Perhaps his very intensity of dedication influenced him in his attitude to John Mark when Barnabas wished this young man to accompany them a second time (15. 36-39). For Paul regarded John Mark's former withdrawal from the work in Pamphylia as a deflection from responsibility, a deficiency out of character with walking by the Spirit.

Another interesting case is that of Apollos, the Alexandrian, who knew John's baptism and had taught carefully the things concerning the Lord Jesus. When the way of God was expounded unto him more carefully, he helped them much which had believed through grace (18. 26, 27). Having walked conscientiously by that to which he had attained through the teaching of John the Baptist, Apollos was quickly receptive to a fuller understanding of the mind of the Lord when this was presented to him.

### **The Spirit of God and the Kingdom of God**

The closing paragraphs of Acts afford a personal glimpse of the apostle Paul as he continued to witness despite the limitations of his position in Rome as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. The keynote of his testimony was the kingdom of God (28. 23, 31), as it had been the keynote of the Lord's instruction to the disciples during the forty days after His resurrection (1. 3). During the intervening years the power and control of the Holy Spirit had been exercised towards the extension of this great spiritual kingdom. Paul's deep spiritual insight enabled him to appreciate this fundamental concept of the divine purpose in his day, and he devoted himself to the task of making disciples who would unitedly **give** expression to this kingdom. *R. A. Parker*

### **"MY CHURCH"—INCEPTION AND PURPOSE**

The only occurrence in the Scriptures of the expression "My Church" is to be found in Matthew 16. 18. There our Lord makes the important declaration concerning the great divine purpose of the building of His Church. This purpose had from all ages been hid in God (Ephesians 3. 9). It was something unrevealed even to angels, and mentioned for the first time on that memorable day at Caesarea Philippi. Its being called "the purpose of the ages" (Ephesians 3. 11 R. V. M. ) marks it out as one of the greatest purposes of all time. Therefore the words of our Lord may well be described as one of the greatest declarations of intent ever spoken in the ears of men. What He calls "My Church" is spoken of by Paul as "the Church which is His Body" (Ephesians 1. 22, 23). It is also called "the Body" (Colossians 1. 18), and "The Church" (Ephesians 5. 23). Our Lord's words, "I will build My Church" clearly indicate that the commencement of the building was future to the time when He spoke. It is our purpose to examine the Scriptures to know when this began and when it will be completed.

Although the Lord spoke of building a Church it was not a material building He had in view. The Church is called "His Body". He is related to His Church as the head is related to the human body. His Church is composed of members who are believing men and women

called out from all peoples irrespective of **their** station in life (1 Corinthians 12. 13). **The answer as to how such men and women become members of Christ's Body is surely found in 1 Corinthians 12. 13.** "In one Spirit were we all **baptized** into one Body, whether Jews or **Greeks**, whether bond or **free: and** were all **made to drink** of one Spirit". Baptism here is not **water baptism but baptism in the Spirit into the Body.** **The Baptizer is Christ Himself, even as John the Baptist stated, "He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 3. 11, R. V. M.) At the time of baptism each one is made to drink of the Spirit. This must mean the receiving of the Spirit by each believer. For this no prayers are needed and no human choice is exercised: Thus we see that entry into the Body is linked with the receiving of the Spirit. We should also note that being a member of Christ's Body is tantamount to being "in Christ". So we, who are many (members), are one Body in Christ (Romans 12. 5). The words "in Christ" describe the unique position into which the believer is brought. Belief in Christ and reception of the Holy Spirit are two great truths which go hand in hand. The Holy Spirit is received into the heart the moment one puts faith in Christ. "In whom (Christ), having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1. 13).**

**The hundred and twenty whose names were together (Acts 1. 15) were true believers in Christ, but not until the Holy Spirit descended and abode upon each one of them on the day of Pentecost did they become members of the Body. The Spirit also came to indwell them (2. 4). They were, on that day, made to drink of the Spirit. The day of Pentecost marks the beginning of the building of the Church, the Body. On that day also, because of the response on the part of the multitude who listened to the preaching of the word, another three thousand believed and received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so became part of the Church the Body (2. 38).**

God's purpose in the Church may be looked at as being threefold: towards angels, towards men and towards Christ. By the revelation of His purpose God is at the present time making known, through the Church, His manifold wisdom unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3. 10). Throughout the ages God withheld from those mighty beings the knowledge of His will regarding the Church, but now wonderingly they view the outworking of His great design whereby, based upon the death of Christ, believers are brought into an indivisible, eternal union with Him. So that now, angels who were privileged to behold God's wonderful power in creation are made to know something of His profound wisdom through His dealing thus with fallen sinners. Such action exalts God in the eyes of angels.

We should now examine how this purpose affects men and women who are the objects of such wondrous grace. At the time of conversion each one, baptized into the Body, becomes a member of an organic unity and enters into a relationship with Christ the Head and with other members of the Body. This position is inviolable. Neither failure on the part of the individual nor device of Satan can interfere with it. All rests solely upon Christ who is the Saviour of the Body. Death has removed many, yet they ever remain members of His Body. The Scriptures teach, however, that the members have responsibilities towards each other to behave and function according to their several

gifts, for the benefit of the whole. In the ideal it is God's purpose that all members who are contemporary with each other in the same locality should be together to fulfil this design. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, a majority of believers in that city were together and known as "the Church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1. 2), but they were also addressed as "Body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12. 27). It is clear that they could not be "the Body of Christ" to the exclusion of other believers. The definite article is not in the original Greek. This must mean then that they were "Body of Christ" characteristically, that in them as the church of God at Corinth, composed of members of the Body of Christ, the evidence of their being united to Him should be fully manifested in their functioning together in service and in their behaviour towards one another. There is much practical teaching associated with this aspect of truth, for example, "Speak ye truth each one with his neighbour; for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4. 25).

Thirdly, we now look at this purpose in relation to Christ. The Church is described as "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1. 23). This is lofty language and beyond full explanation. Yet looking at it in our limited way, it surely tells us that Christ, in spite of being the One who filleth all in all, Himself requires to be made full or to have a complement, that is someone to complete Him. As Adam needed Eve, even so Christ needs a Bride, and in a day to come she will be visibly united with Him in glory. He shall "present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephesians 5. 27). Students cannot fail to conclude that this will take place immediately following His coming for His own when both the living members on earth and the dead in Christ will respond to His call.

Old Testament prophets spoke of His coming to the earth in judgment and to reign, but none spoke of that day when he will personally return to take His own out of this world. Like the truth of the building of the Church, the Rapture was hid from them because it belongs to a later revelation. Not until that night in the upper room was anything spoken of that day. The same One who said, "I will build My Church", also said "I come again, and will receive you unto Myself" (John 14. 3). The former statement is in relation to the inception of the Church and the latter to the time of its completion. J. Bowman

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### Acts 2

#### The Holy Spirit Poured Forth

**From Derby.** —The 120 together in one place (upon one thing or to one intent: Rotherham) had doubtless all seen and heard the risen Lord Jesus and were thus fully persuaded of His resurrection, being together in obedience to His command, "Tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24. 49). The pouring forth of the Holy Spirit was to affect each one individually (He sat upon each one of them) although His coming was to create a unity. The word "clothed", which is translated from two words, *en*—in and *duno*—down, has the sense of sinking down into a garment (Dr. Strong).

Similarly Gideon was used by the Spirit, who clothed Himself with Gideon (Judges 6. 34, R. V. M. ). This rilling with the Spirit should not be confused with the indwelling of the Spirit in all believers, which is a once-and-for-all act. The filling may rather be an intermittent experience as seen in 4. 31; also to be "in the Spirit" has a dual application, as in Romans 8. 9 and Revelation 1. 10.

In verse 4 we read, "They spake with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Greek *apophthengomai*, which means short sententious sayings). This is the only place where "utterance" is so translated; in other places in New Testament scripture the word "*logos*" is used. This gift of tongues apparently continued throughout the apostolic period, or until God chose to withdraw the gift, probably when the New Testament was complete and widely distributed. Tongues are said to be "a sign to the unbelieving" (1 Corinthians 14. 22) and were an evidence of the Spirit's presence in the assembly, as also were other gifts exercised by individuals present. The divine purpose of this gift of tongues seems to be the speedy diffusion of the gospel to give effect to the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16. 15) [See comment 1],

Peter's masterly Spirit-led address culminated in the conversion of 3, 000 Jews, and the planting of the first church of God in the city of Jerusalem. Thus we see the Spirit's work in bringing believers together and linking them with the 120 already gathered in the "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4. 3) built upon the teaching of the apostles (verse 42, Ephesians 2. 20). S. R. W.

**From Portslade.** —The two loaves were tokens of the firstfruits of a great harvest of souls comprising both Jews and Gentiles; the beginnings of this harvest were seen at Pentecost and Caesarea (Acts 2; 10. 44, 45).

The nucleus baptized in, sealed and indwelt by the Spirit (Ephesians 1. 13; 1 Corinthians 6. 19, 20, 12. 13) was the beginning of the great mystery of the Church which is Christ's Body (Ephesians 3. 1-6, 1. 22, 23; 5. 23-33).

Those that received the word were baptized and added. Thus was begun the church of God at Jerusalem (Galatians 1. 13; Acts 9. 13), the lampstand of testimony (Revelations 1. 20, lit. ) composed of saints indwelt (1 Corinthians 3. 16) and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Likewise was commenced the Fellowship (Acts 2. 42), a community later named the Fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, maintained by the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4. 3, 13).

In the breaking of the bread is implied the collective approach through the veil into the Holy Place (Hebrews 10. 19-25), the beginning of the spiritual house (1 Peter 2. 5), the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3. 15), a habitation of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2. 22).

From Acts 2. 1-4, 10. 45, and the future application of Joel's prophecy it was seen that the pouring out of the Spirit is not confined to one event [see Comment 3]. W. T.

**From Denmark Hill.** —Towards the end of Christ's life, He told increasingly of the coming of the Holy Spirit in a new way. The disciples knew of the Spirit being *on* men for special purposes at

special times (e. g. 1 Samuel 10. 10 in relation to Saul), but the Lord told them the Spirit would be *in* them (John 14. 17). He further indicated the time of the pouring forth of the Spirit: it would be after His glorification (John 7. 38-39). But this new event was foretold in type 1500 years earlier, for Leviticus 23. 16 describes a new meal offering which was to follow 50 days after the wave offering (typical of the resurrection) which itself followed after the Passover, which typified the death of Christ.

Joel 2. 28 is a direct reference from the Old Testament to the new pouring forth of the Spirit. It was clearly only a similar thing which occurred at Pentecost, because the heavenly signs mentioned in Joel did not then take place. But as Jews were the heralds of the new dispensation at the time of the special pouring forth of the Spirit, so it will be Israel's representatives (144, 000) who will witness before the "great and terrible day of the Lord". An immediate outcome of the Spirit's advent by a rushing wind and cloven tongues of fire was the miraculous declaration of the mighty words of the Lord in languages not previously known by the speakers. The outcome of Peter's message was belief in Christ, and those who believed became members of the Body of Christ; but they were also baptized and added to the 120 disciples already together, forming the first church of God in Jerusalem, and the beginning of the new spiritual house of God. The outcome of the promise in the pouring forth of the Spirit was the gathering of disciples into God's house; necessarily of course, they were also members of the Body of Christ. Clearly it is God's wish that believers should continue steadfastly in fellowship together and observe the principles which the Lord taught the disciples over forty days.

It is dangerous to expect a repetition of Pentecostal happenings, because we are not led to expect this by reading elsewhere in the Acts and the Epistles. Pentecost was unique. We noted that in Acts 2. 38 Peter urged baptism unto remission of sins and promised the gift of the Holy Spirit as a result of this, immersion in water preceding reception of the Spirit. Like the experience of the Samaritans in Acts 8, this is contrary to the normal sequence of faith in Christ, reception of the Spirit and baptism in water. These conflicting points must be regarded as part of the transition period from Judaism to the new dispensation. We do not wait for the "second blessing" as do some, since a second Pentecost can never take place. But 1 Corinthians 12. 13 makes it quite clear that "in one Spirit were we all baptized into one Body", and that at the time of faith in Christ. C. L. Prasher

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

The remaining contributors, Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Birkenhead, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow (Parkhead), Kingston-upon-Thames, Liverpool, Melbourne, Methil, Paisley, Teesside and Vancouver brought out a number of interesting points, among which were the following.

In the fulness of time (Galatians 4. 4) the Son came by incarnation. Similarly the Spirit came by effusion at God's chosen time, when Jerusalem was full of visitors from every nation under heaven. On this day of Pentecost, which was also the Lord's Day, God unmistakably intervened in human affairs. Pentecost fell on a day in early summer when the sound of a mighty rushing wind would be a strange and

unnatural thing. Those assembled at Jerusalem, Jews from every nation under heaven, were filled with expectation of some great event which would climax the marvels of the Lord's presence among them. They recognized the mighty rushing wind as a supernatural phenomenon, for it exceeded in velocity the sirocco that was common in Israel in the spring.

"At the institution of the services of the tabernacle (Leviticus 9. 24) and at the dedication of the Solomonic temple (2 Chronicles 7. 1) fire from heaven consumed the sacrifices." By analogy the tongues like as of fire (Acts 2. 3) were thought to be associated with the presence of God in His New Testament house.

Those Jews whose first language was not Hebrew heard the disciples speaking in their native languages (Greek, *dialecto*, idiom). All the languages used under the control of the Holy Spirit were known and understood by some of those present, so that there was no necessity for an interpreter.

Peter's gospel address was a model for all time, he appealed repeatedly to the Scriptures, he exalted Christ and called for repentance by the Jews for their crime of crucifying their Messiah. There was an immediate response and 3, 000 were saved whereas when the law was given 3, 000 died (Exodus 32. 28).

Not the least evidence of the Spirit's infilling was the boldness with which the apostles preached their message. To denounce, in the very citadel of Judaism, the betrayers and murderers of Jesus of Nazareth required courage of an order which was not native to these men. The results of the preaching on the day of Pentecost confirm the nature of our Lord's commission to His apostles, and are in accord with the blueprint laid down by Him for the extension of the kingdom of God during the present age. The first church of God, composed of baptized disciples who continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers, is the divinely authorized pattern for corporate testimony during the present age.

Because of the special circumstances in Jerusalem at that time, many of the disciples sold their possessions and goods, and had all things common. This is not comparable with present-day communism. The more normal pattern of fellowship in material things among disciples in New Testament churches of God was on the principles outlined in such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 16. 1, 2 and 2 Corinthians 8. 1-5, 9.

*Eds.*

### EXTRACTS FOR COMMENT

1. "Jews from about sixteen different nations, being gathered together in Jerusalem, were amazed to hear these simple Galilaean believers speaking in the languages of the nations whence they had come. These visitors needed to know what God was doing, and thus the Spirit enabled the disciples to speak forth the good news of God in foreign languages" (Melbourne).

May we suggest that some care is needed in our assumptions about the use of the gift of tongues? The subject is difficult through limited scriptural data, but from such detail as is available does it not seem that the gift was primarily associated with glorifying God rather than with preaching? On the day of Pentecost the disciples spoke in tongues "the mighty works of God" (2. 11). It seems clear that from 2. 14

onwards **Peter began to speak** in the commonly understood **language**, probably **Aramaic**. In 10. **46** those **speaking in tongues** were "magnifying God". In 19. **6** "they **spake** with tongues, and prophesied", **two distinct** expressions of the **Spirit's** fulness. This view of **references** in the **Acts** accords with 1 Corinthians **14. 2**: "He that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto **men, but** unto God; **for no man** understandeth; **but in the Spirit** he speaketh mysteries". By glorifying **God** in this way the **speaker** in tongues would also edify himself (**14. 4**). Reference **is made** in 14. **14** to **praying** in a tongue, again a **Godward exercise**. Tongues as a **sign** to the unbelieving (14. **22**) would function precisely **as in Acts 2. 6**, where astonishment at hearing their various languages disposed the audience to listen to **Peter's** preaching. The gift of prophecy would **seem to have been** more relevant to preaching than the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians **14. 3, 24-25**).

2. "Some discussion took place **as to** whether the gift of tongues in **Acts 2** and the gift in 1 Corinthians **14** were different. The general **mind** was that they were the same. Nevertheless there **are** difficulties when comparing the **passages**, such **as** the following:

**Acts 2**

**1 Corinthians 14**

- |                                                                                 |                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| (a) <b>every man</b> heard them <b>speak</b> no <b>man</b> understandeth (v. 8) | h e . . . speaketh not unto <b>men</b>   |
| (b) we do hear them <b>speaking</b> (v. 11)                                     | (v. 2)                                   |
| (c) no interpreter needed                                                       | <b>an interpreter needed</b>             |
| (d) <b>a temporary gift</b>                                                     | <b>a continuing gift</b>                 |
| (e) intelligible to the <b>speaker</b>                                          | his understanding <b>is unfruitful</b> " |

(Liverpool).

It is suggested that the **apparent** difficulties of reconciling the **statements** of 1 Corinthians **14** with the narrative of **Acts 2** may largely be resolved **by taking** into account the different situations in which the gift of tongues was **being** exercised. In Jerusalem at Pentecost the Spirit moved the disciples to **magnify** God in various languages **represented** among the assembled multitude. Doubtless different individuals were moved to **speak in different** tongues, and appropriate elements in the crowd recognized their **respective** languages. **But in** the Corinthian church, where few **different** languages were known or **spoken**, some brethren were imposing on the gatherings of the church **by** exercising the **gift** of tongues and **speaking in** languages unknown to **any** present. **So** no one could understand. In such a context as this the **gifts** were useless for the general **benefit** of the assembly unless **an interpreter** was present. The **gift was the same as in Acts 2**, but the **circumstances made** the complementary **gift of interpretation imperative** if the church was to **be edified**.

As to (d), where is the evidence that the **gift of Acts 2** was "temporary"? How should we have known that Paul **exercised** this **gift apart** from the **brief** allusion in 1 Corinthians **14. 18, 19**? Who **is to assert** that those who **spoke in** tongues at Pentecost did not have a continuing ability **to do so as** moved **by** the **Spirit**? Is there really therefore a **valid contrast between Acts and Corinthians in this respect**?

The validity of the final point of contrast (e) may also be questioned. Where **is** the evidence that the understanding of the **speaker in tongues in Acts 2** was **any different** from that of the **speaker in tongues in 1 Corinthians 14**? Do not the **statements** of 1 Corinthians **14** rather

amplify for **us** what equally obtained **in Acts 2?** Admittedly certain **statements are** problematic as we look **back** to something beyond our **present** experience. **But is there** any reason why **the speaker in** tongues should not **magnify** God, the Holy **Spirit bearing** witness with his spirit of **the truths he** was proclaiming, and **yet be** miraculously moved to **express** those **truths in a** language unknown to him? In **this way** he would himself **be** spiritually edified. **Yet as far as** the vocabulary, construction **and** idiom of the language were concerned he would not **speak** with the understanding. In **this sense** his **understanding** would **be** unfruitful. If no interpreter was **present** his **understanding** would also **be** unfruitful towards others, for **they** could not appreciate what he was talking about. Nor could **he** hope to give a **verbatim** translation of what **he had uttered** unless **he** himself **were granted** the gift of interpretation of tongues.

Whatever **may be said** about **such** difficult points, however, weight should **be given** to the formidable **evidence** that **the gift** of tongues **in the Acts** of the Apostles **was the same** as that **in the epistle** to the Corinthians.

3. (See reference in Portslade paper). While **the** expression "poured forth" is **used** of the Spirit's visitation **in** different connexions, this should not **detract** from **the** singular importance of **the day** of Pentecost **at the** beginning of **the present age** of grace. For that occasion was **marked by** supernatural accompaniments which **are** not recorded **as** obtaining **at** any other **time** in apostolic experience. **It was** a unique landmark of **divine** purpose, answering to the typical foreshadowing **fifty days after the** resurrection, **and** signalling the mighty dispensational effusion of the **Spirit in** fulfilment of the promise of the Father.

4. "We thought the words 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation\* (verse 40) applied to **the three** thousand who were saved at Pentecost, **and that it** is not salvation from the penalty of **sin** but **from the power of sin** that **is referred** to here. Now **that** they were saved from the penalty of **sin** they were **to** work out their own salvation from **the power of sin**" (Paisley).

**Perhaps** this explanation derives from **concern to** safeguard the principle that **"by grace have ye** been saved through faith; **and** that not of yourselves: **it is the gift** of God". **But is it** not **rather** difficult to reconcile with **the sequence** of the **passage** that **Peter** should at that point **urge** to salvation from sin's penalty? The flow of his **argument** is towards **repentance and** remission of sins, verse 41 following on naturally **as a** result of his exhortation. There is a general **sense in** which **those** who believed **Peter's message** saved themselves from the crooked generation of Israel to which they belonged. For **by repentance and baptism** they publicly dissociated themselves from Israel's rejection of **Christ, and** proclaimed their faith **in Him as** Saviour; only on the **grounds of repentance and faith** was their eternal salvation gifted to them.

*G. P. Jr.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Will those **saved after the** Rapture receive the Holy **Spirit** individually **as we do** or will **there** be **an** event equivalent to Pentecost? (Birmingham).

Although **the** initial **pouring forth** of **the Spirit** at Pentecost affected

the company of disciples **gathered in** Jerusalem, they nevertheless **each** received Him individually: **the fire "sat upon each one of them... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"**. That **there will be an evident** outpouring of the Spirit **at the time of the end** is clear from Joel 2. 28-32. Those who prophesy **as a result** will have to **experience** an individual visitation; **but** whether they will know His **abiding** indwelling **as with believers of the present age may be** more open to **debate**. Is there **any scripture** which informs us? **G. P. Jr.**

2. Is there a **fault in** our preaching which results **in** delay between salvation **and baptism, since at** Pentecost believers were **baptized** immediately? (Birmingham).

**At** Pentecost, **because** of the **attitude** of the **Judaistic** leaders to those who followed Christ, the **very act** of **baptism** was a dangerous commitment which proved that the person was a **true** disciple. The **issue** between **Judaism and** Christ was clear-cut. Nor were there doctrinal modifications of the **true** Christian faith. Today **it is** more difficult **in many cases** to be clear that one professing Christ **is a** true-hearted disciple **and understands at** least the **basic** doctrines of the faith. Nevertheless, emphasis of the Lordship of Christ **and** His command about **baptism may** encourage early exercise. **G. P. Jr.**

3. Matthew 3. 11. Is the **fire** here the **fire of judgement** or the tongues of **fire in Acts 2. 3?** (Atherton).

(a) There **is** also **reference** to **fire in** the verses **preceding and** following Matthew 3. 11 **and in** both these **cases judgement is** undoubtedly **in** view. The **Acts scripture** describes the tongues **parting asunder as being** like **fire** so that actual **fire does not seem** to have **been** present. A further point **is** that Matthew **uses** the word "baptize", implying immersion, whereas **at** Pentecost the "tongues of **fire"** **sat** on the disciples. One contributor **suggested** that "the symbol of **fire speaks** of **purity and cleansing"**, relating this **to** the holiness of God's spiritual house **at its** inception **at** Pentecost. **L. B.**

(b) In Matthew 3. 11 the **fire** has to do with execution of divine judgement. **J. B.**

4. Were there only Jewish believers **in** the Body of Christ **on the day** of Pentecost? (Melbourne).

**As** yet the gospel had not **been** preached to Gentiles **but** there **is** good reason to believe that the Roman centurion who **said**, "Truly this was the **Son of God"** was a saved man. **Such as** he might have **been** present with the 120 **in the upper** room. There **were** also proselytized Gentiles (that **is** men who had **embraced** the Jewish faith **and** had **been** **circumcized**) **present in Peter's audience** (Acts 2. 10). So, that there **is** a **distinct** possibility that **at** this early **stage** "the middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2. 14) had already **been** breached. **L. B.**

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). \*

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## EDITORIAL

In the early chapters of the Acts the *Holy Spirit* has given us five model addresses by the apostle Peter. They are recorded as follows: Acts 2. 22-36; 3. 12-26; 4. 8-12; 5. 29-32; **10.** 34-43. From these we can learn much of the Spirit's mind in presenting the gospel and the truth in the early days of the new dispensation; and they provide a pattern to be followed in our day.

The driving force of the early Christian mission was not the propagation of the beautiful ideals of the brotherhood of man, but a proclamation of the mighty acts of God. The addresses vary in length, but fundamentally their message is the same. Two great events are prominent in each address, namely, the death of Christ on the Cross, and His glorious resurrection.

The details of that dreadful travesty of justice in the crucifixion of the Lord were well known to Jew and pagan alike. Indeed, the two men journeying to Emmaus expressed their surprise that any sojourner in Jerusalem could have failed to hear the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was mighty in deed and in word before God and all the people, and how He had been condemned to death and crucified by the chief priests and rulers. Not only was the death of Jesus in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, but the guilt of lawless men who crucified Him was laid at their door that conviction might be achieved. That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures is fundamental to the redemptive act on Calvary. Let the Cross be set at the very centre of God's great plan of redemption, and it will prove itself to be, in the twentieth century as in the first, the power of God unto salvation.

This literally crucial event, however, was never in their early preaching isolated from the other which crowned and completed it, forming as it were the keystone of the arch, namely the resurrection. This was the mighty act concerning which only witnesses chosen of God could testify that "Him did God exalt with (at, R. V. M. ) His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins". Without the resurrection of Christ the voice of the gospel preacher would never have been heard in Jerusalem nor in the uttermost parts of the earth; or as Paul wrote later to the saints in the church of God in Corinth, "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain... ye are yet in your sins". The resurrection of Christ is the very basis of the Christian's hope of his own resurrection. There is no hope of revival today until this basic glorious truth is reasserted and comes back to its own... that "the Lord is risen indeed". To the supreme facts of the Cross and the resurrection, which are really not two but one, our preaching must ever return, and from them derive fresh strength and urgency and inspiration.

*Jas. M.*

## THE FIRST CHURCH OF GOD— Constitutional and Conditional Pattern

### "Church" and "church"

Matthew twice records in his Gospel that the Lord Jesus spoke about a "church" (16. 18, 18. 17). We believe that in the first scripture He spoke about a dispensation-wide "church", one which He is intensively engaged in building even now, namely, "the Church which is His body" (Ephesians 1. 22, 23). In the second reference it seems obvious from the context that the Lord is speaking of a church in a "local" setting. How else could one bring a matter troubling two brothers to the church except locally? There is also a future aspect in both quotations. The use of the future tense in the Lord's words, "I *will* build My Church", would indicate that His Church was not being built at that time among the disciples. We could perhaps say that it was "being prepared". Similarly in the "telling to the church" of 18. 17 we believe the Lord to be giving instructions for a future date. We might now ask (a) when did the Lord begin to build His Church? (b) when did a local church function so that matters of discipline and judgement could be brought before it? The opening chapters of Acts furnish answers to both these questions.

It is in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and in the reaching and saving of thousands of men and women, that we see the commencement of Christ's building of His Church (16. 18). In the adding together of these saved ones to a divine nucleus already established in Jerusalem and in their functioning before God and among themselves, we see brought into being a "local" church as envisaged previously by the Lord in Matthew 18. 17. That locality was Jerusalem, the first local church of God being established there, and with this church our study is chiefly concerned.

### His Preparation

The early verses of the Acts tell us of the Lord's preparation of the apostles for Pentecost and afterwards. Earlier He had said, "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs (parables): the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but shall tell you plainly of the Father". The writer believes that "the hour" came when, as described in Acts 1. 3, He appeared unto the apostles by the space of forty days, "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God". So when later the Spirit records that men in Jerusalem "continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching" (2. 42), He clearly signifies that it stemmed from, and was based on, the Lord's own initial teaching during those forty days. How important then is the study of the constitution and function of the church of God in Jerusalem as a divine pattern for all churches of God!

At this point we may note the similarity of the beginning and the ending of the Acts, this divine book in which the pattern of a church of God is given to saved and called-out men and women. Thus— 1. 3 "... the kingdom of God"; 28. 31 "... the kingdom of God, *and* teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ": where God rules, as in a kingdom; where Jesus Christ is enthroned as Lord. Such is the setting in which we read of the establishment of the first church of God in Jerusalem. It is clear in Scripture that subsequent churches of God were also established within the same framework, and so God intended it to continue.

### Constitutional Features

Several phrases are important and should be particularly noted as the story of the church in Jerusalem unfolds: 1. 12-14. In the upper chamber were the eleven apostles, the women, Mary the mother of Jesus and His brethren, who all (a) with one accord (b) continued steadfastly; 1. 15. a multitude of persons (a) gathered together; 2. 1. "when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were (a) all together"; 2. 41. 42. "And there were added unto them (i. e. those mentioned in 1. 15 and 2. 1) in that day about three thousand souls. And they (b) continued stedfastly in . . ."; 2. 47 (c) "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved". Collecting the above points emphasized, we have—

- (a) "with one accord", "gathered together", "all together"
- (b) "continued stedfastly in" (twice)
- (c) "the Lord added to them".

From a consideration of the above associations of scriptures we see that the first church of God was characterized by (a) a united purpose (b) a continued perseverance (c) a divine call. Those saved were called by God into something where they found others united together in a common purpose, and they resolutely continued with them. The precious truths that God calls into the Fellowship of His Son (1 Corinthians 1. 9), and that the Lord adds together (Acts 2. 47 RVM) have continuing application.

Reverting now to Acts 2. 41, 42, we note—

(1) "They then that received his (Peter's) word: (2) were baptized (3) and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in (4) the apostles' teaching (5) and fellowship, (6) in the breaking of bread (7) and the prayers". That saved and baptized people were added to what was together of God, and constituted the first church of God, is the plain teaching of (1), (2) and (3) above. This remained, and still remains, the divine pattern. To churches of God, as they became established, were further added those who (1) received His word in the gospel, (2) responded to its claims and (3) obeyed God's call "out" and "into", and so allowed the Lord graciously to seal the work by adding together.

In those days it was the apostles' oral word, originating from the inspired instruction by the Lord during the forty days, that *organized* the church. It was a church of God because it was organized on the solid basis of divine instruction and approval. Through succeeding ages men have tended to build on their own "handed down" traditions rather than on the fully revealed apostles' teaching in the final canon of New Testament Scripture. Separation, fellowship, witnessing, elderhood, unity of doctrine and practice, government and authority, acknowledged and carried out—church truths such as these are embodied in the apostles' teaching. This is the only basis upon which a church of God can be organized. It is informative to trace from the Acts story certain aspects of the organization of the first church of God in Jerusalem. A notable example is the authoritative place of leadership taken by the apostles and elders (6. 2-5; 11. 1-3, 27-30; 15. 1-2, 6, 23). This leadership was instituted by divine authority. It found typical expression in bold representation of the church before its persecutors (4. 7-13; 5. 18, 29-32); in prompt action to deal with internal disciplinary problems (5. 3, 9; 6. 1); and in ensuring unity with other churches of God as the work developed (11. 22, 27-30 15. 23).

Turning now to the *functional* aspect of things, we ask, "For what purpose were these people organized into a church of God?" We feel that (6) and (7) above would broadly indicate the answer to this question, that is, "in the breaking of bread" and "the prayers". The purpose of the church was to function (a) in worship *towards* God (b) in prayer *for* men, that is, God wards and manwards. In a later day Peter was to elaborate this Godward and manward function more fully: 1 Peter 2. 5, "... a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices"; 1 Peter 2. 9, "... a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of Him..."

### Conditional Features

One delightful feature of our study is that in the first church of God we find the spiritual condition of the great majority of the disciples to have been gloriously worthy of the high calling wherewith they had been called. So this church provided not only a pattern of constitutional principles, but also a commendable pattern of spiritual attitudes. Some major features are summarized below:

(a) a prayerful church (4. 31; 12. 5, 12): here are manifest dependence upon and realistic faith in a living, prayer-answering God, to whom the disciples continually resort.

(b) a Spirit-empowered church (4. 8, 31; 6. 3, 5): the fulness and power of the Holy Spirit find reflection in the joyfulness of the disciples (2. 46, 47; 5. 41), in the boldness of witness (4. 33), in the abounding grace of the Lord Jesus upon them (4. 33), in their wisdom and faith (6. 3-5).

(c) a church strongly united in spirit (2. 44; 4. 32; 9. 31).

(d) a church demonstrating sacrificial self-denial (2. 45; 4. 34; 5. 41; 7. 59-60; 8. 1). The failure of Ananias and Sapphira (5. 1-11) and the murmuring among the Grecian Jews (6. 1) show that certain undesirable conditions did develop, an inevitable consequence of human weakness despite high spiritual privilege. Nevertheless, these exceptions stand out as warnings in contrast to a generally remarkable spiritual tone and achievement among disciples in this first church of God.

*J. H. Pyper*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### Acts 3 and 4

#### The growing Church and Satan's Opposition

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —It appears that at this stage the apostles had not relinquished their hold on the things associated with the Old Covenant. To what extent they held on to the law is not certain, but we do know they were going up to pray at the Temple at the time of the evening sacrifice [See answer to Question 5]. It would appear that on this occasion their main object was to preach to the people, but *it* does seem that in some things they still adhered to things associated with the old Covenant; see for example Acts 21. 20-26.

The impact made by the Lord Jesus Christ had not ceased with His death, for here were men who were known to have companied with Him, performing a similar mighty work and affirming that the miracle was not performed by their own power or godliness, but in the name of the One the rulers had rejected and crucified. Every miracle was according to the will of God and for the glory of God and this called

for spiritual discernment in the apostles. Peter not only emphasized the people's guilt but brought out the contrast between their estimation of Jesus of Nazareth and God's estimation of Him. He also pointed to the testimony of the prophets, exposing their non-acceptance of what the prophets had foretold.

Repentance would result in: —

1. The blotting out of their sins, even that greatest of sins which they had unwittingly committed in clamouring for the death of the Author of life. Here is revealed in a wonderful way the compassion and love of God towards these misguided people.
2. Seasons of refreshing (refreshing has also the meaning of respite, compare Exodus 8. 15 where the same Greek word occurs uniquely in the Septuagint). Repentance would bring the people of Jerusalem a respite from the judgement pronounced by the Lord Jesus, as it brought the Ninevites a respite from the judgement pronounced by Jonah [See Comment 1]. But while Nineveh's doom was deferred, Jerusalem's fell within the time-limit announced: "This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished" (Mark 13. 30). [See Comment 2].

It seems that the main opposition came from the Sadducees who according to some authorities were the dominant party in the Sanhedrin. The teaching of the bodily resurrection of Christ was so contrary to their beliefs that they would do almost anything to prevent it spreading. Only a few weeks had passed since they had condemned Jesus. Their hope that they had got rid of Him was short-lived; it looked as if they were going to have even more troubles on *His* account than they had had before *His* crucifixion.

When Peter and John were brought before the council perhaps they remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer" (Luke 21. 12-15). They certainly proved the truth of the accompanying assurance. Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, made it clear to the council that the miracle was done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they crucified, whom God raised from the dead, contrasting their treatment of Him with God's.

Although they were bold before the rulers this was not their attitude before God; they showed their complete dependence upon God by praying for boldness to speak the word of God despite the threats of the Sanhedrin.

*D. H. Butler*

**From Teesside.** —Frequently in the book of Acts, the apostles went into the synagogues and there reasoned from the Scriptures. Starting from what the people knew and cherished, they preached Jesus. In this chapter the apostles were going into the Temple, to pray there at the recognized time of prayer under Jewish law [See answer to Question 5]. The power and assurance of the Master's presence was with them as they said to the lame man, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk". They knew the power was not in themselves, and made this plain to the people. But using this incident, they remonstrated with the people for their failure to see from the Law that Jesus was the Christ, and they laid His death at their door.

Satan soon stirred up the rulers against them, but thousands heard and believed. Even the rulers were forced to confess that they could not deny the miracle done through these "unlearned men". Filled with the Spirit, they continued to speak the word boldly, despite the constraints put on them by the rulers, and great grace was upon them all.

*W. C. Taylor*

**From** Lagos. — "Men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil". How true these words were during the early Christian era! The manifestation of the resurrection of Christ and the proof of *His* coming again were substantiated by the healing of the lame man by Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate, but the leaders of the people denied the power thereof. Peter testified to the saving power of the risen Christ (3. 12-16, 4. 10). Thanks be to God, we have a living Saviour, and we are duty-bound to testify of His resurrection and to tell of His saving power, for we have tasted of the preciousness which is in Him.

Peter's address convicted many of their sins, resulting in the salvation of many people. On the other hand, it grieved the hearts of the Jewish leaders, resulting in the arrest of Peter and John. After suffering total defeat by the resurrection of Christ, Satan had now launched his attack against the followers of Christ. The powerful works of Satan are still present with us today. Satan knows what will be his eternal punishment, and is trying to destroy the eternal work of Christ. Satan never lets loose his prisoners but, thanks be to God, we have One mightier than Satan, even our Lord Jesus Christ.

The threat of the Jewish leaders had no impact on the faith of the apostles. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye." Instead they were strengthened by prayer (4. 31) and were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness. Yes, we can feel the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit if we commune with God in prayer.

*S. A. Beyioku-Alase*

**From** Liverpool. — "Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (Acts 2. 43). It was one of these miracles which led to the first recorded open conflict of the church of God in Jerusalem with the authorities. The rulers must have been worried about the gathering momentum of this new movement as the Lord added day by day those who were being saved. Here was something that could not be ignored, a miracle performed on a man known to everyone to be a cripple. Even the high priest and his associates could not deny its validity (Acts 4. 16). Annas and Caiaphas, close associates in the trial and death of Jesus of Nazareth, could not deny the fact of the miracle performed in the name of Him whom they did not want to hear mentioned again. We noted the wisdom of Peter in speaking of the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob and in appealing to their respected authorities—to Moses, to Samuel and to Abraham. His language was forthright: "Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer... and killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead". But even this denunciation was tempered with tenderness. They had acted in ignorance and God offered them forgiveness. If they

would repent, they could participate in the blessing of God promised through Abraham. The power of the Holy Spirit was very much manifest. The preacher was filled with the Holy Spirit and the assembly was filled with the Holy Spirit. The place in which they were assembled was shaken. They were of one heart and one soul and this resulted in their having all things common. Truly great days these when all that they did was to the glory of God! "And being let go, they came to their own company" (4. 23). With such a multitude in the church in Jerusalem, there must have been many companies, yet only the one church of God in the city.

*D. EM., J. R. H., G. S. W.*

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Some contributors devoted too much space to the repetition of narrative, neglecting to expound the meaning of the passage or examine difficult points, the main objects of Bible Studies. The summary which follows is culled from the remainder of the papers, submitted by Atherton and Leigh, Birkenhead, Birmingham, Derby, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lagos, Liverpool, Methil, Paisley, Portslade, Teesside and Toronto.

**Peter** and John were examples in spiritual contentment, for they had no material riches but, to secure a man's eternal blessing, gladly gave what they had. The miracle, an immediate cure, demonstrated the power that was in the name of Jesus. It was a sign, witnessing to the divine authority of the apostles' preaching (Mark 16. 20). The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is emphasized in this portion (3. 6, 16; 4. 10, 12) indicating His saving and healing power. The healed man immediately put into practice the divine requirements of worship and witness.

Peter's "masterly use of **Old** Testament prophecy as the background to his message is striking, as is the place he gave to the crucial events in God's saving purpose". The raising up of Jesus (3. 22, 26) was thought to refer to His coming in the flesh and not to His resurrection. Before the rulers Peter recalled Psalm **118**. 22, 23, and also perhaps Genesis 49. 24, in speaking of the Lord as the Stone rejected by the builders.

"For the church of God the arrest of its reputed pillars (Galatians 2. 9) was a very serious matter and the anxiety of the church is reflected in the prayer of Acts 4. 24-30". The unity of the church is expressed in the phrase "with one accord" (4. 24), which occurs eleven times in the New Testament (R. V. ) and no fewer than ten times in the Acts. The use of Scripture in this prayer is significant and it is interesting to see that the disciples prayed for boldness in preaching, not for an abatement of the persecution.

"The expressions 'great power' and 'great grace' give a vivid picture of the wonderful movement which had begun in Jerusalem. The willingness to sacrifice material advantages for the sustenance of the church is a mark of its sterling spirituality. In this context the name of Barnabas first appears in the record. The act was characteristic of the man who was to occupy an important place in the outreach to the uttermost part of the earth".

*Eds.*

## EXTRACTS FOR COMMENT

1. "Seasons of refreshing" (3. 19). Refreshing has also the meaning of respite—compare Exodus 8. 15 where the same Greek word occurs uniquely in the Septuagint. Repentance would bring the people of Jerusalem a respite from the judgement pronounced by the Lord Jesus, as it brought the Ninevites a respite from the judgement pronounced by Jonah" (Aberkenfig and Barry).

This thought-provoking suggestion is based on the substitution of "respite" for "refreshing" in Acts 3. 19; and the thought of respite is gleaned from the use of the same Greek word (*anapsuxis*) in the Septuagint version of Exodus 8. 15. But can this preference for respite really be sustained? It seems barely tenable when most translators give the other shade of meaning, e. g., "times of refreshing" (A. V. ); "seasons of refreshing" (R. V. ); "a time of recovery" (N. E. B. ); "times of refreshing" (R. S. V. ); "time of refreshing—recovering from the effects of heat, reviving with fresh air" (Amplified Bible). The weight of opinion is evidently heavily in favour of the thought of refreshing or revival. This seems also to accord better with the context. Israel was spiritually tradition-bound, formal, guilty. Repentance and acceptance of the resurrected Christ would re-vitalise the spiritual life of all who responded to the gospel.

2. "Jerusalem fell within the time-limit announced: This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished" (Mark 13. 30). (Aberkenfig and Barry).

Can this quotation from Mark 13. 30 be satisfactorily explained within the limited context of Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70? Is it not significant that not only in Mark's account, but similarly in Matthew 24. 34 and Luke 21. 32 this statement occurs in direct relationship to the coming of the Son of Man and associated events at the time of the end—of which AD 70 was but a faint foreshadowing? "This generation", one would suggest, is the generation which will be living at the time of the end when the things foretold by the Lord Jesus begin to come to pass. The Scriptures are God's word for every age, and this verse will have its specific fulfilment at the time of the end. Believers at that time will have the comfort of His assurance that all must be fulfilled within that generation.

3. "The healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple is an example of the signs by which witness was borne to the divine authority of apostolic preaching (Mark 16. 20; Acts 2. 43; Hebrews 2. 4) . . . The miracle was notable and manifest—an instant and complete cure". (Birkenhead).

Attention is drawn to this quotation from Birkenhead's paper because in general this month's papers have given little emphasis to this important aspect of truth. Note that the signs bore witness to the authority of *apostolic* preaching and practice, which of course derived directly from the will and word of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the importance of their authority having been confirmed beyond any suspicion of doubt by such miracles as the healing of the lame man. To suggest that God intended a continuance of such signs throughout the dispensation is to misunderstand the special purpose of those signs, and the general pattern of God's ways with men—that He normally requires a walk by faith in His word, without the visible evidences of signs and wonders.

The congenital lameness, the instantaneous healing and "the perfect soundness" resulting should also be marked as typical of true healing in the Name of the Lord Jesus. The student whose principles are soundly based on scriptural precedent will be best equipped to assess the claims of pseudo-healers who "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding" of the true nature and results of New Testament gifts of healing.

*G. P. Jr.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. In view of Acts 2. 38 can we assume that all who believed were indwelt by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? (Aberkenfig and Barry).

It seems difficult to deduce from Acts 2. 38 that all who had believed in the Lord Jesus were necessarily indwelt by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. For the condition stated by Peter in this verse is that those who expressed their repentance and faith through baptism would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Where there is no clear explanation given in Scripture it is advisable not to dogmatize. But an interesting feature may offer a tentative lead. In Acts 8. 17, 9. 17, 19. 6 the laying on of hands by those who had received the Spirit brought the blessing to different individuals who had already believed in the Lord Jesus: would this suggest that at the beginning, in order to consolidate the work of God, the giving of the Spirit was linked with personal encounter between believers who had already received Him and those who had **not**? *G.* *P.* *Jr.*

2. Since Acts 2. 9-21 is a quotation from Joel 2, which is to be fulfilled at some time in the future, please comment on Peter's use of the passage. (Aberkenfig and Barry).

It should be noted that Peter introduced the quotation from Joel with the words, "This is that which hath been spoken by the prophet". He did not say as the Lord did, "Today hath this scripture been fulfilled **in** your ears". The Joel prophecy had **an application** to the events of Pentecost but its *fulfilment* awaits the time immediately prior to the coming of the Son of Man. *L. B.*

3. Psalm 16. 11 differs from Peter's quotation of it in Acts 2. 28. Was Peter using the Septuagint? (Liverpool).

(a) In all probability Peter spoke in Aramaic, his native language. He would know much of the Hebrew Scriptures by heart and would quote from these, not necessarily from the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation. The differences between the Psalm and its quotation are not significant and can be easily reconciled, the marginal readings (R. V. ) giving some help. The last phrase of the Psalm is of course omitted altogether. Luke would translate the Hebrew into Greek which may explain the slightly different construction of some of the sentences. *L. B.*

(b) We concede the possibility that Peter quoted LXX, as did Paul later. *J. B.*

4. Were many of the 3, 000 (2. 41) visitors to Jerusalem who would in due course return home to their own countries? (Denmark Hill).

It is clearly stated in Luke's narrative that before Pentecost there were about 120 names together (1. 15), that on the day of Pentecost about 3, 000 saved and baptized people were added and continued steadfastly in the exercises of the Jerusalem church (2. 41-42) and that within a short time afterwards the number of the men came to be about 5, 000 (4. 4). This is what Luke tells us by the Spirit. We may speculate about the possibility of some belonging to other countries and in due course returning there. But there is no scriptural evidence of any significant movement of this kind until the great scattering by persecution (8. 2). **G. P. Jr.**

5. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2. 17). Had this any fulfilment at Pentecost or is it still for a future day? (Liverpool).

There is scriptural support for an *application* of "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" to Pentecost and the present dispensation. Prophesying was a recognized gift in New Testament churches of God (1 Corinthians 12. 10, 14. 3). Women could form part of a praying or prophesying company in the exercises of the church (1 Corinthians 11. 5). Philip's daughters prophesied (Acts 21. 9), doubtless in an individual capacity apart from the gatherings of the assembly. **G. P. Jr.**

6. Did the apostles attend the Temple to join in the Jewish services or to take the opportunity of speaking to the people? (Liverpool).

(a) It is significant that nowhere is it recorded that Peter and John joined with the populace in the Temple services. On the second occasion when they were arrested the angel who opened the prison doors instructed them to go "and stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5. 20). All the indications are that the disciples met regularly in Solomon's porch in order to speak with the people (5. 12). This was the natural thing to do in the circumstances, particularly as the Lord always taught in the Temple when He was in Jerusalem. **L. B.**

(b) I agree with Answer (a), and further consider that prayer in the Temple and synagogues was individual and private prayer, not collective prayer of the Jews. **J. B.**

7. Does Acts 2. 47 imply that additions occurred on different days of the week or Lord's day after Lord's day? (Liverpool).

(a) This was something that happened day after day during this period, but what is here recorded is the Lord's work not man's. The intimation of such additions to the church may possibly have taken place on Lord's days. **L. B.**

(b) While there is no evidence in the Acts that such intimations were made on Lord's days, this is now customary on the same principle as 1 Corinthians 16. 2, which appears by that time to have become normal practice. **J. B.**

8. The faith which is through Him (Acts 3. 16). Is this faith given by God? (Liverpool).

Peter is here stressing that it is faith in the Name of the Lord Jesus which made the lame man strong, repeating for emphasis that it is the

faith which is through the Lord Jesus, i. e., the faith which results from the fact of the Lord Jesus being glorified in resurrection power. The question as to whether faith is given by God may be more effectively discussed against a wider background than this text in Acts 3. 16. Man's capacity for understanding God's revelation and responding to it by faith were endowments in the beginning before sin entered into human experience. In that very broad sense, then, the gift of faith was given by God. As to fallen man, born in alienation from God, how could he exercise faith in divine revelation apart from God's movement towards him? In relation to the gospel we read, "Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10. 17). It is no credit to the convicted sinner either that he turns in repentance towards God or that he exercises faith in Jesus Christ. The merit is not in his faith, but alone in the Person and work of *His* Saviour. E. G. Wickham puts it like this: "Faith which because it is a response to divine initiative in and through Christ is the acceptance of a divine gift".

*G. P. Jr.*

The Lord Jesus Christ is the source and spring of faith. This is deducible from the Greek prepositions to several scriptures. *J. B.*

9. What connexion has repentance with the sending of the Christ (Acts 3. 19 20)? Is this His coming back to this earth? (Liverpool).

The emphasis of Peter's message was particularly towards the nation of Israel in relation to their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Messiah. He charges them with the murder of the Holy and Righteous One, and with preferring that a murderer be granted to them (3. 14-15). He asserts that God had raised the Lord Jesus from the dead (verse 15), explains that this was in fulfilment of the prophetic scriptures (verse 18), but calls upon them to repent of the tragic sin of rejecting their Messiah. This is related to the sending of Messiah again to Israel, although the heavens must receive Him until the "times of restoration of all things". Messiah's return will be at the end of the great tribulation period, to usher in the millennial "restoration". At His return Israel will mourn in deep repentance (Zechariah 12. 10-14). *G. P. Jr.*

10. Can Acts 3. 17 be reconciled with Matthew 21. 38? (Liverpool).

The parable of the vineyard was an illustration which so vividly highlighted the attitude of Israel to the Lord Jesus that the Pharisees "perceived that He spake of them" (Matthew 21. 45). Yet it was after all a parable, and it is an unsound form of exegesis which attempts to force the application of parabolic illustration beyond its simple, primary message. As to Acts 3. 17 there was a sense in which ignorance caused Israel through her leaders to reject Christ. Doubtless it was culpable ignorance, but it was ignorance still. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures" (Matthew 22. 29)—ignorance of the word; "I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not" (John 7. 28)—ignorance of both Father and Son. "A wisdom not of this world . . . had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2. 6, 8).

*G. P. Jr.*

11. What is the meaning of the expression "the sons of the prophets" (3. 25)? (Derby).

Under God, Peter was here brilliantly presenting to inquiring Jews the compelling argument that the prophets whom they revered had foretold the coming of the Christ and the events which they were now witnessing. Because they were descendants of the prophets (of Abraham after the flesh, and of all the prophets, morally and spiritually) they were inseparably bound up with the course of Israel's history, of which the most important phase was the coming of the Christ. This they must recognize, and repent that they had rejected Him. L. B.

12. Were the 5, 000 who believed (Acts 4. 4) a cumulative total of men brethren from the day of Pentecost or were they additional to the 3, 000 of Acts 2. 41? (Methil).

The A. V. uses the word "was" in this verse but the R. V. is more precise, "came to be" (Greek, *egenethe*, became) indicating that the total number of men in the church now amounted to 5, 000. This cannot be related to the 3, 000 of Acts 2. 41, for here they were designated "souls" (i. e., men and women). We can however broadly infer that there had been a great increase in numbers. L. B.

## TERAH AND ABRAHAM

### Contribution in pursuance of discussion in Dec, 1969 issue

In the December 1969 issue (page 142) it is suggested in Question 5, Answer (b), that Abraham was the eldest son of Terah, born when his father was 70 years of age, and that Terah remained in Haran for 60 years after Abraham had left that place for Canaan, at the end of which time he died. The chronology according to this reasoning would be: Terah 70 years—Abraham born; Abraham 75 years—leaves Haran for Canaan; Terah remains 60 years—dies in Haran; Terah 205 years—age at death.

In my opinion two points disallow this interpretation of the period. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100, therefore Terah would be 170, and would not have died until Isaac had reached the age of 35. Acts 7. 4, 5 states "From thence, when (literally, *after*) his father was dead, God removed him into this land... when as yet he had no child". Do not these statements demonstrate that what is put forth in Answer (a) is the true interpretation? A. B. Russell

## ERRATUM

"Bible Studies", January, 1970, page 6, line 10, should read, "The term kingdom of God occurs seven times in the Acts".

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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## EDITORIAL

The transparent candour of Holy Scripture never ceases to arrest the student's attention, and to reassure him that this Book is no collection of writings which 'selects out' the narratives of unwelcome or unsavoury emphasis. The painful inclusion of the fall of Ananias and Sapphira serves to mark further Luke's reliability as a church historian. The evaluation of their spiritual crime rests upon the measurement of their current spiritual privilege at this critical moment of advance of divine purpose. It was so also with Judas in his day. This sorrowful narrative should be noted for its significance in contributing to the truth of the personality of the Holy Spirit. Nor will it have escaped the notice of study groups that it provides the context for the first mention in Acts of the word 'church'; a word upon whose New Testament use we in the churches of God have very properly placed great weight in rightly dividing the Scriptures.

It is striking to note in the passage under study this month the Spirit-powered dynamism and positive force of the apostles' testimony as led by Peter. This stands in contrast to the negative 'wisdom\*' of Gamaliel, remarkable as it was in the circumstances. We must recognize these days as days of tremendous intensity of spiritual life and activity; multitudes healed, converted, added; and the authorities reacting with a panic which only grew in the face of divine intervention in the imprisonment of the apostles. For a fast-gathering storm of persecution can be detected by following through these early chapters of Acts the developing, and often confused, emotions of the high priest and his fellows. In 4. 2, 3 they were 'sore troubled' and 'laid hands on them'. In 4. 13 they 'marvelled' and 'took knowledge of them'; then they 'conferred' (v. 15) and 'threatened' (v. 21). Coming to 5. 17, 18 they were 'filled with jealousy' and again 'laid hands on the apostles'; in v. 33 'they were cut to the heart, and were minded to slay them'; 'they beat them and charged them...' (v. 40). The climax was reached in the murder of Stephen. In all, the sovereign hand of the Lord can readily be traced. The wrath of man was about to praise Him in an ordained dispersal of witness, and in the spiritual arrest of an outstanding young Pharisee from Tarsus.

J. D. T.

## A STUDY OF BAPTISM IN WATER

The word "baptize" is a word transferred from the Greek *baptizo* into the English language. Several variations have been offered as representing the true meaning of the word, and some of these meanings, although erroneous, have become accepted for diverse reasons. Some say the word means "sprinkling", some "dipping", some "pouring out"

and some "immersing". The **fact that in the majority of occurrences of the word it is used in its transliterated form in English is not helpful.** However, **there are several significant exceptions to this.** For example, **in the following places the translators have used the word "wash" to express the meaning of 'baptizo':** - Mark 7. 4: "... except they wash themselves, they eat not... washings of cups, and pots... "; Luke 11. 38: "... he marvelled that He had not first washed"; Hebrews 9. 10: "... meats and drinks and divers washings...".

Elsewhere the translators have **used the verb "to dip":** Luke 16. 24: "... dip the tip of his finger in water... "; John 13\* 26: "... I shall dip the sop... "; Revelation 19. 13 R. V. M.: "... arrayed in a garment dipped in blood...".

If the thought of sprinkling, or of pouring out, is applied to **any of these, particularly the latter three, it will be seen how inappropriate is either word.** Further, **different words are invariably found in the original when "sprinkling" is intended (*rhantismas*), or when "to pour out" is intended (*ekcheo*).** Thus there should be no confusion. Perhaps the **nearest English equivalent is "dip" in the sense of "go below a surface... and (usually) emerge or rise again"** (Oxford Dictionary). In the examples above, the **tip of the finger would be submerged in the process, and a garment would be immersed in dye.** We shall later deal with the **deeper meaning** or teaching.

**Types of baptism are to be found in the Old Testament, but for the purpose of our present study we confine our thoughts to the various baptisms in water found in the New Testament:** - John's baptism, baptism by the Lord and His disciples and baptism from Pentecost onwards. One thing common to all three is that **it is in water** (Matthew 3. 6). We see from John 3. 23 the **need of much water in which to baptize people,** and Acts 8. 38, 39 tells us that Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water and both came up out of the water.

"There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1. 6). John tells us that God sent him to baptize with (R. V. M., in) water (John 1. 33). **He came preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins** (Luke 3. 3) in accordance with the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 40. 3-5). **By faith the eyes of Simeon had already seen God's Salvation** (Luke 2. 30). John said, "That He should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing with (in) water" (John 1. 31), and Paul tells us that John said to the people, "that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus" (Acts 19. 4 see also John 1. 7). John's message was, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". To show their true repentance in preparation for the coming kingdom Israelites were baptized (Matthew 3. 6). John's displeasure at some seeking baptism who were not showing true repentance is evidenced in Matthew 3. 7-9. The saving work of Christ had yet to be completed: repentant Israelites could never have their sins forgiven by the mere rite of baptism. They confessed their sins and showed this outwardly by baptism, in preparation for and in anticipation of the revelation of their long-awaited Saviour in His kingdom. Sad alas that when He was revealed many did not by faith receive Him, although He was the One to whom all the prophets bore witness "that through His name every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10. 43). "But as many as received Him, to them

gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1. 12). Faith had to be operative in John's time, as throughout the dispensations.

Of baptism by the Lord we know little except what is revealed to us in John 3. 22 and 4. 2. It is reasonable to assume that this was a similar baptism to that of John. In fact, from John 4. 2 it would appear the Lord Himself did not actually baptize but left this to His disciples, sanctifying the rite by His presence and approval. Baptisms by John and by the Lord were performed contemporaneously and acknowledged by both of them. The Messiah, though sinless, submitted Himself to John's baptism saying, "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness".

Baptism subsequent to Pentecost takes on a very different meaning, although the mode is similar. The fact that we refer to it as "believers' baptism" illustrates this difference from John's baptism, where the applicants in expectation of forgiveness, came confessing their sins as a sign of repentance and preparation for the coming One. Such scriptures as Acts 8. 12, 35-38 and 10. 43-48 clearly show that repentance for sin, and faith in the Lord Jesus brought remission of sins, and then followed baptism into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Here, baptism is the outward sign of an inner experience of forgiveness which has already taken place.

However, when we consider the deeper, underlying truth of the symbol of baptism, we do see a forward look, an anticipation of a walk in newness of life after symbolic death and resurrection. It is also impressed on our understanding from Romans 6. 3-11, that it is only believers who could possibly contemplate going through the waters of baptism if its true meaning is understood. We have here the picture of one who is reckoned by God to have been identified with Christ in His death and resurrection. Therefore those who are baptized declare in effect by this action that they have died with Christ, that the body of sin might be "done away", that so they should no longer be in bondage to sin. Moreover, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over Him". Like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so the baptized believer should also walk in newness of life, reckoning himself to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. That sinless perfection is not in view here is clear from the continued reasoning of the apostle from verse 12 of Romans 6: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof". The baptized believer must continually seek strength by the Spirit to overcome the power of sin inherent in his members, and by overcoming maintain the high standard which he has voluntarily accepted.

To appreciate the scriptural significance of believers' baptism as expounded in Romans 6 is a safeguard against the prevalent misapplication of the rite of baptism to infants or others who have never known the regenerating power of the gospel. The sequence of faith in Christ followed by baptism in water has not been withdrawn or superseded.

*Paul Luck*

### **A STUDY OF BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**

There are seven references to baptism in the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, four of which are found in the Gospels (Matthew 3.

11; Mark 1. 8; Luke 3. 16; John 1. 26-33; Acts 1. 5, 11. 16; 1 Corinthians 12. 13).

It may be helpful to discuss these as follows.

(a) **The Witness of John the Baptist.**

John's message was to Israel concerning the Messiah. It is evident that he was aware of the developing divine purpose, although perhaps he only dimly perceived the full significance of the dispensational change in view. God's word to John was, "Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending... the same is He that baptizeth with (Greek, in) the Holy Spirit" (John 1. 33). Following this divine revelation John identified the Lord to others as the Son of God and the Lamb of God (John 1. 34, 36). This indeed was the One who would baptize believers in the Holy Spirit. It can be definitely asserted that baptism in the Holy Spirit is the Lord's present work and baptism in water is work for disciples.

(b) **The Lord's Ministry**

John's work was eclipsed when the Lord entered upon His public ministry. Many of those who were baptized unto repentance by John were later gathered around the Lord as His disciples (John 10. 2-4). It is perhaps significant that there is a silence regarding baptism in the Spirit from the time of John until after the Lord's resurrection (Acts 1. 5), although some prominence is given during the Lord's ministry to the truth of being "born of the Spirit" (John 3, 3, 5). All who accepted Messiah, whether as a result of John's testimony or through the preaching of the Lord and His apostles, were born from above, born of the Spirit. But this is a different matter from being baptized in the Spirit, which did not take place until the day of Pentecost (Acts 1. 5, 2. 4).

(c) **The Epistles**

1 Corinthians 12. 13 is the only scripture dealing directly with this subject in the epistles, and it casts much light on the normal experience of believers in this dispensation. Using the analogy of the human body, an organic unity composed of many members, the apostle shows that at the moment of accepting Christ each believer is baptized by the Lord in the Spirit, and placed in that wonderful assembly of members, "the Body of Christ". There is no exception to this rule; all believers undergo this same experience. Nor is any human instrumentality involved. The believer may not be conscious of this taking place, or that he is being made to drink of one Spirit, apart from the joy in his heart; but the truth is assured to him by the written word. Neither racial difference nor social status affects the believer's place in the Body of Christ (Galatians 3. 28).

(d) **Illustrations from the Acts of the Giving of the Spirit**

The account of the Acts covers about thirty years. Certain well delineated developments are described throughout, the narrative following the pattern of extension described by the Lord to His apostles before His ascension, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1. 8). The Holy Spirit was given to men in a similar order, to the Jew (Acts 2), to the Samaritans (Acts 8) and to the Gentile believers (Acts 10). Let us consider these occurrences in the order given.

Fifty days after the Lord's resurrection the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the 120 Jewish disciples together in Jerusalem. This event **marked** a new dispensation in God's dealings with the human race. The disciples **had not been** praying for the Holy Spirit. There was no need to do so for prior to His ascension the **Lord** Jesus had **prepared** them for this **descent** of the Holy Spirit from the Father. He **had** crystallized much of His teaching in these words: "**Ye** shall be baptized with **(in)** the Holy **Spirit** not many days hence" (Acts 1. 5). This was a distinct promise pointing to the day of Pentecost. The Spirit was received by them on the ground of faith in that promise, and as a result believers were (for the first time) baptized in the Holy Spirit by the ascended Lord. The building of the Church the Body had commenced (Matthew 16. 18). On that same momentous day three thousand souls in Jerusalem were convicted of their sins and appealed to the apostles for guidance (Acts 2. 37). Note the terms of Peter's reply: "Repent ye, and be baptized (in water) every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2. 38). Why should the believing Jews be counselled in this way? Why baptism in water before the receiving of the Spirit? Possibly to impress upon them the solemnity of the occasion, for as a nation they had slain the Righteous One; perhaps also to eliminate any hypocritically disposed from believers who would genuinely display by their baptism an outward evidence of the inward change which Christ had wrought. After obeying the apostles' counsel these believing Jews would receive (i. e. be baptized in) the Holy Spirit, **and** were afterwards baptized in water and received into the church of **God** in Jerusalem (Acts 2. 41, 42).

Following the persecution which arose upon the death of Stephen, Philip was used to carry the gospel to the Samaritans, with the result that many Samaritans believed the word and were baptized in water. It was not, however, until Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to Samaria that the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. It would appear that the reason for this lay in the fact that traditionally the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, and lest this attitude should be perpetuated among Christian disciples it was necessary to demonstrate that the work in Samaria was an extension of the work in Jerusalem and Judaea. Having prayed for the Samaritan believers, the apostles laid their hands upon them (indicative of fellowship) and God granted them the Holy Spirit. As a result the bonds of fellowship between Jewish and Samaritan believers were firmly established.

In due course the gospel was carried to the Gentiles. It was Peter, whom God had used so powerfully on the day of Pentecost, who now preached the gospel to Cornelius and his Gentile friends. The barrier which had existed between Jew and Gentile was broken down, for "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word... for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (10. 44, 46). By this means God confirmed to the amazed Jewish believers that to the Gentiles also God had granted repentance unto life. Like all believers today, whether Jew or Gentile, Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit immediately on believing. Note the order: the gospel was preached, sinners believed, on believing they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and as believers, were in water. Here then is the normal order for believers of the present age, and this agrees with the teaching of 1 Corinthians 12. 13.

A very interesting case of the giving of the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 19, where in the city of Ephesus Paul found certain disciples. Like Apollos in the previous chapter they had known only the baptism of John. Paul asked these twelve disciples, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" This question underlines the fact that it had become the understood thing that when people believed the gospel they received the Holy Spirit. It should be carefully noted that the Authorised Version rendering, "since ye believed", does not accurately convey the sense of the Greek. These men had not so much as heard that the Holy Spirit had been given, and Paul lucidly distinguished the contrast between John's baptism and the fuller revelation now available. They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus and when Paul had laid his hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. This supernatural manifestation would impress on them the wonderful and distinctive nature of the teaching which they had now received.

In this summary of the giving of the Spirit we submit that the recorded cases give a clear, constructive outline of the development of the work of the Lord in the early part of this dispensation. The Holy Spirit was given to all who believed the gospel, although at certain times there was a modification of the normal order according to special circumstances. These exceptions to the general rule serve rather to confirm the regular pattern of the giving of the Spirit at the moment of believing. For the story of the Acts covers a time of rapid change and momentous development. It was in God's wisdom that *He* chose to deal with particular groups in an exceptional way, whereas the general rule was as illustrated by the experience of Cornelius and his household, confirmed by 1 Corinthians 12. 13. R. Ross

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### Acts 5. 1 - 6. 7

#### Persecution **without** and Problems **within**

**From Atherton and Leigh.** —Internal difficulties were first introduced to the church by Ananias (an unworthy counterpart of Barnabas) who with Sapphira his wife endeavoured to deceive the Holy Spirit. One school of thought maintains that Ananias tried to emulate Barnabas to obtain gratitude from the apostles and eminence in the church and was therefore guilty of hypocrisy. Another states that when the Holy Spirit was working with him he deliberately quenched and grieved the Spirit within. The former suggestion would tend to indicate that his action was first directed against the saints, because he was deceiving them, and only secondly against the Holy Spirit. The latter thought would indicate that his action was first and foremost against the Holy Spirit, a train of thought that is borne out forcibly by Peter's words, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" [See Comment 6].

The death of Ananias took place immediately, whether from violent convulsion of feeling or in consequence of a deliberate exercise of power by Peter, in association with the Holy Spirit, we need not decide [See Comment 1]. No customary rites, no elaborate mourning were bestowed on Ananias and his family was not summoned. Scripture

simply says that the young men disposed of his body as quickly and simply as possible. The second act of this judgement required that Sapphira should not know her husband's fate. The younger men had scarcely completed their dreadful errand when they came in to find the wife also dead.

The hostile encounter with the Jewish authorities and the resultant persecution closely resembles that recorded in chapter 4. The imprisonment was at the hands of the same men, it extended over one night and Peter's two declarations (4. 19 and 5. 29) are very similar. The attack came from the Sadducees and would therefore appear to be motivated by political ambition. The teaching of the resurrection is not mentioned as an explanation of their action; they were filled with jealousy and did not wish to see the new sect become important; a real Messiah would signal the end of their power [See Comment 2].

The story of the empty prison, the perplexed judges, captain and high priest, and the message that the escaped prisoners were preaching in the temple, is all vividly told. After re-arrest the apostles had to be brought with courtesy on account of the people, and before the multitudes the priestly party had to show respect to those who were held in such high esteem. But once within their power, the authorities charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and beat them in the hope of crushing their spirit. The charge was however disregarded by the apostles, who declared that they must obey God rather than men.

Peter's reply, verses 29-32 was a repetition of his former one (4. 19), and although the circumstances may be said to call for less, he repeats his earlier statement and bears witness to the resurrection of Christ. His words are remarkable, designed to speak to all those present, that the God of their fathers had raised up Jesus, and by His right hand exalted **Him** to be a Prince and a Saviour. *J. V. T., P. R. M.*

From Vancouver, B. C. —The Master may have had events like these in His mind when He said, "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16. 33). The Lord's words assure us that even in the midst of persecution and problems, we can know the peace of Christ in our hearts.

The apostles and elders in the church of God in Jerusalem would require Spirit-given wisdom to guide and care for the saints, and caring for the poor was one of the responsibilities that required their wisdom. It would appear that their material resources came from the voluntary self-sacrifice of those who had possessions. No doubt these actions of love for their brethren and sisters would attract a certain amount of attention to those who gave, and this is commendable. It was for the Lord and not the "glory which is from men". Ananias and Sapphira owned a piece of property and were exercised about selling, but they had some other purpose in mind for part of its value. It would appear that they desired the "glory which is from men", and when the sum of money was brought to the apostles for the benefit of the poor, it was represented as being the complete value of the land they had sold. They had discussed this together and agreed what they would say.

This action, which may not appear serious to some, was very grievous in the eyes of the Lord even though unseen to the eyes of men. Peter charged them with lying to the Holy Spirit (verse 3) and tempting

the Holy Spirit (verse 9). The instant death of both must have been a tremendous shock to all in the church, and as the news spread among the unbelievers what a reflection would be brought upon the people of God [See Comment 3]. We contrast this with the sins that were exposed in the seven churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 2, 3). Had God changed His standards? No! Was He being more tolerant? Sin is ever grievous in the eyes of God, and more so among His own, but He deals with it according to His own wisdom by different means at different times.

Jealousy was used by the adversary to bring trials upon the church of God. The power of God was manifest through the apostles in both spiritual and physical blessing. The great number turning from Judaism to Christ was too much for the leaders of Israel. It was God's will that the work should go on so persecution was divinely limited. The over-ruling power of God is seen in that He used Gamaliel, the leading teacher of Israel, to restrain them. We contrast this with later events when the leaders of Israel were allowed by God to imprison and kill some disciples and persecute others so that they were forced to flee for their lives.

Murmuring was an evil that the adversary used with terrible effects among Israel in the wilderness and he used this in the churches also. Historically there were two groups of Jews, Hebrews and Hellenists, and there was animosity between them. They were both Israelites by racial origin. The Hebrews spoke Aramaic, lived mostly in Palestine, and recognized Jerusalem and the Temple as the centre of their culture and worship. They had the Old Testament writings in Hebrew; in contrast, most of the Hellenists spoke the Grecian language. Their synagogues and homes could be found in most large cities where Greece and Rome held sway. A Council of seventy had met in Alexandria and translated the Scriptures into Greek, and thus the Septuagint was the word of God to them. Some liberal thinkers among them encouraged the building of a temple in Alexandria and also had some services of their own. We can understand that devout Hebrew teachers and rabbis would disapprove and many difficulties would result. It could have been that within the church those who were caring for the poor showed more concern for the Hebrews than the Hellenists. Then the murmurs commenced, and spread until the situation was so serious that it required intervention by the apostles. The problem was handled with Spirit-given wisdom, in that they appointed six brethren who were Hellenists and one proselyte (we gather so by their names), men of wisdom and full of the Holy Spirit. At least two, Stephen and Philip, were powerful preachers of the word. *J. B.*

**From Edinburgh.** —Like Barnabas, Ananias voluntarily gave to the Lord. Barnabas, however, laid the full proceeds of his sale at the apostles' feet. Ananias was following this generous example, and was entitled to retain a part of the price, but to pretend to give the full price was sheer hypocrisy. Peter describes his sin as both lying to the Holy Spirit and tempting the Spirit of the Lord. This is not the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit referred to by the Lord in Mark 3. 29. It would seem that Sapphira had an opportunity to repent. She was obviously in full fellowship with her husband. Their sin had to be judged, otherwise the progress of the Fellowship might have been affected.

The judgement of Ananias, in a word, was death. It was suggested that Peter, who received from the Lord authority to bind (Matthew 16), was using that authority when he bound the sin of Ananias and Sapphira upon them and the judgement was recognized by God. In the same way, when a person is excommunicated from an assembly it is the assembly that binds his sin upon him (in terms of the binding of Matthew 18), and such is recognized by God [See Comment 4]. Later, if the brother repents, the loosing of his sin takes place. We also noted the contrast of God working through Peter in bringing death to Ananias and Sapphira and in bringing life to Dorcas (Acts 9). The outcome was that "great fear came upon the whole church".

In Acts 5. 36 "obey" means "be persuaded" (from Greek *peitho*) but in Acts 6. 7 "obedient to the faith" carries the thought of **being** submissive (from Greek *hupakouo*) and in Acts 5. 29 and 32 the meaning is to obey a chief or a ruler (from Greek *peitharcho*). Attention is drawn to the different uses of these words.

A. M. Hope

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Further points from the remaining papers, received from Aberkenfig and Barry, Birkenhead, Derby, Lagos, Liverpool, Methil, Portslade and Toronto may be summarized thus: The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was brought out into the open and judged, for there is nothing hid from the eyes of God. The Lord, walking in the midst of the golden lampstands, has eyes as a flame of fire and feet like unto burnished brass, ensuring that judgement will begin at the house of God. It was like the case of the man gathering sticks on the sabbath day, an example had to be made of him as a warning to others. In Acts 5. 3, 4 lying to God is identified with lying to the Holy Spirit, thus testifying to the deity of the Holy Spirit. It was suggested that when confirmatory miracles are given, judgement falls signally on those who attempt to deceive or oppose. Other examples are Gehazi and Elymas. Ananias and Sapphira would, we understand, be immediately absent from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5. 8). The evil one could not touch that which was begotten of God in them (See 1 John 3. 9, 5. 18).

The persecution by the Sadducees challenged the Lord's authority (Matthew 28. 19), but the miraculous opening of the prison doors was in vindication of that authority. As the persecution increased so did the intensity of the preaching. Gamaliel's intervention was regarded as evidence of his wisdom and restraint, but it also showed the overruling hand of God.

The solving of the problem of the Grecian widows demonstrated that the apostles possessed the spiritual wisdom needed in dealing with internal problems which were potentially more dangerous than persecution from without. Seven men of high spiritual calibre were brought to the forefront and it is noticeable that the increase in the word of God was accompanied by an increase in the number of disciples.

*Eds.*

### Comments

Comment 1 (Atherton & Leigh).

It seems most unlikely that both Ananias and Sapphira were fatally overcome by a "convulsion of feeling". The whole tenor of the passage rather suggests acts of direct divine judgement.

**Comment 2** (Atherton & Leigh).

While the resurrection is not mentioned at this point of the narrative, it is stressed in 4. 2, and was bound to remain a vital factor in the Sadducees' violent opposition to the new faith.

**Comment 3** (Vancouver).

While the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira would be recognized by unbelievers as out of character with Christian profession, the summary judgement which so clearly expressed the Lord's jealousy for the holiness of His people would have a balancing effect. Certainly the Christians were held in high regard by the general populace of Jerusalem (Acts 5. 13, 26).

**Comment 4** (Edinburgh).

The illustrations given of binding and loosing in the sense of Matthew 16. 19 or 18. 18 are helpful. Students will notice the construction of the Greek in both these verses. Young's literal translation of Matthew 16. 19 runs: "Whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens". There is a similar construction in Matthew 18. 18. So God recognizes what men do on earth because they act in conformity with what has been revealed as the divine will, and the act in heaven precedes that on earth.

**Comment 5** (Extract from Methil's Paper).

"We thought that Peter was exercising the gift of the discerning of Spirits when he recognized the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (1 Corinthians 12. 10)".

This is an interesting suggestion, and invites careful thought. The gift of discerning of spirits is mentioned only in the scripture quoted. It would seem to me that discernment of spirits which are not of God (see 1 John 4. 1-3) would clearly be included within the scope of this spiritual gift; so would Paul's treatment of the maid with the spirit of divination (Acts 16. 16-18). But was an evil spirit involved in the case of Ananias and Sapphira? Satan had filled their heart to lie, it is true, but this surely in the general sense of Satan exploiting natural weaknesses. It would certainly seem that what Ananias and Sapphira had conspired in secret was revealed by the Lord the Spirit to Peter, whereby he discerned what was in them, whereas normally none knoweth "the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him" (1 Corinthians 2. 11). But is this a "discerning of spirits" according to the gift of 1 Corinthians 12. 10? I hardly think so. *G. P. Jr.*

**Comment 6** (Atherton and Leigh).

Neither of these appears to me to be in agreement with the record. Ananias followed the example of Barnabas, but for wrong ends, and so lied to the Holy Spirit, while he thought he was only deceiving men.

*J. B.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. "Is persecution instigated by God within the concept of enmity created in the beginning between the Serpent and the Seed of the woman" (Genesis 3. 15)? (Portslade).

This question touches a complex problem as to God's permission of evil, and His controlling wisdom by which evil forces are in some ways made to serve His higher purposes for good. "Shall evil befall a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" (Amos 3. 6). "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us?" (Nehemiah 13. 18). Here are plain examples in which evil has been brought upon God's people in judgement. Had they walked with Him He would have shielded them, but in order to chastise them He exposed them to forces of evil. In other contexts He permitted evil to affect His saints for the proving of their faith (Job 1. 6-22, 2. 1-10; 1 Peter 4. 12-14). Yet it is unthinkable that God could "instigate" evil in the sense of tempting any man to do evil (James 1. 13). Absolutely, without qualification and eternally God is light, love and truth. In the context of our study the evil unbelief and persecuting fury of Annas and his associates were allowed to erupt in fearful persecution of God's people. With what result? Scattered disciples "went about preaching the Word", leading to a vast expansion of the Lord's work. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee" (Psalm 76. 10). When God's purposes in this unleashing of evil fury had been fulfilled, "the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied" (Acts 9. 31). In this sense therefore the truth of Isaiah 45. 7 applies: "I make peace and create evil; I am the LORD that doeth all these things".

*G. P. Jr.*

2. "The judgement of Ananias seems very summary in a day of grace" (Liverpool).

The expression "the day of grace" emphasizes those advantages enjoyed by the people of this dispensation in relation to the eternal salvation of the sinner. It is not appropriate to use it indiscriminately in connexion with governmental matters in churches of God. Indeed there are many scriptures which emphasize the high standard to be observed by the saint (Hebrews 4. 11-13, 10. 26-31; 1 Peter 4. 17); the Lord indicated that the new standard would be higher than it had been under the law of Moses (Matthew 5. 21-32). Summary judgement, that is, judgement without delay, is often the divine method. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira no formal proceedings were necessary, there was no excuse, no mitigating circumstance and no defence. The sin and its enormity were obvious to all when Peter had exposed them, so that all that remained was for judgement to be executed.

*L. B.*

3. "Did the hope of the soon return of the Lord give the disciples an incentive to share their goods?" (Liverpool).

Undoubtedly, in every age the imminent return of the Lord had prompted His people to hold earthly goods with an open hand. It has been alleged that the early disciples thought that in view of the coming Rapture of the Church it was unnecessary to work or to possess any goods, but there is no evidence for this in Scripture apart from Paul's indictment of the disorderliness of a minority (2 Thessalonians 3. 11, 12).

*L. B.*

4. Who are meant by 'the rest' (Acts 5. 13)? (Liverpool).

We can picture the apostles and a large group of disciples standing day by day in the colonnade of Solomon's porch in the Temple precincts teaching the Word and performing miracles whilst crowds of

people would watch and listen with **intense** interest, **but** from a **sufficient distance** to show **that** they were not **identified with** God's people **in** witness. The **gap** was crossed only **by** those who accepted the word **and** were prepared to **suffer** persecution with the **saints**. "**The rest**" might think highly of these dedicated, godly people **but** they held aloof **in** fear of the **extreme** antagonism of the **rulers** to the "Way".

*L. B.*

5. "Was the laying on of the apostles' hands a public recognition of **these men**" (Acts 6. 6)? (Liverpool).

The laying on of the hands of the apostles is an **interesting** study. It is associated with acts of healing (Acts 28. 8), with the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8. 14-18; 19. 6) and with the **impacting** of the **gift** which was **in** Timothy (2 Timothy 1. 6). Certain who were not apostles **laid hands** on others, as Ananias upon Saul, with **resultant** healing and filling with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9. 17-18); also **in** connexion with the **sending** forth of Barnabas and Saul from Antioch. There is the exhortation, "Lay **hands** hastily **on** no **man**" (1 Timothy 5. 22), generally regarded as a "laying **on** of hands **by** way of public recognition". Was the laying of the apostles' hands upon the seven **men** of good report (Acts 6. 6) simply **in** this last-mentioned **sense**, i. e., **by** way of public recognition? It certainly included **that**, but I would incline to the view **that** more may **be** implied. **For** the laying on of the hands of the apostles **seems** usually to have a deeper **significance**; perhaps **in** this **case** the endowment of the seven **with** special **grace** for the complex **task** assigned to them.

*G. P. Jr.*

6. "Do Gamaliel's words **indicate** that he had leanings towards **this** new movement?" (Liverpool).

Gamaliel was undoubtedly a fair-minded man and an independent thinker, but further than **that** we cannot **go** with **certainty**. As a Pharisee the teaching of the resurrection would not antagonize him as **it** did the Sadducees, who were foremost **in** **this** persecution (5. 17). It might even **be** **inferred** that his detached **summing up** of the situation would only **be** possible on the assumption **that** for some reason he did **not** take part **in** the machinations of the **Sanhedrin** which resulted in the crucifixion. These **considerations** could explain Gamaliel's attitude without attributing to **him** any sympathy with the apostles' teaching.

*L. B.*

7. "Were all the apostles imprisoned (Acts 5. 18, 29)?" (Liverpool).

Unless **it** is indicated **to** the **contrary** we should normally regard the **expression** "**the** apostles" as including the twelve specified **in** Acts 1. 26. The **references** **in** 5. 18, 26, 29, 40 **occur** **in** a continuous narrative, **and** **it** would **appear** that all twelve apostles were imprisoned and beaten. **This** would **be** consistent with the Sanhedrin's attempt to **intimidate** the leadership of the Christian movement.

*G. P. Jr.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

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## EDITORIAL

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116. 15).

To the natural mind the Psalmist's thought seems strange, but the instructed believer appreciates its profound truth and significance. For to man alienated from God death spells uncertainty, darkness and fear. That His saints should pass through death as conquerors, in certainty, peace and joy, is an expression of faith which has greatly glorified God. The outshining of spiritual assurance as physical life ebbs away is a notable evidence of the work of grace. So it has often been in the more ordinary experience of the many, but it has been notably seen in the death of the few. The glory shines out with special splendour in the martyrdom of Stephen. Christ being wonderfully magnified in his death, as in his life.

This month's study also sheds its revealing light on what seems at times to human observation but unrelieved tragedy. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. They were doubtless perplexed by what seemed the premature death of one so eminently gifted and dedicated. Only in later retrospect would they see more clearly the deeper wisdom of God in the circumstances and timing of Stephen's death. Enshrined in Luke's narrative, the episode has carried its inspiring message down the centuries, strengthening the hearts of believers in many generations, encouraging them to trust God even through intense trial for the sake of the Name.

"As for God, His way is perfect".

*G. P. Jr.*

## APOSTLESHIP: ITS PURPOSE, QUALIFICATIONS AND SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE

**Prescribed Reading:** Matthew 10; Mark 3. 13-19; 6. 7-13; Luke 6. 12-16; Acts 1. 15-26; 9. 10-16; 15; Romans 11. 13; 1 Corinthians 9. 1-9; Galatians 2. 9; Ephesians 2. 19-22.

### Introduction

It should be carefully noted that the apostleship was formed within the body of disciples; the Lord uses proved men. Apostleship was not in substitution of, but rather supplementary to discipleship; before and after the inception of the apostleship **the** apostles were disciples. No matter how gifted a disciple may be, and irrespective of the high office he may occupy, he should continue to follow in order to learn. When choosing the apostles, the Lord felt so deeply the solemnity of the occasion that He retired to a mountain and continued all night in prayer to God.

### The Purpose of Apostleship

The choosing of the twelve was a sovereign act of the Lord Jesus; "He called unto *Him* whom He Himself would". His purpose in doing so becomes evident as the story unfolds. They were appointed that they might:—

#### (i) Be with Him

Knowing that after His atoning death on the Cross He would return to the Father, the Lord Jesus saw the necessity of selecting a small nucleus of disciples who should become responsible for carrying on and directing the work which He had begun. The wisdom of Christ is manifested in the pointing out of these men from among His disciples. Properly to fulfil this task they must become fully instructed, being with Him in all circumstances and in all conditions. They thus became instructed by His words, His example, His rebukes and His attitudes. They observed Him in private and appraised Him in public, they watched Him in life, beheld Him in death, met with Him in resurrection and took farewell of Him on His ascension. As Joshua and Elisha attended respectively on Moses and Elijah with a view to assuming responsibility, so these twelve men were chosen by the Lord for a similar purpose. Even in this respect, however, there was a differentiation made among the apostles, Peter, James and John being selected to accompany the Lord on several occasions. Peter and John were later named among those reputed to be pillars (Galatians 2. 9), and no doubt the Lord had been preparing them for this added responsibility.

#### (ii) Preach (proclaim as heralds)

Pervaded with wonder as were both the Person and work of the Lord Jesus, it was essential that the pioneers of the great new evangel should be men who had been closely associated with Him. The message as delivered by them was the divinely authenticated truth. The later preaching of others must be accepted or rejected by relation to its agreement with that which was delivered by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word (Luke 1. 1-4). The appellation given to the twelve underlines this aspect of the purpose of Christ, for "He chose twelve, whom He also named apostles". The word apostle means "messenger" or "one that is sent".

#### (iii) Be vested with authority

He gave them power. The word power in our language has at least two meanings (a) mandate, i. e., authority (b) capacity, i. e., ability. A government may have a mandate from the people but may lack capacity, men of ability to govern. A democratic opposition may have capacity and ability to govern, but lack a mandate. In connexion with their responsibilities Christ gave the apostles both the capacity to act and the mandate to warrant their so acting (Luke 9. 1). The power given to them was extensive, and included the power to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease, as well as power to cast out unclean spirits. The authoritative teaching of the apostles derived from the Lord's appointment and enabling. Humble and unlearned as they were, their teaching and decisions would have a spiritual authority because they conveyed and practised truth received from the Lord Jesus Himself. What confidence the Lord placed in these men, to whom of course after His resurrection He gave commandments! There resulted a body of "sound (healthful) teaching", "the truth", "the faith", and "the pattern".

This teaching was authoritatively enjoined upon disciples in churches of God, as illustrated by the decrees of Acts 16. 4.

### Qualifications of Apostleship

It is evident from the Scriptures that on the one hand there were many spurious claims to apostleship (2 Corinthians 11. 13; Revelation 2. 2), and that on the other hand there were attempts to challenge the genuineness of Paul's apostleship (1 Corinthians 9. 1-3). It was necessary therefore that certain qualifications be enumerated in confirmation of such an important claim. These would include: —

- (i) proof that the claimant had seen the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 9. 1; Acts 1. 21);
- (ii) proof that the claimant had seen the Lord in resurrection (Acts 1. 22);
- (iii) proof that the claimant had been divinely chosen (Luke 6. 13; John 6. 70; Acts 1. 24). In this connexion it is true that the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord (Proverbs 16. 33; Acts 9. 15; 13. 2; Galatians 1. 1);
- (iv) proof that the claimant was recognized by his fellow-apostles (Acts 1. 26; Galatians 2. 9; 2 Peter 3. 15, 16); Peter would not have commended Paul and his epistles, in ten of which he claims apostleship, if he considered this to be a presumptuous claim;
- (v) proof that the claimant could exercise the special powers given by the Lord relative to the casting out of evil spirits and healing sickness and disease. Many scriptures attest this fact, but see Acts 19. 11-17; Hebrews 2. 3, 4.

### Scriptural Perspective

A study of the foregoing qualifications should be sufficient to show that the apostles belonged to the opening years of the present dispensation. No man now can claim these qualifications; there is no substance therefore in the claim of some to "apostolic succession". The apostles' work was foundational in character (Ephesians 2. 20). They did a work which can never be repeated, they did it well, and having served their generation by the counsel of God (Acts 13. 36) they, like David, fell on sleep. However, God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love, and in a day yet future they will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. We too shall have them in continual remembrance, for their names are to be for ever inscribed on the foundations of that great city, the Holy Jerusalem (Revelation 21. 14).

*E. Collington*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### Stephen's Witness and Martyrdom

#### Acts 6. 8 - 8. 3

From Paisley. —One would expect that a man of Stephen's spiritual stature, if not an apostle, would be one of the chief men among the brethren, an overseer in the church of God in Jerusalem and a leader among men. Instead we come upon him in the Acts as a newly-appointed deacon, performing the lowly task of serving tables. The first martyr was also the first deacon that we read of in the New

**Testament, and Stephen set a high standard** for all deacons to follow. **If this is the standard by which deacons are recognized and appointed it elevates deacon service to a very high spiritual plane** [see answer to Question 6]. "I . . . **am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD**". We noted the **impressive** qualities of his **character; he was full of the Spirit, full of wisdom, full of grace, full of faith, full of power (6. 3, 5, 8).** He was holy, zealous, forthright, faithful, courageous. **There were diversities of gifts, and one of Stephen's gifts was the power to work miracles. He was also an eloquent teacher, a powerful preacher and an assiduous student of the Old Testament, as his defence before the Sanhedrin shows.**

The Lord had **said, "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem"**, and Stephen was **the latest victim of the fanatical bigotry of the religious leaders. Stephen charged them with receiving the law as it was ordained by angels, and not keeping it. They were the custodians of the living oracles, but inwardly were full of dead men's bones, seeking to put to death a man who had eternal life abiding in him. What a contrast is presented to us in chapter 7!** Stephen was full of power, but the religious leaders were without power. **Legally they had no power to put anyone to death, because the Israel nation was still tributary to Rome, but they took the law into their own hands and murdered Stephen.**

When the Lord had made purification for **sin, He sat down, but when Stephen's fiery trial was at its height He stood up to give His servant encouragement.**

Paul never forgot till the **day of his own martyrdom, more than thirty years later, what took place at the defence and death of Stephen. His memory of that day acted as a goad to his conscience when he met the Lord on the Damascus road, and as he grew in the Christian faith the memory of the angelic face would remain with him.**

The **secret of Stephen's victorious life and triumphant death is that he set his mind on the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. He lived out the truth of the words which Paul later wrote to the Galatians, "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me". Considering the issue of Stephen's life we are left in no doubt that Christ was in this sense living in Stephen also.**

*J. Peddie*

**From Methil. —Stephen's name means a crown and carried the thought of an award for contending in the games. He was one who ran well and adorned the doctrine (2 Timothy 2. 5). He was a godly man full of faith, grace, power, and the Holy Spirit; so great were these qualities that his enemies were unable to withstand the wisdom and Spirit by which he spoke (Acts 6. 5, 8, 10). The Jews endeavoured to catch him out in his words, as they did with his Lord and Master. We remarked on the similarity of the accusations of the false witnesses at the trial of the Lord and at that of Stephen (Matthew 26. 61; Acts 6. 13, 14). Having made their accusations, and fastening their eyes on him, they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Even his outward appearance showed his innocence. After this the High Priest asked, "Are these things so?" Stephen commenced his defence by addressing the council as brethren and fathers and then traced events from Abraham's call to the Lord's rejection and murder (verse 52). He showed that Israel as a nation rejected God's witness**

throughout their history and finally he charged his audience with resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7. 51). Stephen was indeed a fearless witness and the first Christian martyr recorded in Scripture.

In Acts 22. 20 the apostle Paul spoke of when "the blood of Stephen Thy witness (martyr, A. V. ) was shed". Dr. Strong says that a martyr is one who witnesses, records, or testifies. Stephen, like his Lord, was a faithful witness and suffered for it, even unto death. Saul never forgot Stephen's death, for he stood by consenting unto it (Acts 22. 20, Acts 8. 1). It is evident from Stephen's defence, that he had a tremendous knowledge of the sacred writings, enabling him to give an ordered reply to his accusers.

His defence was basically, "It is written". He did not defend himself but his address had such an impact on the accusers that they were cut to the heart. They gnashed on him with their teeth (Acts 7. 54) and refused to hear any more. Stephen, who spoke about the God of glory appearing to Abraham, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (verse 55). Like the Lord Jesus he was given the outside place (verse 58, Hebrews 13. 13). Following his Master's example he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge".

*David Reid, Neville Coomer*

**From Birmingham.** —"By their fruits ye shall know them". This was very evident in Stephen's witness and martyrdom. He could not have stood up and witnessed in the way he did, or faced those that stoned him and said with true sincerity, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", unless he was full of the Holy Spirit. Stephen's witness is an example to us of what we can do if filled with the Holy Spirit. We shall be able to preach the gospel in such a way that unbelievers will be cut to the heart. Stephen was accused of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against God, of saying that this Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the Temple and change the customs which Moses delivered. But the Holy Spirit took up Stephen and proved that the Jews were betrayers and murderers of the Righteous and Holy One.

We feel that the wonderful vision Stephen saw was firstly a reward for his faithfulness, but also to give him strength when he needed it.

*D. P. Brown*

**From Portslade.** —From the word for witness in the Greek (*martus*) is derived the English word martyr. Stephen was the first martyr (Acts 22. 20). It seems to us that he had possibly been a witness of the death and resurrection of the Lord, which would lend authority to his dynamic testimony of Jesus of Nazareth.

His address in chapter 7 affirms that Israel, throughout their history, had followed a line of conduct which culminated in the death of the Righteous One (Matthew 21. 33-42; Acts 7. 52). Obedience on Abraham's part fulfilled the covenant of circumcision, but the weightier parts of the law, judgement, mercy and faith (Matthew 23. 23), as ordained by angels (Acts 7. 53), had been neglected by his descendants for a vain tradition.

In Joseph and Moses we have the types of the sufferings and rejection of the King and Deliverer respectively. Disobedience, idolatry, and unbelief characterized the wilderness people, a dark background for the tabernacle of testimony with the Shekinah glory, ever a testimony to Israel. In Joshua they had a saviour who was able to drive out their

enemies before them. In Solomon's temple we have the highest revelation of Israel's God, though insufficient to contain the glorious One. Thus Stephen, through the Holy Spirit, wove this indictment together.

The almost gentle tone of Stephen at the commencement developed into righteous, holy anger at a people who were stiff-necked, and had always resisted the Holy Spirit, persecuted and killed the prophets.

W. T.

## IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Papers were also submitted by Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Derby, Glasgow (Parkhead), Lagos, Liverpool and Vancouver, in which the following points were made.

The character of Stephen presents a rare combination of strength, beauty and grace. Stephen gave the period of Israel's bondage as 400 years in contrast to the 430 years of Exodus 12. 40. A likely explanation was that the 400 years commenced at the weaning of Isaac but the longer period began when Abraham was called of God at the age of 75 years. Abraham was 100 years old at the birth of Isaac, who was possibly weaned 5 years later, so accounting for the 30 years difference. Some of the information given by Stephen is supplementary to the Old Testament record; for instance, only here do we read of Joseph's brethren being buried in Shechem, with their fathers (verse 16).

Stephen may have realized that this was his last address but thought not of impending danger, exposing the wickedness of the Jews in crucifying the Lord. His effective use of the two-edged sword of the word of God cut them to the heart. It was God's final appeal to the nation of Israel, and it led to the opening by Peter of the door to the Gentiles (Acts 13. 46, Romans 1. 16, 2. 9, 10). Stephen's ministry foreshadowed Paul's in the spiritual interpretation of the law, involving the setting aside of Judaism. In emphasizing the inadequacy of Solomon's Temple he hints at the superseding of the material by the spiritual house of God. The suggestion was made that at this point (verse 51) the Jews were so enraged at Stephen's attack on the Temple, in which they had a vested interest, that they interrupted the address, but Stephen was able to deliver his final denunciation.

In comparing Stephen's dying prayer of forgiveness with that of the Lord, a contributor thought that whereas the soldiers at the cross had no knowledge of the Lord's Deity and so could be excused, the Jews who murdered Stephen could not plead mitigation on account of ignorance and so could not expect forgiveness. We would point out that divine forgiveness of the sinner is not related to culpability but depends on the sinner's repentance. Looked at in this light both prayers were fully granted (Acts 6. 7, 9. 13-16).

The Lord Jesus gave instructions that prayer was to be addressed to the Father (John 16. 23), but Stephen, having seen a vision of the Lord prayed to Him, not the Father. Such a form of address is suitable in private communion and prayer but not in collective exercise.

Stephen's martyrdom is the only one recorded in detail in Scripture.

*Eds.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Is there any significance in the Son of Man *standing* on the right hand of God (Acts 7. 55, 56)? (Liverpool).

Our friends obviously have in mind Hebrews 10. 11, 12, where the service of Israel's priests, who *stood* day by day ministering in the sanctuary, is contrasted with that of the Lord who, having completed his work, *sat down* on the right hand of God. **But** John saw the Lord "in the midst of the lampstands" (Revelation 1. 9-20) apparently standing or walking, and He will leave His throne one day to deal with the Beast and his armies (Revelation 19. 11-21). That the Lord should rise from His throne of glory at the martyrdom of Stephen is no doubt a tribute to this great man, but did it not also enable Stephen to witness powerfully and without the possibility of contradiction to the Deity and resurrection of the Lord Jesus? L. B.

2. Would you say that Stephen was released from the body quickly rather than have a long agonizing death? (Liverpool).

We do not know, but deductions might be made from the fury of the accusers and the suggestion of some historians that large boulders would be used rather than small stones. L. B.

3. What is the meaning of the words "ordained by angels" (Acts 7. 53) and what part did angels play in the giving of the law? (Aberkenfig and Barry).

The expression "ordained by angels" may be literally translated "in dispositions of angels". Galatians 3. 19 states that the law was "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator". Hebrews 2. 2 contrasts "the word spoken through angels" with the word which was at the first "spoken through the Lord". So Stephen was emphasizing the dignity of the law which was given in this way, and Israel's guilt in failing to keep it. In Galatians and Hebrews there is a contrast between a revelation given "through angels" and the fuller revelation through the Lord Jesus. Deuteronomy 33. 2 suggests that "the ten thousands of his holy ones" were associated with the revelation of God's law at Sinai. Yet it was God who spoke to Israel the words of the decalogue (Exodus 20. 1), and to Moses other details of the law. G. P. Jr.

4. When and where was the tabernacle of Moloch set up (Acts 7. 43)? (Paisley).

Stephen's address presents a broad survey of aspects of Israel's history which were relevant to his message. In making the point that they had been characteristically rebellious to divine revelation (verse 38), he reminded them of the idolatry under Aaron's leadership (verses 40, 41), and then referred in general terms to the expansion of idolatry in their later history (verse 42). To strengthen this latter point he quotes from Amos 5. 25-27. The prophet Amos had contrasted the true worship of Jehovah during Israel's original calling in the wilderness with their later idolatrous record. He particularizes by reference to Moloch and Rephan, warning that for this cause they would be carried beyond Babylon. Precisely where or when the tabernacle of Moloch was set up is therefore not particularly relevant, although there is the illustration of Moloch worship in 1 Kings 11. 7. G. P. Jr.

5. When the veil of the Temple was rent at the Lord's death the way into the most holy place was made manifest. How could the priests resume service and worship with a rent veil? (This question is based upon Acts 7. 48. God no longer dwelt in His earthly sanctuary, and with a rent veil there was no longer a division between the holy and most holy places. ) (Paisley).

Care should be taken in interpreting Hebrews 9. 6-8 in the manner suggested in the first sentence of the question. Would it not be more accurate to say that the rending of the veil was a sign that the first (earthly) tabernacle had no longer a standing, thus indicating that the way into the holy place (in heaven) (Hebrews 9. 12, 24, 10. 19, 20) was now available to men? Doubtless the unscrupulous priests in their predicament would repair the veil and attempt to carry on the services as before, hoping the thing would not become generally known (for the rent veil would be concealed from the public gaze by the first screen) but the many priests who were obedient to the faith (Acts 6. 7) would be able to tell the people the unpalatable truth. **L. B.**

This caveat is most significant. It is of vital importance to our place and privilege as a worshipping holy nation that we understand and accept that the rending of the veil was the indication that the LORD no longer dwelt between the cherubim there. The house was then left desolate (Matthew 23. 38). The veil represented the way of entrance whereby the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place to appear before the LORD. The true significance of the veil is brought into sharp focus by the anti-type: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Hebrews 10. 19, 20). This is our high favour and privilege on the Lord's Day morning. **J. B.**

6. Was Stephen recognized as a deacon of the church in Jerusalem at the time described in Acts 6. 5? (Paisley).

The mere fact that the Greek verb *diakonein* (translated to serve or to minister) occurs in Acts 6. 2 hardly substantiates the idea that these seven men were at that time recognized as deacons. All the indications are that Stephen, for instance, was a spiritually mature leader. We are not told definitely, but circumstantial evidence suggests that he would already be among the elders of the church. This would not be incompatible with his assignment to the "serving of tables" having regard to the problem which had arisen. **G. P. Jr.**

## PSALM 65

*Continued from Volume 37—December, 1969*

Lord Jesus, 'tis my purpose  
 To serve Thee to the end;  
 Be Thou for ever near me,  
 My Master and my Friend.  
 I shall not fear the battle,  
 If Thou art by my side;  
 Nor wander from the pathway,  
 If Thou wilt be my guide.

There is no **fear** that He will fail to **be by our side in the battle**, nor to be our Guide in the pathway. If there is failure, **it will be** in us who have failed **in the purpose** we have avowed to fulfil.

It is a glorious thought that the time will come when **all flesh**, all mankind, **will come to Him** who **hears** prayer. In this wicked world the most never **pray, and** do not know **the way to God**, which is through Christ. **Many pray** to their "own" virgin, **but** not to the virgin mother of Christ (who **was** not "ever virgin" **after** Christ **was** born, for she had other four sons **and at least** two daughters). **Mary is not a female mediator**; there is **but** one mediator **between** God **and** man, Himself Man, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself **a ransom for all** (1 Timothy 2. 5, 6). Nowhere in the **Scriptures** is there **guidance** or teaching that anyone should **pray** to Mary. In the coming millennium things will be **entirely** different, for **all flesh** (mankind) **will pray** to God.

Iniquities prevail **against me**:

**As** for our transgressions, Thou **shalt purge** them away.

**Blessed is the man** whom Thou choosest, **and** causest to approach unto **Thee**,

That **He may dwell in** Thy courts:

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house,

The holy place of Thy **temple** (verses 3, 4).

**Against "iniquities"**, the **margins** of both R. V. and A. V. say, "**Heb. Words, or, Matters of iniquities**". This would **seem** to indicate that the iniquities **were** not David's, **but** were iniquitous words or **matters** of others that prevailed **against** him. **As** to his own transgressions and those of **his** people, he **was** confident that God would **purge** them away. **He** possibly **refers** to the **cleansing** of Israel which took place on the day of Atonement, on the tenth **day** of the seventh month. Then he writes of the blessedness (happiness) of the **man** whom the LORD chooses and **causes** to approach unto **Him**, that **he may dwell in His** courts. This **may in particular refer** to the high priest of Israel, who had a singular place in the **past** economy. **He** found, if he were a **spiritual man, true happiness** in the God whom he served, **and in being** separated from the **pleasures** and employments of other **men**. Those who **seek** God, and **are found serving Him** in their **measure**, **may** also experience this blessedness. David said, speaking of satisfaction, that he and others would be satisfied with the goodness, of God's house, the holy place of **His** temple. Goodness (Heb. *Tawb*) means, according to Dr. Strong, good **in the widest** sense, including **the** ideas of goodness, beauty, gladness. "Satisfied" (Heb. *Sabea*) to **fill** to satisfaction, to fill, be full; where this **exists** the **craving**, **lusting after**, the **restlessness** for more, which is **in man's fallen nature**, ceases, and **rest** is the result. How **great** is the contrast drawn **in** the words of Isaiah 57. 19-21!

"I **create** the **fruit** of the **lips**: **Peace, peace**, to him that is far off **and** to him that is near, saith the LORD; **and I will** heal him. **But the wicked are like** the troubled sea; for it cannot **rest**, **and its waters cast up mire and dirt**. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked".

**Here is drawn** the contrast of the **peace that** the gospel **brings** to the **Gentile** (far off) **and** to the **Jew** (near) (Ephesians 2. 17), and **the complete lack** of **rest and peace** to the wicked. **They lust** for money and

materials, they lust for pleasure and power, and like a troubled sea they cannot rest. With them there is no abiding satisfaction. It is something to find satisfaction in Christ, and also in the goodness of God's house, for God is there.

By terrible things Thou wilt answer us in righteousness,  
 O God of our salvation;  
 Thou that art the confidence of all the ends of the earth,  
 And of them that are afar off upon the sea:  
 Which by His strength setteth fast the mountains;  
 Being girded about with might:  
 Which stilleth the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves,  
 And the tumult of the peoples (verses 5, 6, 7).

All God's works are great and terrible, for He has stored the greatness of His power even in the minute atom, which was long regarded as the smallest indivisible part of matter. Man in these last few decades has been allowed by God to have an increase of knowledge (a time in which, alas, there has been a decrease of wisdom) to learn something of the mystery of divine power in what is exceedingly small. If this power were unleashed by men upon their fellows what terrible things would happen! But the God of salvation answers the cries of His saints in righteousness by His terrible things, as He will according to 2 Thessalonians 1. 6-10. God wrought for Israel by terrible things in the land of Egypt and in later years, and He will not fail to work for His saints in times yet future by His terrible acts upon men who violate what is right. David speaks of God being the confidence of the ends of the earth and of those upon the sea. Though men generally pay little attention to what is due to God in times of peace and plenty, when they are in times of extreme danger and distress, the name of God seems to start from their inward consciousness in a cry to Him, for deep down in most men's being there is a consciousness of God. The psalmist speaks of God's strength, that He setteth fast the mountains, stilleth the roaring of the waves of the sea, and also the tumult of the peoples. He has most trouble with the last, the peoples, for these He has loved. In His work for them, how frequently the psalmist is found saying in Psalm 107.

"Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness,  
 And for His wonderful works to the children of men"!  
 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at Thy  
 tokens:  
 Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to  
 rejoice.  
 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,  
 Thou greatly enrichest it; (verses 8, 9)

"Tokens" are signs of God's acting in which men see a proof of the work of God, and consequently they are afraid of God acting in correction of men for their wickedness. In Psalm 135. 9 it says, "He sent tokens ("signs" R. V. ) and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants". Of one of the plagues the magicians of Pharaoh said, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8. 19).

The mighty works of God in nature are tokens of God's eternal power and divinity, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1. 20). The word "rejoice" in connexion with the outgoings of the morning and evening may quite properly be rendered "to sing". The Hebrew word *Ranan* is frequently translated "sing". The outgoings refer, to the glories of sunrise and sunset. God visits the earth and waters it and thus it is enriched, for apart from doing this the earth would be a desert. The Lord said that His Father sent the rain upon the just and the unjust (Matthew 5. 45).

The river of God is full of water:

Thou providest them corn, when Thou hast so prepared the earth.

Thou waterest her furrows abundantly;

Thou settlest the ridges thereof:

Thou makest it soft with showers;

Thou blessest the springing thereof (verses 9, 10).

We have in these verses a continuance of the care and goodness of God for the earth, so that it might bring forth food for God's people and for mankind in general. "The river of God" is not a great river such as the Nile or the Euphrates. River here is a rivulet or small stream, a water channel for irrigation purposes. The same word for river (Heb. *Peleg*) is used in Psalm 1. 3, where it is rendered streams in the R. V., but rivers in the A. V. Dr. Young also translates river in Jeremiah 17. 8 as rivulet, though it is a different word (Heb. *Yuwbal*), and Dr. Strong renders it stream. It is vital to irrigation in hot countries that the irrigation stream should be full of water, and thus David writes of the rivulet of God. Great rivers would wash the growing corn away. With His water God prepares the earth to be fruitful. He waters the furrows, settlest the ridges, also makes it soft with showers, and blesses the springing thereof. In a spiritual sense, Paul might plant, and Apollon water, but it was God that made it to grow (1 Corinthians 3. 5-9).

Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness;

And Thy paths drop fatness.

They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness:

And the hills are girded with joy.

The pastures are clothed with flocks;

The valleys also are covered over with corn;

They shout for joy, they also sing (verses 11, 12, 13).

David views the harvest here. The year is crowned with God's goodness. Wherever God has trodden, His paths drop fatness, even upon the pastures of the wilderness. The hills are girded with joy, flocks clothe the pastures and corn covers the valleys. If this is so in an earth that God cursed, what would the earth have been like had sin not entered the scene? Even yet all nature sings and shouts for joy. Such is the goodness of God to man. In distribution is where man is to be seen most, and here there is much failure through human greed, and much that could be otherwise.

## PSALM 66

This is another psalm that is also a song, but the writer's name is not given.

Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth:

Sing forth the glory of His name:

Make His praise glorious.

Say unto God, How terrible are Thy works!

Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee.

All the earth shall worship Thee,

And shall sing unto Thee;

They shall sing to Thy name (verses 1, 2, 3, 4). (Selah)

Dr. Strong gives no reference to either "joyful" or "noise", but Dr. Young gives, "Shout ye to God, all the earth". In Psalm 81. 1 Dr. Strong again gives no reference to either word, but Dr. Young renders this verse,

"Cry aloud to God our strength,

Shout to the God of Jacob".

It seems strange that the R. V. should perpetuate the old idea of a joyful noise, for these terms are now largely contradictory. Noise, as used now, is something hurtful and a nuisance to the ears and the mind. A joyful noise is explained by the next statement of the psalm: "Sing forth the glory of His name: make His praise glorious". Whilst the A. V. gives honour for glory, yet both glory and glorious are from the same Hebrew word *Kabod*, which means weight, something heavy. Paul, following this meaning of glory, writes of "an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4. 17). Glory is not something which is light and flippant, such as was seen in the people of Israel at Sinai, when they made the golden calf and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel", and they sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play (Exodus 32. 6). Whilst it has ever been God's desire that all the earth, all mankind, should sing the glory of His name, the world for long centuries has turned aside unto idolatry. But it will not always be so, for during the Millennium, when Christ and His servants shall rule the world, there will be the universal worship of God and His Son, though even in that time men will submit to Him outwardly but many of their hearts will not be true to Him. For the marginal reading of both A. V. and R. V. for "submit themselves" is "yield feigned obedience. Heb. lie". Their state will be revealed when Satan is loosed out of his prison in the Abyss; they will flock to his standard, all with the object of claiming something of the wealth in Jerusalem (Revelation 20. 7-10). Yet generally, because of the manifestation of God's power in those millennial days, men will worship God and sing unto His Name.

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# BIBLE STUDIES

<sup>4</sup>A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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## EDITORIAL

It was by a sovereign act of the Holy Spirit that Philip was caught away, leaving the baptized eunuch to continue his journey home without a human teacher. We may thereby infer that the new convert needed to absorb what he had learned in quiet meditation and to apply his new-found knowledge, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in the interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures, part at least of which he held in his hand. What we cannot infer is that his experience was at variance with the principles of Acts 2. 41, 42 and the unvarying practice of the apostles in the remainder of the Acts concerning the planting of churches of God and the addition of disciples thereto. Some contributors were puzzled and misled by the sudden disappearance from the page of Scripture of the Ethiopian eunuch, but is there not a simple explanation?

Luke's purpose is to record the main stream of gospel witness, spreading from Jews to Samaritans and thence to the Gentiles through the work of Peter, James, John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Paul, and others in more limited spheres of service. Their journeys took them from Jerusalem and Judaea to Samaria, Syria, Cyprus, Asia, Macedonia and Achaia and Italy; from whence the gospel spread in post-apostolic times to the remainder of Europe, including ultimately the English-speaking peoples through whom in later years the gospel has spread to so many parts of the world. But it would be a mistake to suggest that there were no evangelists other than those referred to in Scripture. Are we to assume, for instance, that the other nine apostles ignored the plain command of the Lord (Matthew 28. 19) and remained idle, whilst the gospel flame was spreading far and wide? Surely it would be against all probability if a spiritual energy greater than that which brought the eunuch to Jerusalem did not also stir up Christians to travel the same busy trade route in the reverse direction, bringing the teaching of the kingdom of God to Ethiopia. Furthermore the apostles in Jerusalem would have been lacking in spiritual responsibility if, on hearing of the eunuch's remarkable conversion, they had not immediately made the necessary arrangements for suitable brethren to follow him and establish a soundly based testimony in his native land. Scripture is silent as to these details, but quite ordinary considerations show that the eunuch's experience fitted properly into the normal New Testament pattern and is no precedent for any aberration therefrom.

*L. B.*

## THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

"No prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, **being** moved by the Holy **Spirit**" (2 **Peter** 1. 21). This is a cardinal principle with reference to all **true** prophecy both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, whether it is the writing of the

**Scriptures** or the foretelling of the future, or the more general aspect of prophecy, the exposition of the word of God.

**Peter speaks** of false prophets, of whom we **must** beware (2. 1). Their ability **is** of the devil, the father of lies. "By their **fruits ye** shall know them" (Matthew 7. 15, 16; 24. 11, 24; Acts 13. 6; 1 John 4. 1; Revelation 19. 20, 20. 10).

In the scripture quoted above (2 Peter 1. 21) **Peter was speaking** of the Old Testament Scriptures, yet he himself **was being used** in the same way **by** the Holy Spirit to write this **part** of the New Testament Scriptures. He was one of the apostles **and** prophets of the New Testament who established **the** foundation of the household of **God and** unto whom the **mystery** of Christ was revealed (Ephesians 2. 19, 20, 3. 4, 5). He went on to foretell future happenings, the **rise** of false teachers, the **passing away** of the heavens **and** the dissolution of the heavenly **bodies** (2 Peter 2. 1-3, 3. 10-13). Other New Testament writers foretold **future** events, e. g., Paul spoke of the deliverance of the **creation from** the bondage of **corruption into** the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8. 21); the salvation of all Israel (Romans 11. 26); the last **trump** (1 Corinthians 15. 51, 52); **and** the coming of the Lord to the **air** (1 Thessalonians 4. 13-17); **and** to John was given the Revelation of **Jesus Christ** which gives such a wide view of **future** happenings. Others **besides** the **writers** of the Scriptures foretold future events, e. g., **Agabus** who on two occasions foretold **specific** happenings. In Acts 11. 28 he **signified by** the Spirit that there **should be a great** famine all over the world, which **came to pass** in the days of Claudius. In Acts 21. 11 he **said**, "Thus saith the Holy Spirit. So shall the **Jews** at Jerusalem bind the **man** that owneth this girdle, **and** shall deliver him **into** the hands of the Gentiles".

The Lord **Jesus** during the forty days **between** His resurrection and ascension told His disciples that they would **be** baptized in the Holy Spirit, that they would **receive** power when the Holy Spirit had come, **and** that they would **be** His witnesses. This is emphasized at the **beginning of** the Acts. All **service** henceforward would **be** dependent upon the Holy Spirit indwelling believers **and** using them according to the **different gifts** He has given them. In Romans 12. 6 we read that we have **gifts differing** according to the **grace given to us**. That prophecy in the general sense of **speaking the word of God is one** of these **gifts is** clearly stated in a number of scriptures, and there is evidence of it in use in many others.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon certain men at certain times and used them to prophesy or to do certain works. Some were used to write the Old Testament Scriptures and some simply to prophesy on specific occasions. In the New Testament all believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit and may have the ability to speak the word of God. From various scriptures we learn the following facts relative to this aspect of prophecy. Both men and women prophesied, "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2. 17, 18). "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoureth her head" (1 Corinthians 11. 4, 5). Philip had four daughters who did prophesy (Acts 21. 9). Though women may prophesy they must not speak in the churches (1 Corinthians 14. 34).

A person may have more than one gift e. g., Paul was an apostle, a prophet, a teacher, he spoke with tongues and he healed. In Acts 13. 1 several are named as prophets and teachers, among them are Barnabas and Saul. This verse implies that all those brethren had both these gifts, and Acts 15. 35 confirms this in regard to Paul and Barnabas.

Prophesying is associated with preaching and exhorting rather than teaching: "Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them" (Acts 15. 32). Among the effects of prophesying are edification, comfort, and consolation of others and the building up of the Church, the Body (1 Corinthians 14. 3, 4). Not every believer has the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 12. 29). As in the body there are many members and not all members have the same office, so in the Body of Christ the members have different gifts; and we are exhorted to use them, in the case of prophecy, according to the proportion of our faith (Romans 12. 3-6). While all are not prophets, yet the greater gifts, which include prophecy, are to be earnestly desired (1 Corinthians 12. 31). Indeed prophecy is to be desired rather than other gifts (1 Corinthians 14. 1). In seeking after gifts we are exhorted to seek that we may abound unto the edification of the Church. The gifts are distributed according to the will of the Spirit. Reliance on the Holy Spirit is necessary to the use of any spiritual gift, and another essential is love. "If I have the gift of prophecy... but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13. 2). Love is mentioned in association with the gifts in a number of scriptures (see Romans 12. 6-9; Ephesians 4. 11-16; 1 Peter 4. 8-11). He that prophesies speaks with the understanding (1 Corinthians 14. 1-19). There is no question of a person prophesying and not knowing what he is saying. This does not mean that he fully understands all the mysteries of the word of God. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets (verse 32). They are to prophesy one by one, making room for one another, for God is not a God of confusion, but of peace (verse 33). Anyone who thinks himself to be a prophet is responsible to take heed to the things Paul wrote on this subject for they are the commandment of the Lord (verse 37).

The extent to which a person uses his gift of prophecy may be limited by his faith or diligence (Romans 12. 6, 11). In order to make the fullest use of the gift of prophecy, as of other gifts, it is necessary that those who have it present their bodies a living sacrifice, "holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12. 1, 2). Some may find that it is not the will of God that they should prophesy. Let us therefore heed the words of Peter, "According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God... that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4. 10-11).

*J. A. H. Robertson*

## SPEAKING IN TONGUES

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2. 4). "We do hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2.

11). "They heard **them speak with tongues, and magnify God**" (Acts 10. 46). "They **spake with tongues, and prophesied**" (Acts 19. 6).

On the **basis** of the above quotations we submit:

1. At the **beginning** of this dispensation of His dealings with **men** God did miraculously **impart** the ability to **speak in** tongues.
2. These tongues were **spoken languages extant at** that time.
3. They clothed thought which could be understood **by** listeners because their languages **were being** spoken.
4. The persons who **spoke** in tongues **knew** the import of **their** words. They **spoke of** the mighty works of God, **they magnified** God.
5. They spoke **in languages** other than their own.
6. They **spoke as** the **Spirit gave** them utterance. Those who spoke **in** tongues **were** those to whom the **Spirit gave this** utterance.
7. **The speaking in** tongues was spontaneous, produced **immediately** by the **Spirit** without solicitation, without pre-knowledge.
8. The three recorded **instances** should **be** considered **as** to their setting.
  - (a) **Acts 2.** The **crisis of Pentecost**—the **first day** of a new dispensation.
  - (b) **Acts 10.** The **crisis** of the **extension of the** divine purpose to include Gentiles.
  - (c) **Acts 19.** The **case of certain** persons described **as** disciples whose **experience was** limited **by** the revelation **which they** had received **in** the **terms** of the mission of John **the Baptist**. When **there came** to them the further light of the revelation of **divine** purpose for a **new dispensation** they accepted **and were again** baptized. **This was** clearly an exceptional case.
9. The **Acts** covers a wide **range** of divine **workings** and **traces an** impressive extension of **the** work of God. **It is** very **significant** that there **are** so few **references** to **speaking in** tongues. **The** record of the **work** of God **in many** areas **and affecting many** people contains **no** reference to **speaking in** tongues.

In Paul's **first** epistle to **the** Corinthians we see **this matter of speaking in** tongues **in** the **setting** of **church** activity. We **make a** limited **analysis** of what the apostle teaches.

"To each **one is** given the manifestation of the Spirit to **profit** withal... **to another** divers **kinds of tongues**... all these worketh the **one** and the **same Spirit, dividing** to each one severally even **as He will**" (12. 7, 10, 11).

The **impartation** of the ability to **speak in** tongues lay within the sovereign responsibilities and **workings** of the Spirit. **The** impartation was **not** based **on** the solicitation of the believer. **It was** "dividing... **as He will**", not **because** of the wish or **request** of the recipient. When Paul used such an **expression as** "Desire earnestly the **greater gifts**" it is evident that he did not **mean** that each of **the saints** by solicitation should receive miraculous gifts. He was indicating **the** desirability of **seeking** from God **such** collective **endowment** as would result **in** the **edification** of **the** church.

"Do all speak with tongues?" (12. 30). The obvious implication of this question is that all did not speak with tongues. Yet all had been in one Spirit baptized into the one Body, the Church. This disposes of a contention that speaking in tongues is the evidence of having been baptized in the Spirit. If speaking in tongues is the indication of this baptism then believers in Christ who have not spoken in tongues are not in the Church, the Body.

"He that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth" (14. 2).

These words indicate that the primary direction of speaking in tongues is Godward. God understands all languages. When men are being addressed directly this is done in the exercise of prophecy (see verse 3) and the speaking is done in language which is understood in the church (14. 9). It is recognized that with the world-wide spread of the gospel, problems of language have arisen because persons of one nation and language have been addressing persons of a different race and different language. For this reason the services of interpreters may be required.

"He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself (14. 4).

To edify is to build up. "He that prophesieth edifieth the church". That is to say he speaks words which the church understands and by which it receives "edification, and comfort, and consolation". Those in the church are built up by the truths which the words clothe. The man who spoke in a tongue was edified by the truth which was in his mind but the words by which his thoughts were clothed were words of another language, a language which was unknown to the speaker. A person will not be edified by a mere vocal sound which has no significance and which therefore is not the expression of any rational thought.

"Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret" (14. 5).

"Howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (14. 19).

All gifts which God gives are valuable and none should be spoken of disparagingly. But there is relative value and Paul stresses that in these words. It has been claimed that a gift has been the appointed sign of an advanced spiritual experience which has been termed "the baptism of the Spirit". If this claim were true we would expect that the particular gift would be a superior one such as prophesying. In fact, the claim has been made that the relatively inferior gift of speaking in tongues is that by which the experience is attested.

"Except he interpret".

It is clear that what was spoken in a tongue could have imparted edification to others if the person speaking would interpret. In some cases this ability was enjoyed, but if a speaker in tongues could not interpret he was to refrain from public utterance. Paul gives no explanation as to why the person should not have conveyed his thought in a known language instead of in the tongue.

It is also clear that on occasions another person could interpret what was uttered by a brother speaking in tongues. If the speaker himself could not interpret and if no one else present could interpret the person

who had the gift of tongues was to remain silent (see 14. 28). These words establish that the person who could speak in tongues was under rational control and restraint. The exercise of the gift was subject to certain ascertainable conditions so that intelligible communication and divine orderliness were maintained. The speaker was not thrust up by an uncontrollable impulse and power to utter **sounds** which **were** unintelligible to himself and to others. He knew if he himself could not interpret and he was also able to ascertain that no person present could interpret. In these circumstances he knew to remain silent. He could address his thoughts to himself and to God. Again it may be asked, How could a man speak to himself if he did not know the thoughts which were in his mind? Words are the means of expressing thought and we suggest that in the miraculous act of speaking in tongues a person was able to understand his thoughts though he was unable to understand the language which the Holy Spirit miraculously used as the vehicle of the thoughts. Hence the need for an interpreter.

Speaking in tongues lay within the framework of divine purpose to attest, to corroborate and to encourage by miraculous demonstrations the Testimony which was being established in the early days of this dispensation. It was definitely a sign (1 Corinthians 14. 22). If it had been the purpose of God to continue on these lines then the gift of speaking in tongues would have retained the characteristic of spontaneous distribution by the sovereign unsolicited activity of the Holy Spirit. The continuance would not have been determined by the faith or the faithfulness of God's children. During the past two centuries there has been granted a remarkable recovery of divine truth. To many devout believers in Christ there has come profound knowledge of the divine Being and of the purposes of God in their present and future fulfilment. We are unable to accept that such believers were able to receive such important revelation but had not the faith nor the spirituality to receive an ability to speak in tongues. *J. Drain*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### Acts 8. 4-40

#### The Spreading Message

**From Birkenhead.** —As a result of the disciples being scattered from Jerusalem the word was preached in many places. In the city of Samaria the people experienced much joy on taking heed to the word and seeing the signs that were done. Simon the sorcerer had a certain following but the word had its effect and many believed, including Simon himself. Those in Jerusalem heard of the work and sent Peter and John to have fellowship with those already there. This working pattern is followed today in that workers establish a testimony in fellowship with churches already in existence and do not work independently of those already gathered in churches of God.

It is possible that something spectacular accompanied the receipt of the Holy Spirit for Simon to express the desire to be able to dispense this gift. The error of his request was pointed out to him and true repentance was displayed.

The work of angels is mentioned on a number of occasions in the Acts and the guiding of Philip to the eunuch is one of these. Philip was told by the Spirit to draw near, one of the many instances which mark out the Spirit as the "great Administrator". Philip led the eunuch by questioning, to conversation. The eunuch was of the line of Ham, a Gentile. Two suggestions were made as to how he might have become interested in the Scriptures. The word may have travelled as a result of the scattering of Acts 2, and also the historical record of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon may have aroused his curiosity. Certainly he was a man of means to be in possession of a book of the prophet Isaiah. A group of people would be in the chariot, probably drawn by oxen, and in these circumstances Philip spoke of Jesus, using Old Testament scriptures, one of a number of examples showing how the gospel is linked with the Old Testament.

That baptism is by immersion is clearly demonstrated in the passage. Water sufficient for sprinkling would be carried in the chariot, but Peter and the eunuch waited until they came to water in which both could stand.

Although there is no record of the eunuch being added to a church of God it is not in keeping with the pattern of Scripture to conclude that anything but this is the next step to be taken by a true disciple.

*S. G. Turner, R. D. W., R. C. S.*

**From Derby.** —It would seem that the scattering of the disciples, though brought about by the Adversary, had a divine purpose, namely the wider spreading of the message, in accordance with the commandment of the Lord (Acts 1. 8). There was at first a multitude of disciples in Jerusalem and so the purpose of God was not being fulfilled (Matthew 28. 19). Now they went about preaching the Word. Philip the evangelist (one of the seven) went down to Samaria, proclaiming unto them the Christ.

This reminded us of the Lord's visit to Samaria (John 4. 5) when He said to His disciples, "I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured; others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour" (verse 38). The Lord had also told them that the fields were white already unto harvest (4. 35-37).

The divine order of events regarding the Samaritans was hearing and believing the message, baptism, and finally reception of the Holy Spirit after the apostles' prayer and the laying on of their hands. Except for the laying on of the apostles' hands the order was the same for the Jews (2. 38). The sending of two apostles from Jerusalem may well have been to teach the change of attitude now required under the new dispensation, so that the traditional enmity between Jew and Samaritan might be brought to an end (John 4. 9). Also it seemed proper for apostles to be granted the honour of setting their seal upon the work of the Lord in Samaria, as in the case of the Jew (chapter 2) and Gentile (chapter 10).

Simon the sorcerer seemed taken up with the idea of retaining his reputation for being a man of power, like many today who would buy or earn God's gracious gifts. "Not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2. 9, A. V. ). Philip was taken away from his very rewarding work in Samaria to an isolated spot in the desert to seek

the salvation of one man by a direct intervention of an angel of the Lord. The Lord's servant was obedient to the call. The unnamed, God-fearing, trusted servant of Queen Candace, was reading aloud from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in the Greek Septuagint version. He was returning from a visit to Jerusalem, where he had been to worship the God of Israel. He was probably still unsatisfied, so when Philip began at that scripture and preached unto him Jesus he drank in the life-giving message. As the chariot was moving forward they came to a certain water, in which the Ethiopian desired baptism and Philip was evidently satisfied as to his faith. The text of the A. V. gives the ensuing conversation, which the R. V. has in the margin. The eunuch's confession seems necessary, whether written by Luke or not.

The correct mode of baptism is here evident; they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him. He went on his way rejoicing having obviously received the Holy Spirit. Secular church history records that Matthias later joined him in testimony in Ethiopia.

*S. R. W.*

**From Lagos.** —With the martyrdom of Stephen still fresh in their minds, the feet of the disciples were set in motion, carrying the good news along with them. They spread out like a dragnet and thus Philip found himself in Samaria preaching the word.

Hearts were opened to the preaching of Philip, among whom was one Simon, a sorcerer, who had stolen the hearts of the people; he now, hearing the truth, clave to it. A step further was taken by the converts of Samaria, who were baptized and received the gift of Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands by Peter and John.

The rebuke of Peter to Simon showed the inordinate ambition and zeal of Simon to receive God's gift; but thanks be to God His gifts are entirely free to all, either free or bond, Jew or Gentile. His greatest gift was that of His beloved Son, even our Lord Jesus.

The Spirit directed Philip towards an Ethiopian, a man of great authority under the queen of Ethiopia. He had been prepared by the Lord for the gospel of grace as foreshown in the passage he was reading. "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself, or of some other?" he enquired from Philip, but Philip seized the opportunity to expound the gospel to him. His was indeed a heart that had been prepared by the Lord. He accepted the word and took a step further in obedience to water baptism. We believe that Philip had told the eunuch about the need of baptism during the course of their conversation.

*S. A. Beyioku-Alase*

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Further papers were received from Aberkenfig and Barry, Atherton and Leigh, Glasgow (Parkhead), Kingston upon Thames, Liverpool, Methil, Nottingham, Teesside, Vancouver, which may be summarized as follows:

The word of warning given by Amos, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (6. 1) might have applied to the disciples in Jerusalem had they not been stirred up to follow the Lord's command in Matthew 28.

The good tidings of the kingdom of God preached by Philip (verse 12) was something additional to the preaching of the new faith, for it resulted in the people of Samaria who believed being baptized. Their experience was mentioned later in Hebrews 2. 4, "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit". But the signs were secondary, the fundamental need of the people was spiritual. Peter and John came and laid their hands upon the Samaritans, thus showing identification with them in their faith. The Samaritans then realized the complete unity of the new faith, no longer was there to be any break between Samaria and Jerusalem.

The importance of joining each extension of the Lord's work to that which already existed is illustrated in verses 14, 15, 16. Those who received the grace of God in Samaria, and also believed the truth concerning the kingdom of God and the Name (which bespeaks the authority) of the Lord Jesus Christ, must be linked up to form one Fellowship, that of God's Son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1. 9). Scriptures such as John 4. 9, Luke 9. 51-53 and Matthew 10. 5 illustrate the position between Jew and Samaritan during the Lord's ministry. A radical adjustment of attitudes was needed once the gospel was beginning to flow out to all nations.

Was Simon the sorcerer a true disciple? Very strong words are used about him by Peter (verse 23), but verse 13 states definitely that he believed and was baptized. "Pray ye for me to the Lord" are not the words of an unsaved man. Peter's words which drew this request from Simon do not seem to be a threat in themselves, but they were probably an allusion to Deuteronomy 29. 18-20 where many curses are laid upon such an offender.

That Peter and John were sent to complete the work of Philip does not suggest any lack on Philip's part, but it left Philip free to move on to use his gift for evangelism elsewhere.

"These were days when God directed His servants by exceptional means (verse 26), and it is suggested that such means are no longer used, for we have the complete Scriptures to guide us in principle. They who wait upon the Lord will, we believe, be given indications through circumstances of the particular sphere of service in which they should engage".

The difference between the wording of Isaiah 53. 7, 8 and the quotation (Acts 8. 32, 33) is due to the eunuch having the Greek (Septuagint) translation. Verse 33 is perhaps made clearer by the R. S. V. translation. "In His humiliation justice was denied Him. Who can describe His generation? For His life is taken up from the earth".

The eunuch was probably used by God to carry Christianity to Ethiopia, a country nominally Christian for centuries. Philip was taken away, eventually to settle in Caesarea, but we read of him again when Paul lodged with him on his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 21. 7-11).  
*Eds.*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. When did the eunuch receive the Holy Spirit, before or after baptism? (Derby).

Since the eunuch was a Gentile his experience would probably be the same as that of Cornelius and his company, who received the Holy Spirit as the gospel was being proclaimed by Peter (Acts 10. 44-48). Confirmation may be seen in the desire of the eunuch to be baptized, the initiative being his not Philip's, suggesting that the indwelling Spirit was already giving him the desire to fulfil the will of the Lord.

**L. B.**

2. Why were disciples said to have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2. 38, 10. 48) and in the Name of the Lord Jesus (8. 16), whereas the Lord commanded baptism in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28. 19)? (Derby).

Matthew 28. 19 records the Lord's formal instruction stated in detail whereas the other scriptures quoted refer briefly to the authority of the Lord in connexion with baptism.

**L. B.**

3. Was Philip's journey to Azotus (verses 29, 30) miraculous or was he simply led by the Spirit in the normal course of events (Kingston upon Thames).

This is a debatable point. There is no doubt that in some contexts the Greek verb *'harpazo'* is used of miraculous events, as in 1 Thessalonians 4. 17; yet it could equally mean that the Spirit "caught away" Philip by constraining him suddenly to leave the eunuch and proceed towards Azotus. I am personally inclined to this latter view.

**G. P. Jr.**

I should prefer the former view; "Philip was found" is a sufficient basis.

**J. B.**

4. Should we conclude that to make converts and then pass on without any concern for their after-care is something which we rarely see in the New Testament and then only in the beginning of the evangelistic period? (Aberkenfig and Barry).

The wording of this question sets the matter in realistic perspective. The apostles and other leaders of this period were obviously true to the Lord's commission in Matthew 28. 19-20. The Lord had enjoined on them that baptized disciples should be taught whatsoever He had commanded. This included corporate testimony in churches of God. There, was nevertheless a special usefulness in the incident of the eunuch. For it illustrates that where individuals respond to the gospel in a situation where immediate association with a church of God is impracticable, they may be baptized in anticipation of possible later developments. The eunuch's baptism should be regarded in this light, and not as a precedent which would weaken the strong scriptural emphasis on the gathering of disciples into churches of God.

**G. P. Jr.**

5. Would the apostles lay their hands **on** each disciple **in Samaria** individually? (Liverpool).

Yes. That **is** the plain **word of Scripture** (8. 17) which **cannot** be **interpreted in any** other way. **Simon, in asking for a similar power used** the word "whomsoever", obviously contemplating **an individual action.**  
*L. B.*

6. How **and** when **were** churches of God **formed?** Little **seems to be** revealed about this **in Acts** (Atherton and Leigh).

The functioning **of** churches of God **is** frequently referred to **in Acts** but their planting **is** implied rather than stated. The doctrine of churches of **God is contained in** the epistles, where planting **is** specifically **referred to in 1 Corinthians 3.** There **is no** detailed procedure **given,** but the principles involved **are** straightforward **and simple of** practical application.  
*L. B.*

1. **In** preaching, the apostles gave a full call to discipleship and **baptism** was considered **as the step** immediately following salvation, **but** today there **can be big** delays **after** application for **baptism.** Should there **be?** (Atherton and Leigh).

**It is disciples** who **are baptized** (Matthew 28. 19. R. V. ). Three factors tended to accelerate the **baptism of disciples in** apostolic times. **First,** the remarkable discernment **granted** to apostles **and** others which gave them insight into the **genuineness** of those professing Christ; second, the clear-cut **commitment to "the Way" in the act of baptism,** possibly involving persecution or death, **and so deterring** the less enthusiastic; third, the clear-cut doctrinal distinction of "the Way", deviations not **yet** having developed. In **modern circumstances it is** often **more** difficult to **discern** whether one professing faith **in Christ is a** seriously intentioned disciple, **and a waiting period may in some cases be expedient to test genuineness of desire or understanding** of the **issues** involved. **Yet** such considerations should not delay longer than **is** absolutely necessary.  
*G. P. Jr.*

There **is no** scriptural authority for delay and **we** should not **induce unnecessary** delay. Indeed, **we** should definitely **present** to **new** converts the Lord's teaching **as to baptism, and** that without loss of **time.**  
*J. B.*

8. In view of the **tremendous** outreach involved, why **did** the apostles **stay in** Jerusalem? Were they **as a bastion in the centre of** Jewish religious opposition? (Atherton and Leigh).

By the **time** Stephen was **martyred** the church of God **in Jerusalem was composed of many** thousands of **saints** who were then **scattered** abroad. This **number was sufficient** for the work in hand of evangelizing **Judaea and Samaria and it was the divine purpose** that the apostles should **remain in Jerusalem (Acts 8. 1), but they were available for confirmation of the work wherever the need** arose. It is **significant** that although the **apostles figured in the conference of Acts 15,** they **are not mentioned as being in association with James the Lord's brother in**

**Acts 21.** 18, perhaps having left as their work **there was** now finished. The apostles **had not been** given the **task of leading the outreach** to the Gentiles. That work was placed **in the hands of** the apostle Paul, **God's man** specially chosen and **equipped for this great purpose**. Nevertheless secular history suggests that **some apostles engaged in work among** Gentiles, e. g., Thomas **in** India. **L. B.**

9. Please comment on the authenticity of **Acts 8. 37** (Aberkenng and Barry).

This **verse is in the Textus Receptus and therefore appears in the Authorized Version but it is omitted from the Nestle Greek text and from the majority of versions published since the Revised Version.** The reason **for the omission is that textual scholars in general regard it as a later addition as it is not found in early manuscripts.** **L. B.**

### PSALM 65-continued

Come, **and see the works of God;**  
**He is terrible in His doing toward** the children of men.  
 He **turned the sea into dry land:**  
 They **went through the river on foot:**  
 There **did we rejoice in Him** (verses 5., 6).

The **works of God were truly terrible toward men,** toward Pharaoh **at the Red Sea, and toward** the Canaanite nations when the Israelites **crossed the Jordan on foot.** It was **great grace toward Israeli, but terrible towards** those whose sins He punished. In Micah **6. 5** we read, "Remember **from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteous acts of the LORD**". Shittim was **on the east side of the Jordan** and Gilgal **on the west.** **Between** lay the miraculous crossing **of the Jordan, and at both the Red Sea and the Jordan** the people rejoiced. It would have **been well for them if this had always been so.** **God's people today do not sing from their heart often enough and long enough in the light of the great work God has done for them.**

He ruleth **by His might for ever;**  
 His **eyes observe the nations:**  
**Let not** the rebellious exalt themselves (verse 7) (Selah)

God is **merciful and does not** willingly afflict the children of men. Yet, "**because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,** therefore the heart of the **sons of men is fully set in them to do evil**" (Ecclesiastes **8. 11**); **men do not realize that God ruleth by His might for ever.**

Though the rule **of the kingdom of heaven is merciful and gracious,** it will nevertheless **burst forth upon the wicked in all its might and fury, and they will be cast in the furnace of fire,** where there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth** (Matthew **13. 38-43, 50**). **God's eyes observe the nations, and the rebellious are told not to exalt themselves.**

*To be continued—J. H.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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## EDITORIAL

Last seen filling a rather ill-defined role at the murder of Stephen, Saul of Tarsus now makes a startling re-appearance on the page of Scripture, itself to be largely dominated henceforth by this tremendous character. Whether Augustine is right or not in claiming that Stephen's dying plea for the pardon of his murderers was the principal motive power under God towards Saul's spiritual transformation, it seems at least unlikely that the memory of that man of God and his words was ever very far from the young Pharisee's mind, consciously or unconsciously. Stephen's words found a fulfilment, which must have moved Saul to the depth of his soul, in those two golden words, "Brother Saul".

The study of the events of Acts 9 has engaged some of the most acute minds among Christians down through the years. Similarly the subsequent spiritual career of this tremendous man of God has absorbed the student of the Word from then till now. W. M. Ramsey, for example, reports at some length the highly fanciful suggestion that Saul's Damascan Road vision was an epileptic hallucination; and Christian literature abounds in scholarship dedicated to the analysis of this single pivotal event of New Testament history.

Many study groups now engaged with us on our present study of Acts will recall the highly profitable year's study in 1966 devoted to Paul's life and work. Some of the topics arising from Acts 9, e. g., the chronology of Paul's early days and years following conversion, were analysed at some length in the 1966 study. Most groups this month have wisely directed their attention primarily to the study of Saul's conversion as an event in the progressive development of the kingdom of God in apostolic days. Several papers refer to the Acts 22 and 26 accounts by Paul himself of these events. It is very clear that the impact of his experience can hardly have faded to any degree throughout his life. His words to Agrippa, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision", remind us of the profound truth that divine choice necessarily combines with human positive response to give effect to the divine will. The Lord's call required Saul's obedience, though he was a "chosen vessel". "How unsearchable are His judgements, and His ways past tracing out"!

*J. D. T.*

## THE METHOD, EMPHASIS AND POWER OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING

"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1. 8). So spoke the risen Lord with all authority to those who now waited for the Holy Spirit that they might show forth the excellencies of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. Then, ten days later, the great public work of being His witnesses began in power, to be pursued

under all kinds of circumstances that would even cost the apostles their health, liberty and life.

Their aim was clear. It was to persuade men concerning Christ who had said, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10. 10). With this agrees the angelic message, "Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this Life" (Acts 5. 20). The angel's words thus made it clear where the emphasis of the apostles' message should lie. The apostle John wrote, "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life" (1 John 5. 11, 12).

Their method was to go to men. The angel had told them to go to (and to speak in) the Temple. This was the destination of Peter and John at the hour of prayer when many would be present, a ready audience. In fact, the many newly-won converts continued steadfastly with one accord in the Temple, where their witness found favour with all the people (Acts 2. 46, 47). Solomon's porch appears to have been their place of preaching. After the great persecution the synagogues became the places of witness. And wherever else men would gather there was the gospel preached. "I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying... repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20. 20, 21). So spoke the apostle Paul, and thus had he done, in the school of Tyrannus, on the Areopagus and by the riverside at Philippi.

The apostles were men who knew the life of their Lord and Saviour. The one chosen to take the place of Judas must be one who had gone in and out among them from the baptism of John unto the day that the Lord was received up, to be a witness of His resurrection. Peter said, "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard"; and again, "We are witnesses of all things which He did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem" (Acts 10. 39). In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul said of those who saw the Lord in resurrection that they were now His witnesses unto the people. They were men who knew the remarkable events of the Lord's life. However, in the recorded preaching of the apostles there are only two references to His life, on the occasions when the gospel was first preached to Jew and Gentile (Acts 2. 22, 10. 38). The references to the Lord's death are more numerous. But the greatest emphasis was upon the Lord's resurrection and exaltation. His Lordship, by reason of which the individual life would be affected and changed, was strongly preached.

The name of Jesus—its virtue, its saving power and its authority—was frequently used. Therefore Paul before his conversion had thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26. 9). But afterwards he wrote, "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Philippians 2. 10). The apostles powerfully preached that holy and blessed Name. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour "for the Name". In preaching the Lordship of Christ it is evident that they often linked with it the commandment of baptism (Acts 8. 12, 36, 16. 15, 33), for they preached the kingdom of God (Acts 8. 12, 19. 8, 28. 23, 31).

The apostles also knew the Scriptures and were able to use them. Peter used them effectively on the day of Pentecost. He spoke authoritatively: "All the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days". Paul reasoned from the Scriptures. Apollos (not an apostle) showed by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. Stephen and Paul both used their profound knowledge of the Scriptures when preaching to the Jews (Acts 7. 13).

In their preaching the apostles were very bold. Faintness, uncertainty, hesitancy were not part of their preaching. They prayed for boldness (4. 29), they spoke boldly so that the rulers beheld it (4. 13), and it was the outcome of the mighty filling with the Holy Spirit (4. 31) after united prayer. And this boldness is to be seen to the last in the apostle Paul, for in Rome he preached and taught "with all boldness". He wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel" for he had a deep appreciation of its mighty truth and power.

The power of their preaching was according to the Lord's promise: "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you". Their words were simple, the message clear and plain. "My speech", wrote the apostle, "and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2. 4). The apostle's learning was not used to impress his hearers. And as for Peter and John, they were unlearned and ignorant men. The secret of their power was in the disciples' united prayers, in their daily devotion to their task, in the purity of their lives, and in their faithfulness under oppression. Peter, "filled with the Holy Spirit", spoke to the people (4. 8). Stephen, speaking by the Spirit, could not be withstood (6. 10). Paul wrote, "Christ wrought through me . . . in the power of the Holy Spirit\*" (Romans 15. 18, 19). They were truly men clothed with power from on high. They lived and preached daily for Christ.

Peculiar to their time was the confirmation of their preaching by signs and wonders, in keeping with the principle in Hebrews 2. 3, 4, "so great salvation . . . having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit". The working of signs is frequently found in the earlier part of the Acts (2. 43, 3. 6, 4. 30, 5. 12-16, 8. 13, 15. 12 and 19. 11, where "special" may indicate a reviving of the power to work miracles for a limited purpose). Paul had widely used the power of signs and wonders for the sake of the Gentiles (Romans 15. 19), but it would seem that such signs were meant to show the apostleship of those chosen for this work by the Lord (2 Corinthians 12. 12).

While the working of signs is not granted to us today yet we are not denied the power of the Holy Spirit; for it is His work to convince men, and therefore we may pray that our preaching be after the manner of the apostles. Luke wrote: "With great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4. 33).

*G. K. Kennedy*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

## ACTS 9. 1-31

## CONVERSION OF SAUL AND ITS RESULTS

**From Methil.** —We are introduced to Saul in Acts 7. 58 as a young man at whose feet were laid the garments of those who stoned Stephen, and who was equally guilty of the death of Stephen. His attitude towards the disciples of the Lord was a fulfilment of the words of John 16. 2, "Whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God". What Saul did he did in good conscience (Acts 23. 1; 1 Timothy 1. 13). In Acts 22. 3, we read that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of his fathers, being zealous for God.

History was made on the road to Damascus. Saul set out with the intention that the disciples of the Lord would receive no mercy, but would be taken back to Jerusalem to receive the same fate as their brethren before them (Acts 22. 4, 26. 10). Before his mission was completed, however, he had an experience such as he had never known before. There shone round about him a great light from heaven. So bright was this light that he was forced down upon the ground, blinded, when to his further surprise he heard a voice, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" It was a humbled Saul who asked, "Who art Thou Lord?" Little wonder that the men who accompanied him stood speechless, for they heard only a sound, and were unaware of the words spoken to Saul. Many there are today who hear the gospel without response. The message that day was for Saul alone.

Ananias was well aware of the destruction that Saul had carried out, but despite his misgivings, he obeyed the Lord's word to go to the street called Straight, where he found this very man praying. The words of verse 15 clearly show the work to which the Lord was now calling Saul; "He is a chosen vessel unto Me". This same man who had so recently received from the high priests letters of authority to persecute the disciples of the Lord was now destined to proclaim the message of the gospel to such notable figures as Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Caesar Augustus.

Such was the hatred of the Jews towards Saul that they conspired to destroy him, and watched day and night for their opportunity. God, however, had a great work for Saul to do, and so his disciples, knowing the Jews' plan, delivered him, letting him down through the wall in a basket.

When Saul attempted to join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem, their attitude was similar to that of Ananias when the Lord told him to go to Saul; they feared him for they had heard of his past record. Barnabas, however, knowing of his invaluable work at Damascus, commended him to the church at Jerusalem. Here Saul continued the work for which he had been saved, and preached boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, speaking out boldly against the Hellenists to such an extent that again his life was in jeopardy. Such was the concern of his brethren, that they sent him to the safety of his home town of Tarsus.

*A. R. Smith*

**From Glasgow** (Parkhead). —The word "conversion" is well applied to Saul of Tarsus. The man who left Jerusalem was angry, haughty and vicious; the man who arrived in Damascus was subdued and inoffensive. His notion that Jesus was an impostor and His resurrection a lie was replaced by the full knowledge that Jesus was raised and in glory. The Voice which said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" was a revelation of power and appeal which made a deep impression on him. The rabid Pharisee was to become a missionary to Jew and Gentile according to the sovereign purpose of God.

The immediate results of his conversion were fourfold. For Saul it meant the beginning of a training period as a servant of God in preparation for his lifelong service as an apostle. For the disciples it meant mystery coupled with fear. For the other apostles and elders it was an unexpected surprise which they accepted with caution. For the Jews it appeared as treachery with which they should deal summarily. The assurances of Ananias, together with the smoothing influence of Barnabas, helped to set Saul on the road marked out for him, so that before long he was preaching boldly in the name of Jesus.

A comparison of Acts 9. 26-30, 11. 25-30 and 12. 25 would suggest that after his conversion Saul tarried in Damascus, then went to Jerusalem, Tarsus, Antioch, Jerusalem and Antioch, and thence on his first missionary journey with Barnabas. But his own words in Galatians 1. 16-18 suggest a three-year period in Arabia not mentioned in the Acts, after which he came to Jerusalem where he was known by repute. Where this Arabian sojourn may be placed in the record of Acts is a matter of varied opinion. It would be reasonable to place it early in Paul's career, perhaps between Acts 9. 30 and 11. 25. [See Comment 1].

The conversion began ripples in the sea of time which have not yet ceased to spread. The teaching in his letters is a source of instruction not yet exhausted; it will remain so till the Lord comes. Its full results are not yet measurable.

*J. J. P.*

**From Vancouver.** —The conversion of Saul of Tarsus is one of the most famous in all history. It was not a sudden conversion but rather a sudden surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. Stephen's testimony, prayer and death must have remained in Saul's mind. His conscience was "the goad" against which he was kicking. In spite of this, great was his avenging fury in persecuting the Christians. "Why persecutest thou Me?" he was asked. Who was the "Me"? It referred to everyone who had embraced Christianity. It was the Church which is Christ's Body that was the object of Saul's vehemence. [See Comment 2].

"Hearing a voice, but seeing no man". A contradiction has been suggested here, since in Acts 22. 9 Paul testified, "They that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me" (A. V. ). Then in Acts 26. 14 we read Paul's account before Agrippa: "When we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, "Saul, Saul..." (A. V. ). This indicates that only Saul heard the voice. There is no contradiction here. The men who were with Saul heard a sound, or noise. It was not meant that they should understand the words. The message was for Saul of Tarsus only. We find a similar instance recorded in John 12. 28, 29. When Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify Thy name", God spoke from heaven and said, "I have both glorified it, and

will glorify it again". The people who stood near heard the sound. Some remarked that it thundered, and others thought an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus understood because God was speaking directly to Him.

Chronologically the events in Saul's life following his conversion, derived from both Acts 9 and Galatians 1, are:

1. Converted on the journey to Damascus.
2. Preached at Damascus (Acts 9. 20-22).
3. Into Arabia (Galatians 1. 17).
4. Returned to Damascus (Galatians 1. 17).
5. Three years later to Jerusalem (Galatians 1. 18; Acts 9. 26).
6. Escaped to Caesarea (Acts 9. 29, 30).
7. On to Tarsus (Acts 9. 30).
8. Brought to Antioch by Barnabas (Acts 11. 25).

Saul's encounter with the Lord Jesus resulted in a changed man. Until this time Saul did what he himself wanted to do. Now it was to be Christ's will and in Christ's way. So it must be with any person who becomes a Christian; self-will ceases and Christ's will begins. Saul's conversion meant a new way of life and new friends. Ananias displayed brotherliness in spite of Saul's frightening reputation. Barnabas showed large-heartedness by speaking on his behalf to the very sceptical apostles at Jerusalem. Peter spent fifteen days with Paul (Galatians 1. 18).

Paul was alone with God in Arabia. This was very necessary. It provided both guidance in the new Way, and strength for the almost overwhelming task ahead. Paul had a vision from God. Paul had a period of maturing following his conversion. At least three years went by. In Arabia, in Damascus and in Tarsus he waited. During this time the churches of God had peace.

*J. Robinson*

**From Liverpool.** —It is impossible to convey the hatred that was in Saul's heart against the disciples. He lived in an atmosphere of threats and slaughter. It was the very air he breathed. What Jacob prophesied of Benjamin in Genesis 49. 27 is true of this Benjamite, "A wolf that ravineth: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at even he shall divide the spoil".

There are three accounts of Saul's conversion in the Acts: the account we have here, Paul's testimony in chapter 22. 6-11, and the account which he gave before Agrippa in chapter 26. 12-18. These accounts present us with some variations. It is reasonable to assume that all present saw the light but none perceived the form of Him who spoke except Saul. They all heard the voice but only Saul distinguished the words. When Saul used the word 'Lord', it may have been simply as a mark of respect as used in John 5. 7 where the same Greek word *kudos* is translated 'Sir'. It was suggested that "the goads" referred to the warning counsel of Gamaliel (Acts 5. 34-39), the dying prayer of Stephen (Acts 7. 60) and the daily spectacle of those who were ready to die or go to prison rather than renounce the name of Jesus. Now Saul was learning that as Gamaliel had warned, he was fighting against God. This experience ended in his complete surrender expressed in the words, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do"? The word "Lord"

would now **take on a new meaning** to him. From **that moment** it was his life's **objective that Christ might be magnified in his body** whether by life or by death (Philippians 1. 20). **Saul**, who had shown such zeal in **persecuting** the saints, now with equal zeal, though not now in the **flesh but in the power** of the Holy Spirit, was **proclaiming openly** in the synagogue **that Jesus is the Son of God** (verse 20). Paul **stayed for a while** with the disciples at **Damascus** before he went **into Arabia** (Acts 26. 20; Galatians 1. 17). With all Paul's **former knowledge** of the **Scriptures**, having **studied at the feet** of Gamaliel, he still **required** a special preparation before he could **undertake** the **great** commission for which God had **separated** him. He would possibly receive while in **Arabia** the truth of both Jewish and Gentile believers becoming fellow-members of the Church the Body. His **fame, or ill-fame, was so** widespread that **Barnabas** had to **bring** him to the apostles and declare to them how he had **seen the Lord in the way** and that **He** had spoken to him, and how at **Damascus** he had preached boldly in the **name of Jesus** (verse 27). It is not a little **remarkable** that when this **man was saved** the church had peace. *F. J., G. S., G. S. W.*

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

**Aberkenfig and Barry**, Birmingham, **Derby**, Lagos, Paisley and Toronto also contributed **papers**, from which the following **points** have been extracted.

Saul's purpose in going to **Damascus** was the extinction of the "Way", the **name by which the Christian community was then known**, but a **name associated** with "the way of salvation" (Acts 16. 17), "the way of the Lord" (Acts 18. 25) and the "way of holiness" (Isaiah 35. 8).

This **man**, so richly endowed with intellectual ability, was separated to God from his mother's womb. His conversion was **unique**, for no human **agency** was used. **During** the three days he was without sight he probably **meditated** upon his **past** life; it was a period of **preparation and adjustment** during which he would **make** resolves as to his **future** service. He had much to unlearn, and so **deep** were his misguided convictions that only a **divine** revelation could change his heart. All his preconceived **ideas** of **servng** God fell with him to the earth. As Saul **reflected** later on how ignorant and injurious he had been, he realized how gracious and merciful the Lord had **been** to halt his madness and **appoint** him to His service. He **knew** that he was as one born out of **due** time. He knew that it was **by the grace** of God that he had become what he was, an apostle and bondservant of **Jesus Christ** (1 Corinthians 15. 8-10). The **gospel's greatest opponent** became one of its **foremost** exponents.

It **appears strange** that the disciples in Jerusalem should **not** have believed that Saul was a disciple **after** such a length of time (three years). This **seems to indicate** that **news of his activities in Damascus** was slow to reach them, else they would have **been** more **ready** to **accept** him.

Those who teach that **baptism in water is necessary** for the remission of **sins** may quote Paul's own **account** of his **baptism** (Acts 22. 16), but the **fact is** that his **sins** had **been** dealt with three days before. His **baptism** was rather the public confirmation of what had already **taken** place.

In verse 31 the A. V. has "churches" and the R. V. "church". The plural appeals to us as being more correct, but there must be strong textual reasons for the R. V. to prefer the singular. Perhaps the scattered saints of the church of God in Jerusalem had not yet formed themselves into divinely constituted churches (see answer to Question 1).

*J. D. T., L. B.*

### COMMENTS

1. Since several papers touch upon the question of the chronology of Paul's early experience following his conversion, it seems worthwhile to set out the sequence of events which has probably the widest acceptance amongst commentators. (This is, in fact, very close to the summary by friends in Vancouver). Students can compare this with their own conclusions, and should also refer to B. S. 1966 pp. 13-21 for discussion of this topic.

1. Conversion on the Damascus road and three subsequent days (Acts 9. 1-19).
2. He witnesses in Damascus "certain days" (Acts 9. 19-21).
3. He goes away to Arabia (Galatians 1. 17).
4. He returns and preaches further in Damascus (Galatians 1. 17; Acts 9. 22-25).  
[3 and 4 together encompass 3 years—Galatians 1. 18].
5. He goes up to Jerusalem (Galatians 1. 18; Acts 9. 26-29).
6. He escapes to Caesarea and thence to Tarsus (Acts 9. 30).
7. His visit to the region of Syria and Cilicia probably occurs at this point (Galatians 1. 21).
8. Barnabas goes forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul and brings him to Antioch (Acts 11. 25-26).
9. Barnabas and Saul carry "relief" to Judae, visit Jerusalem, and return to Antioch with John Mark (Acts 11. 29-30; 12. 25).
10. Paul's first missionary journey begins (Acts 13. 1-4).

2. Who was the 'Me'?... It was the Church which is Christ's Body (Vancouver).

Though the immediate targets of Saul's fury were members of His body, does not the sequence in verses 4, 5—"Me... thou... Jesus"—point to an intensely personal encounter between Saul and the risen Christ?  
*J. D. T.*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Was the Church (Acts 9. 31) the church of God in Jerusalem or something wider?

There has been considerable discussion about this question, and it seems advisable to present different viewpoints for consideration:

(a) In support of the reference being to the church of God in Jerusalem. It is reasoned that this was a unique period in the development of divine testimony, and Jerusalem was the recognized centre for a time

during **this** development. Persecution scattered the **disciples** and the work was **extended** by groups of **disciples** in various places under the **guidance** of the apostles. Such companies of **disciples** would **at that stage** be regarded as of the church in Jerusalem. Hence the **reference** to "**church**" (singular) in **Acts 9. 31**, the church in Jerusalem in its partially scattered state. This view is thought to be strengthened by **Paul's statement** in Galatians 1. 13: "**I persecuted the church of God** (singular) **and made havoc of it**". **Acts 26. 10-11** seems to bear this out. Saul having followed the disciples of the Jerusalem church **even** to foreign cities. **In this view it is submitted** that the church which was **persecuted** was the church which had **peace** when the **persecutor** was converted. **In which case it** was the church of God in Jerusalem which was **scattered** abroad in **Judaea, Samaria and Galilee**. No doubt these scattered companies of disciples grew, and some of them would **afterwards** be recognized as churches of God, **but it is not clear that** at the time referred to in **Acts 9. 31** this had actually **taken** place. There is no mention **up** to this point of the **Acts narrative** that other churches of God had **been** established. Nor is there other **definite** evidence that the **churches** of Judaea which were in **Christ** had **been** established at this early date.

(b) In support of the reference being to a wider thing.

This view proposes that **Acts 9. 31** appears to refer to a time at least **three years after the scattering** of 8. 4, by which time it would seem **strange** if other churches of God had not **been** established throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria. Therefore the word "**church**" in **Acts 9. 31** **must be accepted** as "the **summation of the churches of God in the areas mentioned**". This is seen to be **out of line with the general pattern** of New Testament usage of the terms **church and churches of God**, **but is compared** with the expression "the church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3. 15) where the singular "**church**" is applied to the **aggregate of all churches of God**, forming the **house of God**. A case in favour of this view is presented in the following extract from "**Needed Truth**", 1959, page 38:

"Throughout all', *kath holes*, are the words from which the word Catholic is derived. It means 'throughout the whole\*'. Now the question arises, 'Does the word church mean that what is in view here is the scattered church of God in Jerusalem, and that no other churches of God had been planted by this time?'... I am of the opinion that... as the saints were scattered from Jerusalem and took up residence in the cities of Judaea and Galilee, churches of God were brought into being.... It seems to me that 'the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria' emphasizes the divine unity which existed in the churches of God throughout the area mentioned. If further proof is needed that the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria comprised the churches of God in those areas, this will be found in Galatians 1. 21, 22, where Paul says, 'I was still unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ'. Paul came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia when the brethren in Jerusalem... sent him forth to Tarsus (Acts 9. 30). So that by this time churches of God had been planted in Judaea, and this likewise was the case in Samaria and Galilee",

The following comments are added with a view to stimulating further exploratory thought on the subject:

1. It will be appreciated that View (a) is in harmony with the general principle that the term "church of God" (singular) is normally applied in the New Testament to disciples gathered according to the divine will in a city, town or other local community. View (b) suggests an exception to this general principle, not in contradiction of it, but as the exception proving the rule.

2. There is general acceptance that the singular 'church' is the correct translation in 9. 31, rather than the plural 'churches' as in the A. V. This is of course a matter of textual criticism, but the consistency with which translations subsequent to the A. V. have adopted the singular word is a weighty consideration.

3. As to the comparison drawn between Acts 9. 31 and 1 Timothy 3. 15, some may feel that there is significance in the fact that the definite article precedes the word "church" in the Greek of Acts 9. 31, but is omitted before "church" and "house" in 1 Timothy 3. 15.

4. The argument from Galatians 1. 22, 23 (as used in the above quotation from "Needed Truth" and in Answer to Question 2) is open to question. For Luke's narrative in Acts may not necessarily be in precise chronological sequence. The events of Acts 9. 22-30 may well have been recorded at this point to round off the episode of Saul's conversion and its sequel, particularising Saul's personal experience for more than three years beyond the general sequence of events in the broader progress of the work. Then in Acts 9. 31 the narrative returns to the Palestine scene, commencing with a generalisation about the composure which followed Saul's conversion. But can we conclude that it took three years after the conversion of the arch-persecutor for this change to ensue? May not the events of 9. 31 to 12. 24 have been concurrent with part of Paul's time in Arabia? If so, does not this invalidate much of the reasoning advanced in favour of view (b) and point us back towards a reconsideration of view (a)?

It would appear that W. E. Vine leaned to this view: "There is an apparent exception in the R. V. of Acts 9. 31, where, while the A. V. has 'churches', the singular seems to point to a district; but the reference is clearly to the church as it was in Jerusalem, from which it had just been scattered, 8. 1". Note particularly the last clause, which implies a relatively short period between the scattering and the dying down of the persecution.

5. Some may feel that acceptance of "church" in Acts 9. 31 as applying to the church of God in Jerusalem in its scattered state does not necessarily exclude the possibility that some other churches of God had been established. For the comment of Acts 9. 31 could be thought of as focusing attention on the church in Jerusalem as having been scattered through Saul's persecution, but now being at peace, edified, walking in the fear of the Lord etc., and being multiplied in the sense that other churches of God were springing from it. *G. P. Jr.*

[Editors will be interested to receive any further thoughts on this subject which may be submitted].

2. Was there only one church of God at this time (Acts 9. 31) and if so was Jerusalem the only place where saints could break bread? (Barry and Aberkenfig).

Although Paul recounts how he persecuted the *church* of God (Galatians 1. 13), in connexion with the time immediately after his visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 1. 22) he refers to the *churches* of Judaea which were in Christ. These same churches he also called "the churches of God which are in Judaea in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 2. 14). Since Galatians 1. 22 in all probability has to do with the same period of time as Acts 9, 31 it is my opinion that there were many churches throughout the region which was evangelized by those who fled from Jerusalem. This conclusion is supported by the further consideration about the breaking of the bread, for the necessity for the saints to keep the Remembrance would ensure that there would be no unavoidable delay by the apostles in planting churches.

*L. B.*

See also relevant points of discussion in Answer to Question 1. Much depends upon the actual time incidence of Acts 9. 31. It seems inconclusive that this verse has to do with the same period of time as Galatians 1. 22. Precisely when other churches of God were planted is not easy to determine.

*G. P. Jr.*

3. Would there be a church in Damascus or did scattered disciples meet in the synagogue at this time? (Liverpool).

We read of disciples preaching and reasoning in synagogues (Acts 18. 4, 19. 8, 9), but this was the obvious way to bring the gospel to the Jews and would run parallel with, and not be in substitution for, service in churches of God. It is unlikely that Saul would have directed his persecuting zeal against Damascus unless there had been in that city a strong contingent of disciples witnessing powerfully for the Lord. In such circumstances there would be no reason for delay by the apostles in planting a church of God there, and this could have been accomplished whilst Saul was still preoccupied in Jerusalem.

*L. B.*

One would feel there was a greater likelihood of a church of God having been planted in Damascus during Paul's absence in Arabia than when he was first led into the city after his conversion. That he was closely associated with the disciples in Damascus immediately after his baptism is clear. But that would not necessarily imply that a church of God had yet been established there.

*G. P. Jr.*

4. Was Paul added to the Community before he came to Jerusalem? (Liverpool).

We see no reason to doubt that he was added to the church of God in Damascus on being baptized. He was "with the disciples" there (9. 19) he proclaimed Jesus (verse 21) and disputed with the Jews (verse 22). At a later period (perhaps three years after, Galatians 1. 18), and prior to this Jerusalem visit, he was again in Damascus (verse 23). We cannot envisage how this joint labour with the disciples in Damascus and this lapse of time could have taken place before Paul was added to a church of God.

*L. B.*

I am disposed to the view that Paul was added to the Community before he came to Jerusalem, but consider it more probable that he would be formally identified with a church of God in Damascus after he came back from Arabia.

*G. P. Jr.*

5. Does "many days" (verse 23) cover the period Paul spent in Arabia? (Liverpool).

This proposition fits in well with Paul's own account of his movements immediately following his conversion (Galatians 1. 16-18). It should be noted that "many days" (a long period) is in contrast with "certain days" (a short period) (verse 19). *L. B.*

6. Did Paul receive instructions about the part for the Gentiles in the kingdom of God in a vision in Arabia? (Vancouver).

Surely Ananias would tell Saul of God's words, "A chosen vessel to bear My name before the Gentiles". Subsequent events show that at various stages of Paul's work the Holy Spirit came in and not only indicated broad strategy (Acts 13 1-4) but also clearly pointed out detailed tactics (16. 6-10). He may well, of course, have received some guidance in this general direction in Arabia, but if the most widely accepted chronology of Paul's early Christian years is adopted, the Lord's words recited in Acts 22. 21 came *after* the stay in Arabia. Paul must have **been** well aware of his main mission to the Gentiles from the start, though it was repeatedly reinforced to him thereafter.

*J. D. T.*

### PSALM 65-continued

O bless our God, ye peoples,  
 And make the voice of His praise to be heard:  
 Which holdeth our soul in life,  
 And suffereth not our feet to be moved.  
 For Thou, O God, hast proved us:  
 Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried (verses 8, 9, 10).

Here the psalmist contemplates the people of Israel as congregated together, and says, "O bless our God, and make the voice of His praise to be heard". This is worthy encouragement. He says that God held their soul in life, and we can say so too. He also said that He had not suffered their feet to be moved. Ours is a happy state if this is so, and our feet are walking in the paths of righteousness. May we continue walking therein till the end. God ever tries His servants and His people, as silver is tried in the crucible. The divine Refiner sits with ladle in hand skimming off the dross. This is a needful experience, so to be tried that things which are unworthy in the lives of saints may **be** removed. In a future day the Lord "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto the LORD offerings in righteousness" (Malachi 3. 3). Silver is pure and ready to be poured when the refiner can see his face reflected perfectly in it. Can the Lord see Himself in us?

*To be continued—J. M.*

# BIBLE STUDIES

<sup>4</sup>A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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## EDITORIAL

The scriptural use of the term "Gentile" is an interesting study. The Hebrew word *goi*, plural *goim*, is translated "Gentile" 30 times, "heathen" 142 times, "nation" 373 times and "people" 11 times. The word itself derives from a root implying masses and hence nations. The choice by translators of the appropriate English word is obviously governed by the context. Where the great ethnic groups outside Israel were referred to in a general sense, the word "nation" sufficed; where the emphasis was on their relative lack of spiritual light, the word "heathen" gave a clearer shade of thought; where it was desired to stress the alien nature of other peoples in contrast to God's chosen people, the term "Gentile" seemed indicated.

In the New Testament the word *ethnos* (or its derivatives) is frequently translated "Gentile". (The A. V. also renders the word *Hellen* as "Gentile" in five places, but the R. V. more consistently uses "Greek", in every occurrence.) The word *ethnos* means a multitude or company, and hence a multitude of the same nature or genus, i. e. a nation or people. It is rendered "Gentiles" (plural) 93 times, "heathen" 5 times, "nation" 64 times and "people" twice. There is a broad parallel between the translators' choice of English equivalents for the Hebrew or Greek in the Old and New Testaments respectively.

Isaiah in the Old Testament and Paul in the New were outstanding in their grasp of divine purpose towards the vast Gentile populations of the world. Isaiah's prophecies ranged far beyond the borders of favoured Israel, and predicted the universal blessing to be derived from the salvation which Israel's Messiah would bring. The apostle Paul closely identified himself with the Gentile peoples—"a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles" (Romans 15. 16); "an apostle of Gentiles" (Romans 11. 13); "the prisoner of Christ Jesus in behalf of you Gentiles" (Ephesians 3. 1); "a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Timothy 2. 7). Having testified in vain to many of his own kinsmen after the flesh, he declared, "Seeing ye . . . judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13. 46).

Yet it was Peter who was chosen first to learn and then to teach his brethren that "to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life". It is this vital crossroads of divine purpose which engages our study in this issue. By this means the way was prepared for the extensive ministry of Paul and his associates towards the spiritually underprivileged majority of the Gentile world. **G. P. Jr.**

## CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP IN NEW COVENANT CONTEXT

A dispensational setting is contemplated in this study, for as we shall see, stewardship and dispensation are allied terms. The subject is considered under various headings as follows:

### 1. Definitions of "Steward" and "Stewardship"

"A steward is a person entrusted with the management of estates or affairs of another", hence stewardship is the duty of one so entrusted. In the New Testament the Greek word *oikonomos* is translated "steward" and usually carries the above meaning. For example, "There was a certain rich man, which had a steward" (Luke 16. 1). Vine explains that such a person was often a slave (very significant in our context!). The Greek word *oikonomia* is translated "stewardship" and in some cases "dispensation". These words have been taken up in Scripture and applied to Christian service. For example "as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4. 10).

### 2. Dispensational Setting

The Scriptures reveal God's overall plan, and within that plan His arrangements (His dispensations) for the execution of His will. As mentioned, *oikonomia* is sometimes translated "dispensation"; for example Paul says, "the dispensation of that grace of God... was given me" (Ephesians 3. 2). This is with regard to the imparted truth of the Church, Christ's Body. Of his ministry he says, "according to the dispensation of God which was given me... to fulfil the word of God" (Colossians 1. 25, 26). Again, regarding the preaching of the gospel he writes, "I have a stewardship (dispensation, A. V. ) intrusted to me" (1 Corinthians 9. 17). Thus in the administration of a divine arrangement the apostle is entrusted with the word of God. "Dispensation" emphasizes the great divine administration itself, whilst "stewardship" stresses the necessary human responsibility within that administration. This involvement of sinful man necessitates a divine appointment, and an established relationship. These are secured by covenant. Today, in virtue of the New Covenant, men are purchased for God's service, and a people can be sanctified in obedience to Him. So it was under the Old Covenant, slaves were redeemed for divine service by God Himself. Agreement with His will (His covenant) was required of them, not to preserve their redemption, but to enable the covenant-Maker to secure His objective—He desired a people for Himself, who could be greatly privileged and entrusted with divine affairs.

### 3. Some Illustrations of Old Covenant Stewardship for Comparison and Contrast

(a) Precepts: The Jews were "intrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3. 2). This involved a people retaining God's Law in their hearts, putting it into practice in their private and corporate lives, and communicating it to successive generations. Likewise under the New Covenant the responsibilities of stewardship are related to "the Faith which was once for all delivered (entrusted) unto the saints" (Jude 3).

(b) Production: Of all that the people's labours produced, a tenth belonged to the LORD (Leviticus 27. 30-32). This tithe made provision, amongst other things, for the Levites who were not free to be employed like the rest, being more fully engaged in the Lord's service. Some tithes also provided for the needy such as the fatherless and widows (Deuteronomy 14. 28, 29). The tithe appertained throughout the dispensation, though the people sometimes failed in their response (Malachi 3. 8-10), and some leaders exacted tithes in the wrong spirit (Matthew 23. 23).

In contrast the New Covenant is one of grace and not of law; hence there are no such stipulations, but similar needs still have to be met! Circumstances of need, however, may vary considerably from time to time, as we see later, but always the word of grace is, "Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9. 7).

(c) Possessions: The tithe was the minimum legal requirement; provision was also made for free-will offerings, and special occasions for giving also arose. For example, in the construction of the Tabernacle and the Solomonic Temple the people were privileged to give liberally. In the latter instance David said, "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chronicles 29. 14). This compares with the outlook in the early days of God's present house, "not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4. 32).

#### 4. New Covenant Stewardship—Some Examples

(a) Personal: A redeemed person belongs to Jesus Christ, and as His disciple, has entrusted his life to Him. His Master, however, in return, entrusts the disciple with the management of that life for Himself. Stewardship then, is all-embracing for the Christian, and he will be exercised accordingly regarding the following: himself (1 Corinthians 6. 19, 20; 2 Corinthians 8. 5); his body (Romans 12. 1); his mind (Romans 12. 2); his talents (Romans 12. 7, 8; 1 Corinthians 12. 1-31; 1 Peter 4. 9, 10); his time (Ephesians 5. 16); his money (2 Corinthians 9. 7); his possessions (1 Timothy 6. 7); and God's word (2 Timothy 1. 13).

Then there are those who are stewards in special capacities, for example, the apostles (Colossians 1. 25); the preachers of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9. 16, 17); and the ministers of God's word (1 Corinthians 4. 1).

(b) Collective: This is a very important aspect, for it is evident from the New Testament that Christian stewardship can only be fully performed in the sphere of Churches of God. In this community, entrusted with "the Faith", a divine administration is served by overseers who in this respect are termed God's stewards (Titus 1. 7). The following examples also illustrate the need, as well as the pattern, for corporate action.

#### 5. Christian Stewardship in Action—The Response to Changing Conditions in New Testament Times

When poverty and persecution created need amongst the saints in the early days of the Acts, those with possessions sold and distributed, so they "had all things common" (Acts 2. 44, 45, 4. 32). However, such extreme conditions did not apparently prevail in all subsequent situations, but certainly when need arose those who had, exercised their stewardship towards those who had not. For example, due to a famine the disciples sent relief "every man according to his ability" to the brethren in Judaea (Acts 11. 27-30). Also, the Macedonians and Achaians made a certain contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem (Romans 15. 26).

#### 6. Some Guiding Principles for our Time

Circumstances may change, but there are unchanging principles governing Christian stewardship. Space permits only a very brief indication

of some of them, and these are commended for fuller consideration.

- (a) Remember Him who became poor (2 Corinthians 8. 9).
- (b) Give ourselves to Him (2 Corinthians 8. 5).
- (c) Be ready with what we have (2 Corinthians 8. 12).
- (d) Be faithful in our stewardship (1 Corinthians 4. 2).
- (e) Give priority to church collection as we prosper (1 Corinthians 16. 2).
- (f) Give purposefully and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9. 7).
- (g) Do not be obsessed with one's possessions, but be ready to distribute (1 Timothy 6. 17-19).
- (h) Aim for contentment rather than affluence (Hebrews 13. 5).
- (j) Give in love (1 Corinthians 13. 3).
- (k) Guard the good deposit of God's word (2 Timothy 1. 13, 14).
- (l) Render... unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew 22. 21).

*A. P. Sands*

## THE PLACE OF PRAYER AND FASTING IN EARLY CHURCHES OF GOD

### **Prayer—Its Importance**

One cannot read the history of the early churches in the Acts of the Apostles, or the teaching given to them in the epistles, without realizing that prayer played a very prominent part in their spiritual lives. Certainly, in every major decision which confronted them, the early disciples prayed. Even before the first church was established at Pentecost, the eleven seeking a replacement for Judas turned to prayer (Acts 1. 24). This pattern continued throughout the record of the Acts. The importance of prayer was explicitly recognized by the apostles when they appointed seven brethren to attend to the material needs of the new community, and left themselves free to "continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word" (Acts 6. 4).

From the epistles it is clear that prayer was to be resorted to in all matters of difficulty: "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4. 6). Equally, the saints were exhorted to make it a continual exercise (Colossians 4. 2; 1 Thessalonians 5. 17). They prayed as individuals (e. g. Peter, Acts 10. 9) and collectively. The first church of God "continued steadfastly in... the prayers" (Acts 2. 42). Other examples of assembly prayers are found in Acts 12. 5, where the church prayed for the imprisoned Peter, and in Romans 15. 30 where Paul asked the church in Rome to strive for him in their prayers.

### **Prayer Answered**

An important feature of this study is the notable way in which many of these prayers were answered. For example, Acts 4. 23-31 records a session devoted to prayer and thanksgiving by the church in Jerusalem, when Peter and John had been released by the Council. The result was a clear demonstration of the presence of the Holy Spirit among them. Acts 12 gives another example of answered prayer, in the miraculous release of Peter from prison. In 2 Corinthians 1. 11, Paul refers to the obvious benefit he had received from the prayers of the Corinthian church.

Of course, not all prayers were so dramatically answered. Paul's reference in 2 Corinthians 12. 7-9 to his "thorn in the flesh" is an example of an occasion when the answer to his prayer was "No".

### Occasions for Prayer

There was no aspect of their individual or collective lives where prayer had no part. Among other matters, they prayed for—

(a) Divine **guidance** in decisions affecting the Community (Acts 1. 24).

(b) Divine **power and help**. There are numerous examples of this. For instance, Peter and John prayed that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8. 15). Peter prayed for power to raise Dorcas (Acts 9. 40), and in Melita, Paul prayed before healing the father of Publius (Acts 28. 8).

(c) **Divine Care** of churches and individuals. Paul, in his prayers, was continually commending churches and individual saints to the care of the Lord. Examples are his prayer with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20. 36), and with the disciples at Tyre (Acts 21. 5). His epistles, too, make frequent reference to his constant prayers for the saints (e. g. Ephesians 1. 16-19; Philippians 1. 4; Colossians 1. 3).

However, not all prayer was a request. These early disciples were taught to mingle their prayers with thanksgivings. The written ministry of Paul, in particular, is notable for its emphasis on the importance of thanksgiving in prayer (Philippians 4. 6; Colossians 4. 2: 1 Timothy 2. 1).

### Principles of Prayer

Little is said in the Acts of the Apostles about the manner in which prayer should be made. But through the epistles, the early disciples learned the fundamental principles of effectual prayer.

#### 1. The need for personal holiness

Paul emphasized to Timothy the necessity for holiness of life. "I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing" (1 Timothy 2. 8). Likewise, Peter stressed that husbands and wives should dwell together according to knowledge "to the end that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3. 7). And the record of the Acts shows clearly that effectual prayer was invariably linked with a high spiritual standing in the saints.

#### 2. The need for faith

The Epistle of James teaches that prayer must be made in faith. "Let him ask in faith, nothing doubting" (James 1. 6). Of the doubter James wrote, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (1. 7). Later, writing of the prayers of the elders over the sick, James was explicit that it was "the prayer of faith" which was necessary for healing. It must surely have been in faith that Peter prayed before raising Dorcas (Acts 9. 40).

#### 3. The place of the Holy Spirit

Equally fundamental was the teaching that prayer should be in the Holy Spirit. Paul taught the Ephesians that they should be "praying at all seasons in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6. 18); Jude, too, emphasized the need for "praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).

To the Romans Paul explained one aspect of the Spirit's part in our prayers, "In like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered... He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8. 26, 27).

#### 4. The Great High Priest

The Hebrew saints were encouraged to come to the throne of grace because of the presence before God of a Great High Priest "who hath been in all points tempted like as we are" (Hebrews 4. 14-16). They were thus enjoined to have perfect boldness in their prayers, knowing that the Lord Jesus is before the face of God on their behalf.

#### Fasting

There are few references to fasting in the Acts and the epistles, and this would probably indicate that, in contrast to prayer, fasting is meant to play a relatively minor part in our spiritual lives. However, on the two occasions in the Acts where fasting is mentioned, it is closely associated with prayer, and both occasions were times of deep spiritual exercise. In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit indicated to the leaders of the church in Antioch that Barnabas and Saul should be separated for the work whereunto the Holy Spirit had called them. In the intensely solemn atmosphere of this occasion, these men fasted and prayed together before sending them forth. The other mention of fasting is in Acts 14. 23, where Paul and Barnabas, coming to the end of their first journey, had appointed elders in the newly planted churches, and "had prayed with fasting". Again, the spiritual solemnity of the occasion will be noted. From two references in 2 Corinthians (6. 5, 11. 27) the apostle Paul seems to indicate that fasting had played a part in his spiritual development, but nowhere were the churches given a command to fast.

#### Summary

Thus we see that in the early churches of God prayer was dominant. Collectively and as individuals, the saints recognized its importance, and a considerable amount of teaching was given on their responsibilities therein. At certain times of profound spiritual significance the exercise of fasting was added, and although not directly commanded by the Lord, there can be little doubt that in those times of special exercise fasting was a profitable spiritual experience. *R. Lindsay*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### Acts 10. 1 - 11. 18

#### The Gentiles also Granted Repentance unto Life

**From Atherton and Leigh.** —The apostolic movement was firmly established amongst the Jewish disciples in Jerusalem and elsewhere before any divine approach was made to the Gentiles. The bringing in of the Gentiles was clearly implied in the Lord's commission (Matthew 28. 19), and later in Acts 1 ("My witnesses... unto the uttermost part of the earth"); yet Peter and his fellow apostles seem a little backward in their understanding of God's plan to reach out to the Gentiles. The vision

given to Peter shows that he had not grasped that the gospel was for Jew and Gentile alike.

It is clear from Acts 15. 7 that Peter was chosen to be the first in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. We see his wisdom in taking six brethren from Joppa with him to witness what took place (10. 23, 11.

The position of Cornelius before God is described by Peter himself: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him" (10. 34, 35). It was presumably from godly Jews that Cornelius had learnt about God and also to fear Him, resulting in his working righteousness in giving much alms to the people (10. 2). He was certainly a man of faith, deeply responsive to all he could learn about God. His readiness to accept Peter's message is truly amazing. Some thought that Cornelius was acceptable to God upon His initial faith and that it was a further development of his faith when he accepted Christ as Saviour. Others considered that Cornelius was not saved in any sense until he accepted Christ [See Comments 1 and 2].

Cornelius having some knowledge of God and possibly of Christ (10. 36), Peter is left with the task of making clear that Jesus is no ordinary person but "Lord of all". He indicated too that His miracles were with the power and approval of God, and that salvation was available to all through faith in Him. The hearts of the people had been well prepared by God to receive the words of Peter, their response being full and immediate.

The first Gentile converts received the Holy Spirit at the moment of belief in Christ and before they were baptized in water, the order being different in the cases of the Jews and Samaritans (see Acts 2. 38, 8. 12, 17). Paul's question to the Ephesians in Acts 19. 2, "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" shows that this had become the normal order in the experience of believers by that time (see also Ephesians 1. 13).

It came as a great shock to the Jewish believers that God had given the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles. Peter was called upon to defend his conduct of visiting and eating in a Gentile home. This he did, recounting God's clear guidance to both Cornelius and himself in the matter, and the Jewish believers were persuaded that "to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life". Before this they do not seem to have grasped at all the wide implications of the gospel message which makes salvation dependent not on nationality or circumcision or law-keeping; nor had they grasped fully the terms of the Lord's commission or the Old Testament references to the future bringing in of the Gentiles. We suggest the twelve apostles are to be included in an initial lack of understanding of the purposes of God in the Gentiles.

*D. S. Jones, R. A. Jones*

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.**—In fulfilment of the Lord's words in Matthew 16. 19 Peter was granted the privilege of opening the door of the gospel to the Gentiles, as he later acknowledged (Acts 15. 7). This was a step forward in the accomplishing of the will of God through Christ that He should be "to raise up the tribes of Jacob" and be God's "salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49. 6). It was such an important step that it needed a divine revelation to Peter. *It is clear*

that apart from the vision of the sheet and the direct message of the Spirit, Peter would have hesitated to go. How much did Peter understand of the will of God? It seems he did not understand fully his mission to Cornelius until he arrived. It appears that Peter came in response to the call (Acts 10. 29) but did not immediately preach the gospel. It was Cornelius' account of the angel's message to him that made God's purpose clear. Peter's message was a universal call to repentance, the first time we judge such a message was preached, "every one that believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins" (10. 43).

This incident is well described as the door being opened to the Gentiles, but we notice that the door is not flung wide open from the beginning; it was as though it was slightly ajar at first. Cornelius cannot be described as a typical Gentile. It is clear that he was "not far from the kingdom" at the start. He was a devout, God-fearing man who was kindly disposed to the poor and who observed the hours of prayer. Although a centurion to a bold cohort, he was a good man whose influence was felt amongst the soldiers. It is interesting to notice the number of honourable centurions mentioned in the New Testament. For all this he needed the light of the gospel to shine upon him. The repeated vision to Peter indicated that God was revealing a new step to him. His words, "of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him", reveal the impression which the vision made on him.

The evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit was again the miraculous speaking with tongues. This manifestation, we judge, would this time be necessary to convince the preachers rather than the listeners. "The Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word", a departure from the procedure with Jews and Samaritans. Judging from the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 and Galatians 3. 2 we conclude that this is the rule rather than the exception, and when a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ today he receives the Holy Spirit immediately.

Peter, in going to Caesarea wisely took plenty of witnesses with him. He probably knew the opposition in Jerusalem would be great and so it would be necessary to have others to witness what had happened. The evidence of the gift of the Holy Spirit to these Gentile converts was enough to silence the criticisms.

Attention was paid to the differences in the accounts of Acts 10 and 11, particularly in respect of the words spoken. It was recognized that we have only a brief summary of what was said, and differences are not contradictory but complementary, as we so often find in parallel accounts of the same incidents. Particular note was taken of Cornelius' explanation for his call to Peter as recorded more fully, we believe, in 11. 13-14. This, it would seem, was the first time that Peter realized the full extent of his mission and of the vision that God was offering salvation through Christ to Gentiles also. *I. M. F., C. O. J., R. C. J.*

**From Denmark Hill.** —The portion describes the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, as had been the experience of the Jews in Acts 2. The following common factors in Acts 2 and 10 may be noted:

1. The experience was preceded by much prayer (Acts 1. 14, 10. 2, 10. 9).

2. **Peter** was the spokesman.
3. **Peter's addresses had the** following common points:
  - a. Christ **had** appeared in **Holy Spirit** power.
  - b. Christ **crucified** in Jerusalem.
  - c. Christ **raised** from the dead.
  - d. Apostles appointed to **testify** in the world the Lordship of Christ.
  - e. **Necessity of belief in** Christ for salvation.
4. **The Holy Spirit's** outpouring **demonstrated by speaking in tongues** by them that believed.
5. Baptism **in** water followed.
6. Churches of **God** were formed (Jerusalem, **Acts 5. 11**; Caesarea, **Acts 18. 22**).

Cornelius and his friends were not the **first** Gentiles to be saved, e. g., **Acts 2. 7-11, 8. 27-36**. [See Question and Answer]. Moreover **many** others, both **Jews** and **Gentiles**, were saved without the outward **manifestation** of the **Holy Spirit**, e. g. the Ethiopian **eunuch** (**Acts 8**); Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 9**). **Yet there were** others **apart** from **Jews and proselytes** in **Acts 2** and **Gentiles in Acts 10** to whom the **Holy Spirit** was given with **a sign such as speaking in tongues** (**Acts 19. 6**). It is **thus** clear that God decided **in a few special cases** at the **beginning** of the dispensation to accompany the **giving** of the **Spirit** with an outward **sign**. This is **in keeping with** God's **use** of visions, which were reserved for specially important **events** such as the birth of Christ (**Luke 1. 26**; **Matthew 1. 20, 2. 12, 2. 13, 2. 19**) and the birth of John the **Baptist** (**Luke 1. 19**). So the vision of the sheet filled with **creeping creatures** unlawful to **be eaten** according to the law of Israel, together with the **command, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat"**, was a vivid way of showing **Peter** that a new thing **was being started** by God. The **speaking** with tongues and the visions were both for use **by** God in special dealings with those who were **praying** for **His guidance**.

Should the apostles have known that God was going to work with the Gentiles? Consideration of the following passages appears to suggest an answer in the affirmative: **John 16. 8**, promise of **Holy Spirit** to "the world", and **Acts 11. 16** where **Peter** says, "I remembered the word of the Lord..." We are thankful **today** that God's purposes are including both **Gentile and Jew**. May we be purposeful in our desire to **serve Him better!**

*C. L. Prasher*

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

**Papers** were also received from **Birkenhead, Birmingham, Derby, Liverpool, Methil and Paisley**. These emphasized the following further points of **interest**.

"**Glory and honour and peace to every man** that worketh good, to the **Jew first, and also to the Greek**" (**Romans 2. 10**). **Cornelius** was such a **man** and to him God was **about** to **grant** more light. **He was a Roman, an uncircumcized Gentile** (**Acts 11. 1-3**) and thus not a proselyte. It was suggested that in **accepting** the gospel **Cornelius** was **representative** of the **descendants** of **Japheth**, whilst the Ethiopian eunuch represented **Ham**, and **Saul of Tarsus** **Shem**. The **alms-giving** and **prayers** of **Cornelius** could **not save** him, **but were** rather an **indication** of the

longings of his heart. However, it could be said of him that, like Abraham, his faith was reckoned unto him for righteousness.

"It is an Old Testament truth that the Gentiles would be reached and saved, but the stumbling-block to the Jew was that they were being brought among the people of God. This was unthinkable to the Jew, who thought of his nation as distinct and separate from all other nations on the earth. The people in the new movement had to learn that God was taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name" (Acts 15. 14).

Both Peter and Cornelius prayed (Acts 10. 4, 9) and thus began the work of the Lord. "Peter's address in the house of Cornelius, as the occasion demanded, was direct and forthright. This method of preaching is characteristic of Peter and is on record for our instruction. The gospel is a historic message based on the facts marshalled so skillfully by the apostle. Its authority is irrefutable, 'He charged us to preach unto the people' (verse 42). The facts are also attested by the witness of the prophets. The conclusion and appeal of verse 43 have a perpetual relevance".

In dealing with the opposition from those of the circumcision at Jerusalem, "Peter's qualities of leadership were demonstrated by his wise handling of the opposition. His defence was factual and unanswerable, and serves as a model for godly defence of a course of action in keeping with the will of God, but which may not be readily acceptable to others not so well instructed in the will of God". *Eds.*

### COMMENTS

1. (Atherton and Leigh). It is clear that Cornelius had an attitude of heart towards God which caused him to respond to the light already available before he met Peter. Suppose the fuller light of the gospel had never reached him. Then surely he would have been included among those described in Romans 2. 7, 10. Because of his faith in God, according to the light granted to him, he would have been justified (compare Genesis 15. 5-6). All of course is based on the atoning work of Christ; on the ground of His sacrifice alone can any be justified in any age. But in the case of Cornelius-like people to whom the gospel has not yet come, their attitude of heart towards God is expressed by their "working good", and "by patience in well-doing" seeking for glory and honour and incorruption. When the clear gospel message is in due course presented to them, this attitude of heart leads to willing acceptance of the Saviour. *G. P. Jr.*

2. "The view was expressed that it is possible for such as Cornelius was before his conversion to be saved and lost again" (Paisley).

In every dispensation eternal life is by faith. The finished work of Christ is ever the basis, so it follows that in whatever age, salvation is not by works and a person cannot be saved today and lost tomorrow. This principle is seen operating in the case of king Saul. He was a saved man (1 Samuel 10. 1-13) but although he went as far away from God as any man could, he went to upper Sheol with Samuel at his death (1 Samuel 28. 19). *L. B.*

### QUESTION AND ANSWER

Were other Gentiles reached before Cornelius? (see Acts 11. 20 (Liverpool)).

The Ethiopian **eunuch** was probably a proselyte since he went to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8. 27), so leaving **aside Samaritans and proselytes** the answer to the question **depends** upon whether Acts 11. 19-26 precedes or follows chronologically chapter 10. The words of 11. 19 are reminiscent of 8. 1-4 so that it might be inferred that the former follows on immediately after the latter, most of the events recorded in the intervening passage being later than 11. 19. However certain recorded incidents in the life of Saul of Tarsus form connecting links, giving some indication of the passage of time. His persecution of the church in Jerusalem must have occupied some time prior to his journey to Damascus where, after his conversion, he stayed "certain days" (9. 19) and finally left after "many days" (9. 23), a period generally accepted as lasting three years (Galatians 1. 17, 18). Then followed his introduction by Barnabas to the Jerusalem church, a period of preaching, his persecution and escape to Caesarea and the journey home to Tarsus. Nothing more is recorded concerning Saul until Barnabas sought him out to help in the work at Antioch (11. 24-26). It is suggested that a period of roughly five years would be needed for these events, indicating the likelihood of Luke's order of writing being consecutive chronologically. The "therefore" (11. 19) may indicate that the work in Antioch was the logical consequence of the conversion of Cornelius and the resultant readiness of the church in Jerusalem to further the work among Gentiles in Antioch. To summarize, the conversion of Cornelius and his company probably took place before the events of Acts 11. 20, so that they would be the first recorded Gentiles, other than Samaritans and proselytes, to be saved.

L. B.

### PSALM 66-continued

Thou broughtest us into the net;  
 Thou layedst a sore burden upon our loins.  
 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;  
 We went through fire and through water;  
 But Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place (verses 11, 12).

The refining process of Israel as outlined in these verses was sore and trying; they were brought into the net, a sore burden was laid upon their loins, the seat of their strength; men were caused to ride over their heads, they went through fire and water; but at the end of their trials they were brought into a wealthy place. It is ever the end that matters. The Christian has a glorious end to the pathway of faith and trials; it will be a wealthy place at the end of the road. It is well also at every stage of the journey, when the particular trial is ended, if we find ourselves the wealthier spiritually for our experience.

I will come into Thy house with burnt offerings,  
 I will pay Thee my vows,  
 Which my lips have uttered,  
 And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in distress.  
 I will offer unto Thee burnt offerings of fatlings,  
 With the incense of rams;  
 I will offer bullocks with goats (verses 13, 14, 15). (Selah)

Here is the end of trial and refining; the one who has passed through the trial comes in his appreciation from his wealthy place to

offer burnt offerings in God's house. He had uttered vows to God with his lips in his days of distress, and now with his offerings he would pay his vows. He would offer fatlings, animals in the best of condition. God would get the best that he had. Rams as burnt offerings would be made to smoke as incense. Such was the manner of offering all burnt offerings. He would also offer bullocks with goats. There was to be no scarcity in his offerings.

Come, and hear, all ye that fear God,

And I will declare what He hath done for my soul.

I cried unto Him with my mouth,

And He was extolled with my tongue (verses 16, 17).

Having offered to God his burnt offerings and paid his vows (it should ever be God first), the psalmist calls on such as fear God to come and hear what God has done for his soul. He cried to God, and He was extolled with his tongue. It is well to have a story to tell as to how God has dealt with us for our good. It is well, however, not to speak as Asaph thought of doing:

"If I had said, I will speak thus;

Behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of Thy children" (Psalm 73. 15).

We should so speak as Paul exhorts, "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear" (Ephesians 4. 29). This kind of speech may last a lifetime in those that hear.

If I regard iniquity in my heart,

The Lord will not hear:

But verily God hath heard;

He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

Blessed be God,

Which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me  
(verses 18, 19, 20).

Here is a matter that we need to pay attention to, that if iniquity is lodging in our heart the Lord will not hear our prayer. The apostle John says, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3, 21, 22). Elihu charged Job with regarding iniquity: "Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction" (Job 36. 21). Solomon says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28. 9). There are other scriptures on similar lines. The psalmist was certain that God had heard and attended to his prayer, and He had not turned away his prayer nor His mercy from him. It is a great comfort to the heart to know that God has heard and answered our prayer.

J.

M.

**Erratum:** Psalm 65—continued on page 72 of June issue and page 84 of July issue should read Psalm 66—continued.

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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## EDITORIAL

The exhortation of Barnabas to the saints in Antioch that "with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11. 23) is just as important today as when it was first spoken. "Cleave unto", meaning to remain faithful to, is the only instance in the R. V. New Testament where *prosmeno* is so translated. It occurs in five other places where it is rendered either "continue with" or "tarry". Vine's Expository Dictionary gives the literal meaning as, "To abide with (*pros*, toward or with and *meno*, to abide)". The usage in Acts 11 is probably figurative since the action contemplated is spiritual rather than physical and so the R. S. V., using more freedom in translating than R. V. or A. V., renders the second clause of verse 23: "and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose". This may express more distinctly than R. V. the constant loyalty expected of saints in churches of God but it fails to give the sense of nearness to the Lord conveyed by the R. V. After all, those who believed and were baptized were "added unto the Lord" (verse 24), so that "cleave to the Lord" would impress upon them the requirement to continue steadfastly in that close association with the Lord and with others likeminded which commenced with their baptism and should endure until death or the coming of the Lord. *L. B.*

## OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS IN THE ACTS

Acts 24. 14 shows that the apostle Paul believed all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets. He spoke of the Old Testament Scriptures as the oracles of God (Romans 3. 2), and was convinced that the fulfilment of the law was to be found in Christ (Romans 10. 4). Moreover the Scriptures of the prophets are the means of making known the mystery of the gospel unto all the nations (Romans 16. 26, 3. 21). He has been speaking also of Cephas when he writes, "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4. 1). The writer to the Hebrews in chapter 13. 5 ascribes a quotation from the book of Joshua to God Himself. Paul sees in the law a forward vision of Gentiles justified by faith (Galatians 3. 8), and Peter states that the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets, and testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them (1 Peter 1. 11). It is clear therefore that the apostles accepted Old Testament Scripture as the word of God, and regarded it as central to the word of the truth of the gospel.

When expounding Old Testament Scripture, phrases are used which are also to be found in the Old Testament passage being alluded to, but occasionally a quotation is given in fuller detail. In the following list such detailed quotations in the book of Acts are included; also some allusions, particularly from Acts 7, specifying from what books of the Old Testament the quotations are taken.

**Books of the Old Testament where quotations in Acts are found**

Acts	Reference	Pentateuch	Acts	Reference	Psalms
3.	13	Exodus 3. 6, 15	1.	20	69. 25
3.	22	Deuteronomy 18. 15	1.	20	109. 8
3.	25	Genesis 22. 18	2.	25-28	16. 8-11
4.	24	Exodus 20. 11	2.	30	132. 11
7.	3	Genesis 12. 1 (12. 7, 15. 18)	2.	34, 35	110. 1
7.	5	Genesis 15. 7, 8	4.	11	118. 22
7.	6	Genesis 15. 13, 14	4.	24	146. 6
7.	7	Exodus 3. 12	4.	25	2. 1-2
7.	10	Genesis 41. 37-39	13.	22	89. 20
7.	11	Genesis 41. 54 (42. 5)	13.	33	2. 7
7.	26-31	Exodus 2. 13, 14	13.	35	16. 10
7.	30-31	Exodus 3. 2-3	14.	15	146. 6
7.	32-34	Exodus 3. 4-10			Isaiah
7.	35 (7. 27, 28)	Exodus 2. 14	7.	49, 50	66. 1-2
7.	37 (3. 22)	Deuteronomy 18. 15	8.	32, 33	53. 7-8
7.	40	Exodus 32. 1, 23	13.	34	55. 3
14.	15	Exodus 20. 11	13.	47	49. 6
23.	5	Exodus 22. 28	28.	26, 27	6. 9-10

**Other Prophets**

2. 16-21	Joel 2. 28-32
7. 42, 43	Amos 5. 25-27
13. 41	Habakkuk 1. 5
15. 16, 17	Amos 9. 11, 12

**Some purposes emerging from the way in which the quotations are used in the Book of Acts.**

- (1) To show awareness of the Law and respect for it, thus avoiding the recrimination of men (23. 5).
- (2) Appeal to the Old Testament to clarify a situation of perplexity 1. 20: references in the Psalms are shown to apply above all to Judas, and here lead the eleven to seek God's choice of an apostle.  
14. 15: to guide the Gentiles quickly to an appreciation of God.  
15. 16: to guide the apostles and elders in their uncertainty concerning approaching Gentiles with the gospel.
- (3) Explanatory, in a situation where a prophecy has some fulfilment.  
2. 17: the manifestations of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.  
13. 47: to justify turning also to the Gentiles.
- (4) Exhortation.  
13. 41: to the necessity of being awake to the marvellous work of God's grace.  
28. 26, 27: using Scripture to show the danger of sinking into unbelief; the voice of the Lord is interpreted as the Holy Ghost.
- (5) Old Testament Scripture quoted in prayer.  
4. 24: in addressing God.

4. 25: denning the psalm in the context of the rejection of Christ by the unbelieving, and the consequent rejection of His disciples, while finding in it an assurance of the overruling of God.

(6) Bringing conviction through the warning of God's judgement on rebelliousness (7. 43) and His honouring of faith in the past. This faith always found expression in obedience of the heart to the Spirit of God, not in the unsanctified work of the hands.

(7) Old Testament Scripture used in the course of teaching, to show that God's counsel as revealed to prophets and patriarchs awaited fulfilment in Christ (3. 13, 22).

(8) Old Testament text used to demonstrate the truth of the gospel by showing how the Scripture was in fact speaking of Christ.

2. 25: urging the fact of His resurrection.

2. 30: His royal descent from David's line.

2. 34: David speaking of his greater Lord.

3. 25: identifying Christ with the promised seed of Abraham.

8. 32, 33: from this scripture the gospel was unfolded, showing that the prophet spoke of Christ.

13. 22: the divine choice of David's line.

The hope of Israel depended on the promised seed. The relationship which the Son has to God the Father could not be destroyed by any raging power. It was the subject of decree (13. 33). The prophecy concerning the sure mercies of David (Isaiah 55. 3) is an assurance that those of Israel who lay hold of the promise will be secure in the incorruptible Holy One. One link between the prophecy and the psalm containing promise of the resurrection of Christ is the word "holy". In Psalm 16. 10 *chasiyd* is the word for "Holy One", and in Isaian 55. 3 *chesed* is the word for "mercies". The Greek word *hosios* is the adjective used in the Septuagint version to translate them both. It could not be said of David that he would not see corruption. So that the blessings are in the Holy One and are confirmed through the fact of His resurrection.

### Variations finding a counterpart in the Septuagint version

Quotations are occasionally by the guidance of the Spirit adapted to the context, as in 1. 20 where the word "his" defines the outstanding example of the type of individual envisaged in the psalm. More often, the quotation is based upon the Septuagint Version, that is, the Greek translation. Some examples of this are next considered.

In Acts 13. 22 use is made of words from various parts:

Psalm 89. 20, "I have found David My servant"; "a man after My heart" is from 1 Samuel 13. 14; and the words "who shall do all My will" are in contrast to the reason for Saul's rejection (1 Samuel 13. 14). This type of quotation where an argument is borne out by the use of phrases or handling of entire passages of Old Testament Scripture is characteristic also of Stephen's defence in Acts 7. Comparison with the Old Testament brings two points to light. In Acts 7. 16 is the information that Abraham bought the tomb from the sons of Hamor in Shechem to which the remains of the fathers were carried over and in which they were laid. We read in Genesis 33. 19 that Jacob bought a parcel of ground there at the hand of the children of Hamor. Joshua 24. 32 records that the bones of Joseph were buried in the same parcel of ground. Abraham's other purchase of the cave of Machpelah was made from Ephron the Hittite, and this is where Abraham was buried, and also Isaac (Genesis 49. 31), and Jacob (Genesis 50. 13).

**Acts 7. 43** following the LXX gives a translation of **Amos 5. 26** more closely resembling the marginal reading of the Revised Version. **Siccuth** could be read in a consonantal text as *succath* (= the tabernacle of). Molech (or in its Greek form Moloch) was an Ammonite idol (1 Kings 11. 7), but the name is equivalent to the Hebrew word for King (*melech*). So that the Hebrew text could be taken as "Siccuth your king", or "the tabernacle of Moloch". "Rephan" of the New Testament corresponds to "Chiun" of Amos 5. 26. They appear to be different titles of the same idol, associated with a star. The R. V. margin of Amos 5. 26 follows a derivation of Chiun from *hechin* = prepare (1 Kings 6. 19) or set (Ezra 3. 3), and takes it to mean a shrine.

Two other passages are affected by the reading in Hebrew. In Acts 13. 41 "despisers" reflects a slightly different reading of the Hebrew text from the one available for Habakkuk 1. 5 today; **bogedim** (despisers) for *baggoylm* (among the nations). The Hebrew equivalent of the letter 'd' has been broken up into two letters equivalent to 'oy'.

**Acts 15. 17**, "that the residue of men may seek", reflects a different tradition in applying vowels to the Hebrew text, so as to read *adam* (men) for Edom; and a different reading of the word *yireshu* (may possess) giving *yidreshu* (may seek).  
E. Archibald.

### THE NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Name	Leviticus 24. 11
My holy Name	Leviticus 20. 3
Thy great Name	Joshua 7. 9
Thy glorious Name	Nehemiah 9. 5
Thy great and terrible Name	Psalms 99. 3
Holy and reverend is His Name	Psalms 111. 9

We approach our consideration of this subject with somewhat of the reverence of the devout Jew. By His names and titles God revealed Himself to Israel. In these they learned His ways and His attributes. A certain amount of this has been lost to the English reader, as indeed it was lost also to the readers of the Septuagint in New Testament times. That is because, as in the Septuagint, so in our Bible versions also, the words Lord and God are in most general use, and the sense of variety in manifestation is not appreciated.

The divine names or titles fall into three main groups, deriving from: (1) El; (2) Jehovah; (3) Adon. A detailed consideration of these is largely a concordance study and thus quite unoriginal. Tribute should be paid to such devout and painstaking scholars as Dr. J. Strong and Dr. W. Gesenius, from whose English Concordance and Hebrew Lexicon respectively the data has been procured. Students will also find the Newberry Bible extremely helpful in its notes. The three root names are developed in the order listed.

#### 1. (a) El.

This is translated "God" in the R. V. It comes from a root meaning "strength", which is the basic thought in the name in any of its forms. It is first found in Genesis 14. 18 where it is linked with 'Elyon' (see 1 (d) below), but its first occurrence alone is in Genesis 16. 13, "Thou God seest me" (R. V. M.). This somewhat personal touch in the name is further exemplified in its use with the first person pronoun only as for example, in Psalm 22. 1, "My God", whereas "thy God" and

"his God" are confined to the plural form of the word 'Elohim'. [See Note A following this article]. 'El' is singular, carrying of course a singular verb. In relation to Deity it would appear to occur some 220 times, of which three-fourths are found in the Pentateuch, Job, Psalms and Isaiah. It has however a more general use in Scripture, and the following selections indicate the basic meaning of the word: -

Genesis 31. 29: "It is in *the power* of my hand to do you hurt".

Job 41 25: "**The mighty** are afraid".

Psalm 89. 6: "Who among the sons of *the mighty* is like unto the LORD?"

Ezekiel 31. 11: "*The mighty* one of the nations" (i. e. Nebuchadnezzar).

The italicised words are "el" in each instance, so we may be assured that in this divine title is enshrined that sense of personal power and might which Dr. Luxmoore so well expressed in one of his hymns:

"El, Thou Almighty, Thou powerful and strong,

Strength for Thy people the whole way along".

It should be noted in passing that the word is also applied to false gods, as in Exodus 34. 14, "For thou shalt worship no other god".

#### (b) *Eloah*

This would appear to be 'El' in extended form for emphasis. It is translated "God" in the R. V. It has a much more restricted use and occurs just over 50 times, of which 40 are in Job. It is first found in Deuteronomy 32. 15 where it is associated with God as the object of His people's worship. It has a Chaldean form, found first in Ezra 4. 24, and occurring altogether 43 times in Ezra, once in Jeremiah and 49 times in Daniel. It also appears as "God" in the R. V. [See Note B following this article].

#### (c) *Elohim*

This is the plural form of 'El' and it too is rendered "God" in the R. V. [See Note C following this article]. It occurs well over 2, 500 times. Its first occurrence is in Genesis 1. 1 where its presentation as the Strong One in creative might is characteristic of its use in Scripture. The Hebrew language has three numbers—singular (one), dual (two), and plural (three or more). Although Elohim is a plural word (as seen, for example, in Genesis 1. 26, "let Us make man") it carries a singular verb in Genesis 1. 1, thus delightfully confirming to us, in the opening verse of Scripture, that the Trinity acts in unity. It also occurs elsewhere with verbs in the plural; indeed in Genesis 1. 26 both "God" and "make" are plural.

As in the case of 'El', 'Elohim' is applied to others besides Deity, and in particular it is used of strange gods in Genesis 35. 2; of angels (by reason of their exalted position in the creation of God) in Psalm 8. 5, as made clear in the New Testament citation in Hebrews 2. 7; of judges (by reason of their standing in administering God's law) in Exodus 21. 6 (A. V.).

The character of God is further expressed in the following well-known combinations of El, the sense of which is preserved in the R. V.

#### (d) *El Elyon or Elohim Elyon*

*Elyon* means "the most High", so that *El Elyon* is rendered in the

R. V. in its four occurrences in Genesis 14. 18, 19, 20, 22 as "God Most High". *Elohim Elyon* occurs in Psalm 57. 2 and 78. 56, where it is rendered "God Most High" and "the Most High God" respectively. God, on high over all the earth and its nations, is evidently in view.

*Elyon* occurs by itself 21 times, of which 15 are in the Psalms. The first reference is in Numbers 24. 16. It has two Chaldean equivalents, both of which are found in Daniel, occurring in total 13 times. In all these 34 occurrences the word is translated "the Most High".

(e) *El Shaddai*

*Shaddai* is thought by some to be from the Hebrew root *shadad* indicating (actively) powerful, and (passively) impregnable. Others view it as stemming from *shad*, meaning the breast. In any event, *Shaddai* is presented in Scripture as the bountiful supplier of all His people's needs. The word occurs by itself some 40 times, of which 31 are in Job. The first occurrence is in Genesis 49. 25. It is translated in every instance in the R. V. as "the Almighty".

The combined form *El Shaddai* occurs **7 times** in Scripture (Genesis 17. 1, 28. 3, 35. 11, 43. 14, 48. 3; Exodus 6. 3; Ezekiel 10. 5) and is uniformly rendered "God Almighty" in the R. V. Although of infrequent occurrence, this word gives a most graphic presentation of God in relation to a dependent people.

(f) *El Olam*

Literally this is "the Everlasting God" and that is how it is rendered in its two occurrences, Genesis 21. 33 and Isaiah 40. 28. In these two majestic verses, the word is used as descriptive of Jehovah.

(to be continued)

J. L. Ferguson

NOTES:

The following notes on this subject have been contributed by E. Archibald: (A) It is true that the first person pronoun is the only pronoun associated with *el*. But the words "his God" are not confined to the plural *Elohim*, because *eloah*, the singular, has a third person suffix in Habakkuk 1. 11, "his god". It is "god" with a small letter, however; and being the only exception does not destroy the point being made.

(B) There seem to be two Chaldean forms for God. The first of these as listed in the Chaldean Concordance is *Elah*, which the Concordance notes is equivalent to *Eloah* and *elohim*. The second word for God is *el aha*, which the Concordance says is an emphatic form of *el ah*.

(C) In the Hebrew Concordance, *elim* is listed as the plural of *el* (Psalm 29. 1, 89. 6, Exodus 15. 11); *elohim* is listed as the plural of *eloah*.

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

Acts 11. 19 - 12. 25

### Growth in Antioch and Trial in Jerusalem

From Birmingham. —The growth of the work in Antioch shows how essential it is to be in the current of God's will. It was not until men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who discerned more fully God's will, came and

preached to the Greeks also, that the great expansion and blessing came about. It was when the fulness of God's will was being carried out that the disciples were first called Christians, not by themselves but by others, we judge. We questioned why it was that, before the men of Cyprus arrived, although brethren appeared to be of one mind, God's will was only partly carried out in that they preached to the Jews only. Can they be justifiably criticized in this in relation to the great commission of Matthew 28? The thought was expressed that notwithstanding Matthew 28 God was gradually revealing His will in those days. [See Comment 1]. With blessing came trial and persecution. We noted how Satan through Herod attacked the leaders of God's people, and how all the saints felt the persecution. These circumstances rightly found them all on their knees in prayer and ultimately all rejoiced at **Peter's** divine deliverance.

*D. H. Elson*

From Nottingham. —The words "the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord" (verse 21) arrest the attention. In verse 24 the expression "added unto the Lord", denotes true conversion, a turning from sinful ways, being saved by faith and this marked by a determination to own Christ as Lord and follow in His ways. Thus we have a contrast between those days and these, when so many who experience a saving faith decline to own their Saviour as their Lord.

It seems that disciples settled in various places as a result of persecution and, the Lord having shown His hand in blessing, churches of God were planted. This appears to have been the case in Damascus, and, in the case of Antioch, Barnabas may well have been used in conjunction with those already there in the planting of the church. [See Comment 2].

The term "Christian" is so generally misapplied today that its original use tends to be lost sight of. Moreover, its mis-use often leads to people being misled over the truth of the gospel. The Greek word translated "called" has the sense in which we sometimes use the word "calling" in reference to a person's trade or profession. It seems then that its use was by way of describing the disciples, that is, as followers of Christ. If this is so, what a serious responsibility is placed on those to whom it is truly applied! [See Answer to Question 3. ]

The thought of fellowship is prominent in the account of the action taken following the prophecy of Agabus. Hearing of the forthcoming need they hastened to make provision for it in good time and so sent their gifts. In this they displayed the unity in the churches. Verses 29 and 30 show the oneness among the overseers, not only in Jerusalem itself, but throughout Judaea. There was co-ordinated action.

Chapter 12 contrasts proud king Herod, seeking popularity regardless of what wicked act was necessary to win it, with a humble man who was following his Lord. Peter was a man of rich experience who had been favoured to see things others had not seen, and to receive revelations unrevealed to others. But in God's purposes their pathways were to cross. James, the servant of God, was to suffer at the hand of the enemy. The first link in a chain of glorious testimony was to be broken.

*R. Hickling*

From Derby. —On the day Stephen was stoned to death, a great persecution arose against the church which was in Jerusalem and the disciples were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and

Samaria (Acts 8. 1). In due course some of these scattered saints had reached much further afield to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (11. 19). The Lord did not permit the apostles to be forcibly scattered, but in His own good time He sent most of them to various spheres of service. Peter and James (the Lord's brother) seemed to have become resident in Jerusalem, which had been the chief centre of gospel outreach.

Antioch was now to be brought into prominence as another important centre. This city, one of the world's largest, at that time capital of Syria and the residence of the pro-consul of the province, containing a mixed population including many Jews, who, it is recorded, resided in a separate quarter under their own governor.

Antioch speedily became the centre of evangelical outreach. Its geographical position on the river Orontes (now Antakia) and adjacent to the sea, made it easily accessible to all, particularly the Lord's messengers. Saints of the scattered church, discerning the mind of the Spirit, preached the gospel to non-Jewish peoples at Antioch, the Lord sealing their labours in that great numbers both believed and submitted to the all-authority of the Lord.

The disciples in Antioch such as had turned unto the Lord (not merely believers, we suggest, but subject ones), were called Christians, a name not previously used. Did the disciples themselves coin this name, or did the populace of the city call them this? Peter, at a later date, uses the word "Christian" in 1 Peter 4. 16, the name in this context being inspired of God. Herod Agrippa II, also used this name, showing that its use had become common, as it is today, often in a very general sense. [See Answer to Question 3. ]

The sending of relief to the brethren in Judaea (11. 27-30) involved a deal of labour and travelling because other churches were to participate as seen in 2 Corinthians 8, Romans 15. 25-29. [See Comment 3. ]

King Herod Agrippa I began to afflict certain of the church, killing James the brother of John who had so often on important occasions been very close to the Lord. Next he turned his murderous heart towards Peter (another of the three), casting him into prison under a very strong guard. Peter was sleeping. He had no doubt committed himself and his cause to God. There was also a praying church engaged throughout the night in praying according to His will. He heard and granted their request (1 John 5. 14). Yet they found it hard to believe that Peter was indeed standing at the door. S. R. W.

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

Denmark Hill, Liverpool, Methil, Paisley and Vancouver also submitted contributions containing the following additional points of interest.

Presumably the church in Jerusalem had been driven underground to some extent by persecution but the spiritual vitality of the scattered disciples was certain to find an outlet somewhere, and Antioch, 300 miles away in Syria, was the place. A better man than Barnabas could probably not have been chosen to go to Antioch. He was not shocked by the new work among the Gentiles, but recognized God's working and looked for the best way to foster it. Barnabas was "a good man". Only three men are so called in Scripture, Ahimaaz (2 Samuel 18. 27), Joseph of Arimathaea (Luke 23. 50) and Barnabas (Acts 11. 24). There

are many good men in the Bible but these are singled out by the Holy Spirit for special mention. We gather from Acts 9. 27 that Barnabas knew the details surrounding Saul's conversion and would learn from him the Lord's words to Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel... to **bear My** name before the Gentiles... " (9. 15). It may have been this that prompted Barnabas to go to Tarsus for Saul rather than to Jerusalem for assistance.

Why was *it* that those who lived in Judaea alone needed relief seeing that the famine was worldwide? Does it not suggest that the church in Jerusalem was very poor, perhaps as a consequence of persecution?

The persecution under Herod was fomented by the Jewish rulers. Herod set about curbing the activities of the apostles, who must now have realized what it meant to drink of the cup of which the Lord had spoken (Matthew 20. 23). James the brother of John became the second martyr among the disciples. Whilst the martyrdom of Stephen is described at length in Scripture, that of James is recorded in eleven words. The power of men is as nothing compared with God's power, neither chains nor numerous guards prevented the release of Peter. Our God is able to deliver (Daniel 3. 17). Meanwhile there was a prayer meeting in Jerusalem which, although at a very late hour, was well attended; here was evidence of the power of collective prayer. We understand it is James the Lord's brother who is referred to in 12. 17. The James who was killed with the sword was one of the sons of Zebedee.

Chapter 12 closes with the three men, Paul, Barnabas and John Mark poised at the "first base camp" for the assault on the Roman Empire.

*Eds.*

## COMMENTS

### Comment 1. (Birmingham)

There does not seem to be adequate ground for criticising the apostles and other leaders in this matter. Quite obviously the ultimate fulfilment of Acts 1. 8 would be long-term. The initial impact of the gospel in Jerusalem and Judaea was so great that they would be heavily committed in establishing the work there. The Acts story unfolds with logical development from the Jerusalem centre, and the apostles responded to divine indications of further outreach step by step.

### Comment 2. (Nottingham)

The probable timing of the planting of churches of God during this period is an interesting, but often inconclusive study. Compare general discussion points in July 'Bible Studies', and as regards Damascus in particular, page 78 of Young Men's Corner, 1931.

### Comment 3. (Derby)

It is important to keep time perspectives clearly in view. The ministrations to the needy of Judaea referred to in Romans 15. 25-29 was at a very much later phase than that of Acts 11, probably about 12 years later. Doubtless the problem of poverty among disciples in Jerusalem and Judaea was a persistent one. Paul was associated with Barnabas in carrying relief from Antioch to Jerusalem (Acts 11. 30) and at a later period of his ministry he was concerned to encourage exercise towards the same end among European churches of God. *G. P. Jr.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Matthew 18. 10. Have we each an angel commissioned to care for us? (Nottingham)

Hebrews 1. 14, as well as the scripture quoted, may suggest that this is so, but Vine's Expository Dictionary takes the view that in Acts 12. 15 "angel" should be taken in the sense of "ghost". *L. B.*

2. When was the church of God planted in Antioch? (Vancouver)

Our Methil friends mention in their paper a minority view that since many are said to have "turned unto the Lord", this implies discipleship in the fullest sense, necessitating the existence of a church of God within which alone the Lord could be served. We do not think this argument is conclusive, for the turning to the Lord was first of all in the heart and may not have been seen in its practical outworking until a later time. It is probable that it was not until Barnabas arrived from Jerusalem and confirmed the fellowship of the elders in Jerusalem that the church was planted. Only so could the unity and cohesion of the growing Fellowship be maintained. *L. B.*

3. Who was it that called the disciples in Antioch Christians? (Methil)

As I understand it, the disciples were called Christians in Antioch by the non-Christian community in that city. I base this opinion on the fact that "Christian" is not the usual designation for disciples in the New Testament. It was used by Agrippa (Acts 26. 28) in what I regard as a sarcastic statement, referring in a derogatory sense to the Christian "sect". Its use in 1 Peter 4. 16 is in harmony with the context—suffering as a thief, evil-doer or as one of the despised Christian minority. This view of the origin and early use of the term Christian does not detract from its later honourable association as accepted by believers. *G. P. Jr.*

4. Why does Luke not tell us where Peter went? Did he know? Did he want to keep it secret for "security" reasons? (Liverpool)

It seems unlikely that security would enter into the matter, since Luke wrote long after the event. Guided by the Spirit, Luke would omit details irrelevant to the spiritual purpose of his treatise. *CP. Jr.*

5. Which visit of Paul to Jerusalem does Galatians 1. 18 refer to? (Liverpool)

This question was alluded to in July Bible Studies by Vancouver and in a comment by Dr. J. D. Terrell. Both agree that in Galatians 1 Paul is speaking of his first visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9), not of the one recorded in Acts 11. *L. B.*

6. What has the incident of Herod, James and Peter to do with the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem? (Liverpool)

It would seem that the events of 12. 1-23 took place whilst Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem. This is significant because it is precisely at this point in time that the divine record moves away from Peter's ministry to that of Paul. Both men are in Jerusalem. Peter, having completed the first phase of his work, is driven away by persecution. Paul, about to be sent by the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, leaves with Barnabas and Mark, enjoying the full confidence of the elders in Jerusalem. Is there a delicate suggestion in this that Peter must decrease whilst Paul must increase? *L. B.*

7. Since Acts 11. 19 refers to 8. 1 we wondered if Acts 10, which contains the opening of the door to the Gentiles, would be before, after or about the same time as the events before us? (Vancouver)

In August Bible Studies reasons were advanced for the opinion that there would be a gap of several years between Acts 8. 1 and 12, during which the events of chapters 9 and 10 were enacted. *L. B.*

8. Turning unto the Lord is more than being a believer. Acts 11. 21 says "*a great number that believed turned unto the Lord*", it does not say, "*All that believed*". Please comment. (Methil)

In such early days, before heresies were rife, a believer was one who accepted the full apostolic teaching. The gospel offered men the new birth, a new way of life and almost certain persecution, so that half-heartedness would be practically unknown, and it is difficult to accept that there might be some who believed and yet did not turn to the Lord. Neither does the scripture give room for such an assumption. The A. V. rendering is, "and a great number believed and -turned to the Lord". Marshall's literal translation gives, "A great number believing turned to the Lord". It was the same persons that believed who turned to the Lord. *L. B.*

### PSALM 67

This is another psalm, a song, on stringed instruments. Both the sweet music of stringed instruments and the words of the song are suited to each other.

God be merciful unto us, and bless us,  
And cause His face to shine upon us; (Selah)  
That Thy way may be known upon earth,  
Thy saving health among all nations (verses 1, 2).

Here the psalmist seeks God's mercy and blessing for the people of Israel. When God blessed Israel greatly in the closing days of David, and in the early part of the reign of Solomon, the nations took notice of what God had done for His people, and many came to Jerusalem, amongst whom was the queen of Sheba. She came and saw Solomon's glory, and heard his wisdom, the like of which she had never seen and heard before. The psalmist repeats words taken from the blessing that the high priest was to put upon Israel, as to God causing His face to shine upon them. This manifestation of divine blessing was not simply for the wellbeing or aggrandisement of God's people, but was to result in God's way being known upon the earth, and His saving health among the nations. In Israel was God's testimony among men, and they could not be this if they were subjugated by foreign powers, and hunted to the mountains to find shelter in the caves and the rocks, as sometimes was the case. But if they obeyed God and were raised on high through divine blessing, and they reflected the shining of God's face upon them, then the nations would take notice of God's way in Israel, and of His salvation which was for them as well as for Israel. Alas, it was not so for the greater part of Israel's history. Their history was a sad one, and the sadness of it is by no means at an end. There are darker days in front before the dawn comes for them.

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God;  
Let all the peoples praise Thee.  
O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:  
For Thou shalt judge the peoples with equity,  
And govern (Heb. lead, A. V. & R. V. marg. ) the nations upon earth  
(verses 3, 4). (Selah)

When Israel is restored to divine favour in the future, and the nations have learned of God's salvation and of His way, then the peoples of the earth will praise God as never before. It will be unique in the world's history. They will rejoice and sing, for the Lord will settle all their difficulties with equity. Isaiah 2. 2-4 tells of the glorious days of the Millennium, when the Lord "shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more". No military academies will then be needed, and no barrack square drills. Metals that were turned in foundries and engineering works into weapons of war will be turned through men's wisdom and work into things of use for the lands and cities and homes of the people. All matters of dispute will be settled with equity by the Lord and His saints, and recourse to war will be no more needed: war will then belong to the foolish and savage past. The Lord will lead and shepherd the people to the quiet waters of rest with a rod of iron in His inflexible yet gracious rule.

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God;  
 Let all the peoples praise Thee.  
 The earth hath yielded her increase:  
 God, even our own God, shall bless us;  
**God** shall bless us;

And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him (verses 5, 6, 7).

Here we have a repetition of verse 3, that all the peoples of the earth are to praise God. Dr. Young renders praise as confess. The Hebrew word *Yadah* means confess as well as praise. Part of the word is *Yad*, which means the hand, and may mean to praise with extended hand. The earth shall yield her increase; it has done so since the beginning, but in the Millennium it shall yield its increase with great **bountifulness**.

"There shall be abundance of com in the earth upon the top of the **mountains**;

The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (Psalm 72. 16).

"Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field" (Isaiah 29. 17).

"The wilderness (shall) become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest" (Isaiah 32. 15).

"The wilderness and the solitary place (parched land, R. V. marg. ) shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35. 1).

These and other scriptures show that the earth shall yield its increase in a measure and manner that it has not done since God pronounced the curse upon it (Genesis 3. 17-19). Then as never before God, Israel's own God (a unique expression), shall bless His people, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. J. M.

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# BIBLE STUDIES

<sup>4</sup>A Magazine for the exploration of the **Word** of God (Acts 17. 11). '

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## EDITORIAL

In any enterprise two key elements upon which success ultimately depends are planning and control. It is salutary and instructive to observe that divine management of situations and events reflects this fact and teaches us much in these matters. The outreach from Antioch, which is the subject of our study this month, clearly marked a critical and exciting stage in the spread of the kingdom of God for this dispensation. Although we may operate in a more limited sphere of planning and control of our spiritual service and outreach, we do well to remember that the same divine Spirit who ordered this enterprise is our only source of guidance and direction. He had established a secure base, first in Jerusalem, then in Antioch, and from there chose prepared men who went out into a field of work in which their every move would require the courage of lions and a wisdom which is not of this world. It was the Holy Spirit who said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them". It is not surprising, therefore, that the apostle refers in his address in Antioch of Pisidia to the sovereign divine plan in "giving" to the people Samuel and Saul (verses 20, 21); in "raising up" David (verse 22); and using the same expression, "raised up" Jesus (verse 33). The same thought, flowing from the wonderful fact of God's masterful ordering of men and events, is contained in the matter of the Gentiles who "were ordained to eternal life" (verse 48). This matter was touched upon by more than one study group and calls for further brief comment.

As one paper indicates, the Greek word used in Acts 13. 48 is *tasso*—the same as is used in Romans 13, 1, "the powers that be are ordained of God". It is related to *diatasso*, used in 1 Corinthians 7. 17, "so ordain I in all the churches"; in 1 Corinthians 9. 14, "ordain that they . . . should live of the gospel"; and in Galatians 3. 19, "ordained through angels". Now all of these scriptures suggest the thought of the orderly and authoritative organization of affairs, rather than conveying the idea of the vital matter of divine election to eternal life; all, that is, except Acts 13. 48 where we might have expected to find the same word as is used in Romans 8. 29, 30 (*proorizo*) for "fore-ordained". In the latter scripture the apostle is dealing with the profound theological principle of God's foreknowledge and elective appointing to ultimate glory. In Acts 13. 48 the ordaining could only be of God, and so there can be no fundamental difference in sense from the "fore-ordained" of Romans 8. It is suggested that the more "administrative" word *tasso* is used here in the context of the need for recognition of one group of Gentiles as those who were truly believers, as distinct from other Gentiles who appeared (as do some today) to "glorify the word of God" but were distinct in God's sight from the true believers. As such they had to be identified and classified by the apostles in the ordering of the emerging divine testimony in Antioch of Pisidia. J. D. T.

## THE NAMES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

(continued from page 102)

We come now to the second group.

### 2 (a) **Jehovah**

This is supremely the name by which God is known in the Old Testament. Indeed, this is strictly speaking the name which God gives to Himself. This is indicated in several places but one of the earliest is perhaps the clearest. In the conversation at the place of the bush, "Moses said unto God (Elohim), Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, **What** is His name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the LORD (Jehovah), the God (Elohim) of your fathers... hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations" (Exodus 3. 13-15).

So Elohim said that His name was: —

I AM THAT I AM (Hebrew, Ehyeh asher ehyeh)

or I AM (Hebrew, Ehyeh)

or Jehovah (from the same root as Ehyeh).

Howsoever we may apply the word, name, or title to other names by which God revealed Himself in the Old Testament, we have in Jehovah the one name of supreme excellence and of most general use. It is throughout rendered LORD or GOD except for five occasions when JEHOVAH is used (Exodus 6. 2, 3; Psalm 83. 18; Isaiah 12. 2, 26. 4).

It comes from a root meaning "to be" or "to exist", so that in this name God presents Himself as the self-existent One, eternal and immutable. It first occurs in Genesis 2. 4 as a combination with 'Elohim', by itself alone in Genesis 4. 1 and thereafter it occurs fully 7000 times, with highest incidence in Psalms, then Jeremiah, then Deuteronomy and so on decreasingly.

Its frequent use is doubtless due to the fact that in the main it has in view God, as Redeemer in abiding relationship with His covenanted people Israel. For example, 'Elohim' said to Noah "The end of all flesh is come before Me" (Genesis 6. 13). But in 7. 1 it was Jehovah who said to Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark". Again in 2 Chronicles 18. 31 it was Jehovah who helped His people, but 'Elohim' who moved the Syrians to depart.

The first person recorded in Scripture as having God specifically revealed to him as Jehovah was Abram in Genesis 15. 7, "I am Jehovah". This personal revelation was next given to Jacob in Genesis 28. 13, "I am Jehovah, Elohim of Abraham thy father". Then to Moses in Exodus 6. 2, "I am JEHOVAH". On that occasion God said "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by My name JEHOVAH I was not known to them" (verse 3). So although the patriarchs were familiar with the name Jehovah, they were not aware of the essential implications of the name in relation to a covenanted people.

"Jehovah, great I AM!  
By earth and heaven confest!  
We bow and bless the sacred name,  
For ever blest!"

There is a well-known group of divine names or place names which are combinations of Jehovah and another name, which emphasize a particular aspect of God's ways with His people. These are, in order of first occurrence: -

(i) **Having reference to God**

Jehovah Ropheka, i. e. Jehovah that healeth thee (Exodus 15. 26)

Jehovah Mekaddishkema, i. e. Jehovah which sanctify (you)  
(Exodus 31. 13; Leviticus 20. 8, 22. 9, 16, 32; Ezekiel 20. 12)

Jehovah Zebaoth, i. e. Jehovah of hosts (1 Samuel 1. 3 etc. )

Jehovah Zidkenu, i. e. Jehovah our righteousness (Jeremiah 23. 6).

Jehovah Elyon, i. e. Jehovah Most High (Psalm 7. 17; 47. 2;  
**97. 9**)

Jehovah Rophi, i. e. Jehovah my Shepherd (Psalm **23. 1**)

Jehova Hosena, i. e. Jehovah our Maker (Psalm 95. 6).

(ii) **Having reference to places**

Jehovah-Jireh, i. e. Jehovah will see or provide (Genesis 22. 14)

Jehovah-nissi, i. e. Jehovah my banner (Exodus 17. 15)

Jehovah-Shalom, i. e. Jehovah is peace (Judges 6. 24)

Jehovah Zidkenu, i. e. Jehovah our righteousness (Jeremiah 33. 16)

Jehovah Shammah, i. e. Jehovah is there (Ezekiel 48. 35).

It should be noted that Jehovah Zebaoth occurs altogether some 280 times, and significantly is prominent mainly in Isaiah, Jeremiah and the post-captivity prophecies.

(b) **Jah**

'Jah' is an abbreviated form of Jehovah and carries with it the same thought of the self-existent One who inhabits eternity. It is rendered LORD in the R. V., occurs 49 times, is found only in Exodus, Psalms and Isaiah, and occurs first in Exodus 15. 2.

3. We come now to the third group of names: —

(a) **Adon** (plural 'Adonim') has a root meaning of sovereignty, either in rule or in ownership. It is used of God only infrequently, some 30 times, the first occurrence being Exodus 23. 17 where it is combined in 'Adon' Jehovah. It is rendered Lord in the R. V. The word has a fairly general usage in Scripture as applied to earthly masters (e. g. Abraham in Genesis 24. 9) or owners (e. g. "the owner of the hill, Samaria" in 1 Kings 16. 24), or rulers (e. g. Joseph in Genesis **45. 8**).

(b) **Adonai**, also spelt Lord in the R. V. is an emphatic form of 'Adon', and conveys the same thought of sovereignty. It is more frequently used, occurring some 290 times, first appearing in Genesis 15. 2. With perhaps a minor exception, the word is invariably applied to God, unlike 'Adon' with its general use.

One or two general observations may now be appropriate.



English versions today, so that as they are presented to us is probably not dissimilar to how they were read in the Greek Version of the Old Testament, current in the Lord's day. This leads on to the obvious continuance of the subject as found in the New Testament, for which editors may find space in a later issue.

"Oh Jehovah our Adonim, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8. 1). J. *L. Ferguson*

## PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH IN THE NEW COMMUNITY

A study of the map of Paul's travels in most copies of the Revised Version will illustrate the phenomenal spread of the gospel during the period AD 33-65. The record of the work involved is found in the Acts and in the Epistles.

Some of the causes which resulted in the growth of the new Community are as follows: —

1. The giving of the Holy Spirit and His control of godly men.
2. Implicit obedience to the will of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit.
3. A dedication of disciples to believing prayer.
4. The still most effective way of propagation of the gospel, by preaching the word.
5. A preparedness to be used wherever the Spirit directed.

The practice of these guiding principles was greatly strengthened by the planting of churches of God, composed of believing, baptized and obedient disciples, and provision made for their after-care by godly elders.

### The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit filled and directed the apostles and early disciples because they were born again and receptive of the word of God (2. 4, 4. 31, 5. 32). They were Spirit-led men greatly used by God in the furtherance of the testimony (16. 6-10). Such distinctively were Stephen (7. 55), Philip (8. 29), who carried the message to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian eunuch; and Peter (10. 19) who in declaring the message to Cornelius commenced the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. To the Thessalonians Paul wrote, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 1. 5). The Ephesian saints he exhorted to be filled with the Spirit (5. 18).

### Obedience

The preaching of the kingdom of God did not stop at salvation. Disciples were baptized and taught to continue steadfastly in the apostles' teaching (2. 41, 42). They were encouraged also to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). We read that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith (6. 7). Paul himself testified before king Agrippa, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (26. 19). So he faithfully preached the gospel wherever he went, this obedience resulting in churches of God being planted in many of the places he visited. Paul associated his call to be an apostle with "obedience of faith" (Romans 1. 1, 5). The response of the apostles and other disciples can be sum-

marized by Peter's words, "We must obey God rather than men" (5. 29).

### **Prayer**

The early disciples\* prayers were much in evidence, and with prayer came power and boldness (2. 42, 47, 4. 23, 31). They continued steadfastly in prayer, and this resulted in the word of God increasing and the number of disciples being multiplied exceedingly (6. 4-7). The record of the prayers of individual leaders is striking. Stephen's last words as he was being stoned were, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (7. 60). Saul prayed at his conversion on the Damascus Road, and his life thereafter was characterized by prayer (9. 5). Peter prayed and Dorcas was raised from the dead (9. 40). The prayers of the churches brought evident results (12. 5-16). They prayed earnestly with fasting (14. 23). These godly men were dedicated to serving their Lord, and by their zeal and active participation were involved in the rapid extension of the kingdom of God. So Paul writes to the Thessalonian saints, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5. 17).

### **Preaching**

Constant preaching is essential for success. Wherever they went Christians carried the precious Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the early days the preaching of the Word was frequently accompanied by signs (Mark 16. 20; Acts 3). So the testimony spread from the beginning at Jerusalem unto the uttermost part of the earth. The power of Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost and the results are vividly described in Acts 2. Philip proclaimed the Christ unto the Samaritans, and there was much joy in that city, and he continued preaching in all the cities till He came to Caesarea (8. 5, 40). They were not ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1. 16). They preached a full and complete gospel (Acts 28. 31). The instruction to Timothy, "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4. 2) was a basic principle then as now.

### **Mobility**

In some cases the mobility of the early disciples was a direct result of persecution (8. 1-4). The Word spread rapidly from one city to another, thus fulfilling the instructions given in 1. 8 and 9. 15. The Holy Spirit's direction of Philip's movements is emphasized in 8. 29, 39. Paul similarly knew the guidance of the Spirit in the journeys which resulted in many churches of God being planted (16. 6\*19). What pleasure God had as He saw the willingness of His servants to undertake vast journeyings for the sake of the Name! They sowed, planted and watered; God gave the increase.

### **Establishing in Unity.**

Even in cities where there was much idolatory churches of God were planted whenever it was evident that there had been a work of God in turning men from idols to serve Him, the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1. 9, 10; Acts 18. 9-11). In full fellowship with the church of God in Jerusalem, the first Gentile church, the church of God in Antioch was planted. It was there that disciples were first called Christians (11. 19-26). There soon followed other churches of God at Ephesus, Colossae, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and other places. Each was a divinely appointed centre where God's will was carried **out**, and so the kingdom of God was extended. After-care of such assemblies

is illustrated by the return visits to establish and confirm the disciples (14. 20-23), "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (16. 5).

Unity of teaching and practice was seen throughout the early Community. Over the question of circumcision a special gathering was held in Jerusalem where by the Spirit's guidance brethren arrived at oneness of mind. Their decision was conveyed by "chief men among the brethren" to churches of God elsewhere (15. 22, 16. 4). By this means doctrinal and practical unity were promoted. In connexion with collections for the saints, Paul urged the Corinthians to do the same as other churches of God (1 Corinthians 7. 17, 16. 1, 2). There was an exchange between churches of certain epistles which were to be read in each church (Colossians 4. 16). Paul had an anxiety for all the churches of God (2 Corinthians 11. 28). Moreover a definite oneness of mind obtained among the early disciples as they continued in fellowship with the Lord and with one another. They were linked together in bonds of love. When they prayed it was "with one accord" (4. 24); they were "of one heart and soul" (4. 32).

The rapid extension of the kingdom of God in apostolic times was due in large measure to the above-mentioned principles having their effect in the lives of the early disciples of this dispensation.

*N. G. Coomer*

### OLD TESTAMENT OBSERVANCES AMONG EARLY CHURCHES OF GOD

The early disciples very soon broke with Old Testament practices which were at variance with the tenets of the Faith of the New Covenant, then being revealed to them. Their conformity to, or observance of, Old Testament practices was apparent mainly so far as they shared a common ground, linguistically, historically and socially with Jewish communities.

The centre of New Covenant revelation and growth was to be Jerusalem, and necessarily the apostles were found in places where Jews congregated, such as the temple precincts. "He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1. 4). God longed for His ancient people, and determined that the activities of Spirit-filled men should be demonstrated and heard amongst those at the very centre of Jewry. Salvation was to be to the Jews first, and the new Faith was to be lived out and told among men who "were intrusted with the oracles of God" (Romans 3. 2). Plainly the disciples were to take the evangel where men professed an interest in divine purposes, past and present, and God intended that the new Faith should be seen linked with the old. They preached fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and new revelation of divine mysteries to men who knew the Law and the Prophets. It follows that much that is recorded in the Acts would be in temple and synagogue, where most Jews of that sort were to be found, and if the apostles were to find sympathetic listeners they would obviously try not to offend Jewish opinion and seek to be known as God-fearing men themselves. However, it was not long before the Jews began to expel the disciples and persecute them as heretics.

"In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (Hebrews 8. 13). This scripture, written about A. D. 60/70, would indicate that years after Pentecost and the miraculous signs of early days, the order and form of ancient activity was still going on; but while this records the continuance of orthodox Jewish activity it cannot be inferred that disciples were involved in any way.

The Old Testament practices and ordinances with which the disciples appear to have associated are prayer at the temple, fasting and the making of vows. In addition, they attended synagogues regularly. Synagogues were not strictly an Old Testament institution in that they are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but they had an important place in Jewish life before New Testament times. They were important social centres, but public reading of the Old Testament was an essential activity in every synagogue. Sabbath reading of the Law and Prophets was universal in synagogues throughout the world, so until they were cast out, the disciples, like their Lord before them, used these facilities to reach Jews.

In spite of the fact that the disciples apparently attended at times of prayer, attendance at the Temple was to meet Jews and preach the gospel, particularly in Solomon's Porch (Acts 2. 46, 3. 1, 5. 42). It is not recorded that they were found in the situation as described in Luke 1. 10, and prayer and other collective activities of the saints obviously took place elsewhere e. g. Acts 2. 46, 5. 42, 12. 12.

Acts 13. 2, 3 records fasting as a feature of early Christian devoutness in Antioch (a church with a prominent Jewish leadership) and abstemiousness and self-control plainly promoted divine exercise. It is an Old Testament practice carried over with advantage, and does not mean subservience to an outmoded faith.

Circumcision had its origin in the Old Testament and the apostles were most anxious that this should not be seen as a necessary qualification for salvation (Acts 15). Yet Paul circumcized Timothy (Acts 16. 3), who was a Jew because his mother was a Jew, Jewish nationality deriving from the mother, not the father. This was to make Timothy acceptable to Jews and was for social and national reasons. This is not reversion to the Old Testament law, but in keeping with Paul's own dictum, "I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews" (1 Corinthians 9. 20). It is in line with the Jewish disciples' intention of not offending national opinion unnecessarily.

Acts 18 and 21 describe Paul taking a vow and shaving his head, and one feels this was to show Jews in Gentile provinces (and later in Jerusalem) that he was no blasphemer. This is supported by Acts 21 in that he was told by the brethren resident in Jerusalem to associate himself with four others who had also taken a vow. According to verse 20 the Jewish believers were "all zealous for the law". The brethren in Jerusalem apparently wanted to show other Jews that they respected the Old Testament, and this show of personal conformity (as with circumcision) was attempting to bridge the old and new ways. The fact that Paul was arrested "when the seven days were almost completed" (verse 27), that is, before he could complete the formalities associated with a vow, shows how unsuccessful the effort was. Outward conformity with Jewish customs was an attempt by Jewish brethren to show that adoption of the Christian Faith did not make a man repro-

bate and corrupt. However, orthodox Jewry rejected the Christians totally, and conformity to Old Testament customs and ordinances lost any value or significance in averting Jewish opposition.

In Paul's life and writings there is recounted his own experience and effectiveness in becoming "all things to all men", and the underlying motive is love which "worketh no ill to his neighbour: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law" (Romans 13. 10). Romans 14 shows how far the apostle was prepared to go to avoid offending any who might be won and kept for Christ. He would put no "stumblingblock in his brother's way" and while he personally might be "persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself", it was different for others, even in matters like eating. When the practice was not in opposition to the will of God, or against the freedom of the gospel, Paul tried not to offend local feelings. On the other hand, brethren with highly personal views should hold them "as unto the Lord".

There were difficulties in early days from Judaising Christians who might have overwhelmed the Faith if they had not been stopped (Acts 15, Galatians 2). In Colossae (2. 16-23) there were those who wanted to impose restraints and aesthetic considerations on the saints, so adding to their burdens and corrupting the perfect truth of God. They wanted to impose restrictions as to food, drink, and feast days; they would have robbed disciples of their "prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels". Paul commands them not to subject themselves to ordinances for such things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

The gospel has a universal outreach and it is inevitable that outward signs, if not standards, of holiness should vary in different lands and societies. We have to be careful about local opinion, as were the early disciples, and study to be worthy of the gospel we preach. This may impose restraints on our personal activities, inclinations or even appearance, but we must never allow the doctrines of the Lord to be restricted.

*A. B. Robertson*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

### Acts 13. 1-52

#### Outreach from Antioch

**From Methil.**—Fasting linked with prayer was evidence of humility before God and a sense of dependence upon Him for His leading. Ministering to the Lord we took to mean engaging in the exercises of the assembly, while the laying on of hands, we would suggest, conveyed to Paul and Barnabas an assurance of the support and fellowship of the church in the work that lay to their hands.

In Cyprus they met their first opposition. Sergius Paulus was anxious to hear the word of God, and Elymas the sorcerer was equally anxious that he should not hear it. How typical of the tools of Satan today who constantly seek to destroy any work that may be commenced for God! So severe was God's judgement upon Elymas that he was struck blind, but Sergius Paulus believed, a notable defeat for Satan,

From this point Saul, who was now known as Paul, evidently took the lead, and Barnabas, who had commended Saul to the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 9. 27), took second place. John Mark, however, for reasons

which **Scripture** does not **reveal**, left **their** company and **returned** to Jerusalem. While **at a later date** this action **appears** to **have been the cause** of a division **between** these two apostles, **it is** worthy of note **that** Paul subsequently commended **him** to **the church** at Colossae (Colossians 4. 10), and **requested his attendance** following **the** falling away of Demas (2 Timothy 4. 10).

On **reaching** Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas were **invited** by the rulers of the synagogue to **speak** to the people. Never before **had** they heard such words **as** these, **and were** so **impressed** as to invite Paul and Barnabas to **return** the **next** Sabbath. On this occasion almost the whole city was **in** attendance to hear **these** eloquent **ministers** of the word of God, **but it is** so **sad** to note **the attitude** of the Jews. **So** jealous **were they** of **seeing** so **many** gathered under the **sound** of God's word **that** they contradicted all that **the** apostles **said**.

As stated by Paul (verse 46), **it** was God's will that **the** word should **first** be spoken **to the** Jews, **but** they refused **it** and so **it** was **preached** to **the** Gentiles, who, despite the opposition of the Jews, now heard Paul's **words concerning** the "Light of the Gentiles" (verse 47). That they should be fellow-heirs and fellow-members of **the** Body of Christ, and fellow partakers of the promise of Christ, was wonderful news to them. **Many** therefore believed, and the word of God **spread** throughout **the** district. The Jews continued **their** opposition **and**, with **the** chief citizens, **cast** Paul and Barnabas out of **the** city. A. R. Smith

**From Liverpool.** —The opening verses reveal **an** important transition. Until now, **Peter** had **been** the **chief instrument** in **the** **spread** of the gospel, **but** from now on the divine history concerns **the** work of Saul, otherwise **named** Paul.

We wondered **if** the calling of Barnabas and Saul at this **time** was their calling as **apostles** [see Comment 1]. We considered **the** difference between prophets and teachers, **and it** was **suggested** that the prophet received a **direct message** from God whereas **the** teacher conveyed more systematic instruction. **In** what way would **the** Holy Spirit **make** His will known? **In** Acts 20. 23 we read that "**the** Holy Spirit testifieth unto **me** in every city"; again we are not told how. **In** Acts 21. 10-11 **there is** a definite statement that the Holy Spirit **spoke** through the lips of a prophet named Agabus [see Comment 2]. The sending forth of these two **men** marks **the** **beginning** of the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul. This **seems** to **be** the work of the church of God **in** Antioch **acting** separately from Jerusalem or **any** other church, whereas today the Fellowship **as** a whole sends the Lord's **servants** forth [see Comment 3],

Some **suggested** that the **raising up** of David in verse 22 was the same as the **raising up** of Jesus in verse 33, the resurrection from the **dead** in verse 34, being a different thought. Others thought that both verses 33 and 34 refer to the resurrection from the **dead**, the emphasis **being** in verse 33 on the quotation from the second Psalm, **and in** verse 34 on the phrase, "**now** **no** more to **return** to corruption" [see Comment 4].

F. L. J., G. S., G. S. W.

**From Paisley.** —In Galatians 1. 15 we read that Paul was **separated** from his mother's womb, **but** now **by** the **command** of the Spirit he, with Barnabas, was publicly **separated** to the work of God. **Satan's** activity to **impede** the work **is** seen in **the** **opposition** of Elymas, whom

**Paul describes as a son of the devil. Then there is the further discouragement in the departure of John Mark. We are not told what caused this. Some have thought it might have been that John, being a Jew, had not yet arrived in mind where Paul and Barnabas were in the presentation of the word of God to the Gentiles. However, we have in this chapter one of the outstanding addresses of the apostle Paul and its remarkable results in Antioch and the province of Galatia.**

We wondered about the expression "exalted" as applied to Israel while in Egypt (verse 17), whereas in fact they were downtrodden. However, there is no doubt that when they first entered Egypt they obtained a favoured place because of their relationship to Joseph [see Comment 5]. Some difficulty arises regarding the 450 years of verses 19 and 20. The R. V. seems to suggest that these years were before the Judges whereas the A. V. appears to suggest they came after. Help would be appreciated (see Answer to Question 1).

We also discussed the word "ordained" in verse 48 and wondered if this is the same word as is used in Romans 8. 29 or does it simply mean that the Gentiles here became disposed to eternal life by what they heard from Paul and Barnabas, and so they believed? (see Editorial).

J.

Miller

### Impressions from other Contributors

Aberkenfig and Barry, Birkenhead, Birmingham, Derby, Lagos and Nottingham also submitted papers, the following being a summary of the main points dealt with.

The church in Antioch in Syria is the first church outside Jerusalem to be mentioned but is not referred to elsewhere in the New Testament. It was obviously in a healthy state spiritually.

The work of the Holy Spirit can be traced in verse 2 where the command to separate Paul and Barnabas is given; in verse 3 "they (the prophets and teachers) sent them away"; and in verse 4 they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit. Of course He had already laid upon the hearts of Barnabas and Saul the work which they were now undertaking. There is guidance for today in the way Barnabas and Saul went out together, workers should not go alone to the Lord's work.

John Mark is described as their attendant. This word translates the Greek *huperetes*, an under-rower, that is, one who rows under the direction of another, indicating his status. He ministered to the needs of those whom he accompanied. His knowledge of the Lord's ministry and the events of the crucifixion would also be an asset. The reason for his return home is difficult to determine. Maybe there was a difference in temperament or the proposed arduous journey over difficult terrain to Antioch of Pisidia daunted his courage.

The journey of Barnabas and Saul was not planned by the church but by the Holy Spirit. Their first preaching was at Cyprus, the birthplace of Barnabas, and this visit was probably the outcome of the events recorded in Acts 11. 19-21. In Asia Minor where Paul was brought up he seems to have taken the lead, for we now read of "Paul and his company" (verse 13) rather than "Barnabas and Saul" (verse 2). Probably at **this early stage** the great character of the apostle was evident.

In **Acts 13. 46, 48** are the only two occurrences in Acts of the expression "eternal life". "Ordained" (verse 48) is in the passive voice, signifying that God's preordination was operating here, recalling Romans 8. 29, 30, "whom He foreknew, He also foreordained". *Eds.*

### COMMENTS

1. (Liverpool). The calling to Barnabas and Saul as apostles was quite distinct from their being sent out from Antioch to preach the gospel. Apostleship was a divine calling (Romans 1. 1; 1 Corinthians 1. 1). The missionary work envisaged at Antioch was dependent upon that prior calling and was but a part of the apostolic service. *L. B.*

2. (Liverpool). Derby and Aberkenfig and Barry in their papers suggest that the Holy Spirit would speak through one of the prophets present in Antioch. We would agree that this is the most likely method of communication. *L. B.*

3. (Liverpool). Barnabas had already been sent out to full-time ministry by the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 11. 22), and Acts 12. 25 links Paul with Barnabas in such a way as to suggest that he was similarly approved. The sending out from Antioch was subsidiary to this and did not require **any** further approval. *L. B.*

4. (Liverpool). The first interpretation is the correct one. "Raised up Jesus again" in the A. V. (verse 33) is misleading, the R. V. being more accurate in omitting "again" in translating the Greek *anistemi*, to raise or raise up. The opening words of verse 34 imply that the apostle has moved **on** to **a** further thought, the resurrection. *L. B.*

5. (Paisley). The apostle is referring in verse 17 to the glory which Israel gained in the eyes of the Egyptians because of God's miraculous dealings with them (Exodus 11. 3, 12. 36). *L. B.*

6. There seem to be divided views as to whether Paul was a name that he always had or was given to him at this time. He is only named Paul from this time onwards (Birkenhead).

The name Paul is the Roman form of Saul and the indication of its adoption at this point is probably related rather to the apostles' commencing penetration of Gentile lands under Roman control than to any special apostolic significance of a new name. The specific wording in Acts 13, "who is also called Paul" could also be partly a reference to the proconsul Sergius Paulus having the same name. *J. D. T.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

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## EDITORIAL

Through the pen of Luke the Holy Spirit has chosen to focus attention largely on the work of Paul and his associates in presenting to us the great apostolic outreach with the gospel to Asia Minor and Europe. In Paul were personified the great missionary ideals of that tremendous epoch. In him burned the compelling urge to press onward with the message. His spiritual vision extended to the far horizons of divine purpose for his time. He personally spearheaded the assault on successive areas, enduring in hardship and bodily injury the vicious reactions of enemies of the cross of Christ. His desire was at all costs "so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named", that he might not build upon another man's foundation. As a result of this attitude he could look in retrospect over years of service and say that "from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ".

In Paul there was an exemplary blend of the spiritual and the practical. His deep spiritual capacity and strength of mind fitted him to receive and expound the great mysteries of New Covenant revelation. It was by reason of the exceeding greatness of certain revelations that he was required to endure the thorn in the flesh, lest he should be exalted overmuch (2 Corinthians 12. 7). Yet his was no mere theoretical grasp of divine truth. The treasure entrusted to the earthen vessel must be used for the blessing of others. His spiritual energies were poured out in practical involvement in the work of the Lord. Many served worthily in the gospel, but he yet more, "in labours more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure" (2 Corinthians 11. 23). Sometimes supporting himself by tentmaking (Acts 18. 3, 1 Corinthians 4. 12); sometimes accepting responsibility for the co-ordination of relief measures (Acts 11. 30, 24. 17, 2 Corinthians 9. 1-5); at all times he bore on his heart a burden of concern for all the churches of God (2 Corinthians 11. 28).

Such intensely practical outworking of spiritual convictions marked the apostle Paul as an inspiring exponent of the highest missionary ideals. Contributors this month have pointed well the lessons from Pauline experiences, noting particularly his insistence on the application of the whole counsel of God to his work, and the consequent gathering of converts into a divine unity in churches of God in his time.

*G. P. Jr.*

## TO THE JEW FIRST: CHRIST THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY

The men whom the Lord called to be His disciples were searchers who were stirred in spirit. The atmosphere at the Lord's first advent was tense and questioning. John the Baptist was making a powerful impact by calling men to repentance and by pointing to the One who was upon the threshold, the coming Messiah, the promised One (Luke

3. 1-17). As they heard John's testimony and **came** into contact with the Lord, they were convinced **and** touched in heart. But the nation as a whole, though **steeped** in the words of the law and the prophets, failed to recognize the Messiah **in Jesus** of Nazareth. "Go, **and** tell this people, **Hear ye indeed... but** perceive not" (Isaiah 6. 9). The miracles which the Lord performed, the showing of His power over **disease**, and **even** death, left them as a nation unmoved; His spotless life, His words of which the officers **said**, "**Never man so spake**" (John 7. 46), failed to soften them. The prophecy of Isaiah 61. I was not, for them, a portrayal of this Man. The Lord **in** His preaching quoted this prophecy as applying to Himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon **Me**... He hath **sent Me**... to proclaim the acceptable **year of** the Lord". He also **said**, "The witness which I have **is greater** than that of John: for the works which the Father hath **given Me** to accomplish, the **very** works that I do, **bear witness of Me**, that the Father hath **sent Me**" (John 5. 36); **yet** they saw only the **carpenter's Son!**

The short life **of** this wonderful Man, full of **deeds of kindness and** words of wisdom, working manifestly with the God **of** heaven, drew to its close. His foes gathered closer **and** closer, the rabble with all the injustice, cruelty and intense hatred bore down **upon** Him. **Yet** though He stood, calm, unmoved, and **dispersed** them **in fear** with His spoken "I **am**", He allowed them to **take** Him. The **cross**, the **darkness**, the earthquake, the voice of God, though filling them with **fear**, could not **open** their eyes. They **resisted** the Holy One.

The crucifixion **of** the Lord had left the apostles **and** other disciples **in** much **fear and** indecision, **but** His glorious resurrection **and** His **repeated** appearances to them with such love **and** **tenderness**, roused them into fervour **and** **certainty**. They went about preaching **and** healing, **causing** some to believe, some to hate, **and** some to fear. The **first man** to proclaim publicly **and** fearlessly to the Jews that **Jesus** is the Christ was **Peter** on the **day** of Pentecost. He stood **up and** reminded them that the power of the Holy Spirit which had fallen upon these **men**, **causing** them to seem drunken, was **an** application of the words of the prophet Joel (2. 28-32), a **passage** which would **be** familiar to them. He went on to quote David's Psalm 16: "Neither wilt Thou give Thy Holy One to **see** corruption". Further he quoted to them David's Psalm 110: "The Lord said unto **my** Lord, Sit Thou on **My** right hand, till I **make** Thine enemies the footstool of Thy **feet**". Then he pointedly said: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath **made** Him both Lord **and** Christ, this **Jesus** whom **ye** crucified". This had a humbling **effect** upon **many**. In chapter 3 **Peter** also charged the people **after** they had witnessed the miracle of the lame **man**, "**Ye** **denied** the Holy and Righteous One... **and** killed the **Prince** of life; whom **God** **raised** from the dead".

Stephen the **martyr** **is** **seen** **before** the leaders **of** Israel **in** Acts 6. He was full of power and faith, **speaking** boldly until he was brought **before** the Council. As he **spoke** his **face** was transformed **and** the Council watched **it** **becoming** illumined with heavenly radiance. In chapter 7 he patiently brought **before** them **events** which **began** with Abraham; on to Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, **David** and Solomon, showing **God's** dealings through each **and** the **continuance** of the **promises**, **but** when he **accused** them of **being stiffnecked**, their **anger** **arose and** they rushed **upon** him. His heaven-like countenance, **and** his

Christ-like forgiving spirit were seemingly lost upon them as they stoned him to death. But the dusty bent figure, bruised and bleeding, lifted a face of lighted glory and uttered words which pierced like an arrow the heart of the young man Saul: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God". Later Saul became Paul and contributed his testimony in suffering, preaching, and contending for the Faith.

A shaft of light was sent out to the Ethiopians when Philip, the evangelist, was given the opportunity of revealing to the eunuch the meaning of Isaiah 53, that this Man who was "led as a sheep to the slaughter" was none other than the Lamb of God whom John the Baptist had proclaimed, and the Son of God.

More intensive calls to the Jews were made by Paul as he began his ministry. In Acts 13. 16, he called to the "men of Israel, and ye that fear God\*", and gave a concise account of how God chose Israel, led them out of Egypt, gave them judges, kings, and according to promise "brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus\*". A warning followed from the prophets: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish". Even more pointedly did Paul speak the next Sabbath in the synagogue when after his word had a good effect on many, a wave of jealousy sprang up and there was contradiction and blasphemy against the truths that Paul was showing forth. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly: "It was necessary that the word of God should *first* be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you... lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us". This revelation was given first to Peter on the housetop in a vision, and Paul now confirmed it by throwing their minds back to the words in Isaiah 49. 6, There, in answer to the previous verse—"for I am honourable in the eyes of the LORD, and My God is become My strength"—Jehovah replies in delight as He contemplates the Son: "It is too light a thing that Thou shouldest be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth".

In Paul's letters to the churches he repeatedly refers to God's purposes regarding Israel and their non-acceptance. The passages are numerous. In Romans 10. 16-21 is a clear judgement upon them: "But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings...

But I say, Did they not hear?...

**But** I say, Did Israel not know?...

I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation...

I was found of them that sought Me not;

I became manifest unto them that asked not of Me.

But as to Israel He saith,

All the day long did I spread out My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people".

What a dreadful loss was theirs!

*John P. A. Taylor*

**Was the Church (Acts 9. 31) the Church of God in Jerusalem or something wider?**

*{See Bible Studies, July 1970, pages 80-82}*

Editors welcome a response to their request for further thoughts on this subject. The following view is put forward by D. Smith of Lerwick.

Among those who left Jerusalem in the great exodus of Acts 8. 2 was Philip the evangelist, who made his way to the city of Samaria, where he proclaimed the Christ to the people of that place. Multitudes gave heed to his message, and the divine account goes on to say that when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (verse 12).

Surely it would be erroneous to assume that when the good tidings of the kingdom of God were faithfully preached, and both men and women were baptized, no church of God was planted! How could the will of God be done collectively or the Lordship of Christ be acknowledged within the kingdom of God if there was no recognized assembly in Samaria?

The record of Philip's labour clearly implies that a church of God came into existence in Samaria at this particular time. Confirmation of this is found in the fact that when the apostles at Jerusalem "heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John" (verse 14). The word of God was, I presume, the complete doctrine governing the worship, service and conduct of those together, who composed the "them" of verse 14. Here was a plurality of persons distinctly defined, consisting of Samaritan citizens and not just a company of Christian exiles from Jerusalem.

If we can rightly conclude that a church of God was planted in Samaria at this juncture in the history of the testimony, then at least two churches, Jerusalem and Samaria, existed before the conversion of Saul.

Although the Scriptures spot-light the work of Philip it would not be inconsistent to assume that others of the dispersion were labouring simultaneously to the same end. Therefore, we may safely say that many churches of God came into being between the death of Stephen and the conversion of Saul. Thus Acts 9. 31, which relates to the conditions that existed after Saul's conversion, could hardly be applied to one assembly.

**Comment:** All will not of course find the above arguments particularly convincing. Attention is drawn, for example, to—

(a) the degree of speculative assumption involved in the conclusion arrived at in the final paragraph.

(b) the absence of any discussion of the time incidence factor between Acts 8. 1 and 9. 31. Merely to assume that the narrative flows on in chronological order seems a superficial treatment of the subject. It is seriously thought by others that under the Spirit's guidance Luke presents different aspects of the developing work, though these may have overlapped as to time. First he deals with Philip's activities (8. 5-40), then with Saul's experiences (9. 1-30) and then with events in which Peter figures most prominently (9. 32 -11. 18).

(c) the improbability that Saul of Tarsus would have undertaken the long journey to Damascus if so much nearer to Jerusalem there was a flourishing Christian work going on openly in Samaria. For a mass of Christian believers in nearby Samaria would have seemed a more formidable threat to Judaism than those of the Way whom Paul went to hunt out from distant Damascus.

Further expressions of opinion welcome!

*Eds.*

NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION  
PATTERNS OF MISSIONARY SERVICE

Acts 14. 1-28

**From Vancouver.** —The missionaries of the early churches used some methods which we who would be missionaries for Christ today could well follow. However, they also used methods which we would find difficult to follow today, such as the performance of signs, so giving an immediate opening for the preaching of the word (verses 3, 10). We know that we cannot perform such signs today, and so we must seek for another type of opening. This seems to be the problem in this present age, and the barrier that men have raised against the gospel cannot be broken down by our mere words; we must speak in the power of the Holy Spirit. Too often we rely on our own words or ability to convince.

We see other features that may apply today. We realize the devil still follows any missionary service and seeks to stifle it. There was division among the audience at Paul's preaching, resulting from the fact that some were being reached with the message. Paul's approach varied according to whom he was addressing (verses 1, 15-17). His preaching to the Jews was based on the Old Testament, whereas when he preached to the Gentiles his appeal was to the things of nature. Elders were appointed in the new churches that were formed; these elders would have been doing the work before their appointment. The missionaries of that day realized the need of entering into the kingdom of God. This is a continuing process carrying on into future times. The missionaries of the past followed a pattern of going from place to place and planting churches, not just preaching the gospel. On their return they reported their activities and what God had done with them.

We noted the importance and necessity of revisiting a church to establish it, whether it be for a short time or for years. Paul's stay in one place was governed by the circumstances and need. We should seek to follow this early example. J. Bell

**From Aberkenfig and Barry.** —The apostle Paul and his companions made use of synagogues wherever possible, for they were ideal places for expounding the word of God. Wherever they went their preaching was adapted to the needs of the people to whom they spoke and they preached the gospel so that it could be understood. They stayed long enough (if permitted) in one place to establish the work (verses 3, 21, 23). They kept before them the primary object for which they had been sent: to make disciples and to establish them in the Faith. This is evident from the fact that they were able to appoint elders in every church. Note also the words of verse 26, "The work which they had fulfilled". They not only fulfilled the work but they reported it to the church which had commended them to the work of the Lord.

It is evident that the apostles Paul and Barnabas had learnt to rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There was no indiscriminate performing of miracles, but only such as would be for the furtherance of the work. The testimony of Scripture indicates that the apostle Paul was a man under the controlling power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 16. 6-10). Are we in churches of God today sufficiently dependent upon His guidance or are we trying to follow a set pattern? We appreciate

that in the apostles' days the work was being established, but today there may still be avenues of service which have not yet been explored. It seems as though part of the plan was to establish groups of churches in different areas; we have here Galatia; later there was Macedonia and then Asia. This was an excellent plan enabling these groups to have fellowship one with the other. We have a similar pattern of churches today. Wherever the work of God spreads it is one work. Missionaries are not sent out to start new communities; they go to establish new churches in the one Community.

The action of the apostles had now changed. In the early days they resisted the authorities: "We must obey God rather than men"; but now, instead of resisting they fled to the next city, this in keeping with the Lord's words, "But when they persecute you in this city flee into the next". It was suggested that the reason they fled was to save the new disciples from being persecuted.

*D. H. Butler*

**From Denmark Hill.** —Iconium, capital of Lycaonia, was on the great communication line between Ephesus on the west, and Tarsus and Antioch on the east. So it was a well chosen centre for missionary operations.

Paul and Barnabas usually began their campaigns by searching out the religious Jews in their synagogues. Nor did they give only one gospel talk. They were persistent and persevered in their preaching to the extent that they spoke to as many people in the city as they were able. So much so that, as the case of Iconium, a whole city was frequently divided in its beliefs. Small wonder, because the apostles astounded the people with miraculous signs. But the rulers stirred up the non-believers to stone the apostles. We noted that the apostles did not stay and invite martyrdom. They fled to Lystra and to Derbe where they continued to preach the same gospel. Lystra was to become especially significant to Paul for from it emerged young Timothy, his much loved child in the faith and later companion in travel.

It is a study in itself to consider the different people Paul met on his travels. At Lystra there sat a crippled man. He had never walked. As Paul preached he could see the man's faith. The resulting miracle startled the whole city: "The gods are come down", they cried. Unfortunately they misunderstood the miracle. The apostles were quick to correct that wrong impression. But where there is a work for God the opposition is ever active and disbelieving Jews came all the way from Antioch and Iconium to stir the people further. As a result Paul was stoned and left outside the city as dead. To the relief of his faithful followers he stood up and entered again into Lystra.

It seems that churches were planted and established remarkably quickly in these days, for the apostles, on their journey back to Antioch, called at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (Pisidia) (1) to confirm the souls of the disciples (verse 22); (2) to exhort them to continue in the faith; (3) to appoint elders (verse 23). The great commission of Matthew 28 was thus carried out. What a thrilling missionary report meeting there must have been back in Antioch as the apostles gave the disciples there a first hand account of the progress made and how the Lord had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles!

*Mark McKaig*

**From Derby.** —Chapter 14 shows how the Lord of the harvest thrust forth His labourers, even allowing persecution to cause His servants to

**flee from** one city to another (Matthew 10. 23). Leaving Antioch of Pisidia they journey 90 miles into the province of Lycaonia in which the three cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were situated.

There is no mention of converts or disciples being made at Lystra, **yet** in verse 21 we read that the apostles returned to Lystra, confirming the souls of the disciples. Verse 19 recounts the astonishing event of the stoning of Paul. **Did** the apostle really die? It is concluded by many that Paul did die, and God raised him up from the dead. It may be that at this time he was caught up to the third heaven (Paradise) as recorded in 2 Corinthians 12. 2-4. [See Answer to Question 10]. The 14 years mentioned seem according to Ussher to agree with the date of the stoning (AD 46) and the date of the writing of the epistle (AD 60). Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11. 23, "in deaths oft", and "once was I stoned" (verse 25), and again in 2 Corinthians 1. 9 of their trust "in God which raiseth the dead". Paul was so fully restored that "on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas of Derbe", where they preached the gospel, making many disciples. In these three cities disciples were made, churches of God were planted and elders were appointed. In this chapter there is no mention of baptism, but no doubt Paul and Barnabas well knew the will of the Lord in this matter and His command in Matthew 28. 19, 20. What the eleven knew, so also did Paul: "They... who were of repute imparted nothing to me" (Galatians 2. 6); implying that they only confirmed what Paul already knew.

With regard to verse 22, the pathway of obedience to the Father's will led the Lord Jesus through much suffering, yet He turned not back from the track, "though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5. 8). We thought that entrance into the kingdom of God has reference to a heart ready to obey the will of the Lord. This is not learned all at once, but we are assured that in churches of God, where the apostles' teaching is imparted to the saints, it becomes a matter of individual responsibility to give heart subjection to that teaching. Compare the Lord's words to the Pharisees in Luke 17. 20, 21: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you". That is, the kingdom is within the hearts of men. It is understood that the Greek word here is *entos*, not *mesos* (among or in your midst). See also Matthew 23. 26 (inside), translated from the word *entos*. It is possible therefore to be an added one yet not to be entering wholeheartedly into the doctrines of the Lord; tribulation may hinder from entering.

S. R. W., A. G. W.

### Impressions from other Contributors

Further thoughts contributed by Atherton and Leigh, Birmingham, Glasgow (Parkhead), Nottingham, Liverpool, Paisley and Methil are summarized below.

Acts 14 records the first missionary journey undertaken by the apostle Paul, approximately fifteen years after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Then as now there were Jews and Gentiles, saved and unsaved; there were evangelists, pastors and teachers proclaiming a universal gospel and labouring for the extension of the kingdom of God. They preached with great boldness and were willing to lay down their lives for the sake of the gospel.

Before **his** conversion Paul **had** consented to the stoning of **Stephen** but now **he** was **subjected to the same treatment**. He alludes to **this incident in 2 Corinthians 11. 25** and recalls God's deliverance **in 2 Timothy 3. 11.**

The apostle Paul's **address at Lystra** (verses 15-17) **seems to be an abbreviated version of the one at Athens.** Some of the phrases **are similar, such as "God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is" (14. 15), and "the God that made the world and all things therein" (17. 24).** Compare also, "**Suffered** all the nations to walk **in their own ways" (14. 16), with "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked" (17. 30).**

Paul **and Barnabas** confirmed the souls of the disciples in the new churches. This expression has **been misinterpreted** by some, **but it is clear that the thought is of establishing or strengthening those in the church, a principle well understood, but one which requires careful thought in its practical application.**

We judge that the kingdom of God (verse 22) **refers to His rule as expressed in churches of God forming the Fellowship of God's Son.** Disciples enter the kingdom of God through tribulation, that is, **at a cost to each one, varying in degree and nature.** This **entering** in has also the **sense of a continuous experience** in remaining steadfast **in the truth, with its accompanying experience of tribulation.** *Eds.*

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. The period of **450 years** for the occupation of the land of **Canaan** is too short to **fit** in with the known dates of the Exodus (1500 B. C. ) and the fall of Jerusalem (**580-590 B. C.** ). Please comment (**Aberkenfig and Barry**).

It is considered that the interval referred to **in Acts 13. 19, 20** is that **between** the division of the land **under Joshua and the death of Samuel,** which some chronologers calculate to **be about 450 years.** The A. V. **reading is clear as to the meaning but the R. V. is difficult to follow in these two verses.** *L. B.*

Another view **taken by** some commentators is that the **450 years** of verse 19 **is a summation of the years from the beginning of the sojourn of Abraham in the land ("our fathers", verse 17) to the occupation by the nation of Israel (verse 19—"He gave them... ").** This **is a period of about 450 years.** *J. D. T.*

2. The ordering **of the Psalms must have been accepted by the time of Paul (verse 33).** When did the numbering **take place?** (**Aberkenfig and Barry**).

Conservative scholars consider that the Psalms **were largely complete by the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.** It is likely that they were **put in their present order and numbered about that time.** *L. B.*

3. Please explain the use **of Psalm 2. 7 in Acts 13. 33** (**Aberkenfig and Barry**).

Contributors this month have made **a variety of suggestions about verse 33, not all of them doctrinally sound.** The question is **an important one because it goes to the root of the doctrine concerning the Person of Christ.** The word "begotten" in relation to Deity **cannot have the meaning attached to human begetting, for the Father and Son**

have **existed** together for all **eternity**. Even though **Jesus** was born of **Mary** at His **incarnation**, this event is **described** as the Son **being** "given" (Isaiah 9. 6) or "sent" (Galatians 4. 4). Human **minds** inevitably fail to **gain** more than a hint of the sublime truth **suggested** in the thought of divine **begetting**, perhaps inadequately **expressed** as the Father and Son **being** in an eternal unchanging relationship that **may** at **any time** be described in the words, 'This **day** have I **begotten** Thee'. Psalm 2. 7 is in the **setting** of the Lord's **victory** over His **enemies** so that the Jews of Antioch would **understand** Paul to **mean** that the One **sent** by God into the world **but crucified** by men was **at the same time** their Messiah **and** the eternal Son of God. *L. B.*

4. Habakkuk's prophecy related to his own **time** and yet Paul used it to **refer** to the **present**. Please comment (**Aberkenfig** and Barry).

This kind of double application in **Scripture** is **quite** common, indeed it is an **essential part** of the complex **structure** of God's word (e. g. Hosea 11. 1; Matthew 2. 13). The subject is dealt with at length in Bible Studies, 1962, A Study in Prophetic Principles, by G. Prasher, Jr. *L. B.*

5. Was Paul known to **be an** apostle prior to **Acts 14. 14**? (**Derby**).

We learn **from 2 Corinthians 12. 12** that signs, wonders **and** mighty works were the **signs** of an apostle. The healing of the impotent **man** at Lystra was undoubtedly in this category **and** would witness publicly to Paul's apostleship. Perhaps this is why the two missionaries **are first** called **apostles** in **Acts 14. 14**. Following this line of reasoning, no miracles **are** recorded as **taking place** in Antioch of Pisidia, so that **men** would **not** know that Paul was an apostle. *L. B.*

6. Why did Barnabas and Saul **take** Mark as their **attendant** **apparently** without the approval of the elders in Jerusalem? (**Liverpool**).

**Acts 13** describes the commencement of a new development in the work of Paul and Barnabas. Their full-time **service** in the Lord's work was initiated at an earlier stage **and** similarly we have to go **back** to chapter 12 to find the origin of John Mark's full-time service. He lived in Jerusalem and was well known in the church there (12. 12); undoubtedly when he left with Paul and Barnabas (verse 25) it was with the full approval of the elders. *L. B.*

7. Has the laying on of hands ceased? If not, then should it be **practised** still as a literal physical action. If it has **ceased**, what is the **significance** of the **reference** to it in Hebrews 6. 2? (**Nottingham**)

Instances of laying on of hands in the **New Testament** are confined to a limited **range** of special service situations. One of these was **associated** with a very special occasion of the giving of the Holy **Spirit** (**Acts 19. 6**) and clearly **one** out of the normal **pattern** of divine operations in this matter. On the other hand, the occasions of **Acts 6. 6** and **13. 3** represent an act of fellowship **and** commendation associated with the recognition of a divine endowment **and** choice of **men** for a special work. The laying of the elders' **and** the apostles' hands **upon** Timothy represented fundamentally the **same kind** of action. We do not **read** of laying on of hands in **connexion** with the appointing of elders (**Acts 14. 23**; **Titus 1. 5**). Hebrews 6. 2 probably refers to a **pattern** of instruction given to early **converts** **guiding** them in, amongst other things, **matters**

where Christian teaching and practice impinged on Jewish Old Testament practices. (Thus the mention of baptisms or 'washings' and laying on of hands). The limitations and special connotations of the latter would probably be indicated, in comparison with the extensive manual, physical rituals under the Law. In matters like this there would be a danger of the Jewish Christians slipping back into over-observance of such procedures. When today similar commendations of men to special work for the Lord occur, it would seem prudent to be very cautious about directly applying a practice on which Scripture gives no general teaching, but only a few limited examples, each with something special about the persons or circumstances. Today the "right hand of fellowship" approach to brethren going out into special service conveys a similar **kind** of recognition and fellowship.

*J. D. T.*

8. Is there a need for fasting in missionary work today? (Vancouver).

Compare article in August issue (page 90) on the place of prayer and fasting in New Testament churches of God. There may well be an application of fasting in connexion with the Lord's work in modern times, according to the personal exercise of those engaged in it.

*G. P. Jr.*

9. Were all the missionaries of the early days public speakers or evangelists as is the case today? (Vancouver).

Luke is an outstanding example of a missionary who did not, as far as we know, take a prominent part in public speaking. He seems to have had a gift for personal work. Today there are men in whole time service for the Lord whose main work is of a personal nature although they are also able to take part in public speaking very acceptably.

*L. B.*

10. Did Paul actually die (Acts 14. 19) and was it at this time he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12. 2, 4)? (Derby).

There is a good deal of support for the suggestion that in 2 Corinthians 12 Paul is alluding to his experience at Lystra. If this is so, his reiterated parentheses in verses 2 and 3 emphasize that only God knew whether or not he was still in the body when he was caught up into Paradise. Perhaps we may learn from this that the answer to the first part of the question lies with God and not with man.

*L. B.*

11. Were the early churches left without overseers until Paul returned, or were some of Paul's fellow-overseers left behind to care for the disciples until his return and the appointing of overseers? (Methil).

Acts 14. 23 and Titus 1. 5 indicate that churches of God were in existence prior to the appointment of elders, yet the Fellowship teaching is that assemblies are linked together through an appointed elderhood which is united. What was the link prior to Acts 14 and Titus 1 when there were no overseers appointed and the two apostles were of Antioch? (Atherton and Leigh).

The overall teaching of the Acts and the Epistles confirms that the corporate unity of New Testament churches of God was preserved by means of a united elderhood or presbytery (Acts 15. 6, 23, 16. 4, 20. 17, 28; 1 Timothy 4. 14; Hebrews 13. 17; 1 Peter 1. 1, 5, 1-2). Against the background of this clearly established principle, such circumstances as those of Acts 14. 22-24 provide helpful illustration of the development of local brethren in responsibility at the start of a new work. We are not told what provision was made for oversight care between the first

and second apostolic visits to Iconium and Lystra. The point emphasized by the Holy Spirit in this portion is that at a relatively early phase of this work certain brethren were marked out as fitted for recognition as elders. This is a valuable guide in patterns of missionary service. For it demonstrates the possibility that in connexion with a new work God may within a very short time raise up men upon whom oversight responsibility may be placed. The reference to Titus 1. 5 should also be considered against the wider background of the general principle. That great importance was attached by the apostle to the principle of the elderhood is illustrated by the charge to Titus that elders be appointed in every city. God has given us no further information about the development of the Cretan work so we cannot be sure what arrangements were made for the earlier care of the churches there. We do know that the apostolic pattern in establishing churches of God included the rule of elders. It is consistent with this that some interim provision must have been made until local men were available for service as elders. The most likely possibility seems to be that certain of the brethren accompanying Paul would remain in a new area for a period. Acts 20. 4 is an illustration of a considerable group) of brethren accompanying Paul on occasions and 1 Timothy 1. 3, 2 Timothy 4. 12 and Titus 1. 5 of his habitual disposition of fellow-workers according to local needs.

*G. P. Jr.*

12. How could Paul and Barnabas go into the synagogue, the place where the law was taught and upheld? Has the fact that the Lord went in any bearing on this question, having in mind that He did so before the existence of churches of God? (Atherton and Leigh).

The synagogue was an institution associated with the honouring of the Old Testament Scriptures as the word of God. As such the Lord Jesus customarily went there (Luke 4. 16) and the apostles would also have been familiar with it from boyhood. The fact that the Law of Moses was "taught and upheld" there was not of itself a reason for refusing to go into the synagogue. For "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous and good" (Romans 7. 12). So that after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as the gospel was first being taken from area to area, Paul, Barnabas and others found in the synagogue a legitimate venue for the proclamation of the great new evangel. For the new revelation was a development of that of the Old Testament. They could honourably enter the synagogue to place before the devout believer in the Old Testament writings that the Lord Jesus was the Christ of Old Testament prediction. Of course, the reactions were the same from city to city. The declaration of the truth about Christ in the synagogues brought about division between those who believed and those who refused the gospel. One after another synagogue doors were closed against the light (e. g. Acts 18. 4-7). But Paul and his companions brilliantly exploited the opportunity while the doors were initially open to them.

*G. P. Jr.*

### PSALM 68

In this psalm we have the glories, and in the following one the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 1. 11). It is not the genitive "the sufferings of Christ", but the accusative, "the sufferings unto (Greek *Eis*) Christ" (see R. V. margin). In Psalm 68 we have the glories first, but the sufferings in order of time came first.

**Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered;**

**Let them also that hate Him flee before Him** (Heb. **from His face.**  
A. V. marg.)

**As smoke is driven away, so drive them away:**

**As wax melteth before the fire,**

**So let the wicked perish at the presence of God** (verses 1, 2).

This psalm was written in connexion with the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Zion, the place that God chose as His dwelling place in the days of David. Similar words to those of verse 1 were spoken by Moses when the Ark set forward on its journey from Sinai to Canaan:

"Rise up, O LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered;

And let them that hate Thee flee before Thee" (Numbers 10. 35).

Behind this lies the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and the journey of Israel to Canaan with God dwelling in their midst from mount Sinai onwards; He was even among them before that (Exodus 17. 7). In the ascent of the LORD at the bringing of the Ark to Zion we have a picture of the Lord Jesus in His ascent to the mount Zion above, where He is now seated (Psalm 2. 6).

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led Thy captivity captive;

Thou hast received gifts among men" (verse 18; Ephesians 4. 8).

There is also reference to the results which will follow the Lord's coming to the earthly Zion (verses 31, 32).

David thought of the LORD'S enemies being driven like smoke before the wind, and as wax melts and flows away before the fire, so the wicked were to perish before the presence of God. The moving of the Ark and the presence of God to Zion was no ordinary historical event; Zion was to know yet greater days in the future. In times yet to be Zion will be the great world centre for a thousand years. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was also destined to be an event of universal importance. The ascent of the Lord to Zion above after His victory on the Cross was an event of unparalleled importance, as will also be His coming down to mount Zion in the holy land in the future. The truth involved in Zion in David's time increases in ever widening concentric circles as the purposes of God develop, till that time comes, which the Lord put first in the prayer that He taught His disciples, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matthew 6. 9-13).

*To be continued—J. M.*

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# BIBLE STUDIES

'A Magazine for the exploration of the Word of God (Acts 17. 11).'

VOLUME 38

DECEMBER, 1970

## MR. JAMES MARTIN: A NOTABLE JUBILEE

It is **fifty years since** Mr. James Martin **first** undertook editorial work in connexion with the Fellowship study magazine. Without remission over **this past** half-century he has borne continuous responsibility, month in, month out. What **this has** involved in terms of self-denying, arduous service the **day** alone will declare. All who have **any** knowledge of his work will share with editors a **sense of deep indebtedness** to him.

A **great deal of this work is** enshrined **unseen** within the **fifty** annual volumes, for so **much** of editors' time and effort is **taken up in shaping others' papers**, co-ordinating **variant** views and co-operation with the printer. **Yet** our magazine has also been enriched by numerous articles from Mr. Martin's facile pen. Many will recall **his series** on the Psalms, **his penetrating word studies** and a style of editorial which **created a bond** between editors, contributors and other readers.

In **all aspects of his** editorial work Mr. Martin has dedicated God-given qualities of both **heart and mind**. Editors bear witness to the grace, **patience and capacity** for detail which **made him an invaluable member of the editorial team**. Readers will **have felt the warmth** which **pervades his** writings. His was **Bible study in its most edifying form**—rightly **dividing** the letter of the Word, yet **maintaining** vivid awareness of the spirit which **pervades** the whole. **For the Scriptures** reveal Christ, the Personification of **grace and truth**. We **pay tribute** to the Christ-like character of Mr. Martin's editorial ministry.

A notable jubilee indeed! **Yet** it is **saddened by** the fact that our friend and brother has felt obliged through ill health **to resign** from the "Bible Studies" editorate. All concerned for the progress of the **magazine** will share our **keen sense** of loss. Such changes, though bound to come, leave **us** feeling **very** much the poorer.

We are **certain** too that **many** fellow-students will feel the challenge of our **retiring** editor's outstanding devotion to his Master, and **remembering** the **issues of his life, seek grace to imitate** such faith.

Since the above **tribute** was written,  
it has pleased the Lord to call  
Mr. Martin to his eternal rest.

*Eds.*

## EDITORIAL

Considering the pride of **every Jew in his nation and in its** unique position as the people of God (Exodus 19. 5, 6), it is not **surprising** that **many** Jewish believers **found it difficult to understand** the terms on which Gentiles could **enter the kingdom of God and failed to grasp** the fundamental character of the change that had **taken place**. "The kingdom of God shall **be taken away from you, and shall be given to a**

nation bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matthew 21. 43). Even Peter was reluctant to throw the door wide open to Gentiles until God had dealt very plainly with him in the matter of Cornelius (Acts 11. 17).

Cornelius and his friends were God-fearing men but Paul's first missionary journey brought into churches of God many people who before their conversion knew little of Israel's God, being steeped in idolatry and evil practices. To Jewish minds something more was needed of such people than a simple confession of faith. Paul saw things in quite a different light. He had a divine commission to preach the gospel to Gentiles, the gospel of justification by faith alone. He had the clear vision of men of all races gathered in churches of God, forming the Fellowship of the Son of God, practising the apostles' teaching untrammelled by the outward observances belonging to a dispensation now superseded by an order incomparably better.

Although the cleavage between the two views was fundamental, Paul determined never to let slip those truths which he had received by direct revelation from God. To a lesser mind than Paul's the only solution might seem to be to break away from the deadening influence of the Judaising party and lead an independent evangelical campaign among the Gentiles. But as well as being intellectually great, Paul was humble. His God-given vision was of a united Fellowship, not a Pauline sect, and he must do all in his power to maintain a unity which was soundly based doctrinally.

With such an objective in view, courage, humility and gracious dealing would be needed, so Paul, forgetting self, took his journey with Barnabas to the very stronghold of Judaism to meet face to face those who would oppose him. His part in the council of elders does not seem to have been a prominent one except to relate the signs and wonders God had wrought through him. His intimate dealings with the Lord respecting his work among the Gentiles (Galatians 1. 11, 12, 15, 16) would have justified his speaking with commanding authority but he was content to wait patiently whilst James summed up the matter and gave through the Spirit the mind of the elders. We can all aspire to the humility, if not the greatness, of the apostle. *L. B.*

### **CRISIS MANAGEMENT — THE SPIRITUAL APPROACH**

Opposition from without and dissension within are experiences probably common to most religious movements, and it is evident from the Acts history that the churches of God had their share of difficulties from both sources.

Persecution was inevitable for the followers of a Leader whose claim to be the Son of God, although abundantly supported by evidence, had inflamed the intensely religious Jews, and whose claim to be the King of the Jews had aroused the hatred of the ruling family. But, as might be expected from a movement so soundly based, persecution from without achieved nothing to hinder but rather promoted greater fervour and dedication among its rapidly multiplying thousands. Inevitable also, because the disciples were human, the occasional internal failures and the developing dissension and doctrinal differences, which were of far greater consequence to the progress and wellbeing of the movement than all the violence of its enemies.

**Summary** (A denotes opposition from without, B difficulties within)  
 Acts 4 A. 1 Peter and John arrested; resisted boldly, "we cannot but speak".

„ 5 B. 1. Ananias and Sapphira.

„ 5 A. 2 Apostles arrested by high priest; delivered by angel, told to preach in the temple; arrested again, resisted boldly; beaten and charged not to preach, but "ceased not... to preach".

Acts 6 B. 2 Dissatisfaction over widows' relief.

„ 7 A. 3 Stephen killed.

8 A. 4 Great persecution springing from Stephen's murder; disciples (except apostles) scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria; preached as they went.

„ 11 B. 3 Jewish believers at Jerusalem resent admission of Gentiles.

„ 12 A. 5 Persecution by Herod; James killed, Peter about to be, but released by angel, and fled.

„ 14 A. 6 Paul persecuted; this continues throughout his life.

„ 15 B. 4 A serious doctrinal crisis.

„ 15 B. 5 A contention involving Paul and Barnabas.

„ 21 B. 6 The Jewish problem again. Paul persuaded to conform to temple ritual in Jerusalem.

### Persecution

The gospel had first to be preached in Jerusalem; here, where so shortly before the Jews had killed the Prince of Life, must His apostles bear witness to His resurrection and offer divine forgiveness to repentants. So for a time the apostles boldly resisted threats and ill-treatment. But when the Jews demonstrated by Stephen's murder their determined resistance to the Holy Spirit, and when too the base church was firmly established and numbered many thousands the pattern changed, and no longer did the adherents of the Way stand their ground and boldly resist; the time had come to hide and flee, and in fleeing to carry the message with them, first to Judaea and Samaria, and ultimately to the far places of the world, thus to fulfil their Master's word of Acts 1. 8.

Christians thus became from earliest days a persecuted class of people, and the life of perhaps the greatest of them, recalled in 2 Corinthians 11. 25-33, symbolizes in itself the sufferings of Christians in all ages and places, true followers of the Christ who also suffered, and when He suffered, threatened not.

### Internal Crises

Persecution could be recognized for what it was, and suffered or avoided as may be, but difficulties within the churches varied as to cause and content, and also in significance. B. 1 and B. 5 were isolated incidents, but a strong Jewish religious element can be seen in all the others.

B. 1: What principle called for so drastic a judgement in this case? It could not merely be to expose the evil of envy or love of money. Their lie was obviously a deliberate sin, "conceived in thy heart" and "agreed

together" in hearts open to Satan. What in all the dark reaches of human wickedness can be blacker than a lie deliberately perpetrated? Its father is the devil, and it contains within itself the whole world of evil, as it did in Eden. Hence the capital punishment.

B. 5: It seems regrettable that after working so long and closely together (from Acts 9. 27 to 15. 36), Paul and Barnabas should disagree so sharply that their partnership had to end. But in matters of opinion differences do arise, especially between gifted men, and it may be better sometimes to agree to differ and, if necessary, to work apart, rather than that either should press for a decision, and probably offend his brother in the process. That brethren can separate with goodwill and mutual respect is clear from Paul's subsequent references to Barnabas (1 Corinthians 9. 6, Colossians 4. 10).

B. 2: The widows' relief incident indicates that Jewish class distinction between the favoured homeborn and those from outside the national boundary, had carried over into the church. At the apostles' suggestion, the church wisely selected a representative group of brethren, including a proselyte from Antioch, to attend to the need impartially, while the apostles concentrated on their own ministry; spiritual economics here in the division of labour!

B. 3: The cause of friction was thus removed, but the same spirit showed itself when those "of the circumcision" questioned Peter as to his visiting Cornelius (not that they are to be condemned more than others for their nationalistic attitude, for the Lord had had to speak three times to Peter before he was enlightened to see that "in every nation..."). Fortunately, Peter had taken six men with him to Caesarea, and their testimony of the giving of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles there silenced the critics and kept open the door.

B. 4: Gentiles having been admitted (perhaps grudgingly by some at Jerusalem) another crisis is later precipitated by the same people's attempts to bring the Gentile Christians at Antioch into subservience to the Jewish religious code. But Paul and Barnabas, although Jews, had learnt clearly the call of the Gentiles (9. 15, 13. 46-49), and resisted this dead doctrine. Note that the dispute was not resolved by, say, the prophets in the Antioch church; this issue was to have worldwide implications and must be settled centrally for application throughout all the churches (16. 4). Jerusalem was evidently still the governmental centre (15. 2).

The controversy was resolved by (a) Peter recounting the Cornelius story, (b) Paul and Barnabas recounting what God had done by them among the Gentiles, and (c) James quoting supporting O. T. scripture, and giving his own judgement. The decree is a fine example of restraint and moderation; the temptation to bring the Gentiles into line with Jewish practices was resisted, and with wisdom and foresight the apostles and elders formulated a code of conduct which would be of universal application, in whatever countries churches of God existed then or might later be established. The overriding principle of the Jerusalem decree was, not to put an impossible yoke on the Gentile disciples, not to "trouble them", to "lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things... from which, if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you".

It is interesting to note that only one such conference is recorded in the New Testament, although others may have been held, and that

it was held to decide a doctrinal issue vitally important to the churches of God as a whole. Local or regional issues were, no doubt, settled within their own boundaries. With churches coming into existence in many different countries, composed of saints having differing backgrounds, customs and circumstances, considerable flexibility was necessary. Guidance would be given to saints locally along the lines of general principles within the framework of the way of the Lord as taught by the apostles and prophets. This is reflected in 1 Corinthians 7. 17 where Paul emphasized that he ordained this principle in all the churches, so that the disciples could walk according to God's will despite the wide variety of their circumstances. The whole of 1 Corinthians 7 is an inspiring treatise on the scope for voluntary submission to the will of the Lord as one sees its application to the circumstances of one's own life. 1 Corinthians 8 calls for a voluntary restriction of this liberty in areas where others might be stumbled, and this is again balanced in the next chapter by Paul's insistence on his personal freedom in the work of the Lord.

Such principles all underlie the Jerusalem decrees of Acts 15, and may be as important long-term for the wellbeing of the churches as were the items specified in the letter to Antioch. Yet it is recognized that certain decrees, minimal in number, did emerge from the Jerusalem conference, detailing features which were binding on all in the churches of God.

B. 6: By this time (Acts 21) Paul had many critics in the churches, including some at Jerusalem who were still very Jewish in their attitudes and prepared to believe false reports about the apostle to the Gentiles. Being strong in faith, Paul had no difficulty about submitting to a temple rite if this would disarm the opposition. He enjoyed the freedom that comes of seeing things in their true perspective, and therefore could accept many things (which he saw as unimportant in themselves) rather than offend others less enlightened (e. g. Acts 16. 3). Like his Master, he was servant to all.

*E. H. Merchant*

## GOD'S USE OF OUTSTANDING MEN IN EARLY DAYS

### Foundation days requiring fundamental teaching

The forty days of Acts 1. 3 constituted a period of preparation for the apostles and the others with them. Formerly the Lord's ministry had been "to do and to teach", but now, with the apostles, it was to teach and ground them in "the things concerning the kingdom of God", so that they might do these things and put them into practice. These were foundation days. A new nation with a new challenge was imminent (Matthew 21. 43).

The apostles, called to serve God, had first to realize who He is and how He would be served. They were to become dedicated, fearless men, willing to conform to the divine standards of holiness and righteousness. They had been taught to value the power of prayer and to look for the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives for the work that lay ahead. The progress of God's purposes was now their only concern.

### Witness, results and setbacks in Jerusalem

The apostles spoke the word of God with boldness, signs and wonders being done by them through the name of Jesus. Filled with the Holy

Spirit, they acted through His leading and guiding (Acts 2. 41-47, 5. 12-16). Where God is working in the hearts of men, Satan operates as well. Soon deception within (5. 3) and persecution without (5. 17, 18) attacked the church of God in Jerusalem. Fearlessly, in joint witness before the rulers, the apostles pressed on declaring, "We must obey God rather than man". Timely indeed had been their request for boldness (5. 27). At the commencement of this work, Peter, now a strong spiritual leader, established his brethren, and, ably supported by John, rallied the rest of the apostles, and opened the door firstly to the Jews by preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God. This, in measure, fulfilled the instructions of their Lord, "Ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea", words they were ever to keep in mind.

An apparently serious setback befell the early movement with the martyrdom of Stephen. Subsequent events show clearly that his passing was in the mind and will of God. Stephen was an outstanding, faithful servant and witness of Jesus Christ, (possibly already an elder in the church in Jerusalem) and was one of seven appointed as ministrants to the apostles (6. 3). Like the others he was of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. He was an outstanding case of one not an apostle, whom God used to defend the Faith, and who in so doing spoke against Israel and against their unbelief and sin. Jerusalem rejected him and the gospel, yet in God's wonderful grace the work there did not cease. Many more were yet to believe (21. 20). His seemingly untimely end must have had a profound effect upon the work and upon the church.

### **Scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria**

Satan used Saul in the persecution that followed, with a resultant scattering of the saints, a scattering that was to introduce further problems. What had been local to Jerusalem soon became a widespread movement. Those who were scattered went on preaching the Word, for persecution has never shut the mouths of Spirit-filled men. During this persecution and the subsequent outflow of the work, the twelve apostles were not scattered with the rest. Their peculiar work in God's service required them to remain in Jerusalem until the Fellowship was more firmly established (8. 1), able to deal authoritatively with practical and doctrinal matters, such as the planting of churches of God, and discerning and teaching the will of the Lord (11. 22, 15. 2, 16. 4, 5). Their work was foundational in character not only in Jerusalem where James and Peter and John were pillars in the church (Galatians 2. 9), but further afield also (Ephesians 2. 20).

Following upon the faithful testimony of the church in Jerusalem, Philip the evangelist (21. 8), another of the chosen deacons, is seen as the central figure in the great pioneering work in Samaria. This work appeared to be beyond mere human power to accomplish, but, as Samaria had a place in the heart and purposes of the Lord, the enmity of former times fast disappeared. Liberty to preach the word brought results. Philip, like the apostles, had the gift to heal (8. 7). The work in Samaria was linked with the work in Jerusalem. This is confirmed by the coming of Peter and John to have fellowship with Philip. This illustrates that churches of God would be established by those who were already together in church capacity in accordance with Acts 2. 41-42, and be located according to divine arrangement (Titus 1. 5; 2

Timothy 2. 2). The increase in blessing would be of God, as seen at Corinth. Each man had his distinct ministry, as Paul indicates, "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3. 5-9). The case of Philip working alone in Samaria is somewhat different from the usual pattern seen in the Acts. Others worked in pairs or in larger groups, e. g., Peter and John; Barnabas, Paul and John Mark; Paul, Silas and Timothy. It is good to observe the harmonizing of personalities and various gifts. As a result of mutual subjection in the fear of the Lord, it would matter little to these men, from personal considerations, whether God used them to evangelize multitudes or individuals or to teach, so long as the work of the Lord prospered. God "gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the Body of Christ" (Ephesians 4. 11, 12; 1 Corinthians 12. 4, 5, 28).

Persecution had taken disciples to Damascus. Saul pursued them, only to be himself "arrested" by the Lord to carry out a special missionary work for Him. When God calls, man must respond obediently or be guilty of disobedience: "He is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: . . . many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (9. 15, 16). To faithful Barnabas fell the task of introducing Paul to the apostles at Jerusalem, assuring them of his complete change of heart. "So the church throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified" (9. 31).

Peter stretched further afield. Acts of healing and the demonstration of the power of prayer at Lydda and Joppa were that many might believe and so become disciples of the Lord.

### **The door opens to the Gentiles**

Under guidance and direct revelation from God Peter, divinely fitted for his special work, now opened the door to the Gentiles also (Acts 10; Matthew 16. 19). God granted repentance unto life to them with the same unlimited grace which had been shown to the Jews and Samaritans. This marked a great advance in the purposes of God doctrinally, that the middle wall of partition was about to be taken down (Ephesians 2. 14; Galatians 3. 8), and the gospel and the truth of the kingdom of God made known. Peter's humble action before Cornelius, when the latter would have worshipped him, is commendable: "Stand up; I myself also am a man" (10. 25, 26). Paul had a similar experience at Lystra (14. 15). Such was the standing of these men in the eyes of the people, and such were their actions before men as apostles of Jesus Christ.

To the amazement of those of the circumcision, even while Peter was speaking the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the Word (10. 44, 45). They began to speak with tongues. We see no transitional period with the Gentiles as was expressed by Jews and Samaritans.

Unto the **uttermost** parts of the earth

The scattering had taken disciples as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and to Antioch in Syria at which place the disciples were first called Christians. The hand of the Lord had been with them. Barnabas, sent from Jerusalem to assist, when he witnessed the grace of God in their hearts was glad. Through the further services of this godly man,

"much people was added to the Lord". Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch and so the work grew and prospered in the church there. This new divinely chosen centre was to be greatly used by God for the further outreach of His work and the establishing of many more churches of God amongst Gentile peoples. Gentile believers were no longer "strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2. 20, 21).

In chapter 13 we witness the unique separation by the Holy Spirit of Barnabas and Paul unto a special work, "intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision... unto the Gentiles" (Galatians 2. 7, 8). The success of their mission and ministry was thus assured despite trials ahead. These were men who hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (15. 26). What a commendation! From Antioch they journeyed on to Antioch of Pisidia and boldly declared, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles". It is interesting to note God's use of Paul in various signs and wonders (13. 11; 14. 3, 8-10) and to study the pattern of missionary service described in chapter 14. Their preaching and teaching always had in view the gathering of disciples into churches of God.

It is regrettable that Paul and Barnabas later parted company. Thereafter Silas, Timothy and other fellow-workers joined Paul. With his new companions he reached Europe, preaching and teaching in Philippi, Beroea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus, before returning to Antioch. Further travel took him on to Rome. And so the work spread through God's use of specially endowed servants, each in harmony with his brethren giving individual and collective contributions towards the progress of God's purposes. Let us not forget Luke, the beloved physician and faithful companion to Paul (Colossians 4. 14; 2 Timothy 4. 11), whose accurate account of the Acts of the apostles has allowed us to appreciate in a fuller way the vast work accomplished for God by His servants. May we, through studying the lives, actions and accomplishments of these men, be led to emulate their godly exercise. "Mark them which so walk even as ye have us for an ensample" (Philippians 3. 17).

*Iain T. H. Hunter*

## NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION ACTS 15. 1-35

### DOCTRINAL CRISES AND MODE OF SETTLEMENT

**From Birmingham.** —The men who came down from Judaea and taught the brethren in Antioch concerning circumcision may have been among those Pharisees (verse 5) who affirmed these things in Jerusalem, presumably having gone there with Paul and Barnabas to present their view. These men, who may have been motivated by principles of the highest sincerity and who were evidently effective teachers and men of some influence may possibly have been affected by their own background. Bearing in mind that the canon of Scripture was not yet complete, Paul and Barnabas, as leaders in this spiritual crisis, had no definite guidelines in this matter, and as it was one that would affect all the churches of God, had recourse to the meeting in Jerusalem with the apostles and elders [see Comment]. God used the crisis as a

further stage in the unfolding of His divine mind and will. Today we have the complete revelation of God's word with its provision for every aspect of doctrine and truth. We note the contrast between the joy that the truth brought in Antioch, and the sorrow and trouble brought **by** confusion **and** uncertainty.

*H. Smith*

**From Liverpool.** —Those disciples in the early churches who were converted Jews remained very conscious of their background. The Gentiles had "turned from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for His Son", and had thus made a complete break with all they formerly believed, but the Jews recognized that Jesus was the Messiah promised to their nation. Because of this, some tended to see Christianity as an extension of Judaism, not a fulfilling of the law. In consequence, they wished to see the observance laid down for God's people in the Old Testament continued in the new holy nation (verse 1). There was more to the teaching than simply submitting to circumcision; Paul points out in Galatians 5. 3 that those who receive circumcision are under an obligation to do the whole law, thus negating the message of the gospel. Paul and Barnabas therefore resisted this teaching, which was being spread by unauthorized teachers (verse 24) and they were appointed to consult the apostles and elders at Jerusalem about this. The passage does not state that any other elders than those of the church in Jerusalem were involved. Is there any evidence of the presence of others? [see Answer to Question 1]. The apostles and elders alone considered the question, and Peter testified to his experience with Cornelius and his household, pointing out that man's inability to keep the law was the very reason for the existence of the gospel (verses 10, 11). Paul and Barnabas gave evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gentiles through them. James, summing up the discussion, recognized that God was building up a new people for His Name, to whom certain aspects of the law were not relevant. The Gentiles were commanded to abstain from fornication, from things tainted with idol worship, **and** from blood.

*P. H. L., F. F., G. S. W.*

**From Nottingham.** —Although the false teaching regarding circumcision and salvation seems to have been set forth as a dogma, it was from beneath because it struck at the very foundation truth of the gospel that our salvation depends entirely on the finished work of Christ. We might draw a comparison here with the many ways in which men still try to teach that man's work is necessary to salvation.

The method of settling this dispute and of coming to one mind as to the Lord's will is important. There is no question of settlement by individual churches acting for themselves. There was a coming together of the elders and a conference. God had used miraculous means or visions to make known His will in certain matters, as for example, the vision to Peter regarding the gospel and the Gentiles. No such visions are given or miracles wrought at this particular time; God has taught His servants and now with prayer and the use of God-given gifts they must determine His will.

Having in mind Galatians 2 it would appear that Paul and Barnabas first met with the apostles and elders to obtain their fellowship in the work undertaken. Then, with the circumcision question raised, the apostles and elders were gathered together to consider the matter. When

they were of one mind the decision was made known to the churches. This indicates the divinely approved pattern for the determining of the will of God so that there may truly be oneness of mind.

*R. Hickling*

### IMPRESSIONS FROM OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

The remaining papers, from Aberkenfig and Barry, Denmark Hill, Derby, Methil, Paisley and Vancouver may be summarized as follows: — Satan had previously sought to destroy the Fellowship from outside but now the attack was from within. The rapid growth of the Church in Antioch by the addition of both Jews and Gentiles brought a grave problem into the assembly. The Jews believed that they were exclusively the people of God and it was difficult for them to accept Gentiles in the church unless they first embraced Judaism. Matters were brought to a head by men going from Judaea to Antioch with false and unauthorized teaching. First there was discussion in Antioch but when no unanimity could be reached an appeal was made to the apostles in Jerusalem by the mediation of Paul and Barnabas.

In Jerusalem the church heard Paul and Barnabas recount their experience but when some Pharisees propounded heresy a conference of apostles and elders was convened to consider the matter. Everyone present was free to discuss and to question as they wished. Peter recounted the results of his response to divine leading and counselled that the yoke which the Jews could not bear should not be placed on Gentiles. Paul and Barnabas corroborated what Peter had said with their own experiences among the Gentiles. The result was a unity of mind under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, James being the spokesman to sum up the feeling of the meeting, repudiating the necessity for circumcision but making recommendations that certain other parts of the law of Moses should be adhered to. The tone of the letter communicating the decision to the churches was both humble and definite. A believer who knowingly ate that which was sacrificed to idols was having communion with demons (1 Corinthians 10. 20). The prohibition of fornication is embodied in the law of marriage given to Adam and Eve. The law concerning the eating of blood was given to Noah (Genesis 9. 4).

The divine pattern for settling disputes of such magnitude is seen. Appeal is made to the recognized leaders acting in concert with local representatives. There is no thought of an edict from a small group of leaders acting "in camera". Full discussion by all the elders concerned is a necessary feature, leading to a unified judgement under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

*Eds.*

### COMMENT

**Birmingham.** Paul's epistle to the Galatians shows clearly that he had a divine revelation concerning the gospel and what his part was to be in its propagation. These were his guidelines, and his visit to Jerusalem neither modified nor added to them. The purpose of the visit was to bring unity amongst the brethren on the matter (see Editorial).

*L. B.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. The passage (Acts 15) does not state that there were elders other than those in the church in Jerusalem involved. Is there any evidence of the presence of others? (Liverpool).

There is no suggestion in the chapter that there were elders other than those from Jerusalem and Antioch present. The pronoun "them" towards the end of verse 2 must apply to the elders of Antioch and not the previous "them" in verse 2, since the latter were men acting unconstitutionally and without authority (15. 24). *L. B.*

2. Why "blood"? (verse 29). Is it because the life is in the blood, or because of associated practices? (Liverpool).

At least three different suggestions have been offered in explanation of the prohibition from blood in Acts 15. 29—

(a) because in the interests of Jewish-Gentile relationships within the churches, Gentile believers should refrain from something repugnant to their Jewish brethren.

(b) because practices widely associated with drinking blood were patently evil, and must be avoided.

(c) because it was a fundamental principle with God that blood should not be taken.

It does seem to me that while (a) and (b) could be very reasonable supplementary points the real explanation lies in (c). For it was not only Mosaic legislation which precluded taking blood. This was commanded by God to Noah (Genesis 9. 4), and therefore should have been binding upon all nations. It was renewed to Israel under the Mosaic law, and carried forward to the present dispensation. So we have a principle running through the ages from Noah until now. However little we may be able to understand why, there does seem to be a connexion between this prohibition and the fact that the life is in the blood (note the wording of Genesis 9. 4 and Deut. 12. 23). *G. P. Jr.*

3. Is there any connexion between verse 12 and verse 22 concerning the multitude and the whole church? (Liverpool).

Verses 6-21 relate to the meeting of apostles and elders, no others being present. The church in Jerusalem was very large, numbering many thousands, so that there would be a great number of elders present, constituting a multitude (verse 12). Verse 22 introduces a later phase—the propagation of the decision of the elders and its acceptance and implementation by the whole church. *L. B.*

4. What is the force of Acts 15. 21 in relation to the passage?

This is an interesting and perhaps debatable point, but one would suggest that James was contrasting the four selected limitations with the much wider range of limitation which the orthodox Jews were known to observe throughout the Dispersion in Gentile cities. For instance, Gentiles would be generally familiar with Jewish observance of both circumcision and the sabbath. Yet these two well known aspects of Mosaic legislation were now specifically excluded from application to Gentile believers. *G. P. Jr.*

5. From verse 6 "the apostles and elders", verse 22 "the apostles and elders with the whole church", and verse 23 "the apostles and elders and brethren" (AV), can we conclude that the **entire church at Jerusalem gathered on this occasion and therefore the entire church took part in deciding the case?** (Vancouver).

In the Revised Version **verse 23 reads**, "the apostles and the elder brethren", the change being **due to a slight difference in the Greek texts used by R. V. and A. V. J. N. Darby**, in a footnote to his New Translation **says**, "elder brethren is not improbably right". **His** context also supports the change ("the apostles and elders", verse 6). It is clear that **verses 6-21; describe a meeting of apostles and elders as distinct from the whole church and it was at that meeting that the decision in principle was taken. In verse 22 the apostles and elders are seen leading the church in the choice of men to go to Antioch with the decrees "which had been ordained of the apostles and elders" (16. 4). It is important to distinguish carefully between the various meetings which took place and to see clearly that the settling of doctrinal differences was confined to the gathering of the apostles and elders.**

*L. B.*

Another year's profitable study of the Scriptures has been completed and our thanks are due to the many brethren whose arduous work in the preparation of contributions makes the publication of Bible Studies possible. A spiritual blessing accrues to those who labour thus as well as to those who read and the Fellowship is thereby enriched.

*Eds.*