

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

LESSON ONE

A COMPARISON OF ACTS 1:6, MATTHEW 2:2 AND ACTS 28:28

Let us compare the first question in the Book of Acts with the question asked more than thirty years before, and a statement made about thirty years after the "Acts" question.

In Acts 1:6 is recorded the question of the eleven apostles (Judas not with them) between the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

Now the first question in Matthew at the time Jesus was born in Bethlehem,

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

Now the statement in Acts 28:28:

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." Acts 28:28.

"LORD WILT THOU AT THIS TIME RESTORE AGAIN THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL?"

"WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS?"

"THE SALVATION OF GOD IS SENT TO THE GENTILES."

Note that the apostles addressed the risen Christ as "Lord" and they knew He was Divine and omnipotent, that He could restore the kingdom to Israel.

We note that. this Divine Lord was born King of the Jews. In this connection let us note Matthew 1:1 Romans 15:8—Acts 13:23—and Matthew 15:24:

"The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham." Matthew 1:1.

"Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Romans 15:8.

"Of this man's seed hath God, according to His promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." Acts 13:23.

"But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew 15:24.

Jesus Christ was born King of the Jews. He came unto His own and his own received Him not. Because His own received Him not the Gentiles obtained mercy.

Let us note in Romans 11:11, 15 and 30 why salvation was sent to the Gentiles.

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." Romans 11:11.

"For if the casting away of them (the Jews) be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Romans 11:13.

"For as ye (Gentiles) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained merry through their unbelief." Romans 11:30.

Thus we see that Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews, was the Son of David, the Son of Abraham; that He was a minister of the circumcision to confirm God's promises to Israel, that God raised up from David a Saviour for Israel, and that this Saviour dogmatically and emphatically affirmed that He was sent only to Israel.

Then we see that because of Israel's unbelief, mercy was extended to the Gentiles, that reconciliation was sent to Gentiles when and because Israel was cast away, that salvation was sent to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy.

But let us not assume or presume, that Israel had fallen when Peter and the Eleven stood up in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Salvation was not then preached to Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy or for any other reason.

THE KINGDOM RESTORED TO ISRAEL

When the apostles asked, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel," note the Lord's answer: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." Acts 1:7.

There are many, many Divine prophecies which guarantee this restoration of the kingdom and the kingdom nation. Note how it is stated in Acts 3:21 and 24:

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began:"

"Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days:"

All of God's holy prophets since the world began foretold the glorious reign of Israel's King on earth and the wonderful kingdom blessings that Israel will enjoy in that kingdom age. Note Hebrews 8:10 and 11 and Romans 11:26:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest." Hebrews 8:10 and 17.

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Romans 11:26.

Yea, Moses, Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken have likewise foretold of these days. Because of Revelation 20:1 to 9 Christians speak of "these days," these coining kingdom days, as the millennium. Some refer to the coming "golden age."

WHAT THE TWELVE DID NOT KNOW

Now carefully note the words of Christ to His apostles in John 16:12 and 13:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now, Howbeit, when the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

There were many things they could not bear.

There were many things they did not know. They could have known and should have known the truth of I Peter 1:11

"Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

They could have known, and should have known, that Jesus, the promised Messiah, was to suffer and die on the tree and that He was also to sit on David's throne; that is, that Jesus Christ was to be the Lamb of God, and the Prince of Peace. "The sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." They did not know, and were not expected to know, at the time that the Twelve stood up on the day of Pentecost, that there would be generations and centuries between the suffering and the glory of the Messiah; for God's "grace" program, between the crucifixion of the King of the Jews and His return to the earth, was hid from ages and from generations. Colossians 1:26. Therefore we speak with full Scriptural authority when we refer to this present, dispensation and age as a parenthetical period, an unprophesied period and program.

So when we perceive that Peter and the Eleven did not know that the Lord would postpone His prophesied kingdom until He had built His unprophesied Body (Ephesians 4:9 to 14) we understand why they asked the question, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

They had the right to be intensely interested in the kingdom. Note the words spoken to them by Jesus of Nazareth, King of Israel:

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

"Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupt. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Luke 12:32 and 33.

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, freely ye have received, freely give." "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: For verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." Matthew 10:7, 8 and 23.

"Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matthew 19:27 and 28.

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall he sit upon the throne of His glory." "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:31 and 34.

As you carefully and prayerfully consider these statements, imagine yourself to be one of those apostles who had received John the Baptist's baptism several years before Christ died. They had heard John say, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" "Christ shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Then they were told to preach to the Jews "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They left all to follow the King. They sold their earthly possessions. The Son of man was to come as a King and sit on His throne on earth. The twelve apostles were to remain in the cities of Israel until the Son of man came and then they were to sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Remember, there are very many things that you and I know, or should know, concerning the Body of Christ and the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1 to 3), that was wholly unknown to the twelve apostles of the King who had received their specific orders, "go not into the way of the Gentiles." Matthew 10:5. The Spirit of Truth had not come to lead them into all truth. Read John 7:38 and 39 and John 16:12.

Note carefully Luke 18:31 and 34; that the twelve apostles did not understand the words of the King when He told them He would be rejected, crucified and raised from the dead. Then the King made the general statement to Israel:

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, the Stone which the builders rejected, the Same is become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matthew 21:42 and 43.

Note in Acts 4:11 that Peter declared to Israel that the Stone had been set at naught and had become the Head of the corner. But little did Peter understand what Christ meant when He declared that He would take the kingdom of God from Israel and give it to a nation bringing forth fruit; for, several years later Peter declared that it was not lawful for him to associate with Gentiles. Acts 10:28. Still later he refused to eat with even Gentile Christians. Galatians 2:17 to 14. Paul and Peter decided that Peter and his associates should go to the Jews years after Christ died on the cross. Galatians 2:9. Surely there was some reason why Peter and the Eleven remained in Jerusalem. Acts 8:1 and Acts 15:1 to 13.

ISRAEL'S KINGDOM—GENTILES' SALVATION

Again compare Acts 1:6 with Acts 28:28:

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."

All through the Old Testament Scriptures there is much prophecy concerning the two facts, namely, that the kingdom would be restored to Israel and that, salvation would be sent to the Gentiles. But of course in this order, first, the kingdom to Israel and then, salvation to the Gentiles. But nothing of the mystery of Romans 11:25, 26 and 30:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have not obtained mercy through their unbelief."

So when the judgment of God was pronounced upon Israel, in Acts 28:25 to 27, and then the statement was made that salvation would be sent to Gentiles, that meant that salvation would be sent to the Gentiles in a way not foretold or mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was after this pronouncement that Paul wrote those significant words of Ephesians 3:8, although the same Divine truth is suggested in Romans 16:25 and Acts 20:24. We quote the three verses:

"Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 3:8.

"Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." Romans 16:25.

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Acts 20:24.

God's message preached to Gentiles in connection with the kingdom presented to Israel is called "the gospel of the kingdom." God's message preached to Gentiles when, and because the kingdom nation was set aside, is called "the ministry of reconciliation" "the gospel of the grace of God." Read II Corinthians 5:18 to 21. We should of course know the difference between grace in a dispensation, and "the dispensation of grace."

Then as we study the Book of Acts, let us keep in mind two different kingdoms, the one which is Christ's "political-spiritual" kingdom and Christ's spiritual kingdom. Note Colossians 1:13 and Matthew 25:31:

"Who hath delivered us front the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory."

Member's of Christ Body are in the spiritual kingdom of Christ mentioned in Colossians 1:13. But Christ's is certainly making no attempt to establish His political-spiritual kingdom of Matthew 25:31 at this time. And He will not until the culmination of this age of grace mentioned in Ephesians 4:12 and 13:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a Perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Christ is the Head of the spiritual kingdom while the Church Which is His Body, is in the making. His throne is far above in the heavenlies. In fact, He is on His Father's throne in heaven. But Christ, as the Son of man and King, will sit on the throne of His glory here on this earth and be the King of His "political-spiritual" kingdom. Read Isaiah 9:6 and 7—Luke 1:27 to 33. Also the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh chapters of Ezekiel.

Now let us also keep in mind that the Old Testament prophets knew about the "political-spiritual" kingdom of Christ to be set up on this earth and spoke about it, and wrote about it. All of them spoke of "these days." Acts 3:24. Not one of them spoke of the spiritual kingdom or Body, of Christ, which is to be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. Ephesians 1:19 to 23.

ACTS—THE BOOK BETWEEN

Let us think of the Book of Acts as the "Book Between." By this we mean that it is the Book between the proclamation of Israel's Messianic kingdom and the clear written revelation of God's eternal purpose, or the dispensation of the mystery. Ephesians 3:9. It is after God set aside His kingdom nation that we find the clear written revelation in the Divine Record of God's reign of grace, unmixed with religion and religions ceremonies. As an illustration let us compare Matthew 10:5 to 8 with Titus 2:11—I Timothy 5:23 and II Timothy 4:20:

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." Matthew 10:5 to 8.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11.

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." I Timothy 5:23.

"Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." II Timothy 4:20.

At a glance we note the difference between the kingdom at hand for Israel with miraculous healing and signs and the grace of God at hand for Gentiles as well as for Jews and the absence of miraculous healings and signs.

This present age of grace has been called a signless and timeless and a religionless age. But throughout the period covered by the Book of Acts there were visions, miraculous jail deliverances, angelic visitations and the sign-gifts of I Corinthians 12:8 to 11.

With Divine authority today we can preach that the grace of God that bringeth salvation is at hand for all, and for all believers the elective healing of Philippians 2:20 to 23. But we have no Scriptural right to preach that the same kingdom of heaven is at hand that was at hand when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth as the minister of the circumcision.

Note Acts 2:22—Galatians 4:4—Acts 5:30 to 32:

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know." Acts 2:22.

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Galatians 4:4.

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree."

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him." Acts 5:30 to 32.

Jesus of Nazareth was put on display in the land of the Jews for Israel by miracles and signs. He was made under the law. Christ was presented to Israel to be their Prince and Saviour, both in incarnation and in resurrection. What a difference between Acts 5:30 and 31, Christ raised from the dead to be Israel's Prince and Saviour, and Christ, seated far above in Ephesians 1:19 to 23, as Head of the Church composed of Gentiles and Jews. Read Ephesians 1:19 to 23 as to the present heavenly Headship of Christ. Then note in the second chapter:

"And that He might reconcile both unto God in one Body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you that were afar off and to them that were nigh." Ephesians 2:16 and 17.

After the revelation and proclamation of the gospel of grace, even in the Book of Acts, we find religion, signs, signgifts and religious ceremonies, but with the close of the Book, they waned and passed away Read I Corinthians 13:8 to 11.

THE CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

Note carefully Mark 7:27 and Matthew 8:12:

"But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs."

"But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here we observe that, the Lord Jesus referred to the Jews as "the children," as "the children of the kingdom." Here we have the records of Christ's dealings with two Gentiles of great faith. Read Luke 7:1 to 12 and Matthew 15:21 to 27.

To the Gentile woman the lord Jesus declared that the children (the Jews) were first to be filled. To the Gentile man Christ said that the Jews would be cast out. Note how this order is carried out during the "Acts" period:

"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:25 and 26.

" Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only." Acts 11 :19.

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES." Acts 13:46.

"And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Acts 18:6.

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day." Romans 11:7 and 8.

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Romans 11:25.

"And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word. Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers. Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them." Acts 28:25 to 28.

Thus we learn that, in the ministry of Christ to the two Gentiles while He was on earth, we have the Divine order or the Book of Acts presented. First, the children being filled. Second the children being cast out; blinded by God. That blindness and unbelief brought mercy and salvation and reconciliation to Gentiles. Romans 11:11 to 30. But certainly not until Paul received his new commission of Acts 13:2 and obeyed that commission. Then he Said in Acts 13:46, "Lo we turn to the Gentiles." "Then God hath opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Acts 14:21. These statements mark a very definite turning-point in God's dealings with the Gentiles.

LESSON TWO

THE SECOND CHAPTER OF ACTS

In another lesson we shall study concerning Judas and Matthias, but let us now consider some facts in the second chapter of Acts:

1. PETER STOOD UP WITH ELEVEN OTHERS, INCLUDING MATTHIAS. ACTS 2:14. HERE THEN WE HAVE TWELVE APOSTLES, ALL JEWS. TWELVE APOSTLES TO TWELVE TRIBES. THE NUMBER "TWELVE" SPEAKS OF ISRAEL.

2. THEY ADDRESSED DEVOUT JEWS FROM EVERY NATION UNDER HEAVEN. ACTS 2:5. THEY GAVE A MESSAGE THAT CONCERNED ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. ACTS 2:36. NOTE ACTS 2:22: "YE MEN OF ISRAEL."

3. THE APOSTLES, AND OTHER DEVOUT JEWS, WERE IN THE CITY OF JERUSALEM ON A RELIGIOUS JEWISH FEAST DAY. ACTS 2:1 TO 5. THEY WERE ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE PROPHETS AND THE COVENANTS. ACTS 3:25.

4. COMPARE ACTS 2:1 WITH ACTS 20:16 AND ACTS 23:4 AND 5: "AND WHEN THE DAY OF PENTECOST WAS FULLY COME, THEY WERE ALL WITH ONE ACCORD IN ONE PLACE." ACTS 2:1.

"FOR PAUL HAD DETERMINED TO SAIL BY EPHESUS, BECAUSE HE WOULD NOT SPEND THE TIME IN ASIA: FOR HE HASTED, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE FOR HIM, TO BE AT JERUSALEM THE DAY OF PENTECOST." ACTS 20:16.

"AND THEY THAT STOOD BY SAID REVILEST THOU GOD'S HIGH PRIEST? THEN SAID PAUL, I WIST NOT, BRETHREN, THAT HE WAS THE HIGH PRIEST: FOR IT IS WRITTEN, THOU SHALT NOT SPEAK EVIL OF THE RULER OF THY PEOPLE." ACTS 23:4 AND 5.

5. IN THE AUDIENCE THERE WERE SOME PROSELYTES AND VISITING JEWS FROM AS FAR AS ROME. ACTS 2:10. THE PROSELYTES WERE GENTILES WHO HAD BECOME JEWS BY RELIGION. READ ESTHER 8:17 AND GENESIS 17:8 TO 18. LET US KEEP IN MIND THAT WHILE JESUS CHRIST WAS ON EARTH HE WAS A MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION, MADE UNDER THE LAW, AND THEREFORE, IF ANY GENTILE MEN WERE SAVED WHILE JESUS OF NAZARETH WAS ON EARTH, THEY HAD TO BE CIRCUMCISED TO ENJOY FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE.

6. WHEN PETER REFERRED TO THE PROMISE IN ACTS 2:39 "TO YOUR CHILDREN," AND "TO ALL THAT ARE AFAR OFF," HE WAS REFERRING TO THE DISPERSION, WHOM HE ADDRESSED IN HIS EPISTLE, THE FAR-OFF JEWS. DANIEL 9:6 TO 8—I PETER 1:1 TO 3 ACTS 10:28.

7. COMPARE PETER'S MESSAGE, IN ACTS 2:22 AND ACTS 10:36, 38 AND 39 WITH PAUL'S STATEMENT IN II CORINTHIANS 5:16:

"YE MEN OF ISRAEL, HEAR THESE WORDS; JESUS OF NAZARETH, A MAN APPROVED OF GOD AMONG YOU BY MIRACLES AND WONDERS AND SIGNS, WHICH GOD DID BY HIM IN THE MIDST OF YOU, AS YE YOURSELVES ALSO KNOW." ACTS 2:22.

"THE WORD WHICH GOD SENT TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, PREACHING PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST: (HE IS LORD OF ALL:)" "HOW GOD ANOINTED JESUS OF NAZARETH WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER: WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD, AND HEALING ALL THAT WERE OPPRESSED OF THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM. AND WE ARE WITNESSES OF ALL THINGS WHICH HE DID BOTH IN THE LAND OF THE JEWS, AND IN JERUSALEM; WHOM THEY SLEW AND HANGED ON A TREE." ACTS 10:36, 38 AND 39. PETER PREACHED TO JEWS AND GENTILES CONCERNING JESUS OF NAZARETH, IN THE FLESH, WHAT HE DID IN THE LAND OF

THE JEWS. PAUL DECLARED THAT HENCEFORTH CHRIST WAS NOT TO BE KNOWN AFTER THE FLESH.

8. NOTE THAT PETER ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST PREACHED TO ISRAEL CONCERNING THEIR LAST DAYS, CONCERNING WHICH JOEL PROPHESED. ACTS 2:16 TO 21. COMPARE THE MYSTERY AMONG THE GENTILES, CONCERNING WHICH JOEL WAS SILENT, AND IGNORANT. NOTE THE CONTRAST: "JESUS OF NAZARETH IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL, A WITNESS BY MIRACLES," AND "CHRIST IN (OR AMONG) THE GENTILES A MYSTERY BY REVELATION."

9. COMPARE LUKE 1:31 TO 33, THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE TO MARY WITH PETER'S MESSAGE TO ISRAEL IN ACTS 2:29 TO 31: "AND BEHOLD, THOU SHALT CONCEIVE IN THY WOMB, AND BRING FORTH A SON, AND SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS. HE SHALL BE GREAT, AND SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF THE HIGHEST; AND THE LORD GOD SHALL GIVE UNTO HIM THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID; AND HE SHALL REIGN OVER THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOREVER; AND OF HIS KINGDOM THERE SHALL BE NO END." LUKE 1:31 TO 33.

"MEN AND BRETHREN, LET ME FREELY SPEAK UNTO YOU OF THE PATRIARCH DAVID, THAT HE IS BOTH DEAD AND BURIED, AND HIS SEPULCHRE IS WITH US UNTO THIS DAY. THEREFORE BEING A PROPHET, AND KNOWING THAT GOD HAD SWORN WITH AN OATH TO HIM, THAT OF THE FRUIT OF HIS LOINS, ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, HE WOULD RAISE UP CHRIST TO SIT ON HIS THRONE; HE, SEEING THIS BEFORE, SPAKE OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, THAT HIS SOUL WAS NOT LEFT IN HELL, NEITHER HIS FLESH DID SEE CORRUPTION." ACTS 2:29 TO 31.

HERE AGAIN WE LEARN THE ALL IMPORTANT TRUTH FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S MESSAGE AND PROGRAM PRESENTED ON PENTECOST, THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN AND RAISED FROM THE DEAD TO OCCUPY DAVID'S THRONE. WHENEVER DAVID'S THRONE IS IN VIEW, THE MESSAGE IS FOR THE NATION ISRAEL AND IT IS THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.

10. NOTE CAREFULLY ACTS 2:38:

"THEN PETER SAID UNTO THEM, REPENT, AND BE BAPTIZED EVERY ONE OF YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, AND YE SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

NOW LET US NOT HANDLE THE WORD OF GOD DECEITFULLY AND STATE THAT THIS MEANS REPENT AND BE SAVED AND THEN RECEIVE WATER BAPTISM AS A WITNESS TO THE WORLD THAT THE BELIEVER HAS BEEN BURIED WITH CHRIST IN BAPTISM. LET US KEEP IN MIND THAT PETER AND THE ELEVEN HAD RECEIVED THEIR WATER BAPTISM MONTHS BEFORE THEY PREACHED ACTS 2:38. TO THEM WAS PREACHED WHAT THEY ALSO PREACHED, BAPTISM UNTO REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. LUKE 3:3 TO 16. THIS WAS THE MESSAGE AND CEREMONY WITH THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AT HAND. MATTHEW 3:2 TO 12.

11. NOTE ACTS 2:44 AND 45:

"AND ALL THAT BELIEVED WERE TOGETHER, AND HAD ALL THINGS COMMON; AND SOLD THEIR POSSESSIONS AND GOODS, AND PARTED THEM TO ALL MEN, AS EVERY MAN HAD NEED." THIS WAS A KINGDOM COMMUNISM, BUT IT IS NOT GOD'S PROGRAM FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT

THOSE WHO STATE THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST HAD ITS HISTORIC BEGINNING ON THE PENTECOST OF ACTS TWO, NEITHER PRACTICE THIS COMMUNISM COMMISSION NOR PREACH IT FOR THIS DISPENSATION. NEITHER DO THEY PREACH THE MESSAGE OF ACTS 2:38. NOTE THE KINGDOM MESSAGE AND PROGRAM OF LUKE 12:32 AND 33 AND ACTS 4:33 AND 34:

"SELL THAT YE HAVE, AND GIVE ALMS; PROVIDE YOURSELVES BAGS WHICH WAX NOT OLD, A TREASURE IN THE HEAVENS THAT FAILETH NOT, WHERE NO THIEF APPROACHETH NEITHER MOTH CORRUPT. FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO."

"AND WITH GREAT POWER GAVE THE APOSTLES WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS: AND GREAT GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL. NEITHER WAS THERE ANY AMONG THEM THAT LACKED: FOR AS MANY AS WERE POSSESSORS OF LAND OR HOUSES SOLD THEM, AND BROUGHT THE PRICES OF THE THINGS THAT WERE SOLD."

12. NOTE ACTS 2:47:

"PRAISING GOD AND HAVING FAVOR WITH ALL THE PEOPLE. AND THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED.

THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH. WHILE THE WORD "CHURCH" IN THIS VERSE IS NOT FOUND IN SEVERAL OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS, YET GOD HAD A CHURCH ON HAND BEFORE PENTECOST. THE GREEK WORD "EKKLESIA" TRANSLATED "CHURCH" IS USED MANY TIMES IN THE SEPTUAGINT TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES. NOTE IN ACTS 8:1:

"AND SAUL WAS CONSENTING UNTO HIS DEATH. AND AT THAT TIME THERE WAS A GREAT PERSECUTION AGAINST THE CHURCH WHICH WAS AT JERUSALEM."

"FOR YE HAVE HEARD OF MY CONVERSATION IN TIME PAST IN THE JEWS' RELIGION, HOW THAT BEYOND MEASURE I PERSECUTED THE CHURCH OF GOD AND WASTED IT." GALATIANS 1:13.

"FOR I AM THE LEAST OF THE APOSTLES, THAT AM NOT MEET TO BE CALLED AN APOSTLE, BECAUSE I PERSECUTED THE CHURCH OF GOD." I CORINTHIANS 15:9.

"CONCERNING ZEAL, PERSECUTING THE CHURCH TOUCHING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS IN THE LAW, BLAMELESS." PHILIPPIANS 3:6.

SAUL OF TARSUS PERSECUTED THE CHURCH COMPOSED OF JEWISH BELIEVERS BEFORE THERE EXISTED THE JOINT-BODY OF EPHESIANS 3:6 "THE CHURCH OF THE MYSTERY." SOME CHRISTIANS HAVE FUTILELY ATTEMPTED TO PROVE THAT THE CHURCH OF THE MYSTERY BEGAN WITH ACTS TWO BECAUSE PAUL DECLARED THAT HE PERSECUTED THE CHURCH OF GOD. THE WORD "EKKLESIA" MUST BE QUALIFIED, IF WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHURCH WHICH IS CHRIST'S BODY AND THE OTHER CHURCHES OF GOD IN THE BIBLE. NOTE ACTS 7:38:

"THIS IS HE, THAT WAS IN THE CHURCH IN THE WILDERNESS WITH THE ANGEL WHICH SPAKE TO HIM IN MOUNT SINAI, AND WITH OUR FATHERS: WHO RECEIVED THE LIVELY ORACLES TO GIVE UNTO US."

First let us observe that the eleven apostles were NOT only in the will of God when they chose Matthias to take the place of Judas In fulfillment of the Scriptures but they were definitely

led by God in their selection of Matthias. Matthias was God's choice, to be numbered with the apostles. Note that Matthias had been associated with Christ on earth and with His apostles from the time John the Baptist preached until after the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead. Acts 1:16 and 20 to 26. Note God's approval "all with one accord in one place." Acts 2:1. Acts 2:44 and 4:24. "Were of one heart and one soul." Acts 4:32. "With gladness and singleness of heart." Acts 2:46. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 4:31. this was a genuine work of God. The lord's servants, filled with the Holy Spirit, were led by the Holy Spirit. They were not led by their own carnal desires and influenced by their Jewish prejudices, as many Bible teachers leave claimed. Note their bold uncompromising stand, "We ought to obey God rather than men" Acts 5:29. They walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Acts 9:31. What presumption to say that the twelve apostles were prejudiced and disobedient and for this reason they did not obey the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20.

We emphasize this unity of purpose and blessing of God because there are men of God who teach that the eleven apostles were out of the will of God when they chose Matthias to take the place of Judas, that all twelve of the apostles were out of the will of God when they remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), and that they lost the rich blessing, of the Lord because they did not obey Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Mark 16:14 to 18 and go into all the world with the gospel. These Men say that because of their Jewish prejudice against the Gentiles and their disobedience, God rebuked them by choosing Saul of Tarsus to do the work that the lord intended the twelve to do. What folly and false charges against those faithful men of God who were filled with the Holy Spirit!

THE MINISTRY OF PETER AND THE ELEVEN

Let its note carefully several Scriptures:

"Afterward He appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:14 to 18.

"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, you know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the Word of the Gospel, and believe." Acts 15:7.

"And when James, Peter and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." Galatians 2:9.

PAUL'S MINISTRY

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." Romans 11:13.

"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the Word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,

which ye have heard and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister:" Colossians 1:5, 6 and 23.

Were all the apostles walking in the flesh? Is not the record clear that one mouth of the twelve mouths of the twelve apostles was chosen by the Lord to preach to Gentiles, but that Paul was THE apostle to the Gentiles and Peter and his fellow-apostles were to go to the Jews"? When the gospel was preached all over the World, it was under Paul's Christ given authority and supervision.

How strange that the same men of God, who tell, us in one message that the ideal Church was the apostolic Church from Pentecost on through the early "Acts" period, tell us in another message of the inconsistencies, spiritual lethargy and disobedience of those prejudiced Jewish apostles who refused to obey the great commission.

They tell us also that they have found out, not in the Bible but in Church history, that the twelve apostles finally realized their great mistake in not obeying Christ, and so after James, the brother of John, was beheaded (Acts 12:1 and 2) the apostles finally went out to the uttermost parts of the earth and preached to Gentiles in obedience to Acts 1:8. Undoubtedly they have overlooked Galatians 2:9 and Colossians 1:5, 6, and 23.

Surely they are workmen who need to be ashamed, because they do not rightly divide the Word of truth. They need to prayerfully study the visit of Paul by revelation, to Jerusalem more than fourteen years after he was converted, Galatians 2:1 to 6. Note why and when and how he went to Jerusalem. Then note the "but contrariwise" in verse seven. How significant the "contrariwise."

"BUT CONTRARIWISE, WHEN THEY SAW THAT THIS GOSPEL OF THE UNCIRCUMCISION WAS COMMITTED UNTO ME, AS THE GOSPEL OF THE CIRCUMCISION WAS UNTO PETER; (FOR HE THAT WROUGHT EFFECTUALLY IN PETER TO THE APOSTLESHIP OF THE CIRCUMCISION, THE SAME WAS MIGHTY IN ME TOWARD THE GENTILES;) AND WHEN JAMES, PETER AND JOHN, WHO SEEMED TO BE PILLARS PERCEIVED THE GRACE THAT WAS GIVEN UNTO ME, THEY GAVE TO ME AND BARNABAS THE RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP; THAT WE SHOULD GO UNTO THE HEATHEN, AND THEY UNTO THE CIRCUMCISION." Galatians 2:7 to 9.

IN FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

What took place in the first chapters of Acts was in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Judas, the son of perdition, fell that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. John 17:10 to 17. The builders rejected the Stone that He might be the Head of the corner (not the head of the Body) in fulfillment of the Scriptures Christ was raised from the dead to be Israel's Prince and Saviour to occupy the throne of David in fulfillment of the scriptures. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Jewish feast day in the Jewish city that the prophecy of Joel might be fulfilled.

"But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh." Acts 2:16 and 17.

Compare this with Colossians 1:24 to 26:

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and, fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints."

How different! Joel knew nothing and said nothing about the dispensation which Christ the Lord committed to Paul. Surely we should know that the dispensation of the grace of God was a part of God's secret purpose concerning this age of grace, during which the Gentiles have a place of special Divine favor. We should also know that this secret purpose had nothing to do with the Divine program and message proclaimed by Peter and the Eleven on the day of Pentecost to the twelve tribes of Israel.

The revelation of the dispensation of the grace of God and the dispensation of the mystery, God's eternal secret purpose, was made known to Paul. Ephesians 3:1 to 11. This Divine truth was definitely Gentilish, whereas the message and ministry of Peter and the Eleven on the day of Pentecost was definitely Israelitish. The mystery was not to fulfill the law and the prophets, but the new truth given by revelation to Paul to complete the Word of God. Colossians 1:25 and 26.

How absurd and contrary to sound doctrine to say that the happenings that were in fulfillment of prophecies concerning the last days of Israel's prophesied kingdom and the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David were taking place in the unprophesied Church of the mystery. The "mystery" Body of Christ did not begin (historically) with any happenings that were in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Therefore, the "mystery" Body of Christ did not begin with the confirmation ministry of the Twelve but with the revelation ministry of the one, Paul.

Note Paul's statements in Romans 16:25—Ephesians 3:8 and Colossians 4:3 and 4:

"Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began."

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds. That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

Paul was not egotistical, deluded or presumptuous. His imprisonment was real. He was not in the Roman jail for doing the thing that many men of God teach. They say that when Paul wrote concerning the dispensation of "the grace of God," "the dispensation of the mystery" (Ephesians 3:9), "the one Joint Body—of the mystery," he was perpetuating the ministry which had been carried on by Peter and his associates before the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul. These men should ask themselves the question, if Paul was doing what they claim he was, why was it that the other twelve apostles were not in jail for the mystery?

LESSON THREE

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM THE PROGRAM OF

ACTS 15:13 to 18

Let its now consider these statements:

"Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." Acts 2:30.

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." Acts 3:21 and 24.

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them." Acts 5:29 to 33.

"But he (Stephen), being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye." "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord. And cast him out of the city and stoned him." Acts 7:55, 51, 57 and 58.

Jesus Christ was raised from the dead to take David's throne. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead to be Israel's Prince and Saviour. Acts 13:32 to 35. Jesus Christ was the Son of man standing in heaven. The Holy Spirit was witness of these things. Acts 5:32. If Israel would repent, God would Send Jesus Christ back to restore the prophesied kingdom to Israel. Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Jews continued to have murder in their hearts. They wanted to kill the Twelve They did kill Stephen. They definitely rejected the testimony of the apostles and the witness of the Holy Spirit concerning the resurrection of the Son of man, their Messiah. Read I Thessalonians 2:12 to 17.

In Matthew 12:30 to 32 Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of man, warned Israel as to what would happen if they rejected the witness of the Holy Spirit after they sinned against the Son of man. Paul warned them in Acts 13:40 and 41 It happened. Note Acts 13:40, 46 and Romans 11:25:

"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts 13:40 and 41.

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES." Acts 13:46.

" For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Romans 11:25.

HOW PETER USED THE KEYS

Most dispensational teachers believe that when Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached to Israel concerning the doings and sayings Of Jesus of Nazareth on earth, His death and resurrection, he used the key of the kingdom of heaven. Note Matthew 16:19:

"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

They likewise believe that when Peter in Acts 10:34 to 43, preached to a company of God-fearing, Jew-loving, praying, religious Gentiles, concerning the doing's and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth on earth, His death and resurrection, he used the key of the kingdom of heaven.

Both of these messages were preached in the land of the Jews concerning, the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth in the land Of the Jews. Cornelius was seeking the Lord and his alms and prayers went up to heaven. He feared God and worked righteousness. Acts 10:34 to 38. Peter told him words whereby he and all his house were saved. Concerning the salvation of Cornelius, and his household, note Acts 11:10 to 17.

ACTS 15:7 AND 15:13 TO 18

"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe." "And after they had held their peace, James answered saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written (Amos 9:11 to 15). After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, with the Lord, Who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works front the beginning of the world." Acts 15:7 and 13 to 18.

One month of the twelve months was chosen to preach to a household of God-fearing, Jew-loving, religious Gentiles in the land of the Jews. Compare this with Paul's testimony in Acts 22:17 and 21 and Romans 15:16:

"And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance." "And He said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto flee Gentiles." Acts 22:17 and 21.

"That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, to minister the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:16.

The, calling out of Cornelius and his household after Christ had been raised from the dead to take David's throne, after many thousand Jews had repented and accepted the resurrected Son of man as their Messiah, was in fulfillment of Amos 9:11 to 15 and many other kingdom prophecies. The making of the One New Man, composed of Saved Jews and Gentiles, with Jesus Christ the Head, is not in fulfillment of Amos' prophecy or any kingdom prophecy So we should not put the Body of the mystery in Acts 15:13 to 18.

Any intelligent, spiritual student of the Scriptures can learn, by comparing Acts 15:13 with Galatians 2:9, that the out-gathering of Acts 15:13 to 18 had to do with the prophesied kingdom of heaven rather than with the unprophesied Body of the mystery the Joint-Body of Ephesians 3:6. God purpose in this age is to call out both Gentiles and Jews into one Body.

Therefore, we should see that the Divine program of Acts 15:13 to 18, recorded in Acts up to the death of James (Acts 12:1 and 2), had to do with the kingdom and kingdom gospel. Note Paul's words later on:

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Acts 20:24.

"For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" Romans 11:15.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenlies might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord." Ephesians 3:8 to 11.

LESSON FOUR

JUDAS—MATTHIAS—JAMES—PAUL

A NEW COMMISSION

Let us consider several statements:

"For it is written in the Book of Psalms . . . And his (Judas') bisphorick let another take." "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." Acts 1:20, 25 and 26.

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John, with the sword." Acts 12:1 and 2.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Acts 13:2.

"And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." Acts 14:27.

When the resurrected Christ gave the so-called "great commission" of Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Mark 16:14 to 18, he gave it to eleven apostles, for Judas was missing. According to God's prophecies, another man was chosen to take the place of Judas. He was a man who was in the company of the Eleven from the ministry of John the Baptist and was an eye witness of the resurrection and ministry of the Lord Jesus. Matthias qualified and was selected.

But why should any man have been selected to take the place of Judas? Could not eleven apostles have done the Work as well as twelve? Remember that twelve apostles stood up on the day of Pentecost Acts 2:14. Then why was it necessary to have even another apostle, one born out of due season, after the Twelve had ministered For several years before and after the death of Christ?

Let us carefully note that in God's program, from Acts 1:1 to Acts 11:19), God required twelve apostles, therefore the one and only case of apostolic succession: Matthias took the place of Judas when Judas died.

In Acts 12:2 is recorded the death of James, the brother of John. But no successor to James was selected. Why then was an apostle selected to take the place of Judas to keep the number "twelve" Why was it not God's will to have twelve apostles after James died? Knowing the significance of the number "twelve," we must decide that God was dealing with Israel during the first eleven chapters of Acts as He was not dealing with them thereafter.

THE NEW COMMISSION

"AS THEY MINISTERED TO THE LORD, AND FASTED, THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID, SEPARATE ME BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE WORK WHEREUNTO I HAVE CALLED THEM." Acts 13:2.

"But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the Same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles;) And when James, Peter and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." Galatians 2:7 to 9.

"And He said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles:" Acts 22:21.

Thus we see that about twelve years after Peter and the eleven other apostles stood up on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit sent Saul of Tarsus forth. This was some years after the Lord's words to Saul at the time Paul was converted near Damascus "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15.

So Saul had been working for some years when the Holy Spirit separated him for a new work. Note what that work was to be, in Romans 11:11:

" . . . SALVATION IS COME UNTO THE GENTILES, FOR TO PROVOKE THEM (JEWS) TO JEALOUSY."

Surely this was a new work for although one of the twelve apostles had been chosen to preach to a company of Gentiles (Acts 15:7), that apostle (Peter) certainly did not preach to Cornelius to provoke Israel to jealousy.

The Twelve were ministers to Israel and they could not have done their work successfully in the land of the Jews by provoking Israel to jealousy. As we study Galatians 2:10 to 14 we can be sure that there were no uncircumcised Gentile Christians in the churches in Judea. The twelve apostles preached to the children of the covenants, Gods message of repentance and restitution but during the period covered by the first chapters of Acts, they knew nothing about the truth of Romans 11:15 and 30:

"FOR IF THE CASTING OF THEM BE THE RECONCILING OF THE WORLD, WHAT SHALL THE RECEIVING OF THEM BE, BUT LIFE FROM THE DEAD?" "FOR AS YE IN TIMES PAST HAVE NOT BELIEVED GOD, YET HAVE NOW OBTAINED MERCY THROUGH THEIR UNBELIEF."

Paul was the first apostle or ambassador of the reconciliation to Gentiles. There is a great difference between Peter's message to Israel in Acts 5:29 to 32 and Paul's message to the Gentiles in Romans 10:12 to 15.

Peter and his fellow apostles, had the outstanding place in the first eleven chapters of Acts. They remained in Jerusalem. Acts 8:1. They were still there years later. Acts 15:1 to 11.

But here is a most noteworthy fact, from the death of James to the end of the Book of Acts there is no record of the spiritual activities or ministries of any of the twelve apostles, except as they had dealings with the Apostle Paul. The last sixteen chapters of Acts is the record of once man (Paul) and only such other persons as had dealings with him.

Another significant fact is, that, beginning with the new commission of Acts 13:2, we find in Acts the record of three or more missionary journeys of Paul, but no record of any missionary journey of Peter and the Eleven The preachers who tell us of those missionary journeys have to go to church history other than Bible Church history. In that history there are many conflicting and contradictory statements, so we cannot state with a say certainty where the twelve apostles went outside of the land of the Jews. We know that John went to Patmos and Peter went to Babylon perhaps.

A DISPENSATIONAL MIRACLE

Note this very interesting statement concerning a Gentile Roman official in Acts, 13:12.

"THEN THE DEPUTY, WHEN HE SAW WHAT WAS DONE, BELIEVED, BEING ASTONISHED AT THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD."

This Gentile (Paulus), believed, being astonished at the blindness that happened to a Jew with a most significant name, "Bar-jesus." When and because God sent blindness upon Barjesus, the Jew with a good name but with a bad testimony, the Gentile believed and obtained mercy. Note how this truth applied to many Jews and Gentiles In Romans 11:30, 19 and 8:

"For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through, their unbelief." "Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in." "(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day."

The blindness of Bar-Jesus was for a season. Acts 13:11. If he did not believe after that, judgment was sent upon him, he truly was very foolish.

Note Romans 11:25 and 26:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Israel was the child of Jehovah the Saviour. When and because blindness was sent upon them reconciliation was sent to the Gentiles. The Gentiles obtained mercy because or Israel's unbelief.

Bar-Jesus means "the child of Jehovah the Saviour." Therefore, Bar-Jesus, the blind Jew, and Paulus, the believing Gentile, tell us the story of Romans Eleven as well as the story of Acts 13:45 and 46. Note these two verses:

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES."

Now note Acts 14:27:

"And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

We here emphasize, "LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES" and "GOD HAD OPENED THE DOOR, OF FAITH UNTO THE GENTILES."

These are most significant statements, for they mark: a radical change, a decided turning-point in God's dealings with the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy and to usher in the message and reign of grace and finally the revelation of the truth of Ephesians 3:1 to 3.

"FOR THIS CAUSE I PAUL, THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU GENTILES, IF YE HAVE HEARD OF THE DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH IS GIVEN ME TO YOUWARD: HOW THAT BY REVELATION HE MADE KNOWN UNTO ME THE MYSTERY; (AS I WROTE AFORE IN FEW WORDS."

THE CASTING AWAY OF GENTILES AND ISRAEL

In Romans 1:16 to 32 God has given us the record of the casting away of the Gentiles. In Romans 11:1 to 32 God has given us the record of the casting away (temporarily) of the Jews. When God cast away the Gentiles He chose Israel. Read the call and circumcision of Abram—Genesis 12 to 17. Then read Romans 11:21 and 22.

"For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

God will again put the Gentiles in subjection to Israel, but not "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13.

It is more than interesting to note that so far as we have any Divine record, the first Gentile man to whom the Lord Jesus on earth ministered was a Roman official who loved the Jews and built them a synagogue. Luke 7:1 to 12.

The first Gentile to whom any of the twelve apostles ministered after the death of Christ was a Roman official who loved the Jews and gave them money Acts 10:2 and 22.

The first Gentile to whom Saul preached was a, Roman official who asked to hear the Word of God. Acts 13:3 to 14. He was Sergius Paulus, a prudent man. He believed the gospel when and because blindness fell upon Bar-jesus. Then Saul took the name of "Paulus" or "Paul."

Then note what Paul wrote:

"FOR I SPEAK TO YOU GENTILES, INASMUCH AS I AM THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES, I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE." Romans 11:13.

In this connection it is interesting to compare Romans 15:8 with Romans 15:16 and Romans 16:25:

"NOW I SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST WAS A MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION FOR THE TRUTH OF GOD, TO CONFIRM THE PROMISES MADE UNTO THE FATHERS." Romans 15:8.

"THAT I SHOULD BE THE MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE GENTILES, MINISTERING THE GOSPEL OF GOD, THAT THE OFFERING UP OF THE GENTILES MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE, BEING SANCTIFIED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT." "NOW TO HIM THAT IS OF POWER TO ESTABLISH YOU ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL, AND THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE REVELATION OF THE MYSTERY, WHICH WAS KEPT SECRET SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN." Romans 16:25.

Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision to the Jews. Matthew 15:24—John 1:11. The Apostle Paul was Christ's minister to the Gentiles. Jesus Christ confirmed, or fulfilled, that

which was not kept secret by God but was made known to and by Israel's prophets. Paul's "MY GOSPEL" was quite different. It had been God's secret until the Lord Jesus in heaven revealed it to and through the apostle of the Gentiles.

One phase of this mystery is revealed in Colossians 1:27—"the mystery among the Gentiles," "Christ in you the hope of glory.

LESSON FIVE

ONE GREEK—SEVERAL GREEKS—A MULTITUDE OF GREEKS

Note these interesting statements:

"The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled; For it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yea, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." Mark 7:26 to 29.

"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired Him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:20 to 24.

"And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together in the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed." Acts 14:1.

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Romans 10:12.

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." Colossians 3:11

First, the one Greek. She was humble and of great faith. She took the place of a dog; under the table as an alien and a stranger. Although Christ plainly told her that He was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24) she received the blessing she sought.

The several Greeks desired to see Jesus. But He sent word to them that a (great event had to first take place. He had to be the Corn of Wheat, die and fall into the ground and be raised from death.

Then during the first nine chapters of Acts the twelve apostles and their helpers preached to no Gentiles except proselytes. Acts 2:10, In the light of Acts 10:28 and 11:19 we may be sure that the eunuch of Acts 8:27 was a proselyte. He had been to Jerusalem to worship. We should not confuse the Greek-speaking Hellenists (Jews) of Acts 6:1 and 11:20 with the Greek-speaking Gentiles. It was after Saul became Paul and said, "LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES." that the first company of Greeks believed the gospel and were saved. Then later on the apostle stated there was no difference between the Jews and the Greeks.

Then note I Corinthians 12:11 to 13:

"But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the Body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one Body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Also note I Corinthians 10:32:

"Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God."

Now no difference between the Jews and the Greeks. But even so, for some years God's order was "to the Jews first," until God gave them blindness and set them aside

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

ONE ORDER FOR BELIEVING GENTILES; ANOTHER ORDER FOR BELIEVING JEWS

"WHEREFORE MY SENTENCE IS, THAT WE TROUBLE NOT THEM, WHICH FROM AMONG THE GENTILES ARE TURNED TO GOD." "AS TOUCHING THE GENTILES WHICH BELIEVE, WE HAVE WRITTEN AND CONCLUDED THAT THEY OBSERVE NO SUCH THING, SAVE ONLY THAT THEY KEEP THEMSELVES FROM THINGS OFFERED TO IDOLS, AND FROM BLOOD AND FROM STRANGLED, AND FROM FORNICATION."

By carefully and prayerfully studying the fifteenth and the twenty-first chapters of Acts, we learn that, during the "Acts" period there was one order for the children of the covenant, the circumcision, and another order for the uncircumcised Gentiles. But this two-fold order was, no longer sanctioned by God after His judgment recorded in Acts 28:25 to 28. During the "Acts" overlapping period, during the years when God's order was "to the Jew first," there were signs, miracles, visions, tongues, sign-gifts and religious ceremonies. But after the close of the transition period these ceased its accordance with I Corinthians 13:8 to 11.

Let us thus summarize: During the years that Jesus Christ was on earth God's order was "to the Jews, but not to the Gentiles." During the years covered by the first nine chapters of Acts, God's order was "to the Jews first not to the Gentiles." Beginning with Acts 13:46 God's order was "to the Jews first and also to the Gentiles," until the close of Acts." Since the judgment of God, recorded in Acts 28:25 to 28, God's order has been "to the Gentiles and also to the Jews."

In Luke 21:24 and Daniel 2:1 to 44 we learn that "the times of the Gentiles politically" began about 600 B.C. with the revelation of the Lord's secret to Daniel.

Its Romans 11:8 to 30 and II Corinthians 5:16 to 21 we learn that "the times of the Gentiles, spiritually began about the middle of the first Christian century with the Lord's revelation of His secret to Paul.

The end of "the times of the Gentiles, politically" is told in Luke 21:27 to 33. Read those verses concerning the coming of the Son of man to earth.

The end of "the times of the Gentiles, spiritually" is told in Ephesians 4:13:

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a Perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the

Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Romans 11:25 and 26.

LESSON SIX

PAUL IN THESSALONICA AND BEREIA

Quite frequently we hear of a "Berean" Bible Class. The members of such a class are supposed to be like the noble Bereans mentioned in Acts 17:11.

Note the statement:

"These (Bereans) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily (The Old Testament Scriptures), whether those things were so."

When the Lord Jesus was here among the Jews, in their land, He spoke to them about searching the Scriptures. John 5:39. They could have checked up on Him, for He said that He came to fulfill the law and the prophets. Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision with a confirmation ministry. Romans 15:8. "When they had fulfilled all that was written of Him they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a sepulchre. But God raised Him from the dead." Acts 13:29 and 30. The birth of Jesus Christ, His sayings and doings, His death and resurrection were all, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

Note in the seventeenth chapter of Acts that Paul went first into the synagogue of the Jews in Thessalonica and then into the synagogue of the Jews in Berea. Note what he did. He reasoned with them out of the Scriptures (The Old Testament), that Christ must needs have suffered and risen from the dead." Acts 17:2 and 3.

It was possible for all the Jews to search, or trace, through prophesied messages of the Old Testament and confirm or refute the claims of Jesus Christ on earth or the claims of the apostles concerning Him after God raised Him from the dead. The Old Testament prophets foretold the place of Christ's birth, the manner of His birth, the miraculous credentials that He would present to His nation, how He would be betrayed, despised and rejected, and how He would die, what He would say on the cross, how he would have His grave with the rich, and how He would be raised. These Old Testament prophets foretold the reign of Israel's Messiah and King on David's throne, the restitution of all things, after the great tribulation and also how Gentiles would be saved by Israel's kingdom message But note what these prophets did not know or foretell:

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 3:8.

"Whereof I (Paul) am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill (complete) the Word of God; the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints." Colossians 1:25 and 26.

"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery."

When Paul preached at Berea and the Bereans searched the Scriptures, whether those things were true, he was not preaching the mystery which the risen Christ made known to him by a very special revelation. That Divine truth was never disclosed to Israel's prophets. Therefore the Bereans could not have searched that truth in the Scriptures with any success. The mystery was a Divine message and program that was never disclosed to any of Israel's Prophets and never foretold in their oral or written messages.

Therefore that message is called "the Unsearchable Riches of Christ." The Greek root of the word, "unsearchable," means a "track" or a "step." The Greek word in Ephesians 3:8 means "cannot be traced" or "untraceable." The meaning is, that the truth for Gentiles given out by Paul in Ephesians was for Gentiles but was not the message and program for the Gentiles which the prophets had prophesied. The servant of the Lord is instructed, "rightly dividing the Word of truth." II Timothy 2:15. It should be obvious to any intelligent, spiritual student of the Scriptures, who will approach the Divine Book With the spirit of the Bereans, that the searchable riches or Christ, or the "confirmation" ministry of the apostle Paul, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, or the "revelation ministry of the apostle Paul, were different.

We read in Ephesians 3:6 that one phase of the mystery revealed to Paul, the mystery of God's will (Ephesians 1:9), was the fact, "that Gentiles should be joint heirs, of the Joint-Body." Another phase of that mystery was "the mystery among the Gentiles, Christ in you the hope of glory, Colossians 1:27. Then the mystery is set forth in Romans 8:28 to 32, and in II Timothy 1:9. All of this is called, in Ephesians 3:11, "the eternal purpose of God in Christ Jesus," In Ephesians and Colossians we learn what that eternal purpose was. The word, "purpose," is used several times, in Paul's written messages and it is used always in connection with God's predestinated program and "the hope of His calling." In our printed message on the Epistle to the Ephesians We have dealt with this in detail.

WHAT THE JEWS AT THESSALONICA DID

Paul's reception by the noble Bereans was far different from his treatment in Thessalonica as recorded in Acts 17:1 to 9. Read these verses and then note what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the cruel folly of the Jews

"For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us: and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, TO FILL UP their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." I Thessalonians 2:14 to 16.

These are very solemn and significant words. "The wrath is come upon them (the Jews) to the uttermost." We remember the words of the Lord Jesus on earth: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 8:12. "But when the King heard thereof, He was wroth: and He sent forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." Matthew 22:7. "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which kill the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Matthew 23:31 to 33. "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Matthew 23:38.

All of this brings to mind the statement of Romans 10:21 and the Lord's parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21:33 to 46. Note Romans 10:21: "But to Israel He saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Never did the Lord stretch forth His hand of mercy to that disobedient and gainsaying nation any more than He did for some years after Jesus Christ was crucified and raised from the dead. We note in Acts 13:23 that Jesus Christ was raised up in incarnation to be Israel's Saviour, and in Acts 13:33 to 43, that Jesus Christ was raised up in resurrection to be Israel's Saviour. This truth is plainly declared in Acts 5:29 to 32. So we should ask the question, how long was Israel's "all day long"? What a great blunder God's servants have made in teaching that Israel's "all day long" ended with Matthew 23 and the crucifixion of Christ and that beginning immediately thereafter God ushered in a new dispensation, called in Ephesians 3:9, "the dispensation of the mystery."

Now note the parable of the vineyard. Read carefully and prayerfully Matthew 21:23 to 46, and with this read Isaiah 5:1 to 7, and Psalm 80:8 to 19, concerning the Vine which God brought from Egypt to Canaan. "A Vine out of Egypt." Psalm 80:8—"The Vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel." Isaiah 5:7.

"AND THE HUSBANDMEN TOOK HIS SERVANTS, AND BEAT ONE, AND KILLED ANOTHER, AND STONED ANOTHER. AGAIN HE SENT OTHER SERVANTS MORE THAN THE FIRST; AND THEY DID UNTO THEM LIKEWISE. BUT LAST OF ALL HE SENT UNTO THEM HIS SON, SAYING THEY WILL REVERENCE MY SON. THEY CAUGHT HIM, AND CAST HIM OUT OF THE VINEYARD, AND SLEW HIM." Matthew 21:35 to 40.

Think of the crimes of Israel. Then think of the mercy of God toward that disobedient and gainsaying people. Do you remember the words that the Lord gave to Stephen to proclaim to Israel in Acts 7:51 and 52? Hear then again: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye." "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and they have slain them which showed before the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." This accusation was made in Jerusalem, before Saul of Tarsus was converted.

Then note several years later Paul's message to a group of Jews concerning their rulers: "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him (Jesus) not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet, desired they Pilate that He should be slain." "But God raised Him from the dead." "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts 13:27 to 41.

How stupid to play follow the leader and fall into the serious blunder of believing that God's religious nation (Israel) was set aside before Peter and the Eleven stood up on the day of Pentecost. If Israel had been cast away at the time Paul addressed them in the synagogue, he would never have said, "Beware, lest that come upon you." He never would have said, "it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you (Jews)." Acts 13:46.

How deplorable that servants of the Lord have failed to understand the significance and efficacy of the prayer of the Son of man on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. This brought a new offer of mercy to Israel. Acts 3:14 to 26. That prayer prolonged their "all day long" Their sin against the Son of man was pardonable. Matthew 12:30 to 33. Acts 2:22 and 23. Acts 3:18. Acts 4:27 to 29. John 12:39 and 40. But their sin

against the Holy spirit was unpardonable. Acts 5:32 . . . Acts 13:45 . . . Acts 18:5, Romans 11:20 to 24.

Reconciliation was sent to the Gentiles when and because Israel was cast away. Romans 11:15. Reconciliation was not sent to the Gentiles until after the statement of Paul in Acts 13:46, "lo, we turn to the Gentiles." And it was some years after that before God sent His armies to destroy those murderers and burn up their city. Note in Luke 21:20 to 24 concerning the desolation of Jerusalem and Israel and when that desolation was to take place. ". . . When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." When did those armies compass Jerusalem? Certainly this had not taken place when the twelve apostles preached to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. It had not taken place when Paul preached to the Jews in Antioch some years later. Acts 13:40. In fact, it had not taken place when Paul spoke to a group of Jews in Rome about thirty years after Pentecost. Acts 28:19 to 28.

ISRAEL DURING THE ACTS PERIOD

Not only did the city of Jerusalem stand during the years covered by the Book of Acts, but the Jews' temple stood and the high-priests continued to minister in that temple. Acts 23:1 to 7. At no time in the history of Israel did they receive more gracious treatment from a Gentile government than they received from the Roman Government during the "Acts" period. During that period Paul said, "Unto the Jews, I became as a Jew: to them that are under the law, as under the law." I Corinthians 9:20. He circumcised Timothy. Acts 16:3. he shaved his head when he took a Jewish vow. Acts 18:18. Paul apologized to Israel's high-priest more than twenty-five years after the words spoken by Jesus of Nazareth to Israel in Matthew 23:38 to 40.

It is only as we understand this transitional period and overlapping program, when God's order was "to the Jew first," that we can ever explain with any degree of intelligence and satisfaction why the signs, miracles, visions, supernatural visitations, judgments, tongues and sign-gifts are not found in the Church of Jesus Christ in this day of grace. The sign-gifts of I Corinthians 12:8 to 11, during the transitional period, were exercised by the most carnal babes in Christ to whom Paul ministered. I Corinthians 3:1 to 7 . . . 6:7 to 11. But not one of these sign-gifts is exercised by the most spiritual Saint on earth in this day of grace. Note this statement endorsed by Dr. C. I. Scofield without reservation: "The sign-gifts of I Corinthians Twelve were operative only during the Acts period."

LESSON SEVEN

HAVE YE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT SINCE YE BELIEVED?

(ACTS 19:1 to 12)

This is a very interesting question to consider. Before we consider it, let its note some statements in verses five to eight. "They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve, And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months."

These twelve men had received John's baptism. "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe; on Christ Jesus." Acts 19:4. John's baptism was for Israel, that Christ might be made manifest unto Israel. Acts 13:24 and John 1:31. Therefore, these twelve men were Jews. It is thought that they had, been instructed by Apollos, "knowing only the baptism of John." Acts 18:25.

But the order in this nineteenth chapter is of great interest to the student of the Scriptures for several reasons. One reason is, that this is the last Scripture to record the baptism of anyone by water. The order was, baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, the imposition of the apostolic hands, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, their speaking with tongues. This order is generally taught and practiced in the Pentecostal assemblies.

Very much the same order is found in the eighth chapter of Acts. Read Acts 8:5 to 15. Note the order. First, Philip, the deacon and evangelist, preached Christ in the city of Samaria, but Acts 11:19 would indicate that he preached to none but Jews in that city. Philip performed many miracles while he was preaching. The sick and the lame were healed. They believed Philip and they were baptized both men and women. Acts 11:12. But the Holy Spirit did not fall upon them when they believed and were baptized. Some days later Peter and John went from Jerusalem to Samaria and prayed for the baptized believers in Samaria that they might receive the Holy Spirit. They did when Peter and John laid hands on them. Acts 8:14 to 17.

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour breathed of the twelve apostles and said unto them, "Receive ye the holy Spirit." John 20:22. At least three years before they thus received the Holy Spirit they had received John's water baptism. Then before Pentecost the resurrected Christ said unto them: "John the Baptist truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Acts 1:5.

When this took place Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Acts 2:16. After this experience it is recorded in Acts 4:8 that Peter was filled with the holy Spirit. Then in Acts 4:31 it is recorded that all of the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit. Note Paul's words to the saints, "Be filled with the Spirit." Ephesians 5:18. These saints had already been baptized into the Body of Christ. And in Ephesians 4:4 and 5 is recorded the fact of One Spirit and One Baptism and One Body.

John the Baptist spoke very definitely of three baptisms. With water, with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Matthew 3:11. Luke 3:16 and 17. Then in Luke 12:50 the Lord Jesus declared that He would be baptized, referring to His death on the cross. Then in Matthew 28:19 and 20 He spoke of "Baptizing them into or unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." So in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we find several baptisms, but in Ephesians 4:4 and 5 there is one baptism.

In Mark 16:14 to 18 is recorded the commission of the Lord to the eleven: "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," "and these signs shall follow." Christ did not instruct them to preach, "he that believeth and is saved should be baptized as a witness to the world, and there are to be no signs following faith. "Servants of the Lord who proclaim this changed message certainly are not working under the commission of Mark 16:14 to 18. Philip did in Samaria. The Twelve did on the day of Pentecost. Note carefully the order:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

No servant of the Lord has any Scriptural authority to change this order to agree with some sectarian creed and program, as many are doing. They thus change Acts 2:38, "Repent and believe the gospel of the grace of God, be saved and receive the Holy Spirit to witness that you

are saved and then witness your salvation to the world by being immersed in water." This truly is handling the Word of God deceitfully. Moreover it is certainly handling the Word of God ignorantly to teach that water baptism before Pentecost was a kingdom ordinance and that Christian baptism began with the day of Pentecost, when the ceremony took on a new meaning; namely, a witness to the world that the Christian had been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the death of Christ, had been buried with Him by baptism and had been raised to walk in newness or life. Those who thus corrupt the plain Word of God admit that none of the twelve apostles and not one of the one hundred and twenty disciples received Christian baptism. They prefer to give no explanation of Paul's experience as related by him in Acts 23:16. Christ said to him, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." Paul obeyed and straightway went into the synagogue to tell Israel that Jesus was their Messiah. That is why John the Baptist went out baptizing. That is why Paul was baptized.

But Paul's own words are found in I Corinthians 1:15 to 18. Paul had labored for more than eighteen months in a very large city where many Corinthians believed and were baptized and then they spoke with tongues or exercised the gifts of healing, performed miracles or prophesied or were able to discern spirits. Acts 18:8 and I Corinthians 12:8 to 11. But Paul could not remember more than a very few that he had baptized. For this fact, he said, "I thank God." Think this over. Paul was almost willing to be accursed to get people saved, he travailed in birth until Christ was formed in some, he became all things to all men that he might save some; and still he thanked God that he had baptized fewer than ten people out of all of the many believers in Corinth. This is the death blow to water regeneration in the gospel of grace. Of course at the time he was preaching to the Corinthians he did not know that he was going to write a letter to them later on rebuking them for their carnal divisions. That was not the reason he did not baptize them. "Christ sent me not to baptize." I Corinthians 1:17. Regardless of the interpretation and mode of water baptism preached and practiced by any Christian or group of Christians all Christians should acknowledge that the Lord sent the twelve to baptize, but not Paul. Did Paul say, "I thank God that I did not perform the ceremony that would have been their witness to the world?" He knew and we should know, it was no such thing. And if there is any water in Romans 6:3 to 6 or Colossians 2:12, it is meritorious and efficacious and man's work helps to regenerate a sinner. Then of course comes the question, why did Paul baptize those twelve Jews in Acts Nineteen, or Lydia, or the Philippian jailer"

WATER AND SIGNS

Right after Paul baptized the twelve Jews we read that he healed many people by using handkerchiefs and aprons. We read that when Lydia was baptized they had been assembled on the Jewish Sabbath. When the Philippian jailer was baptized there was a miraculous earthquake. On the day of Pentecost there were supernatural demonstrations, the mighty wind and tongues. We have already observed that when Philip was baptizing in Samaria he was performing miracles. We have Noted that in the commission of Mark 16:14 to 18 the Lord's order was, faith, baptism, salvation, signs. Now again note the order in Acts 19:4 to 7, water baptism, imposition of hands, Holy Spirit baptism, speaking with tongues.

Thus we see that we find in the Scriptures signs, sign-gifts, supernatural visitations and manifestations, angels and miracles are linked with water baptism. Any exegesis that will eliminate the miraculous signs will eliminate the water ceremony.

Water baptism was to manifest, Christ to Israel. John 1:31. Signs were to put Christ on display to Israel. Acts 2:22. John performed no miracles, but baptized. Christ performed miracles but did not baptize. The Twelve and Paul did both. Signs were for the same reason in the ministry of the twelve apostles. Hebrews 2:2 to 5. Paul's signs were the signs of an apostle. II Corinthians 12:12. Paul thanked God that he spoke with tongues more than others, but he thanked God that he did not baptize many believers. I Corinthians 14:18. I Corinthians 1:15 to 18. And let us not forget that in the matter of speaking with tongues in the assembly he said, "Let your women keep silent in the churches." I Corinthians 14:34.

PETER AND THE HOUSEHOLD OF CORNELIUS

It is interesting; to study in the Book of Acts what was said and done by God's angels. If we are to have the program of Phillip and the eunuch, let's have the angel also. Then note that the angel warned Cornelius Acts 10:3, 10:7 and 22. Then note the sheet from heaven in Acts 10:11. Is it not strange that so many Christians in this day of grace are not worried about the absence of "sheet visions" and instructions from angels, because they have the completed Word of God, but they do so much cherish the water sign?

Cornelius was an uncircumcised proselyte. The other eleven apostles contended with Peter for preaching to Cornelius. Acts 11:1 to 5. It was unlawful until Peter received the vision from Heaven. Acts 10:28. When the Lord sent Peter to Cornelius, Peter was told, "Nothing doubting." Acts 10:20. What evidence did the Lord give to Peter that Cornelius; experience was genuine? "The Holy Spirit fell on them that heard the Word." Acts 10:44. "Tongues." Then the question, "can any man forbid water" Then water baptism. Then was Cornelius circumcised? There is no record. But if he continued to gather in assemblies with the Jews in the land of the Jews, we may be sure from Galatians 2:10 to 14 that he was; for if those Christian Jews in the land of the Jews would not fellowship with uncircumcised Gentile Christians out of the land, we may be sure that they, did not in the land.

In order that Peter would receive Cornelius into his fellowship, and know the truth of Acts 10:28 and 29 God gave Cornelius the Holy Spirit before he was baptized with water. Acts 11:17 and 18. But this, was not the order in Acts 19, Acts 2, and Acts 8.

But note this interesting fact that when Cornelius received the Holy Spirit he was saved; at the time he was saved he received the Holy Spirit. Acts 11:13 to 16.

RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THIS DAY OF GRACE

There are some Christians who seem to believe that we should have an experience similar to that of the twelve apostles. They were saved many months before they received the holy Spirit. The Lord said to them "the Holy Spirit dwelleth with you and He shall be in you." John 14:17. But no such instructions are given to any member of the Body of Christ saved by believing the gospel of grace. The twelve apostles did not receive the Holy Spirit at the time they became the Lord's disciples, because the Holy Spirit was not yet given. John 7:38 and 39 and John 16:7 to 12. The three thousands Jews on the day of Pentecost did not have to wait many months, as did the twelve apostles, for the Holy Spirit, because when they repented the Holy had been sent down From heaven.

What is a Christian? A Christian is a Christ's one. The word "Christ" comes from the verb meaning, "anoint." A Christian is an anointed one, and the anointing abideth in the believer. I John 2:27 and 28. Now note carefully II Corinthians 1:21 and 22:

"Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

Here we learn definitely that a Christian is one who has the Holy Spirit in his heart. The Corinthians were very carnal and were doing wrong. I Corinthians 6:5 to 10 and 3:1 to 5. But the Holy Spirit was in them. I Corinthians 6:9. They had been sanctified by the holy Spirit. I Corinthians 6:11. They were saints. I Corinthians 1:1 and 2.

Note what Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Galatians 3:2. Then he told them that because Christ died on the cross, believers received the holy Spirit through faith. Galatians 3:14.

Note carefully Ephesians 1:13 and 14:

"THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION; IN WHOM ALSO BELIEVING, YE WERE SEALED WITH THAT HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE, WHICH IS THE, EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL THE REDEMPTION OF THE PURCHASED POSSESSION.

Then note in this connection Ephesians 4:30:

"AND GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD, WHEREBY YE ARE SEALED UNTO HIS DAY' OF REDEMPTION."

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we learn that the believer is sainted (sanctified), saved, sealed, seated in the heavenlies and secure, all by the infinite grace of God, because God is rich in mercy for the great love: wherewith He loves dead sinners, and because of the efficacy and value and power of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note in Ephesians 1:3, that the believer is blessed with all spiritual blessings, and in Ephesians 1:19 to 23 the mighty power of God is available for the believer. With all spiritual blessings at the believer's disposal, with the mighty power of God available because the believer is in Christ in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and because the believer is complete in Christ, is it not the height of folly, as well as spiritual ignorance, for a member of the Body of Christ to be seeking for the second blessing and more power? Some even teach that if the saved member of the Body of Christ does not seek sanctification, he may lose his salvation. We wonder if they have read II Thessalonians 2:13; and Hebrews 10:10 and 14, and I Corinthians 6:11, and I Corinthians 1:30. Christ is the believer's sanctification. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering; of the body of Christ once for all and perfected forever." "Chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit."

When the dead sinners of Ephesians 2:1 to 6 were made alive by God's grace, His Divine baptism made them members of Christ's Body and baptized them into the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and raised them up far above all principalities and powers to sit is the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. There is One Body, One Baptism, One Spirit, even as there is only One Christ. Those who seek for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the second work of Sanctification, say that the sanctified believer may at any time lose his baptism of the Holy Spirit. In other words a believer must either get rid of his carnal nature by the baptism of the holy Spirit in a second work or he may lose his Divine nature and be eternally lost. But the Word of God is very clear in the statements that entirely agree with the experience of every regenerated believer, and that is, that every member of the Body of Christ is a saint, a temple of the Holy spirit, and every believer has two natures. No matter what religious scheme or philosophy may be employed he can never get rid of his nature until the day of redemption, and thanks be unto

God, there is no possible way of losing the Divine nature as long as the believer believes the gospel of his salvation. He may grieve the Holy Spirit; but he is sealed unto the day of redemption. Nothings on earth or below or no created thing can separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus, because believers were chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world Ephesians 1:4 to 11 . . . Romans 8:28 to 37 . . . II Timothy 1:9 and 10. Therefore who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

" Pisteusantes, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit." "After that ye believed" in Ephesians 1:13 is one Greek word, "pisteusantes" and it should be translated, "believing."

The same word "pisteusantes" is used in the question of Paul in Acts 19:2 ". . . PISTEUSANTES, RECEIVED YE THE HOLY SPIRIT?" They did not receive the Holy Spirit at the time they Believed, because they did not hear and believe the gospel of the grace of God. "Since ye believed" in Acts 19:2 is more than a faulty translation. It is a serious blunder. Many foolish "sanctification" and "Holy Spirit-baptism" theories and vagaries have been supported by this mistranslation of a very Simple question and explanation. We learn in Ephesians 1:13; that the believer receives the Holy Spirit when he believes.

Thus we see that the sealing, the anointing, the earnest, the indwelling and the baptism of, with, in, or by, the Holy Spirit is never something that is a future experience with any member of the Body of Christ, but always a past experience; all is received when the believer is saved by grace.

JOEL AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

Inasmuch as Joel had nothing to say about the dispensation of the grace of God, God's program of grace during; this parenthetical period, or the Church of the Mystery, described in Ephesians, no member of the Body of Christ receives the Divine baptism for membership in the Body of Christ in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. If he does, then Israel and the kingdom and the Body of Christ are all one and the same and all teaching concerning the postponement of the kingdom and a parenthetical "grace" age is unscriptural; and that or course, means that the church will go through the tribulation. The important baptism is the death baptism of Romans 6:3 and 4, Colossians 2:12, Lake 12:50 and Ephesians 4:5.

THE THREE LAWS OF ROMANS 8:1 TO 4

In these verses we read of three great laws. "The law of sin and death, by Adam." "The law, the ministration of condemnation and death, by Moses,"

II Corinthians 3:5 to 9. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Thus we learn that; By Adam is the entrance of Sin. Romans 5:12. By Moses is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20, 5:20 and Galatians 3:19. By Jesus Christ is the forgiveness of sins. Acts 13:39.

Paul wrote, "When Christ who is our life shall appear." Colossians 3:1 to 4. Christ declared Himself to be the life. John 14:6. Paul wrote, "Christ liveth in me." "For me to live is Christ." In II Timothy 1:10 we learn that Christ brings life and the guarantee of incorruptibility to light in the gospel. In John 10:28 we Have the words of Christ, "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish." In John 11:25 Christ is the resurrection and the life for believers who will never die." Christ had power to lay down His life and to take it up again. John 10:17 to 19.

Thus we understand that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus frees the believer from the law of sin and death; from the penalty and wages of sin; from the wrath to come. The sum total of man's spiritual responsibility and duty is, with respect to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." First, to appropriate that law and be Saved. Second, to demonstrate that law by walking in the Spirit and fulfilling the righteousness of the law. Third, to propagate that law of life by preaching it to others; that is, by proclaiming the message of grace unmixed with religion or legalism.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT FULFILLING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW

Note in Romans 8:4, what we mean by demonstrating the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

"THAT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN US, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT."

Then note the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 and 23: "against such there is no law."

In Galatians the believer is crucified to the law, to the world and to the flesh. In Romans 6:1 to 17 the believer's old man has been crucified. The believer is a new creature in Christ Jesus. He is to reckon himself dead unto sin and alive unto God and righteousness. He is to constantly put off the old man and put on the new man. Colossians 3:9 to 11. Ephesians 4:22 to 32.

The believer is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, by praying without ceasing, by studying and rightly dividing the Word of truth, by having no confidence in the flesh, by glorying in the Lord, by worshipping in Spirit and in truth by witnessing for Christ as true, faithful ambassadors, by gathering in assemblies with those of like precious faith. The believer who will observe and practice the Divine rules will be of power and love and of a sound mind. There is no short cut to a spiritual, or Spirit-filled, life in Christ Jesus.

LESSON EIGHT

DID ACTS 28:25 TO 28 MARK A CHANGE IN GOD'S PROGRAM?

The Book of Acts is called "The Acts of the Apostles We have observed that Peter is the principal human actor in the first eleven chapters or Acts; that Paul is the chief human actor in the last sixteen chapters of Acts. We Have observed that in the last sixteen chapters of Acts there is no record of the spiritual activities of Peter or the other eleven apostles except as they had dealings with the apostle Paul. Therefore, the Book of Acts is very definitely a record of the spiritual activities of the apostle Paul. Then the question that must come to the mind of the thinking student of the Scriptures, why did the Book of Acts rather suddenly end before the life of Paul ended? The human author of the Book of Acts was Luke, the beloved physician, and he was with Paul when he wrote his last Epistle. Note II Timothy 4:11. Then why did not the Holy Spirit lead Luke to include in the Book of Arts the spiritual activities of the apostle Paul to the day of his death? For some Divine reason it was the will of God that the apostle Paul should write about one-half of his Epistles before the close of the Book of Acts, or during those thirty years of the "Acts" period, and about one-half of them after the judgment recorded in Acts 28:25 to 28. Moreover, the student of the Pauline Messages who has not observed a difference between

the Lord's spiritual program in Paul's Pre-prison Epistles and His Prison Epistles has not been a very careful student of those Messages.

Perhaps, there is a meaning in the statements of Paul in I Corinthians 13:8 to 13 that we have not understood. Let us note some of those statements written before Paul reached Rome to become the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." As we read this statement we think of the truth of Hebrews 5:11 to 6:1, the difference between the milk of the Word for those who are babes and unskillful and those who are of full-age (perfect). Certain things are to be left behind as the child of God goes on to perfection; not perfection in behavior here but in doctrine. Why? "That, we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine Ephesians 4:14. This last statement is made in connection with "The Perfect Man" of Ephesians 4:13. If the apostle Paul had written to the Corinthians the truth of Ephesians 4:13, they would not have understood that "manhood" truth. I Corinthians 3:1 to 7. Is it not true, but sad, that more than ninety-eight percent of the members of the Body of Christ never get beyond Corinthian truth, the milk of the Word? God declares that they are unskillful in the Word of righteousness. If they knew the truth of II Corinthians 5:16, would the Postmillenarians join with the Modernists in their cry, "back to Jesus," "give us the program of Jesus of Nazareth," or would the Fundamentalists among the Premillenarian join with the fanatical Pentecostals and cry, "back to Pentecost,"? Certainly not, they would all say "on with Paul, unto perfection." This is God's will for those who are of full age, who desire to progress from childhood to manhood.

If we are not led by the Holy Spirit to "test things that differ" and to "rightly divide the Word of truth," if we do not receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ to know what is the hope of His calling (Ephesians 1:17 to 19), how can we expect to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called (Ephesians 4:1) and make others see "the dispensation of the mystery"? (Ephesians 3:9).

Behold the utter confusion concerning the commission of Mark 16:14 to 18 and the sign-gifts of I Corinthians 12:8 to 11, because the Lord's messengers, described in Hebrews 5:11 and 12, have not put away childish things. If we do not see the difference in God's spiritual program after the close of "Acts" and understand the meaning of I Corinthians 13:8 to 13, then we should join with the Pentecostals in their cry "back to Pentecost" and earnestly seek for the recovery of that program of miracles which the Church of Christ has lost somewhere along the way. Some preacher in England truly said, "if the signs of Mark 16:16 to 18 are the credentials of a Christian, there have been no Christians on the earth for more than eighteen hundred years." If there was not a change in God's spiritual program after Acts 28:25 to 28, and we are to carry on the same program of sign-gifts found among the members of the Corinthian assembly, then let us emphasize the truth of I Corinthians 12:28 and contend for that program when we contend for the faith once-for-all delivered unto the saints. Note that verse: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." God set these gifts in the church. Who set them out? Think of the foolish explanation offered by some real, spiritual leaders among Evangelical Christians. They say, "they are here, if you can find them." Then they admit that about the only place you can find them, except in the counterfeit, is in the foreign field several thousand miles away. But the Pentecostals say, "Come with us, we preach the full Pentecostal gospel and we do the miracles. We heal and we speak with tongues." Remember that all of the

sign-gifts were found in Corinth, and that the members of the church there were the least spiritual of any of the saints to whom Paul ministered.

Now note the Word of God: "Whether there be tongues they shall be done away; whether there be knowledge it shall be done away." "And now abideth faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." I Corinthians 13:8 and 13. Then in the next chapter the apostle refers to the churchmember who gives an uncertain sound on the trumpet. 14:8. All about us in the Pentecostal camps we hear the uncertain sound of the trumpet, because these deluded people do not know the change that took place after Acts 28:25 to 28, and the Evangelical Christians, who are teaching that the dispensation of the mystery began with the Pentecost of Acts Two, have no antidote or corrective ministry for this wild fanaticism, and therefore in many sections of the country Fundamentalism and Fanaticism are synonymous. The gospel of the grace of God is confused with the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the circumcision.

CONCERNING ISRAEL'S BLINDNESS AND GENTILE SALVATION

The pronouncement of Acts 28:25 to 27 is in the language of Isaiah 6:9 and 10, and we ask what has the judgment at the close of Acts to do with the Divine judgment pronounced in Isaiah 6:9 and 10? First let us note several verses in the eleventh chapter of Romans

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

"(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day."

"Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway."

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." Romans 11:7, 8, 10 and 11.

Now note carefully Romans 11:30 and 33:

"For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief."

"O THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT."

Thus we see that the blindness of Israel was in the program and purpose of God.

In this connection note carefully John 12:37 to 41:

"But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory and spake of Him."

Note this also is the quotation of Isaiah 6:9 and 10. Again we say with Paul:

"O THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS, AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT."

If we would but see the three-fold mutual rejection of God and Israel, we would better understand what God means when He says, "I would not have you ignorant of this secret." Romans 11:25.

Again read the parable of the vineyard, in Matthew 21:33 to 46. We quote II Kings 17:18 and 23:27:

"Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only."

"And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."

Israel rejected the Lord and the Lord rejected Israel before the incarnation of their Messiah. Then note Matthew 21:37:

"But last of all He sent His Son, saying, They will reverence My Son."

But the builders rejected the Stone. Matthew 21:42. Israel rejected the Lord in incarnation.

Then they were given the third offer, the opportunity to receive the Messiah in resurrection. Note how this is stated in Acts 3:14 to 26—Acts 5:29 to 32—Acts 13:32 to 41.

Note what the rulers of Israel did concerning the resurrected Messiah and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye." Acts 7:51.

"Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." Acts 5:57 and 58.

"When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took council to slay them." Acts 5:33.

"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13:45 and 46.

"And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Acts 18:5 and 6.

"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith." Romans 11:20.

When the Lord Jesus, on earth, proclaimed the seven parables of the kingdom of heaven He began with the quotation of Isaiah 6:9 and 10—Read it in Matthew 13:13 to 15.

Note what Christ had said in Matthew 8:11 and 12: "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Then, in Matthew 12:30 to 33, the Lord Jesus told of the pardonable sin of rejecting the Son of man (in incarnation), and the unpardonable sin of rejecting the witness of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 5:32) as to the resurrection of the Son of man. When the Jews in Jerusalem resisted the Holy Spirit Stephen saw the Son of man standing in heaven. Acts 7:51 to 57.

Note Acts 13:18 and 23:

"And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness."

"Of this man's seed hath God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Saviour Jesus."

Perhaps the Holy Spirit had in mind the forty-year period in Israel's history, from Egypt to Canaan, and the forty-year period from the day John the Baptist introduced the Messiah to Israel to the desolation of Israel by the Roman emperor, about 70 A.D. Note John's words in connection with that introduction:

"And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." John 1:31.

Then note what Christ said would happen to Israel when their desolation came:

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke 21:23.

Note Isaiah 6:9 to 13:

"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." "Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." "And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land."

When God spake to Israel, in II Kings, Jeremiah and Isaiah, He referred many times very specifically to the conquest of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon.

That conquest marked the setting aside of Israel, and the beginning of "the times of the Gentiles," politically. There was a blind Jew, Zedekiah. Read II Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52. The Lord turned then to the Gentiles. There was a blind Jew in Acts 13, "Bar-jesus." The Lord again turned to the Gentiles. Acts 13:46. After that began "the times of the Gentiles" spiritually.

The times of the Gentiles, politically, will end with the events recorded in Luke 21:25 to 33.

Note the culmination of "the times of the Gentiles," spiritually.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a Perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13.

Then what?

"And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Romans 11:26 to 29.

As Barjesus, the child of Jehovah the Saviour, was blind only for a season, so also will the nation Israel.

"O THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS AND HIS WAYS PAST FINDING OUT." Romans 11:33.