

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson # 12

COMMENTARY ON: 2:43-47

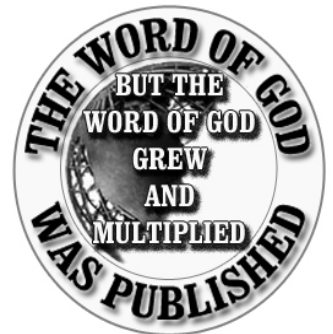
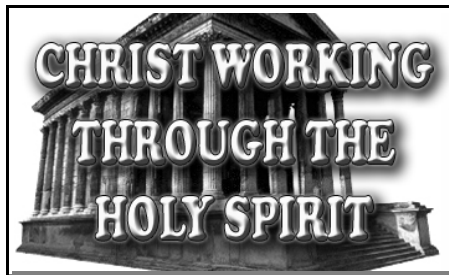
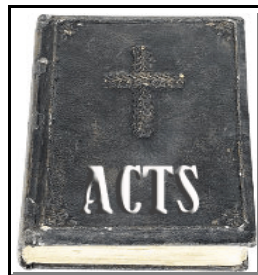
THE EFFECT OF CONVERSION

The impact of truth upon the human spirit is staggering to consider. Upon knowing, or apprehending, *"the truth of the Gospel,"* the character of the individual is reshaped – the consequence of being born again. When one makes the Divinely accomplished transition from *"the power of darkness"* to *"the Kingdom of" God's "dear Son,"* life in all of its aspects becomes radically different. A purported conversion that leaves the individual fundamentally the same is no conversion at all. A person cannot be made *"new,"* yet remain basically *"old."* Sins cannot be remitted and the Holy spirit given without it impacting on a person's perspective, focus, and reason for living. That is why conversion is referred to as being raised from death in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). While the measure of a person's change may not appear the same, the fact of it will be evident. This is why the liberated souls of our text begin doing what no law could make them do. They began fulfilling the righteousness of the Law.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

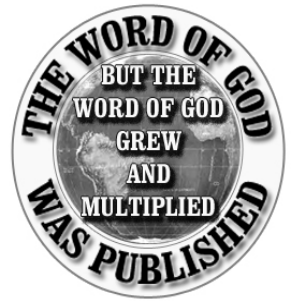


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 12



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God's Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

THE EFFECT OF CONVERSION

“ 2:43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. ⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (Acts 2:33-47)

INTRODUCTION

The impact of truth upon the human spirit is staggering to consider. Upon knowing, or apprehending, *“the truth of the Gospel,”* **the character of the individual is reshaped** – the consequence of being born again. When one makes the Divinely accomplished transition from *“the power of darkness”* to *“the Kingdom*

of” God’s *“dear Son,”* **life in all of its aspects becomes radically different.** A purported conversion that leaves the individual fundamentally the same is no conversion at all. A person cannot be made *“new,”* yet remain basically *“old.”* Sins cannot be remitted and the Holy Spirit given without it impacting on a

person’s perspective, focus, and reason for living. That is why conversion is referred to as being raised from death in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1). While the measure of a person’s change may not appear the same, the **fact** of it will be evident. This is why the liberated souls of our text begin doing what no code could

Opportunities to bring glory to God are afforded when men are in the process of honoring Him by Given O. Blakely

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make them do. They began fulfilling the righteousness of the Law (Rom 8:2).

BABYLON'S CONTRIBUTION

Babylon the Great, that spiritual monstrosity that is noted for its fornication and opposition to the saints (Rev 17:5-6; 18:2-3), has promoted a religion that does not involve a radical moral and spiritual change. In fact, it is exceedingly difficult in our country to distinguish believers from unbelievers. From within the church itself, it is often confessed that those in the world often have more comely observable traits than those who profess to be members of the body of Christ. While care must be taken not to overemphasize appearance, it must be made clear that an ungodly appearance strongly suggests, if not outrightly proves, an ungodly character.

ABOUT APPEARANCE

When Jesus spoke of not being deceived by appearance, He was not speaking of a wicked and worldly appearance, but of a comely appearance that was nothing more than simulation. *"Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity"* (Mat 23:28). He never suggested that a person who was genuinely godly could appear as

though they were ungodly, and a person who had been delivered from the world could continue to look as though that had not occurred. This is precisely why Paul solemnly admonished believers *"abstain from ALL appearance of evil"* (1 Thess 5:22). Speaking of our outward manners, it is also written, *"Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God"* (1 Cor 10:32). And again, *"Giving no offence in any thing"* (2 Cor 6:3). And again, *"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men"* (2 Cor 8:21).

It is out of order for any professing Christian to ask other believers to overlook their carnality, or not judge them for uncomely manners. Not knowing men *"after the flesh"* (2 Cor 5:16a) does not suggest that we ignore ungodly conduct and manners. We do not know Jesus *"after the flesh"* (2 Cor 5:16b), but that does not suggest He had uncomely ways that we are asked to ignore. Let all believers have done with suggesting that worldly manners are to be glossed, and that we are to pretend that unrighteous conduct can be ignored. If we are told *"touch not the unclean thing"* (2 Cor 6:17), *"let not corrupt communication come out of your mouth"* (Eph 4:29), and *"be ye holy in all manner of conversation"* (1 Pet 1:15), who is the person willing to suggest such things are to be ignored? How can men be convicted of sin if believers act as though it is not really there? It is the solemn obligation of every professing believer to see to it that their lives are not a distraction, and that they do not contradict their profession.

THE FACT OF REAL CHANGE

All of this is true because in Christ a very real change does take place. That is why conversion is referred to as being *"born again"* (John 3:3,7; 1 Pet 1:23). There is a termination of one manner of life, and the commencement of another manner. Jesus called it making *"the tree good"* (Matt 12:33), becoming

"as little children" (Matt 18:3), being born *"of God"* (John 1:13), and being made *"free indeed"* (John 8:32,36). The book of Acts refers to this as the hearts being *"purified by faith"* (Acts 15:9), and the Lord opening the heart (Acts 16:14).

The Apostles referred to the new birth in a variety of ways: being *"freed from sin"* (Rom 6:7), being *"made free from the law of sin and of death"* (Rom 8:2), God putting us into Christ (1 Cor 1:30), becoming a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), putting on Christ (Gal 3:27), being quickened *"together with Christ"* (Eph 2:5), and being saved by *"the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"*^{NKJV} (Tit 3:5).

It is inconceivable that such things could occur without a change becoming very evident. Ponder how regeneration involves moving from one domain to another.

- ⇒ From being blind *TO* having our eyes opened (Acts 26:18a; 2 Cor 4:4,6; Hb 10:32).
- ⇒ From darkness *TO* light (Acts 26:18b; Eph 4:18-23; 5:8).
- ⇒ From the power of Satan *TO* God (Acts 26:18c; Col 1:13; Heb 2:15).
- ⇒ Made free from sin and become servants *TO* God (Rom 6:22).
- ⇒ Passing from death *TO* life (1 John 3:14; John 5:24; Rom 6:4; 8:2).
- ⇒ From being alienated *TO* being reconciled (Col 1:21).
- ⇒ Out of darkness *INTO* His marvelous light (1 Pet 2:9).
- ⇒ From being *"not a people"* *TO* being *"the people of God"* (1 Pet 2:10a).
- ⇒ From not having obtained mercy *TO* obtaining mercy (1 Pet 2:10b).

It is out of order for any professing Christian to ask other believers to overlook their carnality, or not judge them for uncomely manners.

It approaches blasphemy to suppose that the work accomplished by the Son of God would not have moral and spiritual consequences of unspeakable magnitude.

The God of Salvation

Is it possible for God to really work without anything significant really happening? – and salvation in all of its intricacies is a work of God (Jonah 2:9; Rev 7:10). When God worked in creation, something **observable** and of significant duration took place. When He sent a flood to destroy the ungodly and save Noah, something **evident** took place. When He delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, something **perceptible** took place. **Can it be that in His greatest work – recreating men in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10) – nothing really takes place?** In a moral and spiritual recreation are we to expect that no genuine change occurs? Do those who are “*saved*” remain fundamentally the same as they were before? Do their **basic** appetites remain as they were before? Are their **primary** inclinations unchanged? I acknowledge that if we look at the modern church we might be inclined to think this is the case. If we consult with the religious counselors and professed *Christian psychiatrists*, we might consider this to be likely.

How is it possible for the transition from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, to take place without it impacting upon the conduct of the individual? And, if a change of this magnitude can, in fact, occur without effecting our lives, precisely in what sense have we been changed, or delivered, or reconciled, or regenerated, or born again? It is the business of those who wear the name of Jesus to press these matters upon the conscience of men.

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

It is necessary to say these things because of the religious climate in which we are living. It suggests that a person can be reconciled to the Lord and still be a friend of the world. **But this is not so, for a holy God has no tolerance of sinners just because they call themselves Christians.** If they are not changed, then they are not His children, for, in Christ, He does not beget sinners. Or, is there someone who would care to affirm that He does do such a thing?

But there is another reason why these things must be declared. The change wrought in regeneration accounts for the conduct in those of our text. **If we do not see their manners as a consequence of their reconciliation to God, we will be inclined to view them as moral supermen – a sort of lofty example that is wholly divorced from our situation.** Therefore, instead of perceiving them as a means to measure our own profession, we will be moved to think of them as superior believers, quite unlike ourselves. They will, in such a case, be more like heroes than like brethren. If that is so, their record will no longer be profitable to us, and will not be perceived as a relevant word.

Unless a person is a fool, the absurdity of such thinking will be evident. **It approaches blasphemy to suppose that the work accomplished by the Son of God would not have moral and spiritual consequences of unspeakable magnitude.** But let me say no more on the matter. Let the text speak to you. Matthew Henry well says of the believers of our text, “They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in all instances of piety and devotion, for Christianity, admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways wherein He has appointed us to meet Him and promised to meet us.” MATTHEW HENRY NOTES

We must never allow ourselves to become accustomed to lifeless religion. It is lethal to the soul dishonoring to God, and reproachful to Christ.

FEAR CAME UPON EVERY SOUL

^{2:48a} **And fear came upon every soul . . .**

When it comes to the results of repenting and believing the Gospel (Mk 1:15), they are always the same. The effects of being regenerated do not differ from individual to individual. Personalities may differ. Ministries, or assigned functions within the body of Christ, may differ. **However, the essential nature of the redeemed is the same.** This is seen in the initial response of those within our text. They all

repented and were baptized – “*every one of you*” (Acts 2:38). **Everyone** who “*gladly received his word were baptized*” (2:41). **Everyone** “*continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine*” (2:42a). **Everyone** continued steadfastly “*in fellowship*” (2:42b). **Everyone** continued steadfastly in “*the breaking of bread*” (2:42c). **Everyone** continued steadfastly in “*prayers*” (2:42d). Now we will be introduced to another thing that was common among them all.

FEAR

“*And fear came . . .*” Other versions read, “*kept feeling a sense of awe*,”^{NASB} “*filled with awe*,”^{NIV} “*Awe came upon*,”^{NRSV} “*feeling of fear came over*,”^{GWN} “*And fear was on*,”^{MRD} “*Reverential awe came over*,”^{NET} “*A deep sense of awe*,”^{LIVING} “*felt great respect for God*,”^{IE} “*A sense of reverence seized*”^{WILLIAMS} and “*sense of awe (reverential fear)*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

I must confess that I have never been fully satisfied with the explanations I have heard concerning this kind of “*fear*.” Perhaps the words “*reverence*,”

“awe,” and “respect” are etymologically correct, but in our culture they do not have much of an impact upon the human spirit. We are living in a time and place where the concepts of reverence, awe, and respect are hardly known. It is a self-centered society in which self has been enthroned in the place of God. That is the reason for the dominance of indulgence, entertainment, sports and various forms of, what is called, addiction. All of these are driven by the perception that “self” is the center of the world, and nothing really matters but self-satisfaction. In this kind of society, “fear” means very little. It is only associated with things that are harmful and overpowering – whether a force of, what is called, “nature,” of some facet of human abuse and oppression.

As used in this text, “fear” is a noun (as opposed to the verb usage “they feared”) and has a very strong meaning. Coming from the Greek word φόβος (fobos, from which we get the word “phobia”), it includes the ideas of “dread, terror,” THAYER “causing fear, source of fear, terror . . . dread, alarm,” FRIBERG “a state of severe distress, aroused by intense concern for impending pain, danger . . . troubled in every way,” LOUW-NIDA “panic, fear . . . terror, properly of the outward show of fear, and so distinguished from the sensation of fear . . . to strike terror into one,” LIDDELL-SCOTT “terror,” LEH “a terror . . . fear, alarm, fright.” GINGRICH

One lexicographer observes, “In a number of languages there is no noun-like word for ‘fear.’ Accordingly, expressions containing such a noun in Greek must often be restructured so that the corresponding semantic unit may be expressed by a verb. Therefore, instead of ‘fear,’ one may have expressions such as ‘be afraid,’ or ‘to fear.’ Instead of ‘fears within (2 Cor 7:5), one may translate ‘in our hearts we were afraid.’” LOUW-NIDA

As the next phrase will confirm, this is not a human response, but something that comes upon the individual. It is a consequence of being in the presence of Divine working, and knowing that this is the case. Where the truth of God is proclaimed, and the works of God are being wrought, this kind of “fear” is realized.

This exposes the fallacy of much of the modern *praise movement*, which tends to promote casualness that is totally foreign to this text. We are being

exposed to a record of genuine Divine working, bona fide repentance, and actual spiritual effects. These circumstances are unsullied with religious tradition and corruption. Such intrusions will eventually find their way into the church – even in its early days. But they are totally absent in our text.

CAME UPON EVERY SOUL

“. . . upon every soul . . .” Other versions read, “everyone,” NASB “every mind,” MRD and “every person.” IE

Keep in mind that this is a noun,

them that heard these things” (Acts 5:5).

⇨ **AFTER SAPPHIRA WAS STRUCK DEAD.** “And *great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things*” (Acts 5:11).

⇨ **WHEN THE SONS OF SCEVA WERE OVERCOME BY A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN.** “And *this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified*” (Acts

This is something outside of men that comes upon them – “fear came upon every soul.” There are a number of places in Scripture where this same type of thing occurred – fear imposed upon men from outside of themselves.

not a verb. Strictly speaking, as I have already said, in this text it is **not a human response**. This is something outside of men that comes upon them – “fear **came upon every soul.**” There are a number of places in Scripture where this same type of thing occurred – fear imposed upon men from outside of themselves.

⇨ **ZECHARIAS.** “And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and **fear fell upon him**” (Lk 1:12).

⇨ **THOSE IN THE HILL COUNTRY OF JUDEA.** “And **fear came on all that dwelt round about them; and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea**” (Lk 1:65).

⇨ **DURING JESUS’ MINISTRY.** “And **there came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people**” (Lk 7:16).

⇨ **WHEN ANANIAS WAS STRUCK DEAD.** “And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost; and **great fear came on all**

19:17).

Eliphaz the Temanite described to Job the kind of fear in our text, saying he personally had experienced it. It was a fear that came upon him. “*In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, **Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.** Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth? They are destroyed from morning to evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away? they die, even without wisdom*” (Job 4:13-21).

On the banks of the Red Sea, when Moses led Israel in the song of triumph, they insightfully said of their enemies, “**Fear and dread shall fall upon**

them; by the greatness of Thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which Thou hast purchased” (Ex 15:16). Jeremiah spoke of a fear that **seized** Damascus. *“Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail”* (Jer 49:24). David said of the enemies of the Lord, *“fear took hold upon them”* (Psa 48:6).

This is the kind of fear that brings with it the utmost sobriety. Those upon whom such a fear comes do not speak hastily, stand in judgment of God, or treat His people with contempt. They become keenly aware of their own weakness, and the irresistible and mighty power of the great God. The

frailty of humanity is seen in the light of the all consuming presence of God. That is why we read of people being *“taken with great fear”* (Lk 8:37), and *“great fear”* falling upon people (Acts 5:5,11; Rev 11:11).

This *“fear”* cannot be induced by men. This is the result of the perceived working of the Lord. In the case of our text, it was not an awesome judgment, like the death of Ananias and Sapphira. Rather, it was the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the displaying of Divine power in the mighty deeds wrought by the Apostles. **It was clear to all that God Himself was among them!** This is why Paul spoke of a stranger coming into an assembly of the righteous and being convinced by their speaking that God was among them. *“But if all*

prophecy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth” (1 Cor 14:24-25). That is the effect of the kind of fear to which our text now exposes us.

We must ever keep before us that we are being introduced to **real** conversion and its very real effects. These are the kind of results that proceed from believing and obeying the Gospel of Christ, and receiving the Holy Spirit. It is glaringly obvious that there is a total absence of the dreaded presence of institutionalism in this text. Jesus Christ has truly *“apprehended”* these people (Phil 3:12).

MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS WERE DONE

“ 43a . . . and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.”

Commencing with the fourteenth verse of this chapter the apostles have risen to prominence. In fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, other *“sons”* and *“daughters”* and *“young men”* and *“old men”* had spoken. But now, the foundation-layers, in whose doctrine the people *“continued steadfastly,”* are in the spiritual limelight. **Everyone who is saved is in the body of Christ, but they are not all equal as regards their ministry.** The Holy Spirit speaks of a

first apostles, *secondarily* prophets, *thirdly* teachers, **after that** miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor 12:28). Note that godly *“teachers”* rank higher in the body of Christ than those with *“gifts of healing,”* administrators, and those who can speak a multiplicity of languages through the power of the Holy Spirit.

MANY WONDERS AND SIGNS

“ . . . and many wonders and signs . . . ” Other versions read, *“many wonders and miraculous signs,”* NIV *“all sorts of wonders and signs,”* BBE *“many amazing*

miracles,” NJB *“many miracles,”* LIVING *“many powerful and amazing things,”* IE and *“many marvels and signs.”* WEYMOUTH

“Wonders”

A *“wonder”* is *“something so strange as to cause it to be watched and observed.”* THAYER Other lexical meanings are *“something so unusual it arouses close observation.”* FRIBERG Here, the emphasis is on **the nature of the thing that is wrought.** It is outside the sphere of creation and the ordinary, and thus demands the attention of the people. Especially at the beginning of the New Covenant era, the apostles wrought *“many wonders,”* drawing attention to the uniqueness of this time and the nature of Divine involvements with men. In their very essence, *“wonders”* are something visible to the eye, for their purpose is to capture the attention of men. Technically, all miracles are **not** *“wonders”* – designed to capture the attention of the people. Some were wrought out of the Lord’s compassion, as when He fed a multitude of five thousand men, besides women and children (Matt 15:32). Other miracles were wrought in relative seclusion, not intended to get the attention of the people – as when He raised Jairus’ daughter, Mk 5:40 and Peter obtain a coin from a fish. Matt 17:27

Here the focus is the confirmation of the apostles as messengers sent forth by Christ Jesus Himself. There is also a matter of confirming that the word was from God, and was to be heeded. In this kind of miracle, the point was not the miracle itself, but something of even greater import.

certain ranking in the body of Christ. *“And God hath set some in the church,*

things and miraculous signs,” GWN *“many signs and prodigies,”* MRD *“many signs and*

“Signs”

A “*sign*” is a miraculous work by which “a person or thing is distinguished from others and known” ^{THAYER} Other lexical meanings include, “what serves as a pointer or means of confirmation,” ^{FRIBERG} “that by which something is known or distinguished,” ^{UBS} and “an event regarded as having some special meaning.” ^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here the focus is the confirmation of the apostles as messengers sent forth by Christ Jesus Himself. There is also a matter of confirming that the word was from God, and was to be heeded. In this kind of miracle, the point was not the miracle itself, but something of even greater import. An example is the healing of the impotent men who had been let down through a roof to the feet of Jesus. On that occasion Jesus said, “**But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house**” (Matt 9:6).

“Many”

The word “*many*” comes from the Greek word **πολλά** (pol-lah), which means, “much, multitude, many, numerous . . . abundant plenteous,” ^{THAYER} “of extent or magnitude great, large, much, many, plentiful . . . things that occur in a mass or in large quantities,” ^{FRIBERG} “much more, all the more,, many more,” ^{UBS} “a great number of,” ^{LOUW-NIDA} “great populous,” ^{LEH} and “very great, very large.” ^{GINGRICH}

Sometimes men refer to things being “*many*,” when there is only a nominal number of them. They use the word relatively, speaking of things that do not really appear to be numerous or abundant: “many people are saying,” or “many surveys confirm.” **However, the Holy Spirit does not speak in this manner. He is not given to exaggeration, hyperbole, or overstatement.** Both the number and nature of these works were extraordinary, matching the uniqueness and effectiveness of the New Covenant being implemented through the apostles.

Thoughts on Many Miracles

The word “*miracles*” (plural) is mentioned four times in Genesis through Malachi (Num 14:22; Deut 11:3; 29:3; Judges 6:13). Other versions employ the word once, ^{NKJV} six times, ^{NASB} ten times, ^{NIV} and five times. ^{NRSV/RSV} Alternate words used in the KJV for these are “*wonders*” (Ex 3:20), “*marvels*” (Ex 34:10), “*signs*”

(Psa 105:27), “*marvelous things*” (Mic 7:15), “*marvelous works*” (Psa 105:15), and “*wondrous works*” (Psa 106:22). **Throughout the Old Covenant Scriptures there is not a single reference to “*many miracles*,” or “*many signs*,” or “*many wonders*” in any standard version of Scripture.**

I mention these things to show the uniqueness of our text. The word “*miracles*” is mentioned twenty-three times in Matthew through Revelation (John 2:11,23; 3:2; 6:2,26; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:37; Acts 2:22; 6:8; 8:6,13; 15:12; 19:11; 1 Cor 12:10,28,29; Gal 3:5; Heb 2:4; Rev 13:14; 16:14; 19:20). There are also ten references to “*mighty works*.” Add to that the twenty-five references to “*signs*” and “*wonders*,” and you see the significance of the New Covenant era.

Prior to Jesus, there were a few individuals through whom great miracles were wrought: Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha. Samson accomplished several feats of unparalleled strength. But I do not believe there were ever two persons who were working miracles simultaneously. Joshua’s feat of making the sun and moon stand still took place **after** Moses died (Josh 10:12-14). All of Elisha’s miracles were accomplished **after** his predecessor Elijah had been translated. There were no miracle workers who were contemporary with Samson.

But with Jesus, the rarity of miracles came to an end. Even His enemies confessed that He did “*many*

Another time He sent out seventy disciples, telling them to “*heal the sick*” (Lk 10:9). When they returned, saying even the demons were subject to them, He told them, “*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you*” (Luke 10:19). **Never before in the history of the world had there been such an assault on the kingdom of darkness!** Many miracles by many people.

WERE DONE BY THE APOSTLES

“*. . . were done by the apostles.*” Other versions read, “*were done through the apostles,*” ^{NKJV} “*were taking place through the apostles,*” ^{NASB} “*were being performed through the apostles,*” ^{CSB} “*took place through the apostles’ means,*” ^{DARBY} “*happened through the apostles,*” ^{GWN} “*were [wrought] by the hand of the legates in Jerusalem,*” ^{MED} “*came about by the apostles,*” ^{NET} “*the apostles worked,*” ^{NJB} “*the apostles performed,*” ^{NLT} “*were showed by the apostles,*” ^{TNT} “*were being done through the apostles,*” ^{YLT} “*God used the apostles to do,*” ^{IE} and “*were performed through the apostles (the special messengers).*” ^{AMPLIFIED}

A point is made of this confirmation in several different texts of Scripture.

⇒ “*And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen*” (Mark 16:20).

⇒ “*And by the hands of the apostles*

But with Jesus, the rarity of miracles came to an end. Even His enemies confessed that He did “many miracles.” Once He sent out His twelve apostles to work miracles – “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.” Another time He sent out seventy disciples, telling them to “heal the sick.”

miracles” (John 11:47). Once He sent out His twelve apostles to work miracles – “*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils*” (Matt 10:8).

were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch” (Acts 5:12).

⇨ “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also **bearing them witness**, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?” (Heb 2:4).

These particular “wonders and signs” were not simply a ministry among the people. **In fact, although there was ministry in them, that was not their primary purpose.** Just as God had “approved” of Jesus “by miracles and wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22), so He was approving of the Apostles and their message through these means. The “power of God unto salvation” is not through “wonders and signs,” however voluminous and epochal they may be. **It is the message that is the power, and these “wonders and signs” buttressed the message delivered by the Apostles.** In the words of Scripture God “confirmed the

Word” (Mk 16:20), and was “bearing witness” to the veracity of the apostles and their message (Heb 2:4).

Again, I want to underscore that, in my persuasion, **the modern church has not been persuaded of the need of the “apostles’ doctrine.”** This is confirmed by their general ignorance of it, even though it has been made accessible to them. Some might imagine that this condition requires the working of many wonders and signs again, to confirm that the message is true. This, however, is not the case. **When Israel came to despise the Law, they were not required to return to Sinai and see the thunderings and lightning again.** God did not speak out of heaven to them once again. When the church drifted from the truth, it was not necessary to have Jesus rise again, or that Pentecost be experienced once again. Surely this is evident to everyone.

The reason for this condition is plain. Once the Apostles and their message had been “confirmed,” the

church became a custodian of confirmed word. The world does not need eye witnesses of the resurrected Savior in every generation. It is not necessary to have the word confirmed over and over again, **because it has been invested with power.** Now, the people who embrace that Gospel become a living “epistle of Christ” themselves – letters that are “known and read of all men” (2 Cor 3:2-3).

All miracles, signs, and wonders are not devoted exclusively to confirming the Word of God, even though some suppose this to be the case. God “set” the gift of working miracles in the church “after” the apostles (1 Cor 12:10,28,29; Gal 3:5). Those workings were not placed there to further confirm the Word. That has already been done.

Such miracles are not in the same category as the “signs of an apostle” (2 Cor 12:12). They are given at the Lord’s discretion (1 Cor 12:5-11,18), over which men have no control, and for the good of the whole body.

THEY WERE ALL TOGETHER

“⁴⁴ **And all that believed were together, and had all things common.**”

Remember, we are reading of the effects wrought by repentance, remission, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. **These experiences had a transforming effect upon the people.**

ALL THAT BELIEVED

“And all that believed . . .” Other versions read, “all those who had believed,”^{NASB} “All the believers,”^{NIV} “all those who were of the faith,”^{BBE} “All who shared the faith,”^{NJB} “all those believing,”^{YLT} “all who believed (who adhered to and trusted in and relied on Jesus Christ),”^{AMPLIFIED} and “all the ones believing.”^{ALT}

The Spirit is very precise in the statement concerning the church. He does not say “all the members,” or “all who had joined the church,” or “all who were baptized.” To be sure, all of them were part of the church, and all them had been baptized. **Here, however, we get to the heart of the matter.** There may very

well have been some pretenders who

33,000+ DENOMINATIONS OF PROTESTANTISM, AND COUNTING

David Barrett, et al, does indeed refer to “over 33,000 denominations in 238 countries.” (Table 1-5, vol 1, page 16). This refers to his unique definition of a “Christian denomination” but does not include small ones (congregations of a couple hundred or less), which would dramatically increase this number beyond all imagination.

Denominations / Paradenominations:

1970: 26,350
1995: 33,820

The definition of a denomination, as used by David Barrett, is this: “an organized Christian Church or tradition or religious group or community of believers or aggregate of worship centers or congregations, usually within a specific country, whose component congregations and members are called by the same name in different areas, regarding themselves as an autonomous Christian church distinct from other denominations, churches and traditions.” For my part, this is an acceptable definition.

liked to think of themselves as part of the number. The situation, however, is stated

as it should be: “all that believed.” That is, all who had perceived the truth and embraced it; all who had heard the Gospel and obeyed it; all who were trusting in the Lord and not leaning to their own understanding.

Ponder this in view of the condition of the professed church in our day. The World Christian Data Base records 9,000 major denominations within the Christian community.

WERE TOGETHER

“ . . . were together . . .” Other versions read, “kept together,”^{BBE} “were in one place,”^{GENEVA} “met together in one place,”^{NLT} “kept themselves together,”^{PNT} “were at the same place,”^{YLT} “met together constantly,”^{LIVING} “stayed together,”^{TE} “lived together,”^{WILLIAMS} “were united and [together],”^{AMPLIFIED} and “continued together in close fellowship.”^{GNB}

Real faith unites all those who possess it! That is why we read of “the

unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13). Where there are divisions (something the Lord strictly forbids – 1 Cor 1:10), it can always be traced to unbelief, for **faith never divides those who have it**. Considering that all who are in Christ Jesus also have received the Holy Spirit, their unity is accented all the more by the expression *“the unity of the Spirit”* (Eph 4:3).

The unity of reference was not merely creedal, and it surely was not theoretical, or just something people talked about. These people **wanted** to be together, and therefore they stayed together. **That is the practical circumstance that confirms whether real unity exists or not: do the people want to be together?** People who do not want to be together are not truly united.

“Together”

There is a considerable emphasis on togetherness in the epistles. It is clear that a *“common salvation”* (Jude 1:3) and a *“common faith”* (Tit 1:4) unites people, bringing them together. After all, there is a certain singleness associated with salvation that makes for *“the unity of the Spirit”*: *“There is **ONE** body, and **ONE** Spirit, even as ye are called in **ONE** hope*

text this was actually happening.

- ⇨ Being *“comforted **together**”* by *“mutual faith”* (Rom 1:12).
- ⇨ Believers will be *“glorified **together**”* (Rom 8:17).
- ⇨ The church can *“strive **together**”* in focused prayer (Rom 15:30).
- ⇨ Saints can be *“perfectly joined **together** in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor 1:10).
- ⇨ Believers are said to be *“gathered **together**”* (1 Cor 5:4).
- ⇨ The church can *“come **together** for the better”* (1 Cor 11:17).
- ⇨ God has tempered, or combined, the body of Christ *“together”* (1 Cor 12:24).
- ⇨ “Believers are said to *“come **together** in one place”* (1 Cor 14:23).
- ⇨ Needy brethren can be helped by brethren praying **together** (2 Cor 1:1).

- ⇨ Saints are to *“stand fast in one spirit, striving **together** for the faith of the Gospel”* (Phil 1:27).
- ⇨ The saved are to be *“comforted, being knit **together** in love”* (Col 2:2).
- ⇨ As we cling to the Head, Jesus Christ, individual believers have *“nourishment ministered,”* and are *“knit **together**”* (Col 2:19).
- ⇨ In their assemblies, the faithful comfort themselves *“together, and edify one another”* (1 Thess 5:11).
- ⇨ Solemnly we are told *“Forsake not the assembling of yourselves **together**”* (Heb 10:25).

There is a sense in which our individuality is minimized in Christ’s body, thereby allowing for a very real togetherness. Therefore those in Christ are admonished, *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each **esteem other better than themselves**”* (Phil 2:3). And again, *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man **also on the things of others**”* (Phil 2:4). And again, *“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; **in honor preferring one another**”* (Rom 12:10). Where such a condition exists, division is not possible, and the *“unity of the Spirit”* is inevitable.

In Christ Jesus our attention is turned toward Him, not ourselves. In fact He died and rose again that this might be the case. As it is written, *“And that he died for all, that they which live should **not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again**”* (2 Cor 5:15). In our text there was a certain purity that did not allow for self-interests to be present. Such would soon be found in the church (chapter five), but had not yet made its entrance at the time covered in this passage.

THEY HAD ALL THINGS COMMON

“... and had all things common.” Other versions read, *“had everything in common,”* ^{NIV} *“they shared everything with each other,”* ^{GWN} *“whatever belonged to them, was of the community,”* ^{MRD} *“shared everything they had,”* ^{NLT} *“held all they had as common goods to be shared by one another,”* ^{WILLIAMS} *“shared*

What caused this selfless spirit to assert itself, and why was it done so willingly? This remarkable circumstance was not a response to a commandment. Those who teach that we can only offer to God what he has commanded or authorized, or serve Him in strict accord with specific directives, could not possibly be more wrong.

*of your calling; **ONE** Lord, **ONE** faith, **ONE** baptism, **ONE** God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Eph 4:4-6). **How is it possible for such realities to in any way contribute to division, dissension, or a lack of harmony?**

Ponder how much is said about the matter of being *“together.”* For many, this is an ambition or goal. In our

- ⇨ Believers are said to be *“workers **together** with Him”* (2 Cor 6:1).
- ⇨ The church is described as a building *“fitly framed **together**,”* and *“built **together** for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Eph 2:21-22).
- ⇨ The *“whole body”* of Christ is intended to be *“fitly joined **together** and compacted by that which every joint supplieth”* (Eph 4:16).

everything on common," PHILLIPS *"they were having all [things] common,"*^{ALT} and *"shared their belongings with one another."*^{GNT}

What caused this selfless spirit to assert itself, and why was it done so willingly? **This remarkable circumstance was not a response to a commandment.** Those who teach that we can only offer to God what he has commanded or authorized, or serve Him in strict accord with specific directives, could not possibly be more wrong. Such barbaric teaching is from Sinai, and lacks both the quality and effectiveness of teaching that comes from "mount Zion," to which we "are come" (Heb 12:22). **Those who embrace a Sinaitic approach to newness of life only confess they do not have genuine spiritual life, for that is not how it is lived out.** If, at some time, such poor souls were, in fact, "born of God," then they have gone backward, are withdrawing from God, and moving closer to perdition (Heb 10:38-39).

There is not the slightest hint that Peter and the rest of the apostles required this of the people, or implied that it was essential to their acceptance by God. This was rather the voluntary response of the "new creature" (2 Cor 5:17) – the "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph 4:24), and is "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col 3:10). This was an expression of the "newness of life" in which these new converts were walking (Rom 6:4).

When a person, or group of persons, is "joined to the Lord," becoming "one spirit" with Him (1 Cor 6:17), a radical change takes place within. Old things had really "passed away," and "all things" had become new (2 Cor 5:17). Their former nature, now their "old man," had been "crucified" with Christ (Rom 6:6), and they were no longer the center of their world. Now it was no longer them that was living, but Christ within them (Gal 2:20). Rather than serving God "in the oldness of the letter," they were serving Him "in newness of the Spirit"^{NKJV} (Rom 7:6).

THE CIRCUMSTANCE

Some sophists, cavorting about on

the surface of truth (if there be such a thing), have concluded that this was a form of communism – communal living where no one had any possessions of their own. However, that is a grossly corrupted view. Some time later, there were great numbers of these very people who still had personal possessions (Acts 4:34-37). Years later, when Paul taught the Corinthians, he admonished to give proportionately to what they possessed (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:12). When these people were converted, it did not become sinful for them to keep and maintain their possessions.

This was no ordinary circumstance. High Jewish feasts had

Their whole lives were changed. Now, after the Passover and after Pentecost, they were still going to the Temple every day, and from there moving about from house to house. It was time to go home, but it was obvious they did not desire to do so. It is also clear that the converts from Jerusalem did not want them to leave either.

been observed: the Passover and Pentecost. Multitudes of people had come in to Jerusalem for the occasion – "devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). It had certainly been an eventful series of days. Not only had the Passover occurred, but "Jesus of Nazareth" had supposedly been found guilty of blasphemy and was crucified. This had taken place with their consent, as well as their insistence that He be crucified, while Barabbas, a murderer, was chosen for release (Mk 15:10-14). Now, on the day of Pentecost, they had witnessed miraculous phenomenon and heard the exposition of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. Their hearts had been pricked, and, upon being told what to do, they repented, were baptized, and received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Their whole lives were changed. Now, after the Passover and after Pentecost, they were still going to the Temple every day, and from there moving

about from house to house. It was time to go home, but it was obvious they did not desire to do so. It is also clear that the converts from Jerusalem did not want them to leave either.

If they brought resources with them for the feasts, they had run out by now. They were not from that area, and thus were not employed there. What will they do? Those who were from that area, and any wealthy people who came in from afar, refused to let go of their brethren. They looked upon their own possessions as a resource for their brethren as well as themselves. Everyone who believed stayed together, pooling their resources and having everything

common. They simply did not want to separate from one another. They had one faith and one hope, and thus were united.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is a unity that transcends anything men can accomplish. This is a unity that is created, not achieved. Once that unity is destroyed by the intrusion of flesh, it must be earnestly sought once again. When professed Christians are divided, that means they are not united, for that is what division is. When that condition exists, the Divine mandate is, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10). That is not an option, and must not be treated as though it was. Here is the word of the Spirit delivered by Paul.

⇨ Speak the same thing.

- ⇒ Have no divisions among you.
- ⇒ Be perfectly joined together in the same mind.
- ⇒ Be perfectly joined together in the same judgment.

Is there any soul who is at liberty to ignore this summons, and still remain in Divine favor? When we came into Christ we did not come in divided, but

were *“one body in Christ”* (Rom 12:4-5). We were *“one spirit”* with the Lord – and He is not divided (1 Cor 6:17; 1:13). Although *“many,”* we were *“one body”* (1 Cor 10:17; 12:20). All believers were *“called in one body”* (Col 3:15). That is the way every single person in Christ started newness of life. If, after some time, there is friction, division, and even hostility, it is not owing to God’s *“great salvation”* (Heb 2:3). It is not the nature of *“newness of life”* to finally break up, divide, and become separate warring

factions. The Holy Spirit certainly does not promote separation among those who are united to Christ. If that condition is found, *“an enemy hath done this”* (Matt 13:28). None of this existed at the time of our text. It is as though the devil had been caught off guard, neutralized by the striking blow of Christ’s heel on his head, the disruption in the regions of the dead, and the leading of captivity captive when Jesus rose triumphant, defeating the grave and taking the spoils of battle.

THE ABSENCE OF A COVETOUS SPIRIT

“⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

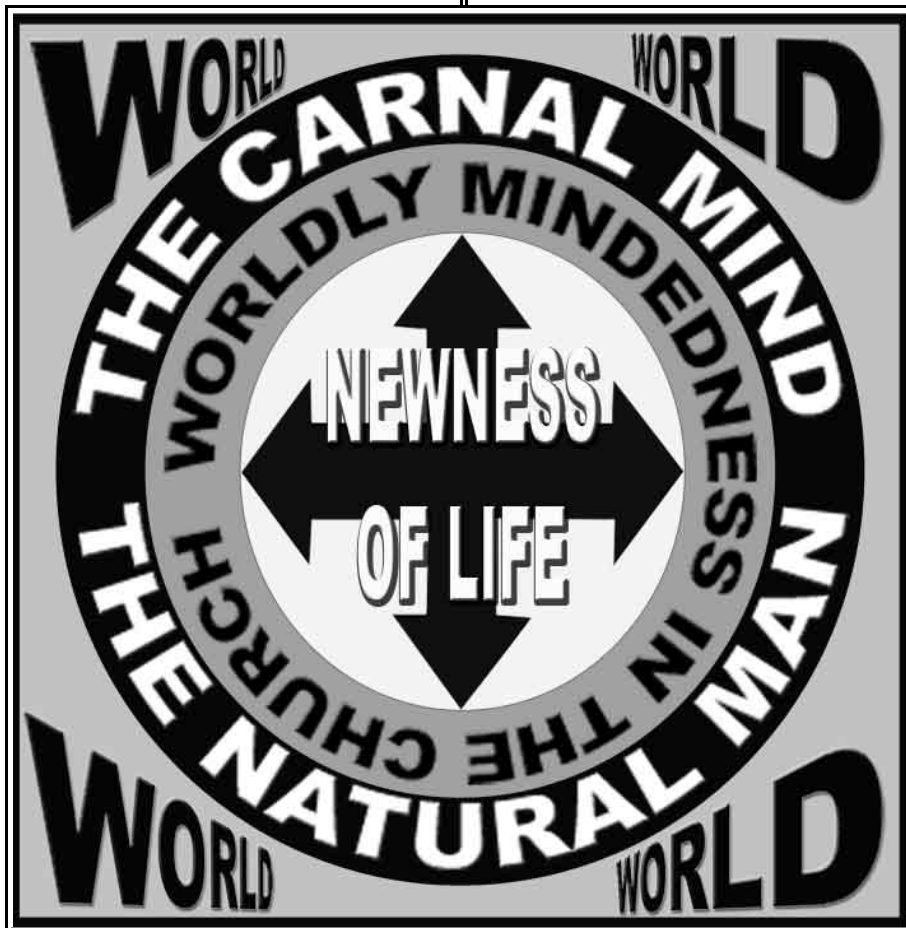
Remember, we are not witnessing the implementation of a new law, but the **expression** of newness of life.

The body of the redeemed is *“in the world,”* but it is not *“of the world”* (John 15:19). For this reason, the *“newness of life”* cannot be lived while one is dominated by *“this present evil world.”* In Christ we are, in fact, *“delivered from this present evil world”* –

from its thinking and its ways. However, because of our close proximity to the world, and the presence of our *“adversary the devil,”* there are strong influences exerted upon us to move closer to the world, once again adopting its ways and its manners. The struggle against these inclinations is called *“resisting the devil,”* *“abstaining from all appearance of evil,”* wrestling *“against principalities and against powers,”* and *“fighting the good fight of faith”* (James 4:7; 1 Thess 5:22; Eph 6:12; 1 Tim 6:12). If we fail to resist these inclinations, we will modify our mindset – maintaining a religious stance, yet allowing worldly ways of thinking into our thought processes. This, in turn, modifies our conduct, causing us to become basically selfish, or self-centered. The more the carnal mind dominates men, the more like the world they become, and the less they are like Christ. In such a stance, they once again become the enemies of God.

In our text, these withdrawals had not yet begun to happen. Newness of life was pure and uncontaminated, as is evidenced by the manner in which these brethren conducted their affairs.

Once again, this is not a standard to be adopted, but is a revelation of real newness of life. The intent of the passage is not to provide a pattern for all churches to follow. It rather reveals to us **how** *“the newness of life”* responds to unplanned situations or crises. There will be times when uncomely responses to



Opportunities to bring glory to God are afforded when men are in the process of honoring Him by Given O. Blakely

such situations will occur – such as in the sixth chapter of Acts, when “there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration” (Acts 6:1). However, in that circumstance neither the neglect nor the murmuring were expressions of *newness of life*. Those were expressions of the flesh, which, in our text, had not yet made its way into the church. Our text is an exhibit of “pure religion and undefiled” (James 1:27). It was not the result of an admonition, a commandment, or an exhortation. It was real, unsullied, and without hypocrisy.

THEY SOLD THEIR POSSESSIONS AND GOODS

“And sold their possessions and goods . . .” Other versions read, “began selling their property and possessions,” ^{NASB} “exchanging their goods and property for money,” ^{BBE} “sold their possessions and substance,” ^{DARBY} “were selling their possessions and belongings,” ^{ESV} “sold their property and other possessions,” ^{GWN} “they sold . . . the things they owned,” ^{IE} “they sold their lands and other property,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “they made it their practice to sell their possessions and goods,” ^{ISV} “they continued to sell their property and goods,” ^{WILLIAMS} and “they sold their possessions (both their landed property and their movable goods).” ^{AMPLIFIED}

Here is an example of the robust and aggressive nature of spiritual life. It is a stark contrast of the being driven by Law. Here is what happens when the law is written upon the heart, and put into the mind I(Heb 8:10; 10:16). At once you see that spirituality in no way promotes or maintains “*covetousness, which is idolatry*” (Col 3:5). It confirms how a person reacts to the circumstances of our text when they “*love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*” (1 John 2:15). Here, the love of the brethren is lived out, and there is no need to exhort the people to do so. The text is not a theoretical statement concerning unity. It is not a summons for those professing allegiance to Christ to unite. **This is the report of people who were actually united, and of the effects that unity produced.**

Something had happened among

these people to cause them to devalue worldly possessions for self. They now saw “*treasures upon earth*” as a means to minister in the name of the Lord. Their definition of *family* and *household* had changed.

AND PARTED THEM TO ALL MEN

“. . . and parted them to all men . . .” Other versions read, “divided them among all,” ^{NKJV} “sharing them with all,” ^{NASB} “gave to everyone,” ^{NIV} “distribute the proceeds to all,” ^{NRSV} “distributed them to all,” ^{RSV} “they made a division of it among them all,” ^{BBE} “distributed the money,” ^{GWN} “distributed the proceeds among them all,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “distributed the price among all,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “divided the proceeds among the fellowship.” ^{PHILLIPS}

Although it may not be popular to say so, distribution was not made among

and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth” (Deut 15:8).

Under the New Covenant

- ⇨ “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Rom 12:13).
- ⇨ “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (1 Cor 16:1).
- ⇨ “And when James, Cephas, 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. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the

I am quick to point out that this is not to be construed as an attack upon the practice of ministering to the poor in general. However, as confirmed in this text, the thrust of godly philanthropy concerns the people of God, to whom we are especially to do good

the poor of the community. It was made among the brethren. Even though there is nothing wrong, and everything right, with assisting the poor in general, the **emphasis** in Scripture has always been placed upon assisting the poor among God’s people. Even when reference was made to “*strangers,*” it was always those among the people of God (Lev 19:10; 23:22; Deut 14:29).

Under the Law

- ⇨ “And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner: that he may live with thee” (Lev 25:35).
- ⇨ “If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him,

same which I also was forward to do” (Gal 2:9-10).

- ⇨ “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:10).
- ⇨ “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17).

I am quick to point out that this is not to be construed as an attack upon the practice of ministering to the poor in general. **However, as confirmed in this text, the thrust of godly philanthropy concerns the people of God, to whom we are especially to do good** (Gal 6:10). Of course, if the New Covenant provides the guarantee of prosperity here and now, and all-sufficiency in this world’s goods, then such admonitions would be pointless. In such a case, it would only be

contributing to the unbelief of the those who were not prospering, or stood in lack. Such a thought is utterly absurd!

AS EVERY MAN HAD NEED

“. . . as every man had need.”

Other versions read, “as anyone had need,”^{NKJV} “as anyone might have need,”^{NASB} “according to any man had need,”^{ASV} “as anyone had a need,”^{CSB} “as everyone had need,”^{GENEVA} “according to what each man needed,”^{NJB} “those in need,”^{NLT} “according to everyone’s necessities,”^{WEYMOUTH} “as anyone had special need,”^{WILLIAMS} “just as anyone from time to time had need,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “according to individual need.”^{PHILLIPS}

text. Even in seemingly legitimate Christian enterprises, *need* is often related to large and comfortable buildings for orphans, new media production studios, and four-wheel all-terrain vehicles. Once again, it is not that these things are of themselves wrong. The issue is whether or not they can be defined as *needs*.

Jesus spoke of “*need*” as eating, drinking, and being clothed. “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles

Once, when Paul was in prison, he wrote to Titus, telling him to assist Zenas the lawyer and Apollos to come to him. “Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them. And let ours also **learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful**” (Titus 3:14). Other versions read, “to meet urgent needs,”^{NKJV} “to meet pressing needs,”^{RSV} and “in order that they may provide for daily necessities.”^{NIV} Here, “good works” refers to honest trades, or a way of earning a living that is honorable before God. The reason for engaging in such a posture is twofold. First, to provide for the necessities of life, including the need of Kingdom servants as well as their own. Second, that their lives may be fruitful, and not unproductive. That is, that they might be noted for assisting the people of God, as well as being in situation where they did not require assistance themselves.

Our Text

When our text speaks of distributing goods “as every man had need,” it is referring to those who did not have the regular requirements of life – food, drink, and clothing. I assume that some form of shelter is also included. **This had particular reference to the brethren from other parts of the world, who had remained in Jerusalem.**

This text also reveals freedom from covetousness, although that dreaded trait will soon surface among the disciples (Acts 5). When Jesus walked among men He said, “Beware of covetousness” (Lk 12:15). Now, under the influence of the *newness of life*, there was a freedom from that vice. Paul admonished the Ephesians to see to it that “covetousness” was not named among them – even one single time. “But . . . covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Eph 5:3). The Colossians were instructed to mortify, or put to death, “covetousness” (Col 3:5). Believers are also exhorted to let their entire manner of life be “without covetousness” (Heb 13:5).

In the beginning, there was a certain purity and holy innocence that is refreshing to ponder. We are being given a view of newness of life itself, **before** the

Remove from your mind the notion that everyone in our text divested themselves of all wealth, and pooled it, dividing it up equally among all the brethren. Possessions were not the point, but necessities – and there certainly is a vast chasm between those two conditions.

Remove from your mind the notion that everyone in our text divested themselves of all wealth, and pooled it, dividing it up equally among all the brethren. Possessions were not the point, but necessities – and there certainly is a vast chasm between those two conditions. The objective was not for everyone to have the same amount of money or other resources. Rather, it was that no one would suffer lack, or be without the things required for life – “*need*.”

In Christ, “Need” Is Redefined

In the American society, *need* is often equated with comfort and preference. Thus people speak of *needing* a new car, a larger house, a new television, or the likes. Often *need* is associated with convenience and ease. The legitimacy of such things is not to be questioned, and that is not the issue here. The mega-church mentality, together with the human sanctification of the opulence that accompanies it, has caused people to think of *need* quite differently than the way it is used in our

seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have **need** of all these things” (Matt 6:31-32). Even then, the accent was not to be placed upon these “*things*,” although they may have been scarce. Jesus continued, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33). Here, “*need*” is related to the maintenance of life, not the comfort and ease of life. Jesus said, “But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole **need** not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matt 9:12). Others are said to have Had “**need of healing**” (Lk 9:11). John spoke of those with substance seeing the “*need*” of a brother, and ignoring it (1 John 3:17). He was speaking of the necessities of life – things required to maintain life.

In Christ, the concept of “*need*” obtains a new perspective. This is because the accent is place on “*things above*,” and not on “*things on the earth*” (Col 3:2). While “*newness of life*” does not sanctify poverty and the lack of any conveniences, neither does it sanctify their abundance.

church became contaminated by various individuals like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), Hymanaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1:19-20), Phygellus and Hermogenes” (2 Tim 1:15), certain in Corinth (1 Cor 5:1-8), the Galatians (Gal 1:6), Demas (2 Tim 4:10), and others.

We are being exposed to the Kingdom norm, or standard of conduct.

In our time, the norm has become drawing back, but it was not so in the beginning, nor is it now. This text is telling us HOW newness of life makes itself known – at least one of the ways. The life that is given to us in Christ Jesus is **not** an inconsiderate one. It is **not** one that focuses upon self, and wants a lot of this world. **It is Christ’s own life that is given to men, and is made**

manifest in their conduct. Thus it is written, *“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that **the life also of Jesus** might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that **the life also of Jesus** might be made manifest in our mortal flesh”*(2 Cor 4:10-11). That is the *life* that is being revealed in our text.

DAILY CONTINUANCE

“^{46a} And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple . . .”

Already we have read that these early believers *“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). **They did not blow hot and cold, or tend toward inconsistency and a lack of involvement with one another.** That is not the nature of *“the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”* (Rom 8:2). Later in this book, believers will be persuaded to *“continue in the grace of God”* (Acts 13:43). Others will be exhorted to *“continue in the faith”* (Acts 14:22). We are told that *“eternal life”* will be given to those who *“by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality”* (Rom 2:7). We are told they will not be cut off the source of life *“if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off”* (Rom 11:22). We will, in fact, be presented to the Lord *“holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”* (Col 1:22-23).

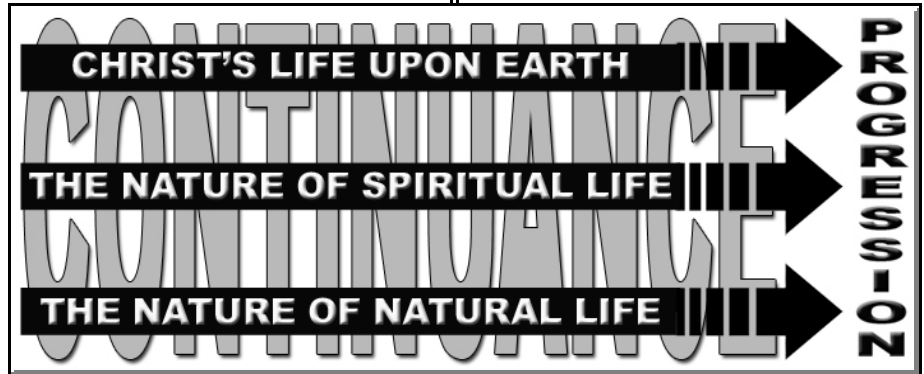
Sporadic discipleship, though quite common in our day, is wholly unacceptable in Christ’s Kingdom. That is not the way Jesus is. It is not the way the Spirit operates. It is not the kind of life that is given to believers. Therefore, we ought to expect continuance to be prominent in the early days of the church, before Satan regrouped, as it were, and sowed tares among the wheat.

THEY CONTINUED DAILY

“And they, continuing daily . . .”

Other versions read, *“So continuing daily,”*^{NKJV} *“day by day continuing,”*^{NASB}

spiritual life that is intended to be preserved. In this case, this becomes one



“every day they continued,”^{NIV} *“day by day continuing steadfastly,”*^{ASV} *“every day they devoted themselves,”*^{CSB} *“every day, being constantly,”*^{DARBY} *“each day,”*^{NLT} *“regularly . . . each day,”*^{LIVING} *“day by day attending constantly,”*^{WEYMOUTH} and *“day after day.”*^{AMPLIFIED}

of the means of sustaining the life that is realized in Christ Jesus. It accompanies the awakening of a voracious appetite for the word of God, a remarkably strong love for the people of God, and a fervent desire to understand things pertaining to life and godliness.

What Do We Have Here?

There are at least two ways that we can look at this fact. **First**, some are quite comfortable with seeing this as the **initial** response of new life – a beginning that, by its very nature, will finally cool, as the people return to a normal way of living. Those who embrace this view – and legion is their name – see such continuance as unusual, inconvenient, and only intended to get things started. They see it as a possible aspect of novicehood – something that is not required, and is not even consistent at the beginning of spiritual life. Even then, it is a rare circumstance. **Second**, we can view this as a normal expression of

If we choose to accept the first view, then we must also conclude that *“newness of life”* ebbs and flows, and tends to diminish and wane in its effects upon the individual. I do not know how any person could support such a view, and what would really be accomplished if they did manage to support it. Another alternative is to see the life given on the day of Pentecost as being of a different order than normal spiritual, and therefore intended only for that time. Again, I do not know how a person could hope to defend such a postulate, which has all manner of unacceptable ramifications.

I will proceed accepting the view that this was genuine spiritual life that did not differ from the life that is granted to all who are in Christ Jesus. Like all gifts that come from God, life is characterized by purity, an unwavering trait of the Divine nature. Where this purity is lacking, it is not owing to any deficiency in the life that is realized in Christ Jesus. When the people of God become lacking in any way, it is due to the intrusion and dominance of the flesh. What is born of God cannot decline or be corrupted, because the "wicked one" cannot "touch" that begotten life. As it is written, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

This was confirmed when Jesus Himself walked among men. It is written that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). **That is what Divine life in human form does – wherever it is found.** The nature of spiritual life is thus described as one of increasing change: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). The reflection of the glory of God is seen "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). The transformation that results is found in "the new man," who grows and matures in the prospect of being finally "conformed to the image" of God's Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29).

Where there are no obstacles, or where the Holy Spirit is not grieved or quenched (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19), spiritual life advances and expresses itself in ways that are pleasing to God, advantageous to the individual, and beneficial to the body of Christ.

The Conclusion of the Matter

And what can we say is the conclusion of this whole matter? What we have in our text is the expression of the newness of life – an expression that perfectly agrees with the advancing and continuing nature of spiritual life. The continuance of these people was not their response to a command to keep on

meeting together. It was not adherence to a special series of ordinances that were bound upon them by the apostles. Rather, when two or more people are born again, this is the kind of thing they are prone to do – continue "together." They have been placed in "one body," have received the same Spirit (1 Cor 12:4), and were "called in one hope" of their calling (Eph 4:4). Why would they not continue together? It is reasonable for them to do so, and unreasonable for them not to do so. This is confirmed in the words that follow.

WITH ONE ACCORD

"... with one accord..." Other versions read, "with one mind,"^{NASB} "to meet together,"^{NIV} "spent much time together,"^{NRSV} "going in agreement together,"^{BBE} "had a single purpose,"^{GWN} "with one soul,"^{MRD} "by common consent,"^{NET} "with one heart,"^{NJB} "with the same purpose,"^{IE} "with united purpose,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "as a group."^{GNB}

Here we have a group or meeting defined by the unanimity of the people. **It was their minds that brought them together. It was their hearts that drew them together.** They were in agreement, and it compelled them to come together. They all consented to do so, being driven by a common purpose. They were thinking in the same direction. Their affection was centered on the same thing.

When the disciples prayed together prior to Pentecost, they were in "one accord" (Acts 1:14). When the day of Pentecost commenced, these same disciples "were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). Now, every day they are still "in one accord" (Acts 2:46). Later, when they were threatened by the Jewish leaders, they lifted up their voice to God "with one accord" (Acts 4:24). After the incident with Ananias and Sapphira, "they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch" (Acts 5:12). When Philip went and preached in the city of Samaria, "the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake" (Acts 8:6). When Barnabas and Paul were sent out, they were sent out by brethren that were "of one accord" (Acts 15:25).

The Philippians were admonished to be "likeminded" and "of one accord"

(Phil 2:2), and that they would be found standing "fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel" (Phil 1:27). The desire of Paul was that the Romans would glorify God "with one mind and with one mouth" (Rom 15:6). The Corinthians were urged to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10), and to "be of one mind" (2 Cor 13:11). Paul said to scattered believers, "be ye all of one mind" (1 Pet 3:8).

Institutionalized religion has made it convenient to maintain different ways of thinking – to have divided thinking, even though it is contrary to both the nature of spiritual life and the Word of the Lord. Even though it involves division, heresy, sectarianism, and a party spirit, men can gather together under the banner of humanly devised theological systems. They call themselves by different names, and maintain separate theological schools to perpetuate their peculiar way of thinking. Oh, they all say they are right, and are ready to take God's word in their mouth as though it was written to support their view.

My point in bringing up this miserable and reproachful condition is that it cannot be found in our text. **We are considering the real thing – genuine spiritual life, or "newness of life" as it really is.** The continuing together of our text was not the result of organization. It was not the consequence of sectarianism, or an effort to promote an institutional agenda. They continued together because they were united by their faith (Eph 4:14), and their possession of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:3).

IN THE TEMPLE

"... in the temple..." Other versions read, "in the temple courts,"^{NIV} "attending the temple,"^{RSV} "to the temple,"^{BBE} "In the temple complex,"^{CSB} "in the temple area,"^{NAB} and "in the temple courtyard."^{IE}

Keep in mind the number of brethren involved in this text. The number started with at least one hundred and twenty. Three thousand were added, and daily additions were being made "to the church." We have no idea of the exact number, but it was well over 3,100 at the very least. If the

response of the people to Peter's initial words was so significant, we could very well be talking about a number in the vicinity of 3,500-4,000.

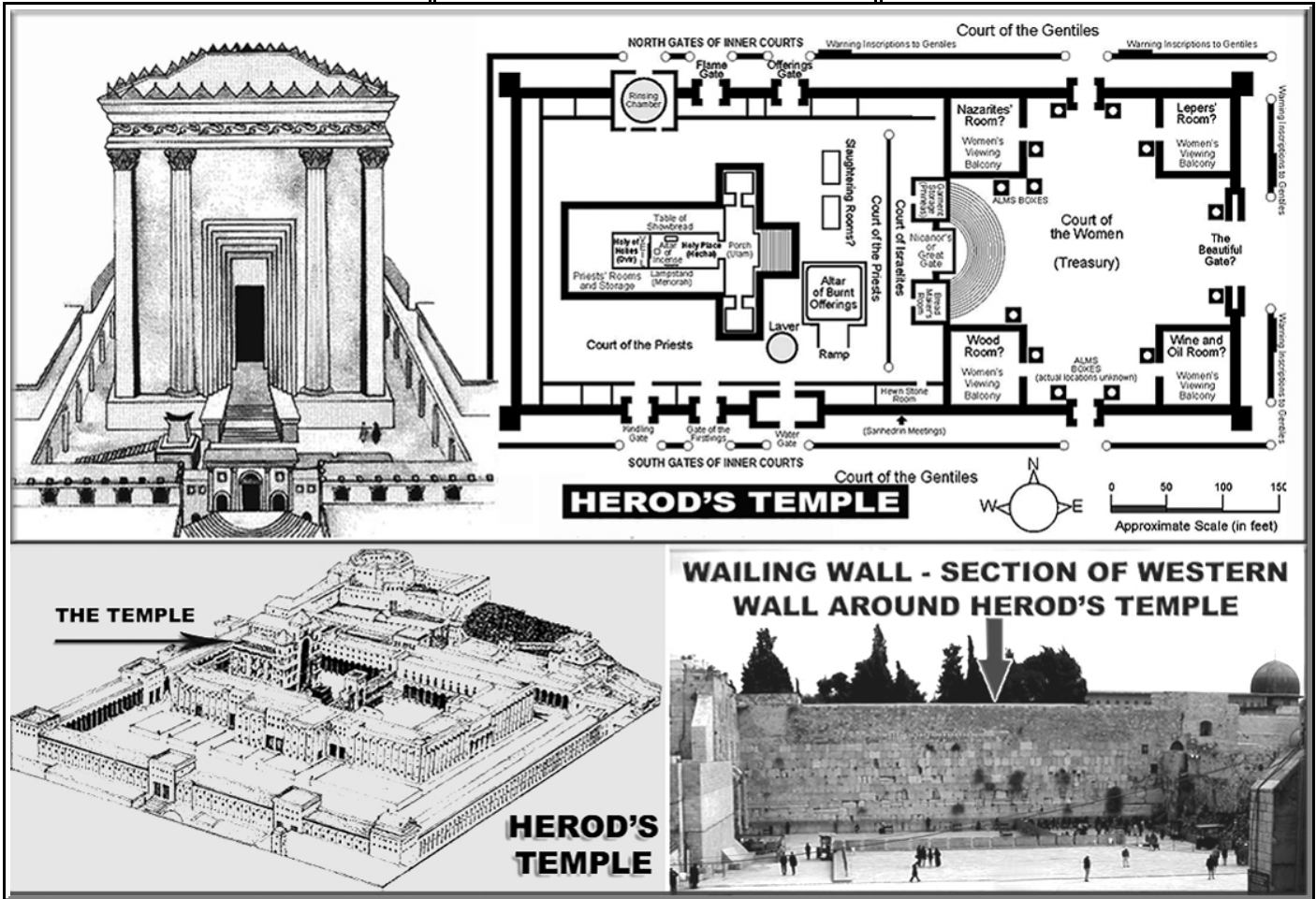
But do not be distracted by the

of blood, a High Priest, intercession, cleansing, prayers, service, worship, and much more.

Herod's temple itself, according to some historians, had the same

Solomon's porch (Acts 5:12).

Thus, the Temple area clearly could accommodate great crowds of people. Historians tell us that the wall around the Temple complex was 600



number itself. All of these brethren were continuing to meet **together** every day! They did not meet in a coliseum, but in the Temple, which had been used of God to introduce the glorious things to be realized in the New Covenant. They did not meet in the Temple proper, where only priests were allowed to minister. They were, rather, in what might be called the temple complex, courtyard, or area.

Or rather than seeing their new lives as a contraction of the things related to the Temple, they now doubt saw the types and figures that were embedded in the Temple service as now being fulfilled: sacrifice, lambs, shedding

dimensions as that of Solomon: 60 cubits long (90 feet), 20 cubits wide (30 feet), and 30 cubits high (45 feet). A number of courts, porches, and other structures surrounded the Temple itself, creating a rather large complex. You may recall that the disciples once showed Jesus the *"buildings of the temple"* (Matt 24:1; Mk 13:1). Within the Temple there was also *"Solomon's porch,"* in which Jesus walked (John 10:23). This appears to have been a rather large area. When Peter healed the man at the Temple gate called *"Beautiful,"* many people *"ran together"* to Solomon's porch (Acts 3:11). In the fifth chapter of Acts, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit, the disciples were in

cubits square. The minimum measurement assigned to a cubit is eighteen inches. That would make the area nine hundred feet square, or an area in which nine football fields could be placed. Some affirm that a royal cubit, which it is likely that Herod used, is 20.67 inches in size. That would make the Temple area 1,033.5 feet square, or nearly 15% larger. We are speaking of an enormous area.

One section of this massive wall remains to this day. The section is referred to as *"the wailing wall,"* and is referred to as *"the holiest shrine of the Jewish world."* ZOLA LEVITE MINISTRIES The wall is presently about sixty feet high

(equivalent to a six story building).

My point in spending an unusual amount of time on this is to accent the nature of real spiritual life. Brethren want to be together! After all, they are headed for a place where they will “go no more out” (Rev 3:12), either from the conscious presence of the Lord or from one another. **It makes a lot of sense that kindred spirits do not want to separated from one another.** Therefore, these brethren sought means to be together, and they found them in the Temple area.

For general information “the Temple” is mentioned twenty-four times in the book of Acts (2:46; 3:1,2,3,8,10; 4:1;

5:20,21,24,25,42; 19:27; 21:26,27,28,29, 30; 22:17; 24:6,12,18; 25:8; 26:21). Peter and John went there “at the hour of prayer” (3:1). The angel of the Lord told the apostles, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life”, which they did (Acts 5:20,21,25). When the apostles had been released from prison, they were found “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). Paul went to the Temple (21:26,30). He prayed in the Temple (Acts 22:17).

This does not suggest that the Temple was intended to remain in place, or that the Lord dwelt there in a unique

and special way. It does suggest, however, the early believers were able to make holy associations, and took advantage of them to meet together. They were not against buildings, and took measures to ensure that they could be together in one place. Those who imagine that there is more sanctity and advantage in dividing the saints into small numbers will not be able to account satisfactorily for this refreshing record.

People who have one mind, or are of “one accord,” perceive being “together” as a most pleasant advantage. They do not attempt to limit the number with whom they meet, but seek to gain every possible benefit.

BREAKING BREAD FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

^{46b} . . . and breaking bread from house to house . . . ”

Even after they spent time “together” in the Temple, the freshness of salvation, and the vigorous nature of “newness of life” compelled them to spend more time together. Again, this was not a matter of law, or of apostolic requirement. **Those who only spend time together because they have to do so will seek opportunity to separate for a season.** These people sought opportunities to be together.

I must take care to confirm that the events taking place in our text are

expression of new life, especially at its inception. It should be contrasted with a new converts in our time who become part of a group that meets from 1-3 hours a week – and even that time is often bereft of food for the soul and profitable fellowship. Such a circumstance is an religious aberration – an abnormality from which nothing of lasting goodness will emerge. It assumes that new life progresses without involvement in the *body of Christ* to which it has been joined. By way of contrast, we are reading of how **real** believers, responding to the **real** Jesus, were compelled to conduct themselves.

meat. ^{GENEVA} “they ate,” ^{GWN} “broke bread and took food,” ^{MRD} “taking their meals together,” ^{NAU} “ate together,” ^{NIB} “for the Lord’s Supper,” ^{NLT} “met in small groups . . . for Communion,” ^{LIVING} “they ate,” ^{ASV} “they practiced breaking their bread together,” ^{WILLIAMS} and “they broke bread [including the Lord’s Supper].” ^{AMPLIFIED}

There is by no means agreement among the commentators on whether this refers to the Lord’s Supper, or to a common meal enjoyed by the people. However, in the wake of the sudden burst of spiritual life, it would not be strange for disciples to frequently partake of the table of the Lord, at which a most blessed remembrance of the Savior was the focus.

- ⇒ This ordinance provided a vivid depiction of the marvelous unity, or oneness, that they were enjoying. As it is written of the ordinance, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: **for we are all partakers of that one bread**” (1 Cor 10:17).
- ⇒ The matter of resolution and commitment also takes place at this table as we recall, “Ye cannot drink

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not the establishment of a standard, or norm. Neither are they the response to a particular apostolic directive – unless it be to save themselves from that “untoward generation” (2:40). This is an

BREAKING BREAD
 “. . . and breaking bread . . . ”
 Other versions read, “they broke bread,” ^{NIV} “taking broken bread,” ^{BBE} “they received their food,” ^{ESV} “did eat their

the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 Cor 10:21).

⇒ There is also the matter of discernment, when the Lord Jesus is seen more clearly, and understood more precisely: *"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"* (1 Cor 11:28-29).

⇒ There is even a proclamation in the observance of the Lord's Supper, as we declare the Lord's death, doing so in the prospect of His coming: *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come"* (1 Cor 11:26).

⇒ There is also a very real participation in the benefits that were realized by means of Christ shedding His blood, and bearing the sins of the world in His body on the tree: *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* (1 Cor 10:16). In the place of *"communion,"* other versions read *"sharing,"* ^{NASB} *"participation,"* ^{NIV} *"give us a part,"* ^{BBE} *"fellowship,"* ^{YLT} *"joint-participation,"* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *"participate in and share a fellowship."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

I doubt that these early disciples had a cognitive grasp of all of these things. **Yet, as they entered into the ordinance they were realizing all of these ,marvelous benefits, being drawn into more intimate involvement with the Savior Himself, and realizing more fully the marvelous unity they were experiencing in Christ Jesus.** I know from experience that the effects of such realities upon the soul brings with them a fervent desire to be with those of kindred spirit. All of this is accented by the Lord's promise to be among those who meet together in his name, or because of Him and for His sake (Matt 18:20). If the ultimate objective of salvation is that Deity will dwell among them (Rev 21:3), then salvation itself is

bound to promote a longing for such a presence. There is no better precursor to this aim than saints assembling together – particularly in remembrance of Christ.

In my own judgment, both the Lord's Table and the eating of common meals are included in the activity of this verse – just as it was on that marvelous evening when Jesus ordained this feast. Ponder the wonderful things that took place at that occasion – when they ate together, and first observed the Lord's Table.

In my own judgment, both the Lord's Table and the eating of common meals are included in the activity of this verse – just as it was on that marvelous evening when Jesus ordained this feast. Ponder the wonderful things that took place at that occasion – when they ate together, and first observed the Lord's Table.

⇒ Jesus washed their feet (John 13:4-12).

⇒ Jesus confirmed that He had chosen them (John 13:18; 15:16).

⇒ Jesus revealed the one who would betray Him, even though it was not understood by the disciples (John 13:21-27).

⇒ He gave them a new commandment, that they love one another as He had loved them, declaring their connection to Him would be made known in that love (John 13:34-35).

⇒ He revealed He was going away to prepare a place for them, so they could be with Him (John 14:1-3).

⇒ He declared Himself to be the only means of gaining access to the Father (John 14:6).

⇒ He told them He was going to send a Comforter to them, the Spirit of truth, who would abide with them forever (John 14:16-18).

⇒ He told them the day was coming when they would know He was in the Father, they were in Jesus, and Jesus was in them (John 14:20).

⇒ Jesus declared that the person who had His commandments and kept them would be loved by Him, and that He would reveal Himself to that person (John 14:21).

⇒ He revealed that the person who loved Him and kept His words would be loved by the Father, and that the Father and the Son would make

their abode with that person (John 14:23).

⇒ He told them the Comforter, when He was come, would teach them of all things, and bring to their remembrance His life-giving words (John 14:26).

⇒ He declared He was going to give them His own peace (John 14:27).

⇒ He told them He was the Vine, and they were the branches, and developed the implications of those realities (John 15:1-8).

⇒ He revealed that the Holy Spirit would testify of Him to them, making them competent and effective witnesses (John 15:26-27).

⇒ He unveiled the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11).

⇒ He affirmed that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth, withholding nothing from them that He was given to say (John 16:13).

- ⇨ The Holy Spirit would glorify Christ by taking what He had given, and showing, or unveiling, it to the disciples (John 16:14-15).
- ⇨ He promised that He was going to speak plainly to them of the Father (John 16:25-26).
- ⇨ He revealed that the Father loved them because they loved Him, and believed that He came out from God (John 16:27).

All of that was done BEFORE Jesus died, **before** the sin of the world was taken away, **before** the devil was destroyed and principalities and powers were plundered. It was said **before** Jesus made peace, **before** He reconciled the world to God, and **before** he blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. These things were said **before** Jesus rose from the dead, **before** He ascended into heaven, and **before** He was exalted, being made both Lord and Christ!

Now that He has been exalted above every name than is named, will Jesus do less when He is among those who eat at His table, and joyfully eat together as His disciples? All of this was done during a meal, and when they first took of the Lord's Supper. **What may we expect Him to do now when His disciples come together to remember Him?**

In view of this, consider something Jesus said after the memorable institution of the Lord's Supper. *"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you **in my Father's kingdom**"* (Matt 26:29). *"Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new **in the kingdom of God**"* (Mark 14:25). To what time was Jesus referring? Was it to the world to come? Will we require that ordinance to assist us in remembering Jesus when we are with Him face to face? Did Jesus not tell these people they would see the Kingdom of God come with power (Mk 9:1)? If this table involves communing with Christ's body and blood, is He not there among us, eating and drinking in a "new" way with us?

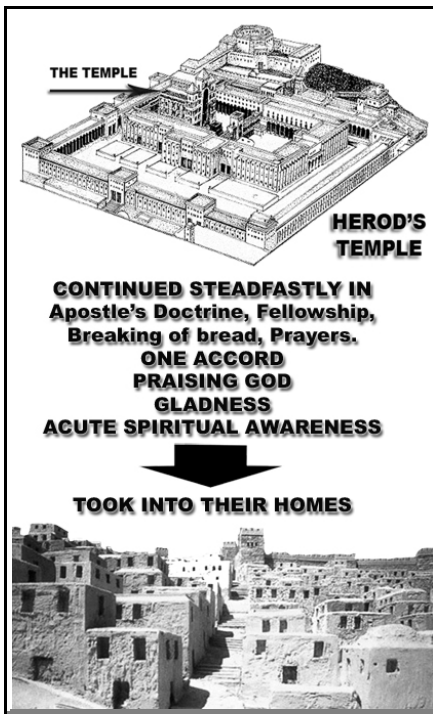
The Relevancy of This

There is a certain relevancy to be seen in this brief diversion. In keeping with the nature of the Kingdom and spiritual life, these people did not know one another "after the flesh" (2 Cor 5:16). That is, their closeness was not owing to fleshly friendship, or institutional camaraderie. They were one in Christ Jesus, and therefore their activities tended to center in Him, not in natural relationships and activities.

FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

"... from house to house ..."

Other versions read, "in their homes,"^{NIV} "at home,"^{RSV} "in their houses,"^{BBE} "at each other's home,"^{GWN} "met in homes,"^{NLT} "every house,"^{TNT} "in private houses,"^{WEYMOUTH} and "in their own homes."^{MONTGOMERY}



Leaving the Temple, the disciples, now well over 3,100, meet in smaller groups in various homes. It is likely that this was determined more by the area in which they resided, rather than mere fleshly acquaintance. Just as in our times, it is apparent that some homes were more commodious, and able to house more. As you can see, these disciples did not view their houses as their own alone, but shared them with their brethren. It is also likely that some

of the "devout men out of every nation under heaven" needed places to stay. It is not unlikely that local brethren opened their homes to such.

By saying "from house to house," a certain movement is implied. That is, there were no cliques, sects, or isolated groups. The expression used here "from house to house" comes from an interesting Greek expression. The word "from" comes from the Greek preposition *κατ* (*kot*), which "denoted motion of diffusion or direction from the higher to the lower . . . down from,"^{THAYER} "generally downward movement"^{FRIBERG}

The idea is that the environment and benefits realized when the disciples were all together in the Temple, went with them as they met in various houses.

Here is another place where true spiritual life radically differs from institutional hype. For example, it would not be difficult to conceive of professing Christians going straight from a Lord's day assembly to an athletic event, or some family outing, or an amusement park. Life **after** the average assembly – assuming it is an assembly with any degree of substance – is anything but a continuance of the spirit of the assembly. **For example, the concept of praise and worship that is being hawked in the churches today is one of entering into an activity, then leaving it.** There is absolutely no need for a *praise and worship leader* after the gathering. Further, things that take place in the assembly are generally of a different gender than things outside of the assembly. Should there be some kind of break from routine in the assembly, it is not surprising to find people speaking of things wholly unrelated to life and godliness. All of this is generally accepted being normal among modern professing Christians.

However, would you expect that sort of conduct among the disciples of our text? Do you imagine they went from continually meeting in the Temple to descend together into the quagmire of purely earthly interests? Is there any record of Jesus Himself ever wholly devoting Himself to such interests – or the twelve apostles, or Paul, or Timothy, or anyone else of Scriptural record? Is there any record of believers becoming

absorbed with politics, or business, or community events, or any other form of ordinary life?

The sophist will object, saying that I am suggesting they never did such things – that all believers were totally divorced from any lawful involvements with the world. However, that is not at all what I am saying. I rather suggest that such involvements were always secondary, and never primary. **I am saying that “newness of life” is, by its very nature, is fundamental, primary, and principal.**

The Kingdom of God, together

with all of its facets, is to be sought “first” – not secondarily or as some other subordinate interest. That is why we are admonished, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Cor 10:31). And again, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him*” (Col 3:17). And again, “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men*” (Col 3:23).

This is why Jesus died and rose again, “*that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again*”

(2 Cor 5:15). This is involved in presenting our bodies as “*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service*” (Rom 12:1). **Simply put, this is the way life in Christ Jesus is lived. It is the manner of regenerated life.** What we are witnessing in this text is the expression of that life. In our day, it will take different forms. We may not meet in the Temple, but we meet. We will take the benefits received when we meet together and carry them into our homes, which will be open to all of our brethren. That is newness of life! That is simply how it functions. It is not self centered, but Christ centered. It sees God’s people as the primary people.

EATING WITH GLADNESS AND SINGLENESS OF HEART

“^{46c} . . . *did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart . . .*”

The unity that is accomplished in Christ Jesus – the “*unity of the Spirit*” – is very real. It is not institutional unity that is turned on and off as men deem appropriate. **This is a unity that**

DID EAT THEIR MEAT WITH GLADNESS

“. . . *did eat their meat with gladness . . .*” Other versions read, “*they ate their food with gladness,*”^{NKJV} “*they were taking their meals together with gladness,*”^{NASB} “*ate together with glad . . . hearts,*”^{NIV} “*partook of food with glad . . .*

gladness,”^{AMPLIFIED} “*sharing their meals with simple joy,*”^{PHILLIPS} and “*sharing food with great happiness.*”^{ALT}

This is newness of life in its purest form. It will not be long until the old serpent will corrupt the church with his ministers and their doctrine. Later, in Corinth, they ate together, but there was a total absence of the spirit made known in this text. Paul chastens that wayward assembly. “*When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken*” (1 Cor 11:21). Oh, when they met, they did take the Lord’s Supper – but not in the proper spirit. They had a meal together also, but they did not eat their food with gladness. Instead, everyone thought only of themselves, eating their own food sumptuously while poorer hungry brethren sat right next to them. What happened in Corinth? Why was it so contradictory to what is happening in our text? I will tell you why. They had heard about and received another Jesus, another Gospel, and another Spirit (2 Cor 11:4). That reception caused differing and contradicting attitudes to arise among them. Those attitudes did not come because they were believing, or loved the brethren, or were worshiping God. **They were expressions of people who were**

This is a unity that continues because it produces gladness. It is not cumbersome. It does not tax the patience of those who possess it. It is not forced upon men, so that they must continue together out of obligation, whether they like it or not. It is not a theoretical unity that men only talk about, but which is never evidenced in their daily lives.

continues because it produces gladness. It is not cumbersome. It does not tax the patience of those who possess it. It is not forced upon men, so that they must continue together out of obligation, whether they like it or not. It is not a theoretical unity that men only talk about, but which is never evidenced in their daily lives. Behold how glorious it is to be of “*one heart and of one soul*” (Acts 4:32).

. hearts,”^{RSV} “*they took their food with joy,*”^{BBE} “*they received their food with gladness,*”^{DARBY} “*they were joyful . . . as they ate,*”^{GWN} “*took food rejoicing,*”^{MRD} “*they ate their meals with exultation,*”^{NAB} “*sharing their food with glad . . . hearts,*”^{NET} “*shared their food gladly,*”^{NJB} “*shared their meals with great joy,*”^{NLT} “*eating their good with joyful hearts,*”^{IE} “*took their meals with great happiness,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*partook of their food with*

regressing, walking in the flesh, and quenching the Spirit.

However, in our text, life was fresh, dominating, invigorating, and refreshing. This is real life, and their devotion was real devotion. There is no simulation here, no pretension, no hypocrisy. Those dreadful traits will soon enter, but it will not because it is the nature of spiritual life to allow them.

Here we read of the meals of the brethren. This is in addition to the breaking of bread, which, in the least consideration, included the Lord's table. Now, they share their food, and do it gladly. They did not leave their gladness in the Temple, but brought it into their houses. God is said to fill men's heart "with gladness" (Acts 14:17), and indeed He does! Jesus was anointed "with the oil of gladness" (Heb 1:9).

Gladness has always been a mark of the godly. In Nehemiah's time, when a revival took place, "there was very great gladness" (Neh 8:17; 12:27). When Divine deliverance was experienced by the Jews of Esther's time they had "gladness and joy" (Esther 8:16,17). David sang that God had "put gladness" into his heart (Psa 4:7), and even "girded" him with gladness (Psa 30:11). God is to be served "with gladness" (Psa 100:2). When God brings forth His people, whether it is Israel being brought from Egypt, or the those in Christ being brought from the world and sin, it is "with joy" and "with gladness" (Psa 105:43). Isaiah prophesied of the day of salvation, saying the people would "obtain joy and gladness" (Isa 35:10; 51:3,11). Jeremiah spoke of the coming age as one in which "the voice of joy and the voice of gladness" would be heard (Jer 33:11).

The word "gladness" is an especially strong one, as you might suppose. Coming from the Greek word

It ought to be noted that this is not a gladness brought on by a drum roll and a pounding base. In scripture, "gladness" is rational, and is the result of insight, perception, and understanding. It is not simply a feeling that is caught, so to speak, by being in a tumultuous environment, or the result of being led into a frenzied state by a charismatic personality.

ἀγαλλιάσει (ag-al-lee'as-ei), it means "exultation, extreme joy," THAYER "gladness, (extreme) joy, feeling of great happiness," FRIEBERG "extreme joy or gladness," UBS "a state of intensive joy and gladness, often implying verbal expression and body movement (for example, jumping, leaping, dancing) – to be extremely joyful, to rejoice greatly, extreme gladness," LOUW-NIDA "great joy, exultation." LIDDELL-SCOTT

It ought to be noted that this is not a gladness brought on by a drum roll and a pounding base. **In scripture, "gladness" is rational, and is the result of insight, perception, and understanding.** It is not simply a feeling that is caught, so to speak, by being in a tumultuous environment, or the result of being led into a frenzied state by a charismatic personality. That is why it is wed to such things as light, joy, and honor (Esther 8:16), rejoicing (Psa 45:15), the upright in heart (Psa 97:11), holy solemnity (Isa 30:29), thanksgiving (Isa 51:3), and the love of truth and peace (Zech 8:19).

It is what these believers had received and understood that made them glad. It was not a gladness that created distraction and chaos, for they "ate their food with gladness," and that is an orderly involvement.

AND SINGLENESS OF HEART

"... and singleness of heart . . ."

Other versions read, "simplicity of heart," NKJV "sincerity of heart," NASB "sincere hearts," NIV "generous hearts," NRSV "true hearts," BBE "humble hearts," NET

"generosity," NLT "thankfulness," LIVING "single-heartedness," WEYMOUTH "simple hearts," WILLIAMS and "undivided hearts." MONTGOMERY

A single heart is an uncluttered one. The phrase "singleness of heart" is mentioned three times in Scripture (Acts 2:46; Eph 6:5; Col 3:22). Under the law, the matter of a "singular vow" was addressed (Lev 27:2), meaning dedicated vow that was unmixed with any other commitment. Jesus spoke of commitment to a single objective as having an eye that was "single" (Matt 6:22; Lk 11:34). The word used here means "simplicity," or "plain," like soil without rocks, THAYER "smoothness, evenness, hence sincerity of heart, humbleness," FRIEBERG and "humility associated with simplicity of life – humility, humbleness, simplicity." LOUW-NIDA

The idea is that the people had no ulterior motives, hidden objectives, or secret ambitions. There was no exploitation, or shrouded intentions. No person was trying to get on the good side of another, or plotting to gain some sort of advantage. Friends were not sought for personal gain.

These brethren were not driven by a lifeless institutional agenda, or humanly conceived laws. They were glad to share their homes and their food, and happy to be together, focusing on the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers.

PRaising GOD

" 47a **Praising God . . .**" Other versions read, "Giving praise to God," BBE "At the same time they praised God," GWN "all the while praising God," NLT "the

believers were praising God," IE "they kept praising God," ISV "constantly praising God," WILLIAMS and "they praised God continually." PHILLIPS

Right here we confront something with which the modern church has great difficulty. For the most part, it has allowed the young and unlearned to shape

Opportunities to bring glory to God are afforded when men are in the process of honoring Him by Given O. Blakely

their thinking on praise. This was not a separate activity, with a separate specialized leader. It does not say they were singing, although that certainly would not have been strange. As some versions indicate, they were praising God throughout their sundry activities. They praised Him in the Temple. They praised Him as they went from house to house. They praised Him when they broke bread. They praised Him when they ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart. What is there about praise like this that would require a leader, and how would he go about leading such praise should such a person be required?

WHAT IS PRAISE?

Precisely what does it mean to praise God? You will note from the text that this was not their response to a

Coming from the Greek word **αἰνοῦντες** (ah-ee-noon-tes), "praising" means, "extol," THAYER "praise, speak in praise of, in the NT used only of praise for God," FRIBERG "to speak of the excellence of a person," LOUW-NIDA and "to glorify." LEH

As is common with all spiritual expressions, praise is characterized by both truth and perception. Praise is the result of perception – perceiving the work of God. **When men praise God, like their perception, it flows from faith, for praise is the eye and hand of the soul, that takes hold of the things of God.**

As used in this text, this word occurs nine times in Scripture.

⇨ When Jesus was born, the shepherds heard "multitude of the heavenly host **praising God**" (Lk 2:13). Their

seeing the *holy child*, they did so "glorifying and **praising God**" (Lk 2:20).

⇨ When Jesus came into Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, "the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and **praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen**" (Luke 19:37). Their words were also insightful: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38).

⇨ After Jesus was risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, it is said of the disciples, "And were continually in the temple, **praising and blessing God. Amen**" (Luke 24:53).

⇨ When the lame man was healed at the gate Beautiful, it is written, "And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and **praising God**" (Acts 3:8).

⇨ When Paul was commenting on the acceptance of Gentiles, he sited a text from the 117th Psalm: "And again, **Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud Him, all ye people.**" (Rom 15:11; Psa 117:1).

⇨ From the Isle of Patmos, John the beloved heard a voice coming out of the Throne: "**Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great**" (Rev 19:5).

As used in all of these texts, there were expressions of refreshing insights concerning the Person, purpose, and accomplishments of God Almighty. Understanding was reflected in the words, as well as appreciation and thankfulness.

I have lamentably noted over the years how very little insightful speech is found among professing believers. Only recently I was with a group of Christian leaders where insight into the Person of God was glaringly absent. If you have ever been part of a meal attended by church folk, you probably heard very little "praise" for God – very few words of understanding concerning holy involvements with the sons of men.



commandment, or a procedure, or to some form of human leadership. **Whatever had happened to these people had set them to praising God.**

words were insightful: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

⇨ When the shepherds returned from

However, if you had been with those early believers – thousands of them – you would have heard them praising God. They would not have been speculating about why He did this or that, or allowed something they did not understand. Even though those saints lived in politically difficult times, you would not have heard them philosophizing about why Pilate was allowed to mix the blood of certain Galileans with their sacrifices (Lk 13:1). You would not have heard them speaking about the miserable architects of the day whose tower collapsed on eighteen people, killing them all (Luke 13:4). **Something had happened to those early believers that transformed how they saw things, as well as the things on which they focused.**

As I have already emphasized, we are being exposed to real conversion and the impact their transformation had upon them. If their conduct is at variance with that of modern day professed believers, what kind of person would assume it was because the times have changed, and people are no longer so radical. Who would say that those early believers tasted of something unique – something that was not intended for all time? Of course, if that really is the case, then precisely what is there about salvation that is “common” (Jude 1:3). And, how can faith be “common,” yet yield such dramatically different results (Tit 1:4). These are things to ponder.

CONTINUAL PRAISE

Believers are admonished, “By Him therefore let us offer **the sacrifice of praise to God continually**, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Heb 13:15). Praise is one thing, “continual” praise is something else. A person may be able simulate praise for a short time, but the person who cannot perceive the working of the Lord cannot praise Him “continually.” For such pretenders, praise is not “fruit,” but only pretension.

Without apparent prodding, the disciples of our text **continued** to praise the Lord – in the Temple, and from house to house. They did not see it as a duty, but as something their hearts compelled them to do. It was not an activity to which time was assigned, or that

required a leader and instruction. Their praise was the spontaneous and insightful expression of their faith. They had a “like precious faith” just as the apostles (2 Pet 1:1), who would say later, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). That involves praising as well as preaching.

ONE MORE WORD ABOUT PRAISE

Because of the current teaching concerning *praise*, it is necessary to say a few more words about this matter. Through the prophets, the Lord foretold a time when the people of God themselves would become “a praise.” The apostles confirmed that this occurred in those who are joined to Christ Jesus, and thus participate in both His death and His life.

it” (Jer 33:9).

⇨ “At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and **a praise** among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD” (Zeph 3:20).

The Apostles

The apostolic equivalent of this is stated in the following manner.

⇨ “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, **to the praise of the glory of His grace**, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6).

⇨ And again, “That we should be **to the praise of His glory**, who first trusted

In all of these texts, the people themselves become “a praise.” That is, they are seen as the work of God, and thus produce praise to God in those who see them. That praise is primarily in heaven, among the hosts who have a clearer and more extensive view of the greatness of the work of God than ordinary men.

The Prophets

⇨ “And give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem **a praise** in the earth” (Isa 62:7).

⇨ “For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for **a praise**, and for a glory: but they would not hear” (Jer 13:11).

⇨ “And it shall be to me a name of joy, **a praise** and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto

in Christ” (Eph 1:12).

⇨ And again, “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, **unto the praise of His glory**” (Eph 1:14).

⇨ And again, “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, **unto the glory and praise of God**” (Phil 1:11).

⇨ And again, “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found **unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ**” (1 Pet 1:7).

In all of these texts, the people themselves become “a praise.” That is, they are seen as the work of God, and

thus produce praise to God in those who see them. That praise is primarily in heaven, among the hosts who have a clearer and more extensive view of the greatness of the work of God than ordinary men. The praise will also be

perceived the work of God in the people. It was obvious to the eye of faith that God had “*created them in Christ Jesus*” (Eph 2:10). It was evident that they had passed from death unto life, and that God was working in them “*that which is well*

They used instruments like David, but it was for their own satisfaction, and not for the Lord. What the people called praise, God called “*noise*” and “*howlings*.” It all sounds like a page out of modern times.

It should be apparent, and yet it is necessary to say it, this is the only kind of people that can praise God – a people who themselves have been “made a praise.” All other purported praise is pretentious, and is actually obnoxious to the Lord.

upon earth among those who perceive that the people of God are, in fact, the work of God.

Expressions of This Praise On Earth

Remembering that giving thanks is expressly said to be “*praise*” (Heb 13:15), an expression of this kind is found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. “*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers*” (Eph 1:15-16). A similar expression or praise was expressed to the Colossians. “*We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints*” (Col 1:3-4). Another such expression related to the Thessalonian saints. “*We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God*” (1 Thess 1:2-4).

In these three cases, Paul

pleasing in His sight” (Heb 13:20). The people had become “*a praise*.”

The Relevancy to Our Text

It should be apparent, and yet it is necessary to say it, this is the only kind of people that can praise God – a people who themselves have been “*made a praise*.” All other purported praise is pretentious, and is actually obnoxious to the Lord. Both the prophets and Jesus spoke of such a thing in these words: “*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*” (Matt 15:8-9).

The seriousness of the condition is accented by the prophets. “*Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols*” (Amos 5:23). And again, “*That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David*” (Amos 6:5). And again, “*And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence*” (Amos 8:3). The people had simulated praise.

The point is that the people of our text had really been made new. They had once been charged with killing Jesus, now they had been forgiven and liberated by Him, and they knew it. The product of that was their praise – daily praise, and continual praise.

Today the professing church is being taught by sophists that praise is the secret to receiving from God. It is like a key that unlocks heaven, and causes God to come and dwell among the people. The whole matter is presented leaving the impression that praise makes a people, rather than a people making praise. **It is a serious error praise is purported to be coming from a people in whom the working of God is not evident.** A people whose very appearance and manners is a distraction to godly minds cannot possibly be found in “*the courts of the Lord*” (Psa 84:2). **It is not possible for a people to truly praise God who are not continuing steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread and in prayers.** It is time for godly teachers and leaders to rise up and insist that people be “*holy in all manner of conversation,*” or “*conduct*”^{NKJV} (1 Pet 1:15). This is God’s requirement, and it must be ours as well. If men object, saying it is not possible to determine who is really holy, they should be removed from positions of leadership. **God has not put them there, for He places no members in functions for which they are not suited** (1 Cor 12:28).

Of course, in our text, such unsavory conditions had not yet arisen. That is the whole point of saying these things. We are beholding true purity.

HAVING FAVOR WITH ALL THE PEOPLE

^{47b} . . . and having favor with all the people.” Other versions read, “*enjoying the favor of all the people,*”^{NIV} “*having the goodwill of all the people,*”

^{NRSV} “*having the approval of all the people,*”^{BBE} “*were looked up to by everyone,*”^{NJB} “*the whole city was favorable to them,*”^{LIVING} “*All of the*

people liked them,”^{IE} “*regarded with favor by all the people,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*being in favor and goodwill with all the people,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*all the people respected*

them.”^{PHILLIPS}

Here is a phenomenon that is most arresting to consider – “*favor with all the people.*” This confirms that God does not produce a people whose appearance and manner of life is offensive to others. Christians are not social oddities, who look like fools and conduct their lives as though they did not have good sense. It is their doctrine that causes all of the trouble, not their appearance. Solomon once said, “*Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man*” (Prov 3:3-4).

The people of Jerusalem looked favorably upon this growing body of believers. There was a certain comeliness in their conduct that reflected the working of the Lord. They were not seeking their own. They were not moved to exploit others. There was no cause for legal restraint among them. The city was not made worse because of their presence. No one’s possessions were in jeopardy because of their presence. They did not engage in disruptive or abusive conduct. Thus, the people looked favorably upon them. That does not mean they all rushed to embrace the truth that had liberated these souls, and that is not what our text means. It rather highlights that even the inhabitants of Jerusalem saw that the people were better, not worse.

This assisted the church in its beginnings, as the Lord protected them from harsh opposition at the first. In due time, because of their aggressive preaching and testimony, much of this favor would be lost. However, that would not be due to the way they lived, or to any adverse effects their lives had upon others. True godliness is of such an order that it is written, “*Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ*” (1 Pet 3:16).

The Working of the Lord

From one point of view, this “*favor with all the people*” was the working of the Lord, who gave the new disciples favor in the eyes of the people.

When God appeared to Moses and told him He was going to deliver Israel from Egypt, He said, “***And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty***” (Ex 3:21). When the time of deliverance came, this is precisely what he did: “***And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians***” (Ex 11:3). And again it is written, “***And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians***” (Ex 12:36).

It is also written of Joseph, “***And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt: and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house***” (Acts 7:9-10). As young Samuel advanced in years, it is said of him, “***And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the LORD, and also with men***” (1 Sam 2:26). It is also said of Esther, “***And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her***” (Esther 2:15).

up stones **again** to stone Him. Jesus answered them, *Many good works have I showed you from My Father; for which of those works do ye stone Me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God*” (John 10:33). It was what Jesus SAID that brought men to oppose Him. As for His life itself, it was not offensive to ordinary men – not even men like Pilate. When Pilate looked for some deed or expression in the life of Jesus that would justify His death, even he had to twice acknowledge, “*I find no fault in Him*” (John 19:4,6).

True Godliness

When the redeemed live their lives within the context of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, there is a sense in which they are “*approved of men.*” Thus it is written, “*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men*” (Rom 14:17-18). When admonishing the Corinthians, Paul urged them to provide “*for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*” (2 Cor 8:21).

However, when men look unfavorably upon us, it must not be because of the way we live, or because of our behavior among men. It is wrong for believers to be criticized for their work ethic, or because they are lazy, or because they cannot be trusted. Our light shines through our works, thus adorning the doctrine

The Example of Jesus

When the very nature and life of God was embodied a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, it is said of Him, “***And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man***” (Luke 2:52).

On one occasion, the Jews took up stones to kill Jesus. At this time Jesus asked them which one of His “*good works*” had provoked them to such action. Here is the record. “*Then the Jews took*

Jesus said, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matt 5:16).

It is not that we are to do things to please men, for that is a wholly improper motive (Gal 1:10). **Rather, it is that true godliness is not of itself offensive to men.** It is the reason and objective of godliness that causes the offense, particularly as it is expressed in preaching.

A Word to the Wise

We are not to be naive or overly simplistic in our view of this matter. **There is no guarantee that you will experience overwhelming acceptance by everyone around you, and you should not expect this to be the case.** However, when men look **unfavorably** upon us, it must not be because of the way we live, or because of our behavior among men. It is wrong for believers to be criticized for

their work ethic, or because they are lazy, or because they cannot be trusted. Our light shines through our works, thus adorning the doctrine (Tit 2:10).

Likewise, when we find favor with men, let it not be because we keep silence about the truth, or because we present the truth so that it is more palatable to men. And, even in our speech, may it be said that we have *“sound speech, that*

*cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, **having no evil thing to say of you**”* (Titus 2:8).

We can be assured that when it is appropriate, and when it is best for our own advancement and the glory of God, our Lord can still give us favor with all of the people. We can let it rest at that.

ADDITIONS EVERY DAY

“^{47c} And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Those who are looking for a pattern in the book of Acts, or for precedents established for all time, will surely have a difficult time with this text. I do not know that I have ever heard someone say that daily additions are the standard for all churches – even though, considering that *“the field is the world”* (Matt 13:36), this is surely happening. The very fact that this is something that the Lord did confirms that it is not subject to systemization or exploitation by men.

THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH

“And the Lord added to the church daily . . .” Other versions read, *“the Lord was adding to their number daily,”*^{NASB} *“day by day the Lord added to*

Lord added to the assembly daily,”^{DARBY} *“the Lord increased daily together,”*^{DOUAY} *“every day the Lord saved people,”*^{GWN} *“the Lord added to their community,”*^{NJB} *“each day the Lord added to their fellowship,”*^{NLT} *“the Lord added to the congregation daily,”*^{TNT} *“each day God added to them,”*^{LIVING} *“every day the Lord continued to add to them,”*^{WILLIAMS} and *“the Lord added to their group.”*^{GNB}

Luke is not speaking of a church roster, or a set of books on earth. It was the assembly itself that as increased – *“the church.”* This is only the second time the expression *“the church”* is used in the New Covenant Scriptures. Jesus referred to *“My church”* in Matthew 16:18, speaking of a time to follow His enthronement in glory. He referred to *“the church”* in Matthew 18:17, where he was addressing the matter of one brother trespassing against another. His

though the principle continues to apply.

Here we have the first time the words are used with particular reference to the body of Christ, those who have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13).

As used in this text, there has been considerable dialog among believers concerning the word *“church.”* Some have chosen to use it in reference to the structure in which the people of God meet. There is, however, no Scriptural basis for such a use, and it contradicts the way the word is employed by the Holy Spirit.

The word *“church”* is translated from the Greek word *ἐκκλησία* (ek-lay-see-ah). The foundational, or root, meaning of the word is, *“called out, or called forth.”*^{THAYER} The predominate idea in the word is that of an assembly – a group people that have been *“called out.”* This the lexical definition of its use is, *“a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; as assembly,”*^{THAYER} *“the assembled Christian community,”*^{FRIBERG} *“congregation of Christians, implying interacting membership,”*^{LOUW-NIDA} *“community, congregation, church,”*^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} *“assembly,”*^{LEH} *“church or congregation; as a church meeting.”*^{GINGRICH} While there are other uses of the word like a political gathering (Acts 19:39), the gathering of Israelites at Sinai (Acts 7:39), and an unruly assembly of people (Acts 19:32), the emphasis is always on the **gathering** – an **assembly**. Even when the *“church”* is used of the body of Christ in general (Col 1:18), the emphasis is upon the people

Here we have the first time the words are used with particular reference to the body of Christ, those who have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son

their number,”^{NRSV} *“every day the number . . . was increased by the Lord,”*^{BBE} *“the Lord added to them,”*^{CSB} *“the*

immediate reference was not to *“the church”* as comprehended in the apostles’ doctrine – that is to say, His body – even

being called out of the world and assembled together in Christ.

Therefore, when our text says the Lord “*added to the church daily*,” the immediate reference is to an increase in the assembly – in those who were continuing “*steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers*” (Acts 2:42). The larger implication is that the body of Christ – the people called out of the world and set in the heavenly places – was increasing daily.

Note that it was the Lord who was doing the adding. This means that His criteria for addition had been met. Other expressions that speak of the Lord adding to the church are as follows.

- ⇨ “*But of Him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor 1:30).
- ⇨ “*But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him*” (1 Cor 12:18).
- ⇨ “*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*” (1 Cor 12:13).
- ⇨ “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Col 1:13).
- ⇨ “*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*” (1 Cor 3:6).
- ⇨ “*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6).
- ⇨ “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior*” (Titus 3:5-6).

Ultimately, the things required

for our salvation are accomplished by God, through Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit. Some of the accomplishments include the following.

- ⇨ Reconciled (Col 1:21).
- ⇨ Washed (1 Cor 6:11).
- ⇨ Sanctified (1 Cor 6:11; Jude 1:1).
- ⇨ Justified (1 Cor 6:11).
- ⇨ Purged (Heb 1:3).
- ⇨ Purified (Acts 15:9; Tit 2:14).
- ⇨ Delivered (Gal 1:4; Col 1:13).
- ⇨ Translated (Col 1:3).
- ⇨ Called out (1 Pet 5:10; 2 Pet 1:3).
- ⇨ Joined to the Lord (1 Cor 6:17).
- ⇨ Baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13).
- ⇨ Drink in one Spirit (1 Cor 12:13).
- ⇨ Baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27).
- ⇨ Enlightened (Heb 6:4).
- ⇨ Tasted of the heavenly gift (Heb 6:4).
- ⇨ Made partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb 6:4).
- ⇨ Tasted of the good word of God (Heb 6:5).
- ⇨ Tasted of the powers of the world to come (Heb 6:5).

Those who have experienced such

As you can see, there are a number of differing perspectives reflected in the various translations. Note the different emphases.

- ⇨ **DIVINE DETERMINATION:** “*should be saved*,” ^{KJV} “*were to be saved*,” ^{DOUAY} “*destined to be saved*.” ^{NJB}
- ⇨ **THE PROCESS OF BEING SAVED:** “*were being saved*,” ^{NKJV} “*He was saving*,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “*who were being saved*.” ^{AMPLIFIED}
- ⇨ **A RESULT OF SALVATION:** “*who had salvation*.” ^{BBE}
- ⇨ **HUMAN INVOLVEMENT:** “*who were finding salvation*.” ^{PHILLIPS}

Obviously, some of these versions are actually commentaries rather than translations, for words themselves cannot have such a diverse meaning. My purpose here is simply to determine as best I can what the verse is actually saying. You may be sure that it will

Those who have experienced such things, by the very nature of the life given to them, are drawn together. They have all been “added” to the church, being made a part of Christ’s body. Further, their “common salvation” and “common faith” bring them together

things, by the very nature of the life given to them, are drawn together. They have all been “added” to the church, being made a part of Christ’s body. Further, their “common salvation” and “common faith” bring them together (Tit 1:4; Jude 1:3).

SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED

“ . . . such as should be saved.”

Other versions read, “*those who were being saved*,” ^{NKJV} “*those that were saved*,” ^{ASV} “*those who had salvation*,” ^{BBE} “*those that were to be saved*,” ^{DOUAY} “*those destined to be saved*,” ^{NJB} “*those whom He was saving*,” ^{WEYMOUTH} “*those who were being saved [from spiritual death]*,” ^{AMPLIFIED} and “*those who were finding salvation*” ^{PHILLIPS}

perfectly agree with the Scriptural doctrine of salvation itself.

The word “added” (the Lord added) is an imperfect active verb. That is, it is an action that is continuing – as though the text read “*kept on adding*.” The words “*should be saved*” are derived from a single Greek word, *σοζομένων* (sozo-amen-ous). From the standpoint of linguistics, or the structure of language, this is a present perfect participle. This means it is referring to an action that was complete at the time of writing – something that had already happened.

Putting the concepts of “adding” and “*should be saved*” together, the text means that God kept on adding to the church those who had been saved. That

is, salvation was required for them to be added to the church, or made a part of the assembly. Simply stated one might say, “upon being saved, God added them to the church.”

Divine Determination
Here is where ones theology can

Lord returns. *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”*^{NKJV} (1 Cor 1:18). *“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing”*^{NKJV} (2 Cor 2:15). *“Wherefore, my beloved, as*

The Scriptures also view salvation as the result of what men do. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord **shall be saved**”*(Rom 10:13). *“He that believeth and is baptized **shall be saved**; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16). *“And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto **all them that obey Him**”* (Heb 5:9).

Conclusion

As you can see, there is a sense in which each one of these meanings is true. I have taken the time to briefly delineate them to confirm why men translated the text differently. They were looking at it from differing angles.

As for the text itself, and what it is intended to convey, it seems to me that the paramount consideration is the Lord Himself – referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter said He had been made *“both lord and Christ,”* and thus He is involved in the affairs of the Kingdom. It is He who addressed the matter of sin, taking it away. He is the One who sent out the messengers to deliver the good news. He is the One who is the *“Author and Finisher of our faith.”* He is also the One to whom all judgment has been committed (John 5:22). **He, therefore has the last word on who is and who is not a part of His church. He is the One who is building it (Matt 16:18), adding to it daily all are appropriately described as “saved.”** It is not possible to be “saved” without being “added to the church,” and no one is a part of the church who is not, by Divine definition, “saved.” **There is no point or facet of salvation in which it becomes institutional.** No part of it is confined within a routine or a procedure. Nothing about salvation is disassociated from the One who has wrought it.

He is the One who is the “Author and Finisher of our faith.” He is also the One to whom all judgment has been committed. He, therefore has the last word on who is and who is not a part of His church. He is the One who is building it, adding to it daily all are appropriately described as “saved.”

dictate the meaning. For example, if a person accepts the view that Divine determination is the driving force, the text will be perceived as saying God added to the church every day those who were *“destined to be saved.”*^{NJB} There are texts that suggest this is the case. *“And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed”* (Acts 13:48). *“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”*(John 6:44). *“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”*(John 10:16).

The Process of Being Saved

This meaning emphasizes that being added to the church is part of the process of salvation itself: *“were being saved.”*^{NKJB} Salvation itself is often viewed as a process, commencing with the new birth, and culminating when the

*ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**”* (Phil 2:12). *“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”*(1 Pet 1:5).

The Result of Salvation

This perspective would view salvation as something completed, the result of which was being added to the church: *“who had salvation.”*^{BEBE} There are also texts that view salvation from this perspective. *“Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye **are saved**)”*(Eph 2:5). *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy **He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost**”*(Titus 3:5).

Human Involvement

This view traces the cause of being added to church to what men have done: *“were finding salvation.”*^{PHILLIPS}

CONCLUSION

Thus we conclude our considerations of the second chapter of Acts. It is to the church what the six days of creation are to the universe. For the body of Christ, it is the beginning, paralleling Israel coming out of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, and commencing

the journey to Canaan. We have been exposed to the ruling Christ, the working Spirit, and the consequent preaching and response of men. Christ’s influence upon earth was confirmed when He, being exalted to the right hand of God, poured out the Holy Spirit upon men (verse 33).

The convicting power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel has been seen (verse 37). We have been exposed to how men respond when they are convicted – pricked in their hearts – and how aggressive they are to appropriate salvation (verses 38 and 41). It has been

made clear that the matter of salvation involves being separated from the world as well as having one's sins forgiven (verse 40). The fact that the Word of God is gladly received when it is believed has been confirmed (verse 41). The impact of the truth upon human hearts is seen when men continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (verse 42). The unity

of believers and their lack of covetousness was confirmed (verse 43-45). The unanimity that results from the common faith and common salvation was clearly corroborated (verse 46). The effect of real salvation was evidenced by continual praise (verse 47).

These are all realities, not mere creedal statements or theological

positions. Jesus did not come to institute an organization or a program, but that men might have "life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). This did not mean the accumulation of worldly goods, for these brethren sold their goods, distributing to their brethren as they had need. Individuality was not the main thing, but joint-participation. This has all been lived out in this chapter.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 10/13/2006. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Thirteenth lesson will cover verses 1 through 11 of the third chapter: "THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN." The boldness and confidence of the apostles following Christ's enthronement in glory is remarkable to consider. This incident will confirm what power and abilities are brought to those whose spirits have been joined to the Lord. They are seen in the healing of the lame man, and are quite arresting to ponder. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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