

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

PART ONE: Prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:1-26)

A. Jesus' Post-resurrection ministry and ascension (1:1-12)

Acts 1:1-3 - By comparing this introduction with Luke 1:1-4, we see that the same person who wrote the book of Luke also wrote the book of Acts. The first account, i.e. the book of Luke had all that Jesus had begun to do and teach. Jesus in John 14:26 had promised the Apostles and their associates that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all the things that Jesus had said to them. The book of Acts and all the material in the New Testament that follows is as much the words of Jesus as those He spoke during His earthly ministry. We know this from John 16:12-15 where Jesus told the Apostles that He had many more things to tell them but that they could not handle it at the time He was speaking. However, He promised that the Holy Spirit would guide the Apostles and their associates into all truth. The Holy Spirit would take information from Jesus and show or disclose it to them. Before Jesus left, He had given specific orders to the Apostles. The best known of these orders is the Great Commission in Mt. 28:19-20 where Jesus commands the Apostles and by inference all believers to tell others about Him, baptize those who believe and then teach them to obey everything that Jesus had commanded. Jesus also showed that He was alive by many different types of proofs. He appeared to the 11 in the upper room in Luke 24:36-43 and invited them to touch Him and also ate food. He appeared to Thomas and showed Him His wounds in John 20:24-29. In 1 Cor. 15:5-8 we note that He was seen by 500 people at one time and by the Apostle Paul. He made numerous appearances in the 40 days following His resurrection up to the time of His ascension. The subject of His teaching during the 40 days was the kingdom of God. This would include the 1000 year earthly kingdom mentioned in Rev. 20:4-6 and Rev. 5:9-10 and the present spiritual kingdom which we enter by the new birth (Col. 1:13; John 3:3-7; 1:12-13). This passage helps us to fully see the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection. It strengthens our sense of joy and peace in the midst of a world where suffering and death are a part of our lives and realizing that it is only temporary.

Acts 1:4-5 - During Jesus' post-resurrection ministry on earth, He was meeting with the Apostles. His command was for them to wait for the promise of the Father which Jesus had spoken to them previously. The next verse explains that this was the promise of the Holy Spirit of which Jesus had spoken in John 14:16-17, 26: 16:7-15. The unique work that the Holy Spirit would be doing was called a baptism. John had baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (cp. Luke 3:16). As can be seen, this baptism with the Holy Spirit would not be a water baptism. This would place them in the spiritual body of Christ according to 1 Cor. 12:12-13 and Acts 11:15-17. This spiritual body of Christ is the church at large according to Eph. 1:21-23 and Col. 1:18. This would happen after Jesus went away at His ascension (John 16:7). Some have tried to mistakenly teach that Acts 1:5 refers to a baptism "in" the Holy Spirit as an extra zap for our Christian lives that is received after salvation. While the Greek word in Acts 1:5 translated "with" can also be translated "in". The same Greek word is used in 1 Cor. 12:13 and is translated "by". 1 Cor. 12:13 makes it very clear that all believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit so for it to be true of all believers, it has to happen at the

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

point of salvation. Otherwise, it would not be true of all believers. We will see when we look at Acts 10:44-48 and 11:15-17 that Spirit baptism is separate from Christian water baptism. Water baptism of believers was commanded by Christ in Mt. 28:19-20 and is a picture of Spirit baptism. In our New Testament, the phrase “in Christ” is used to describe believers and the way we ended up “in Christ” when we were saved was by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. This would occur at Pentecost in Acts 2 for those who had become believers prior to that day (note the words “not many days from now” in Acts 1:5) and at salvation from the time of Acts 10:44-48 which is also recounted by Peter in Acts 11:15-17. As we go through Acts, we will look carefully at the work of the Holy Spirit because some have twisted some of the scriptures to promote error. We are never commanded to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit because it is something that happens to us at the moment of trusting Christ to receive salvation. Like Christ’s death on the cross, His resurrection and His ascension, Pentecost, (which we will see in Acts 2) does not have to be repeated. They are all one-time events.

I have a 9-page question/answer course on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (on the website: biblestudyhall.org) in which you can use your Bible to learn more about the practical outworking of this in your Christian life.

Acts 1:6-7 - Some believers have made the error of understanding that this verse meant that Israel would never have the kingdom that was promised in the Old Testament (e.g. Isa. 2:1-5). In Matthew 21:43-45 Jesus had told the Jewish leaders that the kingdom would be taken away from them and given to a nation that brings forth fruit for God. This nation is explained in 1 Peter 2:9-10 to be the church. However, it is clear that this is temporary according to Rom. 11:25-27 when Israel will turn to her Messiah Jesus Christ at His second coming and be saved as a nation. The “all Israel” that is mentioned in Rom. 11:25-27 is a remnant according to Rom. 9:27. In addition Jesus had promised the Apostles that they would serve as judges over the 12 tribes of Israel in His future kingdom (Luke 22:28-30 cp. Isa. 1:25-28). In Luke 1:31-33 it is stated that Jesus will sit on the throne of David, and we see from other scripture that this will be at His second coming (cp. Mt. 25:31). He is not currently seated on His own throne in heaven but has sat down with His Father on His Father’s throne according to Rev. 3:21 where at the Father’s right hand, He intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34) and functions as our advocate to speak to the Father in our defense (1 John 2:1). The point that Jesus is making is that it was not for them and us by extension to know the dates and times that God would do this for Israel. Otherwise, we could date His second coming. In the meantime, God has work for us to do as outlined in Acts 1:8 which we will discuss next.

Acts 1:8 - Jesus made it very clear that in contrast to their concern as to when the kingdom would be restored to Israel as they had discussed in Acts 1:6-7, there was more important work to be done. Jesus had told them to wait in Jerusalem until this power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49 cp. Acts 1:4-5) was available for them to undertake the commission which He was giving them (and by extension those of us believers living now). The Holy Spirit would come upon them on Pentecost (Acts 11:15-17). This relationship of “upon” appears to be connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit that we discussed in a prior meditation. The purpose of this

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

power given by the Holy Spirit was to help the early Christians testify or witness concerning Christ. When we trust Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells us (Rom. 8:9; Gal. 3:26 cp. 4:6). The witness is to begin in the community where we live and proceed to the nation in which we live, the nations in close proximity and to the entire world. Some believers are personally called to be missionaries (Eph. 3:8) while others are involved in praying (Col. 4:3-4); sending (Rom. 10:14) and financially supporting (Phil. 4:15-18). Each one of us as believers has an obligation to tell the gospel to the unsaved wherever we may be (Rom. 1:16). Each of us as believers is empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. We must ask God to show us how He wants us to be involved and always remember that God has given us the power to do it.

Acts 1:9-12 - We see in this passage what God's word teaches concerning the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ. This notes that His ascension was a very real and visible event to His disciples. The words "looking on", "sight", "gazing intently", "looking into the sky" and "watched" all point to a very visible event. The description was very simple. Jesus was lifted up. There is no further description of how this was done. They watched Him keep rising up until a cloud concealed Him, and they could no longer see Him. Two men, probably angels, explained to them that Jesus had gone in a visible manner and would come back in a visible manner. Revelation 1:7 and Matthew 24:30 explain that Christ's second coming will be in the clouds and visible to everyone living on earth at that time. A note of additional interest is that Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives according to Acts 1:12 and Luke 24:50-51 (Bethany is on the Mount of Olives – see Luke 19:29). Zechariah 14:3-5 makes it very clear that when He returns, His feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives. Seeing someone come back from the dead and visibly rise off the ground is an experience like a vast majority of believers have never had but the record is clear. Some of the implications of His ascension include His interceding for us at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:34), acting as our advocate who speaks to the Father in our defense (1 John 2:1), assuming headship over the church which is His spiritual body (Eph. 1:19-23) and helping us in time of temptation (Heb. 2:17-18).

B. Matthias chosen to replace Judas (1:12-26)

Acts 1:12-14 - Following the ascension of Jesus, the disciples were given no further instructions other than to wait for the Holy Spirit to come in a few days. Their wait was actually 10 days. They could not begin their witness (Acts 1:8) without the power of the Holy Spirit. The phrase "Sabbath day's journey" (about 3000 feet) was the distance that was set by the Jewish leaders as a limit that could not be exceeded to avoid being categorized as work. It was not a command of the Old Testament. It was a man-made commandment that had been added to the law. This type of addition had brought forth the strong criticism of Jesus in Mark 7:1-9. Since there was not anything assigned to do other than to wait on God for the next step, the believers met and stayed together and spent their time in prayer. In our Christian lives, sometimes we have done everything we know to do in relation to some issue. These are times of waiting upon God. It is important that we not isolate ourselves from other believers and that we come together for corporate prayer at a designated place. With the exception of Judas, we see a list of the Apostles. The group also included some women, Mary the mother of Jesus and

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES
SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

his brothers. You will recall that Jesus' brothers were named in Mt. 13:55 and were said to be unbelievers during the early part of Jesus' ministry according to John 7:5. However, at some time after John 7:5 and His ascension, they evidently became believers. This shows us that people who are resistant to trusting Christ as Savior can be won over so we should not give up while they are still living knowing that God may bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ. My wife and I prayed for her sister's unsaved husband for 24 years seeing him go from bad to worse. However, in the end, he trusted Christ and was totally dedicated to serving Him for the last year of his life, only to die of an unexpected heart attack. To be sure, we must spend time in individual prayer (Mt. 6:5-8) but group prayer (Acts 4:24-31) is also vital for our spiritual growth and enrichment.

Acts 1:15-20 - Here we see Peter, a restored believer (after denying Christ 3 times) taking charge of this small group of 120 believers. There is no doubt that the treachery of Judas and his subsequent suicide had left the believers upset and possibly feeling that everything was still out of control. Peter pointed out that the unfaithfulness of Judas had been predicted by David in the Psalms (cp. Psalm 41:9 with John 13:18). Peter states that Judas had been one of their number and had shared in their ministry. Yet it is equally clear that Judas was a counterfeit believer according to John 6:64, 70-71. On first glance, the description of Judas' end seems to be contradictory. However, what obviously happened is that Judas went to this field and found a high point, possibly a cliff or high tree. He found a place to hang himself as described in Matthew 27 and whatever he hung himself on broke and he ended up falling headlong to the ground and bursting open so that his intestines ran out – a very graphic ending. The place that Judas committed suicide was a potter's field and was afterward purchased by the Jewish officials in the name of Judas, but because of the bloody result of Judas' suicide method, it was called the field of blood. To emphasize his point, Peter cited Psalm 69:25 and 109:8. There are three things that we must be able to take from this passage. (1) The Holy Spirit is the real author of scripture. David was only His human communicator. (2) There will be people in our churches who profess to be saved but lack the reality of genuine faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 John 1:9-10; Tit. 1:15-16). (3) Despite the problem of false brethren, we must move forward in our living for Christ (Phil. 3:13).

Acts 1:21-26 - Because of the defection of Judas and his subsequent suicide, there needed to be a replacement for Judas. Jesus had chosen 12 Apostles, and a replacement was needed. Notice how the selection process was done: The criteria for selection included: men who had been with them from the time Jesus was baptized until the time that He ascended (vv. 21-22), men who had seen the resurrected Christ (v. 22), the eleven appointed them as candidates to replace Judas – Barsabbas and Matthias (v. 23), they prayed for God's guidance as to which one to select (v. 24), and finally, they cast lots and Matthias was chosen (v. 26). This procedure of casting lots for choosing leaders was abandoned after the Holy Spirit was given as God gave the criteria in His word later. However, before the sending of the Holy Spirit, God honored this procedure (Prov. 16:33). Another observation on this passage is the fact that God knows everyone's heart. This is true of God alone according to 2 Chr. 6:19, 30). To be sure, there were other Apostles later such as James, the half-brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19) and Barnabas and

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Paul according to Acts 14:14. The idea that these men jumped the gun and that Paul was really God's choice for the 12th Apostle is not found in scripture. Romans 11:13 and Gal. 2:7-9 state that Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles while Peter and the others would be Apostles to the circumcision, i.e. Jews. Since God has plans for the 12 Apostles as judges over the Jews in the coming kingdom (Luke 22:28-30), this would strongly indicate that God honored the choice of Matthias as the 12th Apostle to replace Judas Iscariot. The spiritual gift of Apostle is considered a spiritual gift that is unique to the founding of the church (Eph. 2:20) and along with the New Testament prophets functioned as the guiding authority until the New Testament was recorded. What we can learn from this passage is that when false brethren rise and fall within the ranks of church leadership, God will raise up faithful men if we will humbly pray to that end and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

PART TWO: Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47)

A. The sending of the Holy Spirit (2:1-13)

Acts 2:1-4 - Here we see the early Christians gathered together in one place. This theme runs throughout the New Testament. God made believers to be together and to experience Him together and not just to experience Him individually. Here we see the coming of the Holy Spirit to them on the day of Pentecost. Jesus had promised the sending of the Holy Spirit in John 16:7, and it is also mentioned in John 7:37-39. It was predicted by John the Baptist in Mt. 3:11. Notice the description of this one-time event. It was not a violent rushing wind but sounded like it. There were tongues that looked like fire and rested on each believer present. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. It is also on this occasion that they were also baptized with the Holy Spirit according to Acts 11:15-17. God's word carefully distinguishes between the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit as seen in the chart on the next page:

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES
SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Ltr.	Holy Spirit Baptism	Holy Spirit Filling
a.	Happens once 1 Corinthians 12:13(occurs only once at a point of time – Greek aorist verb tense). See also Ephesians 4:5	Happens repeatedly Ephesians 5:18 – Greek verb tense is present tense command which tells the believer to keep on being filled by the Holy Spirit
b.	Not commanded to seek it.	Commanded to be filled – Eph. 5:18
c.	True of all believers 1 Corinthians 12:13	Not true of all believers
d.	Cannot be undone No scriptural passage telling us of someone being unbaptized by the Spirit	Can be undone Peter was filled with the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:4) and was later filled again in Acts 4:8
e.	Received by initial faith in Christ at salvation 1 Corinthians 12:13 cp. Colossians 2:12	Received by yieldedness and ongoing faith in Christ Romans 12:1-2; 1 John 1:9; Galatians 5:16,25 cp. 2:20; 3:1-3; Colossians 2:6
f.	Did not occur before Pentecost Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5	Did occur before Pentecost Exodus 31:3; 35:31; Luke 1:41,67
g.	Places the believer in Christ and His spiritual body 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27	Empowers the believer for service, sharing the gospel and godly living Acts 2:4, 11; 4:8-12, 31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17-20; 11:23-24; 13:9 cp. with 13:7-12; Eph. 5:18-21

We will continue looking at this event of Pentecost in our next meditation when we discuss how the day of Pentecost changed the relationship of the Holy Spirit to believers prior to that day and on and after that day.

We have seen the fact that the believers experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit which gave the supernatural ability to speak in other languages. They also were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual body of Christ which is the church at large. In John 14:16-17 we see that the Holy Spirit was with the disciples during Jesus' earthly ministry and in the future after Pentecost, He would be in them. In addition, John 14:16-17 tells us in verse 16 that the Holy Spirit's presence in the believer would be forever or permanent. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit could leave a believer and come upon a believer as we clearly see in 1 Sam. 16:13-14. In Psalm 51:11 when David prayed his prayer of confession after his sin with Bathsheba, he prayed that God would not remove the Holy Spirit from him. No believer living in the time since Pentecost has to pray that prayer in light of what Jesus taught in John 14:16-17. Additionally, we know that we are sealed with Holy Spirit for the day of redemption when Jesus

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

returns and gives us a new body like His resurrection body (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30 cp. Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21). However, it is always proper for the believer to pray that He is conformed to the conditions for the full ministry of the Holy Spirit. We will discuss the conditions for the filling of the Holy Spirit in the next paragraph.

Ephesians 5:18 - *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit (NKJV)*. The filling of the Spirit is a command from God. It is present tense in the Greek which speaks of something that we are to continue to do. It is contrasted to being drunk with wine. Another way that we could understand what it means to be filled shows up in this contrast. When we drink alcohol to the point of drunkenness, we are controlled by that alcohol. The idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit is being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Notice how the filling of the Spirit resulted in special enablement from God in the following situations: Here – speaking in a foreign language not previously learned or studied; Acts 4:8-12 – enabled Peter to speak boldly for Christ when opposed, Acts 4:31 – enabled the believers to speak God’s word boldly ; Acts 6:3 – enabled certain men to lead as deacons; Acts 7:55 – enabled Stephen to focus on Christ rather than the danger of persecution; Acts 9:17-20 – enabled Paul to speak out boldly for Christ as a new believer; Acts 11:23-24 – enabled Barnabas to strengthen and encourage new believers to stay true to Christ; Acts 13:9 cp. with 13:7-12 –enabled Paul to speak out against a man given over to the occult; Eph. 5:18-21 – enables believers to sing praises to God, be thankful for every situation good or bad and to submit their wills to other believers. When the Holy Spirit controls us, we are able to carry out God’s purposes in a manner that we would not otherwise be able to do so. The conditions for being filled are: being decisively yielded to God (Rom. 12:1), having all sins confessed (1 John 1:9); trusting Christ for the power to obey His commands (Col. 2:6). As we do this the Holy Spirit fills or controls us to do God’s work in us and through us (Gal. 3:1-5). We will note the error of those who insist that speaking in tongues is the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit, and note what that gift was, as we examine the next few verses in Acts 2 and other pertinent passages.

Acts 2:4-11 - One of the first observations that we make with reference to speaking in tongues is that these were specific languages spoken by different people groups. The people who spoke them had not been familiar with the language they were speaking but were understood by those who grew up speaking that language. The speaking in tongues was not used to proclaim the gospel. It was used to praise the greatness of God and His actions according to v. 11. The idea of them being some type of angelic language is foreign to scripture. The mention of tongues occurs only in Mark 16:17-20; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 19:1-7 and I Corinthians chapters 12-14. Some have tried to state that tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 refer to angelic languages referenced in 1 Corinthians 13:1. However, 1 Cor. 14:9-11 makes it clear that these are languages that are heard in the world. In addition, every time an angel communicated with people in the Bible, the recipients had no problems understanding what the angels were saying and did not need an interpreter. Therefore, the angelic language is universally understood. By establishing the fact that biblical tongues-speaking is a definite human language, this calls into

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

serious question the validity of so-called instances of tongues speaking and its resurgence in the early 1900's after 1800 years of subsiding.

Some summary observations can be given on the spiritual gift of tongues:

1. As noted above, it is a definite human language.
2. Not every believer has the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12:28-30).
3. Tongues are not the sign of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. All believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13) but all do not speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:28-30).
4. 1 Cor. 1:22 states that Jews require a sign and tongues were a sign for Jewish unbelievers according to 1 Cor. 14:21-22 which quotes Isa. 28:11-12 so the reference to this people and those who do not believe are referring to the Jewish unbelievers. In our passage above, there were an abundance of these in Jerusalem. We will look next at other instances of tongues speaking mentioned in scripture.
5. Tongues are not to be forbidden according to 1 Cor. 14:39 but they are to be restricted to situations where there is an interpreter (1 Cor. 14:28) and where no more than three people speak in a meeting and that speaking is in order (1 Cor. 14:27).
6. Tongues are the last of the gifts in order of value in 1 Cor. 12:28-30 and we are to seek for the greater gifts to be used in the church according to 1 Cor. 12:31.
7. Finally, Jesus Christ never spoke in tongues – not once. The goal of the Christian life after we have been saved is Christ-likeness (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 2:5).

Based on this data from scripture, the modern resurgence of the so-called gift of tongues in the 1900's up to the present 1800 years of silence is not the biblical gift of tongues. This is not to say, there have been no genuine instances but they are far and few between. The gift of tongues like all miraculous gifts has greatly subsided.

We saw in the last paragraph that the spiritual gift of tongues was a sign to unbelieving Jews (1 Cor. 14:21-22 cp. Isa. 28:11-12). The next instance in Acts was the speaking in tongues that occurred after Cornelius and his household trusted Christ as Savior (Acts 10:43-48). Again this was a sign for the Jews because the believing Jews (=the circumcision) were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on Gentile believers (Acts 10:45-46). The third instance of speaking in tongues was the 12 disciples of John the Baptist (probably Jews based on Acts 13:24) who spoke in tongues after they were baptized and the Apostle Paul laid his hands on them (Acts 19:1-7). The passage in Mark 16:17-20 shows us that speaking in tongues would be one of the signs of those who had at that time already believed (according to the Greek verb tense) according to Mark 16:17. In other words, these signs would accompany the first generation of believers to confirm their message (Mark 16:20). Hebrews 2:3-4 bears this out that the purpose of tongues and other signs was to confirm the message of Christ to the Jews since the book of Hebrews was written to the Jewish people.

I am aware one instance where there evidently was a genuine occurrence of the spiritual gift of tongues and an appropriate use of it. It occurred at a Bible-believing non-charismatic church in a small town. There was an unbelieving Jewish woman who had grown up in France and had

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

come to the United States and had lived in the town for many years who had come to the church meeting. One of the men jumped up and spoke the gospel in French to the lady. Another man arose and translated it to English. Neither of these men had ever learned or spoken French so the lady saw the reality of Christ because of this and trusted Him for salvation. This was a valid exercise of the spiritual gift of tongues. We will look at the reaction to this supernatural display of God's working through the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:12-13 - Notice the reactions among unbelievers to the coming of the Holy Spirit and its accompanying sign of tongue's speaking. One group was amazed because of the uniqueness of the event, and they were perplexed as well. The explanation for this lack of understanding is given in 1 Cor. 2:14 where we are told that the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God because they are not receptive to those things and that they lack the capability of understanding things because they are discerned by the help of the Holy Spirit whom they do not have. Others readily tried to explain this away despite the fact that this was clearly a supernatural event. They attributed the strange sounds that they heard to drunkenness. They completely ignored the fact that people who understood these languages were amazed at this display as well. Most of us have encountered people who continue to try to explain away the supernatural. People try to explain away the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ despite the eyewitness accounts of seeing the risen Jesus Christ. Others try to explain away the miracle of creation itself. The day of Pentecost was no exception. However, we will note that Peter addressed the confused people and the mockers with a powerful and courageous sermon setting forth the word of God, i.e. God's viewpoint of the events. Before I was saved, I was definitely a skeptic but the word of God cut through all of this. We must not be surprised that we face a confused and skeptical world but patiently set forth our Lord's viewpoint from His word.

B. Peter's Message (2:14-36)

Acts 2:14-21 - Peter began speaking to the people who were present. There were those who were confused and those who were mocking. Peter showed the people that were mocking the supernatural display of the Holy Spirit's power that this was not a case of drunkenness because it was 9 o'clock in the morning which would be too early for that to be the case. Peter took his audience to the scriptures. Keep in mind that the only Bible that these people knew was the Old Testament. Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32 in Acts 2:17-21. Notice very carefully that Peter did not say that the display of the Holy Spirit was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The following chart on the next page will help in this comparison of what happened on Pentecost and what Joel predicted would happen:

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

<i>Joel's Prophecy (Joel 2:28-32)</i>	<i>Pentecost in Acts 2</i>
Holy Spirit to be poured out on all people.	Holy Spirit poured out on the 120 (cp. Acts 1:15).
The display and fulfillment of prophecy, visions and dreams but no prediction of speaking in foreign languages.	Speaking in foreign languages not previously known or studied by the speaker but no prophecy, visions and dreams on this occasion.
Signs and wonders on the earth and the sun turned into darkness and moon turned into a blood-red color.	None of these phenomena were present on Pentecost.
Anyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.	Anyone who called on the Lord would be saved cp. Rom. 10:13

As can be seen from the chart above, Joel's prophecy was not fulfilled. However, the common elements were the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the availability of calling upon the Lord in faith for salvation. What he was saying was that the people should have recognized the supernatural event of Pentecost as the work of the Holy Spirit because the prophet Joel had stated that the Holy Spirit would be involved in supernatural work in relation to the return of Christ and the setting up of the future kingdom. Because everyone who trusts Christ as savior receives the Holy Spirit when they trust Christ for salvation (Gal. 3:26; 4:6), we now have the power to live a supernatural life. This challenges us to not just do what comes natural but to do what God commands and supernaturally enables us to do.

Acts 2:22-24 - Peter continued his message to the people who had been confused about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and to those who had mocked it and tried to explain it away. God had shown that Jesus was the promised Messiah by doing miraculous works through Him. The Greek word for miracles speaks of supernatural works that show God's power. The Greek word for wonders refers to supernatural works that display God's greatness. Another Greek word is used for signs and has the meaning of supernatural works that show God's message. These repeated works had been done in the midst of these people so that they would understand that God had been working through Jesus. Despite the fact that the Jewish people had Jesus arrested and turned over to lawless people, i.e. the Gentiles, to put Him to death, God bodily raised Jesus from the dead. God ended the pains or effects of death for Jesus by raising Him from the dead and demonstrated that it was impossible for Jesus to be held in the grip of death. All of this happened as a part of God's plan and foreknowledge. This was an example of God letting evil people carry out their scheme in order to not only raise Him from the dead but to put into effect His plan for our salvation. Peter's purpose in this part of the message was to point out to the people their guilt in rejecting all the evidence God had given them of Jesus' Messiahship and turning Him over to the Gentiles to be killed. Peter pointed out that they had not done this with God's blessing and approval but had only been successful in carrying out their plan because God allowed it to achieve His greater purpose of providing salvation.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Acts 2:25-31 - Peter continued his sermon to those who had been confused with regard to the Holy Spirit being at work and to those who were mocking and trying to explain it away. He used David's quote from Ps. 16:7-11 to show that it predicted that God would raise Jesus from the dead. What it specified was that His soul would not be left in Hades and that His body would not experience decay. Jesus would experience fullness of joy in the presence of God, and it was for that joy that Jesus had endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). Peter made it clear that David had to be speaking of Christ because David's body was still dead and buried. He stated that David was a prophet and knew that one of His descendents would sit on His throne. Notice that David did not say that Christ would be sitting on David's throne when Christ was resurrected because His being seated on David's throne awaits His 2nd coming (Isa. 9:6-7 cp. Mt. 25:31). In Acts 2:22-24, Peter had declared Christ's resurrection. In this passage, He had used the scriptures to prove Christ's resurrection had been predicted. In Acts 2:32-36, He will use the fact of multiple witnesses to prove Christ's resurrection. Notice that Peter's message up to this point has contained the gospel which is the death and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-4). When we recognize that the centerpiece of the scripture (including the Old Testament) is Christ (John 5:39), we see how God keeps His promises. We can trust Him and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ to do what they say yesterday, today and forever.

Many wonder what it means that Jesus' soul was not left in Hades. Eph. 4:9 states that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth. He had predicted in Mt. 12:40 that He would be in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights. It appears that prior to Christ's ascension that Hades (or Sheol which is the Old Testament equivalent) was divided into a torment and a paradise section (Luke 16:22-24). We know that Jesus did not suffer because He stated that it was finished when He died on the cross in John 19:30. In Luke 23:43 He had promised the repentant thief on the cross that he would be in paradise with Jesus that very day. We know that paradise was obviously moved to heaven according to 2 Cor. 12:2-4. Many believe that this probably occurred when Jesus ascended because Eph. 4:8 states that when He ascended, He led a group of captives (presumably the souls of the Old Testament believers) to heaven. The purpose of Christ's descent into Hades was not only this. According to 1 Peter 3:18-20, He announced to the spirits (i.e. angels, Heb. 1:14) in prison (the angels who had sinned in Gen. 6:1-5 and were confined there according to Jude 1:6 and 2 Peter 2:4) His victory over them (1 Peter 3:22; Col. 2:15). By understanding that Christ went to Hades/Sheol to announce His victory to the confined fallen angels and to move the paradise section of Hades to Heaven, and by learning that He did not suffer there, it helps us to better understand God's word on this question of Christ's soul not being left in Hades. . For those of you who have not been exposed to this subject, this may seem like a lot of information. I do have a question/answer course on this whole subject which can walk you through this topic step by step. This study is online at biblestudyhall.org under question and answer studies titled "Intermediate State".

Acts 2:32-36 - Peter makes it clear to the audience that it is the very same Jesus that they put to death who was raised from the dead to fulfill David's prophecy. They confirmed this with scripture in Acts 2:35-31 and by the fact that all of them were eyewitnesses that He was raised from the dead. Peter goes on to declare that Christ was raised up at His ascension to the right

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

hand of God. He affirmed that Jesus had received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father (John 7:38-39; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7) and that what they were seeing and hearing was a result of the Holy Spirit being poured out. Peter pointed out that the scripture through David stated that Jesus had been raised to the right hand of the Father. He stated that Jesus would remain at the Father's right hand until the time of His second coming when He defeats His enemies. Peter affirms that Jesus occupies the position of authority (made Lord) and that Jesus was the promised Christ or Messiah (king for Israel). Peter also emphasized that this was the very same Jesus that they had crucified and not some other individual. After this powerful Sermon in which Peter demonstrated from the Old Testament scriptures that the Holy Spirit had been sent, Christ had been raised from the dead and was at the right hand of the Father, it was now up to the Holy Spirit to convict the people in the audience of their need to change their mind. Peter's sermon reminds us that when we present Christ to the unsaved that we need to use the word of God because it is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:17). We will now look at the response.

C. Response to Peter's message (2:37-42)

Acts 2:37 - Those of us who have trusted Christ as savior will find ourselves with opportunities to present the gospel to some unsaved person or persons. We know that the Holy Spirit convicts these people of the sin of unbelief, of insufficient righteousness and the judgment to come because God's word says that He does (John 16:8-11). We noticed that Peter had used the word of God in His message to the people of Israel and Jewish proselytes from other countries who were in Jerusalem. It is the word of God that is used by the Holy Spirit like a sword to cut to or pierce the heart of unsaved people (Eph. 6:17). Hebrews 4:12 explains that the word of God penetrates the entire being of people to deal with them regarding their deeds and their thoughts. How did the Holy Spirit move so that Peter knew that these people were under sufficient conviction to respond to Christ? Notice that these people asked Peter and the Apostles, "What shall we do." Notice how Phillip could see the Holy Spirit working on the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:28-37. The Holy Spirit had prompted Phillip to approach the man. The man asked Phillip to explain the scripture in Acts 8:34 and then asked for baptism in Acts 8:36. In Acts 16:30-31 the Philippian jailor asked what He should do to be saved. What we see from this short verse and the other passages mentioned is that if the Holy Spirit is working on someone with whom we are sharing or starting to share the gospel, we will receive some type of positive signal from that person that they are ready to place their faith in Christ.

Acts 2:38 - When Peter saw that they were responding to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He gave them the command to repent. Repentance means to change one's mind. When speaking of salvation, it sometimes includes the act of believing or trusting Christ as here (Acts 2:44), and it involves discarding whatever has kept you from believing such as confidence in one's own righteousness (Rom. 3:10; Isa. 64:6), sincerity (Prov. 14:12) or it can include sins that keep one from believing (Rev. 9:20-21). This was sufficient for salvation. Many have understood the phrase "*be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins*" as requiring baptism in order to have their sins forgiven. The word "for" can be understood in two ways.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

First of all, it can mean “in order to” like the sentence, “He went to the store for milk and bread” meaning that he went to the store to get milk and bread. On the other hand, it can mean “because of” as in the sentence, “He went to jail for robbery” where the word “for” has the meaning of “because of.” The Greek word for “for” is “eis” and can be used both ways in the Greek like our English word “for”. In Matthew 12:41, we are told that the people of Nineveh repented at (Greek word “eis”) the preaching of Jonah. They did not repent in order for Jonah to preach but repented because of the preaching of Jonah. Here in Acts 2:38, the people were baptized because of the forgiveness of sins. Acts 10:43 makes it clear that our sins are forgiven when we believe in or trust Christ. 150 times in the New Testament faith is listed as the only condition for salvation. When we trust Christ as Savior, we receive the Holy Spirit as a gift from God (Gal. 3:26 cp. 4:6). Since salvation is a gift and does not involve any works on our part, this verse cannot mean that salvation is received by being baptized (Eph. 2:8-9). The fact that the baptism is done in the name of Jesus Christ simply means that it is done by the authority of Christ. We will continue to see how this faith changed their lives.

Acts 2:39 - The call or invitation goes out to many people according to Matthew 22:14 but only a few respond. This is obvious from Jesus’ parable in Luke 14:15-24. We are involved in this call of God through sharing the gospel according to 2 Thes. 2:14. The promise refers to the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:33. What Peter is saying to these people is that this promise is available to them as a provision of the salvation package. The purpose of the invitation is to call for a decision on their part. Notice that the provision was available to the Jews and Jewish proselytes who were present as shown by the words “you and your children”. The words “for all who are far off” refer to the Gentiles (=those who are not Jews) as shown by the description of the Gentiles being “far off” in Eph. 2:13, 17-18. The moment that we trust Christ as Savior, we are sealed with this promised Holy Spirit according to Eph. 1:13. Believers tend to share the gospel with people are more like themselves than those who are different, but this shows us that we need to think in broader terms when it comes to sharing the gospel.

Acts 2:40 - One of the interesting observations concerning Peter’s sermon on Pentecost was that we only have some key parts of that message. The phrase “with many other words” tells us this. One of the practical points that we glean from this is that God’s word gives us all that we need to know but does not disclose everything that we might like to know. Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us that the secret things belong to God but the things revealed are given for us and those who follow that we might obey all the commands that God gives us. What we do know about these other words of Peter was that they provided testimony (the evidence from eye-witnesses) and exhortation (words to help them come to decision for Christ). The result would be that they would be saved from people who had perverted God’s truth and values. To pervert God’s word is described in Isa. 5:20 where God promises judgment to those who would blur the distinction between light and darkness and the distinction between good and evil. Salvation benefits us much more than just the forgiveness of sins and the removal of obstacles that hinder us from trusting Christ. It also takes us out from under the control of those who have perverted God’s word and values. Finally, we see that the Greek verb tense of the word “saved” speaks of a decision that is made at a fixed point of time. When

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

we trust Christ as Savior, this is the fixed point of time that we pass from spiritual death to spiritual life. John 5:24 reminds us that when we believe that we pass from death to life. We will continue to look at how this message helped many come to Christ.

Acts 2:41 - We see that there were a large number of people saved this particular day that Peter preached. The message was new to these people and the Holy Spirit had obviously begun His work of conviction. We notice that God's word does not give us the exact amount of people who trusted Christ but gives us an approximate number. Only those who accepted the message were baptized. This re-enforces the fact that only those who trust Christ as Savior are to be baptized. This rules out infant baptism and proxy baptism (practiced by the LDS cult). We also note that baptism was done immediately after trusting Christ as Savior. This is the pattern of the New Testament. Baptism is to be the initial act of obedience following one's salvation by trusting Christ. Finally, we observe that these approximately 3000 people were added to the ones who were already believers. When we trust Christ as savior, we are added to the other believers and become part of one body or group. Salvation is the reality that adds us to other believers and water baptism is the picture of that reality. After we help someone to salvation by giving them the gospel, we should communicate to them that baptism is an act of obedience to show that they mean business with the Lord. At the same time, we must let them know that water baptism does not help us gain salvation nor does it help us keep our salvation (Phil. 1:6).

D. The fellowship of the believers (2:42-47)

Acts 2:42 - One of the important items for a healthy church is follow-up with those who have received the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. One of the crucial assets in this follow-up is a church that faithfully follows the pattern given in the New Testament. We are commanded to meet together to promote and encourage love and good works in the lives of one another as believers according to Heb. 10:24-25. Acts 2:42 tells us what they did when they met together as believers. The Apostles' teaching or doctrine would have consisted of what is found in our New Testament with some presentation of the Old Testament as well. The preaching of God's word in a patient and teaching manner is commanded in 2 Tim. 4:2. The word fellowship involves sharing and giving. It involves the one-another commandments in the New Testament. The breaking of bread was a term used for the Lord's Table to commemorate the death of Christ for our sins and for the love feast (Jude 1:12) which occurred in the early church. The final item was corporate prayer where the people of the church prayed together. When believers are looking for a healthy church, all of these four items are to be present. As we go through the book of Acts, we will see the need for special meetings together for other purposes as well.

Acts 2:43-45 - One of the results of trusting Christ as Savior is that there is a fear, i.e. supreme and healthy respect, for God that He puts in our hearts (Jer. 32:40). This is put in our hearts by the indwelling Holy Spirit who is called by one of His names, "the Spirit of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11:2). This fear needs to grow in our lives as believers. Notice that many wonders and signs were being performed. Take special note, however, that not every believer was

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

performing these. These were being performed through the Apostles. Wonders are miracles that show God's greatness while signs are miracles that show God's message. One of the things that we notice is that all the believers were so poor that they decided to sell what property and possessions that they had and distribute to all of them who had a need (not a greed). This sharing of goods was voluntary and not compulsory. It was temporary. It was confined to the church at Jerusalem. We do not see this widespread sharing of goods in any other church in the New Testament. However, believers were commanded to be alert to any believer who was in need and be ready to help them if they had the means (1 John 3:17-18). Notice very carefully that it does not say that they sold everything that they had in the way of property. Otherwise, they might not have had a home to live in or to share with other believers. Also, take note that this sharing of goods and property was not to everyone in Jerusalem but simply to the believers. Fortunately, Christians living in the western nations of the world usually have enough for their needs, even the poorest of them. Occasionally, we will find believers in our midst who may not be able to buy crucial prescriptions and the believers in the church can offer temporary or ongoing help but this is rare. We know from 2 Cor. chapters 8 and 9 that more affluent churches helped poor churches who had unmet needs from time to time. Ministries such as Samaritan's Purse run by Billy Graham's son Franklin have often serve as an instrument by which local churches and individual believers can help believers in other locales of impoverished sections of the world. These verses do teach us that this is one of the ways that we are to show love for one another to the watching world (John 13:34-35) and show that we are Christ's disciples.

Acts 2:46-47 - At this point, there was a real unity among the believers. They were assembling in the temple complex and in various homes. Notice the connectedness among the believers by the phrases "one mind" and "together". There is obviously no room for "lone ranger" Christians. The breaking of bread appeared to be speaking of their common meals together which were more frequent due to the financial circumstances of many of these believers. There was a gladness or joy among them which was shared around their common meals. In addition, their hearts or thoughts were sincere showing that these early believers were serious about their relationship to Christ and by extension to one another. We see a very important facet of worship mentioned here in that these believers were continually praising God. At this point, they had a good reputation with the people at large. However, this would soon change. Obviously, these people were sharing their faith with unsaved people because the scripture notes that people were being saved on a daily basis and being added to their number. We must ask ourselves if we are meeting with other believers, praising God in song and prayer (private and corporate) and looking for opportunities to share our faith with the unsaved.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

PART THREE: Preaching and Persecution of Peter and John (Acts 3:1-5:42)

A. Power for healing (3:1-11)

Acts 3:1-11 - Peter and John show us the importance of setting aside a definite time for prayer. In following the Lord's leading in doing this, they had an opportunity to introduce a man to Christ. They encountered a man lame from birth over 40 years old (Acts 4:22) who had no way to support himself and was dependent on whatever money he could raise by begging. Peter and John had no financial means to help him, but they were empowered by the Lord Jesus to heal him physically so that he would be able to work and support himself. This was a genuine miracle because people who were lame and unable to walk for this length of time would have no strength in their legs. He was helpless. This pictures the condition of everyone who is lost and without Christ because at that time, we were without spiritual strength according to Rom. 5:6. Notice that his life was visibly changed. He was able to walk, leap and praise God. The people who had repeatedly seen this man and knew his story saw the change in the man because of his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ through Peter and John. When we experience the new birth by trusting Christ as Savior (John 1:12-13), there is a visible change in our lives. 1 John 3:9 and 1 John 3:14 point to this change in us because we now sin less although we are not sinless and we have a love for those who have trusted Christ. The people who saw the change in this man spread the word and a crowd of people gathered at the temple to see the change in him. This provided an opportunity for Peter to present the gospel to the unsaved people in this crowd. In the same way, the changed lives of genuine Christians provide a platform to share the gospel with those who have not trusted Christ for salvation. The more that we let the Holy Spirit change us into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor. 3:17-18), the greater will be our platform for sharing Christ.

B. Pointing the people to Christ (3:12-26)

Acts 3:12-17 - Peter used this healing (which God accomplished) to point the people to the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter made it very clear that the power that brought about this miracle was of God and not of him or John. He also made it clear that any godliness that he and John had was not responsible for this miracle. He makes it clear that the same God the Jews worship is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that He did this miracle to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. This teaches us that we must be very careful to give God the credit for what we do and accomplish (cp. 1 Cor. 15:10). Peter then brought the people face to face with their sin and guilt in handing Jesus over to Pilate and then denying Him as the promised Messiah. They had put pressure on Pilate to crucify Jesus when Pilate had decided to release Him. He builds His demonstration of the people's guilt by pointing out that Jesus was holy and righteous, i.e. sinless and totally undeserving of any punishment. Peter added that they even asked that a murderer (Luke 23:19 – Barabbas) be released when they could have asked for Jesus to be released. They had killed the humanity of Jesus who was God the very source of life and God the Father had raised Him from the dead. Peter emphasizes that he and John are witnesses of

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

the fact of Christ's resurrection. Notice the important points of presenting the gospel to unsaved people, as Peter speaks that form a model for us: Showing the unsaved person their sin or guilt, showing that Jesus was sinless, that Jesus is God and emphasizing His death and resurrection. In relation to the miracle, the only responsibility was faith on the part of the crippled man to receive what God was willing to provide in His situation. Even though, these sins and accompanying guilt were the result of ignorance, Peter still called on the people to repent in Acts 3:19. It is important as we present the gospel to call for a response.

Acts 3:18-21 - Peter now is calling for a decision after presenting the gospel. He pointed out that their lack of knowledge in putting Jesus the Messiah to death actually fulfilled what the prophets in the Old Testament had predicted (eggs. Isa. 53 and Psalm 22) because they had predicted that Jesus would be a suffering Messiah and not just a victorious and reigning kings. The call was for the people to repent and turn to God. Repentance involves letting go of anything that keeps us from trusting Christ which can include sin or confidence in our own righteousness. It means a change of mind that brings about a change of direction. In some cases it includes believing in Christ as here (*Acts 4:4* states that many of them believed this message). In turning to God, there is a forsaking of our way of being saved or our indifference to being saved to an acceptance of God's way of being saved through Christ alone (*John 14:6* cp. *Isa. 55:7-9*). The result of trusting Christ as Savior is that our sins are wiped out. On this occasion, Peter was telling them that if Israel as a nation would turn to God in this way that the times of refreshing would come from Christ which is the time when all Israel will trust Christ and be saved (*Rom. 11:25-27*). This would result in God sending Christ. We know from other scriptures that this will not happen until believers in the present age are caught up to be with Christ and Israel goes through a 7 year period that will involve unprecedented suffering for them because of the persecution by the Anti-Christ (see *Matthew 24:15, 21* and *Revelation* chapter 12 along with *Zechariah 12:1-10; 13:8-9; 14:1-9*). Christ will be in heaven doing His present ministry until this time of restoration comes (*Acts 1:6-7*). When we receive Christ as Savior by faith and afterward let the Holy Spirit direct our lives, we experience a foretaste (*Gal. 3:26; 5:16-18, 22-23*) of the full unveiling of the kingdom that will be coming (*Rev. 20:1-6; 5:9-10*) with the eternal state in heaven afterward (*Rev. chapters 21 and 22*).

Acts 3:22-23 - Peter cites *Deut. 18:15, 18-19* to show that the word that Jesus brought to them was like the word that Moses had brought to them. This also states that Jesus was the prophet of whom Moses had spoken who would be like Him. Notice that Moses stated that this prophet was to be heard in all things He spoke. The results of disregarding the word of this prophet would be total destruction. The Greek word for "destroyed" speaks not of annihilation or loss of being but speaks of loss of well-being and in this case extensive loss of well-being. One of the problems that the Jewish scholars had was that they had differentiated between the Messiah and the prophet (*John 1:19-21*). They did not realize that they were one and the same. Peter in this message was used by the Holy Spirit to bring this error to an end. Jesus was recognized as a prophet according to *Luke 24:19* by His followers. Those people in Israel in particular - and everyone else in general - has to decide whether or not Jesus was speaking the word of God or speaking on His own authority. Jesus had explained in *John 7:17* that if anyone

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

wanted to or chose to do God's will that this person would be given the needed spiritual light to know that His teaching came from God (see also John 12:49). By putting the authority of Moses' words behind the authority of Christ's words, many in the Jewish audience were beginning to see the evidence for Jesus being the Christ/Messiah and their need to change their mind (repent) and place their trust in Him for salvation. When we share Christ with unbelievers, it is important for them to understand that God is not going to judge them by some mysterious criteria but by the very words of Christ (John 12:48).

Acts 3:24-26 - Peter was speaking of the glorious future that God had planned for Israel to try persuading His Jewish audience to receive their Messiah, Jesus Christ. He stated that all the prophets beginning with Samuel and those prophets who came after Him had announced these days. This refers to "the times of refreshing" that Peter had mentioned in Acts 3:19. He pointed out that the Jewish people were the sons (descendants and therefore heirs) of the prophets and of the covenant made with the fathers speaking of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Deut. 6:10; John 7:22). One of the provisions of God's covenant with Abraham was that in His seed (singular and referring to Christ according to Gal. 3:16), all the families of the earth shall be blessed and not just the Jews. However, God raised up His servant Jesus for the Jews first and sent Him to bless people by turning them and us away from sinful ways. The only way that these people could do this was to trust Christ as Savior according to Acts 10:43 and John 14:6. This blessing of being rescued or saved from our sins is one that can be rejected in unbelief and a failure to change our mind (i.e. repent), or it can be accepted by faith in Christ. Our job as believers is to make that choice clear to those who have not received Christ by faith.

C. Confrontation, defense, warning and release (4:1-22)

Acts 4:1-4 - When we as believers present the gospel, there is going to be opposition at various times and various ways. Here the opposition came from those outside of the presentation. As believers in the western world, we sometimes find parents or spouses very opposed to the communication of the gospel. Other times the opposition may come from church leaders with which the hearers are associated. In many cases, they will work to close off further opportunity or contact. In some of the Moslem world, the opposition may be so strong that those who present the gospel will face jail, torture and/or death. In this case the opposition was led by the Sadducees who denied the resurrection and the reality of angels (Acts 23:8). They were the leaders over the worship at the temple whereas the Pharisees were leaders over the synagogues. Because this preaching by Peter occurred in the temple area, these people arrested Peter and John. The reason that the temple leaders did this was because of the believers teaching of the people, i.e. the Christian doctrine to which they were opposed (Acts 5:28) and because the Christians were teaching that Christ had been raised from the dead and that His resurrection was proof that He would raise those who trusted Him for salvation. They denied the resurrection of Christ and had fabricated the story that Jesus' disciples had stolen His body (Mt. 28:11-15). John and Peter were only kept in custody until the trial the next day since trials were not supposed to be held at night (Note the trials of Jesus at night were totally at variance with the law). However, despite the opposition that Peter and John faced, the

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

number of men (adult males) had now reached the total of 5000. This figure probably includes the adult males that were in the group of people that were saved on Pentecost (the Greek verb tense shows that this is the meaning and that it was not saying 5000 additional men were saved on this occasion). Notice that it does not say that all of Peter's audience believed on this occasion but only that many believed. Some believers have assailed Bible-believing churches for keeping track of numbers, but we see very clearly that the early church saw that this was important. What we see from this scenario, is that when we use God's word to share the gospel that it will at some point bring about results even in the face of opposition.

Acts 4:5-10 - Peter and John were set in the midst of the Jewish temple authorities for a trial. Their question was, where did they get the power to do this miracle and what was the name/authority behind this miracle? Peter now had a brand new audience and opportunity to share the gospel. The easy route would have been to tone everything down, but Peter used this as opportunity to testify of Christ. Christ had predicted in Luke 21:12-15 that His followers would be brought before the authorities and that it would be an opportunity for them to give testimony of Jesus Christ. They were not to worry about what to say because the Holy Spirit would give them the words at that very time (Mt. 10:19-20). It is noteworthy to see that Peter was again filled with the Holy Spirit and was the spokesman for himself and John. Peter made it very clear that the healing of the lame man had happened in the name, i.e. authority of Jesus Christ. He reminded them of their guilt in having Jesus crucified and drove home the point that Jesus' death was not just the same as any death because unlike others, He was raised from the dead. The principle that we can learn from this encounter is that adverse circumstances often give additional opportunity to share the gospel. Paul's imprisonment gave him an audience with the prisoners and guards to share the gospel and emboldened other believers to share the gospel (Phil. 1:12-18; Phlm. 1:10). When I worked in Social Services for the state of Texas, I encountered a bedfast 90 year old lady who suffered a lot of pain from a broken hip. She testified that the Lord had put her in that nursing home to share Jesus with patients, staff and visitors. The nurses told me that this lady was very cheerful and they even put people in her room who were depressed because she was so good in helping them and cheering them up. My wife was cornered by an unbelieving lady whose daughter was in her children's church class as to what she was teaching. It gave my wife an opportunity to make a clear gospel presentation. The second principle that we see is that the filling of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to present the gospel. To be filled with the Holy Spirit requires that we surrender our whole being as a sacrifice to Christ (Rom. 12:1), confess any sins (1 John 1:9) and that we trust Christ to provide the wisdom and the power through the Holy Spirit to witness and work for Him (Gal. 2:20; 3:1-3; 5:16).

Acts 4:11 - In this verse, Christ is referred to as the stone which was rejected by the Jewish leaders who are referred to as the builders. This was a quote from Ps. 118:22. Jesus also quoted this passage in Mt. 21:42-43 and explained to the Jews that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to another nation which refers to the church as the body of Christ (1 Peter 2:9 "a holy nation"). The chief cornerstone is Christ Himself who is the chief cornerstone for the church according to Eph. 2:20. Christ is also referred to as the stumbling stone for

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Jewish unbelievers (who were trying to work for their salvation rather than receiving it as a gift by faith in Christ) in Rom. 9:33 which quotes Isa. 28:16. However, this setting aside of Israel as the holy nation of the kingdom is only temporary and Rom. 11:11-15, 25-27 show that in the outworking of God's plan; Israel, as a nation, will be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. God used their rejection of Christ to bring salvation to a large group of non-Jews, i.e. Gentiles. Romans 11:33 states "How unfathomable His ways." in summing up the temporary rejection of Christ by Israel and their being temporarily set aside while God calls out from among the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14).

Acts 4:12 - Peter in this statement to the Jewish rulers touched on a key point of the gospel. Jesus is the only name by which people may be saved. Jesus had put it this way in John 10:1, 9 where He explained that He is the door (not just a door) to God. He went on to say that anyone who tried to come to God in any other way was the same as a thief and a robber. In John 14:6 Jesus asserted that He was the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to God except by Him. Christians are often accused of being arrogant in saying that Jesus is the only way. However, we do not say that Jesus is the only way for salvation because it is just our belief or our opinion. We say so because Jesus Himself said so. Their quarrel is not with us but with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Some people dismiss this claim stating that it is narrow minded. However, Jesus was narrow-minded as He warned people to enter through the narrow gate (which is faith in Him alone) in Mt. 7:13-14 and that the broad way taken by most people leads to destruction (not obliteration but eternal ruin in Hell). Stop and think that one does not berate the physician for being narrow-minded if he tells you there is only one cure for some fatal disease you have developed. You rejoice that there is even a cure. We certainly should rejoice that God provided a way for us to be saved from our sinful condition. However, some believe that if one is sincere that God will make an exception. However, Proverbs 14:12 tells us, "There is a way that seems right to a man but the end of it is the way of death." We can be sincerely wrong. When it comes to the eternal destiny of people who cross our path and our own eternal destiny, we had best not be wrong sincerely or otherwise.

Acts 4:13-17 - Two things that the men of the unbelieving rulers, elders and scribes observed was the effect that Jesus Christ had on the lives of Peter and John as well as the lives of the lame man who had been healed. They notice the confident boldness of Peter and John. They also noted that these men lacked any biblical training or education in the rabbinical schools that taught the Old Testament and all of the overlying traditions and man-made rules. One of the principles that this teaches us is that if we meditate on and obey God's word, we will end up with more spiritual understanding than those with more education and more experience than we have (Ps. 119:99-100). They also saw the fact that these men had been with Jesus. As we pray to God in Jesus' name and immerse ourselves in God's word (assuming we respond in faith and the obedience of love), then it will be obvious that we have been with Jesus. In addition they saw the change in the man who had been healed. Changed lives make it hard for those who oppose the word of God and Jesus Christ to have anything to say. When we introduce people to Christ and then disciple them, unbelieving people find it difficult to find fault with Christ and with the word of God. These unbelievers recognized that a remarkable sign had occurred. The

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Greek word for “sign” is at times translated “miracle” as here. It speaks of a miracle that gives a message and that message was that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead and was actively at work. This was a fact these opponents of Jesus did not want to admit. They decided to warn Peter and John not to teach anymore the things concerning Christ. Their strategy was to stop the word of God but as 2 Tim. 2:9 reminds us, God’s word is not imprisoned or bound.

Acts 4:18-22 - Peter and John were warned not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. However, they were being commanded by those in authority to refrain from doing what Jesus Christ had commanded. If they were to obey Christ, they would not be able to obey the command of these authority figures. Normally, believers are to obey those in authority because all authority exists has been appointed (not necessarily approved) by God (Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). However, verses 19-20 and Acts 5:29 make it very clear that we are to obey God’s word when it clashes with those in authority. We are commanded to testify of the gospel of Christ in Mark 16:15 and told that we are to be His witnesses in Acts 1:8. The Jewish leaders did not have strong grounds under their system to really do much to Peter and John and because the people were praising God for the change that had come about in this man’s life plus seeing that he was over 40 and had been lame from birth. With this kind of evidence, they were fearful of the people’s displeasure. We live in a world that is antagonistic to Christ and to believers as a result (John 15:18-21). We face opposition on a smaller scale in the western world for sharing Christ as outlined in Luke 6:22 (ostracism from certain social circles, insults, loss of reputation in different groups such as workplace, family, non-religious groups and finally hatred in the form of open antagonism or indifference). In other parts of the world, believers face physical assault (2 Cor. 11:23-25), loss of property (Heb. 10:34), imprisonment or even death (Rev. 2:10). Refusing to be silenced even by those in authority will bring adverse consequences but we are promised God’s blessing in enduring these in a Christ-honoring way (Mt. 5:10-12).

D. Prayer, power and proclamation of Christ (4:23-31)

Acts 4:23-30 - Peter and John shared with their church body the content of the warning given by the Jewish leaders. Notice that the church did not threaten in return, but they simply went to God in prayer. So many times, we try to act in the flesh when we encounter opposition rather than asking God for wisdom and direction. The prayer begins with a praise of God’s creation work in relation to the universe, the earth and the sea and everything that they contain. They mention the anger of the nations in opposing God’s purposes by citing Psalm 2. Notice Peter showed His belief in the inspiration of scripture by saying that the words were God’s words and that he used David’s mouth to proclaim and record them. The plot against God’s purposes is said to be meaningless or vain. In their prayer, they mentioned how the rulers of the nations had gathered together against God Himself and His anointed king who is and was Jesus Himself. Jesus is said to be God’s anointed which occurred when He was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). The prayer mentions that in partial fulfillment of the scripture, Herod, Pontus Pilate, other Gentiles and the people of Israel had gathered together to plot against the Lord and against His Christ, i.e. Messiah or anointed one. The prayer went

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

on to say that this group of peoples carried out what God's active power and purpose had determined in advance. Keep in mind that these people were all willing participants in this plan, and God allowed this plan to go forward for His purposes. In our praying, we are to acknowledge God's sovereignty and His direction of events (some that He causes and some that He permits). The praying believers appealed to God to look on their threats and restrain them. When we face resistance, there is no better thing to do than to cast all our care upon God because He cares for us (cp. 1 Pet. 5:7). Finally, they prayed for boldness to speak God's word which is something that we can do as well. They also prayed for God's power to be displayed supernaturally to do signs and wonders in the name/authority of Jesus Christ. In summary, when faced with difficult opposition, acknowledge God as the source of everything, His control of events and circumstances. Even when things seem out of control, trust Him to address our concerns and to give us boldness and supernatural power through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:31 - This verse contains some very vital truths for us as believers. We see that the believers had addressed the problems of threats and oppositions by gathering together in a single place. They had prayed together about the problem. They had prayed specifically for boldness/confidence in Acts 4:29 and God had answered that prayer. In Acts 4:30, they prayed for healings to take place and also for signs and wonders. The first sign or wonder was the shaking of the place where they were gathered. The signs and wonders took place in Acts 5:12-16 by the hands of the Apostles not the other believers of the church. In order for God to answer their prayer for boldness/confidence, the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. As believers, we often need boldness to tell the word of God to the unsaved to help them be saved and to speak the word of God to one another for the purpose of instruction and encouragement. In Eph. 6:19 Paul had requested the Ephesian believers to pray for him as a missionary to tell the unsaved the gospel in a bold manner. In summary we see that being specific in prayer, especially of the church-gathered is a powerful means of securing the filling of the Spirit so that we can witness boldly to the unsaved and so that we can see God work in a supernatural way.

E. Voluntary sharing among the believers (4:32-37)

Acts 4:32-37 - One of the results of the trials of the early church was a great unity in their thinking and their disposition. We are commanded as believers to make every effort to preserve the unity created by the Holy Spirit according to Eph. 4:3. The people surrendered their claim on everything that they possessed. As disciples of Christ, we are to forsake or surrender our ownership of everything that we have to God (Luke 14:33). This does not mean that we no longer have it, but we see what we have as really belonging to God (Ps. 24:1; 1 Chr. 29:14). We are merely stewards or trustees of what God has given us. These people showed their love for their fellow-believers by giving to meet their needs (1 John 3:17-18). This need to share extensively was voluntary and not required by the church leadership (Acts 5:4). The Apostles were the primary witnesses and testified of Christ's resurrection since they had all seen and spent time with the risen Christ. The believers' love for one another gave witness to

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

the watching unsaved world that they were people who had been taught by the Lord Jesus Christ (John 13:34-35). The scripture states that great grace was upon them all. God's grace not only saves us from sin's penalty (Eph. 2:8) and keeps us eternally saved (Rom. 5:2), but it works in helping us live out the truth of God's word in our daily lives (see also 1 Cor. 15:10). Notice that the money given was put at the disposal of the church leadership so that those who lacked could have their ongoing needs met. Money was raised not only from income but from selling off houses and lands. It would be understood that this would consist of houses and lands that these people did not need for a residence or for work purposes as this would have only aggravated the problem if they had sold off their primary residence. Barnabas, whose name showed that He was to be an encourager, lived up to his name as seen in Acts 11:22-24. His type of giving showed that he also possessed the spiritual gift of giving in addition to encouragement (cp. Rom. 12:6-8). In summary, we see that this arrangement was voluntary and temporary because of the poor conditions and persecution which were confined to the Jerusalem church. This passage reminds us to be sensitive to the needs (not greeds or desires) of fellow-believers in giving to God's work, to set a good example like Barnabas and to hold our material possessions as stewards of God.

F. Death and healing (5:1-16)

Acts 5:1-10 - Before we look at what happened in this passage, it is interesting to note that the Greek word for "*breathed his/her last*" in Acts 5:5, 10 speaks of giving up one's soul. When a human being dies, the soul leaves the body (see Gen. 35:18) along with their spirit (Acts 2:26; Luke 8:55). As we look at this passage, there are several very obvious teachings. First of all, it was not a sin for Ananias and Sapphira to sell the possession and keep part or all of the proceeds. The sin was giving the money to God's work and telling people that they were giving the money from the full price of the land to God's work. It was theirs to give or not to give according to verse 4. When we pretend to be more spiritual and sacrificial in our living than we really are, this highly displeases God. In this particular case God's judgment on Ananias, and Sapphira came upon them in the form of the extreme discipline of physical death. Their sin was not just lying to people but testing the Holy Spirit by lying to Him. As believers, it is important to remember that God takes our sin much more seriously than we do. In this case Ananias and Sapphira did not lose their salvation but were disciplined by God (1 Cor. 11:30-32). This is known as the sin unto death as in 1 John 5:16-17. This should warn us as believers that we need to judge the sin in our lives by confessing it to God (1 John 1:9). We are warned of the need to keep ourselves under God's authority in Heb. 12:9 if we want to live and not be taken home prematurely. Two things are obvious with respect to the Holy Spirit. Notice lying to the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:3 is called lying to God in Acts 5:4. This clearly shows us that the Holy Spirit is God. We see that He is a person (a being with the traits of personality such as intellect, emotion and will) by the fact that one may lie to Him and test Him. These two sins in the life of the believer obviously can bring great discipline from God. God's discipline is designed to purify us and the church to produce the likeness of Christ in us individually and as a group. In some cases God takes drastic action as He did in this case to keep the church purified.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Acts 5:11-16 - The incident of the sin unto physical death of Ananias and Sapphira got the attention of the church. It states that great fear came upon all the church. It was obvious to them that God was at work and that God did not fool around. This fear even spread to those who were not believers who had heard of what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. The answer to the prayer of the church was being fulfilled in the signs (miracles showing God's message) and wonders (miracles showing God's greatness) being done in large quantity by the Apostles. The believers were unified and together on Solomon's porch which was the outer corridor of the temple. Because of the reaction of the Jewish leaders, no one wanted to join them in their meeting. Yet at the same time the people had great respect for these early Christians. A great number of men and women became believers as a result of God's miraculous and supernatural working. According to Heb. 2:3-4, God was using these miracles to confirm the message of the Apostles and other believers. At this time healing was widespread and so was the removal of demons, Peter's shadow passing by was enough to bring about healing. We see the same type of healing in Acts 19:11-12. However, later in 1 Tim. 5:23, we see that Timothy was told to use a small amount of wine for his frequent stomach illnesses so there was no miraculous healing for him. In 2 Tim. 4:20 Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus so there was no miraculous healing for him either. We must recognize that the signs, wonders and miracles did not end, but they did subside greatly. This was obviously not due to lack of faith but was due to the will of God. God still does heal in response to the prayer of faith, but it is not always His will to heal because sometimes He has a greater purpose. Our job as believers is to pray in faith and leave the outcome to God because God has the best result in mind.

G. Persevering with the gospel despite strong opposition (5:17-42)

Acts 5:17-26 - The conflict between those who believed in a works system of salvation rather than a grace/faith system of salvation continued. The Sadducees were at the forefront of this persecution against Christians. They controlled the worship at the temple and were deniers of the reality of angels and the resurrection (Acts 23:8). Notice the sins that plagued the works-religion people. We see that they were jealous because Christians were winning people to Christ who had been committed to their false religious system. They were perplexed and confused because as natural men, they did not understand the things of the Spirit of God nor did they receive them (1 Cor. 2:14). They were worried what would come of these unexplainable events such as the disappearance of the Apostles from the jail. They were afraid of the people because of possible violence because they feared the frown of man far greater than they feared the frown of God. The Apostles were jailed for their preaching, but God used an angel to open the gates of the jail and lead them out. They were commanded to speak the whole message of life. This would, of course, emphasize both the death of Christ for our sins and His bodily resurrection which was a big sticking point with the Sadducees who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. Moreover, they saw the death of Christ as the same as the death of any individual rather than a final taking away of sins. The Apostles were again found in the temple teaching the people this truth. The important truth is that we are not to stop telling others about Christ because of opposition and resistance. God was now going to use this

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

opposition to give the Apostles an opportunity to testify directly to these enemies of the reality of Christ's death and resurrection.

Acts 5:27-29 - Once again the Apostles were hauled into the council for trial. The priest reminded them of the previous directive not to teach in the name of Jesus. The council's issue was the content of their doctrine. As all opponents of Bible-believing Christianity, they rejected the value of Christ's death and their testimony of Christ's bodily resurrection. Another motivation for their opposition was their fear that the more Christ was mentioned, the more likely that they would be blamed by the people for His death. Peter and the other Apostles gave a teaching that helps believers to know when it is right to disobey those who are in authority. Any time the government commands us to do or not to do some action, we are normally to obey it according to Rom. 13:1-2. However, if they prohibit us from doing something that God's word explicitly commands and there is no leeway around their prohibition, our responsibility is to disobey the government command. Also, if they command us to do some action that God's word prohibits without any leeway, our responsibility is doing what God commands in His word. Keep in mind that this will not prevent the government from punishing us and we will have to assume the consequences of this type of disobedience to the government (see Acts 5:40-41). This principle would apply to other sources of authority ordained by God such as the boss/subordinate relationship in the workplace (Eph. 6:5-8), the husband/wife relationship (Eph. 5:22), the parent/child relationship (Eph. 6:1) and the church leadership/church member relationship (Heb. 13:7). In those rare instances where God's word and God-ordained authority clash, obeying God's word is never easy, but it is always right.

Acts 5:30-31 - The Apostles, with Peter as the probable spokesman, now began a message to the council. They emphasized that the men on this council were guilty of murder by having Jesus hung on a cross. The men on the council did not believe that they were guilty of murder (Acts 5:29), but the record here and elsewhere in scripture (Mt. 27:15-26) states that they were guilty. Once again the Apostles testified that God – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – had bodily raised Jesus from the dead. They brought the council face-to-face with the gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4). They emphasized that because Jesus had been raised from the dead that God had raised Jesus to the place of honor and authority at His right hand. The purpose of this was to give two things to Israel and to all people. Jesus' death and resurrection provided forgiveness of sins for all people (John 1:29). Now all people are not saved because they refuse to receive by faith the forgiveness Christ offers. Only those who receive it by faith have the benefit. Just as the provision of food to a group provides for them to avoid starvation, some of them could starve if they refused to eat the food. Jesus was also crucified for our sins, raised from the dead and then raised up to the right hand of the Father to provide repentance for Israel. Repentance was provided for Israel, but each individual was responsible to repent. The word repent means to change one's mind and involves discarding whatever kept them from trusting Christ and then actually trusting Him. God can give us repentance; but if we fail to personally exercise this gift, we remain condemned in our sins. So it was with Israel. God had given them repentance but only a few repented to trust Christ for salvation (Rom. 11:1-6).

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES
SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Acts 5:32 – At first examination, this verse seem to run contrary to what the Bible teaches about the believer receiving the Holy Spirit when they trust Christ as Savior (Gal. 3:1-2; Eph. 1:13-14). The question is: What type of obedience is needed to receive the Holy Spirit? The obedience discussed here is not day-by-day obedience but is obedience to the message in Acts 5:31 which was to repent i.e. change their minds and trust Christ for salvation. Acts 6:7 also suggests that this obedience is to the faith of the gospel. Romans 10:16 which is correctly translated by the K.J.V. and N.K.J.V. as “obeyed the gospel” shows that this obedience is to believe” our report” or “our message.” Peter is the primary spokesman in Acts 5:29-32 and uses the term “obey” or “obedience” as meaning the same as obeying the gospel, i.e. to place one’s faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The table below shows how many times Peter does this throughout the book of 1 Peter.

#	Scripture References	Teaching
1.	1 Peter 1:2	The Holy Spirit sets the believer apart prior to salvation so that he can obey, i.e. place his faith in Christ and be sprinkled with Christ’s blood.
2.	1 Peter 1:22	Believers have purified or cleansed themselves by obeying the truth for a sincere love of fellow-believers. This obedience is placing their faith in Christ and results in love for fellow-believers (cp. 1 John 3:14). 1 Peter 1:23 shows this is the obedience of faith that brings initial salvation.
3.	1 Peter 2:7-8	The disobedience to the word in v. 8 is applied to those who do not believe in Christ for salvation
4.	1 Peter 3:1-2	Those who do not obey the word are obviously those who have not trusted Christ. The N.I.V. went ahead and just translated it as “not believe” for meaning rather than word equivalence.
5.	1 Peter 4:17-18	The household or family of God and the righteous are contrasted with those who “do not obey the gospel” which obviously means to not believe the gospel.

In concluding we can readily see that this obedience is simple faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 5:33-39 - Notice how God worked in this situation. The council members wanted to put the Apostles to death. The Apostles had presented the gospel and called for a decision on their part. They overwhelmingly rejected the gospel and were enraged rather than convicted of their sin and their need to trust Christ. We must remember that we cannot share the gospel and expect a positive response most of the time because Jesus said that few rather than many would choose to come to God through Him (Mt. 7:13-14). This exposed the condition of their hearts because just as they had wanted to kill Jesus, so they wanted to kill the Apostles (John 8:37-40 cp. John 15:18-21). However, God used a teacher of the law, who was an unbeliever to persuade them not to take such a drastic course. His logic was as follows. Past leaders of various movements had tried to oppose them and ended up coming to nothing. If this Christian movement being led and taught by the Apostles were not of God, it would come to nothing. However, if it was of God, then the counsel would find themselves fighting against God. His advice was, leave the Apostles alone and the movement would probably die. His advice proved wrong over time, but God used it to protect the Apostles. This shows how God works in the

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

hearts of those in authority – even unbelievers (Proverbs 21:1) to achieve His purposes for His people.

Acts 5:40-42 - Instead of the Apostles being put to death as the council/Sanhedrin desired, the council followed the advice of Gamaliel and simply had them beaten by being flogged. They also ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus before they let them go. It would have been easy to have given up and not shared the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, they made the choice to rejoice that God had allowed them to be counted worthy of being dishonored for the name of Jesus. Although we as believers living in the western world do not suffer beatings, we suffer minor persecution mentioned in Luke 6:22-23 which consists of hatred by the unsaved (either in the form of antagonism or in the form of indifference), ostracism, insults and loss of reputation. Jesus commanded us in Luke 6:23 to rejoice because we know that we will have a reward in heaven. Keep in mind that rewards and salvation are not the same. Rewards are future at Christ's coming for us (Luke 14:14) and are gained by works (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Salvation is a present possession (John 5:24) of those who trust Christ and is a gift received by faith apart from works (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 3:27-28). When we face trials we are commanded to count it complete joy in James 1:2. Despite the order to refrain from teaching in Jesus' name, the Apostles continued to instruct the believers and speak the good news of salvation by trusting Christ in the temple and/or homes where the believers gathered. Our job is the same. We are to communicate the good news to the unsaved and to instruct those who have believed (Mt. 28:19-20).

PART FOUR: Picking and Purpose of Deacons (Acts 6:1-7)

Acts 6:1-7 - This passage explains how the office of deacon in the local church had its origin. Believers were sharing money for the relief of those who were not physically able to work or were widows. A problem arose when a complaint came to the attention of the Apostles that the Hebrew, i.e. Aramaic-speaking, widows were being provided for while the Greek-speaking widows were being neglected. In order to solve the problem, we see a model for the local church in selecting deacons. There was a special meeting of the disciples. The basic issue was that the leaders of the church (the Apostles) were so busy communicating the word of God to the unsaved and teaching the saved that they did not have the time to address this problem. The Greek word for "serve" in verse 2 is the verb form of the Greek word for "deacon." Notice the qualifications for the office of deacon that are outlined here: (1) They had to be men, (2) They had to be believers – note the words "from among you," (3) They had to be reputable, (4) They had to be spiritual – show the qualities of being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-21 cp. Gal. 5:16, 22-23), wise – obeying what they knew of God's word (Mt. 7:24-27). Notice that the congregation was to select the men. Then we notice that the leaders would then appoint them if they met the outlined qualifications. Their main job was not only to handle this problem of overseeing the distribution to the widows but to take care of any function which fell outside of the ministry of God's word and prayer. The Apostles in the very early church functioned as the elders (same as pastors) of the church. In Acts 15:1-2, we see that the church was now being led by both Apostles and elders. By the time of Acts 21:17-18, we see that James (the half-

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

brother of Jesus who was also an Apostle but not one of the 12 – see Gal. 1:19) and the elders were in charge of the local church at Jerusalem.

In looking at the word disciple, there are three stages of discipleship: (1) stage 1 – hearing and learning God’s word but not having yet trusted Christ for salvation (John 6:60-66), (2) stage 2 – people who take the next step and trust Christ for salvation as here in Acts 6:1-7 and experience freedom from the penalty of sin (John 5:24), (3) stage 3 – John 8:31-32 – believers who abide in God’s word by hearing and obeying it (James 1:25) and are no longer immature but experiencing freedom from the power of sin. Mt. 28:20 explains that this third stage is the goal of Jesus in that people not only trust Him for salvation but that they are taught to obey everything that He commanded. The congregation of believers approved the decision of the leadership. Notice that the number of deacons for a local church is decided by the leadership. However, the people of the congregation selected them (6:3-5). In regard to the men chosen we notice some distinctive identifying marks. Stephen was not only spiritual, i.e. full of the Holy Spirit but he was a man of great faith in carrying out the work of God. Nicolas was a Gentile who had become a Jew before trusting Christ to become a Christian. The leadership (consisting of the Apostles functioning as elders/pastors) prayed concerning the men selected. Then they laid hands on them. The laying on of hands did not give the deacons any additional spirituality. The purpose of laying on of hands in appointing deacons can be best understood by looking at Numbers 27:18-23. From that passage, we see that the purpose of the laying on of hands was to show that the leadership was transferring some of their authority to these deacons. The outcome of dealing with the problem in a decisive and harmonious way was to multiply the spread of God’s word. As a result the number of disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem. Another result was that many of the priests placed their faith in Christ. Here we see that obedience to the faith was synonymous with trusting Christ for salvation as in Rom. 10:16 (NKJV, ESV and HCSB). As the watching world sees us as believers working out our differences by showing love for one another, they are attracted to the truth of the gospel.

PART FIVE: Preaching and Persecution of Stephen (Acts 6:8 – 7:60)

A. Stephen arrested for preaching Christ (6:8-15)

Acts 6:8-15 - We see one of the deacons named Stephen being described as full of grace and power. God’s grace is needed for us to be effective in communicating God’s word. Paul stated it in 1 Cor. 15:10 that what he did and what he was had its source in God’s grace. As we recognize our own inadequacy apart from Christ (which is what it means to be humble – cp. 2 Cor. 3:4-5), God’s grace is given to us to accomplish the work that God has for us (James 4:6). Humility is the essential for us to have God’s grace fully and completely working for us. He was also full of God’s power. As we trust Christ for the power to live the Christian life, we have the fullness of His power (Gal. 2:20 cp. Phil. 4:13). This fullness is not to do our own thing but to do the work that God has for us. God enabled Stephen to perform great wonders (miracles that displayed God’s greatness) and signs (miracles that display God’s message) among the people

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

to confirm the reality of the gospel (Heb. 2:3-4). However, various groups among the Jews argued with Stephen but were unable to refute the wisdom of God's word and the working of the Holy Spirit on those who heard Him. They privately obtained false witnesses to accuse him of speaking against Moses and God, speaking against the temple, the law and the customs Moses had given them. These charges were repeated before the council, i.e. the Sanhedrin that had tried Peter and John and that had tried Jesus Christ. All those sitting on the council saw something unique in his face as though he were an angel. It was obvious the Holy Spirit was working on their hearts. However, as we will see in the next chapter, they resisted the conviction of the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51) as do many who fail to trust Christ as savior to seal their own condemnation (John 3:18).

B. Stephen's message of defense (7:1-53)

Acts 7:1-6 - The high priest asked Stephen to present his defense to the council/Sanhedrin. Stephen began his defense by addressing the council as "brethren." This term did not mean they were believers but that they were fellow-Jews. "Fathers" recognized the older and senior members of the council/Sanhedrin. By comparing Gen. 12:1-2 with Acts 7:1, there appears to be a contradiction. However, the KJV, NKJV, and NIV clear it up by pointing out that the Lord "had said" this in Gen. 12:1 to Abraham to show that the call had come prior to Gen. 12:1. The point of time for this call was when Abraham dwelt with his Father in Mesopotamia prior to leaving for Haran according to Acts 7:1 cp. Gen. 11:29-32. It is obvious that Stephen is pointing out that Abraham was living by faith. He was asked to leave his relatives and country and then God would show him a land. However, Abraham did not make the break and went only as far as Haran where his father died. This, of course, delayed Abraham from seeing the land. This shows us that we must act on what God commands us before he can show us more of His will and plan for us. When we delay in obeying or obey incompletely as Abraham did, we delay knowing God's plan and will for us. God promised Abraham this land for him and his descendents but gave him no inheritance in it at the time Abraham was living there. Interestingly, God made this promise to Abraham when he had no children, and it appeared highly unlikely that he would have any children. In Gen. 15:14-16 Abraham was told that his descendents would dwell in and be oppressed by bondage in a foreign land for 400 years. This figure in Acts 7:6 and Gen. 15:14-16 of 400 years speaks of the affliction while the figure of 430 years in Exodus 12:40 speaks of the total time of the people in the land. They were well-treated at first for obviously about 30 years. God used these 430 years to make Israel into a great nation according to Gen. 46:1-5. When we face affliction, we must remember that God is wanting to something great in our lives. Like the people of Israel, however there is a waiting period for this to come to pass.

Acts 7:7-15 – Stephen's defense continued with this additional background. In Genesis 15:14-16, God had promised that the nation who enslaved his descendents would be judged. This judgment on Egypt ended the time of the rules of God that the people lived under prior to the giving of the law (Gen. 18:19; 26:5). Stephen mentioned the covenant of circumcision which was an outward ceremony or token of the saving righteousness which came by faith alone

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

(Rom. 4:9-12). Stephen recounts God's faithfulness in multiplying Abraham's descendents through Isaac, then Jacob and then the 12 patriarchs. Stephen pointed to the sin of the jealousy of the patriarchs in selling Joseph into slavery into Egypt which would remind his hearers that the brothers' hostility to God's plan to use Joseph was like their hostility to Christ and the gospel (Mark 15:10). This reminds us as believers that jealousy on our part of other believers can serve to make God's plan more difficult to carry out although it will not stop it. It also made their lives harder and more miserable. Yet God worked through all of this by His presence with Joseph and helped him get a good position in Potiphar's household, helped Joseph when he was unjustly accused and imprisoned to give him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh who then made him ruler over Egypt directly under Pharaoh himself. God used a famine to bring Joseph's brothers to Egypt and his father after that. This shows how God can take a bad situation for all concerned and work it for good not only in the life of Joseph and his brothers and father but also in the lives of the people yet to be born in the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This shows us that when circumstances appear to be working against us that God can use them to serve His greater purposes. This section notes that 75 persons went down to Egypt which conflicts with the figures in Genesis 46:26-27.

Here is the math that solves this issue:

Genesis 46:26: Jacob(1) + 66 + the wives of Jacob's sons + Joseph and his two sons (3) = Gen. 46:27: the 70 people not counting the wives of Jacob's sons. By adding the wives of Jacob's sons to the figure of 70 people in Genesis 46:27 makes Stephen's figure of 75 in Acts 7:14 a plausible figure. Also Stephen uses the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (Septuagint completed 180 years before Jesus was born) which has the figure of 75 rather than 70 from Ex. 1:5.

This section ends with the death of Jacob and his sons who were the ancestors of the Jewish people. As we continue looking at this defense of Stephen, we will see that death does not stop the outworking of God's love in His plans at large or in His plan for our specific lives (Rom. 8:38-39).

Acts 7:15-16 - Jacob purchased the field of Shechem for 100 pieces of money and built an altar there (Gen. 33:19-20). That field contained a burial place according to Joshua 24:32. This is where Joseph and his brothers were buried according to Acts 7:15-16. The word "they" in Acts 7:16 refers to our fathers not to Jacob (who was buried in the cave of Machpelah which was purchased by Abraham according to Gen. 23:8-20). Bible critics have tried to call an error in what Stephen said stating that Jacob not Abraham bought this other burial tomb based on Gen. 33:19-20 and Joshua 24:32. However, a close reading of Gen. 33:19-20 and Joshua 24:32 states that Jacob bought the field where the tomb is and not the tomb itself. It is entirely plausible that Abraham bought the tomb and not the field itself. This explanation is strengthened by the fact that Abraham in Gen. 23:8-20 tried to buy just the cave for Sarah's tomb and not the field itself, but ended up buying the field at the insistence of Ephron, the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver. So the solution to this alleged contradiction is very simple. Jacob bought the field where Abraham had bought the tomb years before. Many believe that happened when Abraham built an altar at Shechem in Gen. 12:6-7. Critics outside of the Christian fold and some who profess to be in the Christian fold try to use differences in one location or another to

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

discredit the word of God. When we find a so-called contradiction in God's word, it is usually because we have not rightly divided God's word (2 Tim. 2:15) by looking carefully at what it says and what it does not say. We now continue looking at Stephen's defense.

Acts 7:17-22 - While God's people were in bondage in Egypt, their numbers increased greatly. A new king, who had no regard for what Joseph had done, ordered all boy babies to be thrown into the Nile River to die. God's people had already been in bondage. Just at the point that God was blessing them, this king or Pharaoh arose who was determined to reverse their numbers. Circumstances were less favorable than ever for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham to bring the people out of Egypt. For the most part, God's people did not have faith. Hebrews 11:23 tells us that Moses was a beautiful child and that his parents by faith were not afraid of the king's order, so they hid him for 3 months. His parents were the exception who chose to stand for God's purposes unlike Stephen's hearers. When Moses was placed outside, God moved on the heart of Pharaoh's daughter to take him and raise him as her own. God used this experience to prepare Moses for his role as the deliverer of His people. He was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. This is significant because God chose Moses to write the first 5 books of the Old Testament. The very literary form of ancient Egyptian documents is mirrored in the literary format of Genesis 1 and 2 where there is the overview in chapter 1 with detail in chapter 2. There are not two accounts of creation as some Bible scholars have tried to promote but simply a use of an Egyptian literary device with which Moses would have been familiar. In addition Moses (despite trying to drag his feet when God called him by saying he lacked speech skills) was a very powerful speaker and a man of action. God used these experiences to equip Moses to fulfill His purpose. In the same way, God uses experiences in our lives to prepare us for the role that He has for us. In the next paragraph, we see how the people of Israel responded to their God-appointed deliverer Moses when he went forth at age 40 (*Acts 7:23*).

Acts 7:23-29 - The next part of Stephen's defense starts to move toward the Jewish people's pattern of rejecting the leaders that God had raised up for them. Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter and decided to come to the aid of His people. Heb. 11:24-25 speak of the faith of Moses that led him to identify with His own people. The word "visit" does not simply mean a social call to converse. It carries the idea of coming to the aid of another as in James 1:27; Luke 1:78; 19:44. Moses saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the people of Israel. He went to the Jewish man's defense and killed the Egyptian. Moses thought that the Jewish people would see God's purpose as sending someone to deliver them, but it did not work out that way. In the same way when Jesus came to the people of Israel to help them, they did not receive Him (John 1:11). The very next day after rescuing the Jewish man from the abusive Egyptian, Moses tried to stop two of God's people from fighting and hurting one another. The man of Israel, who was mistreating his fellow-Israelite, challenged Moses' right and authority to be a ruler and judge over the people. In the same way, the people of Israel who rejected Jesus said, "We will not have this man rule over us" (Luke 19:14). The man who was mistreating the other asked Moses if he was planning on killing him like he had killed the Egyptian the previous day. So 40 year old Moses, who was rejected as leader and whose deed was known, fled to

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Midian where he spent 40 years (Acts 7:30), got married in that time and had two sons by his wife. In this part of his address, Stephen was slowly building his case against the Jewish leaders who had arranged Christ's rejection and death and were persecuting the Christian leaders. We learn from this that people want to do their own thing and do not want anyone to rule over them or judge them even if that one is God's chosen leader and judge. That is why all of us need a savior and Lord.

Acts 7:30-36 - God had prepared Moses for his first forty years, but the people were not ready to accept his leadership. God wanted to use his time away from Egypt to help Moses be humble so that He would rely on God and not on himself. When he was 80 years old, an angel appeared to him in the flame of a burning bush on Mt. Sinai. Moses heard God speak to him in an audible voice identifying himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses trembled at hearing the word of God spoken in an audible voice. God speaks in Isa. 66:2 of using and favoring men of contrite spirit who tremble at His word. Trembling at God's word implies a strong eagerness to please God. Moses did not look because He was well aware that one cannot see God as God and live (Ex. 33:20 cp 1 Tim. 6:16). When God ordered Moses to remove his sandals, it is well to note that He was to approach God as a servant because servants customarily did not wear shoes or sandals but went barefoot. This reminds us as believers that we are here on earth to serve and please God. He is not just in heaven to serve and please us. God made it very clear that He was concerned about His people being used by the Egyptians and heard their groaning under their oppression. This reminds us that God does not want us to use people by overworking them. God was now present in a special way to save them. His plan was to send Moses to Egypt. This was the same Moses that the people had rejected 40 years earlier as a ruler and judge. Now God sent Moses to be the ruler and redeemer of God's people, Israel. Moses performed, with God's help, wonders (miracles showing God's greatness) and signs (miracles showing God's message) in the land of Egypt. Then God used Moses to lead the people out of Egypt where He did another miracle in parting the Red Sea to give the people a way of escape and using that same sea to bring judgment on Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt. During their years in the wilderness, God continued performing signs and wonders through Moses. Stephen was showing his hearers how God had used someone that they had rejected to save them. In the same way, God sent Jesus to save not only the Jewish people but all people from our bondage to sin (Rom. 6:17-18). Stephen was using this account to build his defense to bring his hearers closer and closer to see the magnitude of their sin of rejecting their Messiah, Jesus Christ. This is why we are to use God's word in telling others about salvation in Christ, because it is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:17) so He can convict people of their sin of unbelief (John 16:8-9), and it is by hearing God's word that people are able to have faith to be saved (Rom. 10:17).

Acts 7:37-39 - Stephen came to the point in His defense where he clearly was telling the Jewish leaders that Moses had prophesied of Jesus in His role as a prophet by citing Deuteronomy 18:15. Jesus Himself had told many of those same leaders present on the council/Sanhedrin in John 5:45-47 that Moses had written about Him, i.e. Jesus Christ, but they did not believe Moses' writings and because of that, they would be unable to believe the words of Christ. We

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

saw in our discussion that covered Acts 3:22-23 that Jesus Christ was that prophet. Stephen's point was that this was the Moses whom the Jewish leaders claimed to be following and obeying that had spoken of Jesus whom they had recently had put to death. This very same Moses was the one who was called by God by the angel in the burning bush and received the living oracles (=audibly spoken words of God Himself) on Mt. Sinai. Heb. 4:12 reminds us that God's word is not just words on a page but living words that guide us to salvation by faith in Christ (2 Tim. 3:15) and show us the right path for our thinking and behavior, when we are off that path, how to get back on that path and simply to be trained to live by God's standards (2 Tim. 3:16). Stephen in v. 39 put his finger on the problem that Israel had with Moses that they also had with their Messiah, Jesus Christ. That problem was that they were unwilling to be obedient to Him. The problem did not reside in their lack of knowledge or intellect. It was a problem of the will which is the capacity to make choices. Even though, the people of Israel had grudgingly accepted the leadership of Moses, there came a point where they repudiated him as their leader just as the generation to whom Stephen was speaking had repudiated Christ (John 1:11). Their hearts turned back to Egypt which was their old life of bondage. We are warned in Heb. 3:12 against having an evil and unbelieving heart in departing from the living God. When that happens, one of two things is obvious: (1) We have not yet come to the point where we have trusted Christ. We must examine ourselves to be sure that we have genuinely trusted Christ for salvation (2 Cor. 13:5). (2) We are failing to advance toward spiritual maturity (Heb. 6:1) and have become fleshly or carnal in our walk with God (1 Cor. 3:1-3) in which case that we need to immediately confess and forsake any sin so that fellowship with God may be restored (1 John 1:9 cp. Prov. 28:13). Otherwise, God will discipline us (Heb. 12:5-11 cp. 1 Cor. 11:30-32).

Acts 7:40-43 - Stephen continues making his case for their pattern of rejecting the leaders that God had sent to them culminating in their rejection of their Messiah, Jesus Christ. In the case of rejecting the leadership of Moses as God's appointed leader, they also rejected the true God and pressured Aaron to make a calf idol to which they offered sacrifices. These people rejoiced in the works that they had devised rather than in the God who has made them. God gave them up to worship the sun, moon and stars as substitutes for the true God. During their wilderness wandering, there was a divided allegiance to the true God and these substitutes for the true God. This continued after they conquered and occupied the land and culminated in the Babylonian captivity. The pattern is clear: God sends His leader (Moses during the past time of Israel and now Christ in the lifetime of Stephen's hearers). Some initial acceptance, then outright rejection comes. After that there is a looking to substitutes for the true God. Then there is a divided allegiance between these substitute gods and the true God (Mt. 6:24). Finally God's judgment fell upon the nation. This principle works two ways. First of all, this is the pattern for the professing (but not genuine) believer. Secondly, when a fleshly believer rejects the authority of God through His appointed leaders, God will give him over to a double mind resulting in instability (James 1:8) and a divided allegiance to Christ and alternatives (Mt. 6:24). Finally, God disciplines or judges the believer as described in 1 Cor. 11:30-32. Had these people chosen to stick to the word of God during Moses' absence, it could have resulted in great

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

blessing. When we lack godly leadership, our job is stick with God's word and not to follow those who would take us in a different direction.

Acts 7:44-50 - Stephen had shown in Acts 7:40-43 that the Jews had rejected the law (a charge also made by Jesus Christ in John 7:19), the very law they accused Stephen of rejecting (Acts 6:13-14). He had shown in Acts 7:9-39 that they had rejected their God-appointed deliverers, Joseph and Moses. God had Moses make the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness. It was a testimony that God was dwelling in their midst. Although the glory of God occupied the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33-38) and the first temple (2 Chr. 7:1-4), the Jewish people of Jeremiah's time regarded it as a refuge so they could continue in their sinful ways (Jer. 7:4-11). Jeremiah called the temple a "den of robbers" in Jer. 7:11. The situation had not changed when Jesus cleansed it in Mt. 21:13. David and Solomon wanted to build a temple for God to dwell. David planned it and Solomon had it built after David had died. Even Solomon acknowledged the truth of Isa. 66:1-2 cited in Acts 7:49-50 that God does not dwell in hand-made temples (1 Kings 8:27). In Acts 6:13-14 Stephen had been accused of speaking against the temple. However, the problem was not the temple but the rejection of the very one and only Son of God for Stephen's hearers. In the present time period in which we are living the temple is: the physical body of the believer (1 Cor. 6:19), the local church collectively consisting of its true believers (1 Cor. 3:16) and the church at large/the body of Christ (Eph. 2:19-22). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is Himself God, make all these three a temple. As believers, we are warned against misusing the temple of our individual bodies in 1 Cor. 6:15-20 but to use it to glorify God. We are warned in 1 Cor. 3:16-17 to not do anything to ruin or damage the local church or God will bring ruin on us in terms of lost rewards (not lost salvation) according to 1 Cor. 3:10-15. Finally, we see that we belong to an entity far greater than ourselves in Eph. 2:19-22 and are no longer strangers or outsiders to the plan of God. As part of this great temple, let us seek to make the doctrine of our God attractive (Tit. 2:10).

Acts 7:51-53 - Stephen comes to the climax of his message. First of all, he charges them with being stiff-necked. This implies rigidity in their mindset toward Jesus Christ and the word of God. There is an unwillingness to let God transform them and their thinking. Secondly, he charges his hearers with being uncircumcised in heart. This is true of all who have not placed their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ezekiel describes what happens when the heart of the unsaved is circumcised in Ezek. 36:26 when we are given a new heart when we are born again by trusting Christ as Savior (John 1:12-13). This circumcision results in the putting off - but not out - of the flesh/sinful nature according to Col. 2:11. This simply means that our sinful nature is dethroned when we trust Christ for salvation. Stephen stated that they were uncircumcised in ears. This simply meant that they were unable to understand spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14). They are charged with resisting the Holy Spirit in the same way as their ancestors had done. The unsaved person is quite capable of resisting the work of the Holy Spirit because the natural man does not receive the things of the Holy Spirit and neither can understand them because they are spiritually discerned according to 1 Cor. 2:14. The Holy Spirit certainly was convicting these enemies of Stephen (John 16:8-11) but they resisted that conviction. Stephen reminded them of their ancestor's persecution and killing of the prophets. They followed the pattern of their ancestors by arranging the betrayal and murder of Christ who was called the

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Just one. This title is given to Christ because of His sinlessness (Cp. 1 Pet. 2:22 and 1 Pet. 3:18). Finally, Stephen reminded them that they were sinners because they had not obeyed the laws God had given through angels and then Moses. However, we will see that the hearers of Stephen were not willing to recognize their sins and their need for forgiveness by trusting Christ for salvation.

C. Enraged hearers mob and martyr Stephen (7:54-60)

Acts 7:54-60 - The reaction to Stephen's message was contrary to the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the hearers because of their resistance to Him. Rather than repenting (changing their mind) and placing their trust in Christ, they reacted with anger and demonstrated it by grinding their teeth in fury and disapproval. In contrast, Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit was in control of his behavior and thinking as shown by His response. When we share the gospel, we share it and leave the results to God. In this case, these men were so hardened that they did not respond in a positive manner. Stephen looked up to heaven and saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. God was visible not as God but in the form of the cloud or Shechinah glory. The question comes at this point: Why was Jesus standing rather than sitting at the right hand of the Father? When it comes to having paid for our sins on the cross, Christ is pictured as sitting at the right hand of the Father because His suffering for our sins is completed (Heb. 10:10-12). However, Christ's sufferings with us as believers are still ongoing according to Col. 1:24, because as head of His spiritual body the church (Eph. 1:22-23), when one member or part of His spiritual body suffers, all members including the head suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). It is assuring to know that Jesus stands with us in our sufferings. Stephen was suffering rejection and hostility and was about to suffer a violent physical death, but Christ was standing with Him in it. This suffering of Christ with us has nothing to do with His payment for our sins but the fact that our life with Christ is a shared life. Any time that you suffer in any way for Christ as in Luke 6:22 or something worse, remember that Jesus is standing with you.

Stephen told the council/Sanhedrin that He saw heaven open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. They were unwilling to hear any more and showed this by covering their ears. Disorder broke out in the proceedings, and with loud yelling, they rushed Stephen, dragged him out of the city and began to pelt him with stones. One of the men present was Saul (who later became widely known as Paul – Acts 13:9) who took care of the coats of the men who were stoning Stephen (by doing this showing his approval - Acts 22:20). He was and became one of the foremost leaders of those who were persecuting the Christians voting time and again for them to be put to death (Acts 26:10). While Stephen's message did not seem to penetrate Paul's hard heart, it later was used by the Holy Spirit to show how God can take a life and change it completely when that individual trusts Christ for salvation (1 Tim. 1:12-16). Notice that Stephen directed His prayer directly to Jesus rather than praying to the Father in Jesus' name. He called on Jesus to receive his human spirit which would leave his body when he died (James 2:26). He called on the Lord Jesus to not hold this sin against them because they did this out of ignorance of the facts and reality in regard to the person and work of Jesus Christ (cp. 1 Tim. 1:13). This type of forgiveness is extended by believers when the persecutors do what

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

they do out of a lack of knowledge. Notice that this type of forgiveness is not always extended if the persecutor is aware of what they are doing (2 Tim. 4:14). Even then, the matter is to be left in God's hands and not our hands (Rom. 12:19-21). Stephen died without knowing that his death would revolutionize the life of one person who was present – the apostle Paul. This reminds us that our labor for the Lord is never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58) and that His word does not come back empty (Isa. 55:11).

PART SIX: Persecution and Preaching of Phillip and Other Disciples (Acts 8:1-40)

A. Scattered in Judea and Samaria but preaching Christ (8:1-4)

Acts 8:1-4 - Saul (who later became Paul the Apostle – Acts 13:9) was fully supportive of putting Stephen to death. Saul was leading the charge in persecuting the Christians. He entered every house and imprisoned both men and women. Notice the word “great” shows that this was an intensive persecution. Persecution comes in many forms. There is severe persecution such as beating (2 Cor. 11:23-25), having property/possessions taken away (Heb. 10:34), imprisonment and even death (Rev. 2:10). Then there is lesser persecution mentioned in Luke 6:22 which involves being hated (either through hostility or indifference), being ostracized, being insulted and having your reputation/name maligned – all because of our relationship and stand in reference to Christ. We notice very clearly that the death of Stephen, a young and faithful man of God, brought about very great grief. However, the grief of the Christian is not like the grief of the unsaved world who lack the blessed hope of eternity with Jesus Christ (1 Thes. 4:13). We know that we will emerge victorious in the end (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:57). Notice that the people were scattered all over Judea and Samaria. However, this only served to spread the gospel and multiply the number of Christians. From this passage we see that God uses circumstances to show us His will. These dislocated believers spread the light of the gospel to areas who had not heard. The main guides that God uses to show us His will are His word (Psalm 119:105) and secondly the leading of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14). Here in this passage, we saw how God used circumstances created by the very enemies of Christ who unwittingly furthered His will for these believers in their individual lives and the church at large. Hopefully, this may give us insight to God's greater and hidden purposes as we encounter resistance and even hostility in sharing the gospel.

B. Phillip and Apostles preach in Samaria (8:5-24)

Acts 8:5-8 - In Acts 6:5, we see that Phillip was one of the 7 men chosen as deacon. He had left Jerusalem and had gone to the city of Samaria. He started telling people about Christ, i.e. the Messiah. There were a large number of people who were listening to his message. God enabled Phillip to perform signs (= miracles with a message). Some of these involved the casting out of demons (=angels of Satan). Another sign was the healing of many people suffering lameness and from paralysis. The purpose of these signs was to confirm the word of God in reference to salvation's provision by Christ's death and resurrection with its reception by

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

faith (Heb. 2:3-4). As a result of people coming to Christ, there was much rejoicing. It is very obvious that salvation brings joy, but it is also obvious that this joy may be lost. In David's prayer of confession in Psalm 51, Psalm 51:12 speaks of the fact that when he sinned with Bathsheba that he lost the joy of his salvation and was praying that God would restore the joy of His salvation. We do not lose our salvation (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:28-29). However, we can lose the joy of it by sinning and not confessing and forsaking it promptly (Prov. 28:13).

Acts 8:9-13 - This passage sheds a great deal of light on the issue of sorcery. Sorcery works in enlisting Satan and/or his demons (=angels) to function in the supernatural realm to gain power and control. Notice that this man Simon practiced sorcery. Sorcery starts with dabbling, but in this case, it had become a practice or habit rather than an isolated act (8:10). It is classified as a work of the flesh/sinful nature in Gal. 5:19-20. One of the driving forces for people involving themselves in this sin is to amaze or astound others (8:9). We also see in v. 9 that it is done for one's own glory not God's glory (Mt. 5:16). We can see in v. 10 that his sorcery drew people from all socio-economic backgrounds under its sway. Notice that v. 10 shows us that people's attention is diverted from the things of God to magical arts and the magician. It also resulted in a faulty understanding of God according to verse 10 seeing Him as an impersonal force or power to be used by people rather than a personal God of love and holiness who desires to use us. When people fall under the influence of those who practice sorcery, they often naively assume the sorcerer to be of God (v. 10). Verse 11 tells us that these people had been involved with sorcery for a long time because of Simon. However, Acts 8:7 shows that it had brought them nothing but demonic bondage. We see in verse 12 that despite his influence and hold over the people, that many of them believed the message concerning what Christ had done and the kingdom He offered. These believers were baptized to show that they were sincere. Simon also believed and was baptized. He was very amazed as he saw the great signs (=miracles with God's message) and miracles (=miracles that show God's power) as he went around with Phillip. If we want to move people out of occult bondage, the only way is for us to help them to trust Christ as Savior and show it by making a clean break with that past. We must learn that not every miracle that happens is of God (2 Thes. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14). Finally, God is not ours to use. We are created for His use and His glory, not our own.

Acts 8:14-17 - This passage is very confusing to many believers. Those who believe that we do not receive the Holy Spirit (either at all or just in part) at the moment of salvation have made much of this passage. However, I believe that the chart on the next page extracted from my study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit will shed some light on this issue. There are passages where the Holy Spirit is received after salvation rather than at the time of salvation. In all of these cases there are some definite elements that appear to be present: These include the presence of at least one Apostle, the laying on of hands and the people who receive the Holy Spirit are Jewish or part Jewish.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

#	Scripture References	Presence of Apostles	Laying on of hands by Apostles	Jewish or part Jewish People	Teaching
1.	Acts 8:12-18	vv.17-18 Peter and John	vv. 17-18 yes by Peter and John	v. 14 people of Samaria were part Jewish	Although Phillip had the hands of the Apostles laid on him in Acts 6:5-6, he had to wait until Peter and John came for them to lay on hands and impart the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans
2.	Acts 19:1-7	vv. 1-2 Paul	v. 6 yes by Paul	Probably	These men were probably Jews because Acts 13:24 tells us John's preaching was directed to Israel. Also Acts 19:8 speaks of a synagogue at Ephesus.
3.	2 Timothy 1:6-7	vv. 6-7 Paul	vv. 6-7 yes by Paul	Acts 16:1 yes part Jewish	Timothy was given the Holy Spirit who gives us love, power and a sound mind.
4.	Acts 2:38	Acts 1:13-14; 2:1- all of the Apostles	It is not stated one way or another	Jewish audience	Acts 2:5,39 tells us that the audience were all Jews
<i>Special Note: In the case of Cornelius and his household, who were Gentiles, the Holy Spirit was given at the time of faith in Christ (Acts 10:44-48; 11:14-18). Since 1 Corinthians 12:13 shows that all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit, it is logical to conclude that this occurs at salvation. Since Romans 8:9 shows that anyone who does not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not a true believer, then we know that the Holy Spirit must be given at the moment of trusting Christ (Galatians 3:26;4:6). Given the fact that the spiritual gift of Apostle was either primarily or exclusively foundational (Ephesians 2:20), this argues for the passages in the table above being foundational and transitional.</i>					

Acts 8:18-24 - This passage is one that finds godly professors in Bible-believing seminaries with two different views. One view is that Simon's sin showed that he had not genuinely trusted Christ. However, there are two facts that push against this view. One is that Acts 8:13 states that Simon himself had believed. If that was the case, the solution would have been for Peter to tell Simon that he needed to exercise genuine trust in Christ for his salvation. Secondly, Peter told Simon to pray to God that if possible the intention of his heart could be forgiven. We are not saved by praying but by believing. The gospel is believing something not doing something. That something is trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from the eternal condemnation of sin based on His substitutionary, bloodshed death on the cross and His bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Rom. 1:16; 2:16). Simon was not trying to purchase salvation nor was he trying to purchase the reception of the Holy Spirit. He was trying to purchase the spiritual gift of Apostle so he could lay hands on people so that they could receive the Holy Spirit. However, Peter made it clear that we do not purchase our spiritual gift. It is sovereignly bestowed by God the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11, 18) when He places us in the spiritual body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13) at the moment we trust Christ for salvation.

In the last paragraph, we saw that Simon tried to buy the authority to bestow the Holy Spirit on those who believed. He was not trying to buy his salvation or his reception of the Holy Spirit.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Simon's speech betrayed the fact that He thought that this spiritual gift with its accompanying authority could be bought. Peter expressed the fact that Simon wanted to use the money he had for this sinful thought. Simon was clearly out of fellowship with God. There is no partnership with God (the word "part"). This is an indication of lost fellowship not lost salvation. John 13:8-10 clearly distinguishes between cleansing/forgiveness for fellowship (feet washed) and cleansing/forgiveness for salvation (body bathed). Simon's heart and thought life was looking back to the central role he had prior to salvation and was not right with God. He needed to repent. Repent is used in two ways in God's word: (1) Repentance for salvation of which saving faith is connected (Acts 11:18) and (2) Repentance of a believer for restoration of fellowship (2 Cor. 12:20-21). Simon was being commanded to repent in this second way to restore fellowship with God. Simon was experiencing the poison (gall) of bitterness about his lost position as the center of attention and had put himself in bondage to this sin (cp. Prov. 5:22). Simon asked Peter to pray for him so that these things would not come on him in such a way that he remained out of fellowship. We are not told how Simon handled this. Hopefully, he repented and confessed the sin to God and prayed that his sinful thought would be forgiven. The words "if possible" do not express doubt. The Greek word for "if" refers to something that is assumed to be true so Peter was not expressing doubt that Simon could be forgiven. What we can learn from this encounter with Simon is that God has given us our spiritual gift(s) and we need to be content. We must avoid bitterness and letting our thoughts be trapped in sin. As we repent, we need to enlist other believers to pray that these sins do not return to control us.

C. Phillip supernaturally taken to the desert to share gospel with Ethiopian (8:25-40)

Acts 8:25-29 - One of the important items that we see in verse 25 is that Peter, John and Phillip finished giving their testimony of how they came to trust Jesus Christ as Savior. They also told others the word of God in the various villages of Samaria in addition to the main city where Phillip had been before returning to Jerusalem. We learn from this that not only is it important to tell the unsaved the gospel but to give testimony from our own experience with Christ. There is no better advertisement for someone or something than a satisfied consumer. When we trust Christ and experience eternal life and abundant life, that testimony along with God's word and specifically the gospel is used by the Holy Spirit to bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ. After these men returned to Jerusalem, God used an angel to take Phillip out to a desert area south of Jerusalem to the area of Gaza. There was a man searching the scriptures very much in need of having his questions answered. This man was a eunuch and a Jewish proselyte from Ethiopia who was in charge of the treasury. Here we see God using an angel to set up the geographical background of a witnessing opportunity for Phillip. This helps us to realize that God uses angels to get us to the right place at the right time for witnessing opportunities. While the man sat in his chariot, he was reading a scroll of Isaiah the prophet. God was using His word to prepare this man's heart to receive the gospel message (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit led and prompted Phillip to go near the chariot and overtake it. In the same way, the Holy Spirit will prompt us to approach someone for the purpose of presenting

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

the gospel to them. Phillip had been used to speaking to crowds of people, but was now being led to speak to this one man. When we find ourselves in strange and unfamiliar settings, we need to be alert for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:30-40 - Notice that Phillip immediately obeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit. He did not start by blurting out the gospel. Phillip heard the man reading the prophet Isaiah and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The man showed that he was open to a gospel presentation by inviting Phillip to join him in the chariot and explain the passage to him. He read from the book of Isaiah about the death of Jesus Christ. What confused the man was that he was not sure whether the passage spoke of the prophet himself or some other man. Phillip was able to present the gospel showing this man that the passage spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. Using this scripture from Isaiah as the beginning point, Phillip preached Jesus which would include His resurrection and the need to trust Him for salvation. After Phillip presented his message, the man was ready to be baptized. While v. 37 is not in the oldest Greek manuscripts nor is it in the majority of Greek manuscripts, it is readily understood from the rest of scripture that faith in Christ for salvation comes before one is baptized to demonstrate that they have trusted Christ. Phillip baptized the man. A very unusual miracle happened after they came out of the water. Phillip was caught away by the Holy Spirit to the city of Azotus and the man did not see Phillip anymore. As a result of having trusted Christ for salvation and then being obedient to be baptized, he was rejoicing. Joy is one of the results of a salvation relationship with Christ. That joy (but not our salvation) can be lost by sin according to Psalm 51:12. This reminds us that as new creations in Christ that while we do sin (1 John 1:8, 10) that confession brings forgiveness (1 John 1:9), it cannot replace the lost blessings of the time between sin and the confession. We notice in our text that Phillip was able to tell others about Christ in Azotus and the other cities until he came to Caesarea. Notice that Phillip did not focus on the miracle of the Holy Spirit transporting him over distance but used the miracle of being transported to tell others about Christ. Miracle or no miracle, Phillip used his opportunities to speak to people about trusting Christ. This needs to be our mindset as well.

PART SEVEN: Paul's Conversion and Preaching (Acts 9:1-31)

A. His conversion (9:1-9)

Acts 9:1-5 - The first two verses reveal the hostility of Saul (i.e. Paul) toward believers. He received authorization from the high priest to arrest any believer and bring them bound to Jerusalem from Damascus. He was a very threatening man who would not hesitate to cast his vote to put them to death (Acts 26:10). We notice that Christianity is referred to as "the Way" not "a Way". Jesus had said that He was the only way to God in John 14:6 and Peter had also mentioned this in Acts 4:12. When Paul and the men with him came close to Damascus he

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

encountered a bright light and the risen Lord Jesus Christ who appeared to him (Acts 9:17). As a result, Saul fell to the ground. He heard a voice speaking to him by name asking him why he was persecuting Jesus. Why did Jesus not ask why Paul was persecuting believers? Jesus wanted Paul to realize that believers were bound to Him in a unity in which one member suffers that all the members suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). Jesus as head of the body, the church was suffering (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). As mentioned in our study of the last part of Acts 7, Christ's sufferings for our sins are finished (Heb. 10:10-12) but his sufferings as the important part and head of His body, the church continue and are yet to be filled up (Col. 1:24). These sufferings have nothing to do with Christ's payment for sin which was finished at the cross (John 19:30), but our total identification is in Him and Him in us (John 14:20). Paul knew that Jesus was Lord, i.e. God Himself. Paul was said to be kicking against the goads like an ox which means he had simply been deeply penetrated by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. It was at this point that Paul knew Jesus in a saving way (cp. John 17:3). The worst sinner ever had met and was immediately transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:15-16). Let us not give up in our prayers and witness to those whom we believe are hopeless. My wife and I prayed for her sister's husband for 25 years and saw him trust Christ before his sudden and unexpected death 9 months later. The change in his life was astounding. An abusive, drinking gambling man was changed overnight. He and the family were in Sunday school, morning and evening church, Wed. night prayer and Bible study. In addition, he led the family in family time of reading the Bible and praying together. Recently, the 93 year old father-in-law of my wife's late brother placed His faith in Christ after 46 years of prayer and witness for his salvation. Do not ever give up.

Acts 9:6-9 - I have included the first sentence of verse 6 even though the oldest manuscripts and the majority of manuscripts do not contain Paul's question. However, when Paul recounted this before a Jewish audience years later, the first part of this sentence with Paul's question is mentioned in Acts 22:10. Believer's sometimes wait some time before asking this question. However, it is important to each of us to be sure that we have asked the Lord Jesus that question of what Christ wants us to do. Notice how the Lord Jesus answered Paul. He did not give him a blueprint of His will for Paul's life. He told Paul to go into the city and there he would be told what he must do. This shows us an important part of discovering God's will for our life is to act in obedience on what we do know from the scriptures. When we do that, then God shows us the next step. God has no need to show us His will beyond the next step. If we do not obey the first step, why should He show us the next step? The men with Paul heard the sound of the voice, but obviously not clearly or closely enough to make out the words according to Acts 22:9. These men with him saw the light as Paul had seen the light according to that same verse, but they did not see the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as Paul had according to Acts 9:7 cp. 9:17. As a result, Saul was blind for three days. As a result, the men with him had to lead him by the hand into Damascus. During that time, Paul chose to fast and go without anything to drink. We will see how Paul responded to the additional information that was given Him and how God prepared a man to minister to him. His encounter with Jesus Christ had totally changed him from being in control to being completely dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, direction and guidance. This reminds us that apart from Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

B. Paul's time with Ananias and other disciples (9:10-19)

Acts 9:10-16 - We notice how Jesus was working behind the scenes to get Paul started in His Christian life. In Damascus was a disciple named Ananias. Jesus appeared to Ananias in a vision. When called by Christ, he replied "Here I am Lord". These words spoke of the fact that He was making himself available to serve and obey Christ. Each of us must make that decision in our Christian life each time that we interact with God's word. Visions were more common and necessary in the early church because the New Testament was not yet complete. For us, the instructions usually will come through God's written word and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus instructed Ananias to go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for Saul of Tarsus. Notice that Paul had already begun one of the important disciplines of the Christian life which is prayer. Each of us as believers is to make prayer a priority. We should pray at least once a day (besides meals which require prayer each time – 1 Tim. 4:3-5). Jesus in his model prayer in Mt. 6:9-13 said, "Give us this day our daily bread". Notice Jesus did not say, "this week our weekly bread" or "this month our monthly bread". Prayer is to be, at least a daily occurrence. We notice that prayer was made three times a day by David (Ps. 55:17) and Daniel (Daniel 6:10). It is good to pray at regular intervals as well as spontaneously when a need arises (1 Thes. 5:17; Neh. 2:4-5). We will continue looking at this encounter between the risen Lord Jesus Christ and Ananias.

Notice that Jesus commanded Ananias to do something that was – in his thinking – absolutely absurd. Here is this man with a reputation for beating, killing, jailing and dispossessing Christians. Of all things, Ananias is commanded to go put his hand on this cruel Saul so that he might be healed of his loss of sight. Sometimes the commands of God may seem absolutely absurd. We are only too eager to find an out. Yet Isa. 55:7-9 instructs us as sinful beings to turn loose of our thoughts and ways and take on the ways and thoughts of God which are not only different than our ways and thoughts but higher than our ways and thoughts. Saul had a reputation, and the believers in Damascus had heard more than enough about him. Notice that Ananias was honest with Jesus. When we pray to God -whether directly to Jesus or to the Father in His name - we need to be honest about our concerns. There are those times when scripture says one thing and our inner being says something else. It is quite alright for us to bring these concerns to God (1 Pet. 5:7). This does not exempt us from obeying because God is not going to lead us to disobey His word. This is when it calls for faith and obedience on our part. The Lord Jesus made it very clear to Ananias that Paul would be speaking about Christ to those who were not Jews, rulers and the people of Israel. In addition, the Lord promised to show Paul how many things he would suffer for the cause of Christ. Sometimes, when believers are hesitant to obey God's word, it is important to pray and keep reading because God's word often clarifies the need for our faith and obedience just as the Lord clarified it for Ananias. But if He does not, we need to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7) and not lean on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5). We see that suffering for Christ is a part of what it means to be a believer (Phil. 1:29). This suffering may be major: Rev. 2:10 (imprisonment or death), Heb. 10:34 (loss of property or possessions), 2 Cor. 11:23-25 (physical beatings); or minor as in Luke

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

6:22 (hatred, insults, ostracism, loss of reputation among the unsaved). Finally, we must remember, the crucial issue is that it is not where individuals have been but where they are going.

Acts 9:17-19 – Ananias despite his initial reluctance to approach Paul acted in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice that he recognizes Paul as a fellow-believer by addressing him as “brother” because Paul was now a child of God by faith in Christ (John 1:12). Ananias was given power to heal the blindness of Paul by laying his hands on him. Not only was Paul healed of his blindness, but he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Notice that the healing was instant. This Spirit filling simply means that Paul was under the control of the Holy Spirit (see Eph. 5:18). If we are to minister effectively for the Lord Jesus Christ, the filling of the Holy Spirit is very crucial. The filling of the Holy Spirit is not about us having more of the Holy Spirit. It is about the Holy Spirit having more of us. Paul showed that He meant business for Christ by being baptized in water. One of the facts we note in reading the book of Acts is that new believers were promptly baptized. Water baptism does not save, but it pictures the work of Christ using the Holy Spirit to baptize the one who trusts Christ at the moment of salvation into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-12) We are not told who baptized Paul in water but many suppose it was probably Ananias. Paul was without food or water for three days. At this point he received food and regained much of his strength. God’s word stresses that our physical body is the temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit in 1 Cor. 6:19-20 to be used to glorify God. Eating when we should is an important part of caring for God’s temple. Finally, we notice that Paul did not resort to his old associates but spent his time with the believers or disciples at Damascus. It is most important that as believers, we spend time with other believers so that we may give and receive mutual encouragement (Heb. 3:13; 10:25). We will see that Paul was soon sharing His newfound faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In summary, we see the importance for new believers to develop a prayer life, let the Holy Spirit have the controls of their life, being promptly obedient in being baptized and spending our time with other believers. Like Paul, we as believers need to grow spiritually. This is a lifelong process of becoming more like Christ knowing that on this side of eternity, we will not arrive (Phil. 3:12; 1 John 3:2) but will be continually under construction.

C. Paul presents Christ and is opposed (9:20-31)

Acts 9:20-22 - We see Paul immediately obeying what He knew that God wanted him to do. This reminds us that when we as believers know from the scriptures what we are to do that we are to be immediate in our obedience (Ps. 119:60). We saw that Paul was fellowshiping and meeting with other believers and spending time in prayer in our previous discussion. Here we see him telling others about Jesus. One of the important truths that he communicated was that Jesus was the Son of God. This title showed that Jesus was God. In Jewish understanding, the son possessed the same nature as the Father. Paul’s hearers were amazed at Paul’s clear message and the complete transformation of his life. Here was a man who had been jailing, promoting execution and otherwise ruining Christians and had come to this place to arrest Christians for trial in Jerusalem. Now he was doing the very thing that he had tried to stop – witnessing about Jesus Christ. When an individual trusts Christ as Savior, not only does their

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

position and standing before God change, but also their disposition is transformed (1 John 3:9). Paul kept growing in spiritual power. This is true of any believer who will act in obedience to what he knows of God's word. He was able to overcome the objections of those Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ, i.e. the promised Messiah. In order to prove his case, undoubtedly, Paul was using the scriptures as did Apollos in Acts 18:28. In sharing Christ, it is important to use God's word because Rom. 10:17 reminds us that this is how people come to faith. In this post-modern era, it is very important that we as believers acquaint ourselves with the external and internal evidences for the Bible being the very word of God so that we may defend the gospel (Phil. 1:7, 16) and give a defense of the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15. Do not ever underestimate the power of God's word (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

Acts 9:23-27 - It would appear that the many days includes Paul's time in Arabia mentioned in Gal. 1:17. Paul's preaching of the gospel in Damascus finally brought about powerful opposition and a conspiracy among the Jews there to kill Paul. However, Paul became aware that the Jews were lying in wait for him and were guarding the city gates night and day. The other disciples helped him escape by lowering him in a basket from a location by the wall. Any time the gospel goes forth with power, Satan is busy stirring up persecution (Rev. 2:10). When Paul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself with the disciples. When we come to a new community, one of the first things that we should seek out is a good sound Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church. However, they were all fearful of him because they remembered him as the man who had so severely persecuted the Christians. They did not believe that he was a true believer and a disciple of Christ. At this point, they had nothing more than his word that he was a disciple. It is always good to be discerning regarding potential church members (1 John 4:1-6). However, Barnabas took Paul to the Apostles and explained to them that Paul was truly a changed man and had given evidence of it by speaking out boldly concerning Christ in Damascus. Once again, this emphasizes that a genuine salvation encounter with Christ will bear evidence in a changed life. This also reminds us that it is important to speak out boldly for Christ. This is something for which we need to pray for ourselves (Acts 4:29-31) and for other believers (Eph. 6:18-19).

Acts 9:28-31 - Evidently the persecution against the church in Jerusalem had abated because the Apostles were there. Saul spent time with them in Jerusalem. Once again, he was speaking boldly for Christ. In Acts 4:29-31 we saw that the filling of the Holy Spirit is what helps us to be bold in our witness as well as the prayers of other believers according to Ephesians 6:18-19. In his communication of the gospel, these involved conversations and debates with the Greek-speaking Jews. These evidently became more intense so that these Jews actually tried to kill Paul. Once again, Paul's boldness in telling others the gospel of Jesus was bringing opposition and persecution. His fellow-believers helped him make an escape after they learned of the threat. One of the principles that we see in Acts is that when our message is widely and strongly rejected, we are to move on to other areas to share the gospel with the unsaved (cp. Mt. 10:14 with Acts 13:50-51; 14:5-6; 14:19-20; 16:39-40; 17:6-10; 17:13-14; 20:1). Notice that the conversion and transformation of Paul resulted in a time of peace or freedom from persecution for the church in Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Carefully observe that the believers

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

were being built up or edified. This means as they were hearing the word of God, they were obeying it and letting it change their lives to promote greater growth in Christlikeness. They were walking in the fear of the Lord. This simply means that they were living their lives with a mindset of taking God seriously in their daily life with its moment by moment happenings. Then we notice that these believers were accomplishing this through the encouragement of the Holy Spirit. It is this encouragement from the Holy Spirit that helps us as believers to obey the commands of Christ (John 14:15-17). Finally, we see that the church increased in numbers. This means that these believers were still telling others about Jesus Christ and that there were people in these areas receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. This drives home to us as believers living in the western world how we should be living in this time which is free of serious persecution.

PART EIGHT: Peter's Miracles (Acts 9:32-43)

Acts 9:32-35 - Notice that the term "saints" is used. This refers to anyone who has placed their faith in Christ. It comes from the word "sanctified" or "holy." The term "saints" is used for all believers. 1 Cor. 1:2 establishes the fact that those who have been sanctified in their standing before God are called saints. This occurs when we trust Christ for salvation according to Acts 26:18. The Greek verb tense in both 1 Cor. 1:2 and Acts 26:18 speak of an action that occurred at a past point of time with ongoing results. This is often referred to as positional sanctification. No matter what a believer does this standing does not change for eternity (Heb. 10:10, 14). However, believers are to be holy or sanctified in their behavior (1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Cor. 7:1). This refers to our practice which may not always be what God desires. The Greek word emphasizes being set apart for God's purpose and not one's own purpose or the purpose of any other individual or entity. Finally, the believer will be completely sanctified at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:27; 1 Thes. 5:23-24; 1 John 3:2). When Peter made contact with the believers at Lydda, he encountered a helpless man who had been paralyzed and bedridden for 8 years. Notice that this healing took place at the hands of Peter, an Apostle. There are 45 total miracles in the book of Acts. Only 2 of the 45 lacked some apostolic involvement. 43 of the 45 had some apostolic involvement: as direct agents in 20 of the miracles, as receiving benefit or guidance in 16 of the miracles, indirect involvement in 4 of the 43 miracles, and simply witness in 3 of the 43 miracles. The fact that the spiritual gift of Apostle was foundational to the church (Eph. 2:20) gives us a good explanation as to why we see fewer miracles at the present time. The purpose of this healing as in all the signs, wonders and miracles was to confirm the words of these men who were specially chosen by Jesus and had heard Him (Heb. 2:3-4). We see that the words spoken by Peter were sufficient to be used by God to heal Aeneas and that the healing was not gradual but immediate. We also notice that Peter did not lay hands on the man. When people who were not believers saw him, they turned to the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior. A changed life is one of the best vehicles that God uses to bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ. That is why it is important to let God change us so that unsaved people will see God in all His reality (Heb. 12:14).

Acts 9:36-43 - This passage centers around a believing woman named Dorcas which was the Greek word for the Aramaic word "Tabitha" which means "gazelle," A gazelle was a small

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

antelope native to Asia and Africa. This woman consistently was doing good works (i.e. works which benefit others) and acts of charity, i.e. mercy. The fact that she had a reputation for doing these types of deeds speaks of the fact that she had two spiritual gifts. One of those gifts was helps (1 Cor. 12:28), and the second one was showing mercy (Rom. 12:6-8). People were able to see the robes and clothes this woman had made. When she died, they washed her body as was the custom and summoned Simon Peter who was at nearby Lydda. They were weeping and mourning for her which is understandable because when a believer dies, we mourn even as Jesus mourned (John 11:35) which is not as the unsaved world mourns (1 Thes. 4:13). Unlike the so-called modern faith healers, Peter was not playing to the audience because he had them all leave the room where her body was. Notice what Peter did. First he prayed meaning he talked with God. Then he spoke to the dead woman. She opened her eyes, saw Peter and sat up. Peter then touched her by taking her hand to raise her up from her seated position and called to the believers including the widows and presented this woman now alive to them. When this became known all over Joppa, many people placed their faith in Christ. This is an example of someone doing the same works that Christ did in this situation (John 14:12) while Pentecost where 3000 were saved (Acts 2:41) is an example of the greater works (John 14:12). Dorcas was raised back to life only to die again whereas the 3000 were saved from everlasting condemnation (John 3:18). Once again, we see a transformed life confirming the reality of the gospel and many people becoming believers. The last verse provides the setting for the geographical location of Peter in Acts 10. Interestingly, this believer Simon was a tanner of leather and was an outcast to the scribes and Pharisees who saw his occupation as ritually unclean according to their tradition (not the teaching of the Old Testament). Not only did this miracle confirm the gospel's reality. It also restored a believer to a fruitful life for the Lord. While God may not answer our prayer to raise a physical dead person to life, we can partner with God in raising spiritually dead people to spiritual life now (John 5:24) to experience a bodily resurrection at Christ's return (John 6:39-40).

PART NINE: Preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1 - 11:30)

A. The preparation of Peter and Cornelius and His associates (10:1-33)

Acts 10:1-4 - We notice the character of this man Cornelius. He was said to be a devout man, one who wanted to please the true God. He is also said to have taken the true God seriously which is described as fearing God. Yet this man for all his sincerity and devotion was lost and needed to be saved (Acts 11:14 cp. Prov. 14:12). He was generous in helping the poor among the Jewish people yet he lacked the very righteousness that God requires (Mt. 5:48 cp. Rom. 4:3-5, 22-24). He prayed to God on an ongoing basis. It is very clear from verse 4 and Acts 10:31 that God heard the prayers of this unbeliever. This runs contrary to what many Bible-believing Christians have taught, but one cannot miss what the scripture clearly says. Some believers object and say that Cornelius was an Old Testament believer. However, Acts 11:14 makes it absolutely clear that he was not saved. Just because an individual has God hear and answer his prayer does not mean that this individual is saved. Cornelius pictures a heathen man who knows about the true God and is seeking to know more about him. John 7:17 in the

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

NIV says, *“Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”* God has given us evidence of his reality in creation (Rom. 1:19-20). This is not enough to save anyone, but it is enough to condemn them. If one is willing to do God’s will, he will find out whether Jesus is speaking the truth or not. This does not relieve believers of their responsibility to share the gospel with unbelievers (Mark 16:15) and to send missionaries (Rom. 10:14-15), but it does show that if someone is positive toward God that God will see that they get additional information. Here we see that God sent an angel to this Cornelius to give him the opportunity to get the additional information.

Acts 10:5-8 – Even though Cornelius was positive toward the gospel, this information was not provided to him right away. The angel directed him to send men to Joppa and seek out and locate Simon Peter at the house of Simon, the tanner. At this point, the only information Cornelius had from God was that the next step was to send his men to Simon Peter who would tell him what he must do. God could have had the angel deliver the gospel to Cornelius but chose to have Simon Peter be the one to bring the gospel to him. God can use any supernatural or normal means (or use any combination of these two means) to get out the gospel and bring people to where that they would hear the gospel. Acts 11:13-14 adds that the angel told Cornelius that this Peter would bring words by which he and those people in his household would experience salvation. Cornelius shared this information with a soldier under him who was devout and two of his household members. Cornelius realized that the outcome would be salvation. He did not understand how it would be provided or how it would be received. That information would be brought by Peter. In the meantime, we will see how God was preparing Simon Peter’s heart so that he would be willing to go to a gentile (=non-Jew) household and share the gospel. Notice how God’s will works in this man’s life and in our own lives. God shows us from His word or sometimes circumstances, what we are to do next. In order to get the full disclosure of God’s will, we have to take that step of faith and obedience. God will probably not use an angel with us although he certainly can. God’s main disclosure occurs through obedience to the written word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:9-17 - While the men sent from Cornelius to find and bring Peter were on their way, God arranged to work with Peter so that he would follow God’s plan. Peter went up on the flat roof to pray at noon. This reminds us as believers that we are to set aside time to talk with God. However, while lunch was being prepared, Peter found himself very hungry. It was at this time that he fell into a trance. He had a vision of a large sheet being lowered from heaven with all sorts of animals, reptiles and birds. Some of these were forbidden for eating according to the Old Testament laws in Lev. 11:1-47 and Deut. 14:3-20. Peter heard the voice of the Lord tell Him to get up and kill these living things and eat them. Notice that Peter told the Lord Jesus “No”. He had still not given Jesus His rightful place with respect to the New Testament lack of restrictions on what we eat (Mark 7:19 cp. 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Heb. 13:9). This shows us that when people trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that they are recognizing Him as the supreme authority over their life even though not everything is under His lordship as was the case with Peter here and elsewhere (cp. Gal. 2:11-14). It is in these areas that we need to grow. This vision was repeated three times. By doing this God was giving Peter a triple witness of what He was trying to teach Him. It showed Peter that He was not just seeing things (Deut. 19:15 cp.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Gen. 41:32). At this point, Peter was lost as to what this could mean. However, the circumstances appointed by God beginning with the arrival of the men from Cornelius would show Him that this vision had far more application than just food. It would show Him that no human being should be called common or unclean in God's sight. Up to this point, Peter was still not going forth with Jesus' command to take the gospel beyond the Jews, but God was working to help Him grow just as God works in our lives to help us grow (Phil. 2:13).

Acts 10:18-23; Acts 11:12 - God had prepared Cornelius and Peter for this encounter. The Holy Spirit spoke guiding Peter to go with these three men to the house of Cornelius. Peter was instructed by the Holy Spirit to not be doubtful. This reminds us that the same God whose Holy Spirit helped bring us to Christ (John 16:8-11) continues to lead us after salvation (Rom. 8:14). It is faith that received our salvation, and it is faith by which we live our lives after salvation (John 1:12; Col. 2:6; Gal. 2:20). The reputation of Cornelius among the Jews helped to set his mind at ease. It is made clear to Peter at this point that Cornelius had a message via an angel from God. Notice that Peter arranged for these men from Cornelius to be lodged and in this way showed them hospitality. Rom. 12:13 reminds us to be hospitable to one another, and Peter himself wrote in 1 Pet. 4:9 to show hospitality without complaint to one another as believers. In this case, these men were soon to be believers. Peter, knowing that God was at work took six believers with him to go with the 3 men from Cornelius to meet with Cornelius and his household. This reminds us that we are to be sensitive to the working of God in circumstances, the leading of the Holy Spirit and in the practice of being hospitable.

Acts 10:24-33 - One of the natural bridges we have for sharing the gospel or talking to others about hearing the gospel is to invite relatives and friends to hear a speaker present the gospel or to present it to them ourselves. Notice that Cornelius erred in trying to worship Peter, and Peter quickly corrected his error. Worship is not even to be given to angels. It is reserved for God alone according to Rev. 22:8-9 which includes Jesus Christ (Mt. 14:33). Cornelius had gathered a large group of people at his home consisting of relatives and friends. Peter stated that it was forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with a non-Jew. This was not the teaching of the Old Testament but an addition by the teachers of the Law. They had taken God's commands to insulate themselves from the idolatrous Gentile nations and changed them into isolating themselves from the Gentile nations. Some believers today make the same error. We are to remember that while we are not "of the world", we are "in the world" (John 17:14-16). Israel failed to be the light that God intended (Deut. 4:6-9). Peter went on to explain that God had shown him through the vision not to call anyone – Jew or Gentile – unclean or common. Peter was not fully aware why he was supposed to be at the home of Cornelius other than that the Holy Spirit had told him to go. Again this shows how God discloses his will. Act on what you know God wants you to do, and then He will show you the next step. When Peter asked Cornelius why he had sent for Peter, God used this to show Peter that he was here to tell these people the gospel. Cornelius recounted how God had used a vision to tell him to invite Peter there and that he and the people that he had gathered were there to hear what the Lord had commanded Peter to say. Do note that Cornelius referred to the angel appearing to him and communicating with him in Acts 10:3-4 as a man in Acts 10:30-31 rather than an angel. This gives us a good idea of what angels look like to people. Notice that Cornelius was prompt to

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

obey the word of God. Psalm 119:60 tells us that we are to promptly obey God's word without delay. Finally, Cornelius told Peter that he did what was right by coming. This reminds us that even spiritual leaders (even great ones) need our encouragement and to be affirmed when they do what is right even when it flies in the face of tradition. We will begin to look at Peter's sermon in the next section.

B. Peter's message (10:34 – 43)

Acts 10:34-35 - Peter opens his message by stating that God does not show partiality toward any individual or ethnic group. He does not state how an individual actually gains acceptance with God. Instead he states the standard that God requires of everyone in order to be accepted by Him. Rom. 3:18 clearly states that people do not continue to fear God. They may fear God part of the time but not continually. We learn this because the Greek present tense denotes continuing action. In the same passage in Rom. 3:10-18, Paul shows that both Jews and Gentiles come up short in various areas that place them all under condemnation according to Rom. 3:19-20. The same idea is expressed in Rom. 3:10 where we are told that there is no one righteous. Again this is not saying that people do not at times meet God's standards, but no individual continues to do so (Rom. 3:10). It only takes one sin for anyone to be guilty before God and deserving of eternal condemnation (James 2:10). Other scripture passages which speak of God's perfect standard for salvation are Mt. 5:48; Luke 10:25-28; Rom. 2:7-10, 13. In introducing the gospel, we have to give the bad news first. That bad news is that God requires perfection in order to enter heaven and none of us have ever met that standard. This prepares the heart of the hearer or hearers of the Good News/Gospel which is that Jesus Christ provided a sacrifice for the sins of every human being (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 John 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:21) and demonstrated that it was accepted by God by means of His bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4 cp John 2:19-22). When we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, we receive the benefits of all our sins being forgiven (*Acts 10:43* cp. Col. 2:13) and the righteousness of Christ is put to our credit (Rom. 4:3-5, 22-24). Romans 10:11-14 makes it clear that God shows no partiality in His offer of salvation. Unfortunately, this passage has been misused by those who do not rightly divide God's word in distinguishing between the standard for salvation and the actual way of salvation. When we make that distinction, it heightens our understanding of God's word and our gratitude for the riches of His grace.

Acts 10:36-38 - The message that Peter was now bringing to the Gentiles was the same good news that had been preached to the people of Israel. The main truth is that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, i.e. Jesus the Messiah. The word peace communicates the concept that man and God are at odds with one another so there is a great need for this peace. Peace with God is the same as being reconciled. The peace with God through the gospel has two aspects. The first aspect is the provision of peace or reconciliation which is the blood of Christ according to Rom. 5:9-10; Col. 1:20. The second aspect of peace or reconciliation with God is the reception or appropriation of that provision by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). The first aspect can be pictured by the cross as a bridge between a holy God and us as sinful people. The provision or bridge is available to every living human being. However, there is the human responsibility to cross that bridge. Otherwise, the bridge does not make any difference

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

in the status of sinful people. That responsibility is to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as savior by faith. That alone takes the believer across that bridge between a holy God and us as sinful people. This message incorporates the idea that Jesus is Lord of all. This shows that He is God. Since He is God, He is the supreme authority for our lives. Peter appears to be aware of the fact that his hearers were familiar with the ministry of John the Baptist. John had preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (the Greek word translated “for” can be translated “because of”). The nature of this repentance (= change of mind) was discarding whatever kept them from believing in the coming Messiah Jesus – sin, physical relationship to Abraham, self-righteousness – and then placing their faith in the one who was to come (Acts 19:4). John was the forerunner to prepare people for the coming of Jesus. Most importantly, Jesus Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit. This set Him apart as the promised King. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is also received by everyone who trusts Christ as savior (2 Cor. 1:21-22; 1 John 2:20, 27). Jesus Christ was given special power by God and God was with Him empowering Him to do His works (John 14:10). Jesus used that power to go around, do good and heal those who were oppressed by Satan. As believers, we are to do good works and have been saved for that purpose (Eph. 2:10). Like Jesus we are to go about and do what was good. Also our job as believers is to work with the indwelling Holy Spirit to help people come from under the dominion of the devil to the light of Christ by sharing this good news (Acts 26:18).

Acts 10:39-41 - Peter, in his message to the people at the house of Cornelius, explains that he and his associates were witnesses of all the good works and casting out demons that He did in the country of the Jews and in the city of Jerusalem. Peter then moves to the basic components of the gospel. He speaks of Christ being killed by crucifixion. He then shows that Jesus' death was unique by testifying and witnessing to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day by God. This validated that Jesus' death provided justification (Rom. 4:24-25). However, Peter makes it clear that this resurrection was not some ghostly apparition that popped up here and there. He was actually seen in a visible bodily form by those who knew Him well. These witnesses were specially chosen by God. Notice that Jesus did not appear to all the people. Those who did not know Him well and had only seen Him once or twice could have explained away the resurrection as the appearance of someone who simply looked like Jesus. Some of you may remember the alleged sightings of deceased Elvis Presley and John F Kennedy. If these sightings would have been by all the people who had closely worked with these men, then these so-called sightings would have had credibility. However, that was not the case since none of these people were close associates. The evidence for Jesus' resurrection was His being seen by all of his close associates except for Judas who was already dead plus the fact that they actually ate and drank with Him after He had risen. Now that Cornelius and those people who were at his house to hear Peter had heard about God's provision for their sin problem, we will discuss what they needed to do to respond to the truth of the gospel.

Acts 10:42-43 - Peter had spoken of Christ's death and resurrection and the testimony supporting them. He then explained why we as people need the provision of the gospel. This same Jesus has been appointed by God to judge the living and the dead (John 5:22, 27-29) with His bodily resurrection being the proof (Acts 17:31). The gospel has three important points: (1)

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

the provision of Christ's death and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-4), (2) the need for the gospel to be believed (Rom. 1:16) because of Christ's impending judgment of all people living and dead (Rom. 2:16), (3) The need to receive the provision of the gospel which is by trusting Christ/ believing in Him for salvation. Peter makes the third point very clear that when we trust Jesus as Savior, we receive the forgiveness of sins. Peter also called their attention to the fact that the Old Testament prophets in their testimony or witness taught that faith in Christ brings forgiveness of sins. Keep in mind that there are two aspects of God's forgiveness. This passage speaks of the once and for all forgiveness that includes all our sins according to Col. 2:13. This removes the penalty or condemnation for sin according to John 3:18; 5:24. Of course, believers still need forgiveness of sins for the purpose of restoring fellowship with God (1 John 1:7-9) even though they still have forgiveness from eternal condemnation. We will note the response to Peter's message.

C. Response and reception of Cornelius and his group (10:44-48)

Acts 10:44; Acts 11:15-17 - The response to Peter's message was obvious. The Holy Spirit fell upon the hearers because they obviously believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Note very carefully that this occurred at the moment of faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ according to Acts 11:17 in Peter's recounting of the events in Acts 10. This is the standard way the Holy Spirit is received after Pentecost by those who trust Christ as Savior. Rom. 8:9 explains that if anyone does not have the Holy Spirit, he is not a believer. We also see that these believers experienced the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 11:16. This is also the standard way that this is received because 1 Cor. 12:13 makes it abundantly clear that all believers have experienced the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit. If all believers have experienced it, then it has to happen at the moment of salvation. Otherwise, not all believers would have experienced it. 1 Cor. 12:12-13 goes on to explain that the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit places us in the spiritual body of Christ which is the true church (Eph. 1:22-23). This passage also helps us distinguish between Spirit baptism and water baptism because we see that these believers were baptized in water following their moment of faith in Christ. This moment of faith included baptism by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47-48). Much harm has been done by preachers and teachers have tried to make the baptism of the Holy Spirit out to be some special zap that we get after salvation by requesting it from God. If anyone asks you if you have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, the answer is "yes" assuming you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Acts 10:45-48 - We come into contact with the question of speaking in tongues once again. To determine the nature of the tongues, we interpret what we do not know by what we do know. The tongues in Acts 2:4-11 were specific human languages and the tongues in 1 Cor. 14 are also specific human languages according to 1 Cor. 14:9-11. We can safely understand that this is the meaning in this passage and in other passages. This passage has been used by some to teach that the reception of the Holy Spirit at salvation is accompanied by speaking in tongues. Others have stated that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is sometimes after salvation and is accompanied by speaking in tongues. However, we do not see tongues mentioned in the other salvation

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

experiences except in Acts 19:1-6. As we noted in our previous meditation all believers have the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9) and all believers have the baptism of the Holy Spirit which places them in the spiritual body of Christ, the true church (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 1:22-23). However, 1 Cor. 12:28-30 clearly explains that not all believers have the spiritual gift of tongues. Therefore, the teaching, that the reception of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit must be accompanied by speaking in tongues, does not agree with what the word of God clearly states. We also know that the purpose of the spiritual gift of tongues was a sign to the Jews of the working of the Holy Spirit. Note that Jews were present in Acts 2:1-11 and again in this passage. In Acts 19:1-6, these were probably Jewish men because they were disciples of John the Baptist who ministered mainly to Israel (Acts 13:24). Finally 1 Cor. 14:21-22 states that tongues were a sign for unbelieving Jews. The Jews looked for signs (1 Cor. 1:22). For this reason, Peter asked the Jewish believers who had accompanied him if they had any reservations about baptizing these new non-Jewish believers in water in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:19-20). Finally, we notice that these new believers were eager to grow and be meeting with other believers because they asked Peter and his associate-believers to stay with them a few days. We are commanded in 2 Pet. 3:18 to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. With new believers, some type of follow-up is imperative according to Mt. 28:20. In my previous teaching experience, I developed a discipleship course which can be used to guide new believers on a one-to-one basis or as a group. If anyone wants this course for themselves or as a follow-up tool, it is available at biblestudyhall.org at no cost. . It is not deep but covers some broad areas of the Christian life starting with the plan of salvation, the disciplines of the Christian life, the duties of the Christian life, and the doctrines of the Christian life.

D. Peter convinces Jewish Christian skeptics that Gentiles can be saved (11:1-18)

Acts 11:1-4, 18 - When people trust Christ as Savior, there are always those who will take issue with the one who presented Christ to them. In this case, there were those within the church who put an emphasis on the rite of circumcision to the point that one could not eat with those who had not experienced that rite. This was not an Old Testament teaching but an add-on by the scribes and teachers of the law because there was no Old Testament scripture which would have prohibited Peter from doing this. Jesus had commanded believers to see that the gospel and making of disciples was to go to all groups (Mt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). This fact was lost to those who were opposing Peter. One of the practical applications is that we as believers should not be quick to jump to conclusions (Prov. 18:13) and so quick to speak (James 1:19) before we hear out the individual with whom we disagree. The verses in Acts 11:3-17 were covered in previous paragraphs on chapter 10. This is simply Peter's recounting of what happened in Acts 10 to those who were questioning his judgment and decision. After Peter explained what had happened and the fact that he had 6 men as witnesses to back him up (Acts 11:12), the ones who were questioning him began to see the working of God and the Holy Spirit in this matter. The scripture states that these dissenters became silent yet glorified God and stated what happened. The Greek word for "silent" does not mean they were quiet. It simply means that were no longer contentious regarding what had happened. They realized that these

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

uncircumcised Gentiles (non-Jews) had changed their mind in such a way that they left whatever was keeping them from faith in Christ and trusted Christ for salvation. Repentance for someone who has not yet trusted Christ refers to that change of mind regarding dead works (Heb. 6:1 – good works of devotion to God which can never bring salvation – see also Isa. 64:6 which calls such works “filthy rags”), sin (Rev. 9:20-21) or religiosity (Phil. 3:4-6) and includes trusting Christ as savior. It involves a transfer of trust. The kind of life Peter was talking about is spoken of in 1 John 5:11-12. It is spiritual life given to one who is spiritually dead (Rom. 6:23). In some places in scripture where faith is mentioned with it (Mark 1:15 and Acts 20:21), it refers to what one is discarding to exercise that faith. Finally, we note that saving repentance results in a changed life (Mt. 3:8; Acts 26:20), but these changes or works do not contribute to receiving salvation or keeping salvation. They are simply the evidence of authentic repentance and faith (James 2:18).

E. Evangelism and follow-up to Jews and Gentiles in Antioch (11:19-30)

Acts 11:19-26 - The persecution that occurred following the death of Stephen did not extinguish the gospel but only served to spread it. The persecutors meant it for evil, but God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20). Those believers who were scattered were only telling Jews about Christ. However, those people who trusted Christ carried the message to those who were not Jews. The result was many people trusting Christ for salvation because God was empowering them and their message. The church at Jerusalem heard of this. They realized that with this many people trusting Christ as Savior that follow-up was needed. Barnabas was sent to do this. He recognized that the people who had reportedly trusted Christ as Savior had done so because of the grace of God. God's grace provides the gospel and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit and the people who bring the message to the lost. This gladdened the heart of Barnabas. We must ask ourselves if we rejoice when we see God moving to bring people to Him. One of the reasons for follow-up with new Christians is to help them by encouraging them to continue fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus Christ. The key was their heart or thought life. If our heart (thought life) is where it should be then we will be doing what God commands in His word and ready to be led and filled by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 23:25-26). Barnabas was characterized by good works, the filling of the Holy Spirit and being full of faith. This shows that his deeds were done in dependence on or faith in Christ (Gal. 2:20). We receive Christ by faith and it is important that we live our lives from situation to situation by faith in or dependence on Christ. The result of this was a large number of people coming to Christ for salvation. He realized that he needed help and enlisted Saul (Paul) to help him and together they taught a large number of these people for a period of one year. This is in keeping with Mt. 28:19-20 where we are commanded not only to tell others about how to be saved but to see that they are baptized and taught to obey all the commandments of Christ. This includes not only the things that Jesus taught during his earthly ministry (John 14:26) but the things that He taught through the Holy Spirit after Pentecost to the Apostles and their close associates (John 16:12-14) in the rest of the New Testament. Because of this teaching, the lives of these people were so transformed that they were identified as Christians for the first time. When we learn and obey God's word after trusting Christ as savior, we build a reputation or identity as a follower of Christ.

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

Acts 11:27-30 - The first item that we note in this verse is that the early church had prophets. To be a prophet one must be accurate on predictions 100% of the time according to Deut. 18:20-22. Even if one is accurate, their prophecy must agree with God's word according to Deut. 13:1-5 cp. Isa. 8:20. The fruits or results that issue out of their lives must be good and not evil (Mt. 7:15-20). Finally, Eph. 2:20 strongly suggests that this spiritual gift like Apostle was primarily a foundational gift for the church and served to provide guidance and direction for the believers until the completion of the New Testament. We are commanded not to despise prophesying but to test all things that they prophesy in 1 Thes. 5:20-21. While we may have people in the church who claim to have this spiritual gift, we are told to test the spirits in 1 John 4:1-6 which shows an additional test of them being correct about the person of Christ. In this section Agabus, who was a prophet in the early church predicted a famine which occurred during the reign of the emperor Claudius. Notice that this prediction came through the working of the Holy Spirit. Regardless of our spiritual gift, it is designed to be used by the working of the Holy Spirit. The disciples or believers evidently decided to help the believers in the churches in Judea since the people there were already in dire financial straits. Notice that each believer gave to God's work for this, and that their gift was based on their ability to give. Finally, we see that they arranged for the relief to be sent by reliable men, Paul and Barnabas. When we give to God's work, money must be handled in a way that avoids even the appearance of evil (2 Cor. 8:19-21). Notice that it was delivered not just to one person but to the elders or leaders of each church. This way, they would avoid not only the reality of the money being mishandled but the appearance of doing so. Finally, we notice that when this prophecy was given to these disciples at Antioch, that they did not just sit back and mark this up as interesting and exciting information. They did something about it. This shows us that prophecy is not given just to tickle our ears but to change and move our thoughts and actions (Ezek. 33:30-33).

PART TWELVE: Persecution of James and Peter (Acts 12:1-24)

A. Peter to prison and James killed (12:1-4)

Acts 12:1-4 - Herod started a wave of persecution against the church by having some of them arrested. The first main leader was James the brother of John (who wrote the book of John). He made the decision to have James put to death with the sword. The Jews were very pleased that Herod did this. God's word warns against being glad about calamities (Prov. 17:5). This serves as an example that we are to avoid. Herod's observation that this pleased the Jews had a second main leader, Simon Peter, arrested. Herod lived for the praise and applause of men rather than the praise and applause of God (cp. John 5:44; 12:43). By contrast, we as Christians are to live for the glory, i.e. honor of God (1 Cor. 10:31) and not as men-pleasers (1 Thes. 2:4). Herod delayed in taking action against Peter because it was during the time of a sacred Jewish feast, the days of Unleavened Bread, which would immediately be followed by the Passover. His plan was to bring Peter out for public trial before the people after the Passover. Undoubtedly, he was probably planning to put Peter to death as well. To make sure that Peter

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

did not get out of prison like he had in Acts 5, he had Peter guarded by 4 squads of 4 soldiers each. It looked like a hopeless situation for Peter, but with God nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37) and nothing is too hard for Him (Jer. 32:17, 27). We will see how God used this situation to develop the other believers and Peter as well. God permits us to undergo trials that are overwhelming so that we may trust In Him explicitly rather than depending on ourselves and our own resources (2 Cor. 1:8-9).

B. Prayer for Peter answered (12:5-17)

Acts 12:5-11 - While Peter was kept under guard in the prison, the church was praying very intensely for him. On the night right before Herod was to bring him out for trial and probable execution, he was sleeping between two soldiers. The fact that Peter was able to sleep knowing he was facing trial and probable execution shows His explicit trust in the promise of Christ that he would not die until he was old (John 21:18-19). God is the one who enables us to sleep in the face of great danger (Ps. 3:5; 4:8) because He Himself guards us. God promises that He will give perfect peace to the one whose mind trusts and focuses on Him (Isa. 26:3). Notice the circumstances: Peter was chained between two guards and 2 other guards were on duty in the way out of the prison. Notice how God through the angel and Peter responding in faith and obedience changed his situation. The angel suddenly appeared and God caused a light to shine in the cell. The angel poked Peter in the side and gave Him instructions. He had to obey the command to get up, and when he did God caused the chains to fell off. Both Peter and God did their part. His part was to gird himself (pull his garment around him and tie it so that he would not trip) –Peter’s responsibility. He was commanded to follow the angel. Following the angel was Peter’s responsibility. Peter thought that he was having a vision and that what was happening was not real. God’s supernatural power enabled Peter to get past the first and second guard in the passage out of the prison and caused the gate to open of itself. However, in order for God’s power to be effective on Peter’s behalf, he had to do his part in following and obeying the angel. Once he was out of the prison, the angel left. The lesson for us as believers is that God will work on our behalf, but we are to work in harmony with Him to accomplish His purpose (Col. 1:29) which requires faith and obedience on our part. Peter gave glory and praise to God for sending his angel to rescue him from a grueling trial and probable execution that Herod had planned and the Jewish people were anticipating. In our working for God, we are to depend on the power of Christ (Gal. 2:20) and to do our part.

Acts 12:12-17 - John Mark was a close associate of Peter. Since Peter’s normal home would be the first place the authorities would look, Peter chose the house of Mary, John Mark’s mother. Unknown to Peter was the fact that many people from the church were gathered together and had continued to pray for Peter’s well-being and release. A servant girl was sent to answer the gate knock. She recognized Peter by his voice and went back to tell the praying believers that

NOTES ON ACTS – PETER AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES

SECTION ONE: Acts Chapters 1:1-12:24

their prayer had been answered. Peter had been spared physical harm and was out of jail. Seeing God had answered the prayers of her and the other believers brought her joy. Evidently, some of those who were praying for Peter knew the circumstances of his imprisonment and were convinced that the person Rhoda was seeing was Peter's angel. Furthermore, they thought that Rhoda was not in her right mind. They also accused her of being out of her mind. However, Peter persisted in knocking. Then the praying believers opened the door and saw that it was Peter. This reminds us of how we are sometimes surprised to see God answer a prayer "yes". All of us need to realize that sometimes our faith is not what it should be and that God answers our prayer despite the fact that our faith is weak (James 1:6-7). We need to pray like the father of the epileptic boy in Mark 9:24, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." It is hard for us to understand that God delivered Peter, but did not deliver James, the brother of John. However, we do not live by explanations, but we live by the promises of God (2 Cor. 5:7).

C. Persecutor Herod judged by God (12:18-24)

Acts 12:18-24 - The impact of Herod's sinfulness and seeking the approval of people opposed to God's plan was beginning to show itself. First of all, the miraculous delivery and disappearance of Peter from a very secure lockup created a stir within the army troops who were working for Herod. Herod had an inquiry in examining the guards and simply assumed that they had neglected their duty rather than seeing the handiwork of God in the matter. As a result of his unbelief, the guards suffered for failing to do their appointed duty even though they were generally innocent in the matter. Herod had evidently been in Judea overseeing the persecution and with the disappearance of Peter retreated out of the public eye to Caesarea. However, he was not out of God's eyes (Prov. 15:3). He turned his attention to the areas of Tyre and Sidon with whom he had been at odds. Their representatives sought peace with Herod because their country was dependent on Herod's country for their food. To do this, they enlisted one of Herod's aides to help smooth the way. Herod's pride in being able to speak to the people of these areas soon became evident. When he gave a public speech to them, the people kept on crying out that Herod's voice was the voice of a god and not the voice of a man. Herod really ate it up that he was being considered a god and by doing so robbed the true God of his rightful glory and honor. For this, an angel of God struck Herod so that he became very ill and died a painful death shortly afterward. Despite the persecution which had led to Peter's arrest and incarceration, God's word continued to grow and multiply. There are several lessons and reminders to be given from this passage. (1) Our sin can affect the well-being of other people; (2) God sees our sin and He sees our good deeds; (3) Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall (Prov. 16:18); (4) God's people can be killed or imprisoned, but the word of God cannot be killed (1 Peter 1:23, 25) or imprisoned (2 Tim. 2:9).