

despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Gideon's faithful 300 were a minority in the house of Israel. The bride of Christ too will be a minority that comes forth out of the sleeping body of Christ, His church!

### **Peter's Midnight Escape from Prison**

Before we begin this most incredible **midnight** Bible story found in ACTS 12 we need to do some reviewing to put this story in context. It would also be most beneficial for you to read chapter 12 of Brother Copley's ACTS study book as he quite profoundly points out the typical teaching found in this chapter. Our approach will be more directed toward the real life drama found in this **midnight** Bible story of ACTS 12, and the background for Peter being apprehended in this chapter. Remember that *...All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works...* 2 TIMOTHY 3:16 & 17. Thus ACTS chapter 12 was not written only to give profound typical teaching, but also to give us lessons in righteousness that will greatly benefit our own lives today. Recall also that **midnight** is defined both in the literal and metaphorical senses. Literally **midnight**, as we defined it is the darkest time of the **night**. Metaphorically **midnight** is the time when our test, or our trial appears to have reached it's darkest, and seemingly hopeless point. ISAIAH 46:9 and 10 tells us that God knows and declares *...the end from the beginning...*, and He certainly doesn't leave us in the dark. PSALMS 34:19 tells us: *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.* In all of our **midnight** Bible stories we find a positive outcome by the light of day, and an emergence of more hero's of faith. The darkest of times brought forth the hero's of faith in HEBREWS 11, and in order to be a full overcomer one must face on his or hers foreordained path many **midnight** tests, and trials.

ACTS 12 isn't the first **midnight** Bible story surrounding Peter, as he too faced many **midnight** tests, and trials as do all pursuing the perfect will of God in their life. We have already discussed one of the **midnight** stories surrounding Peter in the chapter entitled **The Disciples and the Troubled Sea**, which we went over earlier in this study. It was at that **midnight** time that Peter walked on water.

Our main focus will be on **Peter** in this **midnight** Bible story, and we will first go over some of his background, and what it was that brought him to be the focal point of ACTS 12. We can learn a lot from **Peter** whose name means a stone. Let's first note that there are three names found for **Peter** in scripture, and the first one is **Peter**. The second one is **Simon**, which means hearkening. He is called **Simon called Peter** in MATTHEW 4:18, and **Simon Barjona** in MATTHEW 16:17. **Simon Barjona** means: "the hearkening son of a dove." MATTHEW 16:13 *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* The third name we find for **Peter** in scripture is **Cephas**. JOHN 1:40 *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.* (It is interesting to note that this is the only time in the four gospel records of MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, and JOHN where **Peter** is called **Cephas**. Paul in his gospel records calls **Peter** by the name of **Cephas** five times, and five times he referees to him as **Peter**.) There are a lot of three's associated with **Peter** besides his three different names, which we will make note of as we progress.

Before we read of **Peter** in scripture he was a fisherman. MATTHEW 4:18 and MARK 1:16 both introduce **Peter**, and his brother Andrew *...casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.* It is

interesting to note that the scripture never records Peter catching any fish without the aid of Jesus! MATTHEW 8:14, MARK 1:29, and LUKE 4:38 all tell us that Peter had a house. How could he afford a house, if as a fisherman he couldn't catch fish? LUKE 5:3 tells us Peter had a ship! He must have had some success as a fisherman to afford a fishing ship, but again we do not read in scripture of Peter catching any fish without the help of Jesus! In LUKE 5:5 we read that Peter told Jesus: *...Master, we have toiled all the **night**, and have taken nothing...* . That was a sleepless **midnight** Bible story with an empty feeling by the light of day. Then Jesus came and changed everything. We will discuss some of the treasures in LUKE 5 in a moment. After Jesus death and resurrection we read in JOHN 21 that Peter again returned to fishing. JOHN 21:2 *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.* Doing the math here we find seven of Jesus disciples going fishing, and Peter was their leader. 3 *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that **night** they caught nothing.* Here again we see that Peter had fished all **night** and had caught nothing on his own. We will also discuss more from JOHN 21 a little later too, Lord willing, but take quick notice that the **midnight** Bible story of JOHN 21 concluded with Jesus once again coming on the scene, and changing everything for the positive, and for our benefit too.

Following Jesus' instructions Peter caught a lot of fish. Peter caught fish with the net, and Peter caught fish with the hook when he did what Jesus instructed him to do. In MATTHEW 17:27 we find Jesus giving these instruction to Peter about how to catch a fish to pay tribute money: *...go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.* By faith Peter did this. In LUKE 5, which we briefly referenced above, we read the rest of the story of how Jesus enabled Peter to catch so many fish that his ship nearly sank! LUKE 5:1 *And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,* 2 *And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.* 3 *And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.* 4 *Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.* 5 *And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the **night**, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.* 6 *And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.* 7 *And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.* 8 *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* 9 *For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:* 10 *And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.* 11 *And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.*

There are an untold number of sermons hidden in these verses from LUKE 5, and plenty of thoughts left here for us to ponder. This is just a too rich of a portion of scripture to pass over lightly, so we will examine some of the highlights in these verses of LUKE 5 before continuing on with our **midnight** Bible story of Peter in ACTS 12. What we learn here will enrich the content of ACTS 12. We will start by pointing out that LUKE 5:1-11 gives a brief snap shot of Peter's life, both before meeting Christ, and after. Before Peter met the Lord, he was a fisherman, as we noted previously. He was a more successful fisherman after meeting the Lord, which point we also noted above. In the end, after Jesus death and resurrection, and after the day of Pentecost when Peter will filled with the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, Peter was prominent among Jesus disciples as a fisher of men, just like Jesus had told him. There are three records in scripture showing that Jesus told Peter He would make him a fisher of men. In LUKE 5:10 above we read that *...Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.* In MATTHEW 4:18 *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee,*

saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. The third account of this very same thing is found in MARK 1:16, which reads: Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

Back to LUKE 5 starting with LUKE 5:1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Note here that the people we pressing upon Jesus wishing to hear the word of God. Jesus is The Word of God, so imagine what it would be like to hear the word of God from The Word of God Himself! The disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus in LUKE 24:32 probably expressed it best as they finally realized that they had heard the word of God from The Word of God Himself. Here is what they had to say in LUKE 24:32 ...Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? Now put yourself in Peter's ship here for a moment in LUKE 5. Who was in the ship with Jesus? Peter. Peter got to hear every word that Jesus spoke as He taught the people out of "the ship." Over the next three plus years Peter was taught a lot of lessons from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ out of "the ship." There are twenty-five references to "the ship" in the four gospel records, and twenty-five is again the number pointing to THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. Twenty-five is the product of five times five: GRACE times GRACE. "For by grace are ye saved" Paul writes in EPHESIANS 2:8. JOHN 3:16 contains twenty-five words: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* I don't know whether or not if Peter, and John painted names on the backs of their ships, but the names GRACE and TRUTH would have been appropriate. The Apostle John wrote in JOHN 1:14 *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ... full of grace and truth.* Three verses later John added: JOHN 1:17 *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* A lot of grace and truths was taught by Jesus as ...he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Continuing now in LUKE 5 we find our first conversation between Jesus and Peter, who Jesus here addresses as Simon. Recall that Simon means hearkening. Recall also that they were on Lake Gennesaret. Gennesaret means harps. The words Jesus spoke were beautiful music to those with hearkening ears of hearing. As we read on here in LUKE 5:4 & 5 we will find that Peter hearkened to the words that Jesus spoke unto him, sort of, but not completely. LUKE 5:4 *Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.* 5 *And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the **night**, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.* Let's look at these verses a little closer. Jesus told Peter to ...Launch out into the deep. Jesus was thus instructing Peter to thrust out into deeper water. Water figures the word of God, and as such Jesus was showing Peter some deeper truths, which he needed to learn in order to become a fisher of men that Jesus called him to be. It took Peter a good long while, and being filled with the Holy Ghost before Peter could more fully appreciate the deeper truths he was here shown by the Lord. Peter's last words written in scripture are found in 2 PETER 3:18, which words are left for us to encourage each of us to also ...Launch out into the deep. 2 PETER 3:18 *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.* Peter spent the rest of his life launching out into the deep. Our Apostle Paul wrote much about the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, and said this in EPHESIANS 3:8 *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.* It should be all of our privilege to ...Launch out into the deep, ... and probe the depths of the word of God! Our Apostle Paul also spent the rest of his life as a Christian launching out into the deep, and learning the unsearchable riches of Christ! In the text of LUKE 5:4 & 5 we find that Peter did ...Launch out into

*the deep,... and then sort of complained unto Jesus telling Him ...Master, we have toiled all the **night**, and have taken nothing...* . Peter addresses Jesus as “Master” here, meaning: an appointee over, a commander, a teacher. Jesus is indeed the Master Teacher! Peter was greatly disheartened by his lack of success during the **midnight** hours, and must have felt it fruitless to proceed any further. Peter and the boys were after all professional fishermen, and knew that the best time to catch fish was at **night**. And they had labored hard all through the **night**, and were indeed quite fatigued and wearied out. Couple that with the fact that they had caught nothing, thus they had made no money. Peter had not yet learned the lesson Jesus would teaching in JOHN 15:5 *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing*. Without Jesus, Peter and the others with him had caught nothing proving what we just read to be true: ... *for without me ye can do nothing*. Again we repeat that in scripture we never find Peter catching any fish without the help, and assistance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Nor do we read of Peter, or any of the other disciples being successful fishers of men without the aid of the power of the Holy Ghost whom Jesus sent unto them, and us, on the day of Pentecost! Concerning this fishing lesson in LUKE 5 our Apostle Paul wrote us some instructions that Peter could have used at this time. Paul wrote in COLOSSIANS 3:23 *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ*. Too bad Peter didn’t know this, for if he had known this perhaps we would have seen more enthusiasm in responding to Jesus request to ...*Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught*. We are not all that familiar with such terminology as “a draught,” but Jesus was telling Peter to cast your nets (plural) into the deep for a great haul; an exceeding abundant above all you could ask or think bounty of fish, if you will.

Again let’s read LUKE 5:5 *And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the **night**, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net*. This statement “...*nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net...*” is really a statement of faith. How so? Peter was a fisherman, and a ship captain, who was at this present time discouraged by the fruitless efforts of his own works, having caught nothing at all the night before. Peter had here relinquished the control of his ship over to a new captain, Captain Jesus. Captain Jesus had directed Peter to ...*Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught...* for a great bounty in LUKE 5:4. Peter had followed these instructions of Captain Jesus, and was at the point of dropping overboard a net because Jesus had requested him to do so. Faith is not sight. Peter couldn’t see any fish, much less a bounty of fish, but Peter also had seen enough that day of the results of the words of Captain Jesus as He spoke unto the people, and Peter must have realized that the words of Jesus are indeed truth. Thus Peter answers Captain Jesus “...*nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net...*” one more time just because Jesus had instructed him to do so.

Keep in mind that Peter didn’t yet know the facts that you and I know, which are found in COLOSSIANS 1; things concerning Jesus. COLOSSIANS 1:16 *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist*. In other words Peter didn’t here realize that Jesus created Lake Gennesaret upon which Peter’s ship was now floating. Jesus created the wood that became Peter’s ship. Jesus populated Lake Gennesaret with the fish Peter caught, and made his living from. Jesus had promised a great haul, a draught of fish, and He delivered an exceeding abundant above all you could ask or think bounty of fish; much more than Peter could bring his mind to imagine. Jesus here in LUKE 5:4 & 5 told Peter to “let down you nets” (plural), but Peter only let’s down one net (singularly). The bounty that the Lord had prepared for Peter couldn’t be contained in one net, but Peter wasn’t expecting such a bounty, and reasoned in his own mind that only one net would be sufficient. One net wasn’t sufficient to contain all of the fish as LUKE 5:6 points out: *And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake*. Jesus Mother had already learned one of the lessons that Jesus was teaching Peter here, and that lesson was: *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it...* JOHN 2:5. If Jesus says let down your nets (plural), He means

nets (plural), not net (singularly). The Psalmist, probably David, wrote in PSALMS 119:160 *Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.* Brother Hawkins here wrote in his commentary of LUKE: “This is the catch which Jesus promised, but it was only a type of the greater, spiritual draught, available to all who are willing to launch out into the depth’s of God’s grace and let down their nets, only because Jesus says it.” When the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 TIMOTHY 4:13 to ...*give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine...* he was in essence saying: *Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.* Probe the depths of the word of God. *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth...* 2 TIMOTHY 2:15.

Remember the Berean Saints of ACTS 17 fame? They were Bible thumpers, that is exceptional Bible students, who followed Paul’s instructions we just read in 1 TIMOTHY 4:13, and 2 TIMOTHY 2:15. ACTS 17:11 *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* This searching the scriptures is what makes believers good Bible students. Further this searching the scriptures daily is what makes believers full overcomers. How do you know if the preacher is telling you the truth? You need to search the scriptures for yourself to see if these things are true. The preacher the Berean’s heard was the Apostle Paul, and they checked the scriptures to fact check him! The word “searched” here in verse 11 means: to investigate, examine, enquire into, scrutinize, sift, question, to hold an investigation. Such is the more noble frame of mind that was found in Berea. They investigated the scriptures daily whether those wonderful things spoken by Paul were really true. The Berean Saints attained to God’s best. Those that have God’s best during this church age will be in the Bride of Christ. Those who are alive at the soon coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who will be in the Bride of Christ, are pictured by the Philadelphian church of REVELATION 3:7-13. They know the importance of knowing the word of God. REVELATION 3:8 *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name...* . Note the fact that they of Philadelphia have ...kept my word... . Jesus emphasizes the fact that the Philadelphian Saint knows the word of God, and even more importantly has kept the word of God, for He twice makes note of this fact: first in REVELATION 3:8 ...and hast kept my word...; and second in REVELATION 3:10 ...thou hast kept the word of my patience... . These are high water mark statements made by the Lord concerning the New Testament worthies of faith.

We mentioned that there are a lot of lessons contained in this portion of LUKE 5. Let’s look at a couple of more thoughts found here in verse 6. LUKE 5:6 *And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.* We might not yet realize it here, but the fact was Jesus was preparing Peter to become one of the great Kingdom Apostles, and Lord willing we will discuss this further later in this **midnight** Bible story. Peter later would preach to great multitudes as a fisher of men. Here in LUKE 5:6 one lesson Jesus was teaching Peter was not to fear great multitudes; not to fear great multitudes of fishes, nor great multitudes of people. As a fisher of men Jesus was preparing Peter for the great multitudes of souls He would give him. Men’s souls are of far greater importance than any fish, and that goes without saying. It was just as easy for Jesus to send multitudes of people Peter’s direction as it was to send a great multitude of fish Peter’s way. Another lesson Jesus was teaching Peter here was to follow closely Jesus instructions. Had Peter followed Jesus instruction to “let down your nets for a draught,” Peter and the rest involved here would have had a much easier time managing the huge haul of fish Jesus had given them. Of course the net began to tear as it had reached it’s maximum capacity, but again Peter was seemingly caught by surprise by the far more than he expected bounty the Lord had already provided. Ponder this next question in your own mind for a while, and see what thoughts the Lord gives you. Had Peter let down his nets as instructed to do by Jesus, would he have caught more fishes? It seems there was a greater probability to catch more fish had multiple nets been used. Certainly the abundance of fishes caught here would have been better managed had several nets been used. And when the singular net began to break at the weight of fishes it contained, there was potential for some fish to escape, but we

do not read that they lost any fish. Obviously Jesus put all of the fish they were to catch in this one net. Peter had not asked Jesus for any fish here, but the Lord wanted Peter to learn these lessons He was teaching him here. We read in EPHESIANS 3:20 that Christ *...is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,..* which power speaks of the Holy Ghost. Peter was taught this lesson here. Also one of the greatest lessons Peter began to learn here was that Christ the Master Teacher, was also the Captain of Peter's ship!

LUKE 5:7 again states: *And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.* This great haul of fish no doubt would have been better managed had Peter let down his nets, nevertheless several great lessons were learned here. Another lesson learned here was that you can believe the words of Jesus. In JOHN 6 a few months later after Peter and the twelve had followed Jesus for some time, Jesus asks them in JOHN 6:67 *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* The words of grace, and truth, and eternal life were more powerful, more important to Peter now that he had learned to better listen unto the Word of God, who is Jesus. Near the end of his life Peter wrote in 1 PETER 1:24 & 25 a quote from ISAIAH 40:8, and added his own ending. 1 PETER 1:24 *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.* Yes, Peter in time learned to believe the words of Jesus, for they were indeed the words of eternal life.

Let's now finish our thoughts from LUKE 5. LUKE 5:8 *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.* We see here a level of growth in Peter as he was encouraged of the Lord to fear not. By the time we get to our **midnight** Bible story of ACTS 12 we do not see any more fear manifest in Peter. But here in LUKE 5 Peter exhibited some fear when he confessed in verse 8 *...Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* In verse 5 Peter had addressed Jesus as Master. Here in verse 8 Peter addresses Jesus with a much stronger term, and that being "Lord," which means: supreme in authority, controller. In other words Peter now was bowing to Jesus as the Supreme One. From this point forward Peter allowed the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Captain of his life.

Since we are here in LUKE 5, let's take note of a couple other instances of the number of times we find three different records of some three's associated with Peter. There are in scripture three different records showing that Jesus told Peter He would make him a **fisher of men**, and we just read one of them in LUKE 5:10 where *...Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.* In MATTHEW 4:18-20 we read: *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.* The third account of this is found in MARK 1. MARK 1:16 *Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.* We mentioned above in LUKE 5:6 that the great multitude of fish Peter caught in his net was foreshadowing the great multitude of souls Peter would later catch as a **fisher of men**. We read of three major sermons that Peter preached after the day of Pentecost, after Peter was full of the Holy Ghost. The first of these sermons was actually preached on the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2:14-40, after which about three thousand souls were saved. Peter's second sermon is recorded in ACTS 3:12-26, and the results of that sermon are found in ACTS 4:4 where it is noted that about five thousand souls were saved! Obviously Peter wasn't afraid of the multitudes as a



**fisher of men!** Note this additional bit of information found in ACTS 5 before we mention Peter's third major sermon recorded in scripture. ACTS 5:12 *And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.* There are some other scriptures found in ACTS before ACTS 12 that tell of the great success Peter had as a **fisher of men**, robbing hell of multitudes from going to a Christ-less eternity. The third major sermon recorded in scripture that Peter preached is found in ACTS 10:34-43, where he addressed those in the Gentile house of Cornelius. To Peter's astonishment: *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God...* ACTS 10:44-46. We will mention some other common facts found in Peter's three major sermons a little later in this study.

We are still in the midst of our introductions to a **midnight** Bible story concerning Peter's **midnight** escape from Herod's prison in ACTS 12, and we are trying to cover several thoughts about Peter that will make that **midnight** Bible story much more meaningful. One more connection we can make from what we just read above in LUKE 5, with what is found in ACTS 12 concerns Peter's partners in the fishing business. In LUKE 5:10 we read that James, and John, the sons of Zebedee were partners with Peter. Now let's for a moment jump ahead in time some twelve to fifteen years, and read what took place in ACTS 12:1 & 2. ACTS 12:1 *Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.* Between our introducing James the brother of John in LUKE 5, and his death in ACTS 12, James the brother of John had a lot more interactions with Peter, and Jesus, and one of these times we will now read about in JOHN 21.

We also have shown above several examples of three's associated with Peter. We have noted his three different names, his three famous sermons, and three different accounts of being called to be a fisher of men. We have also read above in MATTHEW 17:27, and LUKE 5:1-11 how that Peter didn't catch any fish in scripture without the help of Jesus. JOHN 21 records the third account of how Peter was able to catch fish following Jesus instructions. Before reading from JOHN 21 recall that the events of JOHN 21 took place after Jesus death and resurrection. Before Jesus was crucified we find noted in all of the four gospel records one of the low lights in Peter's history, another one of the "threes" associated with Peter, which was the dark **midnight** that Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus was crucified a few short hours later. All four gospel records tell of Peter's denial in the following verses: MATTHEW 26:31-35 and 69-75; MARK 14:26-31 and 66-72; LUKE 22:31-34 and 54-62; and JOHN 13:36-38 and JOHN 18:15-27. Jesus and Peter had the following brief discussion at the last supper. JOHN 13:37 *Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. 38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.* MATTHEW 26:74 & 75 tells the result of Peter's denial: *Then began he (Peter) to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.*

After Jesus death and resurrection we read in JOHN 21 that Peter again returned to fishing. JOHN 21:2 *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.* The sons of Zebedee were James and John, Peter's partners in the fishing business that we read about in LUKE 5:10. (James was the one killed by Herod the king in ACTS 12:2). There were seven of Jesus disciples going fishing here

in JOHN 21 and Peter was their leader. JOHN 21:3 *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.* Here again we see that Peter had fished all **night** and had caught nothing on his own. Peter seemed to have forgotten that Jesus was the Captain of Peter's ship, and the Captain of Peter's life. Peter himself was an alpha male. An alpha male in the animal kingdom is the leader of the pack. An alpha male among men is a man tending to assume a domineering role in social or professional situations. Peter was this kind of alpha male, who influenced six of Jesus disciples into following him for a **midnight** fishing adventure, and once again they had caught nothing. Then Jesus came on the scene, and changed everything. Jesus too was an Alpha male, and so much more. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, our Risen Saviour, our Healer, our Redeemer, our Provider, our Shepherd, the prophet of the Highest, our Deliverer, a buckler, a shield, a high tower, the Creator, the Rock of our salvation, a fortress, a very present help in time of need, a refuge in times of trouble, a Sanctifier, a lifter up, a Strengtheners, a Counselor, The Mighty God, The Prince of Peace, The King of Glory, The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, The Way, The Truth, The Life, The Word of God, The Holy One of Israel, The Lamb of God, The I Am, The Light of the world, the only begotten Son of God, the Apostle and High Priest, the everlasting Father, the most High, The Son of man, the Justifier, the Hope of Israel, the Righteous Lord, the Captain of our Salvation, The Author and Finisher of our faith, the same yesterday, today, and forever; He is before all things, and by Him all things consist; He is our soon coming Bridegroom... and so much more. Again Jesus already told His disciples by the time of JOHN 21 these facts, which they now knew, found in JOHN 15:5 *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.* In other words Jesus was informing all of us that without Him we can do nothing. And yes Peter, without Jesus you cannot catch fish!

So here in JOHN 21 we find Peter and six other of Jesus disciples on another **midnight** fishing trip, and they once again caught nothing without Jesus help. Let's read on: JOHN 21:4 *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* The reason they didn't know it was Jesus was because they weren't looking for Him in the common every day things of life. Jesus our Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and will never leave us or forsake us as is told us in HEBREWS 13:5-8, and in many other scriptures, such as DEUTERONOMY 31:6-8. He, as the Author and Finisher of our faith, is interested in every moment of our lives! JOHN 21:5 *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat?* Jesus calls them "children" for even though they were grown men, they were still immature Christians! This word "children" didn't fall on deaf ears, and even Peter wrote in his final words of 2 PETER 3:18 *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Continuing on in JOHN 21:5 *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. 8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. 9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. 12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14 This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.*

Let's note another series of three things associated with Peter that connects the thoughts found here in JOHN 21:14, where we just read that ...*This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.* There are three distinct different occasions



where Peter was present, when Jesus told His apostles that He would be killed and raised again the third day. The first is found in MATTHEW 16:21 *From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.* (See also LUKE 9:22.) The second account is in the next chapter. MATTHEW 17:22 *And while they (the Apostles, and Jesus) abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: 23 And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.* (See also MARK 9:31 and LUKE 9:44 & 45). Three chapters later we read the third account. MATTHEW 20:17 *And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, 19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.* (See also MARK 10:34 and LUKE 18:31-34).

Let's keep in mind that these were three separate occasions where Jesus told His disciples that He would be killed and raised again the third day. Yet these words of Jesus didn't properly register with His disciples, namely Peter and John as is told by John in the previous chapter of JOHN. JOHN 20:1 *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. 2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, (John) and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. 3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. 4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. 6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, 7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. 8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. 9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.* How was it that Peter and John knew not that Jesus would be killed and raised again the third day? We just read three separate instances from MATTHEW where at three different times Jesus told His disciples that He would be killed and raised again the third day. LUKE 18:31-34 in our reference above gives us the answer to our question. LUKE 18:31 *Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.* At the time these words were spoken by Jesus, that he would be put to death, and rise again from the dead three days later, His disciples couldn't as of yet understand these things, and these words were obscure to them. One translation here states: "The words were a mystery to them, and they did not even begin to grasp what He meant." The mysteries of the Word of God, who Christ is, are revealed unto us by divine revelation.

Even though Jesus disciples, His Apostles, spent three plus years following Jesus, and learned much from Him, they were told on the night of the last supper the following information found in JOHN 16. In JOHN 16 starting in verse 12 Jesus tells His disciples: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* We see here the importance of receiving the Holy Ghost, for He is the agency of the trinity that reveals unto us all truth, and shows us things to come, and opens to us the mysteries of the Word of God! Thank God for the truth that has been revealed unto you! I thank the Lord for all of the truth that has been shown me. And we at this assembly have been privileged to

have expounded unto us truths that the majority of Christians haven't been taught, or know nothing about, for like the Apostle John wrote of himself in JOHN 20:9 above: *For as yet they knew not the scripture...*

We got into this side track discussion by noting the whole of what JOHN 20:9 states concerning Peter and John: *For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.* One of the Old Testament scriptures referenced here is PSALMS 16:10, which reads: *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* Fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead Peter preached his first Holy Ghost inspired sermon, and quotes PSALMS 16:10, which we can read in ACTS 2:27 *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* The Apostle Paul also quotes PSALMS 16:10 in his sermon to those of Antioch in Pisidia, stating in ACTS 13:34 & 35 -- *And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. 35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* So we note that the subject of the resurrection from the dead was taught in the Old Testament, and Peter emphasized the point that Jesus was **raised from the dead** in the sermons, and testimonies we have left for us of his in ACTS. In this first sermon of Peter's recorded in ACTS 2:14-39 we read the following: ACTS 2:22 *Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. ...29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.*

This famous sermon of Peter's is remarkable considering that some fifty plus days earlier we read of one of the low lights in Peter's history, another one of the "threes" associated with Peter, which was the dark **midnight** that Peter denied Jesus three times. Peter learned a lot between the day Jesus was raised from the dead, and the day of Pentecost, when Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost. The same guy who three times denied Jesus less than two months earlier had in ACTS 2 just preached a Holy Ghost power packed sermon where about three thousand souls were saved!

Peter's second sermon is found in ACTS 3:12-26, and note the following: ACTS 3:13 *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. ...26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* Next in ACTS 4 Peter and John were arrested by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem because, as ACTS 4:2 puts it, they *...Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.* The next day Peter and John were brought before the whole Sanhedrin council, and starting in ACTS 4:8 were read: *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9 If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* Later after being released by the Sanhedrin we read that Peter and the other Apostles continued preaching and testifying in Jerusalem. In ACTS 4:33 we read: *And with*

great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. In ACTS 5 Peter and the Apostles were arrested again, and brought before the Sanhedrin a second time. Let's read a short portion starting in ACTS 5:27 *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, 28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. 29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. 33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.*

The third major sermon we find Peter preaching in scripture is when he was called to the house of that now famous Gentile Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band according to ACTS 10:1. ACTS 10 is an interesting chapter, so please study it further on your own. The short version is that Peter came to the house of Cornelius at the request of Cornelius himself to hear all things that were commanded of Peter by God, this according to ACTS 10:33. Before Peter came to the house of Cornelius, Peter had a vision. Remember we are still in the process of noting the many "threes" associated with Peter, and in ACTS 11:5-11 Peter himself recalls this event of going to the house of Cornelius. ACTS 11:5 *I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.* Peter went with these three men unto the house of Cornelius. Let's now read from ACTS 10:34 Peter's third sermon that we have a record of in scripture, which was given at the house of Cornelius. ACTS 10:34 *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* The power of the Holy Ghost was upon Peter as he preached here in the house of Cornelius, and what happened next was extraordinarily remarkable. ACTS 10:44 *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*

Obviously the sermons Peter preached were power packed, and inspired by the Holy Ghost. We are still studying, and talking about them today almost two thousand years later! Not bad for a

fisherman, and on top of that the Sanhedrin council had noted Peter and John to be unlearned in the teaching of the Jewish scholars, and untrained in teaching, and a man who obviously had not the benefit of an education. This is what is meant by ACTS 4:13, which reads: *Now when they (the Sanhedrin council) saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.* In other words the Sanhedrin council was baffled, and confounded how the likes of Peter, and John, who lacked education, could speak with so much fluency, and pertinence, magnifying the teachings of Jesus. Only the Holy Ghost had the power to induce such a reaction. The real unlearned and ignorant men here were the men of the Sanhedrin council, who themselves had Jesus crucified not recognizing Him to be Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, their Messiah! They were foolish. The Apostle Paul understood their line of thinking having himself once been closely associated with the Sanhedrin council. So Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18 *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Recall what we just read in ACTS 10:38 above in Peter's sermon to those in the house of Corneilus: *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.* This same Holy Ghost empowered Peter to do the same thing. The Sanhedrin council perceived this. Let us not make light of the importance of receiving the Holy Ghost. To believers in ACTS 19:2 Paul asked this question: *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* Since accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, have you also received the Holy Ghost? We just read in ACTS 4:13 the effect Peter's words had upon the Sanhedrin council. ACTS 4:8 tells us: *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them,...* . Peter couldn't have had an impact speaking by himself unto the Sanhedrin council, but Peter spoke being like a net crammed full of the Holy Ghost, and his Holy Ghost inspired words had a lasting impact.

One common theme we find in all of Peter's three sermons is that God **raised Jesus from the dead upon the third** day according to the scriptures. This was the fact that Peter and John didn't understand initially as we read above in JOHN 20:9 *For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.* Now let's return to JOHN 21 where we left off. JOHN 21:14 *This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.* This was the morning after Peter, and those six other Apostles with him had gone fishing, and had caught nothing until Jesus came upon the scene. JOHN 21:14 tells how this was *...the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead...* as if to emphasize, especially unto Peter, the fact that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead as Jesus had three distinctly different times before his death told His disciples would be the case. {See and study again the verses we read above in MATTHEW 16:21; MATTHEW 17:22 & 23; and MATTHEW 20:17-19.} Obviously Peter has now gotten one of the messages he was to preach, which was God **raised Jesus from the dead upon the third** day according to the scriptures, and as we have just pointed out, this was a common theme Peter preached about, and testified to, and wrote about in his epistles. 1 PETER 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. ...18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. 1 PETER 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19*

*By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. 21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. Did you note that it was three times in 1 PETER that he mentioned the resurrection of Jesus Christ? As we mentioned many times before in this portion, there are many three associated with Peter.*

One more thought before we leave JOHN 21:14. JOHN 21:14 *This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.* The first two times Jesus appeared unto His disciples, His Apostles, after His resurrection is also found in JOHN chapter 20 verses 19 through 29. There were other appearances after this as is recorded in ACTS 1, and we will cover that in more detail shortly. However Jesus first appearance to His disciples after His resurrection was actually on the day of His resurrection we read in JOHN 20:19 *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.* (As we continue reading these verses we will find that Jesus repeats “Peace be unto you” three times. Jesus wasn’t attempting to startle them, so He calms them down a little with these words: “Peace be unto you.”) 20 *And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. 21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* (Here Jesus was sending His disciples forth with orders, meaning to be the Apostles He had called them to be.) 22 *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:* (In GENESIS 2:7 we read: *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.* The breath of life here made man a living soul. This act of breathing on them in JOHN 20:22 underlined the importance of receiving the Holy Ghost, which happened to them on the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2. The Holy Ghost in their lives was essential to their becoming the Apostles they were sent to be. ACTS 1:8 tells us the Holy Ghost was the power they needed to become the fishers of men Jesus sent them to be! In other words in one sense we can think of the Holy Ghost as being the breath from heaven that speaks to us the wonderful works of God!) ...JOHN 20:24 *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. 26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.* (This was the second time Jesus appeared unto His disciples after His resurrection.) 27 *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. 29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* The third appearance by Jesus unto His disciples after His resurrection in JOHN 21 was designed especially for Peter’s benefit. JOHN 21:14 *This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.*

Next in JOHN 21 we read probably the next most familiar “three’s” we associate with Peter, where Jesus encourages Peter with a three-fold discourse on love. No doubt three degrees of love are expressed here to Peter. JOHN 21:15 *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, (“the hearkening son of a dove”) lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?*

*And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, **Feed my sheep.*** We have heard countless sermons from these verses concerning the deepest kind of love, which is agape love; that closest kind of affectionate love that can be expressed between man and God, which Jesus was getting Peter here to appreciate. We should also pay close attention to the fact that Jesus repeated unto Peter three times the point of emphasis that he was to Feed the flock of the Lord.

Recall also that during His time on earth we found three different records showing that Jesus told Peter He would make him a **fisher of men**, as was told in LUKE 5:10 where ...*Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; **from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*** By the time of JOHN 21 has Peter caught any men? Not yet, for at this time he was not yet fully equipped to catch men. Peter needed the power of the Holy Ghost reigning within before he could catch men. Here in JOHN 21 Jesus was encouraging Peter as to how to catch men, and that being to “Feed my lambs” (the little sheep), to tend my sheep, and to “Feed my sheep.” The message that Peter here was taught, and the main point he learned here was that he needed to have the same divine passion as Jesus Christ Himself had in loving God, and in feeding the flock of God. Jesus here in JOHN 21 was instructing Peter how to accomplish this, and Jesus continued instructing Peter in JOHN 21:20-22. JOHN 21:20 *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? **follow thou me.*** Remember Peter and John were partners in the fishing business, and had been together long before Jesus came on the scene. Here Jesus was instructing Peter not to worry about John any longer. Jesus would take care of John, and Jesus would take care of Peter better than John could, so “**follow thou me.**”

Guess how many times in scripture Peter was told of Jesus to “**follow me.**” There were three different occasions where Peter was told of Jesus to “**follow me,**” and we just read the third time in JOHN 21:22. MATTHEW 4:18-20 records the first time Peter was told by Jesus to “**follow me.**” MATTHEW 4:18 *And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, **Follow me,** and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.* Again in MATTHEW 16:24 we read: *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and **follow me.*** This same story is also told in MARK 8:34 and LUKE 9:23. The third time is here in JOHN 21:19-22 where Jesus is speaking unto Peter: ...*And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, **Follow me.** 20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? **follow thou me.*** We get the indication here that Jesus intended to give Peter, and the other disciples further instructions in the immediate future, so “**Follow me.**” JOHN 21:25 tells that this indeed happened: *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.* Let’s read on what is written next in our Bible’s in ACTS 1. ACTS 1:1 *The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* If we could have been there what would we have heard, and learned from Jesus during these forty days? Obviously Peter did follow Jesus the rest of his life, and as we have already noted, Peter led literally thousands to the Lord as he became the fisher of men Jesus told him he would be by following Jesus.

We are still in our introductions of Peter as we are really studying the **midnight** escape of Peter from prison in ACTS 12. By the time we get to ACTS 12 we will know Peter a whole lot better. We just studied in JOHN 21 about the passion Peter was to have for the Lord in order to



properly “feed my sheep” as Jesus had instructed him to do. Of course Peter and the other Apostles of the Lord lacked the power necessary to accomplish this. Reading on in ACTS 1:4 & 5 & 8 we read what was mandatory in their lives in order for them to complete the tasks the Lord had foreordained them to do. ACTS 1:4 *And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ...8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* It was the power of the Holy Ghost that enabled Peter, and the other Apostles to become the fishers of men Jesus intended them to become when He said ... *Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men...* in MATTHEW 4:19.

We have already discussed the power of Peter’s ministry after he was filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and how three thousand were saved that day after Peter’s Holy Ghost inspired sermon. Five thousand men were noted in ACTS 4:4 to have believed after Peter’s second sermon. In ACTS 5:14 we read that multitudes both of men and women believed because of Peter’s and the other Apostles preaching! We read in ACTS 5:42 *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.* Only God knows how many were saved because of Peter’s preaching. The number was in the thousands. Do we know any of their names? Perhaps we do.

Let’s back up a few verses and read how ACTS 4 concludes. ACTS 4:32 *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet.* In these verses we are introduced to Barnabas, one of the believers because of Peter, and the other Apostles ministry it seems. Barnabas goes on to be a connecting link between these Apostles, and Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 9:27. There is also another connection to Barnabas in ACTS 12, which we will note when we get there, Lord willing. This same Barnabas sought out Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 11:19-26, and when he found him he took Saul of Tarsus to Antioch, Syria where they became the Church Apostles Paul and Barnabas that we are familiar with.

Peter and the Apostles we have been studying about were not Church Apostles, but rather they were Kingdom Apostles. We need to be aware of the differences in teaching between the Kingdom Apostles, and the Church Apostles. Simply put the Kingdom Apostles were sent unto the Jews, and the Church Apostles were, for the most part, sent unto the Gentiles. We have on our Living Waters Tabernacle web site two tracts that further explain the differences between Kingdom Age teaching, and Church Age doctrine. These tracts are entitled “The Church Age and The Kingdom Age” (by Joe Rogers), and “The Gospel of the Kingdom,” which was written by Brother Copley. Knowing the facts explained in these two tracts will resolve any confusion between the differences between Kingdom Apostles, and Church Apostles. We will now discuss a little more about this from a slightly different perspective, and see why there were differences between the teaching of the Kingdom Apostles, and the Church Apostles, and we will also note some of these differences. By doing this we will better appreciate where Peter was coming from as he expounded the gospel message he preached, and we will see how this was different than what Paul preached. The reason for this was that Paul was given a different dispensation to preach than Peter was given. Paul writes in COLOSSIANS 1:25 *Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God.* We will discuss this further as we continue explaining the difference between the Kingdom Apostles, and the Church Apostles.

Let's start by reviewing what Jesus taught. Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom as is noted in MATTHEW 4:23, MATTHEW 9:35, and MARK 1:14. MATTHEW 4:23 reads: *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.* MATTHEW 9:35 *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* Who did Jesus preach the gospel of the kingdom to? Jesus preached unto the Jews for it was the Jews, the children of Israel, who had synagogues. JOHN 1:11 tells us: *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.* His own people that Jesus came unto were Jews, Jesus Himself being the King of the Jews, whom the wise men sought out in MATTHEW 2. Let's read a few verses from MATTHEW 10:2 *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. 5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. These Kingdom Apostles were sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In other words they were sent unto the children of Israel, the Jews. In the verses we discussed earlier in JOHN 21 when Jesus instructed Peter to "feed my sheep," He was referring to the Jews.*

Let's get another perspective. Before Jesus came on the scene, the Jews were sent by God one John the Baptist, whose message was *...To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins...* LUKE 1:77. John the Baptist didn't come to preach before the Gentiles like the Apostle Paul did. John the Baptist preached *...the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel...* ACTS 13:24. John the Baptist preached before the time of Jesus ministry. In ACTS 19:4 Paul states: *...John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.* In John the Baptist's day water baptism was an outward expression of an inward belief in the soon coming Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and His forgiveness of sins. After the resurrection of Jesus water baptism to a Jew was an outward expression of an inward belief that they had accepted Jesus as their own personal Saviour, His forgiveness of their sins, and that they had died unto the law of Moses and were to be counted among those who believed in the resurrected Jesus Christ.

As we continue to examine some of the differences between the Kingdom Apostles, and the Church Apostles, let's note where the Kingdom Apostles originated, which was from John the Baptist's ministry. We read this in JOHN 1. JOHN 1:19 *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. 22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. 24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 And I saw, and bare*

*record that this is the Son of God.* As we read on, verses 35-42 we find two of John the Baptist's disciples, John and Andrew now following Jesus. JOHN 1:35 *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; 36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! 37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.* These guys, Peter, his brother Andrew, and John were part of the groups of twelve who became Jesus Apostles, which we call Kingdom Apostles. Note that they were first followers of John the Baptist.

Let's now turn to some verses in JOHN chapters 3 and 4, and read what Jesus disciples (His future Kingdom Apostles) were doing. JOHN 3:22 *After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. ...JOHN 4:1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)...* . Note it was Jesus future Kingdom Apostles who were baptizing those that believed on Him as their Saviour, and these believers were all Jews. Now turn again to ACTS 2 and read some verses of what took place after Peter's first sermon preached on the day of Pentecost. Peters sermon ends with verse 36; ACTS 2:36 *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Recall what we stated above, that after the resurrection of Jesus water baptism to a Jew was an outward expression of an inward belief that they had accepted Jesus as their own personal Saviour, His forgiveness of their sins, and that they had died unto the law of Moses and were to be counted among those who believed in the resurrected Jesus Christ. Peter and the other Apostles had baptized hundreds during Jesus ministry, so continuing to do this after His resurrection was nothing new to them.*

There was one other follower of John the Baptist's ministry that is recorded in scripture, who is made known first to us in ACTS 18, and his name is Apollos. By the time we are introduced to Apollos, John the Baptist has been off the scene about twenty-five years. Jesus Christ's ministry had been accomplished, and Jesus had been raised from the dead for more than twenty years when Apollos came to Ephesus. By this time the Apostle Paul has completed two missionary journeys before we are introduced in scripture to Apollos. Apollos doesn't know the basic facts of Paul's gospel that are found in 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-4, which in part states: *...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.* Apollos knows nothing about the true meaning of Pentecost when he comes to Ephesus in ACTS 18. When he gets to Ephesus in ACTS 18 Apollos knows Old Testament scripture, for he is a Jew, and a traveling preacher, in other words he is an evangelists, and a disciple of John the Baptist for all practical purposes. Apollos was teaching the Jews to be looking for their Messiah to come. But Jesus has already come the first time long before Apollos preached in Ephesus. The Jews as a whole had rejected Jesus, the KING OF THE JEWS, and had persecuted Him. Apollos, however was ignorant of these facts at the time of ACTS 18. The message of repentance and looking for the coming Messiah was still being received by some Jews of that day, showing that Apollos wasn't the only Jew ignorant of Jesus death and resurrection, and the facts of Pentecost that was twenty plus years behind them. So obviously Apollos knew nothing about the Kingdom Apostles either, meaning he wasn't familiar with Peter. Let's read what is found in ACTS 18:24 *And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the*

*scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.* Recall what we noted earlier, that in John the Baptist's day water baptism was an outward expression of an inward belief in the soon coming Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and His forgiveness of sins. But when Apollos preached this at Ephesus in ACTS 18:24 & 25 he was about twenty-five years behind times. So we read in ACTS 18:26 *And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.* The word "perfectly" here means: more exactly; more completely; in greater detail. What did Aquila and Pricilla know, and why were they so anxious to take in this eloquent man? They were taught from the mouth of the Apostle Paul, Paul's gospel message. Paul was a Church Apostle, not a Kingdom Apostle, so Apollos learned from Aquila and Pricilla Paul's gospel. ACTS 18:3 tells us that Paul lived with Aquila and Pricilla at Corinth, and in ACTS 18:11 we find that Paul was in Corinth a year and a half. In that eighteen months Aquila and Pricilla were like sponges soaking in Paul's gospel message. When Paul left Corinth and proceeded on to Ephesus, Aquila and Pricilla went with him, and took up residence in Ephesus. So the Saints at Corinth were also taught Paul's gospel before Apollos went there, and when Apollos decided to travel next to Corinth from Ephesus, Aquila and Pricilla wrote letters unto the Saints of Corinth to receive Apollos, which they did. ACTS 18:27 & 28 records these facts this way: *And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.* This was a far cry from what he was teaching when he first got to Ephesus when he only knew the baptism of John the Baptist.

So we have now shown that Apollos was a disciple of John the Baptist, as was Peter and John, and they all went on to be Apostles. Peter and John went on to become Kingdom Apostles, and Apollos became a Church Apostle. We are still in the process of pointing out the difference in the Kingdom Apostles, and the Church Apostles, which boils down to the differences between what Peter taught, and what the Apostle Paul taught.

We mentioned above that Barnabas probably was saved because of Peter's ministry. Again Barnabas is introduced to us in the following verses. ACTS 4:32 *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. 33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.* ACTS 11:24 tells that Barnabas *...was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith...* and at that time he was still a follower of Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles. Barnabas will go on to become one of the Church Apostles after learning Paul's gospel message from Paul himself, and we will mention more about Barnabas later, Lord willing.

We are going to discuss for a moment why the Jews here at Jerusalem were selling what they had, and giving the money to the Kingdom Apostles to distribute. This was first mentioned in ACTS 2:44 & 45 after Peter's first sermon that he preached on the day of Pentecost: *"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.* Brother Copley explains this in his study book on ACTS, writing: "The conduct of the saints as expressed in these verses was the fulfillment of LEVITICUS 25. Every 50th Jewish year was a jubilee year, which pointed forward to the millennium. That very year in which Jesus died and the Holy Spirit was poured out was a Jubilee. The disciples supposed that the millennial reign of Christ was due and that He would return very soon. Indeed, it was due and He would have come back about seven years later, if the Jews as a nation had received Him. Therefore,

they acted in obedience to LEVITICUS 25 and sold their possessions and had all things common, as they will do again when the Lord returns. However, Jesus did not return then, but introduced a different order of procedure. The Church was never intended to observe that rule of order given to Israel. Hence, the Apostle Paul, the Church apostle, distinctively never taught the community of goods. For that reason, wherever men have endeavored to introduce such a custom, it always failed. They were not led of the Lord. The unity required of the Church is the “*unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*”-- the seven ones of EPHESIANS 4:3-6. We are not admonished to try to bring it about, for it already exists, but we should be “*diligent to keep the unity.*” The gifts and offices have been bestowed that we might “all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (EPHESIANS 4:13).” {End of quoting Brother Copley.} Brother Copley here was explaining some of the differences between what the Kingdom Apostles taught and what the Church Apostles taught.

Before we got to the above discussion we were considering if we have in scripture any names of the people who go saved because of Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles ministry. We indicated that possibly Barnabas may have been one of their converts. Certainly Barnabas was a part of their ministry at the beginning. Let’s read some more about the impact that Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles ministry had. ACTS 6:1 *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.* Peter had indeed followed Jesus, and had also fed His sheep, and had become a great multitude catcher as a fisher of men. Seven names are recorded here in ACTS 6:5; men who may have been saved because of Peter’s preaching. Again these seven were Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. Only two of these seven are mentioned more than once in scripture, Stephen, and Philip. The ministry of Stephen occupies the remainder of ACTS 6, and all of ACTS 7. Philip’s ministry is recorded in ACTS 8, and down the road a few years he was a welcoming host of the Apostle Paul in ACTS 21:8! Stephen’s sermon in ACTS 7 pricked the heart of one man, Saul of Tarsus. Saul of Tarsus goes on to become our Apostle Paul. Do you now see why our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ encouraged Peter so many times along the way to “follow me,” to be a fisher of men, and to “feed my sheep?” Indirectly the preaching of Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles led to Saul of Tarsus getting saved. Praise the Lord!

Let’s now realize a point that is mentioned in DEUTERONOMY 29:29, which reads: *The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.* This was spoken unto the children of Israel by Moses before his death. It was unto the children of Israel that the law was given for them to follow. The Gentiles were not given the law of Moses to follow, thus they (you and me non Jews) are not under the law. Let’s put ourselves back in the days of Peter as we have found him in his ministry up to the time frame of ACTS 8. The four gospel records have not yet been written, and the Apostle Paul, who is then known as Saul of Tarsus, is barely on the scene. One of Peter’s followers, Stephen is stoned to death in in the closing verses of ACTS 7. Before his death ACTS 7:55 & 56 records this of Stephen. ACTS 7:55 *But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* Jesus was standing at the right hand of God waiting to return, and be Israel’s King if they (Israel) had welcomed Him

back at this time. But they rejected Him in rejecting His anointed servant Stephen's Holy Ghost inspired sermon, and in stoning Stephen to death. Another dispensation of time was about to be introduced, and this dispensation is called the Church Age. The Church Age was one of those secret things that, up until this point in time, was hidden, and remained hidden until Jesus Christ Himself revealed this dispensational message we know as Paul's gospel unto Paul as is noted in GALATIANS 1. Paul writes in GALATIANS 1:11 & 12 -- *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* The time that elapsed between the death of Stephen, and Paul's gospel message being revealed unto him, this new Church Age dispensation, was between four to seven or eight years, which we will now explain further.

It is nearly impossible to nail down the exact year of Jesus Christ's death, or the year when Stephen was stoned to death. Brother Copley was of the opinion that there were seven years between Jesus' death, and Stephen being stoned to death, which means that the events of ACTS 1 through ACTS 7 would have covered seven years. The dates in our Scofield Bibles in this regard are probably incorrect if Brother Copley's dates are correct. Conyebear and Howson in their book entitled "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul" couldn't agree on these dates either, thus they added about three pages in their appendix trying to explain the chronology of the Apostle Paul, thus in their time table of his life they had question marks as to the early dates of his Christian life. So no one really knows the year when Stephen was stoned, or the year when Saul of Tarsus was saved. These two events seem to have happened within a couple of years of each other. History does however record the date when Herod Agrippa I died, and that was the year 44 A.D. Herod Agrippa I is called "Herod the king" in ACTS 12:1, and he is the guy who arrested Peter in that chapter. We are working our way to discussing that **midnight** Bible story of ACTS 12, but we have been examining Peter's background leading up to his arrest in ACTS 12, and in the process we are seeing some important Bible characters, who probably were saved because of Peter's ministry. Barnabas is one of these guys, and the seven Holy Ghost filled men of ACTS 6:5 are some others that followed Peter's ministry as a Kingdom Apostle, who preached the gospel of the kingdom to the children of Israel.

Let's continue the time-line leading up to the events of ACTS 12. We will do this by reading a few verses starting in ACTS 7:59 at the stoning of Stephen. ACTS 7:59 *And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.* (Stephen had the heart and spirit of a full overcomer). *And when he had said this, he fell asleep.* ACTS 8:1 *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.* Years later the Apostle Paul (formerly know as Saul of Tarsus) told King Agrippa II what his thinking was at this time. We read this starting in ACTS 26:9 *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* At this time in his life Saul of Tarsus was indeed a terrorist. Paul admits this also in GALATIANS 1:13 where he writes: *For ye have heard of my conversation (manner of life) in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.* Because of Saul of Tarsus' continual persecution we read this in ACTS 8:4 *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.* So we see that Saul of Tarsus has further persecuted this assembly at Jerusalem to the point that they were all now scattered, EXCEPT THE APOSTLES. The twelve kingdom Apostles remained in Jerusalem, for now, and the Lord protected them there. No doubt there were many



elderly in their care, and others who could not leave Jerusalem, so the Apostles trusted the Lord to keep them safe in His keeping.

Continuing on with a summary of ACTS 8 we find that Philip, one of the seven noted with Stephen in ACTS 6:5, went over to Samaria when all were scattered. And Philip preached as an evangelist some mighty Holy Ghost inspired messages, and God wrought many miracles by his hands. Notice what Philip preached in ACTS 8:12 *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.* Philip preached the kingdom of God, as did Peter, and the Kingdom Apostles, as did Jesus. ACTS 11:19 inserts the following additional information: *Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.* The stoning of Stephen set the wheels in motion for the transition into the next dispensation of the Church Age to take place. But first the Lord had to scatter the multitude of believers, who were devout followers of Christ because of Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles preaching. Note that those that were scattered continued to preach the word, and they preached to the Jews only, and the word they had to preach was Old Testament scripture because nothing yet was written of New Testament scripture. They also, no doubt, continued to preach the word given unto them of the Lord Jesus Christ, which things were taught them by the Kingdom Apostles from first hand experiences of His life, death, and resurrection.

Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7 seems to have fallen on deaf ears, for so far the results of his preaching have caused the believers to scatter from Jerusalem, and Saul of Tarsus, who heard Stephen's sermon, became the chief persecutor. However the heart examiner, who is Jesus, saw in the heart of Saul of Tarsus' heart a continual pricking. The words of Stephen's sermon kept playing over, and over again in his mind. Stephen's powerful Holy Ghost inspired sermon had a long lasting impact. Saul of Tarsus knew in his conscience that Stephen had spoken words of truth, and many of those whom Saul of Tarsus had persecuted had also testified to him words of truth. And Stephen's words continued to prick the self-righteous conscience of Saul of Tarsus. In doing so, Stephen's words were sharper than any two edged sword. HEBREWS 4:12 *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Just think about this fact for a moment. How many sermons have you heard, and how many of them can you remember word for word? We have numerous recordings of powerful sermons, and we are glad we have them, for it is very hard to remember sermons word for word. Stephen's powerful Holy Ghost inspired sermon was remembered word for word by Saul of Tarsus. Stephen's sermon of ACTS 7 was a very powerful Holy Ghost inspired sermon, and in reality it closed out one age and set the stage for a new age, the Church Age, to be ushered in. We are still studying Stephen's sermon today.

Peter late in his life wrote the following: 2 PETER 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* Peter had learned that the Lord was ...*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance...* including the chiefest of sinners, the likes of Saul of Tarsus, who was physically in attendance at the stoning of Stephen, and at the time of ACTS 8 he was persecuting those who believed in Jesus as their personal Saviour. I wonder how many during that time were praying for Saul of Tarsus to get saved. I imagine nearly all the believers who were following Peter and the Apostles were now praying for the safety of themselves, and those who were being persecuted. Were they believing that God ...*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...* as is stated in EPHESIANS 3:20? Were they praying for this enemy that was persecuting them? Jesus had instructed in MATTHEW 5:44 *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.* Jesus was about to answer their prayers in ACTS 9.

Of all the conversions in scripture there is only one that is recorded three times in three different places, and that is the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, which is recorded in ACTS 9, ACTS 22,

and ACTS 26. We are not going into the details of Saul of Tarsus' conversion here, but the end result was that Saul of Tarsus was chosen by our ever loving Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to be the Apostle unto the Gentiles, and to preach the glorious gospel, which was given him for us of this yet present Church Age. The Apostle Paul himself summarizes this in his first letter written unto Timothy. 1 TIMOTHY 1:11 *According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. 12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; 13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

We are still discussing the names of people we find in scripture, who may have become believers because of the ministry of Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles since the day of Pentecost found in ACTS 2. Saul of Tarsus made havock of the church according to ACTS 8:3 after the stoning of Stephen. As time went on Saul of Tarsus was embolden to pursue the disciples of the Lord beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem. It is recorded in ACTS 22:12 that there was in Damascus a very devout man according to the law, who had a good report of all the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, and his name was Ananias. ACTS 9:13 and 14 records Ananias of Damascus thoughts concerning Saul of Tarsus, for he states in a discussion with the Lord: *"...I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name."* Was Ananias of Damascus a believer because of the ministry of Peter, or one of the other Kingdom Apostles? Scripture doesn't say one way or the other. It was common for the Jews to go to Jerusalem at the Jewish feast days, and Pentecost was one of those times. Was Ananias of Damascus there on the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2? Ananias of Damascus was obviously filled with the Holy Ghost, so perhaps this happened to him because of Peter's, or the other Kingdom Apostles ministry. He said in ACTS 9:13 that he had heard of Saul of Tarsus, and how much evil he had done to the Saints at Jerusalem. To know this kind of information means he had communication with the followers of Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles. It is also obvious that Ananias was afraid that Saul of Tarsus would seek him out in Damascus, and in ACTS 9 that what he feared had come upon him, much like what Job stated in JOB 3:25 *For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.* But the Lord was there one step ahead of Ananias's fears, and appeared unto to him in a vision before Ananias even knew that Saul of Tarsus had arrived in Damascus. The full discussion between the Lord and Ananias is recorded like this in ACTS 9. ACTS 9:10 *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. (Saul of Tarsus was blinded by the glory of the light of the Lord that appeared to him on the road to Damascus.) 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* The Lord appeared unto Ananias of Damascus, (after Saul of Tarsus was blinded by the Lord on his way to Damascus), and the Lord in essence told him, I want you to display the love of God to Saul of Tarsus, and pray that he receive his sight again. Ananias of Damascus became an overcomer at this time, for he overcame his fears and did what the Lord had told him to do. ACTS 9:17 records it this way: *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and*

*putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

This sentence in ACTS 9:17 is very rich in content. Let's note three very important points here. First this salutation "Brother Saul," or "Brother" (so and so) is one Christians are familiar with, for it refers to brethren in Christ. It is a term of respect used of fellow Christians in addressing one another, and acknowledging the fact that each has been born again. When Ananias addresses Saul of Tarsus as "Brother Saul," Ananias was acknowledging the fact revealed unto him by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that Saul of Tarsus was indeed now a born again believer. This was probably the first time Saul of Tarsus had been addressed like this: "...Brother Saul,..." and how comforting this greeting must have sounded to the ears of Saul of Tarsus. We also know from ACTS 9:12 that Saul of Tarsus was expecting Ananias of Damascus to find him in the house of Judas praying. ACTS 9:12 reads: *And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.* And so the two men meet, Saul of Tarsus the feared former Christian persecutor, and Ananias of Damascus, the devout man of God with the good report. The second thing of major importance that we need to note here is that Ananias wasn't afraid to put his hands on Saul of Tarsus and pray for him as he was instructed to do by the Lord. Saul of Tarsus as we just read in ACTS 9:12 was expecting *...a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.* So when Ananias put his hands on Saul of Tarsus, and prayed for him to receive his sight, what do you supposed happened next? ACTS 9:18 answers this question, stating in part: *And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith...* The third, and most important point that we need to note from ACTS 9:17 is what else Ananias prayed for Saul of Tarsus to receive. Ananias laid his hands on Saul of Tarsus that he might also *...be filled with the Holy Ghost.* Please note this. When was Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul filled with the Holy Ghost? Our answer is again found in these words of ACTS 9:18 *And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith...* There is a double meaning here. When Ananias prayed for Saul of Tarsus to receive his sight, from his eyeballs there fell scales, and he received his natural sight again. At the same time Saul of Tarsus also received the Holy Ghost, and the spiritual eyes of his understanding became opened, and he received Holy Ghost enlightened sight forthwith! Perhaps you have never thought of it this way, but go back and review what Jesus told His disciples in JOHN 16. We read these words of Jesus in JOHN 16:12 *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* Note the little word "shew" in verses 13, 14 and 15. The Holy Ghost was given us to help us see things, to "shew" us things we wouldn't otherwise be able to comprehend. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote in EPHESIANS 1:18 that he was praying: *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,...* In other words Paul was praying that we might receive our Holy Ghost enlightened sight. The full overcomers of REVELATION 4:6 and 8 have such enlightened eyes, and see things before, and behind, and within! They have doves eyes, Holy Ghost opened eyes!

Turn to ACTS 19 for a moment where we find Paul arriving once in in Ephesus at the beginning of his third missionary journey. Let's read again the following verses: ACTS 19:1 *And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his*

*hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve.* Where did Paul learn that he could lay his hands upon these disciples for the purpose of receiving the Holy Ghost? Paul learned this back in ACTS 19:17 when Ananias of Damascus laid his hands on him *...that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Let's note in ACTS 22 one more thing about Ananias of Damascus, this devout disciple of the Lord, who no doubt had connections with Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles. Paul mentions in ACTS 22:13 & 14 of how Ananias of Damascus *...Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.* Who was it Ananias said Paul should see? It was that very same Just One that Stephen mentioned in his sermon in ACTS 7:52! ACTS 7:52, and ACTS 22:14 are the only two times in scripture where we find Jesus called the "Just One." On the road to Damascus the Lord answered Stephen's final prayer: *...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge...* ACTS 7:60.

In our **midnight** Bible story of ACTS 12 we have been examining Peter's history, as this will give us a greater appreciation of what took place in ACTS 12. Currently we are connecting the dots, and reviewing some thoughts about the people affected by Peter's ministry, and now we have come to the place in ACTS 9 where Saul of Tarsus is saved. The preaching in ACTS 7 of Stephen, one of Peter, and the other Kingdom Apostles close followers, had pricked the heart of Saul of Tarsus to the point that he became a believer when arrested by the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Another follower of the Kingdom Apostles was Ananias, who had just laid hands on Saul of Tarsus that he might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Let's read what took place next to Saul of Tarsus. ACTS 9:19 *And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* This well taught expert in the Old Testament scriptures, as a newborn again believer, began preaching in the synagogues there in Damascus. His gospel message that he would later preach was not yet revealed unto him, but as a babe in Christ he taught what he knew. And Saul of Tarsus knew from his experience on the road to Damascus where he was saved that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God. In JOHN 20:31 the Apostle John writes why he wrote the gospel record we know at JOHN. And the Apostle John wrote in JOHN 20:31 *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* The book of JOHN hadn't yet been written when Saul of Tarsus *...preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God...* but his message was the same as John wrote: *...that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said this unto Nicodemus in JOHN 3:18 *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* The very fact that Saul of Tarsus himself *...preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God...* was somewhat confounding to those who heard him preach this, because in the preceding weeks he was persecuting those who believed this. So we read next in ACTS 9:21 *But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?* The answer to their question was a resounding YES this is the very same guy who previously arrested them who believed that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

Turn to MATTHEW 16 for a moment, and let's read some word spoken unto Jesus disciples, who went on to become His Kingdom Apostles, Peter being one of them. Jesus asks them in MATTHEW 16:15 *...But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Jesus here tells Peter, "Peter your name means a pebble, a

little stone, a little rock, and Peter, little rock, upon this Rock, (Jesus Christ Himself) I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Brother Hill explained it like this in his last sermon of March 6, 2005: “Peter you have just confessed me as your personal Saviour. On that testimony, on that statement I am going to build my church.” Paul writes in 1 CORINTHIANS 10:4 *...that Rock was Christ*. Paul also acknowledges in GALATIANS 1:13 how that before he was saved *...that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it*. Jesus Christ is the Solid Rock upon which the church of God is built. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 CORINTHIANS 3:10 & 11 -- *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation,... 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*. Saul of Tarsus in the days immediately after his conversion began laying the foundation of his gospel message, preaching as we noted above in ACTS 9:20 that The Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God.

ACTS 9:22 continues this story saying: *But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ*. Now let’s read ACTS 9:23 very carefully, and deliberately, so we don’t miss what is being said here. Some are confused by what is said in ACTS 9:23, but I think we can clarify where the confusion comes in. ACTS 9:23 *And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him*. The “many days” seems to confuse some, but the Apostle Paul explains this in GALATIANS 1. GALATIANS 1:11 *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days*. The “many days” of ACTS 9:23 are the “three years” of GALATIANS 1:18, and certainly there are “many days” in three years. So ACTS 9 begins with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Three days later Ananias of Damascus prays for him to receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. The disciples of Damascus took him in in ACTS 9:19, and shortly there after Saul of Tarsus was preaching in the synagogues of Damascus what he knew, and that being Christ is the Son of God, as we noted above in ACTS 9:20. He was with the disciples at Damascus a fairly short period of time, and then was led by the Holy Ghost into the desert regions of Arabia where, by revelation of Jesus Christ, he was taught the gospel he was to preach that took him one hundred chapters of New Testament scripture, and thirty or so more years to fully expound. The “many days” of ACTS 9:23 again are the “three years” of GALATIANS 1:17 & 18, where in Arabia our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ appeared once again unto Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul, and taught him the gospel message that he was to preach.

Let’s dig a little deeper here, because I have had some questions asked me along these lines, and you are not going to hear the correct answers by the preachers on television. During his conversion the Lord Jesus Christ told Saul of Tarsus many things, and Jesus gave Saul of Tarsus a life sentence, which he was to follow. This “life sentence” is really the ninety-nine words of ACTS 26:16-18, which reads: *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me*. That’s an overwhelming abundance of information for anyone to take in all at once, much less remember, and even Saul of Tarsus couldn’t comprehend all of this at once. He first of all needed the help of the Holy Ghost, and secondly he had

to learn the depths of what he had just been told. Note what Jesus told him in verse 18, that He, the Lord Jesus Christ would “appear unto thee.” For what reason would Jesus appear unto Saul of Tarsus? The answer is to teach him Paul’s gospel message that he learned by the revelation of Jesus Christ during those three years he was in Arabia as noted in the verses we read above in GALATIANS 1:11-18. When Paul, three years later, returned once again unto Damascus in GALATIANS 1:17 he was equipped with the gospel message he was to preach, and teach.

Here is some of what Paul’s gospel message teaches, and why it is unique, and why it is for us of this Church Age. Paul’s gospel teaches the doctrine of joint-heirship, the doctrine of being a full overcomer, and a New Testament worthy of faith, the doctrine of a race course runner, the doctrine of having God’s best, the doctrine of the hope of His high calling, the doctrine of the glory of His inheritance, the doctrine of suffering with Christ Jesus, the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ, plainly stating in EPHESIANS 5:23 *...Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.* This is a very simple statement *...Christ is the head of the church...* not a Pope, not some other man, but *...Christ is the head of the church.* The doctrine of the Bride of Christ is also emphasized in Paul’s gospel, and is a large part of the doctrines mentioned in the above statements about what Paul’s gospel teaches. The Bride of Christ is not the whole church, but a rib portion taken out of the sleeping church! The Bride of Christ will be composed of the company of full overcomers from this church age. Sister Bodie wrote: “Christ must have a bride like unto Himself, a companion, fit for Him, not an infant, nor a child, but a mature woman full-grown in every respect, able to enter into the fullest sympathy and understanding with all His desires and plans. The whole church has been betrothed; but they will not all qualify as the chaste virgin, who shall be presented. ....The young woman who is engaged must be proven and tried; she must measure up to the standard -- CHRIST, who is set before her, and thus grow up into His likeness. She must have His nature fully developed and manifested in her. And this is only possible as she holds her head (CHRIST), she the conscious weaker vessel, absolutely dependent upon Him, ...strengthened, energized and harmonized by His abundant life of which she is a partaker.” {End of quoting Sister Bodie.} We in this assembly of Living Waters Tabernacle owe a debt of gratitude to such Saints as Sister Bodie, and Brother Copley, and Brother Hill, who taught us these deeper truths, either in person, or by written study books. Paul’s gospel teaches of seven mysteries not found in other scriptural records, that were hidden in ages past, which are: (1) the mystery of Israel’s blindness, (ROMANS 11:25); (2) the hidden mystery, (ROMANS 16:25; 1 CORINTHIANS 2:7; COLOSSIANS 1:26, and EPHESIANS 1:9); (3) the mystery of translation, (1 CORINTHIANS 15:51-53 and 1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-17); (4) the great mystery of the Bride, which unfortunately remains a great mystery in most churches today simply because they do not have the Holy Ghost to teach them the truth, and if they do they fail to see Paul’s doctrine of ranks in the resurrection, (EPHESIANS 5:32); (5) the mystery of Godliness, (COLOSSIANS 2:2 and 1 TIMOTHY 3:16); (6) the mystery of iniquity, (2 THESSALONIANS 2:7); and (7) the mystery of faith, (1 TIMOTHY 3:9). Paul’s doctrine was given him specifically for this church age, and was primarily given him to reach the Gentiles as noted in ACTS 26:16-18. Paul’s doctrine teaches about the two natures, and the two heads, (the first man Adam, and the second man Adam, which is Christ Jesus). Paul’s gospel teaches about the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man. Paul’s gospel reveals how to put off the old man, and how to put on the new man. Further Paul’s gospel teaches how to *...put on the whole armour of God;*... EPHESIANS 6:11 & 13, and how to, as the elect of God, *...to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering,*... and charity, COLOSSIANS 3:12-14, and how we may grow up into Him in all things... EPHESIANS 4:15. Paul’s gospel makes known the whole counsel of God, and how to *...put on the armour of light...* ROMANS 13:12. Paul’s gospel teaches us that *...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us...* ROMANS 8:37. We are taught to be established in Paul’s gospel, *...to the end that Christ Jesus may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his Saints...* 1 THESSALONIANS 3:13. Paul’s gospel teaches us how we are to rule and reign with Christ, as the full overcomers in the Bride of Christ taken from this church age! Paul’s gospel teaches to *...love His appearing...* in 2



TIMOTHY 4:8, and to be constantly ...*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...* as we patiently ...*run the race that is set before us...* HEBREWS 12:1 & 2. There is a bunch of “much mores” found in Paul’s gospel, and we could say “much more” here too, but let’s finish this portion of our study quoting the words of the Apostle Paul found in ACTS 20:32 *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

Now back to ACTS 9:23 where we find Paul, still known then as Saul of Tarsus, returning after three years in Arabia (GALATIANS 1:17 & 18) unto Damascus where he had a few Christian friends, Ananias of Damascus being one of them. By then it seem the Jews were plenty riled up because of Saul of Tarsus’ preaching, and we read this account: ACTS 9:23 *And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: 24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.* In 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32 & 33 Paul writes about this, stating: *In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: 33 And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.* ACTS 9:25 & 26 finishes this part of the story. ACTS 9:25 *Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. 26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.* GALATIANS 1:18 adds: *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem...* Here we see that Saul of Tarsus then after three years of being away returned to Jerusalem, his former home, which he intended to return to after arresting the disciples of the Lord at Damascus. Of course that didn’t happen, because Saul of Tarsus himself was arrested by the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. So after three years this was Saul of Tarsus’ first visit back in Jerusalem as a Christian. His old friends were now on the opposite side of faith, and would not receive him, and in fact they would have liked to kill him. The believers in Jerusalem at this time were all Jews, and prior to getting saved the only association that Saul of Tarsus had with them was as a persecutor, none of whom were looking forward to seeing him again. That is why we read here in ACTS 9:26 *And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed (he tried; he made an attempt) to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.*

Then an associate of Peter’s ministry once again appears on the scene. Our old friend that we were introduced to in ACTS 4:36, Barnabas now steps forward in ACTS 9:27, and this is a very important verse of scripture, for we find here the link that connects Saul of Tarsus with the Apostle Peter for the first time. ACTS 9:27 *But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.* We see here that Barnabas became a friend to Saul of Tarsus when no one else would there at Jerusalem. Barnabas took Saul of Tarsus in, thus began a most wonderful long lasting relationship. Barnabas truly showed Saul of Tarsus the love of God. Scripture doesn’t tell us how, but know doubt somewhere along the way Barnabas must have come across Saul of Tarsus in Damascus. Ananias of Damascus may have introduced Barnabas to Saul of Tarsus, or Barnabas may have been passing through Damascus one day when Saul of Tarsus spoke in one of the synagogues of Damascus. We are not told how they got aquatinted, but Barnabas no doubt heard Saul of Tarsus tell first hand how that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. {See ACTS 9:20}. Barnabas also knew the story of how Saul of Tarsus had met the Lord on the way to Damascus, and how the Lord had spoken unto him. How did Barnabas know this information? Perhaps Ananias of Damascus had told him, or perhaps Saul of Tarsus had made this known in one of his synagogue sermons there in Damascus. Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus must have met each other sometime in Damascus. However they met we are not told in scripture, but Barnabas here in ACTS 9:27 declares to the Apostles now in Jerusalem how that Saul of Tarsus had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus, and how Jesus had spoken unto him. At this point in time Saul of Tarsus realized that he had a friend in Barnabas.

Let’s finish this part of the story and see when Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul met Peter for the first time. We need to read here GALATIANS 1:18 & 19 -- *Then after three years I went up to*

Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now back to ACTS 9:27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, (Peter, and James the Lord's brother) and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: (the Greek speaking Jews) but they went about to slay him. 30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. On your own read GALATIANS 1:20 to 24 and note that Paul himself said he next went to the regions of Syria, and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea.

Now a quick aside concerning Saul of Tarsus, our Apostle Paul, who has just been sent back to his boyhood town of Tarsus in ACTS 9:30. In ACTS 9:16 the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had told Ananias of Damascus ...*For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* The Apostle Paul records some of the things he suffered in his ministry in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-33. Several of the things mentioned in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:24-26 are not recorded else where in scripture, such as in the book of ACTS. It is thus quite probable that Paul suffered many of these things between the time frame of ACTS 9:30, and ACTS 11:26 where we find Saul of Tarsus once again mentioned in scripture. Let's read a couple of these verses in 2 CORINTHIANS 11:24-26. 2 CORINTHIANS 11:24 *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, {one was at Philippi, see ACTS 16:22 & 23} once was I stoned, {at Lystra, see ACTS 14:19}, thrice I suffered shipwreck, {and this was written well before the ship wreck recorded in ACTS 27}, a night and a day I have been in the deep; {perhaps in a small boat} 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.* So it seems apparent that Saul of Tarsus, who was now equipped with the gospel message he was to preach, didn't sit idle at Tarsus, but rather used his boyhood home as his headquarters for a while as he made some unrecorded missionary journeys from there preaching his gospel message. Ponder these thoughts on your own as we move on.

We are still working our way to the **midnight** Bible story of ACTS 12 that concerns Peter. We have covered three years of time in the verses of ACTS 9:1 to ACTS 9:30. So from the stoning of Stephen in ACTS 7:59 & 60 until ACTS 9:30 somewhere between four to five years have elapsed, meaning we are now eleven to twelve years past Calvary. Remember the events of ACTS 12 end with the death of King Agrippa I in 44 A.D. Thus as we continue with the background of Peter here in ACTS 9, we are then about eleven to twelve years beyond the day of Pentecost in ACTS 2. And we have just found in ACTS 9:26-30 that Peter was still in Jerusalem. We find him some twenty-five miles away in ACTS 9:32-35. ACTS 9:32 *And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.*

As we look at this event we are some fifteen years beyond the time early on in Jesus ministry that we read of in MATTHEW 10:1, which reads: *And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.* Was there an expiration date associated with the power Jesus gave His disciples here in MATTHEW 10:1? The answer is no. There were times before they were filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost when Jesus disciples, His Apostles, seemed unable to use this power Jesus gave them MATTHEW 10:1, and that is part of the reason Jesus told them in ACTS 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:...* . At the last supper Jesus told His disciples many things about the Holy Ghost, and some other subjects. Jesus told them in JOHN 14:12 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do*

*shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.* The word “greater” here is a misleading translation of what Jesus said here. I have found it more meaningful to replace the word “greater” with “grander in scope” making this sentence read something like this: “Most assuredly, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do he will do also; and grander in scope than these will be the works he shall do; because I go unto my Father.” In other words, more far reaching is the works that has been done by those who believe in Jesus because he has gone unto the Father. Jesus works has been magnified by millions who have believed on Christ since He arose from the dead, and sent His Holy Spirit to guide us. And His work is “grander in scope” since He ascended unto heaven; His greater works having touched people worldwide. We have discussed earlier in this lesson how that after Jesus death and resurrection, and after the Holy Ghost was sent on the day of Pentecost, that Peter himself preached a couple of different sermons where thousands were saved. And we read in ACTS 5:12 *And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.* This was part of the “grander in scope” works that were accomplished that were spoken of by Jesus in JOHN 14:12. So was this event we just read about some eleven or twelve years later in Lydda where Aeneas was healed. Again ACTS 9:32 *And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.* Note a greater work here too for all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord!

The greater works continue in the next verses of ACTS 9. ACTS 9:36 *Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.*

There are eight examples left for us in scripture of people who were raised from the dead, besides Jesus, and besides Paul, if he was dead after being stoned at Lystra. These 8 are: (1) the widow’s son raised by the LORD because of the prayer of faith of Elijah in 1 KINGS 17:17-25. (2) The son of the Shunammite, a wealthy woman, who was raised from the dead because of the faith of Elisha in 2 KINGS 4:32-37. (3) In line with the double portion of the spirit of Elijah granted to Elisha, another man was resurrected from the dead during his burial after touching the bones of Elisha in his sepulchre, as told in 2 KINGS 13:20 & 21. These three resurrected from the dead in the Old Testament were a widow’s son, a rich persons child, and a dead man during the time of burial. Jesus in the New Testament raised from the dead a (4) widows son in LUKE 7:11-18, a (5) rich persons child, in LUKE 8:41-56 and MARK 5:35-43, and a dead man during the time of burial, (6) Lazarus in JOHN 11. (7) Peter raised Tabitha from the dead by the prayer of faith in ACTS 9:36-42. (8) Paul raised Eutychus from the dead in by the prayer of faith in ACTS 20:9 & 10. Plus there have

been countless others who have been raised from the dead in similar fashion over the years since the writing of the New Testament, and only the Lord knows the number for sure. It is recorded that about twenty people were raised from the dead in the course of Smith Wigglesworth's ministry after he prayed for them. Truly Jesus words of JOHN 14:12 have been proven true: *JOHN 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.* Yet note it is still His works that are being magnified, for as Peter himself stated in ACTS 4:12 *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

ACTS 9 ends like this: ACTS 9:43 *And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.* The "many days" here in ACTS 9:43 are probably less than a couple or three weeks. It was from the house of Simon a tanner in Joppa that Peter was called unto the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10. Peter had no idea who Cornelius was, and Cornelius had no idea who the Apostle Peter was. ACTS 10:1 through ACTS 11:18 focus upon one event, which was the preaching of Peter at the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, and a Roman centurion, who lived in Caesarea. This was a monumental event in New Testament scripture as it introduces the time when preaching unto the Gentiles that through Jesus name whomsoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins as is recorded in ACTS 10:43. Peter was a reluctant participant in this event, and had to be strongly persuaded by the Lord in a trance that going to the house of this Gentile Cornelius was indeed something he was to do.

Again it takes a chapter and a half of New Testament scripture to expound upon this one event, and its significance is historic. How so you may ask? Recall during the early days of Jesus ministry here on earth He gave these instruction to His twelve Apostles: MATTHEW 10:5 *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* We have mentioned this before how that Peter and the twelve apostles of the Lamb were sent unto the children of Israel preaching the gospel of the kingdom. But upon the stoning of Stephen at the end of ACTS 7 the nation of Israel as a whole had rejected Jesus as their Messiah, and the door for a new age was about to be opened. This new age is the church age in which we are still living. The purpose of this church age is stated by James in ACTS 15:14-18, and the Holy Ghost, who inspired these words, explains a concept that was really far deeper than James could understand. ACTS 15:14 is a key verse in New Testament scripture, and reads: *Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God at the first (for the first time, a reference to the events of ACTS 10 & 11) did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.* Brother Hill used to ask the question, what are the "people for His name" called? Christians true, but a rib portion company will be called Mrs. Jesus, a people with His name!!! Stated another way, the Bride of Christ will be taken from this church age. The majority in the Bride of Christ will be Gentiles, and in REVELATION 5:9 they sing a new song, which in part says: *...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation...* . Every kindred, tongue, people, and nation means Gentiles, as well as Jews. Simply stated the purpose of this church age is to prepare a Bride for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Peter was used of the Holy Ghost in ACTS 10 & 11 to preach unto the Gentiles for the first time. However it was Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul, who was the Apostle sent unto the Gentiles *...To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me...* according to Jesus words of ACTS 26:18. Never forget this key verse of scripture written to us in ROMANS 11:13 by the Apostle Paul: *For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.* At the time of ACTS 10 & 11 our Apostle Paul is on the scene, but his gospel message has not yet been fully expounded as his ministry was still in its infancy.

We have given a quick overview of the importance of Peter being sent by the Holy Ghost unto the house of a Gentile named Cornelius in ACTS 10. As we think about this recall some things we mentioned earlier in our introduction of Peter. We noted many three's associated with Peter, and

among them was three different records showing that Jesus told Peter He would make him a fisher of men, which are found in LUKE 5:10; MATTHEW 4:18-20; and MARK 1:16 & 17. Jesus didn't tell Peter that he would be a fisher of Jews only, but rather a fisher of men. But up until ACTS 10 Peter has only preached unto the children of Israel, the Jews, for as we also noted above, Peter was an Apostle sent unto the lost sheep of Israel. However in ACTS 10 Peter was specifically sent by the Lord unto the house of Cornelius, a Gentile Roman centurion. It was repeated unto Peter three times in this vision the Lord gave unto him that *"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common..."* ACTS 10:15. Peter got this message, and even repeated it in ACTS 11:9 where Peter explained how the voice of the Lord told him: *"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."* We are all, Jew and Gentile believers, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb are we not? EPHESIANS 2:13 tells us: *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* REVELATION 1:5 & 6 reads: *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* The message Peter was given in this vision was that those whom God hath cleansed are not common, or unclean as was Peter's thinking up until this point in time concerning the Gentiles. The encouragement Peter received of the Lord is further explained in ACTS 10:28 where Peter explains to Cornelius, and those other Gentiles that were in his house: *...Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

Before moving on with this story, let's back up for a moment, and see who Cornelius was, and put the pieces of this historic Bible story in there proper place. ACTS 10:1 & 2 explains: *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.* Cornelius was a centurion, an Italian Gentile, a commander of one hundred Roman soldiers, who was most likely assigned as a bodyguard of the Roman governor there at Caesarea, whom would have been King Agrippa I at this point in time, and the same guy who arrested Peter in ACTS 12.

I have heard some so-called Bible scholars state that Cornelius was unsaved at this time. Let's discuss this for a moment, and better appreciate the grace of God. Those who think Cornelius was unsaved at the time recorded in ACTS 10:1 & 2 do not understand the grace of God. The Apostle Paul wrote in TITUS 2:11 *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.* It is the grace of God that bringeth salvation, not some man's idea of who is saved, or who is not. EPHESIANS 2:5 & 8 explains this further. EPHESIANS 2:5 *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).* EPHESIANS 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is **the gift of God**.* What is the gift of God? ROMANS 6:23 answers this stating: *For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God** is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Since we all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God as is told in ROMANS 3:23, we all need a Saviour in order to be saved. Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour! In ROMANS 10 the Apostle Paul explains it like this: ROMANS 10:9 *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the **Lord shall be saved**.* We read earlier in ACTS 9:1-6 of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. When did Saul of Tarsus get saved? We just read the answer here in ROMANS 10. Saul of Tarsus got saved when he believed in his heart that the Lord Jesus Christ was indeed raised from the dead, and was in fact appearing unto him on the road to Damascus, and he called on the name of the Lord, and asked "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?..." ACTS 9:6. Instantly Saul of Tarsus was saved. Let's look

at another example found in LUKE 23. All four gospel records tell how Jesus was crucified on the cross between two thieves, who were also crucified on their crosses. Now let's read the account found in LUKE 23:39-43. LUKE 23:39 *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* What did the one thief do in order to be saved? The thief that got saved called upon the name of the Lord in faith believing, and was saved when he said: *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

ACTS 10:1 *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.* When did Cornelius get saved? Scripture doesn't tell us does it? We read in JOHN 14:6 these words spoken by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: *...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* We find here in ACTS 10:2 that Cornelius was a devout man, one that feared God, and prayed to God always. We are informed in PSALMS 34:15 *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. ...17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.* Additionally PROVERBS 15:29 states: *The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.* Was Cornelius a righteous man? We read this statement in JOHN 9:31 *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.* In the spirit of ROMANS 4:3 we could say that Cornelius believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Only the Lord Himself knows when Cornelius got saved. Back to Cornelius here in ACTS 10. The Lord obviously heard Cornelius' prayers as we read on in ACTS 10:3 *He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.* How many men went to Joppa at Cornelius request? Two servants, and a soldier, for a total of three. Furthermore please note that Cornelius was a man of faith, and we can say this because he believed God, and he believed the words of the angel of God, and he followed through with the instructions he was given.

Hold that thought, and jump ahead to verse 22. In ACTS 10:22 we find the scripture identifying Cornelius as a "just man." Is a just man justified? Let's read some verses from ROMANS 3 to find out. ROMANS 3:21 *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* The heart examiner, who is Jesus Himself, knows those who believe in Him as their Saviour.

There are two main characters in the story told in ACTS 10. We have already introduced Cornelius, the Gentile Italian Centurion, who was told by the angel of God to send for Simon Peter in Joppa, who according to ACTS 10:6 would give Cornelius and his family instructions that would give him a greater degree of understanding of what to do to increase in the knowledge of God. While the three men sent by Cornelius were on their way from Caesarea to Joppa, the following happened



unto Peter. And remember Peter at this point in time was oblivious as to who Cornelius was, or where he lived, and had no knowledge whatsoever of him. ACTS 10:9 *On the morrow, as they (Cornelius' three) went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.* Study this and see that three times the Lord told Peter: What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. Peter had a lot of things explained to him three times during his life, but he got the message, though he didn't fully understand it yet, that What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common... and that included Gentiles. Jesus Christ died upon the cross to save sinners, and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Christ died to save the ungodly, to save us all whether Jew or Gentile, and there far more Gentiles in the world than Jews. Still Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, both Jew and Gentile. Peter was just now learning this lesson. We must realize that Peter's world stopped at the house of Israel as we noted above in MATTHEW 10:6. In other words Peter's association, and his universe of close acquaintances up to this point in time of his life have been with the Jews only, as was the case with all of the Kingdom Apostles. Jump ahead for a moment to ACTS 11:19 where we read: *Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.* Up to the events of ACTS 10 Peter had nothing to do with the Gentiles for Peter's universe included Jews only, and his thinking was that the Gentiles were common and unclean. That perspective was now about to change.

Reading further in ACTS 10 we find how the Holy Spirit further encouraged Peter concerning the vision he had just seen. ACTS 10:17 *Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.* As Peter himself later told them in Jerusalem about this incident he gave this account of what we just read, stating in ACTS 11:12 *And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting.* Here again in the scripture we find another three-fold something concerning Peter, and this time the discussion revolves around doubting. In ACTS 10:17 we find that Peter doubted in himself what this vision meant. In other words he was much perplexed in his own mind, and found himself completely at a loss to know what road to take. But the Lord's timing is always spot-on right down to the nanosecond, so we find as Peter was pondering the meaning of this vision the Holy Spirit spoke unto him telling Peter about three men who were seeking him, and to go with them doubting nothing. A different Greek word is used here translated "doubting," which on the surface expresses the thought of going without hesitation, or without any misgiving. This same Greek word translated "doubting" in ACTS 10:20, and ACTS 11:12 is found in JAMES 1:6 translated "wavering." JAMES 1:6 *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.* Recall that PSALMS 37:23 tells us: *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.* And 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7 adds: *(For we walk by faith, not by sight).* The Holy Ghost was encouraging Peter here to go in steps of faith that are ordered by the Lord in going with these men, nothing wavering, and doubting nothing. Additionally the Lord was preparing Peter for the events down the road a short ways in his life when Peter would be facing the **midnight** test foreordained for him in ACTS 12. As a quick sneak preview you will find no wavering, no doubting in Peter in ACTS 12.

Let's pick up our story back here in ACTS 10:21. ACTS 10:21 *Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. 23 Then called he them in, and lodged them.* Back in verse 19 & 20 the Holy Spirit told Peter as he was pondering the vision, that three men were seeking him, and to arise, go greet them, and go with them nothing doubting. It was about a 35 mile journey from Joppa to Caesarea, so before journeying with them we find that Peter lodged them, that is entertained them, and received them hospitably as guests. Would Peter had been this hospitable with Gentiles before his vision? Probably not, so we see almost instant results in Peter obeying the leading and guiding of the Holy Ghost in Peter's life. The rest of ACTS 10:23 reads: *And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.* In ACTS 11:12 we find that there were six men who accompanied Peter down to Cornelius' house. Peter plus these six made seven men; seven Jews accompanying the three Gentiles Cornelius sent, which makes a total of ten on this two day journey.

ACTS 10:24 *And the morrow after (at the end of this two day journey) they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.* We learn some more details here concerning the character of Cornelius. In verse 22 above we learned that Cornelius had the testimony of being a just man, one who feared God, and was of a good report among all the nation of the Jews. Here in verse 24 we further learn that Cornelius had been at Caesarea long enough to develop relationships beyond his family, and that Cornelius was not ashamed to call them to his house to hear words from a man of God, who hadn't even arrived at his home yet! Again Cornelius was a man of faith, and he believed that God was sending Peter his home that day. Obviously Cornelius family and close friends trusted that what Cornelius had told them was indeed true, and they too waited in Cornelius' home for Peter's arrival.

Next a verse that has confused many: ACTS 10:25 *And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.* Peter was apprehensive about going to Cornelius' house in the first place, and this greeting by Cornelius certainly shook Peter. And apparently the translators of New Testament scripture were taken back by this also not knowing how to properly state what was taking place here. Cornelius was not worshipping Peter as a god, but rather was paying him civil respect, and reverence. One translator says that Cornelius bowed to the ground in deep reverence. This was an expression of honor, in which Cornelius offered Peter the highest act of civil respect, and we too have seen such actions before by people addressing dignitaries. Cornelius must have been overjoyed by the fact that Peter had so quickly come, and furthermore Cornelius was accustomed to this kind of salutation. As a centurion Cornelius often would have been saluted himself as a sign of respect for the office he held. Furthermore as a centurion assigned to the Roman governor, who resided at Caesarea, Cornelius would have no doubt bowed in respect when saluting the governor. As a devout man who feared God, we would expect Cornelius to show a man sent from God by divine revelation as much respect, if not more than a Roman governor. This is what we find in verse 25, Cornelius addressing Peter with honorable respect as he was accustomed to do when dignitaries were present. Peter on the other hand was not at all familiar with such Gentile customs, or protocol, but the Lord had these steps ordained for a reason, which is explained in the next verse. ACTS 10:26 *But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.* Popes, who claim to be Peter's successors, should follow Peter's example found here in ACTS 10:26. We are to worship God, not a man. Twice in John's vision of REVELATION he fell down to worship one of the full overcomers thinking it was Jesus, and both times he was corrected, and told to worship God. Obviously John saw Christ's image in them, or he wouldn't have fell down to worship them in the first place. REVELATION 19:10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. ...22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy*

*brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.* Peter here in ACTS 10:26 made it very plain that he was a man, and not to be worshipped. Let us take away this from ACTS 10:25, that Cornelius was beyond thankful for God sending Peter to his house.

After this awkward introduction, Peter and Cornelius had a brief discussion concerning the excessive respect Cornelius had shown Peter. Cornelius probably greeted Peter outside the door of his home as ACTS 10:25 indicates. So they exchanged some further greetings as Cornelius led Peter into his house. ACTS 10:27 explains it like this: *And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.* No doubt this unexpected crowd in Cornelius' house caught Peter somewhat off guard, but remember Peter was strongly encouraged by the Holy Spirit in ACTS 10:19 & 20 to go to the house of Cornelius nothing doubting, which he now has done. Peter addresses those in Cornelius' house, as well as Cornelius in these next verses: ACTS 10:28 *And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying,* (without hesitation, or reluctance; without questioning, without objection, doubting nothing), *as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?* The rest of ACTS chapter 10 give the answer to this monumental historic occasion.

ACTS 10:30 *And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* Now we know who Peter was, and we now know who Cornelius was, but it is apparent from reading this chapter that neither of them knew each other, or had even heard of each other until the Lord brought them together here in ACTS 10. And Cornelius made it very clear that they were gathered together *...to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.*

We next read Peter's third Holy Ghost inspired sermon found in scripture, and it is just as remarkable as his first two sermons we discussed earlier in this study. We briefly also looked at this sermon earlier in this study, but will now spend a little more time here noticing some interesting facts. This sermon is the shortest of the three sermons recorded in the Bible preached by Peter, for it is contained in ten verses. These ten verses can lead any lost soul to the path of salvation, proving once again that ten is the number having to do with: RESPONSIBILITY ACCORDING TO ABILITY. Our responsibility as a man is to believe in God, and His ability, thus in so doing, God becomes responsible to man. What does HEBREWS 11:6 tell us? HEBREWS 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him (God): for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Did Cornelius diligently seek God? Yes, and God by miraculous ways sent Peter to the house of Cornelius to preach a very short Holy Ghost inspired sermon of ten verses, through which all in the house were saved, and filled with the Holy Ghost. How many over the centuries since Peter spoke these words have become believer, only God knows. But the impact of this ten-verse sermon of Peter's reaches down to us today, for we are still studying Peter's sermon. Let's read Peter's short sermon. ACTS 10:34 *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* (Cornelius was this kind of man.) ACTS 10:36 *The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)* 37 *That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third*

*day, and shewed him openly; 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Before we examine this sermon any further, let's first note the following. There were three phases in Peter's life in which he acknowledged Jesus as Saviour. Each phase took Peter to a deeper knowledge of Christ. The first phase is found in JOHN 6 where we read Peter's confession of faith. JOHN 6:67 *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? 68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. 69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.* Here in these verses Peter seems to be the spokesman for all of the Apostles; their leader if you will. And Peter was sure that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and was sure Jesus had the words of eternal life. In that regard Peter was acknowledging Jesus as his Saviour, but Peter never really got to know the depths of Jesus as Saviour until after the day of Pentecost when Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost. Peter acknowledges that Jesus is the Mighty Saviour to Israel in our second account found in ACTS 5:29-32 which reads: *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* It took some more years of the Holy Ghost working in Peter until the time of ACTS 10 for Peter to acknowledge in the house of Cornelius our third account of Peter's spiritual growth the fact that Jesus is the Redeemer, and the Saviour of all mankind. Peter states in ACTS 10:34 *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. ...43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* Peter had first acknowledged that Jesus was his Saviour, and secondly that Jesus was Israel's Saviour, and now thirdly that Jesus is the Saviour of whosoever from any nation that believeth in Him!! Here again we see that the words Peter wrote in 2 PETER 3:18 were also the theme of his life: *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

Back to the sermon Peter preached in Cornelius' house in ACTS 10. Peter learned as much from this sermon, if not more than those who heard it did. As Peter began to speak he had an "ah-ha" moment as he said: *...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him...* ACTS 10:34 & 35. This was further confirmation that Peter had learned the lesson he got in the vision on the roof of Simon the tanners house a couple of days earlier, that *"What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common"* ...ACTS 10:15. This very same theme was expressed by Peter unto those in Cornelius' house in ACTS 10:28: *...Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.* The fact that God is no respecter of persons should be one of the highlight points that we too take away from Peter's sermon. PROVERBS 28:21 in part says: *To have respect of persons is not good.* The Apostle Paul repeated this thought in ROMANS 2:11 where he writes: *For there is no respect of persons with God.* Paul couldn't have been the Apostle unto the Gentiles had he been a respecter of persons. Paul perhaps was making here a reference to what is said in DEUTERONOMY 10:17 *For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, (meaning: greatly to be feared) which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.* Paul wrote this in EPHESIANS 6:9 *And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.* Again Paul stated in COLOSSIANS 3:25 *But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.* Years after departing the house of Cornelius, Peter wrote in

1 PETER 1 a little about what he had learned here. 1 PETER 1:17 *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: 18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. 22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Before we look further into Peter's sermon that he preached in the house of Cornelius, we should do a quick review of some things Jesus said unto His disciples after His death and resurrection. By reviewing a couple of portions of scripture we will better appreciate the words Peter spoke at Cornelius' house. LUKE 24 probably explains some of this the best. We will start in LUKE 24:32, but before we read here recall that on the day of His resurrection Jesus appeared unto two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and they knew not that it was Jesus who walked with them. As they walked along, Jesus, beginning at Moses and all of the prophets, expounded unto them the scriptures concerning Himself. As evening approached they constrained Jesus to eat with them, and after He had blessed the food their eyes were opened, and they knew it was resurrected Jesus Himself who had walked, and talked with them this day, and Jesus then vanished from their sight. This is the point where we will begin reading in LUKE 24. LUKE 24:32 *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? 33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. 36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43 And he took it, and did eat before them. 44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And ye are witnesses of these things. 49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

Why did we review this particular portion of scripture? To point out a couple of things that Jesus Christ Himself told His disciples. One important point He made is noted in verse 47 ... that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Obviously Peter and the other Apostles had preached repentance and remission of sins starting at Jerusalem, and they had up to this point in time preached exclusively to the Jews. When Peter got to the house of Cornelius he certainly began to preach to those of other nations. The second important point we want to make concerns what Jesus said in LUKE 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things. The Greek word for "witnesses" is *martus* {mar'-toos}, number 3144 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, with a double meaning. "Witnesses" means an eyewitness, and *martus* can also mean martyr, which is how *martus* is used in ACTS 22:20, and REVELATION 2:13, and 17:6. After

following Jesus for three plus years, and living with Him most of this time, Peter had definitely witnessed some incredible things hadn't he? And he and the other disciples couldn't properly explain what they had witnessed without the power of the Holy Ghost being upon them. This is exactly why Jesus explained to them in JOHN 14:26 *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* Furthermore in ACTS 1:8 Jesus told His disciples, and Peter was there when He said this: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses (martus) unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* Peter was full of the Holy Ghost as he gave witness to those in the house of Cornelius of what he had witnessed during Jesus time here on earth.

ACTS 10:36 *The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)* 37 *That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;* 38 *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.* 39 *And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:* 40 *Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;* 41 *Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.* (We read one account of this in LUKE 24:43 above.) 42 *And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.* 43 *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Let's look at verse 43 a lot closer for it is a key verse in scripture, and interestingly enough, verse 43 is the last words of Peter's sermon here at Cornelius' house! ACTS 10:43 *To him give all the prophets witness,...* . The word witness here is different than "witnesses" above. The Greek word here is *martureo mar'-{too-reh'-o}*, number 3140 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which has the meaning among many other of to give a good report. The prophets all gave a good report, a good news message concerning Jesus. And here is how Peter summarized this good report in ACTS 10:43 *...that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* These final words in Peter's sermon are truly a masterpiece of scripture, as we will now explain.

Focus for a moment upon the phrase "**through his name.**" This phrase is found twice in scripture with ACTS 10:43 being the second time. The first time the phrase "**through his name**" is found is in JOHN 20. JOHN 20:30 *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:* 31 *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* This is written to you. This is written to me. John is stating that these things are written in John's gospel, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life **through his name.** Here in ACTS 10:43 Peter is telling his Gentile audience *...that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* "Whosoever" means "whosoever," and encompasses every kindred, tribe, tongue, people and nation from among all men, descendants of Adam, who dwell upon the earth both Jew and Gentile alike! Peter in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost made a similar statement of "whosoever" in ACTS 2:21 *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

Next take a special note that there are two phrases found in ACTS 10:43, which are found seven times in scripture, and seven again is the number of SPIRITUAL PERFECTION or SPIRITUAL COMPLETION. The two phrases are "**whosoever believeth,**" and "**remission of sins,**" and both of these phrases point the way to salvation. Peter had just announced to this Gentile crowd that through Jesus name *...whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* Three of these "**whosoever believeth**" statements are found in JOHN. In JOHN 3 a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, and asked Jesus several questions. Jesus told Nicodemus in JOHN 3:14 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:* 15 *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* 16 *For God so loved the world,*



that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. Next we read these words of Jesus Himself in JOHN 12:46 *I am come a light into the world, that **whosoever believeth** on me should not abide in darkness.* Paul writes the next two “**whosoever believeth**” statements in his epistle unto the ROMANS. ROMANS 9:33 *As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and **whosoever believeth** on him shall not be ashamed.* ROMANS 10:11 *For the scripture saith, **Whosoever believeth** on him shall not be ashamed.* (The reference here seems to point to ISAIAH 49:23, which speaks to those who shall not be ashamed that wait for the Lord.) The seventh time in scripture where we find the phrase “**whosoever believeth**” is found in 1 JOHN 5:1 ***Whosoever believeth** that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

The second phrase found seven times in scripture, which is also found here in our text of ACTS 10:43 is “**remission of sins.**” Peter had just told his Gentile audience: ACTS 10:43 *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name **whosoever believeth** in him shall receive **remission of sins.*** In his first sermon preached on the day of Pentecost, Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, made a similar statement in ACTS 2:38 *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the **remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Earlier in LUKE 24:47 we read Jesus words spoken unto His disciples after His resurrection. LUKE 24:47 *And that repentance and **remission of sins** should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* During the last supper Jesus instituted the communion service, and said in MATTHEW 26:28 *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the **remission of sins.*** MARK 1:4 and LUKE 3:3 both reference the ministry of John the Baptist, and make similar statements about John preaching *...the baptism of repentance for the **remission of sins.*** Our seventh, and final scripture where the phrase “**remission of sins**” is found in ROMANS 3:25 where Paul is speaking of Jesus: *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the **remission of sins** that are past, through the forbearance of God.*

We mentioned earlier that ACTS 10:43 records the last words of Peter’s short sermon preached in the house of Cornelius. No one in Cornelius’ house would have thought that this was all Peter would say, and no doubt Peter himself had more to say, but Peter wasn’t in charge of this service, the Holy Ghost was. We need to realize some important points here before we move on to verse 44.

The book of ACTS is found in your Bible as The ACTS of the Apostles, which it certainly is. However we have also been taught that the book of ACTS is really the book of The ACTS of the HOLY GHOST, for the power of the Holy Ghost is magnified, and amplified all throughout the book of ACTS. So somewhere in you thinking make a note that the book of ACTS should more properly be thought of as The ACTS of the HOLY GHOST, for the power of the Holy Ghost is really what is emphasized in the book of ACTS. The ACTS of the HOLY GHOST continue on until this day, and will continue on past our short time here on earth, so The ACTS of the HOLY GHOST did not end in ACTS 28:31. Recall two verses of scripture that Jesus Christ Himself spoke unto His disciples His last night with them as He told them about the Holy Spirit. In JOHN 14:26 Jesus tells them: *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* Earlier in JOHN 14:16 Jesus had told them this: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.* The Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost was sent on the day of Pentecost that he may abide with you for ever. Forever extends beyond even our lifetime, thus the profound ACTS of the HOLY GHOST are still taking place. The Holy Ghost is a gift as is explained in ACTS 2:38, where Peter himself states on the day of Pentecost: *...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* The Apostle Paul made a reference to the gift of the Holy Ghost when he wrote to Timothy, and stated in 2 TIMOTHY 1:6 *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the*

*gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.* We have all given gifts during our lifetime. For how long were our gifts given? When we give a gift it is forever is it not. We are not going to come back at a later time and take our gift away, are we? The gift of the Holy Ghost is given by God forever, and He is not going to take the gift of Holy Ghost back from us once we receive this gift is He?

So we can ask the very same question the Apostle Paul asked a dozen believers in ACTS 19:2 *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* This particular portion of scripture has caused much discussion over the centuries. Pastor Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (August 19, 1843-July 24, 1921), whose reference Bible many of us study, didn't understand this portion of scripture either, as evidenced by his study notes. The original Greek of "*Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?*" reads: "The Holy Ghost, have you received Him, having believed?" This is a good question to ask all believers. "The Holy Ghost, have you received Him, having believed?" Many are of the opinion that they received the Holy Ghost the moment they were saved, but this simply is not the case, and scripture does not teach us this. The Apostle Paul was not confused about this either. Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, and three days later was filled with the Holy Ghost when Ananias laid hands on him for this purpose in ACTS 9:17 & 18. Notice here in ACTS 19:2 that the Apostle Paul had no doubt concerning these disciples salvation, but rather there was a question in his mind about their having received the gift of Holy Ghost, also known as The Comforter, The Spirit of Truth, The Holy Spirit; the One whom Jesus said in JOHN 16:13 that *...will guide you into all truth;...* the One whom Jesus also noted in JOHN 14:26 that *...shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* If all believers received the Holy Ghost when they believed, then why would an educated man like the Apostle Paul ask such a question as: "The Holy Ghost, have you received Him, having believed?" Brother Copley writes that "Paul knew that people did not receive Christ and the Spirit by one act of faith, as many today claim. Otherwise, his question would have been impertinent. Hence, the authorized version expresses the Apostle's meaning exactly – "*Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?*" That those twelve had believed on Jesus unto salvation, there can be no doubt. Their answer, therefore, proves that they had not yet received the Spirit. They said, nay "*...We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.*" {End of quote from Brother Copley.}

We have just shown that the gift of the Holy Ghost is given forever to those who receive this gift. And the gift of the Holy Ghost is something to be received after one becomes a believer. Let's take this discussion one step further, and examine some more about the acts of the Holy Ghost, which continue on today. The acts of the Holy Ghost are divine, and sovereign, power packed, and always glorify God. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself had told His disciples after His resurrection in LUKE 24:49 *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* The power from on high that they were endued with on the day of Pentecost was the Holy Ghost, whom Jesus had once again told them about in ACTS 1:8 just before His ascension into heaven. ACTS 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* What was the purpose of receiving Holy Ghost guided power? So that they could properly magnify, and glorify God in their witness, and testimony of Him as He guided their lives. We have evidence of this in ACTS 2 where is recorded in scripture the events of what took place on the day of Pentecost. ACTS 2:1 *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* (Those in this one place were all believers.) 2 *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.* 3 *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.* 4 *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began* (they were the first to do something) *to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* (How do we know they were filled with the Holy Ghost? Because they spoke with other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.) 5 *And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.* 6 *Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded,*

*because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* When those that were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began for the first time to speak in other languages, in other tongues, what were they speaking about? The answer is the wonderful works of God. The Holy Ghost through their tongue was magnifying God. Jesus Himself had told His disciples about speaking in new tongues in MARK 16:17 *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;... .*

All of these things that we just discussed Peter knew. However Peter still had some things to learn as he himself grew in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he was about to learn a great lifetime lesson about the Holy Ghost here in the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10. Recall that Peter had already preached a ten verse sermon here in Cornelius' house in ACTS 10:34-43, and in his mind he wasn't yet done preaching. No one in the house was prepared for what happened next. ACTS 10:44 *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.* We are told here in verse 45 that the Jews who came with Peter were astonished, but the Gentiles in Cornelius' house must have also been astounded as the Holy Ghost fell on all of them who heard Peter preach. Peter hadn't told them much about the Holy Ghost, only that ...*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power...* as is noted in ACTS 10:38. The Gentiles in Cornelius' house had no idea what had happened unto them, and as of yet they knew not that it was the gift of the Holy Ghost who was poured upon them! But Peter and those with him knew what happened unto them, and were now themselves convinced that God indeed had accepted Gentiles, and given them the very same gift of the Holy Ghost that was given unto them years earlier on the day of Pentecost back in ACTS 2. Note what it was that convinced Peter and his associates that these Gentiles had also received the gift of the Holy Ghost: ACTS 10:46 *For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.* How long this outburst of speaking in tongues, and magnifying God lasted we are not told. Probably several minutes after which Peter continued speaking in verse 47 *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* With this question those Gentiles in Cornelius' house learned what had happened unto them; they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and had spoken in tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance just like it was on the day of Pentecost!

Many of you have heard the testimony of Jerry Tabor being filled with the Holy Ghost while driving a tractor in a field back in Kansas when he was barely a teenager, if that old. The power of the Holy Ghost came upon him while thinking about, and praising the Lord while plowing a field, and suddenly he began to speak with other tongues, but he had not a clue what had happened to him. I recently asked him about this, and he told me he didn't know what happened to him that day for about ten years. Then one day in his early twenties he went to a Christian businessmen's fellowship meeting of some kind, and to begin this meeting they prayed. Jerry said he raised his hands in worship, and the same thing happened unto him as when he was on the tractor some ten years earlier, and he began to speak in tongues again. He told me that the Lord blocked his ears from hearing anything else, and when he was finished they all were looking at him. The man who brought him to the businessmen's fellowship meeting was from an Assembly of God meeting, so he explained to Jerry that he had received the Holy Ghost. Those in Cornelius' house didn't have to wait ten years to find out what happened to them, for Peter explained the gift of the Holy Ghost to them as we noted above in verse 47.

Now I know most of us have read, and studied the story of Peter going to Cornelius' house many times, but have you ever considered the bigger picture, and wondered why the gift of the Holy

Ghost was given to all of the Gentiles who were at Cornelius' house the day Peter preached unto them? There are at least two main answers to this question, and in reality there are as many answers to this question as there were Gentiles believers who received the Holy Ghost that day. I have spent a couple of weeks pondering this very question myself: why was the Holy Ghost given to the Gentile believers in Cornelius' house in such a profound, and magnificent manner as He was that day? What follows is some points we all should consider when answering this question.

There are two perspectives to consider here as we answer this question; the perspective of the Jews who were present in this assembly at Cornelius' house, and the perspective of the Gentiles, who were filled with the Holy Ghost in Cornelius' house. And again the bigger picture concerns the purpose of the Holy Ghost being sent unto those believing Gentiles in the House of Cornelius in the first place. Earlier in this study we referenced a scripture found in ISAIAH 46:10, which tells us that the LORD knows and declares *...the end from the beginning...*. We don't want to miss the big picture. The Holy Ghost is given as a gift to those who receive Him for far greater reason than just speaking in tongues, which is the sign and evidence that one has received the gift of the Holy Ghost since being saved. Jesus explained unto His disciples the purpose, and the function of the Holy Ghost unto His disciples in JOHN 14, 15, and 16. And we will review this again shortly, but the Cliff notes version is that the Holy Ghost was given to us as a Comforter, a Guide into all truth, a Teacher of all truth, a Witness of all truth, and as Paul's one hundred chapters of gospel teaches us, the Holy Ghost is the agency of the Trinity that prepares the Bride of Christ to be the Bride of Christ, the wife who has made herself ready in REVELATION 19:7. In other words the purpose of receiving the Holy Ghost is to fully prepare us for an eternal end result, which may be many years down the road from the day we receive this gift.

So back to this event when the Holy Ghost for the very first time fell upon the Gentiles, who were present in the house of Cornelius while Peter preached unto them. From the Jewish perspective, this event convinced the Jews that God indeed was no respecter of persons, and half the chapter of ACTS 11 explains this event, and concludes with this thought found in ACTS 11:18 *When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.* The Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost at Cornelius' house underlined, and highlighted the fact to the Jews that *...God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.* Down the road about ten or eleven years this very same point was the center point of attention in ACTS 15 when there was a great conference in Jerusalem concerning the point whether or not it was necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised or not in order to be saved. Paul and Barnabas were present in this assembly in ACTS 15. Let's read a few verses in ACTS 15 starting in verse 7: *And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.* (This was a reference to Peter's visit to the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10.) *8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.* You can study the events of ACTS 15 further on your own if you want.

Next consider the Gentile perspective to those filled with the Holy Ghost at the house of Cornelius in Caesarea in ACTS 10, what became of them? Specifically we are not told any more about them in scripture, or are we? The gift of Holy Ghost filled them in the house of Cornelius for some future purpose didn't He? Remember *...the end from the beginning...* statement we noted earlier in ISAIAH 46:10? Those filled with the Holy Ghost in the house of Cornelius all lived in Caesarea. We are told in scripture quite a few things about Caesarea. In ACTS 8:40 we find that Philip, one of the seven chosen with Stephen in ACTS 6, was now residing at Caesarea. In ACTS 21:8 Philip is now called an evangelist, and is still residing in Caesarea. This is about eighteen or so years after the time frame of ACTS 10. How many of the Gentiles that were filled with the Holy Ghost at the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10 came to know Philip the evangelist during these eighteen

or so years? Again scripture doesn't answer this question, but would Philip the evangelist be one who could have taught these Holy Ghost filled Gentiles the gospel? Yes indeed, and perhaps he did. In ACTS 21:8 we find our Apostle Paul staying with Philip the evangelist in Caesarea at the conclusion of his third missionary journey before continuing on to Jerusalem. In ACTS 21:15 & 16 we read: *And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.* Who were these certain of the disciples of Caesarea? Were some of them Gentiles who were filled with the Holy Ghost at Cornelius' house? Perhaps, and I wouldn't bet against it, but the scripture doesn't tell us one way or the other, so when we get to heaven we will know the answer to this question. Paul gets arrested in Jerusalem a few days later, and within a couple of weeks Paul is back in Caesarea where the governor, who was Felix, holds him prisoner. Paul ends up a prisoner in Caesarea for two years, and I want you to note what governor Felix said in ACTS 24. ACTS 24:22 *And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.* Who was this centurion now in charge of Paul? Was it Cornelius? Probably not, but I bet he knew who Cornelius was. Was this centurion one who had been at the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10 when Peter went there? Another question we will not be able to answer until we get to heaven. Notice in ACTS 24:23 that the governor allowed Paul to have his acquaintance come visit him. Philip the evangelist was one such guy. The disciples that traveled with Paul from Caesarea to Jerusalem were others who fit this category. What are the odds do you think that there were those in Caesarea who visited Paul during these two years, who were also filled with the Holy Ghost at the house of Cornelius in ACTS 10? The forward-looking Holy Ghost who knows *...the end from the beginning...* no doubt had some of the Gentiles who were filled with the Holy Ghost at the house of Cornelius come visit Paul during his two years in prison at Caesarea, and if so they got to hear from the mouth of Paul his gospel message, which would have included lessons about the Bride of Christ.

Having looked ahead to the potential that was ahead for those filled with the Holy Ghost at the house of Cornelius, let's consider some points of help from the Holy Ghost that those in the house of Cornelius now had available unto them. There are nine gifts of the Holy Ghost found in 1 CORINTHIANS 12, which was written by the Apostle Paul. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4 *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit (1) the word of wisdom; to another (2) the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another (3) faith by the same Spirit; to another (4) the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another (5) the working of miracles; to another (6) prophecy; to another (7) discerning of spirits; to another (8) divers kinds of tongues; to another (9) the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Additionally there is the nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit found in GALATIANS 5, which also was written by the Apostle Paul. GALATIANS 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is (1) love, (2) joy, (3) peace, (4) longsuffering, (5) gentleness, (6) goodness, (7) faith, 23 (8) Meekness, (9) temperance: against such there is no law.* Jesus Christ manifest these qualities, and the Bride of Christ too will manifest these very same qualities.

We are not going to dig into all nine of these nine-fold fruit of the Holy Spirit individually, but let's look at the first one, love, in a little greater detail. The Apostle Paul after listing the nine gifts of the Holy Ghost in 1 CORINTHIANS 12 wrote a whole chapter concerning love in 1 CORINTHIANS 13, where in verse 4-8 he amplified sixteen things concerning love, which is called "charity" in 1 CORINTHIANS 13. Recall that sixteen is the number of LOVE, and the Bride of Christ will also possess the qualities Paul describe in 1 CORINTHIANS 13. And it is the Holy Ghost who works these attributes into the lives of the full overcomer. 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4 *Charity*

*suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.* Let's break this down into our every day language with some additional thoughts I found in Brother Hill's notes. *Charity suffereth long...* speaks to **patience**, the "longsuffering" of GALATIANS 5:22. *Charity... is kind...* addresses **kindness**, which is akin to "gentleness" in GALATIANS 5:22. *Charity envieth not...* really shows a heart of **generosity**, which is a quality of graciousness that is also related to the "goodness" of GALATIANS 5:22. *Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...* correlates to Holy Spirit guided **humility**, which is an absence of pride. *Charity... doth not behave itself unseemly...* addresses **courtesy**, which is gracious politeness. Again it take the full overcoming power of the Holy Ghost to work these outstanding qualities of love into the heart, and life of a full overcomer. *Charity... seeketh not her own...* shows **unselfishness**. *Charity... is not easily provoked...* highlights having a **good temper**. Stated another way, don't expect a full overcomer to have temper tantrums, for doing so shows an area in ones life that still needs overcoming. *Charity... thinketh no evil...* speaks to **guilelessness**, which means being without trickery or deceit. *Charity... rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth...* expresses a heart of **sincerity** interested in all the things of the Word of God, for after all the Truth is in Jesus... EPHESIANS 4:21. Does not your heart also rejoice when you hear rightly divided truth? *Charity... beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things...* continues the thought of the all things of the Word of God, which the Holy Ghost is given to help us learn, and remember, and to love as we run our individually designed race course to win Christ. *Charity never faileth...* means that love holds it place, and accompanies us, and adorns us for eternity, and magnifies all the qualities of GALATIANS 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is (1) love, (2) joy, (3) peace, (4) longsuffering, (5) gentleness, (6) goodness, (7) faith, 23 (8) Meekness, (9) temperance: against such there is no law.*

There are also nine offices of the Holy Ghost. (1) The Holy Ghost is the reprover (the concivtor, the one who brings to light) the following three things found in JOHN 16. JOHN 16:8 *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* (2) The Holy Ghost is the agent of the new birth. JOHN 3:5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (3) The Holy Ghost is a witness to son-ship. ROMANS 8:16 (from a Paraphrased version) *For His Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts, and tells us that we are the children of God.* (4) The Holy Ghost is the Comforter. JOHN 14:26 *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. JOHN 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. JOHN 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. JOHN 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.* (5) The Holy Ghost is our guide and teacher into all of the truth. JOHN 16:13 *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.* The blind need some kind of guide to be their eyes, and this is one aspect of what the Holy Ghost is to us. The Holy Ghost, among His many other duties, is to open spiritual eyes, and shew you things to come; things that it takes spiritual eyes to see. JOHN 14:26 *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the*



*Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* (6) The Holy Ghost is the director of ministers. ACTS 13:1 *Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. 4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. ACTS 16:6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.* There are many other scriptures that also point out how the Holy Ghost is the director of ministers. (7) The Holy Ghost is the inspirer of scriptures. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 PETER 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. ACTS 1:16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.* (8) The Holy Ghost is the distributor of the nine gifts we read about in 1 CORINTHIANS 12. (9) The Holy Ghost is the agency of the trinity who calls and prepares the Bride to forever be the wife of Jesus. Many scriptures bring this point out, but for so many not filled with the Holy Ghost, these things are hidden in the shadows, and not seen by uninspired eyes. One example of this is the story of a bride for Isaac in GENESIS 24. Few realize that this story of GENESIS 24 is but a type and shadow of the preparing of a bride for our heavenly Isaac, Jesus. Long ago we did a study on GENESIS 24, and found that there were nine things given of Abraham's servant (typical of the Holy Ghost in that chapter) to Rebekah (the bride to be) in GENESIS 24. Abraham's servant gave Rebekah (1) an earring, (2) two bracelets, (3) jewels of silver, (4) jewels of gold, (5) raiment, (6) camels to ride, (7) abundant provisions for the long journey, (8) instructions concerning Isaac, (9) and ultimately through all kinds of obstacles, he guided her to him. Again, The Holy Ghost is the one who prepares the Bride of Christ to rule and reign with Him.

So to summarize, those filled with the Holy Ghost at Cornelius' house the day Peter visited them were now equipped with power to become full overcomers, and if they lived some twenty more years beyond this day, they too had opportunity to hear, and learn Paul's gospel message. To my way of thinking, I think they received the gift of the Holy Ghost to prepare them for that time. Whether that was the case, or not, still the Holy Ghost was a Guide, and a Teacher, and a Comforter unto them as they grew in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let's finish our story of Peter in ACTS 10. Having witnessed this remarkable event in the house of Cornelius, when for the first time the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentile believers there present, Peter asks in ACTS 10:47 *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.* So we see that Peter commanded them to be baptized in water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Evidently it was the six brethren with him who did the baptizing. Afterward Peter stayed with them for a while.

How long Peter stayed with these Gentiles in the house of Cornelius we are not told, however the news of Peter going to the house of a Gentile traveled the sixty-five mile distance from Caesarea to Jerusalem faster than Peter did as is evidenced in the first three verses of ACTS 11. ACTS 11:1 *And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, 3 Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.* We see here that Peter's associates in Jerusalem were of the same mindset that Peter was before going to the house of Cornelius. So Peter went over the events we just read in ACTS 10 with them, and in so doing we see

that Peter educated his Jewish audience about the Gentiles, and how God truly is no respecter of persons. ACTS 11:4 *But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, 5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: 6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. 8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. 9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. 11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. 12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. 16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? 18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

We have extensively covered a lot of background information concerning the Apostle Peter, and from the time Peter was introduced to Jesus in JOHN 1 until these events of ACTS 10 & 11 as much as twelve to fourteen years may have elapsed. There is about three or four more years until we read of the events found in ACTS 12, where we read our last **midnight** Bible story concerning Peter. History records that Herod Agrippa I died in 44 A.D., so Peter's **midnight** Bible story occurs within the year before this grandson of Herod the Great died.

The first five verses of ACTS 12 are introductory to our **midnight** Bible story. ACTS 12:1 *Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. 2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. 3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. 5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*

The setting of these events is in Jerusalem where Peter resided, as did the other Kingdom Apostles. In ACTS 12:1 we read "now about that time," which is a time reference to the events in the previous verses of ACTS 11 while Saul of Tarsus and Barnabas were at Antioch, Syria collecting relief for those in Jerusalem, and you can read those verses on your own. While Saul of Tarsus and Barnabas were still in Antioch, *...Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.* Luke, the writer of ACTS, assumes the reader knows who Herod the king is, however we may not be as familiar with this Herod the king as Luke was. We mentioned briefly above that Herod the king referenced here is Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, who was called Herod the king in MATTHEW 2, the same guy, who killed all the children under two years old after learning from the wise men that there was another born King of the Jews, who of course was Jesus. Herod Agrippa I was his grandson, and he was just as cruel, and vindictive. It was by appointment from the Caesar at Rome, Caligula, that Herod Agrippa I was appointed king of Judea in 41 A.D., where he ruled until his death in 44 A.D. These rulers were headquartered in Caesarea, but often made visits to Jerusalem especially at the times of the Jewish traditional festivals. Herod Agrippa I main job was to keep the peace, meaning that if there was anything troubling the Jewish population, appeasing them was in his best interest. The church referenced here in ACTS 12:1 was the assembly in Jerusalem, which was previously persecuted by Saul of Tarsus in ACTS 8:1. The word "vex" here in verse 1 means to bring harm, and Herod Agrippa I was intent on killing certain of this Jerusalem

church, such as their leaders. Let's think about this for a moment. Obviously Herod the king wouldn't himself lay hands on any of the Apostles himself, but rather he would encourage his soldiers, or his servants to do this evil in an effort to destroy the chief leaders of the church in Jerusalem, thus in his mind appeasing the majority of the Jewish population. In ACTS 12:2 Herod the king *...killed James the brother of John with the sword.* We were introduced to this Apostle James in MATTHEW 10:2, which reads: *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.* Peter, Andrew, James and John were partners in the fishing business before Jesus said unto them in MARK 1:17 *...Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.* James the son of Zebedee, and the brother of John becomes the first martyr among the Kingdom Apostles. We read next in ACTS 12:3 that Herod *...because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.* This was the third arrest of Peter recorded in scripture, adding to the long list of "threes" associated with Peter. His first arrest is recorded in ACTS 4:3; the second in ACTS 5:18; and now the third arrest of Peter is here in ACTS 12:3 & 4. You can bet that the bloodthirsty Sanhedrin who had Jesus crucified, and had Stephen stoned, also very much approved of Herod's actions here.

The parenthetical statement that ends ACTS 12:3 further narrows down the time of Peter's imprisonment: *(Then were the days of unleavened bread.)* EXODUS 12:15 & 19 defines the seven days of unleavened bread during which time after the killing and eating of the Passover no leaven was allowed in the houses of the children of Israel. LUKE 22:1 mentions the feast of unleavened bread, stating: *Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.* It's been a while since we have had a discussion on the meaning of "leaven," and "unleavened" bread, which Peter and the Apostles, including Paul were very familiar with the meaning thereof. The word "leaven" is found 23 times in the King James version of the Bible. "Leaven" speaks of corruption. The number 23 is a number associated with DEATH. By contrast "unleavened" then would speak of incorruption or the incorruptible, which again points us to Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. The words "incorruption," and "incorruptible" point us to eternal things, which are only obtainable by belief in Christ Jesus. It is no wonder then that after our **midnight** Bible story of ACTS 12 that Peter would have a better appreciation the incorruptibility of Christ, which he also wrote about in 1 PETER. 1 PETER 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ...23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Unleavened bread then is bread that is uncorrupted by a leavening agent. Scripture tells us that we are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity, which figures that corrupting leavening agent (sin); that old nature we are born with. (PSALMS 51:5 *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*) In other words we are born a leavened lump. To become an unleavened lump, one needs to be born again, thus putting on the new man, which is Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. EPHESIANS 4:24 tells us: *...that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 further states: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* Paul puts all of these thoughts together into one statement when he writes in 1 CORINTHIANS 5:7 & 8 -- *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* Thus we see that the unleavened bread pictures Christ Jesus, a fact that Jesus Himself explained in JOHN 6. JOHN 6:32 *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34 Then said*

*they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

ACTS 12:4 contains considerable introductory information. ACTS 12:4 *And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.* We find here that Herod the king had Peter arrested, and put him in prison under the watchful eye of four quaternions of soldiers. A “quaternion” was a company of four soldiers, thus four “quaternions” would be sixteen soldiers. The Romans divided the night into four watches of three hours each. So each quaternion would be relieved every three hours. Two of the four in a quaternion would be inside the cell with Peter, and the other two outside the prison door keeping watch. Easter here means after the Passover. After the Passover Herod Agrippa I intended to bring Peter to a trial before the people, meaning before the Jews. The reason Herod the king didn’t bring Peter to trial when he was apprehended was because of the serious nature of the services being observed by the Jews during the days of unleavened bread, during which time it would have been deemed improper to have a trial of such a high profile figure as was Peter.

ACTS 12:5 finishes our introduction to this **midnight** Bible story. ACTS 12:5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.* Peter was kept in prison waiting for the time of the Passover feast to be over, and we will discuss this further in the next verse. We also read here in verse 5 *...but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.* There is a saying in football that the best offence is a good defense. The Saints at Jerusalem had the best defense, for they knew the Lord was their defender, and their deliverer, and the only One who could deliver Peter from this seemingly impossible situation. Seemingly impossible situations is exactly what God specializes in. LUKE 1:37 tells us: *For with God nothing shall be impossible.* Moses leading approximately three million through the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh’s pursuing army was a seemingly impossible situation, but not for God. The LORD *...is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...* according to EPHESIANS 3:20. LUKE 18:27 further explains: *...The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.* In JEREMIAH 32:27 we read this statement: *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?* This statement is first recorded in GENESIS 18 where it was thought impossible for a ninety-year old woman to have a son, but in GENESIS 18:14 the LORD announces His miraculous intentions to Abraham and Sarah saying: *Is any thing too hard for the LORD?* A year later Isaac was born to Sarah, who was then 90 years old! Do you realize Sarah wasn’t the oldest woman in scripture recorded to have a child? Think about that for a moment, then read the following verses in GENESIS 4 & 5. In GENESIS 4:25 we read: *And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.* Now read GENESIS 5:3 *And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.* So how old was Eve when Seth was born, for it was Eve who had Seth according to GENESIS 4:25? If Adam was a hundred and thirty years old when Seth was born, so was Eve. Think about it. Moving on, it was impossible for Gideon’s three hundred men to defeat the multitude of the Midianites, but by following the Lord’s instructions they did defeat them. We have mentioned this before in this study, that we will face many **midnight** impossible situations in our walk by faith with the Lord, but God takes us through each and every impossibility. 2 CHRONICLES 20:15, ends with these words *...for the battle is not yours, but God’s.* Again we are told in ACTS 12:5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison:...* and it was Herod’s intention to have him killed after Easter. To prevent Peter from ever escaping there were sixteen soldiers assigned to him. In other words it was seemingly impossible for Peter to escape Herod’s prison.

Again ACTS 12:5 ends with this statement: *...but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.* Only faith in God, and His infinite ability could deliver Peter from Herod’s prison. The Lord was Peter’s defender, and his deliverer. David centuries before had written many statements in the PSALMS about the Lord being his best defense, and I am confident that Peter, and

the Saints at Jerusalem, who were now praying without ceasing for Peter's deliverance, also knew these very same scriptures, which we are about to read. PSALMS 7:10 *My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.* PSALMS 18:2 *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* A "buckler" is a shield, a defense in other words. PSALMS 18:30 *As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.* PSALMS 31:2 *Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.* PSALMS 59:9 *Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.* PSALMS 59:16 *But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.* PSALMS 62:2 *He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.* PSALMS 62:6 *He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved.* PSALMS 84:11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.* PSALMS 89:18 *For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.* PSALMS 94:22 *But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge.* We referenced these scriptures to reinforce the thought that the best offence is a good defense, and our defense is founded upon the foundation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who also is our deliverer as David learned about three thousand years ago. PSALMS 144 is also a Psalm of David, and in PSALMS 144:1 & 2 Old Testament worthy of faith David tells us: *Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: 2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.* Solomon later wrote: PROVERBS 30:5 *Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.* In the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of HEBREWS our Apostle Paul wrote a chapter on living by faith in God, who specializes in the impossible, and in HEBREWS 11:6 makes this statement: HEBREWS 11:6 *...without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Those in ACTS 12:5 who were praying for Peter, were diligently, and earnestly praying for his deliverance from Herod's prison. And they had also been taught by the Apostles the very same fact that is written by the Apostle John in 1 JOHN 4:4, which states: *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

You have probably read ACTS 12 a number of times by now, and are very familiar with this **midnight** Bible story of Peter in Herod's prison. And before we read ACTS 12:6 I want to remind each of us about another statement Brother Hill often repeated, and that is "the Lord is seldom early, and never late." What does that mean? The life we live by faith must be "looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith" as is taught to us in HEBREWS 12:2. It is the Lord who designed our individual race course, the path in life He foreordained we should walk, so in order to be the full overcomer He wants us to become by faith, we must be tested; we must have our faith, and our patience pushed to the limit, and this is so often what we see in these **midnight** Bible stories.

Lest you think our faith, and our patience are not correlated, let's review what is written in JAMES 1:2-4. JAMES 1:2 *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (various kinds of trials and test) 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* The Apostle Paul expressed this very same thought in ROMANS 5:3 writing: *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience.* Nowhere in scripture are we encouraged to pray for patience, for by doing so we are really asking for more trials. However patience is going to be a common commodity possessed by all full overcomers, for all worthies of faith will have been tested to perfection. If you are truly "looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith" as is taught us in HEBREWS 12:2, then your focus is upon the Lord, and upon things above. The Apostle Paul wrote some more about this in 2 THESSALONIANS 3:5 stating: *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* The love of God has no bounds, no limitations, no restrictions, and in trying to describe this for us the Apostle Paul

wrote in ROMANS 8, after years of having his own heart directed into the love of God, and probing the Lord's bounds of love: 38 *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Here we see Paul encouraging us to keep looking unto Christ Jesus our Lord in everything! Furthermore 2 THESSALONIANS 3:5 opens the door *...into the love of God..* that the Philadelphian Saint walks through, which allows the Lord to direct their hearts *...into the patient waiting for Christ... !*

We read about the Philadelphian church in REVELATION 3:7-13, where we are taught the qualities of the full overcomers from this Church Age, who have let the Lord direct their hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ that we have been discussing in 2 THESSALONIANS 3:5. REVELATION 3:7 & 8 states: *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* The Lord Jesus is *...he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth...* . A key as described here is a badge of power, or authority, and as such it opens doors, by faith, and through faith, even locked prison doors such as held Peter in ACTS 12. It was the Lord who gave David the keys to the kingdom of Israel, making him king, because he was a man after God's own heart, a man of faith, who, even as a youth, slew Goliath, believing God would enable him to do the seemingly impossible. REVELATION 3:10 further explains more about the patience of the full overcomer, where Jesus Himself states: *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.* "The word of my patience" Jesus talks about here is The Word of God, which is another name for Jesus Himself according to REVELATION 19:13. The Word of God is the scriptures, our Bible in other words, which Jesus referenced in REVELATION 3:8 when He stated *...for thou hast... ..kept my word,...* . Paul acknowledged the importance of learning, and knowing scripture, the word of God, in several places. For example in ROMANS 15:4 he wrote: *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* So we can think of what is being said in 2 THESSALONIANS 3:5 like this: *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God,... into ...the word of God... ..that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope... ..into the patient waiting for Christ.* The first assumption we correctly make concerning *...the patient waiting for Christ...* concerns Jesus soon coming, whose return we all should be patiently waiting for. Jesus coming to catch His Bride away will be the greatest event of this Church Age, for which a small rib company of Saints are patiently waiting. Their focus is upon Jesus in every thing, which brings us to the second and most important point of this statement: *And the Lord direct your hearts into the... ..patient waiting for Christ.* The Philadelphian Saint has learned from studying, and learning the word of God, especially Paul's one hundred chapters of gospel, to let the Lord direct their hearts into the patient waiting for Christ in everything; in every event that is in their life, including the darkest of **midnight** times!

Again it was the darkest of times that brought forth the hero's of faith in HEBREWS 11, and very often it was at this darkest **midnight** hour that the Lord gave the deliverance. Thus Brother Hill's reminder: "the Lord is seldom early, and never late." We know we want an answer to our prayer, and we want it right now, but "*...the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...*" is a time tested statement written by Peter after he went through many **midnight** situations in his walk with the Lord. Peter wrote this in 1 PETER 1:7, and the **midnight** Bible story of Peter in Herod's prison in ACTS 12 was one of those times when "the Lord is seldom early, and never late." Let's now read ACTS 12:6 *And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same **night** Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the*



*keepers before the door kept the prison.* Herod's intentions was to bring Peter forth unto the people after the Passover was complete, and have him put to death before their eyes. This was going to be Peter's last **night** in prison according to Herod's way of thinking, and according to the Lord's way of thinking also. The Lord wasn't finished with Peter yet, and *...because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world...* as we noted earlier in 1 JOHN 4:4, Herod's wishes for Peter were not going to come true. The Lord held the keys to Peter's chains, and the keys to the prison cell door, and to the iron gate of the city, not Herod. Note what PSALMS 37:7 says: *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.* Do you think Peter knew this verse? Only the Lord knows the answer to this question, however Peter certainly knew the principle of this verse, and even in his adversity he had no problem sleeping, even while being chained between two soldiers. Peter could sleep here because his confidence was in the Lord. Remember there were sixteen soldiers assigned to Peter, four for each watch in the night. Two soldiers would be outside the cell keeping watch, and they would be the keepers referenced in ACTS 12:6. The other two soldiers would be on either side of Peter, each chained to one of his hands. So at this darkest **midnight** hour Peter was sleeping, resting in total confidence in the Lord.

Recall back in ACTS 5 during the time of his second imprisonment how Peter escaped. ACTS 5:17 *Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, 18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19 But the angel of the Lord by **night** opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.* Here in ACTS 5 it was the angel of the Lord, who at a **midnight** hour unlocked the prison doors. Now let's read what happened in ACTS 12:7-10. ACTS 12:7 *And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.*

By now you know we are not going to rush through this portion of scripture without further examination, because we don't want to miss anything important to our spiritual growth, and every word in the Word of God is important. ACTS 12:7 begins with: "**And, behold,**" which in itself is significant, because the Lord wants us to see something here; to behold something important that we might otherwise miss. There are 285 '**and, (comma) behold**' statements written in our King James Version of scripture, and they are all written to emphasize an imperative point of knowledge in God's timing that we should regard, cherish, and pay attention to. In other words "**and, behold,**" should cause us to pause, and focus for a moment so that we can see with our Holy Ghost enlightened eyes of faith the detailed behind the curtain scenes of intricate moments that should take our breath away. Many of these "**and, behold,**" moments in scripture occur during the darkest times of **midnight** tests and trials. Additionally some of these "**and, behold,**" moments found in scripture underline the depths of the love of God, and how close attention He pays to our every second here on earth.

We noted an "**and, behold,**" moment earlier in this study when we had a brief discussion concerning Old Testament full overcomer Joshua. As the Lord's main representative in the book of JOSHUA we pointed out that Joshua's name means "Jehovah is salvation." When the two spies in their **midnight Bible** story returned from Jericho with their report from Rahab, Joshua and the children of Israel were east of the Jordan River. They crossed over the Jordan in JOSHUA 3, and by JOSHUA 5:13 they were next to Jericho, where again we read the following account concerning Joshua. JOSHUA 5:13 *And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, **and, behold,** {pay close attention to this moment is what the Holy Ghost is telling us here} there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto*

him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? 14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? 15 And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. Who is the Captain of the Lord's host? Is it not our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself? The Captain of the Lord's host, who is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, was here emphasizing to Joshua that "Jehovah is salvation."

Elijah is an Old Testament worthy of faith not mentioned by name in HEBREWS 11, but only is referenced in HEBREWS 11 as one of the prophets. 1 KINGS 19 tells of a dark **midnight** time in Elijah's life when his faith needed greatly encouraged. There are four "**and, behold,**" moments recorded in 1 KINGS 19, which further underline the depths of the love of God, and how close attention He pays to our every second here on earth. We will briefly look at three of these "**and, behold,**" moments starting in 1 KINGS 19:9 where we find Elijah very discouraged, and at such a dark **midnight** time in his life that he has fled a forty days journey unto Horeb, the mount of God, thinking among other things that he was the only one left in all of Israel who had not bowed unto Baal. The forty days journey is further evidence that it was a great time of testing in Elijah's life. 1 KINGS 19:9 *And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: 12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. 13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? 14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.* It took these "**and, behold,**" moments to get Elijah to listen unto the still small voice of the Lord, who then gave him further instructions to "Go, return," and continue his walking with the Lord, and continue following the Lord's instructions, and by the way Elijah: *Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him...* 1 KINGS 19:18. Another thing that came out of the Lord's discussion with Elijah in 1 KINGS 18 was Elisha, whom the Lord chose to follow as the prophet after Elijah was off the scene. As for Elijah he continued his walking with the Lord by faith, and we read in 2 KINGS 2:11 the following about Elijah, and Elisha, who were walking together: *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

We can think of these "**and, behold,**" moments found in scripture as points highlighted by the Holy Ghost; important points that we should take note of, and learn from, for again *...For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope...* ROMANS 15:4. Full overcomer Elisha learned from Elijah to be a man of faith, and he learned to see things by faith the same way God sees things. In 2 KINGS 6:15-17 the servant of Elisha woke up one day to find that they were surrounded by a large host with both horses and chariots, and being greatly outnumbered in this seemingly impossible situation we read: *...And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.* Elisha's eyes were not focused upon the circumstance, but rather were clearly focused upon the Lord, as must

be the case with all full overcomers, who then see victory rather than defeat. All full overcomers learn to see things the way God sees things, and the only way to do this is with eyes of faith. As we noted above in 2 KINGS 2:11 that Elisha witnessed the translation of Elijah. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself gives us a similar encouragement in REVELATION 22. REVELATION 22:12 *And, behold, {pay close attention for this moment} I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

Back to our **midnight** Bible story of ACTS 12, where we are reminded in ACTS 12:5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.* About twenty years beyond this time frame when Peter was kept in prison the Holy Ghost encouraged Peter to write us the following encouragement found in 1 PETER 4:12 & 13 -- *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.* This fiery trial Peter was going through here in ACTS 12 enabled Peter to write what he did in 1 PETER 4:12 & 13. And Peter was so focused upon the Lord here in Herod's prison that he had no problem sleeping, knowing that the Lord was in charge of his current circumstance. Please notice that in this **midnight** Bible story we do not read of Peter praying for his own escape, though he very well may have been praying for this. Peter had no problem sleeping rather comfortably here in the dark **midnight** prison cell knowing very assuredly that the Lord was the One in charge here. Meanwhile at this dark **midnight** hour, the church in Jerusalem was praying without ceasing for Peter, and again we find stated in ACTS 12:7 *And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.* This is quite a scene for us to behold, and there are several things taking place in this verse as the Lord answered their prayers. The angel of the Lord at this dark **midnight** hour suddenly was present with Peter, lighting up the prison! This must have been a stealthy light only discernable by Peter, for we do not read of the Roman soldiers being disturbed by this light. Furthermore they were not aware that Peter's chains had been loosed. Note it was the angel of the Lord who aroused Peter from his **midnight** sleep, and raised him up, and made Peter aware to get swiftly moving using the words: *Arise up quickly.*

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 TIMOTHY 4:8 to *...love His appearing...* . That encouragement is a sermon in itself, and part of loving His appearing is hearing His voice. Saul of Tarsus heard His voice on the road to Damascus, and became the Apostle Paul by heeding the Lord's instructions. Part of the Lord's instructions to us were written by the Apostle Paul in his one hundred chapters of New Testament scripture that he penned. And Paul wrote how we too will hear words similar to what Peter heard from the angel of the Lord: *...Arise up quickly!* Paul wrote about this in 1 THESSALONIANS 4. 1 THESSALONIANS 4:14 *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.* Recall what is said in the SONG OF SOLOMON 2:10 *My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.* Do you *...love His appearing...* and are you in tune with His voice? In our **midnight** Bible story here in ACTS 12, Peter's escape from Herod's prison took place after Peter heeded the angel of the Lord's instructions: *Arise up quickly.* Divine power, not natural means were used here showing the ease with which God can deliver from danger. As for Peter we read: *And his chains fell off from his hands.* There are a couple of miracles here, which can only be attributed to God. No doubt there was some kind of lock that kept the chains in place, which were unlocked by the angel, and when the chains then fell off there wasn't enough noise made, if any, that would have aroused the soldiers from their slumber. Obviously they didn't feel that Peter was an

escape artist, and thus they felt they could rest at ease not imagining any way that Peter could possibly escape, thus God gave them deep sleep.

With Peter now free from his chains ACTS 12:8 continues this **midnight** Bible story: *And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.* Peter was undressed to sleep, thus he needed to get dressed is what the angel was telling him to do. So Peter tightened his loose inner garment, and put on his sandals. Then the angel told Peter put on the rest of his garment, which he did. Peter now fully dressed was then instructed by the angel to “follow me.” These were familiar words to Peter, for we have previously noted that there were three different occasions where Peter was told of Jesus to “follow me,” which Peter had done. Initially in MATTHEW 4:19 Peter was told by Jesus to *...Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.* Peter had followed Jesus from that time forward, and had become prominent among the Kingdom Apostles, and the one who took the leadership roll after the resurrection of Jesus. By following Jesus, and His instructions, all of the Kingdom Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and Peter was the first one of them to preach a Holy Ghost inspired sermon. By following Jesus, Peter in the name of Jesus, had performed untold miracles, and by continuing to follow Jesus Peter had led thousands to the Lord. He was a true fisher of men. Following the instructions of the Lord Peter had been the first of the Apostles to preach unto the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. So now when the Lord sent His angel to Peter’s prison cell, Peter would have no problem following the angels instructions to “follow me.”

ACTS 12:9 *And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.* The word “wist,” and the phrase “wist not” are pretty much foreign to us, not being a common part of our every day language. The thought conveyed here is one of perception, which is to say not being able to discern the difference between reality, and what one would see in a dream, or a vision. The Apostle Paul had this very same kind of situation several times in his life of not being able to discern the difference from a in the body experience, or an out of the body experience, kind of like what Peter was going through here in our **midnight** Bible story. Paul wrote this in 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1 *It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.* Peter was in this same situation not being able to tell if he was having an out of the body experience, or not. Paul also wrote in 2 CORINTHIANS 1:9 & 10 an encouragement about trusting God, saying: *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;... .* In our **midnight** story of ACTS 12, Peter was facing death the next morning, having the sentence of death put on him by Herod, but Peter was also trusting in the same God Paul wrote about here in 2 CORINTHIANS 1, who raiseth the dead.

Here in ACTS 12:9 we also read that Peter *...thought he saw a vision...* not yet realizing what was happening unto him, that was *... was done by the angel...* was indeed true. We have found in this study that Peter was an eyewitness to many incredible things up to this point in his life. How many miracles had he eye witnessed in his life? This would be impossible for us to answer because only the Lord knows the answer to these kind of questions. Let’s take a moment to go back and quickly mention one incident of the incredible thing Peter witnessed while Jesus was still here on earth; an event Peter later wrote about. We will go to LUKE 9, and read some verses about the transfiguration of Jesus, which is also found in MATTHEW 17, and MARK 9. LUKE 9:28 *And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. 30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: 31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*

*32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. (Talk about a wake-up call.) 33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. 34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen. You can study these verses out further on your own, but let's now turn to 2 PETER 1, and see what Peter decades later wrote about this incredible event. 2 PETER 1:15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. 16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. Peter never forgot that moment.*

Again Peter had eye witnessed some incredible things in his walk with the Lord adding to the list of the many ***“and, behold,”*** moments found in scripture as points highlighted by the Holy Ghost for our learning. Let's read our text again realizing what we are reading about really happened, but Peter thought he was seeing a vision. ACTS 12:7 *And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. 8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. 9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.*

The facts found in verse 10 follow. The angel of the Lord safely led Peter by two watches set within the prison, an impossible feat without the tender loving guiding care of God. Next came *...the iron gate that leadeth unto the city.* This gate was strongly plated with iron for greater security. Not a secure gate for the angel of the Lord however, for this iron gate *...opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.* The business of the angel of the Lord was to set Peter free from Herod's prison, which was now completed, so Peter was free, and there was no need for the angel's assistance any further, *...and forthwith the angel departed from him.* “Forthwith” also means immediately, so as quickly as the angel of the Lord came upon Peter, just as fast he departed.

It is still a **midnight** hour when we read in ACTS 12:11 *And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.* The events of ACTS 12:7-10 when the angel of the Lord came upon Peter happened in rapid succession. We are not told if these events happened in real time, or in a blink of time. Either way was possible with God. We do know from reading all of this that after the angel left, and Peter was come to himself, that Peter was left in a moment of bewilderment reflecting back on what had just happened unto him in such rapid succession. Notice that he was not dazed and confused, or startled, but rather he quickly ascertained where he was, and what he was doing there. What he thought was a vision was indeed reality, not a dream or an illusion. Reflecting back on all of this Peter said: *...Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.* Peter's words here were really a thanksgiving to God, and if you study this close, you will see these words were indeed a statement of faith. Peter knew of a “surety,” that is of a truth, or most certainly that he had been delivered out of Herod's grip without a thought or worry about being recaptured. God did not send His angel to free Peter so that Peter would later be

recaptured; that's not the way God works. JOHN 8:36 *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.* Peter was free indeed. Oh Herod would search for Peter as ACTS 12:19 will tell us, but Peter knew he was under God's protection, and that there was no way Herod would be a further threat to him.

Our **midnight** Bible story continues in ACTS 12:12 where we learn some interesting information that connects a few dots of scripture for us. ACTS 12:12 *And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.* John, whose surname was Mark, has quite a history in New Testament scripture. We find John, whose surname was Mark, several times in scripture under the following names: John, whose surname was Mark; Mark; and Marcus. In our life of the Apostle Paul study we often referred to him as John Mark, and had a whole chapter about him in that study. John, whose surname was Mark, is first mentioned in scripture here in ACTS 12:12. Here's a point that we probably haven't covered for a while, and that is John Mark's Mother had a brother named Barnabas. We read this in COLOSSIANS 4:10 *Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;).* So John, whose surname was Mark, had an uncle named Barnabas. We have already read a couple of scriptures about Barnabas here in ACTS. We were introduced to Barnabas in ACTS 4. ACTS 4:36 *And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.* Barnabas was known as the man of encouragement, for that was one of the meanings of his name. Here Barnabas first encouraged the Apostles by selling some land and bringing the proceeds to the Apostles. In ACTS 9 when Saul of Tarsus first returned to Jerusalem it was Barnabas, the man of encouragement, who introduced Saul of Tarsus to the Apostles. It was Barnabas, the man of encouragement, who introduced Saul of Tarsus to the disciples at the church in Antioch, Syria where they were first called Christians in ACTS 11:25. It was Barnabas, the man of encouragement, who first went with Saul of Tarsus on a missionary journey unto the Gentiles from Antioch, Syria in ACTS 13, where we find Saul of Tarsus name changed to Paul in verse 9, and Paul and Barnabas were first called Apostles in ACTS 14:4. Back to ACTS 12, when Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their relief ministry to Jerusalem we read in ACTS 12:25 *And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.* When Paul and Barnabas started their first missionary journey in ACTS 13, we read in ACTS 13:5 *...and they had also John to their minister.* John, whose surname was Mark, journey with Paul and Uncle Barnabas only lasted until ACTS 13:13 where, while in Pamphylia, we read: *...and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.* John Mark is next mentioned in ACTS 15:36-39. ACTS 15:36 *And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus.* After the split between Paul and Barnabas over John, whose surname was Mark, Barnabas then taught John Mark the gospel of Paul. Barnabas being a man of encouragement, as he got older, it seems he encouraged John Mark to seek out the Apostle Paul, which he did several years after the split between Paul and Barnabas. How, or when, or by what manner we are not told, but Paul and John Mark come together again, this time as a team, and working in conjunction with the Holy Ghost we find John Mark being profitable to Paul in his later ministry. Paul writes this in his last epistle of 2 TIMOTHY in chapter 4 verse 11: *...Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* John, whose surname was Mark, wrote us a gospel record entitled The Gospel According to St. Mark. Was it the Apostle Paul who encouraged John Mark to write The Gospel According to St. Mark? We will know the answer when we get to heaven. Obviously the Holy Ghost encouraged John Mark to write The Gospel According to St. Mark, and thus we all benefit from John, whose surname was Mark ministry.



Back here in ACTS 12:12 we first find John, whose surname was Mark, associated with the church at Jerusalem. Again John, whose surname was Mark, Mothers name was Mary. It was at the house of Mary, John Mark's Mother, and Barnabas' sister ...*where many were gathered together praying...* at this **midnight** hour. We are not told whether John, whose surname was Mark was here in his Mother's house at this time, or not. Furthermore we are not told if any of the other Kingdom Apostles were there either. As for Peter the subject of this **midnight** Bible story, when he came to himself he must have realized he was near Mary's house, the Mother of John, whose surname was Mark, so he went there. We also learn here that John Mark knew Peter, and no doubt John Mark knew the rest of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb also. Peter himself points out the fact that he knew John Mark in 1 PETER 5:13 stating: *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.* (The words ...*my son*... here means a close follower in the faith, and not a natural son. My son is an expression that Paul also used a couple of different times in referring to those men who were begotten in the faith due to his ministry. An example of this is found in PHILEMON 1:10 *I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds...*.) Thus we note that John Mark, John, whose surname was Mark, also called Marcus, was a follower of Peter from the early years of his ministry, as was Barnabas, and his sister Mary, who was the Mother of John, whose surname was Mark.

With this background information, ACTS 12:12 has a little more meaning. ACTS 12:12 *And when he (Peter) had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.* We are told that many were gathered together there at John Mark's Mothers house praying, and they were praying for Peter as was also mentioned in ACTS 12:5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*

By ACTS 12:13 Peter was at the door of Mary, John Mark's Mothers house, and it was still a **midnight** hour. ACTS 12:13 *And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to harken, named Rhoda.* A young girl named Rhoda did what? She came to harken; she came to listen in other words; she didn't come to open the door in the middle of the night, but she came to listen to who was on the other side. Rhoda's name means a rose. God sent Peter a rose at this **midnight** hour. Rhoda didn't open the door for Peter, but she did hear Peter's voice. She came to harken, and she heard Peter's voice. Obviously she had heard Peter's unmistakable voice before, and she knew what Peter's voice sounded like. She knew Peter's voice. Let's read on: ACTS 12:14 *And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.* This is a very interesting scene, and should bring a smile to your face. We learn here that Peter had come to a very familiar place, the house of Mary, John Mark's Mother, and the young maiden named Rhoda was very familiar with the Apostle Peter, and even recognized his voice. Inside the house Rhoda knew that they were praying without ceasing for Peter, and now she heard Peter's voice, and was so over joyed with excitement, that, in her haste, she opened not the gate to let Peter in. Peter must have been somewhat perplexed as Rhoda failed to let him inside the gate. This scene was a test; not for Peter so much as it was for those inside the house. Rhoda ran into the house and announced that ...*Peter stood before the gate.*

Recall again what we read in ACTS 12:5 *Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.* Part of the church, who were praying for Peter, were assembled at Mary the Mother of John Mark's house. And they were praying without ceasing ACTS 12:5 tells us. What were they praying for? Peter's release from prison, or Peter's safe keeping, or what? What kind of answer were they expecting from their continual prayer for Peter? Let's review some of Jesus own teaching on this subject, which subject those praying in Mary's house had also been taught. Jesus taught in MATTHEW 6:7 *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.* In MARK 11:24 Jesus taught: *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* Here we learn the key to receiving an answer to our prayers is believing God to answer our requests. Jesus stated in MATTHEW 21:22 *And all*

*things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Jesus also said in JOHN 14:14 *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* Do you remember what an “I will” statement from the Lord is? It’s a promise, and each one of the “I will” statements from God in scripture is a promise. 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20 tells us: *For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.* Each of the “I will” statements from God in scripture are promises from God, and it is impossible for God to lie, so His promises are indeed true. Let’s read JOHN 14:14 again, which is Jesus own words: *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* That’s a promise. When Jesus’ disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, LUKE 11:2 tells us: *And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.* Interestingly we only find the phrase “thy will” seven times in scripture, showing us, in part, a glimpse of the SPIRITUAL PERFECTION, and SPIRITUAL COMPLETION that takes place in our heart when we sincerely pray in earnest “*Thy will be done.*” If we pray like we should “*Thy will be done,*” we are not praying ‘my will be done.’ When we pray “*Thy will be done,*” it is like grabbing a hold of the hand of God, and agreeing with Him that ...*with God all things are possible...* MATTHEW 19:26. When we pray “*Thy will be done,*” we are asking Him to perfect a good work in us that will go on developing until the day of Jesus Christ. {Study PHILIPPIANS 1:6.} The Apostle Paul expressed it like this in a prayer of his recorded in HEBREWS 13:20 *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* The point of reviewing all of these scriptures is to point out that we should not be astonished when, or how the Lord answers our prayers, and does the impossible, but we should expect Him to answer our prayers according to His will, and not ours.

Let’s now see in scripture the answer to the question we asked above: what kind of answer were those praying for Peter expecting from their continual prayer? It was still a very dark **midnight** hour for them also when Rhoda ...*ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate...* in ACTS 12:14. ACTS 12:15 *And they said unto her, Thou art mad.* Look up the meaning here and see that they were saying “Rhoda, you are beside yourself.” When it was announced to them that Peter, the subject of their prayers had been granted freedom, they accused the messenger as being out of her mind. Surly they must have known JEREMIAH 33:3, which reads: *Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.* This is another “I will” promise from God statement found in scripture. These who had been praying constantly for Peter were receiving their answer even as Rhoda spoke, but they didn’t believe Rhoda as she spoke. They had their minds made up how God would answer their prayer, and they themselves were very slow to believe Rhoda’s message. ACTS 12:15 continues: *But she constantly affirmed that it was even so.* Rhoda insisted that she was telling the truth because she was telling the truth. Don’t shoot the messenger. ...*Then said they, It is his angel.* One does not have to believe the truth, nevertheless the truth is the truth. We should also realize here that our reaction had we been there would probably not have been much different than those who were at Mary’s house praying for Peter. We should also be thankful for what the Apostle Paul taught us in EPHESIANS 3:20, which reads: *Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.* In other words we should expect Him to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or can even think of. As a potential New Testament worthy of faith, what does a man of faith do? One thing all men of faith do is pray! Men of faith pray to the living God; pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him; pray in faith believing, expecting to receive exceeding abundantly above all that they could ask or think, and ask Him to accomplish the impossible tasks placed before them! PSALMS 37:23 *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.* Faith is not being dismayed as to what one man with faith in God can do. We went over this inn our HEBREWS 12:1 & 2 study.

Meanwhile we read in ACTS 12:16 *But Peter continued knocking:...* . There's a sermon in these words, but moving on, Peter having now come to himself was somewhat impatient perhaps, and since Rhoda didn't open the door for him, he had no choice but to keep knocking. Of course the Lord was still in charge here, and our text reveals that those in the house of Mary the Mother of John Mark were truly very slow to receive the message that Peter was indeed standing before the gate of Mary's house. ACTS 12:16 *But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.* The Greek word translated "astonished" here is *existemi* {ex-is'-tay-mee}, number 1839 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, which means: to amaze, to astonish, to throw into wonderment, to be astounded, and to be besides one's self. Vine's Dictionary says *existemi* {ex-is'-tay-mee} literally means to stand out from. They could hardly believe their own eyes, and were amazed that Peter should be delivered out of prison at a **midnight** hour with such a strong guard set about him to prevent his escape. Again with God nothing is impossible, even at the darkest hour of a **midnight** test. Look up this word *existemi* {ex-is'-tay-mee}, and you will find it used in seventeen scriptures. Seventeen is the number associated with VICTORY IN CHRIST JESUS. Our midnight Bible story in ACTS 12 tells how Peter got the victory over Herod the king, and his victory was in Christ Jesus.

ACTS 12:16 *But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.* Those assembled at the house of Mary, John Mark's Mother, didn't believe Peter was set free until they saw him. Rhoda had told them Peter was there at the door, but until they saw him they didn't believe her. And as we just noted, when they did indeed see him they were amazed, and astonished, and could still hardly believe their own eyes. Repeating a statement we made earlier, we should not be astonished when, or how the Lord answers our prayers, and does the impossible, but we should expect Him to answer our prayers according to His will, and not ours. Such action defines full overcoming faith. Even so it is still okay to have appreciative astonishment unto the Lord for His wonder working power, and the many benefits He bestows upon us. Study the 116<sup>th</sup> PSALMS and see how the psalmist expressed it. Here are some highlights from that chapter: PSALMS 116:12 *What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? 13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. ...16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.* Paul wrote in his very first epistle *...In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you...* 1 THESSALONIANS 5:18. Being thankful, as Paul was, has no boundaries, no limits, and looks forward too, as well as backwards; looks up, as well as looking down. In other words true heart felt thankfulness in every thing is really a statement of full overcoming faith. Those praying without ceasing for Peter in ACTS 12 certainly had a measure of faith, and the Lord truly answered their prayers, and the fact stated in ACTS 12:16 remains: *...and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.* They too had some growing up to do for we do not read of them offering thanks unto the Lord like the psalmist did, or like the Apostle Paul instructed us to do. Furthermore when Peter continued knocking at the door of Mary's house, did those on the inside let Peter into Mary's house? Perhaps ACTS 12:17 will answer this question.

ACTS 12:17 *But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.* This verse does not answer the question if they let Peter into Mary's house, or not. Perhaps they did, but this verse doesn't specifically say so. There was a great deal of commotion, and excitement upon seeing Peter at this **midnight** hour, so much so that Peter had to beckon them with his hand to be quiet; to hold their peace. Whether inside the house, or still at the door we are not told where Peter was when he *...declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.*

Next Peter tells them: *Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren.* The brethren would include the remaining Apostles, who obviously were not at Mary's house at this **midnight** hour. They were no doubt in another place probably somewhere else in Jerusalem. Now let's answer

the question: who was James? The Apostle Paul actually answers this question in GALATIANS 1. The events referenced in GALATIANS 1:18 & 19 have already taken place by the time frame of ACTS 12. GALATIANS 1:18 & 19 tells us: *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.* When Paul first gets acquainted with James the Lord's brother in GALATIANS 1:19 James the Lord's brother is referred as an Apostle. So when did James the Lord's brother become an Apostle? This bit of information is not told us in scripture. The only conclusion that we can draw is that somewhere along the line James the Lord's brother became an Apostle, for the Apostle Paul refers to him as an Apostle.

It's been a while since we answered the question of when did James the Lord's brother become a believer, which is a worth while topic to review here, especially since James is here singled out by Peter here in ACTS 12:17, and he is also called an Apostle by Paul in GALATIANS 1:19. Let's review some scriptures that tell of the time frame of Jesus ministry. In MATTHEW 13:55 and 56 we read of Jesus brothers and sisters, that is children of the same mother: MATTHEW 13:55 *Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? 56 And his sisters, are they not all with us?* So we see that Jesus had brothers and sisters, and that he had a brother named James, the next oldest. Jesus knew what it was like growing up in a large family, for He was the oldest in a family of four younger brothers, and at least two younger sisters. In JOHN 7:5 we find that during the time of Jesus ministry here on earth, his brothers did not believe in him; JOHN 7:5 *For neither did his brethren believe in him.* (The word brethren here means: children of the same Mother). Do you think Jesus Kingdom Apostles knew at this time that Jesus had half-brothers, and half-sisters? Ponder that thought for a moment as we visit JOHN 19 where we will read that while Jesus was dying on the cross he entrusted the care of his mother Mary to the disciple whom He loved, whom we know was the Apostle John. We will explain why Jesus did this after we read JOHN 19:25-27. JOHN 19:25 *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.* Here in verse 27 we see that the Apostle John was entrusted with the care of Jesus Mother. No doubt this was a low blow to Jesus brothers who should of had the care of their Mother, but at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus they were not yet believers in Him. Jesus did not want to turn the care of His mother Mary over to unbelievers, even though they were His half-brothers, that is children of the same mother. So we must ask the question: when did James the Lord's brother become a believer? It was after the resurrection of Jesus. Our Apostle Paul explains this in 1 CORINTHIANS 15. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3 *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.* How did the Apostle Paul know that Jesus appeared unto James the Lord's brother after His resurrection? By interviewing James the Lord's brother during this first visit to Jerusalem after he was saved as we noted above in GALATIANS 1:19. Thus we see that after His resurrection Jesus appeared unto James his brother, and James became a believer in Jesus much the same way the Apostle Paul did. Remember Jesus grew up with His little half-brothers, and sisters, and He loved them just as much as He loves everybody. And Jesus spent probably more time with them than He did anyone else here on earth beside His mother Mary, and Joseph. Furthermore Jesus other brothers became believers also, and ACTS 1:14 helps point this out. Starting in ACTS 1:9 *And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so*

come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. 12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. (Again brethren here means: children of the same Mother). So Jesus brothers may not have been believers at the time of His crucifixion, but they certainly were by the time of Pentecost some fifty days later. By the time Paul first gets aquatinted with James the Lord's brother in GALATIANS 1:19, which we read above, he is referred to as an Apostle. When James the Lord's brother became an Apostle is not told us in scripture. Was he chosen as a replacement Apostle for James the brother of John who was killed in ACTS 12:2? Scripture doesn't so state. The only conclusion that we can draw is that somewhere along the line James the Lord's brother became an Apostle, for the apostle Paul refers to him as such. And he was an Apostle to the Jews, ACTS 15 and 21 plainly point this out. Further the Apostle Paul refers to James as one "...who seemed to be pillars..." in GALATIANS 2:9 referencing pillars in the church at Jerusalem at the time frame of ACTS 15. Also in JAMES 1:1 we read: *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.* Here again we see James the Lord's brother was an Apostle to the Jews, in other words a Kingdom Apostle. Next study ACTS 21:18-25, and see that James is still the Pastor of the church at Jerusalem at the conclusion of Paul's third missionary journey. The conclusion we must come to here in ACTS 12 is that James the Lord's brother is already the Pastor at the church in Jerusalem. Another conclusion we must also reach is that after being saved, James the Lord's brother spent one hundred percent of his time and effort focused upon doing the Lord's will, and with the guiding help of the Holy Ghost in his life, he devoted the rest of his life to doing the will of the Lord, which it turns out to be was being the Pastor of the church at Jerusalem. If the Lord could take the chiefest of sinners, and make him the Apostle Paul the chiefest Apostle, how hard would it be for the Lord to take Jesus brother James, and make him the Pastor of the church at Jerusalem, and an Apostle also? Once again we see that with God nothing is impossible.

Now understanding this information, ACTS 12:17 should have a little more meaning. In ACTS 12:17 Peter is speaking -- *But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.* Note a very important point mentioned here in this **midnight** Bible story; a point that is probably missed in a casual reading of this scripture. We find here in ACTS 12:17 the answer to the question, who was this **midnight** Bible story for? The main subject of this **midnight** Bible story is Peter, so we assume that this profound **midnight** event was for Peter's benefit, and of course it was. But this **midnight** Bible story that takes most of one chapter of scripture to tell wasn't just for Peter's benefit. This **midnight** Bible story also includes the characters found praying without ceasing in the house of Mary, John Mark's mother. The Lord had answered their prayers at this **midnight** hour, and they were all witnesses of seeing Peter free from Herod's prison, and they saw him at a **midnight** hour. And they heard him speak at a **midnight** hour also, and he told them to: *...Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren.* This **midnight** Bible story was also for their benefit, their eternal benefit, and for our benefit also! Let that thought sink in for a moment. Think about this, was this **midnight** Bible story recorded in scripture just to show that God can do the impossible even at a **midnight** hour? Yes indeed, but there is much more that took place that **midnight**. A responsibility was given to those witnesses at Mary's house to *...Go shew these things...* to those who were not present at Mary's house at that dark **midnight** hour. Again ACTS 12:5 told us that *...prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for...* Peter, and now those witnesses at Mary's house were to *...Go shew these things...* unto the other prayer warriors not present at Mary's house that **midnight**. The Greek word translated "go shew" here in ACTS 12:17 is *apaggello* {*ap-ang-el'-lo*}, number 518 in The Strong's Greek Concordance, which means to tell, to declare, to show, to report, to bring word,

or bring word again, to proclaim, and to make known openly. Peter's instructions were to ...*Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren...* which would really include all those believers who they themselves didn't witness this **midnight** scene.

So who was this **midnight** Bible story for? As now part of scripture this **midnight** Bible story is for all of us, written to encourage all of us facing dark **midnight** situations with only one way out, God! We could sum up this whole **midnight** Bible story like this, by faith Peter escaped Herod's prison. This **midnight** Bible story is written to encourage our faith in God. Now consider this also, who told Luke, the author of ACTS about this **midnight** event when Peter escaped Herod's prison? Again we are reminded what Paul wrote in 2 TIMOTHY 3:16 and 17 -- *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* Obviously Luke was inspired to write this **midnight** Bible story by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but Luke first heard about it from whom? Luke heard about this **midnight** Bible story from those who were witnesses at the house of Mary that **midnight**. Luke probably heard this story from more than one source, and may have even interviewed Peter himself. When at a **midnight** hour Peter said ...*Go shew these things...* there was no expiring time limit on expounding this **midnight** story, and somewhere along the way this story was told to Luke, who put it down on parchment in a letter to O Theophilus. Furthermore we are still discussing this **midnight** Bible story today, so the results of Peter's **midnight** escape from Herod's prison are still being discussed nearly two thousand years later.

Let's note this also. When we witness an act of the Holy Ghost, what is our responsibility? Is it not our responsibility to also to ...*Go shew these things...* to those who were not witnesses? Jesus left the earth in ACTS 1:8 with these words: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...* . When we witness an act of the Holy Ghost we are to declare, make known, show these things unto others to the glory of God. The psalmist, probably David, wrote in PSALMS 66:16 *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.* This is what a true testimony is, declaring what the Lord has done for your soul. We are to declare the wonderful works of God, especially the special ones God allows us to see, and witness, and be a partaker of. This is our privilege, and responsibility to ...*Go shew these things...* to others. The best fellowship you, or I will ever have this side of heaven is declaring what He has done in our hearts, and lives, and soul! Some times it is very hard to put all of this in words, yet don't be afraid to express to others the best way that you can what you have seen, and heard of the things of God. The Apostle John wrote in 1 JOHN 1 some words that can better describe what we have been trying to say here. 1 JOHN 1:1 *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* It took the Apostle John some sixty plus years to record this!

Finally note in ACTS 12:17 that Peter went into another place: ... *And he departed, and went into another place.* We are not told where this other place was because the Holy Spirit didn't want it revealed unto us. The Lord didn't set Peter free to have him rearrested, and as ACTS 12:11 told us, Peter had come to himself. As an Apostle of the Lamb of God, who do you think Peter sought his direction from? Obviously the Lord through the Holy Ghost gave Peter his marching orders, so to speak. Peter was urged to go into another place of the Lord's choosing. A place perhaps a little more secure than the house of Mary, John Mark's mother where much commotion had taken place at a **midnight** hour, perhaps arousing undo attention. Peter would be known by all in Jerusalem, so he had to proceed to a place where nobody knew where he was, for as soon as it was day Herod would be looking for Peter.



ACTS 12:18 *Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.* The Lord had set Peter free from Herod's prison at a **midnight** hour, hiding his departure from those who were charged with guarding him. The Lord hid Peter at a **midnight** hour, and the Lord was still hiding Peter as soon as it was day. The light of day revealed unto the soldiers first that Peter was gone! Obviously there would have been a great commotion amongst the soldiers as to how Peter could have possibly escaped, especially since there were sixteen soldiers assigned to Peter for the purpose of holding him secure until after Passover. Certainly there was a diligent search for Peter, but the Lord had him safely hid for He wasn't yet through with Peter.

Remember Herod's intentions were after Passover to bring Peter forth unto the people to have Peter killed before their eyes. "Herod is a striking shadow of anti-Christ," Brother Copley writes in his study book on ACTS. Study Brother Copley's study book and see the types, and shadows presented in ACTS 12. Our **midnight** Bible story of Peter's **midnight** escape from Herod's prison really concludes in ACTS 12:19, which reads: *And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.* Herod sought for Peter, found him not, and had the four quaternions of soldiers responsible for keeping Peter killed. Study the rest of ACTS 12 for yourself, and see that the Lord got vengeance upon Herod, when Herod set himself up as god. ACTS 12:23 tells of Herod's death, which occurred in 44 A.D. -- *And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.* Peter is mentioned again in ACTS 15, but for the most part the rest of the book of ACTS concerns the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Meanwhile the ministry of Peter continued for about another twenty years of so, and we read in ACTS 12:24 *But the word of God grew and multiplied.*

We will conclude our **midnight** Bible story of Peter's **midnight** escape from Herod's prison by reading a couple of Peter's own encouragements, written near the end of his life. In 1 PETER 5:10 Peter noted that we all would have **midnight** tests in this statement: *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.* Then once again Peter's own final words written in 2 PETER 3:18 *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

### Midnight Light

There has been a common theme expressed in the **midnight** Bible stories we have examined so far in this study, and that theme is that even in the darkest of **midnight** times God, who specializes in the impossible, delivers, and gives an exceeding abundant far more than we could even think of or ask for positive results to magnify His eternal glory. We noted early on in this study that the darkest of **midnight** times brought forth the heroes of faith highlighted in scripture. Lord willing we will discuss some more specific **midnight** Bible stories in future lessons, but in this portion we will see that truly God does not want us to be left alone in the darkness of **midnight** times.

We first see that God does not want us to be left alone in the darkness of **midnight** times in the first chapter of GENESIS. GENESIS 1:1 *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* 2 *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.* 3 *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.* 4 *And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.* Note here that there was great darkness upon the earth before there was light, *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.* Before man was created, God created the environment in which man was to live, and it was not to be in total darkness. We are going to read some more here in GENESIS 1, but first let's note a verse the Apostle John wrote in 1 JOHN 1:5 *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* A couple of verses later John further encourages us to "walk in the light," stating in 1 JOHN 1:7 *But if we walk in the*