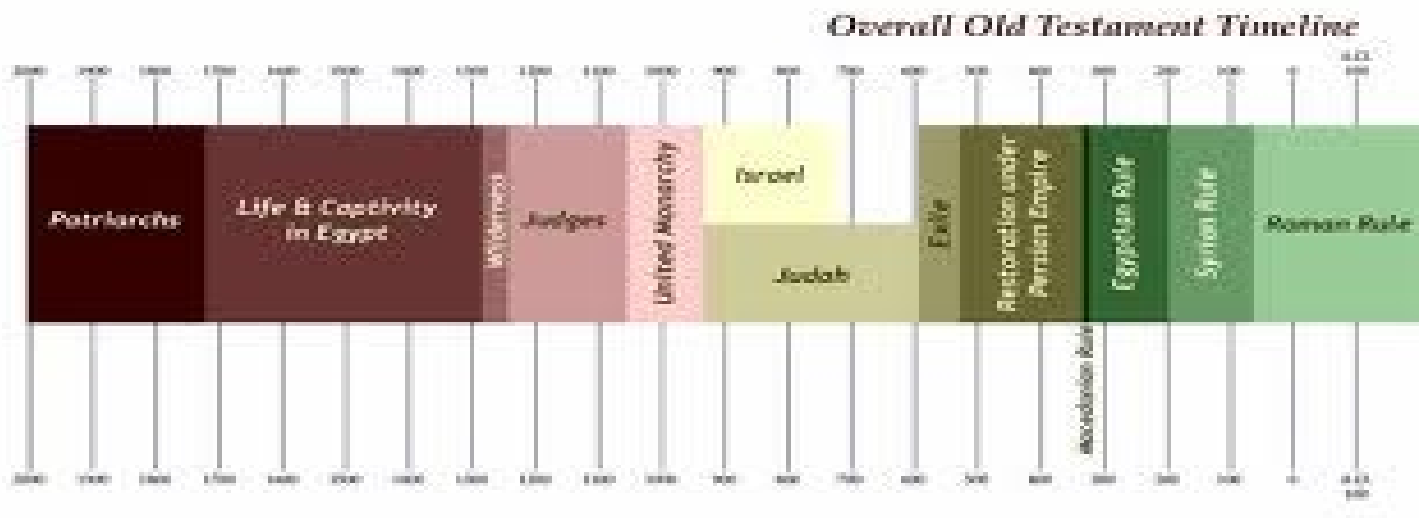


Section 1 A basic review of early events

There can be no doubt that God does want His people to influence His world. This is clear by the aggressive and loving marching orders given in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8. As we consider the progressive revelation of God, it is interesting to note how He worked, and still works through the Church. Now let's review the timeline leading up to the Messiah. The divisions below represent centuries.



Our study will be centered on the time frame between 28 – 70 AD, the time of the birth and growth of the Church. It was a time when Rome ruled much of the known world with an iron hand. Ca 750BC, there lived a prophet named Micah. He said ...

Micah 5

*1*Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. *2*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. *3*Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. *4*And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

WOW! Is that a specific prediction or what? Micah really said something there! He was quoted again, we believe, in Matthew 2:6.

The coming of Messiah was important in so many ways. Christ's birth, death and resurrection split time in two, and from that came the bride of Christ, the Church. There is no other book in the NT that so vividly outlines the events of the early Church as the second book of Luke ... aka the Acts of the Apostles ... or Acts.



We've gotten some great insights from our study of Acts 1 – 10. Let's review some of the highlights, and then take a quiz. Following the great commission (Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8), the disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? 8And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

Some Notes. a) Pentecost represented the giving of the Law in the Jewish religion, and was known by Jews as the “Feast of Weeks”, b) It is likely that this event occurred on the southern colonnade of the temple (see model at the Israel Museum below).



c) At Pentecost, many Jews were washed at the southern colonnade, d) The disciples were always at the temple (Luke 24). Here's the scripture backing for the Feast of Weeks.

Deuteronomy 16

*16*Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

Finally, the term “house” in Jewish thought usually represented the temple. To get the flavor of what was happening, look again at the illustration above and picture the sound and scene of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It's easy to see now how all these other people were drawn to the disciples's preaching. Theologically, this important for us in that we know that as Christians, we have the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit starting at salvation. It marks us as Christ's followers. And speaking of the Holy Spirit, what's up in Acts 3???

Acts 3

*1*Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. *2*And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; *3*Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

4And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. 7And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. 8And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. 9And all the people saw him walking and praising God: 10And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. 11And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

First off, note that this miracle likely took place on the south side of the Temple in an area known as the Double Gate. Then, the confrontation with the priests took place in Solomon's Porch which can be seen in the picture below at the forefront, and was a “cloisters” for the Levitical priests.



According to Leen Ritmeyer (www.ritmeyer.com) the Beautiful Gate (or Timely Gate, or Susan) was located along the south plaza (where the coming of the Holy Spirit took place some weeks earlier), and it was here that the miracle of Peter and John took place at about 3pm as the entered the Temple area.

Following the miracle, perhaps in July, AD 28 the healed man entered the Temple praising God, and remained with Peter and John as they proceeded to Solomon's Porch where they encountered the priests. There is a political statement made here (like it or not). This man wanted and expected alms (financial help, welfare). Instead he received a sure means to take care of himself ... personal mobility. Enough said!

There is also the issue of the miracle. We know not the specifics of the miracle, but we do know that this is yet another miracle in God's record. Beyond the fact that a miracle is the occurrence of an event that is highly unlikely, in the physical sense, it can also be thought of as an indicator of God's control over our universe, *and in particular ... time*. If nerve circuits are broken, they get fixed. If bones are broken, they are restored. If muscles are atrophied, they get new life. If water needs to change to fermented juice it does. If a storm system needs to be stopped, it gets diffused! We have "science" to explain the usual sequence of events. But what if they are altered? What if they are expedited? What if they are stopped? What if they're reversed? That is a miracle.

Finally, what is the response of the players involved? The healed man went "**walking, and leaping, and praising God.**" He knew he'd received the best gift he could receive on this earth. Additionally, he held on to Peter and John as they made their way to Solomon's colonnade.

Most importantly, he gave glory to God. The people were amazed, since they knew the man that had been healed. He was over 40 at the time (Acts 4)! They also drew close to Peter and John in Solomon's colonnade in wonderment. What explanation, what answer would Peter give them in response?

Acts 3

12And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? **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. **16**And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.



17And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

18But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

The phrases, “ Pilate, when he was determined to let him go ”, and “ desired a murderer to be granted unto you”, and “killed the Prince of life ”, and “I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” indicate that Peter himself was still grappling with the meaning of the recent events. Remember that AD 28 was not the time of the *theo-analysis* that we see today. The people, including the disciples, had not yet had occasion to compare and contemplate the multiple accounts of the gospel. They probably had no written documentation of Christ's life on earth. Instead, we see the speech of a man following the commands of Jesus (likely to indicate his love of Jesus), and experiencing the raw, informative, and life changing power of the Holy Spirit. This was, indeed, a direct and spirit filled response on the part of Peter. The Levitical Jews had no logical response. And even if they did respond, it would have been of no effect. The Temple-goers had their evidence for the gospel. The real stinger came in verse 25.

Acts 3

25Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

This had to enrage the unbelieving Jews, and the length of Peter's monologue gave just enough time for them to contact the Temple leaders.

Acts 4

1And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. 4Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. . .

12Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved... 18And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. 20For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. 21So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

So, they were thrown in the Temple slammer overnight, grilled and released the next day, but God was still at work saving around 10K people! It was a watershed moment in the development of the early Church. The split between Judaism and Christianity was gaining traction, at the hand of the unbelieving Jews. Instead of benefiting from the great life of Christ, Judaism was losing members by the Ks. This division would be played out dramatically all around the Med during the next 75 years, and for the rest of the New Testament. But the battle was really between the disciples and the sanhedrin, but rather between the Holy Spirit and satan. We see that battle today, and not so much with Jews, but with secularism, ignorance, self pleasure, the all encompassing grab for power. The detailed theology would come, but at the time, the early Christians were just beginning to see that powerful work. Today, the battle is with the world itself. It has grown from a skirmish in Jerusalem to an all out world war. The issue lies in Peter's statement in Acts 4 that **there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved** . This is the crux of the matter ... that salvation can come only through the Christ! Thank God for His Holy Spirit and the power he gives us at this time. Now let's take a brief quiz.

Quiz 1

1. Which two scriptures below contain parts of the Great Commission?
 - a) Luke 2:10
 - b) Acts 1:8
 - c) Revelation 3:20
 - d) Matthew 28:19
 - e) Philippians 2:10
2. Pentecost likely happened ...
 - a) on the south steps/side of the temple
 - b) in early June 28AD
 - c) when Christ was born in 6BC
 - d) at the revelation in 95AD
 - e) on Wednesday nights at 6pm
 - f) on the slopes of Mt Carmel
 - g) in Emmaus
3. What was Paul doing when Stephen was stoned ...
 - a) Guarding the garments
 - b) He was blind at the time and, therefore, could not aim stones
 - c) He was still growing up in Tarsus
 - d) Taking a final exam from Gamaliel
 - e) In chains in Philippi

4. Philip's ministry to the Eunuch likely sparked gospel expansion in ...
 - a) Europe
 - b) Syria
 - c) Mesopotamia
 - d) Philistia
 - e) Egypt and Africa
5. What characterized the beliefs of the Sadducees?
 - a) devotion to the Christ
 - b) Arminian
 - c) No resurrection
 - d) Once saved, always saved
 - e) separation of Church and State
 - f) end times prophecy
6. When is the Holy Spirit present in Christians?
 - a) Only during miracles
 - b) When reading and studying the scriptures at night.
 - c) Always
 - d) Only on given Wednesday nights
 - e) When witnessing during weekdays
7. What does Acts 3 tell us about helping the poor?
 - a) Our taxes will do that.
 - b) Real help is giving them a way and opportunity to work.
 - c) We just need to devote more government attention to it.
 - d) More money is always the answer.
 - e) If we keep 'em poor, but act concerned, we'll always have their votes.
8. Which factor is particularly amazing and involved in each of God's miracles?
 - a) time
 - b) the medical part
 - c) the explanation
 - d) faith
 - e) length of the prayer
 - f) space
9. What were Peter and John charged with after the healing of the lame man?
 - a) blasphemy
 - b) reckless endangerment
 - c) healing on the Sabbath
 - d) none
 - e) not paying the Temple tax

Section 2 Early Church Prototypes

At this point we are going to turn our attention to more dramatic works of the Holy Spirit and the people involved in them. Peter, of course, continued to be heavily involved in the Holy Spirit's work. He is the prototype of the pastor/elder in the early Church.

Acts 5

15Insomuch 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. 16There 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. 17Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

18And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned and told, 23Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. 24Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. 26Then went the



captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. 27And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, 28Saying, 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. 29Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Wow! Obviously folks were being healed just by being in Peter's shadow. Is this consistent with what Jesus would want ... what He predicted? Actually, yes.

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.

That's pretty clear cut! And don't forget that just prior to this passage, Ananias and Sapphira fell dead at his feet for lying to the



Holy Spirit! I believe that Peter was surely representing Christ fully, and that this is not over. Even today we see individuals who have been enshrouded by God's presence and protection. Billy Graham describes this well in his book *Angels: God's Secret Servants*. Robert Scheffey was a great example of this. The great power of God is at work in His people. In spite of all the world can do, He still reigns supreme ... even among those who didn't appear to know the Christ.

One of the most interesting stories involves a pharisee named Gamaliel who prophesied amazing words among the sanhedrin.

Acts 5

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; 35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

According to wikipedia.com, there were two general schools of thought in Jewish higher education. The School of Sammai and the School of Hillel. The former taught zealous adherence to the rituals of the Law as witness to outsiders. The latter taught a more global understanding of the Law which included a complete understanding of the Sammai approach.

Gamaliel was in fact the grandson of the elder Hillel and a great teacher within the school of Hillel. Essentially 4 grades/names were given to students (like Paul the Apostle).

Mediterranean fish: One who has learned all and knows how to respond.

Pure fish: one who has learned all, and is wealthy.

Jordan fish: One who has learned all and doesn't know how to respond.

impure Fish: one who has memorized all, doesn't understand and is poor.

There is some debate as to whether Gamaliel was a Christian. The Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church hold that he was and was baptized by Peter and John (along with Nicodemus), but was “laying low” to help the Church. Judaism is in disagreement saying that he was a pharisee to his death in around AD 50. Either way, God used this man to stem the tide of persecution, at least temporarily, on the early Church.

His point is also worth noting as well. Gamaliel stressed that God would prevail in any instance ... whether the sanhedrin was right, or Peter and John were right. Gamaliel actually believed in the sovereignty of God!

At this point, the Church begins to experiencing some major works of the Holy Spirit through some remarkable people. The first of these is Stephen. Interestingly, Stephen was what today we call a deacon. He had been called to assist with the day to day administration of the early Church in Jerusalem. There is no history on him, except that he was a man “full of faith and the Holy Ghost,” prior to his appointment story in Acts 6, but there is much to follow.

Acts 6

8And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

It is worth noting that deacon Stephen a) did great wonders and miracles among the people, and b) they (the religious leaders) were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Herein is a charge to deacons. Stephen was a man of faith and reason. He was surely devoted to Christ and unafraid to dig in to the scriptures and the then accounts of the gospel. He acted under and was guided by the Holy Spirit ... to the point of death. For Stephen, it wasn't just about attending meetings, deciding on the color of the carpet, etc. He was ultimately concerned with glorifying the Christ!

Here we want to tie in a key verse from Jesus.

Matthew 12

31Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Now what is Jesus talking about here? Actually the same sin that Stephen accused the Jews of. The rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit!

Acts 7

51Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. 52Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

Clearly, that is a better description than what I could give here. Consider again, the progressive revelation of God. When (and with Whom) does it culminate? Christ! The unbelieving Jews of the first century demonstrated the ultimate act of rejecting the Holy Spirit. They crucified the Christ as the culmination of a long string of rejection.

So is this happening today ... and how? Yes, and by individuals who continue to reject the Holy Spirit. I believe this isn't just the "I don't feel like witnessing now" version. This is the continual turning away from Christ, when in fact the evidence and draw is substantial. And what is the reaction of individuals unable to support their viewpoint logically?

Acts 7

54When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55But 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, 56And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their



ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

They react violently. This is seen in the cousins of the Jews, the Arabs of today. There

is a serious reason that, outside of war, there are no suicide bombers among Christians. That is a testimony!

To be sure, there are many reactions of those who cannot support their position by logic; grandstanding, speaking more loudly, murder, and ignorance. And what was Stephen's reaction to that? It's an example to us. Acceptance of God's sovereign will. Which is *exactly* what Gamaliel advised. Interestingly, Paul (pictured) was party to this act of violence. Perhaps he got a grade of riF on this assignment.

Note also Stephen's vision of Heaven right before his death. This has happened many times to Christians at death. One example is that of Deacon Mabe's grandmother.

In the old celebration of the 12 days of Christmas, the feast of Stephen was on the second day (26 December). It is referred to in the famous Christmas Carol "Good King Wenceslas" (who was also murdered ... in AD 935).



And now brother Luke takes us in a new direction. And in so doing, gives another small glimpse into the character of Paul ... prior to his salvation.

Acts 8

3As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. 4Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. 5Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8And there was great joy in that city.

Philip, not the disciple, but the recently selected/ deacon, also had a ministry through the Holy Spirit. He is the prototype of the Christian missionary. He was apparently quite anxious to travel for the sake of the gospel of Christ. Here is a famous account.

Acts 8

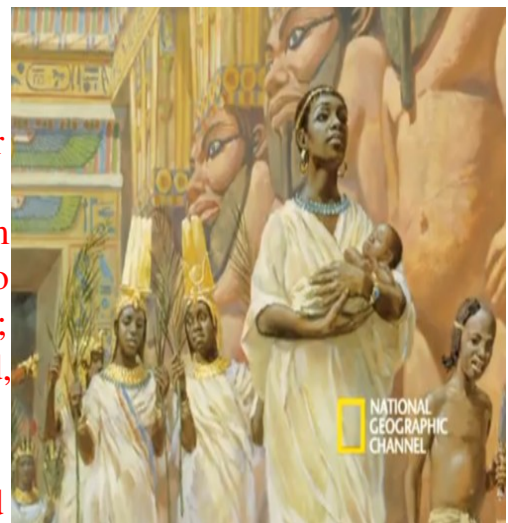
26And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.27And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.29Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.30And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.



34And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.36And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. 40But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

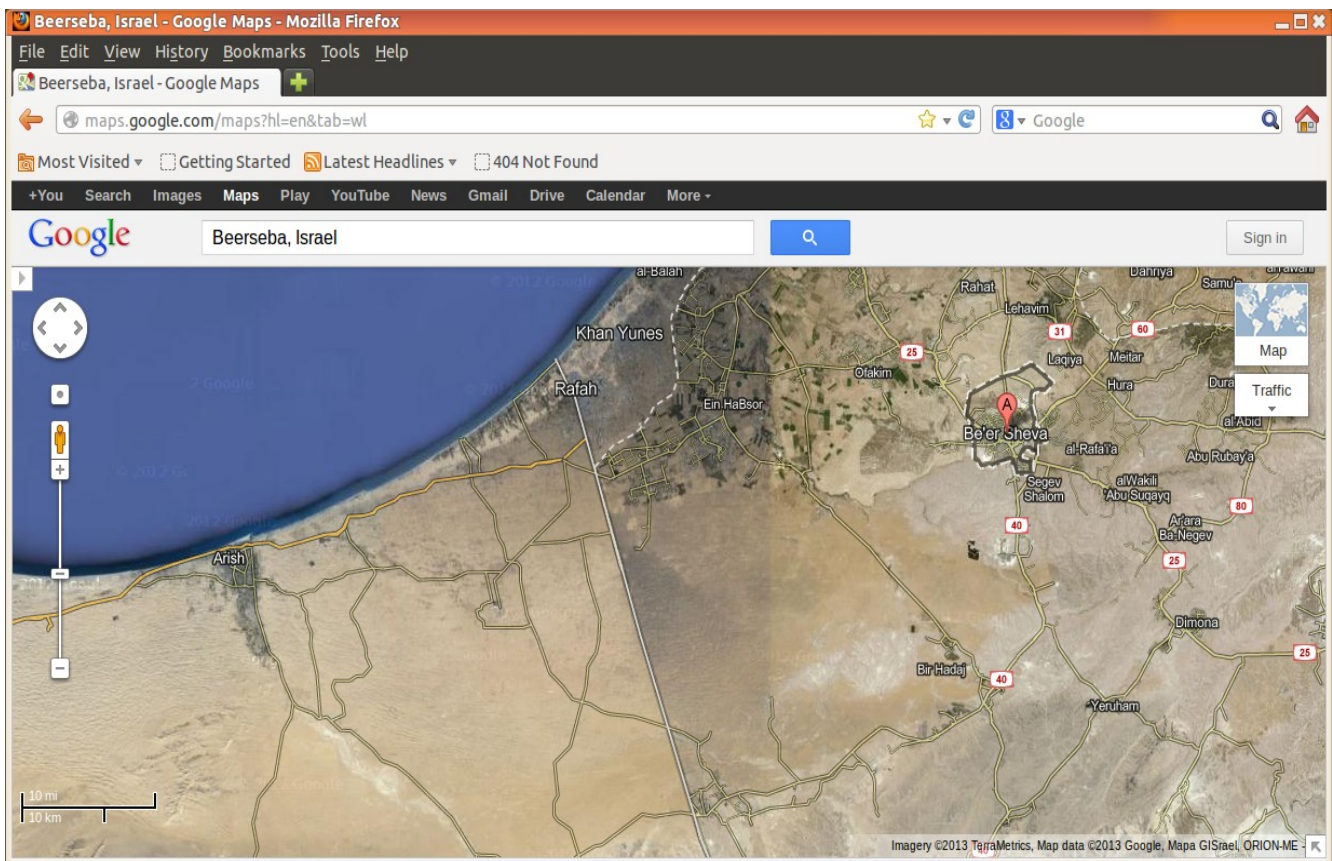


So just who was this eunuch, and who was this Philip? And who, the heck, was

Candace queen of Ethiopia???

We'll begin with Simeon, the eunuch. It is important to know that this man also became a missionary to his native Ethiopia. It was through his witness that Africa received the Gospel. Indeed, Simeon worked with managing the vast treasury of Ethiopia (in fact it is posited by National Geographic that at least one of the pharaohs was from Ethiopia).

Whether he was Jewish or not we don't know. He may've been a gentile proselyte, or he could've been a Jew from the diaspora. In any case, he'd made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover (perhaps a year or so after the crucifixion) and was now making the long journey back to likely hop a boat on the Nile and head south. He was reading the scripture available to him...the OT.



There can be no doubt that this is yet another example of God's sovereignty. The angel told Philip, he responded, and, simultaneously God prepared Simeon's heart. So much so, that he was ready to be *really* baptized instantly. Where? I've scoured the map and come up with a couple 'o' possibilities: Be'er Seba or Aris. The first is at the “well of the south”, while the second is at the end of a long wadi that empties into the Med.

Philip, for his part, continued on to Azotus and Caesarea preaching the gospel.

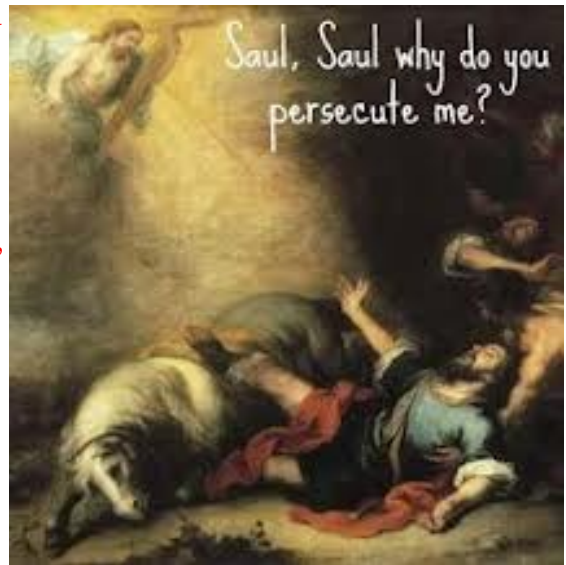
Apparently, he retired in Caesarea, where he had four prophetic daughters, and entertained Paul on his return trip to Jerusalem.

Lastly, let's consider the spiritual journey of the first radical convert to Christianity ... Paul. And by radical convert, I mean one whose life exhibited a radical π turn.

Acts 9

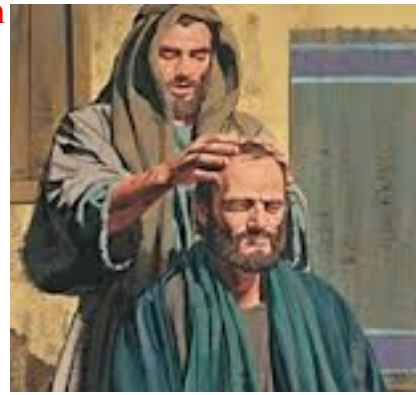
*1*And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, *2*And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women,

he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. *3*And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: *4*And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *5*And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. *6*And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. *7*And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. *8*And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. *9*And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.



*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. *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.

15But 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: 16For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17And 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. 18And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. 19And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21But 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? 22But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. 23And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:



24But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.



26And 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. 27But 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. 28And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

30Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. 31Then 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.

Paul's conversion is representative of many Christians ... a complete reversal! This is the power of the Holy Spirit!

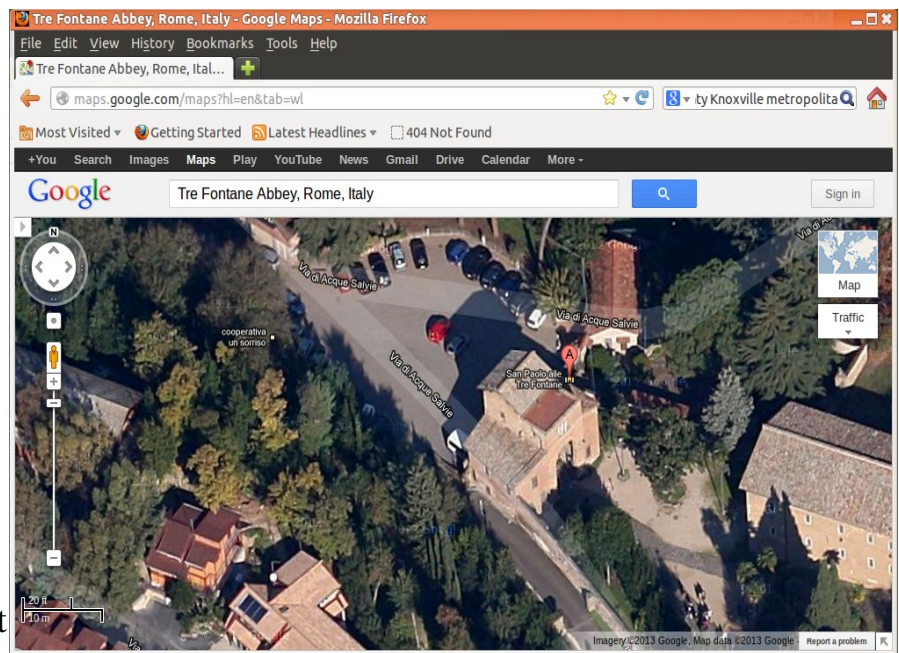
Paul is important, at this stage, because he represents the prototypical dramatic salvation story. Now all salvation is fantastic, but some of us have more dramatic conversions than others. One would be hard pressed to find a salvation experience in which the person coming out is going in a completely opposite direction than that going in. His experience is not unlike that of Nicky Cruz of David Wilkerson's *the Cross and the Switchblade*.

It is quite possible that Paul may have been born around the time of Christ's birth (March/April 6 BC). We think he was born in Tarsus, a large trading center on the northwest coast of the Med. Tarsus had been influential for some time (named after one of the sons of Japhet), and was a hotbed for the Stoic Philosophy. We think it was also where Paul learned the trade of tentmaking. Saul was his Jewish name, and Paul was his Latin name.



Paul's family, we think, was large and strictly Jewish. It seems that there were a fair number of them living in Jerusalem. Not only was Paul named for King Saul (“prayed for”), he was also a descendant of the tribe of Benjamin, and a descendant of the famous priest Hillel. Even more importantly, he was a Roman Citizen and well versed in the lingua franca Koine Greek. In his own words, he became “**all things to all people**”.

The apostle ultimately died at the hand of the evil nero sometime in the mid '60's AD at the (now) abbey of Tre Fontane (above).



Paul ultimately penned 13 books of the 27 book NT. His primary call, I think, was that of refiner. Much of our Baptist theology today comes from his letters to the Churches of Asia Minor. Paul's writings lent detail and practicality to the early Church. Much of his writing was done prior to the penning of the Gospels. He answered many pressing questions ... particularly those involving circumcision, true salvation, homosexuality, roles in the Church and the work of the Holy Spirit. God's choice is always perfect! Now let's take a quiz.

Quiz 2

1. What was Paul doing when Stephen was stoned ...
 - a) Guarding the garments
 - b) He was blind at the time and, therefore, could not aim stones
 - c) Deep in the heart of Tarsus
 - d) Taking a final exam from Gamaliel
 - e) In chains in Philippi
2. Philip's ministry to the Eunuch likely sparked gospel expansion in ...
 - a) Europe
 - b) Syria
 - c) Mesopotamia
 - d) Philistia
 - e) Ethiopia
3. The name of the eunuch was...
 - a) Kunta Kinte
 - b) Diniko
 - c) Simeon
 - d) DeAngelo
 - e) Tylenol
4. Who's title was "the Evangelist"?
 - a) Peter
 - b) John
 - c) Philip
 - d) Simeon
 - e) Joseph of Armithea
5. Who was the first pastor/elder prototype in the early Church?
 - a) Peter
 - b) John
 - c) Philip
 - d) Simeon
 - e) Joseph of Arimithea

6. Who of these listed is a modern equivalent of Paul?
 - a) Joel Osteen
 - b) Mr. T
 - c) Stephen Hawking
 - d) Nicky Cruz
 - e) RJ Seal
7. From what was the Ethiopian reading when Philip approached him?
 - a) Ethiopia Today
 - b) a map of Memphis
 - c) Chariot and Driver Magazine
 - d) Isaiah
 - e) Acts
 - f) Luke
8. Why were the disciples skeptical of Paul's conversion?
 - a) it meant another mouth to feed in the Church
 - b) he had persecuted the Church so soundly
 - c) they were from the school of Sammai
 - d) Paul couldn't remember exactly when he was saved
 - e) he wasn't driving a Toyota
9. What is the reaction of people opposed to the logical reasoning of the gospel?
 - a) violence
 - b) logical acceptance
 - c) fear of the Lord
 - d) the singing of hymns
 - e) the right hand of Christian fellowship
10. What angle of turn did Paul make following his conversion?
 - a) $2\pi/3$
 - b) $-\pi/2$
 - c) τ
 - d) 2τ
 - e) π
 - f) I'd rather use degrees
11. Stephen, as the prototype of the deacon, spent a good deal of time ...
 - a) doing great works and miracles among the people
 - b) setting up meetings
 - c) successfully debating the Jews
 - d) vigorously studying carpet colors for the Church in Jerusalem
 - e) writing Church surveys

12. Where was Paul killed for the sake of the Gospel?
 - a) the isle of Patmos
 - b) in the hearts of the Jews
 - c) on Mount Gilboa by Philistines
 - d) on the isle of Malta by Falcons and snakes
 - e) at Tres Fontane in Roma
13. Which of the following books were written by Paul?
 - a) Acts
 - b) Matthew
 - c) Romans
 - d) Philemon
 - e) Revelation
 - f) II Corinthians
14. Peter was released from the Jerusalem prison in Acts 5 by ...
 - a) Herod the Great
 - b) John
 - c) Luke
 - d) Rhoda
 - e) an angel
15. Paul and Gamaliel were associated with which of the following schools?
 - a) the school of Sammai
 - b) the school of Hillel
 - c) the school of Fish
 - d) the school of Hard Knocks
 - e) the school of the Sanhedrin
16. Which of the following are reasonable guesses for the location of the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch?
 - a) the baptismal in the Church at Memphis
 - b) the Mediterranean Sea
 - c) the wadi of Aris
 - d) the Dead Sea
 - e) the Sea of Galilee
 - f) the Jordan

Section 3 Issues in the Church

At this point we are going to turn our attention to early issues and how they were handled in the Church. There is a very obvious starting point, and it involved the pastoral prototype Peter.

Acts 10

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, 2A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3He 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. 4And 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. 5And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.



7And 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; 8And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

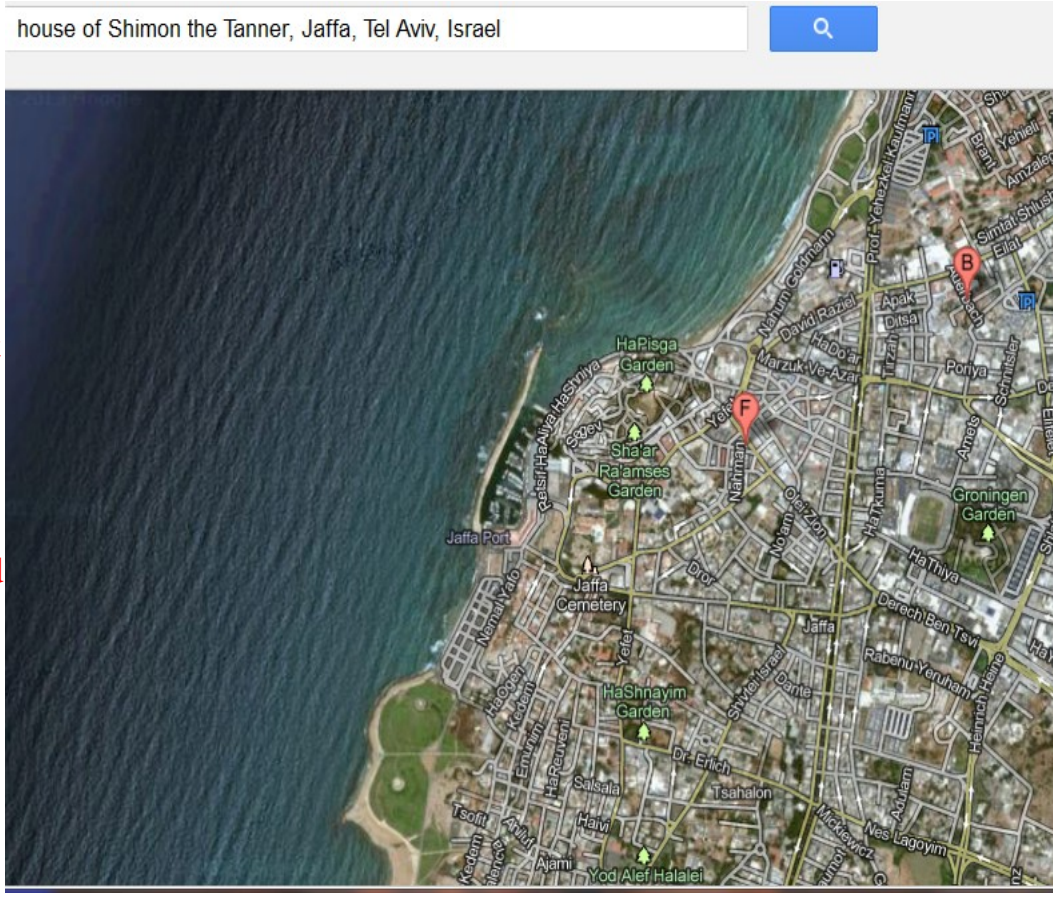
9On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. 16This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17Now 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, 18And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21Then 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?

22And 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. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and he had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

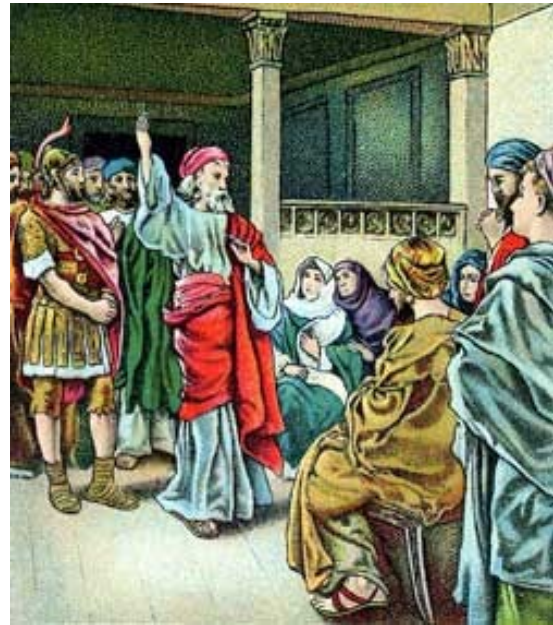
26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 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, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

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.

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 God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.



42And 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. 43To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. 45And 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. 46For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, 47Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? 48And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

There are several questions that come to mind.

1. Do dreams or visions supplant the Word of God?
2. Is the OT of no worth?
3. Can/does God change His mind?
4. Do good deeds merit salvation?
5. Is there a “newer” testament that supplants the NT?

The answer to each of these questions is no. We must first resolve the *apparent* conflict between OT and NT. Peter's first response is based on Christ's assertion, AND his understanding of the law (OT). Recall that at that time, the OT *was* the Word of God. And Christ came to fulfill it.

Matthew 5

17Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

To work through this we must understand the notion of **progressive revelation**. This is the concept that God revealed Himself in small parts to the world (particularly the prophets) up to and until the complete revelation in Jesus the Christ. Again, all of the OT points/leads to Jesus the Christ!

John 14

9Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;

The progressive revelation of God was in the early stages at the giving of the law (ca 1450 BC). We see in Leviticus many restrictions placed on the Jewish people as they migrated north and east to the promised land. Are we to keep these restrictions today? What did Jesus say was the first and greatest commandment? *Does this not imply that some commandments are more important than others?* Of course. The reason for the Law is for the founding of a nation ... a platform from which to declare the glory of God to the world!

Deuteronomy 4

6Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

Isaiah 66

18For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

That's pretty straight forward! So, yet another fact brought to bear on this argument is that the ultimate mission of the Jews was to proclaim the reality and presence of God to the world. When Peter had his vision, God was not contradicting Himself, but rather revealing more of Himself to Peter (and subsequently us).

Second, does God change His mind? No, no and vehemently *no!* There's a verse for that.

Numbers 23

19God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

In spite of what we may “feel”, or read or think, God does not change His mind. To do so would be in direct conflict with, not only this verse, but with His very nature. The very difficult thing to understand is that *God's omniscience would seem, at least, to preclude any bad decisions on His part.*

If God were to change His mind, then that implies directly that He didn't know what He was doing earlier, and that He would be a slave of time ... as we are. Impossible given His omniscience. It is a direct contradiction of His Personal being/attribute.



So it's safe to say here that Peter's vision was consistent with the mission given to the Jews early on, but not consistent with the *deviant* versions of Judaism (Sadducee, Pharisee, Essene, Zealot, etc), no matter how well intended, developed during the diaspora.

Now what about Cornelius's good deeds. Did they bring him salvation? Again, no, but let's look at this more closely. What does the scripture say?

Acts 10

2A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3He 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. 4And 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.

Can God hear the prayer of an unsaved person? Of course He can. Now we also know that He is attentive to the prayers of His people. BUT, if He knows who His people are, even before they are saved, then the “attentive” issue is moot. Now this is a distinctive “proof” of God hearing the prayer of one who is not saved “yet”. Let us consider another verse which brings much to bear on the topic, particularly the case of Cornelius.

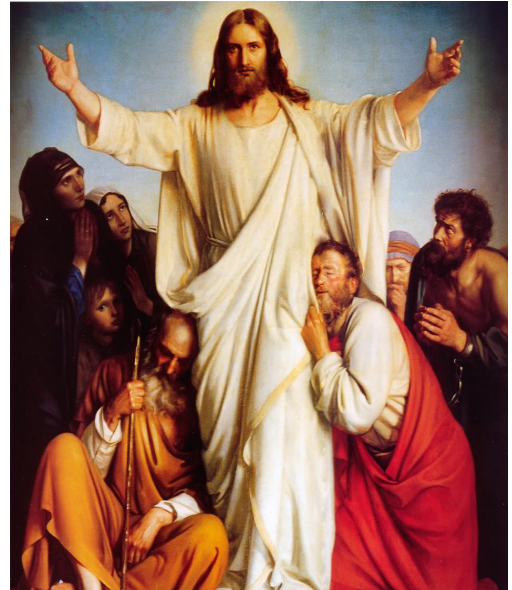
Hebrews 11

6But 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.

KEY, KEY verse. Notice a couple 'o' things. a) The key to pleasing God is faith in Him (as opposed to earthly things or yourself ... ultimately yourself). b) The two bases of this faith: belief in God's *existence*, and belief in His *goodness*! c) His goodness rewards those who earnestly seek Him!

Cornelius was earnestly seeking God. The Holy Spirit enabled him to understand that there was something special about the Jewish faith. The Holy Spirit enabled him to see that there was *definitely* something more realistic about a loving creator God, than about a variety of gods that controlled various elements of the earth and its space; whose realms had such overlap that it became confusing; that had different names in Greece and in Rome; and that feuded among themselves like a soap opera. Cornelius knew that was a bunch of hooley!

And God led him to the light of Christ ... Christ the ultimate and final revelation of God. So, no, there is no newer revelation which would supplant the truth of the gospel. Because God is eternal, and unchanging; and Christ is His one and only son ... in Whom He is well pleased!



Quiz 3

1. What was the name of Cornelius's regiment ...
 - a) the Italian Band
 - b) the Steve Miller Band
 - c) the Band of Brothers
 - d) the Wedding Band
 - e) the Tonight Show Band
2. Cornelius found Christ after ...
 - a) he did many good works
 - b) he made significant donations to the poor
 - c) he was seeking God
 - d) he'd had his fling in Caesarea
 - e) he was circumcised
3. According to Hebrews 11, those who find God ...
 - a) Believe He exists
 - b) Believe in themselves
 - c) Believe in evolution
 - d) Believe in miracles
 - e) Believe that He is Good
 - f) Believe that this is their day
4. People are drawn to seek God by
 - a) good ol' fire 'n' brimstone preaching
 - b) doing good deeds
 - c) being baptized
 - d) the Holy Spirit
 - e) a good logical presentation
5. Which of the following are real attributes of God?
 - a) Infinite
 - b) Good
 - c) capricious
 - d) indecisive
 - e) always learning new things about His creation

6. Match the following historical positions in Church history with the correct person.

Person	Position
Peter	Pastor
Paul	Dynamic convert
Stephen	Deacon
Philip	Evangelist

7. Order the following Church history events chronologically.

- a) Stoning of Stephen
- b) Pentecost
- c) Conversion of Paul
- d) Conversion of Cornelius

8. In the mid 60's AD, Paul was martyred in Rome at ...

- a) Tres Fontane
- b) The Senate
- c) Three Taverns
- d) The Colosseum
- e) The Vatican
- f) The Olive Garden

9. Where in the NT is/are the great commission(s) found?

- a) Luke 2
- b) Matthew 28
- c) Acts 2
- d) 1 Peter
- e) Acts 1

10. At the time of Cornelius's conversion, Peter was staying in Joppa at the home of Simon ...

- a) the Leper
- b) LeGree
- c) the Paler
- d) the Fisher
- e) the Tanner

11. Paul's conversion dramatically occurred on the road to ...

- a) Damascus
- b) Galilee
- c) the Sea
- d) Gaza
- e) Emmaus

12. Pentecost occurred in 28 AD on the south side of the Temple near the gate called ...
- a) the Leprous
 - b) Beautiful
 - c) Olivet
 - d) South
 - e) Convenient