

Through the Bible

# ACTS I

Of the Apostles

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

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## CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

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# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES



THE SUBJECT OF LUKE'S GOSPEL WAS "ALL THAT JESUS **BEGAN** TO DO AND TEACH"( LUKE 1:1 ). LUKE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AS WELL. BY IMPLICATION, THE SUBJECT OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES IS THEREFORE "ALL THAT JESUS **CONTINUED** TO DO AND TEACH -- **THROUGH HIS DISCIPLES**".



THE LAST WORD IN ACTS IS '**UNHINDERED**, NOT "**AMEN**". THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST HAS GONE FORTH **UNHINDERED**, DESPITE ALL THE **OPPOSITION** OF SATAN FOR 2000 YEARS AND WILL **CONTINUE** TO DO UNTIL **CHRIST RETURNS**.



THERE IS A PRINCIPLE WE SEE IN ACTS.1:1 THAT WE MUST **BEAR IN MIND** IN ALL OF OUR **MINISTRY**: JESUS FIRST **DID** AND ONLY **THEN** DID HE **TEACH**. HE **PREACHED** ONLY WHAT HE HAD **ALREADY PRACTISED**. THIS IS THE PRINCIPLE OF **NEW-COVENANT** SERVICE. UNLIKE THE OLD COVENANT, IT IS A VERY HIGH STANDARD OF LEADERSHIP.



IN 1:5, WE HAVE A **PROMISE**, "YOU SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT." WHEN JOHN THE BAPTIST SAID, "YOU SHALL BE **BAPTISED** IN THE HOLY SPIRIT," THEY **IMMEDIATELY** THOUGHT OF AN **EARTHLY KINGDOM**. THE **MIND** OF AN **OLD COVENANT** PERSON IS ALWAYS ON **EARTHLY THINGS**. EVEN WHEN MANY CHRISTIANS SAY, "GOD HAS BLESSED ME" THEY USUALLY MEAN THAT HE HAS **BLESSED** THEM **MATERIALLY** -- WITH **MONEY**, OR A GOOD **JOB**, OR A **HOUSE**. THAT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF **OLD COVENANT** PEOPLE.





The mark of **new covenant blessing** is that we  
become **more** and more like **Christ**.

THE APOSTLES WERE **EARTHLY-MINDED BEFORE** THE DAY OF **PENTECOST**. SO WHEN THEY WERE TOLD BY THE LORD THAT THEY WOULD SOON BE **BAPTISED** IN THE **HOLY SPIRIT**, THEY **IMMEDIATELY** THOUGHT THAT THEY WOULD BE GETTING AN **EARTHLY KINGDOM**.

LORD, IS IT AT THIS TIME YOU ARE **RESTORING** THE KINGDOM TO **ISRAEL**?

IT'S **NOT** FOR YOU TO KNOW **TIMES** OR THE **SEASONS** ON SUCH MATTERS. THE LORD HAS PUT ALL THAT IN HIS **OWN** POWER. BUT YOU WILL **RECEIVE POWER** WHEN THE **HOLY SPIRIT** HAS COME UPON YOU...AND YOU WILL BE MY **WITNESSES**..

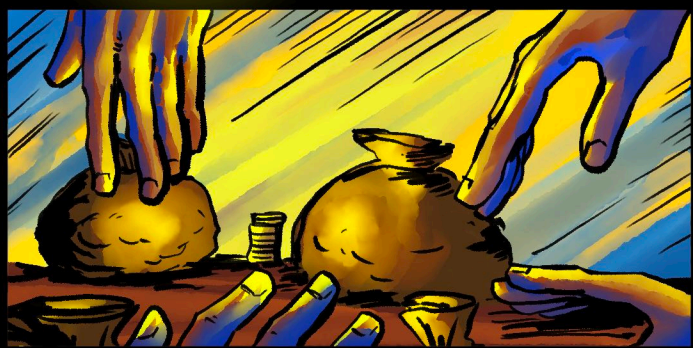


IT'S NOT FOR US TO KNOW **EXACTLY** WHEN JESUS WILL COME AND SET UP HIS KINGDOM. BUT WHAT WE **DO** NEED TO KNOW IS THE POWER OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**. JESUS MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR IN ACTS 1:8 THAT IT WAS **POWER**, NOT SPEAKING IN TONGUES, THAT WAS THE **IDENTIFYING MARK** OF BEING **BAPTISED** IN THE **HOLY SPIRIT**

WE SHOULD **NEVER** USE THE **HISTORICAL** SECTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO DETERMINE ANY **DOCTRINE**. ACTS IS BASICALLY A **HISTORICAL** BOOK. **DOCTRINE** MUST BE DETERMINED FROM THE **TEACHINGS** OF **JESUS** AND THE **EPISTLES ONLY**.

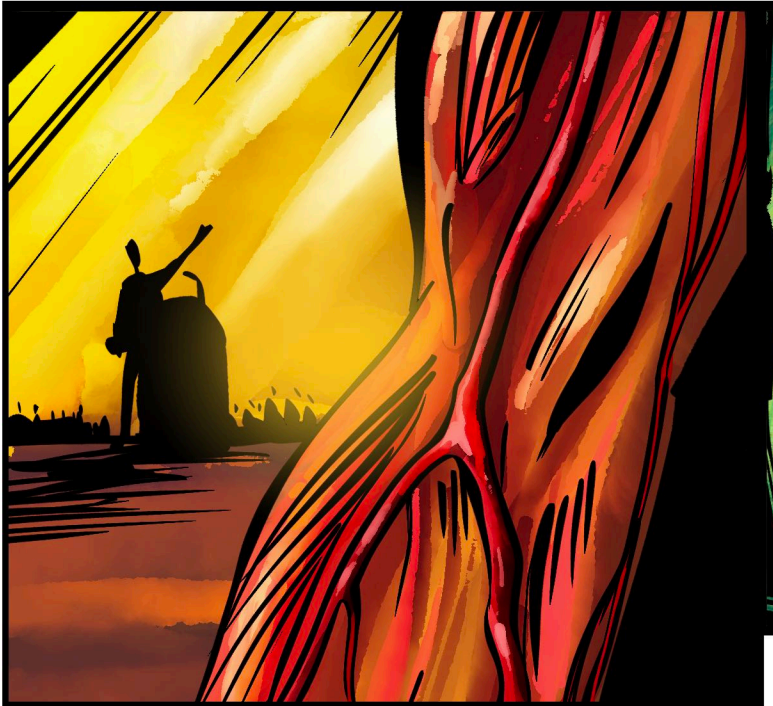


OTHERWISE WE CAN GO **WRONG** -- BECAUSE ACTS TELLS US ABOUT A **NUMBER** OF THINGS THAT THE APOSTLES DID THAT WERE **WRONG** (ACTS 15:9, 16:3, 21:23-26)

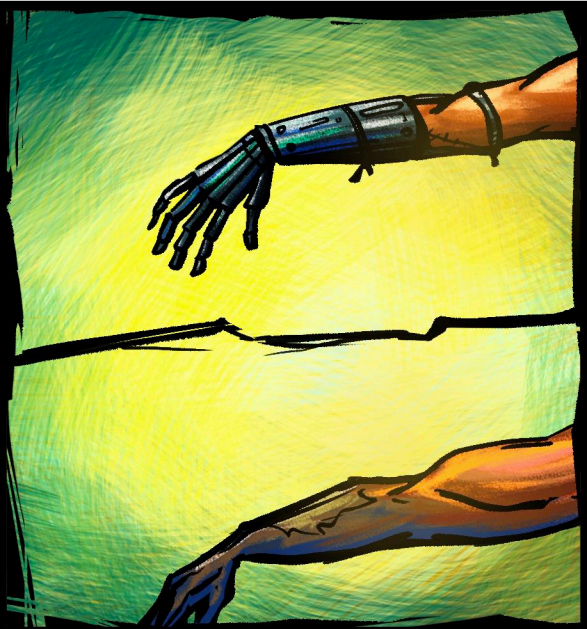


MANY PENTECOSTAL **PREACHERS** LOUDLY PROCLAIM THAT SINCE "ALL SPOKE IN **TONGUES**" THEN (IN ACTS 2:4), THEREFORE **ALL MUST** SPEAK IN TONGUES **TODAY**. BUT THEY DO **NOT** PREACH SOMETHING **ELSE** WRITTEN IN THE SAME CHAPTER THAT SINCE "**ALL SOLD THEIR PROPERTY** AND HAD ALL THINGS IN **COMMON**" THEN (ACTS 2:44), THEREFORE **ALL MUST SELL EVERYTHING** THEY OWN AND HAVE ALL THINGS IN **COMMON** TODAY AS WELL. THEY **SELECTIVELY** CHOOSE FROM **ACTS** WHAT SUITS THEIR **OWN VIEWS**.





IT IS CERTAINLY GOD'S WILL THAT **EVERY** CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE **POWER**. TO HAVE POWER DOES **NOT** MEAN THAT YOU WILL BECOME A **FIERY** EVANGELIST. YOU WILL HAVE **POWER** TO FULFIL YOUR **OWN MINISTRY** IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. CONSIDER THE HUMAN BODY. TO BE A **MEMBER** OF OUR HUMAN BODY, **BLOOD** MUST **FLOW** THROUGH THAT MEMBER.

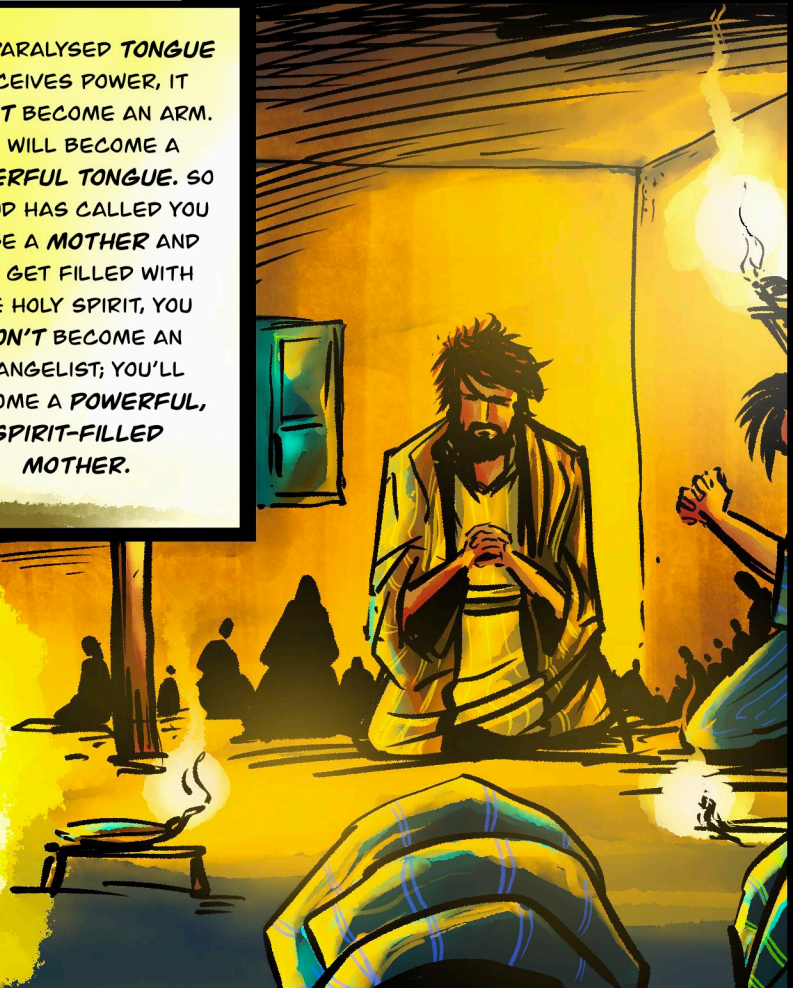


AN **ARTIFICIAL** HAND **CANNOT** BE A PART OF A BODY BECAUSE THE **BLOOD** DOESN'T FLOW **THROUGH** IT. IN THE SAME WAY, ONLY WHERE THE BLOOD OF **CHRIST** HAS CLEANSSED SOMEONE CAN THAT PERSON BE A **PART** OF **CHRIST'S** BODY. BUT **EVEN** IF THE BLOOD FLOWS IN AN ARM, IT COULD STILL BE **PARALYSED** -- AND THEREFORE BE A **USELESS MEMBER**.



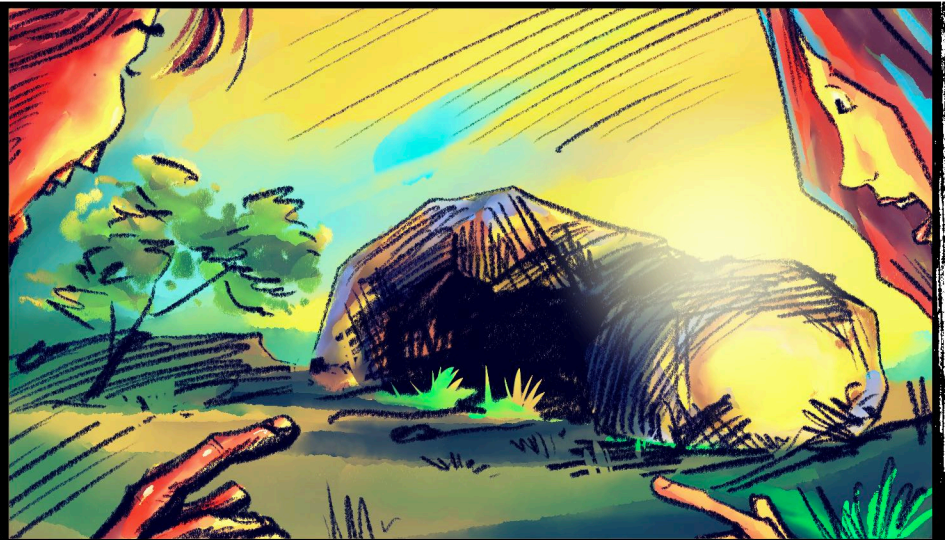
IF A PARALYSED **TONGUE** RECEIVES POWER, IT **WON'T** BECOME AN ARM. IT WILL BECOME A **POWERFUL TONGUE**. SO IF GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO BE A **MOTHER** AND YOU GET FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, YOU **WON'T** BECOME AN EVANGELIST; YOU'LL BECOME A **POWERFUL, SPIRIT-FILLED MOTHER**.

IN 1:15, WE READ THAT **120** MEN AND WOMEN GATHERED IN THE UPPER ROOM WAITING FOR THE **HOLY SPIRIT**. BUT WE KNOW THAT MORE THAN **500** BELIEVERS **SAW JESUS** AFTER HIS **RESURRECTION** (1 CORINTHIANS 15:6). BUT OUT OF THE **500**, **ONLY 120** WAITED! **NOT EVERY** BELIEVER WAS **INTERESTED** IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT -- **EVEN THEN**. THEY WERE **ALL HAPPY** TO **MEET JESUS** AFTER HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD, BUT THEY HAD **NO INTEREST** IN BEING **BAPTISED** IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.





IN 1:22, WE SEE THE APOSTLES LOOKING FOR A **REPLACEMENT** FOR JUDAS ISCARIOT. THEY LOOKED FOR SOMEONE WHO COULD BE "A **WITNESS** OF JESUS' **RESURRECTION**" ALONG WITH THEM. MOST EVANGELISTS DO **NOT** PREACH THE RESURRECTION AS **PRIMARY**. THEY PREACH THE **CRUCIFIXION** AS PRIMARY. BUT THE **APOSTLES** PREACHED THE **RESURRECTION** PRIMARILY.



THE REASON WHY MANY **CHRISTIANS** ARE **GLOOMY** IS BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH THEY **BELIEVE** THAT JESUS ROSE UP FROM THE DEAD, THEY ARE NOT **CONFESSING** IT. LIKE THOSE DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO **EMMAUS**, THEY ARE **GLOOMY** AND WEAR **LONG FACES**. WHAT A DIFFERENCE THERE WAS WHEN THEY REALISED THAT JESUS HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD!!!



CHAPTER 2: WHEN THOSE 120 PEOPLE WAITED FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT, THEY DID **NOT** KNOW HOW **LONG** THEY WOULD HAVE TO WAIT, BECAUSE JESUS **NEVER** TOLD THEM. IF THEY KNEW IT WOULD BE ONLY **TEN** DAYS, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN **EASIER** FOR THEM TO WAIT. GOD WANTS US TO LIVE BY **FAITH**, BECAUSE THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO **GROW SPIRITUALLY** -- AND WAITING IS **ONE** WAY BY WHICH OUR **FAITH** IS **STRENGTHENED**.



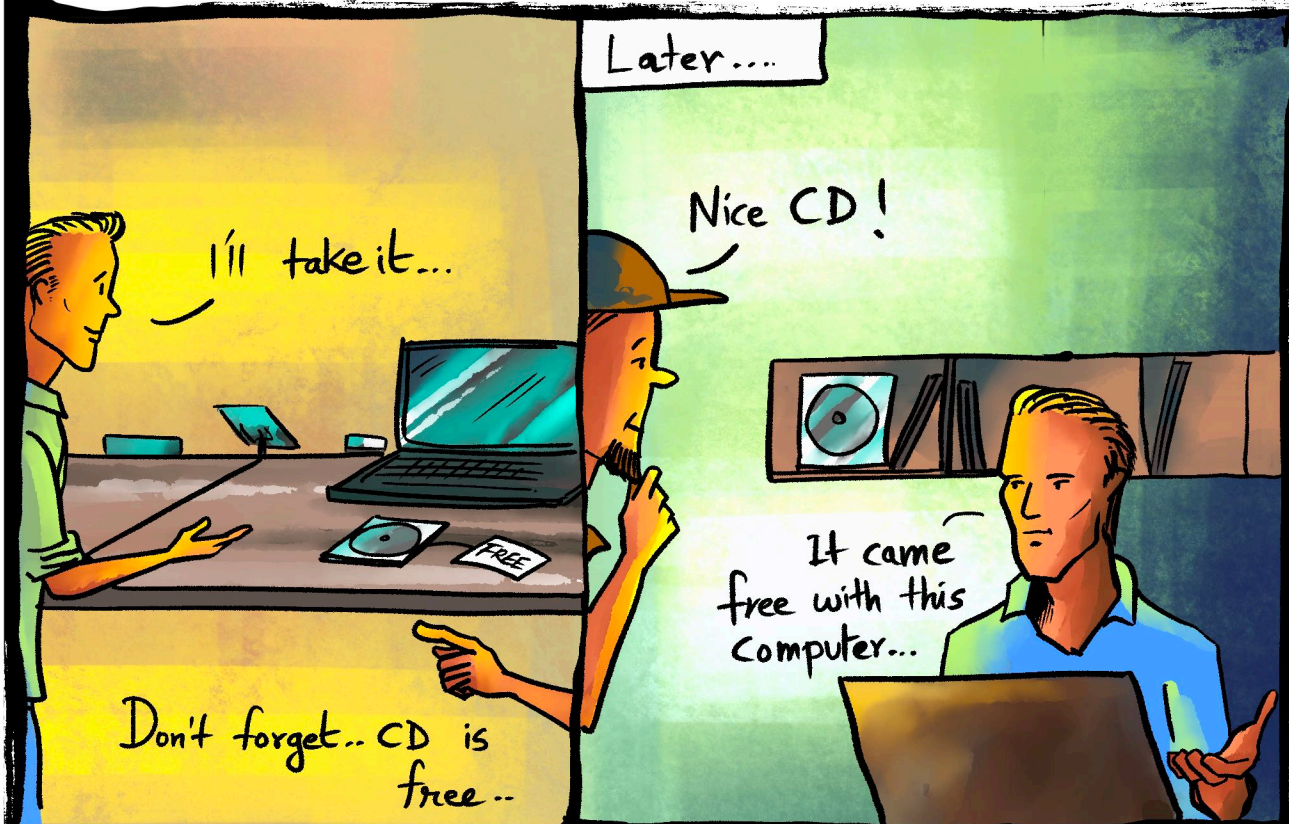
YOU MAY ASK "HOW WILL I **KNOW** THAT I HAVE RECEIVED THIS POWER?" GOD CAN **ASSURE** US OF THAT, JUST LIKE HE ASSURED US THAT OUR SINS WERE **FORGIVEN**. THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO **BEARS WITNESS** WITH OUR SPIRIT.



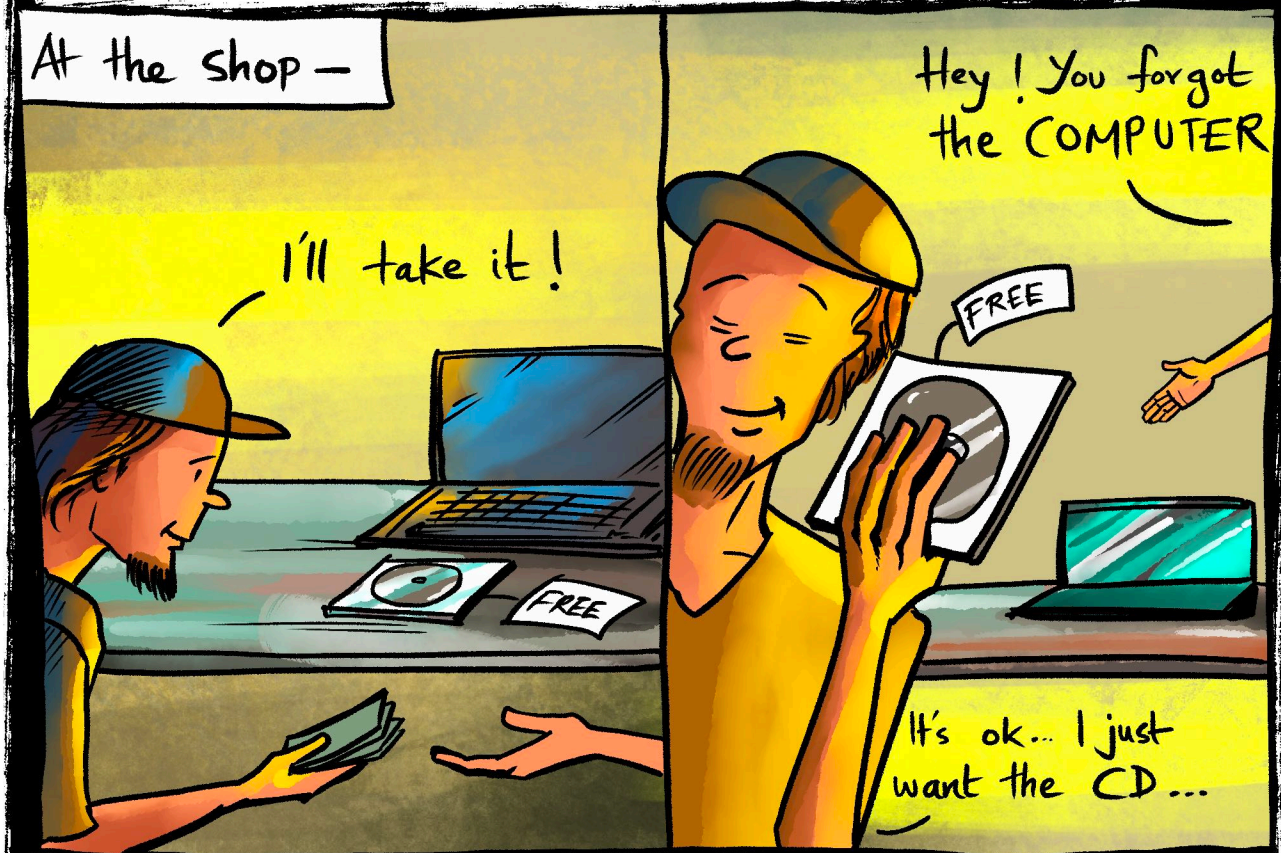
SO THEY WERE WAITING FOR **POWER**. BUT WHEN THEY GOT POWER THEY **ALSO** RECEIVED THE **GIFT** OF SPEAKING IN UNKNOWN LANGUAGES (**TONGUES**).



CONSIDER THIS : YOU GO TO A SHOP TO BUY A COMPUTER (POWER). THE SHOPKEEPER TELLS YOU THAT A **FREE CD** (TONGUES) IS ALSO BEING **OFFERED** WITH EVERY **COMPUTER**. YOU **DIDN'T** GO TO THE SHOP TO BUY A **CD** BUT A **COMPUTER**. BUT SINCE THE **CD** IS BEING OFFERED FREELY, YOU TAKE **BOTH** THE **COMPUTER** AND THE **CD**.



BUT NOW YOUR FRIEND SEES YOUR **CD** AND GOES TO THE SAME SHOP AND **PAYS** FOR THE **COMPUTER** BUT BRINGS HOME ONLY THE **FREE CD!!** HOW **FOOLISH!**

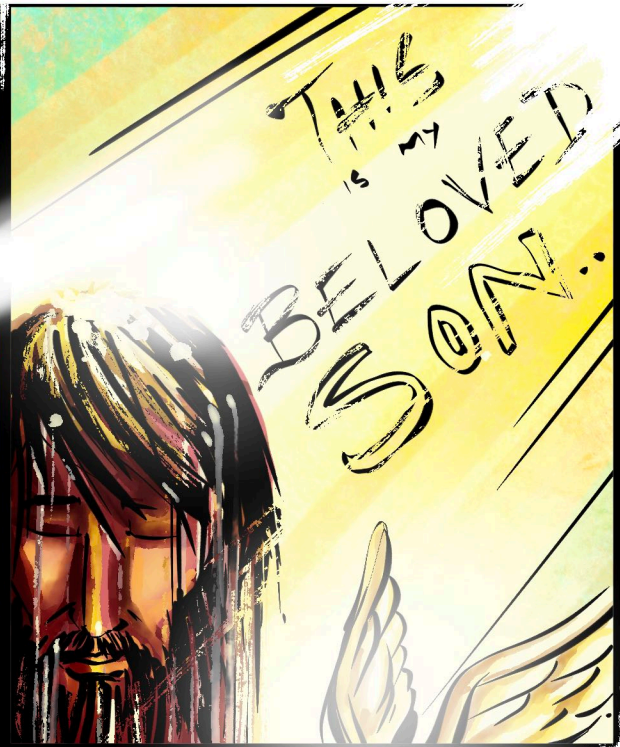


THAT IS A PICTURE OF THOSE WHO RECEIVED THE **GIFT OF TONGUES** BUT NOT THE **POWER**.





WE READ THAT A **NOISE** AND A **WIND** FILLED THE HOUSE WHERE THEY WERE PRAYING AND **TONGUES** AS OF **FIRE** RESTED ON EVERYONE'S HEAD. THESE WERE ONLY THE **EXTERNALS**. THE RECEIVING OF AN **ANOINTING** AND **POWER** WERE THE **MAJOR** EVENTS.



THE **EXTERNALS** WERE DIFFERENT WHEN **JESUS** WAS **ANOINTED**. IN HIS CASE, THERE WAS NO **WIND** OR **FIRE** BUT A **DOVE** AND A **VOICE**. BUT THE **POWER** AND **ANOINTING** HE RECEIVED WERE THE **SAME** AS THESE **APOSTLES** RECEIVED. WE ALL NEED TO BE "ANOINTED WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT** AND **POWER**" AS **JESUS** WAS (ACTS 10:38).



THE **PHYSICAL** AND **EMOTIONAL** EXPERIENCES MAY **VARY** WITH EACH OF US. IF SOMEONE WERE TO GIVE YOU AN **EXPENSIVE DIAMOND** AS A GIFT, IT **WOULDN'T** MAKE ANY **DIFFERENCE** IF IT CAME WRAPPED CRUDELY IN **ORDINARY BROWN PAPER** OR IN A **SHINY PAPER** WITH **FANCY RIBBONS**. IT IS THE GIFT **INSIDE** THAT IS IMPORTANT. ONLY **BABIES** ARE TAKEN UP WITH THE **WRAPPINGS**, THE **EXTERNALS** -- THE **WIND**, THE **FIRE**, THE **NOISE**, THE **TINGLING SENSATIONS**, ETC. **ADULTS** ARE TAKEN UP WITH THE **GIFT** -- THE **ANOINTING** AND THE **POWER** OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**.

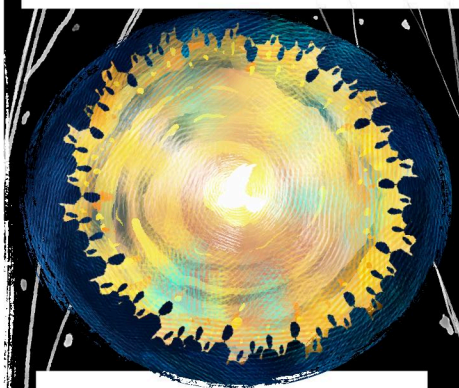


THE **TONGUES** OF **FIRE** THAT SAT ON EVERYONE'S HEADS INDICATED THAT THE MOST **IMPORTANT** PART OF OUR BODY THAT GOD WOULD BE USING IN THE **NEW COVENANT AGE** WOULD BE THE **TONGUE** -- A **TONGUE** SET ON **FIRE** BY THE **HOLY SPIRIT** AND UNDER HIS **TOTAL CONTROL** ALL THE TIME. GOD WANTS TO USE YOUR **TONGUE** TO **BLESS** OTHERS WITH, NOT ONLY IF YOU ARE A **PREACHER**, BUT ALSO IN YOUR **ORDINARY CONVERSATIONS** WITH PEOPLE EVERY DAY. BUT FOR THIS, YOU MUST LET THE **HOLY SPIRIT** HAVE **FULL CONTROL** OF YOUR **SPEECH**, 24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.

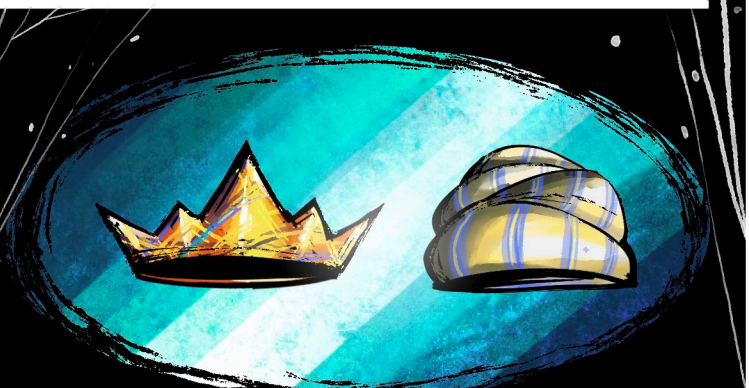




IN 2:14, WE SEE ONE **WONDERFUL** RESULT OF THE SPIRIT **INDWELLING** ALL THE APOSTLES. WE READ HERE, "PETER STOOD UP, **BACKED BY THE OTHER ELEVEN**" (MSG). THE TWELVE ARE ALL **ONE BODY** NOW. THEY DID **NOT COMPETE** TO HAVE THE **HONOUR** TO **PREACH**. THIS IS THE **GREATER WORK** THAT **JESUS** HAD SAID THEY WOULD DO **AFTER THE SPIRIT** CAME -- THE HOLY SPIRIT HAD **BAPTISED** THEM INTO **ONE BODY**.

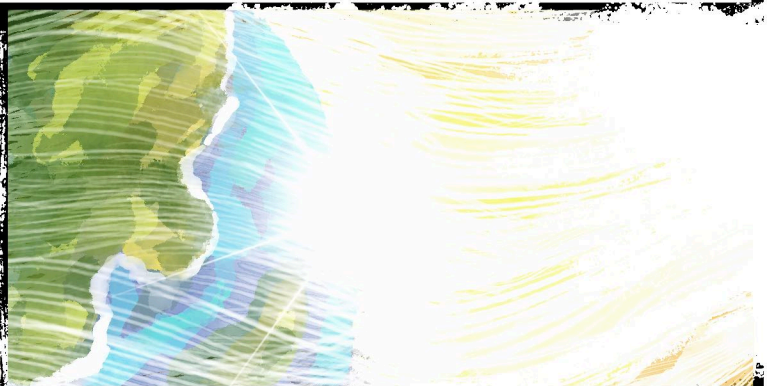


IN 2:17, PETER SAID THAT THE **OUTPOURING** OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY OF **JOEL**.



THIS WAS A **PRIVILEGE** RESERVED ONLY FOR **KINGS** AND **PRIESTS** UNDER THE **OLD COVENANT**. BUT UNDER THE **NEW COVENANT**, **ALL** CAN RECEIVE THE SPIRIT. WHAT A **TREMENDOUS** HONOUR THIS IS!

IN 2:22, 23, WE SEE THE **SPIRIT-FILLED** PETER PROCLAIMING THE LORD JESUS AS A **MAN**, "JESUS THE **NAZARENE**, A **MAN** ATTESTED TO YOU BY **GOD**." JESUS WAS **ALWAYS GOD** AND **STILL IS**. THAT CAN **NEVER CHANGE**. BUT ONCE HE **BECAME** A **MAN**, HE IS **ALWAYS** A **MAN** TOO.

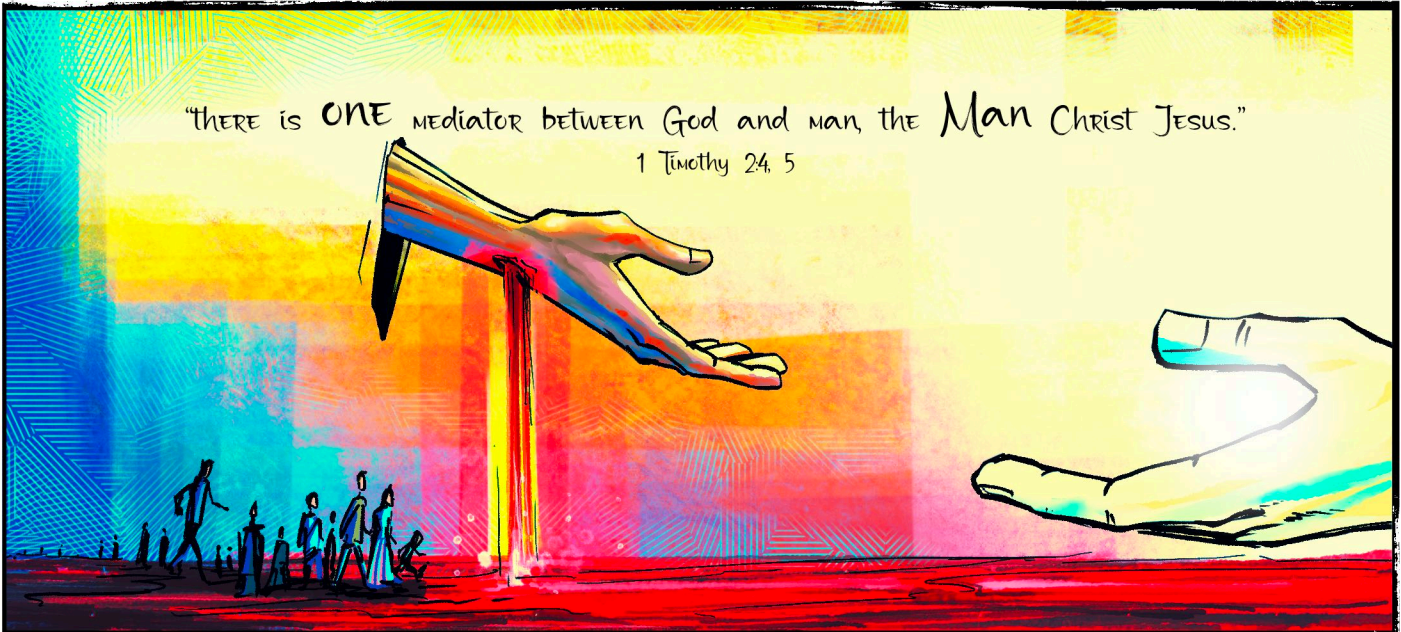


HE **NEVER CEASED** TO BE **GOD** WHEN HE CAME TO **EARTH** AND HE **NEVER CEASED** TO BE **MAN** WHEN HE WENT **BACK** TO **HEAVEN**. HE IS **FULLY GOD** AND **FULLY MAN** EVEN **TODAY**.

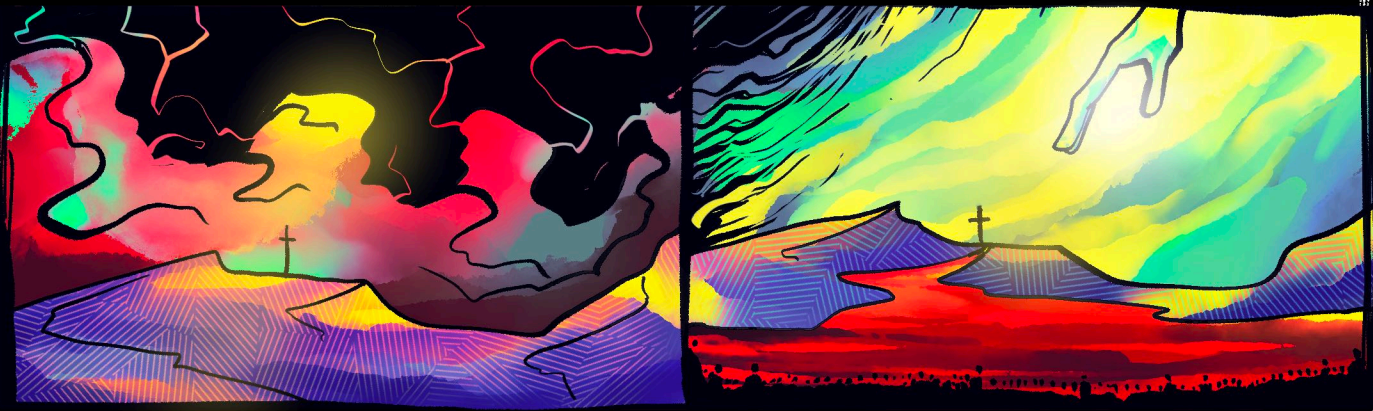


"THERE IS **ONE** mediator between God and man, the **Man Christ Jesus**."

1 Timothy 2:5



THE BIBLE **NEVER** CALLS HIM THE "GOD-MAN", AS **SOME** CHRISTIANS DO. THE **BIBLE** CALLS HIM "THE **MAN CHRIST JESUS**." AND PETER, FILLED WITH THE **SPIRIT**, IS **INSPIRED** BY THE **SPIRIT** TO CALL **JESUS** "A **MAN**" -- BECAUSE OUR **LORD** HAS IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH OUR **HUMANITY** COMPLETELY AND PERMANENTLY. **HALLELUJAH!**

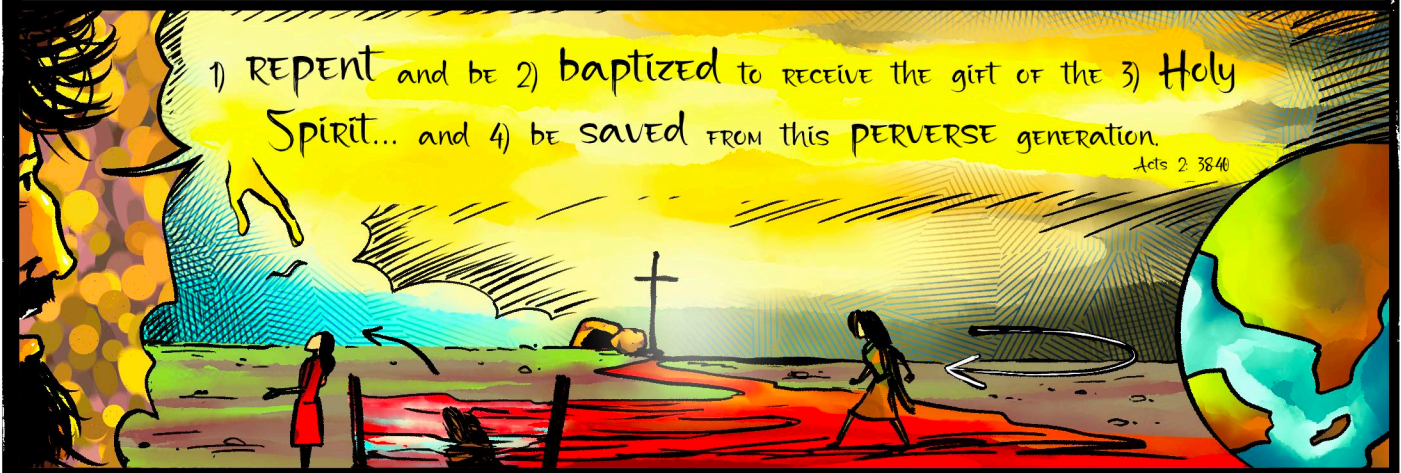


IN 2:23, WE READ THAT JESUS' **CRUCIFIXION** WAS ACCORDING TO "THE **PREDETERMINED PLAN** AND **FOREKNOWLEDGE** OF **GOD**". THE **WORST** THING THAT EVER HAPPENED ON THIS EARTH WAS THE **CRUCIFIXION** OF **CHRIST** -- BECAUSE THERE **NEVER** WAS A **GREATER CRIME** COMMITTED ON THIS EARTH THAN THAT... AND THE **BEST** THING THAT EVER HAPPENED ON THIS EARTH WAS THE **CRUCIFIXION** OF **CHRIST** -- BECAUSE THAT ALONE BROUGHT **REDEMPTION** TO **MAN**. **GOD** IN HIS **FOREKNOWLEDGE** **TURNED** THE **WORST** INTO THE **BEST**. OUR **GOD** CAN MAKE THE **WORST** THINGS THAT THE **DEVIL** DOES TO US (EITHER **DIRECTLY** OR THROUGH HIS **AGENTS**) TO BE **TURNED** INTO THE **VERY BEST THINGS** FOR US!

IN 2:38--40, WHEN PEOPLE WERE **CONVICTED** OF THEIR **SINS** WHEN THE **FIRST GOSPEL SERMON** WAS PREACHED, **PETER** EXHORTED THEM TO DO **FOUR THINGS** - THE **WHOLE COUNSEL** OF **GOD** ..

1) **REPENT** and be 2) **baptized** to receive the gift of the 3) **Holy Spirit**... and 4) be **saved** FROM this **PERVERSE** generation.

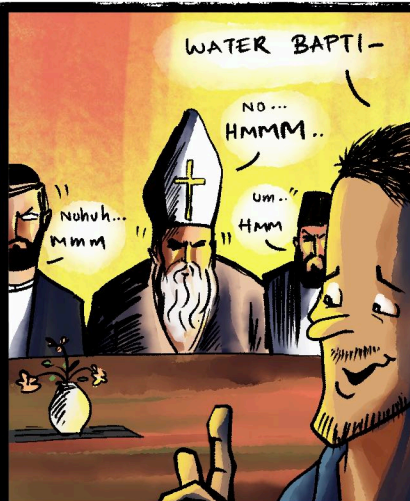
Acts 2:38-40







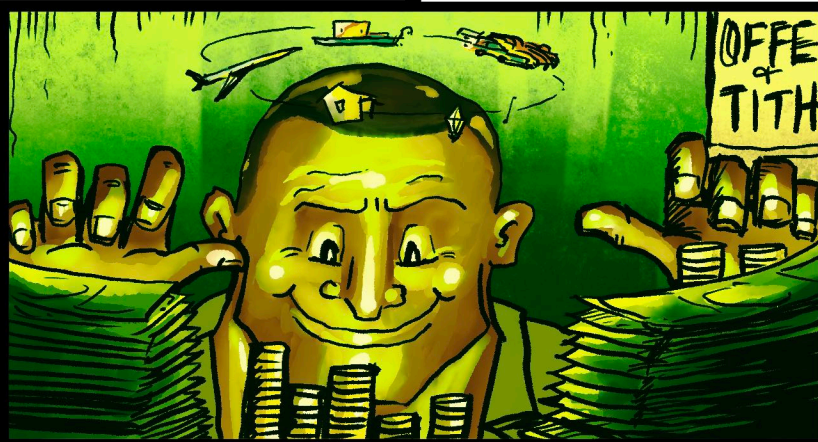
**MOST OF TODAY'S EVANGELISTS DON'T PREACH REPENTANCE, BECAUSE IF THEY DID, THEY WON'T GET SO MANY PEOPLE TO RAISE THEIR HANDS TO BE "SAVED"!!**



**THEY DON'T PREACH WATER-BAPTISM BECAUSE THAT WOULD OFFEND THE BISHOPS WHO SIT BEHIND THEM ON THE PLATFORM, WHO BAPTISE INFANTS IN THEIR CHURCHES.**



**THEY DON'T PREACH THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT BECAUSE THAT WOULD SOUND TOO "PENTECOSTAL"!**



**AND THEY DON'T PREACH SEPARATION FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BECAUSE MANY OF THEM ARE LOVERS OF MONEY THEMSELVES!!**

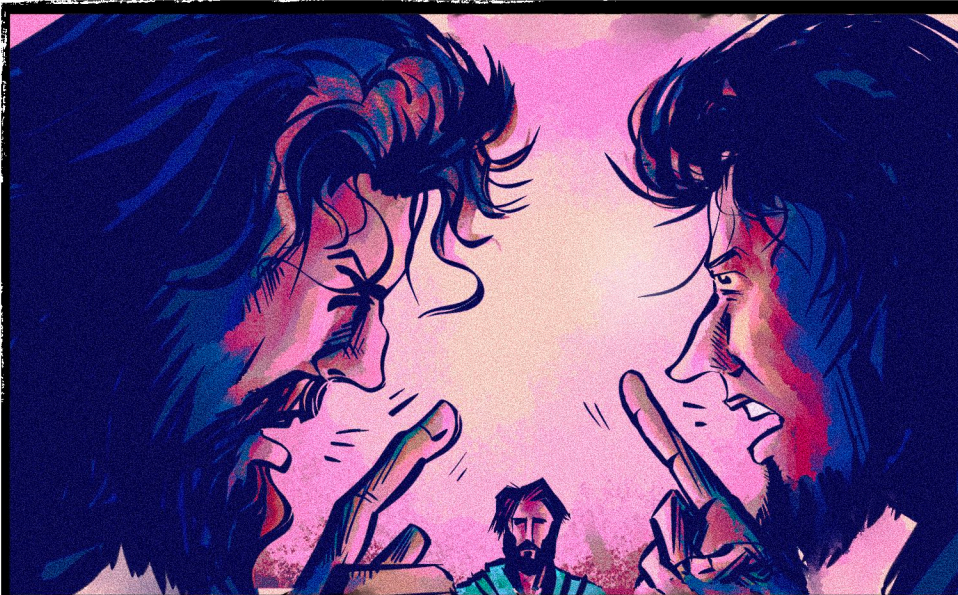


**IN 2:42, WE SEE THE BEGINNING OF HOUSE-FELLOWSHIPS WHERE THE BODY OF CHRIST BEGAN TO BE BUILT. THOSE WHO WERE SAVED CONTINUED IN THE APOSTLES' TEACHING, FELLOWSHIP, BREAKING OF BREAD AND PRAYER -- OBVIOUSLY IN SMALL GROUPS IN DIFFERENT HOMES, BECAUSE THEY DID NOT HAVE ANY BUILDINGS TO MEET IN.**



**AND THE LORD ADDED TO THEIR NUMBER EVERY DAY THOSE WHO WERE SAVED (2:47). IT'S THE LORD WHO ADDS TO THE CHURCH. OUR PART IS ONLY TO PROCLAIM THE UNDILUTED, FULL GOSPEL.**





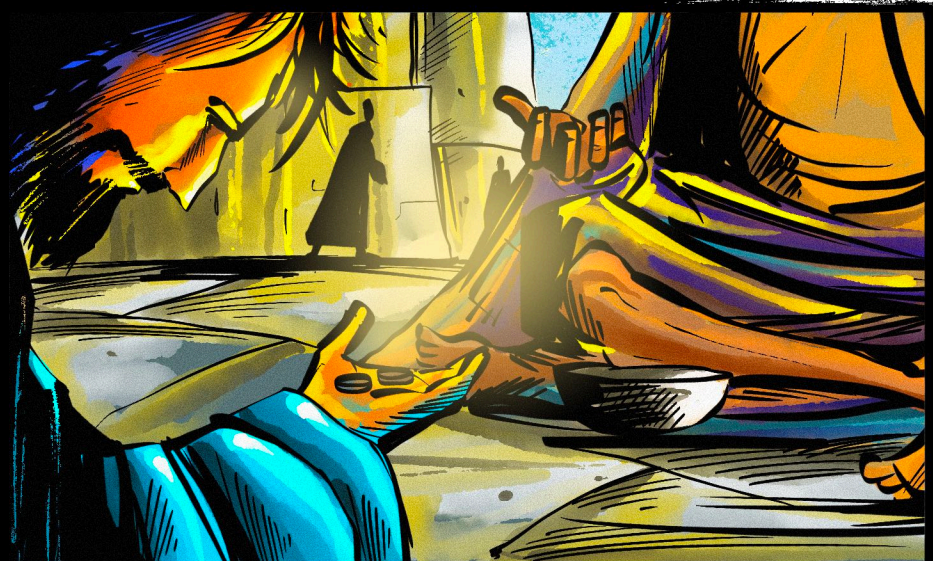
IN 3:1, WE SEE **PETER** AND **JOHN** WORKING TOGETHER.

THIS HAD **NEVER** HAPPENED BEFORE THE DAY OF PENTECOST. THEY WERE **DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED** TO EACH OTHER IN **PERSONALITY** AND WERE IN **COMPETITION** WITH **EACH OTHER** BEFORE THIS. THIS WAS THE **UNITY** THAT **JESUS** LONGED TO SEE IN THEM BUT **NEVER** SAW, BECAUSE THE **HOLY SPIRIT** WAS NOT **INDWELLING** PETER AND **JOHN** THEN.

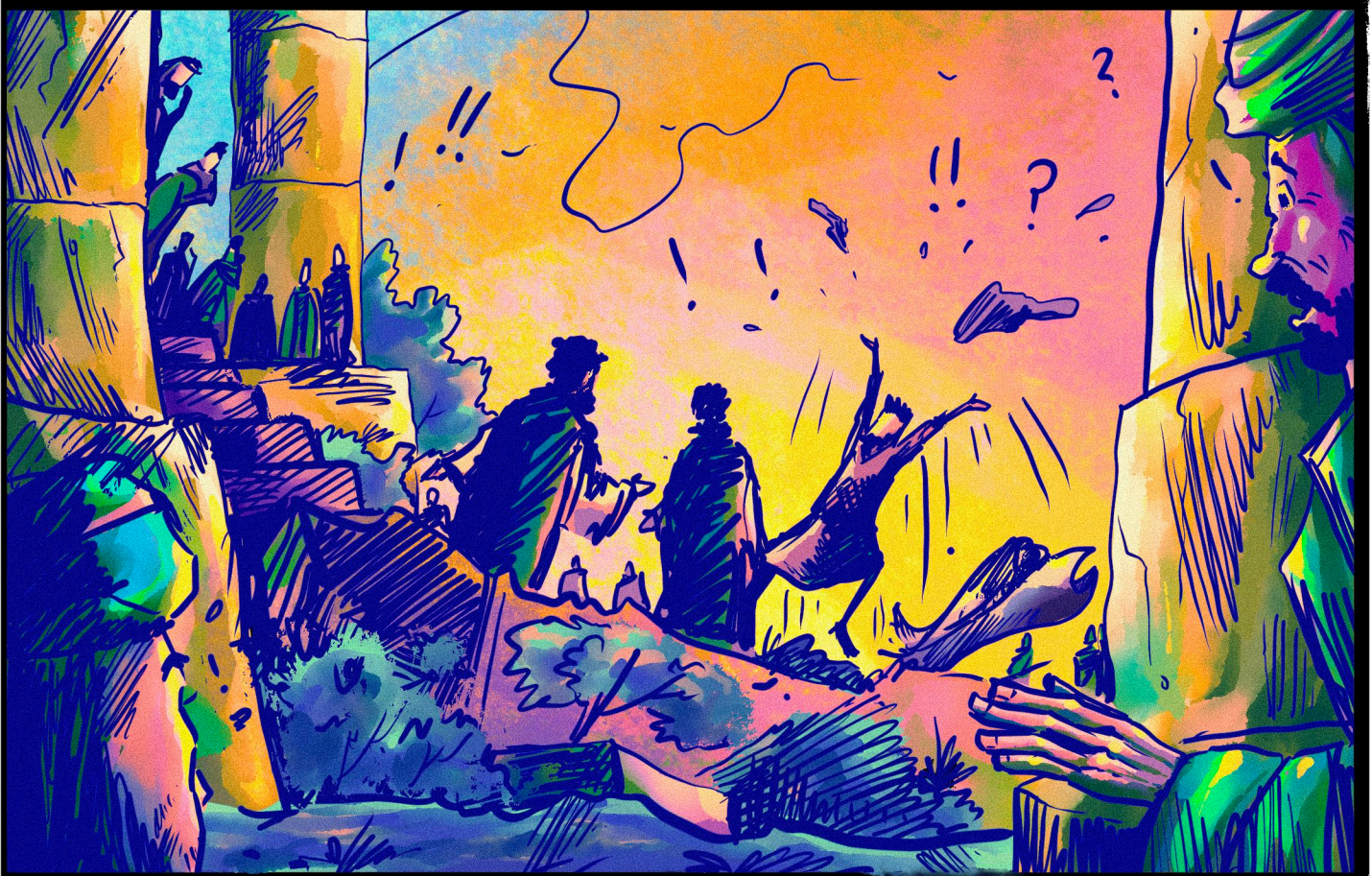


IN **THOSE** DAYS, **JOHN** WOULD ALWAYS BE WITH HIS **BROTHER JAMES**. **PETER** WAS ALSO A PART OF THE **INNER TRIO** OF **JESUS**, BUT **JOHN** AND **JAMES** TRIED TO GET **PETER** **PUSHED** OUT, AND ASKED **JESUS** TO RESERVE THE **TWO** SEATS ON **EITHER SIDE** OF HIS **FUTURE** THRONE FOR BOTH OF THEM **ALONE!** BUT THINGS HAVE CHANGED **NOW** -- FOR THE **SPRIT** HAD COME. **NO-ONE** IS **SEEKING** HIS **OWN** NOW, OR TRYING TO **PROMOTE HIMSELF**. **PETER** AND **JOHN** WHO **NEVER** FELLOWSHIPED TOGETHER BEFORE, GO TO **PRAYER TOGETHER** NOW. IN THAT **UNITY** THERE IS **POWER**.

IN CHAPTER 3 WE READ OF THE **HEALING** OF A **LAME** MAN. HE WAS **OVER 40** YEARS OLD (4:22), **LAME** FROM **BIRTH**, AND WAS BROUGHT TO THE **BEAUTIFUL GATE** OF THE TEMPLE EVERY DAY TO **BEG**. HE **MUST** HAVE SAT THERE EVERY DAY FOR THE PREVIOUS **20** YEARS AT LEAST. **JESUS** WOULD HAVE SEEN HIM **FREQUENTLY**. AND **JESUS** WOULD HAVE GIVEN HIM **MONEY** EACH TIME -- **NOT HEALING**.







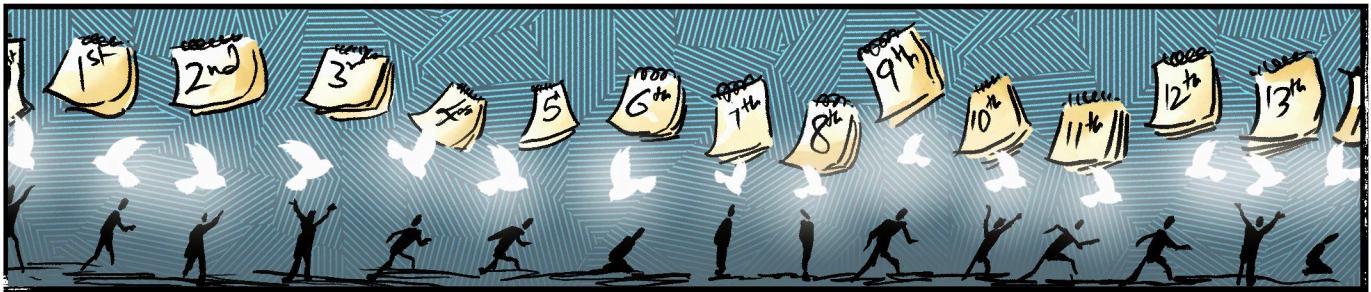
SOME PEOPLE **IMAGINE** THAT **JESUS** WENT AROUND **HEALING EVERYBODY**. HE **DIDN'T**. IF **JESUS** HAD HEALED HIM, THE **REVIVAL** THAT BROKE OUT IN **ACTS 3 AND 4** THROUGH THIS MAN'S HEALING, WOULD **NOT** HAVE TAKEN PLACE. WE CAN **HINDER GOD'S WORK** IF WE ACT ACCORDING TO OUR **OWN REASON** WITHOUT **SEEKING THE WILL OF GOD** IN PRAYER. THE **FATHER'S TIME** FOR THAT MAN TO BE HEALED WAS **AFTER THE DAY OF PENTECOST** THROUGH **PETER**.

MOST BELIEVERS ARE **NOT** IN TOUCH WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT**. THEY LIVE BY **RULES** SUCH AS, "**EVERYBODY** CAN BE HEALED SUPERNATURALLY", OR "**NOBODY** CAN BE HEALED SUPERNATURALLY" -- DEPENDING ON WHETHER YOU ARE **PENTECOSTAL** OR **ANTI-PENTECOSTAL**. **JESUS** HOWEVER DID **NOT** LIVE BY RULES BUT BY THE **LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**. THOSE WHO LIVE BY **RULES** ARE **LEGALISTS**, AND CAN **NEVER FULFIL THE WILL OF GOD**.

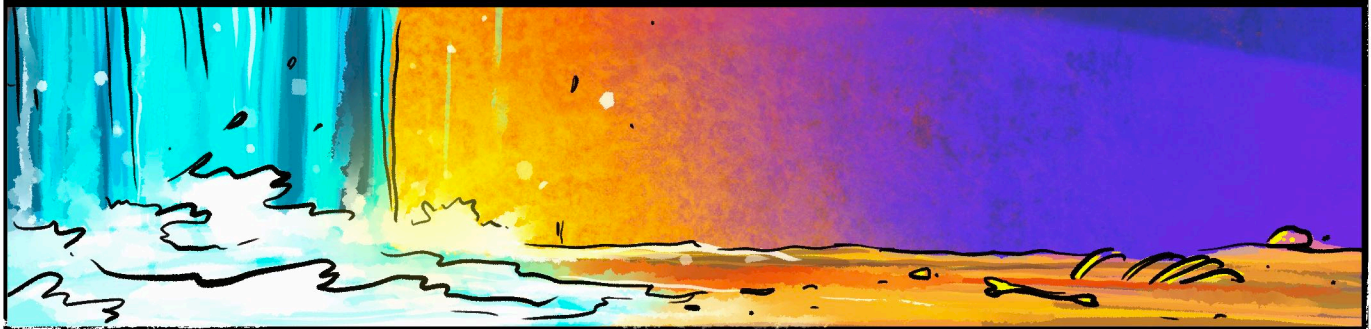


MANY CHRISTIANS WHO LIVE BY **UPRIGHT PRINCIPLES** AND **RULES** ARE THE **BIGGEST HINDRANCE** TO **GOD'S WORK**. THE MAN WHO IS **MOST USEFUL** TO **GOD** IS THE ONE WHO **LISTENS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT**. THIS IS A **BIG WARNING** TO ME -- HOW I CAN **HINDER GOD'S WORK** IF I "**LEAN ON MY OWN UNDERSTANDING**" (**PROVERBS 3:5**), EVEN IF I DO A **GOOD WORK** WITHOUT A **LEADING FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT**.



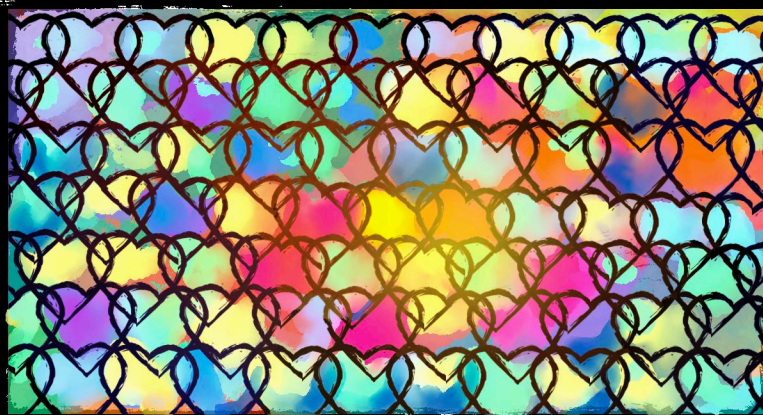


WE SEE BETWEEN ACTS 2 AND ACTS 4, PETER WAS FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT **THREE** TIMES. THIS TEACHES US THAT THE **FULLNESS** OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS SOMETHING WE NEED TO **EXPERIENCE AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN**.



WE HAVE TO **KEEP ON BEING FILLED**. YESTERDAY'S FULLNESS IS **NOT** GOOD ENOUGH FOR **TODAY**. MANY WHO CLAIM TO HAVE BEEN BAPTISED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE **PAST** ARE **DRY** AS A **DESERT** TODAY. ALL THEY CAN DO NOW IS **QUOTE** A **DATE** YEARS AGO WHEN THEY WERE FILLED. GOD WANTS RIVERS OF LIVING WATER TO **FLOW** THROUGH US **ALWAYS**.

IN 4:28, WE AGAIN FIND THE EXPRESSION THAT WE SAW IN 2:23, "TO DO **WHATEVER THY HAND AND THY PURPOSE PREDETERMINED TO OCCUR**." WHEN THEY WERE **BEATEN** BY THE RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES, THEY SAID, "LORD, THIS **ALSO** IS **ACCORDING** TO YOUR **PREDESTINED PLAN**."



IN 4:32, WE SEE THAT "THE CONGREGATION OF THOSE WHO BELIEVED WERE OF **ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL**." THE SECRET OF THE POWER OF THE EARLY CHURCH WAS **NOT ONLY** THE **FULLNESS** OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BUT ALSO THE FACT THAT THEY WERE OF **ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL**. THEY **SUBMITTED** TO THE **APOSTLES** AND THEY WERE COMPLETELY **UNITED**.



"...THEY DID **NOT** CLAIM THAT ANYTHING **BELONGING** TO THEM WAS THEIR **OWN**." THIS DOES **NOT NECESSARILY** MEAN THAT THEY **SOLD** ALL THEIR PROPERTY. BUT THEY DID **NOT SAY** THAT ANYTHING THEY HAD COULD BE **USED ONLY** BY THEM -- IT WAS AVAILABLE FOR **OTHER BELIEVERS** IN THE BODY WHO NEEDED IT.



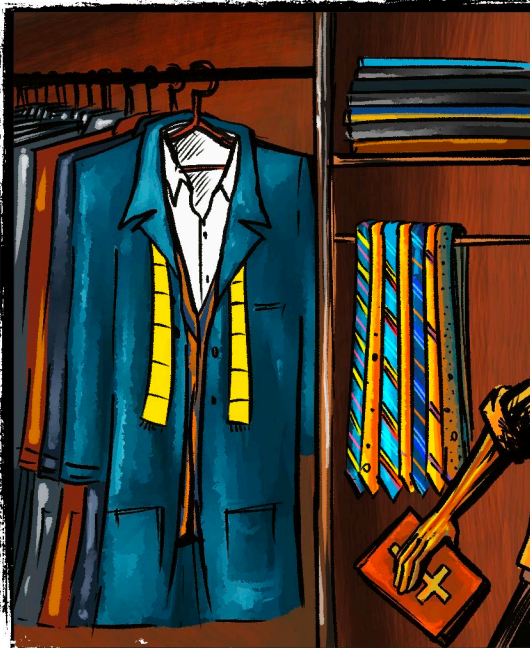


IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT, ONE CAN IMAGINE HOW SOME PEOPLE WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT. IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL TO WEED OUT SUCH PEOPLE IMMEDIATELY, VERY SOON EVERY POOR PERSON WILL WANT TO JOIN OUR CHURCHES, AND WE WILL HAVE REMARKABLE "CHURCH-GROWTH" WITH "CONVERTS" WHO ARE INTERESTED IN MONEY, NOT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MANY PEOPLE HAVE PROSPERED FINANCIALLY BY JOINING THE CHURCH. IF THEIR PROSPERITY CAME BECAUSE GOD HONoured THEM FOR BEING RIGHTEOUS IN THEIR LIFE, THAT IS ALL RIGHT. BUT IF THEIR PROSPERITY HAS COME BECAUSE OF THE WEALTHY CONTACTS THEY GOT BY JOINING THE CHURCH, THEN THEY HAVE MISSED THE WILL OF GOD COMPLETELY -- BECAUSE CHRISTIANITY IS NOT A WAY OF MAKING FINANCIAL PROFIT.



THE CHURCH IS A PLACE TO SACRIFICE AND GIVE -- NOT A PLACE FOR PROFIT AND GAIN. IT IS A SAD FACT THAT MANY "CHRISTIAN WORKERS" TODAY EARN FIVE TO TEN TIMES WHAT THEY WOULD HAVE EARNED IF THEY HAD BEEN IN A SECULAR JOB.



NON-CHRISTIANS LOOK AT THEM AND SAY, "THIS PERSON HAS BECOME A CHRISTIAN WORKER TO MAKE MONEY." AND THEY ARE RIGHT! HOW SHALL WE SHUT THEIR MOUTHS? ONLY WHEN CHRISTIAN WORKERS CAN SHOW THAT THEY COULD HAVE MADE MORE MONEY IN A SECULAR JOB THAN WHAT THEY GET IN CHRISTIAN WORK.



AT A TIME WHEN EVERYONE WAS SELLING THEIR PROPERTY AND GIVING IT TO THE APOSTLES TO DISTRIBUTE TO THE POOR, ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA THOUGHT, "HOW CAN WE APPEAR SPIRITUAL WHILE STILL KEEPING OUR MONEY?" SO WHEN THEY SOLD THEIR LAND, THEY DID NOT GIVE ALL OF THEIR MONEY. THEIR SIN WAS NOT THAT THEY DID NOT GIVE ALL THEIR MONEY. GOD LOVES CHEERFUL GIVERS AND DOESN'T WANT ANYONE'S MONEY. THEIR SIN WAS HYPOCRISY -- PRETENDING TO BE WHOLEHEARTED.



"WHEN YOUR LAND WAS NOT SOLD, IT WAS YOURS TO DO WHAT YOU LIKED WITH IT. AND EVEN AFTER IT WAS SOLD, THE MONEY WAS YOURS. BUT WHY DO YOU TELL A LIE"



IF HE HAD SAID, "WE SOLD THAT LAND FOR 50,000. BUT WE FEEL WE SHOULD GIVE ONLY 20% OF THAT. WE WANT TO KEEP THE REST FOR OUR OWN NEEDS. SO HERE IS 10,000 ." PETER WOULD HAVE **BLESSED** ANANIAS -- AND HE AND HIS WIFE WOULD HAVE REMAINED ALIVE. ANANIAS **NEVER SAID** ANYTHING. HE TOLD A **LIE WITHOUT** OPENING HIS MOUTH, BY JUST **STANDING** IN THE LINE WITH ALL THE OTHER **WHOLE- HEARTED** PEOPLE.



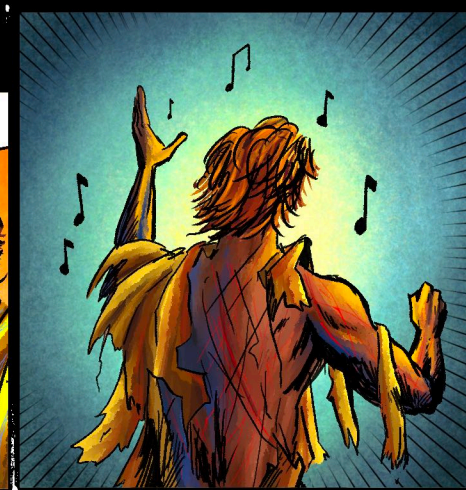
BUT PETER WAS A MAN OF **DISCERNMENT**. BOTH ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA WERE **EXPOSED** BY HIM AND THEY **DIED** FOR THEIR **HYPOCRISY**. WHY DOESN'T GOD ACT LIKE THAT **TODAY**? BECAUSE VERY FEW WILL BE LEFT **ALIVE** IN THE **CHURCHES** THEN!



IT IS **DANGEROUS** TO JOIN A CHURCH THAT IS **PRESSING** ON TO **PERFECTION**, IF A PERSON IS **PROUD** AND A **HYPOCRITE**. GOD WILL **SMITE** AND **REMOVE** THE **HYPOCRITE** FROM THEIR MIDST, IN ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. BUT THERE ARE **NOT** MANY CHURCHES LIKE THAT NOWADAYS. SO **HYPOCRITES** SURVIVE IN **MOST** CHURCHES TODAY. IF ONE WANTS TO REMAIN **ALIVE** AND BE **PROUD** AND A **HYPOCRITE**, THEN THEY SHOULD CHOOSE A **DEAD** CHURCH TO JOIN.

IN 5:29, WE READ THESE **BOLD** WORDS THAT THE **APOSTLES** SPOKE TO THE **RELIGIOUS** LEADERS,

WE **MUST** OBEY **GOD** RATHER THAN **MEN**.



IN 5:41, WE SEE THAT WHEN THEY WERE **PERSECUTED** AND **IMPRISONED** AND **BEATEN**, "THEY **REJOICED** THAT THEY HAD BEEN **CONSIDERED** **WORTHY** TO **SUFFER** **SHAME** FOR **JESUS'** NAME."