

Through the Bible

# ACTS II

Of the Apostles

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

COPYRIGHT ZAC POONEN AND VINAY KURUVILLA

## CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

69, PARADISE ENCLAVE, BELAHALLI  
KANNUR POST, BANGALORE - 562 149  
INDIA





THE APOSTLES **DIDN'T** GO AWAY AFTER THIS, WITH THEIR **HEADS HANGING DOWN**. THEY CONSIDERED IT A **GREAT HONOUR**. IT WAS AS IF THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN A **GALLANTRY AWARD** BY A KING. AS JESUS HAD TOLD THEM TO DO, THEY "**LEAPED FOR JOY**".

IN CHAPTER 6 WE READ ABOUT THE DISCIPLES **INCREASING IN NUMBER** AND **COMPLAINTS** BEGINNING. THIS HAS BEEN THE **PROBLEM** IN ALL CHURCHES, WHEN THEY GROW IN SIZE.



WHEN A CHURCH STARTS, IT IS **SMALL**, AND ONE CAN BE FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT EVERYONE IS A **DISCIPLE**. BUT WHEN IT BECOMES **LARGE**, MANY OF THE **NEWCOMERS** ARE **RELATIVES** OF THE **ORIGINAL DISCIPLES** -- AND THEY MAY **NOT BE DISCIPLES THEMSELVES**.



**MOST COMPLAINTS** IN CHURCHES ARE RELATED TO **EARTHLY THINGS**. THE COMPLAINT HERE WAS ABOUT **FOOD**. THE **GREEK WIDOWS** COMPLAINED THAT THE **JEWS** WERE FAVOURING THEIR OWN WIDOWS IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF **FOOD**. IT WAS A PROBLEM ON **COMMUNAL LINES**, JUST AS IT IS IN MANY CHURCHES **TODAY**.



THE APOSTLES WERE **WISE**. THEY SAID, "WE CAN'T GO INTO THE **FOOD-DISTRIBUTION** BUSINESS, BECAUSE THAT IS NOT OUR **CALLING**. WE WILL DEVOTE OURSELVES TO **PRAYER** AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE **WORD**" (6:4). IF YOU ARE **CALLED** AND **GIFTED** BY GOD TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD, DON'T EVER **BACKSLIDE** FROM THAT CALLING TO BECOME THE **DIRECTOR** OF SOME **CHRISTIAN ORGANISATION** THAT OFFERS YOU A **GOOD SALARY**.



SO THE APOSTLES SELECTED SEVEN MEN FULL OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT** AND APPOINTED THEM FOR THIS TASK.



STEPHEN BECAME THE FIRST **MARTYR**. PHILIP WENT TO **SAMARIA** AND BROUGHT A GREAT **REVIVAL** THERE AND BECAME **GOD'S CHANNEL** TO SEND THE GOSPEL TO **ETHIOPIA** BY BRINGING THE **ETHIOPIAN FINANCE MINISTER** TO THE LORD (ACTS 8)



LIKE **ELISHA**, WHO STARTED BY **SERVING ELIJAH** AND LATER BECAME A **PROPHET**, THESE **TWO MEN** ALSO **FAITHFULLY** SERVED THE WIDOWS -- AND LATER, **GOD** GAVE THEM A **WIDE PREACHING MINISTRY**.





IT IS WRITTEN ABOUT **STEPHEN** THAT WHEN HE **PREACHED** TO THE **JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS**, THEY **COULD NOT REFUTE** THE **WISDOM** AND THE **SPIRIT** WITH WHICH HE **SPOKE** (6:10). THAT CAN BE **OUR** EXPERIENCE TOO, WHEN WE **SPEAK**.

STEPHEN WENT ON TO ASK THEM, "**WHICH OF THE PROPHETS DID YOUR FATHERS NOT PERSECUTE?**" (7:52). **EVERY SINGLE PROPHET IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES WAS UNPOPULAR AND PERSECUTED.**



A **TRUE PROPHET** IS ALWAYS **CONTROVERSIAL**. SO **PROPHETS** ARE ALWAYS **PERSECUTED**, UNLIKE **TEACHERS** AND **EVANGELISTS**. **STEPHEN** **PREACHED** IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY WERE **CONVICTED**. THIS MADE THEM SO **ANGRY** THAT THEY **KILLED** HIM. HE WAS THE **FIRST MARTYR** IN THE **CHRISTIAN CHURCH** (7:54, 55).

IN THE WORDS WRITTEN ABOUT **STEPHEN** IN 7:55--60, WE SEE SOME MARKS OF A TRULY **SPIRIT-FILLED** PROPHET:



1. HIS MIND IS **STEADFASTLY** SET ON **HEAVENLY THINGS**.



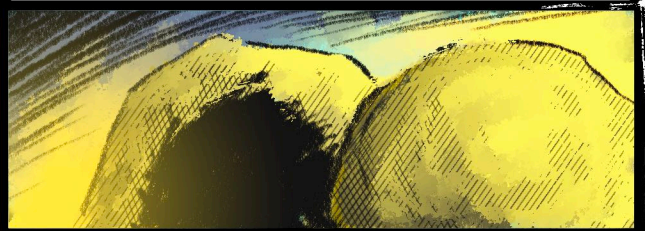
2. HE SEES THE **GLORY OF GOD** IN ALL SITUATIONS.



3. HE IS **UNRUFFLED** BY THE **OPPOSITION OF MEN**.



4. HIS **VISION** IS **FIXED** ON **JESUS** AT THE **RIGHT HAND OF GOD**.



5. HE **TESTIFIES BOLDLY** ABOUT THIS **RISEN CHRIST**.



6. HE IS **PERSECUTED** AND AT TIMES **KILLED**.



7. HE **FORGIVES** HIS **PERSECUTORS** AND **PRAYS** FOR THEM.

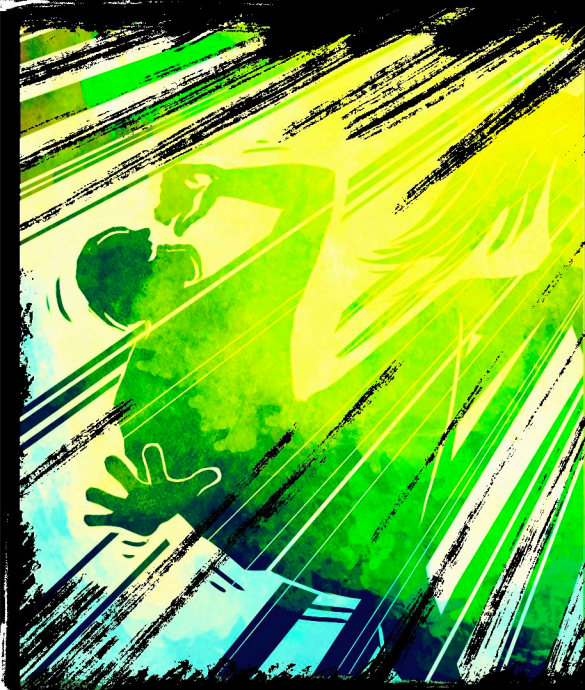




GOD ALLOWED STEPHEN TO BE KILLED FOR MANY REASONS -- ONE OF WHICH WAS THE **CONVERSION** OF SAUL OF TARSUS. I WONDER IF PAUL WOULD HAVE BEEN CONVERTED IF HE HAD NOT SEEN STEPHEN'S **ATTITUDE** WHEN HE WAS BEING KILLED.



WHEN THE **ROMAN CENTURION** HEARD THE WAY JESUS **PRAYED** FOR THOSE WHO **CRUCIFIED** HIM, HE WAS **CONVINCED** THAT **JESUS** WAS THE **SON OF GOD**.



WHEN PAUL HEARD THE WAY STEPHEN PRAYED, HIS **CONSCIENCE** BEGAN TO **PRICK** HIM AND HE BEGAN TO THINK, "THIS **CANNOT** BE A **FALSE** RELIGION. MAYBE I AM **WRONG**." LATER, ON THE **DAMASCUS** ROAD, THE LORD TOLD HIM, "IT IS **HARD** FOR YOU TO KEEP ON **KICKING** AGAINST THE **PRICKS** OF YOUR **CONSCIENCE**" (ACTS 26:14) -- AND HE WAS **CONVERTED**.



PAUL WAS JUST THE **FIRST** OF MANY THOUSANDS WHO HAVE BEEN CONVERTED IN THE PAST **2000** YEARS BY SEEING THE **GODLY REACTION** OF CHRISTIANS TO **PERSECUTION**. BUT TO **REACT** LIKE THAT, WE MUST BE **FILLED** WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT**.



IN CHAPTER 8, WE READ OF A GREAT **REVIVAL** IN SAMARIA THAT CAME THROUGH THE PREACHING OF **PHILIP** -- A MAN WHO HAD **STARTED** HIS MINISTRY BY SERVING **FOOD** TO POOR **WIDOWS**.

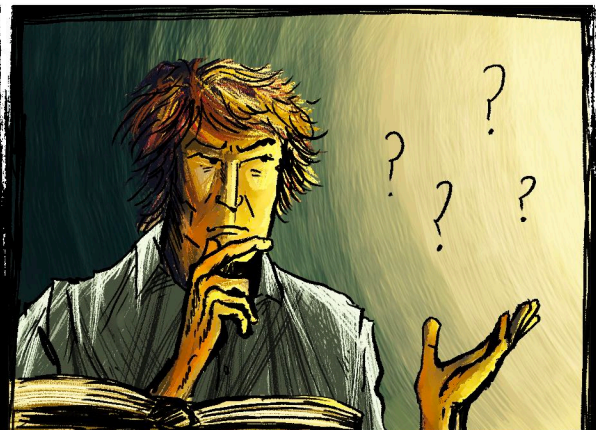




WE SEE THE PHRASE "BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF **JESUS**" OCCURRING **FOUR** TIMES IN ACTS (2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). BUT **JESUS** COMMANDED HIS APOSTLES TO "BAPTIZE IN THE NAME OF THE **FATHER**, AND THE **SON** AND THE **HOLY SPIRIT**" (MATTHEW 28:19). HOW DO WE **EXPLAIN** THIS **APPARENT** DIFFERENCE?

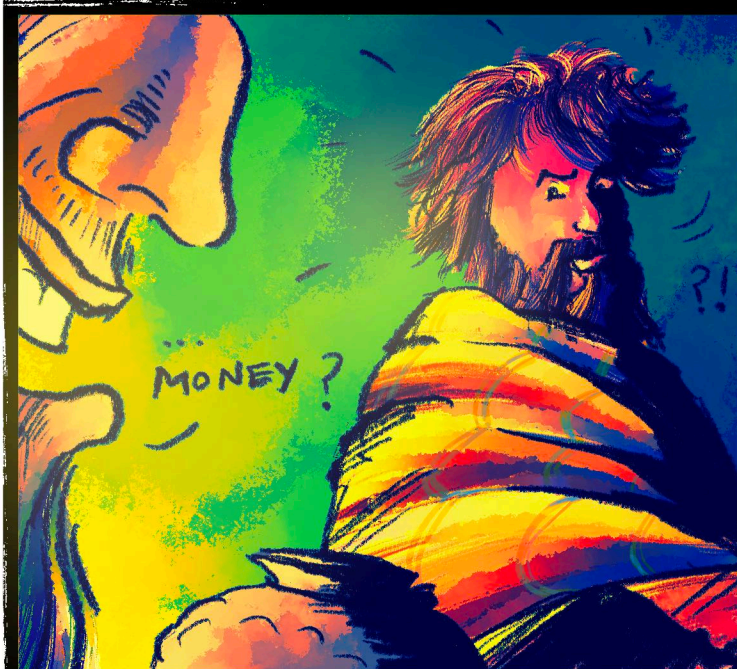
HERE ARE THREE PRINCIPLES TO BE BORNE IN MIND WHEN INTERPRETING THE NEW TESTAMENT:

1. WHEN TWO SCRIPTURES APPEAR TO CONTRADICT EACH OTHER, BOTH ARE TRUE -- THE CONTRADICTION IS ONLY APPARENT.
2. WHENEVER IN DOUBT AS TO WHICH OF TWO APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE TO OBEY, ALWAYS OBEY THE CLEAR COMMAND OF THE LORD JESUS.
3. NEVER MAKE A HISTORICAL PASSAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT A BASIS FOR ANY DOCTRINE.



.. BAPTISING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT..

THE EXPLANATION IN THIS CASE - NON-CHRISTIANS ( EG THE EGYPTIANS, GREEKS AND ROMANS ) ALSO HAD THEIR TRINITIES. SO WHEN THE APOSTLES BAPTISED, IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THE TRINITY AS THE **CHRISTIAN** TRINITY, THEY BAPTISED "IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON THE **LORD JESUS CHRIST** AND THE HOLY SPIRIT".



WHEN **SIMON** THE **MAGICIAN** IN SAMARIA SAW PEOPLE RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH PETER LAYING HANDS ON THEM, HE OFFERED PETER **MONEY** FOR THIS POWER. HERE WE HAVE THE FIRST EXAMPLE IN THE CHRISTIAN AGE OF SOMEONE TRYING TO **BUY** GOD'S BLESSING WITH MONEY.



UNFORTUNATELY NOWADAYS, MANY **CHRISTIAN** TV PREACHERS AND PASTORS ARE **ALSO** PREACHING THAT YOU CAN GET GOD'S BLESSINGS BY GIVING MONEY TO GOD -- **THROUGH** HIS SERVANTS; AND **MILLIONS** OF CHRISTIANS ARE BEING **DECEIVED**.





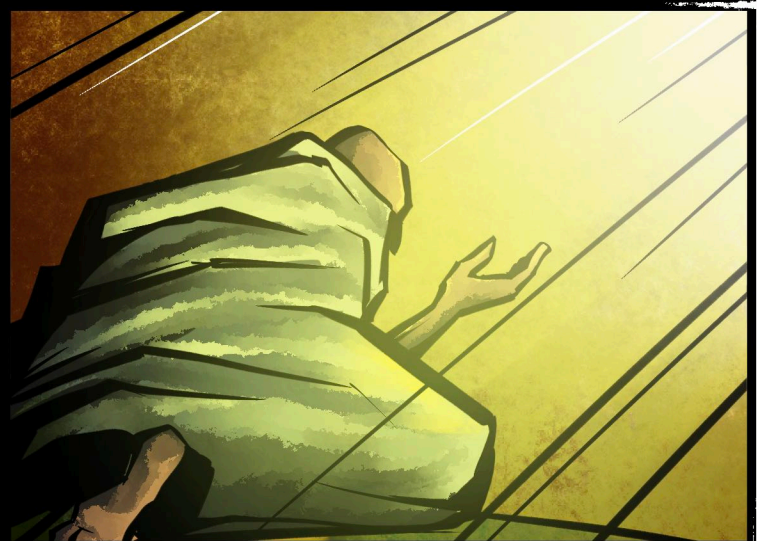
PETER REFUSED TO RECEIVE SUCH MONEY -- **UNLIKE MOST OF TODAY'S PREACHERS**. HE TOLD SIMON, "YOUR MONEY PERISH WITH YOU, BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD **BUY THE GIFT OF GOD** WITH MONEY. YOUR HEART IS NOT RIGHT WITH GOD" (8:20, 21). MANY RICH PEOPLE TRY TO **BRIBE** PREACHERS TODAY BY GIVING THEM MONEY FOR THEIR **MINISTRY**. IF WE **SENSE** THAT A MAN'S HEART IS NOT RIGHT, WE MUST **REFUSE** TO RECEIVE HIS MONEY.



IN CHAPTER 9, WHEN SAUL MET THE LORD ON THE **DAMASCUS ROAD**, HE ASKED THE LORD **TWO QUESTIONS**: "**WHO ARE YOU, LORD? WHAT WILL YOU HAVE ME TO DO?**" (VERSE 5 - KJV). THESE WERE TWO QUESTIONS THAT HE KEPT ON ASKING THE LORD ALL **THROUGH** HIS LIFE. AT THE **END** OF HIS LIFE HE SAYS THAT HIS PASSION IS TO "**KNOW CHRIST MORE**" AND TO "**PRESS TOWARD THE MARK TO FULFIL THE WILL OF GOD**" (PHILIPPIANS 3:10, 13).



THE LORD DID **NOT** SHOW HIM THE **WHOLE** PLAN FOR HIS LIFE **INITIALLY**. HE SHOWED HIM **STEP BY STEP**. "**GO INTO THE CITY AND I WILL TELL YOU WHAT TO DO**" -- WAS THE **FIRST STEP** (VERSE 6).



THERE WAS A MAN CALLED **ANANIAS** IN DAMASCUS WHO WAS **SENSITIVE** TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND WHO HEARD THE LORD TELL HIM TO GO TO THE PLACE WHERE SAUL WAS STAYING AND **PRAY** FOR HIM. WHEN THE LORD TELLS YOU TO GO SOMEWHERE, YOU CAN BE **CERTAIN** THAT HE HAS **PREPARED** PEOPLE AT THE **OTHER END** TO **RECEIVE** YOUR **MINISTRY**.





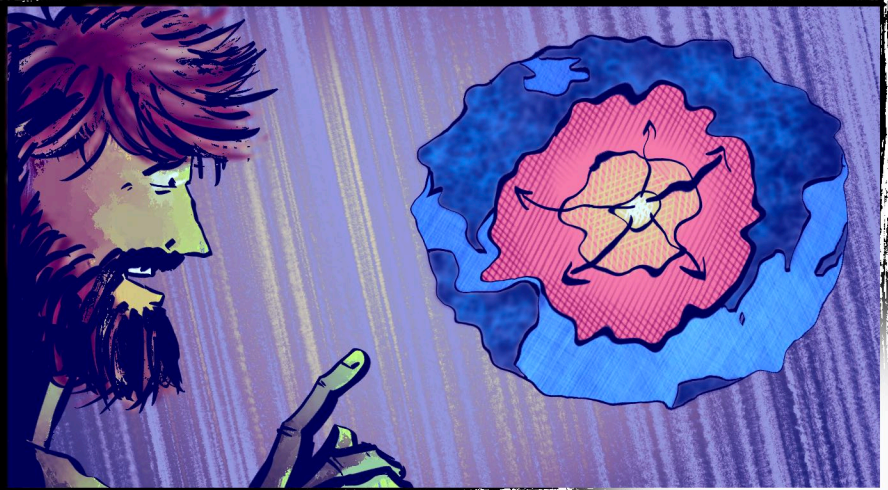
ANANIAS WAS A HUMBLE, UNKNOWN BROTHER WHOM GOD USED TO PRAY FOR SAUL TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT SO THAT SAUL COULD BECOME THE MIGHTIEST APOSTLE IN THE FIRST CENTURY.



IN 9:25, WE READ HOW PAUL HAD TO BE LOWERED IN A BASKET THROUGH A WINDOW TO ESCAPE BEING KILLED. IN 2 CORINTHIANS 11:32, 33, PAUL RELATED THIS HUMILIATING INCIDENT TO THE CORINTHIANS TO SHOW HOW GOD HUMBLIED HIM. IN ACTS 8, WE SAW HOW GOD LIFTED PHILIP UP AND TRANSPORTED HIM TO ANOTHER PLACE. GOD COULD HAVE EASILY DONE THAT FOR PAUL HERE TOO, WHEN THE PEOPLE WERE TRYING TO KILL HIM. BUT GOD'S WAYS ARE NOT THE SAME ALWAYS. AT TIMES, WE HAVE TO GO THROUGH HUMILIATING WAYS TO ESCAPE FROM OUR ENEMIES. BUT HE SAVES US ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.



IN CHAPTER 10, WE READ OF THE GOSPEL GOING TO **NON-JEWS** FOR THE FIRST TIME. THE LORD HAD TOLD HIS DISCIPLES THAT THEY WOULD BE HIS WITNESSES IN **JERUSALEM, JUDEA, SAMARIA** AND THEN TO THE **ENDS** OF THE EARTH. IN CHAPTER 2, THEY STARTED WITH THE JEWS IN JERUSALEM AND JUDEA. THEN IN CHAPTER 8, THEY WENT TO THE **SAMARITANS**. AND NOW IT WAS MOVING TO **NON-JEWS** FOR THE FIRST TIME. **PETER** WAS GIVEN THE **PRIVILEGE** TO OPEN THE DOORS TO THE **JEWS** AND ALSO TO THE **NON-JEWS**.



CORNELIUS WAS A MAN WHO KNEW NOTHING OF THE BIBLE OR OF GOD. BUT HE WAS A DEVOUT MAN WHO PRAYED TO GOD CONTINUALLY AND HELPED THE POOR GENEROUSLY (10:2).



AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM AND TOLD HIM THAT BOTH HIS PRAYERS AND HIS ALMS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOD (VERSE 4). SO WE SEE THAT GOD LISTENS TO THE PRAYERS OF NON-CHRISTIANS TOO, IF THEY ARE GOD-FEARING AND SINCERE..



.. AND HE LEADS THEM TO CHRIST WHO IS THE ONLY WAY TO THE FATHER (JOHN 14:6).





IN THIS VISION, PETER SAW A **SHEET** CONTAINING CLEAN AND **UNCLEAN** ANIMALS AND HE HEARD A VOICE ASKING HIM TO KILL THEM AND EAT THEM. PETER REFUSED TO DO SO SAYING HE HAD **NEVER** EATEN ANYTHING **UNCLEAN**. BUT **GOD** TOLD HIM NOT TO CALL ANYTHING **UNCLEAN** THAT GOD HAD **CLEANSED**.



MANY **CHRISTIANS**, LIKE PETER, **IMAGINE** THEMSELVES TO BE **SUPERIOR** TO **NON-CHRISTIANS**. BUT SOME **NON-CHRISTIANS**, LIKE CORNELIUS, ARE **MORE GOD-FEARING** THAN MANY **CHRISTIANS**. PETER ALSO FELT THAT HE WAS **PURER** THAN **NON-JEWS**. PETER WAS SO **STUBBORN** IN HIS **OPINION** THAT GOD HAD TO GIVE HIM A **VISION** TO **CHANGE** HIS **OPINION**.

PETER WAS **PERPLEXED** AS TO THE **MEANING** OF THIS **VISION** WHEN THE **MESSENGERS** FROM CORNELIUS REACHED PETER'S HOUSE WITH THE MESSAGE THAT AN **ANGEL** HAD TOLD **CORNELIUS** TO SEND FOR PETER. THEN PETER **UNDERSTOOD** THAT **GOD** WAS TELLING HIM TO GO TO THE **HOUSE** OF THIS **NON-JEWISH** MAN WHOM THE **JEWS** CONSIDERED **UNCLEAN**.

I AM SURE THE **ANGEL** COULD HAVE **EXPLAINED** THE **GOSPEL** TEN TIMES BETTER THAN PETER. BUT PETER HAD THE **EXPERIENCE** OF **SALVATION** WHICH THE **ANGEL** DID NOT HAVE. ONLY A **SINNER** SAVED BY **GRACE** CAN TELL ANOTHER **SINNER** ABOUT **SALVATION**.



WHEN PETER CAME TO CORNELIUS' HOUSE, HE SAID, "**NOW I UNDERSTAND** THAT IN **EVERY NATION** THE MAN WHO **FEARS GOD** AND DOES WHAT IS **RIGHT** IS **WELCOME** TO HIM" (10:35). (AND **NOT ONLY** IN **EVERY NATION**, BUT IN **EVERY DENOMINATION** TOO). **GOD** WELCOMES THOSE WHO **FEAR** HIM, IN **EVERY RELIGION** AND LEADS THEM TO **CHRIST** SO THAT THEY CAN BE **SAVED**.



IN 10:38, PETER DESCRIBES JESUS' MINISTRY THUS: "**JESUS OF NAZARETH** -- **GOD** **ANointed** HIM WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT** AND WITH **POWER**, AND HE WENT ABOUT DOING **GOOD** AND **HEALING** ALL WHO WERE **OPPRESSED** BY THE **DEVIL**, FOR **GOD** WAS WITH HIM." EVEN IN JESUS' LIFE, IT WAS **POWER** THAT WAS THE EVIDENCE OF THE **ANointing** OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**. AND WITH THAT **POWER**, JESUS DID **GOOD** AND DELIVERED PEOPLE FROM **SATAN'S** **OPPRESSIONS**.





WE ARE **SURROUNDED** BY PEOPLE WHO ARE **OPPRESSED** BY SATAN -- PEOPLE WHO ARE **DISCOURAGED, UNHAPPILY MARRIED, HARASSED, NEGLECTED** BY THEIR PARENTS, AND SOME CONTEMPLATING **SUICIDE**. GOD HAS PLACED US IN THE **MIDST** OF SUCH PEOPLE SO THAT WE CAN HELP THEM TO BE **FREE FROM SIN AND FROM SATAN** -- AND THUS **HAPPY**. IF **EVEN JESUS** NEEDED TO BE **ANOINTED** BY THE **HOLY SPIRIT** TO FULFIL THIS MINISTRY, HOW **MUCH MORE WE!**



WE READ THAT WHEN **JESUS** WAS **ANOINTED**, "**GOD WAS WITH HIM.**" AND WHEN **WE** ARE **ANOINTED** WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT**, **GOD** WILL BE WITH **US TOO**. WHEN WE **STAND** IN THE **PULPIT** TO **PREACH** **GOD'S** WORD OR WHEN WE GO TO **CAST OUT** A **DEMON** FROM SOMEONE, **GOD** WILL BE WITH **US** TO **BLESS** PEOPLE.



IN 11:28, WE READ OF A PROPHET **AGABUS** **PROPHESYING** THAT THERE WOULD BE A **FAMINE** ALL OVER THE WORLD. HE **DIDN'T** SAY **EXACTLY WHEN** IT WOULD HAPPEN, BECAUSE **JESUS** SAID THAT "**THE TIMES AND EPOCHS** ARE IN THE **FATHER'S** HAND" (ACTS 1:7). BUT IT **DID** TAKE PLACE SOON THEREAFTER.



THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **OLD-COVENANT** PROPHECY AND **NEW-COVENANT** PROPHECY. UNDER THE **OLD COVENANT**, PEOPLE WOULD ASK THE PROPHETS FOR **GUIDANCE** AS TO WHAT TO DO AND THE PROPHET WOULD **DIRECT** THEM **TELLING** THEM WHAT GOD HAD TOLD HIM TO TELL THEM.



NOW THAT THE **HOLY SPIRIT** CAN DWELL WITHIN EVERYONE, THERE IS **NO NEED** FOR ANY **PROPHET** TO GIVE **DIRECTIVE PROPHECY** TO ANY **CHILD OF GOD**, **TELLING** HIM WHAT TO **DO**. IF HE DOES THAT, THE **PROPHET** WOULD BE TAKING THE **PLACE** OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT** AND **CONNECTING** PEOPLE TO **HIMSELF** AND NOT TO **CHRIST**.

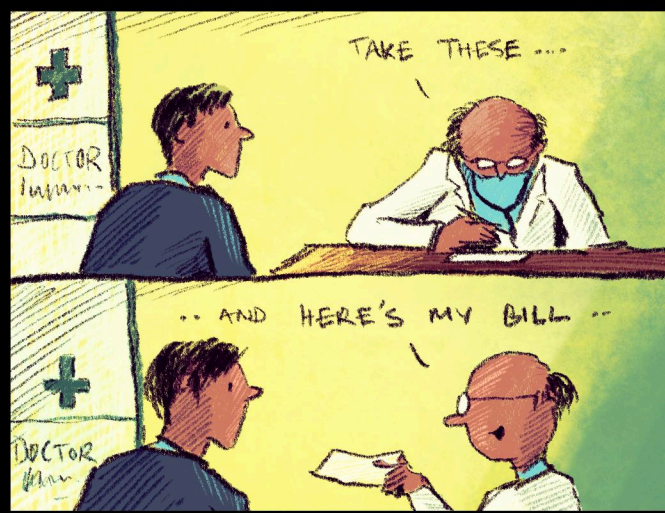




THERE ARE MANY PASTORS AND **SELF-APPOINTED "PROPHETS"** NOWADAYS WHO TELL PEOPLE **WHAT TO DO, WHERE TO GO, WHOM TO MARRY, ETC.** ALL SUCH PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY **HINDERING** THE WORK OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**, FOR THEY GIVE PEOPLE THE **IMPRESSION** THAT GOD WILL **NOT** SPEAK TO THEM **DIRECTLY**. SUCH PROPHETS ARE (KNOWINGLY OR UNKNOWNLY) **INSPIRED** BY **SATAN**, FOR THEY COME **BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THE LORD**. THE HOLY SPIRIT **JEALOUSLY** DESIRES THAT YOU BE **CONNECTED TO CHRIST** SO **INTIMATELY**, THAT **NO-ONE** CAN COME BETWEEN **YOU AND HIM**.



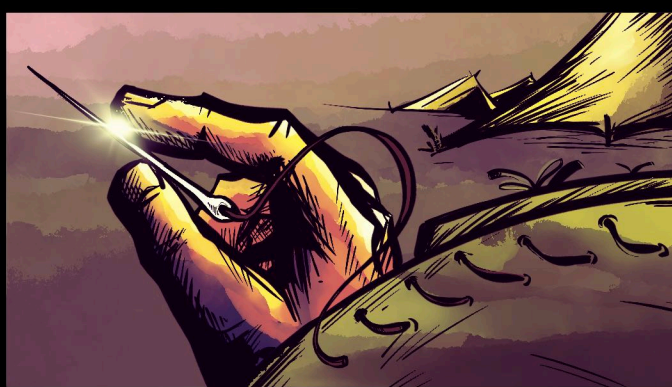
IT SAYS ABOUT THE **ANTICHRIST** THAT HE WILL SIT "IN THE **TEMPLE OF GOD** DISPLAYING HIMSELF AS **BEING GOD**" (2 THESSALONIANS 2:4). THERE ARE **FALSE PROPHETS** TODAY WHO HAVE THIS **SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST** WHO ARE SITTING IN THE **CHURCH (GOD'S TEMPLE)**, TAKING THE **PLACE OF GOD** -- AND TELLING PEOPLE WHAT **GOD'S WILL** FOR THEIR LIVES IS.



YET ANOTHER **PROOF** THAT THESE **SELF-APPOINTED "PROPHETS"** ARE **FALSE PROPHETS** IS THAT **ALMOST ALL** OF THEM **EXPECT MONEY** FROM PEOPLE **AFTER THEY HAVE PROPHESIED** TO THEM -- EXACTLY LIKE A **DOCTOR** WHO COLLECTS HIS **CONSULTATION FEES!!**



WHAT DID **AGABUS, A TRUE PROPHET**, DO HERE? HE SAID THAT THERE WOULD BE A **FAMINE**. HE DID IT TELL THEM WHAT TO DO. THE **BELIEVERS** IN ANTIOCH THEN **SOUGHT GOD** AND THE **HOLY SPIRIT** HIMSELF TOLD THEM WHAT TO DO. THEY COLLECTED SOME **MONEY** AND SENT IT TO THE **POOR SAINTS**.

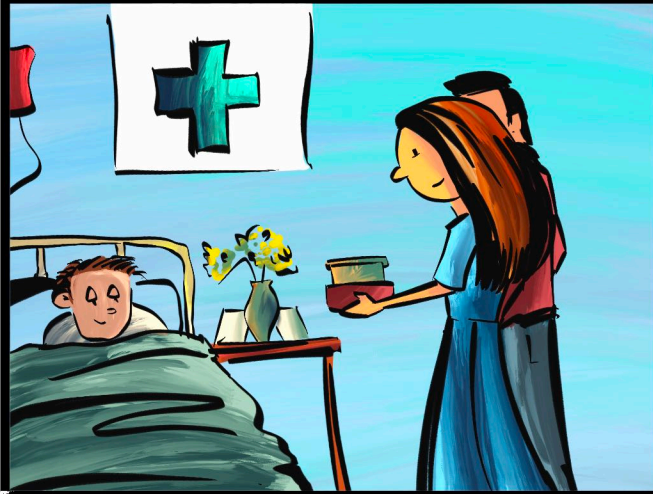


ALL COLLECTION OF MONEY THAT WE READ OF IN THE **NEW TESTAMENT** WAS **ALWAYS** FOR THE **POOR SAINTS** IN THE CHURCHES. WE **NEVER** READ OF PAUL OR ANY APOSTLE ASKING ANYONE TO TAKE A COLLECTION FOR **THEMSELVES** OR FOR **THEIR MINISTRY**. PAUL WORKED TO **SUPPORT HIMSELF** AND TRUSTED THE **LORD** TO **PROVIDE**.

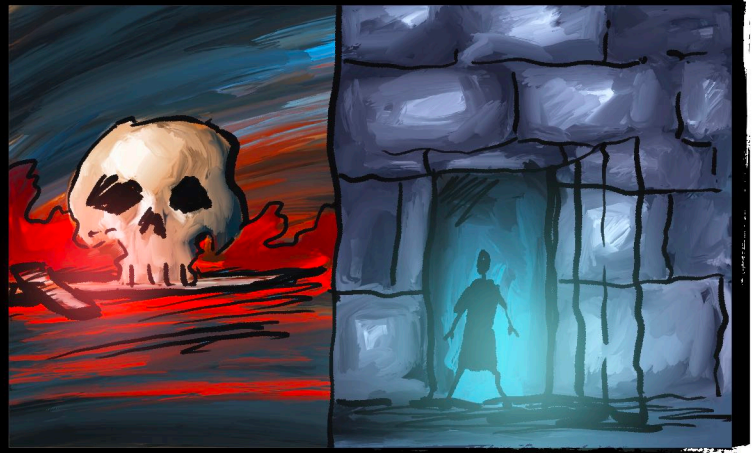




THE COLLECTION FROM ANTIOCH WAS SENT TO JERUSALEM THROUGH **BARNABAS** AND **SAUL** (ACTS 11:29, 30). THERE WAS A HUGE **WALL OF SEPARATION** BETWEEN THE JEWS AND THE GENTILES. BUT GOD USED A **FAMINE** TO BRING THE **GENTILES** IN ANTIOCH CLOSER TO THE **JEWS** IN JERUSALEM. SOME OF THE **TROUBLES** AND **TRIALS** THAT GOD SENDS INTO **OUR** LIVES AND **OUR** CHURCHES ARE DESIGNED BY HIM TO BRING US **CLOSER** TO EACH OTHER.



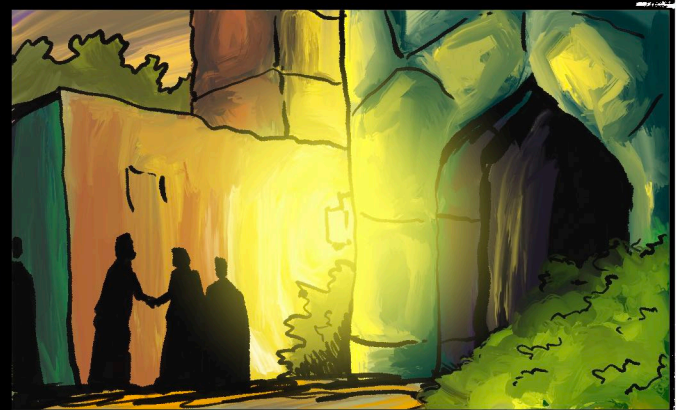
WHEN A BELIEVER IS **SICK** IN A HOSPITAL, THE **OTHER** BELIEVERS MAY PROVIDE **FOOD** OR **PAY** FOR HIS HOSPITAL EXPENSES. THUS WHEN THE **SICK** PERSON COMES **OUT** OF HOSPITAL, HE WILL BE **MORE CLOSELY LINKED** TO THE BODY OF **CHRIST**. SO WE CAN GIVE **THANKS** EVEN FOR **SICKNESSES** THAT GOD PERMITS.



IN CHAPTER 12, WE READ THAT **JAMES** WAS **KILLED** BY HEROD. HEROD THEN **IMPRISONED PETER** AS WELL. BUT THE CHURCH PRAYED FERVENTLY FOR HIS RELEASE AND HE WAS MIRACULOUSLY RELEASED (12:5--16). GOD COULD HAVE DELIVERED **JAMES** AS EASILY AS HE DELIVERED **PETER**. BUT WHEN A MAN'S TIME ON EARTH IS **OVER** IN GOD'S **DIARY**, GOD JUST TAKES HIM **HOME** TO HEAVEN.

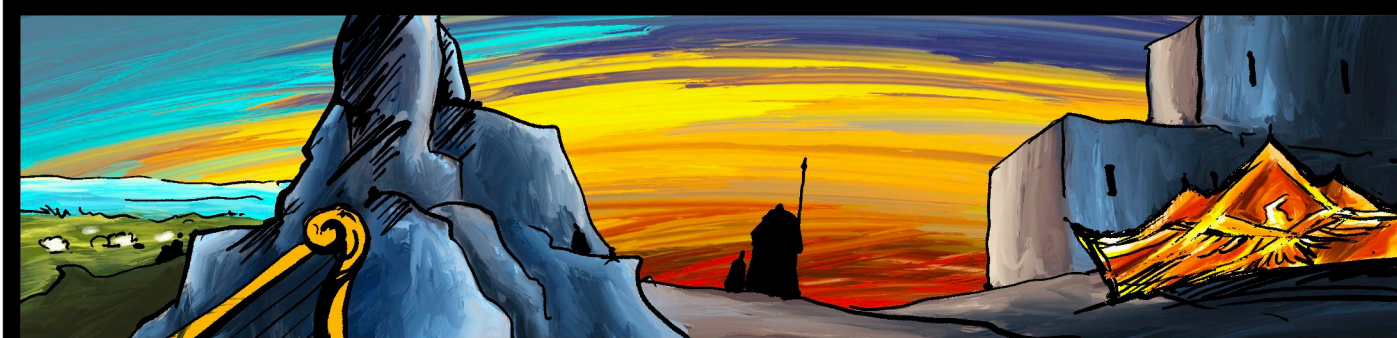


WHEN **PETER** TESTIFIED AT THAT **PRAYER-MEETING**, **JAMES'S** MOTHER WOULD HAVE **WONDERED** WHY GOD DIDN'T DELIVER HER SON AS WELL. IF SHE WERE A **GODLY** WOMAN, SHE WOULD HAVE **RECOGNISED** THE **SOVEREIGNTY** OF GOD AND **REJOICED** WITH **PETER'S** FAMILY MEMBERS AT HIS RELEASE.

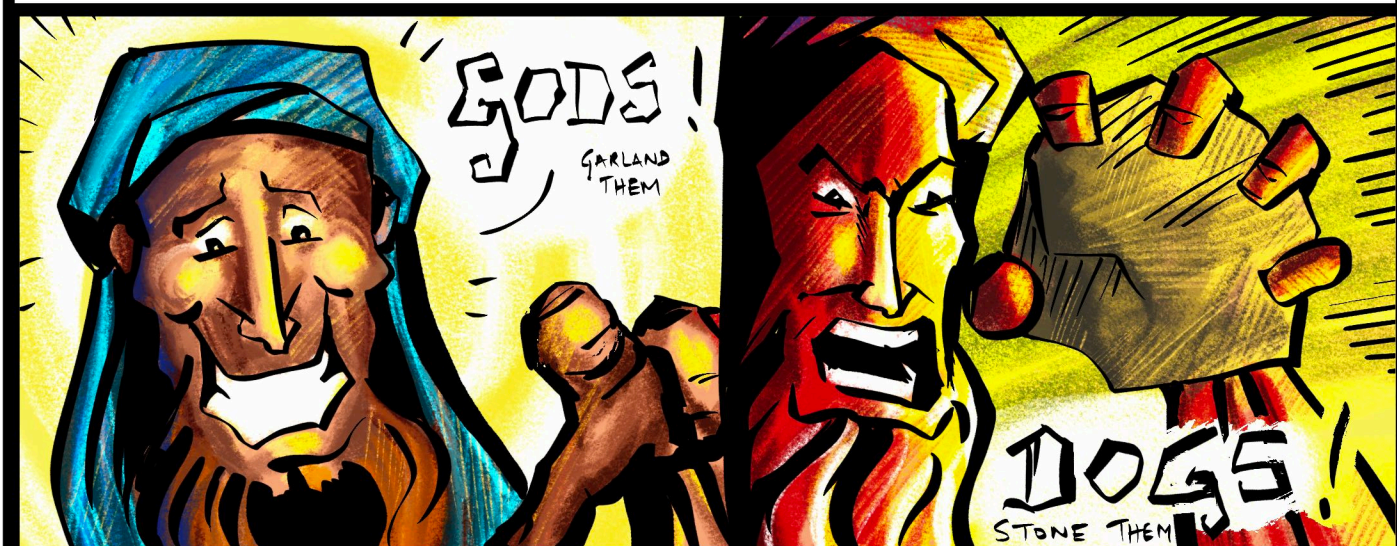


IN CHAPTER 13, WE READ ABOUT THE **FIRST GREAT MISSIONARY** MOVEMENT OUT OF **ANTIOCH**. **BARNABAS** AND **SAUL** WHO HAD GONE TO **JERUSALEM** WITH THE **MONEY** FROM ANTIOCH HAD SEEN THE **AMAZING** RELEASE OF **PETER** AND WERE **CHALLENGED**. THEY HAD GONE TO JERUSALEM TO BLESS THE PEOPLE **MATERIALLY**, BUT GOT A **SPIRITUAL** BLESSING IN **RETURN**, BY SEEING WHAT **PRAYER** COULD DO.





IN 13:36, WE READ THAT "DAVID SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION IN THE WILL OF GOD AND THEN FELL ASLEEP". WE ARE ALL CALLED TO SERVE OUR OWN GENERATION BY DOING THE WILL OF GOD. TO DO THAT, YOU MUST BE A MAN LIKE DAVID, ABOUT WHOM GOD COULD SAY, "I HAVE FOUND DAVID, A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART WHO WILL FULFIL ALL MY WILL" (VERSE 22).



IN CHAPTER 14, WE READ HOW THE LORD HEALED A LAME MAN THROUGH PAUL. IT IS INTERESTING TO SEE THE FICKLENESS OF THE CROWDS IN LYSTRA. ONE MOMENT THEY WERE READY TO WORSHIP PAUL AND BARNABAS AS GODS, BUT VERY SOON THEY WANTED TO KILL THEM (VERSES 13 AND 19). JESUS HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE (LUKE 4:22 28, 29)

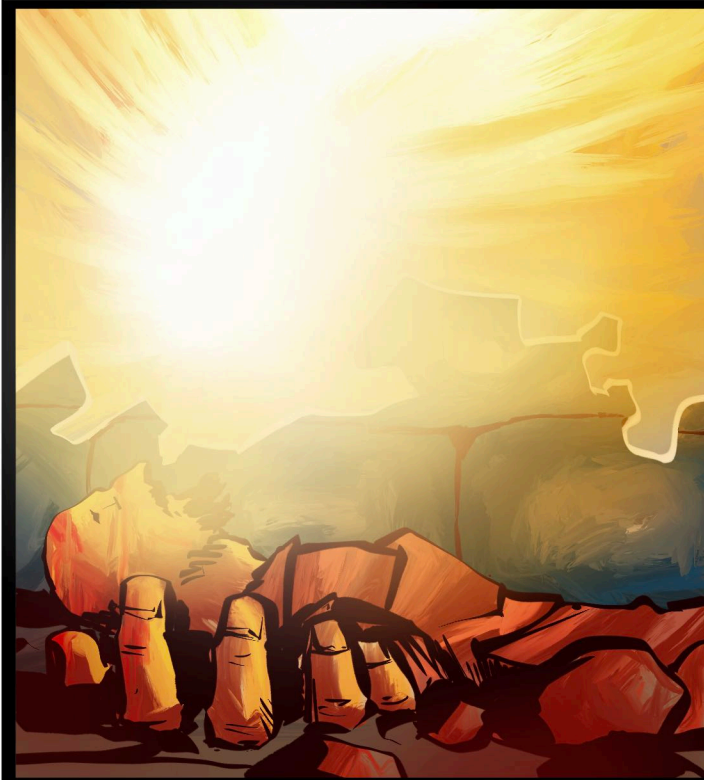




BUT THEY **COULDN'T KILL JESUS** AND THEY **COULDN'T KILL PAUL**, BECAUSE **GOD'S TIME** FOR THEM HAD **NOT COME**. HE DID **NOT STOP EVIL PEOPLE** FROM **KILLING JESUS** (WHEN HIS **TIME CAME**). GOD DID **NOT STOP EVIL PEOPLE** FROM **KILLING THE EARLY APOSTLES**.



THEY **STONED PAUL** AND **DROGGED HIM OUTSIDE THE CITY**, SUPPOSING HIM TO BE **DEAD**. DOES GOD **ALLOW HIS GREATEST SERVANTS** TO BE **TREATED LIKE THIS** BY OTHERS? HE **DOES -- EVEN TODAY**. SOME OF THE **GREATEST SERVANTS OF JESUS CHRIST** IN **HISTORY** HAVE BEEN **KILLED**



IN **2 CORINTHIANS 12**, PAUL SPEAKS OF AN EXPERIENCE THAT HE HAD **14 YEARS** EARLIER OF BEING **TAKEN UP TO THE THIRD HEAVEN** AND COMING BACK TO EARTH. THAT **MAY HAVE HAPPENED** AT THIS TIME WHEN HE WAS **STONED** IN **LYSTRA**. WHILE HIS **BODY WAS LYING** ON THE GROUND OUTSIDE **LYSTRA**, GOD MAY HAVE TAKEN HIM UP FOR A SHORT TRIP TO THE **THIRD HEAVEN!!** YOU CAN BE **CERTAIN** THAT IF GOD **ALLOWS YOU TO FACE INTENSE SUFFERING**, HE WILL ALSO GIVE YOU SOME **PRECIOUS REWARDS** TO **COMPENSATE** FOR THAT **SUFFERING**.

WE CAN ENTER **GOD'S KINGDOM** ONLY THROUGH **TRIBULATION**



IN **14:21**, WE READ THAT PAUL WENT **BACK TO LYSTRA** TO PREACH. HE WAS **NOT AFRAID** TO GO BACK TO THE CITY WHERE HE HAD BEEN **STONED**. HE **STRENGTHENED** THE DISCIPLES THERE BY TELLING THEM (FROM HIS **OWN EXPERIENCE NOW**), THAT "WE CAN ENTER **GOD'S KINGDOM** ONLY THROUGH **TRIBULATION**" (VERSE 22). PAUL HAD THE **SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY** TO MAKE SUCH A STATEMENT, FOR HE STOOD THERE WITH THE **SCARS AND WOUNDS OF TRIBULATION** ON HIS **BODY**.