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POWER EVANGELISM



Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham

Founder/President
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President
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President
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SIGNS AND WONDERS

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN OUR MIDST

Terrorism...nuclear war...social and cultural decay...political corruption...attacks upon the family...persecution...

At this time in history, it is difficult not to be afraid at the growing list of terrible threats against civilization itself. The world seems to be going mad. More and more people worry that we are headed for chaos, leading to economic collapse or the deaths of millions. Clearly, if the world continues on its present course, we all face disaster. As Christians, how do we live in a mad world?

The person who has staked his life upon Jesus Christ knows that world history ultimately has a different outcome. What is the basis of our hope? The resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When He walked this earth, Jesus also faced tribulation. He preached the emergence of a new kingdom of God that would last forever. He announced, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21). He demonstrated the character of the new kingdom with signs and wonders. He cast out demons. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. He transformed lives.

All these were beginning signs of a new order. "Greater things than I have done, you will do," He promised His followers in John 14. Not everyone accepted His claims. His opponents killed Him, thinking that would end it all. Devastated at His death, His disciples hid in an upper room. But Jesus rose again. His disciples saw Him, and in a new way, they saw the power and authority of His Word. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they became bold

and fearless, casting out demons, healing the sick and raising the dead. Once cowards in hiding, they were now ready to face death itself for the sake of the gospel.

Their message miraculously transformed lives. Even the most hopeless of sinners became saints. And so it has been to the present day. As in Jesus' day, signs and wonders are very much a part of our evangelists' ministry. Wherever they go, our evangelists experience the power of the Holy Spirit upon them as they reach out in Jesus' Name to heal the sick and cast out demons. As the apostles preached 2000 years ago, our evangelists proclaim a new order that will ultimately transform our world of death into the full revelation of the Kingdom of God on earth.

All over India, people see these signs and wonders as strong evidence that Jesus Christ is greater than any religion. They see in these signs strong evidence that Jesus Christ is the only One who can bring them peace, provide hope in the midst of despair and enable them to walk, in Habakkuk's words, "with hinds' feet on high places." (Habakkuk 3:19)

As happened during Jesus' earthly ministry, those invested in the status quo violently object to the gospel. In fear, they lash out at those who work miracles in Jesus' Name. They fear the power of transformed lives. But in the end, Jesus has the last word. Sometimes, even the greatest enemies of the gospel, like the Apostle Paul, become the greatest spokesmen for the Good News.

In these days of peril, let us rejoice that Resurrection power of Jesus will one day cause all things to become new. In the meantime, let each of us make sure that we do our part to take the gospel to all peoples in India and elsewhere. This is the major precondition that must take place before the full revelation of the Kingdom of God.

We can have no greater impact for the gospel than if we daily submit our own lives to Christ and experience the transformation that comes from the Holy Spirit's renewal of our minds. The world cannot reproduce this wonder of transformation. The transformed life is the greatest sign of Christ's power and of His impending Second Coming.

Let us be living examples of His resurrection power and let Him work His wonders through us to transform a dying world.

Father God, help us to live resurrection lives so that we may give evidence of your transforming power. In Jesus' Name.



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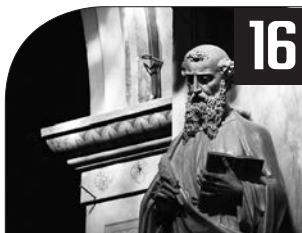
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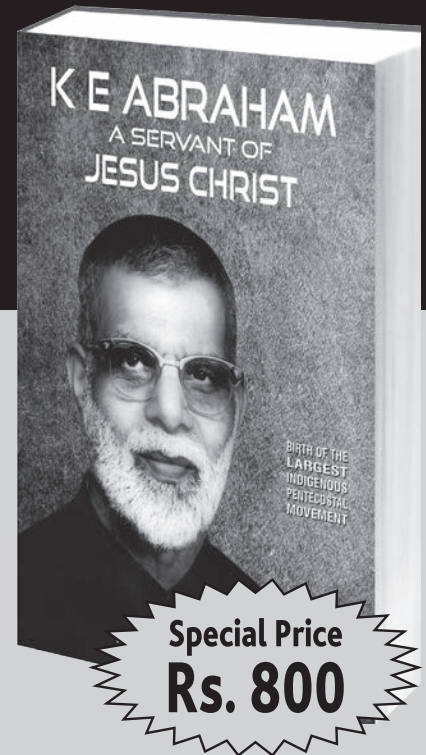
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Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTIANITY

A common phenomenon in nature is the "path of least resistance."

Electricity moving through a circuit will always travel where it has the easiest route. Cars are developed aerodynamically so there will be minimal wind resistance. Rivers always travel around a mountain because it is easier than going through one. Frequently people are like that too.

But as for Christianity, it is the other way around.

From its inception, Christianity has penetrated through resistance and rigorous persecution. If persecution could stop the growth of Christianity, there wouldn't be any Christians on earth.

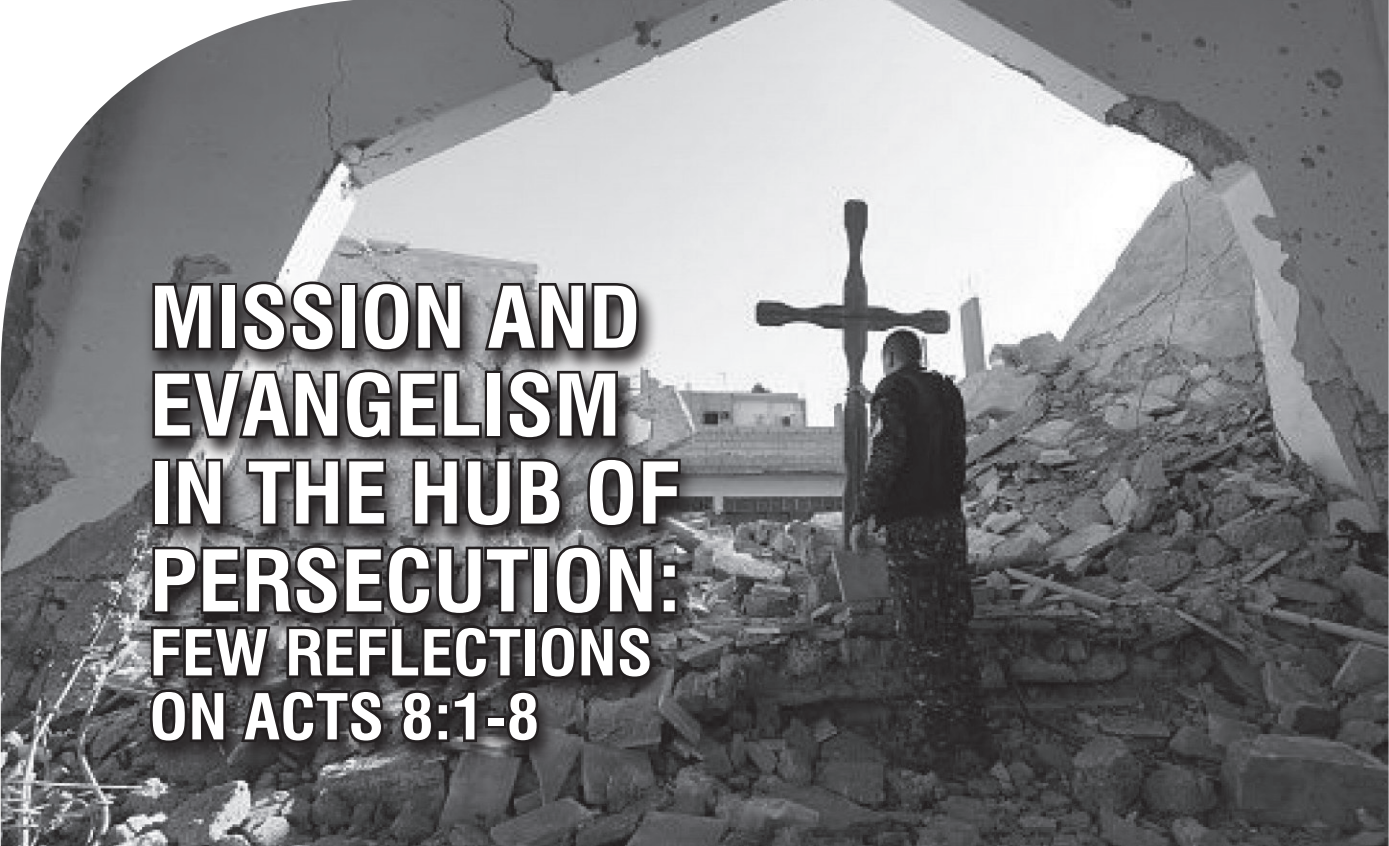
But even today, despite amid severe attacks and assaults Christianity is the largest religion in the world.

Thousands and thousands, no millions and millions have sacrificed their life for this unique faith. The faith is simple, human beings are sinners. According to the Scriptures, All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world died on the cross for the remission of sin of these people. Just believe it and accept Jesus Christ as one's Savior. You are free of sin. The only thing is that sin no more. A blissful eternity is guaranteed for you.

In the first century, Apostle James was martyred for his faith in Christ. The same authority imprisoned Apostle Peter. God sent his angel and saved him. This is the magic of Christianity and this is the doing of the Lord. One dies. Another one is saved. The faith continues...

The Turks, having tortured and slain the parent of a little Armenian girl before her eyes, turned to the child and said, "Will you renounce your faith in Jesus and live" She replied, "I will not." Then to the dogs." She was thrown into a kennel of savaged and famished dogs and left there. The next morning they came and looked in and saw the little girl on her knees praying and beside her the largest and most savage of all dogs, snapping at every dog that ventured near, thus protecting the child.

The men ran away terrified, crying out. "There is a God here; there is a God here." This is the magic of Christianity. It continues... ●



MISSION AND EVANGELISM IN THE HUB OF PERSECUTION: FEW REFLECTIONS ON ACTS 8:1-8

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Faculty, FTS Manakkala

INTRODUCTION

The history of Christianity is the history of mission/evangelism and the church's growth. It is also the history of persecutors and their victims! The Church is the divine-human agency called to do missions on the local, national, or even global scale. Terms like mission, evangelism, persecution, church growth, etc., are interconnected. The primary source to study the history of all the above concerns including the history of first persecution is the Book of Acts. Here we need to ask: Can we avoid the persecution of the Church? Do we need to work for the elimination of Christian persecution? Does persecution is a problem or a possibility for the Church? Persecution is a divine or devilish plan? What should be our response to persecution? How far does the persecution affect the primary task of the Church: Mission/Evangelism/witness? Let us try to do simple reflections on these queries based on the Book of Acts 8:1-8 to have historical and theological consensus to highlight the role of persecution in the expansion of evangelism works of the early church and also to showcase it as a model for contemporary Christians.

1.1. Understanding the Book of Acts from a Mission Perspective

As per the traditional perception, The Book of Acts is regarded as the historical book in the New Testament. The book of Acts is regarded as an initial historical document and a valid primary source regarding the origin and development of Christianity, Church, Witness, Mission and Evangelism, Holy Spirit era, Conversion of Jews and Gentiles to Christian faith, Persecution, Church growth, division and unity, missionary journey and so on. The Book of Acts gives an account of the international mission of the church starting with an international message on an international day (Day of Pentecost) amid an international audience within the diaspora context of Jews. The

NT scholars did a negotiable estimation of the number of pilgrims in Jerusalem would be about 100,000, inhabitants in addition to 150,000-200,000 pilgrims. The mission in the Book of Acts can be clustered into two major segments: micro and macro versions of missions/missionaries. Petrine and Pauline's mission can be considered as macro-mission. The mission of Stephen, Andrew, Philip the Evangelist, believers of Jerusalem, Barabbas and others was the micro-version of the mission. One can see different types of missions in the Book of Acts: Jerusalem mission, Samaritan mission, Ethiopian mission, Grecian mission, Antiochian mission, Gentile mission, Roman mission, and so on by availing personal evangelism, cross-cultural mission, and so on. Let me enumerate the historical and theological significance of the Book of Acts from the perspective of mission and evangelism in the following ways:

- i. The Book of Acts can be regarded as the 'Book of Genesis' in the New Testament (the Dawn of the Holy Spirit Era, witness, evangelism, mission, Church, Church Growth, conversion, inclusive community building, and so on).
- ii. It is also considered as the true connecting link between the Gospels and Epistles.
- iii. It is the second volume of the Gospel of Luke.
- iv. It is the fulfilment of promises in the Gospels: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and its aftermaths on mission and evangelism.
- v. It is nicknamed the 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit'.
- vi. It is the narration of salvation history and historical theology from a missiological perspective.
- vii. It is the fulfilment of the Great Commission laid by Jesus.
- viii. It is the history of the origin and growth of the Church that starts from Jerusalem.
- ix. It is the history of the origin and growth of the missionary journeys.

- x. It is the account of the transformation of persecutors into patrons of the Christian faith.

The Persecution of Christians in Jerusalem

Persecution of Christians can be regarded as the child of mission and evangelism and vice-versa. The positive response of mission and evangelism is the acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus, and its negative response is the opposition and persecution. The best way to avoid the danger of persecution is to avoid mission and evangelism which is so dangerous to the self-existence of the

The persecution of Christians was first started by Jewish religious authority. Jerusalem church is counted as the Mother Church of all churches in the world. This church was probably the first persecuted church in the world. This persecution was sponsored by the Jewish religious authority.

Church itself. The history of persecution of Christians starts with the crucifixion of Jesus, the very founder of Christianity. It was followed by the arrest and martyrdom of His disciples and followers. Persecution did not stop the mission and evangelism zeal but increased it. The persecution of Christians was first started by Jewish religious authority. Jerusalem church is counted as the Mother Church of

all churches in the world. This church was probably the first persecuted church in the world. This persecution was sponsored by the Jewish religious authority. To get political mileage, the Roman imperial authority also directly or indirectly supported it. Jewish religious leader Saul is the key figure in the story of persecution mentioned in the 8th chapter of Acts.

Causes of Jewish persecution

As stated above, the earliest persecution of Christians was done by select Jewish groups over the newborn religion Christianity. The persecution of Christians in Acts 8 can be regarded as the extension of the early persecution and martyrdom of Stephen. It can be seen as the clash between the major and minor religions and also the clash between religiosity and spirituality. It is further conveyed as the divine plan to execute the progression of mission based on the Great Commission/Acts 1:8. Persecution offered a time of equality of men and women in mission. It caused the start of the Gentile Mission. The persecution in the 8th chapter of the Book of Acts is due to the following possible reasons:

- i) Christianity emerged as a challenge to the Law of Moses and Christians did not follow it,
- ii) Disrespect to the day of Sabbath and other Jewish customs,
- iii) Christian disciples /apostles and their followers emerged as a serious challenge to the Jewish religious systems like Sanhedrin and leaders like the High Priest
- iv) Neglecting the Jerusalem temple worship systems and offerings,
- v) The acceptance of Gentiles as Christians,



- vi) Blasphemy of God by Christians with equating Jesus with Father
- vii) Distortion of social order and hierarchy by accepting all groups of people including slaves, Samaritans, Greeks, and so on.
- viii) Preaching about the resurrection of the dead.
- ix) The blaspheming sermon of Stephen and its aftereffects.
- x) The great lamentation of Stephen, the Martyr, and its public attention might have irritated the opponents of Christians.

Methods of Persecution and the Nature of Christian Response

The persecution in Jerusalem was severe. Saul was the key identified figure of the persecutors. It was

“
The persecution in Jerusalem was severe. Saul was the key identified figure of the persecutors. It was the first chapter of the mass Christian persecution. The persecutors employed brutal measures towards the Christians in Jerusalem.”

the first chapter of the mass Christian persecution. The persecutors employed brutal measures towards the Christians in Jerusalem. The persecution in the 8th chapter of the Book of Acts adopted diverse methods: i.) Arresting the Christian believers and leaders ii) Stoning to death (Stephen's death by stoning). iii) Trials and questioning before religious centres like Sanhedrin. The persecutors invaded not only the worship places (Jerusalem Church) but even the houses of the believers. They did not even spare women. They were dragged out of their domestic places, put in Jails, and suspended the freedom of worship. The persecution produced literal martyrs like Stephen and reduced the Christians in Jerusalem Church to living martyrs. Their civil/political and religious rights were abandoned. Christians got a strong faith though they lost their houses. The persecutors planned to annihilate the followers of Christianity

with all possible mental and physical torture. As a result, Jerusalem Christians migrated or were pushed to nearby places. Their persistence and passion for their faith are commendable. They accepted persecution as part of their spiritual suffering experience. Hence, Jerusalem Christians became the first Christian diaspora community due to their faith. There is no reference to lapsed Christians in this report.

The Upshots of Persecution

The persecution has served both destructive and constructive functions. The destruction of the Jerusalem church was a bitter result but the establishment of Christianity in Samaria and Judea was a positive result. The important results of persecution are the following:

- i. Persecution transformed laymen/women into evangelists and missionaries.
- ii. Extension of the avenues of mission to non-apostolic leaders/deacons.
- iii. Scattering of believers either to escape from the persecution or to do evangelism.
- iv. Shifting the centre of mission from Jerusalem to Samaria and beyond.
- v. Starting of gentile mission and conversion.
- vi. Increase in the number of churches and Christians afar the boundaries of Jerusalem.
- vii. Jerusalem church became an evergreen model to the later Christians elsewhere to develop the response towards persecution.
- viii. It upholds the Christian principle of the universal priesthood of all believers.
- ix. It amplified the process of executing the Great Commission envisaged by Jesus.
- x. It dragged the Roman Empire to the program of Persecution.
- xi. It contributed greatly to the commencement of the World Christian mission with cross-cultural methods.

Persecution is always a painful and vicious process. Nevertheless, with the dawn of persecution, the history of the mission diagram had changed. The persecution has served in two ways: it scattered the Christians and also catalyzed the spreading of the Gospel to the nearby places to have a meaning for Acts 1:8. The transformation of the Life and mission of Paul/Saul from the locus of Persecutor into the protector of the church is the most significant result.

Mission and Evangelism under Evangelist Phillip during the Eve of Persecution

Evangelist Phillip became a public missionary on the eve of the persecution of Jerusalem Church. Probably, persecution transformed the ministerial avenues of Philip. The apostolic agenda was to concentrate on the ministry of Word and other ministries, particularly the table duty by 7 selected Deacons. Philip was one of the deacons/table waiters and he was married and blessed with four prophetess daughters. He was a devote 'full of Spirit and wisdom' and hence was selected as one of the seven table hosts. He became a missionary/ evangelist to

**“
Mission and evangelism can be simply distinguished as the sharing of the Gospel near the Church is called Evangelism and far from the Church is known as mission as a result of the sending by the church.
”**

Samaritans after the martyrdom of Stephen. He can be recon as follows:

1. Evangelist Phillip was the first foreign missionary
2. Philip was in charge of the social department of the Jerusalem Church.
3. The cross-cultural missionary who went outside the orbit of Jerusalem.
4. In Samaria, he could focus on one people group, and in Gaza, the southern part, he focused on one person named an Ethiopian Finance Minister.
5. He was the first African missionary.
6. He was the first missionary to the Northern part of Jerusalem.
7. He can be regarded as the second missionary to the Samaritans (the first one was the Samaritan woman)
8. He was the first Christian minister with four prophets in one family.
9. He was probably the first gentile missionary, outside the boundaries of Jerusalem or Jewish Christians.
10. He was the first known lay evangelist with a heritage of a quarter century.
11. His evangelism works were accompanied by the miracles and wonders guided by the Holy Spirit which attracted many to accept the Gospel.

Persecutions in Jerusalem Church granted him a promotion from the position of deacon (waiter) to an Evangelist/Missionary. Philip can be regarded as the Founding Father of the Church of Samaria and Ethiopian mission. We know about Philip's journey from Jerusalem to Samaria, Gaza, followed by "all the towns" covering about 50 miles (80

km) between Azotus and Caesarea. He was fully guided and used by other apostles to do the preaching and miracles. A final New Testament reference to Philip is in Acts 21:8-9, where he and his four unmarried daughters are visited by Paul. He could keep his faith and spiritual legacy until his last both in his family, mission field, and Church. His mission in Samaria destroyed the racial superiority issues of Jews and Samaritans.

Concluding Reflections



From the above narration, it is obvious that the power of persecution could not stop the power of mission and evangelism. The Life and ministry of Philip and his cohorts show this fact clearly. The response of the victims of the persecution in Jerusalem is the readiness for the mission and evangelism. It is significant to note

that the Mission of God or the Church cannot be destroyed by persecution and God turned it as a means to boost up the mission. It also enhanced and empowered the missionary thrust of the believers. Acts 8 showcases the development of persecution from leaders into laymen/women or individual to community basis. The response of the persecuted Christians is great –instead of leaving the Christian faith, they became public missionaries. Philip became their stalwart. Persecution strengthened the Christians of Jerusalem and transformed them into missionaries rather than mere believers. Mission and evangelism can be simply distinguished as the sharing of the Gospel near the Church is called Evangelism and far from the Church is known as mission as a result of the sending by the church. It is not confined to apostles only but it is an open ended for all. The diaspora of Jerusalem Christians due to the persecution is a classic example of it. It envisages the partnership of the

mission of clergy and laity. The first-century Christians like Jerusalem Christians are noted for their passionate mission and evangelism is commendable. Their selfless and sacrificial mission and evangelism not only contributed to the propagation of the Gospel and the transformation of people but even the transformation of persecutors as the patrons and proponents of the Gospel! The history of the call and conversion of Saul, the Jewish persecutor into Paul, the Apostle Par-excellence is the best reward for the sacrificial service of the Christians of Jerusalem Church. The historical analysis of the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem church and its impact on mission and evangelism mentioned in Acts 8 gives the following lessons:

- i. Persecution and the Christian mission are reciprocally linked.
- ii. Persecution contributed to the mission

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and church's growth in wider geographic and ethnic horizons.

- iii. Persecution could not ruin the faith and mission zeal but endowed and enriched.
- iv. Persecution has offered an unusual courage to the devotees to wider and collective witness for Christ near and far which eventually turned the persecutor (Saul) into a missionary and Apostle(Paul).
- v. Persecution is acting as a good season to sow the Gospel seeds for a great harvest.
- vi. Persecution is a divine plan and program envisaged by God to re-orient the agencies and routes of mission.
- vii. The blood of the Stephen had emerged as the seeds of the Churches at Samaria and similar places; when one such missionary was martyred, a hundred missionaries rose.
- viii. The events in Acts show all segments of

Christianity: propagation, conversion, Church planting and growth, persecution, and final victory of Christianity. Persecution had become the divine catalyst for evangelism and mission.

- ix. Christian Church and mission commenced on the Day of Pentecost which would continue until the time of Rapture. No one can destroy the Christian Church and its mission from the outside, but only the Christians (?) from the inside; no external forces including persecutors cannot destroy them; persecution can destroy the Church building but not the Church (Ecclesia/Body of Christ); it can destroy the believers but not the belief or faith of the faithful Christians; but is obvious that after every persecutions, the Church would resurrect from all of them to continue her mission until reaching to the last and least!

By modelling Acts 8, let us pray and work

for the realization of the holistic mission that "the Whole Church brings the Whole Gospel to the Whole World" in our generation! Let me shut down this write-up by lobbying a few queries: (i) Being the members of the Church of the 21st century, let us re-examine what is/ would be our response if we were/ are in the context of Acts 8.1-8. ? (ii) Whether our churches are giving importance to ministry or mission and evangelism or both in our given context? (iii) Whether our Church/s and its present structures are a hindrance to continuing the mission/sin our near and far contexts? We should not forget our mission obligations in all situations. The observation of Emil Bruner is true that "Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning!" ●

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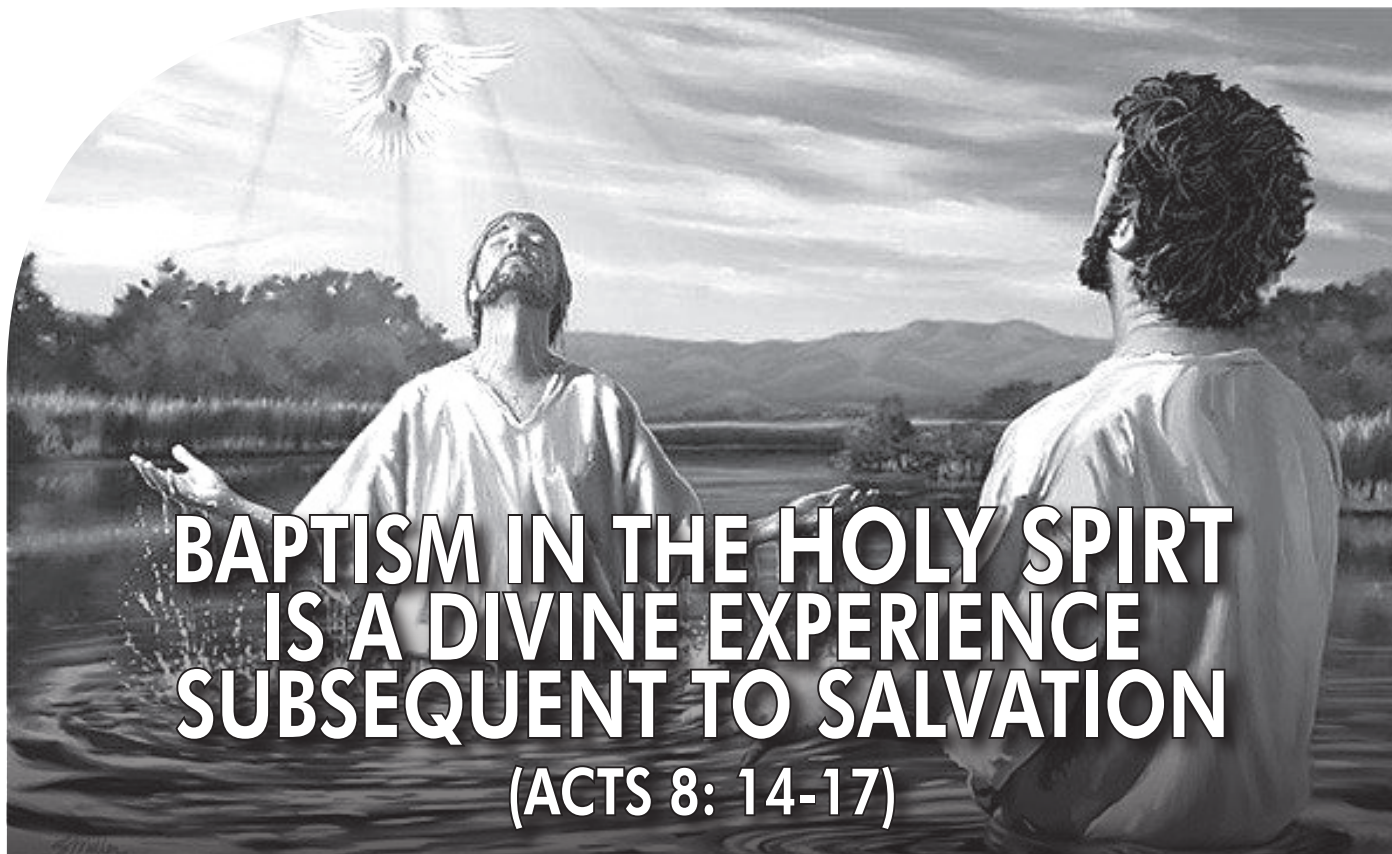


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BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A DIVINE EXPERIENCE SUBSEQUENT TO SALVATION (ACTS 8: 14-17)



PR. P. J. DANIEL

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and Seminary
Kumbanad

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is one of the most fascinating subjects in the New Testament. It was the first major experience that the disciples of Jesus Christ received after the ascension of Jesus to Heaven. Upon receiving this wonderful experience, the New Testament Church was initiated on the day of Pentecost. The disciples had gone forth in explosive power giving witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the preaching of the kingdom of God after they received this wonderful experience.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a different and distinct experience from Salvation. Some are confused with these two experiences. But the Scripture makes it clear that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second blessing after Salvation. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a divine experience foretold in the Old Testament by Prophet Joel (Joel 2: 28, 29), prophesied by John the Baptist (Mark 1:8), commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:4, 5), fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33), continued in the early church (Acts 11:15) and is available till day to everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38, 39). When a believer comes under the total possession of the Holy Spirit, that very experience is known as baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is more than just being born again of the Holy Spirit. It is an absolute saturation in the Holy Spirit. The very word baptism replicates being fully immersed as in water baptism. In water baptism, a person is fully dipped down in the water, similarly in Spirit baptism, a person is fully engrossed in the Spirit of God. We accept the Lord as our Saviour by the work of the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit indwells in us. 1 Corinthians 12:3, "... and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." Though the Holy Spirit indwells in a believer,

He does not have any absolute control over him. When a believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ, he comes under the predominance of the Holy Spirit. This is a second blessing. An apt motif is cited here. A full glass of water does not have any influence on the glass. Water contains in the Glass, but the water does not have any impact or control over the glass. If a glass with water is immersed in a large pool, the glass loses its control and the water controls the glass. This is what occurs in a believer when he is baptized in the Holy Spirit.

It is a divine experience that we enjoy after the new birth. We find much solid evidence in the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit baptism is a second blessing after the reception of salvation. The following references will prove this fact. Our captioned passage is Acts 8: 14-17.

*“But when **they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women ... When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them they might receive the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**”*

From this passage, it is vivid that the Samaritans believed in Jesus Christ, accepted the word of God, and were baptized, but they did not receive the Holy Spirit. When the apostles from Jerusalem laid hands upon them and prayed, they received the Holy Spirit. Hence it is clear that baptism in the Holy Spirit is a distinct experience from Salvation.

But some critics claim that the Samaritans believed not in Jesus Christ but in Philip. So, their salvation was not genuine. When the Apostles laid hands

on them, the Holy Spirit worked on them and at that very moment, they received genuine salvation. They did not receive a second blessing rather they received the joy of salvation. This dispute is obsolete. The Samaritans believed Philip means that they believed in what Philip was preaching. Philip preached about Jesus Christ and naturally, they believed in Jesus. So their faith was genuine. Certainly, they received the blessing of Salvation. Philip would not have baptized them in water if they did not have genuine faith in Jesus, but he baptized them because they believed in

When a believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ, he comes under the predominance of the Holy Spirit. This is a second blessing. An apt motif is cited here. A full glass of water does not have any influence on the glass. Water contains in the Glass, but the water does not have any impact or control over the glass.

Jesus and his word. Later the Apostles from Jerusalem laid hands upon them they received the second blessing of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

There are many other convincing evidences in the New Testament, which prove profoundly that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a divine blessing after Salvation. A few of them are cited below.

1. **Acts 1: 4, 5**, *“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: **“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John Baptized you with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”**”*

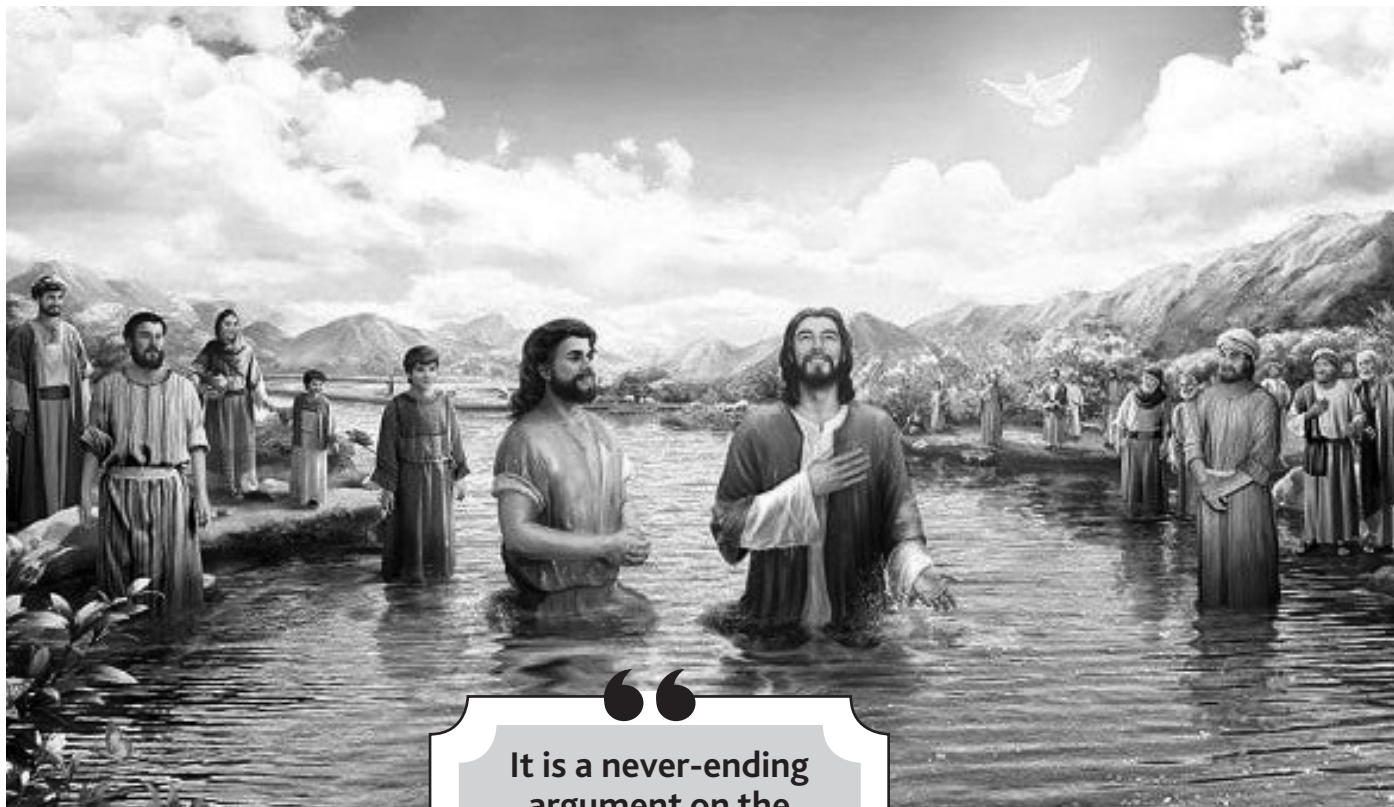
The disciples of Jesus were saved or their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20); they were baptized (Acts 1:4, 5); they were clean because they heard the word (John 15:3). Yet they had to wait for the promise of the Father, which is the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). So, Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a different experience from Salvation.

2. **Acts 2:38**, *“Peter replied, **repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**”*

Here, repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit are three distinct and subsequent experiences. Hence it is clear that baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second blessing after salvation.

3. **Acts 10: 44 – 48**, *“While Peter was still speaking these words, the **Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even unto the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water?**”*

The household of Cornelius heard the message means they accepted it. The same moment they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Afterward, they



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It is a never-ending argument on the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. How do we recognize a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit?
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were baptized in water. Here we see accepting the word i.e., salvation, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and water baptism as three distinct experiences. Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is a subsequent conversance of salvation.

4. Acts 19: 1 -4, “While Apollos was at Corinth; Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit after you believed?’ They answered, ‘No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’ So, Paul asked, ‘Then what baptism did you receive?’ ‘John’s baptism,’ they replied. Paul said, ‘John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance.... On hearing this, **they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.** When Paul placed his hands on them, **the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.**”

Paul asked the believers in Ephesus whether they received the Holy Spirit after they believed. Paul rectifies that the reception of the Holy Spirit is only after believing the Lord Jesus Christ. Since they had received John’s Baptism they did not hear about the Holy Spirit. If it was Christian baptism, certainly they might have heard the name of the Holy Spirit, hence Christian baptism is in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Later they were baptized in water and Paul placed his hands upon them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This incident clarifies that the Holy Spirit baptism is a subsequent experience to salvation.

5. Acts 9:5, 17-18, “Who are you, Lord? Saul asked, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” “Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, said ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and **be filled with the Holy Spirit.** Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again, He got up and **was baptized.**”

Paul accepted Jesus as Lord on the way to Damascus. After three days Ananias came to him and placed his hand on him to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then he got up and was baptized. In this incident, it is vivid that Salvation, receiving the Holy Spirit, and baptism in water are three distinct experiences, and receiving the Holy Spirit is a subsequent experience to Salvation.

The above-stated evidence corroborates that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a different and distinct experience from salvation.

The Evidence of Having Received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It is a never-ending argument on the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. How do we recognize a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit? Is there any tangible physical evidence to recognize one's baptism in the Holy Spirit? Surely there will be some visible physical evidence to recognize one's baptism in the Holy Spirit. It can be identified by a tangible Supernatural Sign. God gives a tangible supernatural sign in our bodies. Your tongue will speak a language you have never learned. This is called "speaking in tongues." We shall see some solid Biblical references to prove that speaking in tongues is the universal, initial, physical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

1. Believers of Joppa, who came with Peter recognized that the household of Cornelius was filled with the Holy Spirit **when they were speaking in tongues and glorifying God** (Acts 10: 44-47). Speaking in tongues was solid proof for them that they were baptized in the Holy Spirit.
2. On the day of Pentecost, one hundred and twenty persons assembled at the upper room **spoke in tongues** when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, which is tangible evidence for it (Acts 2:1-4).
3. The disciples at Ephesus also **spoke in tongues** when they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 19; 5-7).
4. It can be proved that the **believers at Samaria also spoke in tongues** when they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 8: 14-18). When Peter and John placed their hands upon them the Holy Spirit came upon them. Simon saw it. If Simon had seen it, it is apparent that some visible incident had taken place there. It may not be some visible miracles or signs that happened there. If it was so Simon would not have come with money to buy that gift, because he used to perform such miracles and trembled the people of Samaria. So he may not be interested to buy such kind of

gifts (Acts 8: 9-11). He had also seen that Philip had healed the sick and cast out demons in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. Even then he did not desire to have such gifts. (Acts 8:7). So, it is evident that, as it was common in all other incidents, here too they have spoken in tongues. There is doubt that how the other tongue is visible. As common no language is visible to anyone, it is audible, but when people speak a language can be visible to others. So as usual here also when the believers of Samaria were filled with the Holy Spirit **spoke in tongues**.

5. It can be proved that the brothers from Joppa had also **spoken in other tongues** when they were filled with the Holy Spirit Acts 10:47 "*...They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.*" The brothers of Joppa claim that they had also the same experience as at the house of Cornelius when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The household of Cornelius spoke in tongues when they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44 – 45). If so the brothers of Joppa also had the same experience of speaking in tongues when they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
6. When Paul was in the fullness of the Holy Spirit he too spoke in tongues. He boasts: I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you (1 Corinthians 14:18).

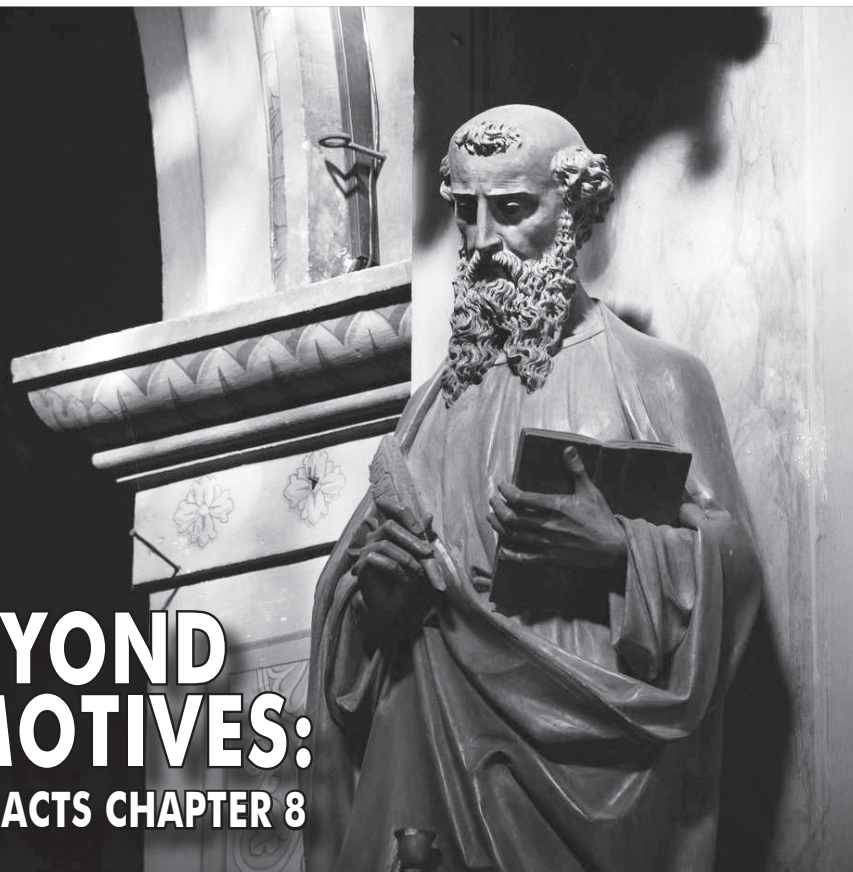
The above-mentioned references confirm '**speaking in other tongues**' is the universal initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. But it is not the exclusive evidence to determine one's genuineness of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jesus revealed the greatest sign of its authenticity: By their fruit, you will recognize them (Matthew 7:15). This is the ultimate sign of recognizing the genuineness of one's baptism in the Holy Spirit.

There arose another rudiment question. Will all the believers who are baptized in the Holy Spirit speak in tongues? When Paul writes to the Corinthians about the

Spiritual gifts in Chapter 12, he raises some questions negatively (1 Corinthians 12:28-30). Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? The answer will be No. So, some think that all who are baptized in the Holy Spirit, will not speak in tongues. Only certain people will speak in tongues, who have the special gift. Indeed, everyone will not have the same gift of the Holy Spirit, - speaking in other tongues. In this chapter, Paul discusses the gifts of the Holy Spirit and not about the initial evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. We should identify the gift of speaking in tongues and the initial physical evidence of Baptism in the Holy Spirit distinctly (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4). The gift of speaking in tongues will not be received by all (1 Corinthians 12: 30), but as the initial visible physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, everyone will speak in tongues. When we consider some of the other gifts, we will comprehend the fact. We all have faith in the Lord for receiving the blessing of Salvation, but all do not have the gift of faith. In one way or the other, we give benevolently to the poor and needy, but we may not have the gift of giving. When we pray for the sick quite often, they get healed, but we may not have the gift of healing. Similarly, all will speak in tongues as the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, but all may not speak in tongues as the gift of tongues, which will be given only to certain selective ones (1 Corinthians 12:11).

The discussed topic is fascinating as well as mandatory for all believers. This experience is not only pleasant but also conversant to every believer. ●

CHRISTIAN MISSION BEYOND ULTERIOR MOTIVES: AN INSPIRATION FROM ACTS CHAPTER 8

**AJEESH GEORGE**Faculty, India Bible College
and Seminary**INTRODUCTION**

What you think was the motivation for Apostle Philip and other disciples in Acts chapter 2 and the entire book of Acts as they engaged in evangelism while facing adverse situations under Roman Empire? Did they receive any promises about material prosperity or any worldly blessing offered by their Master?

Nothing motivated them for evangelism other than their absolute obedience to the great commission, their deep love for their Master, the leading of the Holy Spirit since the Pentecost experience and their burden and self-realisation that they are debtors to all the unsaved people of the world.

The writer always remembers a statement of a senior missionary from one of the northern states of India who told a group of Bible college students and challenged them from his decades of missionary life experiences of the need to "serve God for nothing". Yes, he said we don't serve him for anything of this world. The writer recalls another instance when a young Bible college graduate was invited to teach in a small North Indian Bible college, his first question was, "How much will I be paid?" Yes, material needs have become our major concern today whereas we forget that Abraham told his son Issac, 'Yahweh-Yireh'!

Meaning of Ulterior Motive

According to Webster's dictionary "motive" is defined as 'the psychological feature that arouses an organism to action toward a desired goal; the reason for the action; that which gives purpose and direction to behaviour'. "Motive" is something that causes a person to act in a certain way, do a certain thing, etc. The word ulterior literally means "beyond what is seen" or "that which is concealed." An ulterior motive is a secret motive that nullifies the good words or deeds outwardly seen. So the ulterior

motive can be hidden desire for material benefits, public acceptance, recognition, popularity, comfortable life etc.

Mission Motive of Apostle Philip in Acts 8

When persecution broke out in Jerusalem, Apostle Philip decided to go to a least preferred place for evangelism. A true Jew never wanted to have a close interaction with the Samaritans.

Once the disciples including Philip were shocked by seeing Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. There were no external factors motivated Apostle Philip to go to Samaria without knowing what will be the response of the Samaritan people when there was strong enmity between Jews and Samaritans existed. It was the leading of the Holy Spirit alone led him to Samaria in accordance with great commission in Acts 1:8. The burden in his heart was not only for his people alone rather it was for all the lost people of the earth which took him beyond the biological and geographical boundaries. The all inclusive nature of Jesus motivated him to reach the Samaritans.

Philip was led by the Lord to reach one person the Ethiopian Eunuch, when the ministry in Samaria was prospering. Here also we see an Apostle with pure motives to reach anyone without any hesitance. Philip could have think differently and ask the Lord not to send him rather send someone because ministry in Samaria was prospering. But the growing church or the possible income from the church or other ministry opportunities there or his spreading fame there in Samaria or nothing motivated him. Rather his motive was completely controlled by the leading of the Lord in accordance with the will of God. Nothing of this world motivated Philip to take all the risks to be an adventurous missionary among the Samaritans or nothing of this world deviated him from leaving the prospering church in Samaria in order to reach the Ethiopian eunuch.

Significance of Motives in the Bible

A motive is the underlying reason for any action. Proverbs 16:2 says, "All a person's

ways seem pure to them, but motives are weighed by the LORD." A man can operate out of many motives but should not forget that God knows what the root reason behind each action is. Any sinful desire or desire for the pleasure of the flesh is not pleasing to God. ((Romans 8:8). Motive behind our giving matters (2 Corinthians 9:7). More than how much we give, how we give and why we give matters God (Mark 12. 41- 44).

Our motives behind our prayer matters according to James 4:3 "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with

When persecution broke out in Jerusalem, Apostle Philip decided to go to a least preferred place for evangelism. A true Jew never wanted to have a close interaction with the Samaritans. Once the disciples including Philip were shocked by seeing Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman.

wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." It is very clear that our selfish desires hinder the answer to our prayers. Our offerings with wrong intentions can't please God (Proverbs 21:27). Apostle Paul talks about preachers who were preaching with wrong intentions (Philippians 1:17). Anything we do for the Lord with wrong motives will not please God or it will not bring forth lasting results.

In Christianity, we are serving a God who cares about why we do more than what we do? He is interested in our intentions more than in our actions. People around us see only our actions through which we may try to gain many things of this world. But the Lord looks into our heart and understands our motives behind it.

The reason Jesus called the 'so called' pious Jewish leaders as hypocrites was he knew the motives behind their actions. Our Lord clearly instructed his disciples that "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will not enter in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20) Jesus made it more clear when He talked about the giving of those who did for publicity and honour. It is very clear that any act of ministry with a hidden motive for personal glory is not accepted in the sight of God.

Jesus very clearly exposed the Pharisees for their ulterior motives. He looked into their heart and by knowing their motives behind their actions and said "full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:23-30). Paul confessed that he gave up all his rights and earthly benefits as so called Jew in order to be a disciples of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:4-7).

A variety of ulterior motives drive our actions, our religious life even our ministry life. A wife may pray for her husband's salvation because of her safety more than the salvation husband's soul. A pastor or church leader may use different tactics to add people to the congregation because he wants to impress his leaders and the public. A young man or lady may attend church regularly not because of commitment Christ rather in order to find a life partner. An individual may live by a rigid



list of do's and don'ts believing that he may earn favor with God. We can add more into this list from our observation and from our own self evaluation. Let us always remember Colossians 3:17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Motives for Fruitful Evangelism

When the young John G Patton was getting ready to leave to the Pacific Islands to reach the Cannibals with the gospel, an old Christian warned him that "you will be eaten by the cannibals". John G Patton replied "it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will raise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer." God used this

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But we see totally transformed disciples in the book of Acts who considered everything of this world as rubbish even laid down their own life for the Lord. The process of formation under Jesus brought great transformation in their attitude towards ministry and in their understanding about the mission of God.
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great man of God to sow the seed of the gospel in those Islands even though he had to lay down his life for the transformation of the cannibals to become real human beings. It was the love of God which gave his only begotten son for the redemption of humanity motivated this man of God. The later history of these Islands proves that his efforts didn't go in vain.

Another missionary who gave to his life to evangelise the Aucas tribe of Ecuador said "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose". Yes there was no ulterior motive to gain anything rather they were only concerned about what they can give even their own life to evangelise the unknown, unreached and uncivilized people groups.

Apostles including Philip had ulterior motives in the beginning of their journey with Jesus. Their raised the question "Behold, we have left everything and followed you; what then will there be for us?" (Matt. 19:27). But we see totally

transformed disciples in the book of Acts who considered everything of this world as rubbish even laid down their own life for the Lord. The process of formation under Jesus brought great transformation in their attitude towards ministry and in their understanding about the mission of God. Later their ulterior motive of 'what shall we get' was replaced by what we can give. We see an amazing transformation happened in their motives. What motivated these men of God to serve God without any ulterior motive? Let me high light some of the major motivation behind their fruitful ministry life;

1. The Power of the Holy Spirit- The power of God and the purposes of God always co-exist. It was the power of the Holy Spirit filled them on the day of Pentecost festival made them so bold and powerful in their words and deeds. Holy spirit as a comforter (John 16:14), teacher, reminder (John 16:26), convictor (John 16:8) and guide (John 16:13) was the major motivating power source in their fruitful evangelistic work. They knew the promised power they received is to witness for the Lord wherever the spirit leads them.
2. The Great Commission of the Lord- Disciples knew the obedience to the great commission of the Lord is the greatest expectation of their master from them. Also they knew that this obedience is not optional rather it is mandatory. Their obedience without expecting anything and by expecting any kinds of challenges made them fruitful evangelists.
3. The Burden of God- We sees the burden in God's heart for the fallen humanity from the Garden of Eden onwards. God took the initiative to search for Adam and Eve. Before evangelism becomes the burden of our heart it begins in the heart of God. He send his only begotten son to save the world. God initiates his mission of saving the lost humanity because love he love his people. Disciples got an invitation to participate in the mission of God by demonstrating God's love for humanity.

They accepted that invitation to share the burden of God.

4. The Responsibility of a Christian- Being a disciple of Christ is a great privilege. But this privileged life carries out a great responsibly of showing the way to this privileged and joyful life to those who live in darkness. E. Stanly Jones called it one of the sevendeadly sins. Disciples had a very strong realisation about their responsibility (Act 4:20; Rom.1:14; I Cor. 1:17, 18; II Cor. 5:14).
5. The need of the Hour- Apostle Peter made it very clear to the Sanhedrin "There is salvation in no one else, for

The process of formation under Jesus brought great transformation in their attitude towards ministry and in their understanding about the mission of God. Later their ulterior motive of 'what shall we get' was replaced by what we can give.

there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts. 4:12). Thus salvation and hope of the entire humanity lies in Jesus Christ. Unless we proclaim this to the world, how can the people know the way and get saved (Acts 8:31; Rom. 10:14)? It is the responsibility of

the church to understand the need of the hour and respond to that by doing evangelism.

Conclusion

Someone correctly said 'if it is not a wing, it's a weight'. A wing is something helps us to progress in our faith race, but the weight is anything that hinders us from obeying our call to do God's mission. Any ulterior motive can be a weight in the long run of Christian race.

Let us examine and evaluate our motives behind our actions by pondering on these questions;

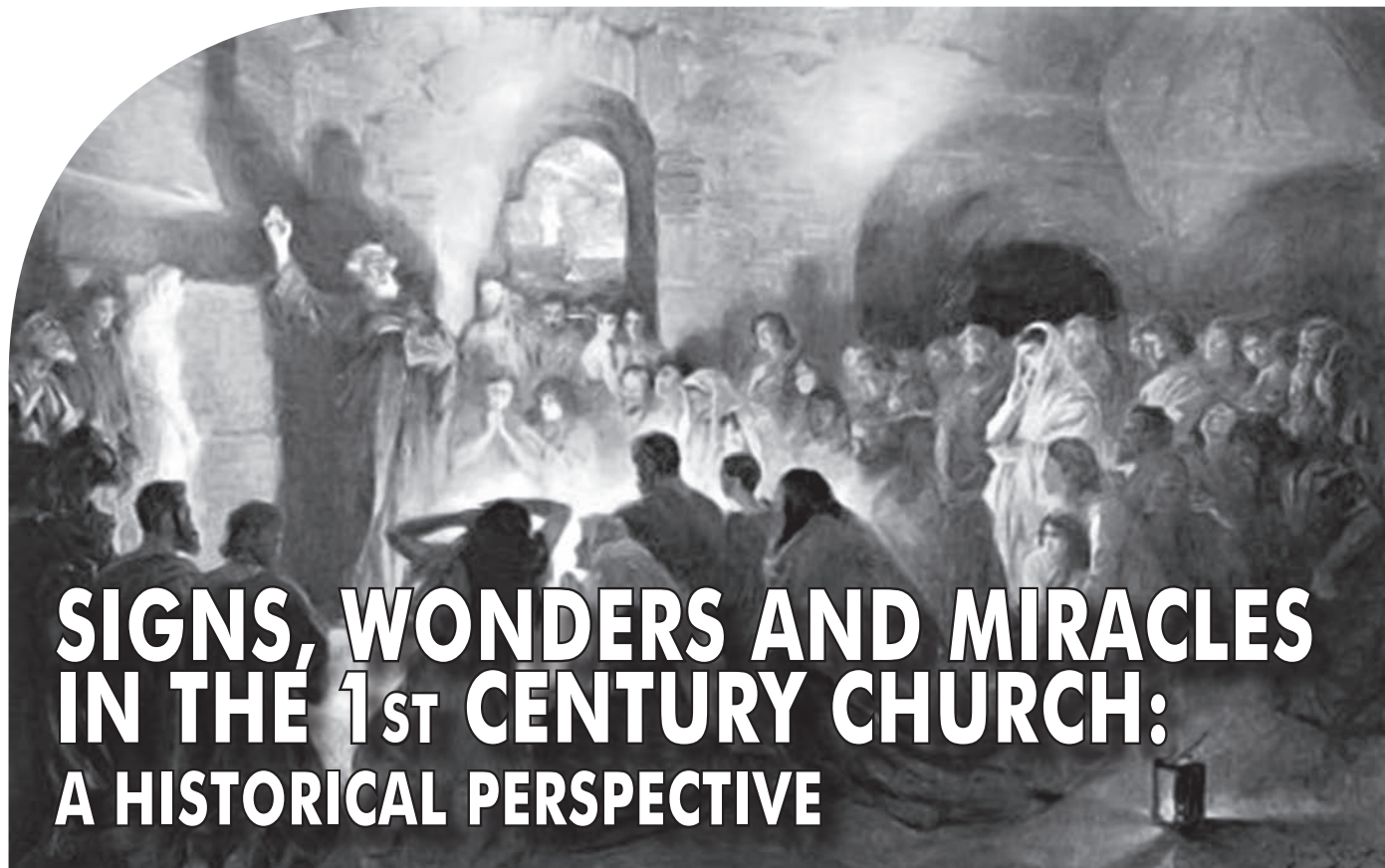
Am I serving the Lord for anything of this world? Would I do what I am doing now for the Lord now if anyone ever knows it? Am I really obedient to the great commission of the Lord? Do I really understand the heart of God?

When we are captured by the love of God we don't seek for anything of this world to share His love to the world. ●



ACTS 8:31

He said, "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?" He begged Philip to come up and sit with him.



SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES IN THE 1ST CENTURY CHURCH: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



REV. BINOY EAPEN PHILIP

Pastor and Bible Teacher

“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed” (Romans 15:18). The first century church has witnessed many signs wonders and miracles worth mentioning. It is my intent to highlight some of them which benefited the growth and development of the early church.

1. The first sign in the 1st century church – The Advent of the Spirit

The first great sign and wonder in the first century church was the advent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which took place in AD 30 an event of great importance. The manner of the Spirit’s coming which is described in Acts chapter 2:2–3 is in itself miraculous. The most striking features were the “sound” and the “tongues like as of fire.” There was a noise and there were tongues. In the words of Curtis Vaughan “but there was neither felt blast nor felt burning... The sound and the sight were the sensible garment of the spiritual visitation.” The sound filled the entire house and its noise resembled the movement of a mighty wind, like the sound of a tornado. In this case the first sign was the sound of the mighty wind. Wind is often used as a symbol of God’s presence (II Sam. 5:24; Psalm 104:3). Here, it not only shows the presence of God, but also how irresistible the power of the Divine Spirit is.

Likewise the second sign that appeared to them was “tongues like as of fire.” The tongues that descended on them were flame like. At first it appeared like a great mass of fire which was then separated and came to rest as a flame or tongue of fire on everyone who tarried there. Being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, all those who tarried there began to speak in languages unknown to them. Fire symbolizes the purification aspect of God.

The advent of the Spirit and its impact on the growth of the church

The after-effect of the infilling of the Holy Spirit was that it wrought miraculous changes in the characteristics of the disciples. Peter who was a short-tempered and a fearful man was transformed into a courageous powerful speaker. Peter boldly spoke to the Jews about the life and works of Jesus (Acts 2:22), the death of Jesus (v 23) and the resurrection of Jesus (v 24 -35). Peter's message spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit stirred the assembled multitude and they were pricked in their hearts. The literal meaning is "to pierce", "to stun", and to smite." Here it suggests that a deep "conviction" came upon the people who heard the message. They were electrified by the Spirit and they came running to Peter asking, "What shall we do to be saved?" Peter's reply was, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins." (2:38) The people who received his words were saved and were baptized. On the same day three thousand souls were added to the church. This occurred in AD 30. They continued steadfastly in the doctrine and teaching of the apostles and fellowship, breaking of the bread and in prayer (2:41, 42).

Thus the advent of the Spirit - the 1st sign of the 1st century church, expanded the church and brought in a sense of new fellowship among the people - a fellowship that witnessed the reverence of God, oneness, love, joy and worship.

2. Miraculous deliverances and the expansion of the church

Paul began his missionary journeys around AD 46 - 47. His second missionary journey began in AD 49 which took Paul and Silas to Philippi in Asia Minor. Three great miracles took place here paving the way for the establishment and growth of the church in the 1st century.

(i) Miraculous conversion of Lydia and the establishment of the Macedonian church

During the second missionary journey of Paul in AD 49, while at Troas, Paul received a vision from God to go to Macedonia.

Paul with Silas obeyed the vision and continued their mission and landed at Neapolis, which is the neighboring city of Philippi. On a Sabbath day, Paul preached to a mob of Jews and Proselytes. While he was preaching on the river side, Lydia, a rich pearl seller who was apparently a Gentile proselyte from Thyatira received Christ and was baptized along with her household. Conversion is always a miracle, an extra-ordinary miracle because it does not happen to all who hear the word. Thus it was the miraculous conversion experience of Lydia that led to the foundation of the Macedonian church.

The after-effect of the infilling of the Holy Spirit was that it wrought miraculous changes in the characteristics of the disciples. Peter who was a short-tempered and a fearful man was transformed into a courageous powerful speaker.

(ii) Miraculous deliverance of an evil-possessed girl and the growth of the church

As Paul and Silas were going to the place of prayer, they met a slave girl who was possessed by a "spirit of divination" - a spirit that was stirred by Apollo, who was the god of many in central Greece. For many days the evil spirit in the girl

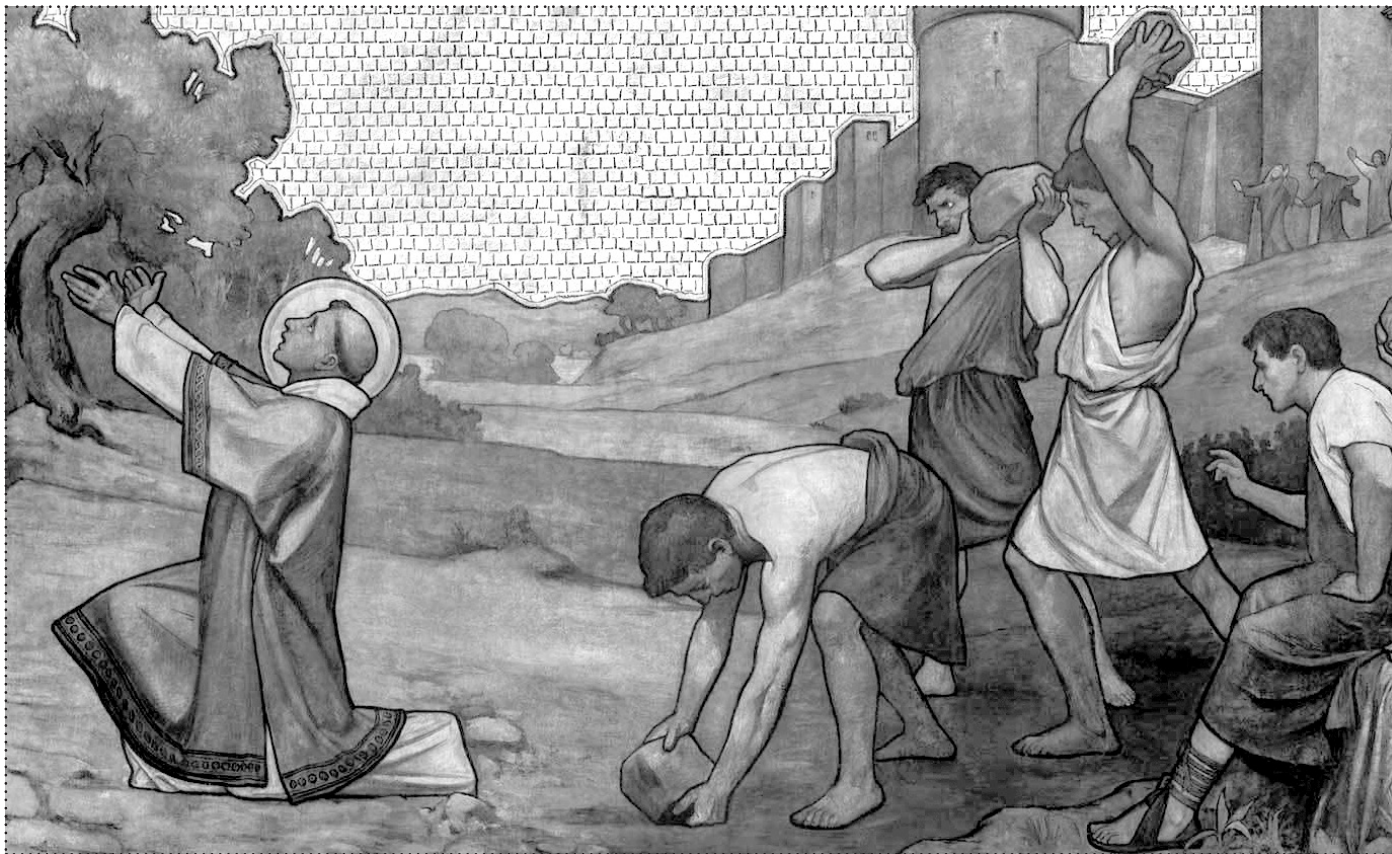
advertised the mission of Paul and Silas. She did not speak any ill about the missionaries. All that she stated were facts: "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who show unto us the way of salvation". This was good advertisement concerning their mission and no right minded person would turn such an advertiser away, especially in modern Christendom, when most people do not concern themselves with the ethical standards of their felicitators or advertisers! But Paul discerned his advertiser and understood that the girl was being controlled by an evil spirit and not a right spirit. There lies the importance of the fruit of discernment.

Dear ones in Christ, all that glitters around us is not gold. What is greatly needed in a believer these days is a discerning spirit. Even as we fast and pray, we need to plead more for the gift of discernment than we would ask for the gift of prophesy. Paul discerned the spirit within her and cast out the evil spirit from her. Her deliverance caused her to become the second believer of the Macedonian church, besides Lydia - initiating greater growth of the church.

(iii) Wondrous signs at the Roman prison and its impact on the growth of the church

Miraculous wonders took place at the Roman prison when Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God. Suddenly there broke out an earthquake and the foundations of the prison were shaken. The Roman prison doors which could be opened only with the help of horse powers (hp) opened automatically and the chains on the hands of every prisoner were loosed.

These signs and wonders in the Roman jail not only wrought deliverance for the apostles but again paved the way for the growth



of the church. On seeing these extraordinary happenings within the prison where he was working for years, the Roman jailor, divinely inspired, asks the apostles "What shall I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas spoke to him about the saving knowledge of Christ, and that very night the jailor and his family accepted Christ and received water baptism by immersion. The jailor and his family joined Lydia and the slave girl in the church which grew in strength. Through such wonders and miracles, God is establishing and enlarging His church.

3. Persecution - A sign for the growth of the church

Persecution and the death of the first martyr of the church:-

The first reported persecution in the first century church was the martyrdom of Stephen. This took place five or six years after

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Pentecost, most likely in AD 35. Stephen was a Grecian Jew belonging to the synagogue of 'freedmen.' The synagogue of freedmen consisted of Cyrenians, Alexandrians and people from Cilicia. "The freedmen" were Jews who once were slaves or were the sons of slaves.

The Jews in the synagogue when they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke, stirred up the people by saying that they had heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against God. False witnesses were set up, but all who sat in the council, when looked at him, saw his face glowing like that of an angel in midst of all the ill talks against him.

When Stephen was given a chance to speak by the High Priest, he started from the call of Abraham and came to where he spoke to them of their fathers persecuting the prophets. This caused the people to become furious and "gnash their teeth." Robertson comments that "their conduct was like that of a pack of hungry, snaring

wolves." Stephen on the other hand was calm and full of peace in the Holy Spirit. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him. Stoning does not ordinarily mean throwing stones at him, rather, in the words of Curtis Vaughan – rolling a heavy stone over his chest. It is believed that stones were rolled over him until he died.

The Jewish community did not know that the "blood of a martyr was the seed of the church" - Tertullian. They thought that by killing Stephen, Christianity could be completely wiped out from the face of the earth. Nevertheless, what happened was just the contrary - the martyrdom of Stephen became a pavement for the spread, growth and development of the church.

Martyrdom of Stephen and the growth of the church

In the words of Rackham, the death of Stephen "was the crucial event which started the expansion of the church." Following the martyrdom of Stephen, there was a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem and the believers were all scattered. Wherever they went,

they preached the Word of God and thus the church extended to Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the world. Persecution was God's agenda for church growth, because if persecution was not sent, believers would not have been scattered and the Gospel would not have spread far and wide, as it has today.

Herodian persecution and its impact on the growth and development of the church:- The Herodian persecution described in chapter 12 occurred around AD 44. James, son of Zebedee, brother of John was arrested and killed by Herod and when he found that this was a pleasing act to the Jews, he decided to do the same to Peter. Apostle Peter, the chief of the apostles, was arrested and imprisoned. This occurred at the time of the festival of unleavened bread, but the church back home prayed for Peter earnestly, thus a wonder took place in the prison and Peter was rescued miraculously by God.

The Outcome of Persecution

(a) Divine judgement on the persecutor Herod not only persecuted the church but

during a public address, when the audience praised him and compared his words to God's voice; Herod instead of giving praises to God, accepted all the praises for himself and boasted of his capability. The Angel of the Lord struck him. At that instant in AD 44, the persecutor of the church met with an end that none before or after met with. While still alive he was eaten by worms and thus died.

(b) But the Word of God spread faster and stronger

Herod wanted to bring a full stop to the spread of the Word of God and the growth of the church. However God put a full stop to his life. The Word of God which he wanted to stop, spread rapidly and thus the church grew faster and stronger.

Through signs, wonders and miracles, God not only demonstrated His power, rather made the church grow, firm and be established. ●

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A Tribute to a Faithful Servant of God

Crumbs From The Table

Rev. Dr.T. Valson Abraham

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ASHA KIRAN SCHOOL, LUDHIANA

Rev. Dr. T. Valson & Mrs. Laly Abraham, Bro. Sunny Kodumthara and Mrs. Elsie Kodumthara with other dear ones visited the slum school near Ludhiana and are overjoyed to see the work among the children and the way they are being groomed into worthy citizens of our beautiful nation.

Mrs. Laly Abraham and Mrs. Elsie Kodumthara gifted beautiful and creative art books to the children and were thrilled to see their handiwork. Friends of the ministry are always overjoyed to see the joyful children who also receive basic education and training in health and hygiene, singing, narrating poetry and storytelling besides primary school education.



FOUNDATION STONE LAYING OF THE IPC NEPALI CHURCH IN LUDHIANA

23 OCTOBER 2023



Pastor Dr. T. Valson Abraham, President of the IPC, prays and lays the Foundation Stone in Ludhiana. Also, seen in the picture are Pastor Dr. K Koshy, President of IPC Punjab State and Pastor Anuj Thomas - Pastor of the Nepali Church



Nepali congregation witnessing the foundation stone laying of their much awaited church building



Bro. Sunny Kodumthara & Mrs. Elsie Kodumthara, Oklahoma, at the Foundation Stone Laying



Mrs. Laly Abraham participates in the ground breaking



PUNJAB BIBLE COLLEGE PASTORS CONFERENCE 2023 LUDHIANA, PUNJAB



Over 200 pastors attended the IPC Pastors and Ordination Services held at the Punjab Bible College on 23rd and 24th October 2023.

General President of the India Pentecostal Church of God, Rev. Dr. T. Valson Abraham along with Pastor Dr. K. Koshy, President - IPC Punjab State and other senior pastors led the services.

