**Witnesses For the Prosecution**

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

 A man drove past a traffic camera one day, and when he noticed that it flashed, he figured it had taken his picture. This made him angry, for he *knew* he hadn’t been speeding. Figuring that maybe it was malfunctioning, he drove past it again, this time driving even slower. When it flashed *again,* he got *really* angry, so he drove it past it for a third time, this time at a snail’s pace. And when it flashed again, he concluded that it *was* malfunctioning, and went home. Three weeks later he got three traffic tickets in the mail—all for not wearing his seat belt.

 Well, as you know, policemen can’t be everywhere, so more and more towns and cities are using those automated cameras these days to witness traffic violations, so they can prosecute scofflaws in court. But if you’ve been following along with us in this study of the Book of Acts, you know that the Apostle Peter is preaching to a crowd of Jews in Acts 2 who were in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. And he has just finished *charging* them with the murder of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now as we read on, we see him telling the Jews that even though they killed the Lord, God raised Him up!

 **“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses” (Acts 2:32).**

Now you know what a *witness* is, don’t you? My dictionary says that a witness is someone who sees or hears something happen, and offers to testify to *prove* that it happened. So when Peter says that he and the 120 disciples (Acts 1:15) were “witnesses” that God raised the Lord from the dead, he meant that they had seen and heard Him after God raised Him, and so they could testify that He was still alive.

 Now I know people say that Elvis Presley is still alive. There’s even a theory that he faked his death because he helped the FBI indict some members of the Mafia, and so had to enter the Witness Protection Program. Because of that, and similar theories, there have been numerous Elvis sightings over the years. Some people even swear they see him in the background in one of the scenes from the movie *Home Alone.*

 But most of the people who say they’ve seen Elvis just claim to have seen a *glimpse* of him. And they weren’t people who knew him well when he was alive. Compare that to what Peter said later in the Book of Acts. Speaking of himself and the other disciples, he said:

 **“…we are witnesses *of all things* which He did…in the land of the Jews…whom they slew and…God raised up…and shewed Him…*to us, who did eat…with Him after He rose...”* (Acts 10:39-41).**

Peter says that the men who witnessed the resurrection of Chrit were the same men who’d witnessed “all things” that He did in Israel. Every lame man He ever healed, every blind man to whom He gave sight, and every leper He cleansed, they saw it. So they would be sure to recognize Him if they saw Him after He rose from the dead.

 And when they *did* see Him after God raised Him, it wasn’t in the drive-through down at Chik-fil-a. They sat down and had a meal with Him. Now if Elvis’s wife (who knew him well) said she saw him alive, and that he took her out for a meal at a nice restaurant, then you might believe he was still alive! And this is the reason you can trust the testimony of the witnesses to the Lord’s resurrection.

 This is the very reason the Lord *picked* those men to be His witnesses, as He told them in John 15:27:

**“…ye…shall bear witness, *because ye have been with Me from the beginning.”***

The Lord knew enough about the credibility of witnesses to know that He had to select men who knew Him well *before* He died to testify of Him after He rose from the dead. And He was wise enough to share a meal with them after His resurrection as well (Luke 24:41-43).

 But as I mentioned in our last study, Peter didn’t yet know what Paul later learned about the resurrection of Christ, something he expressed when he wrote,

**“Jesus...was delivered for our offences, *and was raised again for our justification”* (Romans 4:24,25).**

This was information that was not made known until Paul made it clear in his epistles (Rom. 3:24-26). It’s what Paul referred to as “the preaching of the cross” (I Cor. 1:18). And so while it is true that Peter preached the cross, *he didn’t preach it like Paul preached it*. Paul preached the death and resurrection of Christ *as good news,* as something to believe and be saved by believing (I Cor. 15:1-4). Peter preached the cross *as bad news,* as a mistake that the people of Israel needed to be saved by repenting of (Acts 2:38).

As we shall see, Peter *charged* the Jews with the Lord’s death (Acts 2:23), and *threatened* them with His resurrection. He said, as it were, “You killed the Lord, but God raised Him up. So He’s still alive, and now *He’s coming after you for killing Him.”* That’s why I entitled this message “Witnesses For the Prosecution.” Peter was *prosecuting* the Jews for killing the Lord, and the disciples were witnesses for the prosecution.

But remember, a witness is someone who has seen and heard something, for as we read on, we see how Peter used that to his advantage, saying of Christ,

**“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).**

 The thing that Peter’s audience could “now see and hear” were the tongues in which they saw and heard the disciples speak, evidence that they had been filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). That was something that *the Jews’ own Bible* said would happen (Joel 2:28,29). So when the disciples began to speak in tongues and prophesy as Joel predicted, even the Lord’s enemies couldn’t deny that His disciples were fulfilling the words of one of their own prophets. When that happened, suddenly *all the people of Israel* became witnesses of the Lord’s resurrection. Some of them may have even heard that the Lord had promised He would send the Spirit after He died (John 15:26), something He could not do if He were still dead and in the grave.

But as you may know, God not only raised the Lord from the dead, He “set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:20). That’s what Peter meant when he said that Christ was “by the right hand of God exalted.” The word *exalt* means *to raise high* or *elevate* someone or some thing. At least that’s what my dictionary says, and that’s also how the word is used when the prophet Isaiah quoted God as saying of Christ,

**“…My servant...shall be *exalted* and...*be very high*. As many were astonied at Thee; His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:13,14).**

That’s a description of how they beat the Lord bloody prior to His crucifixion, marring His face so as to be unrecognizable to men. It is noteworthy that this description is found in Isaiah 52, right before the well known 53rd chapter of Isaiah that describes how they crucified the Lord after beating Him. Isaiah’s point is that the people of Israel may have brought the Lord low by crucifying Him, but God elevated Him when He raised Him from the dead. And He exalted Him *even higher* when He set Him at His own right hand.

 And here again, Peter was trying to get the Jews to repent of a mistake that they’d made when they crucified Him. I mean, how would you feel if you put a man in jail, and the governor pardoned him? Do you think maybe you might start thinking you’d made a mistake in jailing him? What if the governor then made the man his lieutenant governor? You know. Set him at his own right hand? Well, however you’d feel about that, that’s how the Jews were feeling once they heard that God set Christ at His right hand.

 But at this point, Peter may have realized that the Jews might not *believe* that the one they crucified was sitting at God’s right hand. So he went on to prove it *by the Scriptures,* saying:

**“For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand” (Acts 2:34).**

Now here, it helps to remember what Peter had preached earlier in his address that day. He quoted a psalm of David, where David talked about rising from the dead before his body began to corrupt in the grave, and then pointed out that David’s body *was* corrupting in the grave (Acts 2:25-28). They could check his grave if they wanted to, but if they did, they would find that the seal on his sepulcher was still intact (v. 29). So Peter argued that David must have been talking about *Christ*, and how *His* body would rise before it saw corruption (v. 30,31).

You see, Peter knew that the Jews understood that many of David’s psalms were Messianic, and spoke about their Christ. So he went on to quote *another* psalm of David, one where David talked about sitting at the right hand of God:

**“The LORD said unto my Lord, *Sit Thou at My right hand…”* (Psalm 110:1).**

If David were still dead and in the grave, he couldn’t very well be sitting at God’s right hand in heaven, now could he? So Peter is arguing that if David was talking about the Lord Jesus when he talked about rising from the dead, he was probably talking about Him again when he talked about being seated at God’s right hand.

 And every Jew who heard Peter quote Psalm 110:1 knew what the rest of the verse said:

**“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, *until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool”* (Psalm 110:1).**

Now just in case there were any Jews who *didn’t* know the rest of the psalm, Peter went on to quote it in the next verse of our text:

**“Until I make thy foes thy footstool” (Acts 2:35).**

Now I don’t know about you, but that sounds like a threat to me! If Jesus of Nazareth was they had crucified Him, then *they* were His foes. And I’m sure this less-than-veiled threat was not lost on Peter’s hearers in Jerusalem that day. They understood the symbolism of making your foes your footstool, for they could all picture the scene when Joshua invited the captains of Israel’s army to put their feet on the necks of the enemies they had conquered (Joshua 10:24,25).

And quoting Psalm 110 was sheer genius on Peter’s part, for that psalm was dear to their hearts. You see, they looked for a messiah who would come and save them from their Gentile enemies—and that’s exactly what that psalm goes on to describe:

**“The Lord…shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. *He shall judge among the heathen*…fill the places with the dead bodies…*wound the heads over many countries”* (Psalm 110:5,6).**

And in quoting one of their favorite psalms, Peter was turning the tables on them, and trying to get them to realize that in crucifying the Lord, *they had joined their enemies,* and now the Lord was going to come back *and judge them too.* And Peter knew they would get the point, because of what *another* of their favorite psalms said:

 **“Why do *the heathen* rage, and *the people* imagine a vain thing? *The kings of the earth* have set themselves, and *the rulers* take counsel *together*, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying*, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us…*then shall He speak unto *them* in His wrath, and vex *them* in His sore displeasure…Thou shalt break *them* with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash *them* in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psalm 2:1-12).**

The “heathen” here were the Gentiles, of course, while “the people” were *the people of Israel.* This psalm predicted that the “rulers” in Israel would join “together” with the kings of the Gentiles to rebel against God and His Christ. And now the people of Israel were part of the “them” that the Lord would speak to in wrath, vex in His sore displeasure, break with a rod of iron and dash in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

 Some of Peter’s hearers may have even heard the parable the Lord told in Luke 20:9-16:

**“A...man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country…And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: *but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.* And again he sent another servant: *and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully…*And again he sent a third: *and they wounded him also, and cast him out.* Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. *So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him*. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. *And when they heard it, they said, God forbid”***

If you know your Bible, you know that the Lord was referencing Isaiah 5:1-6. The “man” represented God the Father, the “vineyard” the house of Israel (v. 7), and the servants He sent them were the Old Testament prophets. The “husbandmen” were the religious leaders in Israel, who persisted in killing the prophets God sent them, seeking spiritual fruit in Israel (Acts 7:52). And the son, of course, was God’s own Son, the Lord Jesus, whom they murdered to get His inheritance.

 Now let me ask you, why would the men who heard that parable respond by saying, “God forbid”? I mean, who could hear a story like that and say, “God forbid that the man should destroy the wicked husbandmen who murdered his son?” If you’re familiar with Matthew’s version of the Lord’s parable, you know the answer to that question, for it ended with the Lord saying,

**“He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen…And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, *they perceived that He spake of them”* ( Matthew 21:41-45).**

*That’s* why they said, “God forbid!” It wasn’t because they thought the man was wrong for wanting to avenge his son. It was because they didn’t like the idea that *they* were the ones on whom God planned to take vengeance!

 Of course, the Lord could only come back and get them if He was Israel’s messiah, so Peter went on to assure them that He was:

**“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).**

 Now here, Peter is again referencing the second psalm, as we see in Psalm 2:6, where David wrote,

**“…Yet have I set my king upon My holy hill of Zion”**

That’s how God *made Him* both Lord and Christ. He set Him at His own right hand in the *heavenly* Zion, “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22).

 But listen, the Jews knew how Psalm 2 ended, just as they knew how Psalm 110 ended. They knew David went on to advise the Lord’s enemies,

**“Be wise now therefore, *O ye kings:* be instructed, *ye judges of the earth.* Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. *Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,* and ye perish from the way, *when His wrath is kindled but a little.* Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:10-12).**

Notice that David advised the Lord’s enemies to “Kiss the Son.” Those future judges of the earth among Peter’s Jewish hearers at Pentecost that day knew that the Lord called Himself the Son of God (John 5:18). So *now* they knew they had better kiss the Son and make up with Him before it was eternally too late. They needed to do what Psalm 2 said and “put their trust in Him.”

 Now if *you* heard that the man you killed had risen from the dead, and was now sitting at God’s own right hand, just waiting for the chance to return and make His enemies his footstool, how would you respond? I’m guessing like Peter’s hearers did that day:

 **“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).**

Any time the Word of God is preached, it affects the heart. The reason for this is found in the description of the Word of God that we find in Hebrews 4:12:

**“…the word of God is…*sharper than any twoedged sword,* piercing even to the**

**dividing asunder of soul and spirit…*and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”***

Of course, sometimes the heart *doesn’t like it* when the Word of God discerns it, as we see when the apostles preached *the exact same message* to some Jews later in Acts:

**“God…raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. *Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour*…And we are his witnesses of these things…When they heard that, *they were cut to the heart,* and took counsel to slay them” (Acts 5:30-33).**

After hearing an identical message, the Jews in Acts 5 weren’t *pricked* in the heart, they were *cut* to the heart. But either way, as you can see, every time you use that Book to talk to people, you’re reaching right into their heart. No other book in the world can do that, *but God’s Book can!*

 And when men respond *in faith,* as they did in Acts 2, they always ask what these men asked: “What can we do to be saved from the wrath that God’s Book is threatening us with?” So let’s see how Peter answers them in Verse 38:

**“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).**

Peter told his hearers to “repent,” a word that means *to change your mind.* So here we have to ask what Peter was asking them to repent *of,* what he was asking them to change their mind *about?* For you see, preachers who quote Acts 2:38 *today* aren’t thinking of the same thing that Peter was thinking of. Preachers today reference that verse to tell men to repent of their lies, and their adulteries, and their thieveries, etc.

But that is *not* what Peter had in mind! He hadn’t been taking the people of Israel to task about their individual sins. He’d been telling them, “You killed the Lord because you didn’t believe He was your Christ. Now I want you to change your mind about that and believe that He *was* your Christ.” *That’s* what he was trying to get them to repent of, the murder of their messiah!

Personally, I think Peter was still quoting the Prophet Joel, like he did in the beginning of this address. See if you think so too:

**“…the Lord shall utter His voice before His army…for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also…saith the Lord, *turn ye* even to Me with all your heart, and with…mourning…and *turn* unto the Lord…Who knoweth if *He* will…repent” (Joel 2:11-14).**

Joel predicted the Lord’s coming to conquer His enemies on the Day of the Lord. But he said, as it were, “If you’ll turn, if you’ll *repent,*\*who knows, maybe *the Lord* will repent, and you won’t end up getting judged.” And that’s what Peter was telling the Jews at Pentecost.

\*The words “turn” and “repent” are frequently used synonymously in Scripture (Ex. 32:12; Jer. 4:28; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30; Hos. 11:8; Jon. 3:9; Lu. 17:4; Acts 26:20), and God frequently told people that if *they* would repent, *He* would repent as well (Jer. 18:8; 26:3; Jon. 3:10).

Of course, when God was dealing with the people of Israel, just repenting wasn’t enough to get saved. God required repentance *plus some kind of works.* And the work that He required here was water baptism.

Now I know that most Baptists today say that water baptism *wasn’t* required “for the remission of sins,” *but Peter said it was.* And the reason he said that is that the Lord had told him,

**“He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved…” (Mark 16:16).**

I’m glad that most Baptists know that you can be saved without being baptized. But rather than denying verses like Acts 2:38 that say otherwise (cf. John 1:4; I Pet. 3:21), please join me in prayer that they’ll learn to rightly divide the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15) and recognize that these verses mean what they say, they’re just not saying it to us today.

 Most Baptists *also* don’t agree with Peter when he said that if you do get baptized, you’ll “receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” You know. The gift that enabled them to speak in tongues (Acts 2:4). Most Baptists don’t believe that speaking in tongues is part of God’s program for today, so this too puts them at odds with Peter’s words at Pentecost.

 But despite these differences, our Baptist friends continue to use Acts 2:38 in their presentation of the gospel, when they could avoid all the confusion by simply recognizing who Peter was talking to that day. And to do that, they would only have to read the next verse in our text:

 **“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).**

What promise was Peter talking about? The promise of the Holy Ghost, of course! Remember,

**“Jesus...commanded...they should...wait for the promise of the Father*…the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 1:1,4,5).**

This was the same promise the Lord’s 120 disciples had received. That’s how you know they’d been baptized, by the way. The Bible never says that Peter and the other apostles were baptized with water, but we know that they were, for if they had not been baptized earlier, they wouldn’t have been filled with the Spirit at Pentecost.

But this wasn’t a promise that God made *to Gentiles,* despite all of the Gentiles today who claim that they *are* filled with the Holy Ghost in the same manner in which they were filled at Pentecost. I’m speaking of our friends in the Pentecostal camp, of course. Peter was talking to the house of Israel when he said that the promise was “to you, and your children.”

Now our Pentecostal friends say that Peter *went on* to include the Gentiles when he said that the promise of the Holy Ghost was “to all that are afar off.” And it’s true, that phrase “afar off” *can* refer to the Gentiles, as it does when Paul wrote,

**“…remember, that ye being...Gentiles in the flesh...were...strangers from the cov-enants of promise…But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were *far off* are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He...preached peace *to you which were afar off*, and to them that were nigh” (Ephesians 2:11-17).**

In this passage, the ones who were “afar off” were *Gentiles.* But you’ll *also* notice in this passage that the Gentiles were said to be strangers from the covenants of promise. That means God never promised the Holy Ghost, or anything else, to Gentiles. The “afar off” ones that Peter had in mind were *Jews.* Remember, he was talking to “Jews, devout men, *out of every nation under heaven”* (Acts 2:5). He was talking to Jews who were visiting Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, but who lived *far off* from the nation Israel in other nations.

 If you are wondering how Jews got to be so far off in those nations, much of it was due to how sinful the nation of Israel became back in Daniel’s day, something that forced God to drive them out of His land, as we read in Daniel 9:7, where the prophet spoke about

 **“…all *Israel*, that are near, *and that are far off,* through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee” (Daniel 9:7).**

 A lot of those Jews were still scattered throughout those countries and nations at Pentecost. They were the ones who were “afar off,” the ones to whom God had promised to give His Spirit. God never promised to give Him to Gentiles. When He later *did* give the Spirit to the Gentiles in Corinth, it was a sign that He was *judging* the people of Israel by taking their gift of the Spirit and giving Him to the Gentiles. But God stopped giving signs to the Jews once the Bible was complete. That means anyone who tells you that they can speak in tongues today is speaking with forked tongue!

 Now Peter had a lot more to say that day, but rather than write it all down, Luke just kind of gives us the gist of the remainder of his words:

 **“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).**

Did you notice that Peter preached “many other words” that day? I like to point this out, for sometimes Christians read the sermons that are recorded in the Bible, and ask me, “How come Peter only preached 400 words, and you preach 4,000?” I happen to know that is about how many words I preach in my messages, for I write many of them out for articles like this one!

But as you can see, Peter preached *many* other words that Luke didn’t record. When we get to Acts 20, we’ll see that the Apostle Paul preached a message “until midnight” (Acts 20:7). If you believe in being Pauline, say amen!

 But why would Peter tell the people of Israel to save themselves “from this untoward generation”? Wouldn’t you think he’d tell them to save themselves from hell and the lake of fire? And what’s that word “untoward” mean anyway?

 Well, un-toward means *not to ward.* And *to ward* is what you want to be when it comes to the things of God. That is, you want to be walking *to-ward* Him, not *away* from Him. I think Peter was referencing Deuteronomy 32:19,20, where Moses wrote about Peter’s generation, “…the Lord…said…they are a very *froward* generation…”

 So what’s the word *froward* mean? Well, did you ever hear of walking “to and fro”? Wouldn’t *froward* be *un-to-ward?* They weren’t *to-ward* God, they were fro-ward, *away* from God, Peter’s whole generation. That’s why Peter told individual Jews to save themselves from that untoward generation. For remember, the Lord said that “the blood of all the prophets…*shall be required of this generation”* (Luke 11:50,51).

 Does that sound like a generation you want to be a part of? Doesn’t that sound like a generation you should rather want to save yourself from?

 Now if you are thinking that it doesn’t seem fair that God would punish that generation for killing all the prophets that came before them, the reason the Lord said that was that in time past, God was always punishing His people for killing the prophets. But when the Lord’s generation killed *Him,* the *ultimate* prophet, the one Deuteronomy 18 said would come, that brought all the blood of all the prophets down on that generation. So individual Jews at Pentecosted needed to save themselves from that generation.

 Here it helps to remember that most Jews thought they were saved *just because they were Jews,* just because they were part of *the nation of Israel.* But the nation in our Lord’s day was an *apostate* nation, an *unbelieving* generation. And do you know what Moses went on to say about that generation?

 **“…they are a very froward generation…I will provoke them to anger *with a foolish nation…*For they are a nation void of counsel” (Deuteronomy 32:20,21,28).**

The Lord was thinking of this verse when He ended that parable by saying,

**“…he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen…Therefore say I unto you, *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,* and given to *a nation* bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matthew 21:41-43).**

Pastors and Bible teachers who read the Lord’s words here usually say that God planned to make the Jews angry “with a foolish nation” by taking their kingdom and giving it *to the Gentiles.* But the word “Gentiles” means “nations,” *plural,* not one nation. That means God didn’t take Israel’s kingdom and give it to the *nations,* He gave it to *the nation of the Lord’s followers,* as He Himself explained when He said to His followers:

**“Fear not, *little flock;* for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give *you* the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).**

As you can see, the Lord took the kingdom away from the leaders of the apostate nation, and gave it to the *believing* nation within the apostate nation. That’s why Peter later wrote to the people to whom he ministered, saying,

 **“…*ye are a chosen generation,* a royal priesthood, *an holy nation*, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (I Peter 2:9).**

 Peter’s followers constituted the *true* nation, the *chosen* generation who saved themselves from the apostate generation. That’s what the Lord meant when He said to Peter,

**“Thou art Peter, and…I will give unto thee *the keys of the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 16:18,19).**

Do you know where the Lord *got* those keys? He took them away from Israel’s religious leaders! After telling them that the blood of the prophets “shall be required of this generation,” He added,

**“…*for ye have taken away the key of knowledge:* ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered” (Luke 11:52).**

The Lord was talking about *the keys to the kingdom* here,as we can see when we compare Matthew’s version of His words:

**“…woe unto you, scribes…hypocrites! *for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men:* for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13).**

The religious leaders in Israel had the keys to the kingdom before Peter, but they not only weren’t using them to get saved, they were keeping *others* from using them to get saved! So the Lord took the keys to the kingdom away from them and gave them to Peter. After that, if you wanted to get saved, you had to get in *his* nation. Remember, in our Lord’s day, it was true that, as He Himself declared, “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). But in Peter’s day, Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled, the one in which he wrote,

**“It shall come to pass, that…in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance*...and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call”* (Joel 2:32).**

 That’s where salvation was in Peter’s day. It was still in Israel, but more specifically, it was in the remnant in Israel whom the Lord would call. Didn’t Peter just finish saying that the promise of the Holy Ghost was to “as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

 By the way, did you notice that the key to getting into the kingdom was *knowledge?* The key to salvation in *any* dispensation has always been in *knowing* the gospel, whatever gospel God’s men were preaching at that time. It’s still true today.

 In closing, you may remember that Peter got some pretty impressive results to his message at Pentecost.

 **“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).**

The disciples started that day numbering 120 (Acts 1:15), and finished the day with over 3,000. That’s an increase of 2,400%! What you’re seeing here, of course, is the kind of results that they’ll be getting in the kingdom of heaven, when the saints are *again* filled with the Holy Ghost in the same manner in which they were filled at Pentecost. As we said in our earlier studies, at Pentecost, God was giving the people of Israel a taste of the kingdom. Responses to the preaching of the gospel like that are part of what will *make* the kingdom to be heaven on earth!

 Of course, the reason we don’t see that kind of results *today* is the same reason we can’t speak in tongues today. And that is, we don’t have the filling of the Holy Ghost like they did, no matter what our Pentecostal friends say.

 And until Christians realize that what happened at Pentecost has nothing to do with anything that God is doing today, in the dispensation of grace, there is going to continue to be confusion in “the church, which is His Body” (Eph. 1:22,23). Even confusion about the very gospel of salvation.

 If you’re not saved, you need to know that you don’t have to repent of your sins to be saved. God will save you if you’ll just believe that Christ died for your sins and rose again. After that, you can repent of your sins if you want to.

 And if you are saved, you *should* want to! You should want to repent of all of your sins, in light of all that God has done for you in Christ. Amen?