

The Young Revolutionaries

To most, those living in Jesus' day were ancient old men, long, white beards flowing down over their chests, stooped, rheumy-eyed, sad. Millions think of them as ancient sages, soft-spoken "saints," standing around with hands forming steeples, and a faraway gaze in their sorrowful eyes. All this is nonsense, of course, but it is the concept projected by religious art, statuary, and false teaching. Actually, the disciples of Christ were young men, living in the "here and now," fully expecting a dramatic *overthrow of government*, and a *violent revolution* in their immediate lifetimes!

It would have been cruel to have told them. How much zeal would you and I have for the work of God—the work of witness and warning for our fellowman of impending tribulation, of the heavenly signs, and of the Day of the Lord—if we thought none of it would take place for another 2000 years?

How much enthusiasm would we put into a perceived political or social cause if we thought it would not be realized until twenty generations later? How dedicated, how committed, how determined would you be, if you thought you were working for a new world order that would not materialize until 2000 years after you were dead?

The disciples of Jesus Christ, still tingling with wonderment and astonishment over Christ's many miraculous appearances following His resurrection, asked Him a question which bears careful scrutiny and understanding.

As He stood before them, He commanded them to "wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of Me. For John truly baptized with water: but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4,5).

It is likely they didn't understand this statement any more than they had many of His enigmatic pronouncements, for they were still carnal. Willing, enthusiastic, but carnal, lacking deep, spiritual perception.

The proof of their lack of understanding follows quickly.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, 'Lord wilt Thou at *this time* restore again the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6).

Their question deserves close scrutiny. They did not ask whether He would come to *rule the world*, which was the very thing He had continually emphasized. They asked nothing about Rome, or Dacia, or Carthage, or Bithynia, or Cappodocia, or Greece. They asked nothing about India, or Britannica, or Germanica.

There was no conception in their minds of a *world-ruling Kingdom of God!*

No, their minds conceived only of an *Israelitish* kingdom, restored to its borders of greatest advancement under David and Solomon! They specified “the kingdom,” meaning the national entity of *Israel* the way it had been hundreds of years previously, with borders from modern-day Iraq to Egypt.

They asked if He would restore “the kingdom” *to Israel!*

It was *their* land, *their* lives, *their* families, and *their* immediate environment and social conditions about which they were concerned. Their question addressed only their own immediate future, as viewed from a purely nationalistic and patriotic point of view.

His answer was the kindest response He could have given them.

“And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power, But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:7,8).

Even this they did not understand fully, and would not understand it until the *power* of which Christ spoke was given to them.

Power on Pentecost

Christ promised it would happen on the Day of Pentecost.

Pentecost means “fiftieth.” It is so named because it was the only one of God’s seven annual holy days that was *counted* from one point in time to another. They were to *count* from the “morrow after the Sabbath” during the Days of Unleavened Bread a total of *seven Sabbaths*. The following day, which would have been the “morrow after the seventh Sabbath” (Leviticus 23:15,16), would be the first day of the week, or the day the pagan Romans called “Sunday,” or the day

of *solis invictus*.

Not only did Christ and His disciples observe God's weekly and annual Sabbaths, but Christ chose this specific holy day, the day formerly called the "Feast of Weeks," as the *birthday* of the Christian church.

The typology is perfect. The word *Pentecost* is derived from the *Greek* name for the day. But the original festival was called the "Feast of the Firstfruits." Because it was *counted* each year, from the morrow after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, seven full weeks (each ending with the Sabbath) plus one day, it was also called the "Feast of Weeks."

During the Days of Unleavened Bread, the high priest cut one armload of barley from a field in a harvest ceremony of thanksgiving. It was called "a sheaf of the firstfruits" (Leviticus 23: 10). He would then *wave* the sheaf toward heaven (verse 11) as an offering to God. This armload of barley was the "*first* of the firstfruits," or the very first cutting of the early spring harvest.

The wave sheaf symbolized the resurrected Christ, *risen*, but not yet ascended to heaven. Christ was resurrected on a late Sabbath afternoon.

Early on the following day, our "Sunday," He said to Mary, who was so happy to see Him alive she wanted to hug Him, "Touch me not; for I *am not yet ascended* to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17).

Later that same evening (John 20:19,20), He materialized before them, and allowed Himself to be touched. He ascended to God the Father on the first day of the week, but He had walked out of His tomb on a late Sabbath afternoon.

Christ is the *First of the firstfruits* of salvation. He is the "Captain" and the "Author" of salvation. The "firstfruits" consist of all of those called the "dead in Christ" who will come up in *the first* resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:50-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

So it was that Christ first ascended to His Father in heaven on the first day of the week following His resurrection, and then sent the Holy Spirit to His disciples exactly *seven Sabbaths and one day later, or the fiftieth day following His acceptance by God*.

It was shortly before the great events of the Day of Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks (or Firstfruits), that Christ uttered the statement you read earlier.

What Pentecost Was and Was Not

The second chapter of Acts bears very careful, studious reading. The disciples were assembled together in one place “when the Day of Pentecost was fully come” (Acts 2:1). Suddenly, without any warning, a roaring sound of a rushing, mighty wind, like that of a hurricane or tornado, *filled the room*.

This sound did not come from human throats. It was not made from moans, screeches, wails, groans, cries, yells, or singing of a group of hoarse-voiced, perspiring, gyrating people who were “calling down the Spirit” or other such nonsense derived from the minds of humans who equate God’s Spirit with human feelings and emotions.

No, it was a miraculous sound, and *it came from heaven* (Acts 2:2).

Immediately, another miracle! Flickering flames of fire descended, materializing in the room. A blazing corona of fire settled on the head of each one of the twelve! The brightly-burning flames were obviously fire, yet not a hair was singed!

The English expression “cloven tongues” in the King James Version is a terrible error. The correct English translation of the original Greek reads: “tongues of fire equally divided among them.”

The English word *tongue* means either the organ of speech or the language spoken. By *analogy*, the term *tongue of fire* is sometimes used to convey the movement of flames. “Flickering flames of fire, divided equally among them” was the *sense* of the thought being conveyed.

Then, one by one, they began to speak! They were not all speaking at once. This was not a babbling, hysterical scene of chaos: “For God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33); and, “The spirits [spiritual gifts, such as speaking in foreign languages] of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32). This was not an emotional, uncontrollable series of utterances that burst forth from the apostles. Rather, it was a rational, orderly, powerful series of orations, delivered with conviction and passion, from intelligent, thoughtful minds to intelligent,

thoughtful people!

Talk about an attention-getting phenomenon! First, the audience of perhaps a few dozen saw and heard flames of fire and a roaring wind. Then, as excited people ran into the streets to shout to others, “the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in *his own language*” (Acts 2:6).

This was perfectly intelligible speech. They heard and *understood* what was being said. Yet, there were, at a minimum, *sixteen different languages and dialects* represented in the crowd. This phenomenal miracle was both in the speaking and in the hearing. It was not gibberish, or some wild-eyed, emotional outburst of garbled sounds, tongue-bitings, and suspected Portuguese epithets, like the completely false, emotional state of mindlessness some call “tongues” today! No, those in the audience said, “We do hear them speak *in our tongues* the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11).

Suddenly, each of the twelve was given *spiritual understanding*. It was as if their minds were *opened*, and what had been muddled and mysterious was *clear*.

Peter’s remarks were heard in at least sixteen dialects. You and I can understand what he said by reading it in English. He spoke of *the risen Christ*, of His impending kingdom, in which He would sit on the throne of David (verses 29,30).

At the conclusion of his brief sermon, he commanded, “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 Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

Here, on this day, it began.

Birth of God’s New Testament Work

Now, they were beginning the *work* of God, of witness as well as

warning, which, although unknown to them, would span a period of time for the next *two thousand years!*

Even now, they had no conception of that fact. They did not know, *could* not know, as Christ said, that they would, in some cases, be murdered (Acts 12:1,2); that others would die of old age (John 21:22,23); that their bones would molder in

their graves as the centuries slowly passed.

No, even on this momentous day, since they had heard the ringing promise, “He shall so come, even as ye have seen Him go into heaven,” they believed Christ could return *at any moment!*

Certainly, they believed He would come in their lifetimes!

Paul wrote to people he knew in the Corinthian church, “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep [die; meaning *you and I, WE*, in this living generation, will not all die], but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead [they, not “us”] shall be raised incorruptible, and WE shall be changed!” (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

Though Paul came along many years after Pentecost, even he, like all the other apostles, continued to believe Christ would return to rule the world in his lifetime (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

How did it all begin?

What were the original disciples thinking when they first saw and heard Jesus Christ?

We Have Found the Messiah!

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was a disciple of John the Baptist. The brothers were firm believers in the future destiny of their country—that “Messiah” would come and restore their national greatness, kick out the oppressive religious fanatics like the Pharisees and Sadducees, overthrow the corrupt Herodian regime, and expel the Roman occupation army. They lived in the “here and now.” To you and me, from our historical perspective, they lived “then and there,” way, way back in some musty age of history. We think of “olden times,” or “Bible days.” We generally have no conception of the immediate *reality* of the lives of those young men.

The disciples of John no doubt thought he might be the “prophet” who was to come, the Messiah. They thought it was likely that John was destined to overthrow the Herodians, raise an army, overthrow the occupying forces of Rome,

and restore the kingdom.

Yet, when John was asked by representatives of the Pharisees if he, John, was "Elijah," or "that prophet," Andrew heard John say clearly, "I am not."

Demanding to know by what authority he was baptizing repentant sinners, the Pharisees were told, "I baptize with water: but there standeth One among you, Whom ye know not; He it is, Who coming after me is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (John 1:26,27).

The very next day, John saw Jesus walking toward him, and immediately knew He was the Messiah. He said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of Whom I said, After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:29-34).

Andrew was there. He heard and saw it all.

He must have been profoundly affected by John's announcement about Jesus; profoundly curious about the Man. We know nothing further of the events of that day, when John first realized that Jesus was the Messiah. But the next day, as John stood with Andrew and another disciples, Jesus walked by, and John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:35,36).

Andrew and his friend heard what John said, and immediately turned to follow Jesus. Noting they were tagging along, Jesus stopped and asked, "What are you looking for?"

Andrew said, "Master ["Teacher," or "Rabbi"], where do you live?"

Jesus told them to come and see, and so they continued along, until they came to Jesus' house. This may have been in Nazareth or Capernaum. John was baptizing either in the Jordan, where it flowed out of the Sea of Galilee, or a short distance further south. They were walking, remember, and it was about ninety miles to

Jerusalem. Peter, Andrew, and Phillip lived in Bethsaida, which was northwest of the Sea of Galilee.

Andrew, after having walked with Jesus to His home, and then spending the remainder of the day with Him, went to Bethsaida and found his brother. He said, "We have found the Messiah!" (John 1:38-41).

Peter went with Andrew, and both arrived at Jesus' house.

"And when Jesus beheld him [Simon Peter], He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas [*Kephus*], which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42).

How electrifying it must have been for these two. Andrew had clearly heard John identify Jesus as the "Lamb of God," had talked with Him for hours. Completely convinced, he went to get Peter, who Jesus obviously recognized and immediately dubbed "a stone."

From the beginning, Peter and Andrew must have been in awe of Jesus; of His personal dynamism, His assurance, His manner of speaking which cut right through to the heart of things. As the days and weeks passed, they were to see miracle after miracle. Each time, it must have reinforced their belief that Jesus would soon stage a triumphal march on Jerusalem; that He would soon move to overthrow the corrupt government of the Herodians.

Miraculous Events Were All the Proof They Needed

Obviously, Jesus knew Simon, whom He dubbed "Cephus," or "a stone." After all, Jesus had lived and worked around Nazareth, Capernaum, and the shores of the Sea of Galilee since His boyhood.

Jesus was one of at least seven brothers and sisters. His brothers were James, Joses, Simon, and Judas, and He had *at least* two sisters (Matthew 13:55-57).

The first miracle witnessed by His disciples occurred at a family occasion in Cana, a city not far from Capernaum, in Galilee. Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding and the feast.

Jewish weddings were elaborate affairs. Somehow, the “master of the feast,” or the caterer, who was responsible for the food and drink, miscalculated how many people would appear.

“And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman [or, “Lady”—a polite term, but obviously used in gentle rejoinder—not “mother”], what have I to do with thee? [or, “what am I going to do with you?”] mine hour is not yet come” (John 2:4).

Obviously, Jesus was gently chiding His mother for turning to Him for help, knowing that she was asking Him for a miracle. This tells us she was fully confident He would be able to perform it. His rejoinder was intended as a polite rebuke, knowing such an event would set tongues to wagging.

Undeterred, Mary said to the servants, “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it!” (verse 5).

Much is told to us in those words. First, it is obvious Mary had a large dimension in the proceedings. She was not a casual guest, but involved with the table fare. Second, she was over the servants. It is strongly indicated that this was a *family* wedding, either one of Jesus’ sisters, or, perhaps, one of His brothers. No other explanation is plausible.

“And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece” (John 2:6).

The English “firkin” was a quarter of a barrel. A barrel contained from thirty-one to forty-two liquid gallons. If we use an average of thirty-six gallons, then a quarter of thirty-six is nine gallons. Since the Bible says each stone waterpot contained “two or three” firkins, even if we choose the smaller amount, each stone waterpot would have contained eighteen gallons. Six times eighteen equals one hundred and eight gallons. This is the *smallest possible amount* of water contained in the stone pots!

One hundred and eight gallons indicates a very large group of people were present.

“Jesus said unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear to the governor of the

feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine [Greek: *oinos*, meaning fermented wine—see Revelation 17:2, where the identical word is used], and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now” (John 2:7-10).

As an aside, there is no question whatsoever that this was *real wine*. The Greek word admits no other meaning, as proved by the many places where *oinos* appears in the New Testament. The statement by the governor of the feast proves it was wine the guests were drinking. The practice of setting out good wine at the beginning and substituting it for poorer wine later was perhaps deceptive, but proves that only after imbibing a glass, or two or three, of good wine, would a person’s taste be dulled sufficiently that he could not discern the difference.

One must wonder what the effect was upon Jesus’ disciples, and upon the servants who saw the water miraculously turn to red wine, carried it to the governor in smaller vessels, and heard his comments. Many is the servant who may have helped himself to a small sip in wonderment.

This was a fabulous *miracle*, performed by Jesus Christ at the request of His mother and right before the startled eyes of His disciples and a large number of servants. No doubt, it was the subject of excited conversation that ultimately reached the ears of every person at the feast, and continued for weeks and months afterward.

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples *believed* on Him” (John 2:11).

A short time later, another fabulous miracle occurred.

“After this [the miracle of turning water into wine] He went down to Capernaum, He, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples: and they continued there not many days” (John 2:12).

They did not camp out in a public park, nor sleep in the streets, or ask to use a man’s stable. We pick up the account of another great miracle by turning to

Mark's account: "And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the *house*" (Mark 2:1). This expression can as easily be rendered "at home."

A large crowd gathered, filling the house, and standing jammed in the doorway. Four men appeared, carrying a friend on a stretcher, trying to approach Jesus. "And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:2-5).

The homes during Jesus' day were built, oftentimes, around an interior common room, or courtyard. The roof may have been of stone, like slate, resting on cross members. Several things are worth noting.

First, no mention is made of this house belonging to anyone else. Jesus was "in the house," or "at home." No outcry was made by anyone when dust and debris began to filter down from above, or when the first shaft of sunlight penetrated the room, indicating someone was on the roof, beginning to dismantle it.

Jesus was in charge. Probably, He saw what the men were doing, and patiently tolerated it, admiring their example of perseverance and faith, knowing the man's friends would replace the roofing materials exactly as they had found them.

This group of people could have numbered anywhere from forty or fifty to one hundred or more, and included, not only Jesus' disciples, but some of the scribes, who began reasoning among themselves, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"

"And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

"And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that *they were all amazed* [including His disciples, who saw and heard it all], and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion [or, "We never

saw anything like this before”]. And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them” (Mark 2:6-13).

Probably, Jesus left the house because the crush of the crowd was too large. Eventually, He was surrounded by *thousands* of people who had come from the ten towns of the “Decapolis,” from Capernaum, Bethsaida, and other towns, somewhere along the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, which today is called the Golan Heights.

Notice what happened next:

“And He began again to teach by the seaside: and there was gathered unto Him a great multitude, so that He entered into a ship and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.” This had the effect of a large outdoor amphitheater. Sound travels extremely well over water. With Jesus on a boat some short distance from shore, and thousands of people sitting and standing on the sharply rising shoreline, all could hear every word He said.

“And He taught them many things by parables...” (Mark 4:1,2). A number of parables followed, including the parable of the sower and the seed. Matthew’s account of His explanation of the parables is very instructive. The disciples asked, “Why speakest unto them in parables [riddles, puzzles]?”

“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given ... therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias [Isaiah], which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed: *lest* at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:10-15).

This is an astonishing statement.

Millions assume Jesus tried to convert every person He met. They believe He spoke in parables to make His meaning *plain*; that He was engaged in *evangelism*, trying to get the people *saved*! Christ said the opposite!

It was not *permitted* for the crowds to understand! He deliberately concealed the meaning of His words from them! Read it in your own Bible.

The statement had an electrifying effect on the disciples, for it showed once again that Jesus considered them to be the privileged *few*. Only *they* could understand, once they had asked Him in *private* what He meant. (Read it in Matthew 13:16-34.)

They had seen Him perform miracles. They had seen how the crowds flocked to Him. But they had also seen how He singled *them* out for special, inside knowledge and understanding.

Shortly after this event, Herod murdered John the Baptist. John's disciples buried his headless body, then came and told Jesus what had happened (Matthew 14:10-12).

"When Jesus heard of it, He departed thence [probably from Capernaum; possibly Nazareth] by ship [across the Sea of Galilee) into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude [about five thousand men, women, and children], and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick" (Matthew 14:13,14).

The primary reason this large crowd gathered was precisely for that purpose. The news had spread far and wide about Jesus' miraculous healing powers. Each event no doubt grew with the telling. We have no knowledge of how many were healed, but it may well have numbered into the hundreds.

"And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past [this is a wilderness, and it's been a long hard day]; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them hither to me. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed [prayed, asked God's blessing], and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude" (Matthew 14:15-19).

This was an astonishing miracle. The disciples must have been exclaiming among

themselves, wide-eyed with incredulity; gathering around to peer into the basket from which Jesus seemed to be taking an endless supply of bread and dried, or smoked, fish! The crowd likewise was no doubt incredulous, amazed, excited!

“And they did all eat, and were filled: and they [the disciples] took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children” (Matthew 14:20,21).

The thousands there were astounded, elated! It is doubtless the vast majority of them believed Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah!

Messiah Here and Now

The stirring prophecies of Isaiah, of Jeremiah and Ezekiel no doubt came to mind. They were living in the *here and now!* Right *here*, on these desolate, grassy slopes overlooking Galilee, they had seen the miracle of the “cornucopian basket.” They had joyously taken into their arms their crippled children, now whole of limb; their retarded, or demon-possessed, now sound of mind; their blind, now seeing; their deaf, now hearing!

Here and there, some may have quoted Isaiah: “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young ... Awake! Awake! Put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city...” (Isaiah 40:11).

Perhaps some remembered Zechariah saying, “Thus saith the Eternal of hosts, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad: and the Eternal shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem” (Zechariah 1:17).

Here and there, they began to talk, to exclaim, to excitedly compare their experiences. Perhaps a large group of leading men approached Him with their suggestions. The Bible says, “Then those men [thousands of them!], when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet [the Messiah] that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by *force, to make Him a king, He* departed again into a mountain Himself alone” (John 6:14,15).

This was nothing short of a proposal of a massive uprising, an impromptu *march*

on Jerusalem! They knew they could accumulate additional thousands of people on the way. Food and water? No problem! Didn't they now have twelve times as much left over in *scraps* than the amount with which they had begun? Couldn't Jesus produce more miraculous food at any moment?

So exuberant were they that, when Jesus demurred, they attempted to *hoist* Him on their shoulders—take him forcibly—and begin a march on the capital!

No doubt His terse instructions to the disciples helped Him disengage from the mob.

When the crowd finally dispersed, disappointed, yet not in despair, the disciples descended to the shore, got in a small ship, and headed across the Sea of Galilee to the north, toward Capernaum, where Jesus' house was. They knew He would return there eventually, when He was sure of no further pursuit.

Then came another fabulous miracle!

A stiff wind arose, whipping the winds against them, rendering their sail useless. They began rowing. "So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see *Jesus walking on the sea*, and drawing nigh unto the ship" (John 6:19).

At first, the disciples believed they were seeing a spirit, an apparition. They were terrified (Matthew 14:26). Jesus called out to them and told them not to be afraid, saying, "It is I."

Peter, always the disciple with bombast, said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid: and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship [including the ship's crew and all the disciples] came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!" (Matthew 14:27-33).

How would you and I feel, if we had experienced the same things? These men didn't just "believe," or hold to be philosophically or intellectually true that Jesus

was the Son of God. They *knew* He was! There is a great difference!

They were living in the here and now. It was *their country, their* downtrodden citizenry, *their* homes, jobs, and families. The corrupt, rotten government of their day richly deserved to be replaced with the prophesied Messiah of Scripture! The occupational Roman legions, with their thousands of brutal, illiterate conscripts from all over the empire, deserved to be expelled!

Here was the *Messiah!* Here was the very *Son of God!*

They believed He was going to set up His kingdom in the *very near future.*

But When?

Each time a major event involving the authorities or large crowds occurred, the disciples fairly tingled with anticipation.

Would it be this Passover, when thousands of pilgrims from all over the “diaspora” (the dispersed Jews) would be in Jerusalem for the holy days? Would it be on the Feast of Weeks, or the Feast of Trumpets, or the Feast of Tabernacles?

A few days before His final Passover in the flesh, Jesus and His disciples neared Jerusalem. Two events occurred which strongly encouraged his disciples; events which to them must have meant He would use this coming feast in Jerusalem as the proper time for a *coup d’etat*, and overthrow the corrupt religious and political leaders.

Matthew knew why Jesus sent some of his men ahead to find a colt that had never been ridden. He wrote, “All this was done, that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophet saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold THY KING cometh unto thee, sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass” (Matthew 21:4,5).

Matthew was there, and he remembered the event clearly when he wrote his journal about twenty-four years later.

“And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them. And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude [thousands!] spread their garments in the way: others cut down branches from the trees and strawed them in the way” (Matthew 21:6-8).

Imagine! A joyous, shouting, clapping, cheering crowd was insuring that not a single hoof of the colt could touch the ground! Several loud chants were taken up. “Hosanna to the Son of David!” The prophecies they thought were being fulfilled had to do with the reestablishment of the *Davidic kingdom*! The prophecy on every person’s lips was a prophecy of Zechariah, which said, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly [a common man—a man of the people], and riding upon an ass [as distinct from a prancing white horse], and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9).

This was it! The crowds were sure of it! This was PROPHECY BEING FULFILLED RIGHT BEFORE THEIR EYES!

This was a great *national event* taking place—the triumphant arrival in Jerusalem of the new *King* of Israel!

Gleefully, they took up the cloaks and garments upon which the colt had trodden, passed them over the heads of the people crowding the narrow, steep path up to the city, and hastened to lay them down again in front of the colt.

“Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Eternal!” they shouted. “Hosanna [praise! joy! blessing!] in the highest! And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying Who is this?” (Matthew 21:9,10).

“What is happening? Who are these people? Who is this man around which they are making such a noise?”

Matthew continued, “And the multitude said, This is Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee!” (verse 11).

The next act of Jesus confirmed, absolutely, in the minds of the vast crowd, and in the minds of His disciples, that this was the moment! This was the time for which they had prayed; had eagerly expected!

“And Jesus went into the *temple of God* [this was *exactly* where they would have expected Him to go!], and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves! And the blind and the lame came to

Him in the temple: and He healed them” (verses 12-14).

The authorities were shocked, angry. All that day Jesus healed and spoke to the crowd. No doubt, thousands pressed forward, eager to hear every word. They applauded every miracle and excitedly questioned those joyously showing off their blind who now saw, their deaf who now heard, and their maimed and injured who were made whole.

In haughty anger, representatives of the chief priests arrogantly demanded of Him, as if expecting Him to halt the joyous display, and as if saying the shouts of the crowd were blasphemous,

“Hearest Thou what these say?”

Jesus answered, “Yea: have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou has perfected praise?”

Later, Christ left the temple, left the city, and walked back to Bethany! The disciples were no doubt both elated and a little chagrined. Why had He not continued on to Herod’s palace? Why had He not taken the crowd to Pilate’s residence, or to the home of the High Priest? Why had He contented Himself with healing, speaking, and contending with the priests in the temple?

During the next several days, as reported in Matthew 22-24, Jesus continually taught in the temple, and was repeatedly confronted by angry priests. They plotted to kill Him, but “When they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitude, because they took Him for a prophet.”

It was not until Jesus told His disciples to prepare for the Passover that they must have assumed He was waiting for that great event to complete His takeover—His assumption of the throne.

Notice: “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to shew Him the buildings of the temple [being hill-country people, they were overawed by the huge columns, the size and magnificent scale of the buildings]. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:1,2).

This was it! Now, He was speaking of *violence!* Of great *destruction!*

No doubt, having seen Him throw out the moneychangers; having seen Him stride up to their tables, and overturn them, scattering the coins in all directions; having seen Him make a whip of cords, and drive the cattle out of the temple, they thought He felt the temple so soiled, so defiled, that He would *dismantle* it, replacing it with something better!

But they were still puzzled, disappointed. How could they *know* when He would do all this? How could they avoid one disappointment after another? When were they to expect they could take part in the *government*?

“And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, *when* shall these things be?”

Yes, WHEN? That was their big question, one that had gnawed at them for a long time.

“And what shall be the *sign* of Thy coming [revealing, unveiling, arriving] and of the end of the world [consummation of the age]?” (Matthew 24:3).

They had no concept of a kingdom of any greater scope than that of the days of David and Solomon, as proved by their question after His resurrection. The “consummation of the age” of which they spoke meant, to them, the *end of the despicable Herodians and Romans, the end of the hypocritical leadership of the corrupt religious leaders*. It meant the beginning of a new age, a new government, a new era for *Israel*, for Jerusalem.

Then followed His famous “Olivet” prophecy, and His enigmatic statements, “Therefore *be ye also ready*, for in such an hour as ye *think not*, the Son of Man cometh,” and “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day or the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:44; 25:13).

When Peter Tried To Kill the High Priest

Peter must have been chagrined, disappointed, frustrated, and humiliated. Jesus had begun speaking of terrible things—of being taken, killed! First, at that lengthy supper, He had said someone was going to betray Him!

“And they [all the disciples] were exceeding sorrowful [they were really emotional, outraged, indignant, shocked!], and began every one of them to say

unto Him, Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22).

In other words, they were saying, "Lord, surely You don't think I could ever do such a thing?"

After Jesus showed John it was *Judas* who would betray Him, two things happened to Peter which must have thrown him into inner turmoil. First, Jesus reacted to a "strife among them, which among them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24). This was at the "Last Supper." Not yet converted, but *carnal*, these young men failed to truly understand the great heaviness under which Jesus was laboring. They had not yet understood His enigmatic statements about His impending betrayal, death, and resurrection.

Then, after telling them that true greatness is *service*, He said, Ye are they which have continued with Me in my temptations [trials] and I appoint unto you a *kingdom*, as My Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on *thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:23-30).

There! He had said it! They were to be elevated to the rank of *kings*; to inherit, each one of them, their own *thrones*. They must have been truly elated, excited!

But then Peter was shocked and ashamed, for Jesus turned to him and said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desire to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Peter's ears must have been burning. He immediately made a protestation of great loyalty! He responded, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death!" (Luke 22:31-33).

This response must be understood in the light of all that had taken place so far. Peter didn't really think this would end in prison and death. Had not Jesus just said they would inherit *thrones*? His statement was a bold, perhaps exaggerated one.

Then came a terrible experience for Peter, in front of the others: Jesus said to him, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day [it was deep in the nighttime], before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me."

One can only guess at the humiliation and shock Peter felt.

Moments later, he tried to save the day. Jesus was saying that the time was here, now, when “he that hath a purse, let him take it [metal coins], and likewise his scrip [paper money]: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning Me have an end.” (Luke 22:36,37; see also Isaiah 53:12).

He was plainly saying the time is here, *now!* He was telling His disciples to *purchase weapons!*

They didn't understand that He was referring to Isaiah's prophecy that Christ would be “reckoned among the transgressors,” or called a “common criminal” by the Jews and Romans.

Peter reached for his sword. Another disciple reached for his. Apparently, only two of them were armed. “And they said, Lord, behold, here are *two swords*. And He said unto them, It is enough” (Luke 22:38). They must have been puzzled over Him saying only *two* were enough! Yet, perhaps they thought His miraculous power would combine with only two swords?

Then came His agony in the garden, His three long prayers, and their sleepiness.

This was followed by the arrival of a large, armed gang, led by Judas, who came with some of the priests, a “multitude” of them, with armed temple guards.

Judas kissed Jesus to identify Him to those who followed, and “When they which were about Him [His disciples] saw what would follow [they could read the vicious mood of the mob], they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?”

Before Jesus had a chance to answer, Peter whipped out his sword, and tried to kill Malcom, a servant of the high priest, who was standing closest to Jesus! He slashed at Malcom's head! Malcom dodged, and the glittering sword glanced off his head slicing his ear neatly off (Luke 22:47-50).

Peter had to *show* Jesus his loyalty! No way he would betray Him! Had not he just told Him he, Peter, would go to jail with Him; die with Him, if necessary? Then, he had been hugely embarrassed when Jesus said Peter would *deny he even knew Jesus!*

Here was a chance to vindicate himself—to *start the revolution!* Had not Jesus said things had come to “an end,” and told them to *purchase weapons?*

But, shockingly, Peter was sharply rebuked by Jesus, who told him to *put up his sword*. He said, “All they that take [up] the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matthew 26:52-54).

Peter’s final humiliation was too great to bear. He faded into the background, and eventually followed the noisy mob at a great distance, safe in the darkness (Matthew 26:58).

Peter’s thoughts must have been bitter. Each time, back there at the feeding of the four thousand, and the five thousand; at Galilee, when he had walked on water; at Lazarus’ tomb, when Jesus had raised the dead; at Jerusalem, when thousands had not let the colt’s hoof so much as touch the road, and when they cheered, “Jerusalem, behold your King!” Each time, like when Jesus had cleaned out the temple, Peter thought, “This is it!” This is the beginning of the revolution!

But he had been rebuffed. He seethed with shame, anger, disbelief, resentment. Later that morning, he *did* deny he even knew Jesus three times! When he heard the cock crowing, he went out and wept bitterly.

But his tears turned to joy when, only three nights and three days later, Mary Magdalene and Mary, Jesus’ mother, came running to tell the disciples Jesus was alive!

Then followed His many miraculous appearances!

Peter watched as Jesus *materialized* in front of their startled eyes; commanded “doubting Thomas” to put his hand into Jesus’ side and into His wrists, where the gaping wounds bespoke His agonizing death.

Then came Peter’s final encounter with Jesus before the day of His ascension into heaven. Let me tell you about it from the final pages of my novelization of Peter’s three and one half years with Jesus, called *Peter’s Story* (no longer in print):

Excerpts From Peter's Story

With the men in place and the nets readied, they left the shore that late afternoon, intending to fish all night if need be, for the family needed the revenue from a good catch.

As the faint rays of early light painted the distant shore, they were working close to the north beach, casting and hauling again and again, tired from the night's work, and they hadn't caught a single fish.

With the growing light they saw a man standing on the beach.

The slightest sounds carried an incredible distance in this early dawn, with the sea as smooth as glass, no thermals yet disturbing its surface.

"Children, have you anything to eat?" the man called out to them.

"No," several of them called back, supposing it was an early morning purchaser trying to buy fish, which was not uncommon.

"Then cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some," he said.

Puzzled, they wondered if the man had seen any fish rise, feeding. They were casting on the left side, away from the shore. Could he possibly have seen some fish feeding from that distance? They gathered in the net and cast it out the right side.

Peter ran aft, passing Andrew, who ducked under him to crisscross their lines and close the mouth of the net, and then four of them hauled away on the lines. They were using a cast net with its small floats and weights, and it took dexterity and skill to close it at the right time. As they began to haul the net, they saw the flash and dull, silvery sheen of many struggling fish! The net was sluggish and incredibly heavy, and it took all their strength to haul it close to the boat. And there, struggling, shimmering, was a huge *school of* fish! The fish were large, larger than they were accustomed to catching, and the sodden weight of the mass of fish was too much for them to haul across the thwart and into the boat.

John was peering intently at the man on the shore, following their struggles, and Peter looked over at him, giving his line to Andrew.

“Peter, it’s the Lord!” John said.

Peter gasped and, turning for his light, inner clothing (for he had been fishing naked, not wanting to ruin his clothes), he quickly put them on, cinched up the cord about his waist and, running along the boat, hit the water in a flat dive and began rapidly swimming toward shore.

The others grabbed the painter and hauled the little dinghy close to the larger boat and, snubbing the net lines around the cleats, piled into the dinghy and began to row ashore. The whole process took only minutes, but Peter was already only a distant splashing dot in the water, swimming with powerful strokes toward the land.

Peter felt weeds scrape his feet, and then sand. Gaining his feet, he hurled himself through the shallows, splashing out onto the beach, his brown beard dripping water and his feet becoming encrusted with the sand and small pebbles of the shore, running wetly toward the Man John had said was the Lord!

It was He!

There were livid marks there, on the face, and all about the scalp and cheeks, and the livid hues of deep wounds could still be seen on the hands. He was looking steadily at Peter with an enigmatic smile; Peter was trying to find words to say, choking with shock, wonder, surprise. His mind reeled with the miraculous fact that this really was Jesus—Jesus Christ of Nazareth! He had appeared before, several times, and here He was again, clear up here in Galilee! As Peter was about to speak, he heard the others scraping the keel of the dinghy onto the pebbly beach and the splashing and thump of their oars as they ran it ashore.

Peter followed the Lord’s glance and saw that they had been unable to bring the net aboard the dinghy, preferring to tow it along behind them, for it was so heavy. Jesus gestured toward them, and Peter ran to help. It took all of them to drag the net ashore, where the fish were slithering about, flopping and struggling, and making the net move like some living thing.

Hauling the boat even further, they opened the net, spilling out the fish and heaving them into the boat, counting as they did. Seventy-eight, seventy-nine, went the count, until they had counted one hundred and fifty-three! All of them large, the greatest catch Peter could ever remember! Why, salted, smoked or sold

fresh, this would prove a real windfall to their families! Any one of those fish would make a good meal for two people!

Strangely, Peter noticed that Jesus already had a fire going, a grill laid out over coals resting on smooth rocks, and there was a fish already broiling over the coals, and bread! Where did it come from? Peter was afraid to ask, moving as if in a dream, wondering, and with scalp tingling, his pulse pounding.

Peter and Andrew deftly slit open and cleaned three of the largest fish, and before long they were sizzling pleasantly over the fire, the odor of hot, fresh bread mingling with the smoke, making Peter's mouth water. Their conversation was strained, perfunctory. The weather, the boat, the lake, the catch—many exclamations about the size and number of the fish—yet none of the disciples dared ask directly, "Lord, is it really You?" even though every one of them wanted to.

Jesus was tending the fire and turning the fish.

In due time He brought bread to the others, where they were seated about on the beach near some large rocks and logs, and said, "Come, break your fast."

They ate in silence, casting furtive glances toward Jesus now and again, watching Him eat and staring at the livid wounds.

As they were gathering up the scraps and throwing them into the fire, stirring it up to burn the leavings, Peter was stunned when Jesus straightened, looked right at him and asked, "Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jona, do you like Me more than these others?"

"Yes Lord. You know I like You," Peter said, hugely embarrassed.

"Simon, son of Jona, do you love Me?" Jesus asked the second time, using a stronger Greek word that meant more than "like," but which meant deep love.

Now Peter thought he knew what was coming. Here they were, standing about over a fire! The last time he had been standing over a fire and had seen Jesus was when they were buffeting Him, slapping Him around, spitting on Him and cursing Him, and while he, Peter, had cursed soundly, denied Him to that chambermaid.

Three times he had repeated that denial.

Now Jesus was asking whether he, Peter, “loved” Him.

Of course he loved Him. But it embarrassed him to think such terms, though it seemed to come easy to John.

Now here he was, staring at Jesus over a fire, and Jesus had said, twice, “Then *feed My sheep.*”

Peter knew He meant those who were following along with them, the other disciples, and the mysterious “other sheep” of whom Jesus had spoken so long ago.

Peter’s scalp prickled with apprehension, and he dug his toes in the sand, looking down, as the inexorable third question came.

“Simon Peter, do you deeply love Me?” Jesus asked.

“Lord, You know that I do love You,” Peter answered again.

“Then *feed My sheep!* Peter, when you were young,” Jesus continued in a sober tone, “you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished. But when you are old you will have to stretch forth your hands and another will dress you and take you where you wish they wouldn’t. *Follow Me.*”

“And what shall this one do?” Peter asked, thinking about John, who had leaned on Jesus’ breast at that last supper together.

“If I decide that he remain until I come, what is that to you? *You follow Me.*”

Peter raised his big head, feeling the morning breeze gently moving his beard and causing Jesus’ robe to flap slightly against His legs, with their livid, purpled scars. He looked at the disfigured face, remembering. He saw the jagged wounds in the hands and feet, and looked at the deep scars across the nose and eyes that made Him look differently, almost like an older, wasted man who would be a gardener or a graveskeeper.

He seemed to hear the dull smacking sound of that cutting whip that lashed at Jesus as he had stayed outside, by that fire. He remembered bitterly his denials of Jesus and how he had wept afterward.

He gazed at this Jesus—this Christ, this Man who was God—who had been

scourged, crucified and killed, and who had walked out of a tomb through solid stone!

He thought back to the time when he had seen Him fall under the weight of that big stake, and how Peter had raged within himself when he saw the Roman soldier reverse his spear and jam it up into this same Jesus' side.

And there was the very wound, visible now and then as the freshening breeze opened Jesus' garment a little.

He remembered Jesus' blunt, work-roughened hands touching a little child's sightless eyes, and the sound of His voice when He prayed. He remembered the tone of command at Lazarus' tomb, and the way He had wept at Mary's and Martha's disbelief. He thought back to the vision on Hermon, and the times up on the Sidonian seacoast, and at Sychem, and over in the Decapolis and down in Judea.

It all came flooding back now, the whole three and a half tumultuous, triumphant, disappointing, exciting, frustrating years. Jesus asleep, and arising out of His robes to go away and pray. The sound of His voice singing around their camps, and how the others would fall silent, enraptured to hear His strong baritone singing David's great psalms and the songs of the common folk; how Peter would see tears glistening in the eyes around the fire as He sang of their people, their families and their Galilee.

He thought of the times when He had turned stormy at the disciples for suggesting some mischief, like calling down fire on the Samaritans, or at Peter for grabbing Him and shaking Him for saying He would be arrested and taken; the way He had walked in and taken Peter's mother-in-law's hand when she was sick with a fever, and how the fever had left her immediately, and she got up to help Beth with the meal. How He had been so preoccupied and had tried so desperately to communicate what He must have been feeling on that last supper they had together just before His arrest, wanting them to understand, to share.

Peter looked at Jesus, remembering.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the very Son of the living God, was standing here before him, standing on the sands of the sea where it had all begun, where He had come walking up and told Peter, "Follow Me, and I'll make you a fisher of *men!*"

And to think I can't even catch a fish without Him! Peter thought ruefully, remembering the whole night's hard work and Jesus telling him where to throw the net.

He understood the big catch now, understood he couldn't do anything without Jesus standing right there to guide him, it seemed.

Jesus had said, "*You follow Me.*"

Peter lifted his eyes to the shimmering sea, the pale shore lost in the distance, to the hills of Galilee. He smelled the morning breeze and looked at the little clouds forming, marching slowly across the sky. He knew now that the road would be long and tough.

He knew now that Jesus wanted him to go back down there to Jerusalem and wait for a great miracle from on high. He knew now, without the remotest shadow of a doubt, that he would catch those men, that he would feed those sheep.

He found his vision swimming. Jesus stood waiting, a faint smile, a knowing look of compassion on His cruelly marked face.

He stood like a proud warrior, wearing His scars of battle like medals, like honors. He was Jesus Christ. Jesus of Nazareth, the Jesus who was the very Son of the living God, and He was telling Peter to feed His sheep, to follow Him wherever He would go and whatever He would do.

Peter looked down, and the tears splashed over his beard.

He raised his big head, brushing a hand across his eyes and feeling the breeze in his hair and his clothing, looked at Jesus across the small fire. He would do it. He would go. He would feed those sheep.

"I'll follow You, Lord," he said, his voice breaking.

With that he turned, unfastened his belt and took his Roman sword from his waist. He took it by the haft and, striding to the water's edge, hurled it as far as he could. The sun sent winking lights from its sharply honed blade as it spun around and around and splashed into the water.

Peter tossed the horsehide scabbard onto the fire.

He walked to Jesus, gently put an arm around His shoulders and said, "I'll follow You, Lord, wherever You go."

The two of them turned and walked slowly down the beach together. The others stood silent and watched.

Suddenly, Peter was walking *alone!*

He turned, came back to the fire and said gruffly, "Let's go home and pack. We're going back to Jerusalem."

Finally, They Knew

It was in Jerusalem, just before Pentecost, that Peter and the others saw Jesus assumed up into the clouds, taken out of their sight.

They had asked, "Lord, wilt Thou *AT THIS TIME* [finally! at last!] restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

But once again, they were told there was more preparatory work to do. They were ordered, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me [about Me, for Me, on My behalf] both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the *uttermost part of the earth.*"

It was not until he was of great age, and knew he would soon be arrested and martyred, that Peter ever came to accept the fact that Jesus Christ would not return in *his lifetime*. He wrote, "I think it is fitting, as long as I am in this tabernacle [the temporary tabernacle of his fleshly body], to stir you up by putting you in remembrance: Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me" (2 Peter 1:13,14).

This lengthy statement led to Peter speaking about how deceivers and false prophets would scoff, and say, "Everything goes in cycles—everything continues just as it always was" (2 Peter 3:4) and to counter with, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).

Finally, Peter knew.

Finally, He knew Christ would not come in his immediate lifetime. But he knew

something else. He knew that, so far as Peter's conscious thought was concerned; so far as the *new, hidden man of the spirit* was concerned; so far as the "new creature in Christ" that had been formed within Peter's earthly tabernacle was concerned, the Kingdom of God was but a blinking of an eyelash, a "twinkling of an eye" away. He knew the Kingdom of God, with Jesus Christ sitting triumphantly upon His throne, *ruling the world* WOULD COME in Peter's *conscious lifetime!* (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

Peter, James, Andrew, John, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, Philip, "little James"—these young men did not exist as stooped, wizened old men with white beards. No, they were *the young revolutionaries*, who believed Jesus Christ would establish His righteous, fair, merciful, bountiful, peaceful GOVERNMENT in their immediate lifetimes!

They couldn't know how long it would be, for it would have been cruel to have told them.

But you and I, believe it or not, are *living in the time* THEY thought was theirs! You and I, believe it or not, *are* living in the age when *JESUS CHRIST IS GOING TO RETURN IN THE LIFETIME OF THISGENERATION!*

Will it be before the turn of the century? Just afterward? Prior to 2009 or 2014? We cannot know the day, or the hour, but Christ's promises, and His prophecies, tell us the time is near.

WATCH YE THEREFORE, for you know not in what hour the Lord will come!

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