

The Great Plan of Happiness  
AND  
**THE COVENANT**

THREADED THROUGH NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

*PART 2: Ministry of the Apostles*



KATHERINE HENDRICKS

*which ye now see and hear... Therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*  
[Acts 2:32-33,36]

**HOW DOES LEARNING THAT EVEN THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN PERSECUTING JESUS COULD REPENT AND BE FORGIVEN HELP ME UNDERSTAND GOD’S GREAT COVENANT LOVE?**

This first missionary sermon by the apostles since Jesus departed was accompanied by a great portion of the Holy Spirit. The people were “*pricked in their heart*” and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “*...Men and brethren, what shall we do?*” [Acts 2:37] Peter then declared unto them the **covenant** path or how to be saved:

*“...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. 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... Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”*  
[Acts 2:38-40]

In this crowd were probably some of the earnest followers of Jesus as well as those who had opposed Him and even participated in seeking His crucifixion. They all learned that the death of Jesus Christ was part of God’s **covenant** plan and that they could all be forgiven of their sins if they repented. The response was incredible! About three thousand souls gladly received the new **covenant** gospel and were baptized that same day.



Day of Pentecost, by Sidney King,  
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*“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your father’s did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the Law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”*

[Acts 7:51-53]

These wicked leaders were so angry that they sought his life, as they did the life of Jesus. Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and said, *“...Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.”* They cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears from hearing him and ran upon him all at once. They cast him out of the city and stoned him to death. At the last, Stephen called out, *“...Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”* Then, Stephen knelt and with forgiveness in his heart, cried out, *“...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”* [Acts 7:56,59-60]



*I See the Son of Man Standing on the Right Hand of God,*  
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**HOW CAN STEPHEN'S EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS, EVEN AS HE WAS BEING STONED TO DEATH, INCREASE MY DESIRE TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO OFFEND ME?**

## What can I learn about Covenant from *"Stephen—Martyr for Christ"*?

- 1) Stephen, being filled with the Spirit and a firm testimony, was able to perform great wonders and miracles. From this, I learn that, as I get better at hearing the promptings of the Holy Ghost all things are possible
- 2) Even as Stephen was being stoned to death, he saw and was comforted by the Lord Jesus Christ. From this, I learn that, no matter what, as I perform my **covenant** last days mission, I will not be abandoned by Him whom I serve.

## *Ministry Extended to Samaria and Beyond*

*The new **covenant** gospel of Jesus Christ went forth with great power. Those who were introduced to it in Jerusalem soon carried the message wherever they went. Persecution also caused local members of the Church of Jesus Christ to be scattered, thus taking the new **covenant** gospel with them to the Gentiles.*



*Persecution of the First Christians and They Spread Out,*  
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The thousands of converts caused a great stir in Jerusalem. The same wicked leaders who put Jesus to death did everything in their power to put a stop to this fast-growing Church. There was great persecution against the Church of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. There was a young man named Saul who participated in the death of Stephen and in the persecution of the saints with great zeal. “As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” [Acts 8:3] Saul later admitted,



Cornelius Greets Peter,  
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*preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:”*

*“Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” [Acts 10:34-43]*

The audience was intrigued by Paul's words and asked that he preach again next Sabbath. Almost the entire city came out the next Sabbath to hear the word of God preached, including many gentiles. Many were converted to the Church of Jesus Christ and *"the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region."* [Acts 13:49]

Opposition followed right on their heels. The Jewish leaders were so angry that they stirred up the chief men and women of the city and accused Paul of blasphemy. They persecuted the missionaries and cast them out of their coasts. Paul and his company shook off the dust of their feet against them and left. They came to Iconium, a city of antiquity, about eighty miles east. They didn't let their challenges stop them. The scriptures say, *"And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost."* [Acts 13:52]



*Paul and Barnabas Told About Jesus,*  
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# The Great Jerusalem Council

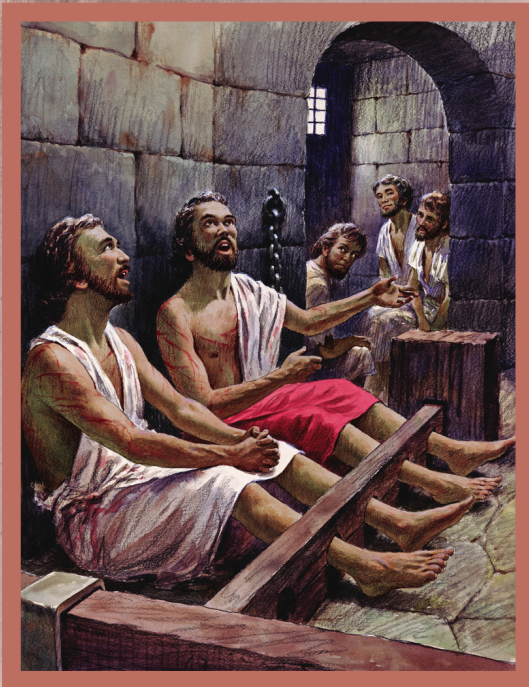
*Details of the new **covenant** gospel of Jesus Christ were revealed piece by piece to His followers and new converts as they were prepared to receive it. While all members of the Church of Jesus Christ had to accept new doctrine, many had to give up old doctrines they held dear. This created opposition that required a great council in Jerusalem to solve. This would change the course of the Church forever!*



*Paul and Barnabas Preached,*  
© by Lifeway Collection, GoodSalt.com

For a long time after Barnabas and Paul returned from their mission, they bore witness that the new **covenant** gospel of Jesus Christ was for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. In fact, they taught without apology that Gentiles could receive the gospel and become members of the Church of Jesus Christ without becoming Jews or obeying the Law of Moses. Both Jews and Gentiles in Antioch enjoyed free fellowship without argument. That peace was about to be disrupted.

Certain men called Judaizers traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch to set the Church straight. Their intentions were most likely well-meaning. They honestly believed that Barnabas and Paul were leading the Church astray. These men taught the



Paul and Silas in Prison,  
© by Providence Collection, GoodSalt.com

The magistrates rent their clothes and commanded that Paul and Silas be sorely beaten and put in prison. This was an illegal procedure, especially against Roman citizens, which Paul and Silas were. They “*laid many stripes upon them*” and “*cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.*” [Acts 16:23] The jailor put them into the inner prison and put their feet in stocks. Wounded, bleeding and humiliated, Paul and Silas suffered in silence until midnight.

Courageous men that they were, Paul and Silas gathered strength. They prayed and sang praises unto God. All the prisoners heard them and so did their God. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake. The foundations of the prison shook, all the doors were opened

and every prisoner’s bands were loosed. The Lord intervened like He did for Peter. When the jailor awoke and saw the doors open and the bands loosed, he presumed that all the prisoners had fled. Knowing his life was in danger, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

Paul cried out to him in a loud voice, saying, “*Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*” [Acts 16:28] The jailor called for a light, came in trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, saying, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” They said to him, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*” [Acts 16:30-31] They then taught him the new **covenant** gospel of Jesus Christ. He believed and rejoiced. They baptized the jailor and all his household into the Church of Jesus Christ. This jailor brought Paul and Silas into his own house and washed their wounds and fed them.



The Jailor Who Was Saved,  
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# Paul Began His Third Mission

Paul's third missionary journey was the longest in duration and distance. He traveled over 3,500 miles and was gone for almost 4 years. Of course, he re-visited and strengthened congregations of the Church of Jesus Christ that he had established on prior missions. He also established additional branches of the Church in new areas. Paul was a diligent servant of Jesus Christ and became a great writer and preacher. His influence grew tremendously. One of his most important tasks was to collect more donations for the poor to take back to Jerusalem.



Map of Paul's Third Missionary Journey, by Kristina Manscill, used with permission

## *Paul Wrote to the Colossians*

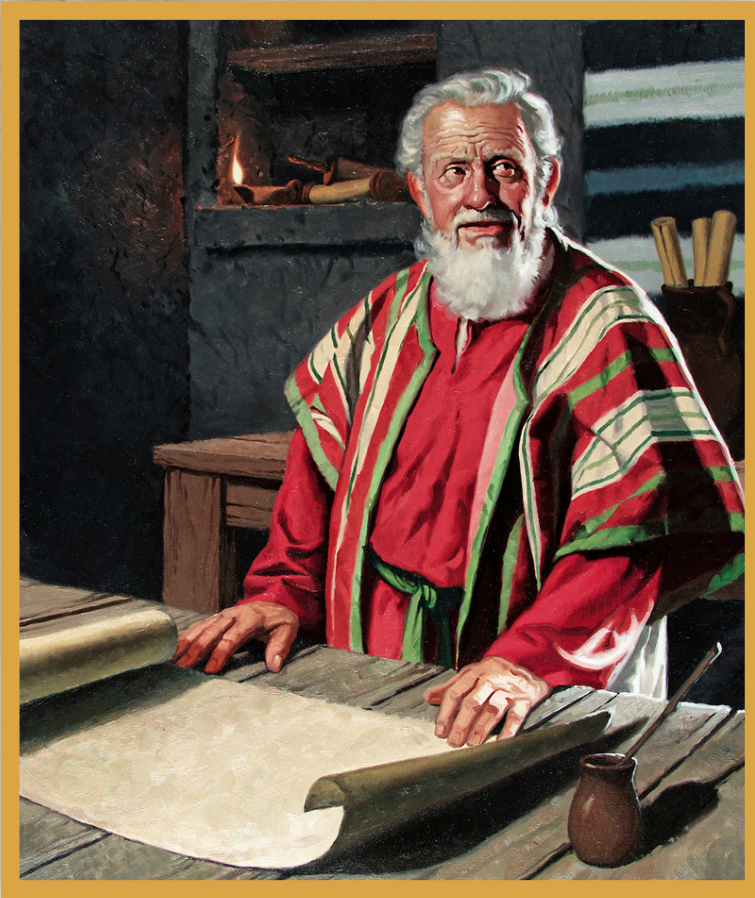
*Colossae was a city located in southwest Phrygia in Asia. Paul may never have visited there. A branch of the Church of Jesus Christ was most likely established in Colossae by one of Paul's converts named Epaphras and a good friend of Paul's named Philemon. Most of the members were probably converts from paganism. Epaphras was disturbed by certain false doctrines and philosophies he witnessed creeping into the Church. He visited Paul in Rome to give a report. This caused Paul to write this epistle to the Colossians. Paul also sent greetings to members in other areas close by. The letters to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon were probably all sent together with Tychicus and Onesimus.*

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Colossae was an ancient city in the Roman Province of Asia (modern-day Turkey). It was about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. Before Paul's time, Colossae was on the great highway of trade between the East and West of the ancient world but had since declined and become a small town.



Colossae-road Trade Route that ran Between Laodicea and Hierapolis,  
Shutterstock image



God Speaks to Peter,  
© by Lifeway Collection, GoodSalt.com

Peter reminded the Saints that they were to *“give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* [2 Peter 1:10-11]

Peter prepared them for his future death, saying, *“Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”* [2 Peter 1:14-15]

Peter reminded the Saints what they already knew. He said, *“we have not followed cunningly devised fables... but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”* They had heard the voice from heaven declare, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* Peter wrote: *“We have also a more sure word of prophecy;<sup>65</sup> whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, unto the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”* [2 Peter 1:16-17,19]

Peter showed them how false teachers had been a problem in ancient Israel as well as in the current Church of Jesus Christ. Then, he said,

*“there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord... And many shall follow their pernicious ways... And through covetousness*



*Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem,*  
by Francesco Hayez, via Wikimedia Commons

command of the Roman legions in Jerusalem passed to his son, Titus, who also later became the next Roman emperor.

In AD 70, about forty years from the time Jesus prophesied it, Jerusalem was thronged with many people who had come to celebrate Passover. Sadly, a good number of visitors became trapped in the city and died in the war. After months of intense fighting between the Romans and Jewish rebels, the rebels took refuge within the walls of Jerusalem. Titus began his siege by the Jaffa Gate and then breached the Second Wall, leaving the Zealots to defend the temple. There were several battles with losses on both sides. Titus used battering rams and had a wall built around the city to starve them out. Those who attempted to flee were captured and crucified. No pity was shown to women, children or the elderly.

Zealot forces fled to the inner courts of the temple for defense. They began to fight amongst themselves, splitting into factions. They even destroyed the food supplies

John took the book and ate it up, which is symbolic of his performing his **covenant** restoration mission to help gather the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. It was sweet as honey in his mouth, but, as soon as he had eaten it, it was bitter in his belly, symbolizing that his mission to gather Israel would be both joyous and painful. John was translated and would live through all these events he was shown. He was shown his own **covenant** mission in the last days. The angel said to John, *“Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”* [Revelation 10:11]



The Two Witnesses,  
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The vision of Revelation now turned to the land of Jerusalem. John saw what would happen in the holy city during events of the last days. John was taken to the temple in Jerusalem and given a reed like unto a rod. The angel stood, saying,

*“Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days (3 ½ years), clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.”*

*“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that*



Woman of Revelation Twelve - God's Church,  
© by Justinen Creative, GoodSalt.com

John saw a woman (symbolic of the Church of God) *“clothed with the sun”* and the *“moon under her feet.”* There was a *“crown of twelve stars”* on her head. The woman was *“with child”* and cried, *“travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”* She *“brought forth a man child”* who was to *“rule all nations with a rod of iron,”* and *“her child was caught up unto God and His throne.”* [JST, Revelation 12:1-2,5] The woman symbolized the Church, the man child symbolized the Kingdom of God on earth and the rod of iron may have symbolized the priesthood.

Another sign in heaven appeared. A great *“red dragon,”*—symbolic of Lucifer— with *“seven heads and ten horns”* and *“seven crowns,”* one on each head. The dragon’s *“tail”* drew the *“third part of the stars of heaven”* and *“cast them to the earth.”* The dragon stood before the woman, which was delivered, ready to *“devour her child after it was born.”* The woman *“fled into the wilderness”* where God had prepared a place for her. She would be fed there *“a thousand two hundred and threescore years”* (or 1,260 years). [JST, Revelation 12:3-4,6]

The Joseph Smith Translation changed the amount of time in that verse from days to years. That is the approximate amount of time from when the gospel was



The Great Last Battle,  
© by Lars Justinen, GoodSalt.com

In modern revelation, the Lord told Joseph Smith that Adam, who is Michael the archangel, would play an important role in this final battle against Satan by gathering together the armies of heaven.

*“And then cometh the battle of the great God; and the devil and his armies shall be cast away into their own place, that they shall not have power over the saints any more at all. For Michael shall fight their battles, and shall overcome him who seeketh the throne of Him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb.”*  
[D&C 88:114-115]

**HOW IMPORTANT ARE WORLDLY RICHES, WEALTH AND POWER  
IF THEY DISPEAR IN A MOMENT?**

With this final cleansing, the earth would be prepared to receive its celestial glory. The final judgment is part of God’s **covenant** plan. John saw that all of Father’s children who had not already done so would stand before God to be judged. The spirit world, a temporary home, will be empty of its inhabitants. It has served its purpose. John saw the great “*white throne*” of God.

Covenant is an incredible gift that Heavenly Father offers to keep us in relationship with Him so that He can bless us with all He has! A thread of Covenant is woven from the Pre-Existence through all this earth's history and throughout all Eternity!

The mortal ministry of our Savior Jesus Christ is at the very center of the Covenant. The New Testament is the New Covenant. He descended to this earth to fulfill His pre-mortal promise to His Father and to all of us! He fulfilled the Old Covenant and became the Mediator of the New and Everlasting Covenant. His mortal story, and the story of His foreordained apostles, is even more compelling when viewed through a Covenant lense. We witness how He organized His Church, how his apostles overcame difficult obstacles through the power of the Holy Ghost and see the continuity in the Restored Gospel today. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life!

The Great Plan of Happiness and The Covenant is designed for a Latter-Day Saint audience from a Restored Gospel perspective. It is created for the rising generation so they can understand who they are, what they are here to do and what blessings are available to them. With our Covenant consciousness raised, may we come to know our all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful Covenant God like never before and become Children of the Covenant.

