

**SEVEN YEAR WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year Four  
Lessons 40-52**

**Fourth Quarter  
John 21 – Acts 9**

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# FOREWORD

"Where the Word of God has not gone the Spirit of God does not make Christians, for it is through the Word of God that the Spirit works in converting men."

---James D. Bales, "Soils and Seeds of Sectarianism"-

The Word of God is vital with the breath of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus likened it to seed that has within it the spark of life. The New Testament makes it clear that men are saved through the proclamation of the Word. Acts actually points this out in our study this quarter.

When the "seed" is sown in the good soil of the heart there is germination which culminates in fruit bearing. By the seed that is sown the fruit shall be known. Traditions of men will produce denominations. The Word of God alone will produce Christians only.

The spreading of the precious Word of God to the uttermost parts of the earth so that men might hear and obey the Gospel is the sole aim of the **WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE!**

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 40 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 40

Page 1

John 21

Memory Verses: John 21:16

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Memory Verse:

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:16).

**THE EPILOGUE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

Five of the most important chapters in the entire Bible we consider are Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24 and John 20, and John 21. They tell of the most important event in human history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead -- capstone of the whole Bible.

"Go . . . into Galilee" (Mark 16:7)

Jesus instructed His disciples to go to Galilee (Matt. 28:7, 10; Mark 16:7), to await further instruction. He had appointed a certain mountain (Matt. 28:16), and probably the time. Robertson says John 21 is "Not the appearance in Galilee pre-arranged by Jesus."

**I. Jesus Appears to Seven at the Lake of Tiberias (John 21:1-14)**

"After these things Jesus showed himself . . ." (John 21:1): Jesus was seen ten times during the forty days (Acts 1:3) from the resurrection until the ascension. The order of the appearances of our risen Lord to: 1. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9), 2. Other women (Matt. 28:9), 3. Two on the way to Emmaus (Mark 16:12, 13), 4. Peter (Luke 24:34; I Cor. 15:5), 5. The ten apostles on Sunday night (John 20:125), 6. The eleven -- one week after the resurrection (John 20:1G-31), 7. The seven-Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-25), 8. The eleven and "above 500" at a mountain in Galilee (Matt. 28:16, 17; I Cor. 15:6), 9. James (Jerusalem, I Cor. 15:7); 10. The eleven in Jerusalem (Acts 1:3-8), 11. Paul -- after the ascension (I Cor. 15:8).

In this seventh appearance of our Lord He showed, shined forth, or revealed Himself at the Sea of Tiberias, so named because the capital of the province bore that title.

"There were together . . ." (John 21:2): Most of them belonged to that very neighborhood. Thomas is the Aramaic Didymus the Greek word for twin. Nathanael is named in John 1:45. He is probably the same as the one called "Bartholomew," which only means "the son of Tholmaius." Nathanael is thought to have been the son of Tholmaius. "Sons of Zebedee" are James and John (Matt. 4:21).

"Two other of his disciples": They were possibly Andrew and Philip. In this list of the apostles seven are referred to. Five are named. Two are unnamed. Most of the followers of our Lord are unknown outside the border of the local church, yet like the two unnamed, they constitute the real strength and backbone of the church.

"Simon Peter . . . I go a fishing" (John 21:3): The apostles were restless, disturbed and uncertain. Jesus now appeared -- now disappeared. They never knew where they might next see Him. Peter's proposal to "go a fishing" was a natural one. It may have been at, or near, the same spot where two or three years before Jesus had first called them to become fishers of men (Luke 5:1-11). All responded to Peter's proposition. "They went, restless, seeking relief in action, and they did not get relief; rather they got a new form of discontent, because they were unsuccessful" (Morgan).

"That night they caught nothing": "Fishermen's luck," you know!

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 40 - PAGE 2

"But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore" (John 21:4): The Revision is correct: "When the day was now breaking." Dawn had come. It was a beautiful, breathtaking sight. "The disciples knew not that it was Jesus."

"Children, have ye any meat?" (John 21:5): A colloquial expression like, "My boys." The aged apostle uses it in I John 2:13, 18. The negative answer is expected by this polite inquiry, as in John 4:29.

"And he said . . . Cast the net on the right side" (John 21:6): Jesus knew where the fish were. The disciples obeyed the command. They did not suspect who gave it. They caught so many fish they were "not able to draw" the net.

"That disciple whom Jesus loved . . . It is the Lord" (John 21:7): John the beloved had believed in the resurrection of Jesus even before he had seen the risen Lord. Here he was the first to discover who He was.

"Simon Peter . . . was naked": He was not nude. He had on what we call undergarments. "Apparently Peter threw on the upper garment or linen blouse worn by fishers over his waistcloth and tucked it under his girdle," jumped into the sea and swam to the shore. Once before Jesus had given them a catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11). Jesus wanted them to catch men alive for Him. Here he enters into their experience of restlessness and failure, and reveals His power on that level. The other disciples restrained their emotions; they attended to the duty of bringing the boat and catch to the shore, about 300 feet away (verse 8).

"Fire . . . fish . . . bread" (John 21:9): Jesus had not come to buy fish, but to supply them, thus giving a new meaning to the Lord's question in verse 5. The disciples found broiled fish and bread ready for their morning meal, and to this provision they are told to add from the abundant supply in the new (verses 10, 11). Peter was already wet, so he helped haul in the bulging net which John carefully tells us contained 153 great fish. There was provision for the present, and future.

The provision of "fine . . . fish . . . bread" was not miraculous. Jesus had prepared the fire of charcoal that lights slowly. Often one has to bend down and blow on it. The RISEN LORD had been preparing the breakfast.

"Jesus . . . Come and dine" (John 21:12): Or, break your fast. Jesus made them sit down. He took the place of a WAITER. He carried the bread around to them, and the fish, and waited on them until they were satisfied. Our Lord left "US AN EXAMPLE" (I Pet. 3:21) of service (Mark 9:35). The purpose and enterprise of Jesus Christ are so vast in their scope. However, Jesus is interested in such matters as the physical hunger of one of his followers.

"And none . . . durst ask him, Who art thou?": The disciples knew it was the Lord. Was there something in His manner, His majesty, His altered appearance, that amazed them, filled them with awe, and prevented them from asking questions that they were curious to know? Did they fear a rebuke like that one administered to Philip (John 14:9)?

"The third time that Jesus showed Himself . . ." (John 21:14): John records this and two other appearances to the apostles (John 20:19, 26). There were four other appearances already (Mary Magdalene, the group of women, two on the way to Emmaus, and to Peter).

### II. Remarks of Jesus to Peter (John 21:15-23)

"So when they had dined . . ." (John 21:15): This last meal of Jesus with His apostles had calmed and quieted the excitement of the men. It made them susceptible of teaching. Jesus began to deal with Simon Peter. In John 10:11-14 Jesus had called Himself the Good Shepherd. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee He was thinking of His lambs and of His sheep. Jesus saw humanity as "Sheep not having a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36).

### YEAR 4 - LESSON 40 - PAGE 3

"My lambs . . . my sheep . . . my sheep" are possessive pronouns which denote Sovereignty and Saviorhood. Thus He showed to Peter what His work was to be: "Feed my lambs . . . sheep." To be a good shepherd is not always easy. It is not always still waters and flowery meadows. Sometimes it means wild and bare mountains, grappling with the wolf, and allowing the wolf to bury his fangs in you to save the sheep!

"Lovest thou me more than these?" Peter had boasted that he would stand by Christ though all men forsook him (Mark 14:29). We do not know what passed between Jesus and Peter when the Saviour first appeared to him (Luke 24:34). Here Christ probes the inmost being of Peter to prepare him for His work.

"These": The masculine and neuter forms of the Greek word for "these" are the same. There is no way to tell in which sense it is here used. It could be "these things," or "these men." "Do you love me more than these other disciples love me?" Or, "do you love me more than you love this fishing business?" Was Jesus twitting Peter for his threefold denial? Was He chiding him for returning to the fishing business?

"Lovest thou me?" (John 21:15, 16, 17): In the first two questions of Jesus (verses 15, 16) our Lord uses "agapan;" a strong verb denoting devotion to the death. Peter replies to the questions by using "philein" a weaker verb, a purely emotional word of "affection or strong attachment, but not approaching adoration."

"The Greek has here subtle shades of meaning which the English does not express. In the first two questions addressed to Peter our Lord used the strong verb agapan, and Peter replies by the weaker verb "philein." Peter, as we have seen, had professed the most unparalleled devotion for the Master, but when the Lord now asks him if he has that devotion, he humbly describes his love as of a far weaker order -- a mere instinctive affection or strong attachment, but nothing approaching adoration. In his third question Jesus drops the AGAPAN and takes Peter's own word -- PHILEIN as if he said, "Peter, are you even sure that you have a high regard for me?" It grieved Peter to have the Lord thus apparently doubt that he had even a tender regard for him. Peter appealed to Christ Himself as a searcher of hearts to bear witness that, poor and meager as his love was, it was at least as intense as he had represented it to be. In response to each of Peter's professions of love Jesus lays a command on him, as if he said, "If you love me as you say, prove it thus," (McGarvey).

"When thou was young . . ." (John 21:18): Peter was to prove his devotion to Christ by a martyr's death. Jesus now tenderly informs Peter of his martyrdom (verse 19). Looking behind him, Peter sees his dear friend, John, following with them. Peter asks what John's experience is to be (verse 21).

"Jesus . . . If I will that he tarry till I come . . ." (John 21:22): Jesus did not intend to suggest that we are not to take a deep interest in the fate of others, but he wishes us to be kept from all envy and discontent which comparisons may produce. Jesus wishes us to be concerned with OUR ABSOLUTE FAITHFULNESS TO HIM.

McGarvey comments: "It was none of Peter's business whether John's earthly lot was easier or harder than his own; his business was to be faithful in the pathway whither the Lord had led him."

"Till I come" does not refer to death, but to our Lord's return in glory. It is then that the dead shall be raised and living believers transformed, and "shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17). This is the blessed hope of every generation of Christians. It should encourage us to such fidelity in service that we can ever pray, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

"Yet Jesus said not . . . He shall not die" (John 21:23): At the time John wrote these words he did not understand just what the saying might mean. "There is no question that John died. This site of his grave at Ephesus was well known to early Christians. The coming of the Lord for which he (John) tarried was that in the Isle of Patmos, of which he tells us in the Book of Revelation. This passage, therefore, shows that John wrote his Gospel before his exile in Patmos" (McGarvey).

**III. Conclusion of the Narrative (John 21:24, 25)**

"We know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24): Two brief words close this Epilogue. The first affirms the truthfulness and credibility of John as a WITNESS TO THE FACTS THAT THE GOSPEL RELATES. He was an EYE-WITNESS of our Lord's entire ministry, a man of profound spiritual vision, and one who received the aid of the Spirit who promised to guide the apostles into "all truth!"

"And there are also many other things that Jesus did . . . (John 21:25): I believe John finished his own book. The last verse of his gospel is a pardonable hyperbole which asserts that "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." This graphically pictures for us the vastness of the work and words of Jesus from which the author has made a small selection (John 20:30f). By "which he has produced what is, all things considered, the greatest of all the books produced by man, the eternal gospel from the eagle who soars to the very heavens and gives us a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (Robertson).

**QUESTIONS**

1. What are five of the most important chapters in the Bible? Why?
2. Where did Jesus appear to the apostles (John 21:1)? Why called "Sea of Tiberias?" How many times did Jesus "show" Himself during the forty days?
3. How many disciples composed the fishing party (John 21:2)? Meaning of Didymus? Who proposed the party (John 21:3)? What new form of discontent came to them?
4. Who stood on the shore at dawn (John 21:4)? What did Jesus ask them (John 21:5)? Why direct them to cast "on the right side of the ship" (John 21:6)?
5. Which of the disciples was first to recognize Jesus (John 21:7)? In what sense was Peter "naked?" How far were they from shore (John 21:8)?
6. What did the disciples find when they brought their boat to shore (John 21:9)? How many fish were caught (John 21:10,11)?
7. Who served as waiter at this breakfast (John 21:13; I Pet. 3:21; Mark 8:35)?
8. Why did none ask "Who art thou?" (John 21:12)?
9. How was this the "third time" (John 21:14; 20:19,26)?
10. What practical lesson did our Lord teach the disciples through this catch of fishes (Matt. 4:19; Acts 1:8)?
11. What question did our Lord thrice ask Simon Peter (John 21:15-17)?
12. What was Peter's answer each time (John 21:17)?
13. Meaning of "more than these" (John 21:15,3)?
14. How was Peter affected after the third question (John 21:17)?
15. What commission did Christ give to Peter (John 21:17)? Meaning of "feed my lambs," "tend my sheep," "feed my sheep?" With what are these duties contrasted (verse 15)?
16. What did the Lord reveal to Peter concerning the apostle's death (John 21:18,19; Acts 10:41)?
17. What the fulfillment of the remark about John (John 21:23; Rev. 1:12-18)? Did John die?
18. How does John warn us against putting confidence in the tradition of men (John 21:23)? How does "hear-say" start many religious "myths?" Illustrate.
19. Who wrote these things (John 21:24,20)?
20. Why did Christ devote this last chapter to the question of Christian ministry (Acts 1:8,9)? Do YOU LOVE and SERVE CHRIST (Matt. 7:21; Rom. 14:12; John 21:14)? Illustrate.

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 41 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 41  
Acts 1

Page 1  
Memory Verse: Acts 1:8

Memory Verse:

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

**WAITING FOR THE PROMISE**

The book of Acts tells of the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem to Rome. Within the generation of the Apostles, the Gospel spread from Jerusalem to every nation then known in the world. "The gospel. . . was preached," Paul writes, "to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23).

**Name of the Book**

The book is called the Acts of the Apostles. It is the acts of Peter and mostly of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 26:15-18). Dr. A. T. Pierson called it "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." It really is the Acts of Jesus, a continuation of the doings and teachings of Jesus (Acts 1:1).

**Author of the Book**

The author of Acts was a:

- A. Historian (Acts 1:1-4). The same writer of Luke's Gospel.
- B. Physician (Col. 4:14). Note the medical knowledge in the book Acts 3:7; 9:18; 12:23; 13:11; 28:8).
- C. Companion of Paul (II Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24). Luke was the only Gentile writer of the Bible. He was a man of culture, scientific education, a master of Hebrew and classical Greek.

**Date of Acts**

It was written about r1. D. 63 at the end of Paul's imprisonment of two years at Rome (Acts 28:30).

**Acts Analyzed**

- A. The Church in Jerusalem: The Founding of the Church (Acts 1-7).
- B. The Church in Palestine: The Broadening of the Church (Acts 8-12).
- C. The Church in the World: The Extension of the Church (Acts 13-28).

Acts is more than a thrilling historical narrative. It is A BOOK OF DOCTRINE. For example, the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:10, 11), and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 15-21).

Eighteen messages are recorded as given by Jesus Christ, by Peter, by Stephen, by James, by Paul. These sermons contain strong doctrinal statements on such supreme subjects as the Messiahship of Jesus, His atoning death, and His resurrection from the grave, His Second Coming.

Acts is relevant to this age. It is a book of practical truth for the space age. Helpful practical examples are to be found in the lives of such heroes of the faith as Peter, John, Stephen, Philip and Paul! Where can one find such divine principles of missionary work as in the Book of Acts?

### Chronology of Acts

Not enough data is given in Acts to form an exact chronology. But sufficient data is given to approximate most of the dates. It is known that Herod's death (Acts 12:23) was in 44 A.D. Mention of Paul's arrival in Jerusalem about the time that Herod killed James (Acts 11:30-12:2) and Paul's departure from Jerusalem right after the (death of Herod (Acts 12:23, 25) makes it look like this was the visit referred to in Gal. 2:1, "fourteen years" after Saul's conversion.

If this is so, and considering Hebrew usage of counting parts of years at the beginning and end of a period as years, the "fourteen years" may actually have been only about thirteen years, or even less. This would place Saul's conversion about 31 or 32 A.D.

If we take 30 A.D. as a starting point, and 60 A.D. as the known date of Festus' appointment as Governor at Caesarea (Acts 24:27), the following dates may be regarded as approximately correct:

- Founding of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:47) ----- 30 A. D.
- Stoning of Stephen, Dispersion of Church (Acts 7, 8) ----- 31 or 32 A. D.
- Conversion of Saul (Acts 9) ----- 31 or 32 A. D.
- Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after Conversion ----- 34 or 35 A. D.
- Conversion of Cornelius, the Gentile between ----- 35 and 40 A. D.
- Reception of Gentiles at Antioch (Acts 11) ----- about 42 A. D.
- Paul's Second Visit to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30) 44 A. D.
- Paul's First Missionary Journey, Galatia (Acts 13, 14) ----- 45-48 A. D.
- Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) ----- about 50 A. D.
- Paul's Second Missionary Journey, Greece (Acts 16:18) ----- 50-53 A. D.
- Paul's Third Missionary Journey, Ephesus (Acts 19-20) ----- 54-57 A. D.
- Paul Reaches Ephesus (Acts 19) ----- 54 A. D.
- Paul Left Ephesus in June (I Cor. 16:8) ----- 57 A. D.
- Paul in Macedonia, Summer and Fall (I Cor. 16:5-8) ----- 57 A. D.
- Paul in Corinth Three Months, Winter (Acts 20:2-3) ----- 57-58 A. D.
- Paul Left Philippi in April (Acts 20:6) ----- 58 A. D.
- Paul Reached Jerusalem in June (Acts 20:16) ----- 58 A.D.
- Paul in Caesarea (Acts 24-26) ----- Summer 58 A. D. to Fall 60 A. D.
- Paul's Voyage to Rome (Acts 27-28) ----- Winter 60-61 A. D.
- Paul in Rome Two Years ----- 61-63 A. D.

#### I. The Starting Point in the Narrative (Acts 1:1-5)

"The former treatise . . ." (Acts 1:1): This is the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1-4; 24:50, 51). Luke fixes the starting point of Acts on the day in which his account "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up . . ." (Acts 1:1, 2, 9, 10, 11). This steps up the significance of the ASCENSION OF OUR LORD. This was an event of supreme importance to the believer in Christ. Though our Lord has returned to heaven, He continues to work: (1) Directly, (2) Through the Holy Spirit who came in accordance with His promise, and (3) Through His own human servants whom He has sent out (John 17:18). He is now our High Priest (Heb. 1:3; 4:14-16).

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 41 - PAGE 3

"O Theophilus." This could be a Roman official of high rank. The title "most excellent" (Luke 1:3) suggests this. The name means "Beloved of God." He may have defrayed the expense of publishing both Luke and Acts. Doubtless a Christian convert, Theophilus is most probably a baptismal name (W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, pp. 388, 389). Nothing is known of the man. It is impossible to decide whether he was pure Roman, Greek or Jew.

"Commandments unto the apostles . . ." (Acts 1:2): During the personal ministry of Jesus, He authorized no one to preach Him as the Christ. In fact He forbade his disciples to do so (Matt. 16:20; 17:9). This Great Commission is the key to the book of Acts. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46, 47).

"To whom he showed himself . . . forty days" (Acts 1:3): Jesus appeared ten times after His resurrection until His ascension during a forty, day period. The apostles first doubted, then risked life itself in defense of the resurrection (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:41; John 20:24f; Matt. 28:17; Acts 4:17-20). See Lesson 40, Page 1, for listing of the appearances.

There is no reason to doubt that Jesus Christ did rise in bodily form from the dead on the third day after His crucifixion. Luke does not cite these evidences here; he had already done so in the final chapter of his Gospel. "Behold my hands, and my feet, that it is I myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see have" (Luke 24:39). He ate fish and honeycomb in their sight (Luke 4:41-4:3).

"Commanded them . . . wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4): Read Luke 24:49; John 14:16, 17; 15:26, 27; 16:114). If Jesus had stayed on earth, He could not be in Covington and California at the same time. It was expedient that Christ by the Spirit in the heart and life of the disciples, be in the church with two or three gathered together -- EVERYWHERE (Matt. 18:20). He is the Universal Christ.

"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost . . ." (Acts 1:5): John the Baptist referred to the baptism of the Spirit (Luke 3:16) for the apostles, and the baptism of fire, hell, for the unbelievers. There are only two instances of Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament -- Pentecost (Acts 2:1-8, 14f), and Cornelius (Acts 10:44-47). Hell awaits those who reject the Gospel (II Thess. 1:7-10; Matt. 25:41).

### II. The Promise of the Spirit, and the Ascension (Acts 1:6-11)

"Lord, wilt thou . . . restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6): The place where the disciples met for this concluding assembly was Bethany, situated on the Mount of Olives (compare verse 12 with Luke 24:50, 51). The apostles believed that Christ's Kingdom was to be a restoration of the Old Kingdom of David, and not a new and different institution. The kingdom had not yet been inaugurated. Their minds grasped only POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE FOR THEIR NATION. Our Lord's kingdom could not be inaugurated until the King was crowned in heaven (Phil. 2:8-11; Heb. 2:9). The King's first administrative act was that of sending the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the next Pentecost (Acts 2:1, 32, 33).

"It is not for you to know . . ." (Acts 1:7): The times and seasons of God's purposes are known fully only by Him. It is curious how eager people are to set dates for the coming again of Jesus (Matt. 24:35), as the apostles were eager to know just when the POLITICAL KINGDOM which they were expecting was to be restored to Israel. God has kept some things to Himself! There are limits to our curiosity. They understood better after Pentecost. True blessedness for Israel and the world was sure to come through the universal preaching of the Gospel!

"But ye shall receive power . . . be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8): The power was the Holy Spirit Himself. He filled them (Acts 2:4) as Jesus promised (Luke 24:48, 49).

"Witnesses" is our word for martyrs. It has been suggested that the Gospel was to begin in Jerusalem to vindicate Jesus where He had been convicted. Many devout Jewish people would be there at the Pentecost

feast. They were favorably impressed by the preaching of John and Jesus. Greater success would come there. The rule was "first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." World conquest is what Christ commands today! The witness is to begin "both in Jerusalem," progress to the neighboring regions of Judea and Samaria, and stretch "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The events of Acts follow this outline of verse 8.

"And He was taken up" (Acts 1:9): Jesus blessed the apostles with uplifted hands as He was parted from them and borne into heaven (Luke 24:50, 51). A cloud "received him out of their sight." "The cloud was not a common cloud of vapor, but the glory cloud. It was the cloud of glory which had filled Solomon's temple . . . an outward sign of Jehovah's presence" (Gaebelein).

"This same Jesus . . . shall so come" (Acts 1:10, 11). The two angels assure them that Jesus will be in heaven as a personal Friend and Divine Saviour. He will come again for His own in God's appointed hour --visibly and bodily (I Thess. 4:13-18; John 14:1-3). No wonder the disciples were comforted. They "returned to Jerusalem with great joy" Luke 24:52).

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem . . ." (Acts 1:12): The ascension took place near Bethany, on the eastern slope of the mount (Luke 24:50). The apostles came back into the city with joy at the thought of meeting Jesus again. A "Sabbath day's journey" is seven-eighths of a mile. It does not say Jesus led them all the way to Bethany, which was fifteen furlongs away (John 11:18).

"They went up into an upper room . . ." (Acts 1:13): Retracing their steps to Jerusalem, the apostles went to an upper room. This was possibly the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12). The eleven apostles were present, along "with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren" (verse 14; Luke 8:2; Matt. 28:9f). Mary does not appear again in the New Testament. The apostles did not worship Mary, nor PRAY THROUGH HER TO GOD. We have only ONE MEDIATOR (I Tim. 2:5). Our Lord's half-brothers were now believers (John 7:5; I Cor. 15:7). The Papacy, not the New Testament, has made Mary the object of idolatrous worship.

#### IV. The Appointment of an Apostle (Acts 1:15-26)

"Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples . . ." (Acts 1:15): During the course of the post-ascension prayer meeting, Peter addressed the group. 120 were together. He showed that Judas' betrayal of Jesus was a fulfillment of prophecy (Psa. 41:9); Acts 1:16, 17).

"Now this man purchased a field." (Acts 1:18): Judas obtained the field through the action of the priests (Matt. 27:5). Judas hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-10) from a tree on the brink of the precipice overhanging the valley of Hinnom. The limb or rope gave way he fell, and was mangled as described in Acts. See Haley, ALLEGED DISCREPANCIES OF THE BIBLE.

"Aceldama . . . The field of blood" (Acts 1:19): When Judas fell headlong, he burst asunder in the midst." His blood splattered the field. The poor, whether Jew or Gentile, were buried in this potter's field. The thirty pieces of silver would amount to about sixteen dollars. Because of the excavations for potter's clay, and the suicide of Judas, the owner was glad to sell the field for a trifle.

"Let his habitation be desolate . . . his bishopric let another take" (Acts 1:20): Psalm 69:25; 109:8 have no specific reference to Judas in their original context. "They occur in the midst of curses pronounced, not by David, but, as Peter explicitly states, by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (verse 16), concerning wicked men in general who persecute the servants of God" (McGarvey). It is proper that the habitation of such men in general should be desolate, and that any office they hold should be given to others. This was preeminently true of Judas! So it is proper to say that these words were written of Judas as of one among

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many. "The authority of the Old Testament is thus recognized, but it is interpreted in the light of the new faith."

"And they prayed . . . the lot fell upon Matthias" (Acts 1:24, 26): The faithful 120 prayed to God, the heart-searcher, to show them whom He had chosen to succeed Judas as one of the twelve (verses 20-26). Luke says God heard their prayer. Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles. Nothing further is known of Matthias. There must be symbolic meaning in the number 12 beyond our knowledge. The foundations of the New Jerusalem bear the names of the 12 Apostles (Rev. 21:19-21). The number of official witnesses is now complete. Overseers are ready to care for the new converts. Pentecost will follow. Note that casting lots was never resorted to after the coming of the Spirit (verse 26).

### QUESTIONS

1. What book is referred to as the "former treatise" (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1-3; 24:50,51)?
2. What does Acts tell us of the spread of the Gospel (Col. 1:23)? Is it really the Acts of the Apostles? What does A. T. Pierson call it?
3. Who wrote Acts? What do we know of Dr. Luke?
4. When was Acts written (Acts 28:30)?
5. Can you give a simple outline of Acts?
6. Do we know the approximate dates of the work of the Holy Spirit as He directed Paul?
7. Who was Theophilus (Acts 1:1)?
8. What the commandment referred to (Acts 1:2; Luke 24:46-49; Mark 16:15, 16)? Who would continue Christ's work after His departure (John 14:12; Acts 1:8)?
9. What became the most prominent theme of the apostles (Luke 24:46-48; Acts 2:32, 33; 4:2, 10; 5:30-32; 10:30-32; 13:30-37)?
10. In what city was their new activity to begin (Acts 1:4)? How far from Jerusalem was their activity to extend (Acts 1:8)?
11. Where, and for what, were the apostles told to wait (Acts 1:4, 5; Luke 24:40; John 7:39; 14:16)? How many instances of Holy Spirit baptism occur in Acts (Acts 2:1-8, 14f; 10:44-47)?
12. Did the apostles fully understand the program Christ was introducing through them (Acts 1:6; 15:13-15)? What did the apostles mean by "restoring the kingdom"?
13. Receive what "power," and why the order of places (Acts 1:8)?
14. From what place is Christ working out His program of evangelism (Acts 1:9; Heb. 7:25)?
15. What was the manner of Christ's ascension (Acts 1:9-11; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51)?
16. How will He come again (Acts 1:10,11; John 14:1-4; I Thess. 4:14-17; Jude 14, 15)?
17. To what place did the apostles go after the ascension (Acts 1:14)?
18. Who was present in the upper room (Acts 1:13-15)? What were they doing (Acts 1:14-26)?
19. In what sense were the words spoken concerning Judas (Acts 1:16, 20; Psa. 69:25; 109:8)? In what sense did Judas buy the field (Acts 1:18; Matt. 27:3-10)? Why was the field called the "field of blood" (Acts 1:19, 19; Matt. 27:7, 8)?
20. What were the qualifications for the successor of Judas, and why (Acts 1:21, 22)? What should now be the qualifications of successors to the apostles? Did the eleven regard the choice of Matthias as their own or the Lord's (Acts 1:24)? Was Matthias a real apostle (Acts 1:26)? Why is casting of lots never used after Pentecost (Acts 1:26; John 16:12-14; Acts 8:29; 10:19, 20; 11:12; 16:6, 7; Rom. 8:14)?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 42 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 42  
Acts 2:1-21

Page 1  
Memory Verse: Acts 2:1

Memory Verse:

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

**THE DAY OF PENTECOST**

Acts 2 is familiar ground to any New Testament Christian. Luke now enters upon the main body of his work by describing the promised advent of the Holy Spirit. Gladly we study the chapter again. We would share it with "every creature" (Mark 16:15, 16; II Pet. 3:9).

**The Time, The Persons, The Place**

These events occur on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, A. D. 30, and ten days after the ascension of Jesus. The key figures are the apostles (Acts 1:26; 2:1-4). The site for these foundational events is a portion of the temple (Luke 24:52, 53; Acts 1:14; 2:1, 46).

**The Church Established In Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-47)**

- I. The Apostles Are Filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)
- II. The Effect on the Multitude (Acts 2:13)
- III. Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-47)
  - A. Introduction: The Miracle Explained (Acts 2:14-21).
  - B. Jesus proclaimed as Christ and Lord (Acts 2:22-32).
    - 1. His Resurrection declared (Acts 2:14).
    - 2. David predicts the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:1&31).
    - 3. The twelve attest the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:32).
    - 4. Jesus exalted to the throne of God (Acts 2:33-35).
    - 5. The logical conclusion (Acts 2:36).
  - C. Exhortation to save themselves (Acts 2:37-40),
  - D. A company blessed by obedience (Acts 2:41-47).

This chapter has been titled "Divine Intoxication." In this "Spiritual Intoxication" we see

- I. The Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).
- II. The Strangers (Acts 2:5-13).
- III: The Sermon (Acts 2:14-36).
- IV. The Salvation (Acts 2:37-41).
- V. The Signs (Acts 2:42-47).

### I. The Apostles Are Filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1.4)

"And when the day of Pentecost . . ." (Acts 2:1): The day of Pentecost was the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of the Passover week. The count commenced on the day AFTER THE SABBATH; it also ended on the SAME DAY OF THE WEEK, our Sunday, Lord's Day, or first day of the week (Rev. 23:15, 16). Because of the SEVEN WEEKS which intervened between it and the Passover Sabbath, it was called in the Old Testament "the feast of weeks" (Deut. 16:10). Because the wheat harvest came in that interval, it was called "the feast of harvest" (Ex. 23:16). On account of the offering peculiar to it, it was called "the day of firstfruits" (Num. 28:26). Through Alexander's conquest of Asia, the Greek language became known in Palestine, and the day became known as Pentecost (fiftieth), because it was the fiftieth day.

Pentecost was celebrated by the special service of offering the FIRST FRUITS of the wheat harvest in the form of TWO LOAVES (Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31). All male Jews were required to attend three annual feasts: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

"They were all with one accord in one place": The grammatical connection between Acts 1:26 and 2:1 shows that the persons assembled together and "filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4) were not the 120 persons (Acts 1:15), but the twelve apostles (Acts 1:26). This was genuine unity (Eph. 4:3; Psa. 133:1).

"From heaven . . . a rushing mighty wind" (Acts 2:2): There was no wind, but the "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind." The SOUND was a SYMBOL of the SPIRIT. It indicated his power, mighty, heavenly but unseen. The roar or reverberation was "an echoing sound as of a mighty wind borne violently," or rushing along like the whirl of a tornado.

"And there appeared . . . cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:3): A tongue that looked like fire "sat upon each of them." A tongue signifies speech. The idea is not that each tongue was cloven, but each separate tongue looked like fire. It was not real fire. Fire had always been, with the Jews, the symbol of the Divine presence (Ex. 3:2; Deut. 5:4). "No symbol could be more fitting to express the Spirit's purifying energy and refining energy" (Furneaux).

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost . . ." (Acts 2:4): The apostles only were "filled" or baptized with the Spirit (Acts 1:26; Matt. 3:11). They were brought completely under the Control of the Spirit. That was for the disciples the essential experience of Pentecost.

Pentecost marks the occasion of the fulfillment of the promise of the Father (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:13, 14). The Holy Spirit imparted to the apostles a new germ of life. The actual life of the Spirit passed into their lives and CHRIST LIVED IN THEM (Gal. 2:20). In half an hour after Pentecost they knew more about Jesus Christ than they had ever known before? ONLY THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT EXPLAINS THE MEN – the changed outlook, the changed behavior, the moral regeneration, the moral passion and their HOLY BOLDNESS (Acts 4:13).

"They . . . began to speak with other tongues": "As the body, when baptized in water, is sunk beneath its surface and completely overwhelmed, SO THEIR SPIRITS WERE COMPLETELY UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, THEIR VERY WORDS BEING HIS AND NOT THEIRS" (McGarvey).

Each apostle began to speak in a language he had not learned by diligent study. It was not a jargon or gibberish, but intelligible language. This is the third miracle: The sound, the tongues like as of fire, and the untaught languages. This temporary endowment was granted for a special purpose. It marked the age of the apostles. It does not exist today.

## II. The Effect on the Multitude (Acts 2:5-13)

"And there were dwelling a2 Jerusalem Jews . . ." (Acts 2:5): The gift of tongues was exactly the preparation needed by the apostles for the task of witnessing to the "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." They were in Jerusalem temporarily for the feast of Pentecost, one of three annual feasts all male Jews had to attend. They were Jews by blood, but born in other lands-fifteen (15) sections of the world are named.

"The multitude came together . . . every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6): The "sound from heaven" (verse 2) was so loud that the noise drew the multitude together. It fixed their attention upon messages which otherwise the Jews might have been indifferent. When "every man heard them speak in his own language . . . they were all amazed and marveled" (verse 7). "Are not all these which speak Galileans?" these devout Jews asked. Such a miracle had never before been witnessed. Notice its effect: Each one could understand his own language as the apostles spoke. This fact confounded, amazed, and perplexed the people (verses 6, 7, 12).

They were at a loss to understand what had happened (verse 12). Fifteen nations are named (Acts 2:9-11) from all the countries of the then known world.

"Other's mocking . . . These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13): The mockers were irreverent men. They said the apostles were "tanked up" with new wine. Thus ancient mockers explained Pentecost. Their mockery will receive due notice from Peter.

## III. Peter Explains the Miracle (Acts 2:14-21)

"But Peter . . . hearken to my words" (Acts 2:14): Peter took his stand with the other apostles who now included Matthias. He "lifted up his voice" because the large crowd and the confusion of tongues demanded loud speaking. The rabbis sat as they taught. The apostles were to be HERALDS -- they STOOD.

"For these are not drunken . . ." (Acts 2:15): Peter explains that the amazing spectacle of the Apostles speaking under tongues of fire to the devout Jews of fifteen nations there represented was in fulfillment of prophecy.

Drunkenness belongs to the night (I Thess. 5:7), It was now 9:00 A.M. Men might be intoxicated at any hour of the day, but the early hour made it improbable that they were under the influence of wine. The rest of his sermon was relied upon to show the complete falsity of the mocking charge.

"But this is that . . . prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16): Peter affirms that speaking in tongues was a fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy (Joel 2:28-32). The Holy Spirit opened Peter's mind to understand this prophecy and its fulfillment right before their eyes. The apostle's courage and spiritual insight tell us he is now a rock. He is no longer shale, but a solid force for Christianity.

"In the last days . . ." (Acts 2:17): Joel defines "these days" as being "the day of the Lord. See also Isa. 2:2 and Micah 4:1. "What happened on Pentecost is not a complete fulfillment, but only the beginning of a great and notable era, of which, thus ushered in, some of the prophecies refer to the end."

Some believe this day to be the destruction of Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost itself, or to the Day of Judgment.

"My Spirit upon all flesh": By "all flesh" is plainly meant, NOT EVERY HUMAN BEING, but persons of all nationalities. The Spirit was given to representatives of all nations. Anna is called a prophetess (Luke 2:36). The daughters of Philip prophesy (Acts 21:9). The humblest classes will receive the Spirit of God (I Cor. 1:26-31).

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"And I will show wonders . . . signs" (Acts 2:19): The remainder of the quotation from Joel in verses 19 and 20 has no bearing on Peter's argument, but was "probably made in order to complete the connection of that which his argument demanded."

"Wonders": To watch like a wonder in the sky. A miracle, marvel, or portent. "Blood . . . fire . . . vapor of smoke" illustrate bloodshed and destruction by fire as signs here on earth. "Clearly Peter does not interpret the symbolism of Joel in literal terms" (Robertson). The day of the Lord is used of the coming again of Christ (II Thess. 2:8; I Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13) for judgment (I Thess. 5:2; I Cor. 1:8; II Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:10).

"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21): "We are not to understand that the mere act of calling an the name of the Lord will save, but such prayer to the Lord as accompanies the faith and the obedience without which all prayer is vain" (McGarvey).

### QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1; Deut. 16:10; Ex. 23:16; Num. 28:26; Lev. 23:15-21)?
2. On what day of the week did Pentecost fall (Lev. 23:15, 16)?
3. Who was "together in one place" (Acts 2:1; 1:26)?
4. What filled the house? What house (Acts 2:1,2; Luke 24:53)?
5. What was the significance of the fire like tongues (Acts 2:3,4)?
6. In what sense was this a baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2:4; 1:5)?
7. How were all Jews, yet born in other countries (Acts 2:5,8)?
8. In what sense were they "devout men" (Acts 2:5)?
9. How did they know the apostles to be Galileans (Acts 2:7)?
10. How many countries were represented (Acts 2:9-11)?
11. Meaning of "proselytes" (Acts 2:10)?
12. What was the principal question? Why (Acts 2:12)?
13. Why the charge of the mockers (Acts 2:13)?
14. What unlikely person preached the first sermon after the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14; Matt. 26:69-74; Luke 22:32)?
15. Why did Peter notice the charge of drunkenness (Acts 2:15)? Was his answer conclusive (Acts 2:14-21)?
16. To what portion of Old Testament Scripture did Peter refer these Jews (Acts 2:16)?
17. What is the meaning of "THIS IS THAT" (Acts 2:16)?
18. How was the Spirit "poured" "poured... upon all flesh" (Acts 2:17)? Does the mention of women by Joel imply that they were now inspired (Acts 2:17, 18)?
19. What was "that great and notable day" (Acts 2:20,21)?
20. Meaning of "call on the Lord" to "be saved" (Acts 2:21; Matt. 7:21-23; John 14:15,21-24)?

"Holy Spirit, faithful Guide, Holy Spirit, Faithful Guide  
Ever near the Christian's side; Gently lead us by the hand,  
Pilgrims in a desert land; Weary souls forever rejoice  
While they hear that sweetest voice, Whispering softly, 'Wanderer, come!  
Follow me, I'll guide thee home.' "

-Marcus M. Wells

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 43 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 43  
Acts 2:22-47

Page 1  
Memory Verses: Acts 2:38, 41

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Memory Verses:

"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 . . . . Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:38, 41).

**PETER'S APPEAL AND RESPONSE**

The Book of Acts is the divine record of the preaching of the apostles, and of the conversions that resulted. The apostles were guided at all times by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit had these conversions recorded (II Pet. 1:21) as examples for all ages and all peoples.

The conversion of 3,000 in this lesson is the **FIRST CASE OF PARDON** under the **NEW COVENANT**. Jesus had given to Peter the authority to state the terms of pardon (Matt. 16:19). What the sinner of that day did to receive pardon or remission of sins **MUST BE DONE BY ALL SINNERS** in the gospel age.

Last week we noted that:

- A. The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).
- B. The effects on the multitude (Acts 2:4-13).
- C. The introduction to Peter's sermon: The miracle explained (Acts 2:14-21).

**I. Jesus Proclaimed as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:22-36)**

A. His resurrection declared (Acts 2:22-24).

"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you . . ." (Acts 2:22): Here is the first public announcement to the world of a risen and glorified Redeemer. Jesus was demonstrated of God unto the "men of Israel," and the world. God did this by "Miracles and wonders and signs." Peter does not mean three classes of actions, but he uses the terms to describe the same phenomena. Peter means the miracles of Jesus, which were mighty works, or powers, because wrought by the immediate power of God. They were "wonders," because they excited wonder in those who witnessed them. They were "signs" because they signified God's approval of what Jesus taught in connection with them "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me (John 10:25).

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel . . ." (Acts 2:23): The death of Jesus on the Cross was not an accident. It was the plan of God within the boundaries of God's purpose for Jesus to die for the remission of my sins (Rom. 5:8-10.) Over and over again Acts states that the Cross is in the eternal plan of God (Acts 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). "The Cross is not a kind of emergency measure flung out when everything else had failed. It is a part of the very life of God." It was by God that Jesus was sent. "The Cross was a window in time to allow us to see the suffering love which is eternally in the heart of God."

"By wicked hands have crucified and slain:" "Lawless men," "not men who are violators of the law, but men who are **NOT UNDER THE LAW**, that is, Gentiles (I Cor. 9:21)." Romans actually carried out the

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crucifixion for the Jews. Peter charges the Jews to their face with the death of Christ. Pilate said: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, HIS BLOOD BE ON US, AND ON OUR CHILDREN" (Matt. 27:24-25). In shuddering horror, we see in the crucifixion how men took the loveliest life the world ever saw and sought to break it on a cross (Acts 3:13; 4:10; 5:30).

"Whom God hath raised up..." (Acts 2:24): The resurrection was the central fact of Peter's sermon. This was the first public proclamation to others than believers of the resurrection of Jesus." At a time when it was still possible to test the statement, to examine witnesses to expose fraud, the apostles openly proclaimed the RESURRECTION AS A FACT, needing no evidence, but KNOWN TO HIS HEARERS (Furneaux).

The resurrection of Jesus was the pivotal point of Peter's Pentecostal sermon (Acts 2:24,31,32), in his second sermon (Acts 3:15), in his defense before the Council (Acts 4:2,10). It was the burden of the apostles' preaching (Acts 4:33). It was Peter's defense in his second arraignment (Acts 5:30). A vision of the resurrected Christ led to Saul's conversion (Acts 9:3-6). Peter preached it to Cornelius (Acts 10:40). Paul preached it in Antioch (Acts 13:30-37), Thessalonica (Acts 17:3) Athens (Acts 17:18, 31), Jerusalem (Acts 22:6-11), before Felix (Acts 7:15,21), Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:8, 23). Without the resurrection there would have been no Christian Church at all!

In the Eastern Church on Easter day, if two people meet, one says, "The Lord is risen!" The other answers: "He is RISEN INDEED!"

Every Sunday is the Lord's Day. Every Lord's Day should be KEPT AS RESURRECTION DAY. As Christians, let us never forget that we LIVE AND WALK WITH A RISEN LORD!

"Having loosed the pains of death": The "pains" or "pangs of dying are figuratively regarded as bonds which hold the victim of death in confinement until they are loosed." Peter did not mean that Jesus suffered any "pangs" or "pains" after dying. "Pangs" in the Hebrew original means "traps" or "cords." Death is personified as a hunter laying snares for prey. It was not possible for death to hold Jesus." UP FROM THE GRAVE HE AROSE!"

B. David predicted the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:25-31).

"For David speaketh concerning Him . . ." (Acts 2:25): Here the Holy Spirit says through Peter that David wrote Psalm 16. Peter shows that the sufferings and death of Christ were the fulfillment of prophecy. To the Jew the idea of a crucified Messiah was incredible. "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree" (Deut. 21:23). To the orthodox Jew the Cross was the one fact which made it impossible that Jesus could be the Messiah.

"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell . . . see corruption" (Acts 2:27): David predicted the resurrection of someone before corruption of the body set in (verses 228). While the body of Jesus was in the tomb, his soul was in "hell," more correctly "Hades," the unseen abode of disembodied human spirits. Yet the soul of Jesus was in Paradise, as we learn from His declaration to the dying thief (Luke 23:43). To the righteous, Hades is a place of enjoyment.

"David . . . is both dead . . . his sepulchre is with us" (Acts 2:29): David habitually speaks in the first person when prophesying of the Christ. David's tomb was then on Mt. Zion where most of the kings were buried. David predicted by inspiration the resurrection of the Messiah (Psa. 16:8-10) as Peter points out (verses 30, 31). It was Christ whose soul was not "left in hell" or Hades. It was Christ's flesh that did not "see corruption."

C. The apostles affirm the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:32).

"This Jesus hath God raised up . . ." (Acts 2:32): The apostles were speaking in tongues, miraculous gifts that proved God was endorsing BOTH THE MESSAGE AND THE MESSENGERS. "We all are

witnesses" of His resurrection, Peter affirms. In Galilee over 500 men had seen the risen Christ when Paul wrote (I Cor. 15:6). Thus over 500 witnesses, honest witnesses, agree in their testimony that CHRIST AROSE! Many of them died for the testimony they delivered. Doubtless Peter went into great detail giving the audience the FACTS OF THE RESURRECTED SAVIOUR. We have ten recorded appearances of the Risen Lord during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension.

D. Jesus exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-35).

"Exalted . . . he hath shed forth this" (Acts 2:33): The miracle of tongues proves that Jesus had kept His promise to send the Comforter (John 16:7; Acts 2:4, 16, 17). Peter by inspiration was speaking the truth that the audience understood.

"Sit thou on my right hand . . . foes thy footstool" (Acts 2:34, 35): Peter by the Holy Spirit quotes Psalm 110:1 as having been written by David. Jesus also declares that David said this "in the spirit" (Matt. 22:43). David referred to Christ, not to himself. David had not ascended to heaven; therefore David could not in these words be speaking of himself. David would call no other "my Lord."

E. The logical and glorious conclusion (Acts 2:36).

"God hath made . . . Jesus . . . Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36): God made Jesus Lord by causing Him to sit on the Father's own throne, to rule over men and angels. He made him to sit on David's throne lineal descent from David made Jesus the rightful King. "Lord" means one with authority or lawgiver (Matt. 28:18-20). "Christ" is the Anointed one, the Messiah.

"From this conclusion the Jewish hearers of Peter learned that, contrary to their previous conception, the promised Christ was to sit NOT ON AN EARTHLY THRONE, however glorious, BUT ON THE THRONE OF THE UNIVERSE."

## **II. The People Exhorted to Save Themselves (Acts 2:37-40)**

"They were pricked in their heart . . ." (Acts 2:37): When men were shown just what they had done in crucifying Jesus their hearts were broken. The Gospel smote them, stung them to the depths of their souls. They now believed that the Messiah whom they had crucified was their Messiah. They were convinced that Jesus was now the reigning Lord. They were His murderers! In agony they cried, "WHAT shall we do?" This was their CHANGE OF MIND. When the Spirit and a faithful preacher or teacher are united in witnessing, men became conscious of their sins. These men wanted to be forgiven their sins. "I," said Jesus, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

A missionary told the story of Jesus in an Indian village. Later he showed the life of Christ in slides thrown against the whitewashed wall of a house. When the slide of the Cross appeared on the wall, one man suddenly arose from the audience and ran forward, "Come down from that Cross, Son of God," he cried, "I, not you, should be hanging there." When we understand what happened there, the Cross will pierce the heart!

"Then Peter said . . . Repent . . . be baptized" (Acts 2:38): Peter's clear answer was dictated by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). The people were told specific things to do.

"Repent," means an "afterthought, a second thought. Often a second thought shows that the first thought was wrong; and so the word came to mean a change of mind; but, if a man is an honest man, a CHANGE OF MIND demands a CHANGE OF ACTION."

"Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" is the second thing Peter tells them to do.

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"For the remission of sins": Peter did not stop with giving two commands. He states specifically the blessings that would follow their repentance and baptism. They were to repent and be baptized "FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS!" If we are saved by faith alone BEFORE WE ARE BAPTIZED, we are saved without having "the remission of sins." By the Holy Spirit Peter said we are baptized "for the remission of sins." Forgiveness of our sins FOLLOWS our baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:27). If the correct rendering be "unto remission of sins," remission follows baptism, and baptism brings us to it!

"Receive the gift of the Holy Ghost": This is the second blessing promised on condition of their repentance and baptism. By the "gift of the Holy Ghost" is not meant the miraculous gift that had just been bestowed upon the apostles. The "gift" refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which we bring FORTH THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, and without which we are not of Christ (Gal. 5:22, 23; 3:2; Acts 5:32; I Cor. 6:19; 12:13).

"Far the promise . . . children . . . all . . . afar off" (Acts 2:39): The children can be no others than those who repent and are baptized. Infant children cannot do this. The promise is unto those whom the Lord shall "call unto him." God calls only those who can hear and believe. The call is to Jews and Gentiles. God calls men through the preaching of the Gospel (II Thess. 2:14).

"Save yourselves . . ." (Acts 2:40): With many words Peter "testified" and "exhorted" his hearers to "Save yourselves from this untoward (crooked) generation."

The sinner can do nothing to procure or merit his own salvation, or to forgive his own sins. "He MUST DO THAT which is prescribed as the method of accepting the salvation procured for him and offered to him. To this extent he saves himself."

### III. A Company Blessed by Obedience (Acts 2:41-47)

"Then they that gladly received his words were baptized . . ." (Acts 2:41): They "received" Peter's word in the sense that they believed it to be true. They adopted the truth as their rule of action.

"Were baptized . . . about three thousand souls": 3,000 were baptized, "buried in baptism," that day. Peter's sermon began at 9:00 A.M. (Acts 2:15). The proceedings at the temple would close as early as noon. This allows six hours for the baptizing before 6:00 P.M., the close of the day.

One can baptize easily one per minute. The twelve apostles could baptize 720 per hour, or the 3,000 could be immersed in four hours and fifteen minutes!

"And they continued steadfastly." (Acts 2:42): Many persons seem to suppose that Pentecostal power is attested to by STRIKING GIFTS or ABILITY IN PUBLIC SPEECH. Its best proof is found in the daily life of the believer! In this passage we have a kind of lightning summary of the characteristics of the first Church at Jerusalem.

"Steadfastly" describes obedient believers who keep on keeping on. They will be "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10c).

"Apostles' doctrine": It was a learning church. Jesus commanded the apostles to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19) or "TEACH ALL NATIONS." It is the duty of the disciples to LEARN, and to ABIDE IN THE THINGS TAUGHT AND LEARNED. "Doctrine" is not passive. It is ACTIVE. Let us journey, not looking to the sunset, but TO THE SUNRISE -- in glory!

"And fellowship": It was a church of fellowship. It had the quality of togetherness. Lord Nelson explained one of his great victories by saying: "I had the happiness to command a BAND OF BROTHERS. The church is only a real Church when it is a band of brothers.

Fellowship is sometimes used for contributions made for the poor (Rom. 15:26; II Cor. 9:13; 8:4).

"And in breaking of bread": This is the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 10:16; 11:20f; Acts 20:7).

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 43 - PAGE 5

"And in prayers": It was a PRAYING CHURCH. The early Christians always spoke to God before they spoke with men. They always went in to God before they went out to the work. Men who meet first with God can meet the problems of the world. Read Acts 1:14; 3:1; 4:23; II Thess. 5:17.

"And fear came upon every soul." (Acts 2:43): It was a reverent church. It was a wholesome fear which miracles naturally inspire, mingled with profound reverence for a community universally characterized by holy living. Things happened in that church. EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD; ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR GOD. When FAITH DIES work dies.

"And all that believed . . . had all things common" (Acts 2:44): It was a sharing church. A real Christian could not bear to have TOO MUCH when others have TOO LITTLE (verse 45). This community life of the Church was an accompaniment of the miraculous introduction of Christianity into the world, intended, we think to be an example extraordinary of WHAT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST COULD DO FOR MANKIND, but no more intended to be a permanent normal arrangement than the daily apostolic miracles. It was VOLUNTARY.

There is no mention of its practices in other New Testament church. Philip, one of the Seven, who ministered these tables, later lived in his own home in Caesarea" (Acts 21:8).

Many poor were in the Jerusalem church. Years later, Paul took great offerings to the mother church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:29; 24:17).

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple" (Acts 2:46): It was a worshipping church. The temple was the daily meeting place of the church. Its courts were open at all times. All Jews had as free access to them as to the streets of the city. Gentiles could go to the court of the Gentiles Acts 3:11; 5:12, 20, 25, 42).

It was a happy church. A great gladness possessed each Christian. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms. He has a deep, a biding joy and peace that the world can not give, nor take away!

"And having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47): It was a church whom others could not help liking. The church exerted a gracious influence. They were magnetic Christians.

"And the Lord added to the church daily." It was a growing church -- perpetual growth. There were daily additions to the church. All who came were "saved" by obeying the gospel that Peter preached on Pentecost.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was addressed in Acts 2:22? What were they exhorted to do?
2. What four facts are asserted in Acts 2:22-24 of "Jesus of Nazareth"?
3. What is the distinction between "mighty works," "wonders," and "signs" (Acts 2:22)?
4. Who were the "wicked" men of Acts 2:23? Why were they so called?
5. Meaning of "loosed the pains (pangs) of death" (Acts 2:24)? Why was it not possible?
6. Do you think the resurrection of Jesus was the pivotal point in Peter's Pentecostal sermon (Acts 2:24, 31, 32)? What place does the resurrection occupy in the book of Acts (Acts 3:15; 4:2, 10, 33; 5:30; 9:3-6; 10:40; 13:30-37; 17:3, 18, 31; 22:6-11; 24:15, 21; 26:8,23)?
7. Whose resurrection did David predict (Acts 2:25-31)? Why?
8. What is meant by his soul being "in hell" or Hades (Acts 2:27, 31)?
9. Were the apostles witnesses of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:32; 1:21,22)?
10. How did they know Jesus was at the right hand of God's throne (Acts 2:33-35,4; John 16:7)?
11. What is the value of this quotation from David (Acts 2:34, 35; Psalm 110:1; Matt. 22:43)?
12. How had God made Jesus Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36)? What is the meaning of "Lord" and "Christ" (Matt. 28:18-20)?
13. What "pricked" these men in their hearts (Acts 2:37, cf. 36; John 12:32)?
14. "Do" for what (Acts 2:37)? What were they told to DO (Acts 2:38), and for what?
15. Does Peter's answer allow "remission of sins" to COME BEFORE BAPTISM (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 22:16)?
16. What is the gift of the Holy Ghost, or Spirit (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:2; 5:22, 23)?
17. Meaning of "received his word" (Acts 2:41 and could 3,000 be immersed that day)?
18. In what four things did the Christians "continue steadfastly" (Acts 2:42)? Define them.
19. Is reverence, sharing, gladness, church attendance, and "favor with all the people" whose faith is in God a daily experience with you (Acts 2:43-47)? If not, why not?
20. Can you "join" the New Testament Church (Acts 2:47b)? What is the meaning of "such as should be saved" (Acts 2:40,38)?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 44 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 44

Page 1

Acts 3

Memory Verses: Acts 3:19

Memory Verse:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

**THE FIRST APOSTOLIC MIRACLE**

In Acts 2 we considered the first sermon preached by Peter in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 14, 17). A wholesome fear, a powerful service, a mutual ministry, a great gladness, a gracious influence, and perpetual growth made an indelible impression "upon every soul" (Acts 2:42-47). There were no iceberg Christians in the First Church, Jerusalem!

**Miracles in Acts**

The first apostolic miracle resulted in the first opposition (Acts 3:1-4:31). The place given to miracles in the book of Acts amazes us.

"The man who is attempting to get rid of the supernatural from his Bible and from his religion does not believe in God" (Morgan). "In the beginning God created . . ." (Gen. 1:1). Grant the truth of Gen. 1:1 and there is no difficulty with the miracles from Genesis through Revelation!

Acts starts with visible appearances of Jesus after his death to His disciples (Acts 1:3). On Pentecost the Holy Spirit is visibly manifested in tongues as of fire (Acts 2:3). Wonders and signs were done by the apostles (Acts 2:43). The lame man healed (Acts 3:7-11), deeply impressed the city (Acts 4:16, 17). God answered prayer by an earthquake (Acts 4:31). Ananias and Sapphira died by a stroke from the Lord (Acts 5:5-10). Signs and wonders by the apostles continued (Acts 5:12). Multitudes from surrounding cities were healed by Peter's shadow (Acts 5:15, 16). Prison doors were opened by an angel (Acts 5:19). Stephen wrought great wonders and signs (Acts 6:8). In Samaria Philip did great miracles and signs (Acts 8:6, 7, 13) and multitudes believed. Saul was arrested by a direct voice from heaven (Acts 9:3-9). At the word of Ananias, scales fell from Saul's eyes (Acts 8:17-18). In Lydda, Peter healed Aeneas (Acts 9:33-35). Peter raised Dorcas from the dead at Joppa, and many believed on the Lord (Acts 9:40-42). The angel appears to Cornelius, the speaking in tongues (Acts 10:3, 46). A voice from God sent Peter to Cornelius (Acts 10:8-22), and convinced the Jews that Peter was right (Acts 11:15, 18). A prison door opened of its own accord (Acts 12:10). The blinding of a sorcerer led the Proconsul of Cyprus to believe (Acts 13:11, 12).

Paul did signs and wonders in Iconium, a multitude believed (Acts 14:3, 4). At Lystra the healing of a cripple made the multitudes think that Paul was a god (Acts 14:8-18). Narration of signs and wonders convinced Jewish Christians that Paul's work among Gentiles was of God (Acts 15:12, 18). In Phillipi, Paul healed a soothsayer, and an earthquake led the jailer to obey the gospel (Acts 16:16-34). In Ephesus twelve men spoken tongues (Acts 19:6), and special miracles by Paul (Acts 18:11, 12) made the word of the Lord prevail mightily (Acts 18:20). Paul raised a young man from the dead at Troas (Acts 20:8-12). In Melita, Paul's hand was healed from the viper's bite (Acts 28:3-6), and made the natives think Paul was a god. Paul healed all on the island that had diseases (Acts 28:8, 9).

Miracles were the bells to call people to the Christian Church in Acts. Take miracles out of the book of Acts, and you have little left. In that age they were needed as a guarantee of the truth. God made abundant use of miracles to give Christianity a start in the world!

### I. A Man Who Received More than He Asked (Acts 3:1-10)

"Now Peter and John went up together." (Acts 3:1): They were ascending the terraces to the temple courts. It is thought that Peter was the oldest and John the youngest of the twelve.

"Hour of prayer . . . ninth hour": The Jewish day began at 6 o'clock in the morning and ended at 6 o'clock in the evening. The third hour is 9 a.m.; the sixth hour is 12 midday; the ninth hour is 3 p.m. For devout Jews there were three special hours of prayer -- 9 a.m., 12 midday, and 3 p.m. The apostles still kept up the customs and habits in which they had been trained. It was the hour of prayer, and Peter and John were going into the Temple to observe it. Acts 2:46 tells us they "continued daily with one accord in the temple. Christians need fixed places and times for prayer. "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). Private prayer is a preparation, NOT A SUBSTITUTE, FOR PUBLIC PRAYER. The people gathered in the temple were moral and religious, but not Christian. The apostles could preach Jesus to them.

"And a certain man lame . . . gate . . . Beautiful" (Acts 3:2): In the East it was the custom for beggars to sit begging at the entrance to a temple or shrine. Daily his friends brought him to the beautiful gate "to ask alms of them that entered into the temple." His friends knew where to place him. If people ever will be generous, it is when they are going to worship God.

"Gate . . . Beautiful": This gate is not so called elsewhere. It may have been the Gate of Nicanor on the east side looking towards Kidron described by Josephus (Ant. XV. 11, 3; War V. 5, 3). It was composed chiefly of Corinthian brass beaten in the form of a vine. It had been made in Greece, purchased by Herod the Great, and floated across the sea. It was seventy-five feet high and took six men to open and close it. In the morning sun it shone like a wall of gold. It was one of the wonders of the world.

"Look on us." (Acts 3:4): Peter fixed his eyes on the beggar and invited him to look on them. The crippled man doubtless took Peter's invitation as a promise of a large gift (verse 5),

"Silver and gold have I none." (Acts 3:6): There is no apology for poverty here. "Such as I have" does not mean it was inferior to money, but magnifies the greatness of what he had. It was better than gold. Being poor is no bar to usefulness.

"In the name of Jesus." It means the same as "by the authority of Jesus." The healing power IS IN THAT NAME (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 10:17; Acts 4:7, 10; 16:18).

"And he took him by the right hand. " (Acts 3:7): "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." By this authority Peter had commanded the man to begin to walk, and then go on walking. The beggar does not budge. He knows that he cannot walk. Peter, "The Right Handed Christian" pulled the man to his feet before he would try to walk.

"And he . . . stood, and walked . . . into the temple" (Acts 3:8): He leaped out repeatedly after Peter pulled him up. When he helped himself, he found new strength. This man who received more than he asked, entered with Peter and John "into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God!"

"Feet," "ankle bones," and "leaping up" are medical terms which Luke the "beloved physician" used. This miracle of healing transformed the man from lameness to leaping, from begging to praise. IN CONTRAST TO SOME SUPPOSED "FAITH HEALERS" TODAY WHO BLAME FAILURE TO HEAL ON THE LACK OF FAITH IN THE SICK PERSON, "THERE IS NOT THE SLIGHTEST EVIDENCE IN THE STORY OF ANY FAITH ON THE PART OF THE MAN" (Morgan).

"And they . . . were filled with wonder." (Acts 3:9, 10): The healing was performed in the sight of all, thus opening the way for Peter to preach Jesus as the one who really had done the healing. Every miracle of Jesus and His apostles was performed TO DIRECT ATTENTION to the One through whom the miracle was wrought. As a great doctor said: "I bandage the wounds; but GOD HEALS THEM."

## II. A Sermon with a Miracle As a Text (Acts 3:11-16)

"And as the lame man . . . held Peter and John" (Acts 3:11): The lame man now healed "held Peter and John" perhaps out of gratitude and fear (Luke 8:38).

"The people ran together . . . porch . . . Solomon's": More properly, it was a portico. A colonnaded roof extended along the eastern wall of the court of the Gentiles. Josephus (ANT. 15. 3, 5) says it consisted of "rows of stone columns twenty-seven feet high, with a roof of cedar resting on them and on the hall." The inner side would be open toward the temple. There were two rows of columns on the eastern side, hence the porch was sixty feet deep, 1530 feet long. The southern porch was 922 feet long, ninety feet wide. These porches protected people from the rain in winter and from the sun in summer. They were huge and could accommodate huge crowds.

"All the twelve apostles might be preaching in them at the same hour, each to a large audience and yet be far enough apart to avoid confusion of sound" (McGarvey).

It was called "Solomon's" because it was built on a remnant of the foundations of the ancient temple. Jesus had once taught here (John 10:23).

"And when Peter saw it . . . why marvel ye at this?" (Acts 3:12): The people looked their amazement, and Peter answered that. "Ye men of Israel" was the covenant name and so conciliatory, the stock of Israel (Phil. 3:5). It is no marvel that God can perform miracles. Peter was quick to tell the people that he was not responsible for the healing of the lame man. Jesus had done it! The miraculous gifts our Lord gave the apostles were temporary (I Cor. 13:8). This brands as imposters all "faith healers" today.

"God . . . hath glorified His Son" (Acts 3:13): God did this by raising Jesus from the dead. "Servant" is the correct rendering of "Son " the servant of Jehovah being a Messianic designation. The people had "delivered up and denied" the Son when Pilate "was determined to let him go."

"But ye denied the Holy One . . . desired a murderer" (Acts 3:14): Peter tried to stab their minds with the realization of the sheer crime of the Cross. Men rejected God's Holy One and Just, and chose a murderer to be released. They chose a destroyer of life in place of the giver and "Prince of life" (verse 14). Him whom they killed God " raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (verse 15). "Prince of Life" signifies Author, Originator of life (John 1:8; Col. 1:14-20; Heb, 1:2f). These four points of contrast form the steps of a climax.

"And his name through faith in his name . . ." (Acts 3:16): Faith in the power or authority of Jesus. The power was in the faith of the apostles, not in that of the man who was healed. Modern "faith healers" who say that the one to be healed must have faith, show that their lower differs from that of the apostles.

"Perfect soundness": This means perfect in all its parts, complete, whole.

It may be well to observe here, that while faith was necessary on the part of one to whom miraculous in order to work any particular miracle, NO FAITH EVER ENABLED ONE TO WORK A MIRACLE TO WHOM SUCH POWERS HAD NOT BEEN IMPARTED. The notion, therefore, which has existed in some minds from time to time ever since the apostolic period, THAT IF OUR FAITH WERE STRONG ENOUGH WE ALSO COULD WORK MIRACLES, HAS AS LITTLE FOUNDATION IN SCRIPTURES AS IT HAS IN EXPERIENCE" (McGarvey).

### III. A Prophecy Fulfilled and Another to Be Fulfilled (Acts 3:17-21)

"I know that through ignorance ye did it . . ." (Acts 3:17): The people showed deep mental anguish at what they had heard. "If they had known what they were doing, they would not knowingly have crucified the Messiah" (I Cor. 2:8). Ignorant sins may cause as dire effects as willful transgression, but they are easier repented of. The sinner who repents will seek to atone for his mistakes (Luke 19:7-10).

"Prophets . . . Christ should suffer": The death of Christ, which they had secured, was part of the plan of salvation of which all the prophets had spoken. This did not mitigate their crime, but it declared to them the divine provision for the forgiveness of sin. The sovereignty of God and the free agency of man are laid side to side as facts.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 foretold the blindness of the Jews toward Jesus. God announced it fully beforehand. The Jews' crime, though real, was carrying out God's purpose (Acts 2:23; John 3:16; I Cor. 1:23; I Pet. 4:13; 5:1).

"Repent ye therefore. " (Acts 3:19): The command to repent assumes they believed (Acts 2:38). God's purpose and patience call for instant change of attitude on their part.

"Be converted": Or "turn again" assumes the freedom of the will to ACT AS THEY DETERMINED. "This expression (be converted) conveys an idea not at all to be found in the original. It conveys the idea of passivity -- be converted, as if they were to yield to some foreign influence which they were now resisting. But the idea of being passive in this is not conveyed by the original word. The word properly means to turn --to return to a path from which one has gone astray; and then to turn away from sins, or to forsake them" (Albert Barnes). The verb is active, not passive.

When his hearers heard Peter command, "Repent, and turn again," they could but understand that they were to TURN BY BEING BAPTIZED, thus entering upon a new and better life. Baptism was the turning act."

"Turn again" occupies the same position between repentance and remission of sins that the command "Be baptized" does in Acts 2:38. He then said, "Repent, and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins." Now he says, "Repent and turn, that your sins may be blotted out."

The blotting out of sins is a metaphorical expression for their forgiveness, the forgiveness being compared to blotting out from a waxen tablet that that was written thereon. Ancient papyrus used ink with no acid in it. The ink did not "bite into" the papyrus as modern ink does. It simply lay upon the top of the papyrus. To erase the writing a man might take a wet sponge and simply wipe it away. So GOD WIPES OUT THE SIN OF THE FORGIVEN MAN.

"Times of refreshing shall come": Forgiveness of sins has been made possible by the first coming of Christ, by his sufferings and death (John 3:16, 17). The times or seasons of refreshing are placed here where "the gift of the Holy Spirit" was placed in Acts 2:38.

"And he shall send Jesus Christ." (Acts 3:20): Jesus is coming again. Universal blessing is conditioned upon his appearing a second time. Every repentant believer is hastening that day and such messages as this of Peter lead men to repentance.

"Times of restitution . . ." (Acts 3:21): Or times of restoration. This verb is used by Jesus of the spiritual and moral restoration wrought by the Baptist as Elijah (Matt. 17:11; Mark 9:12), and by the disciples to Jesus in Acts 1:6. As a technical medical term it means complete restoration to health. This "restoration" is limited to "all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of .all his holy prophets since the world began." Jesus will not return till all these predictions have been fulfilled.

**IV. The True Mission of the True Prophet (Acts 3:22-26)**

“Moses . . . A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up . . .” (Acts 3:22): Moses foretold Jesus in Deut. 18:15-19. The great lawgiver had specifically predicted the coming of Christ and had declared the doom of all who refuse to accept him: "Every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed" (verse 23). "All the prophets from Samuel" (verse 24) had foretold the present days of grace. They had spoken of the atoning work of Christ, and of his coming glory. The promises of blessing were for "ALL THE KINDREDS OF THE EARTH" (verse 25), but first of all the promise had come to Israel. To them Christ had been sent to bless them in turning them from their sin. The same Saviour is being presented today; his appointed messengers declare his pardoning grace (verse 26). To reject Him today is to forfeit sharing the blessedness of His perfected Kingdom!

**QUESTIONS**

1. Did Peter and John continue to worship in the Jewish temple and synagogues after the Church was established (Acts 2:46; 5:21-26; 9:20; 13:5, 14; 17:1-3, 10, 17; 19:8; 21:26-28)?
2. Were there any "iceberg Christians" in the First Church, Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-47)?
3. Is it possible to "get rid" of miracles in the Bible? Can you indicate what place they occupy in the book of Acts? To what may miracles be likened?
4. What were the hours of prayer (Acts 3:1)? Is private prayer a substitute for public prayer (I Thess. 5:17)?
5. For what purpose was the lame man carried to the gate of the temple daily (Acts 3:2)?
6. In what wall was the gate, and why is it called Beautiful?
7. What request did the lame man make of Peter and John (Acts 3:3), and what did Peter say (Acts 3:4) to the man? What did the man expect (Acts 3:5)?
8. Was Peter apologizing for his lack of silver and gold (Acts 3:6)? Is good health to be preferred above silver and gold?
9. What is the significance of "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 3:6; 4:7,10; 16:18; Matt. 28:18-20)? Are you daily "A Right Handed Christian" to lift up the fallen?
10. Should we not be just as grateful for continuous health as the lame man was for restored health (Acts 3:8-10)?
11. How did all the people know the man (Acts 3:10)?
12. Why was the portico called Solomon's (Acts 3:11)?
13. Why Peter's disclaimer (Acts 3:12)? What was Peter's fourfold charge against the Jews (Acts 3:13-15, 17, 18, 22-25; Luke 24:25-27)?
14. To what extent were they in "ignorance" (Acts 3:17)? In what sense did God do the fulfilling (Acts 3:18)?
15. How were they to "be converted" or turn (Acts 3:19; 2:38)?
16. What is the meaning of "blotted out" (Acts 3:19)? What the "seasons of refreshing?" On what conditions were these blessings offered?
17. Did Peter preach the "Second Coming" (Acts 3:20)?
18. What were the "times of restitution" or restoration (Acts 3:21)?
19. In what ways was Jesus a prophet like unto Moses (Acts 3:22)? Who were to be blessed first under the Abrahamic covenant, Jews or Gentiles (Acts 3:25, 26; Rom. 3:1, 2; 1:16)?
20. Why do we not study the Bible more since it centers in Christ (Acts 3:24-26)? Why no exhortation in Acts 3?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 45 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 45

Page 1

Acts 4:1-31

Memory Verses: Acts 4:18-20

Memory Verses:

"And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter, and John answered and said unto them, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.'" (Acts 4:18-20).

**FIRST PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS**

Truth is intolerant! Why? Because it is truth -- truth proved and demonstrated by all history, ancient and modern. History is HIS STORY.

The resurrection is the keystone of Christianity. The preaching of this message brought about the first persecution toward the apostles. The resurrection was the pivotal point of Peter's preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2:24, 31, 33, 36), the main thing in Peter's second sermon (Acts 3:15), and in the defense before the council (Acts 4:10). Read also Acts 4:33; 5:30; 9:3-6; 10:40; 13:30, 31; 17:3, 18, 31, 32; 22:6-11; 24:15, 25; 26:8, 23.

**I. A Foolish Move By "Wise" Leaders: Peter and John Arrested (Acts 4:1-4)**

"And as they spake . . . Sadducees came upon them" (Acts 4:1): The sermon of Peter and John must have lasted sometime. It had been 3 p.m. when the apostles first started to enter the temple for prayer. It was now late in the day. The officials of the Sanhedrin must have heard of the healing (Acts 3:1-11), and decided to STOP THE SERMON.

"The captain of the temple": Twenty-four bands of Levites guarded the temple, one guard at a time. They watched the gates. The commander of each band was called captain, the Sagan. He was the High Priest's right-hand man, his chief of staff his executive officer. Josephus says he was next to the high priest (WAR. VI. 5, 3). The Sanhedrin had seventy-one members. The High Priest was ex officio president.

"Sadducees": Most of the priests were Sadducees. They were the most aristocratic, wealthy and powerful class in Jerusalem. They denied the supernatural, the resurrection, spirits and angels. They affirmed the freedom of the human will. They held the oral tradition of the Pharisees in contempt. They were the rationalists in religion, the skeptics of that day. They controlled the Sanhedrin. They "came upon them": they burst upon Peter and John suddenly, or stood by them in a hostile attitude here (Luke 20:1; 24:4; Acts 6:12; 17:5; 22:20; 23:11). They "broke up" the meeting rudely.

"Grieved that they taught . . . preached . . . the resurrection" (Acts 4:2): The apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Sadducees DENIED THE RESURRECTION, hence the message was unpopular. Such teaching and preaching must stop! They resented the claim about Jesus whom they had helped crucify (Matt. 22:23). Caiaphas, the High Priest, and Annas his father-in-law -- the real Jewish High priest -- were accounted as murderers.

The Pharisees had led the opposition during the ministry of Jesus because our Lord exposed their hypocrisy and broke their traditions. They had not yet learned to hate the apostles; as yet they had not openly assailed them.

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 45 - PAGE 2

"And they . . . put them in hold" (Acts 4:3): "Jailbirds were no more popular then than now" (Walker). The first persecution of Christian resulted in two preachers going to jail, probably in one of the chambers of the temple. Like all bigots, these leaders chose to persecute rather than to investigate. NO CHARGE was placed against the apostles. The jailing was illegal. "It was now eventide" and no trial could take place before the next day, a regulation violated in the case of Jesus.

"Howbeit many . . . believed . . . men . . . five thousand" (4:4): "True to the custom of Oriental nations even to the present day, the number of men alone is here given; the women were not counted. The whole number of believers of both sexes must have been largely in excess of these figures" (McGarvey). 3,000 men became Christians the first day the church was in existence (Acts 2:41). Then the "number of men" was 5,000. Then "multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples MULTIPLIED in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

In a few months every honest minded Jew in Jerusalem had many opportunities to HEAR and OBEY the Gospel. God's plan called for the Gospel to go to "EVERY CREATURE" (Mark 16:15, 16). It took a terrible persecution following the death of the first Christian martyr to DRIVE THE GOSPEL OUT OF JERUSALEM (Acts 7:58-8:4).

This is the last time that the converts are numbered. There can be no numbering in this Church age. NO ONE KNOWS THE NUMBER OF the members of the body of Christ, but God Only!

### II. Persecutors Made Defendants (Acts 4:5-12)

"And it came to pass on the morrow . . ." (Acts 4:5): The arrest had been made late in the afternoon the day before. Peter and John had plenty of time overnight for reflection, prayer, and mutual encouragement before the trial.

"Ruler, and elders, and scribes": The three classes composing the Sanhedrin. "Rulers," chief priests who were Sadducees; the scribes were usually Pharisees; the elders not in either class of 24 priests, 24 elders, 22 scribes. The High Priest was ex officio president. The Pharisees were fanatics for the law. The elders were respected men in the community.

"Annas" (Acts 4:6): Ex-high priest at that time. The High priesthood was hereditary. In Roman times the office of High Priest was the subject of intrigue, bribery and corruption. Between 37 BC and 67 AD there were no fewer than 28 High Priests. After a High Priest as deposed he was often the power behind the throne. Of the 28 High Priests already mentioned all but SIX came from FOUR priestly families. Annas was father-in-law to Caiaphas whom the Romans considered High Priest at that time. John and Alexander are the leaders among the Sadducees in pressing the case against Peter and John.

This was a council or "sitting together" of seventy men, presided over by the High Priest. Numbers 11:16-17 gives the origin of this Supreme Court of the Jews. Twenty-three members constituted a "lesser Sanhedrin." The Sanhedrin had the power of death ONLY in CASE OF VIOLATION OF THE SACRED AREA OF THE TEMPLE BY A GENTILE.

"And they asked, By what power, or . . . name" (Acts 4:7): No formal charge had been placed against the prisoners. It was a court of inquiry. The Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle. They began to inquire, as it by some magical formula such as exorcists practiced (Acts 19:13) as if to catch them by (Deut. 13:1f). It was a trick question to trip the apostles and bring about their ultimate death.

"But Peter filled with the Holy Ghost . . . Ye rulers" (Acts 4:8): Remember to whom Peter spoke. It was an audience of the wealthiest, most intellectual and powerful in the land. Peter, the Galilean fisherman,

stands before them rather as their Judge than their VICTIM. He remembered the promise of Jesus (Matt. 10:17-20). "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel" is a tactful approach. We say, "Your Honor" to judges. He was "filled with the Spirit": The apostles had clear vision, certainty, strong passion, and unflinching courage. Peter was once a coward, boastful and profane. Now he is bold and courageous. This group of men had condemned Jesus to death. Peter knew it; he was taking his life in his hands.

When Achilles, the great Greek warrior, was told that if he went to battle he would surely die, he answered in the immortal sentence: "Nevertheless, I am for GOING ON!" Peter knew the peril in which he stood. He, too, was for going on.

"Examined of the good deed" (Acts 4:9): The question of the council left Peter free to select the subject of his answer. He calls attention to the strange fact that he and John were being questioned not for some EVIL ACT, but for a "good deed." As to the power by which he accomplished the miracle, he again affirmed that it was by "the NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, WHOM, YE CRUCIFIED" that the MAN WAS STANDING "BEFORE YOU WHOLE" (verse 10). Peter did not defend himself. He carried the attack to the council. He accused them of CRUCIFYING THE MESSIAH. They were responsible for His death. The prosecutors became defendants at this trial! They could not go on record against Jesus and the new teaching without finding fault with the case of healing.

"This is the stone . . . set at naught of your builders . . . HEAD OF THE CORNER" (Acts 4:11): The experts, the architects, had rejected Jesus for their building (Psa. 118:22) as Jesus had pointed out (Matt. 21:42; Luke 20:17).

A tradition of Solomon's temple tells of a stone of peculiar shape which the builders, finding no immediate use, dropped. It became covered with debris. When they were ready for the corner stone, it could not be found. At last someone remembered the peculiar stone rejected by the builders. When removed from the rubbish heap it proved to be the desired corner stone!

The stupid Jewish leaders rejected and crucified Jesus. "God raised from the dead" (verse 10) the Lord Jesus. He was now at His Father's right hand. HE HAD HEALED THE CRIPPLED man through the apostles. God had made Jesus "the head of the corner," either the highest corner stone right under the roof, or the corner stone under the building (Isa. 28:16) as Jesus showed, and as Peter here declares, and repeats later (I Pet. 2:6f).

"Neither is their salvation in any other." (Acts 4:12): These rulers, like all men, needed salvation. Peter emphatically states that there is salvation in Jesus Christ AND IN NO OTHER. The beggar found healing IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST. So could the rulers, if they would.

Some say, "The Buddhists, Confucianists, Mohammedans, and others are conscientious and are WORKING OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION." What? NEVER! There is ONLY ONE IN WHOM THERE IS SALVATION.

"None other name, none other hope in Heaven, or earth, or seas,

"None other hiding-place from guilt and shame, None beside Thee!"

We are not SAVED by the merits of Mary, or of the Saints. Mary is NOT THE "DOOR of PARADISE." Jesus is "THE DOOR"; He alone is "THE WAY, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6; Matt. 16:16; John 6:69; I Tim. 2:5).

### III. A Humiliated Court Drops a Case (Acts 4:13-22)

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John." (Acts 4:13): The proud rulers were amazed at the boldness of these two Galilean fishermen. Instead of cringing before them, the apostles boldly silence

their accusers with the truth. The rulers could not contradict what they heard (verse 14). The lame man, now healed, was standing there before their eyes. He was PROOF OF WHAT PETER SAID. "The man was above forty years old" (verse 22).

"Unlearned and ignorant men": The apostles were unschooled, common men. They were "unlearned" or unlettered men without technical training in the professional rabbinical schools of Hillel or Shammai. Jesus himself was so regarded "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John 7:15). "Ignorant" is a layman, a private person, a common man not skilled in the schools; a man not in office, Peter and John were men of ability and courage, but they did not belong to the sect of the rabbis.

"Been with Jesus": The rulers began to wonder, and kept it up. They began to recognize them as men that they had seen with Jesus. Would to God that unsaved people nowadays might be forced to the same conclusion about us modern day Christians!

"They conferred among themselves . . . we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:15, 16): The defense had AN UNANSWERABLE FACT. That the man had BEEN HEALED it was impossible to deny. He was with Peter and John. "WHAT shall we do to these men?" They admit the "notable miracle" had been done. "We cannot deny it!" It will do no good to do so. The news had circulated all over Jerusalem. These rulers COULD HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED the TRUTH of the apostles' teaching, so wonderfully confirmed by the sign of healing!

"But . . . threaten them . . . speak henceforth to no man in this name" (Acts 4:17): They forbid the apostles to speak or teach "in the name of Jesus" (verse 18). The rulers hardened their hearts. They determined to halt the message about Jesus by threats.

"But Peter and John answered . . ." (Acts 4:19): The apostles stoutly affirm that their commission was from the highest authority. They must "hearken . . . unto God!" Impossible silence.

Our hardest rocks are just transformed mud, mud that has passed through the ministry of terrific fire. Here is Simon Peter, once as yielding as mud, having passed through the discipline of flame, is now firm and irresistible as rock.

The apostles calmly inform the rulers, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (verse 20). By these words they "virtually declared the Church to be independent of the Jewish State, and they repudiated the rulers as being opposed to God on whose side the apostles claimed to be. Peter and John may not have seen the full significance of their words; but their bold determination to witness for Christ was the first step in the development of the church from a Jewish sect into a universal brotherhood."

"They let them go" (Acts 4:21): The court drops the case because of fear of the people. The rulers were cowards. They were afraid of the people they ruled. The people kept on glorifying God while the Sanhedrin threatened Peter and John.

#### IV. Liberated Prisoners Make a Case (Acts 4:25-31)

"And being let go, they went to their own company" (Acts 4:23): Peter and John immediately returned to the company of believers. They reported all that had taken place.

"They lifted up their voice to God" (Acts 4:22): Confronted with opposition, the disciples took themselves to prayer. "Where can I go but to the Lord?"

"Lord" -- "Despota" Our word despot. This is an old word for the relation of a master to his slaves or household servants (I Tim. 6:1; II Tim. 2:21; Tit. 2:9; I Pet. 2:18). Simeon thus addressed God (Luke 2:20). In the hour of danger, the Christian Church had conviction of the POWER OF GOD, the Creator.

Once the papal envoy threatened Martin Luther with what would follow if he persisted in his course.

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 45 - PAGE 5

He warned him that in the end his followers would desert him. "Where will you be then?" demanded the envoy. "THEN AS NOW," Luther answered, "IN THE HANDS OF GOD!" See Romans 8:31f.

"David . . . Why did the heathen rage" (Acts 4:25): MAN'S REBELLION against God is FUTILE. Psalm 2:1f is here ascribed to David. Baumgarten suggests that Christians sang the second Psalm, and then Peter applied it to this emergency. "Rage" is used of the neighing of well-fed, spirited horses; they prance and stamp the ground. In the end they will have to accept the discipline of the reins.

"The kings . . . rulers . . . against the Lord" (Acts 4:26): They were against the Messiah.

"Both Herod and Pontius Pilate . . . Gentiles . . . people of Israel" (Acts 4:27: Luke tells (Luke 23:12) of the reconciliation between Herod and Pilate at the trial of Jesus. Peter interprets this prophecy as directly fulfilled in their conduct towards Jesus Christ

"Thy counsel determined" (Acts 4:28): "They rise above sight and seem to see the Hand which 'shapes men's ends, rough hew them how they will'" (Furneaux).

"Grant unto thy servants . . . all boldness" (Acts 4:29): Peter and John had defied the Sanhedrin in verse 20. All the same and all the more they pray for courage to live up to their brave words. In the hour of trial, the Christians turned to God. "Take it to the Lord in prayer" today! They ask for God to vindicate His message with results (verse 30).

"And when they had prayed" (Acts 4:31): Immediate results came. The place where they were was "shaken." They were all "filled with the Holy Ghost": A new filling, not a re-baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were not left comfortless. New power in service and speaking come to us in some "upper room" when we meet to read the Scriptures, to sing, and to unite our hearts in prayer. TRY IT.

### Acts 4 Outlined

- The Persecution (Acts 4:1-4)
- The Preaching (Acts 4:5-12)
- The Prohibition (Acts 4:13-22)
- The Praise (Acts 4:23)
- The Prayer (Acts 4:24-31)
- The Participation (Acts 4:32-37)

QUESTIONS

1. Is truth intolerant (John 14:2; Acts 4:1)?
2. What was the cause of the arrest of Peter and John (Acts 4:2, 7, 10-12; 3:16)?
3. Who was the “captain of the temple” (Acts 4:1; I Chron. 23:5; 26:1-19)?
4. Why were the Sadducees in the lead in “stopping” the apostles (Acts 4:2)?
5. Meaning of “put them in hold” (Acts 4:3)? Of what must Peter and John have been reminded (John 18:15-18; Matt. 10:17-20)?
6. Who was included in the 4,000 (Acts 4:4; 2:41)? Were women members of the First Church, Jerusalem (Acts 5:14)? Any priests (Acts 6:7)?
7. What “rulers” (Acts 4:5)? Who were John and Alexander?
8. What question did the Sanhedrin ask Peter and John (Acts 4:7)? Why no definite charge?
9. Meaning of “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 4:8)?
10. Meaning of the remark about “the stone” (Acts 4:11; Matt. 21:42; Luke 20:17)?
11. Through whom alone can we be saved (Acts 4:12; I Tim, 2:5; John 14:6)?
12. What did this bold testimony of Peter and John prove to the Jewish leaders (Acts 4:13)? Do we remind folk that we have “been with Jesus” or with the devil?
13. What led the rulers to a private consultation (Acts 4:13-15)? Why was the man there (Acts 4:14)?
14. What shows the hypocrisy of the persecutors (Acts 4:16)? What was their motive (Acts 4:17)?
15. What prevented the Sanhedrin from punishing Peter and John (Acts 4:21, 22)? What punishment could the Council lawfully inflict (Acts 5:40)?
16. What is the rule for obeying rulers (Acts 4:19, 20)?
17. How old was the man who had been healed (Acts 4:22)?
18. Where did the apostles go when they were released (Acts 4:22)? What did the people do (Acts 4:24)?
19. How was David’s prophecy literally fulfilled in the rejection of Christ (Acts 4:25-27; Psa. 2:1f)?
20. Can you analyze the prayer (Acts 4:24-31)? The invocation (verse 24). A scripture fulfilled (verses 25-28)? The petition (verses 29, 30)? Was every part appropriate? Why was the place shaken (verse 31)? Why again filled with the Holy Spirit (verse 31)?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 46 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 46  
Acts 4:32-5:16

Page 1  
Memory Verses: Acts 4:32

Memory Verse:

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32).

**CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP AND DISCIPLINE**

Persecution can never destroy the church. It tempts the saints together more firmly in the fellowship in Christ.

“And they continued steadfastly in fellowship” (Acts 2:42): No single word can convey all its richness. “It and its cognate words are translated fellowship, communion, communication, distribution, contribution, partners, partakers.” The root of the word is “they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). Fellowship is having all things in common with God and man.

**Great Growth**

The fellowship had experienced great growth.

The threat of the rulers (Acts 4:17-21) did not stop the growth of the church. The church kept right on in its brotherly spirit. It kept right on growing. 3,000 on Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Then 5,000 men (Acts 4:4). Then “multitudes both of men and women” (Acts 5:14). “And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). The leaders of the opposition ranks became a part of the fellowship.

The rapid growth of the church was stopped temporarily by the judgment of God on Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11),

**I. The Unity and Liberality of the Church (Acts 4:32-37)**

A. The power of the fellowship (Acts 4:32).

“Them that believed... one heart and of one soul”: They were made ONE because they BELIEVED in Jesus Christ. Only those who believed were united. The crowd in Jerusalem that did not believe had nothing to do with the fellowship. Believers were submitted to Jesus Christ as Lord. They were ROOTED IN CHRIST. They bore the FRUITS of Christ (Matt. 7:16-20). The UNITY for which Christ prayed was now enjoyed by the church, and witnessed by the world (John 17:20, 21).

B. The principle of the fellowship (Acts 4:32b).

“Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own” (Acts 4:32b): God is the Owner. “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1; I Cor. 10:26), These Christians knew they were only STEWARDS of what God had entrusted unto them. All rejoiced in the good fortune of any one of the number (Rom, 12:10b). Self was submerged in the interest of the group.

C. The practice of the fellowship (Acts 4:32c-37)

“But they had all things common” (Acts 4:32c): They rejoiced as one They suffered as one (I Cor. 12:26). They showed the supremacy of the spiritual over the material (Luke 12:15). There was no compulsion but love (Matt. 22:37-39).

“The multitude” means that the larger part of the congregation VOLUNTARILY entered the pact – the common treasury was a financial arrangement agreed to by part of the church.

“The motive prompting these early disciples was doubtless similar to that leading to the organization of mutual insurance companies of various sorts, in addition to being an expression of brotherliness” (W. R. Walker). This experiment in communism was not intended to be a permanent arrangement, just as miracles ceased (I Cor. 13:8.11), and discipline by death of dishonest members ceased after God showed His will in this regard.

“If everyone lived an ideal life, perhaps socialism might be an ideal industrial system. But, on the other hand, if everybody lived an ideal life, practicing ‘love for neighbor as for self,’ such a system would be unnecessary” (W. R. Walker). Christian stewardship alone is enough: ‘All I hold is God’s, entrusted to me FOR USE IN HIS SERVICE.’”

The "community of goods" here described “was purely local, temporary, occasional and voluntary, It was practiced only in Jerusalem, not in other cities of the empire, and there only for a time. It was not observed by all Christians even in Jerusalem, in the sense that all their possessions were sold and placed in a common fund” (Charles R. Erdman).

"And with *great* power... witness of the resurrection” (Acts 4:33): This is effective witnessing. The apostles kept on giving their witness with power after the answer to their prayer (Acts 4:31). "Of the resurrection": It was on this issue that the Sadducees had arrested them (Acts 4:1-3).

“Great grace was upon them all“ (Acts 4:33b): The lives of the Christians backed up the preaching of the apostles. Your godly life is the best argument for Christ! We all need “Abounding Grace!”

"Neither... any... lacked“ (Acts 4:34): Only the needy received anything. Those who were not needy were the givers. The apostles at first acted as the dispensers of the common bounty (verse 35). Later they declared such work secondary and deacons were appointed to do such work (Acts 6:1-7). This scheme did not originate with the apostles, nor did the Holy Spirit authorize it. It was a spontaneous outburst of the love of the Christians, who were permitted to try the experiment,

"Joseph... Barnabas... having land, sold it“ (Acts 4:36, 37): His name was Joseph not Jesus. He was nicknamed “Barnabas,” or Consoler and Exhorter (Acts 11:2). The BIGNESS OF BARNABAS appeals to us (Acts 11:24; 9:27; 11:19-26; Gal. 2:13). This wealthy man sold his land and gave the money to the common treasury (verse 37).

A man said he was once so ill that “six doctors had a consolation over me.” No doubt the doctor’s consultation over him must have been consolation to the sick one.

The apostles bestowed upon Joseph a new name. He was only Joseph before. Now he is Joseph Barnabas, that is, Joseph the Consoler. They gave Joseph this new name because it so well expressed the man’s character. He had unusual ability in rousing, encouraging, consoling and strengthening.

### **The Right View of Property**

Note:

1. Sale of property was quite voluntary.
2. The right of possession was not abolished.
3. The community had nothing to do with the money till it had been given them.

4. The community did not share alike.
5. The distribution was according to need (Acts 4:35b).

## II. A Picture of Discipline in the First Church (Acts 5:1-16)

### A. Prevarication (Acts 5:1-4).

“But a certain man named Ananias...” (Acts 5:1): The name means “Jehovah hath been gracious.” He is the patron saint of liars and “of double entry bookkeepers” – one for stark truth, the other for show “Sapphira”: Her name means “Beautiful.”

“Sold a possession”: The praise bestowed properly on Barnabas became a pitfall to Ananias and his wife Sapphira.

“And kept back part of the price...” (Acts 5:2): This husband and wife could not stand to hear the people praise Joseph. They wanted praise for giving all, yet they took care of themselves by keeping “back part of the price.” Here is the beginning of The Ananias Club!

“His wife also being privy to it”: Moffatt translates it: “With the connivance of his wife.” Weymouth: “With her full knowledge and con-sent.” Instead of opposing the lie her husband proposed, she gave her consent – an ugly, not a beautiful act.

“But Peter said, Ananias, why... lie to the Holy Ghost“ (Acts 5:3): Satan filled the heart of Ananias with a lie. Satan is the Father of lies (John 8:44). It is not a sin when an evil thought comes into your mind. It is sin to INVITE EVIL to STAY THERE. (James 4:7). Peter accuses Ananias of having “kept back” dishonestly, or having fraudulently concealed part of the price.

“In thine own power... lied... unto God“ (Acts 5:4): Ananias had lied not only to men, but also to God. He was guilty of fraud, impiety and sacrilege. He and Sapphira had a right to refuse to enter into the communism. No Christian was forced to contribute all or any of his property. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was that of LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, of pretending to give all, when they knew they were giving only a part. “On the surface, it was avarice. Somewhat deeper, it was hypocrisy, Deepest of all, it was unfaithfulness” (Griffith-Thomas).

## Two Types of Attack

Two types of attack against the church have been presented:

1. Attack from cruel persecutors outside the church (Acts 4:3, 17-21).
2. Attack from professed believers inside the church (Acts 5:1-4; 20:29, 30).

The latter is more damaging than the former.

### B. The punishment (Acts 5:5-10).

“And Ananias... fell down... gave up the ghost” (Acts 5:5): He fell down dead. It was an act of the Judgment of God upon this liar. It is needless to blame Peter for the death of Ananias. He had brought the end upon himself. Physically the nervous shock could have caused the collapse.

It is on record that once Edward the First blazed with anger at one of his courtiers and the man dropped dead in sheer fear!

This story demonstrates the stubborn honesty of the Bible. It might have been left out. It shows that even in the First Church in Jerusalem there were very imperfect Christians! If the church were a society of perfect people there would be no church.

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 46 - PAGE 4

A court painted the portrait of Oliver Cromwell. Warts upon his face disfigured Cromwell. The painter, thinking to please the great man, omitted the disfiguring warts in the portrait. When Cromwell saw the picture, he said: "TAKE IT AWAY, and PAINT ME WARTS AND ALL." The Bible shows us its heroes and its great ages, warts and all.

"And the young men... buried him" (Acts 5:6): The speedy burial of Ananias indicated his body was considered so polluted with his sin that it must not be kept in sight. Like the death of Achan (Joshua 7), this is an example for all time to show God's displeasure at the sin of covetousness, lying to God and religious hypocrisy.

"His wife... Yea... buried her" (Acts 5:7-10): Sapphira without hesitation showed to Peter that she had conspired with Ananias. Her death is to show God's judgment on a wicked, lying heart. The crime of the lying actors and hypocrites is related to their financial standing in the church. They wanted to appear more liberal than they were. Are we honest with God in our financial relationships with this church (Mal. 3:8-10; I Cor. 16:2; 4:2; II Cor. 8:2-5; 9:6, 7),

### C. The power of a holy church (Acts 5:11-16)

"And great fear came upon all the church..." (Acts 5:11): The church and Jerusalem knew it was a dangerous thing to be a follower of Christ, unless one was willing to walk straight! The whole body of believers in Jerusalem who heard of the fate of Ananias and Sapphira had an attitude of godly awe. Imposters and intruders kept away from the church (verses 11, 13).

The time for positive action in any New Testament Church is a time for slinking away of those who don't mean business for God.

"The decision to erect a church building, for instance, always acts as a sort of purge of the membership. From here on it will cost; so a great many dare not attach themselves, or they detach themselves on whatever pretense they can think" (Luccock).

"And believers were the more added... multitudes... men and women" (Acts 5:14); There were no babies in this church. The church met in Solomon's colonnades. Daily there met where everybody could see them. They did not try to hide their devotion to Christ. It was an effective church. It did things.

"The shadow of Peter... they were healed" (Acts 5:15, 16): The power to work miracles was limited to the apostolic age (I Cor. 13:8-11). "The only way God could attest His approval of the messages was by means of miracles."

Of course, there was no virtue or power in Peter's shadow. That was faith with superstition. See Matt. 9:20; Mark 6:56; John 9:5 in the Gospels, and the use of Paul's handkerchief (Acts 19:12).

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 46 - PAGE 5

1. Do you think the persecution of outsiders can destroy the Lord's Church? Why? (Acts 4:3, 17-21)?
2. Can you show how the fellowship experienced great growth (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:16; 6:7)?
3. What temporarily slowed down this rapid growth of the church (Acts 5:1-11)?
4. Was the unity for which Christ prayed in this First Church (Acts 4:32; John 17:20, 21)?
5. What was the attitude of these Christians toward material things (Acts 4:32b; Psa. 24:1; I Cor, 10:26)?
6. What is the meaning of "had all things common" (Acts 4:32c; I Cor, 12:26)? What was the compelling motive (Matt. 22:37-39)?
7. How does Charles B. Erdman describe this "community of goods"?
8. To what did the apostles effectively witness (Acts 4:33)? What characterized all the Christians?
9. Who was Barnabas, and why called "The son of consolation" (Acts 4:37)". Why was he specially mentioned?
10. What is the first recorded sin among the members of the early church (Acts 5:1-9)?
11. Can you give five aspects toward property in the Jerusalem church?
12. Who were Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1)? Meaning of their names?
13. What prompted Ananias to lie? How did Satan fill his heart, if he conceived the thing in his own heart (Acts 5:3, 4; John 8:44; II Thess. 2:8-11; Titus 1:2)?
14. To whom did this Christian lie (Acts 5:3, 4)?
15. Had God demanded that Ananias and Sapphira deposit the price of their land in the common church fund (Acts 5:4)?
16. How did God's swift judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira affect the church (Acts 5:5, 11)? Was this Peter's act, or the Lord's (Acts 5:5, 9, 10)?
17. What visible evidence of power did God give in this early church (Acts 5:5, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19)?
18. In what sense were believers "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14; I Cor. 12:13, 27; Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 2:19)?
19. Was there any power in Peter's shadow to heal (Acts 5:15)?
20. Are you help, or a hindrance, in the work of this New Testament Church? If you are not bearing fruit to the glory of God, why not start right now (John 15:1-14)?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 47 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 47  
Acts 5:17-42

Page 1  
Memory Verses: Acts 5:41

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Memory Verse:

“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41).

**THE SECOND PERSECUTION**

If the Jerusalem church had condoned the sin of Ananias and Sapphira by retaining them in their fellowship after their exposure of lying and hypocrisy, the saints of the church would have mourned. Sinners would not have turned to the Lord. God condemned and punished the sinners. The church showed its abhorrence of their dead by burying them without ceremony in the clothing in which they died before their bodies were cold.

Such action made an impression on Jerusalem. Sin could not be tolerated (Rom. 6:24; Acts 5:1-11; Heb. 9:27).

People who wish to compromise with sin will shun such a church. But those who are in earnest about their souls and in serving God will seek such a church.

The church must discipline open sin (Rom, 16:17; I Cor. 5:1-7, 13). God will bless such a church.

The popularity of the apostles and the church promised the triumph of the Gospel in Jerusalem in a short time. To counteract this, Jewish leaders felt it was time to take drastic measures.

**I. The Apostles Imprisoned and Released (Acts 5:17-20)**

“Then the high priest rose up...” (Acts 5:17): “Annas the high priest” (Acts 4:6) was the real Jewish high priest, Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas, had been made high priest by Rome (John 18:13). Both were Sadducees who denied the resurrection.

“Filled with indignation”: The Sadducees started the persecution of Peter and John (Acts 4:1f). They were determined to stop the preaching of the resurrection. Jealousy and hatred began to boil.

“Apostles... put them in the common prison” (Acts 5:18): All the apostles were put in the public prison. “The ‘common prison,’ corresponding to our jail, consists of a single room in the governor’s cellar, with a floor of earth, and one small window, where all manner of people, from the murderer to the insolent debtor, are promiscuously crowded together. The only furniture consists of a bench, always occupied by the strongest; the rest lie on the floor or stand. We have visited prisons of this kind where we could only stand a few moments upon the threshold on account of the foul air. The keepers remain outside of the door (Acts 5:23), but the prisoners are not bound” (Van Lennep).

What do you suppose the twelve apostles did during the night? Or, what would the thousands of Christians think (I Pet. 4:12-19; Matt. 28: 20)?

“But the angel... Go, stand and speak” (Acts 5:19, 20): “The angel of the Lord opened the prison doors” and commanded the apostles to “stand,” take a stand, a bold and pictorial command to preach “all the words of this life.” “This life” is the message of the resurrection or eternal life which the Sadducees had forbidden the apostles to spread (John 6:63, 68; I Cor. 15:19).

A preacher must know the message, live it, and deliver it. In doing so, he will “need the courage of a lion, the skin of a hippopotamus, the endurance of a camel, the sagacity of an elephant, the patience of a donkey and as many lives as a cat!”

## II. A Bold Defense before an Awed Jury (Acts 5:21-32)

A. They are brought into court (Acts 5:21-26).

“And ... they entered into the temples early in the morning...” (Acts 5:21): The temple would be open for early worshippers and traffickers (John 2:14). Many were in Jerusalem for the first and last time in their lives. They would spend much time in the temple area rather than in sightseeing. Word would quickly spread of the release of the apostles. A large audience was soon formed. The apostles “taught” the people.

“But the high priest... called the council... senate”: The council would be the full Sanhedrin of seventy members, plus the high priest – a total of seventy-one. “The senate... of Israel” was probably a body of elders and other influential leaders who were called to assist the Sanhedrin in the deliberations against the apostles. Saul must have been present. The high priest and his cronies had probably spent a restless night. They knew that in the morning they would have to face the “nobodies” who persisted in preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel had won a vast multitude of the best people in the city and surrounding country.

The court met near the prison. A quorum was assured before the prisoners were ordered in.

“The officers... The prison... shut... no man within” (Acts 2:22, 23): The officers were literally under-rowers (Matt. 5:25) They executed the orders of the Sanhedrin. A guard stood on duty around the clock. God miraculously delivered the apostles. Each angel opened and closed the prison doors. “No rescue from outside had occurred, for the keepers were at their doors in ignorance of the release of the prisoners.” The purpose of this delivery was to convince the Sanhedrin that God was with the apostles. Honesty should have compelled them to disperse at once. They were staggered by the announcement; for a time they knew not what to do or say (verse 24).

“Behold, the men... standing in the temple, and teaching the people” (Acts 5:25): The apostles were obedient to God (verse 20; 4:18-21). Their release was a miracle. “The men had gone forth invisible to their keepers, though they were wide awake.”

“The captain... brought them without violence” (Acts 5:26): The temple chief of police brought the apostles gently. He saw his task was a dangerous one. Some of the crowd had stones in their hands! The re-arrest of the apostles was a daring outrage.

B. Accusation and defense (Acts 5:27-32).

“They set them before the council” (Acts 5:27): The captain did not treat the apostles as escaped prisoners are ordinarily treated. He “feared the people.” He did not want to be pelted with stones (Acts 14:19; John 10:31-33).

The council and the apostles are face to face; they are two opposing forces. The enemies of Christ were roused to action. They were the most august and representative assembly that could be gathered in Jerusalem. The apostles were a handful of men who by all human standards were nonentities.

“The high priest... Did not we straitly command you...?” (Acts 5:28): The command referred to occurs in Acts 4:17, 18 and the refusal of Peter and John in Acts 4:20. The Sanhedrin had two counts against the apostles: The apostles had violated the command “not to teach in this name” and you “intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” The high priest pays a high compliment to the faithfulness of the apostles in the confession that they “had filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.” The Jews had assumed responsibility for shedding Jesus’ blood (Matt. 27:25; 23:35).

"Then Peter... apostles... We ought to obey God..." (Acts 5:29): Peter as spokesman for the apostles bluntly tells the Sanhedrin they will obey God, not the Sanhedrin. What would happen in your life to ask: "WILL it please God?" before beginning anything.

Peter boldly affirmed that God (1) "Raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (verse 30). Peter refers to Deut. 21:23 as Paul does in Gal. 3:13, the curse pronounced on every one who "hangs upon a tree." (2) "Him hath God exalted" to the Father's right hand (verse 31). (3) Has given the Holy Spirit "to them that obey him" (verse 32).

Peter demonstrated his right to be called Peter (rock) in charging these men with the death of Jesus.

"God . . . give repentance to Israel" (Acts 5:31): God gives repentance not directly, but indirectly by giving the motives which lead to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Our Lord's death, burial, resurrection and exaltation give motive for one to change his mind and actions to God's will and way (Acts 17:30, 31),

"And we are his witnesses... so is also the Holy Ghost" (Acts 5:32): The apostles were witnesses of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit was a witness of the exaltation of Christ, the Prince of Life. A witness is a martyr, a confessor with the lip and life, an evidence, a credential. Without the Holy Spirit in our lives we will be "Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null" (Zech. 4:6).

"The Holy Ghost... given... obey him": The Holy Spirit is given only to those who have submitted to the Lord (Acts 2:38; John 7:38, 39), He dwells only in the obedient heart.

### **III. The Apostles Saved from Death by Gamaliel (Acts 5:33-42)**

"They were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them" (Acts 5:33): These religious leaders were cut to the heart with rage, not with godly sorrow as in Acts 2:37. Stephen's speech caused the same rage (Acts 7:54). They were allotting and planning to kill (as in Acts 2:23 and Luke 23:33) then and there. In Acts 4:7 the point was whether the apostles deserved stoning for curing the cripple by an evil power, according to the Sanhedrin. Of course God healed the man. Here the Sanhedrin plot and plan to kill the apostles for disobeying their command to teach in the name of Jesus. "They were on the point of committing a grave judicial blunder" (Furneaux).

"Then stood there up... a Pharisee, named Gamaliel" (Acts 5:34): Gamaliel was the grandson of Hillel, teacher of Paul (Acts 22:3), later president of the Sanhedrin, and the first of the seven rabbis termed "Rabban." Some think he was one of the doctors who heard the Boy Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:47), and that he was a secret disciple of Jesus like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. There is no evidence of either position. He was an opportunist Pharisee, as far as the record goes. His fame is preserved in the Talmud. He "commanded to put the apostles forth a little space" while he discussed the case.

"Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves" (Acts 5:35): Gamaliel champions the cause of the apostles as a Pharisee to score a point against the Sadducees.

"For before these days rose up Theudas" (Acts 5:36): Some leader who probably raised a commotion in the disturbances that followed the death of Herod the great.

"Judas of Galilee... drew away much people" (Acts 5:37): A zealot who had opposed the payment of tribute not many years before, in AD 8, and was overthrown and slain for instigating rebellion.

"These men... let them alone" (Acts 5:38): "Hands off" the apostles is Gamaliel's advice. "His advice regarding falsehood and truth is always safe to follow. We cannot overthrow God's truth; but error can-not stand in the light of investigation." We must not persecute advocates of false doctrines. We must refuse to

render error any support in any manner, Gamaliel warns the Sanhedrin that they cannot "overthrow" the apostles for they in that case must "overthrow" God (verse 39).

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“They agreed... beaten them” (Acts 5:40): The Sanhedrin dared not, execute the apostles, or keep them in prison. They whipped them in court and let them go. They accepted Gamaliel’s advice.

“And they departed... rejoicing” (Acts 5:41): This was the first experience of physical torture for Christ. It would not be their last. “The apostles felt honored by dishonor. Note the same use of ‘the Name’ as in James 2:7; III John 7. With the Jews this absolute use of ‘the Name’ meant Jehovah. The Christians now apply it to Jesus” (Robertson).

One characteristic of the early Church was the welcome given to shame, suffering and martyrdom joyfully embraced for our blessed Savior’s sake. “Suffering shame for his name” doubtless, meant they received thirty-nine stripes (Deut. 25:1-3; II Cor. 11:24; 12:10). Would you rejoice in being whipped for Jesus’ sake?

“And daily in the temple... in every house” (Acts 5:42): It was a great victory to go back to the temple where they had been arrested (verse 25) and at home or from house to house (see Acts 2:46). It was a great day of triumph for the disciples in Jerusalem,

“They ceased not”: They kept preaching the resurrection gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the direct object of the participles “didaskontes” (teaching) and “euaggelizomenoi” (preaching or evangelizing) while “the Christ,” (ton Christon) is the predicate accusative. The substance of the early apostolic preaching is that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. This theme saturates these opening chapters of Acts. Gamaliel's sage advice to the “council .. and all the senate of the children of Israel” (verse 21 had opened the prison doors for them. They took full advantage of the opportunity that was now theirs.

### Questions

1. What would have been the results if the Jerusalem church had condoned the sin of Ananias and Sapphira and retained them in the fellowship after their exposure of lying and hypocrisy?
2. Was the severe punishment Peter’s act, or the Lord’s (Acts 5:5, 9, 10)?
3. Were the religious leaders persuaded to believe through the miracles (Acts 5:17, 18)?
4. Who was now the high priest? Of what sect (Acts 5:17; 4:6; John 18:13)? Why were they jealous?
5. Where were the apostles placed (Acts 5:18)? How did Van Lenneps describe such a prison?
6. By what miracle did God vindicate and encourage the apostles (Acts 5:19)?
7. What command did the apostles receive and wholeheartedly obey (Acts 5:20, 21)?
8. What marks of a minister must one have to know, live and deliver the gospel of Christ?
9. What the council and the senate (Acts 5:21)?
10. Why the prison still shut, and the guards still at its doors (Acts 5:23)? Point of perplexity (Acts 5:24)? Why the danger of stoning (Acts 5:26)?
11. Meaning of “bring blood on us” (Acts 5:28; Matt. 27:25; 23:35)?
12. How was the answer that of “the apostles” (Acts 5:29)?
13. Did Peter deny the charge? What three things did Peter boldly affirm (Acts 5:30-32)?
14. How does Cod give repentance (Acts 5:31; 17:30, 31)?
15. How was the Holy Spirit a witness (Acts 5:32)? To whom alone does God give the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; John 7:38, 39)?
16. What was Gamaliel’s advice (Acts 5:34-39)? What do we know of him?
17. Merits of Gamaliel’s policy (Acts 5:38, 39)?
18. Did the Jewish leaders wholly follow Gamaliel’s advice (Acts 5:40)?
19. In what did the apostles rejoice (Acts 5:41; III John 7)?
20. Where, and what, was the apostles’ daily occupation (Acts 5:42)? Effect of all this on the people?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 48 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 48

Page 1

Acts 6

Memory Verses: Acts 6:3, 4

Memory Verses:

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:3, 4),

### **THE FIRST DEACONS**

Two general rules apply to the election of all church officers – evangelists or ministers, elders and deacons.

1. Whatever is done should be done to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31), and
2. Done decently and in good order (I Cor. 14:40).

Acts 5:12-16, 41, 42 gives a picture of a church which meant business for Christ. The church had a large membership – how large we do not know, but Acts 4:4 states “the number of men was about five thousand.”

### **Church Not Perfect**

The book of Acts takes away the false impression that some people have that the early church was absolutely perfect.

There were difficulties within the church, and “murmuring” in the midst of growth. God had purged two liars and hypocrites from the midst of the church (Acts 5:4, 5, 9, 10). There were no sects or schisms in the church. Baring Gould’s hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers” says, “We are not divided!” It is still true of the Church of Christ of which each congregation is a local unit or organism.

Acts 6 records the first difficulty within the early church in connection with the distribution of the fund for the relief for the poor.

#### **I. Selection of the First Deacons (Acts 6:1-7)**

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied...” (Acts 6:1): The new freedom from the intercession of Gamaliel was bearing rich fruit (Acts 5:34-40). The church experienced great, spiritual and numerical growth.

“There arose a murmuring”: The secret grumblings that buzz away till they are heard. Real or imaginary wrongs ought to be talked about freely **AMONG THE PERSONS INVOLVED**. A man who with malicious intentions goes about to influence persons in his petty schemes is despicable before God and man. “These... are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Prov. 6:16-19; I Tim. 5:13, 14). Such ought to be publicly rebuked (I Tim. 5:20).

“Grecians...”: Greek-speaking Jews, or Hellenists. They were members of the church who were born

outside Palestine, like Barnabas from Cyprus! (Acts 4:36, 37). They adopted Greek education and manners.

“Against the Hebrews”: Dwellers in Palestine, largely in Jerusalem, spoke Hebrew, or Aramaic and observed all the customs and traditions of the Hebrews. They held themselves superior to the foreign Jews, and something of this spirit showed itself in the church,

"Their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations": The daily distribution from the common church fund was mainly to widows. There was no general equalization of property, but only a division for the needy. The widows of the Grecians as comparative strangers in the city were the first to be unintentionally overlooked.

"It is not said that the murmuring arose among the widows, but because of them. Women and money occasion the first serious disturbance in the church life. This was evident sensitiveness that called for wisdom."

"Then the twelve called the multitude... unto them" (Acts 6:2); "The twelve" shows that Matthias (Acts 1:26) was recognized as an apostle, The whole church of many thousands could meet in the temple area.

"Doubtless the need for such an arrangement was foreseen by the Head of the Church, Christ, Col. 1:18) and by the Holy Spirit dwelling in the apostles. However, this foresight was not given to the apostles, nor were they moved to make the arrangement until the need for it was manifest to them and to the whole church. Thus the Spirit GUIDED THEM INTO ADDITIONAL TRUTH AS ADDITIONAL TRUTH WAS NEEDED". Until now the apostles were the ONLY OFFICERS IN THE CHURCH. NOW THEY WERE LED TO THE APPOINTMENT OF OTHERS.

"It is not reason that, we... serve tables": It was not sensible for the apostles to leave off their main work of preaching the Word of God to serve tables, or distribute the daily food to widows. Others who could not preach, could "SERVE TABLES." A church is not wise which asks its preacher to gather the clothing for "rummage sales" or to conduct even a "Bible booth" at a bazaar.

The apostles were the ones who had first hand knowledge of the precious story of Jesus and His love. The one means of making it known was by word of mouth. Their one business from morning till night, in public and private was to keep on telling the old, old story of Jesus!

"Serve...": The word "deacon" does not occur in this passage, but the Greek word from which the word deacon comes is in this verse. "Diakonos" means "to raise the dust in a hurry, to serve, to minister either at table (John 12:20), or other service (John 12:25f), to serve deacon (I Tim. 3:10, 13). A deacon who "deaks" is active in serving Christ and the church; he raises the dust he is so busy travelling for His master!

The word "tables" here is the word used in the common daily distribution of the food, possibly including the love feasts (Acts 2:43-47).

"Look ye out... seven" (Acts 6:3): The congregation chose the seven who met the divine standards. The appointment or setting aside or ordaining to the work of deacons was done by the apostles. The need called for "seven men" who would handle the trust faithfully. They must be men of

"Honest report": Men with a good reputation who were members of the local church, or "among you."

"Full of the Holy Ghost": This does not refer to miraculous powers from the Spirit. None but the apostles had such power. They were men who showed in their daily lives the "fruit of the Spirit... love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal 5:22, 23). They were "full" of the Holy Ghost in the home, in their business relations, and in every phase of life.

"Wisdom...": A word that suggests the reaching of the best ends by the best means. Deacons need to be men of sanctified common sense. Deacons need grace, grit, and gumption! Paul by inspiration says the

## YEAR 4 - LESSON 48 - PAGE 3

deacon is the husband of one wife, grave, not double tongued, not given to wine, not greedy of money; proved, a ruler of his house; has a grave, sober, faithful wife (I Tim. 3:8-13). Such men, then and now, relieve the preacher for maximum time for prayer, and “the ministry of the word” (verse 4).

“Whom we may appoint”: Ordain. The people selected the seven men under apostolic direction. The apostles inaugurated the deacons into office.

“The whole multitude... chose...” (Acts 6:5): This is the authority of apostolic precedent for the popular election of church officers. In what way the choice was made by the multitude, whether by balloting, or by a “viva voca” vote (voice vote), and whether with or without nominations, we are not informed; and consequently, in reference to these points, every congregation is left to its own judgment” (McGarvey).

Our congregation has delegated or given authority to the Advisory Council to name a nominating committee to look out and examine candidates for elders, deacons and one trustee year by year. This committee submits the required number of nominees on a ballot. The church in an annual meeting the first Wednesday night in December is given the opportunity to accept all, or some, or none of these nominees. Each member may freely write in the name of one or all the required number of men needed each year. This is democracy in action. It will work perfectly only if each member of the church is fully Christian in intention, and action.

“They chose Stephen”: Note that the seven have Greek names. They were chosen from the complaining party' The whole business was given into the hands of the Grecian Christians. Only base men would betray such a trust. These seven men were the first deacons of the church.

Stephen is specially described on account of the glory of martyrdom that soon followed. He is described as a “man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.”

“Philip...”: He is distinguished as Philip the evangelist.” He gave the gospel to Samaria, “preached... Jesus” to the queen’s treasurer and baptized him into Christ (Acts 8:35-39), and afterwards lived and labored at Caesarea (Acts 21:8).

“Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch”: He was not born a Jew. He had come to the Jews from the Greek world. He was from Antioch, a convert from heathenism to Judaism, and had been circumcised. This is the meaning of “proselyte” in the New Testament.

“The apostles... prayed... laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:6): The laying of their hands on them was “a symbol of the impartation of the gifts and graces that they needed to qualify them for the office. It was of the nature of a prayer that God would bestow the necessary gifts rather than a pledge that they were actually conferred” (Hackett).

“And the word of God increased...” (Acts 6:7): The apostasies had more opportunity to preach the word of God. They did it “in season, out of season.” It was a sad day for Annas and Caiaphas and all the sect of the Sadducees (Acts 5:17) Not only did vast multitudes of the people become Christians, even "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." That is, they were obedient to the gospel, and were baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Gal. 3:27).

### II. Stephen Is Charged with Blasphemy (Acts 6:8-15)

“And Stephen, full of faith and power...” (Acts 6:8): Of the seven deacons, two were great preachers. His preaching of Jesus as the resurrected Lord caused him to be hated by certain foreign-born Jews (verse 9) who met in their synagogues. He is the first Christian who was not an apostle to work miracles. He had received the laying on of the apostolic hands (Acts 8:15-19), As far as we know this power was limited to

the apostles, and to those upon whom the apostles laid hands. Stephen had no power to transmit miracle-working power to others.

“Synagogue of the Libertines...” (Acts 6:9): The Libertines were once slaves. They were now set free. They settled in Jerusalem and were numerous enough to have a synagogue of their own.

The Talmud says there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem. Jews of various countries built them for their own use. Luke speaks of five such synagogues in Jerusalem – the Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and them of Cilicia and of Asia. There probably were enough Hellenists in Jerusalem to have five such synagogues,

Stephen appeared as a Hellenist preaching Jesus as the Messiah. He aroused opposition. To have the hatred of some people is an item in one's favor (Luke 6:26). He must have been a brilliant young man. Saul of Tarsus was from Cilicia. This brilliant student of Gamaliel matched his wits with Stephen and went down to ignominious defeat (verse 10). Stephen silenced Saul! This may be one explanation of his zest in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1).

“Then they suborned men... We have heard” (Acts 6:11): They induced men to give perverted or false testimony. To “suborn” suggests to “put under like a carpet, to bring men under one's control by suggestion or by money One recalls the plight of Caiaphas in the trial of Jesus when he sought false witnesses. They put these men forward in an underhand way for fraud.”

The charge against Stephen was partly true. His words had been perverted and a charge of this kind is always more difficult to meet. In testifying for Jesus, Stephen (in Acts 7) predicted the destruction of Judaism, the universal character of Christian, and the return of the Lord. His preaching had been so interpreted and misstated as to constitute, according to these false witnesses, “blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”

The punishment for blasphemy was stoning to death. The charge, of course, against Stephen was untrue. Note that Moses is here placed before God. Stephen preached, as Paul did later, that the Old Covenant had given place to the New, and that God's people are no longer under Moses, but under Christ. This was called blaspheming Moses!

“And they stirred up the people...” (Acts 6:12): They shook the people together like an earthquake by their false charges against Stephen. This is the first record of mass hostility against the disciples. Men with poisoned minds “came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council.” They rushed at Stephen and seized him, as though they had been pursued by him. They picked on Stephen, not on the apostles who now enjoyed the confidence of the masses. “The council” is the Sanhedrin.

“False witnesses . . . For we have heard...” (Acts (6:13, 14) They were false in that they perverted what Stephen said so as to give it a meaning he had not intended to give (Matt. 24:2; Gal. 3:24, 25).

“And all . . . saw his face as the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15) Stephen knew perfectly well the court “had come together not to try him but to condemn him!” Every eye was fastened to see what effect the charges had on him. One of the spectators was Saul of Tarsus. Probably Luke obtained his account of this trial from Paul.

“As the face of an angel”: Stephen's face was radiant. Even his wicked enemies saw that. See Exodus 34:30 for the face of Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai (II Cor. 3:7). “God's glory smote his on the face” (Tennyson).

Where were Peter and John at this crisis? Does Stephen stand alone before the Sanhedrin as Jesus did? Thank God, Stephen was not alone for he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Never Alone! “No, never alone, No, never alone, He promised never to leave me, He'll claim me for His own. No, never alone, No, never alone, He promised never to leave me, Never to leave me alone.” (Anon.)

**Summary of Acts 6**

1. The Murmuring (Acts 6:1)
2. The Multitude (Acts 6:2-4)
3. The Men (Acts 6:5-6)
4. The Multiplying (Acts 6:7)
5. The Mob (Acts 6:8-15)

**Questions**

1. What two general rules may apply to the election of church officers (I Cor. 10:31; 14:40)?
2. How had the church up to this point experienced both internal and external difficulty (Acts 4:1-3; 5:1-3; 17, 18)?
3. Can you distinguish between the Grecian Jews and Hebrews (Acts 6:1)?
4. What caused the foreign born Jews (Grecians) to murmur (Acts 6:1b)? When did this neglect and murmuring occur? What does God think of sowers of discord (Prov. 6:16-19)?
5. What important decision did the apostles make (Acts 6:2, 4)? What does “serving tables,” mean? Who served the Lord’s table?
6. Who chose the deacons (Acts 6:3, 5)? By whom were these deacons publicly approved and set apart for their work (Acts 6:3, 6)? Why were they not appointed sooner?
7. What three qualifications were demanded of these church officers (Acts 6:3)?
8. From which class were the seven selected? Why? Meaning of proselyte (Acts 6:5)?
9. Is the laying on of hands a precedent for us (Acts 6:6, 3)? Were these men deacons? What does “deacon” mean?
10. How did God show His approval of these deacons (Acts 6:7)? Cause of the increased prosperity?
11. What class of Jews is mentioned for the first time as belonging to this Jerusalem church (Acts 6:7b)?
12. Did God limit the ministry of these deacons to the distribution of alms (Acts 6:8, 10; 8:5)?
13. Why was Stephen’s message irresistible (Acts 6:8, 10)?
14. Who the Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, “and of them of Cilicia and of Asia” (Acts 6:9)? Why a synagogue of these? Of what sect were they (Acts 7:58; 23:6)?
15. With what did Stephen’s enemies charge him (Acts 6:11, 13, 14; Matt. 26:29-61; Acts 25:7, 8)?
16. With what blasphemous words did they falsely accuse Stephen (Acts 6:11, 13)? What was the character of the witnesses used against Stephen (Acts 6:13)?
17. Does Acts 6:14 accurately represent what Christ said (Mark 13:1, 2; Heb. 8:7-13)? What truth at the bottom of the charges (Acts 6:14)?
18. How did God show His approval of Stephen before the multitude (Acts 6:15; Ex. 34:29, 30)?
19. What was the nature of the change in his face (Acts 6:15)? Why was Stephen attacked, rather than Peter?
20. Should the church demand the same qualifications of her deacons today (I Tim. 3:8-13)?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 49 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 49

Page 1

Acts 7

Memory Verses: Acts 7:60

Memory Verse:

“And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not, this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:60).

**THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR**

Luke, the writer of The Acts of the Apostles, gives a detailed account of the persecution of Stephen. It is a sample experience of the buffering of many early Christians (Acts 9:13, 14).

Stephen, the first-named New Testament deacon (Acts 6:5-15), so ably answered the foreign-born Jews in Jerusalem that in their rage they falsely charged him with blasphemy (Acts 6:11-14).

The court is in session, the false witnesses are ready to offer their bribed testimony, the preacher-deacon knows the scene is set, for his death. The thrilling scene makes one's heart beat faster.

**I. The Historical Introduction (Acts 7:1-8)**

"The high priest, Are these things so?" (Acts 7:1): The high priest hypocritically pretended to give Stephen a fair chance, although the court had bribed the witnesses! His question is like our "Do you plead, guilty, or not guilty?"

Stephen was charged with (1) speaking against the holy temple, and (2) changing the customs which Moses had delivered (Acts 6:11-14). There was an element of truth in each of them, and a large amount of error all mixed together. He tried to explain his real position by the historical method, a rapid survey of God's dealing with the people of Israel and the Gentiles. Paul used this method at Pisidian Antioch Acts 13:6f).

How Luke obtained the data for the speech we do not know. We do know Saul (later called Paul, Acts 13:13) heard it. Probably Philip, one of the seven deacons, heard it, too. Both could have given Luke help about it.

Stephen met the first charge by showing the worship of God is not confined to Jerusalem, or the Jewish temple. He answers the second charge by proving that God had many dealings with the fathers before closes came and that Moses foretold the coming of the Messiah who is now known to be Jesus. He "read the history of the Old Testament with new eyes in the light, of the life and death of Jesus" (Furneaux).

"And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken" (Acts 7:2): The spectators were the "brethren" and the members of the Sanhedrin were the "fathers," as Paul in Acts 22:1. "Hearken" means, "Give me your attention now."

"The God of Glory appeared... father Abraham": The God characterized by glory, as seen in the Shekinah, the visible radiance of God. Read Ex. 25:22; 40:34; Lev. 9:6; Heb. 9:5. By these words Stephen refutes the charge of blasphemy against God in Acts 6:11.

"Appeared..." God appeared before there was temple or tabernacle and away over in Mesopotamia in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 11:31), even before Abram dwelt in Haran (Charran) or Carry not far from Edessa, where Crassus met death after his defeat by the Parthians B. C. 53.

“Get thee out of thy country... into the land which I shall show thee” (Acts 7:3): God doubtless called Abram out of Ur of Chaldees to get him away from idolatrous influences and associates. Stephen’s recital of Abram’s migration was as interesting to the Jewish audience, as an “effective recital of the Pilgrim Fathers always interests an American audience.” Abram followed on as God led him (Gen. 12:1-9).

“When his father was dead, he removed him into this land” (Acts 7:4): In Gen. 11:32 it is stated that Terah died at Haran at the age of 205. Terah was 130 years old at the birth of Abram, making Abram 75 years old at his father’s death (Gen. 12:4).

“And he gave him none inheritance in it...” (Acts 7:5): The field purchased by Abraham (Gen. 23:9-17) was not a gift from God.

“Yet he promised...” See Heb. 12:17; 17:8; 48:4 for this promise. So God appeared again to Abram in a strange land. God’s promise was fulfilled in the descendants of Abram, “When as yet he had no child.” Abram had only the promise of God about the land and the child.

“That his seed should sojourn in a strange land...” (Acts 7:6). A sojourner is one dwelling near one’s home, but not of it; hence a stranger, foreigner. It was a temporary residence without full rights of citizenship (Acts 7:29; 13:17), and is descriptive of Christians (Eph. 2:19; I Pet. 1:17; 2:11). “Strange land” is in a land not one’s own, which belongs to another, alien as in Matt. 17:25f.

“Bondage... four hundred years”: As in Gen. 15:13, but a round number as in Ex. 12:40 the time is 430 years. In Gal. 3:17 Paul, following the LXX in Ex. 12:40, takes the 430 years to cover the period in Canaan and the stay in Egypt. “This includes the period from the call of Abraham to the Exodus. See Gal. 3:16, 17. But Isaac was born about thirty years after the call of Abraham, which leaves Stephen’s period of 400 years” (Johnson),

“And he gave him the covenant of circumcision...” (Acts 7:8): A covenant marked by circumcision of which circumcision is the sign and seal (Rom 4:11) as set forth in Gen. 17:9-14. This was after his call and the promise of Christ. The covenant of Christ was FOR ALL. Circumcision was for the Jews.

## II. Two Deliverers Persecuted by Israel (Acts 7:9-43) A. The case of Joseph (Acts 7:9-16)

“And the patriarchs... envy, sold Joseph” (Acts 7:9): Stephen shows that Joseph’s rise to honor in spite of unjust treatment teaches that God overrides opposition (Gen. 37:11). Jealousy caused the ill treatment of Joseph, Through the rejection of Joseph by his brethren, God worked for the redemption of His chosen people. So, through the rejection of Jesus, Stephen will show, God opens a way for the redemption of Israel.

“Now there came a dearth...” (Acts 7:11): For the history read Gen. 39-50. “Sustenance” is fodder for the cattle, a first necessity for owners of herds of cattle.

“Corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first” (Acts 7:12): “Sitia” is the diminutive of “sitos” and means grain – wheat, or barley, not our maize or Indian corn. It is an old word. The visit of the ten brethren is in Genesis 42 and 43.

“At the second time Joseph was made known.” (Acts 7:13): The second visit is recorded in Gen. 45:1f.

“Joseph... called... all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls” (Acts 7:14): Gen. 46:27 gives seventy as the number of migrants to Egypt. Stephen quotes from the LXX or Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament. In it are included two sons of Manasseh, two of Ephraim, and one grandson of the latter, a total of five being added to the seventy. “Stephen then gave the figures as he and his hearers read them in their Bible (the Septuagint), and perhaps neither he nor they had ever observed the discrepancy between the

version and the original” (McGarvey, Note 1, page 120, New Commentary on Acts of Apostles).

“So Jacob went down... carried... Sychem” (Acts 7:15, 16): Jacob was buried in the Cave of Machpelah (Gen. 50:13). Abraham did not hug a tomb in Shechem (Gen. 23:16-18; 33:18-20). Some copyist, knowing of Abraham’s purchase and not remembering that Jacob also made one at Shechem, here inadvertently substituted the name of Abraham where the name of Jacob was originally written. It was a clerical error. We are told in Joshua 24:32 that Joseph was buried at Shechem and Jewish tradition always affirmed that his brethren were buried there also. Jerome (340-420 A. D.) said their tombs were still to be seen. He lived many years at Bethlehem and translated the Bible into the Latin language, called the Vulgate.

B. The case of Moses in Egypt (Acts 7:17-36).

“But when the time of the promise drew nigh...” (Acts 7:17): God’s solemnly promised deliverance of His people from Egypt was “drawing nigh” (Gen. 15:13, 14) “Every divine assurance is equivalent to an oath.” (Malmonides)

“Till another king... knew not Joseph” (Acts 7:18): A different kind of king. Probably a king of the new dynasty after the shepherd kings had been expelled from Egypt, Joseph’s history and services to Egypt meant nothing to the new king. “The previous dynasty had been that of the Hyksos the new king was Ahmes who drove out the Hyksos” (Knobel).

“The same dealt subtly with our kindred...” (Acts 7:19): Ahmes used fraud and deceit with the Israelites in Egypt. As Pharaoh he required the Israelites to expose their children to death.

“In which time Moses was born...” (Acts 7:20): Moses was exceeding fair to God. He was brought up at home for three months in defiance of the new Pharaoh (Bob, 11:28; Ex. 1:1-2:3). Pharaoh’s daughter saved Moses from the Nile (verse 21) and designed Moses for the throne as the Pharaoh had no son (Josephus, Ant. 11:9, 7).

“And Moses was learned... wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22): Reared as “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (Heb. 11:24), Moses was educated in all the accomplishments of his timbre. There were great universities for the education of all who were expected to engage in public employments. The priestly caste in Egypt was noted for their knowledge of science, astronomy, medicine and mathematics. This reputation was proverbial (I Kings 4:30).

“And when he was full forty years old...” (Acts 7:23): The life of Moses is divided into three periods of forty years each: in Egypt 40 years, in Midian 40, governing Israel 40. He was 120 when he died (Deut. 34:7), Desiring to know first hand how his people were faring, Moses tried to help his people. “They understood next” (verse 25). Israel rejected Moses’ leadership (verses 24-28; Ex. 2:11-15).

“Then fled Moses... land of Midian” (Acts 7:29): Moses was a temporary dweller in Midian – for forty years (verse 30).

“Mount Sinai an angel... in a flame of fire in a bush” (Acts 7:30): The mount of God is called Horeb in Ex. 3:1. Sinai and Horeb were “probably peaks of one mountain range” (Page). Horeb is “the mountain of the dried-up ground,” and Sinai “the mountain of the thorns.” Moses “drew near to behold it” (verse 31).

“I am the God of thy fathers...” (Acts 7:32): Here the angel of Jehovah of verse 30 is termed Jehovah himself. Jesus makes powerful use of these words in his reply to the Sadducees in defense of the doctrine of the resurrection and the future life (Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37f). God here describes Himself as the GOD OF THE LIVING.

“Put off thy shoes... holy ground” (Acts 7:33): The priests were barefooted when they ministered in the temple. Moslems enter their mosques barefooted today. When we visited mosques in Jerusalem or in

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any Near East city last summer, we were required to take off our shoes to enter them. Even the ground near the bush was “holy,” a fine example for Stephen’s argument.

“And now come, I will send three into Egypt” (Acts 7:34): For the call of Moses see Exodus 3:1-10.

“This Moses whom they refused...” (Acts 7:35, 36): The Pharisees had accused Stephen of blaspheming “against Moses and God” (Acts 6:11). Stephen here answers that slander by showing how Moses led the people out of Egypt in cooperation with the hand of the Angel of Jehovah.

C. The case of Moses in the wilderness (Acts 7:37-41).

“A prophet shall the Lord... raise up... like unto me” (Acts 7:37): This rejected Moses who was chosen by God to be a prince and a Saviour hath said, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up... like unto me.” This same passage Peter quoted to the crowd in Solomon’s Porch (Acts 3:22). Stephen shows that Moses was predicting the Messiah as a prophet like himself, who is no other than Jesus. So these Pharisees are in reality opposing Moses.

“The church in the wilderness...” (Acts 7:38): Better rendered “congregation” here as in Heb. 2:12 (Psa. 22:22), the people of Israel gathered at Mt. Sinai, the whole nation.

“Who received the lively oracles.” Moses is here represented as receiving the law from an angel as in Heb. 2:2; Gal. 3:19; Deut. 33:2, LXX. He was the mediator or middle man between the angel and the people, where as Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant (Heb. 8:6). Exodus does not speak of an angel. The “living oracles” is a significant title for God’s word, Old and New Testament. The words from God to Moses are still “LIVING” today. The Holy Spirit used living men to write the living Word (II Pet. 1:21; I Pet. 1:25; Heb. 4:12, 13).

“Our fathers would not obey... they made calf... idol.” (Acts 7:39-41) This Moses “our fathers would not obey.” They “thrust him from them.” The unbelief, disobedience, and waywardness of Israel under Moses are summarized in verses 39-41. Israel yearned after the flesh pots of Egypt and even the gods of Egypt. Now we see why Stephen patiently led his hearers through the story. Epee is getting ready for the home-thrust.

“Make us gods” (verse 40): Ex. 82:1. Make them as guides and protectors. Did they allude to the pillar of fire and of cloud that had gone before them (Ex. 13:21). “This Moses” shows their contempt of Moses, and how quickly they forgot Moses and God while Moses was absent in the mount with God. Aaron made the calf, but so did the people (Ex. 32:35). Stephen calls the calf by the right name – “idol.” The people said it was their way of worshipping Jehovah. The Egyptians worshipped the bull ‘Apis’ at Memphis as the symbol of Isis (the sun). They had another sacred bull Mnevis at Leontopolis. The heathen worship god through the image or idol. Israel did this (verse 41) and kept on rejoicing or making merry (Ex. 32:6, 18).

D. God’s final rejection of Israel (Acts 7:42-43).

“Then God turned, and gave them up...” (Acts 7:42): This same form occurs three times “like clods on a coffin in a grave” in Romans 1:24, 26, 28 where Paul speaks of God giving up the heathen to their lusts. Stephen quotes Amos 5:25-27. Israel rejected God’s appointed leaders. The rejection of Christ harmonizes with their past history.

“Ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch...” (Acts 7:43): Israel turned to the abominable worship of Moloch and other false gods. Moloch was a god of the Amorites, and was worshipped by human sacrifice. It was an ox-headed image with outstretched arms in which children were placed. It was hollow beneath so that fire could burn underneath.

“Remphan”: This is probably a name for Chiun, or Saturn (Amos 5:26). They worshipped the host of

heaven, the sun, moon and stars, instead of the Lord of hosts (Deut. 17:3; II Kings 17:16; 21:3; II Chron. 23:3, 5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13).

“I will carry you away beyond Babylon”: God brought this punishment on all Israel for its sins, as Amos predicted. The Hebrew and the LXX have “beyond Damascus.”

### III. Stephen’s Bold Peroration and Glorious Death (Acts 7:44-8:1)

A. The tabernacle supplanted by a house (Acts 7:44-47).

“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness...” (Acts 7:44): This first sanctuary was not the temple, but the tent in the wilderness. “Stephen passes on from the conduct of the Israelites to his other argument that God is not necessarily worshipped in a particular spot” (Page).

The tabernacle was built at Sinai, a witness of the Covenant (Num. 18:8), and of the good things to come (Heb. 3:5). God gave the pattern (Ex 25:9, 40). Israel rejected this for “the tabernacle of Moloch” (verse 43).

“Which also our fathers... brought in with Jesus” (Acts 7:45). “With Jesus,” the Greek form of Joshua, contracted from Jehoshua (Matt. 1:21; Heb. 4:8). Joshua and the later generation of Jews brought this tabernacle into Canaan when they conquered it.

“David... desired... Solomon built him a house” (Acts 7:45-47): David sought to build a permanent temple (II Sam. 7:1-17; I Chron. 2:7). He was restrained from building the temple. It was erected by Solomon (II Chron. 6:7, 8).

The tabernacle served God’s purpose for that day. The temple supplanted it. Both were right and served God’s purpose. It was not blasphemy to say that both were obsolete – they had served their purpose.

B. The temple not God’s real dwelling (Acts 7:48-50).

“The most High dwelleth not in temples...” (Acts 7:48): Read II Chron. 6:10. “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me?” (Isa. 66:1). No building is God’s real dwelling place. Therefore, it is not blasphemy to say the temple was yet to be set aside and destroyed.

Stephen shows by Isaiah that Solomon was right that the temple was not meant to “confine” God’s presence. Jesus showed that God is “Spirit” and can be worshipped anywhere by any individual of any race or land (John 4:24).

C. The application of Stephen’s speech (Acts 7:51-53).

“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears...” (Acts 7:51): Israel was “stiff-necked” or stubborn like the ox which refuses to bend its neck for the yoke, Stephen now makes his direct application. “Uncircumcised”: The uncircumcised were aliens from God and Israel. Israel, Stephen told them, were aliens in heart from God. Spiritually, they were heathen. Like their fathers “ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” “Stephen, the accused, is now the accuser, and the situation becomes intolerable to the Sanhedrin.”

“Which of the prophets... fathers persecuted!” (Acts 7:52): The very prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah their fathers killed. Joseph, Moses, the prophets and Jesus were God’s chosen leaders. Israel had rejected each in turn before “the coming of the Just One” – Jesus, “of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” “Betrayers”: Stephen hurls this biting word at them, it cut like a knife. It is blunter than Peter in Acts 3:13. “Murderers”: The climax of this word used of Barabbas (Acts 3:14).

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“Received the law by... angels... not kept it” (Acts 7:53): The word was spoken through angels (Heb. 2:2; Gal. 3:19). The Jews had “not kept it.” “Like a whip, these words cut to the quick. They glorified in possessing the law and openly violated it (Rom. 2:23).”

D. The death of Stephen (Acts 7:54-8:1a).

“Heard... cut to the heart“ (Acts 7:54): “Cut to the heart” is the word used in Acts 5:33 and 2:37. Here Stephen sent a saw through the hearts of the Pharisees that rasped them to the bone. They were convulsed with rage. Literally they began to gnash their teeth at him, like a pack of hungry, snarling wolves. Stephen knew it meant death for him,

“But he... saw... Jesus standing” (Acts 7:55): Stephen full of the Holy Spirit gazed steadfastly into heaven. He saw God’s glory and Jesus “standing” as if he had risen to cheer the brave Stephen. Jesus is pictured elsewhere as sitting at the right hand (save in verse 56) of God as in Matt. 26:64; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, a total of thirteen times in the Scriptures.

“They... stopped their ears... they stoned Stephen” (Acts 7:57-59); They held their ears together with their hands, believing him guilty of blasphemy. They “ran upon him with one accord.” No vote of the Sanhedrin was taken. It was mob violence, like modern lynching, that took the law into the hands of the Sanhedrin without further formalities.

“Out of the city“ (verse 58): To keep from defiling the place with blood. Stoning was the Jewish punishment for blasphemy (Lev. 24:14-16). The false testifiers against Stephen suborned by the Pharisees (Acts 6:11, 13) had the privilege of casting the first stones (Deut. 13:10; 17:7) against the first witness for Christ.

“Clothes at a young man’s feet... Saul”: This is our first introduction to the man who became the greatest follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was a pupil of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He cast the “black ball” of death against Stephen.

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (verse 59): It is probably true that “if Stephen had not so prayed, Paul had not preached.” Jesus was standing at God’s right hand; Stephen knelt before him in worship and called on him in prayer (verse 60). “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Place not to them or against them this sin. Stephen showed the very spirit of Jesus towards his enemies as he died upon the Cross (Luke 23:34). Then he fell asleep.” See Acts 13:36; I Cor. 15:18. The metaphor of sleep for death is common in all languages. Our word cemetery is the sleeping place of the deed. Sleep is “a picture word of rest and calmness which stands in dramatic contrast to the rage and violence of the scene.”

Questions

1. Have you read carefully Stephen's long discourse (Acts 7:1-53)?
2. Who asked. "Are these things so?" (Acts 7:1)? Was it a sincere question?
3. Who were the "brethren" and the "fathers" of Acts 7:2?
4. Around what three prominent men did Stephen construct his history of Israel?
5. To whom did God appear in Ur (Acts 7:2), What did God command Abram to do (Acts 7:3; Gen. 12:1-9)? How old was Abram when his father died?
6. Why did the fathers sell Joseph (Acts 7:9)? How the 75 made out (Acts 7:14; Gen. 46:27)? Was Jacob buried in Shechem (Acts 7:16; Gen. 50:13)? Who was buried at Shechem (John 24:32)?
7. What great leader had God sent to deliver Israel from the Egyptian bondage (Acts 7:20-34)? Of what Deliverer was Moses a type (Acts 7:37; John 6:14; 7:40)?
8. What was Israel's attitude toward Moses (Acts 7:25-29, 35, 39, 40)?
9. To what did God "give up" Israel, and where would they be carried (Acts 7:42, 43)? In what "book of the prophets" (verse 42; Amos 5:25-27)?
10. Who "desired" to build and who actually built, the Lord "an house" (Acts 7:46, 47)? If no temple could "contain" God, is it blasphemy to say the temple will be destroyed (Acts 6:13; 7:49, 50; Isa. 66:1, 2)?
11. What three-fold sin charged against Stephen's enemies (Acts 7:51-53)? Whose unbelief had prepared these Jews for their rebellion (verses 51, 52; Luke 11:47-51)? Is the rejection of God's true messengers equal to the rejection of God Himself (see I Sam. 8:7; II Pet. 1:21)?
12. Was Stephen's message primarily an exposure of Israel's sin, or a presentation of Israel's Saviour? How did Stephen's message affect these men (Acts 7:54)?
13. What explains Stephen's courage before the hostile Jewish leaders (Acts 7:55)?
14. Can you describe Stephen's heavenly message (Acts 7:55; 9:5; Rev. 1: 9-18)?
15. Why were these Jews so angered by Stephen's words recorded in Acts 7:50 (Acts 2:23, 24; 3:14, 15; 4:10)?
16. Was Stephen's death the result of mob violence, or the result of orderly, legal decree (Acts 7:57, 58)?
17. What does the first mention of Saul reveal as to his attitude to-ward Christ (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 22:20)? Why lay their garments at his feet."
18. With whom was Stephen occupied while being stoned to death (Acts 7:59)? What did Stephen's last words reveal as to his own heart (Acts 7:60; Luke 23:34)?
19. What is the meaning of "he fell asleep," the last three words in Stephen's obituary (Acts 7:60; Mark 5:39; John 11:11-13; I Cor. 15:6, 20; I These. 4:13-18; 5:10; II Tim. 1:10)?
20. How has this study of the first Christian martyr affected you (Rom. 2:1; II Tim. 1:12; 3:12; I Pet. 4:16; II Cor 1:2-10)? Are you determined to better serve Christ and be loyal to His Church (Rev. 2: 10c)?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 50 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 50

Page 1

Acts 8

Memory Verses: Acts 8:4, 35

Memory Verses:

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every-where preaching the word... Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:4, 35).

**THE GOSPEL IN ACTION**

The stoning of Stephen created a crisis in the history of the church.

Christ had promised to be with his witnesses “unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). He helped Stephen in his death to prove that the “Christian can out-think, out-live and out-die“ the pagan, or Jew. Saul never forgot this dying scene.

**“Go... Teach All Nations”**

Jesus had commanded the apostles to “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever have commanded you. And, lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19, 20).

“Ye shall be witnesses unto me,” said the risen Lord, “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth“ (Acts 1:8).

The apostles had stayed in Jerusalem working miracles, in favor with the people, defying the rulers and having a glorious time. God exploded a time bomb of persecution to get them on the “Go for God” to “every creature” (Mark 16:15, 16). “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.“

**The Fire of Persecution (Acts 8:1-4)**

“And Saul was consenting unto his death” (Acts 8:1): As a Christian Paul reported “And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him” (Acts 22:20). He coolly applauded the murder of Stephen, a heinous sin (Rom. 1:32). It is a gruesome picture.

The first three verses of Acts 8 ought to be attached to Acts 7:60.

"And at that time... great persecution": It was the first persecution from both the Pharisees and Sadducees. Both parties united in a general persecution that deserves the adjective “great.” The persecutors turned their rage at once on the whole “church that was at Jerusalem.” They united to stamp out the church,

"Except the apostles“: The Christians were “all scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” Why did the Pharisees spare the apostles? Was it because of the courage of the apostles? Was it due to the advice of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-40)? Or was it a combination of both with the popularity of the apostles in addition?

“Faith of our fathers! Living still In spite of dungeon, fire and sword: O how our hearts beat high with joy Whenever we hear that glorious word! Faith of our fathers! Holy faith! We will be true to thee till death!”

– Frederick W. Faber

“And devout men carried Stephen... burial great lamentation” (Acts 8:2): Only four times in the New Testament in this word used (Luke 2:25; Acts 2:5; 8:2; 22:12). “Possibly some of them were not members of the church.” They were non-Christian Jews, They were good moral men who lamented the brutality of the stoning. They tenderly buried Stephen. “Great lamentation” means to beat the breast. They protested the martyrdom of Stephen “by a public floral width all the usual Jewish demonstrations of mourning.”

“Saul, he made havoc of the church...” (Acts 8:3): He tried to dishonor and ruin the church. Like a wild boar destroying a vineyard, Saul devastated the church. He is the victor now over Stephen who had probably worsted him in debate in the Cilician synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9). This mad violence Paul often recalled while serving Christ (Acts 22:4; 26:10; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13).

“Entering into every house...” Where he supposed disciples could be found. Luke terms it “the church,” plainly not just an “assembly” but an organized body that was still “the church” when scattered in their own homes, “an unassembled assembly.”

“Haling men and women... prison”: Saul forcibly dragged the Christians to prison (Acts 9:2; 22:4). A new feature of the persecution now included the women. They met it bravely as through all the ages since. This was a bitter memory for Paul always. “Committed them” means he kept on handing them over to prison.

“They... went everywhere preaching the word“ (Acts 8:4): Jesus had commanded the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem till they had received the Promise of the Father (Acts 1:4). They had remained long after that. They were not carrying the gospel to “every creature” (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Now Saul pushed out the Christians. They began to carry out the Great Commission for world conquest. Those that were “scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” The same message was preached in Jerusalem, and Samaria, and Antioch.

Today we would have Christian unity, IF EACH PREACHER in the world preached ONLY WHAT IT WRITTEN IN GOD'S WORD (1 Cor. 14:33; John 17:20, 21), We still try to bring men in the denominational world into the true faith (Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 3:11).

## **II. The Gospel in Action in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25) A. Philip, the preaching deacon (Acts 8:5-13).**

“Then Philip...” (Acts 8:5): He was the deacon (Acts 6:5), and evangelist (Acts 21:8), not the apostle of the same name (Mark 3:18). He was a Jew. The persecution caused Philip to go down to Samaria.

“Samaria...”: Philip reaped the harvest sowed by Jesus himself a few years earlier (John 4:35). The twelve were forbidden to go into a Samaritan city during the third tour of Galilee (Matt. 10:5), a temporary prohibition withdrawn before Jesus ascended on high (Acts 1:8).

Philip began to preach and kept on at it. He gossiped the good news. He may have preached in Samaria the capital city. There is no definite article. Literally he preached in “a city of Samaria.” The district of Samaria lies between Judea and Galilee, Samaria and Sychar at this time were two of its important cities. The country of Samaria occupied a rough square of some 40 miles from north to south by 35 miles east to west. “And the people with one accord gave heed...” (Acts 8:6): They kept on giving heed, or holding the mind of the things Philip preached. They were spellbound.

God authenticated Philip’s message with miracles (Acts 8:6, 7, 13). Nothing but the gospel ever unites those who hate each other, as did the Jews and Samaritans (John 4:9). The miracles of Philip are described in verse 7; they were similar to those of Christ (Matt. 4:24; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41),

“Great joy in that city“ (Acts 8:8): Samaria was the mission field white for the harvest (John 4:35). The Samaritans, who had been bewitched by Simon, are now carried away by Philip. As they obeyed thee gospel, “great joy” rescued (Gal. 5:22). “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, down in my heart!” Have you? Accept Christ today; joy abounding is yours if you’ll obey the gospel, as did the Samaritans.

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“Simon... used sorcery... bewitched... Samaria” (Acts 8:9): He practiced magic. He was an imposter who “bewitched” or fooled the people of Samaria, He was simply one of the many magicians of the time. “In his person Christianity was for the first time confronted with superstition and religious imposture, of which the ancient world was at this period full” (Furneaux).

“They all gave heed... be had bewitched them” (Acts 8:10, 11): It is amazing how gullible people are in the presence of a plain imposter like Simon. He claimed that he “was some great one,” mere than a mere man. Unable to explain the things Simon did, the Samaritan ascribed them to divine power shown through Simon.

“But when they believed Philip preaching... baptized” (Acts 8:12): Note how clear and concise the order was of converting men in apostolic times:

1. Philip preached.
2. Philip preached “the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.”
3. “Faith cometh by hewing” (Rom. 10:17), for the Samaritans “believed.”
4. When the Samaritan believed, “they were baptized.”

Only those who were old enough to hear and believe and eligible for baptism. “Both men and women” obeyed thee gospel. Children are not named.

“Simon .. believed... baptized” (Acts 8:13): Simon’s sincerity would never have been doubted had we not been told that hie later fell into sin. He became a believer like the rest. He was baptized like the rest. Then like many others under temptation, he fell into sin.

Simon had deceived the people by “spiritualist cabinet,” “table tipping,” “Ouija board.” He had deceived the people. He knew Philip’s miracles in the name of Christ were genuine. He knew his own works were frauds. We have no room to doubt Simon’s faith, All faith is imperfect at first.

When this magician was convinced that Jesus was God’s Messiah, dead, buried, and risen, he obeyed the gospel! Some want to wait until they understand everything, or until all objections are removed. That means they never obey the gospel. Act on what truth you now have (John 7:17; James 4:17).

B. Peter and John visit Samaria (Acts 8:14-17).

“The apostles... sent... Peter and John” (Acts 8:14): The other apostles SENT PETER and John. This destroys the Roman Catholic doctrine of the primacy of Peter. He is not the chief who dictates, but the servant of Christ who obeys. The Samaritans had heard and obeyed the gospel (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38). They had the “gift” of the Holy Spirit.

“Who .. prayed for them... receive the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:15): The apostles prayed and “laid... their hands on them” (verse 17) that the Holy Spirit might come on the Samaritans. They had been “born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5). They had not received power to work miracles. “The prayer clearly pointed to such a power of the Holy Spirit as had been bestowed on Pentecost” (Plumptree). “Luke speaks not of the common grace of the Holy Spirit, but of those singular gifts with which God would have certainly endowed at the be-ginning of the gospel” (Calvin).

"They received the Holy Ghost" (verse 17): The teaching of Philip, and more recently by Peter and John had guided the young church in Samaria. These in carrying out their commission must depart to other fields of labor. To enable them to retain WHAT THEY HAD ALREADY LEARNED, and to leave the church with the means of convincing unbelievers, the gift of inspiration was bestowed. This miraculous gift of the Holy

Spirit "was bestowed we may presume, not on all, both men and women, but on a sufficient number of chosen individuals... These gifts served a temporary purpose, until the facts, doctrine, commandments and promises of the new covenant were committed to writing by inspired men, when the prophecies, tongues and miraculous knowledge of the individual teachers gave place to the written word" (McGarvey).

C. Simon makes a wicked proposal (Acts 8:18-24).

“Simon .. Give me also this power” (Acts 8:18, 19): Simon was "uninstructed in the lofty spirit of the gospel, ambitious to possess this power peculiar to the apostles he is sordid enough to offer money for it. His sin was not that he aspired to this power, but that he sought to buy it. He had very crude conceptions of the Spirit of Christianity. It is not stated, but it is easy to infer, that he was not one of those upon whom the apostles had bestowed the divine gift” (Johnson).

When Simon saw Peter impart miracle-working power to others (verse 18), he felt the apostle would “sell” his tricks for enough money Simon wanted the power to pass on “this power” to work miracles.

“But Peter... Thy money perish with thee” (Acts 8:20): Peter’s outburst of indignation is characteristic. “Thy money perish with thee” is not an anathema, but the statement of a fact, unless Simon repents, Peter was not corrupt as to accept money for spiritual power. “Money can buy diamonds, but not wisdom, sympathy, or faith, or holiness,” or the Holy Spirit!

“Because thou hast thought”: Peter rebukes the awful sin of Simon, not that Simon has never been converted. It is ONE SIN, not his sins, that stands out in every sentence. “Thy money perish with thee,” Peter tells Simon. “Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God” (verse 21). He was filled with venom, and he was a “bundle of iniquity” as well as being in bondage to it (verse 23),

“Repent... pray God .. thought... may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22): Peter told Simon to repent of this one GREAT SIN. Peter urges repentance, and then prayer. Peter had no doubt about God’s willingness to forgive Simon.

“Simon... Pray ye to the Lord for me” (Acts 8:24): Simon was terror-stricken, and appeared to be deeply touched. The Bible is silent concerning Simon’s future career. We do not know whether he repented or relapsed into his old life. Tradition states that he pursued the latter course.

D. Further labors and return of the apostles (Acts 8:25).

“And when they had testified and preached the word ...” (Acts 8:25): Peter and John now carried on the work of Philip to the Samaritans.

## II. The Conversion of a State Treasurer (Acts 8:26-40)

A. Philip is sent to an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-31).

“And the angel... spake unto Philip” (Acts 8:26): Philip was divinely guided to go about forty to fifty miles south of Samaria to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza for his next work. The angel’s part was to get the preacher on the way to meet the treasurer. Angels do not “convert” people.

“Gaza” An old Philistine city. Gaza means, "strong." It was on the caravan route between Syria and Egypt. Alexander took the city after a two months’ siege in 332 BC. “Desert”: An uninhabited, lonely place.

“A man of Ethiopia... eunuch of great authority” (Acts 8:27): Ethiopia is a term applied to that portion of Africa that lies south of Egypt, a country extending from the first cataract of the Nile indefinitely, including Nubia, Sudan, and northern --if not southern --modern Ethiopia.

“An eunuch of great authority”: This mutilated class of men often rose to great power in oriental countries. Eunuchs were not allowed to be Jews in the full sense (Deut. 23:1). They were proselytes at the gate. He was a devout man. He had made a journey of more than 1,000 miles to worship in Jerusalem. He was reading the scroll of Isaiah (verse 28). He was the queen’s royal treasurer.

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“Candace queen of the Ethiopians”: The name seems to have been a general designation of Ethiopian queen, like “Pharaoh” for Egyptian kings, and “Caesar” for Roman Emperors.

“The Spirit... Philip, Go near, and join thyself to the chariot” (Acts 8:29): How the Spirit gave the command to Philip we are not told. Philip promptly obeyed, ran to the chariot, and probably jumped on the running board on the side of the chariot.

“Understandest thou what thou readest?” (Acts 8:30): Philip heard the treasurer reading aloud from Isaiah the prophet. Philip’s question was appropriate, wisely put, and obtained an invitation from the treasurer to “come up and sit with him” (verse 31).

B. Philip preaches to the eunuch, baptizes him, and then preaches in Philistia (Acts 8:32-40).

“The place... which he read...” (Acts 8:32): The treasurer was reading Isaiah 53:7, 8. The quotation is from the LXX that has some variations from the Hebrew. He was a devout worshipper of God, but he was not a believer in Christ or he would have known this passage portrayed the suffering of our Saviour in our behalf.

“In his humiliation his judgment was taken away...” (Acts 8:33): In the trial of Jesus he was deprived of right judgment by an unfair trial and condemnation.

“Of whom speaketh the prophet ...?” (Acts 8:34): The eunuch’s question gave Philip the opportunity of preaching Jesus to the man. Thus the truth was presented to the first of the dark skinned sons of Africa. Philip needed no better opening than this Messianic passage in Isaiah. Philip knew Jesus was the Messiah. We must know the Old Testament. Our risen Lord knew "Moses and all the prophets" referred to Him (Luke 24:27).

“Preached Jesus”: Philip showed from the prophecies of the Messiah that it behooved Jesus to suffer, die and rise again, and that He commanded His gospel to be preached and believers to be baptized in His name, or by His authority.

When we preach Jesus we preach the FACTS of the gospel (I Cor 15:1-4), the COMMANDMENTS of our Lord (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:17; Matt. 10:32, 33; Mark 16:15, 16). Those who obey the gospel have the PROMISES of Christ (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38).

"Here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36): The account of this conversion ends like those on Pentecost and those in Samaria, with the baptism of the person.

We do not know the locality of the baptism. There are several roads from Jerusalem to Gaza. The one in Hebron is through “desert” more than the others. Eusebius and Jerome state that the baptism occurred at a perennial stream, coming from a fountain, at Bethsur, not far from Hebron. Robinson places the baptism not far from Gaza, at the old site of Eglon.

The treasurer upon learning the truth said: “Behold! Water!” as if his soul was filled with joy that he could obey the gospel. Nothing could “hinder” him from being baptized if he were a believer. Verse 37 is omitted from the Revision, not being found in the oldest manuscripts. Jesus made belief “with all thine heart” essential (Matt. 10:32, 33). A living faith in Him must seize upon and control the heart.

"They both went down... he baptized him" (Acts 8:38): “The original undoubtedly implies a going, not to, but into, the water” (Abbott). “No sufficient reason can be given why the parties went down into the water, but for the sake of the immersion of the new convert” (Ripley). The treasurer obeyed the gospel. He was immersed into Christ (Gal. 3:27). Baptism is the initial rite in becoming a Christian. Jesus commanded it (Matt. 28:19-20). 3,000 at Pentecost were baptized (Acts 2:38), as were the Samaritans (Acts 8:12), Saul (Acts 9:18; 22:16), Cornelius (Acts 10:47, 48), Lydia (Acts 16:15), the Philippians jailer (Acts 16:33), the Corinthians (Acts 18:8), and the Ephesians (Acts 19:5).

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“And when they were come up out of the water...” (Acts 8:39); The treasurer in his new-found Saviour “went on his way rejoicing.” Philip went to Azotus (verse 40), a city between Gaza and Joppa, and in turn he journeyed through Judea and Samaria, “till he came to Caesarea” where he made his home (Acts 21:8).

### Questions

1. Who was the leader of this persecution (Acts 8:1-3; 26:10-12; I Cor. 15:9; I Tim, 1:13; Gal. 1:13)?
2. Who buried Stephen (Acts 8:2; cf. verse 1)?
3. How did God use this persecution to stimulate missionary activity (Acts 8:4)? Why had not the gospel spread from Jerusalem before this time (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8)? Why did not the apostles flee?
4. Why dare go abroad preaching? To whom did the scattered believers preach the Word (Acts 8:4; 11:19)? What was the value to the church of Stephen’s death?
5. To what despised people did Philip carry the message of Christ (Acts 8:5; John 4:9)?
6. What prediction was God beginning to fulfill through Philip (Acts 1:8; 21:8; compare Eph. 4:11)?
7. How did the Samaritans receive Philip’s message, and what were the results (Acts 8:6-8)? What clear order of conversion in apostolic times is given in verse 12?
8. Can you trace the effects of Philip’s miracles (Acts 8:5, 6, 8, 12, 13)?
9. Who had been the leader of these Samaritans (Acts 8:9-11)? What were Simon’s pretensions? Why did the people so promptly desert him, and turn to Philip (verses 12, 13)? What caused Simon himself to yield?
10. What was the purpose of sending Peter and John to Samaria (Acts 8:15)? If the church “sent” Peter and John, does this sound as though Peter exercised any primacy in the early Church (verse 14)? What was the advantage of the apostles remaining in Jerusalem? In what sense had the Holy Spirit not yet fallen on any of them (Acts 8:16, 18; 2:38)? Why did not Philip impart the Spirit?
11. Was Simon a real or a pretended believer (Acts 8:13)? What prompted his wicked proposal (Acts 8:18-19)? What does Peter’s answer indicate as to Simon’s real spiritual condition (Acts 8:18-23)? Did Simon repent (Acts 8:24)? Meaning of “part nor lot” in what matter (verse 21)? Meaning of “gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity” (verse 23)?
12. Was the Lord’s command to Philip through the angel a genuine test of his faith (Acts 8:26)? In what sense a “desert?”
13. Of what blood and religion was the man (Acts 8:27, 28)? What access did he have to the temple (Deut. 23:1)? What was his position “under Candace queen of the Ethiopians” (verse 27)?
14. What command did the Spirit give Philip (Acts 8:29)? Why ask the eunuch whether he understood (Acts 8:30), and what answer did he receive (verse 31)?
15. Why was the eunuch unable to answer his own question (Acts 8:32-34)?
16. How was Philip’s sermon derived from the text (Acts 8:35)? What suggested the question about baptism (Acts 8:36)? Is it right to quote verse 37 (see Matt. 10:32, 33; Rom 10:9, 10)?
17. How does Philip’s experience illustrate the value of knowing Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 8:30-45)?
18. How was the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch another step in the fulfillment of Acts 1:8? Where did the treasurer take the gospel as “he went on his way of rejoicing” (verse 40)?
19. Which person of the Trinity is pre-eminently active in this book (Acts 8:29, 39)?
20. What do we know of Philip’s later ministry (Acts 8:40; 21:8, 9)?

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**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 51

Page 1

Acts 9

Memory Verses: Acts 9:6

Memory Verse:

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” (Acts 9:6)

**THE CONVERSION OF SAUL**

The conversion of Saul and his early labors occupy Acts 9:1-31. So spectacular is the switch from persecutor to preacher that the Holy Spirit thrice records it (Read also carefully Acts 22:3-21; 26:1-23).

Saul is introduced in Acts at the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1-3). He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3), a city rivaling Athens and Alexandria in Greek learning, a center of extensive commerce. As a boy, Saul knew the Greek language, manners and customs. He was born a Roman citizen, although he belonged to the Jewish tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:4, 5; II Tim. 1:3). Born of wealthy parents, he learned of tent making (Acts 18:3), and was “brought up” (Acts 22:3) at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem.

It is probable that Saul returned to Tarsus before John’s ministry and returned to Jerusalem after the ascension of Jesus. In his speeches and epistles he makes no mention of a personal knowledge of the events in the life of Jesus.

**Member of Sanhedrin?**

Saul was doubtless a member of the Sanhedrin, because he gave his vote against Christians thus causing their death (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 26:10, 11). He determined to stamp out Christianity. When the scattered Christians “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4), Saul determined to follow them and destroy the church.

**I. The “Arrester” Arrested (Acts 9:1-9)**

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter...” (Acts 9:1): The zeal of Saul the persecutor increased with success. Read Acts 8:3 from which the narrative is continued. Saul was full of the spirit of vengeance. He revelled in the slaughter of Christian men and women. “And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceeding mad against (hem, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:11). “Threatenings and slaughter” had come to be the very breath that Saul breathed, “like a war-horse who sniffed the smell of battle. He breathed on the remaining disciples the murder that he had already breathed in from the death of the others. He exhaled what he inhaled.” Jacob had said that, “Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf” (Gen. 49:27). This greatest son of Benjamin was fulfilling this prophecy (Furneaux).

“Saul... went unto the high priest... desired of him letters” (Acts 9:1, 2); “Saul as a Pharisee makes request of a Sadducee,” the high priest, as a favor to himself. The high priest was either Caiaphas if before AD, 35, but if in 36 A.D. Jonathan, son of Caiaphas, or in 37 AD, Theophilus, another son of Caiaphas.

“Desired of him letters“: A commission and letter addressed to the rulers of synagogues. The sway of the high priest was recognized in the synagogues of the East. He was a sort of pope with the Sanhedrin for

his cardinals. Paul says that he “received authority from the chief priests” (Acts 26:10) and “the estate of the elders” (Acts 22:5), that is the Sanhedrin.

“Damascus...” At this time, Damascus may have been under the rule of Aretas of Arabia, a tributary to Rome. It certainly was a couple of years later when Saul escaped in a basket (II Cor. 11:32). This enduring, old city is some 150 miles Northeast from Jerusalem. The Abana River from Anti-Lebanon waters it. It is mentioned in the Bible only in II Kings 5:12 where Naaman says, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?” The Greeks called it the Chrysorrhoas, “Golden stream.” It is the same as the modern Barada. It flows through Damascus, making the city, though bordering on a desert, one of the loveliest and most fertile on earth. It divides into nine or ten branches, and spreads out like a fan into the plain east of Damascus.

“If he found any of this way... bound to Jerusalem“ (Acts 9:2): “The Way” is the common method in the Acts for describing Christianity. It is the Way of life (Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22), the way of salvation (Acts 16:17), or the “way of the Lord” (Acts 18:25). Jesus called himself “the way” (John 14:6), the only way to the Father. The Epistle of Barnabas presents the Two Ways. The North American Indians call Christianity the Jesus Road.

“Bound...” Three times this fact of persecuting women is mentioned as a special blot of Paul’s cruelty (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4), the third time by Paul himself. It is one of the items of his being chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15).

“And as he journeyed... light from heaven“ (Acts 9:3): Saul likely journeyed on foot. If so, it would take six or seven days to make the journey. On the way to Damascus, the Lord appeared to Saul, like a flash of lightning. It was a real vision. It was not just a dream. This actual appearance of Jesus to him changed Saul’s whole life (I Cor. 15:8; Gal. 1:16f). This light outshone the brilliant sun. It was the splendor of the glorified Saviour as seen at the Transfiguration, or by John at Patmos (Matt. 17:2; Rev. 1:16).

“A voice... Saul, why persecutest thou me?“ (Acts 9:4): In persecuting Christians, Saul was persecuting Jesus (Matt. 10:40; 25:40, 45). His attendants heard the voice, “but seeing no man” (verse 7).

“I am Jesus...” (Acts 9:5): Up to this moment Saul held Jesus to be an imposter hated of God and man. In a blaze of divine glory Saul learned that (1) Jesus was the Christ, risen from the dead. (2) He was a sinner in rejecting the Christ.

In persecuting Jesus, Saul was injuring himself, like the ox that kicks back on the goads used to urge him forward (Acts 26:14).

“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Arise... go” (Acts 9:6): Saul saw a real Person, the Risen Christ. He surrendered his life to him instantly, as did Thomas (John 20:28), and as little Samuel (I Sam. 3:9, 10). The Lord appeared to Saul to qualify him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Saul must learn the gospel from one of its preachers. Christ never told a mortal how to be saved after he gave the Great Commission to the church.

“And the men... hearing a voice, but seeing no man” (Acts 9:7): The attendants heard the voice, but they did not see Jesus, or understand the language (Acts 22:9; 26:14), of what was said. “I’m sorry, I did not hear you” means “I heard your voice; I did not understand what you said.” There is no contradiction here. The words were for Saul and only understood by him.

“And Saul arose... they led him by the hand” (Acts 9:8): Saul doubtless gazed into the heavenly light as long as he could, and closed his eyes when he could bear the pain no longer. When he arose from the earth he was blind. The persecutor of Christians was now helpless as a child!

“And he was three days without sight... (Acts 9:9); In a soul crisis the appetite goes. In his great misery, Saul fasted as he thought on his awful crime of killing Christians. He was waiting to be told “what” to

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do. Christ did not convert Saul, or Jesus is a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). This miracle did not convert Saul; it qualified him to “bear my name before the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15; 1:22; I Cor. 9:1). Like all of us, Saul had to hear, believe and obey the Gospel to be saved (Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 16:31; 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:27).

### II. Ananias Baptizes Saul (Acts 9:10-19)

“A certain disciple... Ananias” (Acts 9:10): Ananias is a common name, and means, “Jehovah is gracious.” He was held in respect by both Jews and Christians in Damascus (Acts 22:12). None of the unbelieving Jews with whom Saul was staying could help him. By revelation Philip was sent to the eunuch (Acts 8:26, 20), as Ananias is sent by revelation to Saul (verses 11, 12, 15, 16). The revelation was necessary for Saul was a terror to the church. All Christians would avoid him.

“I am here, Lord”: Ananias was present, and available. What if each Christian would say, “I am here, Lord,” to each opportunity Christ gives us?

“Go into the street... called Straight” (Acts 9:11): The avenue across Damascus, 100 feet wide with a walk along each side, runs in a direct line from the eastern to the western gate of the city. It is about a mile long, with only five slight angles.

Christ directed Ananias the Christian to Saul the sinner. Christ had told Saul to expect one who could guide him into the truth (verse 6). Ananias at first did not want to go (verses 13, 14). Saul’s evil works and reputation had gone before him “Ananias in his ignorance saw in Saul only the man with an evil reputation while Jesus saw in Saul the man transformed by grace to be a messenger of mercy.”

“Go... he is a chosen vessel unto me” (Acts 9:15): Saul was a vessel of choice, or selection. “Jesus chose Saul before Saul chose Jesus. He felt of himself that he was an earthen vessel (II Cor. 4:7) unworthy of so great a treasure.” Ananias had a great message for Saul (verse 17; 22:14f; 26:16f). Christ wanted Saul for an apostle to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:6-12). Suffering is one element in the call of Saul (verse 16). A glance at II Cor. 10-12 will show us the fulfillment of this prophecy.

“And Ananias went his way... Brother Saul” (Acts 9:17): All suspicion had vanished. Ananias takes Saul to his heart. Saul is now a believer. His fasting and prayer show sincere repentance on his part. His faith in God, his zeal, and conscientiousness have not changed. Ananias “put his hands on” Saul not to convey a gift, but as a friendly act, significant of God’s blessing. There is no proof that any spiritual gifts were imparted. None but apostles could confer these gifts. Paul asserted that he received these gifts, not from men, but from Christ (Gal. 1:1, 11, 12).

“He received his sight... arose... baptized” (Acts 9:18): “Faith only” is not enough as this New Testament example of Saul shows. He “arose, and was baptized” (Acts 22:16). Baptism is the place in which the blood of Christ is applied to our sins (Rev. 1:5; I Pet. 3:21). It was essential for Saul to be baptized. It is essential for us, too.

“Then was Saul certain days with the disciples...” (Acts 9:10): Peace came into the obedient heart of Saul. He ate food and was strengthened. Saul stayed certain days with the Christians. He worshipped with them. He must learn of “the way” before he can preach Christ, the Way.

### III. The New Recruit Begins Recruiting (Acts 9:20-25)

“And straightway he preached Christ...” (Acts 9:20): Following his fellowship with the Christians, he began to preach. He did his first preaching in the Jewish synagogues, a habit of his life when possible. He

preached that the crucified Jesus is the Son of God. This was a complete reversal of his former position. Jesus had turned him completely around. This is the conclusion that Saul now drew from the vision of the Risen Christ. By the "Son of God" Saul means Jesus is the Messiah of promise and hope, the Messianic hope of John the Baptist (John 1:34) and of Nathanael (John 1:49). Saul is now proclaiming his faith in Jesus in the very synagogues where he had meant to arrest those who professed their faith in him. "Paul boldly calls Jesus the Son of God with full acknowledgement of his deity from the very start. Thomas had come to this place slowly (John 20:28). Saul begins with this truth and never leaves it. With the faith he can shake the world. There is no power in any other preaching."

"But all that heard him were amazed..." (Acts 9:21): They were knocked out of themselves in astonishment at this violent reversal in Saul the persecutor. They had heard of his "destroying" or laying waste, the church at Jerusalem. They knew he had come with "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" to Damascus. They knew of his former zeal against the church; they did not know of his conversion.

"But Saul increased the more in strength... confounded the Jews" (Acts 9:22): Saul grew continually in power to preach Christ. Christ, the dynamo of spiritual energy, was now pouring power into Paul who is already filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17; 1:8; Phil. 4:13; I Tim. 1:12; II Tim. 2:1; 4:17; Rom. 4:20). The more Paul preached, the more the Jews were confused.

"Proving that this is very Christ": "Proving" is an old verb to make go together, to knit together. Saul took the various items in the life of Jesus and Nazareth and found in them the proof that he was in reality "the Messiah," "ho Christos." Paul continued to use this method among the Jews. His arguments were irresistible. He spread consternation among the Jews. Saul had been the most powerful piece of artillery in the Jewish camp; now it is turned suddenly round upon them.

"And after that many days were fulfilled..." (Acts 19:23): Luke does not say how long a period the "many days" was. It may have been a long period, three years at least. Luke was not writing a history of Saul, but of the founding of the church. Paul tells us in Gal. 1:16-18 that he went away from Damascus to Arabia and that the whole period was about "three years" which need not mean three full years, but at least portions of three years. After this he returned to Damascus. It was at this return that the persecution broke out. We must assume the return of Saul from Arabia between verses 22 and 23 when he resumed his preaching in the Jewish synagogues with renewed energy and grasp after the period of mature reflection and readjustment in Arabia.

"The Jews took counsel to kill him": Things reached a climax. Saul now knew what Stephen had suffered at his hands in the Jewish quarter in Damascus. Read II Cor. 11:32 for the story of Aretas, an Arabian potentate. To please the Jewish leaders, he was willing to kill Saul (verse 24).

"Then the disciples... let him down by the wall in a basket" (Acts 9:25): Guarded gates cut off escape that way. Houses were built against or upon the wall. They afforded an opportunity of letting him down on the outside. "And through a window, in a basket, was I let down by the wall and escaped his hands" (II Cor. 11:32).

#### **IV. Paul's First Preaching at Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30)**

"And when Saul was come to Jerusalem..." (Acts 9:26): Three years had passed since Paul had left Jerusalem. Then he was a proud, gifted young Pharisee with brilliant worldly prospects, the honored agent of the Sanhedrin, and determined to destroy the church. He returns distrusted by the disciples. The Pharisees regard him as a renegade and a turncoat.

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“The disciples... all afraid of him“: The Christians did not trust Saul. They frankly disbelieved the reports and regarded him as a hypocrite or a spy in a new role to ruin them.

“But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles...” (Acts 9:27): Barnabas was a Hellenist like Saul. When he saw the situation he took Saul to himself and listened to his story and believed it. Big hearted Barnabas. He had the courage and insight to stand for Saul at a crucial period of life when the tide was against Saul. Barnabas used his great influence (Acts 4:36; 11:22) to win the favor of the apostles, Peter in particular (Gal. 1:19) and James the half-brother of Jesus. Barnabas introduced Saul to Peter and vouched for his story, declared it fully, including Saul’s vision of Jesus and Saul’s brave preaching. Peter was convinced. Saul was his guest for two weeks of delightful fellowship (Gal. 1:18). When Barnabas and Peter and James opened all the doors for Saul, the fear of the disciples vanished (verse 28).

“And he spake boldly... Grecians... went about to slay him” (Acts 9:29): The Jews in Jerusalem who had been born in foreign countries and spoke the Greek language (see Acts 6:1, 9f). “Disputed” is the very verb used in Acts 6:9 of the disputes with Stephen in these very synagogues. These Hellenistic Jews now hear Saul taking the place of Stephen and using the very arguments that Stephen had employed. They determine to kill Saul. The Lord appeared to Saul and told him to get out of Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-21). He was willing to die, but the Lord did not want Saul to be put to death yet. His crown of martyrdom will come later.

“The brethren... brought him down to Caesarea... sent him... to Tarsus“ (Acts 9:30): With the aid of the Christians, Saul was taken to the seaport of Caesarea, and sailed for his old home at Tarsus. One thinks from Gal. 1:21 that he made the journey by land through Syria. He may have sailed from Caesarea to Seleucia in Syria, and from thence by and to Tarsus. Four or five years pass before the next mention of Saul in Acts 12:26, an interval passed in preaching Christ (Gal. 1:23), and churches in Cilicia are planted (Acts 15:23, 41).

What will Saul’s father, mother and sister think of him now? The brilliant young rabbi, the prize and pride of Gamaliel, returns home as a preacher of the despised Jesus of Nazareth!

### V. Peter's Glorious Work (Acts 9:31-43)

A. He evangelizes and heals Aeneas (Acts 9:31-35).

"Then had the churches rest... edified... multiplied" (Acts 0:31): By this time churches were scattered over Judea, Galilee and Samaria (Gal. 1:22). The churches had “rest.” Caligula in A.D. 39 set his image in the temple in Jerusalem for the Jews to worship. They had troubles of their own. Persecution of the church ceased. The multiplication of the disciples kept pace with the peace, the edification, the walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The blood of the martyrs already was becoming the seed of the church. Stephen had not died in vain.

“Peter... Lydda... Aeneas... Jesus Christ maketh thee whole” (Acts 9:32-34): Peter was visiting the churches of Judea. Lydda is some 30 miles NW of Jerusalem. It is modern Lod, near Joppa and modern Tel-Aviv. There Peter heals a cripple. He ascribes the power to Christ and many “turned to the Lord” (verse 35).

B. He raises Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:36-43).

“At Joppa... Tabitha... Dorcas” (Acts 9:36): The seaport of Jerusalem from the time of David. Here a saintly Christian woman lived. Tabitha is Aramaic; Dorcas is Greek. It means gazelle, or roe. She died (verse 37). Peter was called and raised her from the dead (verses 38-41). “Many believed in the Lord” (verse 42). Peter was a guest in Simon’s house (verse 43).

Questions

1. Was Saul less hostile after Stephen's death (Acts 9:1, 3; 8:1, 3; 26:10, 11; I Tim. 1:13)?
2. What is meant by, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" (Acts 8:1)?
3. Who gave Saul the authority for his mission Acts 9:2)? What do you know of Damascus (II Cor. 11:32; II Pet. 5:12)?
4. Meaning of the "way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; 16:17; 18:25, John 14:6)?
5. Who was the "LIGHT FROM HEAVEN" which shined around Saul (Acts 9:3, 5, 17; I Cor. 9:1; Gal. 1:12; II Cor. 4:6; I John 1:5)? Was Saul convinced that Jesus was the Messiah through the testimony of preaching, through signs, or by divine revelation (verses 3-5; Acts 22:6-8; 26:13-15)?
6. In what sense was Saul persecuting Christ (Acts 9:6; Zech. 2:8; Eph. 5:29, 30)?
7. What prevented Saul from thinking it was an illusion (Acts 9:7, 8; Matt. 17:2; Rev. 1:16)?
8. How did the Lord prepare Saul for the ministry of Ananias (Acts 9:6-12)? Why did he neither "eat nor drink" (verse 9)?
9. Why did Ananias hesitate to obey the Lord's command (Acts 9:10-14; Gal. 1:23)? Was Ananias a preacher, or church officer (verse 10)? Was he one of the refugees from Jerusalem (verse 13)? How had he heard of Saul's present mission (verse 14)? What of the street called Straight (verse 11)?
10. Can you explain the figure of "a chosen vessel" (Acts 9:15; II Cor. 4:7)? Was Paul's first obligation to the Gentiles, or to the Jews (Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:7, 8)? What was to accompany Saul's ministry (Acts 9:16; 20:23; II Cor. 11:23-27; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 1:29)?
11. What was Saul told to do, and what was done (verses 18, cf. 6)? Why nothing more? How did Saul prove his profession to be real (verse 20; 26:20)?
12. What did he declare concerning Christ (Acts 9:20; John 20:31)? Why were the people who heard Saul "amazed" at his preaching (Acts 9:21, 22)? Meaning of "confounded" the Jews?
13. Why did they wish to kill Saul (Acts 9:23, 24; II Cor. 11:32)? How did he get through the wall (Acts 9:25; II Cor. 11:33)?
14. Can the "many days" of verse 23 include the "three years" of Gal. 1:18?
15. How was Saul received on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion (Acts 9:26)? Why not believe that he was a disciple?
16. What was the three-fold argument of Barnabas for receiving Saul (Acts 9:27; 4:36, 37; 11:22-26)? How many apostles were present (Gal. 1:18, 19)?
17. How was God fulfilling His prediction of Acts 9:16 (verses 24-26, 29)? Why were the Hellenists so hostile (verse 29; see Acts 6:1, 9-11)?
18. How did God thrust Saul out of Jerusalem for his foreign ministry (Acts 9:29, RO; 22:17-21)? Why send him to Tarsus (Acts 9:30, 11)? How do you think his family received him?
19. What two miracles bring Peter before us again in this chapter (Acts 9:32-43)? What is the difference between "edified" and "multiplied" (verse 21)?
20. How were there saints already in Lydda (Acts 9:32; 8:4, 40)? Why did one cure affect so much (Acts 9:35)? Who planted the church in Joppa (Acts 9:43, 42; 8:40)?

**YEAR 4 - LESSON 52 - PAGE 1**  
**WHOLE BIBLE STUDY COURSE**

**Year IV**

**Fourth Quarter**

Lesson 52

Page 1

Leviticus 27:30

Memory Verses: I Corinthians 10:26

Memory Verse:

“For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” (I Corinthians 10:26).

**THE TITHE IS THE LORD’S**

Christmas is proof enough that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Twenty-five words sum up the gospel in a nut-shell. This verse is the epitome of the Bible. It has been called "The Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven." It is written in the key of ‘B saved.’ It has four movements to it.

Movement number one: The Cause of Salvation. “For God so loved the world.”

Movement number two: The Cost of Salvation. “That he gave his only begotten Son.”

Movement number three: The Condition of Salvation. “That, whosoever believeth in him.”

Movement number four: The Consequence of Salvation. “Shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

What a verse! “**God... Only... Son... Perish... Everlasting Life**” – The **GOSPEL** is in this verse. Here God speaks of his heart of love to your heart – and mine.

**Moral Principles Are Eternal**

Moral principles do not change. What was true in the Garden of Eden is true today. Forms and ceremonies may change, but moral principles do not change. We do not now make sin offerings of the “blood of bulls and goats” (Heb. 10:4) as the Law of Moses commanded. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 3:28), It was right to offer animal sacrifices under the law of Moses, for they pointed to the Christ the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Consider these eternal principles.

**I. God Is the Owner**

A. God’s word declares it.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1). Paul reaffirms this eternal principle in I Cor. 10:26, “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.”

"For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Psa. 50:10).

“The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2:8).

**You Belong To God!**

“What? Know ye not that YOUR BODY is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are BOUGHT with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s (I Cor. 6:19, 20).

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“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and with spot” (I Pet. 1:18, 19).

B. God is a good owner,

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25).

C. God is a wise owner.

“And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.... After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them” (Matt. 25:15, 19-30). Read carefully how the Lord’s return tests the servants to whom he had given the five, two and one talents.

H. C. Duke, a humble Christian who developed a large fortune, used to say he believed God was looking for men whom he could trust. Mr. Duke started as a businessman by giving ten per cent from his one store. God trusted him with large funds. Mr. Duke wound up by giving 90 per cent of his earnings from his dozens of stores.

D. God is a generous owner.

“BRING ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and PROVE ME NOW herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:10-12).

Our blessed Lord said: “GIVE, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:38).

Why should we hesitate to trust our gracious Father? He will do right by us if we do right by him! “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him” (John 5:22, 23).

“If God gets His and I get mine,  
Then everything will be just fine;  
But if I get mine and keep His, too,  
Then what do you think the Lord will DO?  
I think He will collect, don’t you?” (Mal. 3:8, 9).

A second eternal principle is admitted to be true.

### II. Man Is the Steward

A. A steward is a trustee, an overseer, a manager. He is one who controls, uses, occupies, supervises, and seeks to advance or multiply that which belong to another.

Abraham had a “steward” of his house (Gen. 15:2).

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Joseph had a “steward of his house” (Gen. 44:1).

The steward did not own or dominate the house or its owner. He carried on the affairs of the house for its owner.

B. Every Christian is a steward.

God created and redeemed us. We are TWICE HIS. All we have, all we are comes from and belongs to God. God puts us in charge of our-selves, our talents, opportunities, influence, and all material things. To accept this trust 100% is revolutionary. Do YOU ACCEPT IT? If you believe the Bible, you do. “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13-17).

The Bible says “It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (I Cor. 4:2).

“So then,” writes the inspired apostle Paul, “everyone of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom, 14:12).

C. Stewardship enriches a good steward.

A good steward enriches the Lord – and himself (Matt. 25:20-23).

A good steward wins the Lord’s commendation (Matt. 25:21, 23). “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

A good steward is compensated. The Lord makes us “ruler” (Matt. 25:23). “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful... I will make thee RULER over many things...”

A good steward enjoys his Lord’s companionship. “ENTER THOU into the joys of thy Lord” (Matt. 25:23).

“The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:16, 17).

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

“When Jesus as Lord I had crowned, My heart with His peace did bound.”

It is eternally true that God operates by a plan. Let us examine God’s finance plan.

### III. God's Finance Plan

A. Remember: God works always by a plan.

God created and runs the universe by a dependable plan. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

Paul says of Christ, “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:17), or hold together. Christ is the controlling and unifying force in nature. The Son of God’s love is the CREATOR and SUSTAINER of the universe.

### Christ Died and "Rose Again!"

Christ died to make the Gospel possible (I Cor. 15:1-3). The Gospel Plan of Salvation was not an afterthought of God. God gave to Paul “the dispensation of God... to fulfil the word of God. Even the mystery that hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints, to

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whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Car. 1:25-29).

Christ committed the spread of the gospel to man (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

Do you think our Lord would be foolish enough to have NO PLAN TO FINANCE THE EVANGELISM OF THE WORLD? Christ is “God’s unspeakable gift” (II Cor. 9:15). He gave His ALL, His life, for our salvation. You agree I am sure, that whatever we give for the spread of Christ’s Gospel must be a worthy portion!

What portion has God honored in all ages? It is an eternal principle that

B. The tithe is “the Lord’s” (Lev. 27:30).

“And all the tithe of the land... is the Lord’s: it is holy unto the Lord” (Lev. 27:30). When has God repealed the principle of His ownership? “The EARTH is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1).

In Old Testament days when “offerings” were taken they were in addition to the tithe. Giving was in proportion to income. Never is there a suggestion of any plan for less than the tithe. Giving is an act of worship. It must be an expression of love toward God, the God who “SO LOVED that He GAVE...” (John 3:16).

C. The tithe is the starting point – the minimum.

Each Christian should take the tithe as the beginning place in his church giving. Those who fear that tithing smacks of legalism should remember that tithing CAME BEFORE MOSES AND THE LAW. It is older than Jewish history. Older people than the Jews were tithers. Sometime in the morning of human history, God seems to have instilled within the human heart the idea of tithing, for tribes who had become heathen were tithers.

Since “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), we must conclude that God by “divers manners” (Heb. 1:1) let His will be known in regards to tithing.

1. Abraham commenced tithing (Gen. 14:18-20).

There is no record that he was commanded to do so. The command or teaching must have preceded his Bible-recorded experience.

2. Jacob continued it (Gen. 28:20-22).

“Remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:18). God surely blessed Jacob.

3. Moses confirmed it (Lev. 27:30),

The tithe “is the Lord’s; it is holy unto the Lord” (Lev. 27:30). I’m afraid to change this eternal moral principle of God’s plan of finance. God’s covenant with Abraham “was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect” (Gal. 3:17). So, while the law was “blotted out... nailed to his cross” (Col. 2:14), the principle of the tithe was not destroyed. The tithe principle was given BEFORE THE LAW!

4. Malachi commanded it (Mal. 3:8-10).

“Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase...” (Prov. 3:9). The tithe honors God. The tithe “proves” God, or puts Him to the test to keep His promise.

5. Jesus commended it (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42). Jesus said of tithing of mint and anise and cumin, “THESE OUGHT YE TO HAVE DONE, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt. 23:23).

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Tithing, of course, is not a substitute for judgment, mercy and faith, but it powerfully supplements such moral qualities in the spreading of the gospel!

### Was Jesus a Tither'?

The Bible does not specifically say so, but the presumption is that He was a tither. Why?

1. Jesus was reared in a pious Jewish home. The pious Jew tithed.
2. The Old Testament was the Bible in that day. Jesus loved and quoted this Bible. He believed it was God's Word and revealed will. The Old Testament teaches tithing. The presumption, therefore, is that Jesus tithed.
3. Jesus said, "EXCEPT your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees were tithers.
4. Jesus said he had not come to destroy the law or prophets, "but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). Tithing is taught in both the law and the prophets.
5. Jesus taught that his followers should go the "second mile" (Matt. 5:41). That is, go beyond the requirements. One cannot go the second mile until he has gone the first. Will love for God allow us to do less than the tithe, and go beyond the tithe, as we are able? Jesus did not lower the standards. He RAISED ALL MORAL STANDARDS. To give less than the tithe is to lower the Old Testament standard. YOU must give more to raise the standard!
6. Paul concurred in it (I Cor. 16:2). The method of "bringing all the tithe into the storehouse," which under the gospel of grace is the treasury of the local church, cannot be improved upon in financing all phases of God's work!

D. Excuses for not tithing (Luke 14:18).

My wife and I didn't have any business tithing. Common sense told us that a G. I. schoolboy with a working wife couldn't even think about giving up 10% to the church. The high cost of living took all we earned. Doctor bills had us heavily in debt, and it took frequent loans from friends to keep off a bread and bean diet. No matter how we looked at it, we could not afford to tithe. Or at least that is what we kept telling ourselves.

Then, a few months ago, something happened that made us straighten up and do a little thinking. A deacon in our Bible school class gave a talk on tithing. He commented on the alibis of people who don't tithe with something like this: "You say now that you can't afford to tithe because you don't make enough. Later on when your income is higher, it will be because you won't want to give us such a large part of your hard earned money."

That, to put it briefly, hit my wife and me right between the eyes. It made sense! We knew enough about the weakness of human nature to see that we ourselves would go on making excuses about not tithing. Experience had taught us both that it is always easier to make excuses than it is to make decisions.

After finishing Sunday dinner, we pulled down our Bible from the mantel and started reading about that 10% that we "just couldn't give up." We read together, and talked together, and together we were impressed with the importance of tithing. We read things like: "Will a man rob God? ... In tithes and offerings" (Mal. 3:8). "The tithe... is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:30).

### Not an Easy Decision

Our decision to tithe wasn't easy. Actually the whole thing was against our better judgment. But there turned out to be something besides horse sense which my wife and I had to reckon: that intangible, evasive thing we Christians know as Faith!

As we sat and talked of faith we became ashamed. What kind of Christians were we not to believe that God would take care of us? Finally we started tithing.

Today the results amaze us! Somehow our money goes farther than it ever did before. There is no common sense way of explaining it, but we know there has been a change. What is more important, our small sacrifice of itself has brought my wife and me closer to each other and closer to God.

No we couldn't afford to tithe – but we did! And we find that our plan is paying off in happiness and peace of mind. – John Woodruff, Jr., “Home Companion.”

### Church on Crutches?

Everett Gill, Jr., tells the story of a little boy in Mexico who was saving his pennies to buy himself an artificial leg, but who refused to quit tithing. He said, “I would rather go on crutch crutches, than to see my church on crutches!”

### Questions

1. Is this a good time of the year to remember Joan 3:16? Why?
2. Do you agree that the message of this verse is “The Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven?” Why so?
3. Can you arrange this verse to spell “Gospel?”
4. Do moral principles change? Illustrate.
5. Who is the Owner of “the earth... and the fullness thereof” (Psa. 24:1; 50:10; Hag. 2:8)?
6. Is this still true (I Cor. 10:26)?
7. To whom do YOU belong (I Cor. 6:19, 29; I Pet. 1:18, 19)?
8. Is God a good owner (Gen. 18:25; John 3:16; II Pet. 3:9)?
9. Is God a wise owner (Matt. 25:15, 19-30)?
10. Is God a generous owner (Mal. 3:8-10; Luke 6:38)?
11. Is man the owner, or a steward? Can you define steward? Can you name two Old Testament men who had stewards?
12. Is every Christian a steward (Luke 19:13-17; I Cor. 4:2)? Shall we give an accounting of our stewardship (Rom. 14:12)?
13. Can you list four things that result when a man is a good steward (Matt. 25:20-30)?
14. Does God always have a plan (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:17) as Creator and Sustainer of his universe?
15. What plan did the Son of God perfect through His death (I Cor. 15:1-3)? To whom is this Gospel to go (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8)?
16. Do you think God would be foolish enough to have no plan to finance the work of His Church? Is there a portion that God has honored in all ages (Lev. 27:30)? Was God repealed His ownership, and the tithe?
17. Who commenced, continued, confirmed, commanded, commended, and concurred in tithing (Gen. 14:18- 20; 28:20-22; Lev. 27:30; Mal. 3:8-10; Matt. 23:23; I Cor. 16:2)?
18. Was Jesus a tither? Can you list five reasons for your belief that He was?
19. What is your excuse for not tithing (Luke 14:18)? How did John Woodruff, Jr., and his wife overcome their excuse for not tithing?
20. Would you “rather go on crutches, than to see my church on crutches” (Eph. 5:25, 20)? Will you start tithing today if you are not already tithing?