

THE NEW TESTAMENT

ACTS (PART I)



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CONTENTS

LESSON	PAGE
1. The Ascension of Jesus - The Selection of Matthias	1-1
2. The Holy Spirit - Peter's Sermon - The Church	2-1
3. The Lame Man at the Temple	3-1
4. Peter and John Imprisoned	4-1
5. Ananias and Sapphira	5-1
6. The Apostles Imprisoned	6-1
7. Stephen - The First Recorded Christian Martyr	7-1
8. Philip and Simon the Sorcerer	8-1
9. Philip and the Ethiopian Nobleman	9-1
10. The Conversion of Saul	10-1
11. The Preaching of Saul	11-1
12. Peter, Aeneas, Tabitha (Dorcas)	12-1
13. The Conversion of Cornelius	13-1

LESSON 1

ASCENSION OF JESUS - SELECTION OF MATTHIAS

Acts 1

INTRODUCTION. The book of Acts is a history of the early church—its beginning and its growth. *Some* of the acts of *some* of the apostles are recorded in the book.

THE AUTHOR. Luke, a Gentile, is generally accepted as the author of the book of Acts for several reasons.

- The writer addresses the book to "Theophilus" and refers to his "former treatise" (Acts 1:1). The identity of Theophilus is not known, but the former treatise also addressed to Theophilus is the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1-4).
- Medical terms in a technical manner are used in both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. Paul calls Luke the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).
- Luke was a companion of Paul (Col. 4:14; II Tim. 4:11; Phile. 24). The "we" sections in Acts describe in detail various events and prove that the writer accompanied Paul at times on his journeys (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-16; 21; 27; 28).

THE DATE. The book of Acts closes with Paul in prison for two years in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30-31). The apostle Paul was taken to Rome as a prisoner about A. D. 61 or 62. It is likely the book was written at the end of Paul's two year imprisonment, A. D. 63 or 64, which was about thirty years after the crucifixion of Christ.

A. THE ASCENSION OF JESUS (Acts 1:1-11). Luke closes his gospel account with an appearance of Jesus, following his resurrection, to his disciples in Jerusalem. At that time Jesus instructed his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received power from on high (Luke 24:36-49). Luke then briefly describes Jesus' ascension to heaven (Luke 24:50-53).

Luke opens the book of Acts with a more detailed description of Jesus' ascension. Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives and again promised them they would receive power which would occur when the Holy Spirit came upon them. While the disciples were watching, Jesus then ascended to heaven.

1. To whom is the book of Acts written? (Acts 1:1) What other New Testament book is addressed in this manner? (Luke 1:3)

Note. A treatise is a formal essay or book on some subject. The "former treatise" addressed to Theophilus refers to the Gospel of Luke.

2. The former treatise concerned all that Jesus did and taught until what day? (Acts 1:1-2)
3. How long did Jesus show himself alive after his passion (suffering)? (Acts 1:3)
4. Jesus commanded the disciples to remain at Jerusalem and wait for what? (Acts 1:4)
5. John baptized with water, but the disciples would be baptized with whom? (Acts 1:5)
6. The disciples asked Jesus what question? (Acts 1:6)
7. What was Jesus' answer? (Acts 1:7)
8. The disciples would receive _____ after the _____ came upon them. (Acts 1:8)
9. Name four places where the disciples were to be witnesses. (Acts 1:8)
10. Describe Jesus' ascension to heaven. (Acts 1:9)
11. Who appeared to the disciples? (Acts 1:10)
12. The men said Jesus would return in what manner? (Acts 1:11)

B. THE SELECTION OF MATTHIAS (Acts 1:12-26). After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples returned to the city of Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. While they waited, they chose another apostle to take the place of Judas Iscariot.

1. The disciples gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem. Who was there with the disciples? (Acts 1:12-14)

2. How many were gathered together? (Acts 1:15)

3. When Judas learned that Jesus had been condemned to death, he returned the money he had received from the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus. Judas then hanged himself (Matt. 27:3-10). What does Luke add to Matthew's account regarding Judas? (Acts 1:18)

4. The field purchased with the money Judas returned was called what? What does the word mean? (Acts 1:19)

5. It was prophesied in the book of Psalms that another should take the place of Judas (Acts 1:20; Ps. 69:25; 109:8). Peter names the qualifications for the one who is to take the place of Judas: (Acts 1:21-22)
 - a. he must have accompanied them from the _____ of John unto the day Jesus was _____
 - b. the one chosen was to be a witness of the _____

6. What two men met these qualifications? (Acts 1:23)

7. The disciples prayed to the Lord to show them which of the two men He had chosen, for the Lord knows what? (Acts 1:24)

8. Which man was chosen? (Acts 1:26)

LESSON 2

THE HOLY SPIRIT - PETER'S SERMON - THE CHURCH

Acts 2

INTRODUCTION. Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father—the Holy Spirit who would impart power to them (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 8). Earlier Jesus had told his disciples that his Father would send them the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, in Jesus' name. The Holy Spirit would teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had told them (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, would guide the disciples into all truth and declare unto them the things that are to come (John 16:13).

When the twelve disciples were gathered together in one place about a week after Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came upon them. First there was a sound as of a "rushing mighty wind"; then there were "cloven tongues" (divided, parting asunder) like fire which sat upon each one of them; and last, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak as the "Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

THE DAY OF PENTECOST. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, a yearly feast day celebrated by the Jews. All Jewish men were required to go to Jerusalem for this feast and two other yearly feasts, the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Pentecost was also called "Feast of Harvest" (Ex. 23:16), "Feast of the First Fruits" (Lev. 23:17; Num. 28:26), "Feast of Weeks" (Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10). The word Pentecost (*Pentekostos*, Gr.), denoting fiftieth, is found only in the New Testament. The feast was a celebration of the beginning of the harvest and occurred the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of the Passover week. The day always occurred the first day of the week because the count commenced the day after the Sabbath of the Passover week unto the day after the seventh Sabbath which was fifty days (Lev. 23:9-11, 15-21).

A. THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (Acts 2:1-13)

1. The disciples were gathered together what special feast day? (Acts 2:1)

2. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, three evidences occurred: (Acts 2:2-4)
 - a. a sound as a _____
 - b. cloven tongues (parting asunder, divided) like _____ that sat on each one
 - c. they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with _____

Note. The disciples on this day received the promise of the Holy Spirit and power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:33). Baptism consists of the "processes of immersion, submersion and emergence" (W. E. Vine). On this day the apostles were immersed (baptized) in the Holy Spirit—that is, they were completely under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit, and they spoke as the Holy Spirit directed them. Shortly before He was betrayed by Judas, Jesus promised the other eleven disciples:

- another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth (John 14:16-18);
 - the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit who shall "teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance..." (John 14 26);
 - the Comforter who shall "testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness..." (John 15:26-27);
 - the Comforter who will "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:7-11);
 - the Spirit of truth who will "guide you into all truth...and He will show you things to come" (John 16:13).
3. Why was the multitude who had come from every nation to Jerusalem for the feast confounded (bewildered, confused) and amazed? (Acts 2:6-8)
 - a. Every man heard the apostles speak in his own _____.
 - b. They spoke to one another, saying, are not all these _____?
 - c. They asked, how is it we hear in our own _____?

 4. Why did some of the people mock the disciples? (Acts 2:13)

B. PETER'S SERMON (Acts 2:14-41)

1. What did Peter say to prove he and the other disciples were not drunk? (Acts 2:14-15)
2. Peter said this event had been prophesied by the prophet Joel:
 - a. in the last days God will pour forth his _____ upon all flesh (Acts 2:16-17)
 - b. at that time whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be _____ (Acts 2:21)

Note. Peter applies the words of the prophet to the event that just occurred—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. Later all flesh—peoples of all nations—shall benefit from the work of the Spirit: Gentiles (Cornelius and his household) shall receive the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 10); women shall prophesy (Acts 21:9; I Cor. 11:5); male and female, young and old, master and servant shall receive spiritual blessings without distinction of sex, age or social status (Gal. 3:28). In these “last days” judgments shall fall upon those who reject the message of the Spirit, but “whosoever” shall call on the name of the Lord—those who receive and obey the word—shall be saved (Joel 2:28-32).

3. What had Jesus done in the midst of these people? (Acts 2:22)
4. What had the people done to Jesus? (Acts 2:23)
5. What did God do for Jesus? (Acts 2:24)
6. David prophesied that God would not leave his soul in _____, nor allow his Holy One to see _____. (Acts 2:27)
7. What did Peter say about David? (Acts 2:29)
8. Therefore, since David was still in his tomb, he was not speaking about himself in the prophecy, but he was speaking about whom? (Acts 2:31)

9. Where is Jesus now? (Acts 2:32-33)

Note. Peter states that these prophecies of David (Ps. 16:8-11; 110:1; 132:11) are fulfilled in Jesus Christ who was resurrected to sit at the right hand of God.

10. When the people heard Peter's words, their hearts were pricked (pierced). What did they say? (Acts 2:37)

11. What was Peter's answer? (Acts 2:38)

Note. The gift of the Holy Spirit promised to those who repent and are baptized may be explained as:

- the gift of salvation—the Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God through the word (I Cor. 2:7-11), and those who believe and obey the revealed word receive the gift of grace and salvation;
- an indwelling of the Holy Spirit—the baptized believer is a new creature (II Cor. 5:17), and by the Spirit (grace and salvation) dwelling within him, bears the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

12. Those that received the word did what? How many were added that day to the disciples? (Acts 2:41)

C. THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH (Acts 2:42-47)

1. Name four ways in which these people continued steadfastly. (Acts 2:42)

2. What did the apostles do? (Acts 2:43)

3. What did some of the believers do in order to help others who were in need? (Acts 2:44-45)

4. What did the Lord do for those who were saved? (Acts 2:47)

LESSON 3

THE LAME MAN AT THE TEMPLE

Acts 3

INTRODUCTION. On the day of Pentecost 3000 received the message of the apostles and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41). The believers then met daily in the temple to worship, and the Lord added daily to the church those who believed and obeyed the gospel message spoken by the apostles (Acts 2:42, 46-47). The apostles performed many signs and wonders causing fear (awe) to come upon the people (Acts 2:43).

A. A LAME MAN HEALED (Acts 3:1-11). As Peter and John went to the temple one day, they observed a lame man at the door of the temple. This man was lame from birth and was brought daily to the temple where he begged for alms at the door or gate called Beautiful. This gate was probably the eastern gate of the temple, leading from the court of the Gentiles to the women's court, and the principle entrance.

1. When did Peter and John go to the temple? (Acts 3:1)
2. How long had the man at the Beautiful gate been lame? (Acts 3:2)
3. What did he ask of Peter and John? (Acts 3:3)
4. What did Peter tell the man? (Acts 3:4)
5. Why did the man pay attention to Peter and John? (Acts 3:5)
6. What did Peter say he would give the man? (Acts 3:6)

7. When Peter took the man by the hand, what happened? (Acts 3:7)
8. What did the man do? (Acts 3:8)
9. When the people saw the man walking and praising God, they were filled with what? (Acts 3:9-10)
10. Then the people _____ together to the apostles and lame man to the porch called Solomon's, greatly wondering. (Acts 3:11)

B. PETER'S SERMON (Acts 3:12-26). As the people beheld the man who had been lame suddenly leaping about, they also gazed in wonder at Peter and John. They all ran together and assembled in Solomon's porch. This porch was a roofed, colonnaded area along the eastern wall of the outer court of the temple (court of the Gentiles) and overlooked the Kidron Valley. Peter then took the opportunity to preach another sermon. First he explained the miracle (Acts 3:12-16), then he discussed repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:17-21), and last he spoke of the fulfillment of prophecies by Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22-26).

1. *The miracle was the work of God* (Acts 3:12-16). Peter first asked the people why they marveled at the man. He asked why they looked at John and him as though they had made the man to walk by their own power.
 - a. The miracle was the work of God to glorify whom? (Acts 3:13)
 - b. Whom had these people denied and killed? (Acts 3:14-15)
 - c. God had raised him from the dead and Peter and John were _____. (Acts 3:15)
 - d. The lame man was healed because of _____ in Jesus' name. (Acts 3:16)

Note. "Through faith in his name" refers to the faith of Peter and John in the name of Jesus, for there is no indication the lame man believed in Jesus before he was healed.

2. *Forgiveness of sins is through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:17-21).*
 - a. The Jews had killed Jesus in _____ . (Acts 3:17)
 - b. The prophets had prophesied Jesus would _____ .
(Acts 3:18)
 - c. Peter told the people to _____ that their
sins might be blotted out (wiped away). (Acts 3:19)
3. *Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets (Acts 3:22-26).*
 - a. Moses had prophesied that God would raise up a prophet like Moses;
everyone that does not hearken to that prophet shall be _____ .
(Acts 3:22-23)
 - b. All the prophets from what prophet had spoken of these days? (Acts 3:24)
 - c. What covenant (agreement) had God made with Abraham? (Acts 3:25)
 - d. God sent his Son (Servant) Jesus to bless these people by turning them
away from their _____. (Acts 3:26)

*Repent ye therefore,
And be converted,
That your sins may be blotted out...
Acts 3:19*

LESSON 4

PETER AND JOHN IMPRISONED

Acts 4

INTRODUCTION. As Peter preached to the crowd in Solomon's porch, he explained the healing of the lame man. When he spoke of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and repentance for forgiveness of sins, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees arrested him and John. The captain of the temple was the commander of the guard of Levites who were stationed in the temple at the gates and elsewhere to keep order. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and therefore they objected to the preaching of Peter.

Peter and John were kept in prison overnight. In the morning they were brought before the Sanhedrin which was the Jewish supreme council or court of justice composed of seventy-one men. The president of the Sanhedrin was the high priest. Annas was high priest from A. D. 6-15, but his influence continued as five of his sons, a grandson, and his son-in-law Caiaphas served as high priests after him. Caiaphas was the actual high priest from A. D. 18-36 and thus presided over the Sanhedrin during Jesus' ministry and at the time of this incident.

A. PETER AND JOHN ARRESTED (Acts 4:1-4)

1. Why were Peter and John arrested by the priests, captain of the guard, and Sadducees? (Acts 4:1-3)

Note. Since it was evening, the apostles were imprisoned overnight because Jewish law required that trials be held during the daytime.

2. The number of those that heard the word and believed was about: (Acts 4:4)
 - a. 2000 men
 - b. 3000 men
 - c. 5000 men

B. PETER'S DEFENSE BEFORE THE COUNCIL (Acts 4:5-12)

1. Those present at the council were: (Acts 4:5-6)

r _____

C _____

e _____

J _____

s _____

A _____

A _____

kindred of the _____

2. They asked Peter and John by what power or in whose name they had healed the lame man. Peter said the lame man had been healed in the name of whom? (Acts 4:10)

3. Peter said Jesus Christ is the _____ that was rejected by the builders and became the _____. (Acts 4:11)

Note. This is a reference to Ps. 118:22. The Jewish rulers (the builders) rejected Jesus (the stone) who is the cornerstone or foundation of salvation. Jesus applied this Psalm to himself earlier when He spoke the parable of the wicked husbandmen, telling the rulers of the people that "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:42-44)

4. In whose name is salvation? (Acts 4:12)

C. THE COUNCIL'S PRIVATE CONFERENCE (Acts 4:13-17)

1. What three things did the council observe about Peter and John? (Acts 4:13)
2. The rulers admitted to themselves that Peter and John had done what? (Acts 4:16)

D. FURTHER PREACHING FORBIDDEN (Acts 4:17-22)

1. To prevent further spread of the apostles' teaching, the council determined to threaten Peter and John and charged them not to _____ nor to _____ in the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:17-18)
2. When the council commanded Peter and John to preach no more in the name of Jesus, the disciples said they could not stop speaking of the things they had _____ and _____. (Acts 4:19-20)
3. After threatening the disciples, the council let them go without punishing them, for the people _____ God because of the miracle. (Acts 4:21)
4. The lame man who was healed was more than: (Acts 4:22)
 - a. 20 years old
 - b. 30 years old
 - c. 40 years old

E. REPORT OF PETER AND JOHN, PRAYER OF THE DISCIPLES (Acts 4:23-31)

1. When Peter and John returned to their own company and reported what had happened, they all: (Acts 4:23-24)
 - a. feared for their lives
 - b. prayed to God
 - c. left Jerusalem
2. They praised God, saying He had made: (Acts 4:24)
 - a. the heaven
 - b. the earth
 - c. the sea
 - d. all that is in them

3. They quoted: (Acts 4:25-26)

- a. Moses
- b. David
- c. Isaiah

Note. This is a quotation from Ps. 2:1-2 which states that the kings and rulers of the world would gather together against the Lord and his Anointed (Christ).

4. Who had gathered together against Jesus? (Acts 4:27-28)

- a. Herod
- b. Pontius Pilate
- c. the Gentiles and the people of Israel

5. They asked God to grant them to speak his word with _____.
(Acts 4:29)

6. They asked that _____ and _____ be
done in Jesus' name. (Acts 4:30)

7. What occurred after they prayed? (Acts 4:31)

- a. the place was shaken
- b. they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
- c. they spoke the word of God with boldness

F. UNITY AND PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH (Acts 4:32-37)

1. Those that believed were of one _____ and _____.
(Acts 4:32)

2. The disciples who were in need received the things that they lacked when:
(Acts 4:34-35)

- a. they begged at the gate of the temple
- b. the apostles performed miracles to obtain the things needed
- c. other disciples sold their possessions and gave the money to the apostles to distribute to those in need

3. Barnabas, a man of Cyprus, sold some land and: (Acts 4:36-37)

- a. gave all of the money to the apostles
- b. bought another parcel of land
- c. gave part of the money to the apostles

LESSON 5

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

Acts 5:1-16

INTRODUCTION. The early members of the Lord's church came from many lands and different backgrounds (Acts 2:9-11), yet they were of "one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). Those who were poor had their needs supplied by the generosity of others (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). Barnabas is specifically named as one man who sold his property, then gave the money to the apostles to distribute to those in need (Acts 4:36-37).

In contrast to the sincerity and liberality of Barnabas and others who willingly sold their possessions to provide for the needy, the story of another man and his wife reveals their insincerity and hypocrisy. This couple, Ananias and Sapphira, also sold some property, but, unlike Barnabas who gave all his money to the apostles, these two gave some of the money to the apostles and kept a portion for themselves. The money was theirs to do with as they desired, but they conspired with one another to deceive the apostles by professing to give *all* the money they had received for the sale of their land.

A. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA (Acts 5:1-11)

1. What did Ananias and Sapphira do? (Acts 5:1)
2. What did they agree to do with the money they received? (Acts 5:2)
3. When Satan filled Ananias' heart, what did Ananias do? (Acts 5:3)
4. What did Peter say to Ananias concerning the possession owned by Ananias, and the money he received from the sale of it? (Acts 5:4)

5. Peter told Ananias, "Satan filled thine heart to lie to the _____
...thou hast not lied unto men, but unto _____." (Acts 5:3-4)

Note. The apostles in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt acted by the power and authority of God. Thus when Ananias attempted to deceive the apostles, he lied to the Holy Spirit and God.

6. What happened to Ananias? (Acts 5:5)
7. What did the young men do? (Acts 5:6)
8. When did Sapphira come to Peter? Did she know what had happened to her husband? (Acts 5:7)
9. Peter asked Sapphira if she and her husband had sold the land for a certain price (that is, the amount she and her husband had agreed to give to the apostles). When Sapphira answered, "Yea, for so much," she: (Acts 5:8)
- a. told the truth
 - b. lied
10. Whom had Sapphira and Ananias tempted (tried, tested)? (Acts 5:9)
11. What happened to Sapphira? (Acts 5:10)
12. Those in the church who heard about Ananias and Sapphira were filled with great: (Acts 5:5, 11)
- a. joy
 - b. fear
 - c. sorrow

B. SIGNS AND WONDERS (Acts 5:12-16)

1. What did the apostles do among the people? (Acts 5:12)

2. How many believers were added to the Lord? (Acts 5:14)

3. Why did the people carry the sick on beds and couches to the street? (Acts 5:15)

4. The apostles healed: (Acts 5:16)
 - a. the sick
 - b. those with unclean spirits
 - c. all who were brought to them

C. THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

1. After Jesus ascended to heaven about _____ assembled together. (Acts 1:15)

2. On the day of Pentecost _____ were added to their number. (Acts 2:41)

3. When Peter and John preached in the temple, those that believed numbered about _____. (Acts 4:4)

4. After Peter and John were released from prison, a _____ who believed and were of one heart and soul were assembled. (Acts 4:32)

5. After the incident with Ananias and Sapphira, _____ of both men and women believers were added to the Lord. (Acts 5:14)

LESSON 6

THE APOSTLES IMPRISONED

Acts 5:17-42

INTRODUCTION. After healing the lame man in the temple, Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching about Jesus Christ and his resurrection from the dead (Acts 4:1-4). When the council (Sanhedrin) assembled the following day, they were puzzled concerning what action to take with Peter and John. They could not deny the lame man had been healed, but the Sadducees objected to Peter's preaching regarding the resurrection. Consequently, the council charged the two apostles not to teach anymore in the name of Jesus and then let them go (Acts 4:5-22). Nevertheless, the apostles continued to preach the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

As the number of believers in the church grew—multitudes of men and women (Acts 5:14)—the Jewish rulers became more and more alarmed. They resolved they could not allow the apostles to continue their bold preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.

A. THE ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT (Acts 5:17-26). The Sadducees, filled with indignation and jealousy, arrested the apostles and put them in prison. They were determined to enforce the threats they had made earlier to Peter and John.

1. Why did the high priest with the Sadducees arrest the apostles? (Acts 5:17-18)
2. Who opened the prison doors at night and released the apostles? (Acts 5:19)
3. What did he command the apostles to do? (Acts 5:20)
4. The apostles entered the temple early in the morning and _____.
(Acts 5:21)

5. In the morning the high priest called the council together and sent to the _____ to have them brought. (Acts 5:21)
6. When the officers went to the prison, they found: (Acts 5:22-23)
 - a. the prison shut in safety
 - b. the keepers at the doors
 - c. no one inside
7. The officers and priests who were perplexed were then told the men were: (Acts 5:24-25)
 - a. hiding in the temple
 - b. preaching in the temple
 - c. hiding in the city
8. When the officers brought the apostles to the council, they did it without violence (carefully). What did they fear? (Acts 5:26)

B. THE TRIAL AND DEFENSE (Acts 5:27-42). The high priest made two specific charges against the apostles (Acts 5:27-28).

- *Preaching in the name of Jesus*—when Peter and John were released from prison earlier, they had been forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus. Instead of obeying the council, the apostles had "filled Jerusalem" with their teaching.
 - *Bringing upon them (the rulers) the blood of Jesus*—the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to death and persuaded Pilate to crucify him. Thus the Jewish rulers were guilty of the blood of Jesus. They had even boldly told Pilate they would accept the responsibility for Jesus' death (Matt. 27:25). Now, however, they feared that the multitudes following the apostles would rise up against them.
1. In answer to the first charge, Peter and the apostles admitted their guilt but said they must obey whom? (Acts 5:29)
 2. In answer to the second charge, the apostles accused the rulers of what? (Acts 5:30)

3. God exalted Jesus to his right hand to be a _____ and _____, to give _____ to Israel and _____ of sins. (Acts 5:31)
4. The apostles and Holy Spirit were witnesses of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. To whom had the Holy Spirit been given? (Acts 5:32)
5. When the council heard the words of the apostles, what did they want to do? Why? (Acts 5:33)
6. Gamaliel was: (Acts 5:34)
 - a. a Pharisee
 - b. a doctor (teacher) of the law
 - c. honored (respected) by all the people
7. His advice to the council was: (Acts 5:38-39)
 - a. let these men alone, for if this work be of men, it will come to (be) _____;
 - b. if this is of God, you cannot _____ it, lest you be found fighting against God.
8. The council took Gamaliel's advice and did what to the apostles? (Acts 5:40)
9. When the apostles were released, why did they rejoice? (Acts 5:41)
10. What did they do daily at home and in the temple? (Acts 5:42)

LESSON 7

STEPHEN - THE FIRST RECORDED CHRISTIAN MARTYR

Acts 6; 7

INTRODUCTION. As the church continued to grow, the apostles were unable to look after the wants of all the believers. As a result some needy widows were neglected and complaints arose among the Grecian Jews against the Hebrew Jews. Grecian Jews were Jews who were born and raised in foreign lands, spoke the Greek language, and read the scriptures in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament scriptures. Hebrew Jews were Jews who were born and reared in Palestine, spoke the Aramaic language, and read the Old Testament scriptures in the Hebrew language.

The apostles could not give their time to the daily ministrations of the needy and continue to preach the gospel. Therefore, seven men were chosen to take care of the daily distribution of goods to the needy. The men chosen were of good report, full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom. One of the men chosen was Stephen.

A. STEPHEN – CHOSEN TO SERVE AND ARRESTED (Acts 6:5-15)

1. Stephen was full of _____ . (Acts 6:8)
2. Stephen did great _____ . (Acts 6:8)
3. Certain men of a synagogue disputed with Stephen but were not able to resist (withstand) the _____ by which he spoke. (Acts 6:9-10)
4. They suborned (induced, bribed) men who then falsely accused Stephen of blasphemy against _____ . (Acts 6:11)
5. They stirred up the people, seized Stephen and brought him before the _____ . (Acts 6:12)

6. They brought false witnesses against Stephen who said he spoke words against the _____. (Acts 6:13)
7. They also said they heard Stephen say that this place (the temple) would be destroyed by _____. (Acts 6:14)
8. Stephen's face was as the face of an _____. (Acts 6:15)

B. STEPHEN'S DEFENSE BEFORE THE COUNCIL (Acts 7:1-50). When Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin (council) for trial, he recounted Jewish history for the council members.

Abraham (Acts 7:2-8). God appeared to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia and told him to go to a land He would show him. God promised to give the land to Abraham's seed. But first Abraham's seed (descendants) would be in bondage in a strange land for 400 years. God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision.

1. Abraham begat _____, Isaac begat _____, and Jacob begat the _____. (Acts 7:8)

Joseph (Acts 7:9-16). The patriarchs (sons of Jacob) sold their brother Joseph into slavery in Egypt, but God was with him and delivered him out of affliction. God gave Joseph favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh made Joseph governor over Egypt and all his house. When a famine occurred in Canaan and Egypt, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain. The second time they came to Egypt to buy food, Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

2. Joseph then brought to Egypt his father and kindred who numbered _____ souls. (Acts 7:14)

Moses in Egypt, the first 40 years (Acts 7:17-29). The people grew and multiplied in Egypt till there arose another king in Egypt who knew not Joseph. The new king of Egypt oppressed the Israelites, even killing their babies. When Moses was born, he was hidden for three months in his father's house. He was then taken by Pharaoh's daughter who raised him as her own son. Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of Egypt and was mighty in his words and works. When he was forty years old, he killed an Egyptian who was fighting with an Israelite. The following day when he tried to interfere with two Israelites who were fighting each other, the one who wronged his neighbor pushed Moses away and asked if he would kill him as he had killed the Egyptian.

3. Moses then fled to _____ where he begat two sons. (Acts 7:29)

Moses in Midian, the second 40 years (Acts 7:29-37). When forty more years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sinai in a flame of fire in a bush. The voice of the Lord spoke to Moses and said He had seen the affliction of his people in Egypt and would deliver them. The Lord then sent Moses to Egypt to be both a ruler and a deliverer of the children of Israel. Moses brought the people out of Egypt after he showed signs and wonders in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness.

4. Moses told the children of Israel, "A _____ shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear." (Acts 7:37)

Moses in the wilderness, the last 40 years (Acts 7:38-41). Moses received the laws from God on Mount Sinai while the congregation was in the wilderness. While Moses was on the mountain, the people's hearts turned back to Egypt and the idols they had left there. They persuaded Aaron to make a calf for them, and then they sacrificed to it.

5. The people _____ in the works of their hands. (Acts 7:41)

God's rejection of Israel (Acts 7:42-43). Through the years, the children of Israel forsook God and turned to idolatry. Although God pleaded with his people through the prophets to return to him, they would not listen and God gave them up to their idolatrous ways. Stephen quoted Amos 5:25-27.

6. Amos prophesied that God would carry the people away beyond _____. (Acts 7:42-43)

The Tabernacle and the Temple (Acts 7:44-48). Stephen next discussed the tabernacle and temple. While Moses was on the mountain, God gave him the pattern for the tabernacle. The tabernacle which was then built in the wilderness was movable and accompanied the Israelites during their forty years of wanderings in the wilderness. The tabernacle was brought across the Jordan River when Joshua led the children of Israel into Canaan and was used until the days of David. David found favor in the sight of God, but he was not allowed to build a permanent place of worship. His son Solomon built the temple, a magnificent house of worship.

7. However, the most High dwelleth not in _____ made with hands. (Acts 7:48)

Stephen, not guilty of blasphemy (Acts 49-50). Since Stephen had been accused of blasphemy against the temple, he pointed out to the council that the tabernacle was a temporary place of worship, and the temple was a building made with hands—neither was the real dwelling place of God. Therefore, it could not be blasphemy to say the temple would be destroyed. Stephen then quoted Isa. 66:1-2.

8. Heaven is my _____, and earth is my _____:
what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

Hath not my _____ made all these things? (Acts 7:49-50)

C. STEPHEN'S CONCLUSION AND DEATH (Acts 7:51-60). After proving his innocence regarding blasphemy against the temple, Stephen then told the members of the council they were stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit. Their fathers had killed the prophets, and now they had betrayed and murdered the Just (Righteous) One—Jesus Christ. With these words the anger of the council became so intense, they rushed upon Stephen, cast him out of the city, and stoned him to death.

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. _____ Stephen told the council they were (vs. 51) | a. teeth |
| 2. _____ He said they were betrayers and murders of the (vs. 52) | b. stoned him |
| 3. _____ They had received but did not keep the (vs. 53) | c. Just One |
| 4. _____ When the council heard these things, they gnashed on Stephen with their (vs. 54) | d. spirit |
| 5. _____ Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, saw the heavens opened and standing on the right hand of God was (vs. 55-56) | e. law |
| 6. _____ The council cast Stephen out of the city and (vs. 57-58) | f. sin |
| 7. _____ Witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of (vs. 58) | g. stiffnecked
uncircumcised |
| 8. _____ Stephen called upon God to receive his (vs. 59) | h. Saul |
| 9. _____ As Stephen died, he asked the Lord not to charge the people with this (vs. 60) | i. Jesus, the Son of man |

LESSON 8

PHILIP AND SIMON THE SORCERER

Acts 8:1-25

INTRODUCTION. After Stephen was stoned, devout men buried him and lamented him. Then a great persecution by the Jews arose against the church at Jerusalem. As a result, the members of the church scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, but the apostles remained in Jerusalem. Saul, who had consented to Stephen's death and received the garments of those who had stoned Stephen, created much distress for the church, entering the homes of the members and dragging men and women to prison (Acts 8:1-3).

The Jews who persecuted the church had hoped to crush and destroy this rising, new religious movement, but instead, those members of the church who were scattered went everywhere preaching the gospel (Acts 8:4). Consequently, more souls were converted to Christ, and the church grew and spread beyond the borders of the city of Jerusalem.

One of the members of the church who left Jerusalem due to the persecution was Philip, not the apostle Philip, for the apostles remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). This man was one of the seven men chosen in Jerusalem to help with the daily ministrations of the needy (Acts 6:1-6), and is later referred to as "Philip the evangelist" (Acts 21:8).

SAMARIA. When Philip left Jerusalem, he went to Samaria to preach. Samaria was the ancient capital of the ten tribes or northern kingdom of Israel. The city had been built by Omri, the father of Ahab, about 880/79 B. C. (I Kings 16:23-28). Through the centuries Samaria was destroyed several times and rebuilt. In 30 B. C. Herod the Great reconstructed the city in a magnificent manner, enlarging and beautifying it over a period of ten years. In New Testament times the city of Samaria and the entire country of Samaria were ruled by a Roman governor who resided in Caesarea.

A. PHILIP AND SIMON, THE SORCERER (Acts 8:5-25)

1. When Philip went to Samaria, what did he preach? (Acts 8:5)

2. What miracles did he perform? (Acts 8:6-7)

3. Describe the Samaritans' reaction to Philip. (Acts 8:8)

4. Who was Simon? (Acts 8:9)

5. What did the Samaritans say about Simon? (Acts 8:10-11)

6. When Philip preached to the Samaritans, what did they do? (Acts 8:12)

7. What did Simon do? (Acts 8:13)

8. Who came from Jerusalem to Samaria after the Samaritans had received the word of God? (Acts 8:14)

9. Peter and John prayed that the Samaritans might receive whom? (Acts 8:15-16)

Note. Although these Samaritans had been baptized in water into the name of Jesus Christ, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is, salvation (Acts 2:38), they had not yet received a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit.

10. When did the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit? (Acts 8:14-17)

Note. By the laying on of their hands, the apostles imparted to the Samaritans a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit. These miraculous gifts of the Spirit were wisdom, knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues (I Cor. 12:8-10). In the early New Testament church different miraculous gifts were bestowed on different individuals to aid in confirming the word. Whether all the baptized Samaritan believers received spiritual gifts is uncertain.

11. What did Simon see? (Acts 8:18)

12. What did Simon offer to Peter and John? Why? (Acts 8:18-19)

13. What did Peter tell Simon? (Acts 8:20)

14. What was not right with Simon? (Acts 8:21)

15. What did Peter tell Simon to do in order to be forgiven? (Acts 8:22)

16. How did Peter describe Simon? (Acts 8:23)

17. What was Simon's response? (Acts 8:24)

18. After Peter and John had spoken the word of the Lord to the Samaritans, what did they do as they returned to Jerusalem? (Acts 8:25)

B. IMPARTING THE HOLY SPIRIT. Although the Samaritans believed Philip's preaching concerning the kingdom of God and were baptized, the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon them with miraculous powers. Peter and John came to Samaria, and by laying their hands upon the Samaritans, they imparted to them miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1. Was Philip, the evangelist, able to perform miracles? (Acts 8:6-7, 13)
2. What two things did Peter and John do in order for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit? (Acts 8:15, 17)
3. What did Simon want to buy? (Acts 8:17-18)

CONCLUSION. Although Philip had the power to perform miracles, apparently only the apostles had the ability to bestow these extraordinary powers of the Holy Spirit upon others. If Philip could have imparted the power to the Samaritans, then it would not have been necessary for Peter and John to journey to Samaria from Jerusalem.

The purpose of signs and miracles in the first century was to confirm the word and produce faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Mark 16:20; John 20:30-31; Heb. 2:2-4). These miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit possessed by early Christians were temporary, for the miracles ceased when the written word (the New Testament) was completed (I Cor. 13:8-10). When the last of the apostles died, then the ability to impart these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit also ceased.

*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness,
and pray God, if perhaps the thought of
thine heart may be forgiven thee.*

Acts 8:22

LESSON 9

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN NOBLEMAN

Acts 8:26-40

INTRODUCTION. After Philip preached to the Samaritans, an angel of the Lord spoke to him and instructed him to go toward the south, the way from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is “desert.” Philip must have been puzzled, for he was commanded to leave a city where many people were obeying the gospel to go to a lonely road in uninhabited territory.

GAZA. The Old Testament city of Gaza was a Philistine city about fifty miles southwest of Jerusalem. It was located on the caravan and military route from Egypt to Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The only reference to Gaza in the New Testament is this incident when Philip was directed by the angel to go to the road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza.

THE ETHIOPIAN NOBLEMAN. When Philip obeyed the angel's instructions, he encountered an Ethiopian nobleman on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Ancient Ethiopia, also called Nubia (the Hebrew name Cush is sometimes used in the Old Testament), was a nation south of Egypt and west of the Red Sea. The Biblical Ethiopia should not be confused with modern Ethiopia which is hundreds of miles away. The word Ethiopia is Greek and means burnt face or dark-faced.

The Ethiopian had been to Jerusalem to worship and was returning to his own country. He was a nobleman with great authority as treasurer for Candace, queen of Ethiopia. Candace was a title for the queens of Ethiopia as Pharaoh was a title for the Egyptian kings. Whether this Ethiopian was a Jew or a Jewish proselyte (a Gentile who was converted to the Jewish religion, in this case a native of Ethiopia) is unknown.

A. PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

1. The _____ of the Lord spoke to Philip and told him to go to the road that goes from Jerusalem to _____ which is desert. (Acts 8:26)
 2. Philip went and met a man of _____ who had great authority under _____ the queen. (Acts 8:27)
 3. This man was in charge of the queen's _____ and had come to Jerusalem to _____. (Acts 8:27)
 4. He was returning to Ethiopia, sitting in his _____ and reading from the prophet _____. (Acts 8:28)
 5. The Spirit told Philip to go _____ and join himself to the man in the chariot. (Acts 8:29)
 6. When Philip heard what the man was reading, he asked if he _____ what he was reading. (Acts 8:30)
 7. The Ethiopian said he needed someone to _____ him and asked Philip to come up and sit with him. (Acts 8:31)
 8. The scripture the Ethiopian was reading was, "He was led as a _____ to the slaughter; and like a _____ dumb before his shearer." (Acts 8:32-33)
- Note.* The section of Isaiah the Ethiopian was reading refers to the suffering and death of the Servant of the Lord, Jesus (Isa. 53:7-8).
9. The Ethiopian asked Philip if the prophet was speaking of _____ or some other man. (Acts 8:34)
 10. Then Philip began at the same _____ and preached unto him _____. (Acts 8:35)
 11. They came to a certain _____, and the Ethiopian said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be _____?" (Acts 8:36)

12. Philip told him, If you believe with all your heart, you may. The Ethiopian said, I believe that _____ is the _____ . (Acts 8:37)

Note. Some versions of the Bible omit this verse. See the marginal note in the Bible if the verse is omitted.

13. He commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the _____, both _____ and the _____; and he _____ him. (Acts 8:38)
14. When they were come up out of the _____, the _____ of the Lord caught away Philip. (Acts 8:39)
15. The Ethiopian saw Philip no more, and he went on his way _____ . (Acts 8:39)
16. Philip then went to Azotus, and as he passed through the territory, he preached in all the _____ till he came to Caesarea. (Acts 8:40)

B. SOME THOUGHTS REGARDING BAPTISM

1. When Philip baptized the Ethiopian, what was necessary for both of them to do? (Acts 8:38)
2. Why did John baptize in Aenon near to Salim? (John 3:23)
3. Our baptism is compared to what? (Rom. 6:4)

LESSON 10

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

Acts 9:1-19

INTRODUCTION. Saul was first introduced into the narrative at the stoning of Stephen. Witnesses against Stephen laid their garments at the feet of Saul who was consenting to Stephen's death (Acts 7:58; 8:1). Saul was a Hebrew of Hebrews of the tribe of Benjamin and a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5), the strictest sect of the Jews (Acts 26:4-5). He was instructed in Jewish law at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), and exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers (Gal. 1:14).

TARSUS. Saul was born in Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia in Asia Minor (Acts 22:3). Its early history is rather obscure, but in the three centuries before Christ, the city passed under the control of the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Thus in New Testament times, Tarsus was a place of many cultures, a center of great commerce, and a free Roman city. In this setting of Greek and Roman cultures, Saul acquired the knowledge to speak and write Greek, and claimed Roman citizenship as a free-born citizen (Acts 22:28).

DAMASCUS. After the stoning of Stephen, Saul made havoc of the church, dragging men and women to prison (Acts 8:3). Continuing his persecution, Saul received letters from the high priest authorizing him to go to Damascus to find any who were of the Way (followers of Jesus), bind them, and bring them back to Jerusalem (Acts 9:1-2). Julius Caesar, a Roman general and statesman, and Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor, had given the high priest and Sanhedrin authority over Jews in foreign cities. Damascus, the capital city of Syria and believed to be the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world, is about 150 miles from Jerusalem. Damascus seems to be just one of the foreign cities to which Saul carried his persecution (Acts 26:11). However, as Saul journeyed to Damascus, something happened on the way which changed his life forever.

A. SAUL'S VISION (Acts 9:1-9)

1. Saul desired letters from the high priest to the synagogues in: (Acts 9:1-2)
 - a. Damascus
 - b. Antioch
 - c. Rome
2. He intended to bring any followers of Christ, whether they were men or women: (Acts 9:2)
 - a. gifts
 - b. bound unto Jerusalem
 - c. letters of praise
3. As Saul journeyed to Damascus, there was: (Acts 9:3)
 - a. an earthquake
 - b. an angel in the way
 - c. a light from heaven which shone around him
4. Saul fell to the ground and heard: (Acts 9:4)
 - a. thunder
 - b. a rushing mighty wind
 - c. a voice
5. What did the voice say? (Acts 9:4)
 - a. repent
 - b. be baptized
 - c. why do you persecute me
6. What did the voice say when Saul asked, "Who art thou, Lord"? (Acts 9:5)
 - a. I am your friend
 - b. I am Jesus whom you persecute
 - c. it is hard for you to kick against the pricks (goads)
7. Saul was told by Jesus to go to the city and: (Acts 9:6)
 - a. find the disciples
 - b. take his letters to the synagogues
 - c. it would be told him what to do

8. The men that journeyed with Saul: (Acts 9:7)
 - a. stood speechless
 - b. heard a voice
 - c. saw no man
9. Saul was led to Damascus by his companions and was without sight, neither eating or drinking for: (Acts 9:8-9)
 - a. three hours
 - b. three days
 - c. three weeks

B. SAUL'S OBEDIENCE (Acts 9:10-19)

1. The Lord appeared in a vision to a disciple in Damascus named: (Acts 9:10)
 - a. Ananias
 - b. Aquila
 - c. Apollos
2. Ananias was told to inquire for Saul at the house of Judas on the street called: (Acts 9:11)
 - a. Crooked
 - b. Narrow
 - c. Straight
3. Ananias was told Saul prayed and had seen in a vision: (Acts 9:11-12)
 - a. a man named Ananias
 - b. Ananias putting his hand on him
 - c. his sight restored
4. Ananias told the Lord he had heard: (Acts 9:13-14)
 - a. the evil Saul had done to the saints in Jerusalem
 - b. Saul had authority to bind all who call upon thy name
 - c. Saul had authority to kill all followers of Jesus
5. The Lord told Ananias that Saul was: (Acts 9:15)
 - a. a wicked man
 - b. a righteous man
 - c. a chosen vessel

6. The Lord said that Saul was to bear his name before: (Acts 9:15)
 - a. the Gentiles
 - b. kings
 - c. the children of Israel
7. What would the Lord show Saul? (Acts 9:16)
 - a. the kingdoms of the world
 - b. great (many) things he must suffer
 - c. heavenly places
8. Ananias told Saul that Jesus had sent him to Saul in order that Saul might: (Acts 9:17)
 - a. receive food and water
 - b. receive his sight
 - c. be filled with the Holy Spirit
9. Saul received his sight: (Acts 9:18)
 - a. immediately
 - b. after three hours
 - c. after he was baptized
10. Saul then arose and was _____; he took food and was _____ . (Acts 9:18-19)

C. PAUL, AN APOSTLE.

Saul, later called Paul, claimed to be an apostle. What qualification did he have to be an apostle? (I Cor. 9:1; 15:8)



LESSON 11

THE PREACHING OF SAUL

Acts 9:19-31

INTRODUCTION. After Saul was baptized, he remained with the disciples in Damascus and began to preach Jesus to the Jews in the synagogues. All who heard him were amazed, for they knew he was the one who had persecuted followers of Jesus. After a while the Jews plotted to kill him, but with the help of the disciples he escaped the city during the night.

Saul then went to Jerusalem, but the disciples there were afraid of him. They did not believe that he was now a disciple of Jesus. Barnabas, however, took him to the apostles and told them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road to Damascus, that the Lord had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly in Damascus.

A. SAUL IN DAMASCUS (Acts 9:19-25)

1. After Saul was baptized, where did he preach? (Acts 9:19-20)
2. Saul preached that Christ is the _____. (Acts 9:20)
3. Describe the reaction of those who heard Saul preach. (Acts 9:21)
4. Saul increased in _____ and confounded (confused) the Jews proving that this is _____. (Acts 9:22)
5. What did the Jews plot? (Acts 9:23)
6. Who learned of the plot? (Acts 9:24)

7. What did the Jews do in order to carry out their plot against Saul? (Acts 9:24)

Note. Apparently these Jews had the cooperation of the governor of the city who was under Aretas, the king (II Cor. 11:32-33). Aretas was the king of Arabia and evidently controlled the city of Damascus at that time.

8. How did Saul escape? (Acts 9:25)

Note. In ancient cities houses were often built against the walls of the city, and sometimes the windows of the houses were above the wall itself. From one of these windows a person could be lowered outside the wall of the city. Rahab lowered the two Israelite spies over the walls of Jericho by a cord (rope) dropped from such a window (Josh. 2:15).

B. SAUL IN JERUSALEM (Acts 9:26-31)

1. When Saul went to Jerusalem, what did he try to do? (Acts 9:26)

2. How did the disciples receive him? (Acts 9:26)

Note. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul states he went to Jerusalem after three years (Gal. 1:18).

3. What did Barnabas tell the apostles? (Acts 9:27)

4. What did Saul do in Jerusalem? (Acts 9:28-29)

5. Who sought to kill him? (Acts 9:29)

Note. These were the Grecian Jews (Hellenists)—those Jews who were born and raised in foreign lands.

6. What did the brethren do? (Acts 9:30)

7. How is the church described? (Acts 9:31)

a. locations:

b. conditions:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____ in fear of the Lord and

(4) _____ of the Holy Spirit

c. numbers:

The Dome of the Rock, a Muslim mosque, was built on the Temple Mount in 691 A. D. after the Arab conquest of Jerusalem and has survived 1300 years with little alteration.



Modern Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock in Foreground

LESSON 12

PETER, AENEAS, TABITHA (DORCAS)

Acts 9:32-43

INTRODUCTION. After the Jerusalem brethren sent Saul away to Tarsus for his safety, the story turns again to the labors of Peter. First, Peter traveled to Lydda and Joppa, then to Caesarea—he passed throughout all “quarters” or “parts of the country” (Acts 9:32)—preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

LYDDA. Lydda is the Greek name of the Old Testament city of Lod (I Chron. 8:12; Ez. 2:33; Neh. 7:37; 11:35). The city was about ten miles southeast of Joppa in the fertile plain of Sharon. It was located on two trade routes—one that led from Egypt to Babylon, and the other that went from Joppa to Jerusalem. Thus the city was strategically important throughout the centuries, particularly in times of war. The only New Testament reference to the city concerns Peter's visit (Acts 9:32-35).

A. PETER IN LYDDA (Acts 9:32-35)

1. What were the members of the church at Lydda called? (Acts 9:32)
2. Whom did Peter find, and what was the man's problem? (Acts 9:33)

Note. Palsy is an abbreviated medical term for paralysis. The person afflicted could have partial or total paralysis, temporary or permanent paralysis. Since this man was bedridden for eight years, he probably had an incurable form of paralysis.

3. What did Peter tell the man? (Acts 9:34)
4. What did the man do? (Acts 9:34)

5. What was the result of this miracle performed by Peter? (Acts 9:35)

JOPPA. Joppa, which means beautiful, was an ancient seaport on the Mediterranean coast about thirty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was the only natural harbor between Egypt and Acco (Ptolemais in the New Testament). The assignment of Joppa to the patriarch Dan is the first mention of the city in the Bible (Josh. 19:46). Later, when Solomon was king, rafts carrying cedar logs from Lebanon were floated on the Mediterranean Sea from Tyre and Sidon to Joppa, then carried overland to Jerusalem for the building of the temple (II Chron. 2:16). Joppa was the city to which Jonah journeyed when he boarded a ship while attempting to run away from God (Jon. 1:3). Today the city is known as Jaffa and is a suburb of Tel Aviv. While Peter was in Lydda the disciples in Joppa sent for him to come to them.

B. PETER IN JOPPA (Acts 9:36-43)

1. What is the name of the disciple who lived in Joppa? (Acts 9:36)
2. Describe the woman. (Acts 9:36)
3. What happened to the woman? (Acts 9:37)
4. Why did the disciples in Joppa send two men to Lydda? (Acts 9:38)
5. When Peter arrived in Joppa, what did the widows show him? (Acts 9:39)
6. What did Peter do and say? Acts 9:40)

7. What did Tabitha do? (Acts 9:40)
8. Describe what Peter did next. (Acts 9:41)
9. What result did this miracle have on the people of Joppa? (Acts 9:42)
10. Where did Peter stay? (Acts 9:43)



LESSON 13

THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS

Acts 10:1-11:18

INTRODUCTION. After restoring Tabitha (Dorcas) to life, Peter remained for many days in Joppa, abiding with Simon, a tanner (Acts 9:43). So far in Luke's narrative, Peter and the other apostles had taken the gospel message to their Jewish brethren, preaching salvation in the name of Jesus Christ, and baptizing those who believed. Then unexpectedly, a new and remarkable mission faced Peter—one so momentous it required a vision to prepare him to accept the task, for the Spirit directed Peter to preach to the Gentiles. Thus the scene of Luke's account of the early church turns to Caesarea and a Gentile named Cornelius (Acts 10).

CAESAREA. About thirty miles north of Joppa on the Mediterranean seacoast, the city of Caesarea was built by Herod the Great on the site of an ancient Phoenician city, Strato's Tower. Herod took twelve years to build the magnificent seaport city and its artificial harbor which provided safe anchorage for ships year round. The Roman governors who ruled Judea after A. D. 6 made Caesarea their political capital and military headquarters. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who condemned Jesus to death, resided at Caesarea from A. D. 26 to 36.

Cornelius was a Roman soldier, a centurion or officer in command of 100 men, garrisoned in Caesarea. The Italian band (cohort, regiment) to which Cornelius belonged was composed of soldiers from Italy. A cohort or regiment consisted of about 600 men. There were three thousand Roman troops stationed in Caesarea.

Cornelius, although a Roman and a Gentile, had apparently rejected the heathen idolatry and immorality of Roman religion and had embraced the worship of the one true God of the Jews. He is described by Luke as devout, one that feared God with his household, praying to God, and giving alms to the people.

God sent a vision to both Cornelius and Peter. Cornelius, obeying his vision, sent to Joppa for Peter. Peter, obeying his vision, went to Caesarea to Cornelius. Peter told Cornelius and his household words whereby they might be saved (Acts 11:14).

A. CORNELIUS' VISION (Acts 10:1-8)

1. There was a certain man in Caesarea called _____ who was a _____ of the Italian band. (Acts 10:1)
2. Cornelius was a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, who gave much _____ to the people, and _____ to God always. (Acts 10:2)
3. He saw in a _____ about the ninth hour of the day an angel who said his prayers and alms had gone up as a memorial before God. (Acts 10:3-4)
4. The angel told Cornelius to send to Joppa and call for _____ who would tell him what he ought to do. (Acts 10:5-6)
5. Cornelius sent two _____ and a _____ to Joppa. (Acts 10:7-8)

B. PETER'S VISION (Acts 10:9-23)

1. The next day as they drew near the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to _____ about the sixth hour. (Acts 10:9)
2. Peter became very _____ and would have eaten but fell into a trance. (Acts 10:10)
3. Peter saw heaven opened, and a certain _____ descended as a great sheet held at the four corners and let down to earth. (Acts 10:11)
4. What was in this vessel? (Acts 10:12)
5. A voice told Peter to _____. (Acts 10:13)
6. Peter said he had never eaten anything that is _____. (Acts 10:14)

7. The voice said, What God hath _____, call not thou common. (Acts 10:15)
8. After this was done _____, the vessel was received up again into heaven. (Acts 10:16)
9. As Peter wondered what this _____ meant, the men sent from Cornelius stood before the gate of the house and asked for Peter. (Acts 10:17)
10. The _____ told Peter to go with the three men, doubting nothing. (Acts 10:19-20)
11. The next day Peter and certain _____ from Joppa went with the three men, and they entered Caesarea the morrow after. (Acts 10:23-24)

C. THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS (Acts 10:24-48)

1. Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his _____ and _____. (Acts 10:24)
2. When Peter entered, Cornelius fell down at his feet and _____ him. (Acts 10:25)
3. Peter told him to _____ up, for he (Peter) also was a man. (Acts 10:26)
4. Peter told Cornelius that it was _____ for a Jew to keep company with one of another nation. (Acts 10:28)
5. Cornelius told Peter that a man in bright clothing told him his _____ was heard, and that his alms were had in _____ in the sight of God. (Acts 10:30-31)
6. Peter said, God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that _____ him and worketh _____ is accepted with him. (Acts 10:34-35)
7. Peter preached that through the name of Jesus, whosoever believeth in him shall receive _____ of sins. (Acts 10:43)

8. While Peter spoke to Cornelius and his household, the _____ fell on all them which heard the word. (Acts 10:44)
9. Peter's companions were astonished because on the _____ also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 10:45)
10. Peter and his companions heard Cornelius and his household speak with _____ and _____ God. (Acts 10:46)
11. Then Peter said, Can any man forbid _____ that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? (Acts 10:47)
12. Peter commanded them to be _____ in the name of the Lord. (Acts 10:48)

D. PETER JUSTIFIES HIS CONVERSION OF THE GENTILES (Acts 11:1-18).

Sometime after baptizing Cornelius and his household, Peter went to Jerusalem to relate to the brethren and apostles there the events that surrounded the conversion of these Gentiles.

1. Of what did the brethren in Jerusalem accuse Peter of doing? (Acts 11:2-3)
2. Who told Peter to go with the servants of Cornelius to Caesarea? (Acts 11:12)
3. The men who accompanied Peter to the house of Cornelius also went with him to Jerusalem as witnesses. How many men accompanied Peter? (Acts 11:12)
4. The angel told Cornelius that Peter would tell him and his household _____ by which they would be saved. (Acts 11:14)
5. To prove to the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem that the gospel message was for the Gentiles also, Peter said that the Holy Spirit fell on them (Cornelius and his household) as on us (the apostles) at the beginning (Acts 11:15-18). When had the Holy Spirit fallen upon the apostles? (Acts 2:1-4)



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