Acts Facts – Part 2

A study in the Book of Acts. We go through Acts from chapter 1 verse 1, to chapter 9 verse 43. We take our study verse by verse.

This e-book is the second part of our study. In Part 3, we will continue to study the book of Acts verse by verse.

This e-book combines into one volume, several pages from www.simplybible.com

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**Verse by Verse Studies in Acts**
—*Author’s Preface*


I have spent hundreds of hours putting together a complete verse by verse study of Acts. In this preface I explain some of the aims and attitudes behind this work, and how you might make the best use of it.

1 The Paraphrase

The text of Acts appearing in these studies is my own paraphrase. My main aims were to present Luke’s text in a straightforward manner, keeping the language simple. I've done such things as (1) broken up long sentences into shorter ones; (2) replaced many pronouns with the nouns they refer to; (3) eliminated most instances of And where it starts or joins sentences; (4) Eliminated phrases such as "it happened that" which are stylistic but contain no information; (5) replaced some of Luke’s terms with more understandable ones such as commander instead of his chiliarch.

Beyond these measures, I have frequently not reproduced the exact sentence structure and phraseology of Luke, but rather used my own words to express what he meant. That's what a paraphrase is. I realise that some translators will even take these liberties, but I have not attempted a translation. The paraphrase, is intended to be expository — to explain and bring out the meaning of the original text.

The symbol ¶ appears before each section of my paraphrase, to remind the student that I am not quoting from any translation but using my own words.

The paraphrase appears in discrete sections, but is also repeated in fragments with the comments. Sometimes the paraphrase will differ slightly in the fragment compared to the sectional reading. This is intentional.

My paraphrase loses much of the elegant style of Luke's penmanship. That's the sacrifice made for the sake of presenting Luke’s narrative in a modern style that has a familiar feel to many readers and may be clearer to them. But my purpose is not to replace the many translations that do convey Luke’s manner of story telling. Even Luke himself would consider that understanding and believing the story itself is more important than appreciating the skill and culture of the story teller. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive, but my purpose is to help primarily with understanding and belief.

**Chapters and Verses**

The paraphrase is presented in natural sections and logical paragraphs. The traditional “chapters and verses” are sometimes arbitrary and clumsy divisions that inappropriately break the flow of the narrative. They weren't part of the original scripture. Nevertheless I have included “chapters and verses” in the natural sections to provide customary reference. However I have made the verse numbers unobtrusive so they don't interfere with the natural flow and structure.
2 The Notes

Between the sections of the paraphrase, various notes appear. I've not attempted to
deal with every matter that might arise. If a detail is merely academic and not
necessary to a good understanding of the passage, then the note on that detail will be
brief if it occurs at all. In other cases the notes will be thorough because the matter is
important. The notes, like the paraphrase, are intended to be expository—to explain
and bring out the meaning of the original text.

3 The Maps

I have some years ago prepared simple maps of the area covered in Acts. The
appropriate maps are placed on each lesson so that the student does not have to go
looking for them. There is a maps page with all the maps together, but it seemed good
to me to place the maps on the lesson pages as well.

My Reservations

I have some reservations about presenting these expository or verse by verse
studies. Paraphrasing scripture, and inserting one's own comments between the
verses, could be viewed as a great impertinence: adding one's own words to the
scripture. However expository teaching, if done honestly and carefully, is a very
direct and powerful means of helping people understand, appreciate, and apply the
scriptures for themselves. I urge all students to have their own Bibles at hand, and to
read the whole passage for themselves, then turn to my paraphrase and notes as
distinct from the scripture. I have taken much care with this work, and continue to
check and edit it. It is by this care that I justify using the expository method.
Acts 1:1-8

—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 1:1-8. These verses contains Luke's introduction to the book of Acts, and his account of Christ's parting words to his disciples before his ascension into heaven.

Acts 1


Acts 1:1-8

¶ "I did the first account for you Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up, having given orders by the Holy Spirit to the messengers he had chosen. And he showed himself alive to them by many proofs, being seen by them forty days after he had suffered, and he spoke about the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:1-3).

¶ "When they gathered, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father which 'You heard from me'. John indeed immersed with water, but you will be immersed in the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5).

¶ "Those who were gathered asked him this question: 'Lord, is it at this time that you restore the kingdom to Israel?' Jesus said to them, 'It is not yours to know the times or seasons which the Father has appointed in his own authority. But you will receive your authority when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, then in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 1:6-8).

Verse 1

¶ "I did the first account for you Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach." Acts 1:1.


• The name "Theophilus" means God-friend. Theophilus could live up to his name and become a friend of God by believing Luke's account, just as Abraham became the God's friend by believing (James 2:23).

• [**Christ’s Ongoing Ministry.**] The ministry of Christ on earth was only what he "began" to do and teach. He continues his work or ministry even today
(Hebrews 8:1-2).

- Notice the phrase "to do and teach". One's teaching is measured by what one does. What Jesus did went hand in hand with what Jesus said. It ought to be the same with us. (Luke 6:46).

**Verse 2**

¶ "...until the day he was taken up, having by the Holy Spirit given orders to the messengers he had chosen." (Acts 1:2).

- The ascension of Christ is where Luke's first book closed and Acts opens. Acts starts, as we shall see later, with the ascension and the fact that Jesus was "exalted to God's right hand" (Acts 1:9, Acts 2:33).

- **Power From the Spirit.** Jesus was empowered "by the Holy Spirit". His apostles would receive similar authority by the same means (Acts 1:8).

- **Nature of the Orders Christ Gave.** The word ἐντελλομαι entellomai, to command, or give "orders", has the underlying sense of providing goals. The word is related to τέλεος teleos, an end to be met or achieved. In giving us commands, Jesus challenges us with goals to achieve that make our lives meaningful.

- **Notes on the Apostles.** The Greek word ἀποστόλος apo-stolos, "messenger" or apostle, conveys the idea of being sent forth as in ἀποστέλλω apostello, sent.

- There were eleven "apostles" at the time Acts begins. Later, Luke describes how a twelfth, Matthias, was added to make up for the loss of Judas.

- The story of Acts is not about all the apostles. It is mostly about Peter (one of the twelve) and then about the apostle Paul. Paul was not one of the twelve but he said, "I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles." (2Corinthians 11:5). We could not make that claim to that special apostleship, nevertheless every Christian is to be a messenger of Christ. (Acts 8:4, Luke 10:2).

- **Called and Chosen** Being "chosen", elected or picked out, is associated with the idea of being called. The apostles regarded themselves as being called and chosen by God Acts 1:24. We are not called and chosen as apostles, but we are all called and chosen for eternal life. (Revelation 17:14, 2Peter 1:10, 2Thessalonians 2:13-14)

**Verse 3**

¶ "And he showed himself alive to them by many proofs, being seen by them forty days after he had suffered, and he spoke about the kingdom of God."

- **Christ's Resurrection.** Luke’s first book describes the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and some of his appearances are recorded in Luke 24. The resurrection of Christ was confirmed convincingly on many occasions.
Recorded Appearances of Jesus

- (1) Early Sunday morning (April 9) to Mary Magdalene near the sepulchre at Jerusalem (Mark 16:9, John 20:11-18)
- (2) To the women returning from the sepulchre (Matthew 28:9-10)
- (3) To Peter (Cephas) near Jerusalem later that day (Luke 24:34, 1Corinthians 15:5)
- (4) To two disciples going to Emmaus that day (Mark 16:12, Luke 24:13-31)
- (5) That evening at Jerusalem to the apostles except Thomas (Mark 16:14, John 20:19-25)
- (6) Sunday evening (April 16) at Jerusalem to all the apostles especially Thomas (John 20:26-29)
- (7) End of April to seven disciples fishing on Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-13)
- (8) To eleven disciples on a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-18)
- (9) Over 500 disciples at once --location uncertain (1Corinthians 15:6)
- (10) To James --location uncertain (1Corinthians 15:7)
- (11) To the apostles (and probably others) during forty days prior to his ascension (Acts 1:2-3)
- (12) At the Mount of Olives near Bethany at his ascension (Luke 24:50-51, Acts 1:6-12)
- (13) After his ascension, to Stephen the martyr (Acts 7:55-56)
- (14) To Saul on road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6, 1Corinthians 15:8-9)
- (15) To John on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9-19)

Christ’s Passion

Christians speak of the "passion" of our Lord, but they use this word in the special sense of πασχω pascho, to suffer. The crucifixion of Christ is described in Luke chapter 23. The first chapter of Acts mentions not only Christ's death, but also his resurrection, ascension, and second coming. But the cruel cross is essential to the good story of Jesus.

Christ’s Kingdom

The disciples still showed some confusion about the kingdom of God. As we shall see in the second chapter of Acts, Jesus Christ sat on the throne of David in a way the apostles did not fully understand beforehand (Acts 2:30,33) We shall see their lack of understanding in the question they asked (Acts 1:6).

Verse 4

¶ "When they gathered, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father which 'You heard from me.' "
**Nature of the Order Christ Gave** Here Luke comes back to the commandments Jesus issued. This time the word is παραγγέλια parangelia, made up of para, beside, and angelia, message. This is an appropriate word because the apostles, at that moment, had Jesus at their side with a divine message for them to obey. Although he would soon depart from them, the promised Holy Spirit would be present with them to help them obey the orders given.

We should never drift away from the belief that God has commandments for us to obey. But we should realise that God is always at our side, and even in us, helping us to keep his commandments. (John 14:15-18, Philippians 2:12-13).

**The City of Jerusalem** The disciples were told to return to Jerusalem and wait there. Jerusalem, with its pools and palaces, its temple and towers, is the most mentioned city in Acts. The story of Acts begins in Acts Facts has information on Jerusalem.

**How the Disciples Waited** As we shall see later in chapter 1, the disciples didn't wait lazily twiddling their thumbs. Rather they were "fiercely united in prayer and petition" (Acts 1:14). Even when we can't do much else, we can do this! And it's no small thing we do. It is characteristic of Christ’s true disciples, that they wait actively.

**The Promise of the Holy Spirit** The "promise of the Father" is God’s promise of the outpouring of the Spirit as mentioned in verse 5. As we shall see later in Acts, the promise mentioned again with regard to the Jews converted on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-39), and again with regard to the Gentiles converted in Cornelius's house (Acts 10:44-48, Acts 11:15-17). In Acts chapter two, we will learn that when the apostles received the promised Holy Spirit, they were endowed with special powers not granted to all who receive the promised Spirit.

Note three things about the promise and gift of the Holy Spirit:

- (1) Linked with baptism (Acts 1:5, Acts 2:38),
- (2) A gift received from God (Acts 1:4,8, Acts 2:33)

**Verse 5**

¶ "John indeed immersed with water, but you will be immersed in the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

**John’s Baptism** John the baptizer practised a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3). In chapter 2, we shall observe that baptism in the name of Christ or “Christian baptism” is also a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38).

**Meaning of "Baptize"** The word “baptize” is derived from the Greek βαπτω batpwo, to dip, and is used in the New Testament dozens of times in several forms and of various things. Here are some reference verses: John 13:26, Revelation 19:13, John 3:23, Mark 10:38, Acts 8:38, Romans 6:3-4,
1 Corinthians 10:2, 1 Pet 3:21. These show that βαπτίζω baptizo in particular means plunge or immerse. On this website there are several lessons on baptism.

- **Baptism of the Holy Spirit** Christ promises the apostles a baptism in the Holy Spirit which John himself had promised (Matthew 3:11). The promise was fulfilled on Pentecost as we shall see in Acts 2.

- **Not Many Days Hence** Pentecost came fifty days after Passover. Compare this with the earlier mentioned forty days (Acts 1:3). The disciples had about a week to wait.

**Verse 6**

¶ "Those who were gathered asked him this question: 'Lord, is it at this time that you restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

- **Nature of God’s Kingdom.** The disciples recognized Jesus as κυριος kurios, Lord. He is "the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:14-15).

- However, the disciples did not yet fully grasp the nature of the kingdom of God. The second chapter of Acts will show us how Jesus Christ sat on the throne of David in a way the apostles did not fully understand beforehand (Acts 1:6, Acts 2:30,33).

**Verse 7**

¶ "Jesus said to them, 'It is not yours to know the times or seasons which the Father has appointed in his own authority" (Acts 1:7).

- **Authority as Jurisdiction** There was a chain of command. The disciples were under Christ’s command, and he was under the Father’s. The disciples naturally desired to know what was taking place, but they had to be satisfied to wait until God was ready to reveal his counsel and intention.

- The Greek word for authority here is εξουσια exousia and means a jurisdiction. In the next verse we will note the use of another word for authority.

**Verse 8**

¶ "But you will receive your authority when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, then in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

- **Authority as Power** The second Greek word for authority used here is δυναμις dunamis which means power. The two words for authority are used together in much the same sense. God has the ultimate jurisdiction, but grants authority and power appropriately down the chain of command. As a matter of interest, the two words are similarly used together in two other passages (Luke 9:1, 1 Corinthians 15:24).

- **Differing Powers** Although all who follow Christ receive the Holy Spirit, different gifts and powers are given to different ones at different times.
(1Corinthians 12:4,28-29). The power and authority to be soon given to the apostles was very special, and the Holy Spirit came upon them in a most marvelous way (Acts 2:1-4).

- **Bearing Witness** Witnesses bear testimony. They give evidence. The word "witnessing" is used far too loosely today, and the testimonies that people give are often unsubstantiated claims that are little more than wishful thinking. The witness of the apostles was a true and substantiated testimony backed by irrefutable evidence.


- Acts Facts has information on Judea.
- Acts Facts has information on Samaria.
Acts 1:9-14
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 1:9-14. These verses describe the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, and the return of the disciples to Jerusalem.

Jesus Ascends. The Disciples Wait.

Acts 1:9-14

¶“Following these sayings, Jesus was lifted up while they watched, and a cloud took him from their eyes. 10 While they looked intently at his departure into the sky, behold two men in white garments stood by them. 11 And they said, 'Men from Galilee, why linger gazing skyward? This Jesus taken from you into heaven will come thus, in the way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11).

¶“12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called Olive Grove, which is near Jerusalem a Sabbath's journey. 13 They went in, and up to the room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Jude of James” (Acts 1:12-13).

¶“14 These all kept fiercely united in prayer and petition, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1:14).

Verses 9-10

¶ "Following these sayings, Jesus was lifted up while they watched, and a cloud took him from their eyes. While they looked intently at his departure into the sky, behold two men in white garments stood by them” (Acts 1:9-10).

- **Jesus Ascends** The ascension of Jesus is described in several other passages (Luke 24:51, Mark 16:19, Acts 2:33, Ephesians 4:10).

- **Disciples Observe as Eye Witnesses** In verses 9-11, there are six references, to the apostles' observance of the ascension. Five distinct words are used to emphasise the eye-witness evidence...

  - ευβλέπω eu-blepo, to watch
  - οφθαλμος ophthalmos, the eye
  - ατενίζω atenizo, to look intently
  - ειδεω eldeo, to behold
  - θεαομαι thea-omai, to see
Sky and Heaven  In Greek, the same word οὐρανός ou-ranos is used for both sky and heaven. Jesus ascended into the sky, but more than that, he ascended into the greater heaven, to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33, Hebrews 10:24).

Men and Angels  The word "men" should be taken in an accommodative sense, as descriptive of appearance. The "men" were probably angels in fact. It is possible, of course, but I think unlikely, that they were indeed men, appearing as Moses and Elijah did at the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-3).

Verse 11
¶ "And they said, 'Men from Galilee, why linger gazing skyward? This Jesus taken from you into heaven will come thus, in the way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11).

Goodbye Jesus  There was a realization on the part of the disciples, that they had seen the last here on earth of their friend and Master. He had gone. But they lingered, still looking, just as we watch an aeroplane carrying a loved one whom we have farewelled. It flies into the sky till it becomes a tiny speck and vanishes. Yet we may linger, still looking. It is easier to do that, than to face getting on with life without the one we love.

Come Back Jesus  The disciples are promised that they will see Jesus again. He is coming back. The manner of his second coming is likened to the manner of his going. This makes it impossible for us to consider the promise of his second coming as symbolic or figurative. The rapture promise, "we shall be caught up together with him in the air" (1Thessalonians 4:16-17), is therefore quite literal. Mind you, the ascension was a quiet and private affair. The second coming will not be so, as the passage just mentioned shows.

Galilee  A little further down this page, there's a map showing Galilee. Jerusalem is opposite the Dead Sea at the bottom of the Jordan River. Galilee is by the Sea of Galilee at the top of the Jordan River. Between Jerusalem and Galilee is Samaria which the Jews despised. The apostles, being from Galilee, were considered by the people of Jerusalem almost as foreigners, especially as they spoke in a dialect, and were uncultured by Jerusalem standards. See Acts Facts for detailed information about Galilee (simplybible.com/f756.htm).

Verse 12
¶ "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called Olive Grove, which is near Jerusalem a Sabbath's journey." (Acts 1:12).

Mount Olivet to Jerusalem  From the Olive Grove, also known as Mount Olivet, the disciples were within walking distance of the city, about a half hour's walk. By Jewish law, the distance one could walk on the Sabbath was strictly limited.
Verse 13

¶ "They went in, and up to the room where they were staying: Peter and James and John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude of James" (Acts 1:13).

- **Waiting in Jerusalem** Jesus had told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4). So they went to the place they were staying, there to wait as directed

- **Names of the Apostles** There are four lists of the apostles in the New Testament (Luke 6:14-16, Acts 1:13, Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19). The following list combines these four sources...

**The Apostles**

- Simon Peter (Cephas)
- James the son of Zebedee
- John (the brother of the above James)
- Andrew (Peter's brother)
- Philip (not Philip the evangelist)
- Thomas
- Bartholomew
- Matthew the tax collector
- James the son of Alphaeus
- Simon the Zealot, the Canaanite
- Judas Thaddaeus son of James
- Judas Iscariot (the betrayer replaced by Matthias)
Verse 14

¶ "These all kept fiercely united in prayer and petition, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:14).

- **A Faithful Few** A small group, huddled in a big city, far from home, all missing the company of Jesus. Think especially of Mary. She had lost her son once, and received him back again from the dead. Now he was gone again and she would see her son no more on earth. Consider her remarkable faith at this time.

- **How the Disciples Waited.** It is characteristic of disciples of Christ that we are "fiercely united in prayer" especially when there is little else we can do. The disciples were earnest and passionate in their prayers (unlike some worship today where people go through the motions of prayer with cold formality or with inattention). The disciples were not waiting passively but actively, and showing a solidarity of spirit.

- **Prayer and Petition.** As we shall see later in chapter 1, the disciples didn't wait lazily twiddling their thumbs. Rather they were "fiercely united in prayer and petition" (Acts 1:14). Even when we can't do much else, we can do this! And it's no small thing we do. It is characteristic of Christ’s true disciples, that we are We don't just go through the motions of prayer in cold formality as clients or spectators. Rather, we engage in fierce and earnest worship in a visible and genuine solidarity of spirit. The words prayer and petition are not expressing two distinctly different things, but complementary words for the same thing. Paul uses the same phrase (Philippians 4:6).
Acts 1:15-26
—Verse by verse

This page is a study of Acts 1:15-26. These verses tell of how Judas the betrayer, who had committed suicide, was replaced by Matthias as the 12th apostle.

Matthias Replaces Judas as One of the Twelve.

Acts 1:15-26

¶“15And in those days Peter stood among the disciples, around 120 names altogether, and said, 16Men, my brothers! This scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit predicted by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who turned guide to those who captured Jesus. 17For he was numbered among us and was allotted this ministry. 18This man then in fact got a field with the wages of injustice, and he had swollen up, split in the midst, and everything poured out of his bowels. 19And everyone living in Jerusalem came to know of this, so in their own language the field was called Hakeldama, [the Field of Blood]” (Acts 1:15-19).

¶“20Peter then said, 'It is written in the book of Psalms, Let his house be desolate, and let no one dwell there, and let another take the oversight he had. 21So one of these men who were our companions all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22beginning from his immersion by John until the day that he was taken up from us, one of these should join us as a witness of his resurrection.'” (Acts 1:20-22).

¶“23And they put forward two: Joseph (who was called Barsabas surnamed Justus) and Matthias. 24And they said in prayer, 'You, Lord, the Knower of hearts of all men, show which of these two you have chosen. 25May he take as his lot this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas walked away to go where he belongs.' 26So they cast their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was accordingly counted among the apostles with the eleven.” (Acts 1:23-26).

Verse 15

¶ "And in those days Peter stood among the disciples, around 120 names altogether, and said,” (Acts 1:15).

- **Names.** Here, as in Revelation 3:4, the term "names" means "persons" but signifies the enrollment and registration of those persons in Heaven (Hebrews 12:23). Christians have their "names written in the book of life" (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 20:12,15, Revelation 21:27).

Verse 16

¶ "Men, my brothers! This scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit predicted by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who turned guide to those who captured Jesus..." " (Acts 1:16).
Two Named Judas. There were two apostles named Judas. The first was "Judas of James" (Acts 1:13). He is also called Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3). The Judas "who turned guide" and betrayed Jesus was Judas Iscariot (Luke 6:16).

Judas in Prophecy. "This scripture" to which Peter refers, is quoted by him in Acts 1:20, and is found in Psalms 69:25, and Psalms 109:8. Another prophecy was spoken (an oral prophecy) by Jeremiah (Matthew 27:9-10). A similar prophecy is recorded in Zechariah (Zechariah 11:12-13).

Verse 17
¶ "...for he was numbered among us and was allotted this ministry..." (Acts 1:17).

Apostleship Alotted. Peter says that Judas Iscariot had been "allotted this ministry" of apostleship (Acts 1:17). The Greek for "allotted" is κληρος kleeros the same word used for drawing "lots" (Acts 1:25-26). Apostleship was regarded as one's "lot" from God, so the prayerful casting of lots was an appropriate method by which another apostle might be "chosen" by God and "allotted" the ministry.

Verse 18
¶ "This man then in fact got a field with the wages of injustice, and he had swollen up, split in the midst, and everything poured out of his bowels..." (Acts 1:18).

Getting a Field. Judas "got a field" not by buying it personally, but by throwing his thirty pieces of silver into the sanctuary. The field that was bought by the officials technically remained as Judas's estate, since it was blood money (Matthew 27:5-10).

Ironic Wages. The "wages of injustice" or unrighteousness were used to buy a field for the burial of strangers. This has a symbolic irony to it. Hell is a place for strangers to God, and everyone has a choice to make just as Judas had a choice. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is life everlasting in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

How Judas Died. The Greek for "swollen up" is not clearly understood. Possibly Luke as a doctor is using terms in a technical sense. However we know that Judas "went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5). Subsequently he either swelled up for some reason, or fell headlong from where he had hung himself. Whichever was the case, it resulted in a massive rupture and Judas's death was as horrible as Herod's (Acts 12:21-23).

Verse 19
¶ "...And everyone living in Jerusalem came to know of this, so in their own language the field was called Hakeldama, [the Field of Blood]\ " (Acts 1:19).

Field of Blood. The name of the field, "Field of Blood" has reference to the blood of Jesus, rather than to the blood of Judas.

Money Laundering. The 30 pieces of silver were blood money. The chief priests viewed the money as "the price of blood", referring (as we said) to the
blood of Jesus. They deemed the money unfit for the temple treasury, so they laundered the money. Acting as Judas’s executors, they purchased the field on his behalf (Matthew 27:1-8).

- **Why the Name** It was "for that reason" that the field acquired its name "Field of Blood" (Matthew 27:7-8), but it was most likely the populace, rather than the chief priests, who dubbed it such.

**Verse 20**

¶ " 'For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his house be desolate, and let no one dwell there, and let another take the oversight he had.' " (Acts 1:20).

- **Judas's Ministry** Judas Iscariot had the ministry of apostleship, an important place as an overseer of the church, but he "blew it" so to speak and so forfeited and vacated his place, perversely exchanging it for another place.

- **Judas's Scriptural Replacement** Peter is quoting prophetic passages from the Psalms as his authority for replacing Judas (Psalms 69:25, 109:8). Whilst these scriptures don't refer specifically to Judas, Peter is using the principle stated in them that wicked persons deserve to be disgraced and replaced.

**Verses 21-22**

¶ " 'So one of these men who were our companions all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from his immersion by John until the day that he was taken up from us, one of these should join us as a witness of his resurrection.' " (Acts 1:21-22).

- **Qualification For Replacement Apostle** The 12th apostle had to be qualified, and one qualification was that he had been a companion of Jesus and the apostles during the whole time of Jesus's ministry, that is from Christ's baptism through to his ascension.

- **Track Record of Loyalty** The expression "all the time" signifies that any candidate for apostleship must not have been among those disciples who deserted Jesus towards the end, but must have stayed and remained faithful (John 6:66-68).

- **Ability to Testify** One of the important and special functions of the twelve, was their eye-witness testimony, based on their personal and constant companying with Jesus.

**Verse 23**

¶ "And they put forward two: Joseph (who was called Barsabas surnamed Justus) and Matthias." (Acts 1:23).

- **Unknown Disciples** Because of the strict qualifications, it is perhaps not surprising that among more than 100 persons there were apparently only two who filled the requirements. It is a little surprising, however, that these two men are not mentioned previously, and this is the first and last time we encounter them in the scriptures.
Verse 24

¶ "And they said in prayer, 'You, Lord, the Knower of hearts of all men, show which of these two you have chosen...'

(Acts 1:24).

- **Jesus Chooses** Whilst the group put forward the two men who were qualified, it was left to Christ to make the choice.

- **Peter Not Yet Empowered** It is interesting that Peter seems to acknowledge that he did not "know the hearts" of these two men as the Lord did. After he received the power from on high, however, Peter was able to discern the hearts of men, and on that basis he did not hesitate to cut off the lives of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11).

Verse 25

¶ "...that he may take as his lot this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas walked away to go where he belongs." (Acts 1:25).

- **Judas's Choice** Judas "walked away" or "turned aside" from his apostleship. This was his decision, God did not compel him to do it.

- **Judas's Destiny** The expression "where he belongs" or "to his own place" does not signify that Judas was born to be a traitor destined for hell. On the other hand, one belongs in hell if one chooses the path to destruction, just as one belongs in heaven if one chooses the path of life (Matthew 7:13-14). In fact, human beings do not belong in hell. It was never intended as a place for them. It was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41) not for the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. However those who do not follow the path of Christ make themselves "accursed" and make hell the place where they belong. But this was never meant to be their destiny.

Verse 26

¶ "So they cast their lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was accordingly counted among the apostles with the eleven." (Acts 1:26).

- **Election of Matthias Legitimate.** Some people say that the disciples were premature and presumptuous in choosing Matthias, because God wanted Paul to fill Judas's place. There is nothing to support this claim, and a few facts against it:
  - Peter was obeying the scriptures and showed the act to be scriptural, properly interpreting the prophetic scriptures.
  - Peter limited the choice of candidates to those properly qualified, and may well have been previously instructed in this by Jesus.
  - The matter was taken to God in prayer. The result is represented as God's answer to the prayer.

- **Casting Lots** The casting of lots was not "gambling", but an appropriate ceremony for determining God's choice. The apostleship itself is spoken of as a "lot" so it is proper for Matthias to have been "counted" among the apostles.
Acts 2:1-13
—Verse by verse

This page is a study of Acts 2:1-13. These verses tell of how the apostles received power through a baptism of the Holy Spirit. This fulfilled the promise Jesus had made to them just before his ascension (Acts 1:8).

The Apostles Receive Power From on High.

Acts 2:1-13

¶“1When the day of Pentecost was in full swing, they were all together, fiercely united. 2And a sound came unexpectedly out of heaven, as borne of a violent wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3Also they could see divided tongues like flames, and one sat upon each of them. 4They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance to them.” (Acts 2:1-4).

¶“5Many Jews were staying in Jerusalem, pious men from every nation under heaven. 6The crowd gathered as the news spread, and they were confounded, because each heard them speak in his own language. 7So they were all amazed and marvelled, saying to each other, 'Look, aren't all those who speak Galilaeans? 8How then do we each hear in the language of our birthplace? 9We are Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God! ’ ” (Acts 2:5-11).

¶“12They were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to one another, 'What can this mean?' 13Others mocked: they said, 'These men are full of sweet wine!' ” (Acts 2:12-13).

Verse 1

¶"When the day of Pentecost was in full swing, they were all together, fiercely united (Acts 2:1).

• Pentecost Pentecost (the feast of weeks) is a Jewish festival day —the 50th day after the Passover. (The name Pentecost means fifty.)

• Who Were "They"? There is some debate whom "they" refers to in this verse. Was it only the apostles mentioned in the previous verse Acts 1:26?. Or was it the 120 persons mentioned earlier (Acts 1:15).

Some cite the "rule of grammar" which may be stated as follows: The antecedent of a pronoun is the nearest previous agreeable noun. That would
be "apostles". The Greek language in which Luke was writing does not always adhere to that rule however.

Others point out firstly that the pronoun is actually a phrase, "they all" which strongly suggests the whole group. Secondly, the prophecy Peter quoted as fulfilled, seems to require a larger group (Acts 2:16-18, Joel 2:28-29). Thirdly, another group of people later had the same thing happen to them and it happened to the entire group (Acts 10:24,33,44, Acts 11:15-17).

The best way to decide who they were who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, is to go back to the beginning of chapter one. Jesus "gave orders to the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:2), and it was to them that he promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the consequent power (Acts 1:4-8).

Verse 2

¶ "A sound came unexpectedly out of heaven, as borne of a violent wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." (Acts 2:2).

- **A Significant Sound** This sound symbolises the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, the words for wind and for spirit are similar. In the Greek the word for Spirit πνευμα, pneuma, comes from πνεω, pneo, to blow air. The sound was therefore appropriate.

Verse 3

¶ "And they could see divided tongues like flames, and one sat upon each of them." (Acts 2:3).

- **A Significant Sight** These divided tongues were symbolic of the languages or "tongues" that have divided human beings since the Tower of Babel. The Spirit’s gift of tongues would now enable the apostles to preach in the languages of every nation under heaven.

Verse 4

¶ "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave utterance to them." (Acts 2:4).

- **A Special Miracle** The miracle on Pentecost was something very special. It was not promised that we should see it in our day, and it is clear that we do not see it. If the miracle at Pentecost were to occur today, we could hardly turn around and say, "Such miracles are not for today". That's because, if the Pentecostal miracle were happening, it would be undeniable proof of itself, and since we are honest we would have to acknowledge it without reservation.

- **One Spirit But Different Manifestations** The same Holy Spirit is given to all Christians, but the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit differ from person to person (Acts 2:38-39, 1Corinthians 12-4-11, Galatians 5:22-26).

- In the general teaching of the Bible, miraculous powers and signs and wonders have their place in God’s scheme of things, but they are unusual. The emphasis is
upon the more common and constant manifestations: faith, hope, love, joy, peace. These are much more powerful and wonderful than miracles. They are "the more excellent way" (1Corinthians 12:13)

- **Other Tongues** The term "other tongues" simply means languages other than the apostles’ own.

**Verse 5**

¶ "Many Jews were staying in Jerusalem, pious men from every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5).

- **An Appropriate Occasion** God chose a very appropriate and opportune time to establish the church of Christ and begin the spread of the gospel throughout the world. The city was filled with "many... pious men from every nation". What better audience could there have been?

- **Who Were the Jews?** The name “Jews” means Judeans — the the remnant of Jacob’s descendants living in Judea and its capital Jerusalem. This was the only surviving part of the large kingdom of Israel over which David and Solomon had ruled. However the term Jews came to include all of Jacob’s descendants who migrated to various parts of the world, as well as their progeny. The Jews had synagogues all over the world, but the devout Jews journeyed to Jerusalem for special festivals such as Pentecost. The Jews scattered in foreign lands were known as the diaspora or "pilgrims of the dispersion" (1Peter 1:1).

**Verse 6**

¶ "The crowd gathered as the news spread, and they were confounded, because each heard them speak in his own language." (Acts 2:6).

- **The first reaction to the miracle:** "They were confounded." This reaction is just the sort of confusion that occurs when a crowd gathers in tumult around some sensation. This initial reaction doesn't mean much because it is not a thoughtful one.

**Verse 7**

¶ "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying to each other, 'Look, aren't all those who speak Galilaeans?'" (Acts 2:7).

- **The second reaction to the miracle:** "They were "amazed and marvelling." This was the honest reaction of each person to what they personally observed. A sense of awe came over them. This reaction gives us the best measure of the miracle that occurred.

**Verse 8**

¶ "How then do we each hear in the language of our birthplace?" (Acts 2:8).

- **Nature of the Miracle** Each person heard the gospel in his or her own native language because the apostles were speaking those languages (Acts 2:4).
The miracle was in the speaking described in verse 4, not in the hearing mentioned here in verse 8. The hearing was normal and natural hearing, but the speaking was a miraculous gift given to the apostles by the power of the Holy Spirit. The miraculous ability to speak in languages one has never learned is known as *xenoglossia*.

**Verse 9**

¶ "We are Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia," (Acts 2:9).

- These nations, other than Asia, lie to the east and north of Jerusalem.
- Asia lies northwest of Jerusalem above the Great Sea and below the Black Sea.

**Verse 10**

¶ "Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes," (Acts 2:10).

- Phrygia and Pamphylia lie northwest of Jerusalem. They are regions of Asia.
- Egypt lies southwest of Jerusalem along the Nile river west of the Red Sea.
- Libya and Cyrene lie west of Jerusalem on the southern coast of the Great Sea.
- Rome is the capital of Italy and the Roman empire. It lies far northwest of Jerusalem.
- A proselyte is a gentile convert to Judaism, given most of the privileges and status of a Jew.

**Verse 11**

¶ "Cretes and Arabians, we hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God!" (Acts 2:11).

- Crete is an island in the Great Sea west of Jerusalem.
- Arabia is a desert nation. It lies southeast of Jerusalem.
Verse 12

¶ "And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to one another, 'What can this mean?' " (Acts 2:12).

- **The third reaction to the miracle:** "They were in doubt" Their amazement (verse 7) was short lived. A measure of disbelief and doubt set in. They asked, "What can this mean?" They started trying to find some explanation that might show that their eyes and ears were being tricked into imagining things. This is a sad reaction, because it reveals their lack of expectation, their unpreparedness for Messiah, their slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken.

Verse 13

¶ "Others mocked: they said, 'These men are full of sweet wine!' " (Acts 2:13).

- **The fourth reaction to the miracle:** "Some mocked." Some people are such skeptics and scoffers, that they make up any explanation, no matter how silly. "These men are full of sweet wine!" was the best they could do. They made no effort to test this hypothesis, because they knew it wouldn't fit the facts. Peter's rejoinder, "It is only the third hour of the day!" (Ac 2:15), was a mocking of the mockery. The real answer did not need to be spoken, for the miracle spoke for
itself. It was obvious that these men were not alcoholics drunk in the morning. Peter left it unsaid that no drunkard could do what Peter and his fellows were doing.
Acts 2:14-36
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 2:14-36. These verses record Peter’s sermon in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following our Lord’s ascension.

Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost

Acts 2:14-15
¶“14 But Peter, standing among the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them, 'Men of Judea, and all you who dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you and heed my words. 15 You suppose these men are drunk, but they are not! Be reasonable. It's only the third hour of the day.'” (Acts 2:14-15).

[1] Peter’s new boldness

Verse 14
¶ "But Peter, standing among the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them, 'Men of Judea, and all you who dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you and heed my words...' " (Acts 2:14).

* Peter is a changed man. At the arrest of Jesus, Peter denied his Lord (Matthew 26:33-75), but now he is standing strong and speaking with boldness and authority.

Verse 15
¶ "'You suppose these men are drunk, but they are not! Be reasonable. It's only the third hour of the day.'" (Acts 2:15).

* Third hour of the day. The third hour in Jewish time is 9.00am by our reckoning. It was insulting to say that these devout men were drunk at all, let alone at such an early hour. Yet some were mocking and calling out, "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13).

Acts 2:16-21
¶“16 But this is what God spoke about through the prophet Joel: 17 In the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy; your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams. 18 And
yes, in those days I will pour out my Spirit on my servants and on my handmaids, and they shall prophesy.” (Acts 2:16-18).

¶"I will show wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood and fire, and palls of smoke. 20The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes. 21And so it will be that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Acts 2:19-21).

Peter’s quote from the prophet Joel

Verses16-18

¶ "But this is what God spoke about through the prophet Joel: In the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy; your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams. And yes, in those days I will pour out my Spirit on my servants and on my handmaids, and they shall prophesy' " (Acts 2:16-18).

- **Fulfilling Prophecy.** Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 which predicts the giving of the Holy Spirit. This was such a powerful gift that many wonders and signs and miracles occurred, one of which was the xenoglossia being witnessed by all who heard the apostles preaching in many foreign languages (Acts 2:4-11).

- Jesus had predicted this giving of the Holy Spirit a few days before it happened (Acts 1:8, Mark 16:15-16).

- **Baptism and pouring.** Some note that "I will pour out my Spirit" (Acts 2:17) is equivalent to You shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). From this they make an argument that a pouring is sufficient without an immersion. But that isn't what we see here in Acts. The Holy Spirit was poured out in order to immerse the apostles. If this were a parallel to water baptism, then it would demand sufficient water be poured out so as to immerse. However there is no parallel, because we also read "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4), and nobody suggests that we fill people with water to baptize them.

Verse 19-20

¶ "I will show wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood and fire, and palls of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes." (Acts 2:19-20).

- **Fulfilling Prophecy (cont).** This part of Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:30-31) is usually regarded as figurative; nevertheless Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection were attended by signs and wonders not unlike those that Joel describes (Matthew 27:45,50-54).

- **Day of the Lord.** The awesome "day of the Lord" here refers to the day of Pentecost when power came upon the apostles (Acts 1:7-8).

Verse 21
"And so it will be that whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Acts 2:21).

**Calling and being called** Here at the beginning of Peter's sermon, we have the idea of people calling on God. At the end of Peter's sermon we have the reverse: God calling people (Acts 2:39). Likewise, Paul quotes the same passage about people calling on the name of the Lord to be saved (Romans 10:12-14). And he also teaches the reverse when he calls the saved "those who are called" (Romans 8:28). Being saved involves being called by God and calling upon God. Through Peter’s preaching, God called people so that they might call on God.

**Name of the Lord.** The "name of the Lord" here means the power and authority of God in Christ our Lord, who alone is able to save.

**Acts 2:22-24**

¶"Men of Israel, hear these words! Jesus of Nazareth is a man recommended to you by God. You yourselves know this, because in your very midst God wrought mighty works and wonders and signs by him. "23He was then delivered up by the ordaining counsel and foreknowledge of God. You took him, and you crucified and killed him by the hand of men who don't obey God’s law. "24But God released him from the agony of death, and raised him up, because it was impossible for death to keep him captive.” (Acts 2:22-24).

3 **Peter’s main message**

**Verses 22-24**

¶ "Men of Israel, hear these words! Jesus of Nazareth is a man recommended to you by God. In your very midst, God wrought mighty works and wonders and signs by him. You yourselves know this. He was then delivered up by the ordaining counsel and foreknowledge of God. You took him, and you crucified and killed him by the hand of men who don't obey God’s law. But God released him from the agony of death, and raised him up, because it was impossible for death to keep him captive." (Acts 2:22-24).

**Peter’s main message** This is the heart of Peter’s message. The rest of the message is supporting argument. Peter makes three statements about Jesus:

- **His credentials** were clear to everybody, supported by the very public miracles he had done.

- **His crucifixion** was a wicked act, a seeming defeat, yet God had long ago planned to turn it into high victory (1Peter 1:18-20).

- **His conquering of death** was witnessed by many. Men had killed him; God raised him up to life again.

**Acts 2:25-31**
“For David has this to say about Christ: *I saw the Lord always facing me, for he is at my right hand that I should not be moved. Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced. And more than this, my flesh as well will dwell in hope*; because you will not leave my soul in Hades, neither will you let your Holy One see decay. *You made known to me the ways of life. You will make me full of joy with your presence.*” (Acts 2:25-28).

“Brothers, I can say without contradiction that the patriarch David is dead and buried. His tomb is with us to this day. So David was speaking as a prophet. He knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that, of the fruit of David’s fleshly body, God would raise up the Christ to sit on David’s throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that Christ’s soul was not abandoned in Hades, nor did his flesh see decay.” (Acts 2:29-31).

### Peter’s quote from the prophet David

**Verses 25-28**

"For David has this to say about Christ: *I saw the Lord always facing me, for he is at my right hand that I should not be moved. Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced. And more than this, my flesh as well will dwell in hope; because you will not leave my soul in Hades, neither will you let your Holy One see decay. You made known to me the ways of life. You will make me full of joy with your presence.*" (Acts 2:25-28).

- **Christ’s resurrection.** Although David writes this, he is not speaking of himself. Rather, it is Christ speaking through him, foretelling his death and resurrection. His soul will not be abandoned to the world of the dead, nor will his body remain in the grave to rot. He will live again and rejoice.

**Verses 29-31**

"Brothers, I can say without contradiction that the patriarch David is dead and buried. His tomb is with us to this day. So David was speaking as a prophet. He knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that, of the fruit of David’s fleshly body, God would raise up the Christ to sit on David’s throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that Christ’s soul was not abandoned in Hades, nor did his flesh see decay.” (Acts 2:29-31).

- **God makes an oath.** The “throne promise” that God made to David is recorded in (2Samuel 7:12), and is made an oath in (Psalms 89:3-4) and (Psalms 132:11).

- **God fulfills the oath.** God has now fulfilled this oath. Jesus is now King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1Timothy 6:14-15). He said himself, "I have sat down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). We have been ushered into his kingdom (Colossians 1:13).

- **David’s throne equals God’s throne.** Note that David’s throne is the Lord’s throne, a fact made obvious by these parallel passages: "Solomon sat on the throne of David" (1Kings 2:12), "Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord"
The physical throne in Jerusalem was a “type” or symbol of the heavenly throne, just as David’s earthly kingdom was a “type” or symbol of the heavenly kingdom.

- **God made another oath.** David knew of another associated oath, that Christ would be "a priest on his throne after the order of Melchizedek (Zechariah 6:12-13, Psalms 110:4). This oath has been fulfilled (Hebrews 6:17-20). Therefore the throne oath has also been fulfilled.

- **Not postponed till second coming.** Peter says that David looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of Christ. The promise and oath about Christ sitting on David’s throne was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead and then ascended into heaven to reign. Popular teaching says that the fulfillment was postponed by God until Christ’s second coming. This teaching contradicts Peter in his Pentecostal sermon.

**Acts 2:32-36**

¶ “32Jesus is this one whom God raised up. To that fact we all bear witness. 33Jesus has therefore been exalted to the right hand of God. He has received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. He has poured out this which you now see and hear.” (Acts 2:32-33).

¶ “34David didn't ascend into the heavens, but David himself says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit by my right hand, 35until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. 36Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain, that God has made him both Lord and Christ —this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:34-36).

5 **Peter’s declaration of the Christ**

**Verses 32-33**

¶ "Jesus is this one whom God raised up. To that fact we all bear witness. Jesus has therefore been exalted to the right hand of God. He has received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. He has poured out this which you now see and hear." (Acts 2:32-33).

- **Jesus was pouring out the Spirit** Jesus poured out the power of the Holy Spirit to produce what was being seen and heard — the manifestation of the sound like a rushing mighty wind and the flames of fiery light that descended upon the apostles; also the ability of the apostles to speak fluently in many foreign languages (a miracle known as xenoglossia, zen-o-gloss-ee-yuh) (Acts 2:2-4).

- **The message was confirmed by miracles.** The miraculous signs were evidence that the message being spoken was from God and his Christ. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, was behind both the message and the miracles that confirmed the message.

- **Jesus is exalted.** Christ was exalted to the right hand of God. There is no higher exaltation than that. Paul expresses it this way: "Therefore God also highly
exalted him, bestowing on him the name that is above every name..." (Philippians 2:9). The name above every name is, of course, God’s name.

**Verses 34-36**

¶ "David didn't ascend into the heavens, but David himself says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit by my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain, that God has made him both Lord and Christ —this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:34-36).

- **One more prophecy from David.** Peter reiterates that David’s prophecies were not about himself, but about the Christ. The prophecy that Peter quotes here is Psalm 110:1. Jesus used that same text to confound the religious teachers of his day (Matthew 22:41-46).

- **Greek References for Christ:** χριστός Christos Christ 5547 (Strong) cf 5548 [Hebrew Messiah 4899 cf 4886], χριστιανός Christianos Christian 5546.

- **Meaning of House of Israel.** The term "house of Israel" simply means the family or descendants of Jacob. Jacob was the father of twelve sons who in turn were the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. An angel of God changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Genesis 32:28). Luke calls these descendants of Jacob "Jews" (Acts 2:5). That name means Judeans —the the remnant of Jacob’s descendants living in Judea and its capital Jerusalem. This was the only surviving part of the large kingdom of Israel over which David and Solomon had ruled. However the term Jews came to include all of Jacob’s descendants who migrated to various parts of the world, as well as their progeny. The Jews had synagogues all over the world, but the devout one journeyed to Jerusalem for special festivals such as Pentecost.

- **Peter concludes his message.** Peter concludes his message with the statement, "Let all the house of Israel know for certain, that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). This is the main point of Peter’s message.

- **Who crucified Christ?.** In some quarters, there is discomfort, even anger, about “blaming the Jews for Christ’s crucifixion.” Three things should be clear:

  1. **Not all Jews were to blame.** However the Jewish religious leaders, and a big crowd that they collected, shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

  2. **Others besides the Jews were to blame.** For example it was the Romans who carried out the crucifixion.

  3. **We are really all to blame.** Everyone born into the world is guilty of Christ’s death. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23-25). Without his crucifixion, none of us could be saved, therefore we are all equally responsible for his crucifixion because we caused the need of it.
This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 2:37-47. These verses describe the establishment of the very first church of Christ. This happened in Jerusalem on the Pentecost following our Lord’s ascension.

**Beginning of the church of Christ**

**Acts 2:37-47**

¶ "37 Now when they heard Peter’s words, they were cut to the heart, and asked Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' 38 Peter answered them, 'Repent and be immersed every one of you. Do this in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 This promise is made to you, to your children, and to all who are far away; yes, as many as the Lord our God will call.’” (Acts 2:37-39).

¶ "40 With many other words he testified, and exhorted them, to tell them, 'Save yourselves from this twisted generation!’ 41 Then those who were pleased to welcome Peter’s message were immersed. There were added that day about three thousand souls. 42 They made a strong continuing commitment to the apostles’ teaching; and to fellowship; and to the breaking of bread; and to prayer. 43 And on every soul there came fear; and through the apostles many wonders and signs occurred.” (Acts 2:40-43).

¶ "44 All who believed kept company in all-inclusive fellowship. 45 They sold things that they owned, and shared the proceeds out to everyone who was needy. 46 Day by day they continued to be strongly united. They worshiped in the temple. In their homes they enjoyed breaking bread, sharing their meals with happy and simple hearts. 47 They were praising God, and had approval in their whole community. Every day, the Lord kept adding to the number of his called out people — those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:44-47).

**Seven attributes of the first church**

1 **Conviction**

**Verse 37**

¶ "Now when they heard Peter’s words, they were cut to the heart, and asked Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37).

- The church began with two convictions — a conviction that the message preached about Jesus was true, and a conviction of sin needing forgiveness.
The Holy Spirit empowered and inspired the apostles to preach the gospel. "The Spirit was giving them utterance" (Acts 2:4). By blessing all Jerusalem with that attested message, the Holy Spirit caused conviction in the hearts of many hearers.

**Be saved.** Peter had quoted Joel, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Now those who have heeded Peter’s message are most anxious to know how they should do this. The question, “What must I do to be saved?” is the most important question anyone can ask (cf Acts 16:30).

**Promises**

**Verses 38-40**

† "Peter answered them, 'Repent and be immersed every one of you. Do this in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is made to you, to your children, and to all who are far away; yes, as many as the Lord our God will call.' With many other words he testified, and exhorted them, to tell them, 'Save yourselves from this twisted generation!' " (Acts 2:38-40).

The church also began with two promises—the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Commandments.** These promises were attached to two commandments—repentance and baptism. In other words the promises of the gospel were conditional upon obedience to the gospel.

**Save Yourselves** When Peter told the people to save themselves, he did not mean they could do it all on their own without God’s help. God, after all, was providing the salvation. The only way you can save yourself is to trust God completely and co-operate with Him without question or compromise.

**Holy Spirit.** The gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39); the renewing and outpouring of the Spirit (Titus 3:4-7); the indwelling of the Spirit (Romans 8:9,11); and seal of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14); are best understood as all being one and the same blessing. Otherwise things become very complicated and confused.

**The small word "for".** Some argue that baptism was not "for" forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) in the sense of so as to receive forgiveness, but rather in the sense of because of having received. It is easy, in three simple steps, to discover which meaning is right...

- What was the question? "What must we do?" (Acts 2:37).
- What was the answer? "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38).
- What was to be the outcome? "Shall be saved" (Acts 2:21).

Without depending upon any argument about the word "for" we can clearly see that the import of the question was to inquire what one must do to be saved. The purpose of the answer was to inform what one must do to be saved.
### 3 Obedience

**Verse 41**

¶ "Then those who were pleased to welcome Peter’s message were immersed. There were added that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41).

- The two commandments Peter issued were to repent and to be baptized. Peter expected everyone who wanted to be saved to obey these commandments. There was, on the day the church of Christ began, no such thing as “salvation by faith alone”.

- **Baptism in water.** What the obeyers were immersed in is not explained in Acts 2, but elsewhere in Acts we find it was water (Acts 8:36, Acts 10:47-48).

- **Was immersion impossible?** Some say there wasn't enough water in Jerusalem, or time left in the day, to immerse 3000 persons in water. Jerusalem had several pools — the Pool of Siloam for example (John 9:7). Even if only the apostles did the baptizing (an unwarranted assumption) twelve men could each immerse 250 people inside three hours.

- **Basis and Purpose of baptism.** Back in Acts 2:38 we see that the immersion was performed "in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins".

- **Three thousand.** The number who immediately responded to the message preached was "about 3000 souls". This is a small number compared to the population crowding Jerusalem at that season. We are reminded of Jesus’s remark that few find the Way (Matthew 7:14).

- **Gladly received** Luke states that the converts received the word gladly. This language is suggestive of a voluntary receiving of God’s word.

- **Greek References on repentance:** μετανοια metanoia 3341 (Strong) cf 3326 meta (change), 3539 noeo 3563 nous (mind).

- **Greek References on baptism:** [βαπτισμα baptisma (baptism), βαπτιζω baptizo (baptize), 907,908 (Strong) cf 909,910. [from 911 βαπτo bapto, to dip, to immerse]

### 4 Devotion

**Verse 42**

¶ "They made a strong continuing commitment to the apostles’ teaching; and to fellowship; and to the breaking of bread; and to prayer." (Acts 2:42).
After first obedience to the gospel, there must be ongoing commitment: a devotion to the study of Christ’s teaching; to fellowship with his congregation; to the weekly observance of his memorial supper; and of course to prayer.

5 Godfearing

Verse 43

¶ "And on every soul there came fear; and through the apostles many wonders and signs occurred." (Acts 2:43).

This fear was not of fright or dread, but of wonder and awe. It was the fear caused by the amazing message of Christ, a message confirmed by miracles done by the apostles and by those to whom the apostles gave miraculous power (Mark 16:15-18, Acts 8:18).

We are encouraged to live in fear of God, a fear that makes no contradiction against living in the love of God (Philippians 2:12-13, 1Peter 1:17-22).

6 Fellowship

Verses 44-46

¶ "All who believed kept company in all-inclusive fellowship. They sold things that they owned, and shared the proceeds out to everyone who was needy. Day by day they continued to be strongly united. They worshiped in the temple. In their homes they enjoyed breaking bread, sharing their meals with happy and simple hearts" (Acts 2:44-46).

Worldly possessions. The fellowship of the first church of Christ included the sharing of worldly possessions. This was not communism, because on being added to the church people did not relinquish their ownership of property or control of their own money. The selling of personal property, and giving of the proceeds for support of the needy, was a voluntary act. It was encouraged but not compulsory (Acts 4:34-36, Acts 5:1-4).

Nature of benevolence. This benevolence consisted of the rich helping the poor to live decently, contrary to the social system in which the rich live in luxury by making other people poor. However this benevolence does not reduce everyone’s duty to work for a living where possible (2Thessalonians 3:7-13, Acts 18:1-3, Ephesians 4:28, 1Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Breaking bread. The "breaking of bread" at home (Acts 2:46), and the "breaking of bread" in the temple (Acts 2:42), were two different things. The people shared daily meals in their private houses, and they ate the Lord’s Supper in the worship assembly. The two breakings of bread mustn't be confused (1Corinthians 11:18-33). The first church of Christ did not partake of common meals in association with their worship.

Enjoyment. The first church enjoyed itself. It was characterized by "gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46). It was in later centuries that the church became po-faced.
7 Growth

Verse 47

¶ "They were praising God, and had approval in their whole community. The Lord kept adding to the church every day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47).

- **Imitating Jesus** The first church of Christ was, in its infancy, imitating its founder: in his youth, Jesus "kept growing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

- **Favor with community.** The three thousand who obeyed on the day of Pentecost were followed by more believers, and the church grew. This was no doubt helped by the favourable attitude of the wider community to the church at that time. Such favour is not always granted the Lord’s church.

- **Praising God** One reason for their growth was that "they were praising God" (Acts 2:47). Many churches praise and promote themselves far too much and give too little glory to God. God is the One who "gives the increase" (Colossians 2:19, 1Corinthians 3:6), and he is worthy of praise and thanksgiving (Revelation 5:13).

- **Saved added to the church.** This verse shows that all the saved in Jerusalem were members of the church in Jerusalem. Every member of the church in Jerusalem was a saved person. It was the Lord who saved each one, and the Lord who added each one to the church. The roll of church members is "written in heaven" by the Lord (Luke 10:20, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 13:8).

  **Note:** This does not mean we cannot know who is saved and therefore rightfully a church member. All who believe and follow "the apostles’ teaching" are such (Acts 2:42). Nor should we think that the church is an invisible body. The church was visible in Jerusalem. When other churches were established, it was to those visible churches to which God added the saved, just as in Jerusalem.

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Author: Ron Graham

Analysis of Peter's Sermon
—On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

This lesson analyses Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

**PROBLEMS** (verses 14-15)

Peter begins by cutting down the barriers to his message:

- SENSATIONALISM:
  Peter’s audience is drawn by the sensational event. He directs their attention to the important thing: "Heed my words".

- PREJUDICE & SKEPTICISM:
  Others mocked the apostles, saying they were drunk. Peter counters this prejudice.

**EVIDENCES** (verses 16-22)

Peter lays these foundations of proof for his message:

- PROPHECY:
  The testimony of the prophets makes up half the transcript of the sermon (v17-21; 25-28; 34-35).

- MIRACLES:
  Jesus was accredited by his miracles.

**TRUTHS** (verses 23-36)

Peter proclaims two of the most basic truths of the gospel. He then powerfully restates them in verse 36.

- THE CROSS:
  Jesus' death on the cross was not a victory for his enemies, but the plan of God"

- THE RESURRECTION:
  "God raised him up from the dead". He has been exalted to the right hand of God"

**ESSENTIALS** (verses 37-38)

Obviously they would have to believe in Jesus Christ, but their faith ought to be obedient.
• REPENTANCE:
  Peter said to them, when they asked what they must do, "Repent..."

• BAPTISM:
  "...and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ..."

REWARDS (verses 38-39)

These promises were to "all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (v39).

• FORGIVENESS:
  "...for the forgiveness of sins..."

• GIFT OF THE SPIRIT:
  "...and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"

Chart by Ron Graham

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Acts 3:1-11
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 3:1-11. These verses describe healing of the man born lame, a miracle Peter and John did at the temple gate.

Healing of the man born lame.

Acts 3:1-11
¶“1 Peter and John were making their way together up into the temple. It was the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 There was a man who was born lame. He was being carried to the gate of the temple — the gate named “Beautiful”. Every day he was laid there so that as people entered into the temple he could beg gifts for his needs. 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go in, he asked them for a gift. 4 Peter took a good look at the man, and John did too. Peter told the man, 'Look at us.' 5 He gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.” (Acts 1:1-5).

¶“6 But Peter said, 'I don't have any silver or gold, but I do have something to give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!' 7 Peter took him by the right hand, and raised him up. Immediately his feet and ankles were given strength. 8 He leaped up, stood, and began to walk. He went with Peter and John into the temple. He was walking, leaping, and praising God.” (Acts 1:6-8).

¶“9 All the people saw him walking and praising God. 10 They recognized him as the man who would sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11 The lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John while all the people came running toward them into Solomon’s porch. How greatly amazed they were.” (Acts 2:9-11).

Five things to consider.

[1] Peter and John's Intention

Verse 1

¶ "Peter and John were making their way together up into the temple. It was the hour of prayer, the ninth hour." (Acts 3:1).

- **Peter and John** The two apostles were going to the temple either to meet with the Christians (Acts 2:46) or to mingle with the devout Jews attending the temple prayers. They did not, apparently, have any plan or intention of doing any healing miracle.

- **The Temple.** The temple was new and very beautiful. Solomon’s temple had long ago been destroyed by the Babylonians. It was rebuilt under great stress in the
time of Ezra and Nehemiah with the help of Darius king of Medopersia. However it was inferior to Solomon’s temple and the one Ezekiel saw in visions. Centuries later, about twenty years before Jesus came, work commenced to replace this temple with the magnificent structure still being completed at the time the disciples of Jesus admired it and Jesus ironically but accurately foretold its destruction (Matthew 24:1-2).

- **Ninth hour** The 9th hour of the day is Jewish reckoning. We call it 3pm.

2 **The Lame Man’s Expectations**

**Verses 2-5**

¶ "There was a man who was born lame. He was being carried to the gate of the temple —the gate named “Beautiful”. Every day he was laid there so that as people entered into the temple he could beg gifts for his needs. Seeing Peter and John about to go in, he asked them for a gift. Peter took a good look at the man, and John did too. Peter told the man, 'Look at us.' He gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them." (Acts 3:2).

- **The lame man** Just as Peter and John were not apparently intending to work a miracle, neither was this man expecting one. His hope was to get, from kind passers by, a little money to live on. Like everyone else, disabled people have bills to pay. Unlike everyone else, they may not be able to work. The last thing this man expected that day was to be made whole and no longer disabled!

- **Lame from birth.** The man was "lame from his mother’s womb" as Luke describes it. All his life, from the day of his birth, his feet and lower legs were crippled and useless. So he never learned to walk or run or dance. He relied on other people to move him from place to place. This day all that would be bygones.

- **Look at us.** Peter took a careful look at the man. Not every beggar is genuine. The man was not looking at Peter however, perhaps because he was wanting to catch the eye of other possible benefactors, or perhaps because his eyes were downcast. Peter, seeing an opportunity to work a useful miracle, wanted the man to have no doubt about who his healers were.

3 **Peter and John’s Gift**

**Verse 6**

¶ "But Peter said, 'I don't have any silver or gold, but I do have something to give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!' " (Acts 3:6).

- **More than silver or gold** The man would have been delighted enough with a silver coin, but Peter didn’t have one. Instead he had something priceless to give.

- **Name of Jesus Christ** In this case, the word “name” means authority, power and glory. Peter possessed healing power, but only as a gift from Jesus through the Holy Spirit. It was really Jesus’s healing power, not Peter’s. Peter knew this, and was anxious for others to understand it clearly.
Of Nazareth

Jesus had come to be known as “Jesus the Nazarene” because Nazareth was his home town where he grew up and worked for some time as a carpenter. The name Jesus is a form of Joshua, and was a fairly common name for Jewish boys, so Peter identified him as "Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth" to make it clear which Jesus he was calling upon for the miracle.

Rise up and walk

The man, understandably, did not comprehend this command from Peter. So, as the next verse says, Peter took him by the hand and gave him a lift up. That's when the man realized that he could get up! Peter wasn't hoisting up a still crippled man and shouting hallelujah like a charlatan might do to make it seem to the gullible a miracle.

4 God’s Unstinting Power

Verses 7-8

"Peter took him by the right hand, and raised him up. Immediately his feet and ankles were given strength. He leaped up, stood, and began to walk. He went with Peter and John into the temple. He was walking, leaping, and praising God." (Acts 3:7-8).

Immediately

A truly miraculous healing is instantaneous. Unlike natural healing, there is no recovery period. As soon as Peter took his hand to pull him to his feet, the man took over: he leaped to his feet and stood on them for the first time in his life.

Began to walk

This means that he started walking immediately, even though he'd never learned to walk or been able to walk before. Along with his walking he did a bit of leaping. What a show off!

Praising God.

The man might not have understood how he was so suddenly whole, but he knew what power had done it. It was God’s work, for nobody else could have done it. So he gave God the glory and gratitude.

5 The People’s Great Amazement

Verses 9-11

"All the people saw him walking and praising God. They recognized him as the man who would sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. The lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John while all the people came running toward them into Solomon’s porch. How greatly amazed they were." (Acts 3:1).

All the people.

This was a miracle witnessed by many people. They all saw the man walking. They all recognized him as the erstwhile lame beggar laid daily at the temple gate. They were all filled with amazement. Later even the enemies of Christ’s followers admitted that "a notable miracle has been done... and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16).
The Man Held on to Peter and John | The healed man did not hold on to Peter and John because he could not support himself. He was walking for the first time in his life when a crowd came running toward him. Naturally he would be disconcerted by this, and hold on to the men who had healed him.

Amazement. | One would expect, in this situation, that people would be gabbling confusing and contradictory versions of what had happened, and many would be denying that it happened at all and trying to explain it away. But the facts were so simple and obvious, that all the people accepted those facts and responded with utter amazement.
This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 3:12-26. These verses describe Peter’s message after healing the lame man at the temple gate.

Peter’s message after healing the lame man.

Acts 3:12-15

¶“12 Peter looked at the crowd’s behaviour and made this response: 'Men of Israel, why do you regard this man in such amazement? Why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up. 14 You denied Jesus in the presence of Pilate when Pilate had decided to release him. Yes, you denied the holy and righteous one and instead you asked for a murderer to be released to you. 15 You killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead which we witnessed.'” (Acts 3:12-15).

1 Power of God

Verse 12

¶ "Peter looked at the crowd’s behaviour and made this response: 'Men of Israel, why do you regard this man in such amazement? Why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk?' ” (Acts 3:12).

• **Power and amazement.** The ability to perform a miracle, especially one like the healing of the lame man, is a dangerous power because it can be assumed that the one who works the miracle is someone great (Acts 8:9-11). People give glory to the miracle worker instead of to God. A similar miracle by Paul had that effect among the pagans (Acts 14:8-15). However, even Jews could be superstitious. Peter wasn't criticising their astonishment. They had every cause to be amazed. Peter was, however, making very sure that Jesus Christ, not Peter and John, got the credit and glory for this miracle.

2 Preference for Murder

Verse 13-15

¶ "'The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up. You denied Jesus in the presence of Pilate when Pilate had decided to release him. Yes, you denied the holy and righteous one and instead you asked for a murderer to be released to you. You killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead which we witnessed.'” (Acts 3:13-15).
• **You denied and killed Jesus.** Peter confronts the crowd with the same set of facts he preached on the day of Pentecost: Jesus had worked miracles among them, yet they denied him and had him crucified; but God raised him up (Acts 2:22-24).

• **Pilate** Peter is not absolving Pontius Pilate from all guilt, but when Pilate was requested to release a murderer and to crucify Jesus, he was put under a lot of pressure to do what the crowd wanted, even though he didn't want it himself (Matthew 27:11-26).

Acts 3:16-19

¶“16'It is by faith in the name of Jesus that this man, whom you recognize and know, was made strong. Faith that comes through Jesus has given this man perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17Now brothers I know that you acted in ignorance, and so did your rulers. 18Nevertheless what you did fulfilled God’s prior announcement, speaking through all his prophets, that Christ should suffer. 19So change your hearts and turn again, to have your sins blotted out, and then times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord’” (Acts 3:16-19).


Verse 16

¶ "'It is by faith in the name of Jesus that this man, whom you recognize and know, was made strong. Faith that comes through Jesus has given this man perfect soundness in the presence of you all.'” (Acts 3:16).

• **Perfect soundness** When Jesus causes a miracle, he doesn't do it by halves. This man, lame from birth, was suddenly whole: his feet, ankles, and legs were perfectly strong and sound, and he could walk and leap as though he had been doing it since childhood. Take notice of this, because the “miracles” that some churches perform today do not match this standard.

• **Faith through Jesus** Peter attributes this miracle to faith in Christ. But whose faith? Not that of the man born lame — he had expected to receive a coin. It was the faith of Peter and John, the faith they followed, that was behind this miracle. When healings fail today, the preachers say that the people being healed did not have faith. However, the man born lame was healed without himself having faith, and this miracle should be a paradigm or pattern or bench mark for genuine miracles today.

• **Was made strong** There's another answer that healers give when their healings fail. I once saw a deaf man “healed” with much commotion. But he was still completely deaf. The healers said that they had faith that he was healed, and had been made whole from the top of his head to the tips of his toes. They implied that anyone who couldn't see this was blinded by unbelief! The people who saw the man born lame, believed he was healed because he was walking and leaping and praising God. He was made strong. They knew the man had been lame from birth and now was made perfectly whole. Again, this miracle should be a paradigm or
pattern or bench mark for genuine miracles today. We should not have to believe someone “was” healed when the evidence says “was not”.

- **Whom you recognize and know** Peter didn't tell stories of miracles in other places that happened to people unknown by the crowd. The healed man was there present before them; someone they recognized and knew. They knew he had been a lame beggar. They knew and saw first hand that now he was made whole. For the third time I say, this miracle should be a paradigm or pattern or bench mark for genuine miracles today.

### 4 Prejudice Not Excused

Verses 17-18

¶ "Now brothers I know that you acted in ignorance, and so did your rulers. Nevertheless what you did fulfilled God’s prior announcement, speaking through all his prophets, that Christ should suffer.'" (Acts 3:17-18).

- **Fulfilled God’s prior announcement** We come here upon the problem of destiny and things foreordained. It was "by God’s predetermined counsel and foreknowledge" that Christ was crucified (Acts 2:23). Therefore, weren't those who had a part in it only doing what God had decided? How then can God blame them? We have to be careful not to fall into fallacy here. God was willing that Christ should suffer, and God predetermined and announced that Christ would die as a sacrifice for sin (Isaiah 53). However, God didn't compel anyone to take part in Christ’s crucifixion. They did so by choice. God knows what evil Satan will do, and God can plan a strategy to turn Satan’s evil against Satan. But God doesn't make Satan do the evil, nor does he make anyone help him.

- **Acted in ignorance** Ignorance explains why Jesus’s own countrymen sent him to the cross. It does not absolve them from guilt. Nor was their ignorance justified. They knew, or ought to have known, that the prophets had foretold that the Messiah should suffer. How then could they be innocent of their part in bringing prophecy to pass? Their ignorance stemmed from prejudice and was without excuse.

### 5 Promise of Forgiveness

Verse 19

¶ "So change your hearts and turn again, to have your sins blotted out, and then times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

- **Repent and turn** Repentance means a change of heart. But that should be followed by a change in the course of one’s life. You can *intend* to change. That's repentance. But you have to *actually* change as well, and make the turn around. That's conversion. Just as godly sorrow leads to repentance (2Corinthians 7:10), so repentance leads to a complete reformation of life. Peter calls for both a change of *mind* and a change of *conduct*.

- **Conversion and baptism.** How does Peter’s command, "Repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38) compare with his command "Repent and be converted"
In baptism the old person is, by God’s grace, killed and buried with Christ and a new person is raised to life in Christ (Romans 6). Peter in commanding conversion was in no way contradicting or nullifying his command to be baptized, any more than in commanding baptism he was negating the need for conversion.

**Times of refreshing** In his previous sermon (on the day of Pentecost) Peter also commanded people to repent, and he promised them forgiveness of sins. He also promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). If we map that verse on to this verse, we get the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts 2:38</th>
<th>Acts 3:19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repent</td>
<td>Repent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be baptized</td>
<td>Be converted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness of sins</td>
<td>Sins blotted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift of the Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Refreshing from God’s presence</td>
</tr>
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**Acts 3:20-26**

¶“20’And the Lord will send Jesus Christ, who was preordained for you. 21But heaven must receive him until the times of restoration of all things. God spoke through his holy prophets about this too.” (Acts 3:20-21).

¶“22For Moses told the fathers, *From among your brothers, the Lord God will raise you up a prophet like me. You shall listen to everything he tells you.* 23*Every soul who fails to listen to that prophet will be destroyed from among the people.* 24Moreover, all the prophets from Samuel onwards, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days.” (Acts 3:22-24).

¶“25You are the children of the prophets. You are children of the covenant which God made with our fathers when he said to Abraham, *In your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed.* 26God raised up Jesus his servant and sent him first to you —to bless you by turning all of you from your wickedness.’ ” (Acts 3:25-26).

**6 Promise of Christ’s Return**

**Verse 20-21**

¶"And the Lord will send Jesus Christ, who was preordained for you. But heaven must receive him until the times of restoration of all things. God spoke through his holy prophets about this too.’ “ (Acts 3:20-21).

**The Lord will send Jesus Christ** Here Peter is affirming what the angels said at Christ’s ascension: “This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall come in the same manner in which you have watched him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).
Peter’s audience would be thinking that he was talking about the restoration of Israel. Even Peter himself, with the other disciples, had asked Jesus, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Even teachers today are looking for a restoration of Israel on earth. But that isn’t what God has in mind. "For behold I create a new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered" (Isaiah 65:17). Peter later wrote, "According to his promise, we look for a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells" (2Peter 3:13). There is a beautiful description in the latter visions of Revelation (Revelation 21:1-5).

**Prophecy Fulfilled**

**Verse 22-24**

¶ "For Moses told the fathers, From among your brothers, the Lord God will raise you up a prophet like me. You shall listen to everything he tells you. Every soul who fails to listen to that prophet will be destroyed from among the people. Moreover, all the prophets from Samuel onwards, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days." (Acts 3:22-24).

**The prophets told of these days.** (Compare verse 17). Many folk think that the Bible prophets spoke about the second coming of Christ and the “end times” preceding it. But Peter says the prophets, whilst they did foretell Christ’s second coming spoke mainly of "these days" in which Peter lived, and in which Christ had lived; had died; had been raised; and had ascended to heaven. Peter had no sense that what the prophets said would largely be postponed. It was fulfilled and people should now listen to Jesus.

**A Prophet like Moses.** Moses and Jesus were, unlike all other prophets, original lawgivers or mediators of God’s covenant (John 1:17, Hebrews 8:1-7). Christ’s superior law-covenant replaced that of Moses.

**Providence of God**

**Verse 25-26**

¶ "You are the children of the prophets. You are children of the covenant which God made with our fathers when he said to Abraham, In your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed. God raised up Jesus his servant and sent him first to you —to bless you by turning all of you from your wickedness." (Acts 3:25-26).

**You are the children** The people in the temple were mostly descendants of Abraham and of the prophets. God had kept a remnant for himself. They of all people should accept Jesus the promised “seed” whom God had sent to them. And the way they should accept Jesus is by turning from their wickedness.

**First to you** Peter concludes his message with this point: God has honoured the people of Jerusalem by preaching Christ first to them, before providing the message to the whole world. Surely, therefore, they should be the first to turn to Jesus and acknowledge him.
Acts 4:1-22
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 4:1-22. These verses describe how the religious rulers of Jerusalem tried to stop Peter and John from preaching after the healing of the man born lame.

Peter and John Arrested

Acts 4:1-12

¶1 As Peter and John spoke to the people, the priests came over to them with the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees—very annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. §They arrested them, and because it was evening by now, they put them in custody until the next day. ¶But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number, counting the men alone, grew to about five thousand.” (Acts 4:1-4).

¶5 In the morning a gathering took place in Jerusalem of their rulers, elders, and scribes. §Annas the high priest was there, with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and a full contingent of the high priest’s family. ¶They stood Peter and John in the center of the council, and put to them the question, ‘By what power, or in what name, have you done this?’” (Acts 4:5-7).

¶8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people, and elders of Israel: ¶if we are examined today about a good deed done to a crippled man, and if the question is how this man has been healed; ¶be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—in him this man stands here before you in perfect health.’” (Acts 4:8-10).

¶11 ‘This Jesus is the stone that you, the builders, rejected. He has now become the head stone of the corner. ¶There is salvation in nobody else—nor under heaven is there given among men any other name but this by which we must be saved’” (Acts 4:11-12).

1 Preachers Arrested and Jailed

Verses 1-3

¶ "As they spoke to the people, the priests came over to them with the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees—very annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. They arrested them, and because it was evening by now, they put them in custody until the next day.” (Acts 4:1-3).
Priests, captain, Sadducees  The temple was run by priests who were descended from Moses's brother Aaron. The temple had security guards and their captain was present. The Sadducees were a powerful sect of the Jews. Sadducees did not believe in spirits, angels, or in any resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). When Jesus was preaching, his opposition came mainly from the Pharisees, but now the Sadducees are conducting the persecution.

Believers Increase by Thousands

Verse 4

¶ "But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number, counting the men alone, grew to about five thousand." (Acts 4:4).

Hearing and believing. Some people interpret this to mean that faith alone is necessary to be saved. However Luke has previously recorded that "as many as received Peter’s word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). Instead of pitting Luke’s statements against each other, let's simply put them together. People were save and added to the church in Jerusalem by:

- Hearing and believing the word (Acts 4:4).
- Repenting and being baptized (Acts 2:38).

These two versions of what people did aren't contradictory; they're complementary. All these things, hearing, believing, repenting, being baptized, are essential to being added by grace to the number of the saved.

Preachers Tried by Sanhedran

Verses 5-7

¶ "In the morning a gathering took place in Jerusalem of their rulers, elders, and scribes. Annas the high priest was there, with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and a full contingent of the high priest's family. They stood Peter and John in the center of the council, and put to them the question, 'By what power, or in what name, have you done this?'" (Acts 4:5-7).

Gathering of Rulers  The official high priest Annas was appointed by the Roman government, but the rightful high priest by Jewish laws was Caiaphas, so effectively, and awkwardly, there were two high priests (cf John 18:12-14,24). The council now trying Peter and John was the συνέδριον sunhedrion (Sanhedrin), a high court of the Jews (Acts 4:15, Mark 15:1).

The Question  The council itself was not unjust in its dealings with Peter and John. It asks a very fair and appropriate question, and gives Peter the opportunity to answer it.

Peter Answers the Council

Verses 8-10
¶ "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people, and elders of Israel: if we are examined today about a good deed done to a crippled man, and if the question is how this man has been healed; be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead —in him this man stands here before you in perfect health.'" (Acts 4:8-10).

- **Filled with the Holy Spirit.** Jesus had made a promise to his disciples which was now coming true. "When they arrest you and deliver you up, don't be anxious beforehand about what you are going to say, but simply say what is given to you in that hour, for it isn't you who speak, but the Holy Spirit." (Mark 13:11).

- **Peter's Defense.** Peter briefly defends himself and John by showing that, although they have been hauled before the court, they have done no crime to warrant it, but have done a good deed.

- **Peter's Answer.** Peter in effect tells the council that the finger of accusation is pointed not at Peter and John, but at the council and its friends. The name and authority by which the miracle was done is the very Jesus whom they had crucified.

- **Two Raised Up.** The man who was raised up from being lame from birth was healed by the power of Jesus who was raised up from death.

**Verses 11-12**

¶ "This Jesus is the stone that you, the builders, rejected. He has now become the head stone of the corner. There is salvation in nobody else —nor under heaven is there given among men any other name but this by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11-12).

- **Rejected stone.** Peter is alluding here to Psalm 118:22. The corner stone was the one from which all the foundation of a building was laid out. Jesus is the cornerstone of Israel, but its religious leaders rejected him. In doing so they rejected the very counsel of God for themselves, just as they had in rejecting John the Baptist the herald of Christ (Luke 7:30).

**Acts 4:13-22**

¶“13When the council saw the confidence of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. They recognized that these men had been with Jesus. 14Furthermore, seeing the man who was healed standing with them, they were without an argument. 15However, they commanded the prisoners to wait outside and leave the council to confer in private. 16The council then said, 'What shall we do to these men? Because indeed a notable miracle has been done through them. This can be plainly seen by all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17But so that this spreads no further among the people, let us warn them, that from now on they speak to nobody in this name.'" (Acts 4:13-17).

¶“18The council recalled the prisoners, and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19But Peter and John answered them, 'Whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you instead of to God, you judge for yourselves. 20As for us,
we can't stop telling the things which we saw and heard.' 21 When the council had further threatened the prisoners, they let them go, finding no way to punish them. The people were the problem: everyone glorified God for the deed that was done. 22 The man on whom this miracle of healing was performed was more than forty years old.” (Acts 4:18-22).

5 Sanhedrin Frees Preachers with Warning

Verses 13-14

¶ "When they saw the confidence of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. They recognized that these men had been with Jesus. Furthermore, seeing the man who was healed standing with them, they were without an argument.” (Acts 4:13-14).

- **Uneducated men.** Peter and John were country folk. They were not men of letters; they’d had only the basic schooling. Yet here they were confounding these august scholars.

- **Recognized these men.** The council recognized Peter and John as disciples of Jesus. Jesus had never conducted a secret society. He and his retinue of disciples had spent a lot of time in public.

- **Without an argument.** Peter’s very short statement to the court was met with silence. The council was speechless. There was little they could say. The Holy Spirit, through Peter, had said it all. And the full stop to Peter’s statement was the man born lame, standing with Peter and John, perfectly healed.

Verse 15-17

¶ "However, they commanded the prisoners to wait outside and leave the council to confer in private. The council then said, 'What shall we do to these men? Because indeed a notable miracle has been done through them. This can be plainly seen by all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that this spreads no further among the people, let us warn them, that from now on they speak to nobody in this name.' ” (Acts 4:15-17).

- **Sent them out.** The council needed to confer, so they sent Peter and John outside to wait. Luke however has information on what then went on inside, no doubt from one of the assembly who later became a Christian (Acts 6:7).”

- **Miracle done through them.** The council would not admit, even in private, that this miracle had been done through Jesus. They said only that it was done through Peter and John —which is contrary to Peter’s testimony that it was not he and John but rather Jesus Christ who had healed the man.

- **Notable miracle, plainly seen.** They did however admit that the miracle was not hearsay and was evidence in plain view. However they did nothing with that evidence, except reluctantly to let the apostles go under the condition that they speak no more in the name by which the miracle had been done.
Verses 18-20

¶ "The council recalled the prisoners, and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, 'Whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you instead of to God, you judge for yourselves. As for us, we can't stop telling the things which we saw and heard.' (Acts 4:18-20).

- **We can't stop telling.** When told that they musn't preach Jesus anymore, Peter and John call upon a higher authority. They must obey God rather than men, and they can't stop telling people about Jesus. They got away with this defiance for the present, as the next verse shows.

Verse 21-22

¶ "When the council had further threatened the prisoners, they let them go, finding no way to punish them. The people were the problem: everyone glorified God for the deed that was done. The man on whom this miracle of healing was performed was more than forty years old." (Acts 4:21-22).

- **Everyone glorified God.** The populace got it right. They gave credit to God for this miraculous sign, that a man who'd been crippled for more than forty years was now made whole. The popular acceptance of Peter and John’s testimony of Jesus was a main influence in the council’s lack of action against them. It's a pity it wasn't what Peter and John claimed that led the council to release them.

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Acts 4:23-37
—Verse by verse

A verse by verse study of Acts 4:23-37, which describes the disciples’ prayer and encouragement after Peter and John’s release from custody.

The disciples’ encouraged after Peter and John’s release

Acts 4:23-31

¶ "23 After their release, they went to their own, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 Upon hearing Peter and John’s report, the people raised their voice to God with one accord.” (Acts 4:23-24a).

¶ "24b They prayed, 'O Master, you are God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. 25 By the mouth of your servant David you said, Why do the nations rage and the people imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers gathered against the Lord, and against his Christ.'” (Acts 4:24b-26).

¶ "27 For truly in this city, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations and the people of Israel, were gathered to oppose your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed. 28 They did whatever your hand and your counsel predetermined should happen.’” (Acts 4:27-28).

¶ "29 Now Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word very boldly. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal; may signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ 31 When they had prayed, their gathering place was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and they boldly spoke the word of God.” (Acts 4:29-31).

1 The Disciples Wait

Verse 23

¶ "After their release, they went to their own, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.” (Acts 4:23).

- **Went to their own.** Peter and John sought the company of other disciples (who and how many we don't know). Peter and John knew that the disciples would be anxious to know what had become of them.

2 The Disciples Pray

Verses 24-26
Upon hearing Peter and John’s report, the people raised their voice to God with one accord. They prayed, ‘O Master, you are God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. By the mouth of your servant David you said, Why do the nations rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers gathered against the Lord, and against his Christ.’” (Acts 4:24-26).

- **They prayed as one.** This does not mean they all spoke at once, but that one led all in prayer; all prayed in their hearts what the one said for them all. When we pray in a body of Christians, and one leads the prayer, we have a duty, and should have a desire, to lend our own hearts to that prayer. This also means that the one praying aloud should say what is agreeable and clear to those whose hearts join in the prayer.

- **Prayer prefaced with praise.** First God is acknowledged in a doxology (a word of praise). He is praised as the Creator of all things. The scriptures are peppered with such praises (eg Revelation 4:11, Psalms 104).

- **Prayer graced with God’s word.** It is fitting in a prayer to return some of God’s word to him before we submit our own words. This shows a deep respect for God and says to him, We want you to hear us, but also to know that we hear you. In this prayer, the quote is from a Psalm of David (Psalm 2:1-2).

- **The beginning of trouble.** The congregation understood that they would face persecution as Jesus did; Peter and John’s arrest was just the beginning.

**Verses 27-28**

¶ "For truly in this city, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations and the people of Israel, were gathered against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed. They did whatever your hand and your counsel predetermined should happen.’” (Acts 4:27-28).

- **Prayer Affirming God’s Providence.** This part of the prayer looks back to acknowledge to God that his word comes true and all things are under his foresight and control.

- **God’s counsel and foreknowledge.** God was willing that Christ should suffer, and God predetermined that Christ would die as a sacrifice for sin (Acts 2:23). However, God didn't compel anyone to take part in Christ’s crucifixion. They did so by choice. God knows what evil Satan will do, and God can plan a strategy to turn Satan’s evil against Satan. But God doesn't make Satan do the evil, nor does he make anyone help him. Nevertheless, whatever Satan and his followers will do, God knows beforehand, and God decides the outcome.

**Verses 29-30**

¶ "Now Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word very boldly. Stretch out your hand to heal; may signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:29-30).
Verse 31

¶ "When they had prayed, their gathering place was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and they boldly spoke the word of God." (Acts 4:31).

- **Prayer asking God's help.** Like Hezekiah did long ago. When Sennacherib threatened him, "Hezekiah spread it before the LORD. Then Hezekiah prayed to the LORD" (2Kings 19:14-16). So these disciples of Christ now spread before the Lord the threats of the Sanhedrin and ask for help.

- **Three requests.** There are three requests at the end of this prayer...
  - Firstly, that God might look at the threats. God's people should not be quick to instruct God what to do about their troubles, rather than ask God to look at them and form his own counsel on what to do about them.
  - Secondly, that God might grant the opportunity and courage to speak his word in defiance of the Sanhedrin's prohibition. In the greatest work, spreading God's word, Satan hinders us. We need to ask God for help and courage.
  - Thirdly, that God might use his mighty hand for good. When people have enemies, they may ask God to do evil to those enemies. These disciples, however, sought no vengeance. Instead they asked God for something good and constructive: in this case healings and miracles to confirm the word so that people would believe it.

- **Holy Servant Jesus.** Jesus was acknowledged as the Servant mentioned in prophecy (Isaiah 53:11-12). He is described as *holy* which means dedicated to God's purpose. This dedication is described in Philippians 2:5-13.

**Verse 31**

¶ "When they had prayed, their gathering place was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and they boldly spoke the word of God." (Acts 4:31).

- **Filled with the Holy Spirit.** This is the third time Luke has used this phrase to describe the manner in which the Holy Spirit was given: first of the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4); second of Peter before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8); and now third of the group who prayed with Peter and John. In each case being "filled with the Holy Spirit" prepared people to preach the word boldly. The Spirit gave them the words to say and the courage to say them.

- **Special and temporary power.** The church at this time was in its infancy. The gospel it preached wasn't fully revealed in scripture, so God granted the power of His Spirit in a special way so that people could have a revelation of the word they were to speak. Later in the church’s life and progress, the gospel became fully known. Inspired teachers had committed their teaching to writing, and copies of their original letters had been sent everywhere. Thus people could speak the word using this resource, and had no need of special revelation or inspiration from the Holy Spirit. The gifts of direct inspiration passed away because a full and perfect knowledge was obtainable without them (1Corinthians 13:8-10).

- **Still filled.** This doesn't mean that Christians are no longer filled with the Spirit, because "God does not give the Spirit by measure" (John 3:34), and from those who receive the Spirit "there shall flow rivers of living water" (John 4:14, John 7:37-39). There are, however, "varieties of gifts but the same Spirit; varieties of ministries but the same Lord; varieties of effects but... one and the same Spirit
works all these things distributing to each person just as he wills.
(1Corinthians 12:4-11). Some of these gifts outlived their usefulness.

**Acts 4:32-37**

¶“32 The multitude of believers was of one heart and soul. None of them said of their properties, ‘This is my own’. Rather, they shared everything. 33 With great power, the apostles testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great grace was on them all.” (Acts 4:32-33).

¶“34 Neither did anyone among them lack, for all who owned land or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds, 35 and laid them at the apostles’ feet. Distribution was made as anyone had need. 36 For instance there was Joses, whom the apostles called Barnabas which means Son of Encouragement. He was a Levite, born in Cyprus. 37 He owned a field; sold it; brought the money; and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 4:34-37).

### The Disciples Share

**Verses 32-33**

¶ "The multitude of believers was of one heart and soul. None of them said of their properties, ‘This is my own’. Rather, they shared everything. With great power, the apostles testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great grace was on them all.” (Acts 4:32-33).

- **Multitude, believing, sharing, preaching.** It would be wonderful if the church of Christ was like this everywhere. However, even a few decades after this fine beginning, there were churches not holding to this standard (eg Revelation 3:1-6, Galatians 1:6, 1Corinthians 1:11).

**Verses 34-37**

¶ "Neither did anyone among them lack, for all who owned land or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds, and laid them at the apostles’ feet. Distribution was made as anyone had need. For instance there was Joses, whom the apostles called Barnabas which means Son of Encouragement. He was a Levite, born in Cyprus. He owned a field; sold it; brought the money; and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 4:34-37).

- **Nature of benevolence.** The fellowship of the first church of Christ included the sharing of worldly possessions. This was not communism, because on being added to the church people did not relinquish their ownership of property or control of their own money. They were encouraged, but not compelled, to sell personal property, and donate the proceeds for support of the needy. Thus the rich helped the poor to live decently, contrary to the social system in which the rich live in luxury by making other people poor. However this benevolence does not reduce everyone’s duty to work for a living where possible (Ephesians 4:28, 1Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2Thessalonians 3:7-13).
Barnabas. Barnabas is mentioned several times in Acts. He introduced Paul to the disciples and gained him acceptance among them (Acts 9:26-27). Barnabas is described as one who "encouraged all to remain in the Lord with resolute heart, for he was a good man, and filled with the Holy Spirit and faith" (Acts 11:22-26).
Acts 5:1-16
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 5:1-16. These verses describe the lie told by Ananias and Sapphira, and the miracles done through the apostles' hands.

Miracles by the Apostles.

Acts 5:1-10 (Ananias and Sapphira)

¶“One man, named Ananias, along with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. He pocketed part of the proceeds, and his wife knew this. He brought the rest and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to secretly pocket part of the price of the land? While you kept your land, didn't it remain your own? Even after you sold it, the proceeds were under your control, weren't they? How could you let the thought of this pretence enter your heart? You haven't lied to men; you've lied to God.' ” (Acts 5:1-4).

¶“When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. (Great fear came on all who heard of this event.) The young men arose; wrapped up Ananias; carried him out; and buried him.” (Acts 5:5-6).

¶“About three hours later, his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. Peter questioned her, 'Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.' She said, 'Yes, for so much.' But Peter asked her, 'How could you agree together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, those who have buried your husband are standing at the door, and they will carry you out too.' She suddenly dropped at his feet and died. The young men came in and found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.” (Acts 5:7-10).

I Ananias and Sapphira’s Deceit

Verses 1-2

¶"One man, named Ananias, along with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. He pocketed part of the proceeds, and his wife knew this. He brought the rest and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” (Acts 5:1-2).

• Kept back part. Here is another example of the benevolence being practised by the church in Jerusalem. In the previous example, Barnabas gave the apostles the whole proceeds from the sale of his land (Acts 4:36-37). Unlike Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira donated a portion from their sale, and kept some for themselves. Had they been open and honest about this, they'd have done no wrong. They weren't obliged to donate the whole proceeds if they didn't wish to. Peter makes that clear as we read on.
Verses 3-4
¶ "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to secretly pocket part of the price of the land? While you kept your land, didn't it remain your own? Even after you sold it, the proceeds were under your control, weren't they? How could you let the thought of this pretence enter your heart? You haven't lied to men; you've lied to God.'" (Acts 5:3-4).

- **To lie to the Holy Spirit** The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not keeping money for themselves. The sin was making out they hadn't. They hoped to appear more generous and self-sacrificing than they really were. Their pretense was a lie to the apostles and to the congregation — or so they thought. But Peter calls it a lie to the Holy Spirit of God. We might think we can fool people. But we can't fool God. "All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

**2 Ananias and Sapphira’s Decease**

Verses 5-6
¶ "When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. (Great fear came on all who heard of this event.) The young men arose; wrapped up Ananias; carried him out; and buried him." (Acts 5:5-6).

- **Fell down and died.** We don't know whether Peter intented that Ananias and Sapphira should die, or whether God independently caused the deaths — there’s no value in speculating on this morbid subject. As we read on, Peter did expect Sapphira to be killed like her husband. But that doesn't necessarily mean that he was her executioner.

Verses 7-10
¶ "About three hours later, his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. Peter answered her, 'Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.' She said, 'Yes, for so much.' But Peter asked her, 'How could you agree together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.' She suddenly dropped at his feet and died. The young men came in and found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband." (Acts 5:7-10).

- **Sapphira’s ignorance of events** It seems a little strange that Sapphira wasn't warned of her husband’s demise. Perhaps Peter had instructed everyone to keep the secret until Sapphira went through the same test as her husband without any advantage over him.

- **No, funerals.** It was customary to bury the dead without delay (Acts 8:2, Acts 9:36-39). However in "the burial custom of the Jews" care was given to laying out the body, enbalming it, and wrapping it in clean linen (John 19:38-42). Also there would usually be a mournful procession to the burial grounds outside the city. The niceties of burial custom seem to have been cut to a minimum in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.
Acts 5:11-16

¶“11Great fear came on the whole church, and on all who heard about these events. 12By the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. They were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. 13None of the others dared to join them, however the people honored them. 14More believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” (Acts 5:11-14).

¶“15People even carried out the sick into the streets on stretchers or small beds. They hoped that as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might fall on some of them. 16Large crowds also came together from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by foul spirits. They were all cured.” (Acts 5:15-16).

3 Ananias and Sapphira’s Bequest

Ananias and Sapphira thought they would make a donation to the poor, and by deceit take more credit for it than they deserved. As it turned out, all they got was sudden death. However they inadvertently left a legacy worth more than the money that gave temporary relief to the needy. The example Peter made of them had a marked and lasting effect on the strength and growth of the whole congregation.

Verses 11-14

¶ "Great fear came on the whole church, and on all who heard about these events. By the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. They were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. None of the others dared to join them, however the people honored them. More believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.” (Acts 5:11-14).

- **Hands of the apostles** The phrase "by the hands of the apostles" may not be just a manner of speaking. Later in Acts we learn that "by the laying on of the apostles’s hands the Holy Spirit was given" (Acts 8:14-19). Everyone baptized in the name of Christ received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39), but not such that they received miraculous powers. To receive the power to work miracles by the Spirit, it was necessary to receive the laying on of hands by an apostle. The apostles in Jerusalem were likely, by their hands, already passing on to others the ability to work signs and wonders.

- **Solomon’s Porch** One of the grand courtyards in the temple was the main gathering place for the church.

- **The others** Usually the church meetings would include people interested in the gospel but not yet added to the church. These are probably the "others" who didn't at this time dare to visit the meetings. They would have been frightened not only by hearing of the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, but also being aware of the Sanhedrin’s growing opposition to the church. However this soon blew over. The church maintained favor with the people, and new believers were added.

Verses 15-16
"People even carried out the sick into the streets on stretchers or small beds. They hoped that as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might fall on some of them. Large crowds also came together from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by foul spirits. They were all cured.” (Acts 5:15-16).

- **Crowds in the streets.** The news of miracles performed by the apostles, especially Peter, spread through Jerusalem and the surrounding towns of Judea. Crowds of people brought their afflicted into the streets to be healed. This of course made the populace happy but not the Sanhedrin.

- **Unclean spirits.** Luke does not say that some of the sick were thought to be suffering from unclean spirits. He says they were. Not only is he inspired by the Holy Spirit in that statement, but he speaks as a physician (Colossians 4:14). How Luke knew the difference between sickness from some physical cause and suffering from evil spirits, we cannot say. This skill would have to be rediscovered through research. Nor therefore can we say how much illness today might be caused by demonic spirits. These foul spirits that infected human beings were sentient as demonstrated by cases where they spoke through their victims (Luke 8:27-30, Acts 19:14-16).

- **Peter's shadow.** The power of God imparted to Peter was very convincing because even "at the least his shadow" could impart healing (Acts 5:15).

- **They were all cured.** It would not have been convincing, however, if only a portion of the sick brought for healing were cured. "They were all cured" (Acts 5:16).
Acts 5:17-21

The Apostles Arrested and Jailed

Acts 5:17-21

¶“17The high priest and his fellow leaders from the sect of the Sadducees were filled with jealousy. 18They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.” (Acts 5:17-18).

¶“19However an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors during the night. The angel brought them outside and said, 20‘Go stand in the temple and continue to tell the people the whole message of life.’ 21As soon as they heard this, they went into the temple and taught. It was dawn. When high priest and his associates came, they called the Sanhedrin together, and all the eldership of the children of Israel. They then sent officers to the prison to fetch the apostles.” (Acts 5:19-21).

1 Jealousy and Fear

Verses 17-18

¶ "The high priest and his fellow leaders from the sect of the Sadducees were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail." (Acts 5:17-18).

• **Sadducees** These are the same temple officials who jailed the apostles previously (Acts 4:1-3). The Sadducees were a powerful sect of the Jews. Sadducees did not believe in spirits, angels, or in any resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8).

• **Put them in the public prison.** Freedom of speech was not on the Sanhedrin’s agenda. They had told the apostles previously to stop preaching Jesus. Now the apostles are thrown into the public jail to await another trial before the Sanhedrin.

• **Filled with jealousy.** The officials might have been more prudent to detain the apostles in private custody. That would attracted less public attention. But blind zeal and jealousy causes even men of stature to rush in and act unwisely.

Verses 19-21
"However an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors during the night. The angel brought them outside and said, 'Go stand in the temple and continue to tell the people the whole message of life.' As soon as they heard this, they went into the temple and taught. It was dawn. When high priest and his associates came, they called the Sanhedrin together, and all the eldership of the children of Israel. They then sent officers to the prison to fetch the apostles." (Acts 5:19-21).

- **An angel of the Lord** God’s angels are "ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:13-14). On this occasion the “service” was to spring the apostles from prison in the dead of night. The angel managed to open the doors and shepherd the apostles out without the guards noticing, and to leave the prison doors shut and secure. Assuming the apostles were still inside the jail, the Sanhedrin convenes and sends officers to fetch the prisoners.

- **All the words of life.** The apostles had not been able to finish their work in the temple. Many people had heard part of the message of eternal life but not all of it. So God didn't tolerate this interruption. The angel sent the apostles back to the temple to teach all of the message.

- **What, no breakfast?** The apostles went straight from jail to the temple. It was dawn when they got there and resumed their preaching. Nothing is said about taking time for a meal. Maybe they were content to work without eating, as Jesus once said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (John 4:33-34).

- Meanwhile, back at the Sanhedrin’s assembly...

### Acts 5:22-33

"22When the officers didn't find the apostles in the prison, they returned and said, 'We found the prison shut and secure. The guards were on duty at the doors, but when we opened the doors we found no one inside.' 23When the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard this report, they were quite disturbed about the apostles and what these events might turn into. 24Then someone came and told the council, 'Take note: the men you jailed are standing in the temple and teaching the people.' 25The captain went with the officers to the temple, and brought the apostles to the council. This was done without violence, because the officers were afraid that the people might stone them.” (Acts 5:22-26).

"27The officers brought the apostles before the council. The high priest questioned them, 28'Didn't we strictly command you not to teach in this name? Look! You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man’s blood on us.' 29But Peter and the apostles replied, 'We must obey God rather than men. 30The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, after you killed him by hanging him on a tree. 31God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to grant to Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. 32We are his witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.' 33Hearing this, the council felt like their hearts were cut with a saw. They determined to put the apostles to death.” (Acts 5:27-33).
Prejudice and Fear

Verses 22-25

¶ "The officers didn't find the apostles in the prison, so they returned and said, 'We found the prison shut and secure. The guards were on duty at the doors, but when we opened the doors we found no one inside.' When the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard this report, they were quite disturbed about the apostles and what these events might turn into. Then someone came and told the council, 'Take note: the men you jailed are standing in the temple and teaching the people.' " (Acts 5:22-25).

- **No one inside.** The officers found nobody in the cell, yet to all appearances nobody had left it. How could twelve apostles disappear? The dumbfounded council was no doubt relieved when an informer came in with the news that the apostles were back at work in the temple teaching the dawn worshippers. At least this was something the council could act upon.

Verse 26

¶ "The captain went with the officers to the temple, and brought the apostles to the council. This was done without violence, because the officers were afraid that the people might stone them." (Acts 5:26).

- **The captain went with the officers.** To try to stop the fiasco worsening, the captain of the officers went with his men to oversee bringing the apostles in; he saw to it that a tidy job was done with the least fuss.

- **Afraid of being stoned.** The apostles were "teaching the people" and the people did not appreciate heavy handed interference with their teachers’ work. This was now the third arrest. The people would no doubt protest, and the protest could become a stone-throwing riot to overwhelm the officers, further embarrass the Sanhedrin, and raise the apostles’ public profile greatly.

Verses 27-28

¶ "The officers brought the apostles before the council. The high priest questioned them, 'Didn't we strictly command you not to teach in this name? Look! You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man’s blood on us.' " (Acts 5:27-28).

- **Strictly commanded you.** The apostles had defied the order of the Sanhedrin. But instead of answering “yes” to the high priest’s rhetorical question, Peter appeals to a higher authority. "We must obey God". The Sanhedrin seemed to have forgotten that God’s authority was higher than theirs. So Peter reminds them with these facts: they had killed Jesus; God had raised him up. Whom should the apostles obey? The religious leaders who had Jesus crucified, or the God who raised him back to life?

Verses 29-33
But Peter and the apostles replied, 'We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, after you killed him by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a, to grant to Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are his witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.' Hearing this, the council felt like their hearts were cut with a saw. They determined to put the apostles to death."

(Acts 5:29-33).

To grant repentance and forgiveness. Some people make an argument that repentance, like forgiveness, is not something you do, but something God grants to you. However it has twice been recorded that Peter preached repentance as a commandment (Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19). Peter told the people it was what they needed to do—he was responding to their question, "What must we do?"

(Acts 2:37-38). So God does the forgiving; God doesn't do the repenting. God grants repentance in the sense that he provides the opportunity to repent (Revelation 2:21), and through the message shows people their need to repent. This is the grace and mercy of God.

God of our fathers. The expression "the God of our fathers" is short for "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Mark 12:26-27).

Prince and Saviour. In Isaiah 9:6, the child to be born "will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Peter is speaking to people who knew the scriptures. They would take Peter to be claiming that Jesus is God. They would also remember that the Christ is described as "Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25), and interpret Peter as claiming that they had killed their Messiah.

The Apostles as witnesses. Each of the apostles had seen, heard, and touched, the risen Lord. They were not preaching hearsay, but as one of them said, "what we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, the Word of Life" (1John 1:3).

The Holy Spirit a witness. The Holy Spirit was speaking through the apostles and "confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

Acts 5:34-42

¶"34But a member of the council stood up. He was a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, honored by all the people. He gave a command to have the apostles put outside for a little while. 35Then he said to the council, 'You men of Israel, be careful concerning these men. Think about what you are doing. 36For before this present time, Theudas rose up, making himself out to be somebody. He got a following of about four hundred men. He was slain and his followers were dispersed. That came to nothing. 37After him, there was Judas of Galilee who rose up at the time of the census. He drew away some people after him, but he likewise perished, and his followers were scattered. 38Now I tell you, withdraw from these men, and leave them alone. For if theirs is the counsel or work of men, it will be overthrown. 39If it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, and you would be seen to fight against God!' " (Acts 5:34-39).

¶"40The council agreed with Gamaliel. Summoning the apostles, they beat them and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go. 41So the
The apostles left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Jesus’s name. Every day, in the temple and in various homes, they never stopped teaching and preaching Jesus, the Christ.” (Acts 5:40-42).

### Wisdom and Humility

**Verses 34-35**

¶ "But a member of the council stood up. He was a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, honored by all the people. He gave a command to have the apostles put outside for a little while. Then he said to the council, "You men of Israel, be careful concerning these men. Think about what you are doing." (Acts 5:34-35).

- **Gamaliel’s wise counsel.** While the Sadducees fume, and decide to kill the apostles like they killed Jesus, a Pharisee calms them down with a bit of common sense. As he will explain, if this new teaching isn't of God, it will soon pass; if God is behind it, anyone who tries to stop it risks his reputation, not to mention the wrath of God.

**Verses 36-37**

¶ "For before this present time, Theudas rose up, making himself out to be somebody. He got a following of about four hundred men. He was slain and his followers were dispersed. That came to nothing. After him, there was Judas of Galilee who rose up at the time of the census. He drew away some people after him, but he likewise perished, and his followers were scattered." (Acts 5:36-37).

- **Tell them stories.** Gamaliel is obviously a man of wisdom. The council is angry and not thinking straight. So Gamaliel resorts to stories to calm and convince his hearers. Two short anecdotes about former upstarts who came to nothing—these were two witnesses, as it were, to the truth of Gamaliel’s wise counsel.

**Verses 38-39**

¶ "Now I tell you, withdraw from these men, and leave them alone. For if theirs is the counsel or work of men, it will be overthrown. If it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it, and you would be seen to fight against God!" (Acts 5:38-39).

- **Upstarts are put down.** Gamaliel takes a most pragmatic view of upstarts: if they are not of God, leave them alone and God himself will do away with them when he's ready. If they are of God, then they are not upstarts; it is prudent to join them rather than oppose, since you do not want to be at odds with God!

**Verses 40-42**

¶ "The council agreed with Gamaliel. Summoning the apostles, they beat them and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go. So the apostles left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Jesus’s name. Every day, in the temple and in various homes, they never stopped teaching and preaching Jesus, the Christ." (Acts 5:40-42).
• **Commanded them not to speak.** The council’s directive is getting a bit worn around the edges—it's the same old prohibition which the apostles continued as always to defy. The apostles were given a beating but instead of reinforcing the council’s command, it reinforced the apostles’ determination to defy.

• **Worthy to suffer.** Persecution is never easy to bear, but if you interpret it as "sharing in the sufferings of Christ" you can even rejoice in it, painful as it is (1Peter 4:12-19).

• **From house to house.** The preaching of the gospel in public is supplemented by gatherings in various private homes. These “cottage meetings” as we sometimes call them, have several advantages, not least that they are an option when public preaching is disrupted by persecution.
Verse by verse study of Acts 6:1-15. These verses describe how seven men were chosen as special ministers, and one of them, Stephen, fell foul of the authorities.

Seven Men Chosen Including Stephen

Acts Acts 6:1-7

¶“At the time, the number of the disciples was greatly increasing. A complaint arose from the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews because the Grecian widows were being neglected in the daily ministry. ¶The twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It's not appropriate for us to forsake the word of God and serve tables. ¶Therefore brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. ¶Then we can appoint those men over this business, and we apostles will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'” (Acts 6:1-4).

¶“This proposal pleased the whole multitude. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ¶The congregation presented these men to the apostles. When the apostles had prayed, they laid their hands on the chosen men.” (Acts 6:5-6).

¶“The word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. A great company of the priests obeyed the faith.” (Acts 6:7).

Problem Solved

Verse 1

¶ "At the time, the number of the disciples was greatly increasing. A complaint arose from the Grecian Jews against the Hebrews because the Grecian widows were being neglected in the daily ministry." (Acts 6:1).

- **Grecians.** The term “Grecian” or “Hellenist” refers to Jews from regions of Greek culture. Broadly, the term might refer to Jews or proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism) who were not locals and didn't speak the local languages but spoke Greek.

- **Widows.** The “widows” mentioned were women who had not only lost their husbands, but also had no means of their own to live on, and lacked any family to support them (1Timothy 5:3-16). These widows were among the needy who were to benefit from the funds raised from sales of property (Acts 2:45,Acts 4:34-35).
A complaint. Whilst disciples of Christ should never be complainers and disputers (Philippians 2:14), that doesn't refer to legitimate and necessary complaints. Somehow the Grecian widows were being neglected in the support payments. The neglect was unintentional, but the system needed improvement or more attention. A complaint made in the proper manner got the problem recognized and sorted.

Daily ministry. The benevolent payments were made daily. This doesn't mean that each needy person had to queue up every day at the money tables. The service was open and operating daily to cope with the numbers of the needy and to give prompt attention to their needs.

Verse 2
¶ "The twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It's not appropriate for us to forsake the word of God and serve tables.'" (Acts 6:2).

To serve tables. When people sold property and brought the money for the needy, they "laid it at the apostles’s feet and distribution was made to each according as anyone had need" (Acts 4:34-35). The apostles were manning the money tables and apportioning the money. But they were also supposed to be preaching the word and attending to the worship of the church. It seems they were making the mistake that Moses had made, trying to do too much and not delegating tasks to trustworthy helpers (Exodus 18:13-27).

Verses 3-4
¶ "Therefore brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. Then we can appoint those men over this business, and we apostles will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:3-4).

Choosing and appointing. This is the first case of any officials in the church other than the apostles. These officials were chosen by the congregation, but only according to the word of the apostles, and having been chosen they were appointed by the apostles.

Elders and Deacons. The seven men chosen were apparently the first deacons—qualified and trustworthy men appointed to be in responsible charge of various tasks. The word “deacon” comes from the Greek διακονος diakonos 1249 (Strong) cf 1247-1248. It can also be translated “servant” or “minister”. There were also elders appointed, at some stage, in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 11:29-30). Presumably these were appointed for similar reasons—to spread the work load. And presumably these were appointed in the same way—chosen by the whole congregation, but according to qualifications commanded by the apostles.

Verses 5-6
¶ "This proposal pleased the whole multitude. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a
proselyte of Antioch. The congregation presented these men to the apostles. When the apostles had prayed, they laid their hands on the chosen men." (Acts 6:5-6).

- **Pleased the multitude.** The apostles were not in the business of pleasing people and becoming popular. It is to the congregation’s credit that they were pleased by the proposal, because they were happy to obey the apostles’ word. Let us not be multitude pleasers, but wish that multitudes would be pleased to follow the apostles’ teaching.

- **Seven Men** The seven men all had Greek names and were most likely Grecians. The Hebrew members of the congregation showed a lovely spirit of reconciliation when they chose a Grecian administration to care not only for the Grecian widows, but their own Hebrew widows as well.

- **Laid hands on them.** This is the first record of the apostles laying hands on people and there is some argument about its purpose. Was it just a ceremony signifying appointment, or was it that "the Holy Spirit was bestowed by the laying on of the apostles’ hands" (Acts 8:14-18)? It seems more likely to be the latter, because two of the men (Stephen and Philip) are seen later preaching the word under inspiration and performing miracles (Acts 6:8-10, Acts 8:5-8).

- **When they had prayed.** The early disciples took everything they did to the feet of Jesus for his personal blessing. "In everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). This is the way of peace. A complaint had been settled, and the parties to it reconciled; but prayer was essential to the peace process and to the success of the human activity and achievement.

### 2 Progress Enjoyed

**Verse 7**

¶ "The word of God increased and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. A great company of the priests obeyed the faith." (Acts 6:7).

- **The word of God increased.** More and more people were accepting and spreading the apostles’ message, and that message was having an ever growing effect.

- **The number of disciples multiplied.** At last count, Luke has the number at 5000, and that was counting only men (Acts 4:4). Luke does not give us a new number, but says the number multiplied greatly. So there were many thousands of people in this congregation in Jerusalem.

- **A great company of the priests obeyed.** The temple hierarchy had been jailing the apostles for preaching the word, but now the temple priests were defecting to the apostles. This was probably the main reason why persecution by the temple authorities was stepped up to a new level, as the story of Stephen will show.

**END OF THE FIRST SECTION OF ACTS**
With this progress report Luke concludes his description of the origin of Christianity in Jerusalem and the establishment of the church there by the twelve apostles. Persecution is about to scatter some of the converts to other places where new congregations will be planted. The second section of Acts records this spread through Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. It begins with the persecution and killing of Stephen (Acts 6:8 to 9:31).

Acts 6:8-15

¶“8Stephen was full of faith and power. He performed great wonders and signs among the people. 9But some of the people rose up against Stephen and disputed with him. These were men of the synagogue called The Libertines, and some of the Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicians and Asians. 10They weren't able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which Stephen spoke.” (Acts 6:8-10).

¶“11Then Stephen’s opposers secretly bribed men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God'. 12They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and came against him and seized him. They dragged Stephen to the Sanhedrin 13and put false witnesses in the stand. They said, 'This man won't stop speaking blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. 14We've heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us.' ” (Acts 6:11-14).

¶“15All who sat in the council fixed their eyes on Stephen. They all saw that his face had the appearance of the face of an angel.” (Acts 6:15).

3 Persecution Endured

Verses 8-10

¶ "Stephen was full of faith and power. He performed great wonders and signs among the people. But some of the people rose up against Stephen and disputed with him. These were men of the synagogue called The Libertines, and some of the Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicians and Asians. They weren't able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which Stephen spoke." (Acts 6:8-10).

• **Signs among the people.** Stephen is now helping in the work begun by the apostles. Not only is he serving in the administration of benevolence, but he is also proclaiming the gospel and "confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

• **Disputed with Stephen.** Part of the arsenal of the temple authorities was debate. They had dealt with the apostles by calling the security guards and having the “offenders” jailed. But with Stephen they tried another approach: they called their best professors from places of high learning to enter into public debate. They lost the debate, but they weren't won over.
Wisdom and Spirit

Stephen was no doubt a very wise man in his own right; but he relied on the power of the Holy Spirit for the wisdom to prevail in this dispute. We must never be wise in our own eyes but ask of God for wisdom from above (James 1:5-8).

Verses 11-14

¶ "Then Stephen’s opposers secretly bribed men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God'. They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and came against him and seized him. They dragged Stephen to the Sanhedrin and put false witnesses in the stand. They said, 'This man won't stop speaking blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. We've heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us.' " (Acts 6:11-14).

False witnesses

Having lost the debate, the opposers resort to their lower tactics. They pay bribes to liars. The accusations of these false witnesses are not all false because half truth or twisted truth is often more effective than downright falsehood.

• “This man won’t stop speaking” It was certainly true that Stephen wouldn't stop preaching his message.

• “Blasphemous words” This was true in their eyes only; it was actually false. For example they knew the Messiah would be the Son of God and have God’s name and nature (Isaiah 9:6). They denied that Jesus was the Messiah and only by that denial could they regard the gospel as blasphemy rather than truth.

• “He says Jesus will destroy this place [the temple]” It's true that Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple within a generation (Matthew 24:1-2,33-34), and it's true that he viewed this destruction as a judgment from God his Father. But in the sense that Jesus declared himself the enemy of the temple the accusation is false. Jesus recognized and respected the temple as God’s house of prayer (Matthew 21:13). There is no reason why it could not have continued to be such had the temple leaders accepted Jesus as the Messiah instead of persecuting and scattering his disciples.

• “He says Jesus will change the customs Moses delivered” It is true that Jesus was "the Mediator of a new covenant" (Hebrews 9:15). The Jews expected a new covenant to replace the law of Moses (Jeremiah 31:31-33). It was false to treat as blasphemy the claim that Jesus would change the law of Moses. The temple hierarchy denied that Jesus was the Messiah, and only by that denial could they regard Stephen's claim as blasphemy rather than truth. Had they accepted Jesus as Messiah, they would have expected him to abolish the law of Moses and bring in a new covenant.

Verse 15

¶ "All who sat in the council fixed their eyes on Stephen. They all saw that his face had the appearance of the face of an angel." (Acts 6:15).
Face of an angel. God was granting to the opponents of the gospel evidence of its divine nature: God was performing miracles by the apostles and recently also by Stephen. Now here is Stephen on trial before the Sanhedrin. They can look at him long and hard, and be sure their eyes do not deceive them; they can check whether there are any lights and mirrors or conjurer’s tricks; they can ascertain whether all members of the council see the same thing — Stephen’s face transfigured. All of them saw it. None of them could explain it. Didn't they recall that the face of Moses had long ago shone as a sign that God had spoken to him and he was speaking for God (Exodus 34:29-35, 2 Corinthians 3:7)? Stephen’s face was not so bright; but surely its appearance was sufficiently unusual to give the council pause. But no: they ignored the phenomena as though it wasn't happening, and carried on with the hearing.
Acts 7:1-19
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 7:1-19. These verses describe Stephen’s narrative of Israel’s history from Abraham to Moses.

From Abraham to Moses —Stephen’s narrative

Acts 7:1-8

¶"The high priest said, “Are these things so?” Stephen then spoke: Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. God said to Abraham, 'Get out of your land, and leave your kindred, and come into a land which I will show you.' Then Abraham went out of the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. Later, when Abraham’s father was dead, God moved Abraham out of there and into this land here, the very land where you now dwell.” (Acts 7:1-4).

¶"God gave Abraham no inheritance in this land at that time —not so much as a foot to call his own. However God promised that this land would eventually belong to Abraham and his descendants, even though Abraham at that time had no child. God told Abraham that his descendants would live as aliens in a foreign land, and be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. God said, 'I will judge the nation to which they will be in bondage, and after that they'll leave there and come to serve me here in this place.'” (Acts 7:5-7).

¶"God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. So Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day. Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of the twelve fathers.” (Acts 7:8).

1 The Story of Abraham

Verse 1

¶ "The high priest said, 'Are these things so?' ” (Acts 7:1).

• **Are these things so?** Stephen, one of the seven men appointed as deacons, has been arrested. He stands accused before the Sanhedrin. False witnesses say he has blasphemed against God and Moses, and preached that Jesus the Nazarene would destroy the temple and change the laws and customs that Moses taught (Acts 6:8-14). [We discussed these accusations in our previous lesson]

Verses 2-3

¶ "Stephen then spoke: Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. God
said to Abraham, 'Get out of your land, and leave your kindred, and come into a land which I will show you.'" (Acts 7:2-3).

- **Our father Abraham.** About 2000 years before Christ, God called Abram out of Ur where he lived in the land of the Chaldeans near the Persian Gulf. Abram moved and settled in Haran, at the other end of the Euphrates river. However, God led him down to Canaan, east of the Mediterranean Sea where the river Jordan flows.

**Verses 4**

¶ "Then Abraham went out of the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. Later, when Abraham’s father was dead, God moved Abraham out of there and into this land here, the very land where you now dwell." (Acts 7:4).

- **This land where you now dwell.** God promised that Abram’s descendants would possess that land. Stephen begins his speech with the story of Abraham because it is common ground upon which to build his case that whilst God always keeps his promises, those who have the promises don't always believe and obey God as Abraham did.

**Verses 5-7**

¶ "God gave Abraham no inheritance in this land at that time —not so much as a foot to call his own. However God promised that this land would eventually belong to Abraham and his descendants, even though Abraham at that time had no child. God told Abraham that his descendants would live as aliens in a foreign land, and be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. God said, 'I will judge the nation to which they will be in bondage, and after that they'll leave there and come to serve me here in this place.'" (Acts 7:5-7).

- **And after that…** The promises of God are not always about what will happen today or tomorrow. They take a distant view. Abraham, at the time God made the promises, did not even have a child. His wife Sarah was “barren”. Nevertheless God is faithful. Abraham did have descendants. Although they dwelt for generations in Egypt as slaves, they did come to possess the promised land. And here were the Sanhedrin, the descendants of Abraham, in that very land where Abraham sojourned at God’s command. Yes, God is faithful.

**Verse 8**

¶ "God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. So Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day. Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of the twelve fathers." (Acts 7:8).

- **God gave Abraham the covenant.** The covenant of circumcision was given to Abraham long before the covenant of Mount Sinai was given through Moses. Stephen mentions this to show that Abraham was under a covenant from God and was faithful to it.
Note on circumcision. Circumcision is the removal of the foreskin from the penis. This is normally done when the baby is eight days old. Female circumcision was never required or approved by God.

The twelve fathers. Jacob, also named Israel, was Abraham’s grandson through Isaac. Jacob fathered twelve sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve sons and their mothers are listed in Genesis 35:23-26. Note that the names of the tribal territories apportioned in the promised land do not match exactly with the twelve sons of Jacob. That’s because the sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) gained separate territories, whilst the Levites had no single territory as such, but were allotted various towns.

Acts 7:9-19

¶“9The fathers, moved by jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt as a slave; but God was with him. 10God saved Joseph from all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Pharaoh made Joseph governor over Egypt and all Pharaoh’s house. 11Then a famine came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, causing great affliction. Our fathers found no food. 12Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, so he sent our fathers there for the first time. 13When they went the second time Joseph was recognized by his brothers, and Joseph’s origins were revealed to Pharaoh.” (Acts 7:9-13).

¶“14Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five souls, to come and live in Egypt. 15So Jacob moved down into Egypt, and lived there till he died, as did our fathers. 16Their remains were brought back to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham, for a price in silver, purchased from the children of Hamor in Shechem.” (Acts 7:14-16).

¶“17As the time of the promise drew near, the promise that God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt. 18A new Pharaoh arose in Egypt, who knew nothing of Joseph. 19The new king took advantage of our people, and mistreated our fathers. He even forced them to throw out their babies to die. At that time Moses was born...” (Acts 7:17-19).

2 The Story of Joseph

Verse 9

¶ "The fathers, moved by jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt as a slave; but God was with him.” (Acts 7:9).

Moved by jealousy. The fathers, meaning Joseph’s brothers, were not only moved against Joseph but against God. Their treachery, born of jealousy, is the first hint that Stephen gives of the main point he makes: God is faithful to his promises, but the very heirs to them often rebel against his cause. This isn’t because God has left them disposed toward evil or denied them the ability to be faithful like Abraham. Therefore they are deserving of condemnation.

Verse 10
"God saved Joseph from all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Pharaoh made Joseph governor over Egypt and all Pharaoh’s house." (Acts 7:10).

**God saved Joseph.** The adventures of Joseph in Egypt demonstrate the truths that God is faithful and that people can be faithful to him. God looked after Joseph through many tribulations, and Joseph chose to bear his afflictions and be faithful and righteous. Joseph’s story is told in Genesis 37-50

Verses 11-13

"Then a famine came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, causing great affliction. Our fathers found no food. Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, so he sent our fathers there for the first time. When they went the second time Joseph was recognized by his brothers, and Joseph’s origins were revealed to Pharaoh." (Acts 7:11-13).

**Grain in Egypt.** There was grain in Egypt because God, in his good providence, blessed Joseph who was faithful to him. On the other hand there was no grain in the promised land where Joseph’s unfaithful brothers were (Genesis 42:3-7). Such irony! They had to go down to Egypt, the land of their ancestors’ enslavement, to buy grain. Canaan, the land that their descendants have been promised, is barren of providence because of their unfaithfulness.

Verses 14-16

"Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five souls, to come and live in Egypt. So Jacob moved down into Egypt, and lived there till he died, as did our fathers. Their remains were brought back to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham, for a price in silver, purchased from the children of Hamor in Shechem." (Acts 7:14-16).

**Joseph’s great heart.** How easy it would have been for Joseph to take revenge on his brothers. Instead he forgives all, and invites them to dwell in the land of Egypt with him. Joseph is a figure of Christ who is willing to forgive all who rebel against him and to grant them a place with him where he reigns.

**Seventy-five persons.** Moses gives a figure of seventy. Fortunately Moses clarifies exactly whom he is counting: sixty-six children and grandchildren of Jacob; Jacob himself; Joseph already in Egypt; and Joseph’s two sons. Moses also mentions that he excludes from his count any wives of Jacob’s sons (Genesis 46:26-27). Stephen, on the other hand, counts “Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five souls” whom Joseph invited to live in Egypt. We would therefore expect it to be a different number, or the same by coincidence only. It would include the wives whom Moses excludes, and exclude Joseph and his two sons whom Moses includes. [By the way, for some reason not understood, the Septuagint translation of Genesis has 75 not 70.]

**Tomb in Shechem.** Abraham, in an act of faith, had purchased a burial site in Canaan. Abraham was then a stranger in that land, but he knew it was the promised land. He believed God’s promise that his numerous descendants would one day possess the land of Canaan. Abraham ensured that they would find their ancestors
already buried there. This burial site was in Hebron, and purchased from the sons of Heth (Genesis 23).

- Stephen, however, speaks of another tomb that Abraham had purchased in Shechem from the sons of Hamor. We read that Jacob purchased a piece of land at Shechem from the sons of Hamor (Genesis 33:18-20). It is assumed that Stephen made a mistake or an early copyist made an error, putting “Abraham” instead of “Jacob”. Why not assume instead that Abraham had purchased a burial place in Shechem just as he had done in Hebron, and that Jacob many years later pitched his tent at the site in Shechem, and while there purchased another piece of land from the same family?

3 The Story of Moses

Verses 17-19

¶ "As the time of the promise drew near, the promise that God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt. A new Pharaoh arose in Egypt, who knew nothing of Joseph. The new king took advantage of our people, and mistreated our fathers. He even forced them to throw out their babies to die. At that time Moses was born..." (Acts 7:17-19).

- Generations later. Stephen has spoken of faithful Abraham and faithful Joseph. Now he moves on to speak of faithful Moses. These verses mark a transition in time and fortune, but not in the principles Stephen wishes to press upon the Sanhedrin.

- We will study what Stephen says about Moses in our next lesson.
Acts 7:20-41
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 7:20-41. These verses describe Stephen’s narrative of Israel’s history during the time of Moses.

The Story of Moses —Stephen’s narrative

Acts 7:20-41

¶“20Moses was born at this time and to God he was beautiful. For the first three months of his life, Moses was nourished in his father’s house. 21When he was thrown out, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and reared him as her own son. 22Moses was taught in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He became mighty in his words and deeds.” (Acts 7:20-22).

¶“23When Moses was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. 24Seeing one of the Israelites suffer wrong, Moses defended him, and avenged him by striking the Egyptian who was oppressing him. 25Moses assumed that his brothers understood that God was giving them deliverance through him; but they didn’t understand.” (Acts 7:23-25).

¶“26The next day Moses came upon his brothers as they were fighting each other. Moses urged them to reconcile and be at peace. Moses said, ‘Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong one another?’ 27But the one who was mistreating his neighbor pushed Moses away and said, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28Do you want to kill me, like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ 29When Moses heard that, he fled, and became a stranger in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons.” (Acts 7:26-29).

¶“30Another forty years passed by. One day, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses, in a flame of fire in a thorn bush. 31Moses wondered at the sight. As he came close to see, 32the Lord’s voice came to him: ‘I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ Moses trembled, and dared not look anymore. 33The Lord said to him, ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 34I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and have heard their groaning. I have come down to deliver them. Now come, I will send you into Egypt.’” (Acts 7:30-34).

¶“35This Moses, rejected by his brothers when they said, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’, is the very one God sent as both a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36This man Moses led the Israelites out of captivity, and during forty years worked wonders and signs in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. 37This same Moses said to the children of Israel, ‘The Lord our God will raise up a prophet for you from among your brothers, a prophet like me. You shall listen to him.’” (Acts 7:35-37).

¶“38This is the same Moses who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living
39 But our fathers wouldn't obey him, but instead rejected him, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, 40 demanding of Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him.' 41 They made a calf idol in those days, and brought a sacrifice to it, and rejoiced in the works of their hands.” (Acts 7:38-41).

Moses’s First 40 Years

Verses 20-22

¶ "Moses was born at this time and to God he was beautiful. For the first three months of his life, Moses was nourished in his father’s house. When he was thrown out, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and reared him as her own son. Moses was taught in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was mighty in his words and deeds.” (Acts 7:20-22).

• **Birth of Moses.** Moses was born at a time when a new Pharaoh ruled Egypt, and this king had no knowledge of Joseph. So he mistreated and enslaved the Israelites. They were multiplying and becoming numerous, so the new Pharaoh forced them to throw out their babies to die (Acts 7:17-19).

• **Moses thrown out.** Moses’s parents took a risk in hiding and keeping him for three months, time for him, on his mother’s milk, to gain some strength. The parents then had to “throw him out” but they did this in a most lovely manner, setting him among the reeds in a specially made floating cradle, and committing him to the providence of God. And Pharaoh’s daughter, no less, was the one who found him, took pity on him, and raised him as her own child (Exodus 1-2). Here again, we see people showing faith in the most trustworthy God.

• **Mighty in word and deed.** Moses became mighty in word and deed not only because of the amazing education he received, but because he was aware of his roots and believed in the God of his fathers.

Moses’s Second 40 Years

Verses 23-25

¶ "When Moses was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. Seeing one of the Israelites suffer wrong, Moses defended him, and avenged him by striking the Egyptian who was oppressing him. Moses assumed that his brothers understood that God was giving them deliverance through him; but they didn’t understand." (Acts 7:23-25).

• **Defended and avenged.** Moses showed courage and strength in going to the aid of the oppressed. Moses probably didn't intend to kill the Egyptian, since that would hardly be a mighty deed or wise.

• **They didn't understand.** Stephen here contrasts Moses with his fellow Israelites who had no real interest in God and his plan for their deliverance.

Verses 26-29
¶ "The next day Moses came upon his brothers as they were fighting each other. Moses urged them to reconcile and be at peace. Moses said, “Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong one another?” But the one who was mistreating his neighbor pushed Moses away and said, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me, like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?” When Moses heard that, he fled, and became a stranger in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons.” (Acts 7:26-29).

- **Moses rejected.** Next day was a shock for Moses. He finds his brothers fighting each other, and one oppressing another. They didn't need an Egyptian to make them miserable apparently. Worse, when Moses tried to reconcile them he was pushed away and insulted with the words, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?” Indeed God intended to make Moses exactly that. So in rejecting Moses they were rejecting God. Stephen had no need to say that Christ was like Moses, and the Sanhedrin were like the stupid brothers.

- **The Egyptian you killed.** Moses gets another shock. It was probably news to him that the Egyptian he'd struck had died. But it was news well known to everyone else including Pharaoh who was then out to kill Moses.

- **A stranger in Midian.** Moses had to flee from Pharaoh. By God’s grace and his own, Moses found refuge in the country, at the home of the priest in Midian. Moses married one of his daughters, and inconspicuously worked as a shepherd.

3 **Moses’s Third 40 Years**

**Verses 30-34**

¶ "Forty years passed by. One day, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses, in a flame of fire in a thorn bush. Moses wondered at the sight. As he came close to see, the Lord’s voice came to him: “I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Moses trembled, and dared not look anymore. The Lord said to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and have heard their groaning. I have come down to deliver them. Now come, I will send you into Egypt.”” (Acts 7:30-34).

- **Forty years.** Moses’s life was split into three periods each of 40 years: His time living as an Egyptian from his birth until he fled to Midian; the time he spent in exile; and his leading a generation of the children of Israel around the wilderness. Moses was 120 years old when he died (Deuteronomy 34:7).

- **Moses trembled.** First Moses wondered at this bush, afame but not burned. Next, Moses investigated. Then the bush spoke, and Moses trembled. For the first third of his life Moses was interested in God despite his pagan education. In the second third of his life, as part of a quiet priestly family, he no doubt worshipped God faithfully. Now, marking the final third of his life, God starts speaking to him—a privilege not granted many. No wonder he trembled.

- **I will send you.** God assures Moses that he is hearing the true God of Moses’s ancestors. God then informs Moses that where Moses stands is holy ground. The mountain of Sinai would be the most special place where Moses
would commune with God as he shepherded God’s people. Then God calls Moses to go to Egypt to free those people with God’s help.

Verses 35-37

¶ "This Moses, rejected by his brothers when they said, “Who made you a ruler and a judge?” is the very one God sent as both a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. This man Moses led the Israelites out of captivity, and during forty years worked wonders and signs in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. This same Moses said to the children of Israel, “The Lord our God will raise up a prophet for you from among your brothers, a prophet like me. You shall listen to him.” " (Acts 7:35-37).

- **A Prophet like Moses.** Now Stephen drives home his main point. He makes no attempt to defend himself. Why waste words on that? The hypocritical Sanhedrin is giving him a mere show trial. Stephen instead preaches Jesus through the mouth of Moses whom his accusers say he blasphemes. Moses foretold that God would raise up a prophet of whom Moses is a likeness. That prophet was Jesus who also worked miracles as Moses did.

Verses 38-41

¶ "This is the same Moses who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. But our fathers wouldn't obey him, but instead rejected him, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, demanding of Aaron, “Make us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him.” They made a calf idol in those days, and brought a sacrifice to it, and rejoiced in the works of their hands." (Acts 7:38-41).

- **Make us gods.** Now Stephen presses home his other point. The fathers rejected Moses and wouldn't obey him. Indeed they blasphemed him. Having no loyalty to Moses or his God, they demanded idols. They made their golden calf and rejoiced in it. And God denied the promised land to all of them.

- **Living oracles rejected.** Moses received the words of the living God to give to the people but they refused to listen and obey. Jesus likewise received the words of the living God to give to the people. Would the Sanhedrin listen and obey? No, they rejected Jesus as their fathers had rejected Moses. The Sanhedrin knew that this was Stephen’s counter accusation against them. And they knew it was no trumped up accusation. It was true. And the truth hurt.
Stephen rebukes the Sanhedrin, and they kill him with stones.

Acts 7:42-60

¶“41 They made a calf idol in those days, and brought a sacrifice to it, and rejoiced in the works of their hands.” (Acts 7:41).

¶“42 But God turned away and gave them up to worship the stars of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets, ’Was it really to me that you offered slain animals and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? No, 43 you carried with you the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Rephan, and the idols which you made to worship. So I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’ ” (Acts 7:42-43).

¶“44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness. That tabernacle was made exactly as he who spoke to Moses commanded. Moses made it according to the pattern that he had been shown. 45 Our fathers, in their turn, brought in the tabernacle when they entered with Joshua into the land possessed by the pagan nations. These nations God drove out as our fathers advanced. This continued until the days of David 46 who found favor in the sight of God. David asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob, 47 but it was Solomon who built him a house.” (Acts 7:44-47).

¶“48 The Most High, however, doesn't dwell in temples made with hands. As the prophet says, 49 ’Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? 50 Did not my hand make all these things?’ ” (Acts 7:48-50).

¶“51 You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit! You do just what your fathers did. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, of whom you yourselves have now become betrayers and murderers. 53 You received the law as it was ordained by angels, and you didn't keep it!” (Acts 7:51-53).

¶“54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they bared their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. He looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. 56 Stephen said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' ” (Acts 7:54-56).

¶“57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and blocked their ears, and all together rushed at Stephen. 58 They threw him out of the city, and stoned him. The witnesses threw their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 They stoned Stephen even as he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' 60 Stephen then knelt down, and
cried in a loud voice, 'Lord, don't hold this sin against them!' When he had said this, he fell asleep in death.” (Acts 7:57-60).

[1] The Tabernacle for Idols
Verses 42-43
¶ "But God turned away and gave them up to worship the stars of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets, “Was it really to me that you offered slain animals and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? No, you carried with you the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Rephan, and the idols which you made to worship. So I will carry you away beyond Babylon.” " (Acts 7:42-43).

- Tabernacles and idols Stephen has been accused of speaking against the temple by teaching that Jesus will destroy it. Stephen now turns this upon the Sanhedrin as he continues to use the disobedience of their forefathers as a parable against them. The generation in the wilderness insulted God and the tabernacle that he gave them (cf Acts 7:44). They carried with them the tabernacle of Moloch and worshipped stars and idols. When they offered sacrifices at the tabernacle of God, their hearts were with the pagans. God turns away from those whose hearts are not truly with him.

[2] The Tabernacle of Testimony
Verses 44-47
¶ "Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness. That tabernacle was made exactly as he who spoke to Moses commanded. Moses made it according to the pattern that he had been shown. Our fathers, in their turn, brought in the tabernacle when they entered with Joshua into the land possessed by the pagan nations. These nations God drove out as our fathers advanced. This continued until the days of David who found favor in the sight of God. David asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob, but it was Solomon who built him a house." (Acts 7:44-47).

- A habitation for God. The forefathers thought that God needed a house in which to dwell. It is dangerous for people to build a house for God out of their own heads and with their own hands. Next, out of their own heads and with their own hands, they'll make a god to dwell in the house. God therefore did not let the forefathers invent the house: he provided the pattern and commanded every detail. The tabernacle (the travelling ornate tent of meeting) was eventually replaced by a temple in Jerusalem based on the same pattern. David wanted to build it for God, but God did not grant his wish. It is instructive to read God’s message to David (2Samuel 7).

Verses 48-50
Verses 51-53

¶ "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit! You do just what your fathers did. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, of whom you yourselves have now become betrayers and murderers. You received the law as it was ordained by angels, and you didn't keep it!" (Acts 7:51-53).

Stephen ceases to speak parabolically about the Sanhedrin’s ancestors. He now turns directly upon the Sanhedrin with five accusations...

1. **Stiff-necked** They were “stiff-necked” in the sense of prejudice, bigotry, and pride. This characterized the hearts of most of the Sanhedrin. "God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble" (James 4:6, Prov 3:34).

2. **Uncircumcised in heart** Being circumcised according to the law was of great importance to a devout male Jew. However the Sanhedrin didn't seem to realize that you could be a circumcised Jew in the flesh, whilst an uncircumcised heathen in heart. Paul speaks of this spiritual circumcision: ¶ "In him you were also circumcised, but it wasn't a circumcision done by human hands. Rather, it was a removal of the sins of the flesh in the circumcision that Christ does." (Colossians 2:11).

3. **Resisting the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit was revealing the gospel, but the Sanhedrin were not listening. By shutting their ears to the word, they were resisting the Holy Spirit. They were acting toward Stephen’s message as they had acted toward John the Baptist’s: "The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves" (Luke 7:30). People can do no worse than resist the Holy Spirit and reject God’s counsel.

4. **Killed the Messiah.** Just as the fathers killed the prophets who foretold of the Messiah, now the Sanhedrin has killed the very Messiah himself. You cannot do worse than crucify Christ the Son of God (cf Hebrews 6:6).
5. Didn't keep the Law. This accusation would have angered the Sanhedrin possibly more than all the others. They regarded themselves as experts and exemplars of the law of Moses. But Jesus himself had said to them, "You cleverly set aside the law of God in order to keep your tradition" (Mark 7:9).

5 End of Stephen’s Life

Verses 54-56

¶ "Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they bared their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. Stephen said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" " (Acts 7:54-56).

Cut to the heart. This is the same phrase as in Acts 2:37. However there is a difference. When the Holy Spirit convicts people with the truth, cuts them to the heart, they can either accept or reject that truth. Those who were baptized on the day of Pentecost accepted what they'd been convicted of. Those listening to Stephen rejected, repudiated, resisted, and wanted to destroy what convicted them.

Gnashed their teeth The phrase “gnashed their teeth” is an idiom for the kind of frenzy or anguish that might cause people to bare and agitate their teeth in a threatening or agonized manner—as a mad or ferocious dog might do. One does not take the phrase too literally. It's like we said, “They were hopping mad” or, “They did a Vesuvius”.

I see the heavens opened. Stephen was granted a vision of the risen Lord, the man Jesus, who sits at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34). But in this vision, the Lord stood. The Lord honours those who are willing to die for him. This vision encouraged Stephen, but could it have also convinced the Sanhedrin, had they dared to look and also see?

Verses 57-60

¶ "But they cried out with a loud voice, and blocked their ears, and all together rushed at Stephen. They threw him out of the city, and stoned him. The witnesses threw their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. They stoned Stephen even as he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Stephen then knelt down, and cried in a loud voice, “Lord, don't hold this sin against them!” When he had said this, he fell asleep in death." (Acts 7:57-60).

Rushed at him. The Sanhedrin, the august assembly of Jewish scholars and high priests, behaves with disgusting indecency. The veil of dignity is cast away; the whitened sepulchres are broken open and the dead mens’ bones come rattling out (Matthew 23:27).

The witnesses. Under Jewish law, the witnesses were also the executioners. Consequently, if they were false witnesses, they became also murderers.
A young man named Saul. This was the man who was to become Paul the apostle.

Stephen’s prayer Stephen asks the Lord to receive his spirit and to forgive his murderers. Stephen echos his Lord’s own prayers when his Lord was crucified (Luke 23:34,46).
This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 8:1-25. These verses describe Philip’s evangelism in Samaria and the conversion of Simon the sorcerer.

Philip converts many in Samaria including a magician

Acts 8:1-25

¶1 Saul was consenting to Stephen’s death. On that day, a storm of persecution arose against the called out people in Jerusalem. The apostles remained in Jerusalem, but the congregation in general was scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. 2Devout men buried Stephen, and lamented greatly over him. 3But Saul ravaged the congregation. He went around from house to house, dragging both men and women off to prison. 4Meanwhile, those who’d been scattered went from place to place preaching the word.” (Acts 8:1-4).

¶5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed Christ to them. 6The multitudes listened with one accord to the things that Philip said, when they heard and saw the signs that he did. 7Unclean spirits came out shouting from many who were possessed. Many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. 8There was great joy in that city.” (Acts 8:5-8).

¶9There was one man, named Simon, who had been doing sorcery in the city. He'd amazed the people of Samaria, making himself out to be some great one. 10All the people, from the least to the greatest, had listened to him. They'd said of Simon, 'This man is that great power of God.' 11They listened to him because he'd long amazed them with his sorceries. 12But when the people of Samaria believed Philip preaching good news concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13Simon himself also believed. After being baptized, he continued on with Philip, amazed by the signs and great miracles that he saw.” (Acts 8:9-13).

¶14The apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, so they sent Peter and John to them. 15When Peter and John came down to Samaria, they prayed that the people might receive the Holy Spirit. 16As yet the Spirit had fallen on none of them —they had only been baptized in the name of Christ Jesus. 17So Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:14-17).

¶18When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money: 19‘Give me this power too; so that anyone I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.’ 20But Peter said to him, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21You have no share in this ministry, because your heart isn't right with God. 22So repent of this wickedness of yours, and ask God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23For I see that you are tasting the poison and hefting the chains of your iniquity.’ 24Simon answered, 'Pray for me to the Lord, that none of the things you have spoken happen to me.'” (Acts 8:18-24).
“So when Peter and John had earnestly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem. Along the way they preached the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.” (Acts 8:25).

### Saul Scatters the Disciples

**Verses 1-4**

“Saul was consenting to Stephen’s death. On that day, a storm of persecution arose against the called out people in Jerusalem. The apostles remained in Jerusalem, but the congregation in general was scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Devout men buried Stephen, and lamented greatly over him. But Saul ravaged the congregation. He went around from house to house, dragging both men and women off to prison. Meanwhile, those who'd been scattered went from place to place preaching the word.” (Acts 8:1-4).

- **Saul ravaged the church.** This Saul later became the apostle Paul. He describes himself as “formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent aggressor” against the church in Jerusalem (1 Timothy 1:12-14).

- **Congregation scattered.** The congregation had grown to several thousand members since the day that the apostles, and a small number of disciples, had gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:12-15). Now the thousands of converts had fled Jerusalem leaving the apostles no church to tend but those in prison — where the apostles themselves were at risk of being thrown unless Jesus spared them.

- **Went preaching.** The thousands who fled were not cowards, however: they went from place to place preaching. So the persecution, intended to crush the church, impelled Christianity to spread from Jerusalem outward to Judea and Samaria and beyond, just as Jesus had predicted (Acts 1:8).

- **Judea and Samaria.** Judea is the country of which Jerusalem is the capital. It was the area inherited by Judah. Samaria is the country, between Judea to the south and Galilee to the north. The capital of Samaria is also named Samaria.
Stephen buried. Fitting the death of a martyr for Jesus, Stephen is given a decent burial with the appropriate laments. Saul has no respect for this and begins in haste to ravage the church before Stephen is hardly laid to rest.

Saul went from house to house. He probably did not do this personally, since there would be hundreds of houses to raid. Saul would be able to draft strong assistance from the temple police force and squads of deputies made available to his charge by the Sanhedrin.

Philip Takes the Gospel Beyond Jerusalem

Verses 5-8

¶ "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed Christ to them. The multitudes listened with one accord to the things that Philip said, when they heard and saw the signs that he did. Unclean spirits came out shouting from many who were possessed. Many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. There was great joy in that city." (Acts 8:5-8).

Philip in Samaria. Philip was one of the seven “deacons” chosen to help the apostles (Acts 6:5). That work having been disrupted by the exodus from Jerusalem, Philip now becomes an “evangelist” (a gospel preacher) spreading Christianity (Acts 21:8). He goes to the city of Samaria.

Multitudes listened. While Saul is engaged in routing the church in Jerusalem, Philip is starting another church in Samaria. He has crowds listening to him because he demonstrates the power of God in the amazing miracles and healings he performs.

There was great joy. There are three reasons for the joy that Philip brought to Samaria: firstly the “good news” of salvation that he preached; secondly the healings with which he blessed the sick; thirdly the fact that through Philip, as previously through Jesus himself, God was repudiating the culture of hate between Jews and the Samaritans (John 4:9,39).

Simon the Magician is Converted

Verses 9-11

¶ "There was one man, named Simon, who had been doing sorcery in the city. He'd amazed the people of Samaria, making himself out to be some great one. All the people, from the least to the greatest, had listened to him. They'd said of Simon, “This man is that great power of God.” They listened to him because he'd long amazed them with his sorceries." (Acts 8:9-11).

Simon the magician. You didn't have to go far from Jerusalem to find paganism openly practised. This sorcerer, Simon, was capable of great feats of magic (cf 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12). Whether his magic was real or fake is not important. His magic could have been as real and as supernatural as the demons
that possessed the people and which Philip cast out (Acts 8:7). The important thing is that Simon deceived the people, even if his powers were real, because he led people into blasphemy praising him as the Great Power of God.

**Verses 12-13**

¶ "But when the people of Samaria believed Philip preaching good news concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself also believed. After being baptized, he continued on with Philip, amazed by the signs and great miracles that he saw." (Acts 8:12-13).

- **Simon amazed by Philip.** It is a measure of the miraculous powers of Philip that Simon, the great sorcerer, saw Philip’s miracles as greatly superior to his own. Compare this with the so-called “miracles” which some evangelists today claim to do.

- **Those who believed were baptized.** As in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38,41), all who believed Philip’s message of Christ were baptized. Today there are very few churches that join baptism with faith as we see the two joined here: both being an integral part of true conversion to Christ.

- **Both men and women.** God makes no difference between male and female, saving them both on exactly the same terms and making them all “sons of God” (Galatians 3:25-29).

- **The kingdom of God.** Peter had preached the fulfillment of the throne prophecies, that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God and ruling in his kingdom (Acts 2:29-36). Philip preaches the kingdom of God in the same way.

- **Name of the Lord.** The "name of the Lord" here means the power and authority of God in Christ our Lord, who alone is able to save. The name given to Jesus is "the name above every name" (Philippians 2:9-10). As Jesus said, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus is the one who has first place in everything (Colossians 1:13-20).

**4 Peter and John Go to Join Philip**

**Verses 14-17**

¶ "The apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, so they sent Peter and John to them. When Peter and John came down to Samaria, they prayed that the people might receive the Holy Spirit. As yet the Spirit had fallen on none of them —they had only been baptized in the name of Christ Jesus. So Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:14-17:).

- **Peter and John** These two apostles were working together at the time the lame man was healed (Acts 3:1-2). Still faithful companions, they go down to Samaria, bringing unique apostolic powers, to help Philip and the new converts in the city of Samaria.

- **The Spirit had fallen on none.** Peter and John came to lay hands on the people to impart the Holy Spirit. Luke explains, "As yet the Spirit had fallen on
none of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:16). This means that they had received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit in the wonderful way that all baptized believers do (Acts 2:38-39). However they had not received the Spirit in such a way that would enable them to work miracles and signs (Mark 16:15-18).

- **Apostles laid hands on them.** Philip, not being an apostle, couldn't impart miraculous powers to others, even though he could work miracles himself. The apostles, however, could impart miraculous gifts by the laying on of their hands (Acts 8:17-18).

### 5 Peter Rebukes Simon

**Verses 18-24**

¶ "When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money: “Give me this power too; so that anyone I lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.” But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no share in this ministry, because your heart isn't right with God. So repent of this wickedness of yours, and ask God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are tasting the poison and hefting the chains of your iniquity.” Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that none of the things you have spoken happen to me.” " (Acts 8:18-24).

- **When Simon saw** Simon, the erstwhile great sorcerer, has been greatly amazed at Philip’s supernatural powers. Now comes another shock: Peter and John are able not only to perform the same miracles, but also to transfer the powers to others: not by lengthy initiations or closeted learning in the mysteries of magic —simply by the laying on of their apostolic hands! This is too much for Simon; that power he covets. So he offers to buy the apostolic powers.

- **Your money perish with you!** Peter harshly rebukes Simon, not because Peter hates Simon, but because he loves him. Understanding this, and that he is falling from grace, Simon accepts the rebuke and asks for prayers.

- **Repent and Pray** Some compare Acts 2:38 with Acts 8:22, saying the former (repent and be baptized) is God’s law of pardon for the non-Christian whilst the latter (repent and pray) is God’s law of pardon for the Christian who sins.

- **Heart not right with God.** It's important for us to understand that God sees into our hearts. He does not judge us by what others see and say. God judges us by what he sees. God knows the hearts of every person (Acts 1:24). God saw the wrong in Simon's heart. This had dire consequences for Simon unless he quickly changed his heart.

### 6 Peter and John Return to Jerusalem

**Verse 25**

¶ "So when Peter and John had earnestly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem. Along the way they preached the gospel to many villages

- **Testified and preached.** Whilst it is pretty much the same thing to say they "testified and preached the word" and to say "they preached the gospel", there is one particular difference. Anyone can preach, but not every one can testify or bear witness — a task Jesus gave to his apostles (Acts 1:8). The apostles (and a number of other people) had seen and spoken to Jesus after his resurrection. That meant that they could provide an eye-witness assurance that Jesus had risen. In the case of the apostles, they could give the same assurance of his ascension. Being able to give an eye-witness testimony was every bit as important as being able to work attesting miracles.
Acts 8:26-40
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 8:26-40. These verses describe Philip converting the man from Ethiopia who was riding in his chariot.

Philip preaches to a man from Ethiopia.

Acts 8:26-40

¶“26But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. The angel said, 'Arise, and go southward along the road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza.' This area is deserted. 27But Philip arose and went. And behold, there was a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was responsible for all her treasure. He'd been to Jerusalem to worship. 28Now he was returning; seated in his chariot; reading the prophet Isaiah.” (Acts 8:26-28).

¶“29The Spirit told Philip, 'Go closer, and meet this chariot.' 30Philip ran to the man, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet. Philip said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' 31The man replied, 'How can I, unless someone explains it to me?' He implored Philip to come up and sit with him.” (Acts 8:29-31).

¶“32Now this is the passage of Scripture the man was reading: 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. As a lamb before his shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. 33In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who will declare His generation? His life is taken from the earth.'” (Acts 8:32-33).

¶“34The eunuch further replied to Philip by asking, 'Who is the prophet talking about—himself or someone else?' 35Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached to him about Jesus. 36As they went along the way, they came to some water. The eunuch said, 'Look! Here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?' 37Philip replied, 'If you believe with your whole heart you may be baptized.' The man said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' Having said that, 38he commanded the chariot to halt. Both he and Philip went down together into the water, and there Philip immersed the eunuch.” (Acts 8:34-38).

¶“39When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing. 40As for Philip, he found himself at Azotus. From there he passed through all the cities preaching the gospel as far as Caesarea.” (Acts 8:39-40).

I The Holy Spirit Sends Philip Down a Lonely Road

Verses 26-28

¶"But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. The angel said, “Arise, and go southward along the road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza.” This area is deserted. But
Philip arose and went. And behold, there was a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was responsible for all her treasure. He'd been to Jerusalem to worship. Now he was returning; seated in his chariot; reading the prophet Isaiah." (Acts 8:26-28).

- Jerusalem to Gaza This was a lonely road, a most unlikely place to find opportunity to preach.

- Arise and go Although a deserted place seems a strange place for a preacher to go, Philip goes as told. The angel said, “Arise and go”; Philip “arose and went”. He asked no questions — just did it. Whether he walked, and how far he went we don't know.

- A man of Ethiopia, a eunuch. This man was a long way from home. Ethiopia is far south of Gaza, so the man was still in the early stages of his journey from Jerusalem. He was most likely a black man. More interesting than that, he was a eunuch — he'd been castrated. There were many reasons for making eunuchs, including that boy singers should not lose their sweet soprano voices! In the Ethiopian’s case he served a queen as her slave, and was able to be in private with her without raising questions of propriety. The point is, however, that God loved this man and wanted him saved, regardless of his being a black man and a eunuch (Acts 10:34-35).

- Of great authority. To be the queen’s treasurer administering the economy of her kingdom, was a very responsible and important position. We are reminded of Joseph who, although a slave, was second in charge of Pharaoh’s kingdom (Genesis 41:39-40).

- Been to Jerusalem to worship. This man is a believer in God and a worshipper of God. Although probably not a Jew by birth, he is a proselyte and God-fearer who practices Judaism.

- Reading the prophet Isaiah. The Ethiopian is a student of God’s word and he spends his travelling time reading Isaiah.
Luke tells us that the Ethiopian was reading from "the prophet Isaiah" (Acts 8:28). Later, the passage in Isaiah is identified as chapter 53 (Acts 8:32). Some theologians hold a theory, about authorship of Isaiah, that the latter chapters, including chapter 53, were a later addition to Isaiah by other authors. This theory accommodates disbelief in Isaiah’s God-given ability to predict the future. But that accommodation comes at a price: not only is Luke contradicted, but so also are Matthew, John, and Paul—who all attribute Isaiah 53 to the prophet Isaiah (Matthew 8:17, John 12:38, Romans 10:16). Furthermore, if Bible authors couldn't predict the future, then they couldn't predict the Messiah, and the main point of prophecy is made invalid. It is not the Bible authors who are mistaken; rather, the theory that contradicts them is in error.

**Philip Preaches to an Audience of One**

**Verses 29-31**

¶ "The Spirit told Philip, “Go closer, and meet this chariot.” Philip ran to the man, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet. Philip said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The man replied, “How can I, unless someone explains it to me?” He implored Philip to come up and sit with him." (Acts 8:29-31).

**Q1: Do you understand what you are reading?** Philip obeys the Spirit, and runs up to join the Ethiopian in his chariot. On foot, trying to keep up with a chariot, Philip is in no circumstance for formal greetings and pleasantries. So Philip doesn't introduce himself and discuss the weather. He gets right to the point. He asks a direct, sensible, and appropriate question — a most useful skill in evangelism.

**Verses 32-33**

¶ "Now this is the passage of Scripture the man was reading: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter. As a lamb before his shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. Who will declare His generation? His life is taken from the earth.” " (Acts 8:32-33, Isaiah 53:7-8).

**A sheep to the slaughter** This passage predicts the death of Christ, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29,36). Isaiah predicts that the life of Christ would be cut short by oppression and injustice. As it turned out, he was taken into custody by a crooked court, humiliated and killed like a criminal. Only his burial was allowed some dignity, lent by a rich man’s grave. The passage ends with the injustice of his death. He was taken from life "even though he had committed no violence, nor was any deceit found in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:9). Peter, on the day of Pentecost, voiced the injustice of killing Christ (Acts 2:22-23).

**Verses 34-35**

¶ "The eunuch further replied to Philip by asking, “Who is the prophet talking about—himself or someone else?” Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached to him about Jesus." (Acts 8:34-35).
Q2: Of whom does the prophet speak? The Ethiopian was also, like Philip, sharp enough to ask pertinent questions. This question gets right to the heart of the matter. Philip was able to take it from there and preach Jesus to him by expounding that scripture and others. Often people have questions are about side issues. We need to say, in such cases, “That's not the question we need to answer right now. The most important question is...” Philip didn't need to do that. The Ethiopian’s question was right on the mark.

3 Philip’s Teaching Results in Baptism

Verse 36

¶ "As they went along the way, they came to some water. The eunuch said, “Look! Here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?”" (Acts 8:36).

Q3: What prevents me from being baptized? We've noted two good and pertinent questions. Now this third question —is it of the same class? The Ethiopian has been listening intently to Philip, and gathered not only that Jesus is the Christ, but that God requires water baptism into the death of Christ and in the likeness of his burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-7).

Verses 37-38

¶ "[ Philip replied, “If you believe with your whole heart you may be baptized.” The man said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Having said that,] he commanded the chariot to halt. Both he and Philip went down together into the water, and there Philip immersed the eunuch.” (Acts 8:37-38).

Philip replied…the man said. Some translations omit verse 37, the section indicated by square brackets. Because late manuscripts contain it but early manuscripts don't, the verse is relegated to the margin or a footnote. It is thought to be an interpolation (somebody added it). However other versions (such as the New King James Version) include the verse in the text. Without the verse, Philip appears to have no say in the matter; the eunuch’s question is rhetorical; and Philip must presume that the man has faith, since it is unstated. In short, removing the verse leaves an odd gap.

Into the water. There is debate about whether the two went “down into the water” or merely “down to the water”. The argument has to do with whether baptism is immersion in water, or just the sprinkling or pouring of a little water. If the two only went down to the water, and not into it, then Philip could not have immersed the Ethiopian, but he could have reached down to draw up a little water to sprinkle or pour on the man.

On the other hand, if the two went down into the water it would be for immersion, because there would be no need or reason to go down into the water for the purpose of sprinkling or pouring. The next verse makes the whole matter clear.

Verses 39-40
"When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing. As for Philip, he was found at Azotus. From there he passed through all the cities preaching the gospel as far as Caesarea." (Acts 8:39-40).

- **Came up out of the water.** This is the antithesis of the previous phrase, “went down into the water”. It is clear that if the two came up out of water then they must have gone down into it. One wonders, therefore, why there is any debate about whether the two went into the water or only just to the water.

- **Caught Philip away.** Philip disappears, vanishes from the Ethiopian’s sight. Rather than disconcerting the Ethiopian, this small miracle or sign confirms his belief in Philip’s message, so he goes on his way rejoicing.

- **Azotus to Caesarea.** Philip finds himself at Azotus and sets out on a preaching tour through several busy coastal cities — in contrast to his preaching to one man along a lonely road. But God has as much concern to save the one as he does to save the many. Sometimes we preach to crowds, sometimes to one or two. What’s important is that we preach.
Acts 9:1-19
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 9:1-19. These verses describe the conversion of Saul with the assistance of Ananias.

The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

Acts 9:1-19

¶“1Saul kept breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues of Damascus. The letters authorized Saul, if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, to bring them bound to Jerusalem.” (Acts 9:1-2).

¶“3As Saul, on his journey to Damascus, came near the city, suddenly a light from the sky shone around him. 4He fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 5Saul said, 'Who are you, Lord?' The Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 6So Saul, shaking and astounded, asked, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' The Lord said to Saul, 'Arise and go into the city, and there you will be told what you must do.' ” (Acts 9:3-6).

¶“7Saul’s companions on the journey stood speechless. They heard the sound, but saw nobody. 8Saul arose from the ground. Although his eyes were open, he couldn't see anything. His companions led him by the hand, and took him into Damascus. 9Saul was blind for three days. He didn't eat or drink.” (Acts 9:7-9).

¶“10There was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!' Ananias said, 'Behold Lord, here I am.' 11The Lord said to him, 'Arise, and go to the street named Straight. Inquire at the house of Judas for someone named Saul, a man of Tarsus. For behold, he is praying, 12and has seen a vision. He saw a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him to give him back his sight.' (Acts 9:10-12).

¶“13Ananias replied, 'Lord, I have heard from many about this man, and how much evil he did to your saints at Jerusalem. 14Here in Damascus he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.' 15But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Be on your way to him, for he is my chosen vessel to carry my name before the nations and their kings, and before the children of Israel. 16I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake.' (Acts 5:13-16).

¶“17Ananias went on his way. When he entered the house, he laid his hands on Saul. Ananias said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, who appeared to you on the road you were travelling, has sent me. I come so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' 18Immediately something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. Then Saul arose and was baptized. 19He took food and was strengthened. Saul stayed several days with the disciples who were at Damascus.” (Acts 9:17-19).
Saul the Slayer

Verses 1-2

"Saul kept breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues of Damascus. The letters authorized Saul, if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, to bring them bound to Jerusalem." (Acts 9:1-2).

Saul at Damascus. Saul has ravaged the church in Jerusalem, only to find that his persecution and scattering of that church has caused it to rapidly spread. Saul heads northwards to try to head it off at Damascus in southern Syria, and stop it spreading further north.

The Way. At this point the terms “Christians” and “Christianity” had not become common (Acts 11:26). The new religion was known as “the Way”, and its followers were called “disciples” (eg Acts 19:23,30). These descriptions remain acceptable to use as descriptions of Christ’s religion and followers. Jesus himself provided “The Way” as a name for his church and his faith. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6).

It always surprises me how willing people are to invent strange names for themselves when there are several perfectly good descriptions in the word of God. Why do we hear names such as, “Jehovah’s Witnesses”; “Seventh Day Adventists”; “Roman Catholics”; “Uniting Church”; “Anglicans”; “Reformed Baptists”; and so forth? None of these names honors Jesus, nor were they ever on his lips or written in his word. What has gone so wrong that we cannot stay with the scriptural names? “I'm a Christian, I follow the Way” —isn't that enough?

Saul the Shaken

Verses 3-6
¶"As Saul, on his journey to Damascus, came near the city, suddenly a light from the sky shone around him. He fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Saul said, “Who are you, Lord?” The Lord replied, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. [It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So Saul, shaking and astounded, asked, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” The Lord said to Saul] “Arise and go into the city, and there you will be told what you must do.”” (Acts 9:3-6).

- **Who Are You Lord?** Saul’s response to the light and the voice acknowledges the one speaking to him as “Lord” but doesn't acknowledge that this Lord is Jesus. Saul, a Pharisee, certainly believed in angels and spirits (Acts 23:8). He did not believe that Jesus, a man, had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. Even though the voice said, "Why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4), Saul did not recognize that Jesus speaking. Yet Saul was obsessed with persecuting the followers of Jesus.

- **Kick against the goads.** Jesus makes it plain to Saul, that Saul is not hearing an angel. He is hearing Jesus, and Jesus is Lord. Having made that clear, Jesus shows Saul, in the remark about the goads, that he can look deep into Saul’s heart. A goad is a pointed stick used to prod stubborn beasts of burden into movement.

- **What were the goads that Saul was kicking against?** They weren't pangs of conscience, because Saul later said, "I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1). "I truly thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus" (Acts 26:9).

- The goads were the words of truth from the gospel, and the proofs in the form of signs and miracles. Paul, in his dealings with disciples of Christ, could not help but be informed about the message preached and the signs done. An honest man, like Saul, would have to be pricked by the truth and finding it ever harder to argue against it.

- **Missing words.** Some translations omit, in verse 5, the section marked with square brackets. However other versions (such as the New King James Version) include the extra words. The omission or inclusion depends on which texts a translation follows. Paul later relates that Jesus spoke the part about kicking against the goads (Acts 26:14).

### Verses 7-9

¶"Saul’s companions on the journey stood speechless. They heard the sound, but saw nobody. Saul arose from the ground. Although his eyes were open, he couldn't see anything. His companions led him by the hand, and took him into Damascus. Saul was blind for three days. He didn't eat or drink.” (Acts 9:7-9).

- **Stood speechless.** When Saul’s companions got up off the ground, they "stood speechless" (Acts 9:7). You might expect them to be all babbling at each other, “What happened? What on earth was that? Is anybody hurt? Was that lightning? Are you all ok?” But instead they stood silent, unable or unwilling to say anything. They'd seen a glory brighter than the noonday sun. They were awe-struck and words failed them.
Saul was blind. Although Saul opened his eyes, he had no sight. The glory of the light (Acts 22:11) had caused some kind of scale to form on his eyes (Acts 9:18). Saul’s companions were not affected in that manner, although they saw the light as Saul did. This blindness was therefore a personal lesson and a sign to Saul from Jesus. It was to impress upon him that he had allowed himself to be blind to Jesus’s glory, so now for a time he will be blinded by it. When the eyes of his heart see the truth, then the eyes of his flesh will also see. He is now under Christ’s power, and how easily the Lord has humbled him and put an end to his persecutions.

Contradictions? Paul says that his travelling companions did not hear the voice of Jesus who spoke to him (Acts 22:19), whereas Luke says they heard the sound (Acts 9:7). Paul also says that he and his companions all fell to the ground (Acts 26:14), whereas Luke says that Saul fell to the ground and his companions stood speechless (Acts 9:7). This is one of those famous “contradictions” that some people think they have discovered in the Bible. However Luke is hardly likely to write an account that contradicts Paul’s own accounts, and then quote those accounts in the same document! It is easy to reconcile these accounts: Saul and his companions all fell to the ground when the light shone, but his companions stood up before Saul did. Saul heard what Jesus said, but his companions heard only the sound, but did not hear in the sense of comprehending what was said.

3 Saul the Servant

Verses 10-12

¶“There was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” Ananias said, “Behold Lord, here I am.” The Lord said to him, “Arise, and go to the street named Straight. Inquire at the house of Judas for someone named Saul, a man of Tarsus. For behold, he is praying, and has seen a vision. He saw a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him to give him back his sight.”” (Acts 9:9-12).

Saul’s Conversion. We often hear reference to “Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus”. However, Saul was converted in Damascus with the ministry of Ananias. Whilst his conversion may not have happened without the experience on the road, that experience was not conversion. A person can certainly be converted without any such experience as Saul had, so conversion cannot be such an experience. Saul was told by the Lord to go into Damascus where he would be told what do do; Ananias was appointed to tell him. This account does not inform us what Saul was told, but unless he was told, and unless he obeyed, he could not be regarded as “converted” or a “disciple”.

People who speak of “Saul’s conversion on the road to Damascus” may think that conversion is an epiphany and a conviction forced upon those the Lord has chosen. In fact, it is a hearing of the word by a human ministry, and a personal decision to believe and obey that message. That’s why Saul was sent into Damascus and Ananias was sent to him. The Lord may have made an exception of Paul in the manner in which he confronted Saul on the road. But he made no exception in the manner by which Saul would subsequently be converted.

Verses 13-16
\[\text{Verses 17-19}\]

¶"Ananias replied, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, and how much evil he did to your saints at Jerusalem. Here in Damascus he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name.” But the Lord said to Ananias, “Be on your way to him, for he is my chosen vessel to carry my name before the nations and their kings, and before the children of Israel. I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” " (Acts 9:13-16).

- **Ananias objects.** Ananias seems to object; although perhaps he is just seeking clarification when there seems to be a conflict between what he has heard from others, and what he is hearing from the Lord. The Lord says, in effect, that he knows Saul better than anyone else, and he has chosen Saul as the right man for a great task.

- **The nations, their kings, and the children of Israel.** The apostle Paul (whom Saul was to become) is known as the apostle to the Gentiles, here called "the nations and their kings." However Paul was to include the synagogues of the Jews in his outreach as he journeyed to the cities of the Gentiles. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles "and to the children of Israel".

- **He must suffer.** Saul was going to suffer greatly in his role as the apostle Paul. This was not punishment for the suffering his persecution had brought to the disciples of Christ. In fact, by undergoing much suffering for Jesus (2Corinthians 11:23-28), Paul could come to terms with the terrible things he had done against Jesus.

- **Saul later called Paul.** Saul of Tarsus later took the name Paul (Acts 13:9). Saul was the name of the Benjaminite who became first king of Israel (1Sam 9:15-17). Saul of Tarsus was also a Benjaminite (Philippians 3:4-5). No doubt he wore this kingly name with pride. The name "Paul" comes from the Latin for "little" (the root of our English words "pauper" and "paucity"). To give up the kingly name Saul, and take up the name Paul meaning "little", shows humility. But Paul is the more humble, for he does not stop at the name: he calls himself, "I Paul a servant..." (Colossians 1:23,25).

**Verses 17-19**

¶"Ananias went on his way. When he entered the house, he laid his hands on Saul. Ananias said, “Brother Saul, the Lord, who appeared to you on the road you were travelling, has sent me. I come so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. Then Saul arose and was baptized. He took food and was strengthened. Saul stayed several days with the disciples who were at Damascus." (Acts 9:17-19).

- **Immediately.** When Ananias laid hands on Saul to heal him, the result was immediate and complete. Saul could see again. In my experience, immediate and complete healing doesn't happen today when people claim to have the powers of Ananias and when they lay hands on people to heal them.

- **Filled with the Spirit.** Saul had not been filled with the Holy Spirit when Jesus spoke to him on the road. Ananias was sent so that Saul could be filled with the Spirit. Ananias was not an apostle, so the laying on of his hands would not impart the Spirit to Saul (Acts 8:18). At his baptism Saul certainly received the
Holy Spirit as all converts do (Acts 2:38). We are left, however, to wonder how and when Saul received "the signs of an apostle" or the same powers that the twelve apostles possessed (2Cor 12:11-12). The safest assumption is that Jesus gave Saul his powers at an undisclosed time following his conversion.

- **He arose and was baptized.** Ananias was to tell Saul the things that he must do. Baptism was one of those things (Acts 22:16). Why then do people say that baptism is not something we must do?

- **He took food.** Saul had been fasting and praying (Acts 9:9,11). Now, after his baptism, he was reconciled to God and was covered by the death of Jesus (Romans 6:3-11). He could attend to the needs of the body having put his soul to rights by the word and power of Jesus.

- **Other accounts.** Saul’s conversion is described (in his own words) in two other chapters (22 and 26) so we will have opportunity for further discussion of the subject.

### A Startling Fact

J.W. McGarvey, *circa* 1823, in his *Commentary on Acts* tells this most interesting story...

Engaged in a public debate, a few years since, with a Doctor of Divinity of a numerous and powerful party, I determined to apply to him a test which had been employed before by some of my brethren, and charged that he dare not, as he valued his ministerial position, and even his membership in the Church, give to mourners seeking salvation the answers given by inspired men, in the very words, which they employed. He interrupted me, by asking if I intended to insinuate that he would not preach what he believed to be the truth. I replied, that I had no disposition to question his honesty, but that I was stating a startling fact, which ought to be made to ring in the ears of the people.

I then told the audience I would put my statement to a test at once, and turning to the Doctor, I said: "Sir, if you had a number of mourners before you, as Peter had on Pentecost, pierced to the heart with a sense of guilt, and exclaiming, What shall we do? would you dare to say to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?' Or, if you were called into a private house, like Ananias, to see man fasting and weeping and praying, would you dare to say to him, 'Why do you tarry? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord?' I pause for a reply." I stood waiting, and the immense audience held their breath, until the silence became painful; but the Doctor hung his head and answered not one word.
Acts 9:20-31
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 9:20-31. These verses describe Saul’s first experiences as a disciple of Christ.

Saul’s First Experiences as a Disciple

Acts 9:20-31

¶“20Immediately, in the synagogues, Saul proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. 21All who heard him were amazed. They said, 'Isn't this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called on this name? Didn't he come here intending to bring them bound before the chief priests?' ” (Acts 9:20-21).

¶“22Saul increased in strength. He confounded the Jews who lived at Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. 23Saul did this for a long time. Then the Jews conspired together to kill Saul. To that end, they watched the gates both day and night. 24Their plot, however, became known to Saul. 25His disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall. They lowered him in a basket.” (Acts 9:22-25).

¶“26When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't believe that he was a disciple. 27However Barnabas took him to the apostles, and declared to them how he had seen the Lord in the way. Barnabas told the apostles how Jesus had spoken to Saul, and in Damascus Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.” (Acts 9:26-27).

¶“28So Saul associated with the apostles and moved freely in Jerusalem, 29preaching boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. He was talking and debating with the Grecians, but they were seeking to kill him. 30When the brethren found out, they brought Saul down to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus.” (Acts 9:28-30).

¶“31So the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, had peace. They were built up; they were multiplied; and they were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 9:31).

1 Saul Preaches Jesus in Damascus

Verses 20-21

¶"Immediately, in the synagogues, Saul proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. All who heard him were amazed. They said, “Isn't this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called on this name? Didn't he come here intending to bring them bound before the chief priests?” ” (Acts 9:20-21).
• Synagogues. Synagogues are the “local churches” of the Jews scattered around the world. These synagogues are wonderful institutions of flourishing religious life “at the grass roots”. Arguably these synagogues, not the temple, represented the real Jewish church, the church of the people. From the first day of his ministry, in most of the cities he visited, Saul used the synagogues of the Jews as his first opportunity to preach.

• Complete change in Saul. Saul had set out for Damascus intending to arrest the disciples of Jesus and bring them bound to Jerusalem to be sentenced by the chief priests. Now, instead, he is preaching Jesus! A wonderful change in his life had been wrought. This change certainly amazed those who heard him preach.

Verses 22-25

¶ "Saul increased in strength. He confounded the Jews who lived at Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. Saul did this for a long time. Then the Jews conspired together to kill Saul. To that end, they watched the gates both day and night. Their plot, however, became known to Saul. His disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall. They lowered him in a basket." (Acts 9:22-25).

• Confounded the Jews. Saul’s was a Pharisee, educated by no lesser light than Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). This gave him a huge advantage in debating with the Jews.

• Increased in strength. He also received power from Jesus who had laid hold of him (Philippians 3:12), and pressed him into service (1 Timothy 1:12).

• The Jews conspired to kill him. The persecutor now became the persecuted. He begins to share in the sufferings of Christ. They conspired to kill Jesus; they conspired to kill Stephen; now they are after Saul. However, not all the Jews were behind this, and a warning was passed on to Saul.

• Lowered in a basket. The Jews had influence to get the co-operation of the ethnarch or ruler of the city (2 Corinthians 11:32-33). The gates of Damascus were being watched, so a window in the city wall was used for Saul’s escape. Saul was, we might say, “a basket case” in a desperate bid to escape.

2 Saul’s Three Years in Arabia

Between verses 25 and 26 of Acts 9 there is the period of three years, not mentioned here in Acts, but mentioned in Galatians. Saul spent some of this time in Arabia being taught by Jesus Christ, then returned to Damascus (Galatians 1:11-18).

3 Saul Preaches in Jerusalem

Verses 26-27

¶ "When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't believe that he was a disciple. However Barnabas took him to the apostles, and declared to them how he had seen the Lord in the way. Barnabas told the apostles how Jesus had spoken to Saul, and in Damascus Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus." (Acts 9:26-27).
• **Came to Jerusalem.** This return to Jerusalem was three years after Saul’s conversion. As we mentioned above, Saul was in Arabia for some of that three years. The news of Saul’s conversion would surely have reached the disciples in Jerusalem. However their memories of their real experience weighed more on their judgment than news from the north. So Paul got a frosty reception in Jerusalem until Barnabas took the initiative. Barnabas and Saul were to be close companions.

**Verses 28-30**

¶ “So Saul associated with the apostles and moved freely in Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. He was talking and debating with the Grecians, but they were seeking to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought Saul down to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus.” (Acts 9:28-30).

• **Grecians.** The term “Grecian” or “Hellenist” refers to Jews from regions of Greek culture as distinct from the Hebrews, the natives of Jerusalem. Broadly, the term might refer to Jews or proselytes (Gentile converts to Judaism) who were not locals and didn't speak the local languages but spoke Greek.

• **Seeking to kill Saul.** Hostility toward the disciples of Jesus had settled down somewhat, and the churches "had peace" (Acts 9:31). However there was such hostility toward Saul by Jews from further afield, that Saul had to be got out of Jerusalem. He went north, beyond Syria, to his home town of Tarsus in Cilicia.

**Verse 31**

¶ “So the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, had peace. They were built up; they were multiplied; and they were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 9:31).

• **The churches.** The churches that formed because of the scattering, have progressed and by now have become established. Note the four characteristics: they had peace, growth, reverence, and the Comforter.
• **Peace.** Tribulation and persecution passes, and peace ensues for a time. This, by the way, is the meaning of the “little season” in Revelation.

• **Multiplied.** The church in Jerusalem had grown to several thousand before it was scattered. Its scattering did not stop it from growing and probably rather encouraged growth.

• **Fear.** The fear of the Lord isn't terror, but a deep respect and awe. It's not the kind of fear that love casts out (1 John 4:18). We should both love the Lord and fear the Lord. There's no contradiction.

• **Comfort of the Holy Spirit.** Jesus promised to send another Comforter who is the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-18).

END OF THE SECOND SECTION OF ACTS

With this progress report Luke concludes his description of the spread of Christianity into Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. It begins with the Martyrdom of Stephen, describes the work of Philip, and ends with the conversion of Saul (Acts 6:8 to 9:31). In the third section we will see Christianity spread into the coastlands and Syria.

Paul’s trips to Jerusalem

• Paul’s first trip to Jerusalem, after his conversion, is described in Galatians 1:18-24 and in Acts 9:26-30. On this trip Paul introduced himself through Barnabas to the apostles Peter and James and did some preaching in their company.

• A subsequent trip is mentioned in Acts 11:28-30, in which Paul and Barnabas carried the first relief funds to Jerusalem from Antioch in Syria.

• A third trip is described in Galatians 2:1-10 and in Acts 15. Between his first and second missionary journeys, Paul met with the apostles to discuss his doctrine which they commended.

• A final trip (the latter part of Paul’s third missionary journey) is recorded in Romans 15:25-28, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and Acts 21:15-18. Paul and others carried a gathered contribution to Jerusalem for the needy saints.
Acts 9:32-43
—Verse by verse

This page is a verse by verse study of Acts 9:32-43, about Peter’s Miracles in Lydda and Joppa. Peter healed a paralyzed man and raised Tabitha from death back to life.

Peter’s Miracles in Lydda and Joppa

Acts 9:32-43

¶“32 Peter was travelling all around, and he came down to visit the holy people who lived at Lydda. In Lydda, 33 Peter came upon a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden with paralysis for eight years. 34 Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Rise up and make your bed.’ Immediately Aeneas got out of bed. 35 All the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.” (Acts 9:32-35).

¶“36 At Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha. Her name translated is Dorcas or Gazelle. This woman was full of good works and constant acts of mercy. 37 However, she fell sick in those days, and died. Her carers washed her and laid her in an upper room. 38 The disciples at Joppa heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda. So they sent two men to Peter, imploring him to come to them without delay. 39 Peter got up and went with them. On reaching Joppa, they brought Peter into the upper room. All the widows stood by weeping. They showed Peter the coats and garments that Dorcas had made while she was with them alive.” (Acts 9:36-39).

¶“40 Peter asked everyone to leave the room. He knelt and prayed. Then he turned to the body and said, ‘Tabitha, arise!’ Tabitha opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 He offered her his hand, and lifted her up. Then he called the holy ones and widows and presented Tabitha alive. 42 This miracle became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. 43 Peter ended up staying many days in Joppa, as a guest of Simon, a tanner.” (Acts 40-43).

1 Peter’s Miracle at Lydda

Verse 32

¶"Peter was travelling all around, and he came down to visit the saints who lived at Lydda." (Acts 9:32).
Saints

The disciples of Christ are called “saints” four times in the book of Acts. It means those who are sanctified or made holy, and this applies to all disciples (1Thessalonians 5:23-24). Instead of the word “saints”, we can use the term “holy people” —it means the same thing.

Verses 33-35

¶ "In Lydda, Peter came upon a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden with paralysis for eight years. Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Rise up and make your bed.” Immediately Aeneas got out of bed. All the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord." (Acts 9:33-35).

Immediately.

One characteristic of the healing miracles performed by the apostles was immediacy. The healing was not gradual with a period of convalescence. Nor was there any need to coax the healed into standing up and taking a few faltering steps. The healing was immediate and complete.

All saw him.

Another characteristic of the apostolic healing miracles is the quality of testimony. A large number of people saw the man healed, knowing first hand what condition he had been in before the healing.

2 Peter’s Miracle at Joppa

Verses 36-37

¶ "At Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha. Her name translated is Dorcas or Gazelle. This woman was full of good works and constant acts of mercy. However, she fell sick in those days, and died. Her carers washed her and laid her in an upper room." (Acts 9:36-37).
Good people die. It's hard for us to understand why sickness and death inflict even those who are full of mercy and good works. The death of Dorcas, like the death of any righteous and beloved person, is sad and disheartening. It's hard to see the reason why. Trials and tribulations, sickness and sorrow, death and disappointment — these are facts of life that our faith must face. We rely on the promise of heaven: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain..." (Revelation 21:4).

Verses 38-39

"The disciples at Joppa heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda. So they sent two men to Peter, imploring him to come to them without delay. Peter got up and went with them. On reaching Joppa, they brought Peter into the upper room. All the widows stood by weeping. They showed Peter the coats and garments that Dorcas had made while she was with them alive." (Acts 9:38-39).

Peter nearby. It seems that there was nobody in Joppa who could raise the dead. No surprise there. In the normal world, there is never anybody who can raise the dead once death is complete. But on this occasion there was, in a nearby town, an apostle of Jesus Christ who could raise the dead. Knowing this, the disciples at Joppa sent for Peter with urgency. He came to find Dorcas surrounded by women weeping. Since they were widows, this was not the first time death had caused them to weep. But weeping and lamenting, as appropriate as it was, wouldn't bring Dorcas back. However, Peter could.

Verses 40-42

"Peter asked everyone to leave the room. He knelt and prayed. Then he turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, arise!" Tabitha opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. He offered her his hand, and lifted her up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented Tabitha alive. This miracle became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord." (Acts 9:40-42).

Tabitha, arise. Tabitha’s return to life must have been a joyful occasion. However she would some day die again and be wept over once more. There's a day coming when all the saints who have died, including Tabitha, shall rise from death never to die again (John 5:28-29, 1Corinthians 15:50-55, 1Thessalonians 4:13-18).

3 Peter’s Ministry at Joppa

Verse 43

"Peter ended up staying many days in Joppa, as a guest of Simon, a tanner." (Acts 9:43).

God’s manifold grace. The miracle at Joppa caused many to believe. Peter stays on so as to minister to these new believers. But preachers are not the only servants of use in the church. Simon the Tanner also served, by offering hospitality to Peter. So you see, we all have something to contribute: like Dorcas making
clothing for the needy; Peter making the gospel and power of Jesus known; Simon the Tanner offering hospitality to God’s workers. Yes, we also serve. Peter himself says, "As each person has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1Peter 4:10).

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