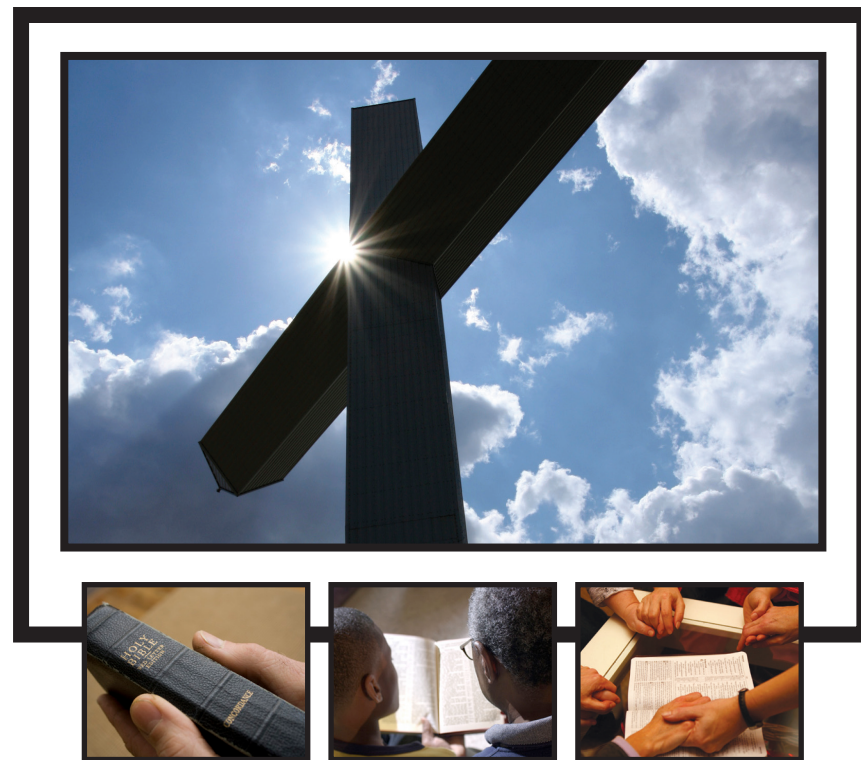


What makes this series so valuable is that each Bible event leads the reader or the group to discover the deepest truths of the Bible for themselves. This is done through insightful multiple choice questions which draw the readers to enter into the story and find for themselves its meanings and implications which they then can apply to their own lives.

The series is best “taught” by persons who encourage the group to do most of the talking and thinking. The teacher best acts as a leader in which the group discovers its way through the Scriptural events. The teacher may help the group when he or she believes that valuable truths have been overlooked, but the first discoverers should be members of the group itself. This stirs tremendous interest on the part of the group. This also relieves the teacher of the responsibility, under older systems of teaching, to carefully master all the truths of the text and present them in a way that would hopefully interest and “teach” the group.

Individuals who use these lessons for their own personal study find this investigative method interesting and meaningful. The reader is invited to sense the drama of each story in his or her own Bible and be led to discern the spiritual truths that are packed into each story.



Faith POWER

*Interactive Bible Studies in
The Acts of the Apostles for Growth of Faith*

NATIONAL BIBLE READING
CAMPAIGN

“Every Community on Earth Deserves a New Testament Church”



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National Bible Reading Campaign

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FAITH POWER

Interactive Bible Studies in

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Introduction:

Wherever Jesus walked, He transformed the lives of those He met. Jesus' great power continued to manifest itself after His resurrection and His ascension to heaven. And so it is, even to our day.

The author of the Gospel of Luke, which is an account of the life of Jesus Christ, later wrote a history of what happened to the disciples of Jesus after His departure from the earth. This book is not only a history of this period of the Christian faith, but it is an account of the spiritual power experienced by those who took Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of their lives. Their experiences were carefully recorded by Luke the physician, who was a faithful missionary companion of Paul. The study of these experiences promises to build the faith of each person who participates in this series of studies.



THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW LIFE

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Jesus Christ came to give us eternal life, abundant life. This life does not begin in heaven, but on earth in the moment we give ourselves in faith to Jesus Christ. It is a life that is full of blessings and precious experiences with the Lord. It is a life of spiritual growth and of new relationships with God and with others.

Every person should work to receive all the blessings that God offers. The following studies will show to each student precious realities of the Christian life based on the experiences of the First Century. Their story is found in the fifth book of the New Testament, called The Acts of the Apostles. The first thing each person should do is to be sure of having begun the new life in Jesus Christ. The following study should help.

Bible Reading: Acts 16:16-34

Acts 16:16-18. One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had an evil spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes. She followed Paul and us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God! They announce to you how you can be saved!" She did this for many days, until Paul became so upset that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I order you to come out of her!" The spirit went out of her that very moment.

1. In this passage, what evidence is there that the early Christians were people dedicated to prayer? What was the testimony of the girl who had the spirit of divination?

Acts 16:19. When her owners realized that their chance of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the authorities in the public square.

2. Why were some men angry about Paul and Silas? Had they done a good or bad work with the girl?

Acts 16:20-24. They brought them before the Roman officials and said, "These men are Jews, and they are causing trouble in the city. They are teaching customs that are against our law; we are Roman citizens, and we cannot accept these customs or practice them." And the crowd joined in attack against Paul and Silas. Then the officials tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be whipped. After a severe beating, they were thrown into jail, and the jailer was ordered to lock them up tight. Upon receiving this order, the jailer threw them into the inner cell and fastened their feet between heavy blocks of wood.

3. What accusations were made against the Christians? In our time, are there bad customs that will be changed by the power of the gospel? Might there be opposition to these changes? How were the Christians punished? Do Christians suffer in our day because of their faith in Jesus? Do you believe that God will reward those who suffer for His sake?

Acts 16:25. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

4. How did the Christians act after being beaten?

- They lost hope and complained to God.
- They sang hymns to God and testified to the other prisoners.

Acts 16:26-28. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, which shook the prison to its foundations. At once all the doors opened, and the chains fell off all the prisoners. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he thought that the prisoners had escaped; so he pulled out his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul shouted at the top of his voice, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

5. How did God intervene in the situation? How did Paul show his compassion for the jailer who had mistreated him so badly?

Acts 16:29-30. The jailer called for the light, rushed in, and fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. Then he led them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

6. Your opinion: Why did the jailer show so much respect for the two Christians? What was his question?

Acts 16:31. They answered, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved----- you and your family."

7. Mark the correct answers with an "x". According to this passage, to be saved, one:

- must believe in Christ.
- must recognize Christ as the Lord of one's own life.
- must participate in certain Christian rites.

Acts 16:32. Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in the house.

8. Your comments: How did the Christians show their interest in the salvation of the entire family? Why should whole families study the Word of God together? What are some of the benefits for a family when all are united in their faith in Jesus?

Acts 16:33-34. At that very hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; and he and all his family were baptized at once. Then he took Paul and Silas up into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his family were filled with joy, because they now believed in God.

9. How did the jailer demonstrate his change of attitude as shown by the way he now treated the two Christian messengers? How did the family react to their experience of salvation?

OTHER TEXTS REGARDING SALVATION

Acts 2:36. "All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!"

10. Your opinion: In what sense is Jesus the Lord?

- He has authority only over the angels.
- He has authority over all those who receive Him as Lord.
- He has no authority. Lord is simply a term of respect.

Acts 4:12. Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.

11. We are saved in the name (by the authority) of which person? Is there any other authority by which we might be saved? Can we be saved through the authority of some church, some religious leader or Christian hero?

Acts 20:20-21. You know that I did not hold back anything that would be of help to you as I preached and taught in public and in your homes. To Jews and Gentiles alike I gave solemn warning that they should turn from their sins to God and believe in our Lord Jesus.

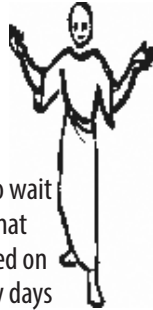
12. Paul said that we are saved by:

- being faithful to our religion.
- repenting of our wrong way of life and giving ourselves in faith to Jesus Christ, our Lord and King.

PERSONAL EVALUATION:

- I recognize that everyone needs God's pardon and salvation.
- I confess that my heart seems to be harder than that of the jailer, and it is difficult for me to submit in faith to Christ.
- I am conscious of my own personal need for divine pardon and a new life and I want Christ to save me.
- In this very moment, I repent of my sins and receive from the Lord His promise of pardon and personal salvation.
- I have received the salvation of my soul in a previous moment in my life.

TESTIFYING IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



When Jesus was about to leave the world, He ordered His followers to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit, and that is exactly what happened on the day of Pentecost. This was a Jewish religious holiday, taking place fifty days after the Passover. This day of Pentecost occurred one week after the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

The Holy Spirit fell upon all Christ's followers, giving them the power to speak in the languages of many Jews, who, as religious pilgrims, were visiting Jerusalem from different foreign countries. The disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, spread out among the crowd and testified about Jesus in many languages.

When a great number of people had gathered together in front of the Temple, Peter stood up to explain what was happening. Let us hear Luke's words about this special moment.

Bible Reading: Acts 2:14-17, 32, 36-42

Acts 2: 14-17. *Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. These people are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine o'clock in the morning. Instead, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about: "This is what I will do in the last days, God says: I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams.*

1. Opinions: Why did some of the Jews believe that the disciples were drunk?
2. In previous times, the Holy Spirit had been given only to certain leaders and prophets of Israel. But now, the Holy Spirit had come upon:
 - common people: men and women, young people and aged.
 - the Jewish priests.
 - the Roman soldiers.

Acts 2: 32. *God has raised this very Jesus from death, and we are all witnesses to this fact.*

3. How was it that Peter preached with such power?
 - He had the approval and support of the Jewish priests.
 - He was an eye-witness of the resurrection of Christ.
4. Personal Opinions: Why is the resurrection of Christ so important?
 - This action, without precedent in human history, affirmed the truth that Jesus is the Son of God.
 - The fact that so many people were witnesses of Christ's resurrection gave authority to the message of salvation in Christ.
 - For Peter, the resurrection of Jesus was just a human theory, a religious tradition.
 - The resurrection of Christ from the dead gave assurance to the apostles that death is simply a door by which they could be eternally with Christ.

Acts 2: 36-37. *"All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!" When the people heard this, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, "What shall we do, brothers?"*

5. Why were so many of the Jews deeply disturbed?
 - Peter told them that Jesus was still dead.
 - Peter accused them of having crucified Jesus, the very Messiah that God had sent to them.
 - Peter declared that God had affirmed that Jesus is the Lord and Messiah, some thing which many of them had previously denied.

For centuries, the Jews had long awaited the coming of the Messiah, God's Anointed One. When God sent Him to them, the Jews, instead of recognizing Him, killed Him. It was the most tragic failure of Israel in all its history.

Your Comments: When these Jews recognized their error in regard to Jesus, what did they ask the apostles? Do you believe they were sincere in their question?

Acts 2: 38. *Peter said to them, "Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit."*

6. Peter told these Jews that:
 - There was no longer any hope for them because they had sinned too greatly, killing the Christ.
 - God would forgive them if they would only repent, receiving Jesus now as their Lord and Savior.
 - If they were truly sincere, they would have to be baptized, showing that their lives really belonged to Jesus Christ.

7. Your Comments: According to the Apostle Peter, what is the one thing that is necessary for a person to do to be forgiven of all his sins? What does the Holy Spirit do with those who sincerely repent of their self-centered lives, receiving Christ as their own Lord? If God could completely forgive those who had killed His only Son, can all other sins of men and women be forgiven?

Acts 2: 39. "For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away, all whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

8. What good news is presented here by Peter?

- The promise of salvation was for the Jews that believed, for their children, and for all of us who are far away, in terms of time and place.
- God calls people that they might be saved.
- Salvation is only for the Jews

9. Personal Opinions: What might be the most common way that God might call us so we may be saved?

- by visions and dreams
- by preaching of the gospel
- by the study of the Word of God
- through religious books
- by the encouragement of friends or family members
- other way: _____

Acts 2: 40. Peter made his appeal to them and with many other words he urged them, saying, "Save yourselves from the punishment coming on this wicked people!"

10. Opinions: Why did Peter testify and exhort the people?

- He understood that faith must come from an internal decision by any person.
- He felt very important, speaking to so many people.
- Unless the people answered with personal faith, they could not be saved.
- He saw that the society in which his listeners lived was perverse and far from God, in spite of being very religious.

11. Opinions: Do you suppose our present society is more holy and acceptable to God than was the Jewish society to which Peter spoke? What spiritual dangers face us today in our own society?

Acts 2: 41-42. Many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about three thousand people were added to the group that day. They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and in prayers.

12. How did those who had real faith respond to Peter's announcement of salvation?

- They were baptized as a testimony of their faith in Christ
- They became a part of the congregation of believers
- They spoke harshly against those who did not respond
- They continued receiving the instructions of the apostles
- They participated in the Lord's Supper with the rest of the believers in Christ
- They prayed to the saints in the church
- They participated in the prayers of the church

13. Opinions: What does God expect from each person who truly repents from his sins and receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS: (It is not required that you read your answer)

- It is hard for me to believe Peter's message.
- I believe that the spiritual principles described here in the Acts have no importance for us today.
- I believe, on the contrary, that Peter was leaving principles and practices that should guide us even today.
- It is easy for me to believe Peter's message, but it is difficult for me to accept it because it has so many implications for my own life.
- I ask that God give me understanding and that my faith may grow so that I will not be separated from the hope of salvation in Christ.
- I am grateful to God for his invitation, and I unconditionally accept it, trusting in Jesus alone for my salvation.
- I rejoice in already having received Jesus Christ as my only Lord and all-sufficient Savior.
- Some other personal feeling: _____.

THE JUMPING CRIPPLE

At times, it is difficult for us to understand and respond to God's divine plan for our lives. This is what happened to many Jews who heard the challenging message of Peter on the day of Pentecost. No matter! God continued to give them the message, under circumstances that none of them could have anticipated.



Bible Reading: Acts 3:1-21

Read Acts 3: 1-10. *One day Peter and John went to the Temple at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour for prayer. There at the Beautiful Gate, as it was called, was a man who had been lame all his life. Every day he was carried to the gate to beg for money from the people who were going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John going in, he begged them to give him something. They looked straight at him, and Peter said, "Look at us!" So he looked at them, expecting to get something from them. But Peter said to him, "I have no money at all, but I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth I order you to get up and walk!" Then he took him by his right hand and helped him up. At once the man's feet and ankles became strong; he jumped up, stood on his feet, and started walking around. Then he went into the Temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God. The people there saw him walking and praising God, and when they recognized him as the beggar who had sat at the Beautiful Gate, they were all surprised and amazed at what had happened to him.*

1. Describe the scene in which the miracle occurred:

- It happened in the Temple at the normal time of prayer.
- Friends had carried a lame man to the doorway of the Temple where he could beg.
- The Christians would have nothing to do with the Jewish temple, hating the Jews for killing Jesus.

2. Describe the experience of the two Christians:

- They entered the Temple to have a debate with the Jews.
- They entered the Temple in order to pray.
- They were upset when the lame man asked for money.
- They admitted that they did not have any money.
- They said they had something more precious than money: the power, given by Jesus, to heal him.
- Peter took the lame man's hand and ordered him to stand up in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

3. Opinions: Why did Peter heal the lame man?

- It was a carefully planned strategy by which Peter would get the attention of the crowd.
- It was a spontaneous occurrence, which happened because of the compassion the two Christians had for the lame man.
- It was part of God's plan, for the welfare of the lame man and, also, for the good of those who would hear Peter's message.

4. What happened as a result of these events?

- The lame man had faith, immediately stood up, and his feet and legs were given strength.
- Peter asked that the lame man give him an offering for having healed him.
- The lame man began to jump about like a child, shouting his praises to God who had healed him.
- The people could not believe that it was a real miracle.

Read Acts 3: 11-16. *As the man held on to Peter and John in Solomon's Porch, as it was called, the people were amazed and ran to them. When Peter saw the people, he said to them, "Fellow Israelites, why are you surprised at this, and why do you stare at us? Do you think that it was by means of our own power or godliness that we made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has given divine glory to his Servant Jesus. But you handed him over to the authorities, and you rejected him in Pilate's presence, even after Pilate had decided to set him free. He was holy and good, but you rejected him, and instead you asked Pilate to do you the favor of turning loose a murderer. You killed the one who leads to life, but God raised him from death----- and we are witnesses to this. It was the power of his name that gave strength to this lame man. What you see and know was done by faith in his name; it was faith in Jesus that has made him well, as you can all see.*

5. What did Peter say about Christ's resurrection?

- He said that God had raised Jesus from the dead.
- He affirmed that he and many others had seen the resurrection of Christ.
- He made it clear that the healing of the lame man, seen by everyone, was due to the power of the risen Christ.
- He did not consider Christ's resurrection to have much importance.

6. Your commentaries: What was Peter's hard message to the Jews? To whom did Peter give credit for the miracle?

Acts 3: 17-18. *“And now, my brothers, I know that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was due to your ignorance. God announced long ago through all the prophets that his Messiah had to suffer; and he made it come true in this way.*

7. What consolation could Peter give to the people who had killed the Author of Life?
- He called them “brothers,” as if they were a precious part of the same family.
 - He said that he understood they had crucified Jesus because of their ignorance.
 - He said that Christ’s death was of little importance.
 - He said that it was necessary for Christ to die, to fulfill the prophecies of a Savior who would suffer for the sins of the people.

Acts 3: 19-20. *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that He will forgive your sins. If you do, times of spiritual strength will come from the Lord, and He will send Jesus, who is the Messiah He has already chosen for you.*

8. How did Peter conclude his message to the people? He said that:
- They must repent and change their attitude completely.
 - On turning around in their spiritual lives, recognizing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, God would pardon and wipe out all their sins.
 - It was too late for God to forgive them.
 - To receive Christ would be the beginning of blessings that God will give to all who repent.

Read Acts 3: 20-21. *...times of spiritual strength will come from the Lord, and he will send Jesus, who is the Messiah he has already chosen for you. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for all things to be made new, as God announced through his holy prophets of long ago.*

9. Your comments: What did Peter say was to happen to Jesus before the end of time?

YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS: (An oral response is optional)

- I doubt that Christ lives and has power today.
- I have no doubt that all that was reported in this Bible passage actually took place and that Christ lives today and has the power to change the lives of those who have faith in Him.
- I understand the hardness of heart of the Jews. My heart is the same way when confronted with many of the things of God.
- I ask that God soften my heart so I can truly repent and receive full pardon of my sins.
- Although my faith may be weak, I believe that Jesus is the only one who can save me if I receive Him now.
- I thank God for having opened my heart and I believe in His Son as the true Author of my eternal life.

STUDY 4

THE JUDGES ARE JUDGED



The combined efforts of the enemies of Christ had failed. They did crucify Jesus, but it was quite evident that Christ had been raised from the dead. The disciples of Jesus, instead of showing fear and hiding, preached daily in the Temple, announcing salvation and eternal life through the risen Christ.

And, now, the leaders of Israel receive the news that a great crowd of people had gathered in the Temple to hear Peter and John, because of the healing of the lame man. Therefore, they arrested the two apostles in order to try them. Nonetheless, we shall see that the judges themselves were brought to trial!

Bible Reading: Acts 4:1-22

Read Acts 4: 1-4. *Peter and John were still speaking to the people when some priests, the officer in charge of the Temple guards, and some Sadducees arrived. They were annoyed because the two apostles were teaching the people that Jesus had risen from death, which proved that the dead will rise to life. So they arrested them and put them in jail until the next day, since it was already late. But many who heard the message believed; and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*

1. The priests taught that there is no resurrection of the dead. Now, why were they angry and what did they do?

- They were angry because the disciples were teaching the resurrection of the dead.
- Undoubtedly, the disciples spoke of the resurrection of Christ as a proof of the resurrection of the dead.
- They were angry because the disciples were taking up an unauthorized collection in the Temple.
- Thousands of Jews were believing the message of Peter and John.

2. Your opinions: What was probably the thing that bothered Jewish leaders the most?

- They feared losing their influence over the people to the spiritual leadership of the disciples of Christ.
- They did not like being accused of the death of Christ.
- They did not like to see laymen, men who were not ordained priests, teaching the

- people.
- They could not deny the fact that a miracle had been done in the name of Jesus Christ.
- They began to believe that they had crucified Jesus in vain and that the people would continue to follow him.

Acts 4: 5-7. *The next day the Jewish leaders, the elders, and the teachers of the Law gathered in Jerusalem. They met with the High Priest Annas and with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the others who belonged to the High Priest's family. They made the apostles stand before them and asked them, "How did you do this? What power do you have or whose name did you use?"*

3. Who formed the Supreme Court of the Jews according to these verses? Were not these the same men who had sentenced Jesus to death? (**See Mark 14:53**) What was their question to these two disciples of Jesus?

Mark 14:53. *Then Jesus was taken to the High Priest's house, where all the chief, the elders, and the teachers of the Law were gathering.*

Acts 4: 8-10. *Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, answered them, "Leaders of the people and elders: if we are being questioned today about the good deed done to the lame man and how he was healed, then you should all know, and all the people of Israel should know, that this man stands here before you completely well through the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified and whom God raised from death."*

4. Peter, in his answer:

- Trembled in the presence of the court.
- Demonstrated great courage before the judges.
- Noted that the two of them were being judged for having done something good to the lame man.
- Affirmed that the lame man now stood before them through his faith in the power of Jesus Christ.
- Asked their pardon for having preached in the Temple without their permission.
- Declared very plainly that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

5. Personal opinions: How is it possible that Peter, who had denied Christ in the presence of household servants now could speak with such courage to the leaders of the nation?

- Obviously, he was drunk.

- He had personally witnessed the power of Christ over death.
- He did not fear what they could do to him, because he knew that Christ had given him eternal life.
- He was angry at these religious leaders because of their pridefulness and error.
- He knew that God, the Just Judge, had already judged these men for having opposed Jesus Christ.
- He trusted completely in Jesus Christ, whether it be for life or for death.

Acts 4: 11. *Jesus is the one of whom the scripture says, 'The stone that you the builders despised turned out to be the most important of all.'*

6. Why did Peter mention to them this prophecy from the Old Testament?

- Because the prophecy had been fulfilled because of the rebellion of these "builders," the leaders of the Jewish people.
- Even when men fail, God has the victory.
- The Jewish leaders had rejected Christ as God's way to save the people.
- Peter himself was the Rock that God gave for the salvation of the people.
- Christ is the cornerstone for salvation for all who receive Him and do not reject Him.

Acts 4: 12. *Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.*

7. This is one of the most powerful declarations in all the Bible about our salvation. It teaches us that:

- It is necessary for us to be saved from our sins.
- The matter of our salvation is of little importance in the Bible.
- Salvation comes through the work of Christ, and not from the work of any other.
- We must save ourselves.
- We can be saved by the authority of many Christian heroes and great leaders.
- The major leaders of the Jews were completely mistaken in opposing Christ as the only Savior.

Acts 4: 13-18. *The members of the Council were amazed to see how bold Peter and John were and to learn that they were ordinary men of no education. They realized then that they had been companions of Jesus. But there was nothing that they could say, because they saw the man who had been healed standing there with Peter and John. So they told them to leave the Council room, and then they started discussing among themselves. "What shall we do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone in Jerusalem knows that this extraordinary miracle has*

been performed by them, and we cannot deny it. But to keep this matter from spreading any further among the people, let us warn these men never again to speak to anyone in the name of Jesus.” So they called them back in and told them that under no condition were they to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus.

8. The Jewish leaders came to the following conclusions:

- That these valiant men were certainly disciples of Jesus.
- It would be impossible to deny that the disciples had healed the crippled man by the authority of Jesus Himself.
- They decided to crucify the two disciples.
- They felt the only solution would be to threaten the men, telling them to keep silent about the resurrection and power of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4: 19-20. But Peter and John answered them, “You yourselves judge what is right in God’s sight ----- to obey you or to obey God. For we cannot stop speaking of what we ourselves have seen and heard.”

9. What answer did Peter give to the Jewish Supreme Court?

- He promised to speak no more about Jesus.
- He promised to keep preaching about the power of Jesus.
- He said that he had to obey God before obeying men.

Acts 4: 21-22. So the Council warned them even more strongly and then set them free. They saw that it was impossible to punish them, because the people were all praising God for what had happened. The man on whom this miracle of healing had been performed was over forty years old.

10. Your comment: Why did they turn the disciples loose?

YOUR PERSONAL FEELINGS: (The following is given to help you to define your relationship to God. It is not required that you read your answers.)

- I believe that it was Jesus’ power that healed the cripple.
- I believe that the disciples spoke with such authority because they knew that they were speaking the truth about Jesus.
- I believe there is no other name, under heaven, given to people, by which we can be saved.
- I believe it is necessary that all people receive Christ as Savior in order to be saved.
- I believe in Jesus Christ as my own personal Lord and Savior, trusting in Him to save me from my sins.

STUDY 5

BELIEVERS’ BAPTISM

What is the meaning of baptism? How should one be baptized? At what age should a person be baptized? What are the prerequisites for baptism?

In our days, there is much confusion about baptism. Different Christian churches and denominations have very different opinions regarding baptism. Again, we ask, how can we know what is the truth?

The answer, for us, is simple. We must see what the Bible says, for it is the pure Word of God. If the Bible teaches what we believe, very good. If it teaches something which differs from our long-held opinions, let us obey the Word of God and not our own ideas.

Bible Reading: Acts 8:1-13, 26-40

Read Acts 8:1-3. And Saul approved of his murder. That very day the church in Jerusalem began to suffer cruel persecution. All the believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. Some devout men buried Stephen, mourning for him in loud cries. But Saul tried to destroy the church; going from house to house, he dragged out the believers, both men and women, and threw them into jail.

1. According to the text, who was the first Christian martyr? How did the Christians suffer? What did many Christians do to avoid being arrested? Who was the great enemy of the Church?

Acts 8:4. The believers who were scattered went everywhere, preaching the message.

2. The Christians that fled Jerusalem:

- Kept quiet about their faith.
- Publicly spoke of salvation through Christ.

Acts 8: 5. Philip went to the principal city in Samaria and preached the Messiah to the people there.



3. Who was Philip? Where did he go from Jerusalem? What did he do when he got to the Samaritan town? What did he speak to them about?

4. Your Opinion: The most important message is:

- That all people should be more religious.
- That all people should be baptized.
- That all people should receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

Acts 8: 6-8. *The crowds paid close attention to what Philip said, as they listened to him and saw the miracles that he performed. Evil spirits came out from many people with a loud cry, and many paralyzed and lame people were healed. So there was a great joy in that city.*

5. The people of the Samaritan town:

- Received enthusiastically the message of Christ.
- Opposed Philip.
- Rejoiced on receiving the message.

Acts 8: 9-11. *A man named Simon lived there, who for some time had astounded the Samaritans with his magic. He claimed that he was someone great, and everyone in the city, from all classes of society, paid close attention to him. "He is that power of God known as 'The Great Power,'" they said. They paid this attention to him because for such a long time he had astonished them with his magic.*

6. What was the religious and spiritual condition of the town? What kind of a man was Simon?

Acts 8: 12. *But when they believed Philip's message about the good news of the Kingdom of God and about Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

7. Your comments: What evidence is there that the Samaritans had abandoned their practice of witchcraft? At what age were the Samaritans baptized? Did they baptize their babies? How many of those who truly believed were baptized?

Acts 8: 13. *Simon himself also believed; and after being baptized, he stayed close to Philip and was astounded when he saw the great wonders and miracles that were being performed.*

8. Simon, who was famous for his witchcraft:

- Opposed Philip.
- Believed in Jesus Christ, was baptized and followed Philip.

Acts 8: 26-27. *An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get ready and go south to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This road is not used nowadays.) So Philip got ready and went. Now an Ethiopian eunuch, who was an important official in charge of the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia, was on his way home. He had been to Jerusalem to worship God and was going back home in his carriage.*

9. Discussion: Where was Philip sent? How did Philip respond to his orders?

Acts 8: 28. *As he rode along, he was reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.*

10. What do you find in this text that tells us that this man was interested in the things of God?

Acts 8: 29-31. *The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to that carriage and stay close to it." Philip ran over and heard him reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. He asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The official replied, "How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?" And he invited Philip to climb up and sit in the carriage with him.*

11. The Ethiopian was a man:

- Whose pride would not let him discover the truth of God.
- Who wanted to learn from the Bible.
- Who asked for help to understand the Bible.

Acts 8: 32-33. *The passage of scripture which he was reading was this: "He was like a sheep that is taken to be slaughtered, like a lamb that makes no sound when its wool is cut off. He did not say a word. He was humiliated, and justice was denied him. No one will be able to tell about his descendants, because his life on earth has come to an end."*

12. The passage that he was reading,

- Was a prophecy about the suffering of Christ for our sins.
- Only spoke about the life of the prophet.

Acts 8: 36. *As they traveled down the road, they came to a place where there was some water, and the official said, "Here is some water. What is to keep me from being baptized?"*

13. Comments: What evidence do we have that the Ethiopian had sincerely received Christ as his Lord?

Acts 8: 37. *"You can," Philip answered, "if you believe with all your heart." And the eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*

14. What single prerequisite did Philip give before the Ethiopian could be baptized? To what degree should we believe in Christ, according to the text? What was the testimony of the Ethiopian?

Acts 8: 38-40. *The official ordered the carriage to stop, and both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official did not see him again, but continued on his way, full of joy. Philip found himself in Azotus; he went on to Caesarea, and on the way he preached the Good News in every town.*

15. Opinions: Why did the Ethiopian go on his way rejoicing?

- He was glad not to be troubled more by Philip.
- He had truly believed in Christ and had demonstrated his faith by means of his believer's baptism.
- He had good news about Jesus Christ to give to his family and friends in Ethiopia.

PERSONAL EVALUATION: Have you believed in Jesus Christ with all your heart? Have you been baptized as a personal testimony of your faith in Jesus? Have you been immersed in the waters of baptism as a symbol of your death to your life before knowing Christ? Do you want to do so now?



TESTIFYING TO A KING

The New Testament, and Christian history as well, relate the experiences of many thousands of people who came to experience the power of God in their lives through their faith in Jesus Christ. The great Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, was known before as Saul.

Three times in the book of Acts, we have a record of Paul's personal experience of salvation. The following is one of those accounts, as Paul spoke to a king. Paul speaks to him, being in chains. He was on the way to Rome where he would defend himself before Caesar himself for being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Bible Reading: Acts 26:1-19

Acts 26: 1-3. *Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak on your own behalf." Paul stretched out his hand and defended himself as follows: "King Agrippa! I consider myself fortunate that today I am to defend myself before you from all the things the Jews accuse me of, particularly since you know so well all the Jewish customs and disputes. I ask you, then, to listen to me with patience."*

1. Discussion: What did Paul say to show his respect for King Agrippa?

Acts 26: 4-8. *"All the Jews know how I have lived ever since I was young. They know how I have spent my whole life, at first in my own country and then in Jerusalem. They have always known, if they are willing to testify, that from the very first I have lived as a member of the strictest party of our religion, the Pharisees. And now I stand here to be tried because of the hope I have in the promise that God made to our ancestors-----the very thing that the twelve tribes of our people hope to receive, as they worship God day and night. And it is because of this hope, Your Majesty, that I am being accused by the Jews! Why do you who are here find it impossible to believe that God raises the dead?"*

2. Paul begins by affirming that

- He had been a faithful, religious Jew all his life.
- He was in chains because of his hope in God's promise given to His people.
- The promise had to do with the authority of a certain Church.
- The promise had to do with the resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 26: 9-11. *“I myself thought that I should do everything I could against the cause of Jesus of Nazareth. That is what I did in Jerusalem. I received authority from the chief priests and put many of God’s people in prison; and when they were sentenced to death, I also voted against them. Many times I had them punished in the synagogues and tried to make them deny their faith. I was so furious with them that I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.”*

3. Before his conversion, what was Paul’s attitude about Jesus Christ?

- He thought that it was good to oppose the name and authority of Jesus of Nazareth.
- He lived according to his convictions, hunting down all who believed in Jesus.
- He thought it made little difference if one believed in Jesus or not.

Acts 26: 12-15. *“It was for this purpose that I went to Damascus with authority and orders from the chief priests. It was on the road at midday, Your Majesty, that I saw a light much brighter than the sun, coming from the sky and shining around me and the men traveling with me. All of us fell to the ground, and I heard a voice say to me in Hebrew, ‘Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me? You are hurting yourself by hitting back, like an ox kicking against its owner’s stick.’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. And the Lord answered, I am Jesus, whom you persecute.”*

4. Describe Paul’s experience:

- Paul went with documents of authority to arrest Christians in Damascus.
- Paul’s companions saw a brilliant light, but Paul didn’t see anything.
- Paul heard a voice from heaven which called him by name.
- The voice asked why Paul was persecuting Him.
- Paul knew immediately whose voice it was.
- Paul doubted who it was, and asked who He was.

Acts 26: 15-18. *“Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. And the Lord answered, ‘I am Jesus whom you persecute. But get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant. You are to tell others what you have seen of me today and what I will show you in the future. I will rescue you from the people of Israel and from the Gentiles to whom I will send you. You are to open their eyes and turn them from the darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God, so that through their faith in me they will have their sins forgiven and receive their place among God’s chosen people.”*

5. What was Paul told?

- That the voice was of Jesus Christ Himself.
- To get up from the ground.
- Not to worry; what Paul had done before was unimportant.
- That Christ would give him a new purpose in life.

6. Personal Opinions: When Christ saves someone today, which of the following might be reasons that Christ saves that person? So the person:

- Can give testimony of one’s experience with God.
- Can serve to open the spiritual eyes of the people.
- Can help other people leave the darkness to enter into God’s light.
- Can rescue people from the power of Satan in order to experience the power of God.
- Can help people receive full pardon from all of their sins.
- Can help people find a place among others who have been saved through their faith in Jesus Christ.

Acts 26: 19. *“And so, King Agrippa, I did not disobey the vision I had from heaven.”*

7. Discussion: According to Paul, what did he do in response to his understanding of God’s plan for his life?

8. Personal Testimonies: It is appropriate to conclude this study of Paul’s testimony by hearing the testimonies of those who live today. The teacher, and any of those taking the study, are invited to express in a few words what Jesus Christ has come to mean in their lives.