

The Bride of Christ

Lesson Twenty-Six

Acts 2-8

Before His ascension, the Lord promised that His followers would receive a gift from God to help them as they witnessed to others about Him. That gift was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to do and say great things. The early church flourished and prospered. The Gospel message was taken to the Jews and also to the Gentiles. This lesson will deal with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit, some episodes concerning church members, and the first martyr of the church.

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON PENTECOST

Acts 2

The disciples had gathered together in Jerusalem as Jesus had told them. He had said they were to wait there for the special gift God would give to them. **Read Acts 2:1-4** for information concerning the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

What do they hear? _____

What do they see? _____

What do they do? _____

Once these things occur, it does not take long for the news to spread. Soon they are speaking to crowds of people.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now, when this was talked about, the crowd came together and was confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language. They were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how is it we hear in our own language? We do hear them speak in our languages the wonderful works of God." And they were all amazed and were in doubt, saying one to another, "What does this mean?" Others, mocking, said, "These men are full of new wine."

What is happening? _____

Why is this difficult for them to accept? _____

What explanation do some of the people come up with? _____

Why is this not a valid explanation? _____

Now Peter will address the crowd and give the real explanation of what has happened. **Read Acts 2:14-36.**

How does he address the intoxication charge? _____

Which prophet is quoted? _____

Who killed Jesus? _____

About whom had David prophesied? _____

What has God done with Jesus after His death? _____

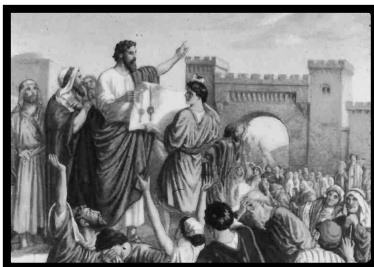
What has Jesus received from the Father? _____

What has Jesus done with this gift? _____

What is Peter's explanation for the ability of the disciples to speak other languages? _____

Who is Jesus? _____

Peter's sermon has not fallen on deaf ears. The response of the crowd brings about the first Christian congregation.



Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and your children and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord, our God, shall call." Then they that gladly received His word were baptized, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. Fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

What does the crowd want to know? _____

What is Peter's response? _____

How many new believers were there that day? _____

THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN

Acts 3,4

The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to perform miracles. The miracles brought about faith and brought about the giving of glory to God. **Read Acts 3:1-11** for details of one of the miracles performed by the disciples.



Where are Peter and John going? _____

Whom do they encounter? _____

What does he ask of the disciples? _____

Do the disciples grant his request? _____

What do the disciples do? _____

What is the man's reaction? _____

And when Peter saw it, he answered the people, "You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you look so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified His Son Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied Him in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just and desired a murderer to be released to you; and you killed the Prince of Life, whom God has raised from the dead. We are witnesses to this. And through faith in His name, He has given this man whom you see and know this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers. Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Many of them who heard the word believed. The number of the men was about five thousand.

Peter uses the opportunity created by the miracle to do what? _____

How many men were converted at this time? _____

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

Acts 4,5

Not all of the people in the fellowship of believers had their hearts right with God. Some were motivated by greed and selfishness. Ananias and Sapphira were a husband and wife who exhibited these characteristics. Most of the people in the early church were extremely generous. **Read Acts 4:32-37.**

What do the believers share? _____

What do the people do from time to time? _____

Are any of the believers in need? _____

Barnabas is an example of the right attitude of a believer toward his possessions. Ananias and Sapphira are examples of a wrong attitude.

But a certain man, named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the price, his wife also knew about it, and brought part of the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own power? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died. And great fear came on all those who heard these things. The young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

Note that the problem with Ananias and Sapphira is that they were dishonest about what they were doing. When the money was brought, it was with the intention of making people believe that it was the full price they had received. If they had wanted to keep some of the money, it would have been okay. But the sin is in that they were trying to deceive the disciples and God Himself while getting praise for their generosity.

What has Ananias done that is wrong? _____

What happens to him? _____

Remember that Sapphira is also in on this scheme. **Read Acts 5:7-11** to see what happens to her.

When does Sapphira come? _____

What does Peter ask her? _____

Does she tell the truth? _____

What happens to her? _____

STEPHEN

Acts 6,7

The early church continued to grow rapidly. This growth did not go unnoticed by those who were opposed to the teachings of Jesus. This opposition eventually led to

violence against the followers of Jesus. The first episode of a person dying for faith in Jesus is the story of Stephen. Before that is dealt with, it is time to take a look at the organizational problems that arose in the church and the solutions to those problems.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them and said, "It is not right for us to neglect the Word of God and serve tables. Therefore, choose from among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." The saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolas, a convert from Antioch.

What problem has arisen? _____

What is the solution? _____

Will the Twelve see to the problem personally? _____

Why not? _____

Stephen was one of the seven appointed to take care of the distribution of the food. Of the seven, only Stephen and Philip are mentioned again. The rest of this section will cover the events surrounding the death of Stephen. **Read Acts 6:7-7:1.**

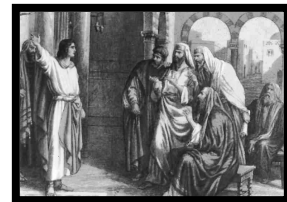
Which group, surprisingly, had large numbers of converts to the faith? _____

What false charges are brought against Stephen? _____

Who else had these same false charges brought against Him? _____

What does Stephen look like as the charges are leveled against him? _____

Stephen does answer the charges brought against him.



But Stephen answered for himself and spoke of the things that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had done to their fathers and how their fathers had always resisted the will of God. At last he said, "You stiff-necked, you do always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain those who predicted the coming of the Just One, of whom you have been now the betrayers and murders – you who have received the Law and have not kept it." When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart; and they gnashed their teeth at him.

What does Stephen accuse them of? _____

Who do they take after? _____

In what way? _____

What is the reaction of the people to what Stephen has said? _____

Read Acts 7:55-8:1 to see what happens next.

What does Stephen see? _____

What do the people do to Stephen? _____

At whose feet are the clothes of the witnesses placed? _____

What are the last words of Stephen? _____

Who gave approval to this stoning? _____

THE EUNUCH OF ETHIOPIA

Acts 8

After the martyrdom of Stephen, the church began to come under great persecution. In fact, the Bible says the persecution broke out the day that Stephen was killed. The man named Saul, mentioned above, worked hard to have believers thrown into prison.

Philip was the other one of the seven appointed to serve in the church that is spoken of later in the Bible. This section deals with aspects of Philip's ministry.

At that time there was a great persecution against the church that was in Jerusalem. They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and dragging off men and women to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. The people with one accord gave heed to those things that Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles that he did.

To where does Philip go? _____

Is he well received? _____

There is a person with whom the Lord wants Philip to speak concerning Jesus. **Read Acts 8:26-35** for more information.

Where is Philip to go? _____

Who tells him to do this? _____

Whom does he meet? _____

What is this man doing? _____

What does Philip ask the man? _____

What is the man's reply? _____

What does Philip do? _____

As they went on their way, they came to some water. The Eunuch said, "See, here is water. Why should I not be baptized?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." He answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he commanded the chariot to stand still. They went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they were coming up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, so that the eunuch saw him no more. He went on his way rejoicing.

What request does the Ethiopian make of Philip? _____

Does Philip do as the man asks? _____

In what manner does Philip leave? _____

REVIEW

1. What gift do the disciples receive from God? _____
2. What amazing sign accompanies the reception of the gift? _____
3. Who explains this sign to the people? _____
4. What is the result of Peter's sermon? _____
5. What miracle do Peter and John perform? _____
6. Who die for their attempt to deceive God and the church? _____
7. What problem arises in the church? _____

8. Who is the first martyr of the church? _____
9. Who leads the persecution of the church? _____
10. What happens to the church after the death of Stephen? _____
11. To whom does Philip witness? _____
12. What is the result of this witness? _____