

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. **(Slide 1)**

What do they hear? Sound of violent wind blowing

What do they see? Tongues of fire

What do they do? Speak in other tongues

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? People from all over the world are hearing the Gospel in their own language

Why is this difficult for them to accept? The disciples are Galilean

What explanation do some of the people come up with? They are drunk

Why is this not a valid explanation? *Getting drunk does not give anyone the ability to speak another language*

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

How does he address the intoxication charge? *It is too early in the day*

Which prophet is quoted? *Joel*

Who killed Jesus? *these people with the help of wicked men*

About whom had David prophesied? *Jesus*

What has God done with Jesus after His death? *Raised Him*

What has Jesus received from the Father? *The Holy Spirit*

What has Jesus done with this gift? *Poured it out on the disciples*

What is Peter's explanation for the ability of the disciples to speak other languages? *The gift of the Holy Spirit*

Who is Jesus? *both Lord and Christ*

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 shall we do?"*

What is Peter's response? *Repent and be baptized*

How many new believers were there that day? Three thousand

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. (Slide 3)



Where are Peter and John going? To the temple

Whom do they encounter? Crippled (lame) beggar

What does he ask of the disciples? He wants some money

Do the disciples grant his request? no

What do the disciples do? Heal him

What is the man's reaction? Jumps and praises God

And when Peter saw it, he answered the people, 4 "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? Witness about Jesus

How many men were converted at this time? Five thousand

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.** (Slide 5, 6, 7)

What do the believers share? Money and possessions

What do the people do from time to time? Sell land and give money to the apostles

Are any of the believers in need? no

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, 8 "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? Kept back money and lied about it

What happens to him? dies

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

When does Sapphira come? Three hours later

What does Peter ask her? "Is this the price of the land?"

Does she tell the truth? no

What happens to her? dies

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? *The Grecian Jews feel their people are being neglected*

What is the solution? *Appoint seven men to deal with the problem*

Will the Twelve see to the problem personally? *no*

Why not? *They are busy with ministry*

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? *priests*

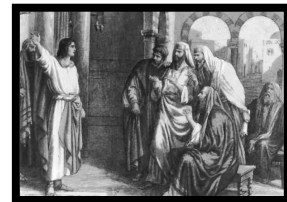
What false charges are brought against Stephen? *Blasphemy*

Who else had these same false charges brought against Him? *Jesus*

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

Stephen does answer the charges brought against him.

But Stephen answered for himself⁹ 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? *Betraying and murdering Jesus*

Who do they take after? *Their fathers*

In what way? *Their fathers killed the prophets*

What is the reaction of the people to what Stephen has said? *They are angry*

Read Acts 7:55-8:1 to see what happens next. (Slide 10)

What does Stephen see? *Jesus at the right hand of God*

What do the people do to Stephen? *Stone him*

At whose feet are the clothes of the witnesses placed? *Saul's*

What are the last words of Stephen? *Do not hold this sin against them*

Who gave approval to this stoning? *Saul*

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 **11** 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? *Samaria*

Is he well received? *yes*

There is a person with whom the Lord wants Philip to speak concerning Jesus. **Read Acts 8:26-35** for more information. (Slide 12)

Where is Philip to go? South on the desert road

Who tells him to do this? An angel

Whom does he meet? An Ethiopian official

What is this man doing? Reading the book of Isaiah

What does Philip ask the man? "Do you understand what you are reading?"

What is the man's reply? no

What does Philip do? Explains it

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? He wants to be baptized

Does Philip do as the man asks? yes

In what manner does Philip leave? The Spirit takes him away

REVIEW

1. What gift do the disciples receive from God? *The Holy Spirit*
2. What amazing sign accompanies the reception of the gift? *Speaking in tongues*
3. Who explains this sign to the people? *Peter*
4. What is the result of Peter's sermon? *Three thousand are saved*
5. What miracle do Peter and John perform? *They heal a lame man*
6. Who die for their attempt to deceive God and the church? *Ananias and Sapphira*
7. What problem arises in the church? *A need for people to serve others (Grecian
Jews felt neglected)*
8. Who is the first martyr of the church? *Stephen*
9. Who leads the persecution of the church? *Saul*
10. What happens to the church after the death of Stephen? *persecution*
11. To whom does Philip witness? *Ethiopian*
12. What is the result of this witness? *Baptism of this man (salvation for the Ethiopian)*