

The Good News of the Kingdom



JUNIOR NOTES — 9 to 12 Years

STAGE FIVE OF FIVE STAGES

CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 121, ST. AGNES 5097, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Handwritten signature and number 7

The Good News of the Kingdom

**JUNIOR NOTES — 9 to 12 Years
STAGE FIVE OF FIVE STAGES**

**CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 121, ST AGNES 5097: SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

FOREWORD

Our lessons last year helped us to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ, and his teachings which we must understand, believe and obey. We learned how that he gave his life in sacrifice, that all who believe the Gospel he taught and are baptised might be saved.

Now this year we are going to study the exciting events which took place as the apostles spread the wonderful news of salvation in the name of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom which he will set up when he returns to the earth. Beginning at Jerusalem, we will follow Peter and the other apostles as they taught the Gospel there and then took it into the areas of Judea. We will go up into Samaria with Philip as he preaches the Truth there. We will also see how some of the faithful followers of Jesus, like Stephen, lost their lives because they believed in Jesus Christ.

Then we will meet Paul. We will see how he was converted from persecuting the followers of Jesus to becoming one of Jesus' greatest followers. We will travel with Paul throughout Asia, Greece and the Mediterranean Sea to Italy as he tirelessly taught the Gospel.

We are sure that you will find this year's lessons very exciting. They are taken from the book of the Bible called Acts, which is so called because it tells of the different acts or events that took place as the apostles went forth preaching the Gospel.

The book of "The Acts of the Apostles" was written by Luke, the disciple who was a doctor. He also wrote the Gospel of Luke which is a record of the life of Jesus.

As you read your lesson notes this year read also the chapters referred to in Acts and do not forget to use your Bible maps. There are usually maps in the back of your Bible. So follow closely the journeys of the apostles as it will help you to understand what is happening in each place.

The Committee

The Good News of the Kingdom

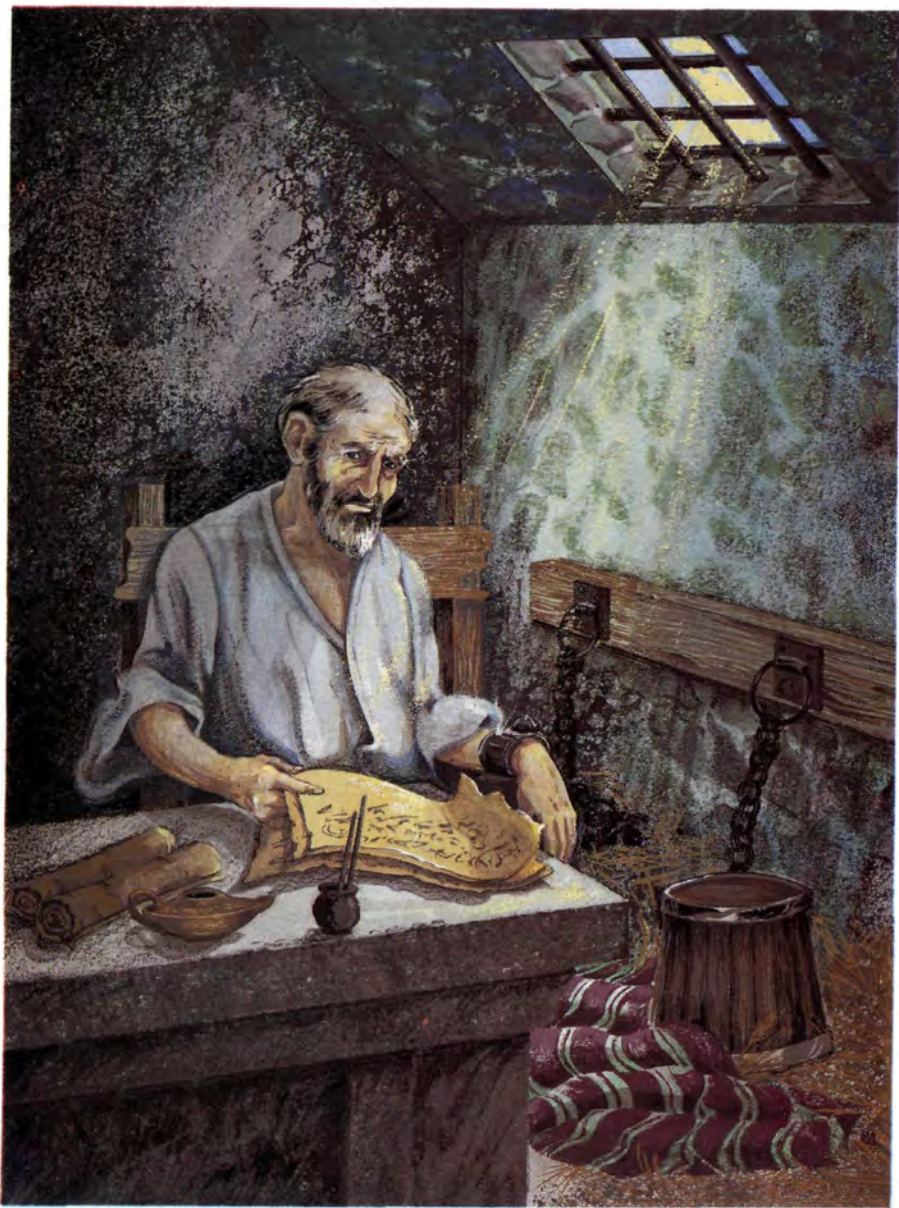
STAGE FIVE OF FIVE STAGES

Junior Notes 9-12 Years

CONTENTS

Foreword.....	2
1. The Calling of Another Apostle	5
2. The Day of Pentecost.....	10
3. The Healing of the Lame Man	15
4. Ananias and Sapphira	20
5. Stephen - Faithful Unto Death.....	24
6. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.....	30
7. How Christ Converted Saul	35
8. The Raising of Tabitha	40
9. Peter Baptises Cornelius the Gentile.....	44
10. Peter Escapes from Prison.....	49
11. Paul and Barnabas Preach the Gospel in Cyprus	54
12. Paul and Barnabas Preach at Antioch	58
13. Suffering For the Truth	63
14. Paul and Silas at Philippi.....	69
15. God Frees Paul and Silas at Philippi.....	73
16. Paul At Athens	77
17. Paul At Corinth.....	82
18. The Truth Comes to Ephesus.....	86
19. Eutychus Falls Asleep.....	90
20. To Jerusalem and Bondage.....	95
21. A Captive in Caesarea	99
22. Paul Defends the Truth Before Agrippa	103
23. Shipwreck on the Way to Rome.....	107
24. Paul on Melita.....	112
25. Paul in Rome.....	115

THE APOSTLE PAUL IN PRISON



"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"

—2nd Tim. 4:7-8

1. THE CALLING OF ANOTHER APOSTLE

"From us must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection"

Aim

To show that Jesus went to heaven after his resurrection and will shortly return; and how the apostles chose another disciple to replace Judas Iscariot.

Synopsis

The 'Acts of the Apostles' is that book of the Bible, written by Luke, which tells us of the things the apostles did after Jesus was taken up into heaven.



Acts 1

THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST TO HIS APOSTLES (vv1-8)

After his resurrection, Jesus spent forty days on the earth with his apostles and other disciples before ascending into heaven. During this time he told them some of the wonderful things about the Kingdom, which he is to set up for God upon the earth.

At the end of these forty days the apostles asked the Lord if he would set up the Kingdom and rule as King now. Jesus replied that it was not for them to know the exact time that this would happen. However, the apostles had an important work to do while he was away. They must preach the Gospel all over the Roman world. The Lord told them that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to help them.

4 The word “apostle” means “one sent”. They would be sent to teach both the Jews and the Gentiles throughout the Roman empire the things that they had seen and heard and learned from the Lord Jesus Christ. The message which the apostles taught is called “the Gospel”, which means “good news” or “glad tidings”.
5 { The Gospel is the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. It is certainly good news to all who hear it because if they believe it they will be saved (see Instructor question 72).

JESUS ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN (vv 9-11)

Jesus had finished telling the apostles of the work they were to do when suddenly he was taken up from them into heaven. While they gazed in amazement into heaven, Jesus disappeared from sight in a cloud, and two angels dressed in white appeared and said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (v11). These words are so important that it would be good for you to learn them off by heart. The angels were telling the apostles what Jesus himself had been teaching them – that he would go to sit at God’s right hand in heaven. They had seen him go with their own eyes and he would just as surely return to the earth to set up the Kingdom of God. This time is very close at hand, and those who are looking for him will soon see him.

THE DISCIPLES GATHER IN THE UPPER ROOM (vv 12-14).

6 Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives which is just outside the walls of Jerusalem. The eleven apostles
7 went back to the city to the upper room in which they were living. The Lord had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the Holy Spirit power to be given them as God had promised (1:4,5). There they continued to worship and pray to God, with many other disciples, about one hundred and twenty altogether.

ANOTHER APOSTLE MUST BE CHOSEN(vv 15-22)

While they were gathered together, Peter pointed out that another apostle must be chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot. You remember that Judas had wickedly betrayed Jesus to the Jewish leaders and they had crucified him. When Judas realised what he had done he went out and hanged himself (Matt. 27:5).

Jesus had said that, when he returned, the twelve apostles would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel ⁹ (Matt. 19:28). So another apostle was needed to make up the twelve.

MATTHIAS IS CHOSEN (vv 23-26)

From those that were suitable, two disciples were chosen – Joseph called Barsabas and Matthias. It was a very important decision to make. So the eleven apostles turned to God in prayer. They prayed that He would help them make the right choice, for He knew what was in the hearts of men (vv24-25). After they had prayed, they cast lots and Matthias ⁸ was chosen. God had answered their prayer. From then on Matthias was counted with the other eleven to make up the twelve apostles.

LESSON FOR US

Let us be like the other faithful apostles and look for the Lord Jesus Christ to return from heaven. God's reward will be for all those who believe and obey Him. ¹⁰

Let us not be like wicked Judas who threw away the wonderful honour of being one of Jesus' apostles. He chose praise of men and love of money instead of eternal life in God's Kingdom.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN APOSTLE (vv20-22)

Peter saw from the Old Testament Scriptures that another should be appointed to take the place of Judas (v20 cp Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8). In selecting another apostle however it

was necessary that the person should –

- (1) have been a constant follower of Jesus during his ministry (v21)
- (2) have followed from the time of the baptism of John the Baptist up to the resurrection of Christ (v22)
- (3) have witnessed Jesus alive after his resurrection (v22).

We can see why the one chosen had to have these special qualifications. He was to go out and convince people that the same Jesus whom the Jews had crucified was raised from the dead. The good news of the Kingdom depended on the resurrection of Jesus and the hope of his return.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *How long was Jesus with his apostles and other disciples after his resurrection?*
2. *What did the apostles hope that Jesus would do after his resurrection?*
3. *What work did Jesus leave his apostles to do?*
- ✓ 4. *What does the word "apostle" mean?*
- ✓ 5. *What is the Gospel?*
6. *Where did the apostles go after Jesus ascended into heaven?*
- ✓ 7. *What had the Lord told the apostles to wait for?*
8. *Who was chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot?*
9. *What reward will the twelve apostles have in the Kingdom?*
10. *Who else will God reward when Christ returns from heaven?*

Detailed Answers

1. (a) *What did the angels tell the eleven apostles on the Mount of Olives?*
(b) *What do these words mean to us?*
- ✓ 2. *Tell how another apostle was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

3. *What did Jesus discuss with his disciples during the forty days after his resurrection?*
4. *Why was it necessary to choose another apostle to replace Judas Iscariot?*
5. *What are the qualifications of an apostle?*

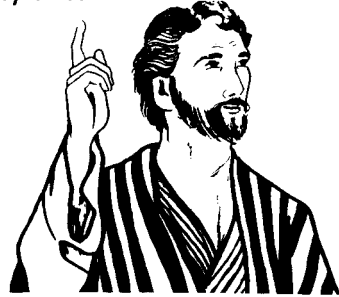


2. THE DAY OF PENTECOST

*“Repent and be baptised everyone of you
in the name of Jesus Christ for the
remission of sins”*

Aim

*To show how the apostles
received the power of the Holy
Spirit and how they used this
power to teach the Gospel to
the visitors who had come to
Jerusalem for the feasts.*



Synopsis

It was Passover time when Christ was crucified. Fifty days later another feast was held in Jerusalem. This was called Pentecost (meaning 50th in Greek). Jewish visitors from all over the world had come there to keep the feast. The apostles were there too, for the Lord had told them a few days earlier to wait in Jerusalem.

Acts 2

THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (vv1-4)

2. { The apostles were all together on the day of the Feast. Suddenly, with a sound like a mighty rushing wind, which filled all the house where they were sitting, there appeared in the room cloven tongues like fire, which rested upon each of them. This was a sign that God had given to them the power of the Holy Spirit. Then the apostles began to speak in other tongues or languages.

WHAT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The word “holy” means “set apart” or “separate” and the “spirit” is God’s power. When God gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles He was giving them power which was “set apart”

Peter now told them that God had raised him from the dead. This was something that had never happened before. Even great King David, whom they honoured so much, was dead and buried and his sepulchre was their in Jerusalem to prove it. David was certainly dead, sleeping in the dust of the

8. earth. David had never ascended into heaven. Yet this man
7. Jesus, God had raised from the dead and he would never die
again. Surely such a wonderful event, which the apostles themselves could prove (for they had seen him alive and had spoken to him), would make them believe that he was truly the Messiah. Peter spoke for a long time and convinced many of them that what he said was true. When the people heard these things, they were “pricked in their hearts” and asked Peter and the other apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (v 37). They felt ashamed when they realised how wrong they had been.

9. { Peter told them, “Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v 38).

The word “repent” means “to change your ways”. Not only must we be sorry for what we have done, but also we must change our ways to do that which is right in God’s sight.

11. The people were glad when they heard Peter’s words and that day about three thousand of them were baptised. God blessed the apostles with the power of the “Holy Spirit” to show that He was with them and this caused so many to listen to their message. What a wonderful beginning to the preaching of the Gospel.

LESSON FOR US

You are learning the Gospel as you read the Bible and do your Sunday School lessons. As you learn you will see that we all need to repent and to obey God. When we believe this we must be baptised and continue in His ways, until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

Today the power of the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues and perform miracles is not available to people. God gave this power only to the apostles and their immediate followers, so that they could do signs and miracles to convince people that God had sent them. Only the apostles could pass on this power to those whom they saw to be worthy disciples. So, when the apostles died, the passing on of the power of the Holy Spirit ceased. Today we have the Bible, which is God's Word, instead.

The Bible was written by men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit (see Instructor questions 6 and 7). God wants us to read and study His Word so that we will understand the Gospel and be saved. The Lord Jesus Christ told his disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel: He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." (Mark 16:16).

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *Which feast was held 50 days after the Feast of Passover?*
2. ✓ *How did the apostles receive the Holy Spirit?*
3. *What could the apostles do when they first received the Holy Spirit?*
4. *Why was the Holy Spirit given to the apostles?*
5. *What did some of the people think had happened to the apostles?*
6. *What things had Jesus done before which should have proved he was the Messiah?*
7. *They had crucified Jesus, but what wonderful thing had God done?*
8. *Where is King David now?*
9. ✓ *When Peter had spoken to the people, what did they ask the apostles?*
10. ✓ *What did Peter tell the people to do?*
11. *How many people were baptised on the Day of Pentecost?*

Detailed Answers

1. (a) *What wonderful things happened to the twelve apostles in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost?*
(b) *Why were the visitors to Jerusalem at the Feast of Pentecost amazed when the apostles spoke to them?*
- ② *Why did God give the power of the Holy Spirit to the apostles?*
3. *Wicked men had crucified Jesus.*
(a) *What wonderful thing had God done?*
(b) *How did the people feel when they heard these things?*
(c) *What does it mean "to repent"?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

4. *What is the Holy Spirit?*
5. *Why is the Holy Spirit not available today?*
6. *What has God provided for us today instead of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?*

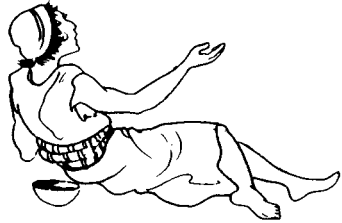
Act 2: 4

3. THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN

“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”

Aim

To show how the apostles used the power of God (through healing the lame man) to preach the Gospel.



Synopsis

Many people in Jerusalem were beginning to believe that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead. This was the first part of the good news which the apostles were teaching. It gave people a hope of being saved from death themselves. The miracles which the apostles did in the name of Jesus Christ made many happy, but some still refused to believe.

Acts 3 and 4:1-22

AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE (3:1-11)

One afternoon, about 3 o'clock, or in Jewish time about the ninth hour, Peter and John were on their way to the temple. This was the time of the day when prayer was offered there. It was a beautiful temple built by Herod many years before, and the entrance to the courtyard was called the Beautiful Gate. At this gate beggars sat daily, hoping to receive money from those who entered in. |

As the two apostles approached this Beautiful Gate of the temple they saw a lame man there who asked the people for alms, or gifts of money. This man had been lame from birth and he was now forty years old (4:22). Unable to go out and work for a living, he was carried each day by his friends to this place to beg. He had been laid there for so many years that many regular visitors to the temple knew him. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for a gift. | x

Peter realised that here was an opportunity to heal the man and show the power of God and preach the Gospel. "Look on us," commanded Peter, fixing his eyes on the man. The lame man looked hopefully at Peter thinking that he would be given some money. He did not know that he was about to receive a far greater blessing. Peter went on to say, "Silver and gold have I none: but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Peter then took the man by the hand and helped him to his feet. Immediately the bones in his feet and ankles were strengthened and leaping, he stood up and walked! How excited the man was as he walked and leaped with them into the temple, praising God as he went!

We can imagine how amazed the people were as they saw this man, whom they all knew as a cripple, walking and leaping in the temple. Everyone ran to see the man and to hear what wonderful thing had happened to him.

PETER EXPLAINS THE MIRACLE (vv. 12-18)

When Peter saw the crowd gathering he called out, "Why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us as though by our own power we had made this man to walk?" Peter went on to tell the people that the lame man had been healed through faith in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He was the one whom the Jews had put to death a few weeks before. Many who now listened to Peter had not long before, at the trial of Jesus, cried, "Crucify him!" But God had raised him from the dead and now they had seen a great miracle done in his name.

REPENT AND BE CONVERTED (vv. 19-21)

Remember how Peter had told the people on the Day of Pentecost to "repent and be baptised"? Here again Peter taught the Jews that God would forgive them if they repented and turned back to Him (which is what "converted" means).

Peter wanted them to be ashamed of putting Jesus Christ to death and to have a change of heart and mind. The people

had seen this wonderful miracle with their own eyes; it was now up to them to do something about the message Peter had spoken.

THE RULERS ARE ANGRY (4:1-4)

While Peter was talking, the priests and leaders of the Jews came. They were furious that the apostles were teaching in the name of Jesus. So they had Peter and John arrested and locked them up overnight. But many of the people who had seen the miracle and had been listening, believed. 6

THE APOSTLES ARE SET FREE (vv. 5-10, 15-22)

The next day, the high priest and the rulers of the Jews sent for Peter and John and asked them, "By what power, or by what name have ye done this?"

The apostles were only too happy to say again that the lame man had been healed "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (v 10). The Jewish leaders who listened had a problem. They *knew* the lame man had been healed. They could not deny it. But they would not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So they told Peter and John "not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus" (v18). But Peter and John would rather obey God than men; so they replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (vv. 19-20). This only made the Jews angrier, but they could do nothing but let them go. And all the people praised God for the amazing miracle of healing the lame man.

LESSON FOR US

Like Peter and John, we should use every opportunity to tell people about the Word of God.

Sometimes other people do not want to hear the message of God and get angry as the rulers of the temple did. When this happens, we must remember that God will bless those who stand up for His Word.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

The leaders of the Jews who came with the priests to arrest Peter and John were Sadducees. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. So they certainly did not want these men telling the people that Jesus whom they had crucified, had been raised. The apostles were able to show clearly from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Through Jesus Christ men could be saved. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). But these Jewish leaders were stubborn. They wanted the people to listen to them as they had always done.

QUESTIONS 9 – 12 years

Short Answers

1. *Who could always be found on the steps outside the Beautiful Gate?*
2. *What did the lame man hope Peter and John would give him?*
3. *What wonderful words did Peter say to the lame man?*
4. *How did Peter say the lame man had been healed?*
- ✓5. *What did Peter tell the Jews to do if they were really ashamed of killing Jesus Christ?*
- ✓6. *What did the priests and rulers do to Peter and John?*

Detailed Answers

- ✓1. *Tell how the lame man at the Beautiful Gate was healed.*
2. (a) *Why were the priests and rulers of the Jews angry with Peter and John?*
(b) *What did the rulers of the Jews tell Peter and John to stop doing?*
(c) *What answer did Peter and John give the rulers?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

3. *Peter told the Jews who had seen the lame man healed, to "repent and be converted". What did he mean?*

4. *The miracle of healing the lame man presented the Jewish leaders with a problem. What was the problem?*
5. *When Peter and John were threatened by the rulers of the Jews*
 - (a) *What was their reply; and*
 - (b) *What lesson do we learn from this?*



4. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA

"Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God"

Aim

To show that God knows everything that is in our heart and that we cannot lie to Him.



Acts 5:1-11

THE ECCLESIA IN JERUSALEM (2:41-42)

1. We have already learned that the work which the Lord Jesus gave Peter and the other apostles to do was to preach the Gospel. Their work began in Jerusalem when three thousand were baptised on the day of Pentecost. These met together regularly to learn from the apostles and to break bread, just as brethren and sisters do today. They were called the "ecclesia" of God. This word "ecclesia" is a Greek word, meaning an "assembly (or meeting) of called-out ones". Anyone who believes the Gospel and is baptised into Christ is really obeying God's call to serve Him. Such a person is separating himself from the wickedness of the world and joining himself to the family of God, or the ecclesia.

THE ECCLESIA GREW DAILY (4:31-37)

2. The brethren and sisters were so thrilled that God had forgiven their sins and given them hope of life eternal that their love for each other grew. They gladly sold their possessions and shared all that they had with their poorer brethren and sisters. If any had land or houses, they sold what they did not need and willingly brought the money to the apostles for the work of the Truth. There was a true family feeling amongst them.

THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA (5:1-2)

But not everyone who offered had an honest heart. There was a certain brother and his wife, named Ananias and Sapphira, who sold some property. They had seen how

generous many brethren and sisters were who sold their possessions and gave the money to the apostles. No doubt they were warmly thanked and praised for their kindness. Ananias and Sapphira wanted their brethren and sisters to praise them too. But they did not really want to part with all the money from the sale. So they decided to keep some for themselves and give the rest to the apostles. The worst part was that they wanted the apostles to believe that what they were giving was *all* the money they had received. This was dishonest. They might be able to deceive men, but they could not deceive God. How wicked this was and how foolish they were. No-one asked them to give any. They could have kept it all. But they wanted the praise of men. 3

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA PUNISHED (vv. 3-11)

Proud Ananias set off for the house where Peter and the apostles were gathered together. There he presented his gift. Surely no-one would know how selfish his thoughts really were. Yet Peter did know. He was not deceived. God had enabled him by the power of the Holy Spirit to see the hidden thoughts of men's hearts. So he knew that Ananias was lying. "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God", Peter told him. Instead of praise, Ananias felt shame, and no doubt he was afraid when Peter found him out. 4

He had good reason to be afraid because Peter, in his wisdom, could see that the whole ecclesia must learn this lesson. Immediately Ananias fell down dead. God had punished him straight away, and the young men carried him out to bury him. 5

Three hours later his wife, Sapphira came, not knowing what had happened to her husband. Peter asked her, "Tell me, whether ye sold the land for so much?" Sapphira said, "Yea, for so much." Like Ananias, she was deliberately lying. Her punishment was the same. Peter spoke sternly to her, and she too fell down dead and was carried out and buried next to her husband. 5

What a terrible thing to happen in the midst of the ecclesia. They had been so happy when they were baptised and their sins were forgiven. They had marvelled at God's power to heal, but now His great power was used to kill.

LESSON FOR US

7 "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7), but He hates lying (Prov. 12:22). Ananias and Sapphira tried to cheat, because they wanted praise. They did not love God at all. If we really love God, it will be seen in truthful words and actions, and in true kindness and love to brethren and sisters and their children.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

When Peter rebuked Ananias he said, "Why hast thou conceived (worked out) this thing *in thine heart*?" In Jer. 17:9 we are told, "the heart is deceitful about all things, and desperately wicked". Jesus said of the many Jews who listened to him, "This people honoureth me with their lips but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8). They were hypocrites. Like Ananias and Sapphira they pretended to do good, but their heart was wicked. God has said, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*" (Matt. 22:37). How careful we must be to have a pure and honest heart, for God looks on the heart.

QUESTIONS 9 – 12 years

Short Answers

- ✓1. *What does the word "ecclesia" mean?*
- ✓2. *How did the brethren and sisters show their love for each other?*
3. *What did Ananias and Sapphira bring to the apostles?*
4. *How did Peter know they were lying?*
5. *What happened to Ananias and Sapphira?*
6. *Why was it necessary for Ananias and Sapphira to die?*

7. *What important lesson do we learn from the story of Ananias and Sapphira?*

Detailed Answers

- ✓1. *Ananias and Sapphira thought that they could deceive God: –*
- (a) *What did Ananias and Sapphira do that was wrong?*
 - (b) *Tell how Ananias and Sapphira were punished.*
 - (c) *God does not want us to be like Ananias and Sapphira. What better example can we show?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

2. *Ananias and Sapphira were hypocrites.*
- (a) *What does this mean?*
 - (b) *How must we be different?*

Prov. 12:22

5. STEPHEN – FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

“Behold, I seen the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God”

Aim

To show how Stephen was prepared to lose his life in preaching the way of salvation to men.



Synopsis

Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. The Lord had warned his disciples that men would not want to hear the Gospel. “Ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake”, he said, “but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22). Although they would suffer, they were promised the gift of eternal life, if they served God faithfully to the end. Stephen was the first of the disciples to suffer in this way.

Acts 6 and 7

SEVEN BRETHREN CHOSEN (6:1-6)

Since the day of Pentecost the apostles had continued to preach the Gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem. The rulers of the Jews still kept trying to stop them teaching in the name of Jesus. But the work went on and God blessed it, so that the ecclesia grew and grew. It was becoming too difficult for the apostles to continue preaching and to look after the needs of such a large company of newly baptised brethren and sisters at the same time. So the apostles said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God, and serve tables” (i.e. give out food and money to the poor). They suggested that seven brethren who were wise and well prepared should be chosen to take charge of caring for the daily needs of the ecclesia. The apostles laid their hands on them, after they

had prayed, so that the seven might be blessed and strengthened to do the work set before them. Among the seven was Stephen.

STEPHEN PREACHES THE GOSPEL (vv. 8-10)

We are told that Stephen was “full of faith and power”, who ³ “did great wonders and miracles among the people”. He obviously used every opportunity to preach the Gospel to the Jews. They could not help listening to him. The miracles he did by the power of the Holy Spirit would have left his listeners in no doubt that what he said was through the power of God. But there were still many, especially among the leaders of the Jews, who were stubborn and would not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was Messiah. They could find no answer to Stephen’s words and actions, but they refused to believe. So they did exactly what the Jewish leaders had done to Jesus. They found wicked men who agreed to tell lies against Stephen. 4

STEPHEN IS PUT ON TRIAL (vv. 11-15)

These evil men said, “We have heard him speak 5 blasphemous words against Moses, and against God” (v 11). This was not true, but the people and the elders of the Jews got very excited and rushed Stephen into the Council, called the Sanhedrin. The false witnesses added more lies to the stories already told. “We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (v 14). When Stephen was given his chance to answer what the false witnesses said against him, an amazing thing happened. Those that looked at him “saw his face as it had been the face of an angel”. God ⁶ was with him to help him speak the Truth before the council of the Jews.

STEPHEN SPEAKS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN (7:1-53)

At last the leader of the council, the High Priest, spoke. “Are these things so?” he asked.

Stephen replied, "Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken" (that is, listen carefully). He reminded them of many things that had happened to Israel in the past. He spoke about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom God had promised the Land of Israel. He reminded them of Moses and the children of Israel who had all worshipped God in the wilderness, long before there was a temple.

Now Stephen knew that God would indeed destroy Herod's temple and those who trusted in it. He wanted these men to see that the temple was, after all, only a building made of stone and faithful men had worshipped God long before there even was a temple. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands", Stephen said (v. 48). He was quoting from the prophets.

By now Stephen could see that they were not paying any attention to his words. Just as their fathers had not taken any notice of the prophets but had killed them, so these men had killed the Son of God. "As your fathers did, so did ye", he said (v. 51).

STEPHEN IS KILLED (vv. 54-60)

The Sanhedrin became terribly angry when they heard Stephen's words. They were so angry that they ground their teeth together. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God's glory, with Jesus standing at God's right hand.

"Behold", said Stephen, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." God was pleased with Stephen, for he spoke the truth even to men who hated him. So God showed him the Lord Jesus Christ at His right hand, the place of power.

When the Sanhedrin heard Stephen's words, they shouted with rage and put their hands over their ears and rushed at him. They did not want to hear him, they were so angry. They seized him and pushed him out of the city. They took off their coats and laid them at a young man's feet (whose name

was Saul) and then picked up stones and threw them at Stephen. He put up with all that they did to him and still prayed to God. Just as the Lord had been willing to forgive those who crucified him, so faithful Stephen prayed to God to forgive these wicked men. As the stones hit Stephen he kneeled down on his knees. “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”, he cried (v. 60). Then Stephen died. 7 8

LESSON FOR US

We may not be asked to die for the Truth, as Stephen did, but we must love God as much as he did. What a humble servant of God he was to pray for his enemies even though they hated him so much and stoned him. That is a lesson he learnt from the Lord Jesus, and so must we – to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us. If we truly love God, we will be able to do that.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

In his reply, Stephen pointed out to the Jews many examples from their history. He wanted to show them two things in particular which would answer the false charges against him.

- * God is with His people wherever they worship Him “in spirit and in truth”.
He appeared to Abraham – in Ur; He blessed Joseph – in Egypt; He blessed Moses – in Egypt and in Midian. The promised land of Israel had not been given to them then. There certainly was no temple in Jerusalem in those days.
But these faithful men of old worshipped and obeyed God wherever they were. So the Jews ought not to be so sure that God would not destroy the temple and drive them out.
- * These faithful men of old whom Stephen referred to obeyed God even before the Law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. So the Jews ought not to boast in the Law of

Moses. In fact, not one of them had ever been able to obey it properly in their lives.

Only the Lord Jesus Christ had obeyed it perfectly. After his death there was no need for men to look back to the Law of Moses. Once God had raised him from the dead all men must believe in him and be baptised. This is how we can please God today.

This was what Stephen had been trying to tell them, but they were as “stiff-necked” and stubborn as ever. God did punish them a few years later. When the Roman armies marched against Jerusalem in AD 70, they shut themselves up in the temple, thinking they would be safe. Herod’s temple was burnt to the ground and those inside were destroyed.

QUESTIONS 9 – 12 years

Short Answers

- ✓ 1. *The apostles were very busy preaching the Gospel. What other work did they have to do?*
2. *How many brethren were chosen to help the apostles?*
- ✓ 3. *What sort of man was Stephen?*
4. *The Jews could find no answer for Stephen’s words. So how did they set out to trap him?*
5. *What did the wicked men first say against Stephen?*
6. *What did Stephen’s face look like when he spoke in the council?*
7. *What did the Jews do to Stephen?*
8. *What were Stephen’s last words?*

Detailed Answers

1. *As the ecclesia grew the apostles were very busy.*
 - (a) *What kept them so busy?*
 - (b) *How did they get help?*
- ✓ 2. *Tell what happened when Stephen finished speaking.*
3. *How is Stephen a wonderful example for us?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

4. (a) *What did the prophets say about where God dwells?*
(b) *Where did faithful men of old worship God? Give some examples.*
5. (a) *Did anyone ever keep the Law of Moses perfectly?*
(b) *How can we please God today?*
6. (a) *What terrible thing had the Jews done that God was going to punish them for?*
(b) *How did God punish them?*

6. PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

“And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him.”

Aim

To show how God directed Philip to teach the way of salvation through Jesus Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8:26-40



TRUBLE FOR THE BELIEVERS

1 { The Jews who stoned Stephen to death caused a lot of trouble for the ecclesia in Jerusalem. Many of the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ were persecuted because of their beliefs. They were dragged from their homes and thrown into prison. This made many of them flee in fear from Jerusalem to other parts of Judea and to Samaria. Wherever they went they preached the Gospel (Acts 8:1; 11:19).

PHILIP PREACHES THE GOSPEL (vv. 5-25)

Among the disciples who left Jerusalem was Philip. He was one of the seven brethren specially chosen to help care for the Jerusalem ecclesia. Like Stephen, he was not afraid to preach the Gospel. God had given him the Holy Spirit to teach His Word clearly and perform miracles among the people.

2 { Philip journeyed to the city of Samaria where many believed his teaching and were baptised “and there was great joy in that city” (vv. 5-12). A new ecclesia was formed and when the apostles in Jerusalem heard of this they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they saw the work that Philip had done and how richly God had blessed it, they called the disciples together and gave the power of the Holy Spirit to some of them by the laying on of hands. Only the twelve apostles were able to pass on the Holy Spirit in this way. Philip could do miracles by the Holy Spirit but he could not pass it on to others (vv. 14-17).

Peter and John then returned to Jerusalem preaching in many villages of the Samaritans on the way (v. 25).

THE ANGEL SPEAKS TO PHILIP (vv. 26-29)

Soon after, the angel of the Lord appeared to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” Philip obeyed immediately and it was not long before he learnt why God had sent him there. 4

An important man from Ethiopia was travelling along the road. He was a eunuch, an important officer in charge of all the treasure of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. Although an Ethiöopian, he believed in Yahweh, the God of Israel and had been to Jerusalem to worship. While journeying home in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. God said to Philip, “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (vv. 27-29). 5

PHILIP TEACHES ABOUT JESUS (vv. 30-35)

Philip ran to join the Ethiopian and asked him if he understood what he was reading. The Ethiopian replied, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” So he asked Philip to come up and sit with him in his chariot. As they travelled he eagerly listened while Philip explained the Scriptures to him. How he enjoyed being taught the truth of God’s Word.

Look up Isaiah 53:7-8 and you will see the part of the Scriptures that the Ethiopian had been reading: “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” (v.7)

When the Ethiopian read these words he asked Philip, “I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?” Then starting from that same chapter Philip preached to him about Jesus. He was the promised Messiah that Isaiah had been speaking of. Although he had done nothing to deserve it, Jesus had been put to death by wicked men. But God had raised him from the dead and he is 6

now in heaven, alive for evermore. Soon God will send him back to the earth to raise the dead and give eternal life to all those who have believed and obeyed the Word of Life.

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH IS BAPTISED (vv. 36-40)

The Ethiopian now understood clearly what he had been reading. He believed the things Philip taught him from the Scriptures about Jesus Christ and his kingdom. With all his heart he wanted to become a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Now that he believed in him, he must first obey God by being baptised.

Soon they came to a place where there was much water. The Ethiopian said to Philip, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised." (v.36) Philip replied, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (v.37) The chariot was stopped and they both went down into the water and Philip baptised him into the saving name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch was completely immersed or covered by water, and then arose out of the water, like a new person in God's sight. When they were come up out of the water, God took Philip away, for his work there was now finished. The eunuch did not see Philip again, but he went on his way rejoicing. The Spirit of God took Philip away to Azotus, where he preached in all the cities between there and Caesarea. (v.40)

LESSON FOR US

The Ethiopian was trying to serve God in the way he thought best, but did not know the true way in which God wants His servants to walk. God sent Philip to teach him how he could be saved through belief in Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian believed and showed his faith by being baptised.

Like the Ethiopian we must eagerly search out God's Truth in the Bible. When we understand and believe it with all our heart, we must be baptised. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." (Mark 16:16)

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Look at Instructor Questions 62 and 63. Here we have two questions and answers about baptism.

What is baptism? Burial in water.

What does baptism do for us? It is the act that God has appointed by which a believer puts on Christ and receives remission of his sins.

Only a person who believes the Gospel or good news about Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God can be baptised. He (or she) goes right down under the water, as if he is being buried with Christ (Romans 6:4). When he comes up out of the water, he is like a new person in God's sight (v. 4). God has forgiven his sins and he must serve God all his life. Baptism is the beginning of service to God, and God will give eternal life to those who continue to serve Him faithfully.

- QUESTIONS 9-12 years

Short Answers

1. *What caused many of the members of the ecclesia to leave Jerusalem?*
2. ✓ *What happened in Samaria because of Philip's preaching?*
3. ✓ *What did Peter and John do when they went to Samaria?*
4. *What did the angel of the Lord command Philip to do?*
5. *Whom did Philip meet?*
6. ✓ *Who is the man spoken of in Isaiah chapter 53?*
7. *The Ethiopian eunuch believed what Philip taught him. What did he have to do then?*

Detailed Answers

1. ✓ *Tell the story of how Philip baptised the Ethiopian eunuch.*
2. (a) *The Ethiopian eunuch believed in God. What more did he have to do to be saved?*
(b) *What do we learn from this lesson?*

Additional Answers (11–12 years only)

3. *This lesson teaches us the importance of baptism.*
 - (a) *What is baptism?*
 - (b) *What does baptism do for us?*
4.
 - (a) *Tell what happens when a person is baptised.*
 - (b) *What must a person do after he is baptised?*

7. HOW CHRIST CONVERTED SAUL

“He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel”

Aim

To show how Saul’s life was changed when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus.



Synopsis

As we learned in our last lesson, the stoning of Stephen was the beginning of a lot of trouble for the brethren and sisters of the Jerusalem ecclesia. Chief among those who persecuted the ecclesia was a young Jew named Saul. Those who threw the stones at Stephen had laid down their cloaks at his feet.

Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-22; 26:4-20

Acts 22:3

SAUL THE PHARISEE (8:1-4)

Saul was a Jew born in Tarsus, a city of the Roman province called Cilicia. He was a tent-maker by trade, but his father sent him to Jerusalem to study at the feet of Gamaliel, the greatest teacher of the day. Saul was a brilliant young man, who studied the Hebrew Scriptures thoroughly and learned all the traditions of the Jews. He was careful to obey the Law of Moses and served God with all his heart. However, though he was sincere, Saul was not really doing what God wanted. It was possible that he had seen Jesus and may have been in Jerusalem when he was crucified. Saul was a Pharisee, and we know that the Pharisees were among the greatest enemies of Christ. Soon he became the chief enemy of the followers of Christ. He was convinced that the disciples were teaching Jews to take no notice of the Law of Moses and he was determined to destroy every one of them.

1.
2:4.
3.

LETTER FROM THE HIGH PRIEST (9:1-2)

Saul was very cruel in the way he treated the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. He thought it was right to stone Stephen to death, and wanted to make sure that all the other believers were punished too. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women and had them thrown into prison. Some fled for their lives, but even that did not save them from Saul's hatred and anger. He did not stop at Jerusalem, but planned to hunt them down, even in foreign cities. He went to the High Priest in Jerusalem to ask him for a letter giving him authority (or power) to search among the Jews in Damascus for any who believed in Jesus. Damascus was about 240 kilometres from Jerusalem, but Saul was determined to go all that way and bring them back to Jerusalem to put them in prison there. Saul did this because he thought God would be pleased. God was soon to show him that he was wrong.

THE JOURNEY TO DAMASCUS (vv. 3-9)

Taking the High Priest's letter with him Saul set out for Damascus. He was so eager to carry out his plan that he kept on travelling right through the hottest part of the day, when most travellers would stop to rest. When he was nearly at Damascus, at midday, there suddenly shone round about him, a light from heaven, brighter than the sun. So brilliant was the light, that Saul fell to the ground, blinded and afraid. Then a voice from heaven spoke to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Saul answered, "Who art thou, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." It was the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to Saul from heaven. He was telling Saul that by persecuting the ecclesia he was like a stubborn ox which was kicking against the pricks of the goad instead of going in the way he should. The goad was a long pole, sharpened at one end and used in those days by the drover to urge along any stubborn animal.

Trembling and astonished, Saul asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" The Lord told him that he must now go into the city and there he would be told what to do (v. 6). His companions were amazed. They saw that Saul was blind! They had heard the sound of a voice but had seen no one. Stumbling and on foot, Saul was now led into the house of Judas, where he was "three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink". How different his entry into Damascus was from what he had planned. 9

ANANIAS SENT TO SAUL (vv. 10-18)

While this was happening another man received a message. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to Ananias, a disciple in Damascus and told him to go to a street called Straight, to the house of Judas. There he was to ask for Saul of Tarsus, who was praying and waiting. Ananias at first was afraid to go, because he had heard of Saul's cruelty to the ecclesia, but the Lord said, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (vv. 15-16). 8

Ananias obeyed, and found Saul at the house of Judas. He put his hands on Saul and said: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately Saul's eyes were opened and he could see again.

SAUL IS BAPTISED (vv. 18-22)

What strange things had happened to Saul in those last few days. His three days of blindness had given him time to think. He now knew that the name which he hated – Jesus of Nazareth – was the name of the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel. Saul had listened to Jesus and had spoken with him. He had now changed his mind completely and repented in his heart of those terrible things he had done. Now he was ready

to be baptised and Ananias baptised him (Acts 22:16). A new and very humble Saul stayed with the disciples in Damascus for several days. While he was there he went into the Synagogue – not to search for those who secretly believed in Jesus but to teach any Jews who would listen that Jesus is the Son of God. How amazed the Jews were. “Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem?” The brethren too were amazed and were afraid of him at first, but they soon realised that Saul was a disciple too. Now he could truly serve God with all his heart and became a special apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSON FOR US

Saul really thought he was pleasing God by punishing the followers of Jesus, but his zeal was in the wrong direction. He had to be converted and to work for God in the right way. He repented and was baptised. Then God was very pleased with all that Saul did in His name. We too must first learn to love the Truth and then we will know what God wants us to do – to be baptised and to serve Him with all our heart as Saul was at last able to do.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

After some time in Damascus, Saul went off by himself into the desert (Gal. 1:17) and when he came back to Damascus, he found that the Jews were plotting to kill him. They waited by the gates of the city day and night to catch him. Saul knew about their plans and one night the disciples helped him to escape by letting him down over the city wall in a basket. He then went to Jerusalem but naturally the disciples were all very afraid of Saul of Tarsus and did not believe that he was now a disciple too. One of the brethren called Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. Barnabas believed Saul’s story and told the apostles all that had happened to him on the road to Damascus and afterward. In this way Barnabas became Saul’s close friend and helped the brethren at Jerusalem to accept him as an equal. (vv. 23-28)

Later in our lessons we will see how God selected these two brethren to travel to distant lands to preach the Gospel.

QUESTIONS 9 – 12 years

Short Answers

1. *Where was Saul born?*
2. *What trade was he taught?*
3. ✓ *Why did his father send him to Jerusalem?* point question
4. ✓ *Who was his teacher?*
5. ✓ *Why did Saul persecute the followers of Jesus?*
6. *Why did Saul journey to Damascus?*
7. *Who spoke to Saul on the way to Damascus?*
8. *What was the name of the disciple sent to baptise Saul?*
9. *For how many days was Saul blind?*

Detailed Answers

1. ✓ *Tell what happened to Saul on the road to Damascus.*
2. *The Lord Jesus spoke to Ananias.*
 - (a) *Where did he tell him to go?*
 - (b) *What did he tell him to do?*
3. *What did the Lord tell Ananias about Saul and the work he had been chosen to do?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

4. (a) *Where did Saul go after he left Damascus the first time?*
(b) *How was he accepted at Jerusalem?*

Acts 9:15.

8. THE RAISING OF TABITHA

“Peter kneeled down and prayed: and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise”

Aim

To show how Peter, by prayer, was able to heal Aeneas and Tabitha through the power of the Holy Spirit.



Synopsis

Following Saul’s wonderful conversion he spent three years in Arabia and Damascus before going to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:15-24). He stayed in Jerusalem for a short time with the other apostles and then eventually came to his home town, Tarsus, where he spent his time preaching the Gospel he once opposed. Now that Saul, their chief enemy, believed the same things as they did, the brethren and sisters had peace in Judea (Acts 9:31).

Acts 9:31-43

PETER VISITS THE BRETHREN (vv 32-35)

The ecclesia of God was growing very quickly. Not only was there a large ecclesia in Jerusalem, but smaller ecclesias were being formed in other parts of the land. It was now necessary for the apostles to visit the new ecclesias and strengthen the saints, as the brethren and sisters are called. They are called saints because they are holy in God’s sight. They are set apart from all the world to do God’s will (See Lesson 2 – “What is the Holy Spirit?”).

1.
2. We read that Peter “came down also to the saints which dwell at Lydda”. Lydda was on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa. There Peter found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, because he was paralysed. Peter said to him: “Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed.” Immediately Aeneas stood up. He

believed Peter's words and his body was healed. Once again a wonderful miracle was done in the name of Jesus Christ. Everyone who lived in Lydda and nearby saw that Aeneas was cured and therefore believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE DEATH OF TABITHA (Greek DORCAS) (vv 36-37)

In Joppa, a nearby town on the coast, lived a very kind woman called Tabitha. Her name in the Greek was Dorcas. This sister not only believed the Gospel message with all her heart, but she tried to follow the example of her master, the Lord Jesus Christ, by doing good to all. She believed the Truth and showed her belief by her actions, seeking to help people in whatever way she could. In those days there were many poor families in the ecclesia, and many widows who had no husbands to provide for the needs of their families. Tabitha knew just how she could help them and she busily sewed, making garments for the poor and the sick. This was her way of showing that she loved the Lord and firmly believed what he taught. Those who knew her loved her dearly, for wherever she went she brought joy and kindness. One day, however, Tabitha became sick and died. It was a very sad day indeed for the brethren and sisters in Joppa.

PETER IS CALLED TO JOPPA (vv 38-43)

Joppa is about 20 km from Lydda, where Peter had healed Aeneas. (Find these towns on your map and follow Peter's journey). The news of this wonderful miracle had spread to Joppa and therefore two brethren were sent to find Peter and beg him to hurry back with them to Joppa. Peter did not hesitate but came straight away to Tabitha's house. He was taken upstairs to the room where Tabitha now lay. All the widows were there whom Tabitha had once helped. They stood there weeping and showing Peter some of the clothes she had made for them.

Peter sent all the people out of the room and knelt down and prayed to God. Then turning towards the bed he said,

“Tabitha, arise.” Immediately she opened here eyes and when she saw Peter she sat up. Peter took her hand and helped her to her feet. He then called the brethren and sisters into the room and their sadness was turned into joy.

This miracle caused many in Joppa to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter stayed with the disciples in Joppa for some time, living with Simon, a tanner, and preaching the Gospel to all who would listen.

PETER GIVES GOD THE PRAISE AND SEEKS HIS HELP IN PRAYER

8 We should be careful to note that Peter, when healing Aeneas, did not say that he himself was healing him. He said, “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole.” (Acts 9:34) So also, before raising Tabitha, Peter “kneeled down and prayed” (v. 40). It was not by his own power that Peter was able to heal them. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit which he had received from God. Peter did not want men to praise him; he wanted them to praise God for all those wonderful miracles that had been done.

LESSON FOR US

The life of Tabitha shows that everyone is important in the work of serving God. We cannot be great teachers like the apostles, but we can all work in the ecclesia and show the love of God to those around us. There are always brethren and sisters and their children who need help and there are many little tasks to do that will please our Father in heaven. The apostle Paul said that we are like many parts of a body and every single part has a very important role to play if the body (i.e. the ecclesia) is to work properly (1 Cor. 12:14-25). Some must teach, some must visit the sick and others sew for the poor or distribute invitations to hear God’s Word. Let us be like Tabitha and work in God’s service every day, not for the praise of men, but so that God may be glorified by our actions.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

Prayer is a great privilege God has given to man, for through prayer we enter into the very presence of the God of the whole universe.

Peter prayed to God that Tabitha should be raised from the dead and God answered his prayer. This teaches us that prayer can be very powerful to help ourselves and others. It is therefore very important that we learn to pray and make it a regular habit in our daily lives.

We must approach God with respect, because He is a great King (1 Tim. 6:15-16). We must be humble when we speak to Him in prayer, because He is in Heaven and we are on earth (Ecc. 5:2), yet He knows what we need before we ask (Matt. 6:31-32) and we must thank Him for all that He provides (1 Thess. 5:18). Most of all, God wants us to ask for wisdom that we might understand His Word and then we can learn to praise Him (James 1:5; Matt. 6:33).

QUESTIONS 9 - 12 years

Short Answers

1. *What was wrong with Aeneas?*
2. ✓ *What did Peter say to Aeneas?*
3. ✓ *Where did Tabitha live?*
4. ✓ *Why was Tabitha well-known?*
5. *What happened to Tabitha?*
6. *Whom did they ask to come and help?*
7. *What did Peter do before he raised Tabitha to life?*
8. ✓ *How was Peter able to heal Aeneas and Tabitha?*

Detailed Answers

1. *Tell the story of what Peter did at Lydda.*
2. *Tell all you know about a woman called Tabitha.*
3. ✓ *What can we learn from the story of Tabitha?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

4. *It is very important to learn to pray. How can we pray to God so that He will hear us as He heard Peter?*

9. PETER BAPTISES CORNELIUS THE GENTILE

“God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean”

Aim

To show how Peter learned that the Gospel was to be preached to Gentiles as well as Jews, when God sent him to baptise Cornelius.



Synopsis

After Peter raised Tabitha he stayed in Joppa and lived with a man called Simon, whose trade was to treat animal skins to make them into leather. He was called a tanner. Joppa was a seaport on the Mediterranean coast, and about 48 km to the north was a large city called Caesarea. When the Romans took over Judea, they made Caesarea the capital and it became the headquarters of a big section of the Roman army. Among the rough Roman soldiers stationed there, was one man whose heart was turned towards the God of Israel.

Now Peter was a Jew and the Jews would have nothing to do with Gentiles. God prepared Peter's mind for the work he had to do, before sending him to preach the Gospel to a Gentile.

Acts 10

CORNELIUS: A GOD-FEARING ROMAN SOLDIER **(vv 1-2)**

1. In the garrison of Caesarea was a Roman centurion called Cornelius. (A centurion was a commander of one hundred soldiers.) Cornelius was a leader, an important man in the army, but he had heard much of the one true God and believed in Him. He “feared God will all his house” (v. 2). His family
2. { and his servants respected him and worshipped Israel's God as he did. Not only did he believe in the God of Israel, but

Cornelius did many good deeds for the Jews. He prayed to God always and tried to please Him in everything he did. Cornelius' prayers were very sincere and God, Who knows the hearts of all men, heard them.

CORNELIUS RECEIVES A VISION (vv 3-8)

Cornelius prayed to God often and one afternoon about 3 o'clock when he was praying, an angel of God appeared to him quite clearly in a vision. "Cornelius", the angel called. At the sound of the angel's voice he was afraid. "What is it, Lord?" Cornelius asked. The angel told him that God had seen his good deeds and heard his prayers and now was sending His messenger to tell him what else he must do.

"Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter . . . he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."

Cornelius was not slow to obey his heavenly messenger. He called two of his servants and a trusted soldier and told them what had happened. Then he sent them down to Joppa to fetch Peter.

GOD PREPARES PETER'S MIND BY A VISION (vv 9-18)

The next day, as the servants of Cornelius came near to Joppa, Peter was on the roof-top praying. It was about midday and he became unusually hungry. While a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance – it was almost as though he was asleep and dreaming. Peter saw heaven opened and what looked like a large sheet, tied at the four corners, was let down from heaven. It was filled with all kinds of unclean animals, that is, animals which the Jews were not allowed to eat under the Law of Moses (see Lev. 11:46-47). Then Peter heard a voice say to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Peter was horrified. He had never eaten any unclean thing and believed that it was wrong to do so. The voice spoke again: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Three times this happened and then the sheet was taken up into heaven.

Peter was very puzzled. He knew it was God speaking to

him, but he could not understand why God was commanding him to do something he had always thought was wrong.

PETER GOES TO CORNELIUS (vv 19-24)

As Peter thought about this strange dream, God said to him, "Behold three men seek thee." The servants of Cornelius had arrived at Simon's house. "Go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." (vv.19-20) Peter went downstairs and found the men at the door asking for him. They told him what Cornelius had heard in a vision. Peter knew then what his dream meant. God was showing him that the Gentiles were in His sight like the Jews. Like the animals in the dream they were not to be thought of as unclean any longer. It did not matter if a person was a Jew or a Gentile – all had to come to God through Jesus Christ.

That night the men stayed at Simon's house and the next day Peter went with them to Caesarea, to the house of the Gentile Cornelius.

CORNELIUS IS BAPTISED (vv. 25-48)

In those days a strict Jew would not have entered the house of a Gentile as Peter did. But he realised that it was God's will (v. 28). Cornelius greeted Peter with great joy and fell down to worship him, but Peter said, "Stand up: I myself also am a man." (vv. 25-26) Then he told Cornelius and all those who had gathered in his house to hear him. "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (v. 28). It did not matter whether a person was a Jew or a Gentile, if he feared God and obeyed Him, God would accept him (vv. 34-35). Then Cornelius and all his household listened carefully as Peter taught them about the great Saviour of mankind, Jesus, the son of God (vv. 36-43).

While Peter was still speaking the power of the Holy Spirit came upon all who heard. They began to speak in different languages and gave glory and praise to God. God was clearly showing them (and Peter as well) that He would accept

Gentiles into the Hope of Israel. “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised?” exclaimed the amazed apostle Peter and he commanded that they all be baptised. Thus Cornelius and his family became part of the true family of God, equal in God’s sight to all the faithful Jews who believed in the Gospel. 8

LESSON FOR US

There are many people who believe that if they do good deeds, this will please God and He will save them, no matter what they believe. This is not true. There is only **one** way whereby man can be saved – by believing the Gospel and being baptised (See Lesson 1 – the Gospel is the good news about the Kingdom of God and the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. See also Instructor question 72). We must read the Bible to find out what God wants us to know and serve Him as He commands.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11 – 12 years only)

In the Old Testament we read of Gentiles who became adopted Jews and agreed to obey the Law of Moses and follow the customs of the Jews. Among these were faithful men and women such as Caleb, Rahab and Ruth. It was really always God’s purpose that Gentiles should have a hope of salvation as well as Jews.

After the resurrection of Christ, the apostles taught that it was necessary to believe the Gospel and repent and be baptised. (You remember that Peter spoke in this way on the Day of Pentecost – see Lesson 2.) It was not until Peter was sent to Cornelius that the Jews began to realise that Gentiles too could be saved in this way. There is only one way of salvation for **all** men.

When Peter later told the story of Cornelius to the other apostles in Jerusalem, he showed that God is calling out of the Gentiles a people for His Name (Acts 15:14).

Learn Gal. 3:26-29. There Paul tells us, “Ye are all the

children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek ... ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

What a great privilege we have then. God will accept us, who are Gentiles, as His children, if we believe (have faith) in Jesus Christ and are baptised.

QUESTIONS 9 – 12 years

Short Answers

1. *Where did Cornelius live?*
2. ✓ *Cornelius was a Roman; in whom did he believe?*
3. *What did Cornelius do every day?*
4. ✓ *What did the angel tell Cornelius to do?*
5. *What was Peter's vision?*
6. *What was God showing Peter in this vision?*
7. *Where did Peter go the day after his vision?*
8. ✓ *What did Peter do for Cornelius and his household?*

Detailed Answers

1. (a) *What kind of man was Cornelius?*
(b) *What else did Cornelius have to do?*
2. ✓ (a) *Tell what Peter saw in his vision.*
(b) *What did Peter learn from this vision?*

Additional Answers (11 – 12 years only)

3. (a) *Give examples of Gentiles in the Old Testament who became adopted Jews.*
(b) *What did they agree to do?*
4. (a) *What must we do to be saved?*
(b) *Is this true for all men?*
(c) *Give a quotation from the Bible to prove your answer.*

Acts 10: 34-35

10. PETER ESCAPES FROM PRISON

"The Lord hath sent His angel and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod"

Aim

To show how God listened to the prayers of the brethren and sisters and set Peter free.



Synopsis

About eleven years had passed since the Lord Jesus had ascended into heaven. In this time thousands of Jews had been converted to the Gospel and now the work was spreading to the Gentiles. But many Jews still persecuted the ecclesia, trying hard to stop the work of the Apostles.

Acts 12

THE DEATH OF JAMES (vv. 1-2)

Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, had not long returned from Rome and wanted to make himself popular with the Jews. He had noticed the hatred the Jews felt for the followers of Jesus (now also called Christians – Acts. 11:26) and decided that the quickest way to please them was to put to death important members of the ecclesia. Herod Agrippa was a very evil man. He began his wicked plan by taking James, the brother of John, and with great cruelty, he had him publicly beheaded. The brethren and sisters were greatly shocked, and fear fell upon them all. The Jews, however, were very pleased. They hoped that if Herod kept this up they would get rid of the Christians altogether.

PETER IS IMPRISONED (vv. 3-4)

When Herod saw how pleased the Jews were at the death of James, he decided to arrest Peter. He realised how important Peter had become, and what effect his imprisonment and

4. death would have on the ecclesia. It was not, however, a
 2. suitable time to kill Peter as it was now the Passover Feast
 and Herod did not want the Jews to think he would break
 their laws.
2. Peter was put into prison until the end of the seven days'
Feast of Unleavened Bread which was a part of the Passover
 Feast. Every care was taken to see there was no possible way
 3. for him to escape. Sixteen soldiers (four quaternions) were
 given the charge to watch over him.

PRAYER IS MADE FOR PETER (vv. 5, 12)

5. Peter's imprisonment drew the members of the ecclesia very
 closely together. Day and night they met together and prayer
was made continually for the beloved apostle's safety. The
 seven-day Feast was fast drawing to its close, and still Herod
 had not changed his mind. The next morning Peter would be
 put to death. There was nothing the ecclesia could do except
 pray to God for Peter's release and safety. A very anxious
 group gathered together in the house of Mary, the mother of
 John Mark, where they planned to spend the whole night in
 prayer.

PETER ESCAPES FROM PRISON (vv. 6-11)

Although the ecclesia was very anxious, Peter remained quite calm. Throughout the long week he also had prayed and now was quite ready to suffer whatever would take place on the following day. He slept bound to two guards with a double chain, while two other guards kept watch outside the door of the prison cell.

Suddenly a bright light filled the dark prison and Peter felt himself being struck on the side and lifted. A voice said to him, "Arise up quickly." Peter saw the angel of God standing there. The chains fell from his hands and he stood up. "Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals," commanded the angel. Again Peter obeyed. It all seemed to Peter like a dream, but he did as he was told, pulling his cloak about him. Through

the power of God they passed unseen by the guards both inside and outside the cell. At last they reached the large, heavy outer gate of the prison, which opened by itself as they approached. Then they were outside the prison and Peter was free. Immediately the angel left him and, as Peter stood alone in the darkness of the deserted Jerusalem street, he realised that God had delivered him from Herod.

“Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod.” (v. 11)

The work of James, the son of Zebedee, had been finished but Peter’s great strength and leadership were still needed in the ecclesia. It was for this reason that God had rescued him.

PETER COMES TO MARY’S HOUSE (vv. 12-17)

Peter thought of those anxious brethren and sisters who had gathered at Mary’s house. Even though it was very late, he went straight there and knocked on the outside door. It was locked because those inside were fearful of Herod and the Jews. A young maid named Rhoda came to the door to ask who was there. When she heard Peter’s voice she was so excited that she ran back inside to tell the others. Those inside did not believe her and said, “Thou art mad.” But Rhoda insisted that she had not imagined it – Peter was truly there. So they then said, “It is his angel.” (probably meaning “messenger”)

Outside Peter kept on knocking until they finally opened the door and were astonished to see the beloved apostle standing there.

He described how God had sent His angel to set him free and told them to let James (the brother of Jesus) and the other brethren know. Then, without waiting any longer, he went to find another place to hide from Herod.

GOD PUNISHES WICKED HEROD (vv. 18-23)

In the morning “there was no small stir among the soldiers”, as to what was become of Peter (v. 18). Herod sent

for Peter, only to find that he was missing. No one could explain what had happened, but – Peter was no longer in prison. It seemed to Herod that the jailors had helped the apostle to escape; so he ordered them to be put to death.

It seems that Herod gave up any further plans to capture the apostles at that time because he left Jerusalem and went down to Caesarea to live (v. 19).

Not long after this, at a public meeting Herod made a speech and the people wanting to flatter him, cried out, “It is the voice of a god and not of a man” (v. 22). Lifted up in his heart with pride, the king accepted the praise and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him. “He was eaten

9. of worms” and died (v. 23).

LESSON FOR US

Jesus once taught, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (or lose heart) (Luke 18:1).

God does answer our prayers and He can do far above all that we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). However, His answer is not always what we expect. Sometimes it is “yes”, sometimes “no”, sometimes “wait”. Sometimes, when God answers our prayers (as He did that night when He set Peter free), we are like those brethren who almost refused to believe that their prayers had been answered.

Let us trust in God and pray to Him always. Then, no matter what trouble we may be in, we will not be fearful, knowing that He is watching over us.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. ✓ *Why did Herod put James, the brother of John, to death?*
2. *At what feast of the Jews was Peter imprisoned?*
3. *How well-guarded was Peter?*
4. *What did Herod plan to do to Peter?*
5. ✓ *What did the ecclesia do when Peter was put into prison?*

6. *What is the name of the young person who came to the door when Peter knocked?*
7. *Why did she not let him in?*
8. *What did the brethren say when they heard her story?*
9. *How did God punish Herod Agrippa?*

Detailed Answers

1. *In order to please the Jews in Jerusalem, Herod Agrippa put Peter in prison.*
 - (a) *Why were so many brethren and sisters gathered together so late at night in Mary's house?*
 - (b) *Tell what happened when they heard someone knocking at the door.*
2. ✓ *Tell how Peter escaped from prison.*
3. *Herod's wicked plan failed.*
 - (a) *What did he do when he found that Peter had escaped?*
 - (b) *How did God punish Herod?*
4. ~~(a)~~ *Does God always answer our prayers?*
 only ✓ (b) *Does God always answer our prayers in the way we might expect?*

Acts 12:23.

11. PAUL AND BARNABAS PREACH THE GOSPEL IN CYPRUS

*“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work
whereunto I have called them”.*

Aim

*To show how God first chose
Saul and Barnabas to preach
the Gospel in distant lands,
beginning in Cyprus.*



Synopsis

*Though many Jews believed the Gospel and were baptised,
many more were the enemies of the Truth. Disciples now
travelled far and wide and the Word of God was preached to
Jews and Gentiles.*

Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-13

ANTIOCH (11:19-26)

To the north of Judea, in Syria, was a large and important city called Antioch. Disciples came here from foreign places and converted many to the Truth and a large ecclesia was established. The Jerusalem ecclesia sent Barnabas to strengthen and encourage the new believers who were mainly Gentiles and “much people was added unto the Lord”. Saul had previously returned to his home town, Tarsus, and Barnabas travelled nearly 200 km from Antioch to seek him and bring him back to the Antioch ecclesia. There they worked together for a whole year (11:24-26).

Antioch (in Syria) had become an important centre for the preaching of the Gospel. Apart from Barnabas and Saul, a number of other prophets and teachers were there and the time had now come for the Gospel to be spread further abroad (Acts 11:24-25). It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians” (11:26), which means “followers of Christ”. (But see Instructor Question No. 5).

A CALL TO SERVICE (13:1-3)

One day as these brethren were together worshipping God, the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (v.2). So, with the prayers of the brethren at Antioch to encourage them, Barnabas and Saul set out on the first of many long journeys in the service of Christ. 2

TO THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS (vv. 4-8)

Leaving Antioch, they walked to Seleucia, the nearest seaport and boarded a ship for Cyprus, a large island at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Barnabas had been born in Cyprus (4:36) and now he was going to take the Gospel message, which he had heard and obeyed, to his own country. He also took on the journey his nephew, John Mark, to help with this important work. 3.

When the ship reached the port of Salamis, the three brethren went first to the synagogue and preached there. Then they travelled on foot to Paphos, the capital city of Cyprus. The Roman governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, wanted to hear the Word of God from them. He was an intelligent man and was very impressed by what he heard. However, he had with him a Jew called Bar-Jesus (also known as Elymas, the sorcerer), who was a false prophet. Elymas argued with Barnabas and Saul because he could see that the governor was becoming interested in the Gospel and he wanted to turn him away from hearing it. 4. 5.

ELYMAS IS PUNISHED (vv. 9-12)

As Elymas kept up his opposition to the Word of Truth, Saul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on him and said, "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season" (v. 11). He was "an enemy of all righteousness", a deceiver, who did not want the governor to see the Truth. Now he could not see and had to ask people to lead him by the hand. God was teaching him 6.

a lesson. The governor himself was astonished. This miraculous blinding of Elymas convinced him of those things which he had already begun to believe.

SAUL IS NOW PAUL (v. 9)

7. You will notice that from now on in Luke's record of the Acts of the Apostles, Saul is called Paul, meaning "little". He is known as "the apostle to the Gentiles", because his most important work was done amongst Gentiles.

LESSON FOR US

We see how hard Paul and Barnabas worked, preaching the wonderful news of salvation in Jesus Christ. They were prepared to travel long distances and suffer many trials, because they wanted to serve God and help others understand the Truth of God's Word.

Let us follow the example of these two faithful men, first by learning of God and His ways now and then by telling people of this wonderful way of salvation.

You may meet people like Elymas, who not only are blind to the things of God, but who also try to blind others to the Truth. God will deal with them. We must, like Paul and Barnabas, continue to preach the Gospel.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. ✓ *Why was Barnabas sent to Antioch?*
2. ✓ *How were Saul and Barnabas chosen to journey afar with the Gospel?*
3. *Whom did Saul and Barnabas take with them?*
4. ✓ *Who was the governor of the island of Cyprus?*
5. *Who was the false prophet who tried to deceive the governor?*
6. *What happened to the false prophet on Cyprus?*
7. *What was Saul's name changed to?*

Detailed Answers

1. *Tell the story of Saul and Barnabas when they preached on the island of Cyprus.*
2. ✓ *Why was Elymas punished?*

Acts 13: 4.

12. PAUL AND BARNABAS PREACH AT ANTIOCH

“Lo, we turn to the Gentiles”

Aim

To show how the Gospel was preached in Antioch in Pisidia: the Jews reject it and the Gentiles gladly hear it.



Synopsis

Paul, Barnabas and John Mark left Cyprus and sailed across to the main land to the town of Perga. Here John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. While Paul was in this area, he became quite ill. No doubt many of us would have turned from the work and gone home, deciding that God would not expect us to continue preaching if we felt as ill as he did – but not Paul. He had been called by the Holy Spirit to preach (13:2) and therefore he determined to faithfully continue the work to which God had called him. What a powerful lesson for us to follow!

Leaving Perga they made for the city of Antioch some 160 km away. Their journey followed a road through a mountainous region, which was quite dangerous as it was a favourite place for bandits.

Acts 13:14-52

PAUL PREACHES IN ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA (vv. 14-15)

There are two Antiochs mentioned in the Bible – Antioch in Syria, which was the city from which Paul and Barnabas commenced their journey, and the Antioch that we are to read about now, Antioch in Pisidia; look them up in your Bible Atlas so that you do not confuse them in your mind.

When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Antioch, they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as they always did, and sat down. After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue realised there were visitors in their midst and so they asked them, “Ye men and

brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

PAUL ADDRESSES THE SYNAGOGUE (vv. 16-41)

This was just what Paul wanted, an opportunity to tell the people the truth about Jesus Christ. Standing up before the people gathered there he said, "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience".

Paul asked them to listen carefully to what he had to say, for he was going to show them from their own Scriptures that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. 2.

Paul slowly went through parts of the Old Testament Scriptures and showed that God had promised that one would come who would take away the sins of the people of Israel and give them hope of eternal life.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." (v. 38) 3

This way was only possible because God had raised him from the dead. It was good news indeed to everyone who wanted to listen.

As Paul finished his address, he warned the people not to despise and reject his words concerning Jesus or they would bring God's judgments on them (vv. 38-41).

SOME WANT TO HEAR THE GOSPEL (vv. 42-43)

In the synagogue were both Jews and proselytes. ("Proselyte" is a word which describes a Gentile who has been converted to a belief in the God of Israel.) As the people left the synagogue, many of those who had listened asked Paul to talk with them during the next week. They had been so impressed that they could not wait until the next Sabbath to hear more. Others followed Paul and Barnabas to where they were living and, as the two brethren went on teaching, they became convinced that what they heard was true.

THE JEWS ARE ENVIOUS (vv. 44-45)

5 { During the week, news concerning the things which Paul had been speaking about spread. The next Sabbath day almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God. When the Jews saw the crowds who came to hear, they became very envious and spoke against those things which Paul had said. They contradicted him and even blasphemed; that is, they said untrue and insulting things about Jesus, just as the Jews did to Jesus when he was on trial. Envy will quite often make people do unreasonable things. Here the Jews closed their ears to the truth and even spoke against it, because they were so envious of Paul.

“LO, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES” (vv. 46-52)

7 { Paul and Barnabas boldly turned to these Jews and said: “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (v. 46)

How foolish they were, for they had not only turned from listening to God’s Word, but had given up all hope of everlasting life.

8. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified God. They were so thrilled with the wonderful hope of the Gospel, that the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region of Antioch. As more and more of the Gentiles believed, the Jews’ envy grew greater and more bitter. They stirred up leading men and women in the town and caused trouble for Paul and Barnabas, until they were finally driven out of the district shaking the dust of Antioch from their feet (cp. Matt. 10:14). They left behind them disciples who were filled with joy because they had found the Truth and had been given the Holy Spirit (v. 52).

LESSON FOR US

We see how quickly Paul took the opportunity to tell people of the Gospel. Even when the Jews opposed him, he continued

to proclaim the Truth, for he knew the power of the Word of God. He knew that if people came with honest and good hearts to hear and think upon the Word of God, they would be convinced.

However, there are always those who, through envy and stubbornness, not only refuse to listen to God's Word but try to stop others from hearing also. Let us always be prepared to speak the Truth as Paul did, no matter what people say, and God will bless us. How thankful to God we must be for the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, for that is how the Truth has come to us, who are not Jews by birth.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

Read Acts 13:46 carefully. Paul says that it was "necessary" to preach to the Jews first. God was giving the Jews, who had crucified Jesus, a last opportunity to repent and to believe in him. This had been Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:36-38). Also, when Peter healed the lame man he said to the Jews: "Now brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it (crucified Jesus), as did also your rulers . . . Repent ye therefore, and be converted" (Acts 3:17-19). How wonderful was God's mercy to them. In God's sight, they were "beloved for the fathers' sakes" (Rom. 11:28); that is, because God loved Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he loved the Jews for their sakes and wanted them to be as faithful as their fathers. Many Jews did believe, but many more were filled with hatred and added to their sins by killing Stephen (Acts 7).

In our last lesson we saw how Barnabas and Paul were sent to distant lands to spread the Gospel, which Paul tells us is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Gentile)." (Rom. 1:16) They always went first to the synagogue to try to convince the Jews (e.g. Acts 13:5, 14).

Now we see Paul turning to the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 13:47 is quoted from Isa. 49:6) to prove that God had

always intended that Gentiles would be given the same hope of salvation (see also Additional Notes, Lesson 9).

The judgment, concerning which the Lord Jesus had warned the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:6,20-24), did eventually come upon them in AD 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were scattered into all parts of the earth.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *What did Paul and Barnabas do on the very first Sabbath at Antioch in Pisidia?*
2. ✓ *In Paul's speech, what was he going to teach them from their own Scriptures?*
3. ✓ *What did Paul say was "preached through this man"?*
4. *Who was in the synagogue listening to Paul?*
5. *How did the Jews feel when they saw the crowds on the next Sabbath day?*
6. ✓ *What did the Jews do when Paul spoke?*
7. *Who did Paul say had judged the Jews of Antioch unworthy of everlasting life?*
8. *Who gladly received the Gospel in Antioch?*

Detailed Answers

1. *In Paul's speech in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia, Paul turned to the Old Testament Scriptures.*
 - (a) *Whom did he speak about?*
 - (b) *What was the good news?*
 - (c) *What would happen if they despised these words?*
2. ✓ *Tell what happened in Antioch in Pisidia on the next Sabbath day.*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

3. (a) *What was Paul's bold answer to the Jews in Antioch in Pisidia?*
- (b) *Briefly say what these words mean.*

Acts 13: 46. -from 62
it was necessary.

13. SUFFERING FOR THE TRUTH

*“We must through much tribulation
enter into the Kingdom of God”*

Aim

To show how Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel at Lystra, Iconium and Derbe and how Timothy became a disciple.



Synopsis

If you look at the map of Paul's first journey, you will see that he and Barnabas visited three more towns before they began to turn towards Antioch in Syria, from where they had first set out. They had been driven out of Antioch in Pisidia by angry Jews who were envious of the interest which the people had shown in the disciples' message. They continued their journey, preaching the Gospel and putting their lives in danger, but God had sent them out and they bravely kept on with the work He had called them to do.

Acts 14

ICONIUM (vv. 1-7)

At Iconium, they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and preached the Gospel to the Jews. It was never difficult to find people who would thrill to the good news of salvation, but there were always unbelieving Jews who stirred up trouble. So it was at Iconium. “A great multitude believed” (v. 1), but the unbelieving Jews with their rulers even plotted to stone them. When Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they hurried off to Lystra, about 30 km. away.

LYSTRA (vv. 8-12)

“And there they preached the Gospel.” (v. 7) They found at Lystra a certain crippled man who had been lame in his feet since birth and had never walked. He was listening very

2. { closely to Paul, who could see that this man had faith to be healed. The apostle fastened his eyes upon the lame man and said loudly for all to hear, "Stand upright on thy feet". To the amazement of those who gathered around, the cripple not only stood, but leaped and walked. He was completely cured.

4 The people of Lystra were astonished. They saw clearly that such a miracle could not have been done by an ordinary man. However, they did not believe in the God of Israel and could not understand that God had given His apostles the power of the Holy Spirit to help them convince people of the Truth. "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men", they cried in excitement. They kept on shouting this out in their own native language. There was a temple for idol worship just outside their city and they thought Paul and Barnabas were two of their gods who had come to visit their temple. They called Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker, and Barnabas they named Jupiter, who to the Greeks, was chief among their gods.

THE PEOPLE WORSHIP PAUL AND BARNABAS (vv. 13-18)

3. Everyone in the city became very excited, and the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands of flowers to the gates of the city, ready to make a sacrifice in honour of the apostle Paul and Barnabas.

Paul and Barnabas began to realise what was happening and were very distressed. They could not allow such a thing to happen. God alone was to be worshipped! They rent their clothes and ran among the people calling out, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men just like you and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." (vv. 15-17)

They had to do a lot of talking before the people of Lystra could be made to understand that they were really men and not gods.

FURTHER PERSECUTION FROM THE JEWS (vv.19-20)

Meanwhile the Jews from Antioch and Iconium were still very angry with Paul and Barnabas and they arrived in Lystra to stir up the people against them. The men of Lystra were by now quite embarrassed about the celebrations they had wanted to make for Paul and Barnabas. When the angry Jews came to their city, they easily forgot the wonderful miracle Paul had done in their midst and, in a moment, became his enemies. Their feelings were stirred up so much, that they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. 5

The horrified disciples gathered around, but, to their great joy, they found that Paul was not dead. Helping him to his feet they went back into the city, no doubt rejoicing that God had saved him from death at the hands of these wicked men.

PAUL STRENGTHENS THE NEW ECCLESIAS (vv.21-28)

The next day the apostles left for Derbe, the last town on their route. When they had preached the Gospel there and "made many disciples" (v. 21 mg.), they headed back to the new ecclesias they had established at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Their special message to each ecclesia was: "we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." (v. 22) 7.

What great examples these two brethren were, who had suffered so many trials while preaching the Gospel. The bruises on Paul's body were obvious to all and the new disciples knew very well that it was for their sakes that Paul and Barnabas had endured so much. So they encouraged them to "continue in the faith", and the two brethren continued on their way, going from ecclesia to ecclesia until they reached Antioch, in Syria. There they gathered the brethren and sisters together and told them "all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (v. 27). Even though they had suffered so much, they knew God had been with them and had blessed the work.

THE DISCIPLE TIMOTHY (16:1-3)

This first journey would have left Paul with many memories, both happy and sad. But of all the disciples he made, one young man brought gladness to Paul for the rest of his life. That young man was Timothy. He lived at Lystra, where Paul had been stoned and left for dead. Perhaps Timothy saw this happen. He had been taught the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother since he was a little boy (2 Tim. 3:15) and had been baptised when Paul preached at Lystra. The apostle became very fond of Timothy and loved to have this young disciple with him. Later, Timothy went with Paul on his journeys. When Paul was in prison at the end of his life he wrote Timothy a lovely letter, encouraging him in the faith and asking him to come to see him.

LESSON FOR US

Paul and Barnabas were very humble men. When the people of Lystra wanted to worship them, they taught that all praise must be given to God only. Let us learn that all that we do must be for God's honour and not to gain praise for ourselves. As we read of Paul's sufferings, we learn that it is not always easy to follow God's way and it is through much tribulation (trial or suffering) that we must enter God's Kingdom. God will help us endure trials if we put our trust in Him as Paul did.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

We can already see coming to pass in Paul's life that which the Lord Jesus foretold concerning him, "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (9:16). Having been converted to the Gospel, Paul must now suffer in the name of Jesus Christ, as he had made others to suffer so terribly in the past (8:3).

Paul later wrote to Timothy: "Thou has fully known my . . . persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." (2 Tim. 3:10-11)

Disciples do not usually face stonings or violent persecution today as the apostles did. The tribulation we face today is often pressure from our school friends to do the things they do – to dress the way they dress, to visit the places they visit, to listen to the “music” which they love to hear, to read the books and magazines that excite them, to watch television, to join in sporting matches with them. That is the sort of tribulation, or pressure that we find hard to endure. Paul encouraged the young man Timothy to “endure hardness (trouble) as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3). He told Timothy of “perilous times” which would come and they are the times in which we live, just before the return of Christ. “Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy . . . lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” Paul’s warning to Timothy is a warning for us all and his wise advice was: “*from such turn away*” (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

The “holy scriptures” which Timothy learned from his mother and grandmother are “able to make us wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Let us have Timothy for our example, so that we may share the happiness he will have in God’s Kingdom.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *How did the unbelieving Jews at Iconium act towards Paul and Barnabas?*
2. ✓ *What miracle did Paul work at Lystra?*
3. *What did the people want to do when they saw this miracle?*
4. ✓ *Who did the people think Paul and Barnabas were?*
5. ✓ *What happened to Paul at Lystra?*
6. *Who was an outstanding young disciple from Lystra?*
7. *What was Paul’s special message to the new ecclesias after his troubles at Lystra?*

Detailed Answers

1. *At Lystra Paul healed a crippled man. Tell what happened afterwards.*
2. ✓ *One disciple at Lystra became Paul's friend for the rest of his life. Tell all you know about him.*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

3. *Paul told Timothy that "perilous times" would come.*
 - (a) *What did he say people would be like?*
 - (b) *What was Paul's wise advice?*
 - (c) *What did Timothy learn that helped him endure?*
4.
 - (a) *Tell how Paul suffered at Lystra.*
 - (b) *What sort of tribulation do you find difficult? Give two examples.*
 - (c) *What can we read that will help us behave wisely while we wait for Christ to come?*



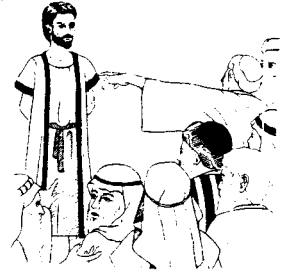
Acts 14:22

14. PAUL AND SILAS AT PHILIPPI

*"If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord,
come into my house"*

Aim

To show how the Truth was preached at Philippi despite much suffering and many were converted.



Synopsis

Paul commenced a second journey to preach the Gospel and this time he took Silas with him. Setting out from Antioch in Syria once again, they went on land to the towns he had visited before, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia. It was on this journey that Timothy joined them.

Acts. 16:9-22

PAUL SEES A VISION OF A MAN FROM MACEDONIA (vv. 9-12)

Eventually the brethren reached Troas, a seaport on the Aegean Sea. There one night Paul saw in a vision a man from Macedonia, standing and begging him for assistance: "Come over into Macedonia, and help us".

Realising that this call was from God to spread the Gospel in that area, Paul wasted no time in setting sail. Two days later they came to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia.

MAKING DISCIPLES IN PHILIPPI (vv. 13-15)

It does not seem that there was a synagogue in Philippi as, on the Sabbath day, people used to go to the riverside to pray. Among the women gathered there was Lydia, "a seller of purple", an expensive dye for material. She was already a worshipper of God and as she listened carefully to Paul's message Lydia was convinced of the Truth concerning the

4 Lord Jesus Christ. God had “opened her heart” to hear the way of salvation and she and her household believed and were baptised.

Lydia was so grateful to Paul and the brethren for the hope they now shared, that she insisted on inviting them to her home. “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house.” Therefore Lydia fed them and cared for them while they continued to serve God in Philippi.

A MIRACLE OF HEALING (vv. 16-18)

5 One day as Paul, Silas and Timothy were going to prayer, they were followed by a slave girl, who was obviously sick in her mind. She imagined she could tell a person’s fortune, or, in other words, what would happen to them in the future. No one can do this, of course, but some wicked men had used her mental sickness to make themselves rich. This girl followed Paul and the disciples for several days, crying out, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.” What she shouted was true, but Paul felt very sorry for her because she did not realise what she was saying. He was worried too, because the Truth should not be spoken about in this manner.

So one day, when she still followed them, he turned and spoke to her. Straight away she was healed. The power of the Holy Spirit was able to cure her through the words of the apostle and she became a normal, sensible girl, perhaps for the first time in her life.

PAUL AND SILAS ARE BEATEN (vv. 19-23)

6 When her masters found that they could no longer use her to make themselves rich, they were very angry. Little did they care that this poor girl had been cured. They thought only of themselves. Catching hold of Paul and Silas, they dragged them into the market place to the rulers of the city, who in turn sent them to the magistrates. “These men, being Jews”, they said, “do exceedingly trouble our city.” (v. 20)

Because Paul and Silas were strangers in Philippi it was not hard to make up some false charge against them. Thus they were accused of teaching things which were against the Roman law. In no time an angry crowd had gathered, all anxious to see Paul and Silas punished. They did not have time to give any answer to the magistrates before their coats were ripped off and the order was given for them to be beaten. The unfortunate brethren were thrashed with rods many times and with backs bleeding and sore, they were thrown into prison. The jailor who had been ordered to keep them safely, fastened their feet in the stocks. 7 8

LESSON FOR US

In his letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:2), Paul reminds the brethren that though they were shamefully treated at Philippi, “we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God”. Even the shame of being treated so unfairly and the agony of the thrashing they were given did not change their minds about preaching. They were completely humble and unselfish, knowing that the Lord Jesus Christ had suffered more than that for them. We must always think of our trials and difficulties like that. It will make us better servants of Christ and more thankful towards God.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

What an example it is for us to see the keenness with which Lydia listened to and learned the Truth. It appears that no men in Philippi took any interest in the things of God to this point of time but this did not stop Lydia from gathering the women together by the riverside on the Sabbath day for prayer and worship.

Not only did Lydia take on this responsibility, but her work as a “seller of purple” would have made her days busy. She let none of these things come before the Word of God. Because our Father looks on the heart He knew what a genuine woman

Lydia was and as she eagerly listened to Paul, God “opened her heart” and helped her to understand.

Even back in the times of the tabernacle in the wilderness, God gave special wisdom to some of those whose heart was stirred to willingly work on the various items for God’s sanctuary (Exod. 35:30-35; 36:1-2).

We can see then that God will be a very present help when we prayerfully open His Word and try to understand it. If our hearts are stirred to seek out God’s Truth, we shall surely find it.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *What did the man in the vision at Troas say to Paul?*
2. ✓ *Where did Lydia live?*
3. *Who was Lydia?*
4. ✓ *What did God do for Lydia?*
5. *What did the slave girl cry out to Paul and Silas?*
6. *Why were the men angry when the slave girl was cured?*
7. *What did these men say Paul and Silas had been doing?*
8. *What did they do to Paul and Silas before throwing them into prison?*

Detailed Answers

- ✓ 1. *Tell the story of how Paul healed the slave girl at Philippi and what happened to Paul and Silas **before** they were thrown into prison.*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

2. *Tell how Lydia came to hear the Truth and what we learn from her wonderful example.*

Acts 16:15.

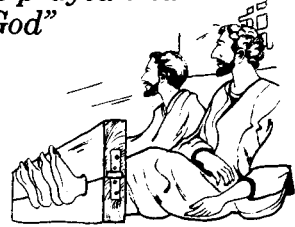
15. GOD FREES PAUL AND SILAS AT PHILIPPI

“At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God”

Aim

To show how the truth of God’s Word changed the life of the jailor and of all his household.

Acts 16:23-40



PAUL AND SILAS SUFFER CHEERFULLY (vv. 23-25)

What a sorry state Paul and Silas were in as the Philippian jailor fastened their feet firmly in the stocks. He had been ordered to keep them safely and the jailor knew he would lose his life if his prisoners escaped. There they were in the dark and miserable prison cell, with backs aching from the terrible beating they had received.

No doubt we would have been bitterly complaining after such unfair treatment but Paul and Silas were amazing men. In spite of all that had happened, they did not speak against God or question Him for allowing them to be dealt with so cruelly. They must have been in a lot of pain, but instead of groaning, they turned to their Heavenly Father in prayer and sang praises to Him far into the night. How surprised the other prisoners must have been when they heard Paul and Silas singing in that prison cell.

God heard their prayers and answered them in a strange way.

THE JAILOR BELIEVES AND IS BAPTISED (vv 26-34)

Suddenly, at midnight, there was an earthquake that shook the whole prison. Immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were undone. The prisoners were free.

The earthquake awoke the jailor and when he saw the prison doors open, he thought the prisoners had all escaped. Knowing that he would surely be put to death when this was discovered, he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul cried

3 with a loud voice: “Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.”
Trembling, the jailor called for a light and rushed in to the
4. inner prison and fell on his knees before Paul and Silas and
5. said: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” How gladly Paul
must have answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and
thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (v 31).

The grateful jailor and his family listened eagerly as Paul
and Silas continued to talk to them about the Gospel, and they
believed. He kindly bathed the disciples' wounds and then, in
6. the early hours of the morning while it was still dark, the
jailor and his household were baptised.

Rejoicing with his family in their new hope, he took Paul
and Silas to his own house to give them a meal.

PAUL AND SILAS ARE SET FREE (vv. 35-40)

When day came, the magistrates who had ordered Paul and
Silas to be beaten sent a message to the jailor, “Let these men
go”, and the keeper of the prison said to Paul, “Depart, and go
in peace.” Paul felt this was not good enough. They had been
beaten without even being able to answer the charges that
had been made against them and this was not according to
7. Roman law. “Let them come themselves and fetch us out”, he
exclaimed.

Paul was not being proud when he said this. He was
thinking of the other disciples in Philippi and wanted to make
sure that they would not be treated unfairly as he and Silas
had been. The magistrates realised that Paul was right and
that they themselves could be in serious trouble. Fearfully
they came quickly to the prison and setting the brethren free
begged them to leave Philippi. Paul and Silas did so, but only
after spending some time encouraging and comforting the
disciples gathered at Lydia's house.

Thus was formed at Philippi a company of brethren and
sisters who loved the Word of God. At a later date, from
Rome, Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians, one of the most
beautiful epistles in our Bible.

LESSON FOR US

It was when Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome that he encouraged them to rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and be instant in prayer (Rom. 12:12). The lesson we have just considered is full of outstanding examples of these exhortations. Paul could be happy and rejoice when in pain because he looked to God for strength and was ever thankful for the many wonderful blessings God had given him.

If we really consider God's goodness to us and how great it is, the troubles which come our way will seem so much less and we may even be able to face trials cheerfully as Paul and Silas indeed did.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

The jailor must already have heard Paul's preaching for no one can learn in one night enough to be baptised. Knowing the cruel beating they had received, the jailor would have been amazed to hear their prayers and songs of praise. When the earthquake came and they did not escape, they thus saved his life. He could see that their actions were always consistent with their words. So God was preparing his mind to accept what they taught as true. He had obviously discussed these things with his family and the events of the night were enough to convince them all of their need to be saved.

The jailor and his household were now changed people. This always happens to those who believe and accept the Gospel. They turn from their old ways and turn to God, learning a completely different way of thinking and acting.

It is the Word of God working in their minds and hearts that brings about this change. Therefore the more we learn of God's Word, the more we will act like the apostles and look past all our trials to the glory of the Kingdom.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *What did Paul and Silas do in prison before midnight?*
2. *What happened at midnight?*
3. *When the jailor was about to kill himself, what did Paul cry out?*
4. *When he fell on his knees, what did the jailor ask Paul and Silas?*
5. *What was Paul's answer?*
6. *What happened to the jailor and his household that night?*
7. *The rulers of Philippi sent a message saying, "Let these men go." What was Paul's reply?*

Detailed Answers

1. ✓ *Paul and Silas were put in prison at Philippi. Tell what happened on that eventful night?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

2. *Discuss some of the things that brought about a change in the Philippian jailor.*

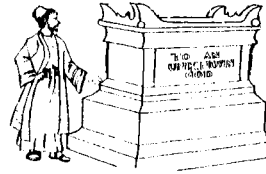
Acts 16: 30-31.

16. PAUL AT ATHENS

*“God hath appointed a day, in the which
He will judge the world in righteousness”*

Aim

To show how Paul preached to wise men in Athens who could not understand the wisdom of God.



Synopsis

On his second journey Paul was no doubt very grateful for his travelling companions. They did not usually suffer as much persecution as Paul did at the hands of the Jews, but they did not desert him in times of trouble. Sometimes he left some of them behind to strengthen new ecclesias, while he travelled on to another town. So Luke and Timothy stayed in Philippi, while Paul and Silas went on to Thessalonica and Berea. Later Paul travelled to Athens by himself where he felt very lonely among people who were so wise in the wisdom of this world that they could not understand the Gospel at all.

Acts 17:16-34

THE NOBLE BEREANS (vv. 10-15)

In Berea, Paul found the Jews “more noble” than those at Thessalonica; that is, they did not shut their ears straight away at the mention of Jesus of Nazareth, but were prepared to listen to Paul’s reasoning. “They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (v. 11) Because they were prepared to read the Bible honestly, they found that what Paul told them was true and so they believed.

Paul had to leave Berea suddenly, because Jews from Thessalonica had followed him there to stir up trouble. He went on to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy (who had arrived from Philippi) to encourage the brethren for a few more days.

PAUL IN ATHENS (vv. 16-18)

Silas + Timotheus

- 1. While Paul waited for the others in Athens, he looked
- 2. around the city and noticed that it was full of idols. It made him angry to think that people could be so foolish as to worship so many gods. He wasted no time and set about preaching to all who would listen. First he went to the synagogue, but the Jews there were apparently not interested. Then he turned to the market-place, a large open square in the city, where many people came to do business or chat. Each day he spoke with anyone who passed by.

It was not long before the learned Greek philosophers heard of Paul and wanted to know more of his teaching. He seemed to them to be “a setter forth of strange gods”, because he preached of Jesus and the resurrection.

The word “philosopher” means “lover of wisdom” and these men liked to think deeply about things, as many in the world do today. But it was only men’s wisdom and that is very different from God’s wisdom. The wisdom of God can only be learned from the Bible. If people will not read that, then no matter how hard they think, they will never be “wise unto salvation”. Their wisdom will end when they die.

- 4 The philosophers brought Paul to a place of great importance in the city, to Areopagus, or Mars Hill, which was the place where the wise men of the city gathered to discuss matters – “for all the Athenians and strangers (i.e. foreigners) which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (v. 21). Now it was Paul’s opportunity to tell them some “new thing” for what he was to speak was the Truth about God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

PAUL ON MARS HILL (vv. 22-31)

- 5 As Paul had been looking around the city, he noticed that among all the altars to their gods, was one to “The Unknown God” (v. 23). Because of their superstition they had made this, being afraid that, if they missed one of the gods, he would be angry and punish them. Paul now said he would tell them

about this Unknown God, so that they could worship Him. To them the God of heaven and earth was unknown – they had never thought of Him, heard of Him, nor believed in Him.

Athens was full of temples, but the true God does not dwell in temples made by man's hands. (cp Acts 7:48; 17:24) He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He gives us our life and breath and everything we need. No idol of gold or silver or stone is like this God. In the past, Paul told them, they had not known Him, but now they must repent and turn from their ignorance and worship Him.

Not only did Paul tell them this, but he also warned of the coming judgment which God would bring upon those who did not serve Him. He said God had "appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man (i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ) whom he hath ordained." (v. 31) The proof that God would do this was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Paul could see that these learned men were not interested in the way of salvation. They thought that what Paul said was new and interesting, but they did not really believe it. Some openly laughed at the idea of resurrection. So he left them there and as he went, one or two went with him and when they had heard more from Paul, they believed.

LESSON FOR US

Many people today are like the learned Greek philosophers, who love to feel they are very intelligent – but sadly they know nothing of the things that really matter, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. Let us treasure the wisdom we receive from God's Word far above any other worldly wisdom, so that, at the "appointed" day, when Jesus Christ returns, we will be found serving the one true God.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

We are told in Acts 17:18 that there were two classes of philosophers who spoke to Paul. They were called Epicureans

and Stoicks. They had thought about the meaning of life for a long time and came up with their own answers as to what a man's aim should be in his lifetime.

(1) *The Epicureans* believed that the world was made by chance. They said that the gods were too far away to be interested in the world or its people. This really meant that they did not believe in God at all. Of such men God says: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no god." (Psa. 14:1) The Epicureans thought that the best aim in life was to enjoy themselves. Their philosophy was "let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

(2) *The Stoicks* believed in self-control. It was weakness, they said, to show feelings of happiness or sadness or pain. A man should control himself. You may imagine how proud they became. They did not think they had need of God. But God said: "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to Yahweh." (Prov. 16:5)

One thing all these philosophers believed, was that every man had an immortal part in him which lives on for ever after he dies. Most people still believe this today. It is wrong (see Instructor questions 31, 32, 34). Because they believed this, they laughed at the idea of resurrection and did not think they had any need of a Saviour. God's wisdom in providing Jesus Christ seemed foolish to them, but God has said, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise." (1 Cor. 1:19) So Paul finished his address on Mars Hill by telling them of God's coming judgment on the world. How depressing for Paul to find that even the mention of God's judgment could not rouse their interest. They had left God out of their thinking altogether, as so many people do today. Let us never put our trust in the wisdom and learning of the world, but turn to God's Word to find true wisdom, which leads to life eternal.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *Whom was Paul waiting for in Athens?*
2. *What did Paul first see as he walked through the city of Athens?*
3. ✓ *What did the Athenians like to hear?*
4. *Where did Paul stand to speak to the men of Athens?*
5. *What words did Paul notice on one of their altars?*
6. *Did any of the people believe what Paul told them?*
7. ✓ *They had not heard the Gospel before. What did they have to do now?*

Detailed Answers

1. *What did Paul tell the people of Athens about God?*
2. ✓ (a) *Finish the quotation: "God hath appointed a day..."*
(b) *What did the men of Athens think when they heard what Paul had to say?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

3. (a) *What did (i) the Epicureans believe in?*
(ii) the Stoicks believe in?
(b) *Where only can we find true wisdom?*
4. *Why did the philosophers laugh at the idea of a resurrection?*

Acts 17:11

17. PAUL AT CORINTH

*“Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:
For I am with thee ... for I have much people in this city”*

Aim

To show that God can call people to the Gospel from anywhere and we must be prepared to speak the Truth wherever we find ourselves.



Synopsis

After Paul left Athens, he travelled south to the city of Corinth. Corinth was the chief city of southern Greece, and was on a narrow neck of land having two seaports, one on either side. Because of this it was a very busy city and to its market places came people and merchandise from all over the world. Like most wealthy cities it was also a city of great wickedness, but we see how God directed Paul there that the light of the Gospel might turn many from their wicked ways to serve Him.

Acts 18:1-18

PAUL STAYS WITH AQUILA AND PRISCILLA (vv. 1-3)

When Paul arrived in this large city, he found two fellow Jews, Aquila and his wife Priscilla. They too had recently come to Corinth, for they had been forced to leave Rome because the Emperor Claudius had made a decree that all Jews should leave the city. Aquila was a tentmaker like Paul. Therefore Paul lived with them and they worked together making a living by their trade in Corinth. We know that Paul would have preached the Gospel to them and it seems that he converted Aquila and Priscilla to the Truth at this time. Paul often refers to these faithful friends and the great work which they did for Christ in his Epistles. He calls them “my helpers in Christ Jesus”, and it appears that Aquila and Priscilla even risked their lives for Paul’s sake (Rom. 16:3-4).

PAUL PREACHES IN THE SYNAGOGUE (vv. 4-8)

As was Paul's usual custom he visited the synagogue on the Sabbath day, where he preached the Gospel to both the Jews and Gentile proselytes. Later Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia where Paul had left them and brought a good report from the ecclesia there. This encouraged Paul and he seemed to go out to preach with new energy showing the Jews from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (v. 5).

As so often happened, many of the Jews who could not find an answer to Paul's words, became rude and blasphemed. This made Paul angry and he shook his cloak at them and said: "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." (v. 6)

Now right next door to the synagogue lived a man named Justus. He worshipped God and invited Paul to come to his house and continue preaching. Among those who did listen was Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue and he with all his family believed. Many Corinthians who would not have been allowed to attend the synagogue, heard Paul in Justus' house. In such a wicked city, these people gladly heard the way of salvation which they believed and were baptised.

THE LORD SPEAKS TO PAUL IN A VISION (vv. 9-11)

Knowing how angry the Jews were, Paul may well have feared that once again the brethren would be persecuted for the Truth's sake and that the preaching of the Gospel would be hindered. One night, however, the Lord appeared to him in a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city" (vv. 9-10). With these words of encouragement, Paul continued to preach the Word of God without fear. Now he knew that God had a great work for him to do in this city and that He would protect him and bless his labours. So he continued his work in Corinth for another year and six months.

TROUBLE IN CORINTH (vv. 12-18)

Paul taught the Gospel with vigour and the Jews' hatred grew worse. Finally they could contain their bitterness and envy no longer. They captured Paul and took him to the judgment seat of Gallio, the Roman ruler in Corinth. They charged him with speaking against the Law of Moses, but Gallio was not interested in this religious argument and drove them from the judgment seat. The Greek inhabitants of Corinth decided to teach the Jews a lesson and taking Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, they beat him right in front of Gallio's seat. Gallio took no notice; as far as he was concerned the matter was over. We see that, although Paul was captured, yet God protected him as He had said He would and delivered him safely from the hatred of the Jews. 7

After this, Paul continued for quite some time in Corinth before he departed with Aquila and Priscilla for Ephesus. Later, Paul wrote letters to the believers in Corinth encouraging them to continue in the ways that he had taught them (1 & 2 Corinthians).

LESSON FOR US

Once again we are impressed with the untiring labours of Paul as he worked, preaching the news of salvation in Corinth. We too must be diligent in serving God and He will watch over us as He did Paul. Notice how Paul seems to have received energy for the work when Silas and Timothy came to help him. We too must realise that we can encourage others and be encouraged by them to do the will of God. Let us always try to develop close friendships with those who love the Word of God.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. ✓ *Whom did Paul stay with when he first came to Corinth?*
2. *Which two disciples arrived in Corinth and encouraged Paul in his work of preaching?*

3. ✓ *What did Paul say to the Jews in Corinth when they refused to listen to the Gospel?*
4. ✓ *Where did Paul go to preach after walking out of the synagogue in Corinth?*
5. ✓ *Who was the important Jew who was converted to the Truth?*
6. *How did God strengthen Paul to continue preaching in Corinth?*
7. ✓ *What did the jealous Jews do to try to stop Paul's preaching?*

Detailed Answers

1. *God had a great work for Paul to do in Corinth. Tell what you know of his preaching there and how God encouraged him to continue in this work.*

Acts 18:9-10

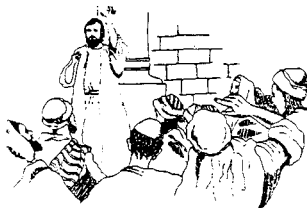
If too long start from:
Be not afraid.

18. THE TRUTH COMES TO EPHEBUS

"They be no gods, which are made with hands"

Aim

To show the power of Paul's teaching at Ephesus and how a riot was started by Gentiles who were afraid of losing their source of wealth.



Synopsis

Paul arrived in Ephesus with Aquila and Priscilla and although the Jews there would listen, he was anxious to return to Jerusalem before setting out on another long journey. So he left Priscilla and Aquila with the Ephesians to carry on the work.

Acts 19

PAUL RETURNS TO EPHEBUS (vv. 1-10)

1. It was on Paul's third and longest preaching campaign that he at last came to stay at Ephesus, a thriving seaport town which lay on the shores of the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was a
2. wealthy city of pleasure-loving people, and their pride was centred on the magnificent Temple of Diana, once described as the First Wonder of the Ancient World.

In this city, given over to sin and idolatry, it seemed unlikely that the Truth would prosper. Yet, with God's help and the tireless efforts of Paul with Aquila and Priscilla, the work of spreading the Gospel was blessed. Paul spoke to the Jews in their synagogue for three months, but those who hardened their hearts spoke evil of the Gospel to the people. Therefore Paul thought it wise to separate those who did believe and teach them somewhere else. He hired the
3. A. schoolroom of Tyrannus and continued there for two years.
"All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." (v. 10)

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL (vv. 11-20)

Paul had the power of the Holy Spirit to perform “special miracles”, to prove that what he taught was the truth of God’s Word. Even “handkerchiefs and aprons” that touched Paul’s body were used to cure people (v. 12). 5

Some Jews thought they could copy these miracles simply by using the name of Jesus Christ. Seven sons of a chief priest pretended to heal people in this way. One day when they tried this cure on a mentally sick man he leaped at them attacking them and causing them to flee wounded and naked. So God taught them a lesson and many of the Ephesians too began to see how wrong they were and how they must change their ways. They understood that the pagan worship of the goddess Diana was wrong and the behaviour of the temple priests and priestesses was evil. These people decided to take all their books on magic and burn them in the public square. It was a huge bonfire and the books burnt were valued at 50,000 pieces of silver, a fortune in those days! “So mightily grew the Word of God.” (v. 20) 6 7

THE PUBLIC RIOT (vv. 23-34)

The silversmiths in Ephesus were very annoyed to find so many people giving up the worship of Diana. It worried them to think that they would not make so much money, because people would not buy their idols anymore. One of them, Demetrius, called all the silversmiths together and said, “Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.” He complained that Paul had persuaded the people that idols made with hands were not gods at all. Unless Paul was stopped their trade would disappear and the temple of their great goddess Diana would be despised. The silversmiths were filled with rage and shouted out: “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” (v. 28) 8 9

The angry shouting of the silversmiths spread quickly through the city and a riot broke out. They rushed into the stadium dragging Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s travelling

companions, with them. There was utter confusion, as some cried one thing and some another. In fact most of the crowd did not even know why they were there.

When Paul knew that Gaius and Aristarchus were in danger of their lives, he would have gone fearlessly into the mob, but the disciples of Ephesus persuaded him not to. One of the Jews wanted to speak to the crowd, probably to explain that they had nothing to do with the disciples. However, when the mob knew that he was a Jew, they began crying and shouting again, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." This continued for two whole hours.

THE TOWNCLERK CALMS THE PEOPLE (vv. 35-41)

In the end the townclerk calmed the people and told them they were very foolish. He said everyone knew the people of Ephesus were worshippers of Diana; so there was no need for them to make such a fuss. Paul and his followers had done nothing unlawful — they "are neither robbers of temples nor yet blasphemers of your goddess" (v. 37). He knew they were likely to get into serious trouble with the Roman authorities for the riot and so he sent them all away.

After this uproar, Paul called the disciples together, embraced them and continued on his journey.

LESSON FOR US

What a difference between the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ and the worshippers of the pagan goddess Diana. The brethren were prepared to burn in public their books of magic and turn from idolatry, to quietly worship the one true God. The idol makers were more interested in their own wealth than the goddess — money was their god. So it is today for most people. Let us not love the things of this world, which pass away, but the Truth, which lasts forever. Paul wrote to Timothy, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:6-10) but "godliness with contentment is great gain".

Like Paul, we should be fearless in standing for Christ and help others learn the true riches of the Gospel of salvation.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *What sort of people were the Ephesians?*
2. *What did the people worship in Ephesus?*
3. ✓ *Where did Paul preach in Ephesus when he left the synagogue?*
4. *How long did Paul preach there?*
5. *What special miracles did God do by Paul?*
6. *What did some Jews do when they saw Paul's miracles at Ephesus?*
7. ✓ *What did the people do with their books of magic when they believed Paul?*
8. *Why was Demetrius angry?*
9. *What did all the people shout out?*

Detailed Answers

1. *Some men tried to copy the miracles Paul did.*
 - (a) *Tell what happened to them.*
 - (b) *What did many of the people do when they heard about this?*
2. ✓ *Demetrius called a meeting of the silversmiths.*
 - (a) *What did he say?*
 - (b) *Tell what happened after that.*

Acts 19:10

19. EUTYCHUS FALLS ASLEEP

*“And they brought the young man alive,
and were not a little comforted”*

Aim

*To show how the disciples met
on the first day of the week at
Troas and how Eutychus was
raised to life.*



Synopsis

On Paul's second journey he came to Troas, but did not stay there because of a night vision in which God showed him that he was needed in Macedonia (Acts 16:8-9; see Lesson 15).⁴ When he returned to Troas he stayed seven days with the ecclesia that had been established there. The brethren from various ecclesias who travelled with him are mentioned in Acts 20:4. Luke, the writer of the Acts, was also with Paul.

Acts 20:7-14

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK IN TROAS (v. 7)

It was the custom of the Jews to observe the seventh day, the Sabbath, for religious worship. God had commanded it (Deut. 5:12). The followers of Christ used to meet as we do on the first day of the week, being the day on which Christ rose from the dead (see v. 7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

3. We can imagine how thrilled the disciples at Troas were to have Paul with them for the memorial meeting. There would be a reading from the Scriptures and then Paul would give the exhortation. They would be happy also to have visitors with them from other countries, brethren and sisters all united by the one Truth they shared.

So they came together as Jesus had taught his disciples, to remember the great love and sacrifice of their Master: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” (1 Cor. 11:23-29) Whenever possible

all disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ meet every first day of the week to remember his death and resurrection in this way. 2
They need to come together to remember him and to be encouraged to live in a way which pleases God. The hope of the resurrection to eternal life is only for those who continue 4
to be faithful until Christ comes.

In those early days of the Truth, it was the custom of brethren and sisters to have a common meal together, after the memorial meeting. For those who were slaves sometimes working for hard masters, this might have been the one good meal they had all the week.

THE HOLY SPIRIT TURNS TRAGEDY INTO GLADNESS (vv. 8-12)

The meeting was held in an upstairs room and Paul no doubt would have recalled many incidents and lessons from the Old Testament, as the brethren and sisters listened eagerly. He spoke for a long time, but they did not mind, for he was leaving them the following day and this was their opportunity to hear him.

The meeting continued until midnight with many lamps burning in the crowded room. Because the room was crowded, one young man named Eutyclus, was sitting on the window ledge listening. Unlike our windows, this was simply an opening in the wall. As Paul went on speaking, Eutyclus became drowsy and gradually fell asleep. Suddenly he lost his balance and fell right down from the third floor. 5
Everyone was horrified and rushed downstairs to find Eutyclus lying on the ground, dead. Paul, of course, had stopped speaking and hurried to where the young man lay. The brethren and sisters, stunned by what had happened, made way for Paul who fell on Eutyclus and embraced him. 6
The apostle knew that he had been given the power of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles and now he would have prayed to God that this power might be used. God heard his prayer and the lad's life was restored. 7

Paul turned to the weeping brethren and sisters and said, "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him" (v. 10).

With gladness they all returned to the meeting room, where Paul finished his talk and they "broke bread" in memory of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a terrible and unexpected thing to happen in the middle of a meeting. Imagine, however, the great joy among the disciples, when they saw God's power working before their eyes. How it would have strengthened their faith in God. They would never forget that meeting!

PAUL ENCOURAGES THE BRETHREN AND SISTERS AND DEPARTS (vv. 11-13)

After the memorial meeting the disciples sat down and shared a meal together. Nobody wanted to go home that night, although it was into the early hours of the morning. Paul talked with them till daybreak. The apostle and his companions planned to leave that day for Assos about 30 km away. Paul decided to walk, while the others went by ship. He joined them at Assos and they all continued their journey back to Jerusalem.

LESSON FOR US

The name, Eutychus, means "fortunate". Things certainly did turn out well for that young man, but his greatest blessing was, of course, that he heard the Gospel preached by the apostle Paul and had his life restored and was given the opportunity to serve God. No doubt Eutychus looked forward to the resurrection, when Christ would return, for then he would receive eternal life and never die.

This is our hope too, for we know that Christ will soon return, just as he has promised.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

Memorial meetings in the early days of the ecclesias were very similar to those today. We try to follow that pattern as closely as possible. Disciples came together to one place,

usually the home of a brother or sister (e.g. Rom. 16:4-5, the house of Aquila and Priscilla; Philemon v. 2, the house of Philemon). There was a reading from the Scriptures and an exhortation to encourage them “unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24). Prayers were offered and bread and wine were passed around so that each brother and sister could eat and drink in turn. They also sang hymns of praise as we do.

As we learned in last year’s lessons, Jesus broke bread and drank wine with his disciples for the first time with a special meaning, just before his crucifixion. He told them that they were to remember him each time they shared the bread and wine together in this way.

Of the bread he said: “This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me”.

Of the wine he said: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20).

Only those who have the same hope as the disciples can share the bread and wine in this way. Thus they remember what Jesus did for them when he died on the cross. It also reminds them of his resurrection and the hope they have of resurrection when he returns, because he told them that he would eat and drink with them again “in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29).

In his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul told them how necessary it was for brethren and sisters to meet together around the Word of God as often as possible, “and so much the more, as ye see the day (of Christ’s coming) approaching” (Heb. 10:25). How wise God is in commanding us to do these things. They help to prevent the cares of this life crowding in upon us, causing us to forget the great hope set before us.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

- ✓ 1. *On what day of the week did the disciples meet together at Troas?*
- ✓ 2. *What did they remember on that day?*

3. *Who came to speak to them at Troas?*
4. *What wonderful hope did all the brethren have?*
5. *What happened to Eutychus as Paul spoke?*
6. *What did Paul do for Eutychus?*
7. *How could Paul bring Eutychus back to life?*
8. *What did Paul do until daybreak?*

Detailed Answers

- ✓ 1. *Tell all you know about Paul's meeting with the disciples at Troas and what happened to Eutychus.*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

2. *Tell what you know about the way memorial meetings were conducted in the early days of the ecclesia.*
3.
 - (a) *Why is it necessary for brethren and sisters to meet together on the first day of every week?*
 - (b) *Why do they eat bread and drink wine?*
 - (c) *When did Jesus say he would do it again?*

Acts 20: 10.

20. TO JERUSALEM AND BONDAGE

“I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus”

Aim

To show how God’s warnings to Paul of imprisonment in Jerusalem came to pass.



Synopsis

During his third journey Paul had encouraged the ecclesias to raise money for the poor brethren in Jerusalem. Now as his journey was ending he set out towards Jerusalem, taking with him the money which had been raised (Acts 24:17). He was aware that trouble and persecution awaited him in Jerusalem, for he had told the Ephesians: “I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me . . . (Acts 20:22-24).

Paul had not hesitated to preach the Gospel to all who would hear. Now he was to preach at Jerusalem – probably the most difficult of all his work.

Acts 21

THE PROPHECY OF AGABUS (vv. 8-14)

When Paul left Troas he was heading back to Jerusalem. He was anxious to be there in time to keep the Feast of Pentecost. His main stopping places were Miletus, Tyre and Caesarea.

At Miletus he called the Ephesian brethren to him to encourage and warn them. They were very sad to see Paul go, especially because he said, “Ye shall see my face no more.”

At Tyre, Paul’s ship stopped for seven days to unload its cargo and Paul spent the time with the disciples there. Here

too they warned Paul, through the Spirit, of the danger he would face in Jerusalem. The brethren with their wives and children all came down to the shores to say goodbye to Paul and his companions. There they knelt down and prayed together before Paul boarded the ship and sailed south to Caesarea.

2
3 At Caesarea Paul stayed at the house of Philip (v. 8; Acts 6:5). There, a prophet from Judea named Agabus, took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet and said, "Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." (v. 11)

4
↓ The brethren begged him not to go on. Even Paul's travelling companions, who had heard these warnings before, now pleaded with him to stay away from Jerusalem. But Paul answered: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (v. 13) When they could see that Paul was still determined to press on to Jerusalem, they said: "The will of the Lord be done." (v. 14)

PAUL COMES TO JERUSALEM (vv. 15-26)

Packing their baggage (including the precious gift of money from the Gentile ecclesias for the poor brethren in Jerusalem), Paul and his companions set off on the three days' journey accompanied by some of the disciples from Caesarea.

5
6 They were warmly welcomed in Jerusalem and the following day, Paul went to see James and the elders of the ecclesia. One by one Paul told them of the things God had done by him and when they heard the story of his experiences, they glorified God.

7 But James and the elders had a problem now that Paul was in Jerusalem. Thousands of Jews who had been baptised still kept the Law of Moses and they had been told that Paul was encouraging Jews to forget about the Law. This was untrue, of course. Paul knew it was no longer necessary to keep the

Law of Moses. God accepted Jews and Gentiles because they believed the Gospel and were baptised. The apostle did not teach the Gentiles to keep the Law, nor did he instruct the Jews not to keep it.

It was suggested that Paul go into the temple and join four other Jews, who were fulfilling a vow to God. This would show that he was not setting out to destroy the customs of the Jews.

While he was in the temple another false charge was made against him. Some Jews cried out that he had brought a Gentile into the temple, where Gentiles were not allowed to go. This was not true either.

BOUND WITH CHAINS (vv. 27-37)

In a short time they stirred up the Jews in the city and a riot broke out. Paul was dragged from the temple and the doors were immediately shut. The Jews would have killed Paul, if Lysias, the Chief Captain of the Roman guard had not suddenly appeared with his men. As soon as he had heard the uproar he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to the excited mob near the temple. When the Jews saw the Romans arrive they stopped beating Paul. He was bound with two chains and Lysias asked who he was and what he had done to cause such trouble. The Jews shouted out one thing or another all together and he could not tell what they were saying. So he marched Paul off to the Roman Castle of Antonia. The Jews were still angry and rushed after the soldiers shouting, "Away with him". The soldiers had to carry him up the steps and into the castle because of the violence of the people. He was now a prisoner, just as God had told him.

LESSON FOR US

Wherever Paul went on his travels, he found a warm welcome and friendship among the believers. It is still like that today among brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us always be thoughtful and kind to our friends who love the Truth.

We also learn from this story to be, like Paul, determined to do God's will, no matter what troubles lie ahead. It took great courage to go to Jerusalem, when the apostle knew he would be made a prisoner there. Let us have the same courage, when we have to stand against others in the name of Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *Why did Paul hurry back to Jerusalem?*
- ✓ 2. *What did the prophet Agabus do with Paul's girdle?*
- ✓ 3. *What did Agabus tell Paul?*
4. *Was Paul frightened to go to Jerusalem?*
5. *Whom did Paul meet at Jerusalem?*
6. *What did Paul tell the elders at Jerusalem?*
- ✓ 7. *What did James tell Paul the Jews were saying about him?*
8. *What did they suggest Paul should do to show the rumours were wrong?*

Detailed Answers

1. *Paul was on his way to Jerusalem when he met the prophet Agabus at Caesarea.*
 - (a) *What did Agabus say would happen to Paul?*
 - (b) *How did he show what would happen?*
 - (c) *What did Paul say he was ready to do in Jerusalem?*
- ✓ 2. *What was the false rumour that started the riot in Jerusalem. Tell what happened in the riot.*

Acts 21: 13.

21. A CAPTIVE IN CAESAREA

*“This man has nothing laid to his charge,
worthy of death or of bonds”*

Aim

To show how Paul was taken captive in Jerusalem and Caesarea and how God watched over him when the Jews wanted to take his life.



Synopsis

Paul's arrest by the Roman soldiers had saved his life. The Jews had cried, "Away with him", but all Paul wanted to do was to speak to them, to turn their hearts to God by teaching them the good news that Jesus was their Messiah. They wanted to kill him, but he wanted to save them.

Paul asked Lysias the Roman Captain if he would let him speak to the people from the safety of the Castle of Antonia. Lysias had thought Paul was a ruffian, but was surprised that he could speak Greek and was a citizen of Tarsus. Therefore he gave his permission, and Paul stood on the Castle steps, held up his hand for silence and spoke to the Jews in Hebrew.

Acts 22, 23, 24

PAUL SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE (22:1-22)

As they listened, Paul went right back to the beginning of his story. He was a Jew, brought up very carefully according to the Law of the fathers of old and, at the feet of Gamaliel, was well-educated in the Jewish religion. He had zealously persecuted those who followed Jesus of Nazareth, but had himself been converted on the road to Damascus and was baptised. Jesus himself, who had been raised from the dead, had spoken to him and said: "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." (v. 21)

That was enough for the Jews. The mention of the word "Gentiles" sent them wild. They threw their clothes and hands full of dust into the air and cried out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." (v. 22)

PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN (22:23-30; 23:1-10)

With the crowd once again ready to riot, the Roman Captain decided to take Paul inside and have him questioned. This time he was to be scourged, or whipped with a Roman lash. As they tied him with thongs, Paul said: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman?" When the Chief Captain found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, he stopped immediately; by scourging Paul he would have put his own life in danger.

Lysias was puzzled. Why did the Jews hate this man?

Therefore he decided to bring Paul before the Jewish Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council, to find out what he had done to rouse their anger. There must be some reason for their hatred of him.

When Paul stood before the Sanhedrin, he noticed that some were Pharisees, who believed in resurrection and some were Sadducees, who did not. So Paul said, "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." (v. 6) This caused a stir between the two groups and once more the Roman Captain came to Paul's rescue, for he thought Paul would be torn apart by the angry Jews.

A MESSAGE OF COMFORT (v. 11)

The Lord Jesus Christ knew of all Paul's troubles. He had been treated in the same way by his brethren the Jews. So the following night, the Lord stood by Paul to encourage him. "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou has testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

THE PLOT (vv. 12-22)

The Jews hated Paul so much that they would have gone to almost any extreme to kill him. Forty men vowed neither to

eat or drink until they had killed Paul. They plotted with the chief priests and elders and decided to request the Roman Captain to bring Paul down again to the Sanhedrin, pretending that they wanted to ask him some more questions. They planned to lay a trap for him on the way so that they could kill him. 5

Fortunately Paul's nephew overheard the plot, told Paul, and then told the Chief Captain. Lysias decided to shift Paul that night to Caesarea. 6
7

TO CAESAREA AND CAPTIVITY (vv. 23-35)

Arrangements were made for a large troop of soldiers to escort Paul to Caesarea – 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen were to be ready to leave Jerusalem at nine o'clock that night. They were to take Paul to the Governor's Palace at Caesarea, but it was necessary to stop at Antipatris overnight. The next day they pressed on to Caesarea.

Lysias had written a letter of explanation to the Governor. Felix, about his new prisoner. He knew that Paul was hated by the Jews, but told Felix that he could find "nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds." (v. 29) Therefore he told the Jews to go to Caesarea and make their accusations to Felix. 8

PAUL HELD BY FELIX AND FESTUS (24:22-27)

Although Paul was a prisoner God was with him. Felix gave an order that any of Paul's friends who wished could visit him. How thankful the apostle would have been for this during the two years he was kept in Caesarea as a prisoner. 9

There was a change of Governors at the end of that time, but Felix, wishing to please the Jews, kept Paul in prison. The new Governor, Festus, also heard Paul's case and wanted to send him back to Jerusalem, but Paul answered, "I appeal unto Caesar." (25:11) 10

Remember that the Lord had said that Paul was to "bear my name before Gentiles and *kings* and the children of Israel." (9:15) Can you see how it was all coming to pass?

LESSON FOR US

We must never forget that God is interested in His people. "The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." (Psa. 34:7) God saved Paul from death on many occasions and cared for him while he was a prisoner, for his work was not yet finished. God wanted him to go to Rome to preach there.

Always remember that the work of evil men cannot change God's plans. So we can always trust in Him.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

- ✓ 1. *When Paul spoke from the castle steps, what one word made the Jews angry?*
- ✓ 2. *What did the Chief Captain decide to do to Paul?*
3. *What changed his mind?*
4. *What did the angel say to Paul in prison in the Castle of Antonia?*
5. *What did some of the Jews say they would not do till they had killed Paul?*
6. *Who heard about their plot?*
7. *What did the Chief Captain decide to do when he heard about the Jews' plot?*
8. *Did the Chief Captain think Paul ought to be a prisoner?*
9. *How long was Paul in prison in Caesarea?*
- ✓ 10. *When Festus wanted to send Paul back to Jerusalem what did Paul say?*

Detailed Answers

1. ✓ (a) *Tell what vow forty Jews made in Jerusalem.*
(b) *What did the Roman Captain do when he found out? Tell the story.*

Acts 23: 11.

22. PAUL DEFENDS THE TRUTH BEFORE AGRIPPA

“Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers”

Aim

To show how Paul defended the Truth and how God worked in his life to bring the apostle to Rome that he might preach the Gospel there.



Acts 25:13-27; 26

KING AGRIPPA AND BERNICE VISIT FESTUS (25:13-23)

Soon after Festus became Governor he received a visit from King Agrippa and his sister Bernice. They were the son and daughter of that wicked Herod Agrippa, who had put James to death (Acts 12). The Romans had made him king over a small part of Palestine and Agrippa was paying a visit to the new governor at Caesarea. This visit worked out well for Festus, because Paul's case was quite a problem to him. The apostle had appealed to Caesar and Festus had to send a letter to Rome explaining what charges were made against him. But Festus did not know what to write. Since Agrippa knew of the Jews, Festus hoped he could get some help in what to say about Paul.

When Agrippa said he would like to hear Paul for himself, Festus arranged for a meeting the next day. It was a colourful occasion, as Agrippa and Bernice entered, dressed in their royal robes. The Chief men of the city and the officers of the Roman army were there too. Agrippa sat on the judgment seat and, when all was ready, Paul was brought in and introduced by Festus. What a contrast there would have been between the prisoner Paul, and the colourful gathering around him.

PAUL IS INVITED TO SPEAK (25:24-27; 26:1)

3. All the important people gathered there were probably very curious about this man before them. No one could say what he had done wrong and yet he had been in prison for more than two years and now appealed to Caesar in Rome. Even Agrippa later said: “This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.” (26:31) But this meeting before Agrippa was not a trial. No one was there to accuse him that day. Agrippa simply wanted to hear for himself what Paul had to say. He turned to the prisoner and said: “Thou art permitted to speak for thyself.” (26:1) Paul was glad of this opportunity to make his defence, to explain his whole life and work.

A DEFENCE OF THE FAITH (26:2-32)

4. In simple, clear language Paul began his story. Agrippa knew the beliefs and customs of the Jews; so Paul was happy to present his story to him (vv. 2-3). All the Jews knew of his behaviour from his early years. They knew full well that he had always lived obedient to the Law, as a strict Pharisee. He believed what all Jews believed – the promises God made to the fathers (vv. 4-7). As for the resurrection of the dead, it was not a new thing. There were many examples of it in the Scriptures; but it was the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth that caused the stir among the Jews (v. 8).

5. Paul then went on to tell how he had persecuted the disciples of Christ and punished them (vv. 9-11), but he was converted on the road to Damascus by Jesus Christ himself, whom God had raised from the dead (vv. 12-15). He had been given a work to do – to preach the Gospel to Gentiles, that they, too, could have a hope of the resurrection, just as the Jews did, through faith in Jesus Christ (vv. 16-20). He finished his speech by repeating what he had said, that his teaching was no different from what the prophets and Moses had said about Messiah (that is, Christ).

- 6.
- (1) “that Christ should suffer, and that
 - (2) he should be the first that should rise from the dead,

and

- (3) should show light unto the people (the Jews), and
(4) to the Gentiles" (vv. 22-23).

When he had said these words, Festus shouted out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad" 7.
(v. 24). But Paul was by no means mad. The words he spake were true. Turning to Agrippa, Paul asked: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I *know* that thou believest?" (v. 27) Agrippa was obviously embarrassed. Paul had spoken well and he did not know how to answer. So he replied: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." 8.
(v. 28) How glad Paul would have been if Agrippa had really meant it. All this imprisonment would have been worthwhile. Later, Agrippa admitted to Festus: "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar." 9.
(v. 32)

LESSON FOR US

Back in prison Paul would remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "Thou must bear witness also at Rome." (23:11) As we have seen before, Paul was suffering in the service of Christ, 10.
just as Christ had suffered himself. Paul always knew that danger lay ahead but he was prepared to sacrifice his own comfort and even his own life, as long as the Gospel was preached. So he could say to the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ." 11.
(1. Cor. 11:1) Let us use all our energy and time in serving God, as Paul did.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. ✓ *Who came to visit Festus?*
2. *Why was Festus glad of their visit?*
3. *Where did Paul say he wanted to be sent?*
4. *On what belief did Paul and the Jews both agree?*
5. *Who did Paul say converted him?*
6. *What work had the Lord Jesus Christ given him to do?*

7. ✓ *What did Festus say when Paul finished speaking?*
8. ✓ *What did Agrippa say when Paul said: "I know thou believest the prophets"?*
9. *When the meeting was over what did Agrippa say to Festus?*
10. *Whose example was Paul following?*
11. *Whose example did Paul tell us to follow?*

Detailed Answers

1. *Paul had appealed to Caesar. What problem did this make for Festus?*
2. ✓ *What four things did Paul say were taught in the prophets and by Moses about Messiah (i.e. Christ)?*
3. *When Paul had finished his speech, he turned to Agrippa.*
 - (a) *What did he say to him?*
 - (b) *How did Agrippa answer?*
 - (c) *What did Agrippa say about Paul later?*

Acts 26: 6.

23. SHIPWRECK ON THE WAY TO ROME

"Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar".

Aim

To show how God brought Paul to Rome and never forsook him, although he faced many dangers.



Synopsis

Paul had been in prison for more than two years even though he was innocent of any crime. Yet he had appealed to Caesar. Therefore Festus could not set him free. He must send the apostle to Rome.

The Lord Jesus had said to him: "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles" (22:21), and Paul had made long journeys by land and sea. However, the most dangerous journey was now before him, and in the midst of great dangers God by his angel encouraged the apostle once again.

Acts 27:1-38

THE LONG JOURNEY BEGINS (vv. 1-12)

Paul was taken with other prisoners aboard a ship bound for Italy. His friends, Luke and Aristarchus, were with him. A centurion named Julius had been given charge of Paul and he had to guard the apostle with his life. Julius would have received a good report of Paul from Festus, the Roman Governor, and no doubt Paul had made it clear that he was going to Rome because he wanted to preach the Gospel there. When they came to Sidon, early in the voyage, Julius very kindly allowed Paul to go ashore and visit other disciples, a privilege not given to other prisoners.

When they reached Myra, they had to change ships. Their new vessel was carrying wheat from Alexandria (in Egypt) to Rome, and there were 276 people on board, counting crew and passengers.

↑
verse 37

2. The voyage was slow and difficult. When they left Myra, they wanted to sail west to Cnidus, which would have been a safe harbour to shelter in. (Follow the journey on the map). But the wind blew so strongly against them that they were forced to head south for the island of Crete. At last they reached Fair Havens, a port on the south side of Crete. Autumn was turning to winter and Paul warned the Master of the ship that gales would meet them at sea and it would be dangerous to continue. The Captain, however, did not think much of Fair Havens and thought it would be better to go at least to a better harbour about 65 km. farther on and shelter there till winter was past. The Centurion agreed with the Captain and so they hauled in anchor and set sail.

IN PERIL ON THE SEA (vv. 13-20)

3. A pleasant "south wind blew softly" as they set out (v.13), but it was not long before they were suddenly struck by a
4. violent north-east wind, which drove the ship off its course. A fierce storm whipped up angry waves which beat against the ship, so that the sailors had to use their skill to help keep the ship in one piece. It had been buffeted so strongly by the gale that they decided to undergird it; that is, they passed thick cables around the bow at the front and worked them along underneath the ship and around it to stop the timbers from pulling apart.
5. The next danger they had to face was that they ~~might be driven onto the treacherous quicksands on the North~~
6. Coast of Africa. The thick dark storm clouds stopped them from seeing stars by night and the sun by day which sailors used as a guide to show them where they were heading.
7. Therefore they did not know the direction in which they were travelling.

The next day they threw overboard some of the heavier things to allow the boat to stand higher out of the water.

"SIRS, BE OF GOOD CHEER" (vv. 21-24)

On board, passengers and crew were very depressed; they had lost all hope of ever being saved. It was then that Paul

stood in their midst and spoke. He said they should have listened to his warning and stayed at Fair Havens, but now they should “be of good cheer” because everyone would be saved.

“For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.” (vv. 23-24)

Surely these people must have thought what a strange man the apostle Paul was. At this time they did not know that through this man they were to be saved from their present trouble. If only they would listen to the Gospel which he preached, too, they would be saved forever.

THE SHIP IS LOST (vv. 25-44)

Paul went on to say, “For I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.” (v. 25) God, who knows all things, had told Paul that the ship would be lost, but that all those on board would be cast onto an island.

Fourteen days passed. About midnight on the fourteenth night, the sailors on watch realised that they were drifting near to land. They sounded (i.e. they measured the depth of the water) and realised that the sea was now becoming quite shallow. As it was night they decided to cast out the anchors to hold the ship until morning. While they waited the crew, pretending to lower more anchors, tried to make off in the ship’s small boat. Paul noticed what they were up to and warned Julius, that unless everyone stayed in the ship, they would not be saved. The soldiers respected Paul’s words and cut the small boat adrift.

As they anxiously waited for the morning, Paul urged them all to have something to eat. They had gone without food for fourteen days, and they needed strength for what lay ahead. When food was prepared, Paul gave thanks to God and they all gladly ate, encouraged by Paul’s words: “there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.” (v. 34) Then they

lightened the ship by casting its load of wheat into the sea. As morning light appeared they could see the coast of an island and decided to lift anchors hoping to bring the boat up on the beach. But the ship ran aground! The bow stuck fast but the stern broke up as it was pounded by the waves.

12 The Roman soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners in case any of them should escape, but because Julius wanted to save Paul, he stopped them from doing this. He commanded all who could swim to jump into the sea and swim to land. Those who could not swim used planks and boards from the broken ship to reach the shore.

So the whole ship's company of 276 people came safely to shore as Paul had said and God had promised.

LESSON FOR US

Paul showed great faith in the face of danger. He knew that God's Word was sure and he would definitely reach Rome. It was not an easy voyage by any means, but because he trusted in God, he was able to encourage the others who had given up hope of safety. God did not forsake Paul, as he wrote later in his epistle to Hebrews: "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. 13:5)

What a wonderful example he was of calmness and faith in the face of storms and shipwreck. We can take strength and confidence from this true story, whenever any troubles come on us.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *Who was allowed to go with Paul on the ship to Rome?*
2. *When they reached Fair Havens, what did Paul advise?*
3. *What was the weather like when first they left Fair Havens?*
4. *What sort of wind arose before long?*
5. *What did the sailors do to try to save the ship?*

6. *What was the next danger?*
7. *Why was it difficult for the sailors to know which direction they were travelling in?*
8. *Who spoke to Paul to encourage him?*
9. *What did Paul say would happen to the people on board?*
10. *When did they next catch sight of land?*
11. *What did the crew try to do?*
12. ✓ *What did the soldiers want to do to the prisoners?*

Detailed Answers

- ✓1. *Tell all you know about the storm after the boat left Fair Havens.*
2. *On the fourteenth night of the storm the sailors knew they were nearing land. Tell what happened after that.*

Acts 27: 31.



24. PAUL ON MELITA

“They shall take up serpents ... they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”

Aim

To show that Paul never forgot that God was with him in all his trials.



Synopsis

The whole ship's company had been in danger of drowning in the stormy sea, but now they all stood shivering but safe on dry land. Only a few of them would have thankfully prayed to God the Maker of heaven and earth, of sea and dry land for saving them from their terrifying ordeal.

Acts 28:1-15

PAUL BITTEN BY THE VIPER (vv. 1-7)

1. The island of Melita or Malta belonged to the Roman Empire and was ruled by a man named Publius. When the shipwrecked company landed, his people were very kind to them, and helped light a fire to keep them warm. As Paul was gathering sticks a poisonous viper fastened onto his hand, but
2. he shook it off into the fire. The islanders were very superstitious, and thought Paul must have been a murderer who, though he had been saved from drowning, was still to be punished. So they watched carefully, expecting to see him swell from the bite and suddenly drop dead. To their great amazement no harm came to Paul at all. The promise which Jesus had given in Mark 16:18 that his disciples would take up serpents had been fulfilled here and Paul's life was spared. The people of the island however, now changed their minds and decided that Paul must be a god.

PAUL HEALS THE SICK (vv. 8-10)

3. The Governor of the island, Publius, who felt sorry for the shipwrecked men, was kind enough to invite Paul and his

companions to his home, where he looked after them for three days. The father of Publius lay very sick with a fever. Paul came to see him, prayed and laid his hands on him, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was able to make him well again. Thus the kindness of Publius was rewarded.

News of this amazing healing soon spread throughout the island and others with diseases came and were healed by the apostle. As a result of this, Paul and those with him were greatly honoured.

PAUL DEPARTS FOR ROME (vv. 11-15)

At the end of three months, when winter was over, Paul and his company set sail once more for Rome. The people of the island, thankful for all Paul had done for them, gave them all kinds of things they would need because they had lost everything in the shipwreck. 5.

Another ship of Alexandria had taken shelter from the rough weather at the island of Malta. They were able to board her and so continue their journey toward Rome. They stopped briefly at Syracuse, Rhegium and Puteoli, the port from which the company would travel on land to Rome. (You should look these places up on your maps.)

What a joy it would have been to Paul and the brethren with him to be met and cared for by the brethren at Puteoli. They stayed for seven days and we can imagine how they would have talked of the Truth one to another and how Paul would have been encouraged and uplifted. 6.

When the brethren of Rome heard the great news that Paul was coming, they went out to meet him in the way. They journeyed as far as Apii Forum and The Three Taverns, a distance of about 80km, to greet him. As Paul met them, he "thanked God, and took courage" (v. 15) and so they journeyed together with him to Rome. 7
8

LESSON FOR US

As Paul the prisoner made his way to Rome he did not know what his final end would be. Yet, because he knew that

God wanted him to go to Rome to witness there (Acts 23:11), he set his face steadfastly in that direction. Like Paul, we too must with determination do the will of God and not excuse ourselves when problems arise.

Just as Paul was strengthened and encouraged by the brethren who met him and journeyed with him, so we must learn to comfort and help one another in the work of God.

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. *What was the name of the island where Paul and the other prisoners were shipwrecked?*
2. *What amazing thing happened to Paul as the people of Melita watched?*
3. *Who was Publius?*
4. *What did Paul do for Publius?*
5. *How long did the ship's company have to stay on the island?*
6. ✓ *How long did they stay with the brethren at Puteoli?*
7. ✓ *Who came to meet Paul on the road to Rome?*
8. *How did Paul feel when he met these brethren from Rome?*

Detailed Answers

1. ✓ *Paul was on his way to Rome when a storm caused the ship to be lost. Tell what happened during Paul's stay on the island of Melita.*
2. *Tell all you know about the last stage of Paul's journey to Rome, i.e. from the time they left Melita.*

Acts 27: 44 & 28: 1.

25. PAUL IN ROME

“For the Hope of Israel am bound with this chain”

Aim

To show how the apostle Paul continued to preach the Truth no matter what difficulties he was faced with. His example should encourage us also to remain steadfast in the Truth.



Synopsis

The long and dangerous journey to Rome was over and Paul now entered the city, thankful to God for the company of brethren and sisters who had met and encouraged him. Now he was to be given the wonderful opportunity of preaching the Gospel in the capital city of the Roman Empire. Although he was a prisoner in chains and he knew that further suffering awaited him, yet he rejoiced that he was a “chosen vessel” to bear the Gospel to many people.

The centurion who had been in charge of the prisoners on the journey to Rome, delivered them to the captain of the guard. The other prisoners would have been put in prison, but Paul was granted the great privilege of having his own hired house. A soldier was appointed to guard him (v. 16), and no doubt he was still bound with a chain to make sure that he did not escape.

Acts 28:16-31

PAUL PREACHES THE GOSPEL IN ROME (vv. 16-31)

Even though Paul himself was a prisoner, the Truth still had to be spread. If Paul could not take the Gospel to the Jews, then he would invite the Jews to come to him to hear it. Three days after his arrival in Rome, he called the Chief Jews to his house and explained to them why he was a prisoner in Rome. He pointed out that “for the Hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (v. 20).

The Jews said to Paul that they had not heard of any charges made against him. They would like to come and hear why he had been imprisoned by the Jews. A day was appointed and many once again gathered to hear Paul. He reasoned with them "from morning till evening" from the Old Testament Scriptures, speaking of the wonderful promises concerning the coming Kingdom of God and showing that salvation could only come through faith in Jesus Christ (v. 23).

A Some believed the things that Paul spoke, others shut their ears and hardened their hearts. When it was clear that some would not listen he pointed out that Isaiah had prophesied of people like them who would not understand the things concerning Jesus (vv. 25-27); cp. Isa 6:9-10). Because so many Jews would not believe, he would turn to the Gentiles, so that they could hear the wonderful Truth. He turned to the hard-hearted Jews and said, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it." (v. 28)

5 { Paul dwelt for two whole years in Rome and preached the "good news" of the coming Kingdom of God and the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke to as many as came to hear him "with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (v. 31).

LESSON FOR US

7 The life of Paul was the life of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. In situations that made other men tremble he was firm and calm – and when it came to doing the will of God, he did not hesitate because of fear. Above all, he knew that suffering teaches men the need to lean upon God. Remember what he said – "We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." We may never match the work of Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, the Lord's "chosen vessel", but we will receive help from God to do His will if, like Paul, we remain firm in the Truth, and always seek God's guidance in our lives.

ADDITIONAL NOTES (11-12 years only)

Although we have come to the end of the Acts of the Apostles, the work of Paul did not finish here. He continued to preach and to write letters to strengthen and exhort the believers who lived in the cities of the Roman Empire. For example, he wrote to the ecclesia at Philippi, to those at Ephesus and to those at Colosse. In addition, the apostle continued to preach to all who would listen. Paul even converted some of the servants of Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22). He had a group of loyal friends, who were often with him. They shared with him the same glorious hope, and supported Paul as he gave help and advice to all who came to him.

Paul was eventually released from Rome and he continued preaching throughout the Roman Empire. Finally, the authorities took him into custody again and imprisoned him in Rome. This time he was not to be released and in some of the last words he wrote, he said to his faithful friend Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand". By this he meant that he would soon die for the things he believed. Yet he was not sad, for he went on to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

Paul knew that he would receive the Crown of Life, or immortality, when Jesus Christ returned. Let us follow the example of Paul, looking forward to the coming of Christ and being prepared to meet him. Remember what he once said to the believers in Corinth, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1)

QUESTIONS 9 to 12 years

Short Answers

1. ✓ *Where did Paul live when he arrived in Rome?*
2. ✓ *Whom did he speak to first about the Gospel after his arrival?*
3. *What was "the Hope" that he spoke about?*
4. ✓ *Did everyone who heard the Gospel believe Paul?*
5. ✓ *Who did Paul say would gladly hear the Gospel?*
7. ✓ *What did Paul learn from his suffering?*

Detailed Answers

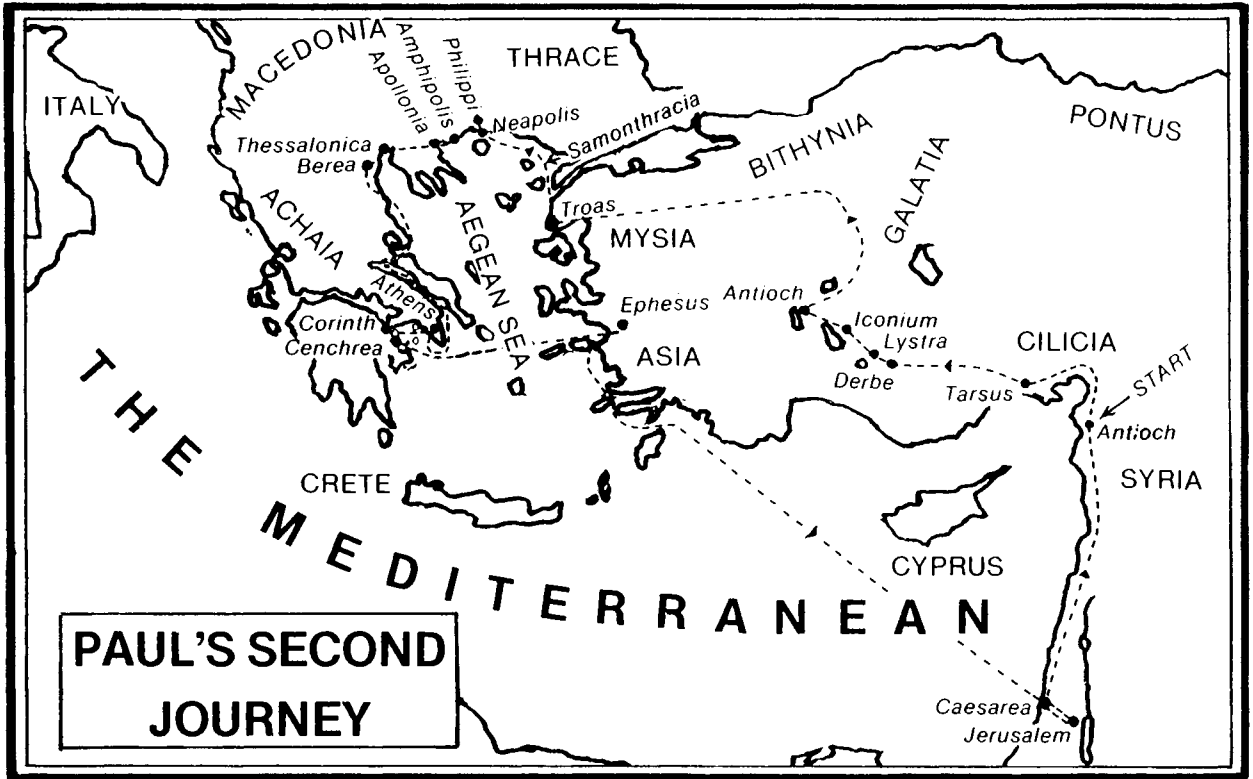
1. (a) *Tell what the apostle Paul did in Rome for two years.*
(b) *What sort of people came to hear him?*

Additional Answers (11-12 years only)

2. (a) *What else did Paul do while he was imprisoned in Rome?*
(b) *In his second letter to Timothy, what did he say he was looking forward to?*

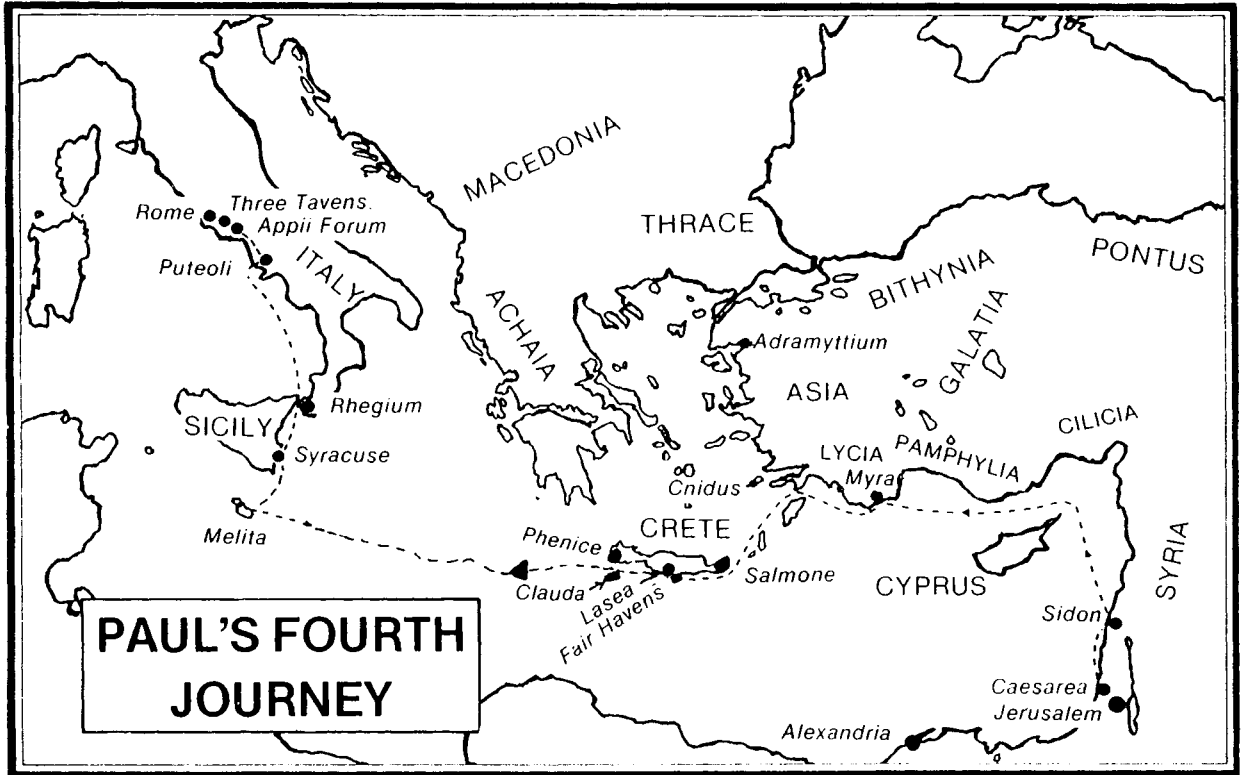
Acts 28: 20.





**PAUL'S SECOND
JOURNEY**





**PAUL'S FOURTH
JOURNEY**