

TEMMIT' FOR CHILDREN

Bible Lesson Quarterly

Year 3 - 1st Quarter - "GO YE & PREACH THE GOSPEL!"

This series of Bible Story Lessons is about the wonderful adventures of the apostles. For our Bible lessons we are going to use the King James Version of the Bible, just like the boys and girls used to use to learn to read from in the pioneer days. There will be some texts to look up for each day and you should practice your memory verse until you can say it without looking. Don't forget to learn the text too.

Weekly Bible Lesson #1: "TARRY YE"

MEMORY VERSE: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15

Sunday

Text: Luke 24:49 "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

Jesus had now gone back to heaven forty days after He rose from the dead.

When He had died on the cross, the disciples, who were still looking for a worldly kingdom, were terribly disappointed. They were almost in despair as they laid His poor tortured body in the tomb and huddled together in the upper room with doors barred for fear the Jews would come after them next.

But after the Sabbath rest in the tomb, Jesus arose a mighty conqueror over the bands of death and now they had a very different idea of His mission to the world. Now they were waiting in the upper room again, not in fear, but because Jesus had told them to wait for a special Gift He would send them.

They now knew that they had a very spe-

cial message of joy and hope to carry to all the world and they knew they never could do it unless Jesus sent them special help.

Jesus had died at the very time the Pass-over Lamb was to be slain. Then Jesus had appeared before His Father as the 'Wave Sheaf' at the very time the priest was doing that ceremony in the temple.

Now for ten days from the time Jesus went back to heaven they waited. As they waited they talked much about all the things they remembered from their time with Jesus. They also remembered many of their sins and nasty ways to each other and told each other they were sorry and asked for forgiveness. They also asked God in the Name of Jesus for forgiveness also.

They did not now fight over who was going to be the greatest, Oh No! The more they thought about their past and the great task ahead of them, the more they felt humble and knew how much they needed special help from Heaven.

Thought - As they waited, they chose another man to take the place of Judas. His name was Matthias-but it seems that Jesus Himself really chose the person to take Judas' place, it was the Apostle Paul.

Monday

Text: Acts 2:1,2 "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."

Pentecost was fifty days after the Passover. It was a feast that pointed to the time when Jesus would be placed as the High Priest in heaven and the offering of the 'first fruits' on that day pointed to the special ones Jesus had resurrected from the dead when He arose and those ones went to heaven with Him. On that day in heaven, while the priest on earth was presenting the special loaves of bread, Jesus was presenting these redeemed ones to His Father.

As a signal that He had started on His special work as our High Priest in heaven, Jesus sent the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead, to be with His people from that time onward. Notice what Jesus told us about the Holy Spirit:

John 16:7,8 "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:"

He told them that the Holy Spirit would help them remember and understand all the things Jesus had taught them when He was with them. He also said the Holy Spirit would help them understand the scriptures. Another thing He would do is impress the hearts of people with the sins they had done and make them see how much they need a Sav-

our.

The Holy Spirit would not teach or talk about Himself, but would show and tell about Jesus and the wonderful plan of salvation, called the 'Gospel'. Jesus gave the Holy Spirit a lovely name. He called Him the Comforter. The same One who makes us feel afraid and all guilty because of our sins, also comforts and protects us when we come to Jesus and give Him our hearts. Many times we need our 'Comforter'!

Thought - That special Gift that Jesus sent to His people was never taken away again- it is still available to each one of Jesus' true followers. We must have it to be saved and made ready for heaven. If we don't have it and know its power in our lives-we should pray and ask God for it and should also ask Him to show us what is wrong in our lives that would stop us from having this special Gift.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 2:3,4 "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

One of the special things that the Holy Spirit did for the followers of Jesus on that special day was to help them get started on preaching the Gospel of Jesus in a big way.

There were on that day a lot of people who made pilgrimages from other countries to Jerusalem to celebrate the special feast. Many of them had come in hopes of seeing Jesus but had found out He had been crucified. They had also heard He was resurrected again and they really wanted to know truth about it all.

It seemed so terrible that the leaders of the temple, who the people thought were 'godly men' would stoop so low as to kill another teacher just because He taught different from themselves. The priests were try-

ing to hush up the events of Passover and hoped the people from all over the world would not find out about it.

But God had other ideas- He wanted all the people to know the truth about Jesus and what had happened to Him. So the Holy Spirit made it possible for the followers of Jesus to speak in different languages so the people from all over could hear the story in their own language.

This was not just a bunch of silly sounds the disciples were making because of being so excited or something- Oh No! It was calm, inspired preaching of the truth about Jesus in real languages that people could listen to and understand.

The priests and rulers were really upset about all these goings on and they tried to say to the people that the followers of Jesus were drunk and not to listen to them. But not many would believe that story- instead they listened to the different disciples preach and learned the truth about Jesus and what the evil rulers had done to Him.

Thought – There are people today who claim to have this gift of tongues as they call it, but they are speaking in meaningless noises that nobody can really understand. God does not do meaningless things-He always has a good reason for what He does.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 2:22-24 “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

One of the wonderful things that the Holy Spirit does for the followers of Jesus is He

gives them courage to speak God’s truth with power. Here just weeks before all the apostles were huddling in fear of the rulers and priests and now they stood up boldly and told everyone that these wicked religious leaders had murdered the Messiah, the Son of God!

They told the people they must repent and be forgiven of this terrible deed or be lost forever. They also said that the very Jesus they had killed, was now the High Priest in Heaven and only by believing in Him could anybody be saved.

Can you imagine how angry this made those leaders and heads of the Jewish Church? Oh how they wanted to snatch away those preachers and murder them too- but they did not dare, as they were afraid the people would turn on them and kill them for their wickedness in murdering Jesus. What a sad state their wicked selfish ways had got them in to! We are told that those wicked leaders never had a moment of peace again as long as they lived and they died fearful deaths!

But there were many who listened and the Holy Spirit convicted their hearts. They remembered having heard the words of Jesus and about His wonderful works. The Spirit made them feel the guilt of what they had done and they repented and asked what they should do to be saved.

They were told to repent and be baptized and so they were. That very day three thousand people took a stand to be on Jesus’ side and leave the official ‘church’ which was now so corrupt that it was no longer part of God’s work on earth.

Many of these people were ones who had been convicted by Jesus’ own teachings but they had not become His followers because of the leaders who they still had believed were ordained of God. Now they saw the truth and they left the ‘official’ church to join with those who followed the Scriptures.

Thought – It is important to know that Jesus’ real ‘church’ on earth is those who truly follow Him and obey His words. “God

has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. “ ‘Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.’ Where Christ is, even among the humble few, this is Christ’s church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church. Where two or three are present who love and obey the commandments of God, Jesus there presides...” 17MR -PG- 81

Thursday

Text: Acts 3:6-9 “Then Peter said, 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. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.”

When the wicked rulers killed Jesus, they hoped they had put an end to His mighty miracles. But now here it was only fifty days later and amazing things were happening. All of the country now knew about their sneaky, cruel plot against Jesus and thousands had turned away from the ‘official’ church to join the followers of Jesus.

If that wasn’t bad enough, all at once a messenger comes running to the priest to tell them about a great fuss in the temple over a man who had been miraculously healed by Peter and John.

Oh No! Not more miracles! Yes indeed, here was a man who had been crippled from birth and never walked. He had sat begging at the gate of the temple to get enough small coins to live on. When he saw that Peter and John seemed kindly men, he called out to them hoping to get a coin or two.

Peter turned and said the words in our text and took him by the hand and he was healed right away! How happy he was to be able to walk for the first time in his life! Not only could he walk but run and jump too.

The people in the temple areas came close to hear how this man, who they had seen begging only a short time before, could be jumping and running in joy now. Peter and John told them it was the Power of Jesus that had healed the man. Again he accused them of the part they played in killing Jesus.

Ac 3:14,15 “But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.”

Again they called upon the people to repent and be forgiven. It was around five thousand men who heard Peter’s sermon this time and many believed. But the Sadducees were hopping mad as they always taught there was no resurrection and they knew this preaching would make them look stupid in the eyes of the people. They sent and grabbed Peter and John and locked them up for the night.

Thought – When we find out that we are wrong about something, we must be willing to learn the truth and admit we are wrong or Jesus cannot help us to be saved.

Friday

Text: Acts 4:19,20 “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, 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.”

The next day the counsel brought Peter and John before them. They knew how Peter had denied Jesus from fear before and they thought they could scare these men into keeping quiet. They started by asking them in whose name they had done this miracle, thinking that Peter would deny Jesus again. But it was a very different Peter now! He

started right in to tell them to their faces that Jesus had done the miracle and that they were guilty of His blood and needed to repent or be lost.

Imagine the rage of these men who thought they were the greatest, most godly men on earth and here they were being told by a mere fisherman that they needed to repent! If they could have killed these men right there they surely would have.

But they were afraid of what the people would do as everyone was now talking about the healing of the man. They sent Peter and John out of the room to talk together. They decided that the only thing they dared to do was to threaten them and command they not talk about Jesus any more.

They brought them in and they did this; but Peter turned to them and told them that he could not listen to them when they were

telling him to do different than God was telling them. "We have to obey God and not men"; he told them boldly.

They were released and went and told what had happened to their fellow believers and they were happy that Jesus' name was so honored. They had a special prayer meeting and they asked that they be made even braver so they would teach the truth about Jesus even if the leaders were made angry.

God answered their prayer and the place they were in was shaken as the Holy Spirit came to them again to give them what they had asked for. They kept on preaching in the Name of Jesus with even more power and more miracles happened.

Thought – Always remember to stick to God's truth and obey it- no matter what people will say. = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson 2: "TRIALS & TRIUMPHS"

MEMORY VERSE: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29

Sunday

Text: "Acts 4:32, 33 "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."

As these believers in Jesus were baptized and joined with the apostles of Jesus, they did a most interesting thing. They not only gave their hearts to Jesus, but they gave their money and belongings as well. They were not selfish any more and if someone had food and things that someone else needed, they would freely share with one another.

Many who were rich freely sold houses and lands and gave the money to the apostles

to use to help preach the gospel and providing for the poor. This way everyone had enough to live on. Now why was this necessary? Why were there so many people who needed this help?

Well, it was because when many of the people decided to take a stand for Jesus, they were going against what most people thought was the 'true church'. Most of the people thought that anyone who spoke out against the church leaders or went against what they said was certainly wrong and going against God. Had not God himself set up the priesthood?

So when their family members joined the followers of Jesus- they threw them out of their homes, fired them from their jobs and would not even give them food to eat or a place to sleep! That is why this special help was needed.

There was one man in particular who had a lot of land and he gladly sold it and

brought in the money. Indeed, he was so happy about doing it that the apostles gave him a new name. They called him Barnabas, which meant he made them feel encouraged with his kind deeds and cheerfulness.

Now when God works in a wonderful way, there is always someone else who gets busy to spoil it all. You know who- old Satan starts working on peoples hearts to get them to pretend to do right but really do something mean and sneaky.

There was a man and his wife, Ananias and Sapphira, and when they saw how Barnabas was respected and honored for his kindly deed, they decided to sell some land that they had and bring the money too. Now it was the Spirit of God that suggested to their hearts to help out like this and be generous.

So they sold the land as they had said they would, but when they had all that money in their hands, Satan tempted them to be selfish and keep it. They began to be sorry they had listened to the Holy Spirit and promised to give the money from that land. But if they turned around and told the truth, and said, "We decided we want to keep it", then people would not admire them and instead would look down on them as selfish.

Thought: Remember to always obey what the Bible says, even if it causes problems for you. God will take care of those who obey Him.

Monday

Text: Acts 5:1,2 "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet."

How were they going to solve their problem? Satan was right there to help them think

up a scheme and a lie. Ananias went over to where the apostles were and placed a big bag of money down before them. Now Peter may have been ready to say 'thank you', when the Holy Spirit guided him that all was not right.

Turning to the man, he said "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" He went on to say that he could have kept the land or the money if he wanted to, but to lie like this was a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Now as soon as he had heard this, Ananias fell down and died! Can you imagine how the people felt? The Bible says, "Great fear came on all them that heard these things."

The young men of the believers wrapped him up in his clothes and took him out and buried him. It is interesting that nobody ran to Sapphira to tell her about it.

In about three hours, she came in and again nobody rushed over to her to tell her about what had happened. She was looking for her husband and wondering why he was taking so long.

Peter asked her if that was the amount of money they got for the land and she said it was. Then he asked her why she and her husband had decided to lie to the Holy Spirit like that and told her that the men who had buried her husband were just coming back and would bury her too. And just as quick as that- she fell down and died. Then the young men took her out and buried her beside her husband.

Thought – God knew that unless there was a strong lesson given to the people at that time, many would join the church just to be cared for by the church and would cheat the people who truly needed help. Even though cheaters and liars don't always fall dead on the spot, they will still be lost if they don't repent and let Jesus remove this sin.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 2: 5:13,14 “And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”

This terrible judgment on the two liars had an effect on the people; the ones who might join just to get what they could out of it and the ones who would join just because it was a popular thing to do, were afraid to do it. The ones who truly believed in Jesus and repented of their evil ways gladly joined the believers.

God continued to give special blessings to the believers and the apostles worked many miracles of healing just as Jesus had done. This was to show the people who were confused because of what the ‘leaders of the church’ were telling them- that it was just a bunch of lies and tricks and Jesus had not really been raised from the dead.

Remember it was the Jewish church leaders who paid money to the soldiers to lie and say the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus to make people think He had risen. But what could they say to all these miracles? The people laid the sick in the streets and even when the shadow of the apostles fell on them, they were healed! It was a wonderful time indeed.

But someone was not happy-you know who; Satan and his friends the ‘church leaders’. They were losing their power over the people. Already they were afraid to do what they really wanted to do for fear the people would stone them. But they were desperate, somehow these miracles had to be stopped!

The high priest ‘rose up’ in anger and ordered that Peter and John be thrown into the common jail. He would tend to them the next day, he thought. But the angel of God let them out and told them to go back and preach in the temple again.

Thought – Now you would think the priests would be afraid to do this to someone when the power of God was so clearly

with them- but when we reject the truth, we get so blind that nothing impresses us anymore.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 5:22-24 “But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.”

Now all these ‘important’ priests got together in their court room in the morning and demanded the soldiers to go and get the men from the prison and bring them in so they could condemn them. The soldiers hurried over to the jail and unbolted the doors and there were all the guards standing at the doors so no one could go out or in- but guess what? Peter and John were gone! The cell was empty. The soldiers stood staring at each other in amazement.

Do you see that in all this Jesus was giving the people and the priests and rulers a chance to see they were wrong and repent and believe on Him? Yes indeed, even though they had killed Him, Jesus still was trying to save them. But for most of them, that love did not good; they just hardened their hearts and fought against the believers like angry wolves.

The soldiers came back to the counsel and told them that the prison was still locked and the guards were there-but the men were over in the temple preaching to the people. Can you imagine how angry these rulers were? They demanded the soldier to go and get the preachers and bring them. They did; but they had to do it gently as the people were all happy to hear the preaching and if they were cruel to the men where the people could see it-they might turn against the sol-

diers and the rulers and stone them!

Trying to choke down his anger, the high priest demanded: "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Ac 5:28

Thought – Isn't it interesting that these men were complaining that the preaching of the disciples was going to make it look as if they were guilty of the blood of Jesus- when just a few weeks before they had roared out before Pilate, "Let His blood be on us and on our children! We have no king but Caesar!" What terrible words to have to live with!

Thursday

Text: Acts 5:29-32 "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him."

Boldly Peter spoke up for the apostles and did not try to make the high priest feel any better- Oh no! He just told him to his face that they were doing God's will and the priests had murdered the Son of God. Now we can see that God was still giving a chance to the priests and rulers to repent and admit they were wrong- but what happened?

The Bible tells us they were 'cut to the heart' in other words the Holy Spirit impressed their hearts strongly that they were wrong and fighting against God. How kind Jesus is to keep pleading with them to repent- even after what they had done to Him- He still wanted to save them. But no way! These men refused the heavenly offer and were determined to kill the apostles on the spot!

Then a man who had a bit of wisdom asked for the apostles to be taken out of the room. He then explained to the counsel that if these men were not of God they would soon be forgotten about- but if they were from God, they could not be stopped. Now maybe his heart was still open a bit, maybe he believed that the high priest and his buddies still cared about God. Anyway, the council voted to just punish the disciples and warn them and let them go.

So they beat them and threatened them and released them. I want you to notice something that at times we don't understand too well. It is important to see this or sometimes we can find ourselves doubting and discouraged. Jesus showed them His power and His love by sending the angel to take them out of the prison, but He did not stop them from being beaten.

You see the great power of Jesus is found not so much in miracles as it is in the way He gives us strength and grace to bear the trials and to suffer for His name. When we get to see the whole story in heaven, we will find that more people have been convinced that God's truth is right by seeing the faithfulness and patience of believers who were willing to suffer and even die for Jesus than by all the miracles.

And although we don't understand it sometimes, we are told that being allowed to suffer for Jesus' sake is the highest honor. But I want you to know something else- we do not have to be afraid because we think we are not strong enough to bear suffering for Jesus. You see, Jesus will bear it for us. If He allows trials and suffering to come to us, He will give us all the strength and courage and grace we need to bear it. We must learn to trust Him.

Thought – We are told that when we reach heaven and look at our life record and how Jesus led us, we would not choose to be led any different way than what He leads us. We will see that even though things seemed hard, Jesus knew what was best for us!

Friday

Text: Acts 5:41-42 “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

It is important that you notice certain things about our text; you need to remember that the Jewish ‘church’ had been set up by God; The priesthood had been ordained by God; the services and sacrifices in the temple had been originally set up by God. This was true, wasn’t it?

So this is why many people of the Jews thought Jesus had to be wrong and the disciples had to be wrong because they saw the leaders of ‘God’s true church’ said they were wrong. They were making a big mistake and that mistake was that they wanted to listen to and admire the great important men and the ones with the fancy education rather than go to the Bible and learn the truth from it for themselves.

The ones who did go to the scriptures and study for themselves soon learned that while God had set up the Jewish church, it was no longer obeying the truth God had given it and had refused to listen to God. They had now become the enemies of God’s truth. This was why Peter had to tell them- we can’t obey you when you are telling us to disobey God.

There is another part of yesterday’s text we need to specially notice; it is this part: “...and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”

Now there is something important here; we hear a lot these days about the Holy Spirit and ‘getting the Spirit’ and ‘praying for the Spirit’ and so on. Too many people think that the way we get the Holy Spirit is by making a lot of noise and getting all excited and Praising God by wild beat music and

clapping and getting a wonderful happy, excited feeling. They think that it is only is we get together in big groups and all do these exciting things that we get the ‘Spirit’.

Now look at that verse; does it say the Holy Spirit is given to those who shout and sing and dance and clap and carry on and get all excited? Oh no! It does not say that. In fact these things do cause people to get a spirit all right- but it is an evil spirit. Yes, it is true boys and girls, even though these people may think they are worshipping God and God is blessing them with these wonderful feelings and strange happening that occur in such groups, it is really the devil and his angels that are giving them these ‘nice feelings.’ And he is doing it to trick them into believing lies so they will all be lost.

What does the text say is the way to get the Holy Spirit?? It says ‘God gives the Holy Spirit to those that OBEY him!!’ Now if you go to one of these excited ‘get the spirit’ meetings, and I don’t think you should go, but IF you did, and you started to tell them about obeying God and following His counsel in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy books, what do you think would happen?

They would not listen to you! They would tell you they didn’t need to do that because they ‘had the spirit’. You will hear them talk about how the disciples ‘were all in one place’ as they try and get everybody to come out and agree with them and join their groups, but they do not talk about this text! They would tell you that you were wrong and a ‘legalist’, which is what they like to call people who have decided like Daniel and the apostles to obey God rather than men.

Thought – Always remember that God will NOT give the Holy Spirit to anybody except those who by the power of Jesus determine to OBEY God on all things. People, who think they have the spirit and so they do not have to worry about obedience, have the wrong spirit-they have the spirit of Satan!
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Weekly Bible Lesson #3: "JESUS STANDS UP"

**MEMORY VERSE: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."
Acts 7:55,56**

Sunday

Text: "Acts 4:32,33 "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."

The early believers were of many nationalities and as they truly gave themselves to Jesus, the Holy Spirit was in their hearts and they were in the School of Christ learning to be like Him, they were like a wonderful, loving family. Satan knew that if they stayed close like this, nothing he could do would be able to stop them and the message of Jesus from going out all over the world.

He had to stir up trouble somehow and one way was to try and get one nationality to be suspicious of another. At first he got nowhere with this, the believers were just too close to Jesus and didn't listen to devil ideas. But as many joined, he was able after a while to get a few who were not really converted, to start complaining and then some others stopped looking at Jesus and started to look at these complaining ones and so they were open for Satan to tempt them too.

You see, some people thought the Greek widows were not getting the help that the Jewish widows got. Finally it got so bad that it was keeping the apostles from doing the work of preaching Jesus and this was just what Satan wanted of course. But the apostles caught on to his tricks and they called all the disciples together and told them a very good idea the Holy Spirit had shown them.

They said for the believers to choose some godly men to be special servants to take care

of seeing that the widows and needy were cared for and other like problems solved. They were not only to do this kind of work but of course, like all believers, they were to preach the gospel and teach the truth of Jesus to both believers and unbelievers.

So seven faithful men were chosen and the Apostles prayed for God's special blessing on them and they were special servants of the believers. We call them 'deacons' which is the Greek word. The original meaning of this word is an attendant, assistant, helper. It is sometimes translated minister, that is, a servant.

There is only two places in the Bible where the word Deacon is used- and it is just that the translators decided to not translate it and leave the Greek word. So what has happened is people think that 'Deacon' and also Minister means some special kind of authority in the church, when really it means people that were to be helpers of the believers.

Thought: It is interesting too that the word translated 'Church' really means 'congregation' that is, a group-and not some kind of an official organization. The early believers were more like a big family, where all helped each other and worked together and the older and wiser ones served the others. In Tyndale's Bible he translated the word right- and this was one of the main reasons he was burned. The 'CHURCH' leaders did not want people to find out that they have no more importance than you or I and no authority except through the Word of God.

Monday

Text: Acts 6:8,9 "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and

miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.”

Stephen was one of the special helpers chosen by the early believers. He really loved Jesus a lot and the Holy Spirit was with him and did wonderful miracles through him and he taught the people about the Gospel.

Now it is important to know that miracles done by God are ALWAYS to do something useful. God heals and helps and blesses with the miracles He does. Sometimes he feeds people who have no food or helps the gospel to go forward when it seems Satan is about to stop it.

God never does miracles just for entertainment- but this is Satan's specialty! You will never see a truly godly person pulling a rabbit out of a hat, or doing 'tricks'. Even when you look at some of the things the demon that appears as 'Mary' does- you can see it is entertainment to fool the people. "... after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." 2Th 2:9 "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Rev 16:14

Stephen was winning so many to the truth that the Jewish leaders were very angry and determined to stop him. They chose some of their 'smartest' teachers to argue with him.

These were ones who had studied Greek philosophy and heathenism and mixed it in with scriptures so they did not know the real meaning of God's word any more.

We have many like this today, who have studied in the schools all the words of men until they don't know the Word of God any more. And they fight against those who teach it- just like back then. But they could not prove Stephen to be wrong.

Thought – It is the job of every believer to help preach and teach the Gospel and all

of us need to study faithfully to be able to do this. You should learn every lesson so well that you could teach it to someone else. By always trying to share the things you learn with others, you will learn them even better.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 6:10,11 “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.”

These philosophers thought they could easily defeat Stephen but they could not and clearly saw that from the scriptures, he was right. But they did not want to believe what the scriptures said; they liked their spiritualism and philosophy ideas better.

So they did what all enemies of the truth do, they started to tell lies about Stephen and to accuse him of things that were false. This is always the way Satan works. He even did that in heaven!

So very soon the leaders accused Stephen and called a council to try him in hopes of condemning him. They wanted to get rid of him! They did not know that at this trial- it was not Stephen who was being tried- in the sight of God it was themselves! The leaders were hearing the last call from Jesus to repent and be forgiven.

Would they listen to the clear words of the Bible he was telling them? Would they admit they were wrong and repent and let Jesus forgive them? The Holy Spirit was there at that court to work on hearts to get them to repent and be saved. The power rested on Stephen so much that his face actually shown as he spoke to them from the very scriptures they claimed to know all about.

You can read the wonderful sermon he preached in Acts 7, where he goes through the history of the Jews from the scriptures, pointing out how God lead them. He also

told how time after time their forefathers had turned to worshipping idols and when God sent prophets to warn them- they rejected and killed the prophets.

Thought – These leaders liked to hear about the wonderful ways God had honored their fathers- but they did not like to be told about how disobedient and wicked they were!

Wednesday

Text: Acts 7:52-53 “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”

Stephen had been watching the faces of the ‘court’ that he was preaching to. He could see they were getting madder and madder as the Holy Spirit pressed on their hearts that they were wrong. The very way his face shown made them tremble with fear. But finally as he talked about the temple, and said the text: “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands;” and told the truth that Jesus was the one they were to worship, he saw the people get very excited. The high priest pretended to be so horrified he tore his robe.

He knew they were soon going to kill him and so he stopped his sermon in the middle and went to the end of it. He said the words of our text. That made the people become just like angry beasts, they gnashed their teeth and put their hands over their ears so they could not hear the words Stephen was saying and the Holy Spirit was pressing on their hearts.

Thought – They had made their choice. This was the last time that the message of the true gospel would be preached especially to them. In the sight of heaven, they were condemned.

Thursday

Text: Acts 7:56, 57 “And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord.”

Stephen saw by the angry twisted faces that he was about to be killed. But he was not afraid. Instead he was suddenly given a vision and he looked up as if he could see right into heaven and he saw Jesus. Jesus was standing by God’s throne.

This was the final warning to those evil leaders- the final warning that they were sealing their own doom. What does it mean that Jesus was standing? Well if we look in our Bibles we find another place where it says this. In Daniel 12:1 we see Michael, which is another name for Jesus, and He STANDS UP.

We know from other Bible texts and the writings of Ellen White that when He stands up, it means the end of the time given to us to get ready for heaven. The end of ‘probation’.

When Stephen saw Jesus by the throne and He was standing up, this meant it was the end of the special time that God had given to the Jews. They had refused to listen and repent and now they were rejected as God’s special people. It was a terrible time and they should have noticed and been afraid.

Instead they rushed forward and grabbed Stephen still in the heavenly vision, and dragged him out of the city. They picked up stones and stoned him. He was not afraid- he knew Jesus was with him. But just like Jesus had done when they crucified Him, now Stephen “calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

I am sure that the words he prayed for

his murderers brought back to the memory of the cruel leaders the words of Jesus, "Father forgiven them, for they know not what they do."

Thought – Notice it says that after his prayer, Stephen 'Fell Asleep'. That is all death is to the true Christian, just a sleep. He said his prayers and fell asleep. When he wakes up- it will be morning, and he with us, if we are faithful, will all go to heaven.

Friday

Text: Acts 7:58 "And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

Here we meet someone new. A young man named Saul. What was he doing there? The Bible tells us he was consenting to the death of Stephen. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us he was one of the ones speaking against Stephen and working to get rid of him.

We are told Saul and many others at that 'trial' could not forget the way Stephen had looked like an angel and his words. He could not get the picture out of his mind. But at the same time he was sure the 'church leaders' had to be right because the Jewish

church was the 'true church'. So although he himself did not stone Stephen, he took care of the coats of those who did the cruel work.

After, he could not get it out of his mind that Stephen was honored by God at the very time he was dishonored by men. It really bothered him that he could not forget this. We know why he could not forget it- it was because the Holy Spirit was working on his mind and heart to get him to see the truth.

After the death of Stephen, Saul was made a member of the Sanhedrin council as a reward for his part in the death of Stephen. This was a special honor, as mostly only older married men were ever put in as members. Paul was young and single. But they were so happy with him for the earnest way he was working to destroy the disciples of Jesus.

But all that was soon to change. Soon this persecutor was to be building up the church that he was now tearing down. Jesus had chosen Saul to take the place of the martyred Stephen, to preach and suffer for His name, and to spread far and wide the tidings of salvation through His blood.

Thought – If we would have seen Saul at this time, we would have thought there was no way He would ever be a Christian!
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Weekly Bible Lesson #4: "THE GOSPEL GOES FORTH"

MEMORY VERSE: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Acts 8:37

Sunday

Text: "Acts 8:3,4 "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."

The death of Stephen marked a real change in the early church. All at once it seemed they were no longer just preaching

to the Jews and trying to get them to accept Jesus as their Messiah, now they were going everywhere telling the good news to gentiles as well.

This was because it came at the end of Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks of years especially given to the Jews. Jesus had died in the middle of the last week of years, just as the prophecy said He would and Stephen died in AD 34, which was the end of that final week.

Jesus had said, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8 And it was just in that order that the message went out!

The death of Stephen triggered a terrible time of persecution that caused the believers to move out from Jerusalem and scatter to different areas. As they went the gospel message was spread all around. Many went to Antioch and that became the great center of true Christianity for a long time.

Of his cruel work Paul said later: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison. . . . And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." That Stephen was not the only one who suffered death may be seen from Saul's own words, "And when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them." Acts 26:9-11.

At this time of peril Nicodemus stood boldly for his faith in the crucified Saviour. He had hidden the truth in his heart for three years after he had talked by night with Jesus, but now he took his stand with God's people. Joseph of Arimathea also came to help the persecuted ones and these two once very rich men become poor in this world's money, gladly spending all to help the believers.

Thought - It certainly seemed that nothing would ever get Saul to accept Christianity! But the Lord knew his heart and really his terrible hatred against the believers was a relation to his growing conviction that they were right and the Jews were wrong. It was very hard for a proud Pharisee to accept such a thought! A person only gets angry when he hears truth if down inside his heart he knows he is doing wrong.

Monday

Text: Acts 8:5,6 "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."

Philip went to Samaria and preached the gospel and many there believed on Jesus and joined the believers. As he was preaching many wonderful healings were done and devils were cast out and the whole city was full of joy.

There was a very interesting man there whose name was Simon Magus, or Simon the great. He was a witch and a pagan priest. The Bible says he, "beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria." The people of Samaria had a long time been afraid of him and admired his powers. They thought he had the great power of God. Now they weren't so sure. When he saw all the fuss being made over Phillip, he decided he had better get in on it or lose his influence.

He joined the believers not because he believed, but because he thought this was the way he could get that power they had. After a while when Philip was so busy he sent for some of the other apostles to come and help, and the church sent Peter and John.

When they came, they found out the Samaritan believers had not yet received the Holy Spirit, so they prayed and asked God in the name of Jesus to send the Spirit to them. And as they laid their hands on the new believers, the Holy Spirit came to them in great power.

Simon Magus saw this and he thought he could make his fortune. If whoever he laid his hands on would get the Holy Spirit, he could charge a lot of money for this. He offered to buy this power from the apostles.

Peter told him, "Your money perish with

you, because you have thought you could buy the gift of God with money. Your heart is not right with God. Repent of this wickedness!”

Simon answered, “Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.” You see he wasn’t sorry for his sin, he was just afraid of the results. Simon never became a true believer. To this day when people want to sell the truth of God for money, we call it Simony.

Thought – We don’t hear a lot about Simon Magus in the Bible. But history has some interesting information. It seems that the man whom the Roman church called its first Pope, was not Simon Peter, but Simon Magus the witch! He later went to Rome and was honored by Nero and later when he died was buried at the Vatican, at that time it was the place where the Pagan’s worshipped magic.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 8:26, 27 **“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship.”**

Now while Philip was at Samaria, one day the Holy Spirit told him to go out into the desert and there he would tell him what to do. Philip was busy at Samaria, he easily could have said, ‘Why would I want to do that for?’ But he knew the voice of the Holy Spirit and he just went out into the desert where no one was around and waited to find out why.

It was not long before he saw a rich chariot coming along the road and the Holy Spirit told him to go up close to it. When he did he soon saw that this man was reading the Scroll of the book of Isaiah. He was a believer in

the true God of Israel.

He had been to Jerusalem for one of the special feasts and had bought the scroll there. Thrilled with his treasure he was busy reading it. The part he was reading was Isaiah 53. You can read it for yourself. It is all about Jesus and what He would do for us and it was written about 500 years before it all happened.

Philip quickly asked, “Do you know what you are reading about?”

“How can I”, the man said, “If someone doesn’t help me?” And he asked Philip to get into his chariot and tell him all about the scripture.

Philip told about how this was a prophecy of Jesus and how it had all just come true not long before. The Eunuch was thrilled and quickly accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Then he saw a large pond of water and asked, “Why could I not be baptized right now?” Philip answered in the words of our memory verse, “If you believe, you can!”

The Eunuch said he believed with all his heart and so the chariot was stopped and Philip baptized this important man from the court of the Queen of Ethiopia. And as soon as he was finished, the Holy Spirit took Philip away so he seemed to disappear.

Thought – Never did the Ethiopian forget what he learned that day. He went home and there taught all who would listen about Jesus. A church was raised up that continued unknown and faithful for hundreds of years. Later when ones from the Roman church found it, the people still kept the true Sabbath!

Wednesday

Text: Acts 9:1,2 **“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”**

Saul was still busy persecuting the true believers and he was angry that they were getting away from him by fleeing from the city. He got a good idea and went to see the High Priest. He asked him for letters of authority to command the people in Damascus to let him arrest the believers there and drag them back to be punished.

Of course the High Priest was very happy with this idea and off went Saul on his horse with his armed men to go after the poor Christians who were just trying to get away from him and worship Jesus in peace.

On the last day of the journey, "at mid-day," as the weary travelers neared Damascus, they came within full view of broad stretches of fertile lands, beautiful gardens, and fruitful orchards, watered by cool streams from the surrounding mountains. After the long journey over desolate wastes such scenes were refreshing indeed. While Saul, with his companions, gazed with admiration on the fruitful plain and the fair city below, "suddenly," as he afterward declared, there shone "round about me and them which journeyed with me" "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun" (Acts 26:13), too glorious for mortal eyes to bear. Blinded and bewildered, Saul fell prostrate to the ground. AA 114

Thought – Saul had been blinding his eyes to the truth and now his physical eyes were blinded.

Thursday

Text: Acts 9:5,6 "And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."

While the light continued to shine round about them, Saul heard, "a voice speaking . . . in the Hebrew tongue" (Acts 26:14), "say-

ing unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

Jesus was saying that Saul was acting like a stubborn ox who when the driver would prick it to make it obey, would kick at the driver. Jesus had been trying to get Saul to see the truth and in his heart he knew it but he was fighting against it.

The men with him were also afraid- they saw the light and heard a voice but they did not see Jesus like Saul did. Saul was terrified and even as he lay there helpless on the ground the scriptures proving that Jesus was the Messiah flowed through his mind like a river. He realized in persecuting the followers of Jesus he had been doing the work of Satan.

"What do you want me to do"? Jesus told him to get up and go into the city and he would be told what to do. When Saul got up- he was blind and had to be led by the hand into the city. He went to the home of one of the believers named Judas and he took him in and put him in a room.

Thought – How different was Saul now! Blind and helpless and so sorry for his sins, he didn't want to eat or drink anything.

Friday

Text: Acts 9:10-12 "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight."

For 3 days Saul sat in darkness and mourned and repented for his terrible sins.

Finally the Lord told him in a vision that a man named Ananias would come and he would be able to see again.

The Lord also spoke to Ananias and told him where to go and that he was to lay his hands on Saul and he would be able to see. This man was startled. "Lord", he said, "This is the man that has come here to arrest us and throw us into prison."

But the angel said to go anyway because Saul was a chosen vessel of the Lord to do a special work for Him. So Ananias went to the house and came in where Saul was praying and fasting. He put his hands on Saul's head and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Instantly it was like scales

fell off of his eyes and he could see again. Then he went and was baptized right away.

Saul didn't waste any time. As soon as he was healed he started to preach the message about Jesus from the scripture prophecies and showed the Jews at that place clearly that Jesus was the long looked for Messiah.

This did not make them very happy you can be sure and soon a group of them decided to kill him as soon as he would try to leave the city. They watched the gates to catch him. Saul knew about their evil plan so some of the believers got a rope and a large basket and let him down from a window in the wall at night and he went on his way to his hometown of Tarsus.

Thought - so the unbelieving Jews lost their best champion that day and Jesus got a brave soldier for the cross! = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #5: "THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES"

MEMORY VERSE: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Acts 10:34

Sunday

Text: "Acts 9:26,27 "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

When Saul left Damascus he first fled into Arabia where he spent about three years in study and communicating with the Lord. Then for a while he returned to Jerusalem, but when he went to talk to the believers, they were afraid he was trying to trick them and would not even let him in. After awhile he met Barnabas and he told him the trouble he was having to see the believers and talk

with them.

Barnabas took Saul and went to the believers and explained how Saul had seen the Lord and been changed and was no longer the wicked enemy any more. So they accepted Saul as one of them.

Right away Saul kept trying to show the Jews from the scriptures that Jesus was the true Messiah. He also showed the ones who had studied Greek philosophy and mixed it in with the scriptures, that they were wrong in doing this. He thought that some of his former friends were like he had been, and if he showed them the truth they would be happy and believe too.

But they didn't, instead they got more and more angry until they decided to kill Saul. So the church sneaked him out and helped him to go on his way towards his hometown of Tarsus.

Then for a while things were quiet for the believers. This gave them a time of peace to

study and learn more about Jesus before trouble hit them again.

Thought - Jesus is very kind that although he allows persecution to come to His followers to help them get rid of sin, He also gives them times of peace so they can learn and study His truth. It is important to use our time well and study and learn when we can, as hard times will soon come and we need to be ready. Jesus will help us get ready if we ask Him but if we waste our time with entertainment- we will not be ready.

Monday

Text: Acts 9:36 “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.”

Peter began to travel around and visit the areas where the believers had moved. In the city of Lydda, there was a man who had been sick and in bed for 8 years. Peter, impressed by the Holy Spirit said to this man, “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed.” And right away the poor sick man was well and able to walk.

In Joppa lived a very kind lady named Dorcas or Tabitha, which means ‘doe’ a female deer. She worked hard making clothes for the poor and helping widows and orphans. But one day she got sick and died.

The people were so sad and they called for Peter to come right away. When he came he was taken to the room where the body was. So many people were there weeping and showing the lovely cloths and things she had made for them.

Peter asked them to go out of the room and then he quietly kneeled down and prayed. He knew from the Holy Spirit that Jesus was going to raise Dorcas so he turned and said, “Tabitha arise.” She opened her eyes and sat up and was surprised to see Peter there. Then Peter gave her a hand and she got up and came down to the people. All

were so happy to have the kind lady back with them again.

Peter then stayed for a while at Joppa with another believer, Simon the tanner.

Thought – We are told about Dorcas that her fingers were busier making clothes and helping people than her tongue was in talking. That is a good idea. Sometimes we spend ever so much time talking and chatting when we could be finding ways to help others and learn more about Jesus.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 10:1,2 “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”

Cornelius was a Roman centurion. He was a man of wealth and noble birth, and his position was one of trust and honor. He had learned about the True God of Heaven from the Jews and worshipped Him with an honest heart. He tried to show his love for God by helping the poor and giving to the needy.

One day he was praying earnestly and all at once an angel appeared to him. When he saw him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? The angel said, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. . . send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose last name is Peter: who is staying with Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou should do.”

Cornelius right away called for two trusted servants and sent them as the angel had said.

In the mean time Peter had gone up to the rooftop to pray and study when all at once he felt very hungry. While they were making the lunch ready, he had a vision. He saw a big sheet come down and in it was all sorts of unclean animals and birds.

A voice said to him, "Arise Peter, kill and eat."

Peter answered right away, "Oh, no, Lord, I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

The voice told him, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." This happened three times and then went away. Now Peter was wondering what this meant when the word came to him that two men were at the gate asking for him.

Thought – Now some people use this vision to say that it is now OK to eat pigs and things. But if they keep reading in their Bibles they will see that Peter said himself what the vision meant. Jesus did not die so to cleanse a pig so we can eat it!

Wednesday

Text: Acts 10:19, 20 "While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them."

Peter went down to talk to the men from Cornelius; and said, I am Peter, who you are looking for: what do you want? They told Peter that Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that fears God, was told by a holy angel to ask him to come to his house, to talk to him.

So Peter invited them in and let them stay overnight at the house where he was. The next day he went with the men and took some of the brethren from Joppa with them as witnesses to what would happen.

When they got to Cornelius' house in Caesarea, there they found he had gathered together all his family and friends to hear what Peter was going to teach them.

The first thing he did when he saw Peter was to fall down to worship him. Peter helped him up and quickly told him, "No, stand on your feet, I am also a man."

When he got into the house and saw the

people all waiting to hear his message, he told them, "You know that it is against the Jew's law for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Now why did you send for me?"

Here you see that Peter knew that his vision was not to tell him it was OK to eat a pig, but that God wanted the Gentiles to hear the gospel too.

Thought – Notice that Peter knew some of the believers would not understand this so he took witnesses to see what happened and report on it.

Thursday

Text: Acts 10:33-35 "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Cornelius told how the angel in bright clothing appeared to him as he prayed and told him to send for Peter to come and tell him what he should do.

Peter told about the vision he had seen and how he saw plainly that God made no difference between Jews or Gentiles but wanted everybody to be saved by the gospel of Jesus. Then Peter told the whole group the story of Jesus and His death and resurrection and how these things fulfilled the prophecies of old times. Now Jesus was in heaven and was to be the judge of all men and would one day come back and take those who gave their hearts to Him to heaven.

The people gathered there were so happy to hear the wonderful Truth about Jesus and their hearts just soaked it up. All at once a wonderful thing happened. Jesus sent the

Holy Spirit down to these people. They were able to speak other languages and praised God with holy joy.

Peter and the other believers with him were just amazed. Then Peter said, "Can anyone forbid water that these should be baptized? They have already received the Holy Spirit like us!" So they went that day and baptized the whole group. Peter stayed with them for a while to teach them.

Thought – This gift of tongues was the ability to speak real languages. This was a sign to Peter that Jesus did indeed accept the Gentiles the same as the Jews. But it would also be a wonderful help to these dear people to preach the gospel in their area as people from all over the world were found there.

Friday

Text: Acts 9: 11:2-3 "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."

After he left Cornelius and the happy group of new believers, Peter headed for Jerusalem. But gossip got there first and when he arrived a group of the Jewish believers had complaints about what he had done. Peter knew this would happen and this was why he wisely had taken witnesses with him.

So Peter told them the whole story about

the vision he had been shown and the vision Cornelius had and all the rest. When he got to the place about how the Holy Spirit was given to the gentiles, the ones listening to him were just amazed.

He told them, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" Ac 11:16,17

After this a change came over the believers. Instead of just preaching to the Jews, they began to preach to the gentiles too, and mostly they found the Gentiles more ready to believe than the Jews. Jesus says He pours water on the thirsty ground. He means that He gives His truth to those who are glad to hear it.

People who are too smart and important in their own eyes, and just want to argue about the truth are often left behind while the Holy Spirit goes to poor, humble people who are so happy to accept the Gospel.

Thought - We have to be careful that we don't get feeling that if people are not in our group, they are not important to Jesus too! There is no human being on earth that Jesus does not want to save. Most will not choose to be saved, but Jesus will save all who will come to Him. Poor people and those not very smart are just as precious to Jesus as rich people and those with big educations.
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Weekly Bible Lesson #6: "A WICKED KING"

MEMORY VERSE: "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." Proverbs 29:23

Sunday

Text: "Acts 12:1,2 "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

In this lesson we are going to take a look at the life of Herod Agrippa 1. This king was nephew and brother in law to Herod Antipas who was the one that Jesus was brought before in His trial. Agrippa 1 had got the throne from Antipas by dishonest means and he started right away to persecute the Christians the same as Antipas had done. He claimed to be a Jewish convert and always practiced the ceremonies carefully to please the Jews.

There were six kings who were called Herod and it was sort of a title. Starting with Herod the Great, who had all the little baby boys of Bethlehem murdered to try and kill Jesus, this family always showed the spirit of the dragon, Satan the devil. Most of them had terrible ends. Herod the Great died in agony of a loathsome disease.

Now as Herod Agrippa 1 took the throne, he wanted very much to please the rulers of the Jews. So he arrested James the brother of John threw him into prison and sent an executioner right away and had him killed with the sword. He was imitating what another Herod had done with John the Baptist. James was the first of Jesus' disciples to be a martyr for Jesus.

Now the Jews were indeed happy about this, but they said to Herod that he should have killed James in front of all the people so it would teach them a lesson about what would happen to these followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

So Herod arrested Peter and put him into

prison and planned to bring him out at the Passover feast and kill him before all the people. The Jewish leaders were pleased but they were worried. They thought that it might not be safe to bring this famous apostle out before all the crowds at the Passover. He had done many miracles and the people might rise up and rescue him.

Also they knew that if he were to speak to the people as he had done in the past they would not be able to prove him wrong and more believers would be won to the hated group. So they decided to wait until after the feast before they killed their captive.

It was during the Passover that these cruelties were practiced. While the Jews were celebrating their deliverance from Egypt and pretending to love the law of God, they were at the same time breaking every part of that law by persecuting and murdering the believers in Jesus.

Thought - if we turn our hearts away from the truth because we would rather believe our own ideas, the cruel spirit of Satan, who will have us do his wicked works, can control us.

Monday

Text: Acts 12:5 "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."

It was a terrible loss to the believers when James was killed and now Peter was thrown into prison and it looked like he was going to be killed too! The whole group of believers fasted and prayed for God to come to their aid that they be not wiped out.

It is important to remember that prayer is the most powerful weapon the Christian has and we all need to know how to use it along with the Sword of the Spirit, which is

the Bible.

Now Herod had been warned that Peter had escaped from prison before and so he set four teams of four guards, sixteen in all, to make sure this did not happen! These guards were to make sure that he did not get away this time. The cell where Peter was kept was carved into solid rock!

Two of them were chained to Peter, one on each wrist, and the other two were guarding at the door of the cell. These guards were changed often so they did not get too tired and fall asleep.

The delay in the execution gave the believers time to search their hearts deeply, and make earnest prayer. Pleading, tears, and fasting were mixed together. They prayed without ceasing for Peter; they felt that he could not be spared from the Christian work; and they felt that they had come to a point, where, without the special help of God, the church of Christ would become extinct.

But what was Peter doing? How would you feel if you knew that very likely you were going to be killed the next morning? Would you feel like sleeping? Well, Peter showed perfect trust in Jesus that whatever He saw best, would be done and so he lay down between his two guards and fell sound asleep.

Thought – We all need to learn about Jesus more and more and think about His wonderful promises. Then we will be able to trust Him and have peace in our hearts no matter what happens.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 12:6, 7 “And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.”

God heard the prayers of the believers as they pleaded with Him in the name of Jesus to save Peter’s life. A mighty angel from heaven was sent to go to the prison cell.

It was impossible for any human to rescue Peter, but it was easy for God. The angel came to Peter and struck him on the side to wake him up. Peter was sound asleep and when he opened his eyes he saw his cell full of light.

As he moved to get up the chains fell off his wrists and he saw the soldiers sound asleep. As Peter was confused, the angel told him what to do. “Get dressed”, he said, “and put on your shoes. Now wrap your coat around you and come with me.”

Peter did as he was told and followed the bright angel. He thought he was having a vision and did not know it was real.

The prison doors opened by themselves and they went through. They went past the first and the second set of guards who were sound asleep as if made of stone. When they came to the iron gate of the prison it opened by itself and they went out into the city and on through one street and then the angel disappeared.

Finally Peter realized it was real and he said; “Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.”

Thought – Peter had really thought that his time to die had come. But even so his heart was full of the Peace of Jesus and he slept soundly until the angel woke him. We can trust Jesus like that too.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 12:12-14 “And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew

Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate."

When Peter realized he was out in the street, he went to the house of Mary the mother of Mark. This was the house that had the upper room where Jesus had the Last Supper.

The believers were gathered and praying earnestly for Peter to be saved. All at once came a knock on the locked door. A young girl named Rhoda went to the door to ask who was there, while the others kept praying.

As soon as she heard Peter's voice, she was so excited that she forgot to open the door but ran back and told the rest that he was there. Now here is an amazing thing; they were all praying for him to be saved and here comes the girl to tell them he is at their very door- and they don't believe her!

Now what does this tell you about those that say that prayer is just the power of human minds joining together and by believing something they make it happen? Well, they were not believing! But God in His mercy answered anyway.

In fact they even told poor Rhoda that she was 'nuts'. And then when she insisted, they said it must be his angel as it could not be him.

Now what kind of faith is that? They were praying for something but they did not believe it was going to happen or even could happen!

Peter kept knocking while all this discussion was taking place and finally they did open the door and let him in. Then they were astonished! Peter signaled them to be quiet and he told how the angel had taken him from the prison. He told them to go and tell this to James the brother of Jesus, who was with another group of praying believers. Then Peter went away to a safe place.

Thought – We need more faith! Not to 'make ourselves believe' so we can make things happen, but faith in God that noth-

ing is impossible with Him and His wisdom knows best.

Thursday

Text: Acts 12:18,19 "Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode."

The next day was to be the big show, the execution of the apostle Peter! People were gathered to watch as Herod sent the order to bring Peter from the prison. He was to be brought with many soldiers to show the power of the king. Soon the word came back that Peter was gone. The guards were all there; the chains were still on their wrists; the gates were all locked- but Peter was gone!

Now Herod knew very well that it had to be God that let Peter out. There was no way that the guards would have allowed him to escape as they knew they would be killed if they did! He knew it, but he hardened his heart and was determined not to believe. Raging with anger the wicked Herod demanded that all the 16 guards be killed.

"Skeptics may sneer at the thought that a glorious angel from heaven should give attention to a matter so commonplace as caring for these simple human needs, and may question the inspiration of the narrative. But in the wisdom of God these things are recorded in sacred history for the benefit, not of angels, but of men, that as they should be brought into trying positions they might find comfort in the thought that heaven knows it all. Jesus declared to His disciples that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of the heavenly Father, and that if God can keep in mind the wants of all the little birds of the air, He will much more care for those who may become the subjects of His kingdom and through faith in Him may be

the heirs of immortality.” 5T. 749

Thought – The more people turn away from believing the truth, the more hard their hearts become and the more stubborn and spiritually blind they get. It is a fact that it is only as we choose to serve God fully that we start to understand the ways of the universe. That is why the Bible says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Ps 111:10

Friday

Text: Acts 12:22, 23 “**And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.**”

Now after his plan to make a big name for himself by killing Peter had been stopped by the hand of God. Herod went to Caesarea. There he decided to make a great feast and celebration.

Pleasure-lovers from all around came to the party, and there was much feasting and wine drinking. When the people were drunken and eager from all the feasting, Herod came out before them dressed in a gorgeous robe of gold and silver. It sparkled in the sun as he moved and dazzled the eyes of the people.

Standing glittering there in the bright sun, Herod made a speech to flatter the people and they went wild with wonder and shouted out that Herod was not a mere man, but that they would worship him as a god!

A few years before, these people refused

to see in the loving Jesus, the Son of God clothed in a poor man’s garments. Now they were ready to bow down and worship one whose shiny robes only covered a wicked, cruel heart.

Herod was thrilled; standing tall before the people he did not rebuke their wicked idolatry. Some of these same ones had been in the crowd that screamed for the blood of Jesus a few years before, now they glorified a vile sinner.

He was about to respond to their adoration when suddenly a terrible change took place. He turned white as death and sweat poured down his face. He stood silent for a moment then cried in sorrow, “He whom you have exalted as a god is struck with death!”

He was carried away in great agony from the scenes of the feast, all his wicked deeds rising up in his mind. Killing James, trying to kill Peter, killing the guards he knew were not guilty; how he wished he had not done them. Now by accepting the worship of the people, he brought the judgment of God on himself.

The same angel that had struck Peter to wake him up had now struck Herod a different blow. The evil king was filled with worms that ate him up inside and he died a horrible death.

Thought - This display of divine judgment really made the people think. The apostle of Christ had been miraculously delivered from prison and death and his persecutor had been stricken down by the curse of God. The news went to all lands, and many believed on Christ. = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #7: "PAUL AND BARNABAS"

MEMORY VERSE: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19, 20

Sunday

Text: Acts 11:25, 26 "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

The preaching of the gospel to the gentiles really got underway now. The main center for the Christian church at this time became Antioch in Syria. There was much success there and many joined the believers. They needed some more ministers to teach the people so Barnabas went to Tarsus and found Paul and brought him back to help.

It is interesting that Antioch remained the center of the true worship for many centuries, while Alexandria in Egypt remained the main center for false worship. The Roman church followed the ideas of Alexandria and eventually grew into Roman Catholicism.

False and corrupted Greek Bibles were written and later on, Latin Bibles were made from these false ones from Alexandria where the philosophers put their own heathen ideas into the scriptures.

The true Bible was put together and kept and cherished at the Syrian center and was in the Aramaic language that Jesus and the Apostles spoke most commonly. The Syrian Bible became known as the Peshitta. True Bibles in other languages were translated there as well.

So we end up with two families of Bibles, the True in the East, and the False or corrupted in the West. Our King James Bible comes from the True family, while the mod-

ern versions, supposed to be better, come from the false family of Bibles!

Jerusalem, until it was destroyed in AD 70, was where many of the believers still tried to hang on to the ceremonial laws and rituals that had pointed to Jesus and now were no longer to be used. They still tried to keep many of the ideas of the Pharisees as well; because some of the Pharisees had joined and they did not like to stop doing these things that they thought made them special and better than those who did not do them. They did not like the idea of the gentiles and the Jews being the same in the Christian church.

Antioch was where the believers were first called 'Christians'. At first it was to make fun of them as all they preached about and talked about was 'Christ and Him crucified and risen and at the right hand of God.'

You see the church in Jerusalem, that was still trying to hang onto the Jewish Ceremonies, did not make as clear a witness to the people that Christ was the Blessed Hope!

Thought - What about you and I? Can others see we are "Christ-ians"?

Monday

Text: Acts 13:2,3 "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem on an errand to take some money to help the church at Jerusalem and when they came back they brought the young man, Mark with them as he wanted to learn to be a mission-

ary. Barnabas was Mark's uncle.

Now as the church in Antioch was praying to know what God wanted them to do, the Holy Spirit told them to send Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries to the gentiles and so they did. It is important to know that 'laying on of hands' did not make Paul and Barnabas into missionaries, God had already said they were missionaries, but it was to show that the believers knew this, and also that they asked a special blessing for them.

So off they went to Cyprus and began to preach the Gospel there. It was not long before they had a problem with another witch. A man who called himself 'Barjesus' with meant 'Son of the Savior', started to make trouble for them. The deputy of that area, Sergius Paulus, sent for Paul and Barnabas to come and teach him the gospel.

Elymas, the sorcerer (his name in another language) did all he could to stop the deputy from hearing and believing the Gospel.

Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit turned to this man and told him: "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season."

Right away the man was stuck blind and groped around calling for someone to come and lead him by the hand. When the deputy saw this, he was amazed! For a long time this sorcerer had been influencing him and now he was shown that the gospel was stronger than witchcraft and he believed Paul.

Thought – Never forget that witches and sorcerers and wizards ALL actually work for Satan against Jesus- even if they don't really know it themselves! There is no such thing as a 'good witch' or 'white magic'.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 13: 14,15 "But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on

the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

There was another Antioch; one was in Syria and the other in Pisidia. So Paul and Barnabas came to this other Antioch and went first to the Jewish synagogue to take the Gospel to them. Paul always did this when he came to a new area. He had a good reason, he wanted his countrymen to accept Jesus, but he also knew that if he preached first to the gentiles in any area, there was no chance the Jews would even listen to him.

You can read the wonderful sermon that Paul preached in Acts 13 as he showed them from the prophecies that Jesus was the Messiah. Many of the Jews believed. After he came out from the synagogue, the gentiles came and asked him to come and preach to them on the next Sabbath and so he did.

The next Sabbath almost the whole city came out to hear Paul! But the Jews when they saw the crowds became jealous and started to interrupt him and use bad language.

Then Paul and Barnabas spoke up boldly and told them that it was necessary for the gospel to first be preached to them, but since they showed they were not worthy of it, from then on they would teach the gentiles.

The gentiles were happy about this and many gave their hearts to Jesus. But the Jews were angry and from then on they followed the missionaries to make trouble for them wherever they went. Here they told false stories to the important people and rulers of the area and so they had Paul and Barnabas ordered out of the city.

So they did as Jesus said to do, they shook off the dust of their feet as a witness and went to another place.

Thought – See if you can find which verse in the Bible first called Saul, by his new name, Paul.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 14:1,2 “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.”

Off they went to Iconium and many people heard them and accepted Jesus there and they stayed a long while. But the unbelieving Jews kept telling lies and making trouble until finally they were planning to stone the Apostles, so they went to another area, Lystra and Derbe.

At Lystra there was a lame man who had been crippled all his life. As he listened to Paul preach, the Holy Spirit impressed him that in the Name of this Jesus, he could be healed. Paul saw how the man looked intently at him, and he was impressed by the Holy Spirit that the Lord was going to heal this man.

Paul called out loudly to him, “Stand up on your feet!” and the man jumped up and walked. Now when the people saw this miracle, they got all excited and began to shout in their own language that their pagan gods, Jupiter and Mercury, were come down to them.

At first Paul and Barnabas did not realize what they were up to, but soon they saw the priest of Jupiter coming with oxen all decorated with strings of flowers. He was going to offer them as a sacrifice to these men-gods.

When Paul saw this he was so upset he tore his clothes and ran into the crowd to beg them to stop! He told them that they were not gods; they were men and had come to tell them about the Real God of heaven and get them to turn away from these heathen things. He finally talked them out of doing the sacrifice but it wasn't easy.

Soon after that, those unbelieving Jews

showed up, and telling lies to the people, they stirred them up against Paul and Barnabas. They even got the people so angry they grabbed Paul and stoned him. Then they dragged him out of the city and threw him in the trash area and went back into the city.

It sure looked like Paul was dead. The believers of the area and Barnabas gathered around and wept and prayed. How happy they were when Paul got up and went with them back to the city. He stayed overnight and the next day they went on to Derbe.

Thought – How changeable people are without Jesus in their hearts! First they wanted to treat the missionaries as gods and next they tried to kill them. This has happened with modern missionaries too.

Thursday

Text: Acts 14:21, 22 “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

They got many believers in Derbe and then they started back through the places they had already been. At each place they taught the ones who had believed and been baptized and helped them to set up their churches and encouraged them to stay faithful to Jesus.

In each area they set up elders and ordained them to be helpers and ministers to the churches. The early churches were simple, and that was the way Jesus wanted them to be. There was not to be any bosses who told everyone else what to do. There were to be men who really loved the Lord Jesus, set up as elders and deacons and these were to teach the Bible to the people and help them to serve the Lord faithfully.

Some people try and say that the church

at Jerusalem was the 'General Conference' and all the churches Paul set up were to take orders from that. This is not at all true. Remember that Paul and Barnabas were sent on their missionary journey by the church in Antioch, not Jerusalem. Nowhere do we see Paul contacting the church at Jerusalem for his orders!

Each church was sort of separate but it also recognized other true churches as sister churches. Like Jesus had said, "All ye shall be brethren", no one was to be the 'head boss' except Jesus and the Bible! It was Satan's counterfeit church that got the idea of a 'central headquarters' bossing the others. This is how we got the Pope.

Later on, the question about whether the gentiles were to follow the ceremonies of the Jews became a real problem. Some of the priests and Pharisees, who had joined the church in Jerusalem, kept insisting that these things all be kept so they would not look much different from the unbelieving Jews. They did not want to stand out and so be persecuted. They were not all that happy about all those gentiles accepting the gospel. They still wanted to be separate and 'special'.

At this time it was decided that some godly people from each of the churches were to come to Jerusalem and they would have a counsel and decide once and for all what they would do about this. Peter and James and some of the other apostles were at Jerusalem and as it is sort of a central area where travel routes passed through, they had the counsel in Jerusalem. It did NOT mean that the ones in Jerusalem were the bosses and everyone else obeyed them!

Thought – This business about hanging on to the Jewish ceremonial law was a big problem to the church in Jerusalem. Even some of the Lord's disciples like Peter kept getting caught up in it. They knew those laws were done away in Christ and yet they kept hanging on to them. Paul even says that at one point he rebuked Peter for this. Finally after the Christians had fled Jerusalem and

the city and temple were destroyed, they understood more clearly these ceremonial laws were finished and it was wrong to keep teaching them.

Friday

Text: Acts 14:26,27 "And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

So Paul and Barnabas came back on their way to Antioch of Syria, preaching and teaching all the way. Can you imagine what a wonderful time it was when they returned and how all the believers came together eagerly to hear the story of their missionary journey?

They told all the wonderful things the Lord had done and about all the dear believers who had given their hearts to Jesus and about the little churches set up where the Christian faith was burning brightly.

Paul and Barnabas then stayed for a long while at Antioch of Syria and preached and taught there. Many believers came into the church there and the Lord was honored.

It was not long though before certain Jews from Judea raised trouble among the believing Gentiles by insisting that none could be saved without keeping the entire ceremonial law. It was making big trouble and confusion among the gentiles and so Paul and Barnabas spoke out against this.

But the Jews of the area, agreed with the Jews from Jerusalem and so the problem grew. Where ever this idea was taught it caused the believers to end up divided into two groups- the 'Jewish' believers and their ceremonies and the 'Gentile' believers and the plain Gospel. Jesus had broken down this wall between and He did not want it put back up!

Finally it was at this time that the church in Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem for to meet with the church there and sort this out for once and for all. This is what we learned about in yesterday's lesson.

It was wrong of the Jewish Christians to keep hanging on to these ceremonial laws that had been fulfilled and ended by Jesus' death on the cross. When Jesus died, the huge, heavy curtain of the temple was ripped in two from the top to the bottom. This was

God's signal these things were ended forever.

The Christians have three ceremonies given us by Jesus; foot washing, the Lord's Supper or communion, and Baptism.

Thought - Believe it or not, we have some among us today who are trying to tell us all to go back to keeping some of the feasts and ceremonies of the Jews! Then we have some who try and tell us the 10 commandments were also done away with at the cross. It seems Satan is trying all his old tricks at once! = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #8: "CEREMONIES"

MEMORY VERSE: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

Proverbs 30:5, 6

Sunday

Text: Acts 15:28,29 "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well."

At the special council the Holy Spirit led them to decide it was not right to try to get the gentiles to follow the Jewish ceremonies. Really they should have stopped following them too as they were clearly shown by God that they were fulfilled at the death of Jesus and had no more to do after that.

The true ceremonies were to keep people's minds looking to the coming Messiah, but as the years passed, most people just thought the ceremonies themselves were like some kind of magic with God and by keeping them and doing them they earned good grades with heaven and so got blessings. This was a false idea altogether.

Also the Jews themselves added all kinds of practices and ceremonies they had made up themselves and some they had got from

heathenism too. They had some very wicked ones that Jesus warned them about when He was teaching them.

One was called 'Corban'. This allowed people to tell the priests that they were going to dedicate all their belongings to the Temple when they died. Then they said the word 'Corban' and they did not have to help their mother or father any more, even if they were homeless and starving. In fact the priests would not even allow them to care for their parents!

God's commandments say to honor Father and Mother, and this means the children should care for them all their lives. You see, when men add ideas of their own to God's Word, they end up not doing what God's Word tells them to do and still they think they are right, when they are wrong.

At least it was a help that the Jews agreed not to try and force the gentiles to follow these things too. After the Temple was all destroyed, it helped the Jewish Christians to realize these things were passed forever.

Thought - Don't let anyone tell you that it was the 10-commandment law that was 'nailed to the cross'; it was only the ceremonial law.

Monday

Text: Acts 15:22 “Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.”

The gentile Christians were very happy when the letter from the council was read but many of the Jews were not happy. They still wanted to keep that separation between themselves and the rest of the world.

Now it is important to understand that God did want His people to be separate from the heathen, but this did not mean they were not supposed to try and teach the gospel to the whole world. God had given special teaching and information to the Israelites and His purpose was that they would obey Him and live godly lives and then the entire world would want to learn about God and join in to worship Him also.

God had wanted the Jews to reach out to the heathen with the truth and try and win souls for the kingdom. But God did not want His people to join in with the worldly ways. He did not want them to take part in worldly holidays and feasts and parties. He did not want them to learn about heathen religions or practice any of the ways of the heathen. Especially He did not want them to marry or make close friends with the heathen. They were to be a separate people.

But the Jews did both wrongs, they would not even try to help the heathen unless they came to them first, and yet they took part in all kinds of bad heathen ways.

After Paul and Barnabas had been at Antioch for a while, they decided to take another missionary trip. Barnabas wanted to take young John Mark with them but Paul did not want to because on the first trip, Mark had got homesick and left them to go back home.

But his uncle thought he was older now and needed a second chance. So they could

not agree and finally Barabbas took Mark and Paul took Silas and they all went on their way. They wanted to see how the churches they had started on their first trip were doing and also to carry the letter from the council to them.

Thought – It turned out a good thing as now there were 4 missionaries and also Mark had grown up and later became a good minister of the gospel.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 16:1,2 “Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.”

Now Paul took another young man to be with him to learn to be a minister. This was young Timothy who Paul writes in the letters to Timothy that from the time he was little he had know the scriptures. His mother and his grandmother had taught him well.

This young man was careful to live a good life and did not get mixed up with the kinds of foolishness some young men were getting into in his town. So it was that he got the chance to travel and learn from the Apostle Paul.

As they traveled and taught the people on this trip, twice they were going to go in one direction but the Holy Spirit told them not to. So they went a different way. Then one night as Paul was sleeping he saw in a dream a man from Macedonia and the man was pleading, “Come over into Macedonia and help us”. So the next day they headed for that place.

Thought – We can all be guided by the Holy Spirit if we give all our hearts to Jesus and ask the Father in the Name of Jesus to give us the Holy Spirit. Remember the first thing the Spirit does for you is to show you your sins and help you feel sorry for them.

Then in the Name of Jesus, He gives you power to stop sinning.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 16:12, 13 “And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.”

In the city of Philippi there was no Jewish synagogue so they went to have Sabbath worship by the river. There they met some Jewish women who came there each Sabbath to worship together and Paul taught them the Gospel.

A lady named Lydia who sold purple cloth and was quite rich, gave her heart to Jesus and was baptized and all the people in her family also. Then she asked the missionary group to come and stay at her house and so they did.

Now as Paul went about preaching in Philippi, a young girl who had a familiar spirit started following him around. Satan was causing her to do this to make trouble for Paul. This girl was a slave who made a lot of money for her owners by telling people's fortunes. It was the evil spirit that spoke through her to tell the fortunes.

Poor girl, she was a double slave, the men owned her body and Satan controlled her mind. She started going everywhere with Paul and shouting out, “These men are the servants of the most high God which show unto us the way of salvation!”

Now that was true wasn't it? But when the people heard this madwoman saying it, they thought Paul was connected with her and did not want to listen to him any more. See how Satan sometimes even makes trouble by telling the truth?

Paul knew something had to be done and he turned to the woman and rebuked the

evil spirit in the Name of Jesus. The evil Spirit left the girl and never came back. So the poor girl was set free of Satan, then her owners didn't want her anymore as she was no good to them if she could not tell fortunes. So she was now free in Jesus!

Thought – Jesus came to earth to set the captives free.

Thursday

Text: Acts 16:19, 20 “And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.”

The girl was happy but her owners were not happy, so they made trouble and told lies about Paul and Silas and they dragged them to the rulers of the city who arrested them and beat them and fastened them in the stocks in the dungeon!

Poor Paul and Silas were in a lot of pain but they started to pray and talk about Jesus and then to sing praises to His name. All at once there came an earthquake and shook the prison. Right away all the prison doors came open and the chains fell off all the prisoners! That was a very special earthquake wasn't it?

Now the poor jailer woke up afraid and rushed to the prison. He was responsible for all those prisoners and would be shamefully executed if they got away. When he saw all the doors open he was sure they were all gone and in despair he drew his sword to kill himself.

But Paul saw him and called out, “Do yourself no harm, we are all here.”

God had caused all the prisoners to remain to hear the gospel from Paul and none had run away. The Jailer was so amazed he ran to Paul and Silas and fell down and begged him to tell him how to be saved.

“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.” Acts 16:31,32

Thought – How amazed the Jailer was when his cruel treatment of Paul and Silas was returned with kindness.

Friday

Text: Acts 16:33, 34 “And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

Now the Jailer took Paul and Silas home with him and washed their wounds and after learning the Gospel message, he and all his family were baptized that very night.

Now the next day the rulers who had thrown Paul and Silas into the prison and

beaten them and all, sent messages that they were free to leave. You see the earthquake had scared them good!

But Paul was not content to go sneaking away after they had been publicly treated as criminals. So he sent a message that they had been publicly whipped and thrown in jail without a trial and they were Roman citizens and it was against the law to ever treat a Roman citizen like that.

Now the magistrates were really scared! If Paul and Silas were Romans, they could be in real trouble and even lose their jobs for having done this! So now they came themselves and apologized and asked Paul and Silas nicely to depart.

The missionaries went first and said goodbye to the believers and comforted them, then they went on their way.

Thought - What wonderful ways the Lord has to turn what Satan plans as evil, into something good if we just trust in Him and don't complain! = ^..^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #9: “THE BEREANS”

MEMORY VERSE: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:11

Sunday

Text: Acts 17:6,7 “And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.”

After leaving Philippi they went on to Thessalonica and again Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue about Jesus being the promised Messiah. Many people believed, but again the ones who did not believe were made angry and went and got some crimi-

nals to make trouble for Paul and Silas.

The missionaries had been staying at the house of a man named Jason, and when the mob came looking for Paul, they could not find him, so they took Jason to the magistrates. The judge got Jason to pay a bond that he would make sure these people staying at his house would not cause trouble.

Paul and Silas left after this and went on to Berea where they preached in the synagogue there and found people not only willing to hear, but they went home and studied the scriptures for themselves to make sure the things Paul told them were true. Many believed and were very happy.

Soon however, the same bunch that made

trouble before followed to Berea and made more trouble. This time Paul went on by himself and left Silas and Timothy to help the new believers for a while longer.

Thought - If people today would search the Bible for themselves to make sure that what they believed in and what they were being told was really true, false ministers would not get away with their lies and tricks.

Monday

Text: Acts 17:19-21 “**And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)**”

Paul traveled on to Athens, the capitol of Greece. Some of the new believers from Berea had traveled with him and when he saw this great city all given over to heathenism, he asked them to go back and tell Silas and Timothy to come to help him.

The city of Athens was a huge center of heathendom. These people were famous for their intelligence and education. Statues of their gods and heroes of history and poetry met the eye in every direction; while great buildings and paintings exalted national glory and the popular heathen gods.

The people were all caught up in the beauty and glory of art. Costly sanctuaries and temples were everywhere. Victories of armies, and deeds of famous men, were told by sculptures, shrines, and plaques. All these things made this famous city like a vast gallery of art. And as Paul looked upon all this, and saw the city crowded with idols, he felt sorry to see that God was dishonored on every side.

He felt sorry for the people, who, even

though they were ‘educated’ and ‘smart’, worshipped idols and did not know God. Paul knew that all these fancy things and all the false wisdom and philosophy did not really help anybody. He saw that they were using their arts to make sin look like it was really good and to honor people who were denying and insulting God.

Paul knew how much better the heavenly things were and he knew the joy and splendor of those riches that will never fade away was so much better than all the earthly pomp and glory of this wicked city. All this costly and fancy art only made the minds of the people hypnotized and they could not see how empty it all was.

Thought – Paul felt very lonely here as he found no one interested in the truths of the Gospel. He wrote about his feelings in his letter to the Thessalonians, in these words: “Left at Athens alone.”

Tuesday

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:23 “**But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.**”

Paul preached in a Jewish synagogue and also in the market places. Finally some of the philosophers heard about him and wanted to hear what he had to say. The Epicureans and the Stoics invited him to come and speak at the Areopagus at Mars Hill, where all the ‘important and educated’ people gathered to hear something exciting and new. Now this was not a friendly situation, as these people did not mind to sentence to death those they did not agree with!

They thought they were very ‘religious’ and very smart but they were really all caught up in Satan’s lies. They mostly wanted to make fun of Paul as they thought they were much smarter and better than he was. They said jeeringly among themselves, “What will this babbling say? He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.”

Paul was a very educated and intelligent man and as some of these philosophers talked with him he could match wits with them. So they invited him to speak.

They took him to Mars' Hill, the most sacred spot in all Athens where the highest court of justice had met for years to decide criminal cases, and difficult religious questions. The judges sat in the open air, upon seats hewn out in the rock, on a platform which was reached by a flight of stone steps from the valley below. Nearby was a temple of the gods; and the sanctuaries, statues, and altars of the city were in full view. Around him here were gathered poets, artists, and philosophers, the scholars and sages of Athens. "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we would know, therefore, what these things mean."

Thought – God was giving these worldly-wise men a chance to hear His truth.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 17:22,23 "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

So Paul stood up and preached a wonderful sermon to them about the great God in Heaven, the Creator of the heavens and earth. These men did not believe or know about the Creator. They believed a kind of evolution.

Paul told them earnestly that the real God could not be worshipped as an idol nor could He be kept in a fancy temple, the real God wanted to be worshipped in the hearts of His people.

At first they were happy with what Paul was saying but he went on and told them about the Creator God and how He had sent

His Son to save them and that they needed to repent of their sins and believe the truth.

He then began to tell them about the judgment and the resurrection of the dead. Now these people didn't want to think about those kinds of things. They had many dark sins on their consciences and did not want to think they would have to answer to a real God about them.

They were not interested in repenting or changing their ways, nor would they humble their proud hearts; so they interrupted him, some started to scoff and make fun, others denied his words and told him they would listen to him some other time about these things. Paul's whole sermon was useless to these men who thought they already knew everything anyway.

So Paul's work at Athens ended, for the Athenians clung to their idolatry, and turned away from the light of truth. They thought themselves so highly educated, and boasted of their learning and refinement, but they were constantly becoming more corrupt, and didn't even care. Only a very few people believed.

Thought – Greek philosophy is still thought to be very smart and educational but it is really just a clever form of spiritualism.

Thursday

Text: Acts 18:2, 3 "And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

Paul traveled on to Corinth and there he found a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla and they became believers. Paul lived with them and they worked together making tents to earn a living.

God had taught the Israelites, by his ser-

vant Moses, to train up their children to hard-working habits. Even royalty would be taught some trade so if needed they could work with their hands and earn a living. Even Jesus toiled for many years as a carpenter. When we are doing useful work we are serving God just as much as if we are preaching.

Corinth was a big business center and there was a chance to preach the gospel to many people as they came and went through Corinth on the way to the other big cities. Paul preached to the Jews there after Timothy and Silas had come to join him and he showed them that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Paul made a change in his way of working here in Corinth. When he was in Athens he matched the philosophers with their own philosophy and fancy arguments but it did not much good. Now he chose to talk about Jesus and preach about him and he did not care if the Greeks thought this was silly. People with honest hearts believed the gospel when it was preached in this simple way.

Thought – The story of Jesus is simple so a little child can understand it and so powerful that it can save all who truly believe it and give their hearts to Him.

Friday

Text: Acts 18:9-11 “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, 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. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

It wasn't long before the unbelieving Jews began to make trouble again and Paul told them that he would teach the gentiles from now on. He was a bit discouraged thinking he was going to have to leave again because of all the trouble, but Jesus spoke to him in a vision and told him to not be afraid but to keep preaching the gospel.

Now as Paul kept on preaching in this city he had better success. But the Jews became jealous and they made a big fuss and brought Paul before the judge to charge him with teaching false things.

The judge's name was Gallio, and when Paul was arrested and brought before him, he was about to speak to defend himself, but Gallio said it was not needed. Turning to the Jews he said, “If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.”

And he dismissed them out of his court. Now the people realized they had been lied to, and they turned on the chief ruler of the synagogue and beat him right in front of the judge and Gallio didn't even care. So the chief ruler got a beating and Paul had no more problems for a while from them.

Paul continued to work in Corinth and the nearby cities and several churches were raised up.

Thought - It never pays to use lies and deceit to fool people and make trouble for others- often it comes right back on you.
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Weekly Bible Lesson #10: "THE NAME OF JESUS"

MEMORY VERSE: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:20

Sunday

Text: Acts 18:24,25 "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John."

Aquilla and Prisilla were friends of Paul and Christian believers in Corinth. One day they heard a man named Apollos speak in the synagogue about the Messiah to come. They invited him to their home and they told him all about Jesus.

Apollos was very happy and excited to learn that Jesus had come and all about the prophecies that showed He was the promised Messiah. Apollos had been born in Alexandria. He was well educated and knew the scriptures. He had heard the message of John the Baptist at some time in his life, and he had given his life to preaching that wonderful message about the soon coming Savior. He had not heard the story of the ministry of Jesus and now he was so eager that he went out and began right away to preach about Jesus from the prophecies in the Scriptures.

Now Apollos was preaching in Corinth and Paul came back into the area of Ephesus as he had promised he would return. There he found twelve believers. He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit and they said they did not know about Him at all.

Paul asked them about their baptism and they said they were baptized into the baptism of John. Paul told them that John's message was to repent and be prepared for the coming Messiah but now that Jesus had come, they needed to be baptized in the

name of Jesus too, and receive the Holy Spirit.

They did not know about the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised to all true believers. When they were re-baptized they afterwards received the Holy Spirit and they went out to spread the message of the gospel in great power and in other languages as well.

Thought - It is the Holy Spirit in our hearts that teaches us and gives us power in the Name of Jesus to overcome all bad ways and sinful habits. He is like our school-teacher to teach us all about Jesus. We are baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Monday

Text: Acts 19:11,12 "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

Paul spoke and taught in the synagogue in Ephesus for 3 months and many believed. But as usual the ones who did not believe started getting jealous and making trouble for Paul, so he stopped teaching them. He took the ones that did believe and helped them form a church of believers.

Paul then went to a school run by a man named Tyrannus and there he taught everybody who would listen for two years. He taught them all about the Scriptures and the prophecies that showed that Jesus was the Messiah.

Now the city of Ephesus was a place very given to idol worship and the study of witchcraft, magic symbols and words. Jesus saw that Paul would need extra help in this center of Satan's craft and so he was given great

power to heal both in person and also by sending pieces of cloth or aprons from himself to the person who needed help and they were made well by the name of Jesus. It was not 'magic' in the cloths but faith in the name of Jesus that healed these people.

Now because of the satanic worship and witchcraft practiced in this city of Ephesus, many people were possessed of devils and many of them were healed by Paul as well and the devils had to leave them.

Thought – Do you know how to find the prophecies in the Old Testament that prove Jesus is the one and only Messiah? If not, you should study and learn about it.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 19:13, 14 “Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.”

Now there were some Jews that made a living by supposedly driving out devils from people who were possessed of them. When they saw how Paul was so successful in getting rid of devils in the name of Jesus, they decided they would try it too.

Now these seven sons of Sceva a Jewish Priest, were not believers in Jesus and were sort of magicians who tried to use magic words and symbols to control demons and work magic.

After the Jews had returned from the long time in Babylon in the days of Daniel, some of them brought back ideas from the Babylonian magicians and tried to mix these ideas into the Hebrew religion. This was called the Kabala and was not true but was heathen through and through.

Now these seven brothers thought they had a new magic word to use that really worked, the name 'Jesus'. Off they went to find a man possessed of devils and they com-

manded the devils in the Name of Jesus who Paul preaches, to come out of the man.

The devil in the man spoke to them and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” You see, they did not have the protection of God and the holy angels just because they said the Name of Jesus. To have that power and protecting we first have to give our whole lives and hearts to Jesus, repent of our sins and be born again by the power of the Lord.

So the man that had the evil spirits attacked these seven men in the power and fury of the demons. He tore their clothes off them and beat and bruised them badly, so they fled for their lives out of that house naked and wounded. After this was known, people had more respect for the name of Jesus.

Thought – There is no such thing as magic words and symbols and so on. Anything like this is from Satan and should be left alone even if it claims to be from God.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 19:18, 19 “And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.”

Now the city of Ephesus had a great temple and in it was an ugly and weird image of a woman, made of gold, which they claimed had fallen out of the sky. No doubt Satan had something to do with the making of this image. It was covered with weird symbols and they were thought to have magic meanings and power if you could understand them.

Through the years many books were written that claimed to explain the supernatural symbols and show how to use them for magic. They were really telling how to worship Satan, get help from him and talk with

the dead. It was witchcraft. Ephesus was a center of this and it was not at all what God wanted people to have anything to do with.

Now when some of these people who studied this stuff learned about Jesus and the Gospel, they turned away from their wicked ways and gave their whole selves to the Lord. Then they had a problem, they had all these books that were very expensive and valuable but they were satanic books.

If they sold them, these wicked things would trap someone else, so what could they do? They had the answer, they made a big fire and they burned up all their magic and witchcraft books.

Thought – When we really belong to Jesus, we will not want to read about or look at or listen to stories about fantasy or magic, witchcraft or wizards, spells or rituals. We will get rid of all movies, games and books about these things and never use them again.

Thursday

Text: Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6 “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”

Really, no matter what people claim about magic and witchcraft, it really is a type of worship of Satan and the dead. When my mother was young the idea of being a witch or wizard was not very popular although there were still many practicing these things, but mostly in secret.

When I was young the ideas were gradually coming back into being popular and you will never guess who it was that did most of this? It was Walt Disney and his movies for children, that somehow people thought were just fine even though they were full of spiritism. So many movies had ghosts or magic spells in them, and even Mickey Mouse

claims to be a wizard. And yet Satan blinded the eyes of people and they thought it just fine to let their children watch these things.

Once we start to like things that are against the truth of the Bible, Satan can blind our eyes more and more, and soon we start to like his lies better than God's truth! If you do not think this is true, then go to a group of children and offer to tell them a Bible story and then offer to tell them a ghost story, see which they get more excited about. WHY is this? Because our hearts are naturally in tune with Satan, it is easy for us to like his lies. For us to be saved our hearts MUST be changed to be in tune with God. Only God can make this change and only if we choose for Him to do it.

Now in our world we are seeing the most terrible bunch of Satanic books and movies for children that ever was! And people, who think these things are wonderful, say, well you older people grew up with stories of Snow White and Cinderella, what is wrong with us having fantasy also. Yes, they are right in that, if people had not had the start in these fairy stories, these terrible books of today could never have been sold.

People claim that fantasy and magic have good sides to them, but God tells us plainly that these things are evil and will destroy us. People think the dead are alive somewhere and we can talk with them. It is in this way that Satan and his angels are tricking most of the world and getting them ready to refuse to believe and obey God and not be ready for Jesus' coming.

Satan's agents claim to cure disease, but in truth the power of which they boast comes from the sorcery of Satan. He casts his spell over the bodies and souls of men. The sick, the bereaved, the curious, are communicating with evil spirits. All who venture here are on dangerous ground.

The visible and the invisible world are in close contact. Could the veil be lifted, we would see evil angels doing all they can to fool and destroy. Anything that causes us to forget God, in that Satan is using his be-

witching power. All who go into scenes of indulgence or irreligious pleasure, or seek the society of the pleasure lover, the unbeliever, or the blasphemer, in person or in reading or movies, are tampering with sorcery. Before they know it, the mind is confused and the soul polluted.

Paul's message to the Ephesian church should be followed by the people of God today: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

Thought – If you are offered books or movies about magic or witches and stuff, don't read or look at them. You are not missing anything good - but Satan will miss his chance to hurt and destroy you.

Friday

Text: Acts 19:26, 27 "Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."

It wasn't long before there was a difference seen in Ephesus. It was a good difference, not as many people were worshipping the idol and doing witchcraft. But there were

some people who were not at all happy about this.

They were the people who made little models of the idol with the mystical symbols on it to sell to people who came to Ephesus on the special holidays to worship the idol and get magic powers.

They were not making as much money anymore and so one of them named Demetrius, who was a silversmith, called a meeting and told the other people who made these idols and things all about it. He said that soon nobody would worship the idol, Dianna any more. They were very angry and began to yell at the top of their voices, "Great is Dianna of the Ephesians".

They yelled and yelled and soon there was a great uproar. They caught two of Paul's friends and dragged them into the public place, Paul, always brave, wanted to go and talk to them but the Christians did not think it was safe for him to do it.

After yelling for two hours straight, the town clerk spoke to them and told them they were likely to get in trouble for making such a racket about nothing. These men had not harmed their goddess or their temple and they should be quiet. So they finally stopped their yelling and went home. After things were quiet again Paul left and went back to Macedonia.

Thought - Always remember that saying something does not make it true. They shouted as loud as they could that their idol was great- but it was just an ugly lump of gold that could not help anybody! = ^ .. ^ =



Weekly Bible Lesson #11: "BACK TO JERUSALEM"

MEMORY VERSE: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 2:1

Sunday

Text: Acts 20:6, 7 "And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

After leaving Ephesus and the worshippers of Dianna, Paul went on his way visiting and preaching in other places. He went to Macedonia and Greece for three months and when the Jews again were trying to kill him, he went on to Troas.

Paul was now gradually working his way towards Jerusalem and when he was there with the believers at Troas, the Holy Spirit told him that this was the last time he would see these people.

It was on the first day of the week in the evening, that was Saturday night, and the people who loved Paul wanted to hear as much of his teaching before he left them forever. They had a meal at the church and then Paul preached until midnight.

A teenager named Eutychus, had sat up in the window ledge but had grown sleepy and fell asleep. All at once he slumped over and fell from his place three stories to the ground.

Quickly all the believers rushed out to where he lay, but when they picked him up he was found to be dead. But Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit put his arms around him and told the people, "Don't worry, he is alive!"

So did they go home to bed then? No, they were all so excited about this wonderful miracle, they went back in and had some

food to eat and then Paul preached some more until morning.

Then Paul went to the ship with his friends to leave for Assos, but Paul decided to walk to Assos and meet them there.

Thought - Paul wanted time alone to pray and think about what God was showing him about his future. The long walk was a good way to do this.

Monday

Text: Acts 20:18-20 "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house."

From place to place they sailed, Paul wanted to be able to be back in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. He stopped and preached to the believers at Ephesus again and told them that he knew he would not get to see them any more on this earth.

They were very sad and wept and did not want to see him go. Then he knelt down and prayed with them all. They went with him back to the ship and before he got on, they hugged him and wept that he would not be back again.

Again traveling on from place to place they came to Tyre and there they found some believers. The ship was unloading cargo so they had seven days to stay and talk to these people. Some of them who had the gift of prophecy warned Paul that he should not go

to Jerusalem as he would be arrested there.

Again when Paul went to get onto the ship the believers followed and they all kneeled down on the shore and prayed. Then they said a loving good-bye and Paul and his friends sailed on to another place.

Thought – Paul had a deep desire to help his own people the Jews at Jerusalem to see the truth about Jesus, so even though he was warned to go there was dangerous, he still wanted to go.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 21:10-12 “And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.”

When they arrived at a place called Caesarea, they went and stayed for a while at the house of Phillip, who was one of the seven original deacons. Phillip had seven daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

Soon after the Apostle Paul’s arrival at Caesarea, the prophet Agabus came down from Judea. He had been warned by the Holy Spirit, of the fate that awaited Paul and came in and took Paul’s girdle and tied his own hands and feet with it and said, “Thus shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle.”

The believers were very upset about this and began to beg and plead with Paul not to go into such danger. They wept at the thought of his being taken away from them.

Finally Paul felt so bad he asked them to stop breaking his heart as he felt it was his duty to go to Jerusalem no matter what happened to him there. So they stopped trying

to talk him out of it, though they still felt very sad about it.

After this they started the long walk to Jerusalem carrying their belongings on their backs. A man named Mnason went with them. They were going to stay at his house when they got there, as that time of year so many people came for the feast that there would be few places to stay in Jerusalem.

Thought – When the people of God are truly obeying Him they have the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy among them. Notice how in different places the people knew ahead of time what would happen. If we truly have the Holy Spirit with us, He shows us what we need to know.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 21:18, 19 “And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.”

When Paul got to Jerusalem, the believers were glad to see him, and listened with interest to his mission report. But sad to say, the ‘Christian’ Jews at Jerusalem were still making trouble over the ceremonial law. They knew in their hearts that these things were all done away with, and fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross. But they also knew if they did not keep those things, the rest of the Jews would persecute them even more. So they kept trying to hang onto the old and the new together.

These mistaken ideas, held even at times by some of the apostles like Peter and James, were bringing a wrong spirit into the early church. They did not like the fact that Paul was bringing in so many people and he was teaching them only the gospel that Jesus told them to preach and not all the ceremonial laws as well.

Now they had a chance to admit they were wrong, Paul was indeed being blessed by God,

and they should give up these old ceremonial laws, but they hardened their hearts and would not admit they were wrong.

So what did they do to poor Paul now as he came back tired and weary and full of the wonderful reports of how God was blessing his work just as he was doing it? They decided they knew better than he did how the work ought to be done.

They tried to make it look like he was to blame for the wrong attitude they had towards him and his work. From someone in the group came an idea, whispered to them no doubt by Satan himself.

They told Paul that there were four men among them that 'had a vow' on them. Now again, these vows and things were all part of the old system, and these four 'Christians' had no business having this 'vow' on them. But this vow required that after a certain time some very expensive offerings and sacrifices had to be offered to finish off the vow.

Now you and I know that there was no reason for any animal sacrifices to be being offered by Christians-and they all really knew it too. But they not only wanted Paul to go along with these four men with their old Jewish vow, but they wanted him to pay out of his own pocket for all these four sets of expensive sacrifices!!

Thought – By the way, this shows clearly that the early Christians were not keeping a different Sabbath- if they were afraid to give up the ceremonies and feasts of the Jews, they certainly would have raised a big problem if they changed the Sabbath!

Thursday

Text: Acts 21:23,24 “Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are

nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.”

The church at Jerusalem was willing to say it was OK for the gentile Christians to just follow what Jesus had taught, but they were determined themselves to hang on to the ceremonies of the past, which were fulfilled and done away with at the cross.

They did not want to have that wall between them and the gentiles broken down, even though Jesus made it plain it was to be broken down. You see the way they wanted to do things, it would forever divide the church into two parts-Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians and this God did not want at all.

How mean and selfish they were to poor Paul! He was a poor man and supported his own self and his ministry by working long and hard as a tent maker. He had just come back from a long missionary trip. The church at Jerusalem should have taken up an offering to help him and care for him.

Instead they wanted him to pay an expensive fee for a bunch of sacrifices they had no business even making! What was Paul to do? He knew that this was unfair and wrong of the apostles and leaders of the Jerusalem church. He knew these ceremonies should be done away with. But he always tried if at all possible to please his fellow believers. So he decided to go along with it.

Thought – The early church was not all being directed by the ones in Jerusalem as some people try today to tell us. The leaders at Jerusalem were wrong in what they said to Paul.

Friday

Text: Acts 21:27, 28 “And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law,

and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.”

A week went past. Paul was now in the inner temple to carry out what the church leaders had told him to do. He was risking his life to go into this place and the leaders knew it, but they didn't care as long as they could get him to do what they wanted. He was talking to one of the priests to make arrangements for the expensive sacrifices when all at once someone recognized him.

Right away this person began to yell, and soon all the people began to yell; it was like Dianna of the Ephesians all over again; but these were Jews! They were not content to just yell; they were determined to kill Paul.

Grabbing and snatching at Paul, they dragged him out of the inner temple and the doors were slammed shut. They would have stoned him or tore him to pieces at once, but the Roman Captain heard about the up-

roar and came with his men and rescued Paul.

They had to carry him to keep the people from tearing him apart. As they were heading up the stairs into the Roman castle near the temple and the people were all yelling for Paul's blood, Paul asked if he might speak to the crowd.

He was allowed and as he waved his hand, a hush fell over the angry mob. Carefully he told his story about how he had been converted to Jesus. The people listened closely but when he made the statement that God had sent him to teach the Gentiles- they all went mad! They yelled and hollered and tore their clothes off and threw dust in the air.

The Roman Captain ordered Paul carried away into the castle.

Thought - The church at Jerusalem did not appreciate the work of the faithful apostle Paul, and now God allowed him to be taken from them. = ^ .. ^ =

Weekly Bible Lesson #12: “40 HUNGRY MEN!”

MEMORY VERSE: “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” John 15:20

Sunday

Text: Acts 22:24, 25 “The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?”

In our last lesson we left Paul being carried into the Roman castle by the soldiers and the mob of Jews from the temple screaming for him to be killed. It is interesting that the Christian Church leaders who had advised Paul to do what had caused this to

happen-were nowhere to be found!

The Roman Captain was sure Paul must be a wicked criminal for the people to be so upset with him, so he gave orders for him to be beaten until he told what he was guilty of, and tied his hands to lead him away. He did not understand what Paul had said to the people as he had spoken in Hebrew.

Paul turned and asked the soldier who was tying him and preparing to beat him, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” The soldier went right away to the Captain and told him to be careful because Paul was a Roman citizen.

He came quickly and asked Paul if it were so, saying that he himself had paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen, but Paul

told him he was born a Roman citizen. The Captain was worried because he could get in trouble for having tied Paul without his being properly charged. He cancelled his orders and untied Paul.

Thought - God sometimes uses worldly powers to protect his faithful ones from their enemies.

Monday

Text: Acts 23:1-3 “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?”

The next day he brought Paul, protected by soldiers, and told the Jews with the high priest to come and say what they had against Paul. Paul stood before them calm and firm. The peace of Christ, ruling in his heart, showed on his face.

He spoke with confidence and innocence: “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”

This made the leaders very angry, because if Paul was innocent, they were guilty! So the High Priest ordered him to be struck on the mouth. In doing this, the High Priest and the one who struck Paul were breaking the law themselves.

Paul answered with a prophecy, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall, for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?”

It was not anger that caused Paul to say this; it was like Jesus had warned those who judged Him that they would be judged themselves. Paul’s prophecy was fulfilled to this wicked Priest; he was murdered by assassins in the Jewish war.

Paul knew that these men were not going to give him a fair trial. They did not care about truth; they just wanted him dead!

He looked around the room at the angry faces. He knew many of them and perhaps even went to school with some of them. He saw that there were both Pharisees and Sadducees there.

Now Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection or angels, or much of anything-except money and power. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection and angels and so on. So Paul spoke up and said, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.”

Right away the Pharisees began to fight with the Sadducees and there was a terrible fuss. The Pharisees began to stick up for Paul, saying, “We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”

They began to pull Paul one way and the Sadducees to pull him another! In the row the Captain was afraid that Paul was going to be pulled to pieces and so he ordered him taken back to the safety of the castle.

Thought – Wicked men only agree with each other to fight against truth.

Tuesday

Text: Acts 23:11 “And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”

As Paul lay that night in the Roman barracks hearing the curses and foul jokes of the rough soldiers, he was a bit discouraged.

He had wanted so much to help his Jewish people to see the truth about Jesus and it had not happened, instead they wanted to kill him with their bare hands. He felt bad that God had been so dishonored by those who claimed to be the ‘True Church’. Even the rough Romans would not carry on in the

disgraceful way those Jewish leaders had done.

He had wanted so much to have unity with the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem who were suspicious of him and so he had agreed to do what they wanted, even though he knew it was neither right nor wise. Now he was alone and a prisoner and there was none of the Christians that even visited him or tried to help him.

The thoughts came through his mind, Maybe he had failed, Maybe his work was now ended and he had so much more he wanted to do, Maybe he had let the Lord Jesus down.

As he thought about this, the Lord Jesus appeared to him in a vision and told him lovingly, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

Paul was encouraged but also wondered. For a long time he had planned to go to Rome, but now it would be very different. What would he be able to do in Rome as a prisoner chained among criminals. But he trusted Jesus and so he fell asleep.

Thought – It is not only when we are successful and everyone is praising us that Jesus loves us, He is with us also when we are left alone and it seems we are a failure.

Wednesday

Text: Acts 23:12-15 "And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more

perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him."

The next day Paul had a visitor; it was his nephew, the son of his sister. Paul was very happy to see this young man. But not only was he there to visit Paul, he had information that would save Paul's life!

Somehow he had found out that forty of the Jewish men had got together in a group, to plan how to kill Paul. They made a solemn promise that they would not eat or drink until they had killed the apostle.

Then these forty went to the chief Priest and the rulers and told them about the promise and asked them to send for Paul as if they wanted to ask him a few questions. Of course the Roman Captain would not mind bringing Paul to them for this reason. After all, he wanted to get to the bottom of this problem and if the Jewish leaders were willing to talk, then maybe it could be solved.

These forty men were going to be hidden somewhere, and rush out and murder Paul before he even got to the council. The High priest and his gang were pleased with the idea. Instead of telling these men that this was a wicked idea and to forget about it, they agreed to do it.

The next day the plot would have been carried into effect, had not God by his providence interposed to save the life of his servant. When Paul heard the story from his young nephew, he called one of the officers and asked him to take the boy to the Captain, Claudius Lysias and let him tell his story to him.

So it was done and the Captain was very anxious to protect Paul, who was a Roman citizen, from such a wicked plot.

Thought – When Peter had been made a prisoner and condemned to death; the Christian brethren had offered earnest prayer to God day and night for his deliverance. But no such interest was manifested in behalf of Paul. They did not like Paul's work, as they still wanted to hang on to their Jewish customs and ceremonies. It was the Christian

elders whose counsel had brought him into this dangerous position, but they made no effort to help him. But Jesus used the watchful sympathy of a relative, to save Paul from a violent death.

Thursday

Text: Acts 23:23,24 “And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.”

Captain Claudius Lysias told the boy not to let on to anyone that he had told the Captain about the plot. Then right away he called for officers and told them to get ready a small army and horses to leave in the dark of the night, to carry Paul safely away to Caesarea to the care of Felix the Governor.

It was important that no time be lost. If something happened to Paul, the Captain might be blamed! At nine in the evening, the body of soldiers, with Paul in the midst, marched out of the fortress, and through the dark and silent streets of the city, and at a rapid pace traveled toward Caesarea. At Antipatris, thirty-five miles from Jerusalem, the travelers halted. There was now little danger of attack, and in the morning the four hundred foot-soldiers were sent back to Jerusalem, while the horsemen continued their journey.

It was only twenty-five miles from Antipatris to Caesarea, and it was in the broad light of day that Paul, with the seventy horsemen, entered the city. How different were these soldiers from the humble Christian company that had gone with him on the journey from Caesarea only a few days before! But Philip, and others of his Christian associates, recognized Paul and their hearts were shocked and saddened that their fears had come true.

The Captain sent a letter with Paul and it was read by Felix when the band arrived with their weary prisoner.

“Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them; then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council; whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.”

Thought – Even though things looked bad in the life of Paul, God was still going to use him for a mighty work. Most of Paul’s writings were done as a prisoner and how blessed we are to have those books in our Bible today.

Friday

Text: Acts 23:34, 35 “And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s judgment hall.”

So Paul was kept in a place where the Jews could not carry out their plan to kill him. So what about these forty men with their ‘sacred promise’ that they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul?

Well either they gave in and broke their promise, or they would soon be very skinny men and would die. So they were made to look foolish before all, and really it was very foolish to have ever made such a wicked vow.

What about the Christian church in Jerusalem? We are told if they would have

given up their evil feelings of bitterness toward the Paul, and accepted him as one specially called of God to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, the Lord would have spared him to them to still labor for the salvation of souls. Jesus knew what would be the result of the envy and jealousy the elders had toward Paul. Jesus did not want that Paul's work would end so soon and in such a way; but He did not work a miracle to stop the results of the foolish and selfish plan they had told Paul to follow. By their actions they had

lost a great blessing.

Paul's only desire in life was to spread the truth about Jesus Christ and to help the Christian Church to grow and obey Jesus in all things. He felt disappointed to be now a prisoner because of the bad counsel of his 'bretheren' but Jesus allowed him to be able to get the chance to speak face to face with rulers and kings and he kept right on preaching the Gospel every chance he got!

Thought - Wrong never becomes right just by church leaders saying it or advising it!
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Weekly Bible Lesson #13: "PAUL AND NERO"

MEMORY VERSE: "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts 26:27, 28

Sunday

Text: Acts 24:25-27 "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound."

We have spent a quarter looking at the stories of the early church and the apostle Paul. There are many more adventures that Paul had after he was a prisoner. We will look at a few of them very briefly in our last lesson.

After Paul had been taken to Felix, he was there for two years. Often Felix would have Paul come and preach to him, but although he felt afraid of the judgment that Paul told about, he would not give his heart to Jesus but kept saying he would do it later when it

was 'more convenient'. That time never came and Felix remained lost.

One of the reasons Felix wanted to listen to Paul often was that he hoped that Paul would arrange for a large amount of money to be paid to bribe him to let him go. But Paul would not do this. For two long years Paul remained there in Herod's Judgment Hall.

Then another man came in to the place of Felix, his name was Festus. But if Paul hoped for any justice from him he was soon disappointed!

Thought - It was very hard for Paul, who had been very active and used to freedom, to remain a prisoner, but he had a clean conscience that he had done nothing worthy of punishment.

Monday

Text: Acts 25:9-12 "But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews

○ have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.”

When Festus came in to rule, the Jews, who had not stopped their plans to kill Paul, showed up at his court and asked for Paul to come to Jerusalem to be tried. Festus was willing to do this. Of course they would have killed him long before he got there.

Paul knew this and so was forced to claim the right of a Roman citizen to be tried by Caesar to protect himself. Festus wanted to please the Jews and did not care about Paul. So once again, their plots of the Jewish rulers were spoiled.

○ Soon after this, the King, Herod Agrippa came to visit Festus and for entertainment they brought Paul out to tell his story. As you see in our memory verse, Paul’s earnest preaching almost caused Agrippa to decide to be a Christian. But like Felix, he put off the chance and was a lost man.

We don’t have space to tell of all the adventures of Paul on his way to Rome, but finally he was there and for the first two years he was allowed to be in his own rented house, but of course, always chained to a soldier. Still he preached to all who came to hear and many people believed and gave their hearts to Jesus.

Mostly it was the poorer people that chose to follow Jesus, too often the rich let their pleasures and worldly pomp and power to be more important to them than eternal life.

○ **Thought** – Even in the Palace of Caesar, many servants and slaves became Christians. If you think it is hard for you to be faithful where you are, imagine what these people had to put up with to serve Jesus in

such a den of wickedness!

Tuesday

Text: 2 Timothy 4:16, 17 “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”

The day finally came for Paul to appear before the Caesar he had appealed to. This was the evil Nero, whose name still is spoken with a shudder by all who know of his wickedness.

It sure didn’t look like there was much hope for Paul to have justice from this man. It was allowed that friends could come and plead for a prisoner, but all of Paul’s friends were afraid and no one came to stand with him. Like his Master, Jesus, Paul stood alone.

“Paul before Nero—how striking the contrast! The very height of earthly power, authority, and wealth, as well as the lowest depths of crime and iniquity, had been reached by the haughty monarch before whom the man of God answered for his faith. In his power and greatness, Nero stood unrivaled. There were none to question his authority, none to resist his will. The kings of the earth laid their crowns at his feet. The most powerful armies marched at his command. The ensigns of his navies upon the seas betokened victory. His statue was set up in the halls of justice, and the decrees of senators and the decisions of judges were but the echo of his will. Millions of subjects bowed in obedience to his mandates.

“The name of Nero made the world tremble. To incur his displeasure was to lose property, liberty, and life. His frown was more to be dreaded than the pestilence. Yet while surrounded by all the outward semblance of

earthly pomp and greatness, adored and revered as a god in human form, he possessed the heart of a demon.

“Paul the aged prisoner, without money, without friends, without counsel, had been brought forth from a loathsome dungeon to be tried for his life. He had lived a life of poverty, self-denial, and suffering. With a sensitive nature that thirsted for love and sympathy, he had braved lies, reproach, hatred, and abuse; shrinking with nervous dread from pain and peril, he had fearlessly endured both.

“He had been, like his Master, a homeless wanderer upon the earth; he had lived and suffered for the truth’s sake, seeking to relieve the burdens of humanity, and to show in his life the life of Christ. How could the capricious, passionate, licentious tyrant, who had no idea of the value of a self-denying, virtuous, noble life, be expected to understand or appreciate the character and motives of this son of God?

Thought – The Bible doesn’t tell us much about this trial but we have a wonderful book written by the Messenger to God’s people in the Last Days, called, “Sketches from the Life of Paul”. If you can get a copy of this book and read it you will enjoy it very much.

Wednesday

Text: Romans 1:16 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Paul and Nero face to face! —the young monarch bearing upon his sin-stamped face the shameful record of the passions that reigned within; the aged prisoner’s calm and kindly face telling of a heart at peace with God and man.

Face to face for all to see, stood clear examples of what Christianity made of a man

and what Paganism made. Selfishness faces selflessness; the simplicity of self-denying endurance, ready to give up life itself, if need be, for the good of others, and the luxury of all-absorbing selfishness, that counts nothing too valuable to sacrifice for a momentary gratification. Here were two religions, —Christianity and paganism; two theories of life,— two spiritual powers,—the ambassador of Christ and the slave of Satan.

How much this world is under the rule of the prince of darkness was shown by these two men. The wretch who had even murdered his own mother, was robed in purple, and seated upon the throne, while the purest and noblest of men stood before the judgment-seat, despised, hated, and chained.

In the vast hall, which was the place of trial, was an eager, restless crowd that surged and pressed to the front to see and hear all that should take place. Among those gathered there were the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the proud and the humble. Yet none of them knew about Jesus and the way of life and salvation.

The Jews were there to claim against the prisoner the old charges of sedition and heresy. Paul was calm; no shade of fear or anger disturbed the peaceful serenity on his face. The people and even the judges beheld him with surprise. They had been present at many trials, and had looked upon many a criminal; but never had they seen a man wear such a look of holy calmness as did the prisoner before them. When he was permitted to speak, all listened with eager interest to his words.

To men’s eyes it looked like Paul was on trial for his life, but in the sight of God, Nero was on trial for his soul!

Thought – Nero’s mother had spoiled him as a child and allowed him to have his own way and do whatever he wanted. She is guilty of creating one of the world’s cruelest monsters!

Thursday

Text: 2 Timothy 4:6-8 “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 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.”

Once more Paul could tell the Gospel Story! He could hold high the banner of the cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit helped him on that day to urge home upon their hearts the truths of the gospel. The wisdom of God was revealed through his servant. As Paul stands before the emperor of the world, his words strike a chord which vibrates in the hearts of even the most hardened, and which thrills in unison with the mission of angels.

Truth, clear and convincing, overthrows error and refutes falsehood. Never before had that company listened to words like these. Light was shining into darkened minds that would gladly follow the guidance of its precious rays.

Nero did not know it, but he was having his last chance, given him by a loving Saviour, to repent and be saved. Yes, even Nero's sins could be cleansed away by the blood of Jesus!

Never had Nero heard the truth as he heard it that day. Never had the enormous guilt of his own life been shown to him as it was that day. The light of Heaven had pierced the sin-polluted chambers of his soul. He quaked with terror at the thought of a tribunal before which he, the ruler of the world, should be tried, and where his deeds should meet a just reward.

He was afraid of the apostle's God, and he dared not pass sentence upon Paul, who was not guilty. A sense of awe for a time restrained his bloodthirsty spirit. For a moment, Heaven had been opened before him

by the words of Paul, and its peace and purity had appeared desirable. That moment the invitation of mercy was extended even to the guilty and hardened Nero; but only for a moment.

The command was issued for Paul to be taken back to his dungeon; and as the door closed upon the messenger of God, so the door of repentance was forever closed against the emperor of Rome. Not another ray of light was ever to penetrate the dense darkness that enveloped him. The Holy Spirit left him forever!

Thought – The truths spoken on that occasion would never die. Though spoken by a feeble and aged prisoner, they would shake the nations. They had a power that would live through all time, influencing the hearts of men when the lips that uttered them should be silent in a martyr's grave.

Friday

Text: Jeremiah 23:19 “Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.”

Paul was set free but only for a short time. Soon he was arrested again and this time kept in a dismal dungeon. There he wrote his last letters and when he stood before Nero again, was sentenced to death.

It was not long after this that Nero sailed to Greece, where he acted so badly that everyone was disgusted. He returned to Rome with great pomp, and in his golden palace, surrounded by the most wicked of his courtiers, he did things too horrible to talk about. In the midst of their revelry, a noise of a tumult in the streets was heard, and a messenger was sent to learn the cause. He hurried back with the news that Galba, at the head of an avenging army, was marching rapidly upon Rome, that rebellion had already broken out in the city, and the streets were filled with an enraged mob threatening death to the emperor and all his supporters, and coming toward the palace.

The wretched tyrant, as cowardly as he was cruel, was scared like Belshazzar of old. He sprang from the table at which he had been feasting and drinking, overturning it in his blind terror, and dashing the most costly dishes to pieces.

Like a crazy man, he rushed here and there, beating his forehead, and crying, "I am lost! I am lost!" He had not, like the faithful Paul, a powerful, God to rely upon in his hour of peril. He knew that if taken prisoner he would be subjected to insult and torture, and he wanted to kill himself with as little pain as possible.

He called for poison, but when it was brought, he dared not take it; he called for a sword, but after examining its sharp edge, he laid it also aside. Then, disguised in woman's clothing, he rushed from his palace, and fled through the dark, narrow streets to the river; but as he looked into its murky depths, his courage again failed. One of the few companions, who had followed him, suggested that he escape to the country a few miles distant, where he might find safety. Concealing his face, he leaped upon a horse, and succeeded in making his escape.

While the emperor was running for his life, the Roman senate, passed a decree declaring Nero to be the enemy of his country,

and condemning him to death. The news of this decision was brought to Nero by one of his companions, the monarch asked what manner of death he was to suffer, and was told that he was to be stripped naked, to be fastened by his head in the pillory, and to be scourged to death.

The monster who had delighted to inflict upon Christians the most inhuman torture, shrank with horror at the mere thought of being tortured himself. He seized a dagger, and again tried to plunge it into his heart; but the prick of it was all that he could endure. As he threw it aside with a groan of despair, horsemen were heard approaching. His retreat was discovered; a few moments, and he would be in the power of his enemies. Terrified alike at the thought of torture and suicide, he still hesitated, and at last had to let a slave help his trembling hand force a dagger into his throat. Thus perished the tyrant Nero, at the early age of thirty-two.

Thought - How much better the dying words of Paul: 2 Timothy 4:6-8 "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 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." = ^ .. ^ =