

# THE ACTS OF JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

## Acts 3-7

### Introduction

The Lord Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried. He rose from the dead and has ascended to the right hand of God the Father almighty. He rules and reigns over all things for the benefit of his Church. Luke begins his second book with the ascension of the Lord (Acts 1) and his fulfilled promise to send the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2). We continue with a look at the victories of our Lord Jesus Christ through the proclamation of his grace. In Acts 3-7, the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus Christ continues to pour out his Holy Spirit on the Church so they boldly proclaim the Word of God. The Word of the Lord grows as the sword of the Spirit battles against forces of evil. For two years, the Church saw a time of great protection from the hand of God. It was *not* yet time for the kingdom to expand through persecution against the church. That time would soon come.

### In Jerusalem



*This picture is a 1:50 scale diorama model of the city of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus and his apostles. It is from the Holyland Model of Jerusalem which is now located at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. You can view more pictures at [www.madainproject.com](http://www.madainproject.com).*

### **Acts 3:1-4:31** *Healing and preaching at the temple result in Peter and John witnessing before the Sanhedrin.*

According to God's timing and direction, Peter and John healed a man who was crippled from birth. Since it was the time of the evening sacrifice at 3:00 p.m., many people witnessed this miracle, and it caused quite the stir. Peter used this miracle to proclaim the message of Jesus.

1. A mark of a good sermon is to proclaim law and gospel. Skim Peter's sermon in Acts 3:12-26. Identify specific law and specific gospel in Peter's sermon.

Specific law	Specific gospel

2. Peter and John were interrupted in the middle of their sermon and hauled off to jail. Even though their mouths were silenced, the Word was not. Compare the result of the Spirit's work here (4:4) to the Day of Pentecost (2:41).
3. When put on trial before the Sanhedrin, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed a beautiful message of law and gospel to them as well. Explain the significance of verse 12...
  - a. For the people who were listening to Peter speak.
  - b. For you personally.
  - c. For the world.
4. The religious leaders could not deny the miracle, but they did deny the power behind the miracle. There wasn't too much they could do at this time, so they threatened Peter and John and then let them go. Even though preaching the gospel was now an illegal activity, how did the disciples respond to the threats and intimidation that were directed at them (Acts 4:19,20,23-31)?
5. How do you respond?

***Acts 4:32-6:7 Life in the Jerusalem church flourished under God's protection and power.***

6. Nobody forced the believers to give their offerings to the Lord and his people. What was at the heart of this generous giving (4:33)?
7. Why is that important for us to remember in our congregation?
8. In Acts 5, we witness an event where Satan was at work among people in the church. Why was what Ananias and Sapphira did so awful?
9. Discuss with a partner or with the people at your table:
  - a. What particular temptations might we run into as we manage our possessions?
  - b. What temptations do we grapple with as we bring our offerings to the Lord?
  - c. What sins are we to avoid as we give gifts to God?

10. In Acts 5:14, Luke no longer recounts a specific number of people coming to faith. In his commentary, Lenski has an interesting statement: *"It has been conservatively estimated that at this time the total number of disciples was between twenty and twenty-five thousand."* He doesn't give the data on which the estimate is based, nor can I enlighten you. At any rate, Luke stops counting.

We have made some prayerful plans and goals that in 2027 we will have 650 people worshipping every week at Emmanuel and 500 adults in Bible studies and connect groups. Describe to your neighbor your initial reaction to that vision of ministry.

How would that vision become a reality?

11. In Acts 5:17, the religious leaders were jealous of what was happening and zealous for what they believed to be the Lord's work. They arrested, not just Peter and John, but all the apostles. The Lord had other plans, sent an angel to set them free, and told them, "Go, stand in the temple courts, and tell the people the full message of this new life" (Acts 5:20). When the religious leaders realized what was going on, they brought the apostles before the Sanhedrin and questioned them. Peter and the apostles gave the same answer: You killed Jesus. God raised him from the dead. Repent. Receive God's forgiveness, which is for all, including you. Unfortunately, these words fell on deaf ears, and the members of the Sanhedrin wanted to kill them. Gamaliel gave some sound advice that put the threats aside. But notice the opposition is increasing. They don't just threaten the apostles; they flog them before releasing them.

What strange reaction did the apostles have as they left the Sanhedrin?

12. Chapter 6 is a transitional chapter as Luke begins to bring Saul of Tarsus into the storyline. Saul was a student under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He also stood and gave his approval of the stoning of Stephen (8:1). Therefore, Luke describes how the stoning of Stephen came about as he was chosen as a servant to serve the people in a special way. The apostles became aware of an issue in the church regarding the distribution of food. Service in the church is a high calling from God, no matter what the service is. The apostles had a particular calling to preach and teach. Therefore, they wanted to select individuals who were spiritual and practical men to oversee this particular service of the church. Stephen was singled out as a man who was blessed by the Lord in several ways. Not only was he filled with God's grace and power, but he did wonders and miraculous signs (6:8). When arguments arose, Stephen was a spokesman who spoke with wisdom and the Spirit (6:10). Unfortunately, there were some who broke the eighth commandment and accused Stephen of speaking words of blasphemy against Moses and against God (6:11). They wanted to stir up the Pharisees as they accused him of speaking against the law, and they wanted to stir up the Sadducees as they accused him of speaking against the temple.

How does Stephen show that he did not speak against the law of Moses or against the temple (7:2-53)?

13. Why did the religious leaders drag Stephen out and stone him?

14. As he is being stoned, how do Stephen's words echo Jesus' words?