

# References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

## NOVEMBER 5-11

### TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | JOHN 20-21

#### **"Do You Love Me More Than These?"**

**(John 21:1-3)** After this Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples, at the Sea of Ti-be'ri-as. He made the manifestation in this way. <sup>2</sup> There were together Simon Peter, Thomas (who was called the Twin), Na-than'-a-el from Ca'na of Gal'i-lee, the sons of Zeb'e-dee, and two others of his disciples. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them: "I am going fishing." They said to him: "We are coming with you." They went out and got aboard the boat, but during that night they caught nothing.

**(John 21:4-14)** However, just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Jesus said to them: "Children, you do not have anything to eat, do you?" They answered: "No!" <sup>6</sup> He said to them: "Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." So they cast it, but they were not able to haul it in because of the large number of fish. <sup>7</sup> Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter: "It is the Lord!" Now Simon Peter, on hearing that it was the Lord, put on his outer garment, for he was naked, and plunged into the sea. <sup>8</sup> But the other disciples came in the small boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not a long way from land, only about 300 feet away. <sup>9</sup> When they came ashore, they saw there a charcoal fire with fish lying on it and bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them: "Bring some of the fish you just now caught." <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went on board and hauled the net ashore full of big fish, 153 of them. And though there were so many, the net did not burst. <sup>12</sup> Jesus said to

them: "Come, have your breakfast." Not one of the disciples had the courage to ask him: "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after being raised up from the dead.

**(John 21:15-19)** When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter: "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He replied to him: "Yes, Lord, you know I have affection for you." He said to him: "Feed my lambs." <sup>16</sup> Again he said to him a second time: "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He replied: "Yes, Lord, you know I have affection for you." He said to him: "Shepherd my little sheep." <sup>17</sup> He said to him a third time: "Simon son of John, do you have affection for me?" Peter became grieved that he asked him the third time: "Do you have affection for me?" So he said to him: "Lord, you are aware of all things; you know that I have affection for you." Jesus said to him: "Feed my little sheep. <sup>18</sup> Most truly I say to you, when you were younger, you used to clothe yourself and walk about where you wanted. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another man will clothe you and carry you where you do not wish." <sup>19</sup> He said this to indicate by what sort of death he would glorify God. After he said this, he said to him: "Continue following me."

#### **nwtsty study notes on Joh 21:15, 17**

**Jesus said to Simon Peter:** This conversation between Jesus and Peter took place shortly after Peter had denied Jesus three times. Jesus asked three probing questions about Peter's feelings for him, to the point that "Peter became grieved." (Joh 21:17) John's account recorded at

Joh 21:15-17 uses two different Greek verbs: *a-ga-pa'o*, rendered **love**, and *phi-le'o*, rendered **have affection**. Twice Jesus asked Peter: "Do you love me?" Both times Peter earnestly affirmed that he had "affection" for Jesus. Finally, Jesus asked: "Do you have affection for me?" Again Peter asserted that he did. Each time Peter affirmed his love, Jesus emphasized that this love and affection should motivate Peter to **feed** and "shepherd" Jesus' disciples spiritually, here referred to as his **lambs**, or "little sheep." (Joh 21:16, 17; 1Pe 5:1-3) Jesus allowed Peter to confirm his love three times and then entrusted him with the responsibility to care for the sheep. In this way, Jesus dispelled any doubts that he had forgiven Peter for denying him three times.

**do you love me more than these?:** Grammatically, the phrase "more than these" can be understood in more than one way. Some scholars prefer such a meaning as "do you love me more than you love these other disciples?" or "do you love me more than these disciples love me?" However, the likely meaning is "do you love me more than these things?" that is, the fish they caught or the things connected with the fishing business. So the overall idea of the verse seems to be: 'Do you love me more than material things or pursuits? If so, feed my lambs.' The question would be appropriate in view of Peter's past. Although Peter was one of Jesus' first disciples (Joh 1:35-42), he did not immediately follow Jesus full-time. Rather, he returned to his fishing. Some months later, Jesus called Peter away from that substantial business to become a 'fisher of men.' (Mt 4:18-20; Lu 5:1-11) Again, shortly after Jesus' death, Peter announced that he was going fishing, and other apostles joined him. (Joh 21:2, 3) So it seems likely that Jesus is here driving home to Peter the need for making a decisive choice: Would he put first in his life a career in the fishing business, represented by the fish piled before them, or would he give priority to the

work of spiritually feeding Jesus' lambs, or followers?—Joh 21:4-8.

**a third time:** Peter had denied his Lord three times; Jesus now gave him the opportunity to affirm his feelings three times. As Peter did so, Jesus told him to show that love and affection by putting sacred service ahead of all else. Along with other responsible brothers, Peter would feed, strengthen, and shepherd Christ's flock of faithful followers. These ones were anointed but still needed to be fed spiritually. —Lu 22:32.

### Digging for Spiritual Gems

**(John 20:17)** Jesus said to her: "Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.'"

#### nwtsty study note on Joh 20:17

**Stop clinging to me:** The Greek verb *ha'ptomai* can mean either "to touch" or "to cling to; to hang on to." Some translations render Jesus' words: "Do not touch me." However, Jesus was not objecting to Mary Magdalene's merely touching him, since he did not object when other women who saw him after he was resurrected "took hold of his feet." (Mt 28:9) It appears that Mary Magdalene feared that Jesus was about to ascend to heaven. Moved by her strong desire to be with her Lord, she was holding fast to Jesus, not letting him go. To assure her that he was not yet leaving, Jesus instructed Mary to stop clinging to him and, instead, to go to his disciples and declare the news of his resurrection.

**(John 20:28)** In answer Thomas said to him: "My Lord and my God!"

#### nwtsty study note on Joh 20:28

**My Lord and my God!:** Lit., "The Lord of me and the God [*ho the-os*'] of me!" Some scholars view this expression as an exclamation of

astonishment spoken to Jesus but actually directed to God, his Father. Others claim that the original Greek requires that the words be viewed as being directed to Jesus. Even if this is so, the intent of the expression “my Lord and my God” is best understood in the context of the rest of the inspired Scriptures. Since the record shows that Jesus had previously sent his disciples the message, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God,” there is no reason to believe that Thomas thought that Jesus was the almighty God. (See study note on Joh 20:17.) Thomas had heard Jesus pray to his “Father,” calling him “the only true God.” (Joh 17:1-3) So Thomas may have addressed Jesus as “my God” for the following reasons: He viewed Jesus as being “a god” though not the almighty God. (See study note on Joh 1:1.) Or he may have addressed Jesus in a manner similar to the way that servants of God addressed angelic messengers of Jehovah, as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Thomas would have been familiar with accounts in which individuals, or at times the Bible writer of the account, responded to or spoke of an angelic messenger as though he were Jehovah God. (Compare Ge 16:7-11, 13; 18:1-5, 22-33; 32:24-30; Jg 6:11-15; 13:20-22.) Therefore, Thomas may have called Jesus “my God” in this sense, acknowledging Jesus as the representative and spokesman of the true God.

Some argue that the use of the Greek definite article before the words for “lord” and “god” indicates that these words refer to the almighty God. However, in this context the use of the article may simply reflect Greek grammar. Cases where a nominative noun with the definite article is used as vocative in Greek can be illustrated by a literal translation of such scriptures as Lu 12:32 (lit., “the little flock”) and Col 3:18-4:1 (lit., “the wives”; “the husbands”; “the children”; “the fathers”; “the slaves”; “the masters”). In a similar way, a literal translation of 1Pe 3:7 would read: “The husbands.” So the use

of the article here may not be of significance in determining what Thomas had in mind when he made his statement.

## Bible Reading

**(John 20:1-18)** On the first day of the week, Mary Mag'da-lene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and she saw that the stone had already been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and to the other disciple, for whom Jesus had affection, and she said to them: “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple set out for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> The two of them began running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> Stooping forward, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter also came, following him, and he went into the tomb. And he saw the linen cloths lying there. <sup>7</sup> The cloth that had been on his head was not lying with the other cloth bands but was rolled up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> For they did not yet understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the disciples went back to their homes. <sup>11</sup> Mary, however, kept standing outside near the tomb, weeping. While she was weeping, she stooped forward to look into the tomb, <sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup> And they said to her: “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them: “They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have laid him.” <sup>14</sup> After saying this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her: “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom

are you looking for?" She, thinking it was the gardener, said to him: "Sir, if you have carried him off, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her: "Mary!" On turning around, she said to him in Hebrew: "*Rab-bo'ni!*" (which means "Teacher!") <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her: "Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Mag'da-lene came and brought the news to the disciples: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what he had said to her.

## NOVEMBER 12-18

### TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | ACTS 1-3

#### "Holy Spirit Is Poured Out on the Christian Congregation"

**(Acts 2:1-8)** Now while the day of the Festival of Pentecost was in progress, they were all together at the same place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly there was a noise from heaven, just like that of a rushing, stiff breeze, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And tongues as if of fire became visible to them and were distributed, and one came to rest on each one of them, <sup>4</sup> and they all became filled with holy spirit and started to speak in different languages, just as the spirit enabled them to speak. <sup>5</sup> At that time devout Jews from every nation under heaven were staying in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> So when this sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> Indeed, they were utterly amazed and said: "See here, all these who are speaking are Gal-i-le'ans, are they not?" <sup>8</sup> How is it, then, that each one of us is hearing his own native language?

**(Acts 2:14)** But Peter stood up with the Eleven and spoke to them in a loud voice: "Men of

Ju-de'a and all you inhabitants of Jerusalem, let this be known to you and listen carefully to my words.

**(Acts 2:37, 38)** Now when they heard this, they were stabbed to the heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: "Men, brothers, what should we do?" <sup>38</sup> Peter said to them: "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the free gift of the holy spirit.

**(Acts 2:41)** So those who gladly accepted his word were baptized, and on that day about 3,000 people were added.

**(Acts 2:42-47)** And they continued devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles, to associating together, to the taking of meals, and to prayers. <sup>43</sup> Indeed, fear began to fall upon everyone, and many wonders and signs began to occur through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All those who became believers were together and had everything in common, <sup>45</sup> and they were selling their possessions and properties and distributing the proceeds to all, according to what each one needed. <sup>46</sup> And day after day they were in constant attendance in the temple with a united purpose, and they took their meals in different homes and shared their food with great rejoicing and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God and finding favor with all the people. At the same time Jehovah continued to add to them daily those being saved.

#### w86 12/1 29 ¶4-5, 7

#### Contributions That Make the Heart Happy

On the first day of the birth of the Christian congregation in the year 33 C.E., a 'sharing with one another, taking of meals, and prayers' were practiced by the 3,000 newly baptized converts. For what good reason? To make it possible for them to bolster their fledgling faith by 'contin-

uing to devote themselves to the teaching of the apostles.’—Acts 2:41, 42.

Jews and proselytes had come to Jerusalem planning to stay only for the period of the Pentecost Festival. But those that became Christians desired to remain longer and learn more to strengthen their new faith. This created an emergency food and housing problem. Some of the visitors did not have sufficient funds with them, while others had a surplus. So there was a temporary pooling and a distribution of material things to those in need.—Acts 2:43-47.

The sale of real estate and the common sharing of all things was strictly voluntary. No one was obligated to sell or donate; neither was this a promotion of poverty. The idea expressed is not that the richer members sold all their property and thus became poor. Rather, out of compassion for fellow believers under the circumstances at that time, they sold property and contributed all the proceeds in order to provide what was needed to advance Kingdom interests.—Compare 2 Corinthians 8:12-15.

### Digging for Spiritual Gems

**(Acts 3:15)** whereas you killed the Chief Agent of life. But God raised him up from the dead, of which fact we are witnesses.

#### it-2 61 ¶1

#### Jesus Christ

**“Chief Agent of life.”** As an expression of his Father’s undeserved kindness, Christ Jesus laid down his perfect human life in sacrifice. This made possible the union of Christ’s chosen followers with him in his heavenly reign and also made possible the arrangement for earthly subjects of his Kingdom rule. (Mt 6:10; Joh 3:16; Eph 1:7; Heb 2:5; see RANSOM.) He thereby became “the Chief Agent [“Prince,” *KJ*; *JB*] of life” for all mankind. (Ac 3:15) The Greek term here used means, basically, “chief leader,” a related word being applied to Moses (Ac 7:27, 35) as “ruler” in Israel.

**(Acts 3:19)** “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, so that seasons of refreshing may come from Jehovah himself

#### c/ 265 ¶14

#### A God Who Is “Ready to Forgive”

<sup>14</sup> Jehovah’s forgiveness is further described at Acts 3:19: “Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins *blotted out*.” That last phrase translates a Greek verb that can mean “to wipe out, . . . cancel or destroy.” According to some scholars, the image expressed is that of erasing handwriting. How was this possible? The ink commonly used in ancient times was made of a mixture that included carbon, gum, and water. Soon after working with such ink, a person could take a wet sponge and wipe the writing away. Therein is a beautiful picture of Jehovah’s mercy. When he forgives our sins, it is as though he takes a sponge and wipes them away.

### Bible Reading

**(Acts 2:1-21)** Now while the day of the Festival of Pentecost was in progress, they were all together at the same place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly there was a noise from heaven, just like that of a rushing, stiff breeze, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And tongues as if of fire became visible to them and were distributed, and one came to rest on each one of them, <sup>4</sup> and they all became filled with holy spirit and started to speak in different languages, just as the spirit enabled them to speak. <sup>5</sup> At that time devout Jews from every nation under heaven were staying in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> So when this sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> Indeed, they were utterly amazed and said: “See here, all these who are speaking are Gal-i-le’ans, are they not? <sup>8</sup> How is it, then, that each one of us is hearing his

own native language? <sup>9</sup> Par'thi-ans, Medes, and E'lam-ites, the inhabitants of Mes·o·po-ta'mi-a, Ju-de'a and Cap·pa-do'ci-a, Pon'tus and the province of Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phryg'i-a and Pam·phyl'i-a, Egypt and the regions of Lib'y-a near Cy-re'ne, sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cre'tans, and Arabi-ans—we hear them speaking in our languages about the magnificent things of God.” <sup>12</sup> Yes, they were all astonished and perplexed, saying to one another: “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup> However, others mocked them and said: “They are full of sweet wine.” <sup>14</sup> But Peter stood up with the Eleven and spoke to them in a loud voice: “Men of Ju-de'a and all you inhabitants of Jerusalem, let this be known to you and listen carefully to my words. <sup>15</sup> These people are, in fact, not drunk, as you suppose, for it is the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup> On the contrary, this is what was said through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> “And in the last days,” God says, “I will pour out some of my spirit on every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams, <sup>18</sup> and even on my male slaves and on my female slaves I will pour out some of my spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> And I will give wonders in heaven above and signs on earth below—blood and fire and clouds of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and illustrious day of Jehovah comes. <sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.”’

## NOVEMBER 19-25

### TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | ACTS 4-5

#### “They Kept Speaking God's Word With Boldness”

**(Acts 4:5-13)** The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes gathered together in Je-

rusalem, <sup>6</sup> along with An'nas the chief priest, Ca'ia·phas, John, Alexander, and all who were relatives of the chief priest. <sup>7</sup> They stood Peter and John in their midst and began to question them: “By what power or in whose name did you do this?” <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with holy spirit, said to them: “Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are being examined today about a good deed to a crippled man, and you want to know who made this man well, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that in the name of Jesus Christ the Naz-a-rene', whom you executed on a stake but whom God raised up from the dead, by means of him this man stands here healthy in front of you. <sup>11</sup> This is ‘the stone that was treated by you builders as of no account that has become the chief cornerstone.’ <sup>12</sup> Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved.” <sup>13</sup> Now when they saw the outspokenness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were astonished. And they began to realize that they had been with Jesus.

#### w08 9/1 15, box

#### From Spoken Words to Sacred Texts—Writing and the Early Christians

##### Were the Apostles Illiterate?

When the rulers and older men of Jerusalem “beheld the outspokenness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were men unlettered and ordinary, they got to wondering.” (Acts 4:13) Were the apostles really unlettered, or illiterate? Regarding this assertion, *The New Interpreter's Bible* comments: “These terms are probably not to be taken literally as though Peter [and John] were unschooled and could not write or read. They simply recognize the profound difference in social class between those sitting in judgment and the apostles.”

## Highlights From the Book of Acts

**4:13—Were Peter and John illiterate or uneducated?** No, they were not. They were called “unlettered and ordinary” because they did not attend rabbinic schools for religious training.

**(Acts 4:18-20)** With that they called them and ordered them not to say anything at all or to teach on the basis of the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But in reply Peter and John said to them: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves. <sup>20</sup> But as for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard.”

**(Acts 4:23-31)** After being released, they went to their own people and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. <sup>24</sup> On hearing this, they raised their voices with one accord to God and said: “Sovereign Lord, you are the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them, <sup>25</sup> and who said through holy spirit by the mouth of our forefather David, your servant: ‘Why did nations become agitated and peoples meditate on empty things? <sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers gathered together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one.’ <sup>27</sup> For truly both Herod and Pontius Pilate with men of the nations and with peoples of Israel were gathered together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, <sup>28</sup> to do what your hand and counsel had determined beforehand to occur. <sup>29</sup> And now, Jehovah, give attention to their threats, and grant to your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness, <sup>30</sup> while you stretch out your hand for healing and while signs and wonders occur through

the name of your holy servant Jesus.” <sup>31</sup> And when they had made supplication, the place where they were gathered together was shaken, and they were one and all filled with the holy spirit and were speaking the word of God with boldness.

### it-1 128 ¶3

#### Apostle

**Activity in Christian Congregation.** The outpouring of God’s spirit upon them at Pentecost greatly strengthened the apostles. The first five chapters of the Acts of Apostles testify to the great fearlessness of the apostles and their boldness in declaring the good news and the resurrection of Jesus in spite of jailing, beatings, and threats of death from their rulers. During those early days after Pentecost, the dynamic leadership of the apostles, under the power of the holy spirit, resulted in amazing expansion in the Christian congregation. (Ac 2:41; 4:4) Their ministry was at first concentrated in Jerusalem, then extended to Samaria, and in time, throughout the known world.—Ac 5:42; 6:7; 8:5-17, 25; 1:8.

### Digging for Spiritual Gems

**(Acts 4:11)** This is ‘the stone that was treated by you builders as of no account that has become the chief cornerstone.’

### it-1 514 ¶4

#### Cornerstone

Psalm 118:22 discloses that the stone rejected by the builders would become “the head of the corner” (Heb., *ro’sh pin-nah*). Jesus quoted and applied this prophecy to himself as “the chief cornerstone” (Gr., *ke-pha-le’ go-ni’as*, head of the corner). (Mt 21:42; Mr 12:10, 11; Lu 20:17) Just as the topmost stone of a building is conspicuous, so Jesus Christ is the crowning stone of the Christian congregation of anointed ones, which is likened to a spiritual temple. Peter also applied Psalm 118:22 to Christ, showing that he

was “the stone” rejected by men but chosen by God to become “the head of the corner.”—Ac 4: 8-12; see also 1Pe 2:4-7.

**(Acts 5:1)** However, a man named An-a-ni’as, together with his wife Sap-phi’ra, sold some property.

**w13 3/1 15 ¶4**

### **Peter and Ananias Lied—What Lesson Can We Learn?**

Ananias and his wife sell some property to get money to help the newly baptized ones. When Ananias brings the money to the apostles, he says it is the total amount from the sale. But it is not! He keeps some money for himself! God lets Peter know this, so Peter tells Ananias: “You have played false, not to men, but to God.” At that, Ananias falls down dead! About three hours later, his wife comes in. Not knowing what has happened to her husband, she also tells a lie and falls down dead.

### **Bible Reading**

**(Acts 5:27-42)** So they brought them and stood them before the San’he-drin. Then the high priest questioned them <sup>28</sup> and said: “We strictly ordered you not to keep teaching on the basis of this name, and yet look! you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you are determined to bring the blood of this man upon us.” <sup>29</sup> In answer Peter and the other apostles said: “We must obey God as ruler rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our forefathers raised up Jesus, whom you killed, hanging him on a stake. <sup>31</sup> God exalted this one as Chief Agent and Savior to his right hand, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses of these matters, and so is the holy spirit, which God has given to those obeying him as ruler.” <sup>33</sup> When they heard this, they were infuriated and wanted to do away with them. <sup>34</sup> But a Pharisee named Ga-ma’li-el rose in the San’-

he-drin; he was a Law teacher esteemed by all the people, and he gave the command to put the men outside for a little while. <sup>35</sup> Then he said to them: “Men of Israel, be careful as to what you intend to do about these men. <sup>36</sup> For instance, before these days Theu’das rose up, saying he himself was somebody, and a number of men, about 400, joined his party. But he was done away with, and all those who were following him were dispersed and came to nothing. <sup>37</sup> After him, Judas the Gal-i-le’an rose up in the days of the registration, and he drew followers after himself. That man also perished, and all those who were following him were scattered. <sup>38</sup> So under the present circumstances, I say to you, do not meddle with these men, but let them alone. For if this scheme or this work is from men, it will be overthrown; <sup>39</sup> but if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them. Otherwise, you may even be found fighting against God himself.” <sup>40</sup> At this they took his advice, and they summoned the apostles, flogged them, and ordered them to stop speaking on the basis of Jesus’ name, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> So they went out from before the San’he-drin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name. <sup>42</sup> And every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus.

## **NOVEMBER 26–DECEMBER 2**

### **TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | ACTS 6-8**

#### **“The New Christian Congregation Is Tested”**

**(Acts 6:1)** Now in those days when the disciples were increasing, the Greek-speaking Jews began complaining against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.



**bt 41 ¶17**

**“We Must Obey God as Ruler”**

<sup>17</sup> The young congregation now faced a subtle danger that threatened it from within. What was that? Many of the disciples being baptized were visitors to Jerusalem and wanted to learn more before returning home. Disciples living in Jerusalem willingly donated funds to meet the need for food and other supplies. (Acts 2:44-46; 4:34-37) At this time, a delicate situation arose. “In the daily distribution” of food, the Greek-speaking widows “were being overlooked.” (Acts 6:1) The Hebrew-speaking widows, however, were *not* being overlooked. The problem, then, apparently involved discrimination. Few issues have the potential to be more divisive than this one.

**(Acts 6:2-7)** So the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples together and said: “It is not right for us to leave the word of God to distribute food to tables. <sup>3</sup> So, brothers, select for yourselves seven reputable men from among you, full of spirit and wisdom, that we may appoint them over this necessary matter; <sup>4</sup> but we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” <sup>5</sup> What they said was pleasing to the whole multitude, and they selected Stephen, a man full of faith and holy spirit, as well as Philip, Proch’o-rus, Nica’nor, Ti’mon, Par’mē-nas, and Nic-o-la’us, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup> They brought them to the apostles, and after praying, they laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup> Consequently, the word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples kept multiplying very much in Jerusalem; and a large crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith.

**bt 42 ¶18**

**“We Must Obey God as Ruler”**

<sup>18</sup> The apostles, acting as the governing body of the expanding congregation, recognized that

it would not be wise for them “to leave the word of God to distribute food.” (Acts 6:2) To resolve matters, they directed the disciples to search for seven men “full of spirit and wisdom” whom the apostles could appoint over this “necessary business.” (Acts 6:3) Qualified men were needed because the work likely involved not just serving food but also handling money, purchasing supplies, and keeping careful records. The men chosen all had Greek names, which perhaps made them more acceptable to the offended widows. After giving prayerful consideration to the recommendation, the apostles appointed the seven men to care for this “necessary business.”

**(Acts 7:58–8:1)** After throwing him outside the city, they began stoning him. The witnesses laid down their outer garments at the feet of a young man called Saul. <sup>59</sup> As they were stoning Stephen, he made this appeal: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> Then, kneeling down, he cried out with a strong voice: “Jehovah, do not charge this sin against them.” And after saying this, he fell asleep in death.

**8** Saul, for his part, approved of his murder. On that day great persecution arose against the congregation that was in Jerusalem; all except the apostles were scattered throughout the regions of Ju-de’a and Sa-mar’i-a.

**Digging for Spiritual Gems**

**(Acts 6:15)** And as all those sitting in the San’he-drin stared at him, they saw that his face was like an angel’s face.

**bt 45 ¶2**

**Stephen—“Full of Graciousness and Power”**

<sup>2</sup> There is something remarkable about Stephen’s countenance at this moment. The judges gaze at him and see that his face is “as an angel’s face.” (Acts 6:15) Angels bear messages from Jehovah God and thus have reason to be fearless, serene, and peaceful. So it is with

Stephen—even those hate-filled judges can see that. How can he be so calm?

**(Acts 8:26-30)** However, Jehovah's angel spoke to Philip, saying: "Get up and go to the south to the road that runs down from Jerusalem to Gaz'a." (This is a desert road.)<sup>27</sup> With that he got up and went, and look! an E·thi-o·pi-an eunuch, a man who had authority under Can-da'ce, queen of the E·thi-o·pi-ans, and who was in charge of all her treasure. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship,<sup>28</sup> and he was returning and was sitting in his chariot, reading aloud the prophet Isaiah.<sup>29</sup> So the spirit said to Philip: "Go over and approach this chariot."<sup>30</sup> Philip ran alongside and heard him reading aloud Isaiah the prophet, and he said: "Do you actually know what you are reading?"

#### **bt 58 ¶16**

#### **Declaring "the Good News About Jesus"**

<sup>16</sup> Christians today are privileged to share in work like that done by Philip. Often, they are able to present the Kingdom message to those they meet in informal settings, such as when traveling. In many cases, it is apparent that their meeting up with an honesthearted individual is no coincidence. This is to be expected, for the Bible makes clear that the angels are directing the preaching work so that the message reaches "every nation and tribe and tongue and people." (Rev. 14:6) Angelic direction in the preaching work is precisely what Jesus foretold. In his illustration about the wheat and weeds, Jesus said that during the harvesttime—the conclusion of the system of things—"the reapers are angels." He added that these spirit creatures would "collect out from his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and persons who are doing lawlessness." (Matt. 13:37-41) At the same time, the angels would gather prospective heavenly heirs of the Kingdom—and later "a great crowd" of "other sheep"—whom Jehovah wants

to draw to his organization.—Rev. 7:9; John 6:44, 65; 10:16.

#### **Bible Reading**

**(Acts 6:1-15)** Now in those days when the disciples were increasing, the Greek-speaking Jews began complaining against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.<sup>2</sup> So the Twelve called the multitude of the disciples together and said: "It is not right for us to leave the word of God to distribute food to tables."<sup>3</sup> So, brothers, select for yourselves seven reputable men from among you, full of spirit and wisdom, that we may appoint them over this necessary matter;<sup>4</sup> but we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."<sup>5</sup> What they said was pleasing to the whole multitude, and they selected Stephen, a man full of faith and holy spirit, as well as Philip, Proch'o-rus, Ni-ca'nor, Ti'mon, Par'me-nas, and Nic-o-la'us, a proselyte of Antioch.<sup>6</sup> They brought them to the apostles, and after praying, they laid their hands on them.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples kept multiplying very much in Jerusalem; and a large crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith.<sup>8</sup> Now Stephen, full of divine favor and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.<sup>9</sup> But some men of the so-called Synagogue of the Freedmen came forward, along with some Cy-re'ni-ans and Alexandrians, and some from Ci-li'cia and Asia, to dispute with Stephen.<sup>10</sup> But they could not hold their own against the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking.<sup>11</sup> Then they secretly persuaded men to say: "We have heard him speaking blasphemous things against Moses and God."<sup>12</sup> And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and coming upon

him suddenly, they forcibly seized him and led him to the San'he·drin. <sup>13</sup> And they brought forward false witnesses, who said: "This man does not stop speaking things against this holy place and against the Law. <sup>14</sup> For instance, we have heard him say that this Jesus the Naz·a·rene' will throw down this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us." <sup>15</sup> And as all those sitting in the San'he·drin stared at him, they saw that his face was like an angel's face.