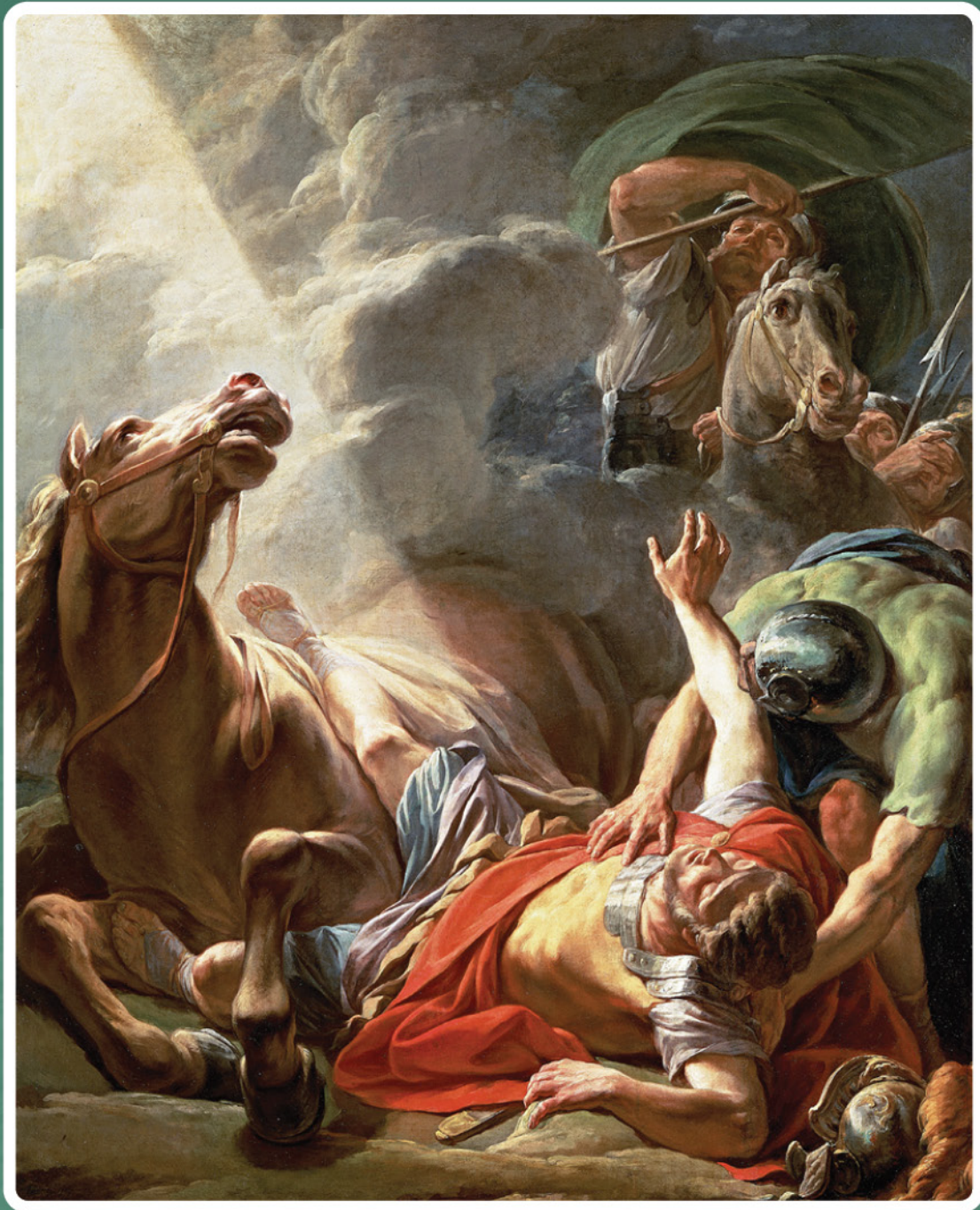


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# Bible History 5

FOR YOUNG CATHOLICS



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND THE EARLY CHURCH

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## Our Lord's Earthly Life



The Angel Gabriel announced Our Lord's birth to His Mother Mary.

### Jesus' Early Life

Jesus Christ lived on Earth for thirty-three years. The Angel **Gabriel** announced His birth to His Mother Mary. Despite her initial surprise at Gabriel's appearance, she joyfully accepted the news that she would be the Mother of the Son of God.

Yet the news of Jesus' birth did not make everyone happy. An evil king named **Herod** tried to kill the Baby Jesus. Herod was not able to kill Jesus, but he killed many other baby boys instead. These **Holy Innocents** would be the first Christian martyrs.

Under the protection of **Joseph**, Jesus' foster father, the **Holy Family** fled to Egypt away from the brutal King Herod. They remained there until an angel told Joseph that

Herod had died and it was safe to return to the Holy Land. The Holy Family moved to **Nazareth**, where Jesus grew up.

When Jesus was twelve, the Holy Family traveled to Jerusalem. As the time came to return home, Jesus became separated from Mary and Joseph. His parents did not realize what had happened right away. When they did, they were both very worried. They rushed back to Jerusalem, afraid that something had happened to Jesus. Thankfully, they found Him in the Temple, surrounded by many wise old men. Jesus was teaching the men about God! Jesus told His parents that He



Mary and Joseph found Jesus teaching.

was focused on His Father's business. But Jesus also realized that He had to obey His earthly parents, who loved him very much and wanted to make sure He was safe.

Jesus went back to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. As the years passed, He helped Mary, and worked in the carpenter shop with Joseph.

## Jesus' Public Life

When Jesus was 30 years old, His mother asked Him to help a newly married couple during their wedding feast at Cana. Jesus told Mary that the time to begin His public life had not yet come. But He loved Mary, so He helped the young married couple. He **performed His first miracle during the wedding feast at Cana** because He loved His mother.

For the next three years, Jesus continued to perform miracles, to teach the truth about God, and to call people to turn away from sin in order to receive eternal life in Heaven. He healed the blind, the lame, and those with terrible diseases. He raised a man named **Lazarus** from the dead. He called Twelve Apostles to help Him spread the Faith, and many other disciples followed Him as well. He founded the Catholic Church and instituted the seven sacraments.

To establish His Church, Jesus named **Peter** the first **pope**: the visible head of the Catholic Church. The day after Jesus miraculously multiplied a few loaves and fishes into food for several thousand people,



Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

He preached that He was “the living bread which came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51). He said that people needed to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood. He was speaking of the Holy Eucharist. However, the Jews found this new teaching difficult to accept. Many of His disciples left Him and no longer followed Him.

After those disciples had gone, Our Lord turned to His Apostles and asked if they too wanted to leave. Peter understood Christ’s new teaching no more than the others, but he answered: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of



Jesus gave Peter the “keys” to Heaven.

God” (Jn 6:68-69). Though Peter did not fully understand everything that Jesus taught, Peter had a deep faith. Because Jesus said it, Peter accepted and believed.

Some time later, Jesus and His Apostles traveled to the city of Caesarea Philippi. To test the Apostles’ faith, Jesus asked who the people said He was. The Apostles reported that the people had different ideas about who He was. Then Jesus asked, “But who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15) Peter proclaimed, “You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).

When Jesus heard this, He told Peter that it had been revealed to him, not by man, but by God the Father. Therefore, Peter would be the rock—the foundation—upon which He would build His Church, and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. Jesus gave Peter “the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Whatever laws Peter made on Earth would be confirmed as laws in Heaven.

To complete His earthly mission, Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose from the dead. He did this to save us from our sins and open the gates of Heaven for us. His Resurrection proved to His Apostles and the world that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

## Oral Exercises

1. Who tried to kill Baby Jesus?
2. Where did Jesus grow up?
3. Where did Jesus perform His first miracle?
4. Who did Jesus raise from the dead?
5. Who was the first pope?

## Philip the Deacon



John and Peter confirmed many Samaritans.

Following Stephen's martyrdom, Saul launched a massive persecution against the Christians in Jerusalem. In fact, he was so determined to root out the Christians in the city and destroy the Church that he began a house-to-house search. Whenever he found Christians, he dragged them out and handed them over to the authorities for imprisonment. As a result of Saul's campaign, many Christians fled the city into the nearby countryside of Judea and Samaria. Interestingly, the Apostles remained in Jerusalem, perhaps to see what would happen.



Among those who fled Jerusalem was **Philip**, one of the seven deacons. Philip went to the city of **Samaria**, the home of the Samaritan people and the ancient capital of the kingdom of northern Israel. In Samaria, Philip preached about Our Lord and performed miracles in His Name. Many Samaritans became Christians and were baptized.

While Philip was preaching in Samaria, a man named **Simon Magus** lived in the city. Simon Magus was a magician, but he did not simply do magic tricks. He fooled the people of Samaria into thinking that he had the power of God. Because he was a talented trickster, he had deceived the people for a long time.

However, when Simon heard Philip speak, he seemed genuinely interested in Philip's message. Like many Samaritans, Simon converted to Christianity and was baptized. In fact, "after being baptized he continued with Philip" (Acts 8:13).

When the Apostles in Jerusalem learned of Philip's success, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. Philip had baptized many people, but **administering**

**the Sacrament of Confirmation required an Apostle.** When Peter and John arrived, they confirmed many Samaritans.

The Sacrament of Confirmation bestowed miraculous signs upon those who received it. Simon Magus, seeing those signs, offered Peter money, hoping that he might gain what he saw as magic power. This power would restore the influence that Simon had lost when Philip and the other Apostles had arrived in Samaria.



Philip took the Ethiopian down into the water and baptized him.

Peter harshly rebuked Simon and urged him to repent and pray for forgiveness, lest he suffer terrible punishment. To his credit, Simon asked Peter to pray for him so that he might be forgiven.

The Bible relates nothing more about Simon Magus. Hopefully, Peter's prayers caused Simon to live a Christian life. However, the sin of **simony**, the buying and selling of sacred things or church offices, is named after Simon Magus.

Once Philip had accomplished his work in Samaria, Our Lord sent an angel who told him to travel south. So Philip set out. As he traveled, he met a high-ranking Ethiopian court official who had come to Jerusalem to worship. The man was sitting in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit inspired Philip to approach the Ethiopian. Philip ran over to the man and heard him

reading Isaiah. He asked the man if he understood what he was reading. The Ethiopian replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:31) Then he asked Philip to help him understand what he was reading.

In fact, the section from Isaiah that the Ethiopian was reading was about Jesus. Philip explained this to the man and told him more about Christ. As they traveled, Philip explained what it meant to be a Christian and to be baptized. Before long, they came to an oasis. The Ethiopian pointed to the water and asked if he could be baptized. Then he ordered his chariot to stop. Philip took the man down into the water and baptized him. When they came out of the water, God miraculously transported Philip away to continue his missionary work. The Ethiopian happily continued his journey home.

## Chapter Review

1. What is simony?
2. After whom is simony named?
3. Who baptized the Ethiopian court official?
4. What was the Ethiopian reading?

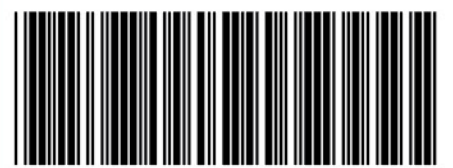


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P-RL05-17