

# STUDY NOTES

## *The Acts of the Apostles*

### A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

[WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS](http://WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS) - Chris Townley

The following content is based on the message "I am Procorus // The City that is all Cities" spoken on 03/20/16 by Chris Townley at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas.

To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>. Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material.

### THE SCRIPTURE - ACTS 6:1-7 and LUKE 19:35-44

*<sup>1</sup>But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food. <sup>2</sup>So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. <sup>3</sup>And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. <sup>4</sup> Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word." <sup>5</sup>Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). <sup>6</sup>These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup>So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.*

*<sup>35</sup>So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on. <sup>36</sup>As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. <sup>37</sup>When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.*

*<sup>38</sup>"Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"*

*<sup>39</sup>But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!" <sup>40</sup>He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!" <sup>41</sup>But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. <sup>42</sup>"How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. <sup>44</sup>They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you."*

### BACKGROUND

We left off, as we finished Acts 5 last week, with the apostles rejoicing in the gift of suffering for the name of Jesus. Because following Jesus means we rejoice a bit differently than the world around us. Apparently,

**You can only suffer for the sake of Jesus if you're doing something for the sake of Jesus.**

### MO' PEOPLE, MO' PROBLEMS

In Acts 6:1-7, we read that "the believers rapidly multiplied" which brought about some "rumblings of discontent." In order to address these problems the apostles appointed 7 people to address the needs of the community's widows.

On team #FoodBank we have Steve, Phil, Pro, Nic, Tim, Parm (I'm guessing he's from Italy), and Nico (Acts 6:5). But we only remember Stephen and how, as his story continues, his face shines like an angel, he goes toe-to-toe with the powers at work against the church, and the way the Spirit works through him as he performs miracles. We want to be like Stephen because the other six are quickly forgotten even though they were "full of the Spirit and wisdom." This isn't necessarily wrong, but the pursuit of being remembered and recognized has a tendency to define us.

The world wants us to think being Procorus or Parmesan or Nicanor means we're barely worth mentioning.

**We must not let the world corrupt the goodness of doing small things with great love for the glory of God!**

#### Questions:

- *Why do you think we got caught up in the pursuit of being recognized?*
- *What if we embraced being Procorus? What if we lived into something simple, something where we might be a forgotten name mentioned in a list, but were people full of the Spirit and wisdom? What would change in our day-to-day lives?*
- *What might be our "feed the widows" calling?*

### JERUSALEM: BELIEVERS INCREASING, JESUS WEeping

In Acts 6:7 we read, "So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too." On Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Jesus resurrects, Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. As the city comes into view, Jesus begins to weep. Jesus weeps over the city that is all cities and the people that are all people.

**Questions:**

- *Why is Jesus weeping?*
- *What is the “way of peace” Jesus talks about in Luke 19:42?*

**“HAIL HIM!” TO “NAIL HIM”**

As Jesus rides into the city of Jerusalem the crowd begins to praise and shout “Hosanna in the Highest!” However, some of this very crowd becomes a part of the crowd that calls for Jesus to be crucified just five days later. Perhaps you and I are more like the “crucify Him crowd” than we sometimes think. Perhaps you and I get our kingdoms confused, too. I’ve heard it said, “The Kingdom of God... is usually different than you think, but always better than you know.”

**Questions:**

- *When have we moved from “hail Him” to “nail Him” in our own lives?*
- *What does it mean for us (and all people) that Jesus looks down from the cross on those crucifying Him and calls for forgiveness?*

**PARTNER WITH THE APOSTLES (AND JESUS)**

*“So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.” (Acts 6:7)*

**Questions:**

- *How did the early church work together?*
- *What was happening that allowed “God’s message to continue to spread”?*