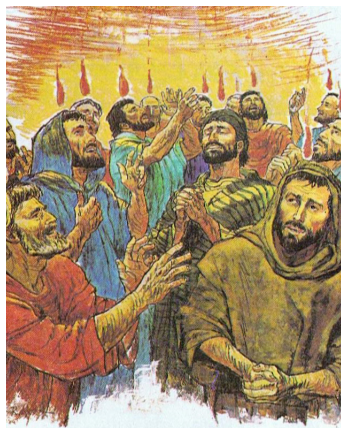


The Life Changer

Study Series

Acts of the Apostles

When you hear the word Christianity what comes to your mind? Perhaps you think of a news broadcast where a man with a long gray beard dressed in a flowing robe is making a press conference about securing property rights in Turkey. Maybe the huge silver cross hanging from his neck or his tall, official headgear comes to mind. Or maybe you saw a movie that had a priest dressed in black with a special white collar and he was hearing the confessions and forgiving the sins of a church member. Some people's thoughts go back in history to the murder and plunder of the Crusades. Many people think of more recent times when predominantly Christian nations invaded other countries or exploited their human and natural resources, extending their imperialism around the world. Sometimes pork-eating tourists from "Christian" countries come to Turkey and drink and smoke and are arrested for disorderly conduct.



Indeed all those things can be associated with the word "Christianity" because of past events and modern history. But what did the term "Christianity" mean in the beginning? After Jesus rose from the dead and went to heaven, what happened to His early followers? What did they do? Where did they go? How did the series of books that we call the New Testament come into being? Let's begin looking for the answers to some of these questions in the Bible.

Lesson 2

Q1. Where were the followers of Jesus first called Christians?
Read Acts 11:25, 26.

A. _____

If you are reading the "Kutsal Kitap" translation of the Scriptures, you see that the disciples of Christ were called "Mesihçiler." That is what the original Greek word means. Transliterated from the Greek, the word is spelled "Christianous" and is where the word "Christian" comes from. Notice that the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians in Antakya, Turkey! As we continue to study we will see that many of the events in the New Testament happened right here in our country.

In the beginning of Christianity a Christian was someone who followed Jesus. They probably got the name because they were always talking about Jesus. There were no crusades or imperialism among the first Christians. Jesus never commanded His disciples to go to war. He said that we should not seek to retaliate but to "turn the other cheek."¹ Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world and His disciples should not fight for it using force. ² Jesus did not look for a political solution to the world's problems. He knew that the problem was the sinfulness of the human heart and that the solution must begin there. Human laws and systems and violence can never change a selfish heart. They can only force an outward obedience to a prescribed set of rules. Christianity began with Jesus and His teaching about the kingdom of God. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom where the principles of love to God and love to man reign in the heart.

¹ See Matthew 5:39.

² See John 18:36.



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



Mehmet sat with his long lanky frame curled over the Bible on the desk in front of him. Although he had been retired from teaching history for a few years now, his love for learning and teaching had not died. He occasionally looked out over the top of his clear-framed reading glasses sitting prominently on the tip of his nose. He looked off into the distance as he contemplated the import of what he was reading. He tucked his thumb under his chin and worked the hairs of his whitening mustache back and forth with his finger.

He remembered the previous evening when he had gone to Fatma's house and they were studying the book of Acts together. Mehmet was particularly focused on the actions of Peter. Before Jesus was crucified, Peter had been so intimidated by the scorn of the maid of the high priest that he had denied Jesus. But in the book of Acts he was speaking boldly to the high priest declaring that salvation was only in Jesus Christ. What had made this great change in Peter? How did he go from being ashamed of Jesus to declaring him openly even at the risk of death?

Mehmet peered through his glasses once again and read the following text: "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."³ The difference seemed to be the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit was in the disciples they had new courage in their lives. Mehmet wanted to learn more about the disciples and the working of the Holy Spirit so he began to search the Bible. (To be Continued)

② Q2. During Jesus' ministry what authority did He give to His disciples? Read Mark 6:7-13.

A. _____

³ See Acts 4:31.

③ Q3. What task did Jesus give to His disciples? Read Matthew 28:19-20.

A. _____

③ Q4. After Jesus' resurrection what special gift did He give to the disciples? Read John 20:21-22.

A. _____

③ Q5. What further instruction did Jesus give to His disciples? Read Acts 1:8.

A. _____

Since Jesus had given the power of the Holy Spirit to His disciples previously in John 20:21-22, we understand that the Holy Spirit was to come upon the disciples again with even greater power. You remember that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. They preached the wonderful works of God in many languages as the Holy Spirit directed. Thousands were baptized and added to the number of believers in Jesus. Do you remember when the languages were confused at the tower of Babel? The nations were scattered because of the sinfulness of man. Then Abraham was called to be a blessing to all nations. In his lineage the Messiah Jesus came as the Savior of the world. The news of this salvation at Pentecost was then being spread to the whole world in their own languages. It was a reversal of the Babel scattering! God was gathering people to Himself as the Holy Spirit changed people's lives.

③ Q6. What events prompted the followers of Jesus to scatter throughout Judaea and Samaria preaching the word of God? Read Acts 7:51-8:4.

A. _____

The first followers of Jesus were persecuted heavily. One of them,

Stephen, was full of the Holy Spirit. He was stoned to death as he preached Jesus to the Sanhedrin which was the high legal court of the Jews. The stoning of Stephen marks the end of the probation period of 490 years for the Jews. The prophecy of Daniel 9:24 said: "Seventy weeks [one day = one year, Ezekiel 4:6] are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy." But instead of repenting, the Jewish people rejected and killed the Messiah. So now God would select a new group of people to carry the news of salvation to the world. Can you think who that might be? That is right, it was the followers of Jesus. Jesus said, "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you [Jewish people], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." ⁴

As Jesus predicted in Acts 1:8, the disciples would preach throughout Judaea and Samaria. But what about Jesus' prediction that they would preach to the ends of the earth? How would that be fulfilled?

⑦ Q7. What surprising choice did God make in choosing an apostle to the non-Jewish people of the world? Read Acts 9:1-22.

A. _____

God picked the greatest enemy of the church to be His apostle to the Gentiles! By revealing the truth to him, Saul became a believer in Jesus as the Messiah and Lord. His name would be changed to Paul and he would become the greatest communicator of truth of the early church. His travels would take him throughout Turkey and the Mediterranean planting congregations of believers wherever he went. There were no church buildings in those days; people met in homes to worship. But as the scriptures say, the Holy Spirit was powerful in building up the body of believers.

⁴ See Matthew 21:43.

In the passage in Acts 9 we read that Saul, later named Paul, would suffer greatly for his work. He would be stoned, whipped, beaten, thrown in jail and shipwrecked. As he traveled so much, he would often write letters to congregations, sometimes even from prison, giving hope, instruction and encouragement to believers who were suffering persecution.

Q8. What did the apostle Peter say regarding the letters of Paul?
Read 2 Peter 3:15, 16.

A. _____

Peter understood that Paul was writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and referred to Paul's letters as 'Scripture.' Many of the 'books' or 'booklets' of the New Testament are Paul's letters. Paul's letters include: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and most likely Hebrews.

What kind of issues were dealt with in these letters? The letters instructed believers about correct doctrine as different people arose introducing false ideas. Paul gave examples of the application of biblical principles to everyday life. He told what behaviors conform to the Christian life and which ones are unacceptable. There were answers to questions about the organization and administration of the body of believers. In some of the letters there was instruction given about future events such as the rise of the great apostasy and the second coming of Christ.

Other inspired prophets of the New Testament include James, Peter and Jude and of course the four gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The gospel writer Luke also wrote the book "Acts of the Apostles" where we see the spread of the early followers of Jesus. The apostle John, who was one of the original 12 disciples, wrote the gospel of John, 1, 2 and 3 John and the last book of the Bible, Revelation. These men wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. These inspired writings are part of the New Testament canon.

- Q9. What did Paul say about the spread of the gospel in his lifetime? Read Colossians 1:21-23.

A. _____

Paul indicated that the message went to the whole world. Historians have found records that the apostle Thomas went as far as India with the message of a crucified and risen Savior.

- Q10. What qualities characterized the early believers? Read Acts 13:52.

A. _____

The early believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and joy in spite of suffering for Jesus' sake.



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



Mehmet's mind was racing. "The book Acts of the Apostles should really be titled Acts of the Holy Spirit" he thought. "It was the Holy Spirit doing these things. It was the Holy Spirit in the believers that was changing their lives. The life changer is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ in the believer."

Mehmet was so happy and absorbed in the feelings that came over him that he didn't notice his wife Ayca as she came into the room. He looked up from his Bible smiling. He wasn't prepared for the scowl on his wife's face. With contemptuous words as cold as ice she said,

"So are you becoming a Christian now?"

"No, but even if I was, what is that to you?" snapped Mehmet.

Ayca turned and walked out of the room, slamming the door behind

her. Mehmet suddenly felt like his stomach was a ball of acid. Along with that, it was as if someone had reached into his chest and was squeezing his heart with two hands. He just hurt inside.

"What just happened?" he thought to himself. "There was such joy in my heart and in one moment it all turned to anger and aggressiveness. And didn't I just lie? Am I not really becoming a Christian? Certainly I am not becoming a Christian as Aycan understands Christianity. She doesn't know the real meaning of the word "Christian." In that sense, I didn't lie. All she has seen is the bad stuff throughout history and on television. And with my angry response, I didn't really give her something better to consider. I didn't give her the love she deserves. She hasn't read all these things. But I should know better. I didn't 'turn the other cheek' as Jesus taught." Mehmet's hands were trembling and he couldn't remain in his chair. He began to pace back and forth as he wrestled with his conscience.

"I feel like I denied my Lord just like Peter, like I betrayed everything I've read. Why didn't I just tell her about all the things that I was studying? I should have shared with her the happiness I feel. Am I scared? What is she going to do to me? She can't physically beat me up!" With that thought Mehmet chuckled to himself in a vain effort to cheer himself up. He continued his self-examination, "But I want so much for her to accept the things I'm learning. Maybe I am afraid of scorn like Peter. What is the solution?"

"When I started studying I didn't know what I was getting into. I didn't know it would lead to this. If I had, I would have invited her to study with me. But it's too late for that now. I can't tell her all that I know in one conversation. It would take months. I just blew my biggest opportunity! What can I do?" Mehmet looked out the window for what felt like hours. "I need to make a new start. In the Scriptures Jesus promises me a new start. He will forgive my sins, He will make up for my errors, and I can begin again. He forgave Peter; He will forgive me. One part of me wants to go in there and apologize

to Aycan and one part of me doesn't. It was really rude what she did. I don't deserve it. I'm a good husband. I provided for our family. Why was she so angry? What did I do to her?"

Mehmet turned from the window and looked at the books he had on his shelf. "Simple human psychology is all it is. She obviously feels threatened and attacked. But is she attacking me really or is she attacking the Christianity that she has seen practiced in the world? The latter probably. I want forgiveness from Jesus; why do I hesitate to forgive her? Why is this so difficult? Didn't Jesus say that a man's enemies will be the members of his own family? Didn't He say that there would be resistance to the truth? Aycan's reaction is normal I suppose. She can't possibly understand these things right now. I need to give her time. And I need to live my faith in front of her. I need to be different."

Mehmet ran his hands through his hair. They were still shaking. "What if I just went in there and boldly declared that I am a follower of Jesus? The apostle Paul was bold. Peter was bold. The other disciples were bold. Should I announce it from the house-top? What would happen to me? They might kill me that's what! Is this case like what Jesus said, 'Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves'? On the other hand it is one thing to not openly announce my faith to a crowd of potentially dangerous people and it is another thing if I can't even say it to my wife. Would I be denying Jesus if I don't tell everyone openly but just try to live like He lived in front of them? After all, the situation is a little different from when Paul and Peter were preaching. Christianity did not have a bad name then. It didn't have 2000 years of bloodshed and politics to go with it. I'm confused. I don't know what to do. I need something outside of myself. I need the Holy Spirit." Suddenly the nervous excitement left Mehmet and he felt like he had run 10 kilometers. No strength remained in his legs.

Mehmet knelt down to pray. "God, I don't know what exactly I should

do. I feel so bad. And yet I believe the Bible is true and that Jesus is the Savior of the world. But I need help. Give me the Holy Spirit. Tell me what to do! In Jesus' name I pray, Amen." Suddenly a strong feeling came over Mehmet. He rose slowly from off his knees to go into the next room to apologize for snapping at Aycan.

Jesus said that whosoever would deny Him as Christ, him He would also deny before the Father.⁵ That is a serious thought. He also said we should be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.⁶ We saw in the gospels where some people were afraid to declare Christ openly at first, but later became open followers of Jesus.

- Ⓚ Q11. If someone should ask Mehmet if he were a Christian, what should he say? Why?
- a) No, I am not a Christian. (I am denying Christ.)
 - b) No, I am not a Christian. (The word "Christian" as you know it is not what I am.)
 - c) No, I am not a Christian, because the word "Christian" now has a different meaning than it did originally. I am a follower of Jesus.
 - d) Yes, I am a Christian.
 - e) I am a follower of Jesus.
 - f) I am Christ's follower.
 - g) Other.

Readers should make a call to commitment through prayer.

Further reading:

Read through the Introduction sections of the various books of the New Testament. Note who wrote them, when and why.

⁵ See Matthew 10:33.

⁶ See Matthew 10:16.



EN ZENGİN MAĞARA ADAMI

Milyoner bir baba ile gösteri dünyasında çalışan bir annenin oğulları olan genç Doug Batchelor, paranın satın alabileceği her şeye sahipti. Mutluluk hariç her şeye. Uyuşturucu kullandı, okulda kavgalar çıkardı ve intihar düşüncesiyle hayaller kurdu. Kendinden tiksinen ve hayatın hiçbir amacı olmadığına inanan Doug, yaşayabileceği tüm eğlence ve heyecanları yaşamayı kafasına koydu.

Arayışı sona ermeden önce dağlarda bulunan bir mağara, evi oldu. Babasının sahip olduğu yata, jete ve havayolu firmasına rağmen, Doug kendini çöp tenekelerinde yiyecek ararken buldu.

Doug'un aradığı mutluluk sürekli kendisinden kaçıyor, ta ki bir "arayışçı" dostun mağarasında bıraktığı tozlu bir kitabı bulup okuyana dek. Bundan sonra olanlar ancak mucize olarak açıklanabilir.

BİNLERCESİ KIRILACAK

Franz Hasel, 40 yaşındaki bir pasifist, ön cephelerde köprüler kuran Hitler'in seçkin birliği 699. İstihkâm Bölüğüne atanmıştı. Dinî inancı üstleri tarafından pek hoş karşılanmamıştı. Kendisiyle "havuç yiyen" ve "İncil okuyan" diye alay edilmesine rağmen sonunda birliğinin saygısını kazanmıştı.

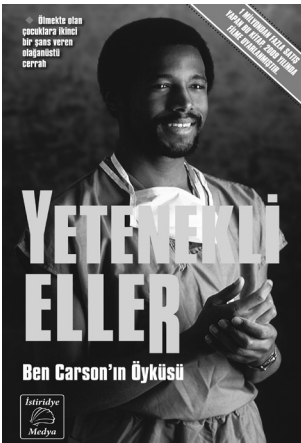
Çevrelerindeki binlerce insan savaşın dehşetine kurban giderken onlar meleklerin kanatları altındaydılar, hatta bazen gerçek anlamda. Bu, ne pahasına olursa olsun imanlı kalmayı seçen ve yüce Tanrı'nın gölgesinde sığınmak bulan çaresiz bir ailenin yürek parçalayan gerçek öyküsüdür.



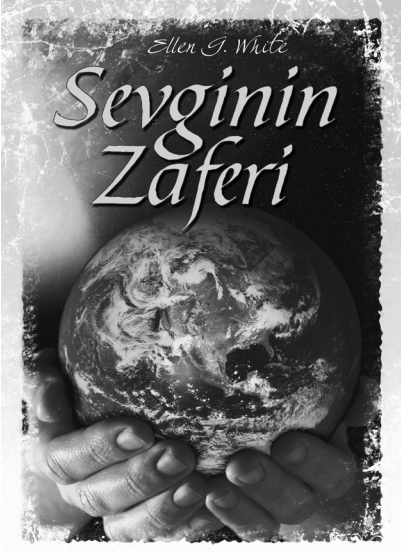
YETENEKLİ ELLER

Dr. Ben Carson, beyin cerrahisindeki umut olmayan yere umut getiren yeniliklerle tüm dünyada tanınmaktadır. Yetenekli Eller'de, Detroit'in kenar mahallelerindeki çocukluğundan başlayarak, otuz üç yaşında Johns Hopkins Sağlık Kurumları'nda pediatrik beyin cerrahisi şefliğine uzanan ilham verici macerası anlatılıyor. Sizi, sayısız hayat kurtardığı ameliyathaneye götüren Ben Carson, görünürde imkânsız olanı başarmaya çalışan herkese örnek oluyor.

Etkileyici vaka tarihçeleriyle dolu olan bu çoksatır kitap, Ben Carson'un zorlukların üstesinden gelme çabasının ve onu günümüzün en büyük hayat kurtarıcılarının biri yapan iman ile dehanın dramatik ve ayrıntılı öyküsünü anlatıyor.



SEVGİNİN ZAFERİ



Kötülüğün kaynağı, henüz çözülememiş bir sırdır. Neden kötülük var? Nereden geliyor? Kötülüğün bir sonu olacak mı? Bunlar yanıtlanması gereken çok önemli sorulardır.

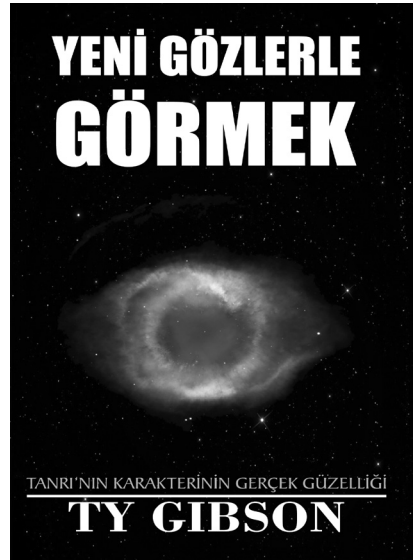
Büyük mücadele, görünen dünyayı, görünmeyen dünyadan ayıran perdeyi aralamakta ve bu dünyanın tüm sakinlerinin dahil olduğu doğüstü savaşı gözler önüne ermektedir.

Kitap, uğrunda savaştıkları şey için çok önemli olan iki tarafın, iyinin ve kötünün arasında geçen evrensel savaşın nasıl başladığından ve nasıl sonlandırılacağından bahsetmektedir. Geçmişten, şimdiki zamandan ve gelecekte söz etmekte, çok dokunaklı bir ricayla ve ciddi bir uyarıyla sona ermektedir. Bu kitabı okurken, sanki Tanrı ile röportaj yapıyormuş hissine kapılacaksınız.

Güzel olduğu kadar şok edici bir yolculuğa çıkmaya hazırlanın. Okuduktan sonra artık aynı kişi olmayacaksınız.

YENİ GÖZLERLE GÖRMEK

Pek çok şeyi görebilmek için, kişinin gözleri açık olmalıdır. Fakat Allah ile öyle değil. Gözlerinizi çok fazla açarsanız ya da çok fazla yakından bakarsanız, O'nu gördüğünüzü düşünürken aslında O'nu gözden kaçırabilirsiniz. Pek çoğumuz tam da bu hatayı yaparız. Allah'ı görmeyi umarak insanlara bakarız. Dinlere bakarız. Hatta aynaya bakarız. Kaçınılmaz olarak da hayal kırıklığına uğrarız, zira İlahî Kişi'nin daha güzel bir resmini ummuştuk. Sayısız insan Allah'tan dönmüştür, çünkü O'nu bir kişide ya da bir toplulukta gördüklerini sanmışlardır... ve açıkçası gördüklerinden hoşlanmamışlardır. Elinizde tuttuğunuz kitap Allah hakkındadır.





Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-5)



©2017

www.kaderidegistiren.com

This study series is a continuation of the Fate Changer series
and a product of Iştiridye Medya.