

*Who is your  
raison d'etre?*

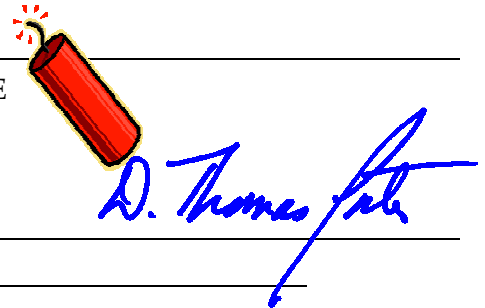
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 Saturday, April 02, 2016  
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LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

ACTS OF HOLY SPIRIT: HE ENCOURAGES WITH COURAGE  
 (Acts 4) Lord's Day, April 3, 2016



OVERVIEW

"Session 5" for this week in the *Explore the Bible Series*

Most people are courageous—when it is useful to be courageous. Few are courageous when their identity is incriminated. Sure, it is easy to declare the Christ as Master among fellow slaves of the Master. When slaves of the evil one (and slaves who think they're free from him) are present, declaring Christ as Master offends our core—we want approval from others. The first sin was not the woman eating the fruit and offering it to the man; it was the man not stopping the evil one, not protecting the woman from doing what he knew was the evil thing to do. The man wanted the approval of the woman more than he wanted the approval of his Creator. And so he was not courageous—he simply backed off and chose a mistress, rather than the Master.

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:  
 HOW DOES HOLY SPIRIT'S ENCOURAGEMENT  
 DIFFER FROM OTHER SOURCES OF ENCOURAGEMENT?**

When the church was in its infancy after Pentecost, we were faced with finding courage. Our communities were tight knit. When our widows were hungry, we fed them. When we needed our roof fixed, or our money belt fattened, we turned to others within our community. But all that went away with the Way. The church was facing poverty of the purse; courage came with difficulty. But the Lord God Yahweh was there—Holy Spirit indwelled, tabernacled with, and encouraged us, not with useful courage, but with Spirit-enthralled courage. This week we get to see what differentiates Godly courage from socially approved, personally useful courage.

**A NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT**

The success of any Bible study is entirely dependent upon three entities: you, your teacher and Holy Spirit. He therefore exhorts you to study—do your homework; encourage your teacher by prayer and active participation; most importantly, continually pray to Father God for Holy Spirit to guide us as we learn what He taught Luke 1900+ years ago.

# ACTS

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## CONTEXT (Ending of Volume 1 ["Luke"])<sup>1</sup>

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After the two believers on the road to Emmaus met a man who turned out to be the risen Christ, Cleopas and his friend returned to Jerusalem where they informed the Eleven. While they were telling them, Jesus Himself stood among them and encouraged them amidst their doubts. Jesus was hungry, and He ate. Afterwards, He taught them more about how repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached throughout the world, beginning at Jerusalem.

They were instructed to stay in Jerusalem until they have been clothed with power from on high. When He led them outside Bethany, He blessed them. While doing so, He ascended into heaven. They worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem, this time with full joy, continually praising God at the temple.

## CONTEXT (Beginning of Volume 2 ["Acts"])

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Acts 1. *After giving more encouragement and instruction Jesus the Christ ascends for the last time within the time of the disciples.* Before, friend of God, I told you about all that Jesus had begun to do and teach. After His suffering, He showed Himself numerous times over a period of about 40 days. He showed them empirical proof that He was indeed alive.

Commanding His students and other followers to stay in Jerusalem, He promised them what Father God had promised—Holy Spirit working among and within them. Formerly, people had been immersed in water to commemorate their repentance, but then the disciples would be immersed in God Himself.

Of course they were curious—was this the time Israel would be restored? Jesus made it quite clear, only the Father of the Groom knows when the wedding party will gather. But for now, you are to tell people about the Kingdom—start in Jerusalem, then go on to the land of the Samaritans (yes, I said Samaritans), and then to the ends of the earth!

After these marching orders, Jesus ascended up to heaven for the last time—angels told them to stop staring and get on with it. He will return as He left. They returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. Praying a lot, they all joined together with the women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Recognizing their numbers were diminished, Peter finalized a procedure for a new disciple to be appointed. Matthias was appointed by God Himself (through a casting of lots).

- Q What does it mean to be baptized “*εν* Holy Spirit?”
- Q Why doesn't the Christ know when He will return to earth?
- Q What are the differences between His first ascension in Luke 24:51 and this one? Why is it useful to think there is but one ascension?
- Q What can we know about Jesus' return from this passage?

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<sup>1</sup>See <http://DThomasPorter.com/BibleStudies>

Acts 2:1-13. *God comes at Pentecost, among and within them—the world is never the same.* The disciples were all together when Pentecost<sup>2</sup> came. A sudden sound similar to a violent wind came from above and filled the entire house where were gathered. It looked like tongues of fire separated themselves and came to rest over each of them. All were filled with Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages as He enabled them.

Believers in the Lord God were staying in Jerusalem, believers from all over. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered in bewilderment. They were mystified—each one heard the disciples speaking in his/her own language.

Blown away, they asked—aren't these men Galileans? How do they know my native tongue? People were from the far east, e.g., Medes), and the far west, (e.g., Rome), the south (e.g., Libya), and far north (e.g., Asia [Turkey]). We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own language! What does all this mean?

Of course, there were skeptics. Some mocked them—they've had too much wine.

Q Why did Holy Spirit come to tabernacle with His people on Pentecost?

Q Why were they skeptical? What is today's equivalent to "they've had too much wine?"

Acts 2:14-28. *We're not drunk on wine, but with the Spirit Himself.* Peter steps up to the plate—listen up! Fellow believers, and all who live in Jerusalem—let me tell you what's going on...

These men are not drunk on wine; good grief, it's only nine in the morning! No, what you're seeing is what Joel said would happen a long time ago...

*In the last days, God will pour Himself out into all people. Your children will prophesy—your young men will visualize great things, your old men will dream dreams. Both men and women will have Me poured out in them. Great wonders in the heaven, signs on earth below, and blood and fire below will be manifested. The sun will be darkened and the moon changed to blood before the coming age of the great and glorious day of the Lord. AND, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!*

Israelites—listen up! Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited to you by God Himself. Miracles, wonders, signs were done by God through Him—you know it's true.

Yet, this man was handed over to you—by God's own design—and what did you do? With the help of wicked people [aka, those who didn't know the Law], you put Him to death! You nailed Him to a cross! BUT, God raised Him from the dead—freeing Him from the agony of death. Why? Because it was impossible for death to stop Jesus! Why? David told us a long time ago...

*I saw Yahweh always before me—why? He is always at my right hand—I will not be afraid.*

*Therefore, my raison d'être is happy and that happiness is manifested by the rejoicing of my tongue.*

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<sup>2</sup>The 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week (Leviticus 23:15-16), thus the first day of the week. Pentecost is also called the Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:10), the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) and the day of First-Fruits (Numbers 28:26). For some odd reason, most evangelical churches no longer observe Pentecost except a few as "Whit Sunday" (British/Irish).

So what? If in 2016 we were following the Biblical calendar, we would celebrate Resurrection Sunday on the first "first day of the week" after Passover (May 1, 2016) and then celebrate Pentecost on June 12, 2016. But western approval and western calendars are more important to us than Biblical calendars and Biblical guidance. In 2016 we celebrated Resurrection Sunday on March 27 and Pentecost on May 15.

*As my body will live in hope, just as You will not abandon me to the grave, You will not let your Holy One see decay. You have made known in me the path<sup>3</sup> to life—You fill me with joy in Your presence.*

Q What evidence did Peter offer to support the notion that Jesus was “the Holy One?”

Q To what extent is today the “last days” of which Joel spoke?

Acts 2:29-37. *David is dead—Jesus is not. You killed Him—God raised Him.* Hey brothers—I have no doubt, nor should you: David is dead. David was buried. David’s tomb is here today. But David was also a prophet who knew God promised him that one of his descendants would ascend to the throne.

So, seeing what’s coming—he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ. Christ was not abandoned, nor did His body decompose. God has raised this Jesus to life—we have all seen this with our very eyes! He is exalted, all the way to the right hand of Father God. Just as promised, Holy Spirit has poured Himself out on what you’re seeing right here, right now. Bottom-line: David did NOT ascend to heaven, yet he said,

*The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”*

SO? Let all of Israel know this assuredly—God has made this Jesus—who YOU crucified—both Lord and Messiah!

They were freaked—cut to the heart. Calling out to Peter and the other apostles, what shall we do?

Q What declaration was David making about footstool placement?

Q What are the implications of saying Jesus is not only Christ, but Lord?

Acts 2:38-47. *Get your act together, individually and corporately.* Peter was clear—every one of you—turn your life around, be immersed with the authority of Jesus the Christ because of the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the ultimate blessing—the Lord God Yahweh living within you. The gift of Holy Spirit’s presence is for you and for all who the Lord God will call to Himself.

He continued with other words of warning, and pleading. Save yourselves from this corrupt culture!

Those who accepted his words were immersed with Holy Spirit and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

So, they became devotees of teaching, fellowship, “breaking of bread,” and prayer. They were all filled with awe as the apostles did many wonders and signs of miraculous nature. When people had a need, people sold their stuff so no one was in need. It was family.

Every day they continued. Meeting in the temple courts. Breaking bread together at home. Eating together with joy, and a shared sincere raison d’être. Praising God. Enjoying the favor of all the people. AND...

**The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

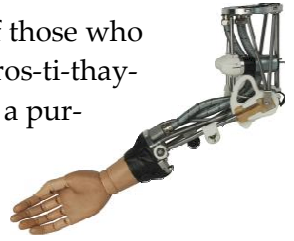
Q What value does “repentance” have in Peter’s answer to their question?

Q What value does “immersion by the authority of Jesus the Christ” have in Peter’s answer to their question?

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<sup>3</sup>This is the same Greek word that Jesus the Christ used when saying He was the “... way (οδους, hodous, 3598), and the truth, and the life.”

- Q What is the result of this repentance and immersion by/in Holy Spirit?
- Q What was corrupt about their generation? Ours?
- Q What verb was used to describe how people were associated with the number of those who believed and were baptized (verses 41&47)? So? [Hint: “added” προστίθημι, pros-ti-thay-mey, 4369, “i.e., put together for a purpose;” i.e., like a prosthesis, each of us has a purpose within the body.] See a great application of this concept in 1 Cor 12.
- Q Why did they sell their possessions? To what extent is this a good model for today’s church?
- Q Did Holy Spirit record these incidents of the early church as examples of what was done, or what was done and should be done? In other words, to what extent is the behavior of the early church a template for how today’s church should be organized, measured, manifested? Example or rule?



## TEXTUAL ISSUES FOR ACTS 4

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Context—Acts 3. *The good news is here, among you.* The apostles continued the work of the Christ—they went to temple frequently. They healed a 40+ year old cripple, right there in front of God and everybody, *by the authority of Jesus the Christ.* Some people were ecstatic about God’s presence within their lives. Others were threatened.

Of course, these were great teaching moments—Peter, for example, challenged the folks at temple. Why are you surprised? We didn’t heal these people. The God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob has glorified His servant Jesus. Yet you killed the one God glorified, and God raised Him from the dead. It is by the authority of Jesus and the faith that comes through Him that healing has happened.

This is not news—prophets for centuries said the Christ would suffer; of course, you don’t think the Christ should suffer. But, He did. Because of you. So, stop, turn around, and turn to God. Otherwise the distance from you and God (sin) will not be reconciled. Then the time of refreshing can begin. Christ is in heaven awaiting the restoration of everything, just as promised by His prophets. Consider what Moses said—“The Lord your God will raise a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything He tells you.” Jesus is He. If you don’t listen to Him, you will be cut off.

Actually, all the prophets from Samuel on have foretold today. You are heirs of these prophets and the promise made by the Lord God to your ancestors. Remember what He said to Abraham—“Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.”

Bottom-line? God resurrected His Servant and sent Him to you to be blessed by turning you around, away from your wickedness.

- Q To whom did the apostles give credit for the healings at temple? Why?
- Q To be an heir to the promise made to Abraham must have some significance; what is that significance? [Hint: see Galatians 3:26-29.]

## TEXTUAL ISSUES FOR ACTS 4 (continued)

Acts 4:1-13. *In the face of powerful, but illegitimate authority, courage inspires.* Well, the powers that be, the priests and their body men and the politically connected Sadducees came to investigate.

Listening to Peter & John's preaching & teaching, their disturbance was palatable—especially about this “resurrection from the dead” business. So, they arrested John and Peter, put them in jail for interrogation later. It didn't help—about five thousand men now constituted the membership in The Way.

Well, the next day all these big wigs, plus professors of the Law (scribes) met in the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Annas, the high priest was there as was Caiaphas, his son-in-law. Other notables included John, Alexander and other mucky mucks in the Annas family.

Peter & John were brought before this rather august group—the opening interrogative was:

*By what power or authority did you do this healing?*

Peter, “pletheitized”<sup>4</sup> (having been overwhelmingly filled) with Holy Spirit, answered:

*Honorable leaders of the people! If we are being indicted for being kind to a cripple and being challenged as to our means to do so, listen up! All of you, and all of the people of Israel! It is by the authority of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ who you crucified, but God raised from the dead that this cripple walks, and jumps, and yells, and praises God, and is healed! Jesus is the stone you builders of the temple rejected; He has become the cornerstone! Salvation is found no where else—for there is no other name, no other authority anywhere given to us by which we must be saved.<sup>5</sup>*

They were freaked—the courage of Peter & John was phenomenal, especially since these two were unschooled, ordinary men. Astonishment rose. And, they noted that these two were indeed two men who had been with Jesus.

Q What got the attention of the leaders of the temple? Why were they concerned?

<sup>4</sup>πληθω—(play-thow, 4130) to be filled, completely, to the maximum. See <http://biblehub.com/greek/4130.htm>

<sup>5</sup>If this declaration by Holy Spirit doesn't turn you on, you need to check your knobs. If this powerful truth doesn't cause you to weep tears, get an appointment with an ophthalmologist. If your heart doesn't skip a beat reading this, see a cardiologist. Most importantly, if His declaration here does not move you, get to your knees and pray for a sensitive heart, an open mind, and a soul who truly cares about one's Creator, Savior, and Master.

### ACTS 4:1-13

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. <sup>2</sup>They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. <sup>3</sup>They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. <sup>4</sup>But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup>The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. <sup>7</sup>They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

<sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup>If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup>then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup>He is

“the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.” [Psalm 118:22]

<sup>12</sup>Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

<sup>13</sup>When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.



Q Why did they hold John and Peter in jail for the next morning? Who was missing from their group?

Q What was their opening indictable question?

Q How would you summarize Peter's response—

1. To whom did he address his remarks? Why?
2. How did he challenge the indictment? What was the act of kindness?
3. To what extent was the authority or the power to do the act more salient?
4. How did Peter's response answer their bi-furcated question?
5. By what authority did they heal the cripple? By what power did they heal the cripple?
6. How was this kind act of healing connected to salvation?
7. Why the singularity of the Lord God in healing and salvation?

Q What was their first response to Peter's declaration? Why were they astonished? Freaked even more now?

Acts 4:14-22. In the wake of Peter's response, authorities shake, trying to console each other, to little avail. Well, could they do? The healed dude was standing right there. What could they say? He'd been jumping around, walking around and praising Yahweh! So they had Peter & John escorted from the Sanhedrin hall and then asked themselves—

*What are we going to do? These men have been seen doing this outstanding miracle by everybody living in Jerusalem. We can not deny that. But... to stop this thing from going any further, we must warn these two to no longer use Jesus' name when they teach or preach.*

Calling them back to the hall, they commanded them not to speak, or teach, at all by the authority of Jesus.

That went over like a lead balloon. Peter & John replied—

*Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey the Sanhedrin rather than the Lord God Jehovah. As for us, we can't help it. We are simply speaking about what we have seen, what we have heard.*

After more empty threats, the Sanhedrin let them go. They were not in one accord on how to punish these two—all the people were praising Yahweh for what had happened. The healed cripple was not only healed miraculously, he was over forty years old. This was no placebo.

Q To what extent was their concern a legitimate concern for the Sanhedrin?

Q What does it mean "not to speak or teach *in the name of Jesus*?"

Q Why do suppose the Sanhedrin could not agree on what to do regarding punishment?

### ACTS 4:14-22

But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. <sup>15</sup>So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. <sup>16</sup>"What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. <sup>17</sup>But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

<sup>18</sup>Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup>But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup>For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

<sup>21</sup>After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. <sup>22</sup>For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

After their release, they went back to their people to celebrate. Peter & John chortled that even the chief priests of the Sanhedrin did not know what to do. When hearing this, the people broke out in song and prayer to God. Here are some of their songs and thoughts and prayers...

- Sovereign Lord, you created the universe.
- Sovereign Lord, you have spoken by Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, David, our ancestor David—  
*Why do powers and people rage, plot in vain?  
Kings take their positions, and rulers gather against the Lord and the Anointed One.*
- Herod failed. Pilate failed. Even the people of Israel failed. Their conspiracy against your holy servant Jesus who You anointed, failed. They only did what You had decided beforehand would happen.
- Now, Lord, consider the threats, and enable your slaves<sup>6</sup> to speak Your word with boldness, great boldness, bold boldness!
- Oh Lord, stretch out your hand—heal, do miracles, show wonders, all by the authority of your holy servant, Jesus.

After they prayed all this, where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled by Holy Spirit and spoke God's word boldly.

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<sup>6</sup>When speaking of David or Jesus the Christ, the people used the word “pah-i-daw” (παῖδα, meaning beloved servant), and when referring to themselves, they used the word “douloi” (δουλοῖς, meaning slaves).



**4:1** *priests*. Those who were serving that week in the temple precincts. *captain of the temple guard*. A member of one of the leading priestly families; next in rank to the high priest (see 5:24,26; Lk 22:4,52).

*Sadducees*. A Jewish sect whose members came from the priestly line and controlled the temple. They did not believe in the resurrection or a personal Messiah, but held that the Messianic age—an ideal time—was then present and must be preserved. They believed only the Pentateuch was legitimate, authoritative scripture. The high priest, one of their number, presided over the Sanhedrin (see 5:17; 23:6-8; Mt 22:23-33).

**4:3** *evening*. The evening sacrifices ended about 4:00pm, and the temple gates would be closed at that time. Any judgments involving life and death must be begun and concluded in daylight hours.

**4:4** *men*. Lit. "males." *five thousand*. A growth from the 3,000 at Pentecost (2:41); see later growth (5:14; 6:7).

**4:5** *rulers, elders and teachers of the law*. The three groups making up the Sanhedrin, Israel's supreme court (see Lk 22:66; see also on Mt 2:4; 15:2; Mk 14:55; Lk 5:17).

**4:6** *Annas*. High priest A.D. 6-15, but deposed by the Romans and succeeded by his son, Eleazar, then by his son-in-law, Caiaphas (18-36), who was also called Joseph. Annas was still recognized, however, by the Jews as high priest (Lk 3:2; cf. Jn 18:13, 24).

*John*. May be Jonathan son of Annas, who was appointed high priest in A.D. 36. Others suggest it was Johanan ben Zaccai, who became the president of the Great Synagogue after the fall of Jerusalem. *Alexander*. Not further identified.

**4:8** *filled with the Holy Spirit*. A fulfillment of 1:5,8; see also Jesus' promise in Luke 24:49. Their spirits were completely under the control of Holy Spirit; their words were His words.

**4:11** *the stone . . . rejected*. Fulfillment of prophecy was an important element in early Christian sermons and defenses. Jesus had also used Ps 118:22 (Mt 21:42; see 1Pe 2:7 and cf. Ro 9:33; Isa 28:16).

**4:12** *no other name*. See 10:43; John 14:6; 1Ti 2:5; even His name means "Yahweh saves;" i.e., Yeshua, (in English, Joshua), Matthew 1:21. Yes, we have obliterated His name to a Latinized version "Eeaysous," added a "j" and now use the word "Jesus" as a substitute for His real name, Yeshuah.

**4:13** *unschooled, ordinary men*. Peter and John had not been trained in the rabbinic schools, nor did they hold official positions in recognized religious circles. Their rabbi, however, was well-schooled, for He had first hand knowledge of all that was and is and shall be in Yahweh's mind, for He was Yahweh, the Creator. He was and is and shall be the Word, the logos on which the universe was created, and will be rebuilt.

**4:20** *cannot help speaking*. See Acts 5:29.

**4:23** *went back*. Possibly to the same upper room where disciples had met before (1:13) and where the congregation may have continued to meet (12:12).

**4:24** *Sovereign Lord*. See Luke 2:29.

**4:27** *Herod*. Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Luke 23:7-15). *Pontius Pilate*. Roman procurator of Judea (Luke 23:1-24).

**4:31** *was shaken*. An immediate sign that the prayers had been heard (see 16:26). *filled with the Holy Spirit*. A fulfillment of 1:5,8; see also Jesus' promise in Luke 24:49. Their spirits were completely under the control of Holy Spirit; their words were His words. *spoke the word of God*. They continued preaching the gospel despite the warnings of the Sanhedrin.

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<sup>7</sup>Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.