**Acts to Revelation**

The World of the First Christians

**Session 2 –The Church Grows in Jerusalem**

**Session Summary** – The church continued to grow in Jerusalem and the Apostles continued to preach at Solomon’s Colonnade. Peter and John healed a crippled man and were imprisoned by the authorities because they were perceived as a growing threat to the religious establishment. However, after Peter and John miraculously escaped, they continued to perform miracles in the name of Jesus, and crowds continued to come from nearby towns. As the movement grew, the religious leaders finally took a stand against a courageous deacon named Stephen. In the end, they killed Stephen for his adherence to the Gospel, and he became the first martyr for his faith.

Peter said, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”* – Acts 4:12

According to Luke’s gospel, Stephen was dragged out of the northwest gate of Jerusalem, probably taken to a ledge or elevated place, thrown down, and stoned. The most likely candidate for this gate is known today as the Damascus Gate. The gate used today was built in 1537 under the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. It is still one of the main entrances into the Old City of Jerusalem. However, the gate of the time of Stephen is below the current gate, and was recently opened for public viewing. This ancient gate originally dates to the time of Stephen in the 1st century, and by the 3rd century, it was called Porta Sancti Stephani, in Latin for “St. Stephen’s Gate.”

**Scripture Reading: Acts 3-7**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Who were the two Apostles imprisoned for preaching on the Temple grounds? How did they escape prison?
2. How many deacons were initially chosen to help administer the church in Jerusalem? What is a deacon?
3. Who was the first martyr for Jesus mentioned in the Book of Acts? What is a martyr?
4. Who was the man who stood with the coats at the first martyrdom of Jesus’ follower?
5. Who was responsible for building the first church structure at the site know today as “St. Stephens’s Church and Monastery?”

**Scripture Reading for Next Week: Acts 8-11**