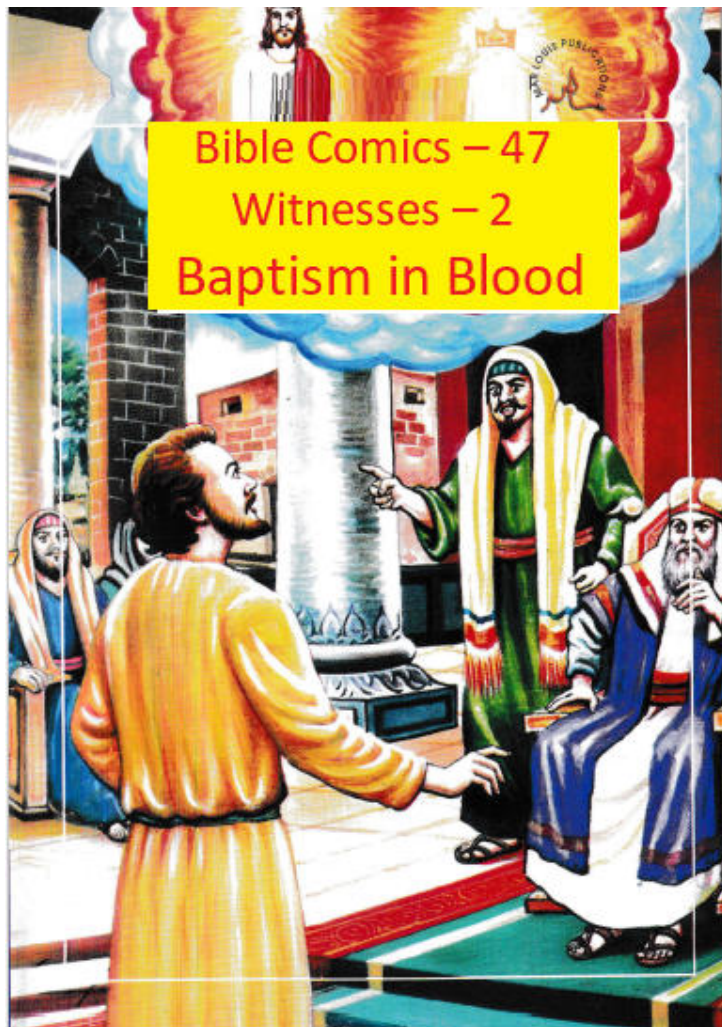


Bible Comics – 47
Witnesses – 2
Baptism in Blood



BAPTISM IN BLOOD

The Church born from the blood of Christ grew up through the sufferings and death of martyrs. The present story starts with the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr and ends with the violent death of Apostle James. Acts 7-12 is the basis for this story.

Initially the Church was taken for a reformist group or a protestant fraction of the Jewish religion. It took time even for the disciples to

grasp the depth and breadth of the definitive intervention of God in human history through Jesus Christ. The Apostles were aware of the universal mission entrusted to them by the Risen Lord; still for almost six years they lingered in and around Jerusalem. It was the persecution that forced them out. The Holy Spirit was pushing them farther and farther away from the religious capital of Judaism. Wherever they went, they proclaimed the Good News.

The deacons were elected to look after the material affairs of the Church. However, in the course of time, they also became full time evangelizers because they firmly believed that when the Word of God fully transforms the human hearts, a just society will take shape and then there will be no need of anybody supervising the distribution of food and clothing. The examples of Stephen and Philip, the deacons, show that preaching the gospel is the primary task of every Christian.

The conversion of Saul marked a turning point in the history of the Church. The Damascus experience was a dramatic call from God. The encounter with the risen Christ revealed to him that the crucified Jesus lives and suffers in the Church. This new awareness transformed the bitter enemy of the Church into a zealous missionary of Christ. The experience of Paul and innumerable other disciples proclaim that Jesus Christ is not a person dead and gone but the Lord who lives and works in the world.

The conversion of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, marked another turning point in the history of evangelization. Philip had preached to the Samaritans and to a gentile (the Ethiopian eunuch) on the way. But, Peter went into the house of a non Jew, proclaimed the Gospel, and baptized the family. It was God himself who prepared Peter for this new step by revealing to him that God loves all peoples without the distinction of caste or race. However, the questions raised by the Jerusalem Church against

Peter's action demonstrate how difficult it was for a Jewish Christian Church to grasp the implications of that vision. It was almost twenty years after the Pentecost that the Church finally obtained clarity about the place of Jews and non Jews in the Church.

It is through the people who are open to the Spirit that evangelization takes place in its true sense. No one who follows the footsteps of the Lord can escape suffering and persecution. This very suffering is the source of strength for the

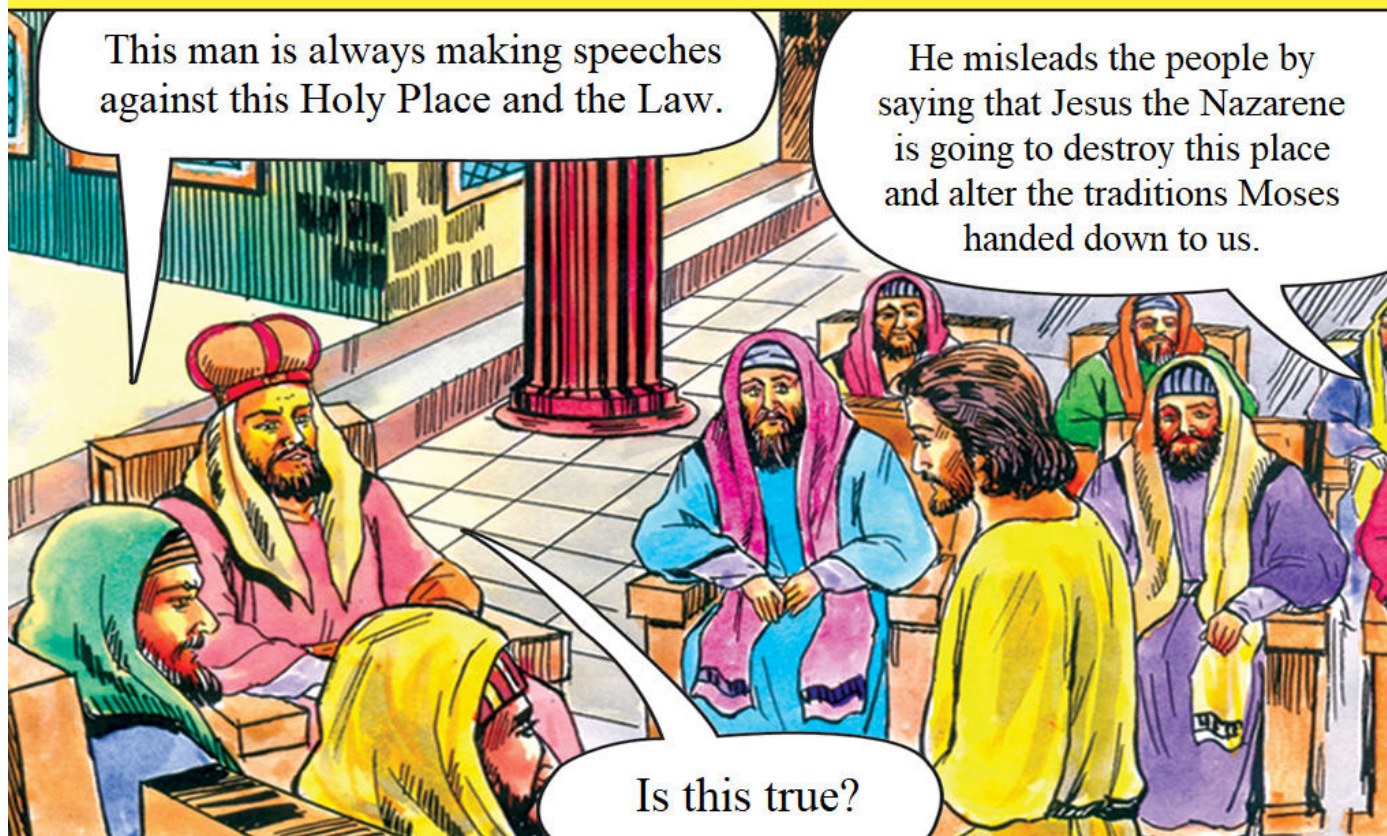
Christians to proclaim the Gospel. Those who have received the Baptism in water and Spirit must be ready for the Baptism in blood as well, in order to follow Jesus who poured out his blood for us.

Bible Comics – 47
Witnesses – 2

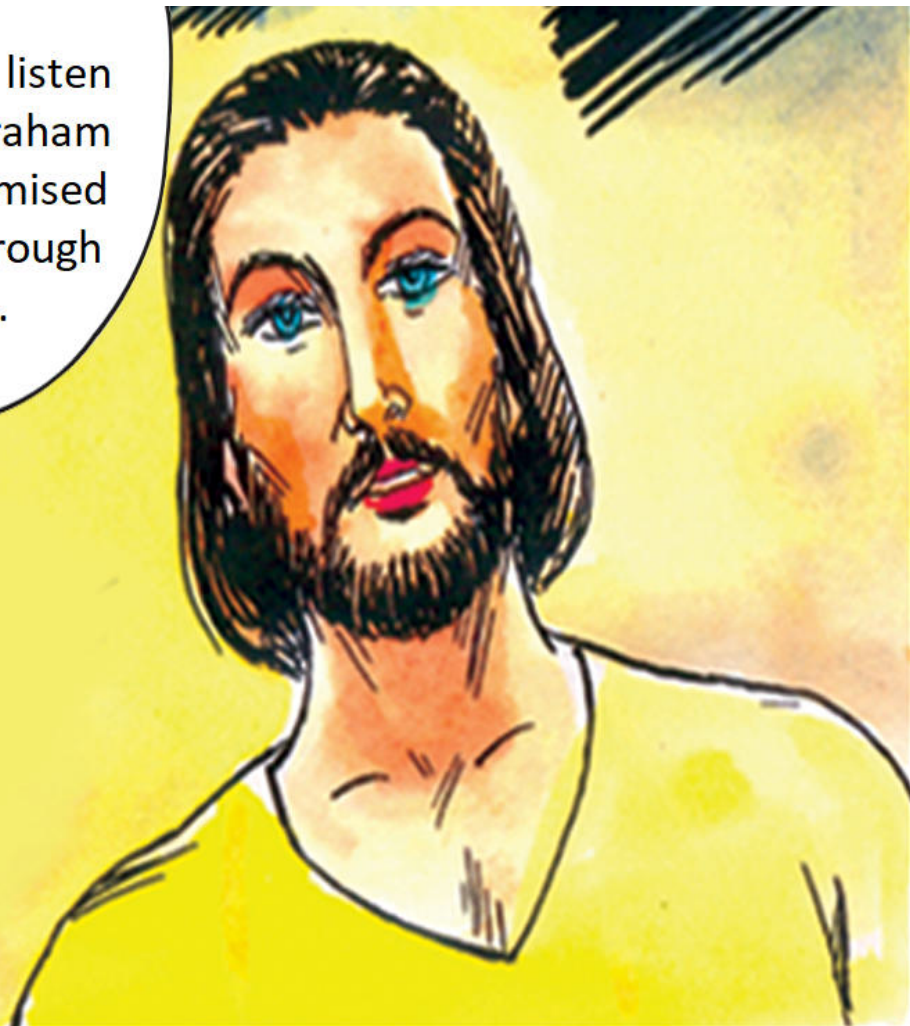
Baptism in Blood

Script:
Rev. Dr. Michael Karimattam
Illustration:
Devassy & Benny

The Jewish leaders arrested Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.



My brothers, fathers, listen to me. God called Abraham out of Haran and promised to bless the world through His descendants.



After narrating the history of Israel.

You stubborn people, you are
always resisting the Holy Spirit.
Just as your ancestors did.

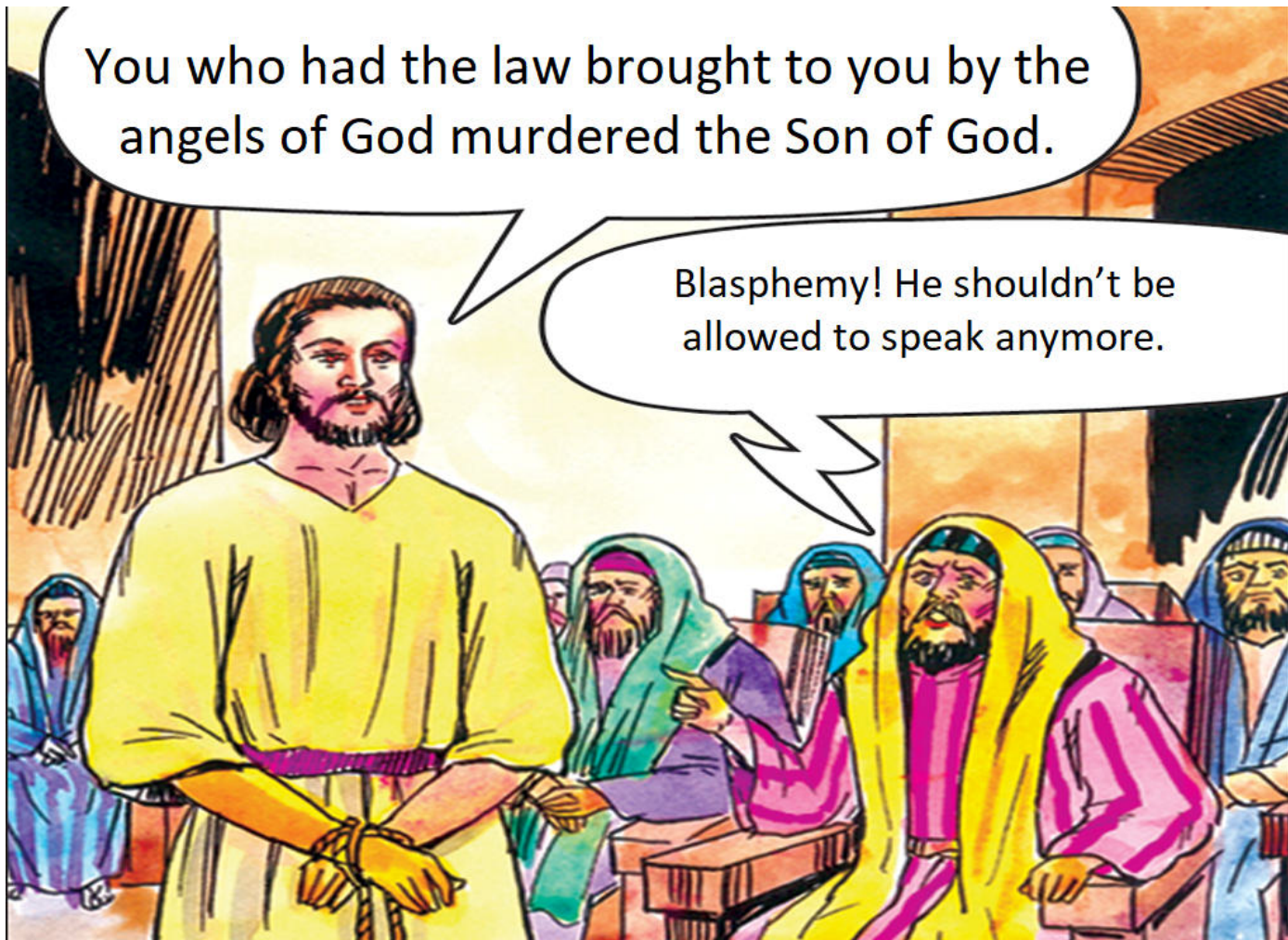


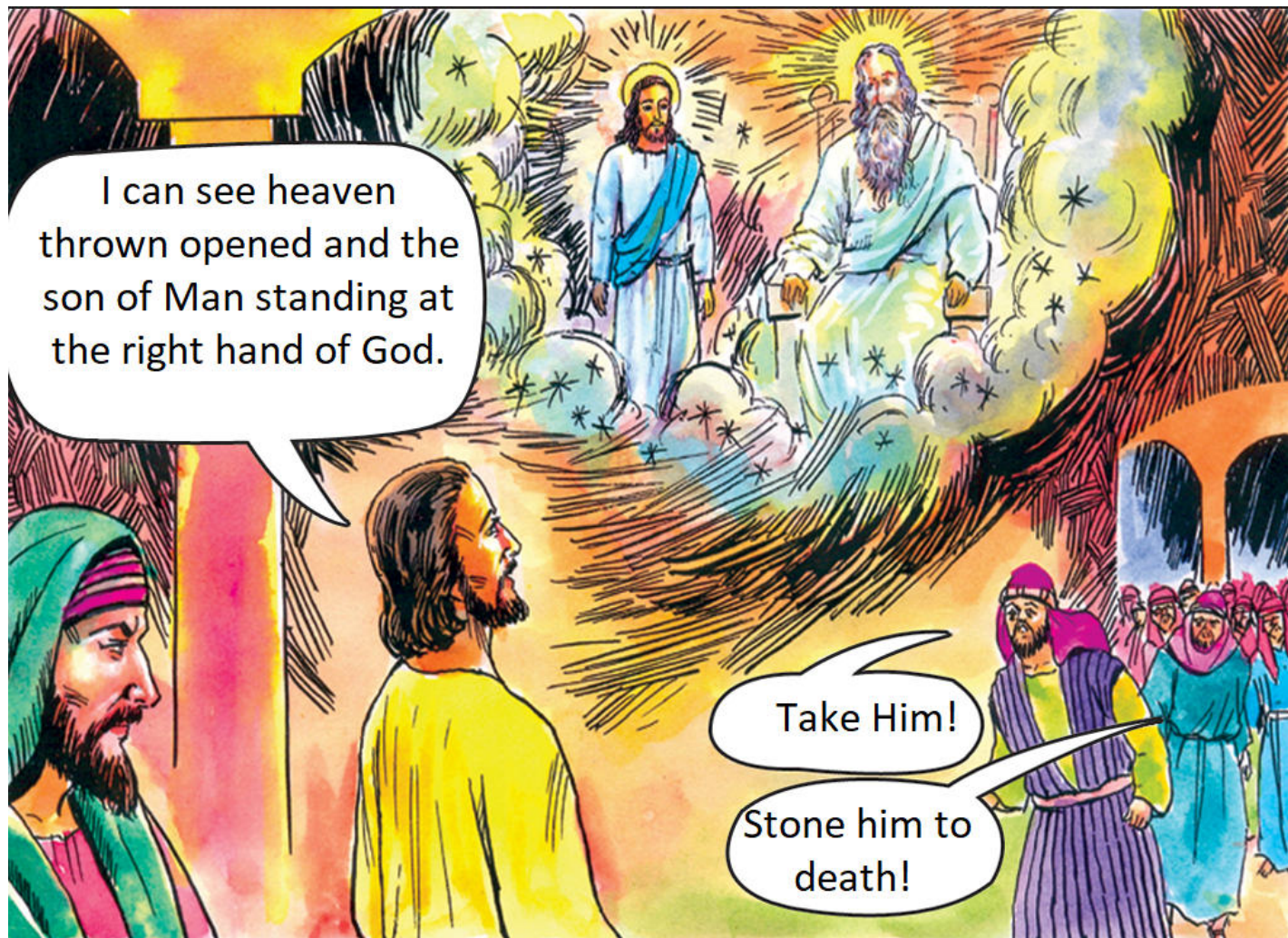
Can you name a single prophet your
ancestors did not persecute? They killed
those who foretold the coming of
the just one.



You who had the law brought to you by the angels of God murdered the Son of God.

Blasphemy! He shouldn't be allowed to speak anymore.





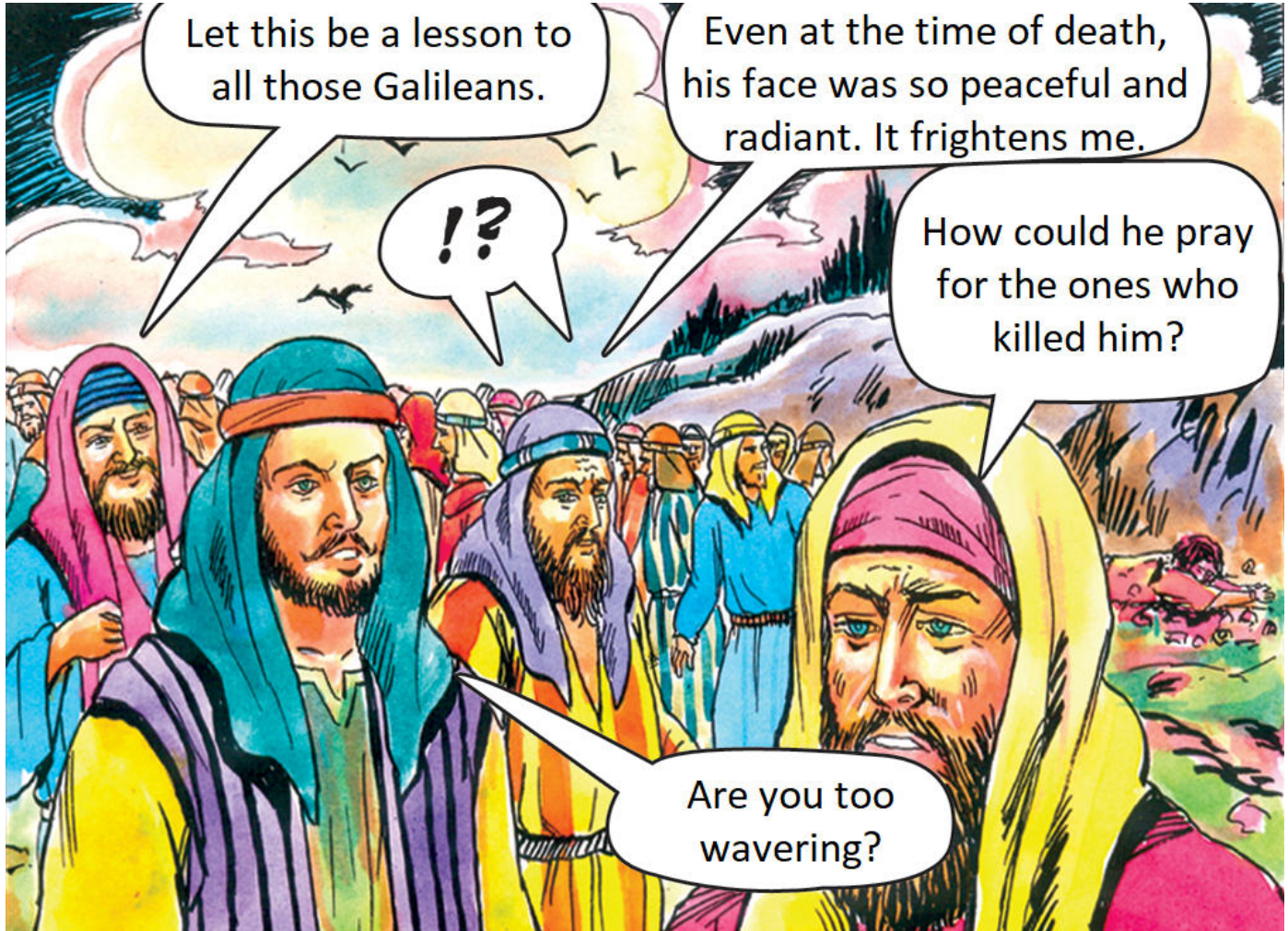
I can see heaven
thrown opened and the
son of Man standing at
the right hand of God.

Take Him!

Stone him to
death!

They took Stephen out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of Saul who supervised the execution.





Let this be a lesson to
all those Galileans.

Even at the time of death,
his face was so peaceful and
radiant. It frightens me.

!?

How could he pray
for the ones who
killed him?

Are you too
wavering?

It is God who gave us the law through Moses.
Anyone who opposes it is an enemy of God.

Rabbi Saul is right.



The followers of that Nazarene
break all our sacred laws. We must
either make them obey, or destroy
them.

There are thousands. Can
we kill them all like this?



It doesn't matter how many
there are. If needed, Israel will
stand together and face them
as at the time of the
Maccabees.



It is our holy laws and sacred traditions that
are being trampled upon.

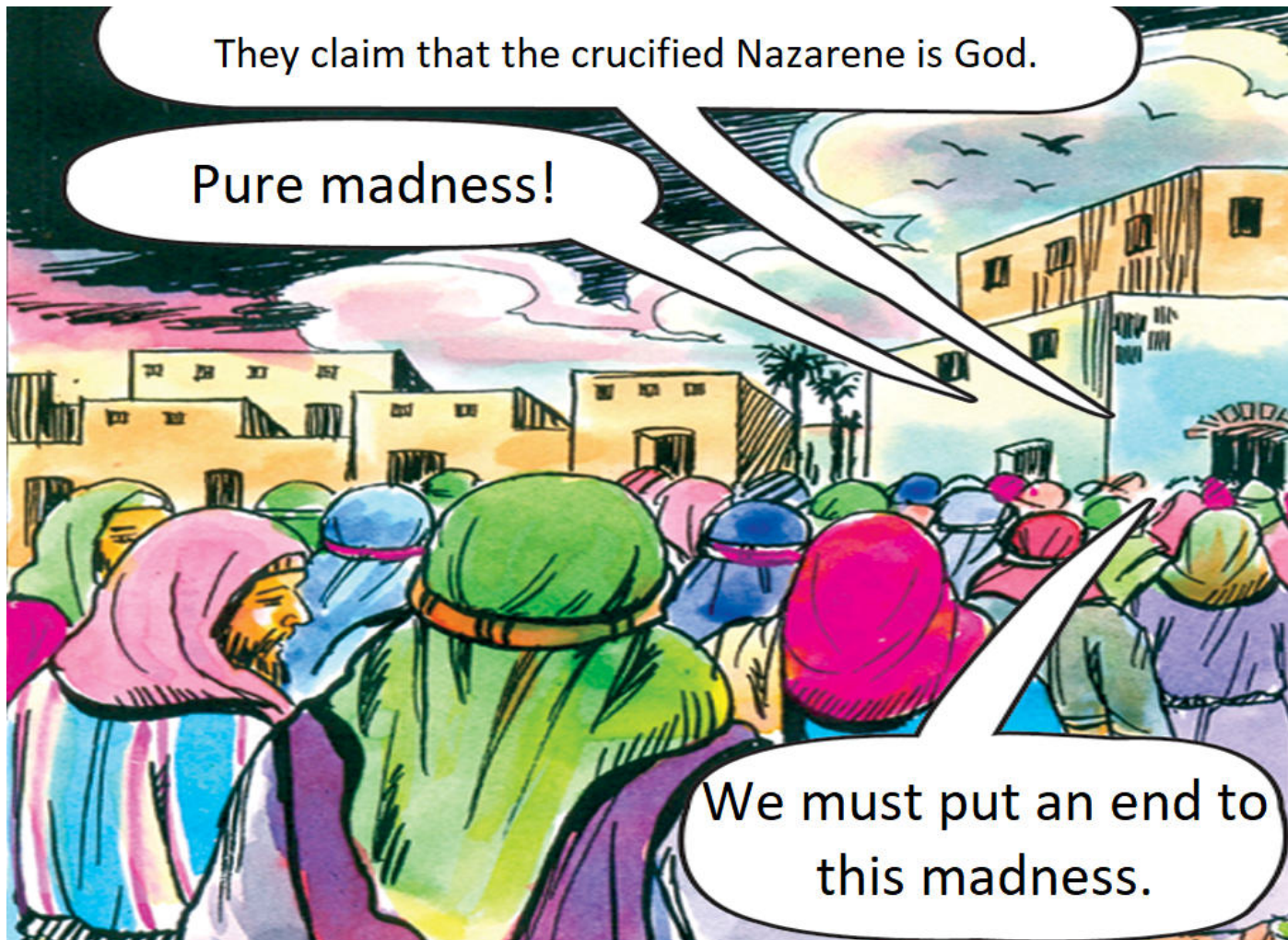
Not only that, they are trying to shatter the
very foundation of our faith by teaching
there is another God equal to Yahweh.



They claim that the crucified Nazarene is God.

Pure madness!

We must put an end to
this madness.



There is a rumor that even Gamaliel,
your master, believes in the Nazarene.

This is a matter of faith. We shall
let no one stand in our way.

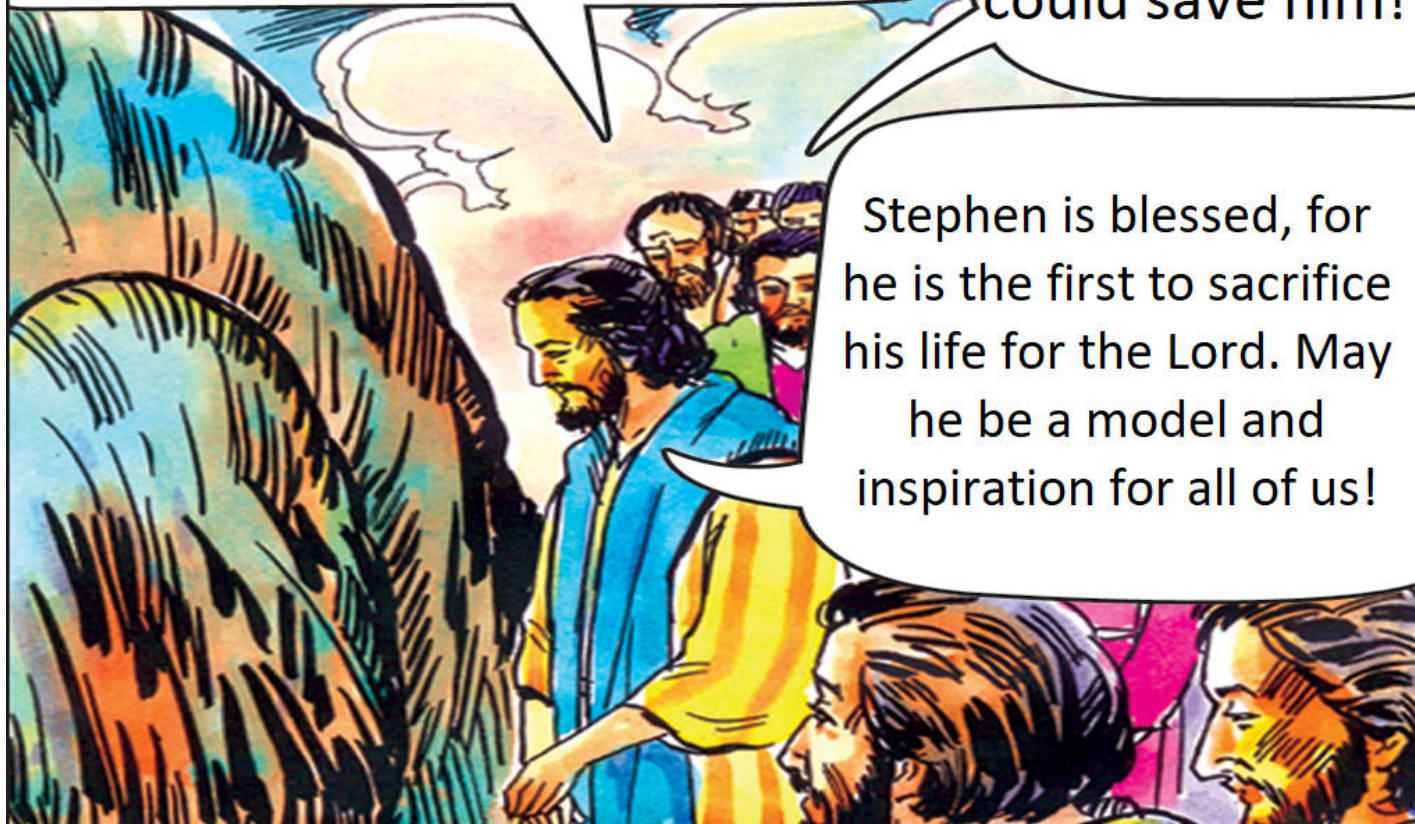


The disciples buried Stephen.

O Stephen, how could anybody be so cruel to you!

None of us could save him!

Stephen is blessed, for he is the first to sacrifice his life for the Lord. May he be a model and inspiration for all of us!

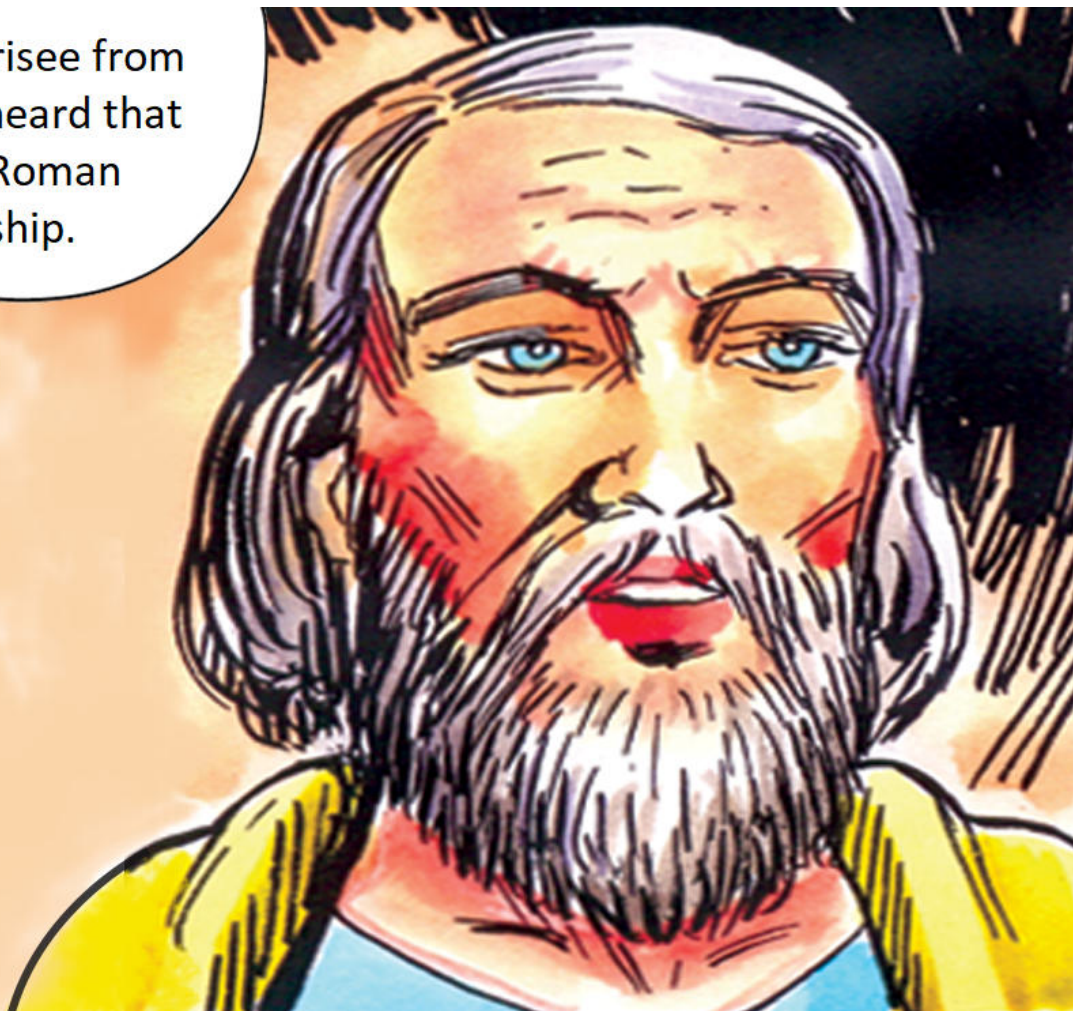


That Saul is becoming a terror. He is determined to search out and destroy all the disciples.

Who is this Saul?



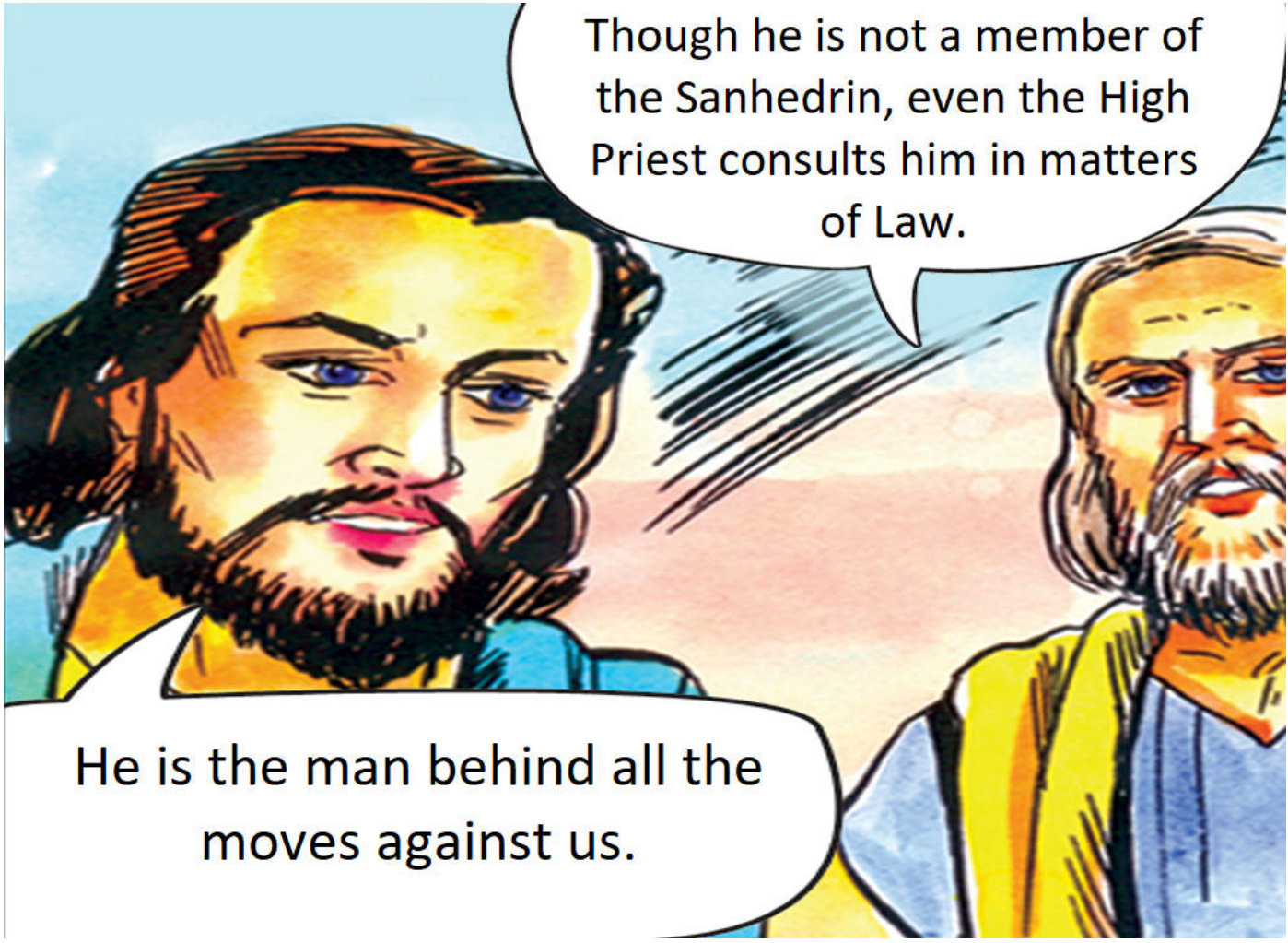
A young Pharisee from
Tarsus, it is heard that
he has a Roman
citizenship.



He came here to study law under Gamaliel,
very sharp, ready to kill as to die for the law.

In disputes, only
Stephen could defeat
him and that might
have infuriated him.



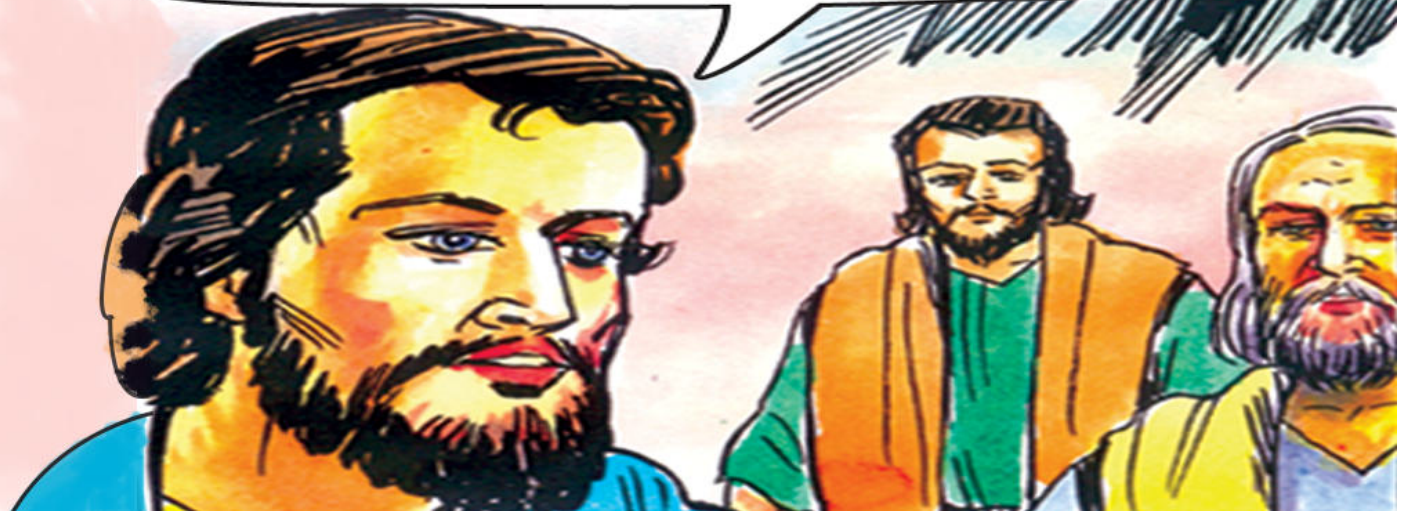
A comic book illustration featuring two men. On the left, a man with long dark hair and a beard, wearing a yellow tunic, looks towards the right. On the right, an older man with a white beard and hair, wearing a blue tunic with a yellow sash, looks back at him. The background is a simple gradient of blue and orange. Two speech bubbles are present: one from the older man at the top right and one from the younger man at the bottom left.

Though he is not a member of
the Sanhedrin, even the High
Priest consults him in matters
of Law.

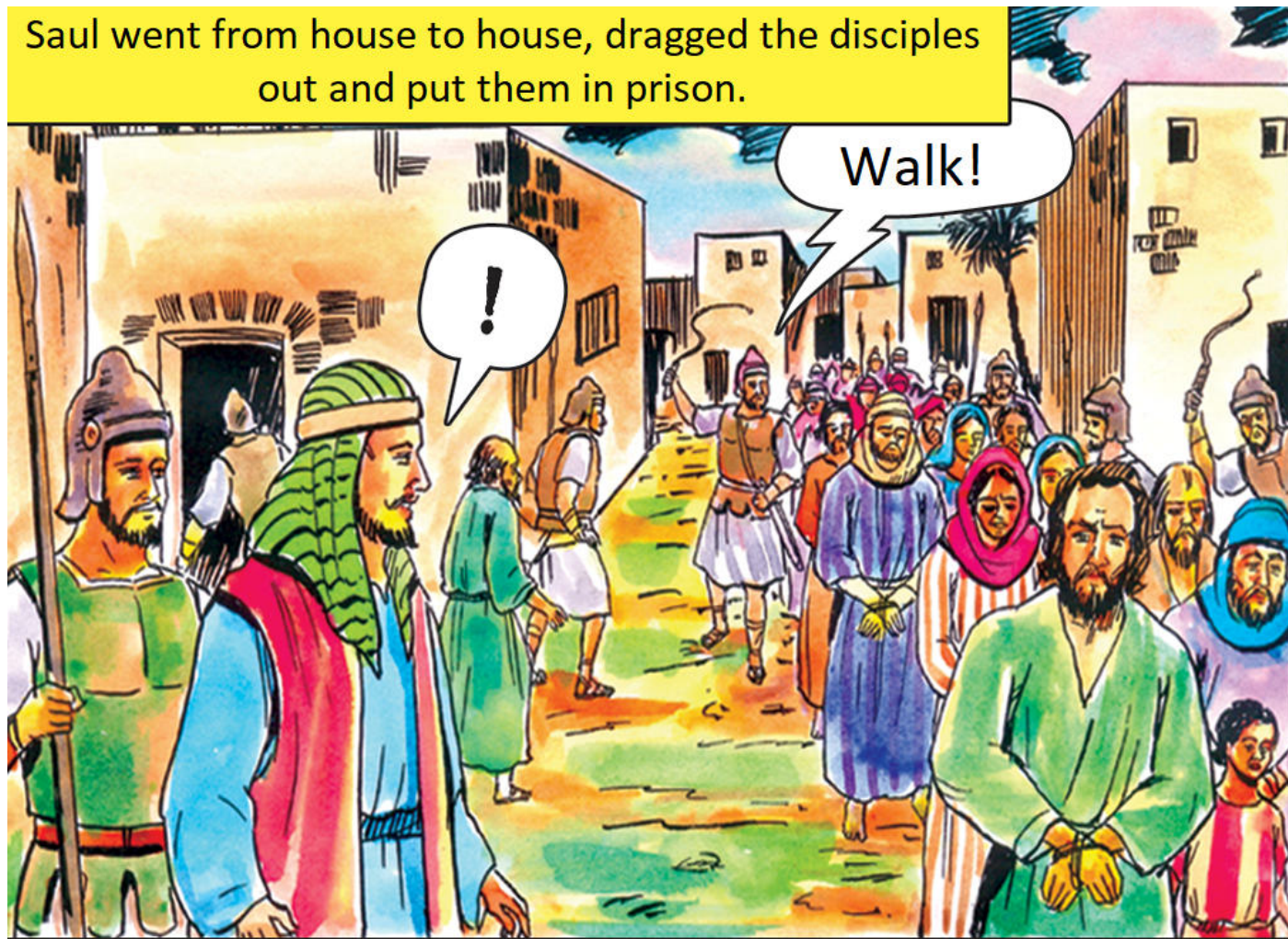
He is the man behind all the
moves against us.

Our people, especially the Hellenists,
must leave Jerusalem as soon as possible.

The Lord has told us to leave for the
next town when we are
persecuted in one.



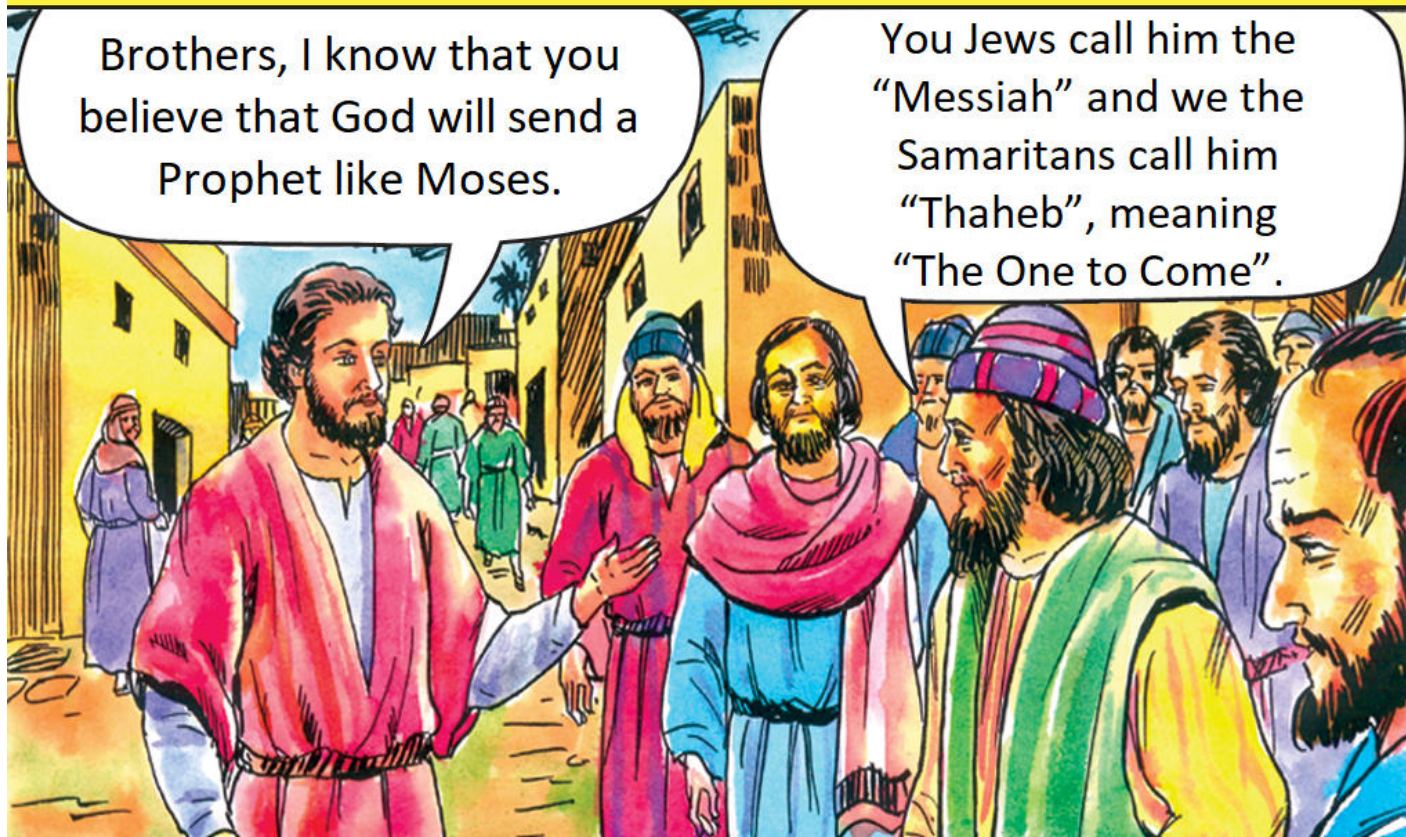
Saul went from house to house, dragged the disciples out and put them in prison.



The disciples scattered from Jerusalem went and settled in Samaria and Syria. Wherever they went, they preached about Jesus. Deacon Philip in a Samaritan town.

Brothers, I know that you believe that God will send a Prophet like Moses.

You Jews call him the "Messiah" and we the Samaritans call him "Thaheb", meaning "The One to Come".



There is no more difference
between the Jew and the
Samaritans. He has already
come and united us all.





Who is He?

Jesus of Nazareth, the Jews
crucified him but God raised
him to life.

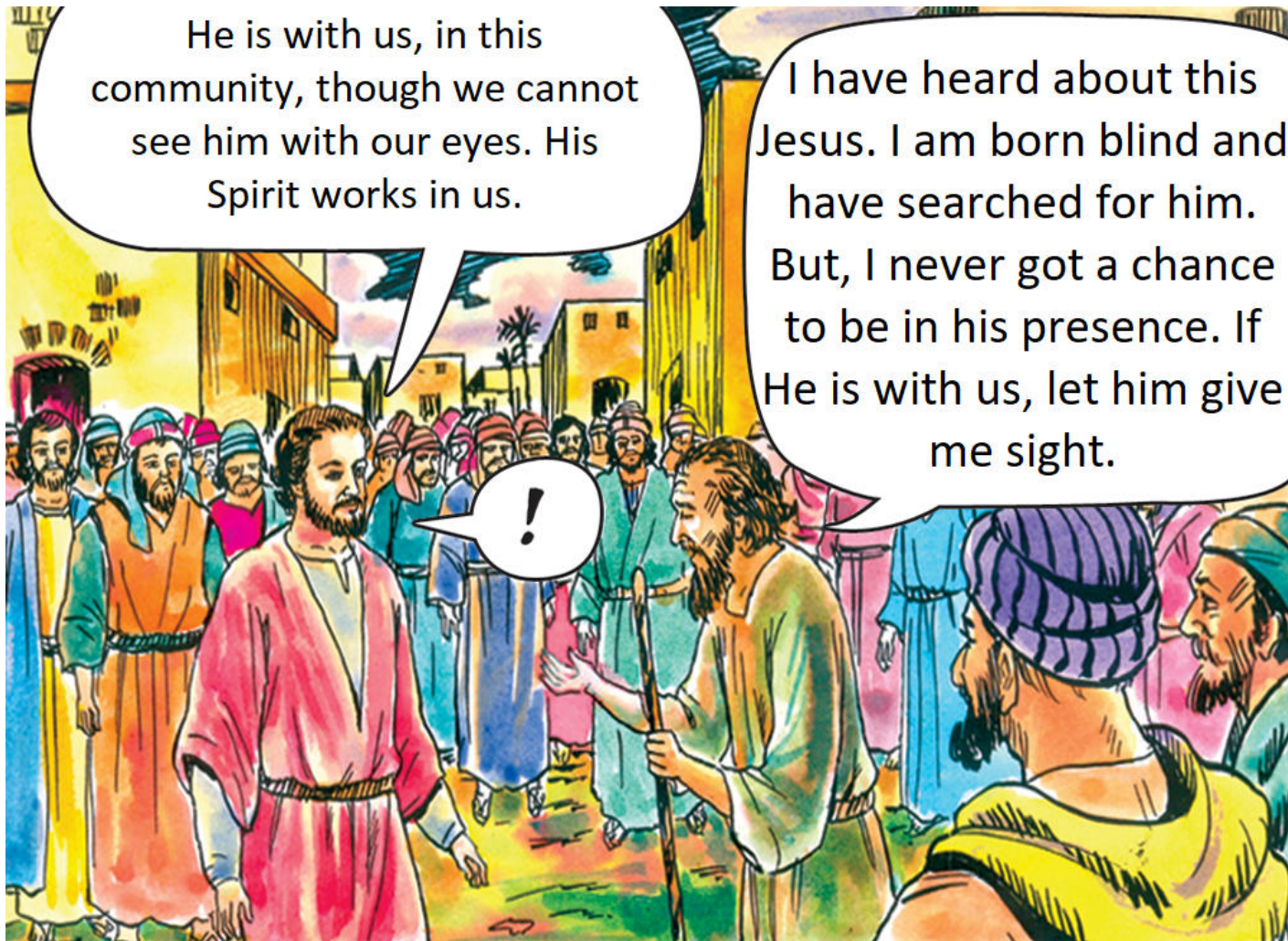
!!!

Where is he
now?

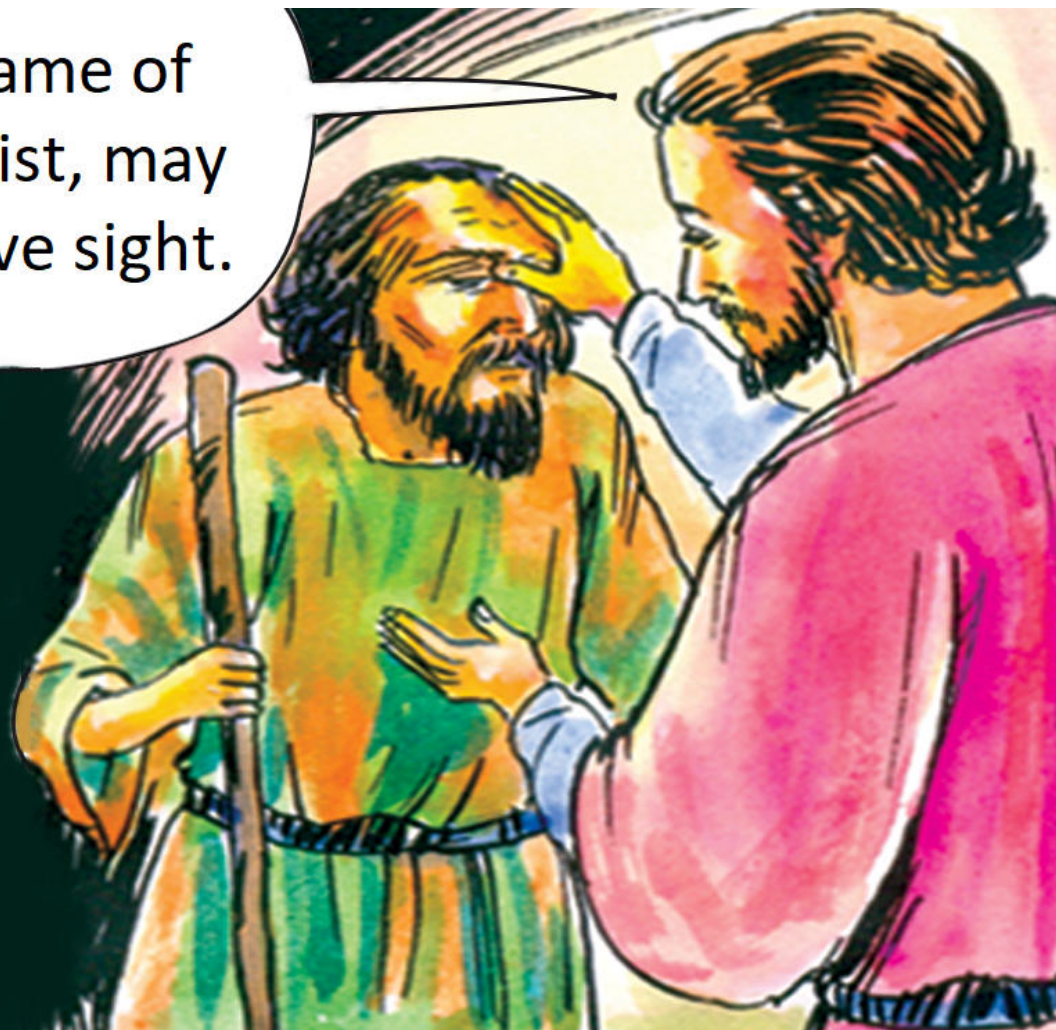
He is with us, in this community, though we cannot see him with our eyes. His Spirit works in us.

I have heard about this Jesus. I am born blind and have searched for him. But, I never got a chance to be in his presence. If He is with us, let him give me sight.

!



In the name of
Jesus Christ, may
you receive sight.

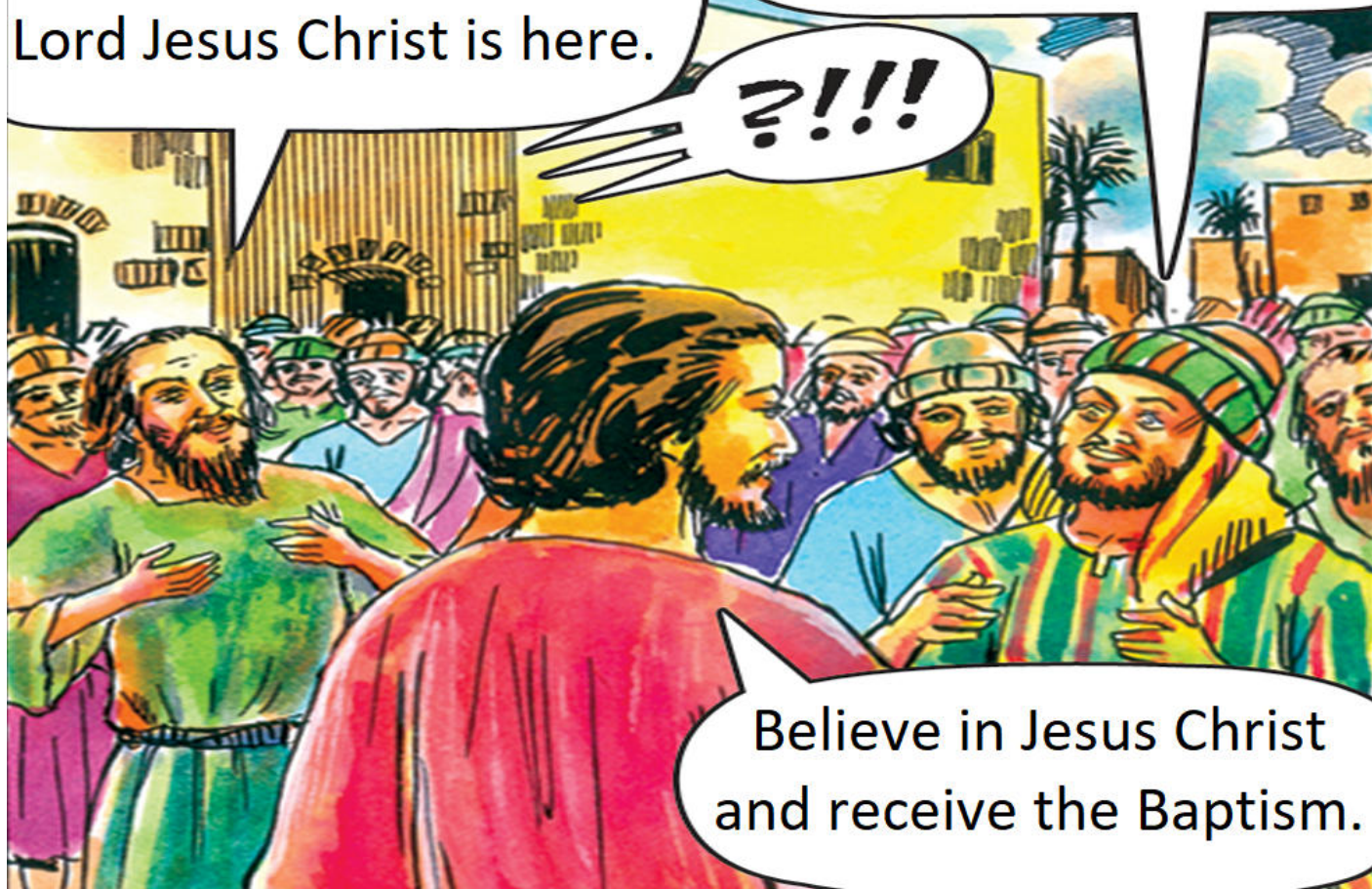


I can see, I believe that
Lord Jesus Christ is here.

Brother, what shall we do?

?!!!

Believe in Jesus Christ
and receive the Baptism.



Hearing about the conversion of the Samaritans, the Apostles sent Peter and John to them.

Brethren, Jesus Christ who rose from the dead showers His Holy Spirit upon us.

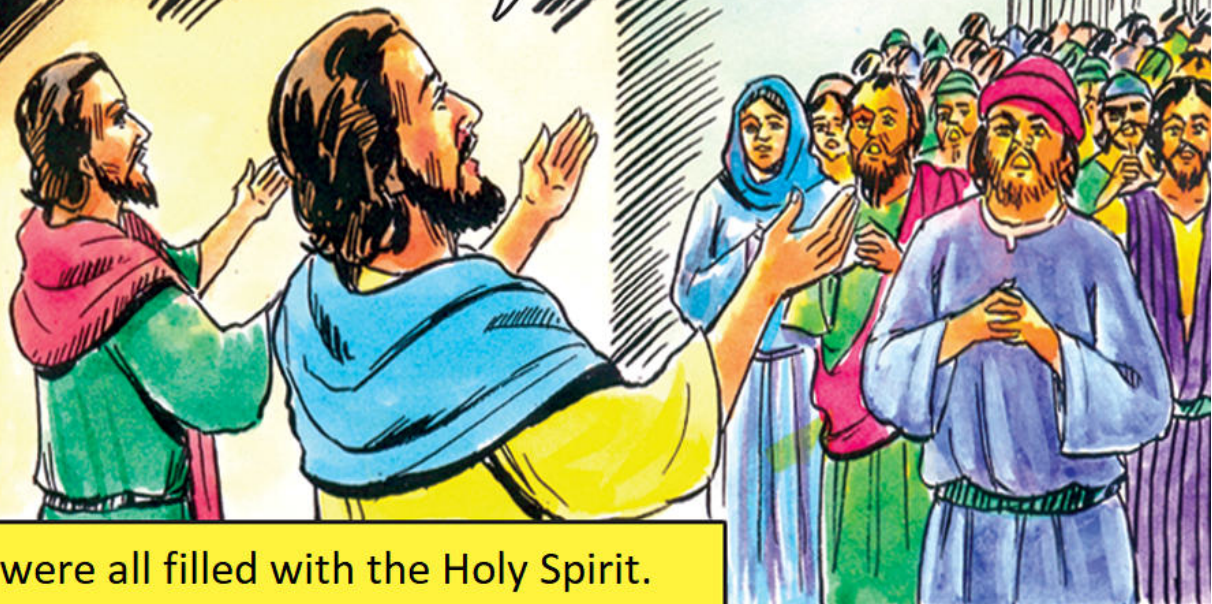


We have come to pray
over you that you also
may receive the same
Spirit.



Lord Jesus, according to thy promise, send thy Spirit upon these brothers.

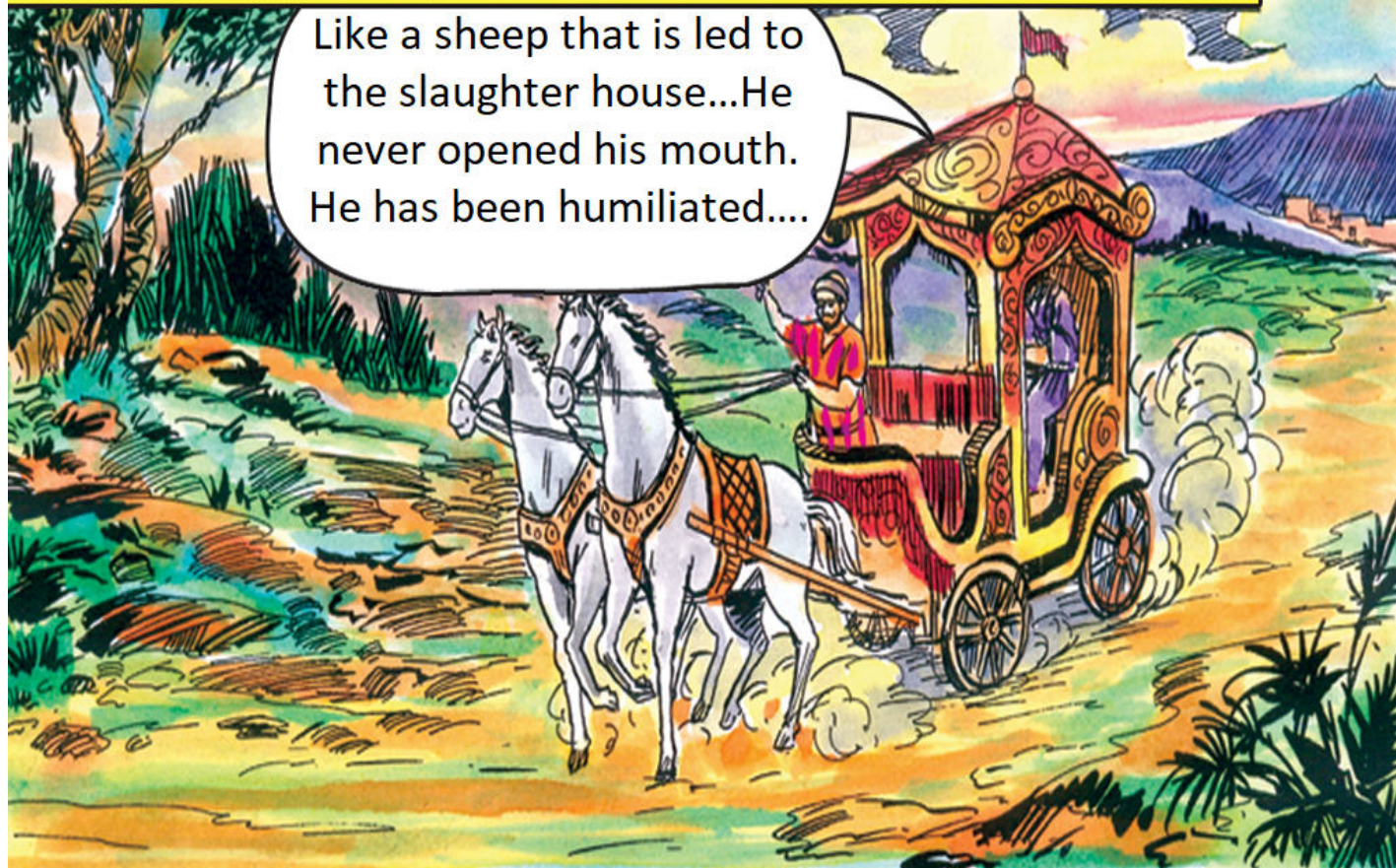
Alleluia, praise the Lord.



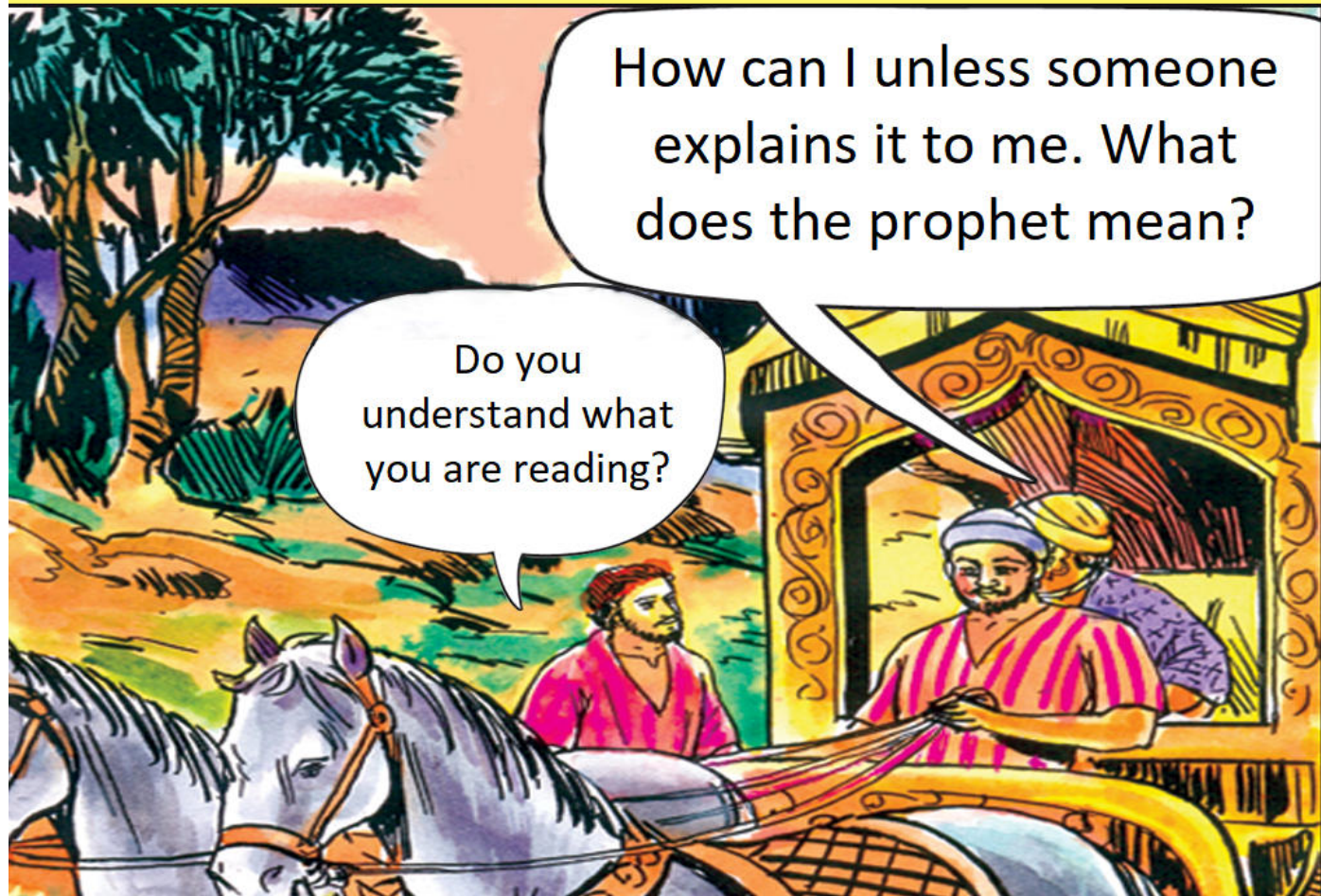
They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

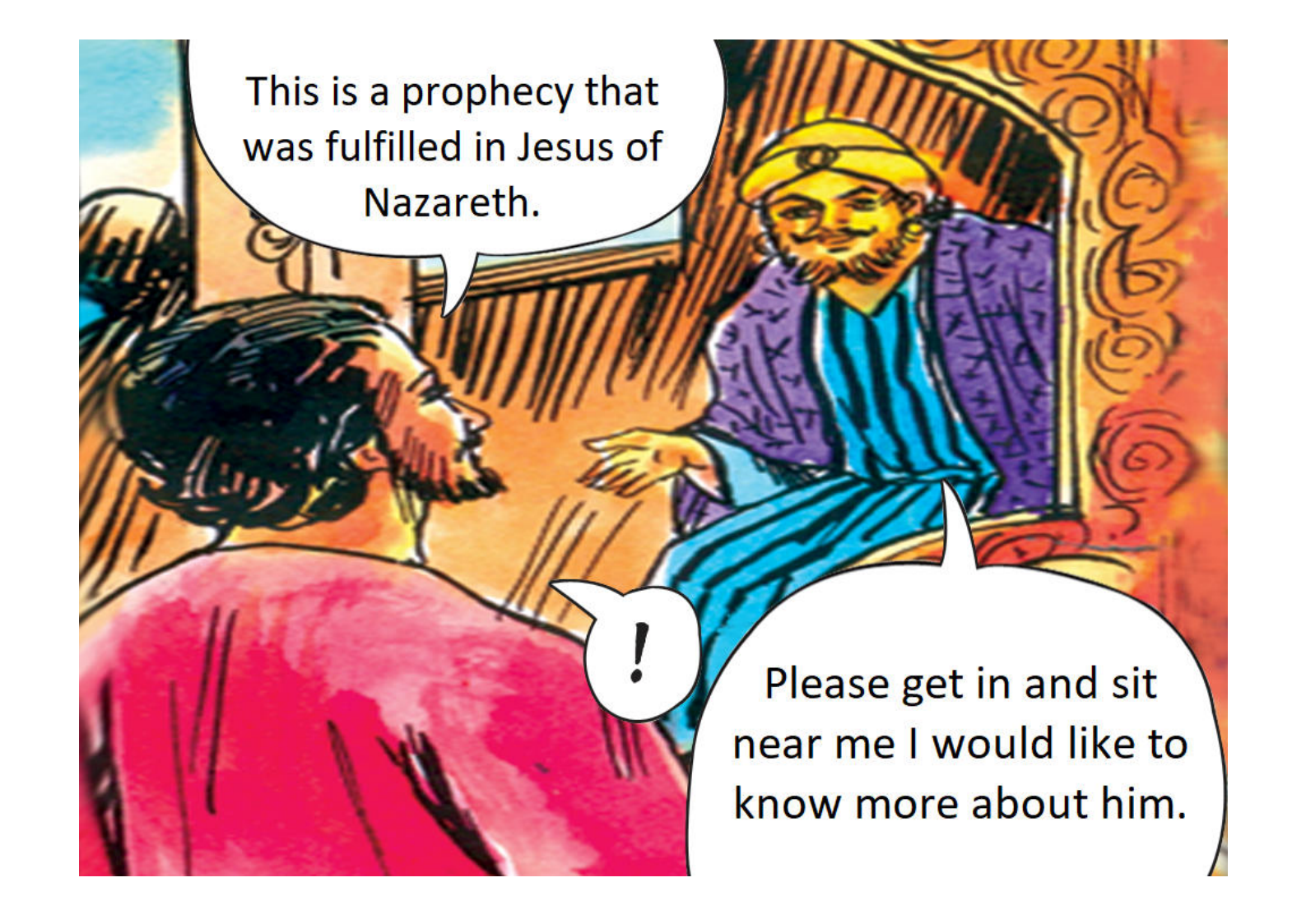
The chief treasurer of queen of Ethiopia was on his way home from Jerusalem.

Like a sheep that is led to the slaughter house...He never opened his mouth. He has been humiliated....



Led by the Holy Spirit, Philip the deacon approached the Chariot.





This is a prophecy that
was fulfilled in Jesus of
Nazareth.

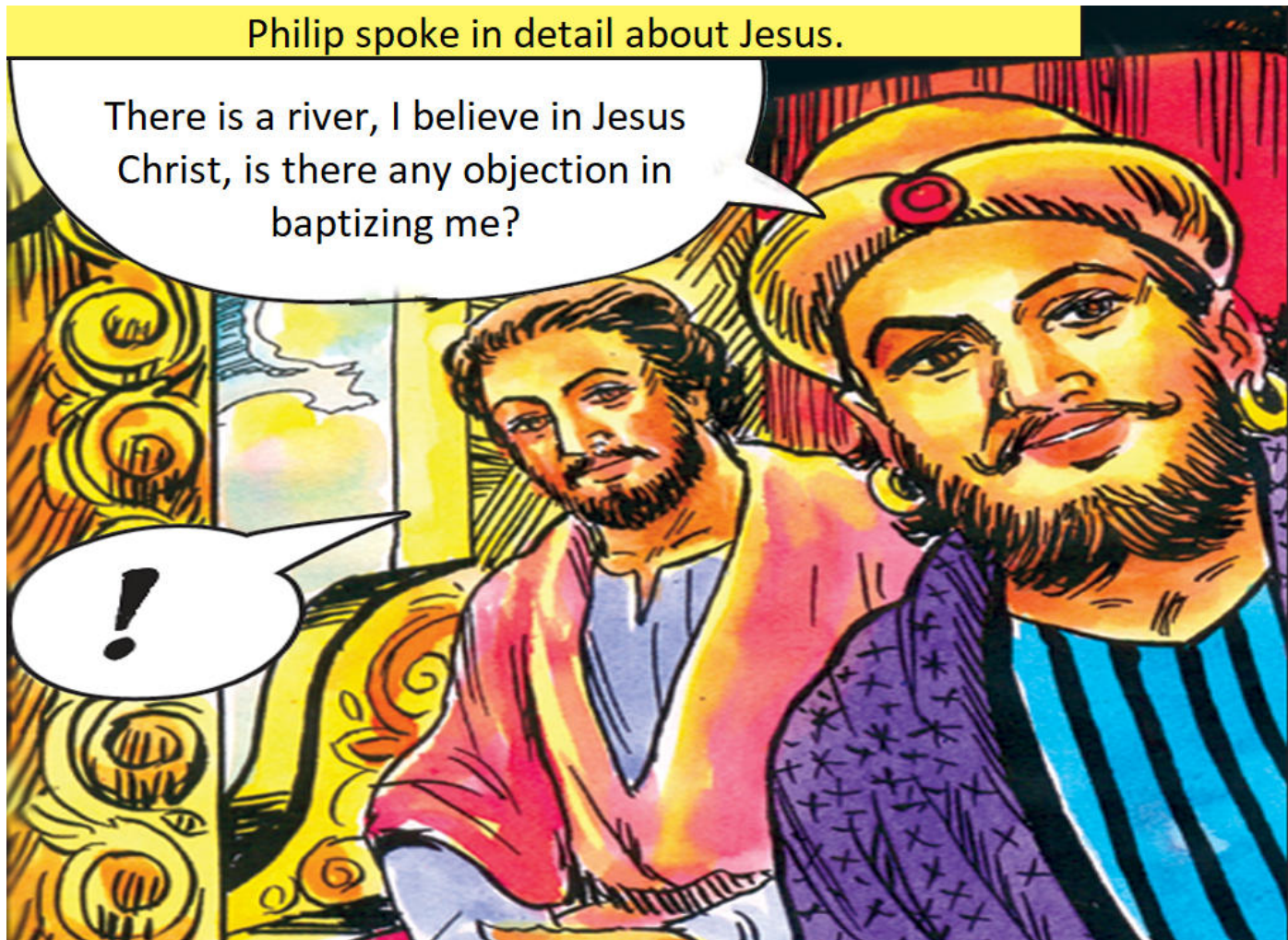
!

Please get in and sit
near me I would like to
know more about him.

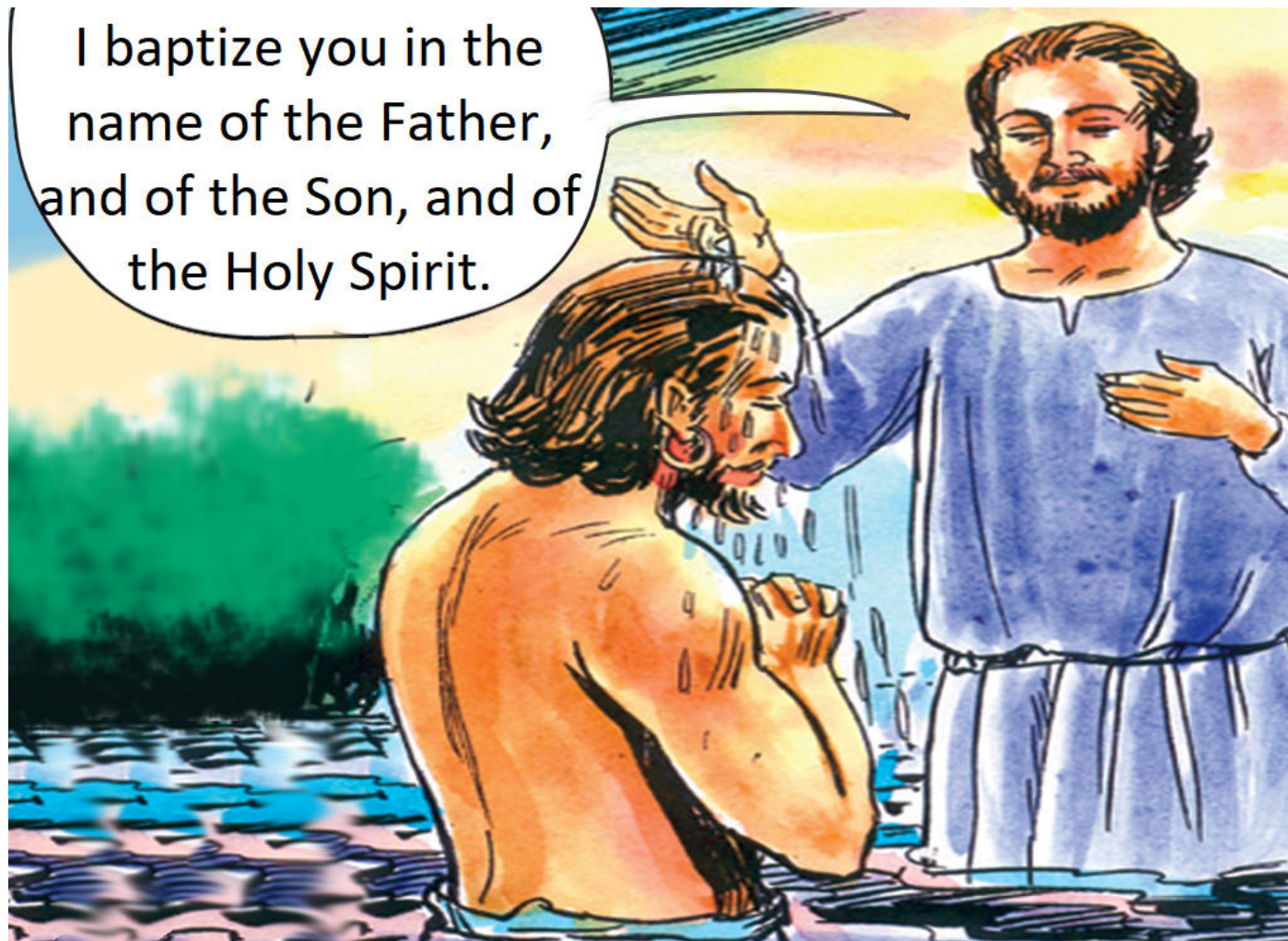
Philip spoke in detail about Jesus.

There is a river, I believe in Jesus Christ, is there any objection in baptizing me?

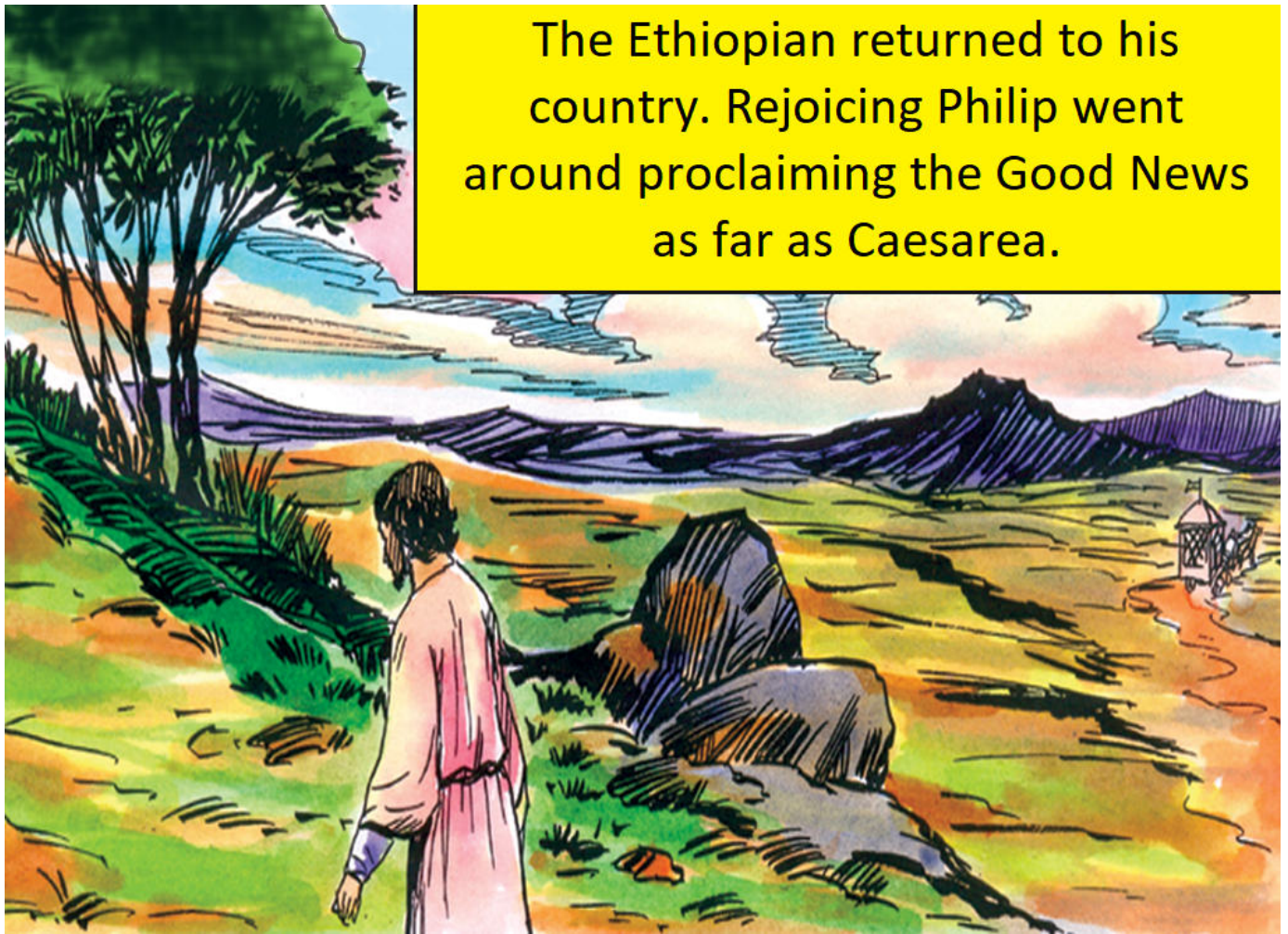
!



I baptize you in the
name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of
the Holy Spirit.



The Ethiopian returned to his country. Rejoicing Philip went around proclaiming the Good News as far as Caesarea.

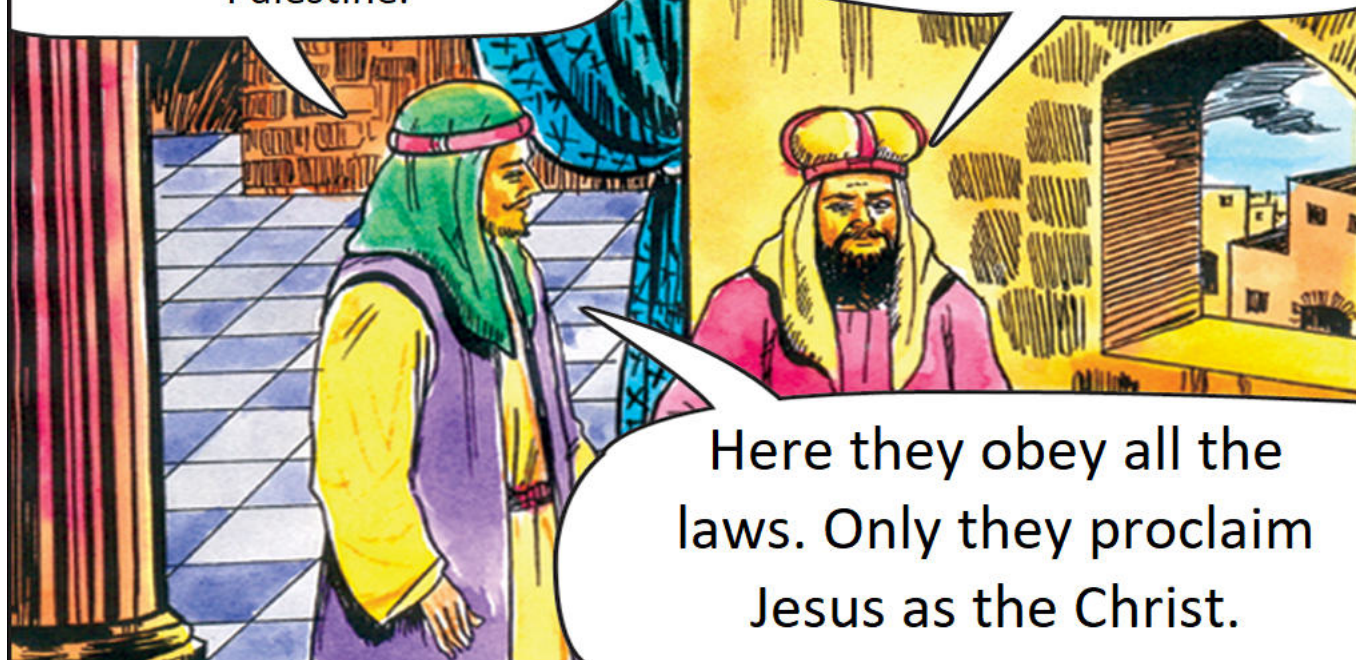


Saul determined to wipe out the Church of Christ, went to the High priest.

The followers of that Nazarene are now leading astray the Jews living outside Palestine.


What are we going to do? We can't control them even in this Holy City.

Here they obey all the laws. Only they proclaim Jesus as the Christ.



Isn't it what they
do everywhere?



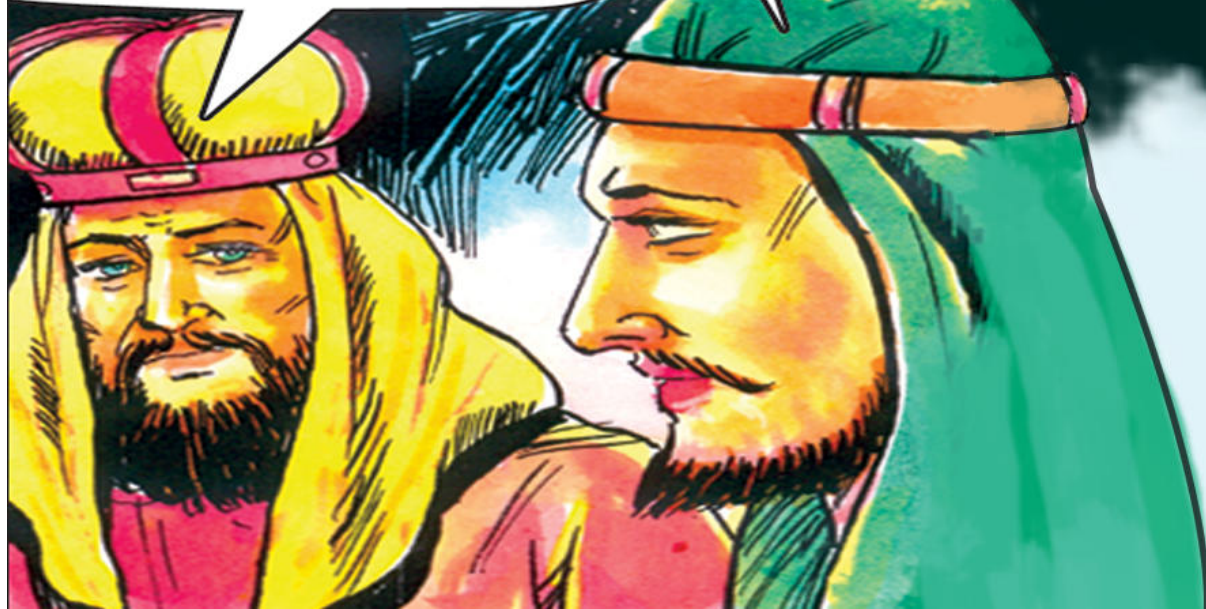


That Stephen's people are causing the entire problem. They teach that it is not necessary to follow the laws of Moses.

We have no authority outside Palestine.

Jews are Jews wherever they live. You being the High Priest have authority over them.

Saul, what are you driving at?



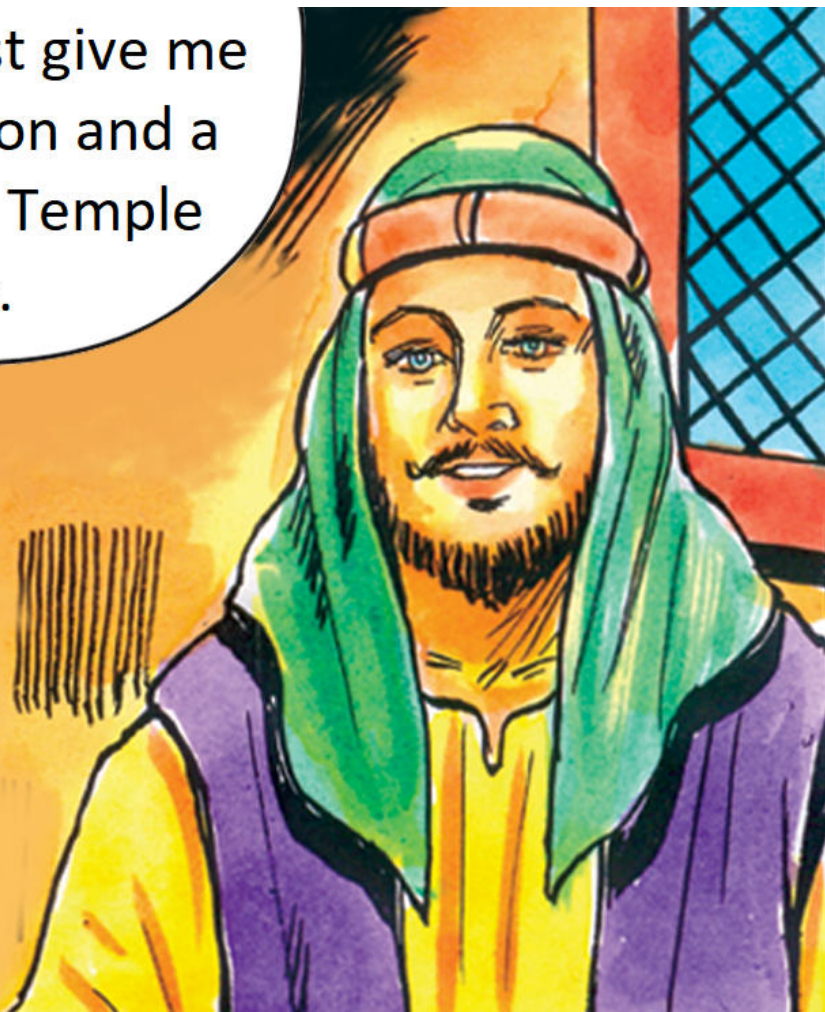
You give me a letter addressed to the
Synagogues in Damascus, authorizing me
to arrest any Jew, who follows Christ.



Will they oblige?

Don't waver, just give me
the authorization and a
division of the Temple
Guards.

Then?

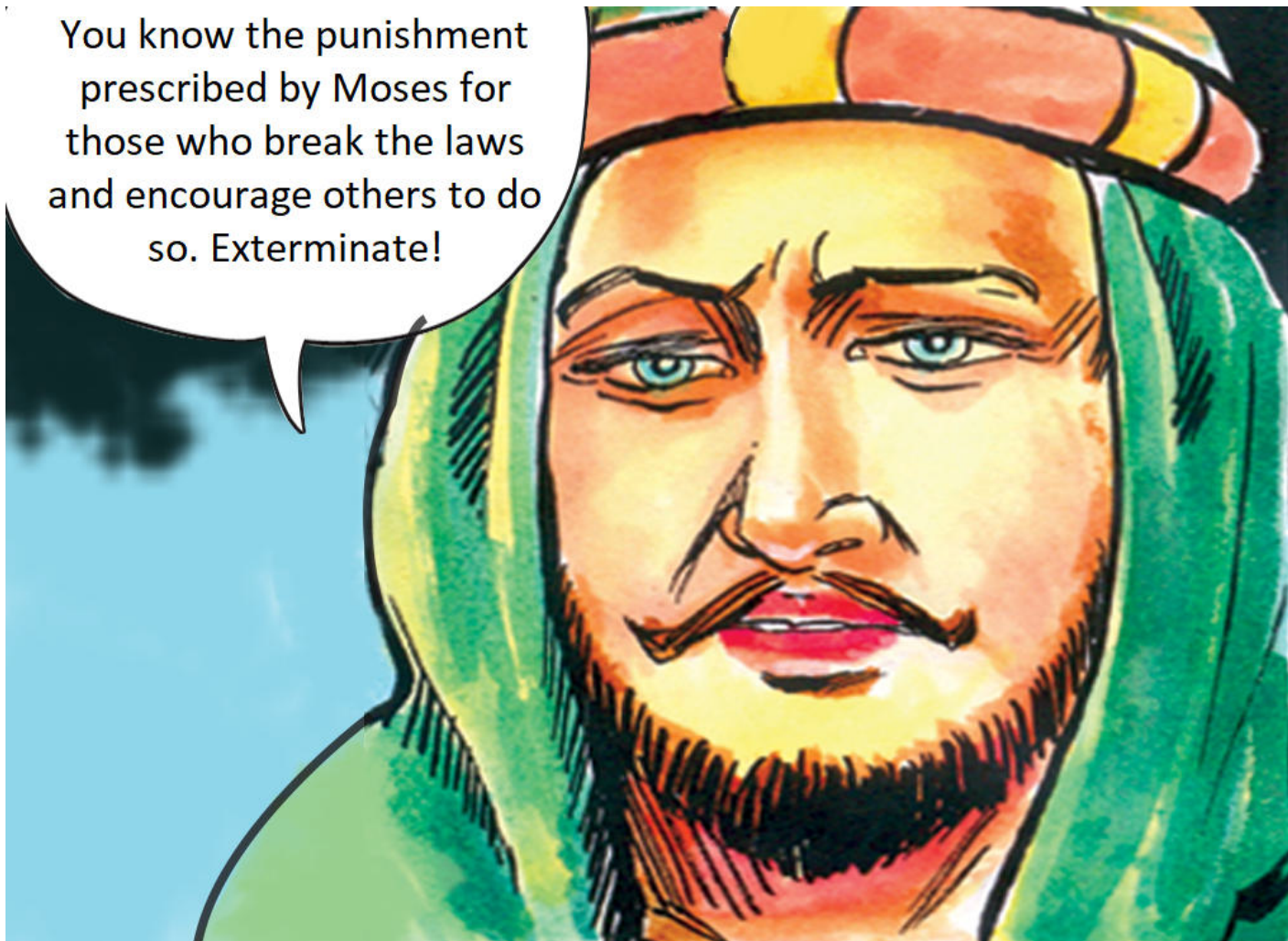


I shall arrest and bring all of them to Jerusalem. If needed, I will seek the help of the Romans also.

The letter will be ready by tomorrow morning. I think that we better avoid using force.



You know the punishment
prescribed by Moses for
those who break the laws
and encourage others to do
so. Exterminate!




When Saul and his company came near Damascus.



SAUL, SAUL, WHY
ARE YOU
PERSECUTING ME.





Who are
you Lord.

I AM JESUS WHOM
YOU PERSECUTE.
NOW GET UP AND
GO INTO THE CITY
AND YOU WILL BE
TOLD WHAT YOU
HAVE TO DO.

?!

Those who were with Saul heard the voice but understood nothing.

Saul what
happened to
you?

I can't see a thing!
Lead me to the city.



Saul remained in prayer.

Saul, get up and eat. It has been three days since you ate anything.

No thanks.



A disciple called Ananias who lived in Damascus had a vision.

An illustration of a man, Ananias, in a red robe with a blue sash, standing in a dark space with a bright yellow light source behind him. He has his hands outstretched. A large, cloud-like speech bubble above him contains the text 'ANANIAS!'. A smaller, oval speech bubble to his right contains the text 'Here I am Lord.'.

ANANIAS!

Here I am Lord.

YOU MUST GO TO THE
STRAIGHT STREET AND
ASK AT THE HOUSE OF
JUDAS FOR SOMEONE
CALLED SAUL FROM
TARSUS.



Lord, isn't he the one set out
to destroy your saints.

**YOU MUST GO ALL THE SAME,
BECAUSE HE IS MY CHOSEN
VESSEL TO BRING MY NAME TO
THE GENTILES AND KINGS. HE
WILL HAVE TO SUFFER MUCH
FOR MY NAME.**



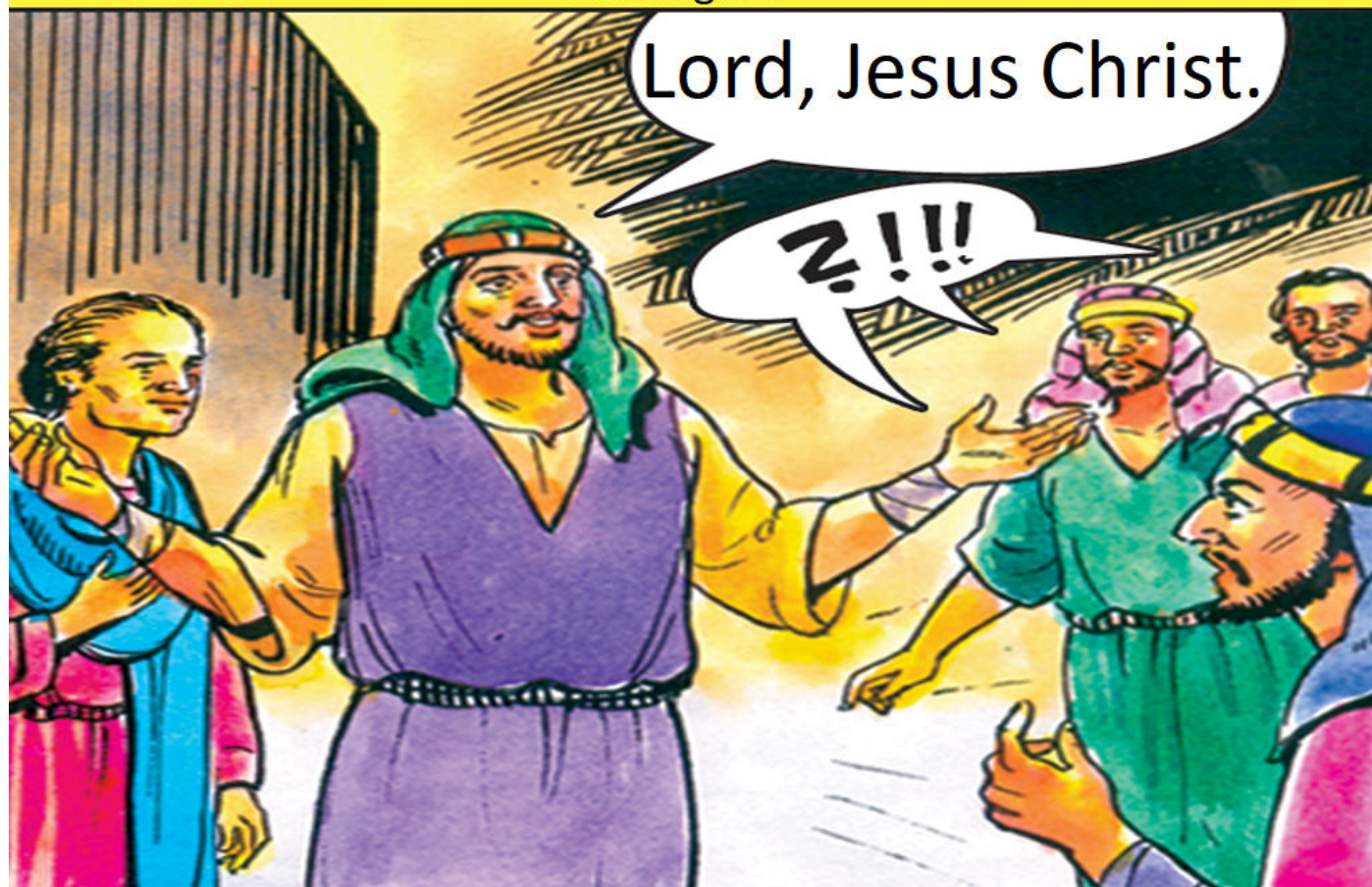
Obedying the Lord's command Ananias went to Saul.

Brother Saul, I have been
sent by the Lord that you
may recover your sight and
be filled with the
Holy Spirit.





Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, He could see again.



Saul spent a few days with the disciples in Damascus.

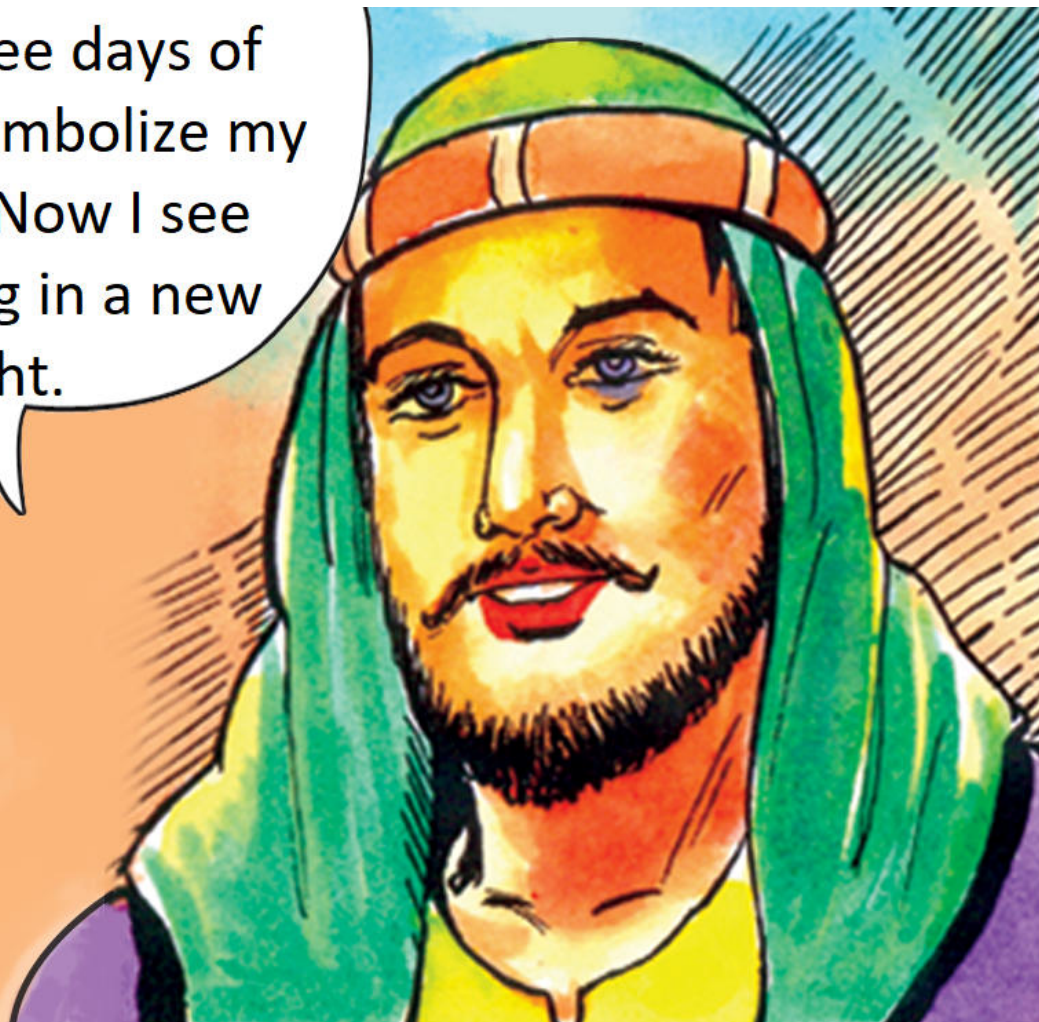
Brethren, I am very grateful for your kindness and love.

We are even more grateful to the Lord who revealed himself to you.

He has chosen you to bring the Good News to the ends of the earth.



Those three days of darkness symbolize my past life. Now I see everything in a new light.

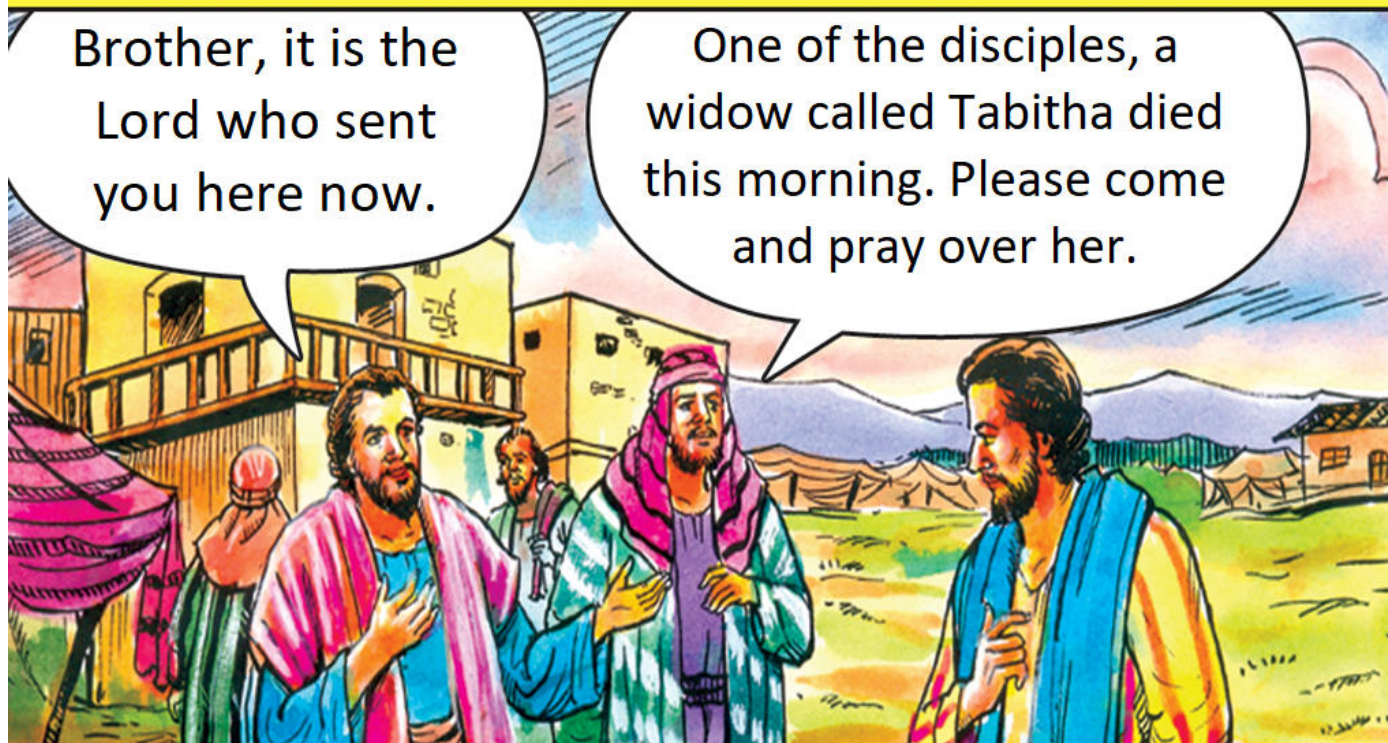


I want to spend some days in solitude and prayer. I am going to Arabia.

Brother, go wherever you are led by the Lord. Our prayers will be with you.



Peter went around preaching and strengthening the faith of the disciples.
When he reached Joppa:



Tabitha was a mother and sister to all of us. She made this dress for me.

She gave food to all who were hungry.

All of you get out, please.





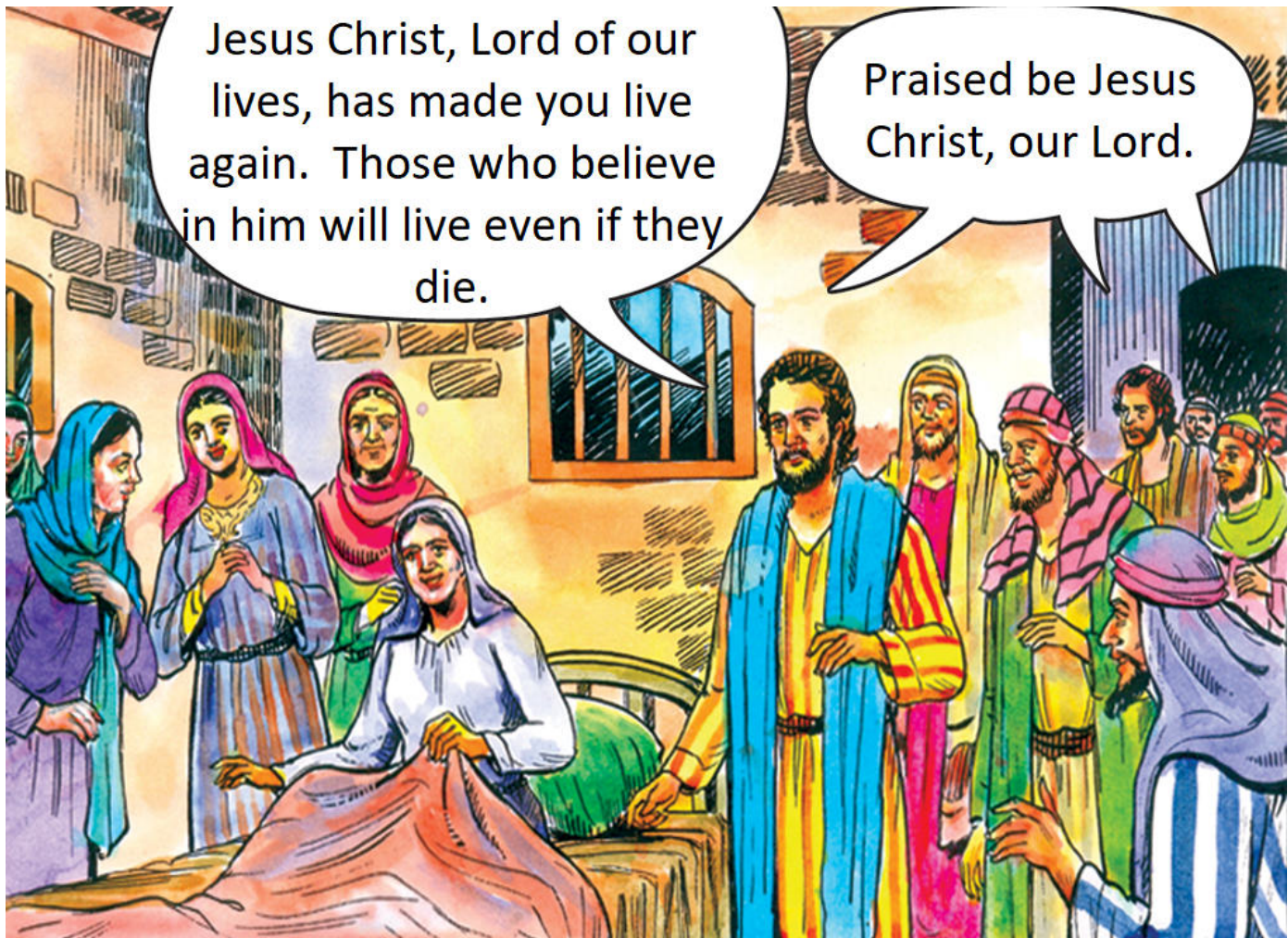
After the prayer.

Tabitha, get
up.



Jesus Christ, Lord of our lives, has made you live again. Those who believe in him will live even if they die.

Praised be Jesus Christ, our Lord.



The whole of Joppa heard about Tabitha.

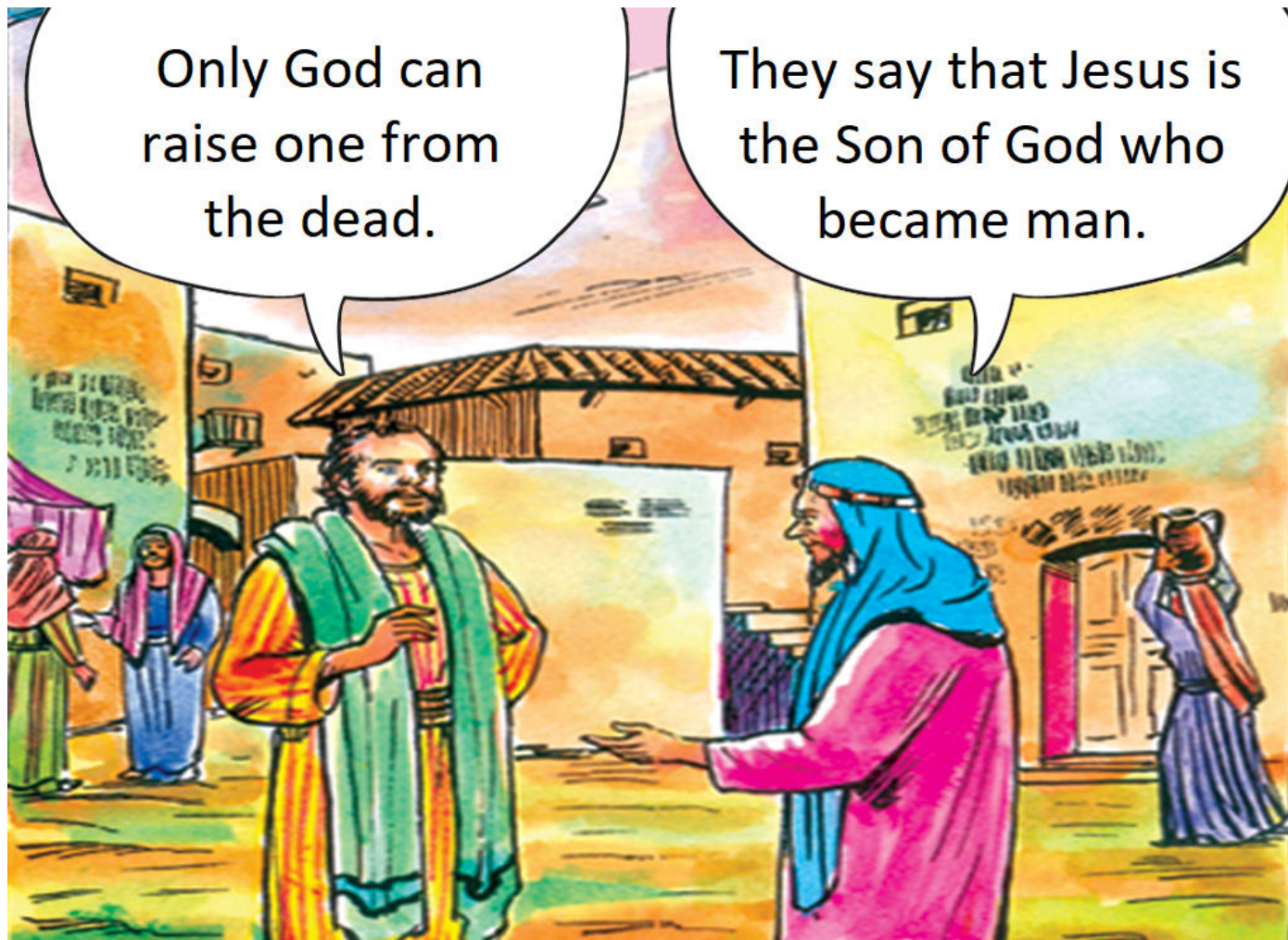
Did you hear that a man called Peter
brought to life a woman who was
dead?

I too heard that. It wasn't Peter
but Jesus Christ who made her
live again.



Only God can
raise one from
the dead.

They say that Jesus is
the Son of God who
became man.



Hey, I would like to
know more about
Him.

Speak to His disciples. There is
something special about the
ones who become
disciples of Jesus.



I too have noticed that. You know that Simon, the cobbler who was always drunk and quarrelsome?

I know. What a change! He has become so calm and polite.



There are hundreds like that. They seem to be so happy and loving to each other.

What is the secret of this change?

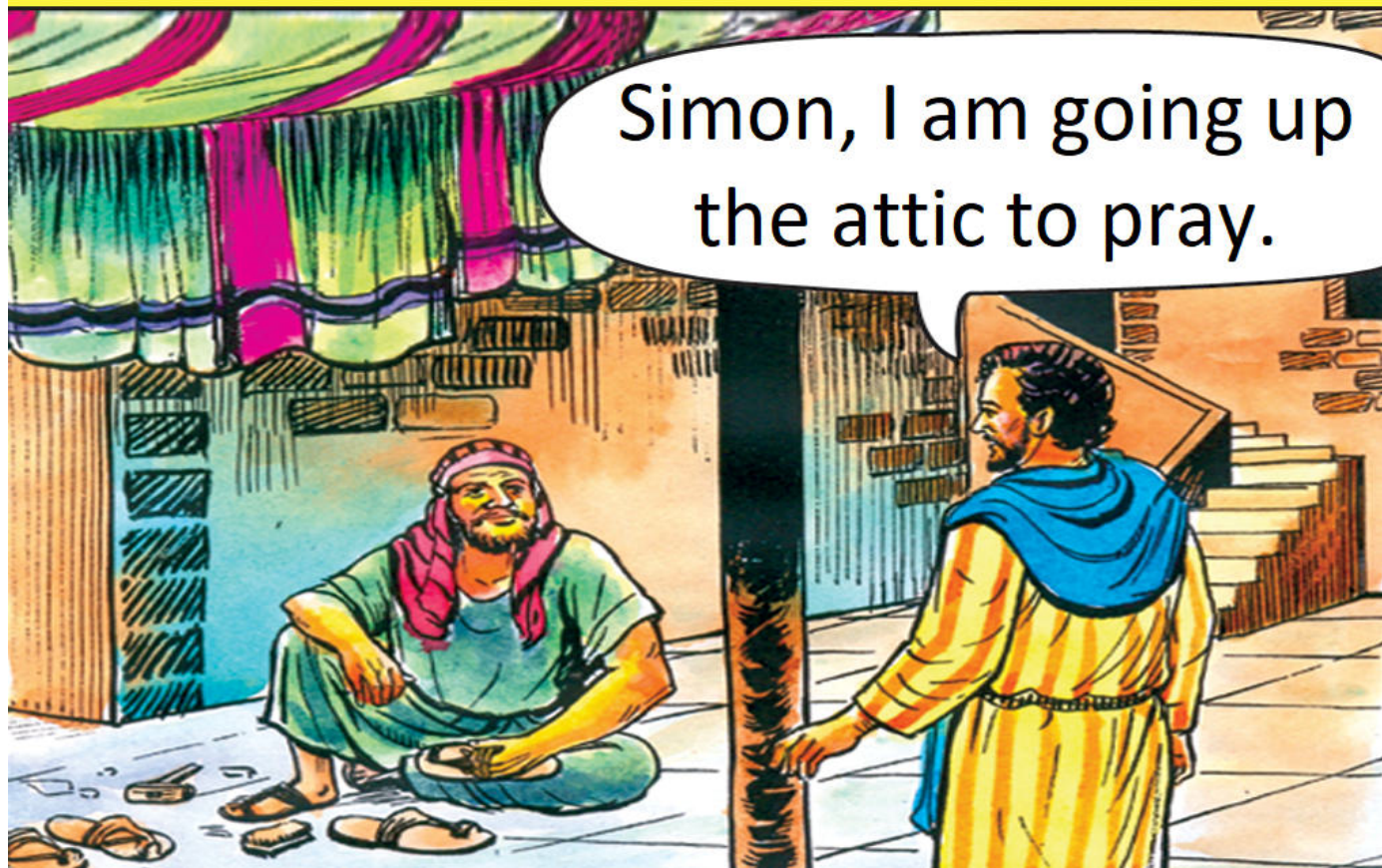


Peter is staying at
Simeon's house. Let us go
and see him.

All right, I do want to
know more about
Jesus.



Many in Joppa and neighborhood believed in Christ. Peter stayed with Simon the cobbler for some time. One day...



Why am I
so hungry?

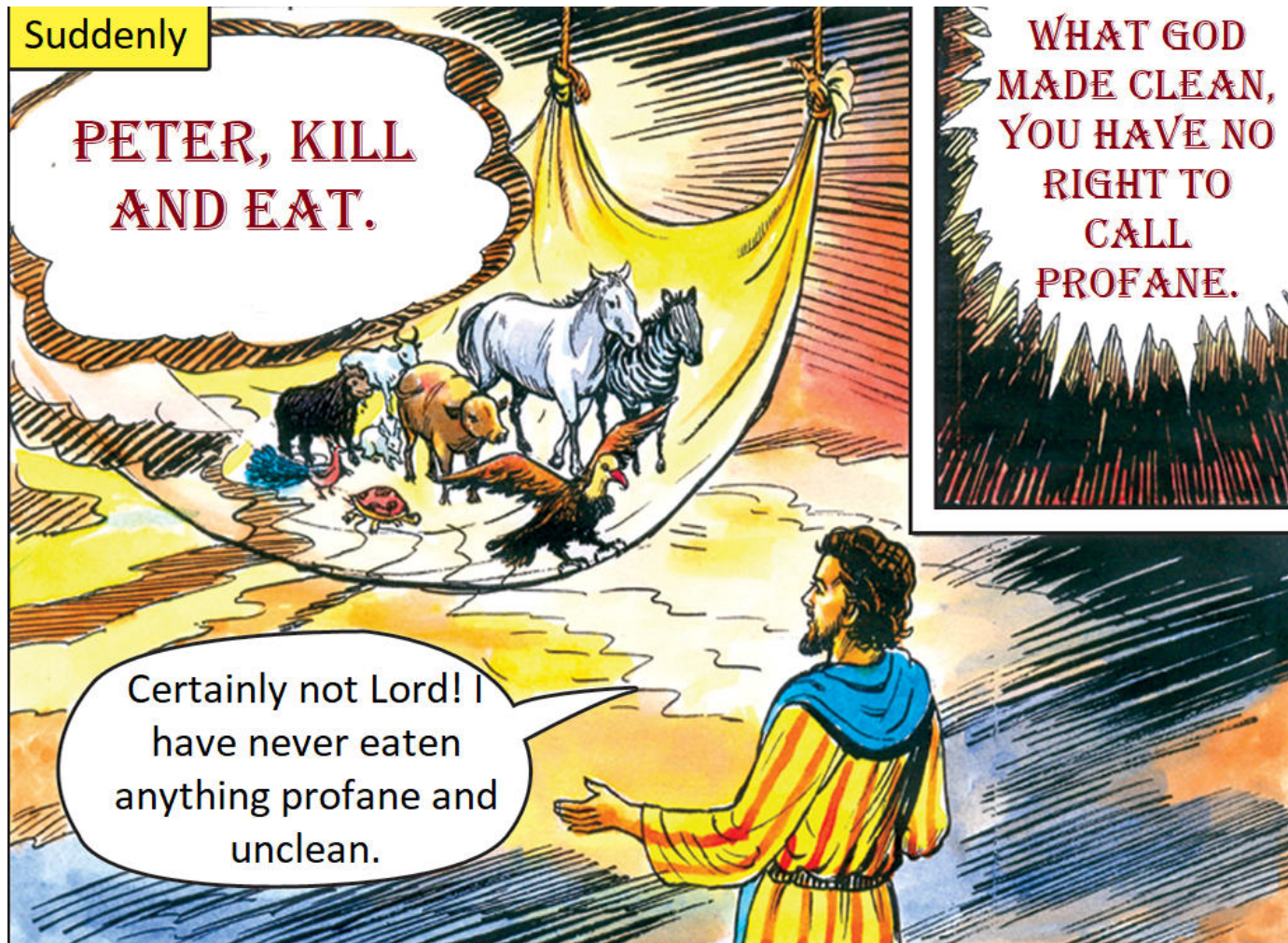


Suddenly

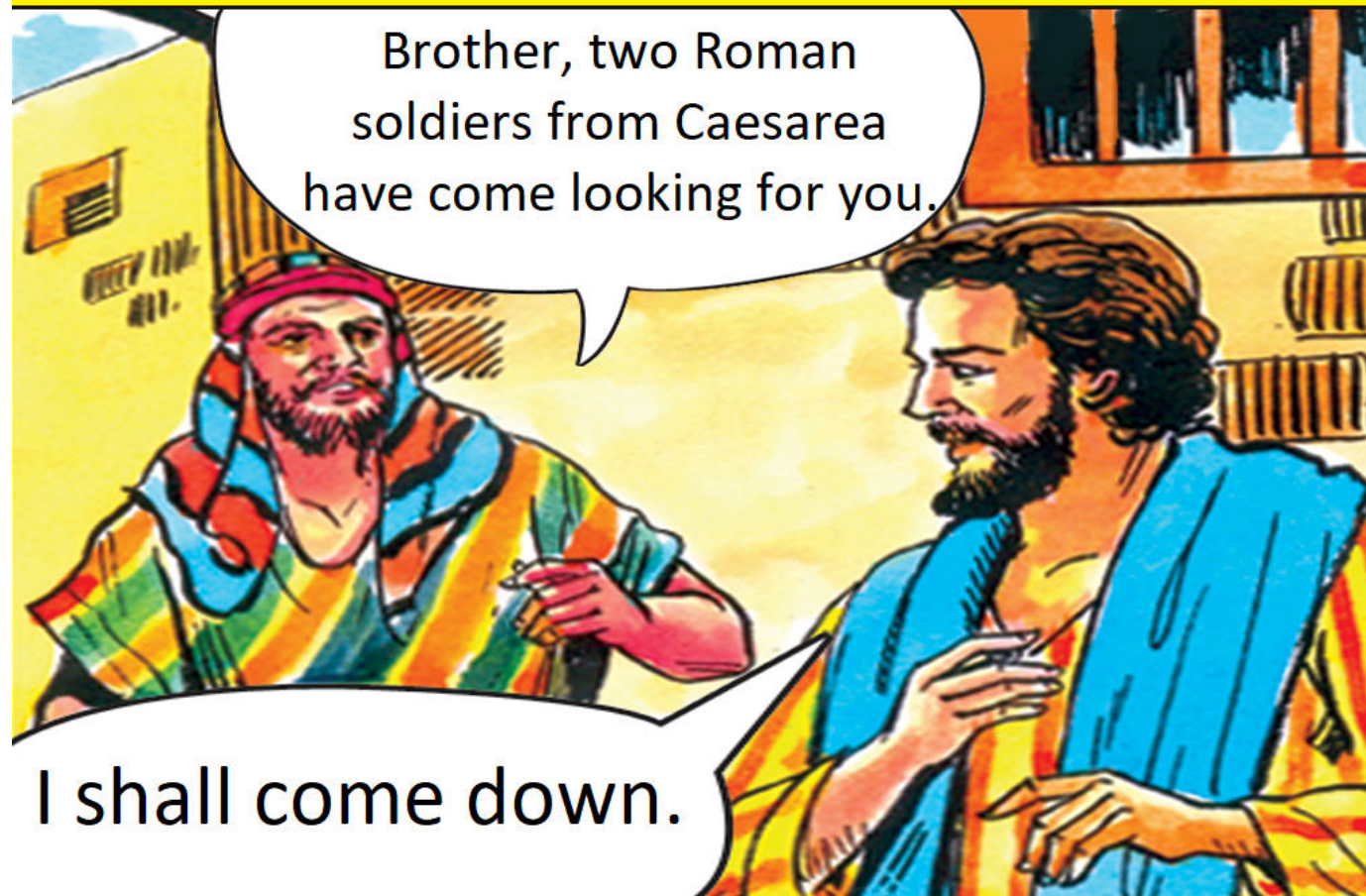
PETER, KILL
AND EAT.

WHAT GOD
MADE CLEAN,
YOU HAVE NO
RIGHT TO
CALL
PROFANE.

Certainly not Lord! I
have never eaten
anything profane and
unclean.



The vision was repeated three times. Then...



Are you Simon
known as Peter?

Yes, I am. What can I
do for you?



I am a soldier on the staff of the
centurion Cornelius stationed in
Caesarea.

We came according to a
vision he had.



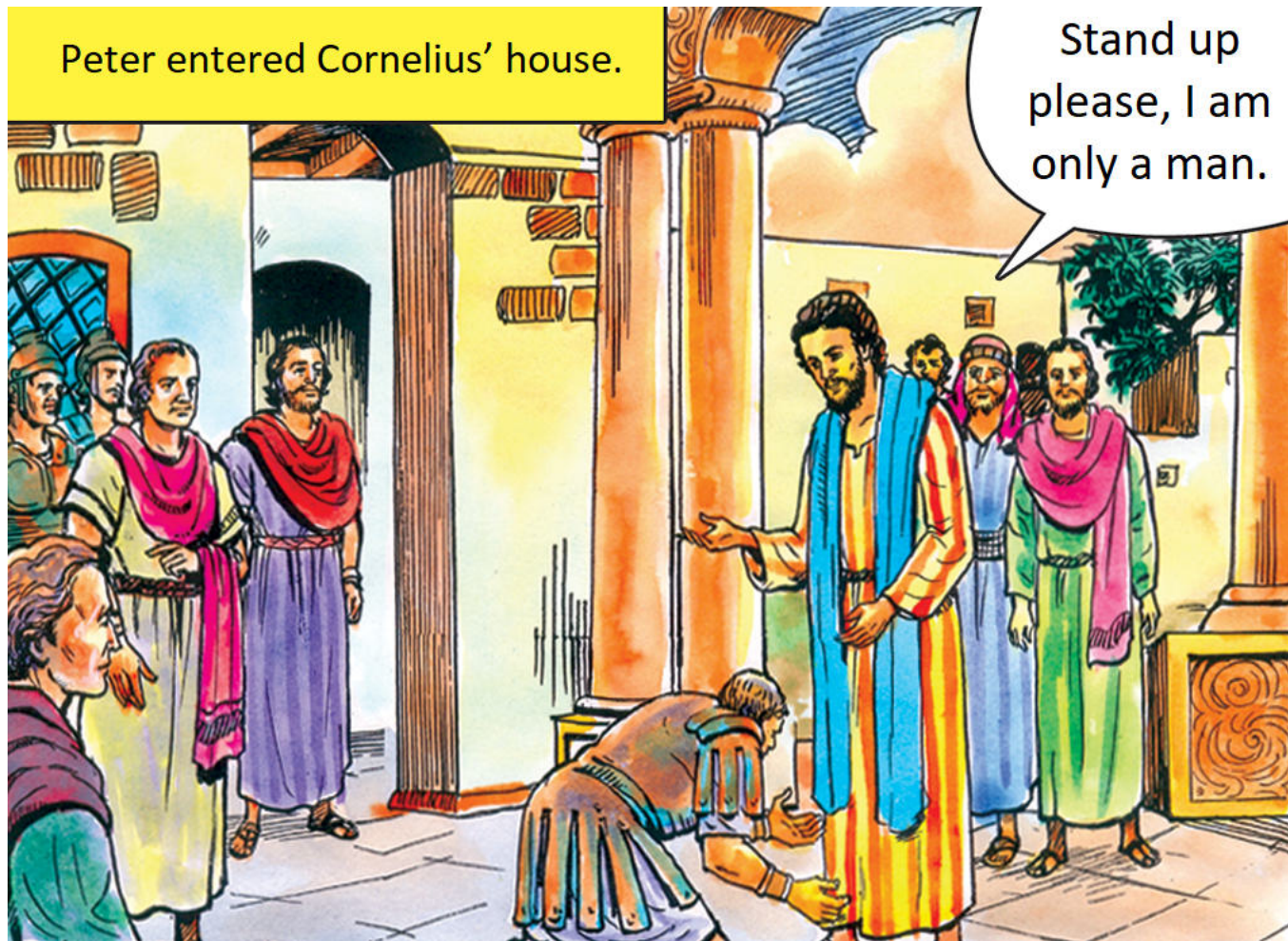
Our Master begs you
to come with us.

It is the Lord Jesus
Christ who sent you.
Let us go.



Peter entered Cornelius' house.

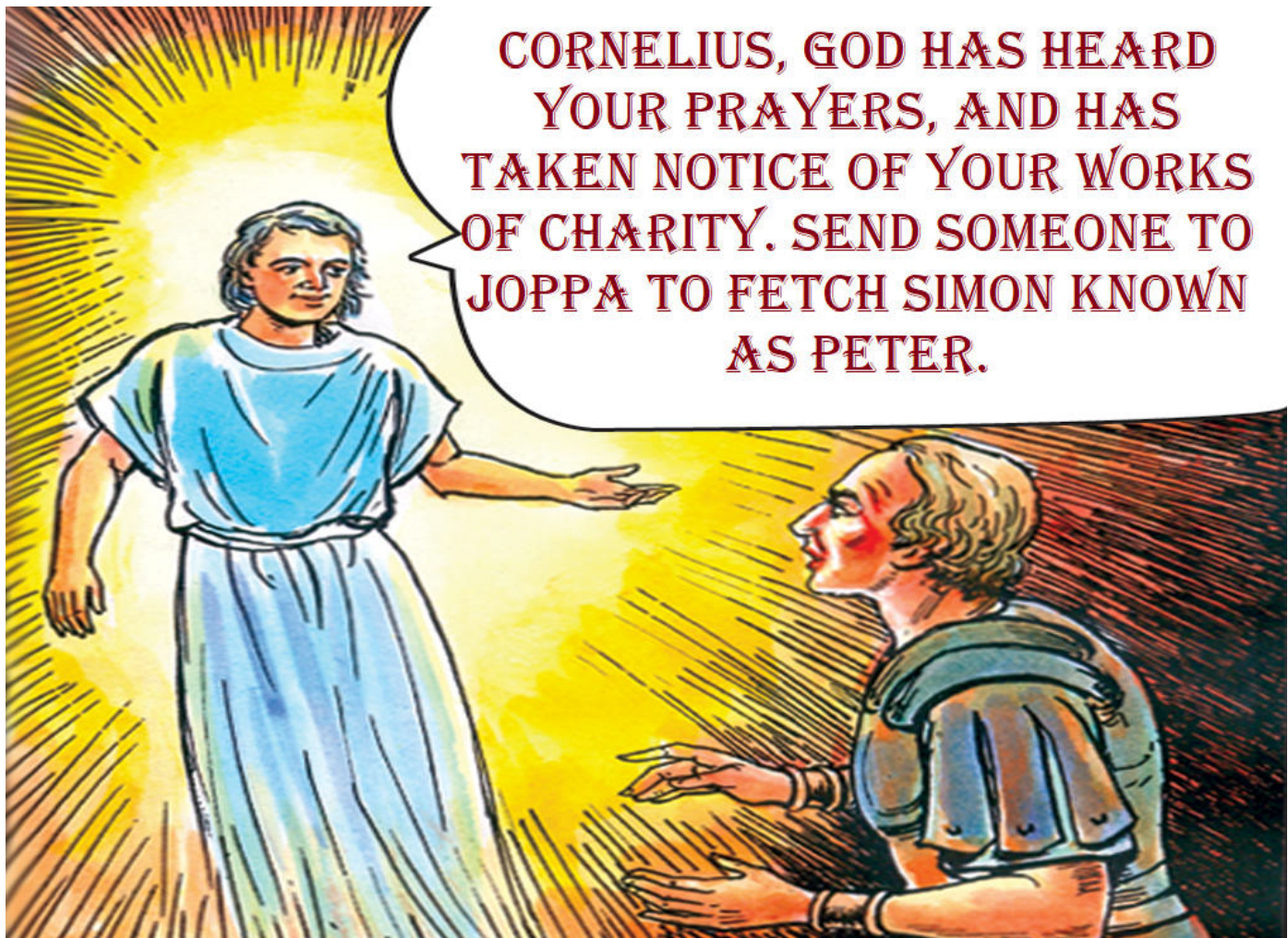
Stand up please, I am only a man.





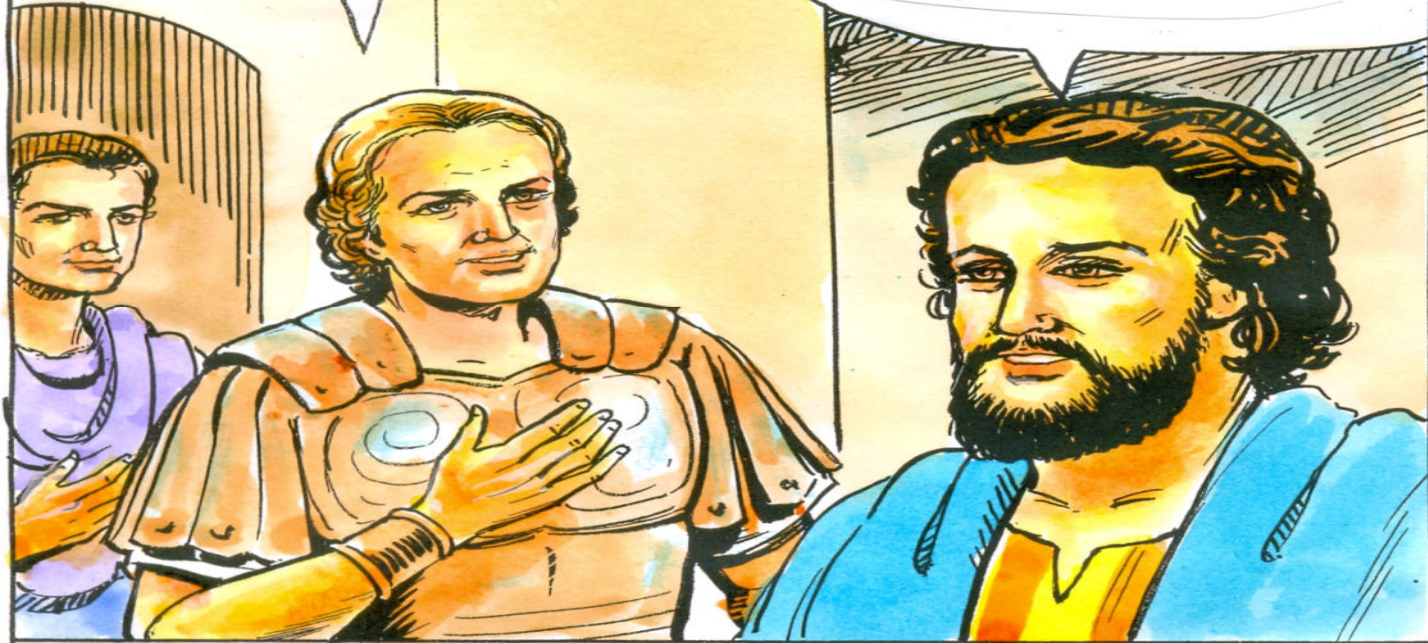
As I was praying in the afternoon, I saw a man dressed in shining clothes.

CORNELIUS, GOD HAS HEARD
YOUR PRAYERS, AND HAS
TAKEN NOTICE OF YOUR WORKS
OF CHARITY. SEND SOMEONE TO
JOPPA TO FETCH SIMON KNOWN
AS PETER.



You have been kind
enough to come. We
all want to hear the
message God has
given you for us.

I have come to know
that God does not have
any favorites. Anybody
who fears God and does
what is right is
acceptable to Him.



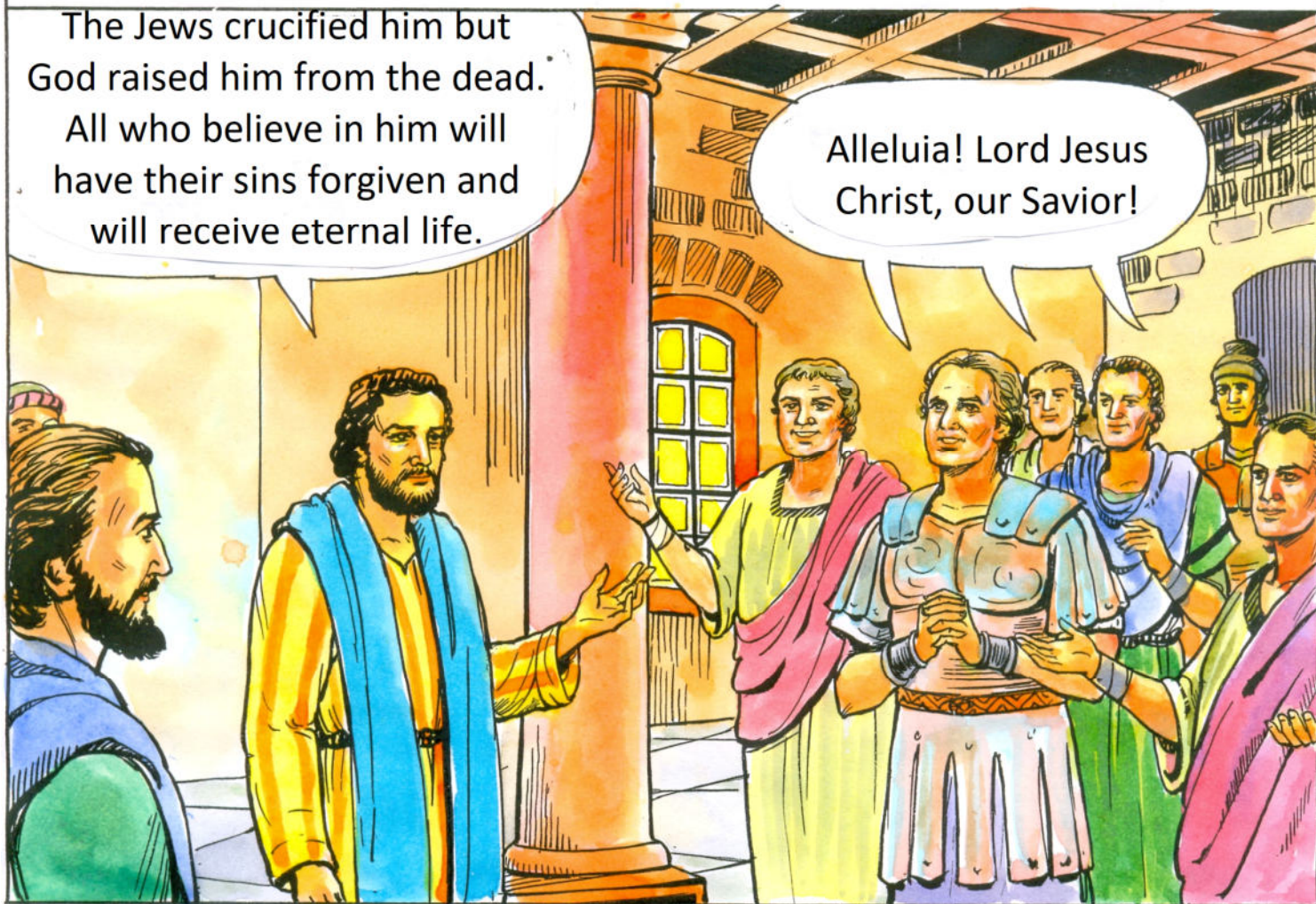
God sent His word
through His son, Jesus
Christ, who went around
all of Palestine and
Judea, doing good.



The Jews crucified him but
God raised him from the dead.

All who believe in him will
have their sins forgiven and
will receive eternal life.

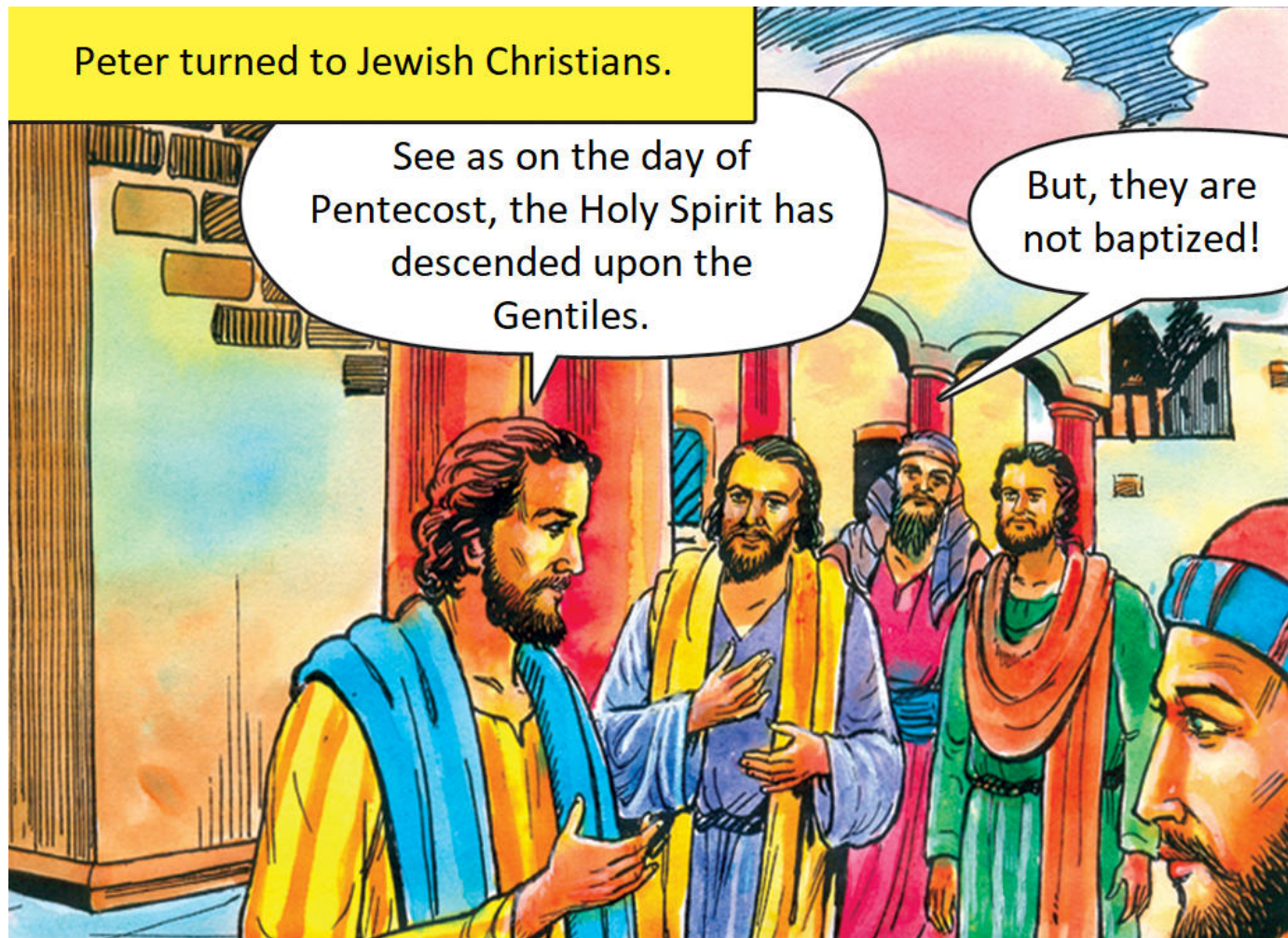
Alleluia! Lord Jesus
Christ, our Savior!



Peter turned to Jewish Christians.

See as on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has descended upon the Gentiles.

But, they are not baptized!



Why do we hesitate?
Baptize them all in
the name of Jesus
Christ.

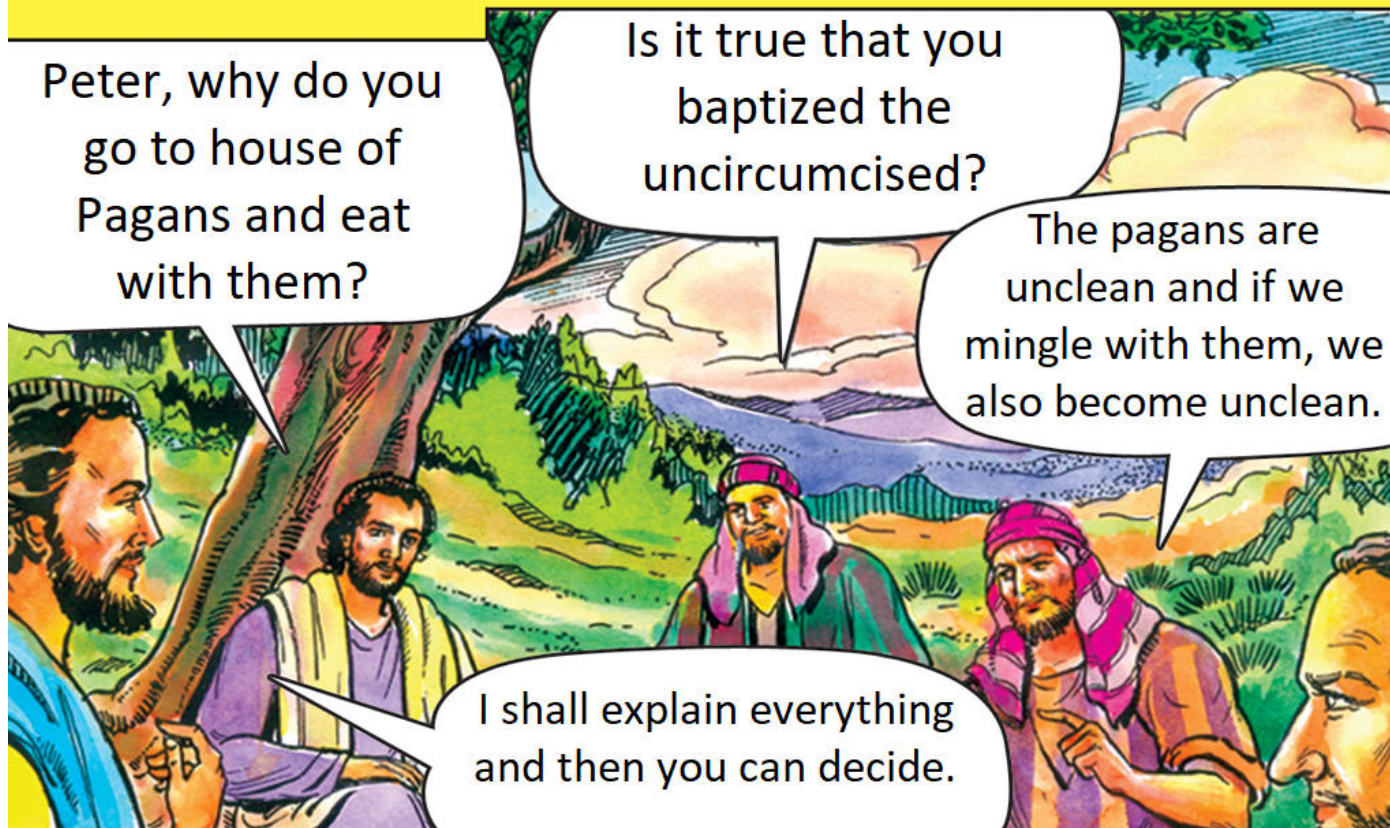


Brother, stay with us for a few days and teach us everything in detail.

I am only happy to do it.



Among the Christians of Jerusalem, a group led by James, known as the brothers of Jesus claimed that all those who believe in Christ, must be circumcised first.





After narrating all that
happened in Caesarea.

Who am I to oppose
God sending the Holy
Spirit upon them?

The Holy Spirit has taught
us that salvation is for the
Gentiles as well as for the
Jews.

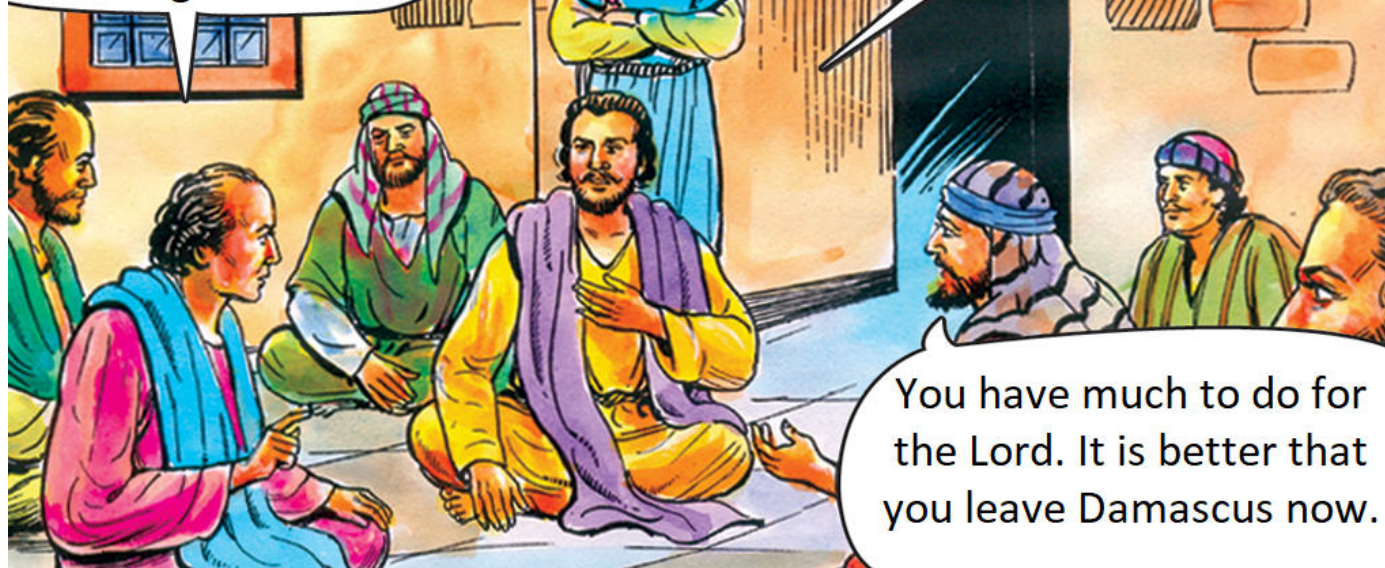
But they must be
circumcised and
obey all the laws.



[Saul returned from Arabia and began to preach in the Synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. One day:

Brother Saul, the Jews are determined to kill you. They have secured the support of Aretas, king of Arabia.

I am ready to die for the Lord who loved me and sacrificed his life for me.

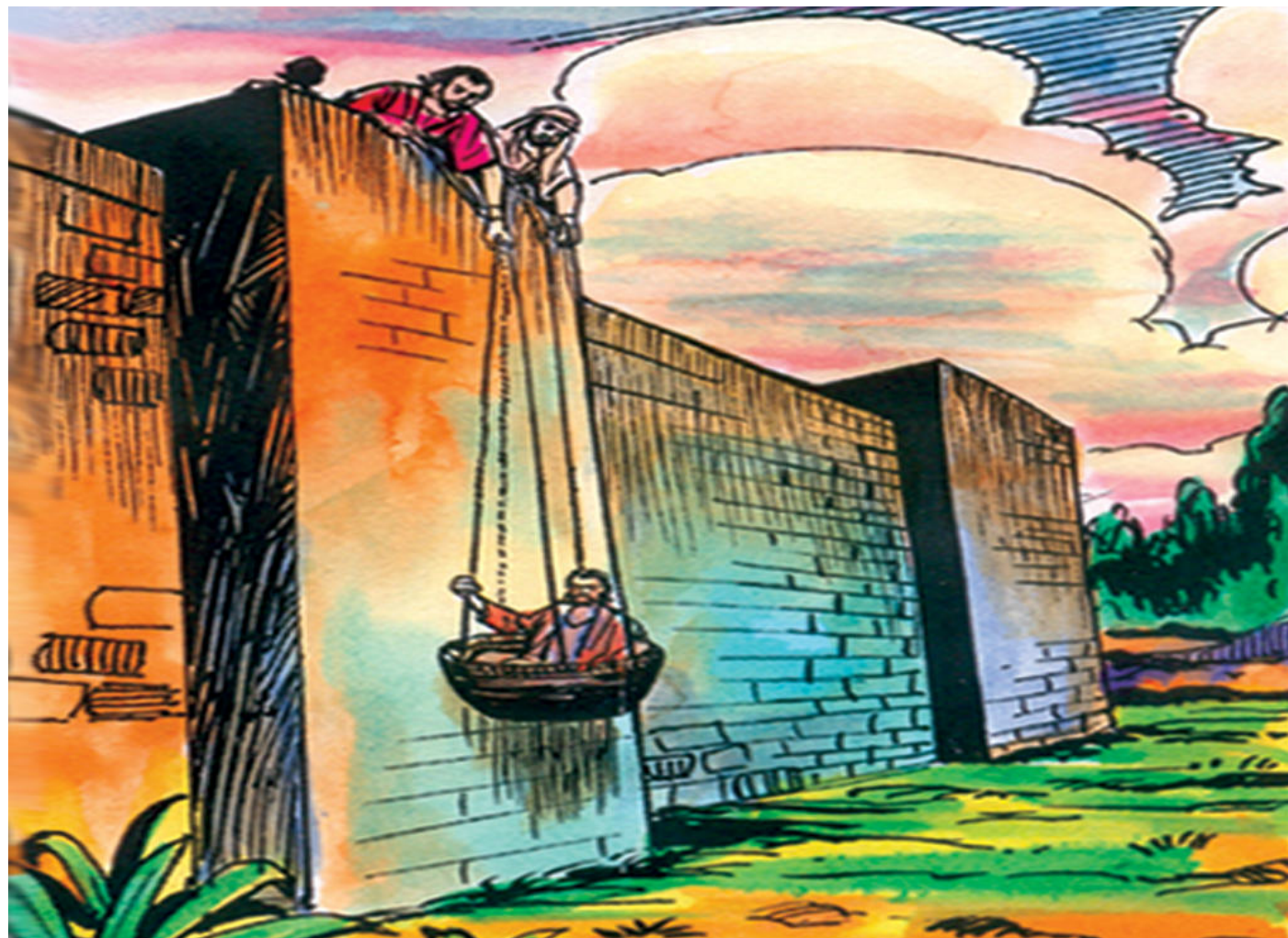


You have much to do for the Lord. It is better that you leave Damascus now.

There are guards at every door with orders to arrest you.

Don't let them seize you. Escape tonight itself!



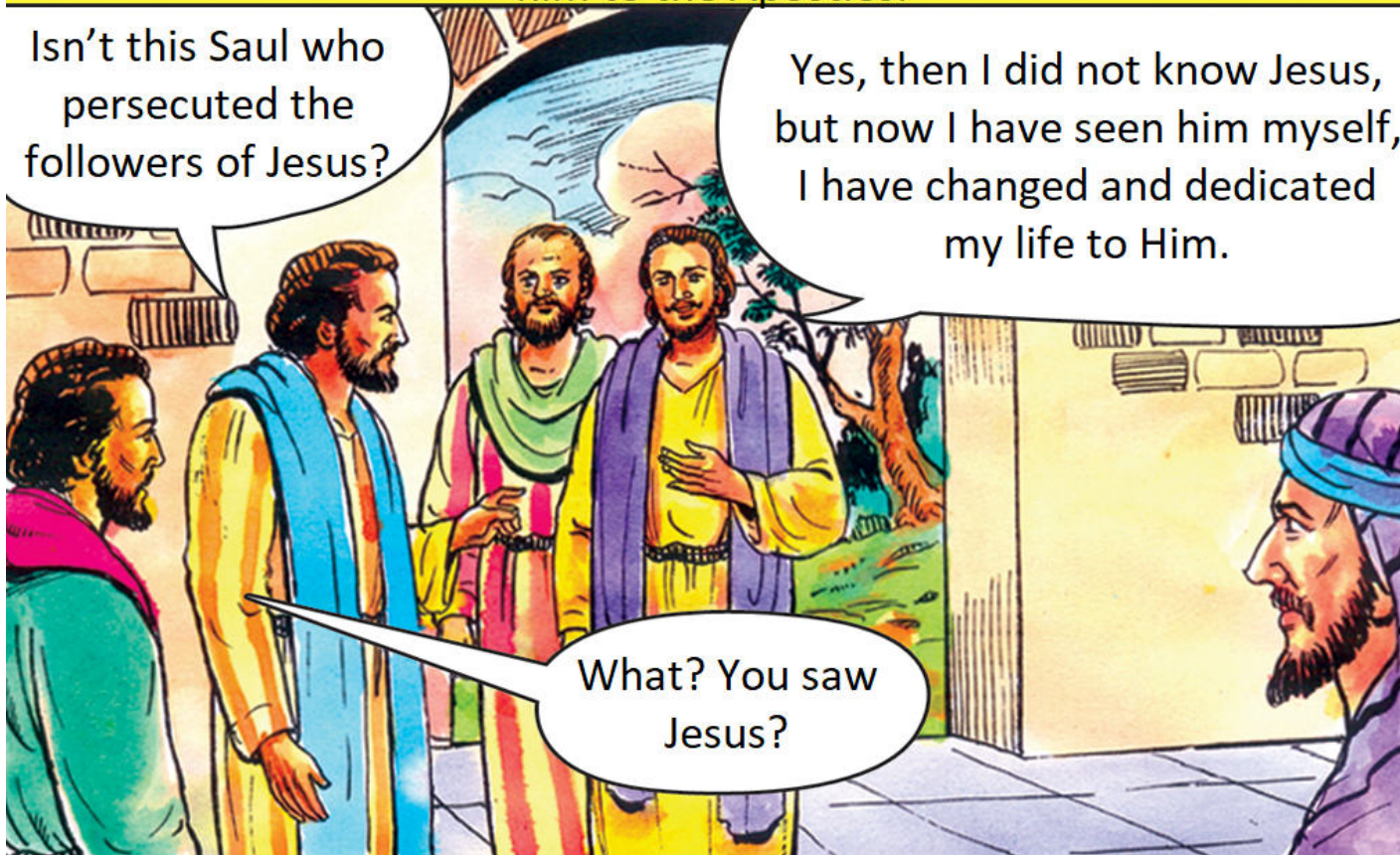


When Saul reached Jerusalem, he tried to join disciples but they were all afraid of him. However Barnabas trusted him and brought him to the Apostles.

Isn't this Saul who persecuted the followers of Jesus?

Yes, then I did not know Jesus, but now I have seen him myself, I have changed and dedicated my life to Him.

What? You saw Jesus?



Barnabas explained how Saul was converted.

Because he preached about Jesus in Damascus, the Jews tried to kill him. He barely escaped.

Praise the Lord who loves his enemies and makes them disciples.





Brother, welcome you
must explain all these to
our brothers here. We
shall inform others
about you.

Saul went around preaching in the name of Jesus. When the Jews couldn't defeat him in disputes. They decided to kill him.

Brother Saul, your life is precious for the Church. Please leave Jerusalem.

I give no importance to my life. But I am ready to go wherever the Lord sent me.



For now go to Tarsus, there
also you can bear witness to
the Lord.

Barnabas why don't you go
with Him as far as Caesarea.



Saul boarded the ship from Caesarea and went to his hometown.



Herod Agrippa, Grandson of Herod the great, became king of Palestine. To please the Jews he persecuted the Christians, Killed James, brother of John and imprisoned Peter.



The chains fell from his hands and the doors opened.



This is no dream! The Lord
really brought me out of
the prison.



Peter went to the house of Mark where the disciples were spending the night in prayer.

Brother Peter, how did you get out of the prison? We have been praying for you.

The Lord heard your prayers and sent his angel to free me.

Tomorrow morning they will look for you everywhere in town.



I shall leave
Jerusalem
tonight itself.
Please inform
James and
other brothers.

May the Lord
protect you!



So far the Good News was proclaimed mainly among the Jews. Now begin the activities of the Apostles to the Gentiles.

NEXT STORY

CHOSEN VESSEL

Questions

1. What were the accusations brought against Stephen?
2. Who was Saul?
3. What were his accusations against the Christians?
4. When did the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit?
5. Explain the conversion of Saul.
6. What insight did Saul gain from the Damascus experience?
7. How did Peter come to know that all are equal in the eyes of God?
8. Describe the conversion of Cornelius.
9. Why did the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem question Peter?
10. Name the king who killed Jacob and arrested Peter.

Memorize: “I am Jesus whom you persecute” (Acts 9,5)

THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN COMICS

1. Cain and Abel
2. Abraham
3. Jacob
4. Joseph
5. Moses
6. Joshua
7. Samson
8. Ruth
9. Samuel
10. Saul
11. David
12. King David
13. Solomon
14. Elijah
15. Amos
16. Hosea
17. Micah

18. Isaiah
19. Jeremiah
20. Ezekiel
21. Zechariah
22. Jonah
23. Job
24. Tobit
25. Daniel
26. Susanna
27. Esther
28. Judith
29. Maccabeus
30. The Maccabees
31. A World Awaiting
32. Light of the world
33. The Herald
34. The Prophet
35. The Liberator

36. The One to come
37. The Lord of the Universe
38. Son of God
39. The Son of Man
40. In the shadow of the cross
41. The Way
42. Son of David
43. Bread of Life
44. The Redeemer
45. With us forever
46. Tongues of fire
47. Baptism in blood
48. The chosen vessel
49. Libation
50. Come, Lord Jesus
51. Woman