

# Samaria

## Acts Chapter 8

Section II of the Book of Acts

### Act 8:1 1) Saul Persecutes the Church vs 1-4

Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

- At the end chapter 7 Stephen was martyred and Saul was the authority that the people took their queue from him for the laid their coats at their feet.
- The saints were scattered. God uses the persecution to move the church to the places He wanted them to go according to Acts 1:8 "*ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*"
- This begins the second section of the book of Acts. Chapter 8-12 is in Samaria and Judea for the next 13 years.

Act 8:2 {Some} devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.

Act 8:3 But Saul {began} ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

- Acts 22:4+5 "*And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.*"
- Acts 26:10+11 "*Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against [them]. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled [them] to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted [them] even unto strange cities.*"
- 1 Corinthians 15:9+ 10a "*For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am*"
  - Paul speaks of GRACE some 120 times.
  - Paul teaches us that it is GRACE that saves us and keeps us.
- Galatians 1:13 "*For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:*"

Act 8:4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

- This is the application of this first section. The believers viewed the hand of God in everything. God is in control of everything and if there is persecution it was for His purpose and that we should still be diligent to those commands He has taught us. The Great Commission.

### Act 8:5 2) Samaria Hears the Gospel vs 5-8

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and {began} proclaiming Christ to them.

- We can look at the persecution and think what an awful thing. Or we can watch how God's plan is working.
- Philip was one of the Grecian Jews who was selected to wait on tables (Acts 6). God allowed the persecution and these Grecian Jews were scattered into the Roman world. God used the controversy of the widows being slighted to have some men selected and trained for God; the God used persecution to send these same men to go and preach the Gospel to Saul and Samaria.
- Notice they were preaching Christ (The Messiah) to them. Not a social gospel or life enhancement gospel but preaching Christ.

Act 8:6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

- The world needs to see and hear from Christians. The need to hear the Gospel of Christ from us and they need to see us living the standard of Christ as well as His Compassion.
- Once again it is not an Apostle performing signs, casting out demons and healing the lame.

Act 8:7 For {in the case of} many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out {of them} shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

Act 8:8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.

- The Samaritans were the people of Israel. Generally the tribes of the Northern Kingdom. In 2 Kings 17:24-40 tells us how:
  - King of Assyria carried off some of Israel, and replaced them with conquered people from other regions. Babylon, Cuthah. Avva, Hamath and Sapharvaim.
  - Because of lion attacks the relocated people complained that they didn't know how to live / worship the God of that land
  - The King of Assyria ordered a priest to be sent back to teach the people how to worship the God of Israel.
  - Unfortunately this priest was from the previously judged Northern Kingdom. Judged for their own idolatry.
  - The result was a mixed race with a very mixed religion.
- When Judah was carried off to Babylon and then returned they came back with the intention to hold to a true belief in the One True God and of course the mixed belief in Samaria was an abomination to them.
- In Jesus day the animosity was great between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Jews didn't allow the Samaritans to talk to them. They didn't travel through their land. The Samaritans defiled the Jerusalem temple, on a Passover between 6-9 AD, by throwing bones in it. In Luke 9:52-54 some disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village for not receiving them.
- Despite all this, Luke 17:16 one out of the ten lepers healed returned to Jesus to give thanks, he was a Samaritan. In John 4:4-30 & 39-40 the Lord Jesus asked for water from, and subsequently ministered to, a woman of Samaria. And here in Acts 8 signs and wonders are performed in Samaria and people believe in Jesus the Christ.
- Today there are still about 300 true Samaritans living and practicing their religion. They still celebrate Passover on the ruins of Mt. Gerazim.
- The application is that God will send us to who ever He chooses not who ever we choose. And the message is the same. Preach Christ.

Act 8:9 **3) Simon Seeks Power** vs 9-25

Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;

Act 8:10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."

Act 8:11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

- There was a sorcerer who practiced in the city. He used these magical powers to give himself to accomplish his real goal. FAME or in other words a great name.
- He actually allowed the people to say of him " *This man is called the Great Power Of God*" Simon didn't correct or deny that error.
- Think of the pride that Simon walked in for years. He was very accustomed to this recognition and accolade.

Act 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

Act 8:13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

- Philip came in to this city and preached Jesus.
- The people were believing and being baptized.
- Verse 13 says " *Even Simon himself believed*"
  - Some debate if Simon was a true convert. The Bible says the Simon Believed
  - John 3:36 " *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*" The same verb is used here in John 3:36 and Acts 8:13 (*pisteuō*)

- Peter in verse s 21+ 22 refers to Simon “perishing” with his money and that his “heart is not right with God”
- While debated by trusted Men of God on both sides and both views can draw out very good applications I lean to the side that Simon was saved and that Peter was confronted Simon with strength to avoid any room for Simon to not repent.

Act 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

Act 8:15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

Act 8:16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

- The Apostles verified the work of those that were sent out. We see the same thing after:
  - Peter goes to Cornelius’ house and Gentiles believe. He had to address those in Jerusalem (Acts 11)
  - Barnibus and Paul went to the Gentiles. They needed to report to the Jerusalem Council. (see Acts 15)
- Sent to Samaria Peter and John (last time John is mentioned)  
John was one of the disciples who wanted to call down fire on a city of Samaria
- They prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit;  
Why did they not receive the Holy Spirit when they believed?
  - i. Some say they were never saved to begin with under Philip’s preaching. When Peter and John came, they really trusted in Jesus and then received the Holy Spirit.
  - ii. Some say they were really saved, and then in a subsequent experience, they received the Holy Spirit in a pattern that believers should follow today.
  - iii. Some say they were really saved at Philip’s preaching, yet God, in a unique move, withheld the gift of the Holy Spirit until it could be bestowed on them by Peter and John. God’s purpose in this was to ensure continuity between the church in Jerusalem and the new church in Samaria, guarding against division.
  - iv. Some say they were really saved and did really receive the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion, but were given special gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit at the laying on of hands by Peter and John.

The last option seems to best explain what happened. Whatever the Samaritans experienced, it seems to have been more than the “regular” bestowal of the Holy Spirit at salvation. This is a filling of the Holy Spirit we should always desire and seek.

- The word “upon” is the word “epi” there were 3 ways the Holy Spirit interacted on mankind
  - Acts Chapter 2 the “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, {but} you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.” John 14:17
  - “Para” John 14:17 Alongside or with
  - “En” John 14:17 Dwell in John 20:22 The disciple had already received the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them and said “receive the Holy Spirit.”
  - “Epi” Acts 1:8 Upon This was an empowerment for the church to go forth in strength confidence and power to proclaim the message of Christ.

Act 8:17 Then they {began} laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

Act 8:18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

Act 8:19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

- Simon being a new convert sees a supernatural ability that affected people. His background was one of influencing people. He wanted what he used to have.
- The act of purchasing rather than being called or commissioning an office or title in the church is called SIMONY.
- The Papacy has been bought at times but we Protestants also think that we can purchase an office by going to Bible Colleges or seminaries and obtain positions.
  - Schooling is great for those who are called.
- The same is true for prosperity teachers. If you give you will be healed or prosper.
- These positions in the church are obtained by a calling by the Lord. Not by money or investment.

Act 8:20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!"

- This perish means "to cease to exist" not perish as in burn in hell.

Act 8:21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

- "In This Matter" his heart was not right. This matter of receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit.
- "His Heart was not right" This condition is a condition that Christians can experience. Various matters can and will arise in our church life and our Christian journey. It can and will occur with you and with me.
  - What a gift to have people with us that will tell us the truth. Those that will tell us boldly what we need to hear.
  - Now of course we are right now thinking of who we can speak to. WRONG!! We need to be thinking as to if we are able to receive those words when spoken to us.

Act 8:22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

Act 8:23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

- Peter tells Simon to REPENT & PRAY.
- The Christian who is in sin needs to REPENT.
- Peter doesn't give this new believer a time of grace to get it together as we grow in the love of Christ. No he tells him to REPENT!
- Peter sees that Simon is in:
  - The Gall of Bitterness -
    - Gal = brazen boldness coupled with impudent assurance and insolence
    - Bitterness = is a fruit of Envy a desire for something that someone else has.
  - Bondage of Iniquity - Simon is held there in the desire that is rooted in his pride.

Act 8:24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

- Here again can be evidence of Simon's unconverted state. Peter told him to repent and Simon asks Peter to pray illustrating that his heart was not cooperative with the Apostles correction.
- This could be a natural expression of a man broken stating his sense of unworthiness to speak to a Holy God.
- Nothing is mentioned as to what happens next with Simon.
  - Some non biblical stories have Simon as a false teacher who encounters Peter a 2<sup>nd</sup> time in Rome

Act 8:25 So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

- They Speak to these believers the Word of the Lord
- They leave but continue Preaching the Gospel where ever their journey takes them.

Act 8:26

#### **4) Get Up!** vs 26-28

**But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert {road.})**

- Here in vs. 26 - "*The angel of the Lord spoke to Philip*" In vs 29 the scriptures read "*The Spirit said to Philip*" The Lord speaks to us through different means.
  - Through an impression our hearts
  - Through the Word of God
  - Through angels (messengers)
  - Through other people (messages, examples)
  - Through dreams.
- Are we sensitive, attentive and responsive to the voice of Jesus?
- The angel of the Lord told Philip to "GET UP!" Go South to Gaza! A Desert Road!

Act 8:27

#### **So he got up and went;**

- He Got Up! He Went!
- It didn't make a lot of sense. There was revival in Samaria. Philip called to go to a desert.
- Philip had learned to be responsive regardless of what his reasoning is telling him. More accurately his reasoning is telling him it is better to obey the Lords leading than do what I might want to do.
- There are two ways towards Gaza. One is more traveled and one is less traveled and called a desert road. Philip was obedient. Took a less popular route based upon the divine direction.
- We need to understand that we know the rest of the story. Philip didn't. When he got up he probably had plenty of questions. God's leading is one of faith. We must believe in faith that He knows where He is leading us.

**and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,**

Act 8:28

**and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.**

- Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa was approximately 1500 miles away from Jerusalem
- Ethiopia is one of the oldest known countries.
- From Noah's son Ham settled to north and east Africa.
- Ham's son Cush is Ethiopia mentioned some 37 times.
- Ancient documents show that Jewish settlements have long been part of Ethiopia. The Falasha (Ethiopian Jew) traditionally hold their beginning at the time of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon of Israel.
- These Jews remained through the history even through Ethiopia becoming a Christian Nation in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Islam influence in the 9<sup>th</sup> century an Italian occupation by Mussolini from 1936 until 1941 and communist infiltration in the 1970's until Gorbachev pulled out leaving Ethiopia bankrupt.
- Candace was a title of the Queen. The actual kandake was likely [Amantitere](#), who ruled from 22 AD to 41 AD.
  
- This Ethiopian was an official in the Queens court, a eunuch and in charge of the Queens treasury.
- By the fact that he had come to Israel on some pilgrimage and was reading a scroll, (which were very costly) he was devout in his quest for Jehovah God.

Act 8:29

#### **5) Go Up!** vs 29-34

**Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."**

- When we go; God will provide divine appointments for us. We need to be sensitive to these opportunities that God has arranged.
- The Spirit said "GO UP!" "JOIN THEM!"
- They are not going to come up to us. We need to go up to them.
- It needs to be pointed out how difficult this really was.
  - This official was not traveling alone. There were others along to bring supplies and protection and as an official he had the resources and authority to accomplish this.
  - He was in a chariot. Philip was on foot.
  - He was someone of Authority, Philip was not.
  - He was occupied reading. Philip would interrupt.
- This is harder to do than "GET UP!" "GO UP" involves a commitment. Many do not "GET UP" because they know they will need to "GO UP"

Act 8:30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

- "Philip ran up" to many Christians RUN AWAY!
- Two Things Philip does here.
  - **1<sup>st</sup> He listens to the man.** Philip is genuinely interested in the person. Philip listens to the man.  
(Don't think that he is taking the time to build a relationship. NO. It doesn't take months to demonstrate that you really care about people. What it takes is some courtesy and honesty. This can be done in a very short time.)
  - **2<sup>nd</sup> He asks a question** that changes the conversation to a spiritual conversation. This question makes the hearer of the gospel speak of spiritual things. This way it is a conversation not a lecture.

Act 8:31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

- This is the skill set I want. Upon meeting a stranger and asking a seemingly innocent question with in a very short time frame, Philip is invited up and asked explanations on spiritual matters.
- The Ethiopian eunuch's question exposes all man kind's condition. We all need help in understanding.
  - Understanding Christian Duty - **Ephesians 4:12-13** "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"
  - Understanding for Faith - **Romans 10:17** "So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
  - Understanding Need for Salvation - **1 Corinthians 1:21** "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Act 8:32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

Act 8:33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."

- The place he was reading was Isaiah 53:7
- When God sets up a divine appointment and we respond and cooperate with His Spirit it seems as though this is all set up. It is.

Act 8:34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please {tell me,} of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"

- Again we see Philip listening to hear the opening. He is not just waiting for the opportunity to speak, but he is listening for that heart question to preach Jesus.
- That question come from a place of humility. This official is asking a stranger to explain something to him. **Psalm 138:6; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5** "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Act 8:35 **6) Speak Up!** vs 35-39

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

- Philip opened his mouth and preached Jesus.
- This "SPEAK UP" seems to be harder for us than the "GO UP" We can go we can even approach strangers and engage then in a conversation but never bring up Jesus. Hand them a tract and move on.
- We all are at different places in our skills of evangelism: *(but we need to be growing in this)*
  - Some are learning everyone is commissioned to go & preach the gospel and haven't yet gone.
  - Some are going and praying silently as others engage strangers.
  - Some are handing out tracts and saying "God bless you" and moving on.
  - Some hand out tracts and engage in polite conversation.
  - Some hand out tracts and engage and turn the conversation to a spiritual conversation.
  - Some hand out tracts, engage, turn the conversation and actually bring up word like SIN, JUDGEMENT, REPENT, JESUS, GRACE, SACRIFICE, HEAVEN, HELL.
  - Some will do this not only with individuals but with groups of people.
  - Some will stand up in a crowd and preach to large groups (Open Air Preaching)



- Notice Philip preached Jesus. Not himself.
- "...from this Scripture" you can see the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.
  - "He was led" - this was the preordained plan of God
  - "He was silent" - not on the cross but before His accusers. He was silent because He was innocent. He could have opened His mouth and announced His innocence and declared our guilt. But there was a plan. And He became guilty and carried our guilt.
  - "His judgment was taken away" - Jesus could have judged us and condemned us to eternal punishment. But by His grace, there is an option for sinful man.
  - "Who will relate" - Who will tell others? Philip will! Will you!

Act 8:36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch \*said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

- The set up continues. WATER IN THE DESERT.
- The Ethiopian wants to know What's Next. What is left to do?

Act 8:37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

- Believe!
- What a thorough expression of saving faith.

Act 8:38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

- The earlier episode with Simon the Sorcerer doesn't discourage Philip from baptizing.

Act 8:39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

- Philip snatched away - same word as raptured "*harpazō*" that is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 "Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
- Was Philip translated miraculously to another location instantly? The text reads as though he does. Yet we do not see this happening anywhere else. So it could be a figure of speech. It could be a miracle.
- The Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing. The sign of a true convert. One who can rejoice in the Lord for what he has done.
- Imagine the eunuch traveling on and reading again with his eyes open. As he is reading he comes to Isaiah 56:3-7 (He was reading Isaiah 53:7 when Philip joined him earlier)
 

*"Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I [am] a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose [the things] that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices [shall be] accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."*

Act 8:40 **7) Keep it Up!** vs 40

But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

- Philip found himself at Azotus. Some 20 miles from Gaza.
- HE KEPT PREACHING
- Everywhere he went he preached Jesus. He didn't stop. He was a consistent Christian.
- He continued because everywhere he went he saw the need. What do you see?
- Philip ends up in Caesarea. We'll see Philip again some 20 years later in Caesarea with 4 daughters who are prophetesses. (Acts 21:8-9)

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