

The Church—Acts 8

Persecution and Scattering of the Church

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

- 8:4...** “...proving, for the thousandth time in the world’s history, how impotent is the hand of man when fighting against God. As the blows of the blacksmith’s hammer upon the heated iron scatter the scintillations in every direction, so the effort of wicked Jews to crush the Church of Christ only scattered its light more widely abroad” [J.W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary on Acts*, p. 89].
- 8:12...** “The unmistakable reality of the miracles wrought by Philip convinced the people that he was attended by the *power* of God; and this was enough to make them acknowledge the *authority* of God in what he communicated to them. In order that men may believe the Gospel, it is only necessary that they believe it to be, in reality, the word of God” [McGarvey, p. 90].
- 8:13...** “Simon also came to a state of faith and was immersed for the remission of his sins (cf., 2:38). The assertion that Simon merely wanted the ‘new power,’ but had ‘no personal need of Jesus as Saviour for his sins’ (Robertson, 105), is a desperate Calvinistic attempt to avoid the conclusion that a child of God can so sin as to be in danger of hell” [Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles—From Jerusalem to Rome*, p. 93].
- 8:22...** “In this instance, the apostle Peter, using the keys of the kingdom of God promised him by the Saviour (Matt 16:19), opened the way for a backslider to return to God. If Simon had not been a backslider from the faith, but had been an alien hypocrite pretending a faith and submitting to a baptism which were worthless, Peter would never have commanded him to repent and pray, these very commandments standing here as an apostolic confirmation of the fact that Simon was in possession of a covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ, despite the fact of his sin. The door here opened for Simon’s return is the same that must be entered by all Christians who, when overtaken by some sin, seek to return to the Lord” [Coffman].
- 8:39...** “Throughout the book of Acts, Luke brings into view the ‘joy’ and the ‘rejoicing’ of those who obeyed the gospel. Significantly, the rejoicing came after the baptism here, as it does elsewhere. One grand purpose of this book is to reveal how men become Christians; and, taken collectively, the various conversions in Acts reveal one plan of salvation and one alone” [Coffman].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: The Period of the Church.

III. Summary.

Acts 8 is such an important chapter. If our Pentecostal friends would carefully study this chapter they would learn that the miraculous gifts of the first century were **ONLY** given to others (i.e., other than the apostles), in **ONE WAY**—the laying on of hands of an apostle, perhaps they would abandon their claim to modern-day miraculous abilities. There are no apostles living today to lay hands on anyone. Such miracles have fulfilled their purpose. There is no longer any need for them (1 Cor 13:8-10). Early in the chapter we are told how dearly loved Stephen was among the faithful brethren (v. 2). We are told about the work of Saul in persecuting the church—strong words are used to describe it: **MADE HAVOC OF THE**

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CHURCH. We are told about Philip’s work of preaching the gospel in Samaria. We meet Simon, the Sorcerer. Through the account of Simon, we learn what a person who has already been baptized into Christ must do when they commit sin—REPENT AND PRAY (8:22). In addition, we read the wonderful account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. We learn that “preaching Christ” involves preaching about baptism (Acts 8:35-36).

IV. Outline.

1. The church persecuted and scattered (Acts 8:1-4).
2. Philip preaches in Samaria (5-8).
3. Philip and the gospel versus Simon and Magic (9-13).
4. Peter and John in Samaria (14-24).
5. Peter and John continue spreading the gospel on their way back to Jerusalem (25).
6. Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (26-39).
7. The later work of Philip (40).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ The eunuch told Philip that Isaiah must have been writing about himself in the passage he was reading.
02. _____ One result of Philip going down to Samaria was great JOY in the city.
03. _____ The eunuch had been to Jerusalem to pay taxes.
04. _____ When Philip went into Samaria he laid hands on some of them and passed on miraculous gifts.
05. _____ Simon the Sorcerer was told: THY MONEY PERISH WITH THEE.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ Simon understood that the Holy Spirit was given by: (a) prayer and fasting; (b) laying on of apostles’ hands; (c) sorcery.
07. _____ As Philip and the eunuch separated, the eunuch left in what state of mind: (a) sad; (b) mad; (c) glad.
08. _____ The eunuch realized he did not fully understand what he was reading and he needed: (a) a rabbi; (b) a lawyer; (c) a guide.
09. _____ After he was rebuked by Peter, Simon was told to REPENT and: (a) pray; (b) do the first works; (c) be baptized.
10. _____ Philip could be best described by his actions in this chapter as: (a) a deacon; (b) an evangelist; (c) an apostle.

Fill in the Blanks

11. _____ was heard from the disciples at the death of Stephen.
12. Philip preached a message in Samaria which concerned the _____ of _____ and the name of _____.
13. _____ with _____ was the MISTAKEN idea Simon had about what could be done with the gift of _____.
14. _____ instructed Philip to go to the eunuch’s chariot.
15. _____ was the Bible book from which Philip began to preach Christ to the eunuch.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week’s handout

ANSWERS to Lesson 02-117... [01—True, Acts 6:5-6; 02—False, Acts 6:7; 03—False, Acts 6:8-10; 04—True, Acts 6:1; 05—False, Acts 6:11; 06—c, Acts 6:2-3; 07—b, Acts 6:4; 08—a, Acts 6:5; 09—c, Acts 6:6; 10—c, Acts 6:13; 11—face, angel, Acts 6:15; 12—the, council, Acts 6:12; 13—Stephen, Timon, Parmenas, Acts 6:5; 14—honest, the, Holy, Ghost, wisdom, Acts 6:3; 15—resist, wisdom, spirit.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

- 1. And Saul was consenting unto his death...** (Acts 8:1). Beware of following a multitude to do evil (cf., Psalm 1:1ff).
- 2. ...went everywhere preaching the word** (Acts 8:4). God can use evil events for good purposes just as the persecution was used to get the gospel out into places where it would be received and appreciated more than in the city of Jerusalem.
- 3. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them** (Acts 8:5). The context of biblical preaching was Christ. So much preaching today is getting away from this very basic principle. Biblical preachers talked about Christ being the fulfillment of prophecy; about His sacrificial death on the cross; about His shed blood; about the way to benefit from that sacrifice; about judgment that will come upon all who are lost and have not obeyed the gospel.
- 4. ...the people with one accord gave heed ... seeing the miracles which he did** (Acts 8:6-8). Miracles were confirmatory in nature (cf., Mark 16:20ff + Heb 2:3-4).
- 5. And there was great joy** (Acts 8:8). The gospel truly is GOOD NEWS. Wherever it is preached and accepted and obeyed, there is the remarkable result of JOY being found in the hearts of men.
- 6. The GOSPEL OF TRUTH is more powerful than the DECEIT OF MAGIC** (Acts 8:13-14).
- 7. ONLY apostles could impart the miraculous gifts on to others** (Acts 8:14-18).
- 8. A child of God CAN fall from grace** (Acts 8:18-21).
- 9. God has provided a way of return for the ERRING** (Acts 8:22). When a Christian sins, he is NOT required to be baptized again. He simply must REPENT (turn from the sin) and pray that God will forgive him of that sin. It makes abundant good sense to me that if this sin is publicly known, I would naturally want those who were aware of that sin to know of my turning away from that sin. One great way of accomplishing this is by making an acknowledgement of that sin before the church and asking my brothers and sisters to pray for and with me. If my sin is only known by one or two others, I can acknowledge that sin to them and pray to God for forgiveness. If no one knows of the sin but me, I can confess it to God and ask Him for forgiveness.
- 10. The Ethiopian eunuch serves as an example of God's great concern with the INDIVIDUAL and his salvation** (Acts 8:26-39). Every single person has a precious soul. As we go out and walk among men, we are wise to recognize the value of a single soul. With the Lord a soul has more value than all of the THINGS of this world (Mt 16:26).
- 11. Without Christ, many parts of the Old Testament DO NOT MAKE SENSE** (Acts 8:34). More than 333 prophecies of the Old Testament are prophecies of the Christ. If we only study the Old Testament we will miss the purpose of those statements. However, if we never study the Old Testament, we will lose the wonderful benefit of understanding fulfilled prophecy as one of the great confirming proofs of the inspiration of Scripture. All Scripture is inspired of God and we do well not to leave any of God's word off from our studies!!!

VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

P O I W E N T D O W N B O T H U Y T R E
 I W Q A Z X S W E D P O P E N E D M C V
 B F C R W H A T T G H B G T N D M O J U
 E I E K D L O P O I I U Y T E R E U W Q
 L A R Z O X S W E C L V F Z R T G T B N
 I H T Y T U J M K I I Y I T G B V H R B
 E C A V H F R T G B P T N B E G A N M A
 V C I D H E R F V B B G T R Y H N M J P
 E U N T I G B V F A E D U C X G Z A Q T
 W S W X N C D E B R F T V B N B G T Y I
 H N A Z D A Q E W S P X C I E D E R F Z
 V F T R E T B G B I N H C Y U U J M K E
 I O E P R O K M R J U I Y H N B N G T D
 R F R V T C D C X S O W Q A Z X S U E D
 C D E R F V S B G J T G B N S N H Y C U
 J M K I O E P U E M N H Y U T G B V F H
 C D E W M Q A R Z A Q W S S X C D E R F
 V F R A T G B N H Y U E M J U I K M T G
 B R S E D C V F R T J Y H N M J U I E W
 Q W P R E A C H E D S X C D E R F D R L

[The highlighted words can be found above. They may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. DRL]

Acts 8:35-39... ³⁵Then **Philip opened** his **mouth**, and **began** at the **same scripture**, and **preached** unto him **Jesus**. ³⁶And as they went on *their way*, they came unto a **certain water**: and the **eunuch** said, See, *here is water*; **what doth hinder me to be baptized**? ³⁷And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, **I believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they **went down both** into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he **baptized** him. ³⁹And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way **rejoicing**.