

Acts Chapter Eight

Acts 8:1-3

And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And *some* devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

- Chapter 8 begins the section of the Book of Acts—first seven chapters was about the gospel in Jerusalem.
- Saul was in hearty agreement—suneudokeo=to approve; be pleased with.
- Before he met Jesus—Saul was so zealous in his religious conviction that he violently persecuted the church (I Cor 15:9, Acts 26:11). He gives leadership to this first wave of persecution—causing the church to scatter.
- Gospel begins to move from Jerusalem to Judea (surrounding Jerusalem) and Samaria (lies north of Jerusalem).
- Some devout men buried Stephen (not all persecuted the church) and made loud lamentation (perhaps repenting his murder).
- Began ravaging=made havoc=used to describe an army destroying a city or a wild animal tearing meat. It is a word describing continuous action.
- Phil 3:6—zeal leads to persecution

Acts 8:4-8

Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. 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. And there was much rejoicing in that city.

- Gospel begins to expand even as it is threatened
- Scattered—carries the idea of planting/sowing seed
- Preaching the word—sharing good news (fellowship)

- Phillip—who had been one of the seven called as a deacon—left Jerusalem in a hurry following the death of Stephen. He carries the gospel to Samaria
- Samaria—hilly country between Judea in the south and Galilee in the north. For centuries it had been home to people the Jews regarded with suspicion and hostility. There was a deep seated contempt toward Samaria. James and John had voice that they were worthy of a fiery judgment.
- 600 years prior—Assyrians conquered this area and deported the wealthy and middle class Jews. Then they moved in pagans from other regions—they intermarried—became 'half-breed' in the eyes of Israel...the Samaritans. Mixture introduced to the people of God.
- These were the people who inhabited the land while the Jews were in captivity in Babylon.
- As Phillip preached—God demonstrated His presence with signs and wonders.
- Phillip breaks century old taboo of avoiding Samaria (Jesus did the same).

Acts 8:9-13

Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. 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. And 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.

- Simon—practices magic (sorcery)—associated with the occult—often included taking mind altering drugs.
- Magi—a class of astronomer/scientist—had a strong appeal among the people and their superstitions were influential.
- Simon—called 'The Great Power of God'—blasphemy
- Phillip preaches the gospel—triumphs over magic
- Many conversions/baptisms

Acts 8:14-17

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

- Peter and John—official alliance between those previously excluded from Israel and now included in the church.
- Laying on of hands: Acts 9:17, I Tim 4:14, II Tim 1:6

Acts 8:18-24

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

- Simon tries to buy blessing of God with money. Up until now, there is nothing that would indicate that this might be a false conversion.
- Simon thought that the H.S. was a commodity that could be bought/sold. Saw the Spirit as a power he could use as he wanted—rather than a person Who ruled his life.
- 'Simony'—is word for sin of selling church offices or privileges
- Didn't seek Spirit for himself—but the ability to impart and control others. He desired spiritual power for personal ends/identity.
- Peter calls for repentance—speaks with bold discernment: gall of bitterness—bondage of iniquity
- Simon had given outward expression of conversion—he had been received as a follower of Jesus—baptized accordingly.
- He prays to be spared consequences rather than humbling his heart.

Acts 8:25-29

And 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.

But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert *road*.) And he arose and went; and behold, 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. And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

- Phillip had been seeing great spiritual success in Samaria—called to leave an area of fruitful ministry and go to the desert. This wilderness area was a trade route to Ethiopia and Egypt.
- Ethiopian eunuch—He held office in the Ethiopian court under Queen Candace. He was her chief finance minister. This is where the Queen of Sheba was from. He was a proselyte to Judaism.
- Eunuch—a castrated man. It was common practice in middleeast for men who had been castrated to serve in positions of government. Being a castrated man made him an outsider.
- Three things come into play for conversion: work of the H.S., Word of God, and a person of God.

Acts 8:30-33

And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 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.**

**"IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY;
WHO SHALL RELATE HIS GENERATION?
FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."**

- Phillip discerns the open door to mans' heart—hears direction of the Holy Spirit.
- Isaiah 53:7—a picture of the fate of Israel in exile.
- Isaiah has written the scenario of One who would come and accomplish God's will.

Acts 8:34-40

And the eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?” And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” [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.”]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. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. 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.

- Some thought that the 'suffering servant' was Israel—some thought it was Isaiah—some thought it was the Messiah.
- Eunuch questions: is this prophecy or biography?
- Beginning from 'this' scripture—Phillip finds place to begin with eunuch—due to his question.
- Word of God is used in salvation (I Pet 1:23-25)
- Phillip told him Who Jesus was—and what He had done.
- Eunuch becomes the bearer of the gospel to the continent of Africa.
- Azotus=Ashdod—by Gaza strip. Gospel moves from there up to Caesarea.

Acts Chapter Eight—Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Read Matthew 13:1-23. How do you see this chapter in light of this parable?

Dig:

- 1) What were the results of Stephen's appearance before the Sanhedrin?
- 2) What were the benefits for the Kingdom of God, from this season of persecution?
- 3) What was the attitude of the Jews toward Samaria in the gospels? What changes in chapter 8?
- 4) How is the Holy Spirit received in this chapter?
- 5) What was the spiritual climate in Samaria before Phillip preaches? What verses indicate this?
- 6) What wickedness is exposed in Simon? How is it expressed? What is the remedy?
- 7) Why was the Ethiopian eunuch in Jerusalem? What do we know about this man?
- 8) What spiritual gifts do you see operating in this chapter?

9) How does Phillip receive instruction in verses 26-29?

10) How/where does the gospel spread in this chapter?

11) What do we know about Phillip from chapter 6—that made him prepared to function in chapter 8?

Discuss:

- 1) What are the benefits for the church during a time of persecution / affliction?
- 2) How is the church, in the world today, most like the church in this chapter? How do we differ?
- 3) What prejudices are addressed in this chapter? Does the church still have any prejudices to overcome?

Point of Prayer:

Pray for a nation/people that are experiencing persecution today.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) When has your obedience to God led to suffering?
- 2) When it comes to suffering, what is your greatest fear?
- 3) How has the Lord prepared you for ministry this year? What is He using to prepare you?
- 4) The Ethiopian eunuch was prepared to hear the gospel. Who is prepared to hear this message in your circle of influence?
- 5) When has the Lord sent you somewhere or to someone?
- 6) Do you have any fears concerning evangelism/sharing your testimony?
- 7) Where do you feel most prepared for ministry right now? Where do you feel least prepared?
- 8) Considering the Parable of the Soils—what is the condition of the soil/heart in your circle of influence?