

# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## LESSON 11: CHAPTER 8

7 August 2015

- Vs. 1** A scattering of the believers results from great persecution in Jerusalem. They scatter to Judaea and Samaria, accomplishing the Lord's original purpose (Acts 8:1). (See James 1:1).
- Vss. 2-4** After Stephen is buried, Saul severely persecutes the church, entering houses and hauling people away to prison. The result: Christians are scattered; the Gospel spreads outside of Jerusalem. After his conversion, Paul will devote much of his time bringing contributions back to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25-26). No doubt he was personally responsible for the deaths of many fathers and husbands there. There were many orphans and widows to care for.
- Vss. 5-8** Philip the evangelist preaches and performs great miracles in Samaria. The people respond with great joy, taking heed to the things Philip preached. This "ground" (Mt. 13:8), Samaria was prepared by Jesus when he spoke to the woman at the well (John 4:4-29) resulting in her witnessing to the men in the city about Jesus. Philip followed up with great results.
- Vss. 9-11** Simon the sorcerer: Satan used this man to keep the Samaritans in the dark after they learned about Jesus by the Samaritan woman. He used witchcraft and was respected as "the great power of God" (vs. 10). Samaria was a stronghold of evil. Historical records reveal that there were many men like Simon there. God sent the Apostles to that stronghold FIRST—to spoil (take) the strongman's goods; souls of men (Matt. 12:29, Mk. 3:27).
- Satan has power to work miracles through men like Simon (vs. 11)—and Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim. 3:8, Exod. 7:11).
- Vs. 12** Philip preached about "**the kingdom of God**" (Luke 17:20-21) and people believed. The believers were baptized.
- Vs. 13** Simon believed. Commentators say he didn't really believe. Simon is a new believer who has a lot to learn and a lot of growing up to do. He still has the mindset of a popular town sorcerer. He hasn't learned about humility yet. Many Christians revert back to their old ways, but it isn't proof that they didn't believe. They just love this present world (2 Tim. 4:10) more than they love God (1 John 2:15)—so they depart for a time (Acts 15:38).
- Simon believed and was baptized and was amazed by the miracles and signs performed by Philip. This reveals that Simon's "miracles" weren't very "impressive" in comparison.
- Vss. 14-17** The apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria. They prayed for the believers and they received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. At this time when there is no written New Testament Scripture, the Apostles are given authority by God. That apostolic authority is authenticated in this act of praying for the Holy Ghost to indwell these new believers. Today people are indwelt by the Holy Ghost instantly upon belief in Jesus Christ. The Scriptures are our final authority.

These Samaritan believers had believed and been baptized, but didn't receive the Holy Ghost (proof that the Holy Ghost isn't received by water baptism).

These Samaritans have gone from being shunned, rejected, and avoided by Jews (John 4:9, 4:27)—to being received as brothers and sisters as one in Christ. The walls of racial prejudice have been removed.

**Vss. 18-24** Simon wants to be a big-shot like the apostles. He wants to be an authority like he was before, but even better. Pride is his undoing. Peter rebukes him harshly and calls for him to repent and get his heart right and pray for forgiveness. Notice (vs. 22) the root of this wickedness is in the heart (Gen. 6:5, Jer. 17:9). Simon asks the apostles to pray for him, but we're not told if they did. You can pray for someone, but if they don't repent, pray, and seek forgiveness, it will most likely be fruitless.

**Vs. 25** The apostles are really reaching out to the Samaritans. Compare this to their attitude in Luke 9:51-53.

**Vss. 26-29** The Lord sends Philip away from the work in Samaria to go to Gaza in the desert. God wants him to witness to an Ethiopian eunuch who loves God and is sincerely seeking truth (see 2 Chron. 15:2, Isa. 55:6, Deut. 4:29, Psa. 119:2, Isaiah 56:3-5).

Philip runs over to the speeding chariot to "join himself" to it (vs. 29). If he is running as fast as a chariot, this is a miracle, but not the first like it (1 Kings 18:46).

**Vss. 30-35** Verse 30 shows the importance of a human witness. "**How can I [understand], except some man should guide me?**" Although "**faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**" (Rom. 10:17), the same passage says, "**How shall they hear without a witness?**" (Rom. 10:14).

The eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53, which speaks of the suffering and death of Christ. Philip "**preached unto him Jesus**" (vs. 35). Notice the use of the word "**preached**." That's what you do when you witness.

**Vss. 36-38** The Ethiopian desired to be baptized and asked if he could. Philip gave the requirement for baptism in verse 37; belief. Modern bibles completely omit this verse for the benefit of religions that want to sprinkle babies (who can't believe) and adults who want to go to heaven, but don't want to go to church to find out how to do it.

The Ethiopian said he believed "that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," so Philip gladly baptized him by immersion (not sprinkling or pouring). A eunuch was not allowed in the congregation of the Lord under the Law (Deut. 23:1), but under the Gospel, he is welcome. See Solomon's prayer for the obedient stranger in 1 Kings 8:41-43. The Ethiopian eunuch is an answer to Solomon's prayer and the fulfillment of Psalm 68:31. He was the "one lost sheep that was found" (Luke 15:4-5).

**Vss. 39-40** Philip is caught away supernaturally (about 20 miles to Azotus). This happened to Ezekiel (Ezek. 11:1) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:16). It will happen to all believers (1 Thess. 4:17).

When the eunuch met Jesus, he "**went away rejoicing**." Contrast the rich young ruler (Mark 10:22) who was sad and grieved.

Philip preached "**till he came to Caesarea**" and most likely settled there (see Acts 21:8-9).