

Acts 8**Lesson 8
Conversion of the Samaritans, Simon, & the Eunuch****Outline****I. The Scattering of the Disciples (vv. 1-4)**

- A. *The cause: a great persecution arose against the church (vv. 1-3)*
- B. *The result: The disciples went everywhere preaching the word (v. 4)*

II. The Conversion of the Samaritans (vv. 5-12)

- A. *Philip preached Christ unto them (v. 5)*
- B. *The people were astonished at the miracles (vv. 6-11)*
 - 1. *Philip worked many miracles (vv. 6-8)*
 - 2. *The people had been astonished at the work of Simon the sorcerer (vv. 9-11)*
- C. *They believed and were baptized (v. 12)*

III. The Conversion of Simon (vv. 13-25)

- A. *Simon believed and was baptized (v. 13)*
- B. *Simon's fall and restoration (vv. 14-24)*
 - 1. *Peter and John came to Samaria to impart the Spirit (vv. 14-17)*
 - 2. *Simon offered to buy the power of the Spirit (vv. 18-19)*
 - 3. *Peter rebuked Simon (vv. 20-23)*
 - 4. *Simon asked Peter to pray for him (v. 24)*
- C. *Peter and John preached the gospel in Samaria as they returned to Jerusalem (v. 25)*

IV. The Conversion of the Eunuch (vv. 26-40)

- A. *The Lord sent Philip to the eunuch (vv. 26-29)*
- B. *Philip preached Jesus unto him (vv. 30-35)*
- C. *The eunuch obeyed (vv. 36-40)*

Key Verse that Summarizes the Chapter**Acts 8:4***Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.*

This chapter begins a new thought. Chapters 1-7 deal with the gospel in Jerusalem. Chapters 8-12 deal with the gospel in Judea and Samaria.¹ This is a transition chapter.

The Scattering of the Disciples (vv. 1-4)

The cause (vv. 1-3). The previous chapter ended with the stoning of Stephen. Those who killed him laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul (7:58). He was just as guilty as they were, for he consented to Stephen's death (8:1). The persecution increased against the church in Jerusalem to the point that the Christians were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

Meanwhile, Stephen was buried with great sorrow and mourning (v. 2). Saul was making havoc² of the church by dragging men and women to prison (v. 3).³

The result (v. 4). The scattering resulted with the disciples going everywhere to preach the word. What was intended to crush Christianity merely fanned the flames and spread it further.

The Conversion of the Samaritans (vv. 5-12)

Philip⁴ went to Samaria and preached Christ to them (v. 5). Great numbers were receptive to his preaching, as they not only heard, but saw the miracles he performed (v. 6). The kind of things they witnessed included casting out unclean spirits, healing the paralyzed and lame (v. 7). The miracles and teaching were embraced by the Samaritans with great joy (v. 8).⁵ They saw a great contrast in what Philip did and the sorcery⁶ that a man named Simon had been practicing before them (vv. 9-11).

The people of Samaria believed the things Philip preached concerning the kingdom and the name of Christ and were baptized (v. 12)⁷. Here we have another progress report with the first case of conversion outside of Jerusalem.

- 1 Refer back to the outline of the book found in the introduction.
- 2 "This word is commonly applied to wild beasts, to lions, wolves, etc., and denotes the 'devastations' which they commit. Saul raged against the church like a wild beast—a strong expression, denoting the zeal and fury with which he engaged in persecution." (Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft).
- 3 This verse shows that the church is the people. What Saul did to men and women is what he did to the church.
- 4 Philip was one of the seven in Acts 6. He was not an apostle, but was an evangelist and successful family man (Acts 21:8-9).
- 5 This reaction is most interesting in that the Jews and Samaritans didn't get along (John 4:9). "The name 'Samaritans' in 2 Kings 17:29 clearly applies to the Israelitish inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom. In subsequent history it denotes a people of mixed origin, composed of the peoples brought by the conqueror from Babylon and elsewhere to take the places of the expatriated Israelites and those who were left in the land (722 BC)" (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by BibleSoft).
- 6 Sorcery is "to practice magic" (Strong's, compare NASV). Simon claimed that what he did was by the power of God (vv. 9-10).
- 7 Here we learn what it means to preach Christ (v.5). Many today think that if we preach about the church or authority, etc. that we are not preaching Christ. Here Philip preached Christ (v.5). That included preaching about the kingdom (the church, Matt. 16:18-19) and the name (authority, Acts 4:12) of Christ (v. 12). It also had to include some preaching about baptism or else why were they baptized?

The Conversion of Simon (vv. 13-25)

Simon obeyed the gospel as others in Samaria did. He believed and was baptized (v. 13). Here is another progress report concerning the effect of the gospel. Simon was amazed at the miracles Philip worked. Since he had deceived the people with his sorcery for so long, he understood the difference in what he could do and what Philip could do.

Simon soon sinned and endangered his soul by his reaction to the miracles by the apostles. The apostles at Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria (v. 14). When they came, they imparted the power of the Holy Spirit on other disciples by the laying on of their hands (vv. 14-17).⁸ Simon saw the power the apostles had and offered money so he could have that same power (vv. 18-19).

Peter rebuked Simon for his sin (vv. 20-23). There were two problems with what he had done: (1) The Holy Spirit could not be bought with money (v. 20). (2) The ability to lay hands on another so he could have the power of the Spirit was only for the apostles (v.21). This ability was not assigned to him. His whole attitude about how to get the Spirit and use the power was all wrong (v. 21).

Simon's sin resulted in his being in a lost condition⁹. He stood to perish (v. 20). He was guilty of wickedness (v. 22). His heart was not right and his thoughts were wrong (vv. 21, 22). He was poisoned by bitterness¹⁰ and bound by iniquity (v. 23).¹¹

Consequently, Peter told him to repent and pray that he might be forgiven (v. 22). Simon asked Peter to pray for him (v. 24).

After some preaching, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching in villages they passed along the way (v. 25).

The Conversion of the Eunuch (vv. 26-40)

The Lord sent Philip to the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, which is a 50 mile plus stretch of uninhabited land (v. 26). He came in contact with a man of Ethiopia who was either a Jew living in Ethiopia or a proselyte. He was the treasurer for Candace¹², the queen of Ethiopia (v. 27). He was a man of great authority, having such a "cabinet" position. He was a eunuch

8 Though Philip had the power to work miracles he could not bestow that on others. It was necessary that the apostles (Peter and John) come from Jerusalem for others to receive the power like Philip had (vv. 14-17). Though the ones upon whom the apostles laid their hands could work miracles, there is no evidence that they (the ones upon whom they laid their hands) could transfer that to others.

9 This shows that it is possible for a child of God to so sin as to lose his soul. Thus, the doctrine of once saved always saved is false.

10 Sin is a bitter and distasteful thing.

11 This is a reference to the bondage of sin. "Peter describes Simon's offer as poison and a chain" (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft & Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament. Copyright (c) 1985 by Broadman Press).

12 "Not a personal name, but like Pharaoh and Ptolemy, the title of the queens of Ethiopia" (A. T. Robertson, *ibid.*).

(v. 27). "Eunuchs were not allowed to be Jews in the full sense (Deut. 23:1), but only proselytes of the gate. But Christianity is spreading to Samaritans and to eunuchs."¹³ He was religious, for he had been to Jerusalem to worship (v. 27). His reverence and sincerity for God was demonstrated by his traveling an excess of 1000 miles. He must have been sincere, thinking his relationship to God to be right.

As the eunuch was riding in his chariot, he was reading from Isaiah the prophet (v. 28). The Spirit instructed Philip to approach the chariot (v. 29).

Once Philip came in contact with the eunuch he preached Christ to the eunuch (vv. 30-35). The eunuch was asked if he understood what he read (v. 30). He responded, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (v. 31).¹⁴ He asked Philip to join him in the chariot (v. 31). He was reading Isaiah 53:7-8 (vv. 32-33). The eunuch asked if this was talking about the prophet himself or someone else (v. 34). Philip began at the same passage and preached Christ to him (v. 35). In a case of divine interpretation, Philip said that Isaiah 53 is about Christ. The prophet foretold of the rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Lord. The message Philip preached was about Christ being the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The message had to include that Jesus is the Son of God and the necessity of being baptized for the remission of sins, or else why would the eunuch want to be baptized (cf. v. 37)?

The eunuch obeyed the gospel (vv. 36-40). When they came to some water, the eunuch asked what hindered him from being baptized (v. 36). There was something in the message he heard that suggested an urgency for obedience. Philip said if he believed he could be baptized (v. 37). The great commission had instructed baptism for believers (Mark 16:16). He confessed that he believed Jesus to be the Son of God (v. 37).¹⁵ Philip then baptized him (v. 38).¹⁶ Here again is a progress report.

After his obedience the eunuch went on his way rejoicing (v. 39), while Philip traveled on preaching the word until he came to Caesarea (v. 40).

It is important to notice *how* God operated upon the sinner in this case of conversion. It was not by an angel, for the angel appeared to Philip, not to the eunuch (vv. 26, 29). There was no direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the Lord operated through the word that was preached (v. 35).

13 A. T. Robertson, *ibid.*

14 The eunuch was humble. He admits his lack of understanding and asked for help.

15 Verse 37 is questioned by some as to whether it should appear in the text. Several modern translations either leave it out or relegate it to a footnote. Those that leave it out are based on the Minority text (a Greek text that relies on two of the oldest manuscripts). The KJV and NKJV leave it in being based on the Majority text (a Greek text that relies upon the majority of the over 5,000 extant manuscripts). This reading appears in Irenaeus (died 203) and Cyprian (died 258). Their reading is at least 100 years older than the two manuscripts on which the Minority text is based (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus). Whether it is included or not doesn't change any point of doctrine. The confession of faith is required in Romans 10:9-10.

16 The action of going down into the water and coming out shows baptism is immersion.

Questions

1. What does it mean to “make havoc” of the church? Can you list some ways that people today make havoc of the church? _____

2. What was the result of the persecution that increased after Stephen’s death? _____

3. Who were the Samaritans? What makes their conversion so interesting? _____

4. What is included in preaching Christ? _____

5. How would you summarize the progress reports in this chapter? _____

6. What were the two problems with Simon offering to buy the Holy Spirit’s power? _____

7. What evidence can be given to show that Simon was in a lost condition after he was baptized and tried to buy the power of the Spirit? _____

8. What was Simon told to do to be forgiven? _____

9. How would you answer the contention that confession of one's faith is not essential to salvation since Acts 8:37 is missing from some of the manuscripts and thus many translations? _____

10. "What hinders me...?" is a good question. Can you list some things that hinder people from obeying the gospel? _____
