

Acts-Chapter 8-Handout # 3

In chapter 7 at the stoning of Stephen, a young man by the name of Saul is mentioned in the 58th verse, at whose feet the stoners left their coats. This first mention of Saul is typical of the way Luke would introduce new persons who would later play some major roles. The eighth chapter begins with the further actions of Saul before ending the story of Stephen and beginning the account of the actions of Philip.

v.1-4- Saul was in agreement with the stoning of Stephen, and this martyrdom was the beginning of persecution of the church in Jerusalem spearheaded by Saul. He would go into homes and drag out men and women, beat them (stated later in Acts) in put them into prison. This caused the scattering of the believers, primarily Grecian Jews, to other cities. When they scattered, the seed of the gospel was scattered as well. Verse 2 gives us the closing of the Stephen account as devout men bury Stephen and lament.

v.1-8- Philip, one of the seven, goes down to Samaria (Samaria is north but at a lower elevation), and preached Christ, or preached the Messiah. We see the spread of the gospel to another ethnic group, the Samaritans. Contention between them and the Jews go back to the Assyrian conquering of Israel, the Northern Kingdom in 722bc. Assyria moved the Jews out and moved gentiles in. The Samaritans were the result of intermarriage between those gentiles and Jews. Philip, after the laying on of hands by the apostles, operates like an apostle, doing miracles, healing, casting out devils. There was great joy in that city (v8).

v.9-25- Simon the Samaritan, used sorcery and bewitched the people and touted himself as some great one, maybe even a deity or close to one. The people thought he was the great power of God. But Philip came preaching Christ and many believed and were baptized, and Simon believed and was baptized (that is in water). And he followed Philip, but was attracted to the power that Philip had. During this time word came to Jerusalem of the Samaritans receiving the word of God. They sent Peter and John to investigate. They laid hands on the people that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Unity in the church for the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost just as the Jews received. But Simon wanted to by the power for gain. Peter cursed him and admonished him to repent; so really he had not been converted in his heart. The word was preached in many villages of the Samaritans.

v.26-49- The Eunuch from Ethiopia. The Holy Ghost leads Philip south of Jerusalem to Gaza where he encounters a Eunuch over the treasury of Queen Candace of Ethiopia. This Eunuch was probably a proselyte who had come to Jerusalem for Pentacost. He was reading Isaiah while in his chariot. Philip explains that the scripture he is reading is about the Christ, the Messiah (Isaiah 53:7). They pass water and the Eunuch wants to be baptized after he has confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. After Philip is caught away and Eunuch sees him no more. Philip shows up in Azotus and continues to Caesarea at the coast, preaching the gospel of Christ. The word is being systematically spread under God's sovereign direction.