

Acts 8

Overview : this chapter is the story of the beginning of the church's mission beyond Jerusalem (Jesus' prophecy Acts1:8).

Everyone except the apostles scatters throughout Judea and Samaria.

Remember the Samaritans were considered to be racially impure and religiously inferior. Though they did worship Israel's God, observe Moses' laws and look for a Messiah. In the wilds of Samaria another miracle is worked; Jew and Samaritan are joined

Chapter 8 is the story of Philip, one of those chosen to help serve the people. Philip has become a prophetic figure and it is through his ministry that the word goes out and flourishes in these new territories.

Vvs. 1-3 Saul's rampage against the church begins.

Verse 4 Philip goes to Samaria where he taught and preached and worked wonders.

Acts relates 2 episodes that demonstrate Philip's powerful ministry.

1. Simon the Great- a powerful and popular magician. People were in awe of him and his power. It is possible to get the truth of the gospel wrong. It is not for sale and it is not magic. Missionaries must also be theologians because everyone's idea of the good news is not necessarily the good news of Christ. The Spirit is pure gift. It is the ability to perform signs and wonders that Simon is seeking, not the love of Christ.

Remember the fledgling church is fighting for its life and therefore it guards its understanding of Christ all very closely. It demands repentance.

Philip's baptism did not confer the gift of the Spirit. Luke's point seems to be that the Jerusalem church is primary to any new mission thrust and requires the receiving of the Spirit to be a full member of the community. Only the apostles can confer that – not Philip

2. Ethiopian eunuch – another powerful man on the fringes
The Ethiopian eunuch is receptive to the truth of the gospel and knows that despite his power and influence he needs guidance to understand .
The Spirit sends Philip to a particular place at a particular time to fulfill the mission of outreach. Philip doesn't argue or question. He simply follows the Spirit's direction. In contrast to Simon, the Ethiopian is a pilgrim in search of God's salvation

All of this chapter is to set the stage for the conversion of one who will carry the gospel “ as a light to all nations”

