

THE WITNESS REACHES SAMARIA

Acts 8

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT 1:1-26

TESTIMONY IN JERUSALEM 2-8:3

Foundation of the Church 2-4:31

Administration of the Church 4:32-6:7

Demonstration of love 4:32-5:11

Acceptance and opposition 5:12-42

Appointment of the seven 6:1-7

Persecution of the Church 6:8-8:3

Stephen, one of the men named to resolve the previous conflict, became the center of a new controversy with the Jews.

Preaching of Stephen 6:8-10

Accusation against Stephen 6:11-7:1

Explanation by Stephen 7:2-53

Stephen answered the charge by demonstrating how God cared for Israel from the beginning but Israel always rebelled and rejected His messengers

This generation was following the same pattern as their ancestors.

They are the ones who have despised the temple and the law.

They profaned the temple and disobeyed the law.

Therefore, judgment was going to come against them.

Response from the council 7:54-60

Death of Stephen 7:60-8:1

Persecution of the church 8:2-3

Stephen's death marks the beginning of a period of persecution which spreads the church throughout all Judea and Samaria.

The ground is laid for next major movement of story: testimony in Judea and Samaria.

TESTIMONY IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA 8:4-12:25

What are the main events of the last two chapters that have created the situation described in chapter 8?

In Acts 6 we have the introduction of a new group of ministers in the church, the deacons —appointed to take over distribution of goods to needy members of the church.

This freed the apostles for the ministry of the Word.

These men were godly leaders also.

Two of them are described more carefully for us:

Stephen preaches the gospel, is rejected by the rulers of Israel and is stoned to death.

His death begins period of unprecedented persecution for the church.

Philip is another of these godly leaders.

Now the writer describes his successful evangelistic ministry in Samaria.

Response of the Church to Persecution 8:4

As a result of the persecution the church scattered.

Everywhere they went they preached the good news (8:4).

Ministry of Philip 8:5-40

Philip was among those moving throughout Judea and Samaria.

He is another of the seven chosen to assist in the distribution of help for the widows.

What kind of person is Philip? How effective is his ministry? (8:4-6, 26-31, 38-40; + 6:3-7)

What are his outstanding personal characteristics?

What is significant about his ministry?

How do these two aspects of his life relate to one another?

Extension of the gospel to the Samaritans 8:5-25

This section adds light to two main themes of Scripture that often cause confusion:

1. Tongues 8:14-17

What does this passage teach us about this issue.

2. Apostolic authority Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23

What does this passage teach us about this issue?

Ministry of Philip to the Samaritans 8:5-13

His message 8:5

Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans.

Their response 8:6

The signs 8:7

The results 8:8

As a result of his preaching and miraculous signs the people paid careful attention to his message about Jesus (8:5-8).

The profession of Simon 8:9-13

Among those listening was Simon, a powerful sorcerer who had led the people because of his mighty acts.

Simon was among those who heard Philip's message and believed and was baptized (8:9-13).

We'll pick up more of his story later in the chapter.

Ministry of the apostles to the Samaritans 8:14-25

When the apostles heard what was happening in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to investigate.

The cause 8:14

The ministry 8:15-17

Why did the Samaritans have to wait for the apostles before they received the Holy Spirit (8:14-18)?

What clues are there in the history of the Samaritans?

What was the significance of the laying on of the apostles' hands (8:18)?

*Signifies identification—Ex. 23:1; 29:10, 15, 19; Lev. 1:4; 4:15-16; 16:20-22; **Num. 27:18** Josh. 34:9; Acts 8:17; 9:17; 13:3; 19:6; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6*

By laying hands on the sacrifice in O.T., the substitute became identified with the sinner (Ex. 29:10ff)

By laying hands on an individual set apart for ministry, the participants identified themselves with the work of that person (Acts 13:3)

The spirit and power of one becomes the spirit and power of the other also:

Moses => Joshua Josh. 34:9

Elijah => Elisha 2 Ki 2:9-15

In Acts 8, this significance takes on a new meaning. They received the H.S. by the laying on of hands.

INDWELLING of the H.S. is universal among believers.

Sinning Christians are indwelt (1 Cor. 6:19)

The H.S. is a gift to all believers John. 7:37-39

Absence of the H.S. is evidence that a person is unsaved

Rom. 8:9; Jude 17-19

Therefore, this is a unique situation. It is NOT the norm. WHY?

Related to the transitional nature of Acts.

The previous reception was only by Jews (Acts 2)

Now the church is receiving a new group

This reception is attested by apostolic authority and by divine authentication!

These new believers had not yet received the Holy Spirit.

Samaritan Judaism had been characterized by independence. (John. 4:20)

They had their own center of worship and Pentateuch.

They acknowledged no dependence on Israel.

To avoid this problem in the church and **to demonstrate the dependence of these new members on the church at Jerusalem, identification with the apostles was preliminary to reception of the Spirit.**

The apostles had to recognize the authenticity of their conversion and identify with them by laying their hands on them.

In this way, God demonstrated the interdependence and unity of the body of Christ, the church.

The response of Simon 8:18-24

As these events were taking place, Simon watched the powerful evidence of God's presence and offered to pay for this ability.

Evaluate the experience of Simon (8:9-13, 18-24). Do you think he was really saved? What evidence do you find for your conclusion?

His former state 9-11

The conversion of his followers 12

His profession 13 (This may be genuine. "He believed")

His interests haven't really changed 13b, 18-19

The accusation—this doesn't sound like a saved person!

v. 20—"May your money perish with you"

v. 21—"you have no part or portion in this matter"

"your heart is not right before God."

v. 23—"you are in the gall of bitterness" (=full of bitterness)

cp. Deut 29:18

"you are in the bondage of iniquity" (=captive to sin) cp. Is 58:6

These last two passages deal with professors among God's people.

Peter's message => "repent"

Simon's request => "pray that I don't get punished"

This has more evidence of Matt. 13 condition than of genuine faith.

While he may have genuinely turned to Christ, his interests have not changed.

Peter's accusation is stern.

Simon should repent and pray for forgiveness of his sin.

Instead of obeying this warning, Simon asks Peter to pray for him.

The preaching in other cities 8:25

When their ministry in that city was finished, Peter and John preached in other Samaritan villages on their way to Jerusalem.

God had begun a new work among the Samaritans also.

They too were now part of God's new people.

What lessons should we learn from the example of Philip?

What lessons should we learn from the example of Peter and John?

What warnings are there for Christians today from the experience of Simon?

Importance of being sure of your salvation

Danger of placing emphasis on that which is visible—on extraordinary signs.

Evangelization of the eunuch 8:26-39

Philip also continues his ministry in Samaria.

God sends an angel to instruct him to go find an Ethiopian eunuch.

His instructions 8:26

His obedience 8:27-30a

His witness 8:30b-35

The eunuch is a Jewish proselyte who is seeking the truth.

The one seeking the truth is *less than a fully accepted citizen of Israel*.

When Philip explains the word of God concerning Jesus, the man readily trusts Him and identifies with Him by baptism.

The eunuch's response 8:36-38

What is significant about the eunuch's baptism (8:34-38)?

What does this teach us about baptism?

How should this be related to our practice today?

Philip's departure 8:39

Evangelization in other cities 8:40

When this mission is complete, Philip returns to preach the word in the area around Caesarea.