



1. This chapter starts out rather discouragingly. How do you think you would feel if you found yourself in the situation described in verse 3? How do you think you would respond if you saw this happening all around you? How did Philip respond (v. 5)?
2. What do we learn about Stephen's character from our last two lessons in chapters 6-7? How might his character have impacted their grief in 8:2?
3. How do Acts 8:1-5,25 relate to obeying Jesus' command in our key verse of Acts (1:8)?
4. Describe the signs Philip was performing (verses 6-7). How do you think these differed from the "magic" that Simon practiced (verses 9-11)? What does Simon's reaction to Philip's ministry tell you about the "magic" Simon was performing (v. 13)?
5. How does Luke describe what Philip preached (v. 12)? Briefly explain these terms in your own words. What two steps did many people of Samaria take in response?
6. How is the receiving of the Holy Spirit in verses 14-17 different from how new Christians receive the Spirit today when they believe in Christ? (See Romans 8:9; 1 Corin. 12:13; Ephesians 1:13.) Why do you think this was different for these believers in Samaria?
7. From earlier chapters in Acts, what event does Simon's offer of money remind you of (verses 18-19)? What was the problem with what he asked for (verses 20-21)? Why do you think sins related to money came up so early in the church? (See 1 Timothy 6:9-10.)
8. In Peter's response to Simon (verses 20-23), what phrases does Peter use to describe Simon's heart condition? How could Peter know these things about Simon's heart? Do you think Simon was a genuine believer or not (verses 13, 20-21)? Why or why not?
9. The banner at the chapel for the book of Acts lists three key themes the elders selected for our study of this book – do you remember these? Try to find at least two verses in 8:1-25 that relate to each theme. (One of the words is not used, but the idea is there.)
10. Questions to ask yourself: Have I believed in Christ and received the Holy Spirit? If not, what is keeping me from taking this important life step? If so, how am I obeying Christ's command to be His witness by the Holy Spirit's power, like Philip did?



Persecution Spreads the Gospel to Samaria Leader Notes for Acts 8:1-25

Acts 8:1 gives us an opening summary of what started to happen after Stephen was martyred. Persecution scattered the church throughout Judea and Samaria – the same two regions where Jesus had told His followers to go preach the gospel (1:8). Verses that talk about Stephen’s character include 6:3-10 and 7:55-60. He was mourned greatly.

The Samaritans were a mixed people of native Jews and foreigners brought in by the Assyrians after they conquered Israel in 722 BC. In John 4:9 we are told, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.” Yet Jesus sought to minister to them several times, and now Philip goes there. The Samaritans were looking for a Messiah, but knew very little about the coming kingdom of God. Philip preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, filling them in on important things they did not yet know about. The crowds paid attention!

The New Testament speaks often of “unclean spirits,” and here Philip cast these spirits out of Samaritans who were troubled by them. He also healed people of paralysis and lameness by the power of the Holy Spirit. Many Samaritans believed as a result and were baptized.

This new group of believers – the first group outside Jerusalem – got the attention of the apostles in Jerusalem, who had stayed there during the persecution. They sent Peter and John to Samaria, and they confirmed this new group of believers was a genuine part of the Lord’s universal church when they laid hands on them. At the same time the Samaritan believers received the Holy Spirit. Had Peter and John not come, the Samaritan group of believers might have remained separate from the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. This visit insured that they all became one united body of Christ.

We are beginning to see how the Holy Spirit’s ministry varies in different parts of the book of Acts. In chapter 2 some Jewish people had already believed (1:15; 2:1), then the Holy Spirit filled them all (2:4), and they began to speak with understandable tongues (2:4,6). Later in that same chapter Peter told other Jewish onlookers to repent and be baptized (2:38), and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:38). Several thousand received his word and were baptized (2:41). By implication at that time they also received the Holy Spirit, as Peter had promised. In chapter 8 the gospel was preached (5) and accompanied by signs (6-7), then some Samaritan people believed and were baptized (12). Soon after that the apostles prayed for them with the laying on of hands (15, 17), and they received the Holy Spirit (17). Each instance was different, as the Lord saw fit to work. We will see this pattern continue in later chapters of Acts.

The magician Simon was amazed by what Philip could do, which must have exceeded the magic he was able to do. He too professed to believe in Christ and was baptized. But later he tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit with his money and was sternly rebuked by Peter. While he seems concerned about the consequences of his actions, the fact that he does not follow Peter’s command in verse 22 is a strong indicator that he was never a true believer. You can’t have someone else repent for you; you must do it yourself before the Lord.

The three themes the elders picked for Acts are the Holy Spirit, witnesses, and prayer. You will find each of these three mentioned at least twice in this week’s passage. Although the word “witnesses” is not used, we see believers “proclaiming Christ,” “testifying,” and “preaching the gospel.” Let’s remember that the Lord Jesus wants us to do the same!

