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A0836 – September 7, 2008 – Acts 8:1-8 – The Scattering Of The Church

Acts 8:1-25 Σαῦλος δὲ ἦν συνευδοκῶν τῆ ἀναιρέσει αὐτοῦ. Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ διωγμὸς μέγας ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τὴν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις, πάντες δὲ διεσπάρησαν κατὰ τὰς χώρας τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Σαμαρείας πλὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων. ²συνεκόμισαν δὲ τὸν Στέφανον ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς καὶ ἐποίησαν κοπετὸν μέγαν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ. ³Σαῦλος δὲ ἐλυμαινέτο τὴν ἐκκλησίαν κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους εἰσπορευόμενος, σύρων τε ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας παρεδίδου εἰς φυλακὴν. ⁴Οἱ μὲν οὖν διασπαρέντες διήλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον. ⁵Φίλιππος δὲ κατελθὼν εἰς [τὴν] πόλιν τῆς Σαμαρείας ἐκήρυσσεν αὐτοῖς τὸν Χριστόν. ⁶προσεῖχον δὲ οἱ ὄχλοι τοῖς λεγομένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Φιλίππου ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν τῷ ἀκούειν αὐτοὺς καὶ βλέπειν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει. ⁷πολλοὶ γὰρ τῶν ἐχόντων πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα βοῶντα φωνῇ μεγάλη ἐξήρχοντο, πολλοὶ δὲ παραλελυμένοι καὶ χωλοὶ ἐθεραπεύθησαν. ⁸ἐγένετο δὲ πολλὴ χαρὰ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ. ⁹Ἀνὴρ δὲ τις ὀνόματι Σίμων προὔπηρχεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μαγεύων καὶ ἐξιστάνων τὸ ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρείας, λέγων εἶναι τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν, ¹⁰ὃ προσεῖχον πάντες ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου λέγοντες· οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ καλουμένη μεγάλη. ¹¹προσεῖχον δὲ αὐτῷ διὰ τὸ ἰκανῶ χρόνῳ ταῖς μαγείαις ἐξεστακέναι αὐτούς. ¹²ὅτε δὲ ἐπίστευσαν τῷ Φιλίππῳ εὐαγγελιζομένῳ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐβαπτίζοντο ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες. ¹³ὁ δὲ Σίμων καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπίστευσεν καὶ βαπτισθεὶς ἦν προσκαρτερῶν τῷ Φιλίππῳ, θεωρῶν τε σημεῖα καὶ δυνάμεις μεγάλας γινομένας ἐξίστατο. ¹⁴Ἀκούσαντες δὲ οἱ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἀπόστολοι ὅτι δέδεκται ἡ Σαμάρεια τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς Πέτρον καὶ Ἰωάννην, ¹⁵οἵτινες καταβάντες προσηύξαντο περὶ αὐτῶν ὅπως λάβωσιν πνεῦμα ἅγιον. ¹⁶οὐδέπω γὰρ ἦν ἐπ’ οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιπεπτωκός, μόνον δὲ βεβαπτισμένοι ὑπῆρχον εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. ¹⁷τότε ἐπετίθεσαν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐλάβανον πνεῦμα ἅγιον. ¹⁸Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Σίμων ὅτι

διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τῶν ἀποστόλων δίδοται τὸ πνεῦμα, προσήνεγκεν αὐτοῖς χρήματα ¹⁹λέγων· δότε κάμοι τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ᾧ ἂν ἐπιθῶ τὰς χεῖρας λαμβάνη πνεῦμα ἅγιον. ²⁰Πέτρος δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν· τὸ ἀργύριόν σου σὺν σοὶ εἶη εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὅτι τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνόμισας διὰ χρημάτων κτᾶσθαι· ²¹οὐκ ἔστιν σοι μερὶς οὐδὲ κλῆρος ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ, ἡ γὰρ καρδία σου οὐκ ἔστιν εὐθεῖα ἐναντι τοῦ θεοῦ. ²²μετανόησον οὖν ἀπὸ τῆς κακίας σου ταύτης καὶ δεήθητι τοῦ κυρίου, εἰ ἄρα ἀφεθήσεται σοὶ ἡ ἐπίνοια τῆς καρδίας σου, ²³εἰς γὰρ χολὴν πικρίας καὶ σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας ὀρῶ σε ὄντα. ²⁴ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Σίμων εἶπεν· δεήθητε ὑμεῖς ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ πρὸς τὸν κύριον ὅπως μηδὲν ἐπέλθῃ ἐπ' ἐμὲ ὧν εἰρήκατε. ²⁵Οἱ μὲν οὖν διαμαρτυράμενοι καὶ λαλήσαντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ κυρίου ὑπέστρεφον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, πολλὰς τε κώμας τῶν Σαμαριτῶν εὐηγγελίζοντο. (NA27)

Acts 8:1-25 And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ²Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. ³But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. ⁴Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them. ⁶The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. ⁷For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out *of them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸So there was much rejoicing in that city. ⁹Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; ¹⁰and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." ¹¹And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. ¹²But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. ¹³Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. ¹⁴Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria

had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, ¹⁵who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹"You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²²"Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³"For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." ²⁴But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." ²⁵So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. (NASB95)

Remember when we finished Acts 7 we had just covered how Stephen was killed. This was the first great martyrdom of the Church and when you read about somebody being stoned to death they weren't picking up little marbles to stone them; they stripped these people down, shoved them off a wall about 15 feet high and if that didn't kill them they laid them on their back face up, eyeball to eyeball and one of the witnesses would drop a forty pound boulder on their chest to smash and crush their heart. And if that didn't finish them off then everyone would join in with large rocks. So this stoning bit was a brutal death, it was not a pretty sight. It was quite gory but during all of this Stephen was quoting Scripture, Stephen was able to focus on his training and quote the great passages of Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ quoted on the cross so he becomes an archetype of Christ-likeness in early Acts, someone who advanced to spiritual maturity and courageously faced adversity. Powerful people hated Stephen. And when these stones were being dropped on him and literally crushing him into the ground you remember he enjoyed dying grace and the Lord Jesus Christ got up off the throne, the only place in God's word where this ever occurs, and welcomed Stephen into heaven and this was a dramatic manifestation of God's dying grace of how

God deals with the problem of His saints when they're being tortured and brutally massacred. This is going on in many parts of the earth and has gone on in the past but safe at home in America we don't think of these things often enough.

Let's go on to Acts 8. Remember that Acts 7 was the last part of stage one of the gospel. The outline of Acts given in Acts 1:8 says the witness would go to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and then to the remotest parts of the earth, it's a three stage program. The gospel has stayed in Jerusalem through chapter 7; now chapters 8 and 9 deal with stage two, the witness breaks out of Jerusalem and goes to Judea and Samaria. So anytime we see these movements in Acts we're brought back to the theme of the Book of Acts which is transition. Never forget this, Acts is a transition period. In Samaria we see some strange events, events that if we normalize them for all time we run into contradiction with the epistles. So to deal with this you have to remember that Acts is recording historical events but those events, though history, cannot be used to teach doctrine. And in that respect, history teaches us what happened not what must happen. Doctrine is what teaches us what must happen and Acts is not recording what must happen but what did happen. And so, just as Moses walked up to the Red Sea and it parted, that was a historical event, but does it logically follow that every time Moses waltzes up to a body of water it would part? And so just because people spoke in tongues when they were baptized by the Spirit on Pentecost does it mean that every time a person believes in Christ they will speak in tongues? Of course not and to think so is ridiculous. Yes, there is a reason and purpose for tongues, we don't deny that, it's just that you can't normalize them for every conversion, that didn't happen in Acts nor does it happen today. These were unique occurrences which served a transitional purpose in the early church. So Acts is recording a transitional period and by definition transitions are not normal. When you change jobs, you go from one part of town to another, you go from one set of skills to another, you go from one boss to another boss, you go from one amount of pay to another, all those are transitions. And that's not a normal period of life, everybody whose normal knows that but for some reason when people come to Acts they want to make it the norm for all time. And that's not right. It is extremely dangerous to build doctrine from the Book of Acts for this very fact.

So to review the transitions taking place remember first of all that transition is not a new thing with Acts, there was transition from before the Fall to after the Fall, transition from before the Flood to after the Flood, transition from before the Law to after the Law and so forth. Transitions are common in the word of God and in the Book of Acts Pentecost begins the transition. 70AD destruction of Jerusalem ends the transition. So the transition is 37 years. The first transition we learned was the doctrinal transition, the church is very naïve doctrinally early on but they move toward maturity. Maturity takes time, it does not take place overnight and so you see silly petty problems crop up in the Book of Acts, a husband-wife plot to get kudos, the widows fighting, naïve, petty problems and the church resolves them and moves forward, so there is a doctrinal transition. Second there's a focal transition. The focus moves away from the kingdom gradually and to the Church. Peter's been offering the kingdom to the nation Israel. This offer goes on until the last chapter of Acts but there's a decline in the offer and an increase of the Church. Third transition is theological; from Christ present to the Spirit present, this happened in Acts 2 but becomes more apparent as the new movement expands. Fourth there is a communal transition from inside Judaism to outside Judaism. Up to this point in Acts 2, Acts 3-4 where have the apostles been teaching? The Temple. They didn't have a problem with the Temple. So it's obvious that initially they saw the new movement as part of Judaism but that's not going to last long, in Acts 8 it incorporates Samaritans and that doesn't quite mesh with Judaism. Fifth, a national transition from Jewish majority to Gentile majority. Up to this point it's been all Jews, but in Acts 8 the Samaritans enter and this is going to cause some serious questions down in Jerusalem that have to be dealt with so they send the top dog, Peter, and his associate John to check things out. This is a move by the Spirit of God that was shocking to say the least. And lastly you have the geographic transition. Everything starts in Jerusalem and it goes out, so the gospel is going out and that geographical transition is the mark of Acts 8. So let's move into Acts 8.

Verse 1, **Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.**

Now, that statement is really the end of chapter 7. Luke puts this in there to show you Saul's mental attitude toward Christianity, because this Saul is going to become Paul and he was a vindictive person flat out. He was a violent, aggressive person, highly motivated. And when Stephen took him to school down at the synagogue debate Saul didn't like it too much. Saul

wanted to be valedictorian and salutatorian wasn't good enough for him so if you were better than him you better watch out, he'd just knock you off. That's the mental attitude of Saul. He was violent, hateful, prideful and vindictive, there's the mental attitude of the guy who wrote 13 NT epistles. So if you don't think there's hope for you think again. Now what's interesting because this man leads the persecution, he wrote the rulebook on how to persecute the church, and the rules were go down to the high priest, get a warrant, arrest Christians, prosecute them and then stone them. And this went on. This was Saul's mission in life. What's interesting about Saul, just like all of us, we're all slightly different but say you have person A and person B, person B is a very strong individual, has fantastic talents. They can be fantastic in the cause of the Lord; they can also be very fantastic in the cause of Satan. The same with person A, person A may not have as much talent, but they can go either way too, but person B, who has greater talent can go farther in either direction. And Paul or Saul at this time was operating negatively; here he's Saul and later on he becomes Paul, as Saul he is a fantastic opponent to the Christian faith, as Paul he's a fantastic defender of the Christian faith. It all depends on your orientation to the word of God

Let's finish verse 1 which moves into the new section, **And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ²Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. ³But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.**

It was **on that day**, the very day Stephen was martyred the whole thing blew up, Saul went on a rampage. Stephen was just the first and once Saul tasted Stephen's blood, as is so often the case, he just had to have more. So with the mention of **great persecution** let's trace how things escalated to this point. Acts 4. The persecution in Jerusalem comes in three stages. We see the first stage in Acts 4:1. "As they [Peter and John] were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, ²being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening." So here it starts off small, just the Sadducees, just Peter and John,

a little jail time. What was the result of this persecution for the church? Verse 4, growth, numerical growth, “the number...came to be about five thousand.” Skip over to chapter 5, here’s stage two of persecution, verse 17, “But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.” Still just the Sadducees but this time they arrest all the apostles. So the intensity has increased and this is when the great jail buster angel came in and told them to get right back out in the Temple and preach Jesus Christ, civil disobedience, and they did. What was the result in 6:1? Growth, but this time it’s not numerical growth that is emphasized but spiritual depth growth, discipleship, believers are getting trained, they’re growing in the knowledge of the truth. Why at this point do we find this? Because the Holy Spirit is preparing to move men out and He’s not stupid, He does not want to send out a bunch of neophytes, He’s going to send out men who’ve been trained in the word. So the apostles devote themselves to the teaching of the word, it always goes back to the word of God. So these men had to be prepared so that when Stephen is murdered the men who are scattered have Bible doctrine. So Stephen’s murder is the third stage of persecution. This stage the Pharisees have joined in. So the persecution has reached a maximum level, it has moved from threats and release to stoning innocent civilians, and notice this time, once more there’s an increase but it’s not numerical, it’s geographical, the word goes out through trained individuals.

What principal can we learn from this? The same principle the church has observed for 2,000 years they can’t seem to remember in the 21st century. The same principle the early Tertullian recognized early in church history, that “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” Persecution, persecution is always involved in genuine church growth. And what precedes persecution. The teaching of the word of God, over and over and over. The word of God has got to be taught with authority and if it isn’t then you can only expect superficial church growth, more numbers but dumber believers. We hear much about church growth today. It’s always oh if you’d build a bigger building, make people more comfortable, oh if you’d add some new programs, oh if you’d bring in a big rock band, oh if you’d just market your church better, throw half your budget into our marketing program, oh if you’d just dumb down the sermons, it’s always some scheme to get more people in the door. Church growth, genuine church growth never has and never will occur

by HVP principles. You want to see real growth, you have to follow DVP principles, get a pastor-teacher who will teach the word of God with authority and raise up an army and put that army out on the streets in a community. Until you do that you can forget it. The word of God causes individual growth and that will get a response out of people. Growth has never occurred and will never occur by some program. If people are not interested in the teaching of God's word then all the programs in the world will not solve the problem. Programs and marketing do not change people, it is the word of God that changes people. The apostles knew that, Stephen knew that, and Stephen was one of the heavy hitting disciples in Acts 6, he was studying under the apostles and then going home and doing more Bible study, asking questions of the text and seeing new insights and when he went out on the streets to fulfill his deacon duty he rubbed with people, they didn't like him too much, not because of his personality, it was just that they didn't like the word of God interrupting their program, so they took him to court and murdered him, solve that problem. And if you learn nothing else from the Stephen event learn this. You never have church growth apart from the word of God being central. You heard that man's speech, it was the most brilliant typological use of Scripture found anywhere in the word of God. And until the church returns to the teaching of the word of God on that level I don't care what you do, you won't see much change for the better. We may win a few battles but the war is over. That doesn't mean stop fighting. We desperately need good pastor-teachers. I challenge some of you young people, some of you have an interest in God's word, we need serious men to come up and get well-trained. We need some Stephen's who will rustle people's feathers. The church is in dire straits. But this kind of growth will precipitate persecution, I just warn you of that. This is why in Communist China for years missionaries have been sneaking Bible's into the country and a few people got the word of God and they were so depressed with the teachings of communism, they were taught they were globs of cosmic goo, and there's no meaning to life and then they got the Bible and "Hey, wait a minute, I am someone, there is meaning and purpose" and so they were attracted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when the government officials found out about this they started arresting the pastors, throwing them in prison, warning them, just like early Acts, it's all just a repeat and what's happening? The church is growing. And the pastor would just keep on, civil disobedience against China, and they'd arrest him again, beat him, warn him and this got to be a common occurrence, the same pastors over and over civil disobedience, civil disobedience and the Church

grew more so finally the communists wised up and said, leave them alone, stop arresting them. And so Saul is on the attack but watch what happens as a result.

Close of verse 1 where did the word of God go? **throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria**, now notice the two places? Isn't that exactly what Acts 1:8 says? You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, so this is fulfilling Acts 1:8, the witness is going out and if you turn to Acts 11:19 you see just how far it went out. "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone." So let's look at a map to get our bearings here. First they went out to Judea and Samaria, Judea is the entire region here around Jerusalem. Now it's going to take awhile for things to get started in Judea but there's an immediate response to the word of God in Samaria. Samaria is to the north of Jerusalem and this is where Philip the deacon from chapter 6 is going to move. We'll look more at Samaria in a minute because this is the next major area of the witness. He faces some interesting characters in this region. Then a bit later, according to Acts 11:19, the same Jews that were scattered in connection with Stephen's persecution head to Phoenicia. Phoenicia is up here in modern day Lebanon, some of the major cities there were Tyre and Sidon. Then we come to Cyprus. Cyprus is this large island out in the Mediterranean. Anyone remember the character who owned some land out here earlier in Acts? He sold it for about half a million dollars and gave it to the church. Barnabus, this is where Barnabus was from. Then lastly we have Antioch. And this is Antioch of Syria not Asia Minor, this is farther up the Mediterranean coast, north of Lebanon. Antioch, many of you know is the first place believers were called Christians; it became the center of Gentile Christianity, another hint that the gospel is not confined to Jews. So if you look at the direction the church scattered what do you immediately notice? It's all north, no one is going south at this point. Now, some fine Christians will come from the south, Alexandria Egypt was a great intellectual center, Apollos came from there, Athanasius who argued for the deity of Christ at the council of Nicea was from Alexandria, he was the "Father of Orthodoxy," Origen the allegorist was from there, Augustine was from there, but the gospel did not move south into Africa early on, the initial movement was north. Why? Because it would have been met with negative volition in Africa,

but in the north you had positive volition to the word. So all this expansion occurred because of the persecution of Stephen.

And notice a significant word in v 1, **scattered**, you've heard of the Diaspora Jew, the Jew living outside of his homeland? Well this is the word, it means to be scattered. Three of the NT epistles deliberately begin with this word Diaspora because they are specifically written to the Diaspora Jew, these people, 1 and 2 Peter and James. Remember, James was written early to these Jews who were scattered in connection with Stephen. So Diaspora, to get the flavor of it think of a farmer holding seed in his hand. What does he do with the seed? He scatters it. And that's the picture of the Holy Spirit here scattering the seeds of the gospel into the regions of Judea and Samaria, **except** and he closes with an interesting note, **except the apostles**. They didn't go anywhere, they stayed snug as a bug in Jerusalem, so apparently the persecution against them has ceased. It's amazing really because they were the one's Jesus commanded in Acts 1:8 to be His witnesses in these regions, yet they don't move an inch and it's a testimony to their provincialism. They were slow to respond to the word of God, they were slow to move outside of Jerusalem, but not Stephen, not his Hellenistic buddies, they went out.

Now verse 2 seems a little out of place but it's there for a purpose I assure you, ²**Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him**. Now don't get it in your head that because they were **devout** they were believers, these were not believers at all, they were just devout Jews and they saw what the Sanhedrin had done to Stephen and they violently disagreed with it. And so they **buried Stephen** which was required under Mishnaic law but then they do something that was against the law, they made **great lamentation over him**. Mishnaic law *Sanhedrin vi.6* forbade public lamentation for an executed person. But they go ahead and do it anyway to show the Sanhedrin, "We don't agree with your policy, you shed innocent blood." And so here's another group in Jerusalem that are committing civil disobedience. And they go out and make a big to-do over it. So again we have another backhanded compliment of Christianity. Stephen hadn't done anything wrong, he was a good upstanding citizen. So Luke throws this in saying to Theophilus, "Hey look Theophilus, even Jews who are not a part of our group see the atrocities committed against Christianity. So don't take my word for it, this is what happened." ³**But Saul began**

ravaging the church, and that word **ravaging**, some of you have wild boars on your property, what do wild boars do? They tear everything up, they just destroy anything of value and that's the word used of Saul (Ps 80:13). Saul was just like a wild boar and the voice here is imperfect meaning he started this wild activity and he kept on and on and on. It was his mission in life. And so he **entered house after house**, because at this time they were just meeting in homes, there was one church in Jerusalem but it met in various houses throughout the city, the modern church building is a later invention, nothing wrong with it, this is just to say in the early church they met in homes. And Saul would find out what homes they were meeting in and in the middle of the meeting he'd bust in with his warrants and start **dragging off men and women**. Just imagine being one of those early Christians, you knew this was going in, Bible study starts at 6 with John the apostle over at so and so's house, are you going to be there? I wonder how many of you would be here if you knew this was happening in town, would you show up if the civil authorities might drag you off to prison. Many of them came anyway because the word of God is that important, you can chain a man's hands and feet but you cannot chain the word of God in a person's soul.

Now to see the reputation Saul gained from these exploits turn to Acts chapter 9 verse 26. By this time Saul had become a believer and in verse 26, "When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple." The word had gotten out about Saul. Everyone knew him and it was just too much to believe he'd been converted. So don't give up hope on those who are most antagonistic to Christianity in your life. Let's go back to Acts 8.

Verses 4-8, **Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.** ⁵**Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.** ⁶**The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.** ⁷**For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.** ⁸**So there was much rejoicing in that city.** Starting in verse 4, **those who had been scattered went about preaching the word**, notice the passive voice, they **had been scattered**, see it was not by the positive volition of

believers that they went out to fulfill the great commission, the credit has to go to the Holy Spirit, He's moving them out, they'd been around Jerusalem, they'd been getting trained in Bible doctrine by the apostles and now they are forced out due to the persecution. It's always this way in the Book of Acts, you see that God has a sovereign plan and He communicated the basic outline of that plan to the believers but they weren't going anywhere so finally God has to force the issue, otherwise nothing would ever happen. So they **went about preaching the word** and this is something new because prior to this they weren't trained well enough to preach the word, they were neophytes. And that's why you see in early Acts they aren't being arrested, it's only the apostles being arrested. But now they've reached the point where they have enough doctrinal training to not sound like idiots. Don't get down if you can't articulate the faith, that's something that takes time, just keep training. But if I had a dime for every time someone told me so and so believer is teaching the Sunday School class at our church, they've been a believer six weeks, I'd be rich. Now what is a six week old going to teach you. They don't have any content to teach, apart from HVP, you can get a lot of that. Why do people put them in a teaching position? It's no wonder something is wrong with the church. It's just ridiculous. Now there's nothing wrong with being a baby believer. Everyone starts off a baby but they have to grow up and that's only going to happen by doctrinal training. You start with basics, and please do not tell a baby believer to go read the gospels or something. These people can't understand Jesus, that's the hypostatic union, Jesus Christ is undiminished deity united with true humanity in one person without mixture or separation forever. Now how are you going to understand that before you have the basics of who God is, who man is. You don't start with calculus. And you don't start with Jesus, there's a logical progression to get to Jesus and God the Spirit already gave us the progression, you start with Genesis, the creation narrative, that's where you learn who God is, who man is. Cover the Fall, the origin of sin and suffering, why we need a Savior. Basics first, then we can talk about Jesus with some intelligence. So these men had undergone training and they went out **preaching the word**.

And in verse 5, we come to one particular disciple; **Philip** and he **went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them**. What do we know about this **Philip**? We know he was chosen along with Stephen as one of the seven deacons in Acts 6. So he got his start waiting on tables and he wound up a great evangelist. He had daughters who had the

gift of prophecy and he won one of the top black men to Christ in the world at that time, who was the treasurer of Ethiopia; he was a fantastic evangelist. He was a strong Bible student who exegeted Isaiah 53. Stephen and Philip prove to you, or should, that these men, before they did great things for the Lord, had hours and hours and hours and hours and hours of Bible teaching. He didn't just wake up one Saturday morning and start going through the exegesis of Isaiah 53. That took years of preparation.

Now this region he is going into, **Samaria**, we need to study. Again, it's the region north of Judea. This was the region of the Samaritans, you've heard of the good Samaritan, well the Jews didn't think too much of the Samaritans. Turn to John 4. This is where Jesus did something crazy speaking to a Samaritan woman. The background to the hostilities goes back a thousand years to the time when the kingdom was divided under Solomon's son Rehoboam. Rehoboam, king of the south; Jeroboam, king of the north. There's your geographical separation, the spiritual separation happened when Jeroboam set up a false worship system in Dan and Bethel where they worshiped the golden calf of Egypt. So the apostasy in the north caused greater animosity. Eventually the northern kingdom went into captivity to the Assyrians in 722BC and they brought some Jews into the land who had learned their lesson and they went over to the Jews in Jerusalem and said, "Hey, can we help you re-build the Temple." And they said, "Hell no you half breeds," and so they said fine and built a rival Temple at Mt Gerizim. Later this Temple was destroyed and they built another one near Shechem and this is where they worshipped. So you have religious animosity between these two groups and that brings us to the time of Christ. Samaria was like a bad neighborhood at the time, if you walk through you might get whacked. That's the pretty background of John 4, lets pick up the story in verse 3, Jesus left Judea and was heading to Galilee and in verse 4, for some reason he had to go through Samaria. So he's in dangerous territory and he comes to a well to get a drink and in verse 7, "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." ¹¹She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well

is deep; where then do You get that living water? ¹²“You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?” ¹³Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.” ¹⁵The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw.” ¹⁶He said to her, “Go, call your husband and come here.” ¹⁷The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.” ¹⁹The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain [Mt Gerizim], and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship [Mt Moriah].” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²“You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews [alright, so you’re going to have to change your thinking, the savior is a Jew not a Samaritan, so get used to the Jews running the show]. ²³“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers [this is the idea that Stephen had latched on to, that God is over all the cosmos and you can worship God from anywhere, not just some sacred Temple, for Jesus says...]. ²⁴“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.” ²⁶Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am *He*.” And the disciples arrive, bewildered He even spoke to a woman.

Now, if you keep reading the story you see that Jesus stayed on two days and got a positive response by Samaritans to the Messiahship of Jesus. Why was he doing this? Why was he hanging out with this motley crew of Samaritans? Was it to prepare his disciples for the Book of Acts? See, Jesus prepared the way, Jesus crossed national barriers here and Philip is just following Jesus’ example in Acts 8. But keep in mind the animosity is still there; this has to be wiped out if the two are ever going to co-exist in the one body of Christ under a Jewish Messiah. And we’ll see how this happens next week.

Philip goes down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them, that is “Messiah,” that Jesus was the Messiah, the same truth Jesus had announced to the Samaritan woman in John 4. Now notice the text says **the city of Samaria**. Where was this? Well if the definite article is original then it’s the city of Sebaste, a re-built city of Herod the Great which was the main city in the region, but if the definite article is not original then it was probably Gitta, which we know from Justin Martyr was the birthplace of Simon the sorcerer who enters the story next week. But in either case this is a major breakthrough because Jews simply do not have dealings with Samaritans.

Verse 6, now **The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing**. So now we have in addition to Stephen and the apostles, Philip doing signs but out in Samaria. What’s the significance? The plan of God is moving out of Jerusalem and what are the two things they are paying attention too? The words of Philip and the works of Philip. It’s always this way, for on one hand Philip must come with the word of God, you can’t respond if there’s no content to believe but on the other hand he comes with signs, how do you know the content is from God, how do we know Philip is the genuine article and not just another magician. You have to have content to believe. And so Philip gives both the content and the sign that authenticates the content. And the signs he was doing had to be stupendous because he was entering an area infested with demonism and magic. So somehow his miracles had to outdo the demonic manifestations in that area? So in verse 7 he exorcises unclean spirits, nobody else was able to do that in that region and the precise reason is because they were doing their works by means of demons. So Philip was cleaning the area of demons. So as we move to the Samaritan Pentecost next week we’ll entertain the difference between demonic miracles and godly miracles, there is a qualitative difference and people who see both side by side can tell a difference just like the Egyptian sorcerers who went head to head with Moses could eventually tell a difference. It got to the point where the sorcerers just couldn’t compete and that’s the whole point of the Exodus battles and the Acts battles. Satan is powerful but he’s not as powerful as God.

And notice in another thing in verse 7, there’s a difference between having an unclean spirit and having a physical illness. **For in the case of many who**

had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

All physical problems are not due to demonism for those of you who have been taught this nonsense, some is but not all and Luke, who is a medical doctor, mind you, records a clear distinction. Philip was solving both kinds of problems. **So there was much rejoicing in that city.** And of course there was because demonic influence was being removed by God's power and this assured them that in the future God's power would finally defeat evil. It's not true that good and evil are equal opposing eternal principles opposites as the eastern religions say, the yin and the yang, that's not true, good is always more powerful than evil and when God goes to work he wipes out evil. Never buy into the depressing lie that good and evil will just go on and on and on, that there's no resolution to the problem. Jesus Christ is the solution to the problem and so there is as much reason for us to rejoice as these Samaritans did. They got a taste of demonic powers being defeated by God and so we rejoice in Jesus Christ our Savior, because this is evidence that Jesus Christ is not dead, He is alive in heaven in full operation, so we have nothing to be ashamed of in the gospel, it is the power of God unto salvation and now we want to take a minute to focus on that gospel right now in communion. Lesson today: we need some more Stephen's who will train so the church can grow.

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