



Chapter 8: The Witness of the Gospel Spreads Beyond Jerusalem

*And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth.* [Acts 1:8b](#)

A Quick Summary of Acts 8

- The first diaspora(dispersion) of the Church occurs “into Judea and Samaria” as a result of the persecution arising after Stephen’s being martyred.
- The Deacon Philip goes to Samaria and begins preaching the gospel there. Great miracles occur by the Spirit through Philip’s teaching and praying for people.
- A Samaritan Sorcerer/Magician named Simon, who is of great acclaim in Samaria, believes and is baptized.
- Word gets to Jerusalem and to the apostles that Samaritans are receiving the Word and being baptized. John and Peter are sent to corroborate and witness this fantastical (and for Judaizing nationalists disturbing) development in the church.
- The Holy Spirit is received by those who had believed and been baptized only in the name of Jesus as a result of the laying on of hands of the apostles.
- Simon is so impressed with what he sees that he wants to buy the power to do what he saw the apostles did (in his mind, they did this) when they laid hands on other Samaritans.
- Philip is sent to Gaza to meet an upper class Ethiopian Eunuch. God would use Philip to save him, Philip would baptize him, and the eunuch would continue to his country rejoicing and bringing the Word of God back to Ethiopia with him.
- Philip, immediately after baptizing the EE now a BEE, or BBEE, is carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to the city of Azotus, and continues to preach the gospel to every town in which he travels arriving finally in Caesarea.

Saul & the Persecutors and the Dispersion of the Church Acts 8:1-3

Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his (Stephen's) execution

> approved: Gk: syneudokeo: To think well of in common; feel gratified with, allow, assent, be pleased, have pleasure.

Acts 8:3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

> Ravaging: Gk: lynamainomai; to soil, insult, make havoc of. From root word, "lyo": to break up, destroy, dissolve, melt, loosen.

- Bloodlust derived from a hatred of Jesus Christ and his followers
- Momentum based upon the response to Stephen's being murdered drew the unbelieving Jews into a greater confidence in their quest.
- Saul was a terrorist enemy and made it his desire to destroy the very memory of Jesus Christ from the earth.

Chapter 9 is coming!! And as hard as it may be for us to believe, it was no more difficult for God to save Saul of Tarsus than it was for him to save Billy Graham of Charlotte, NC or any one of us. Each of us is a murderer. Each one of us is dead in our sins. None is "deader" than another. Nothing is impossible with God.

Romans 5:10-11 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Early Results from the First Diaspora Acts 8:4-13



Philip went to the city of Samaria to preach the word.

Acts 8:4-8

- Proclaims Christ
- Samaritans with one accord are joyfully paying attention to him! Why?
 - Unclean spirits expelled
 - The physically impaired are healed
 - Are there Samaritans from Jesus' visit with the woman at the well? Sure could!

John 4:39-42 (truncated) Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony...So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word..."we know that indeed this is the Savior of the world."

Simon the Magician(vs.9-11)

- Simon practiced his occult, magic arts in the city, amazing the Samaritans.

- *Billed himself as somebody great. “All, from least to greatest, were calling him the power of God that is called Great! “ (v.10)*
- *Simon believes in the message and works of the Spirit through Philip and is baptized.*
- *Simon, upon the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit, wants to buy this ability of the apostles. Peter curses him stating that he should die for believing he could receive the gift of God with money.*
- *Peter speaks over Simon that he is in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.*
- *Simon asks Peter to pray for him that nothing of what he said would happen to him.*

Peter and John are sent to Samaria

Acts 8:14-17

- *The bitter centuries-long hatred and feud between Israel and the Samaritans is brought front and center with the Lord saving them. (See attached details as to the history of this division)*
- *There had to be corroboration by the apostles that in fact this was happening.*
- *When Peter and John lay hands on them the Spirit is poured out upon them as he was at Pentecost, etc.*
- *There could be no schism in the church of Jesus Christ as there was between Samaria and Israel. Christ created unity was essential. How revolutionary this work of God is to the “segregated” minds of these Jewish believers!*

Galatians 3:27-29 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40

Acts 8:26-40 ²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. ²⁷ And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹ And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ And as they were going

along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Our Sovereign God delights in positioning His people in particular places for His glory and our joy!

- ***At the very moment Philip arrives, the EE is reading Isaiah 53! That means that just moments before Philip showed up, the EE was reading...?***

Isaiah 52:6-7,14-15 ⁶ Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore, in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here I am.”

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

¹⁴ As many were astonished at you—
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle^[a] many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths because of him,
for that which has not been told them they see,
and that which they have not heard they understand.

- ***He is baptized by Philip and immediately Philip disappears right as he comes out of the water. The EE gets back in his chariot rejoicing (v. 39b)***
- ***No doubt he continued to read from Isaiah’s scroll and shortly reached...***

Isaiah 56:3-5 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” ⁴ For thus says the Lord: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ⁵ I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

- ***How much more was the EE rejoicing after hearing these words? How totally sovereign and providential was God through every bit of what EE was reading and even the timing of Philip’s appearance?***
- ***And the EE, perhaps through tears of great joy continued to read :***

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, & the opening of the prison to those who are bound, ¹² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, & the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;³ to grant to those who mourn in

Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

- *Whose feet were beautiful now? When he got back to Ethiopia, what must he have said... Over and over and over again?*

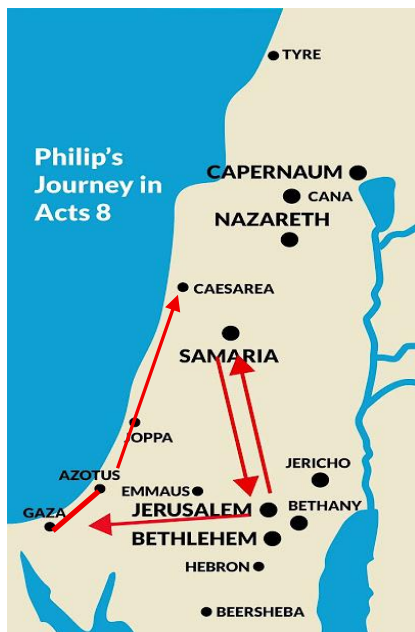
QUESTION: What is the African nation which today has the greatest number of Christians?

That eunuch birthed a lot of babies in Christ! May have been one of the most fertile eunuchs in the history of not only Ethiopia, but the world. And then his babies had a lot of babies! What a spiritual genealogy!!!!

What Happened to Philip?

Acts 8:40

Acts 8:40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through, he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.



- *Saul of Tarsus, who was breathing threats against the church, persecuting, arresting, murdering and giving hardy approval to those who were joined to do the same, wrote this verse some 22 plus years later:*

Romans 10:10-15 if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone (even eunuchs!) who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

How will we be God's Philips this week, finding ourselves somewhere that God has stationed "our" surprise EE to share the gospel with him or her, and even inviting them to this coming Alpha? We believers should not consider these types of encounters unusual; we should consider unusual when a good bit of time has passed and we don't have such encounters! He hasn't placed his Spirit upon us and anointed "us to show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his glorious light!"

Why the Conflict Between Jews and Samaritans ?

(A very Brief Summary)

First, let's find Samaria:

930 B.C. Israel divided in two. Samaria was part of the northern kingdom of Israel with Judea as the southern kingdom. The kings of Israel were mostly wicked. To keep their people from going to Jerusalem to worship, they set up two altars with golden calves, one in Samaria, and one way up north in Dan.

Religious Differences That Fueled the Conflict Between Jews and Samaritans

In 732 B.C., the Assyrians swooped in and conquered the northern kingdom. The Assyrians killed a lot of people, but many they carried off to Assyria. In their place, Assyria planted pagan Gentiles from around their empire and these Gentiles intermarried with remaining Israelites. Many of their descendants considered themselves Jews.

The Jews in Judea did not agree. They considered the Samaritans to be a mongrel race and saw many problems with the way they practiced Judaism. This offended the Samaritans. Then in 585 B.C. Judea itself was conquered and many of its citizens were carried off to Babylon. After 70 years of captivity, when Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians, the Jews were encouraged to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple.

Many were enjoying their life in Persia and chose to stay there or to move to other locations, but some did go back to Judea. They tried in fits and starts to rebuild their temple, and the Samaritans wanted to help. The Jews turned them down. The Samaritans began to interfere with the project by petitioning the kings of Persia. Bad feelings deepened between the Samaritans and the Jews.

Greek Rule and Cultural Division

Around 332 B.C. Alexander the Great conquered the Holy Land and it became Greek. The Samaritans cooperated; the Jews rebelled. After Alexander died, his two generals divided his empire. The Greco-Syrian empire conquered the Holy Land in 175 B.C. The Samaritans denied they were Jews in order to fit in. In Judea, the Maccabees revolted and became the rulers of Judea. Their kingdom was smaller, but they forayed north into Samaria to expand it.

In 113 B.C. the Hasmoneans (kingly descendants of the Maccabee family) destroyed the Samaritans' temple on Mt. Gerazim. The hatred between the two groups grew even deeper.

The World Jesus Entered

Jesus was born into a culture where the Jews deeply mistrusted the Samaritans and vice versa. Some points to remember:

Jesus was called by His Father to teach the Jews. Jesus explained this to the Samaritan woman at the well. He was willing to teach her and her village, and many converted.

The parable of the Good Samaritan has many interesting things to say. One is that the Samaritan was on his way up to Jerusalem. Why, when his holy place was at Mt. Gerazim? Was he a believer willing to risk entering Jewish territory? If so, he was a special person in many ways.

Jesus Himself mostly avoided Samaria. The town of Bethany where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived was a waystation for pilgrims coming down from Galilee to Jerusalem. Bethany was actually south of Jerusalem, but travelers would go east of the Jordan River and walk down through Perea to Bethany, then up to Jerusalem to avoid Samaria.

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