

The Church in Motion – Acts 8

“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”

(Acts 8:1)

Lesson 7 of the series – “The Beginning of an Unfinished Work”



“Now Saul approved of putting Stephen to death. 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 for the apostles. Some devout men buried Stephen and mourned loudly for him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and he would drag away men and women and put them in prison.

(Acts 8:1-3, New American Standard Bible)

- ✓ The life of Stephen and his martyrdom, as well as the other events recorded in Acts 6-7 are directly linked to what Luke records in Acts 8.
- ✓ The persecution of the church will continue and will become even more severe as Luke will point to throughout the Book of Acts. The followers of Christ, especially the apostles and leading disciples are now in the crosshairs of the evil one who will do everything within his power to squelch and or stop it.
- ✓ **Saul**, a Pharisee who became the **“chief persecutor of Christians”**, will later convert and become a Christ follower eventually go by his Roman name **Paul**. (Acts 13:9)

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- ✓ Based on the events recorded in Acts 7, we see that the Jewish leaders determined Stephen was a blasphemer and fully approved of his death by stoning.
- ✓ This execution (approved by Saul and most of the religious leaders) marked a significant decision/choice to **reject the words of Stephen that Jesus is the Messiah**, which was **a rejection of Jesus Himself**. Thus, in their minds, all who followed these teachings must also be put to death.

*“I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. **For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.**” Galatians 1:11-13)*

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- ✓ The persecution by the religious leaders (sanctioned by the Sanhedrin) against the church in Jerusalem became very intense.

“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.” When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. **Then Paul said: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors.** I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. **I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison**, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished. (Acts 22:1-4)

- ✓ Jesus warned his followers this would happen – *“Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ **If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.** If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”* (John 15:20)

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- ✓ This scattering of the believers (Christ followers) doesn't have to be looked at as all bad and in fact it may have even been a good thing as it moves the church toward the fulfillment of what Jesus commanded them to do:

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”** (Acts 1:8)*

- ✓ This scattering will aid Philip in his ministry to the people of the region of Samaria
- ✓ We are also told that the apostles remained behind, perhaps to add comfort and guidance to the believers in Jerusalem, for Jerusalem was still a mission field

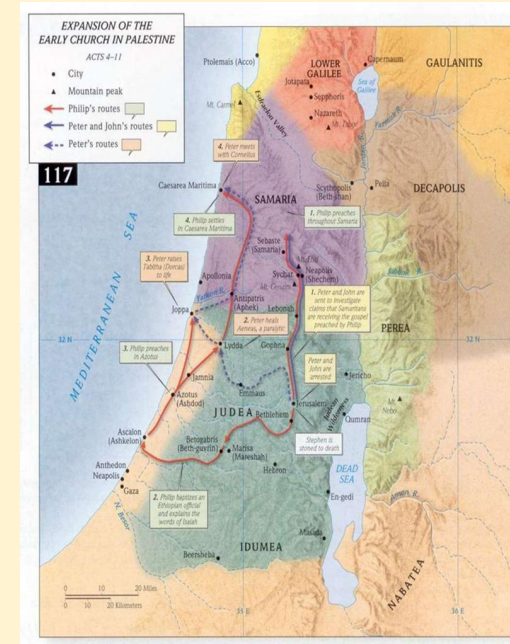
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- ✓ These persecutions (coordinated by Saul of Tarsus) seemed intentional and probably designed to intimidate/scare these new Christ followers. Perhaps, they hoped this would cause them to cease from gathering and telling others about Jesus and what he did for them. It ended up having just the opposite effect as we will see.
- ✓ This is also another fulfillment of what Jesus said would happen – *“All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue; **in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.** They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.”* (John 16:1-3)

“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So, there was great joy in that city.. (Acts 8:4-8)

- ✓ The persecution became so severe that it caused many of these new believer to leave Jerusalem and relocate elsewhere. This was all a part of God’s plan to take the gospel beyond Jerusalem into the surrounding regions and beyond
 - Philip (the Evangelist and not the Apostle) will head to the region of Samaria to preach the gospel (Good News) there
 - While Philip was in the region of Samaria (although it is north of Jerusalem – it is lower in elevation which is why it says; “he went down to Jerusalem”), he will experience some of the dark side of humanity in which evil/impure spirits had overpowered and inflicted pain on the people there.



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- ✓ It is worth noting a few things about this region of Samaria:
 - Samaritan's (in general) were not looked upon in a favorable manner by the Jews which is largely due to centuries of rebellion and infighting between them (the ten tribes of Israel) and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. They were considered outcasts by the Jews of Jerusalem.
 - Previously, Jesus had visited the woman at the well (John 4) which resulted in many Samaritans believing in Jesus as the Messiah
- ✓ Perhaps the recognition by the Samaritans that Jesus was the true Messiah provided an open and fertile ground for Philip to continue to declare those truths

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- ✓ The signs, wonders and healings that Philip performed authenticated him as a true messenger of God and his actions were consistent with the actions of the Apostles.
- ✓ The evidence of “**unclean spirits**” in their midst revealed their need of the Gospel. Where demonic oppression exists, the need to be freed from the bondage of evil is essential to a persons well being and spiritual standing. That type of deliverance comes through the saving knowledge of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ Lest we think that demonic activity does not reside in the USA – here are the paraphrased words of C.S. Lewis from the Screwtape Letters: “***Satan and his demons adapt themselves to whatever world view prevails in a given society. They are equally at home with Western materialists as they are with third world magicians.***”

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- ✓ The power to perform the miracles, wonders and signs had less to do with Philip’s capabilities and more to do with the power of the Holy Spirit who indwelt him.
- ✓ Philip’s focus was on preaching the Gospel (the Good News that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior) which then had a direct result on the Samaritan’s believing in Jesus and culminated in the evil spirits “coming out” of them involuntarily (with shrieks), and others who were crippled and even paralyzed were healed!
- ✓ From reading other passages of scripture on this topic, it seems that being released from demonic possession or demonic influence is a powerful and liberating experience and (at least in this instance) it produced “great joy” throughout the city of Samaria

“Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.” (Acts 8:9-11)

- ✓ Luke introduces us to a new person who he identifies as “Simon”
 - His Latin/Roman name is Simon Magus which is probably derived from his know occupation of being a “magician” or sorcerer.
 - He was a real person who is not only mentioned here in Acts 8 but also mentioned by several second and third century historians (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus)
 - He practiced sorcery and magic that included witchcraft, spell casting, divination, and communing with the dead - all condemned as spiritual rebellion in scripture
- ✓ The people of Samaria were enamored by him and amazed at his abilities

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- ✓ Luke adds additional commentary about Simon
 - Simon boasted of being someone great, but he was a false prophet who attempted to manipulate the “spiritual world” through false means such as made man or humanistic rituals that often focused on idolatry and turning others away from God
 - The people were so amazed that they even claimed he manifested a “god like” power but the reality was that his powers were deceptive and false.
- ✓ Most frauds and swindlers like Simon, promote themselves as being helpful, but his end goal was to elevate himself which allowed him to take advantage of others.

“But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.” (Acts 8:12-13)

✓ Philip’s message was completely different than the message of Simon - for Philip preached the Good News of the kingdom:

➤ The kingdom of God began when Jesus was born into this world

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

➤ The “Good New” is that those who believe in Jesus shall live in that kingdom forever

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

✓ Philip taught that Jesus was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies - specifically those mentioned by Isaiah. (Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah 53:5,7,9, Isaiah 61:1-2)

These words were spoken by Isaiah 700 years before Christ was born

*“Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: **The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.**” (Isaiah 7:13-14)*

*“**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.** The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)*

*“**But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:5-9)*

*“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because **the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.** They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.” (Isaiah 61:1-3)*

There is only One Way into God's Kingdom

“Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” Jesus replied, “**Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.** “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “**Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:1-8)

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

*“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone. **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.**” (Acts 4:8-12)*

“**Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place** and gave him the name that is above every name, that **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and **every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

“**That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** For with the heart, one believes unto righteousness, and **with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.** (Romans 10:9-10)

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- ✓ What we witness taking place here is that many Samaritans (who were once alienated from the “commonwealth of Israel) would now be welcomed into that kingdom through faith in Jesus – the Messiah!
- ✓ This faith in Jesus produced the natural outward action of baptism which was evidence of an inward change, and both women and men participated
- ✓ Later we will witness the **confirmation of their faith** by the laying on of hands by the Apostles in which these Samaritans will receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).
- ✓ This was a pivotal moment in the early days of the church as the Gospel message was expanding beyond the Jewish communities in and around Jerusalem

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- ✓ It’s possible that Simon himself may have been negatively impacted in a financial way; for those who were once following him, are now following Philip.
- ✓ We are told by Luke; “***Simon himself believed and was baptized***” but there are many who conclude (based on Peter’s rebuke of Simon – see Acts 8:18-23) that Simon’s faith was not genuine.
 - Judas Iscariot was once a follower of Jesus, but his betrayal was evidence that his faith/belief was also not genuine. (John 6:70, John 12:6, Acts 1:15-26)
 - “But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. **You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.**” (James 2:18-19)

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”
(Acts 8:14-17)

- ✓ In the early days after the resurrection of Jesus, the church at Jerusalem remained as the primary “hub” of what would later be defined as the Christian Church.
- ✓ Jerusalem is where the apostles remained until external factors (i.e., Roman and Jewish persecutions) drove them to other regions like Samaria, Judea, Decapolis, and Antioch
- ✓ After hearing of the ministry of Philip the Evangelist that was taking place in Samaria where Samaritans were coming to faith in Jesus, the apostles (probably by consensus) chose to send Peter and John there to provide guidance to these new believers

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- ✓ By sending Peter and John (who were recognized as two of the leading apostles), **God authenticated the Samaritans’ faith as being genuine**. This helped to ensure that the early church remained a single, unified body under the apostles’ teaching.
- ✓ Water baptism (which was performed by Philip) and the subsequent receiving of the Holy Spirit via the laying on of hands (by Peter and John) are closely linked **but distinct**.
- ✓ In the early days of the church, it was the apostles (commissioned by Jesus) who maintained a unique authority over the church as it spread through the known world

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- ✓ Why was it necessary for Peter and John to come to Samaria and lay hands on these new believers (Samaritans) for them to receive the Holy Spirit?
 - Perhaps this was the first real significant “evangelical thrust” outside of Jerusalem; making this outward act of the Apostles laying hands on them a direct connection between what they were doing in Jerusalem and what Philip was doing in Samaria.
 - This may also have been looked at as an affirmation by Peter and John to sanction Philip’s ministry to the Samaritans.
 - With Peter and John officially welcoming the Samaritans into the family it avoided future conflict and broke down existing barriers between the Jews and Samaritans

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✓ How does this “unique event” square up with our current understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which occurs at the moment of salvation?

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. **When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance** until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14)

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. **And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.** And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies **because of his Spirit who lives in you.** (Romans 8:9-11)

“**Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”** So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.” (Galatians 4:6-7)

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- ✓ How does this “unique event” square up with our current understanding of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which occurs at the moment of salvation?
 - The Book of Acts is full of many transitional events, and this will not be the last instance where we see the necessity of laying on of hands by the Apostles for “others” (i.e., disciples of John the Baptist) to receive the Holy Spirit. (Acts 19:1-7)
 - God designed one church that was made up of both Jew and Gentile (Galatians 3:28). The need for One Authority (Jesus Christ) that was represented by one message (proclaimed by the Apostles) became the means by which unity was preserved in the person of the Holy Spirit. At times, a need arose to outwardly show that authority through the laying on of hands by the Apostles which helped to ensure everyone (Jew & Gentile) saw and heard the same thing.....thus a divided church was avoided.

Here are several examples

“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again **and be filled with the Holy Spirit.**” (Acts 9:17)

“While Apollos was at Corinth, **Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus.** There **he found some disciples** and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “**No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.**” So, Paul asked, “**Then what baptism did you receive?**” “**John’s baptism,**” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” **On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. **There were about twelve men in all.**” (Acts 19:1-7)

“Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” **So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.**” (Acts 13:1-3)

“Command and teach these things. Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. **Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.**” (I Timothy 4:11-14)

“When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:18-19)

- ✓ Simon’s interest in the Gospel appeared to be for his own personal gain. Perhaps, he saw the Holy Spirit not as a divine person to be submitted to, but as a magical "power" or trick that he could acquire to enhance his own status
- ✓ He seemed to be treating the apostles as fellow practitioners of magic and perhaps sought to buy their secret magical powers as was customary within the world of magicians and occultic practice.
- ✓ This is a significant lesson in the dangers of treating spiritual gifts as commodities and highlights the necessity of having pure motives when it comes to our faith
- ✓ Simon’s behavior (see - Matthew 13:1-9) demonstrates the difference between true conversion and superficial belief. Although Simon was baptized, his request proved that his heart was not right with God and that he still harbored deep greed and pride

“Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because **your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and **pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you** for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.” (Acts 8:20-23)**

- ✓ Peter recognized Simon’s duplicity and false faith (as Simon’s heart was not right with God) in the same way that Jesus acknowledged the false faith of Judas Iscariot.

“The evening meal was in progress, and **the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.**”
(John 13:2)

“Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. **As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.** So, Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” (John 13:26-27)

- ✓ Peter provided an opportunity for Simon to recognize his evil ways and repent, but Simon was wrapped up in false faith based on false doctrine which had him in bondage. The only way to be released from this was to truly repent and accept God’s grace. Simon doesn’t seem to personally act on that opportunity that was offered to him.

“Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.” After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.” (Acts 8:24-25)

- ✓ It seems that Simon only wanted to escape the immediate/temporary consequences of his sin, thus he appears only to express sorrow and took no action of turning from it.

“Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it—I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while, yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, **but because your sorrow led you to repentance.** For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. **Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.** See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So even though I wrote to you, it was neither on account of the one who did the wrong nor on account of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. (II Corinthians 7:8-12)

- ✓ Perhaps Simon’s actions reveal someone whose personal sorrow was void of the type of sorrow required by God that leads to salvation which would reveal his faith to be false. Had his faith been genuine he wouldn’t have needed Peter to intercede for him.



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- ✓ Peter and John set out to return to Jerusalem but along the way they preach the gospel throughout the region of Samaria
- ✓ This marks the beginning of the mission of the church to expand to regions beyond the traditional religious and ethnic boundaries found within Jerusalem and Judea.

“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road”—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So, he started out, and on his way, he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.

The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” (Acts 8:26-29)

- ✓ Philip was already an effective minister to the people in the region of Samaria, and the Lord will now use him to proclaim the Gospel to an influential Gentile whom we don't know by name, but we know by title which was the “Ethiopian Eunuch”.
- ✓ The road (“a desert road”) that Philip was directed to use (“south from Jerusalem to Gaza”) was a road that was not often traveled for it passed through “old Gaza” which was destroyed in 93 B.C., and it became an unusual and least traveled back road to use.
- ✓ There was no delay in Philips' actions, he didn't reason with God, nor try to show all the reasons why he shouldn't leave a thriving work in Samaria.....he just up and went!

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- ✓ Luke mentions that this unnamed eunuch travelled to Jerusalem and that he came from Ethiopia. This is not our modern-day Ethiopia but probably the kingdom of ancient Nubia which was in the region of Aswan in Southern Egypt - probably Khartoum Sudan.
- ✓ After visiting Jerusalem for the purposes of worship and probably seeking out people who could aid him in understanding the Hebrew Scriptures, he returned home
- ✓ On his return home to Ethiopia, he made a stop and began reading the Book (Scroll) of Isaiah while he was sitting in his chariot. The Holy Spirit prompted Philip to go to the place where this Ethiopian Eunuch had stopped. Another Divine appointment!

“Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth” (Acts 8:30-33)

- ✓ We are not told how he acquired the Scriptures (the scroll of Isaiah) in his possession, but the assumption is that due to a strong Jewish population in Alexandria Egypt (close proximity to his home), that he may have obtained it there.
- ✓ Given that the Eunuch had the scriptures and was attempting to read and understand them, our best conclusion is that he was in search of God. We know that the Lord reveals himself to man by his own choosing and in this case, he chose to reveal himself through His written Word. The Eunuch just needed someone to explain it to him.

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- ✓ The specific text that the Eunuch read was Isaiah 53:7-8, and Philip will take this opportunity to declare that Jesus is the one whom Isaiah was referring to.

“You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” (John 3:16-17)

- ✓ Based on the eunuch’s response in Acts 8:37 we conclude that Philip convinced him by reading all of Isaiah 53 that the Lamb led to slaughter was Jesus and He was the Messiah that Isaiah spoke of. (See also Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 11:1-10, Isaiah 61)

“The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.” (Acts 8:34-35)

- ✓ Philip explains that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies—that He willingly suffered, died, and was resurrected to provide salvation. This is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

“Now, brothers and sisters, **I want to remind you of the gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **By this gospel you are saved**, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.” (I Corinthians 15:1-4)

- ✓ Philip used only the scriptures that he had in his possession (imagine if he had a full copy of the 66 Books of the Bible that we have) to convince the Ethiopian Eunuch that he needed Jesus. The results of that conversation are found in the next few verses!

“As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. **What can stand in the way of my being baptized?**” And he gave orders to stop the chariot. **Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him**. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.” (Acts 8:36-40)

- ✓ Notice the rather abrupt willingness of the Eunuch to outwardly demonstrate his inward change of heart. When we submit to God obedience naturally follows
 - Luke’s account tells us the Eunuch saw the water and asked Peter to stop the chariot and baptize him. There was no hesitation!
 - What is missing is the discussion and dialogue that took place between Philip and the Eunuch as to the “why” he chose to be baptized at that moment. Clearly the Eunuch willingly accepted the evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah as prophesied by Isaiah and being baptized was a natural first step in his new life

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✓ The eunuch went away rejoicing which reveals a genuine conversion

“And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope.” May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:12-13)

“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (I Peter 1:8-9)

✓ Luke does not record what happened to the Ethiopian eunuch after this, but an early church leader named Irenaeus claims he became a missionary to the Ethiopians.

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- ✓ Philip; was taken away to continue his ministry in the region of Gaza and eventually settled in Caesarea.

“We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed with them for a day. Leaving the next day, **we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven.** He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.
(Acts 21:7-9)

- ✓ Philip had a fruitful and effective ministry in that entire region (cities such as Joppa and Lydda) and the Apostle Peter would also minister in that region as well.
- ✓ Philip (though not one of the 12 Apostles) is proof that much can be accomplished (irrespective of title or accomplishment) when we obediently serve God with our whole hearts and follow His leading.