

# Acts 8 Commentary

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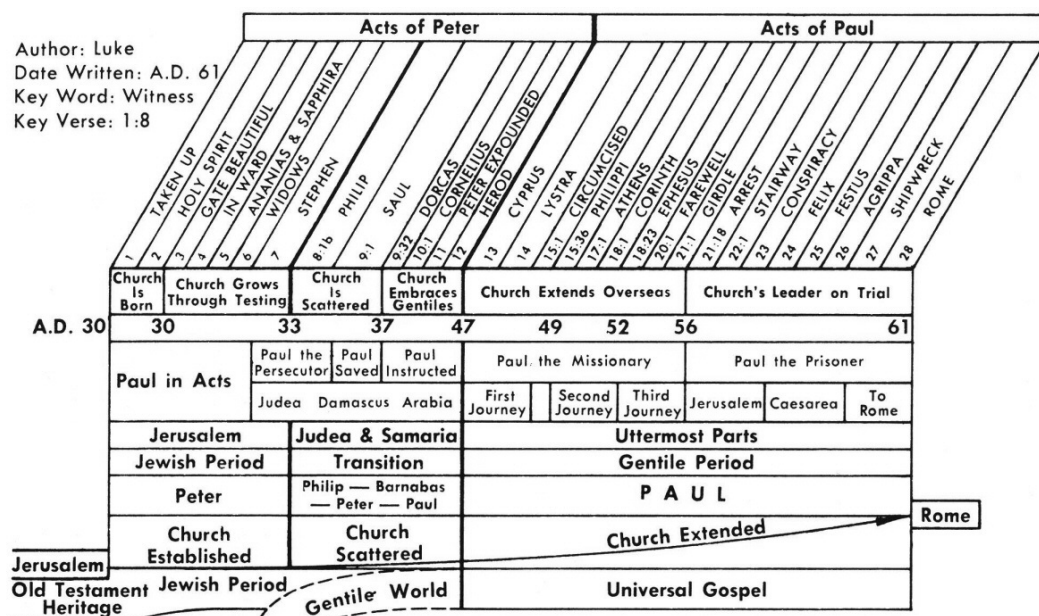
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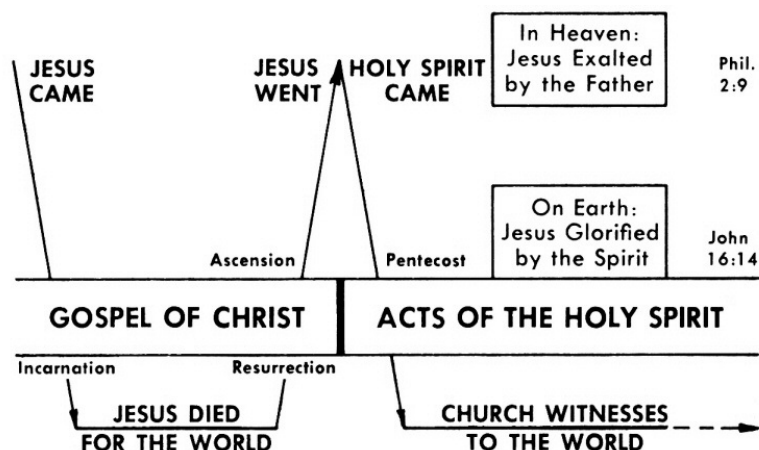
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Author: Luke  
 Date Written: A.D. 61  
 Key Word: Witness  
 Key Verse: 1:8



Click chart to enlarge  
 Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

## THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH



Click chart to enlarge

Acts 8:1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him 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 the apostles. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

KJV Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

- **Saul** - Acts 7:58; 22:20
- **a great persecution began** Acts 5:33,40; 7:54; Mt 10:25-28; 22:6; 23:34; Luke 11:49,50; John 15:20; 16:2
- **the church** Acts 2:47; 7:38; 11:22; 13:1
- **and they were all scattered** Acts 8:4; 11:19-21; Mt 5:13; Php 1:12
- **Samaria** Acts 8:14; 1:8; John 4:39-42
- **except** Acts 5:18,20,33,40; Ex 10:28,29; Neh 6:3; Da 3:16-18; 6:10,23; Heb 11:27
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE FIRST GENERAL PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH

See [Irving Jensen's Timeline of Acts](#) above and in that diagram you will notice that Acts 8:1 is a [hinge](#) verse that flings open the

door for the Gospel to spread eventually to the uttermost part of the world! While the versification of the Scripture is not inspired, it is nevertheless intriguing to observe that Acts 8:1 is the mirror image of Acts 1:8 and begins to answer Jesus' commission in 1:8. The upshot is that if the church would not obey 1:8 then God would allow 8:1 to force them to obey 1:8! Are you resisting God's clear guidance, direction or commandment in some area of your life? If so you might ponder the possibility that God might bring about an "1:8 to 8:1 reversal" -- God has not changed. I am reminded of God's famous words to godly King Asa...

"For (EXPLAINS 2 Chr 16:8) the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars." (2 Chr 16:9)

**Saul** - More literally this is "**And Saul**" as the NAS does not translate the Greek word for "**and**" (de). For example the ESV has "**And Saul** approved of his execution." You may be asking why is this important? **And** (de) is a coordinating conjunction and in this context clearly denotes continuation and further thought development of the topic begun at the end of Acts 7. Here are the last verses from Acts 7

When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named **Saul**. 59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" 60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:58-60)

Clearly **Saul** in Acts 7:58 is the same person identified in Acts 8. As an aside remember that the chapter divisions are not inspired and this division is to put it plainly "horrible" as it breaks the continuity of Acts 7:58-60.

Paul (Saul) later confesses his sin of essentially being an "[accomplice](#)" in Stephen's murder and martyrdom

'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving ([suneudokeo](#) in the present tense), and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying ([anaireo](#) of Jesus' murder in Acts 2:23+) him.' (Acts 22:20).

**Comment** - The construction of this sentence in Acts 22:20 and the parallel passage in Acts 8:1 suggests that Saul himself was not throwing stones but obviously was in agreement with the stoning.

**Saul was in hearty agreement** (was consenting) **with putting him to death** - This is a key juncture in the book of Acts as it marks a decisive change in direction for the Church of Jesus Christ. While the previous 7 chapters have focused on the birth and expansion of the Church based in Jerusalem, this passage marks a permutation of the plan to expansion of the Church beyond the walls of Jerusalem. Saul of Taurus was to the early church what the architect of the holocaust, Adolf Eichmann, was to the Jews who lived in Nazi Germany in the 1930's. Even as Eichmann was zealous to exterminate the Jewish race, so too Saul was just as zealous to exterminate the Church of Jesus Christ. Saul (Paul) himself later testified that he was "as to zeal, a persecutor of the Church." (Php 3:6). **Zeal** is the noun [zelos](#) which is derived from the verb **zeo** which means to be hot, to boil, to be fervent. What an apt picture of Saul's deep devil-inspired, devotion to eradicate the Church!

**David Guzik** - Some people are reluctant persecutors, but Saul wasn't one of these; he took pleasure in attacking Christians.

Paul remembered with shame his experiences of standing by as Stephen was stoned and then trying to destroy the Church (Acts 22:20; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13, 23; Php. 3:6; 1 Ti 1:13). Beloved, if you were not saved as a young child, there is a good chance you have some memories, the recall of which brings you great shame. The lesson from Paul's life is that you can still be a useful instrument in the hands of God in spite of your shameful memories. The memories may come up from time to time, but God's Word mercifully always washes over us with the clear reminder "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps 103:12, cf Ps 32:1 Isa 6:7, 38:17, 44:22 Mic 7:18,19). Acts 26:10 even suggests that Saul (Paul) voted as a member of the Sanhedrin...

"And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. (Acts 26:10)

Farrar observes: "The part which he played at this time in the horrid work of persecution has, I fear, been always underrated. It is only when we collect the separate passages—they are no less than eight in number—in which allusion is made to this sad period,\* it is only when we weigh the terrible significance of the expressions used that we feel the load of remorse which must have lain upon him, and the taunts to which he was liable from malignant enemies" ("Life and Work of St. Paul").

**Saul** ([4569](#)) (**Saulos**) is transliterated from the Hebrew name **Sha'ul** ([07586](#)) which is used over 300x in the OT and which means "asked." **Sha'ul** is used of the first king of Israel, King Saul of the tribe of Benjamin, the same tribe this modern Saul was from.

**Saul** - 15x in 15v -

Acts 7:58; Acts 8:1; Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1; Acts 9:8; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:22; Acts 9:24; Acts 11:25; Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:1; Acts 13:2; Acts 13:7; Acts 13:9

**Hearty agreement** (4909)([suneudokeo](#) from **sun** = together + **eudokeo** = to think well) means literally "to think well together with," to approve along with another or to take pleasure with others, and thus to approve, assent to, consent to, be willing, to agree with, to sympathize with. Suneudokeo is in the present tense which describes the abiding condition of Saul's heart and not just a momentary excitement or thrill from the sight of seeing the blood of a believer. This continuous (present tense) feeling pictures Saul as what we today might call "[bloodthirsty](#)" for the destruction of the disciples of Christ! Saul's heart was marked by eagerness to resort to violence and bloodshed against believers!

**Suneudokeo** is used at the end of Paul's indictment of the Gentiles for rejecting the knowledge God had given them " although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also **give hearty approval** (suneudokeo) to those who practice them." (Ro 1:32+) In short, the attitude of Saul's heart toward Stephen is no different than that of the hearts of the Gentiles he so detested!

**Suneudokeo** is used in Lk 11:48+ of Jesus' [scathing](#) rebuke of the Jewish [lawyers](#) (Lk 11:46+) declaring "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. "So you are witnesses (JUST AS WAS SAUL A WITNESS OF STEPHEN'S MURDER) and **approve** the deeds of your fathers (MURDER OF THE PROPHETS); because it was they who killed them (THE PROPHETS), and you build their tombs." (Lk 11:47, 48+). Saul was clearly [cut out of the same cloth](#) so to speak as these evil lawyers who were [castigated](#) by Jesus, the very One Who would soon deliver a similar [diatribe](#) to Saul! (cf Acts 9:4-5+).

**Suneudokeo** - 6x in 6v - Lk. 11:48; Acts 8:1; Acts 22:20; Ro 1:32; 1 Co. 7:12; 1 Co. 7:13

**Putting...to death** (336)([anairesis](#) from **anaireo** = to take up [Acts 7:21] from **ana** = up + **airo** = to raise or take up) literally means taking up and carrying away and as an action refers to the taking up of a life rather than simply death. The idea is "take away, make an end of, destroy." As in Shakspeare "The deep damnation of his *taking off*." *Macbeth*, i., 7. "Let her who would be rid of him, devise His speedy *taking off*." *Lear*, v., 1.

**And on that day** - The **day** of Stephen's death. This is a **day** that would go down in [infamy](#) on one hand, but a day that would signify the beginning of the spread of the good news to the Gentiles. Indeed, our God causes the tragic end to one man's life, to become the seed that fell into the ground and bore "much fruit" (Jn 12:24). The "seed" of Stephen's body planted in the ground on that day, would result in an unstoppable sowing of the Gospel seed that has impacted even you (if you are a believer) and me, some 2000 years later. Here is the point. From a human perspective, one might look at the death of Stephen, truly a might man of God, as "premature" and as a horrible tragedy. But his death was not premature, for he fully accomplished the work the Father had planned for him to accomplish (cf Jn 4:34 and Jn 17:4). God's perspective of the value of one life is not the same as our perspective, for we seen only in time, while God sees in eternity. One is reminded of the "premature" death of another great man of God, [Jim Elliot](#) at the hands of the Acua Indians in South America. But from that "seed" that fell to the ground and died, much fruit has resulted over the subsequent decades (the chief of the tribe became a believer as did others, not to mention the impact Jim's radical life has had on many who have been motivated to take up Jesus Cross, to die daily and to follow Jesus to ends of the world, to every tribe and tongue and people and nation!) Be faithful where God has you planted beloved. He will take care of the fruit which endures for eternity! I am reminded of the words of [Jonathan Edwards](#) "**O Lord stamp eternity on my eyeballs.**" (A bold prayer all of should frequently be willing to pray! See Redeem the Time and [Vertical Vision](#))

**David Guzik** - On Sunday, January 8, 1956, on the shores of a lonely river deep in the jungles of Ecuador, natives murdered five missionaries who came to tell about Jesus. To many, this death seemed like a senseless tragedy. Many could only see five young missionaries who had their careers cut short or the five widows and fatherless children. But God did an amazing work through those five men, even in their deaths, and the blessing still reverberates through people like Elisabeth Elliot—one of the five women whose husband was murdered. In the same way, Stephen's death might seem sort of meaningless at first glance. His young ministry of power and eloquence was cut abruptly short. His ministry also seemed to end in failure—no one was immediately brought to faith, and all that came forth was more persecution against the church. But as always has been the case, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church.

## **STEPHEN'S DEATH OPENS THE FLOODGATES OF PERSECUTION!**

[Tertullian](#) speaking of Christian persecution wrote "*Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust; your injustice is proof that we are innocent...The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.*" ([Apologeticum](#))

And indeed the blood of the martyr Stephen was the seed sown that bore much missionary fruit, even as promised by our Lord Jesus Christ

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (Jn 12:24)

That "seed" of Stephen planted in the ground in Jerusalem is still bearing fruit to this very day! To most men Stephen's death seems premature, taking him in his prime, but to God, Stephen's death was sovereignly decreed before the foundation of the world, so that his demise might play a crucial role in the divine plan of redemption.

**Derek Thomas** - There is a vital principle at work here, one that Luke was intent on ensuring we understand as he tells us the story of the church. In commenting on 1 Peter 1:11, Calvin puts it this way: "The government of the Church of Christ has been so divinely constituted from the beginning that the Cross has been the way to victory, death the way to life."...It is the principle that dying in one produces life in another. This is what Saul will later learn when (as Paul) he will write to the Corinthians, "So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor. 4:12).

**A great persecution began against the church ([ekklesia](#)) in Jerusalem** - This was the first persecution of the Christians as a whole. The persecution against the church grew incrementally - first it was against **Peter and John** (Acts 4:1-7,8-21), then against the **12 apostles** (Acts 5:17-18, 26-39, 40), then the **martyrdom of Stephen** (Acts 7:55-60), and finally culminating in an all out attack on the **entire Jerusalem church**. Clearly Saul was instrumental in instigating the outbreak of **great persecution**. And if not the chief instigator, he certainly was instrumental in its enactment and effectiveness.

**Great** (or loud)([megas](#)) is used repeatedly in Acts 8 - Acts 8:1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 13.

**Persecution** ([1375](#))([diogmos](#) from [dioko](#) = to chase, to pursue) literally refers to a chase or pursuit and figuratively means to put to flight or to pursue with repeated acts of enmity.

Persecution is not my favorite topic, but I can recall in my first decade as a believer that I was ignorant of this aspect of being a follower of Christ and I was ambushed by fellow church members who had previously shown themselves to be our friends. This unfounded attack shocked and disheartened me and almost caused me to totally withdraw from any leadership roles in the future. I am sure the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were taken aback by the degree of persecution far more severe than I was forced to endure. So here is the point for us today -- we may never experience a persecution like our brothers and sisters did in first century Jerusalem, but if we are serious about our practicing our faith in a sin-darkened, devil controlled world, we can be sure that we will experience persecution in some form. Do be surprised as I was - to be forewarned is to be forearmed! And so in his last known letter, an exhortation to Timothy, Paul gave his young disciple a "Bible promise" writing

Indeed, all (GREEK MEANS "ALL" WITHOUT EXCEPTION!) who desire to live godly (THE CONDITION TO BE MET) in Christ Jesus (IN HIM IS THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE GODLY - SUPERNATURAL NOT NATURAL!) will be persecuted (THE PROMISE). (2 Ti 3:12+)

**Derek Thomas** reminds us that "Christ had promised his followers that living for Him would lead to trouble (see Luke 21:12-19). This is still true. If we boldly live out our faith, the light of our lives will expose the sinfulness of others. Our words of truth will pierce their souls. Some will be convicted and yield to the leading of the Spirit. Others will become angry and hardened in their hatred of the truth. As Jesus said, "*The people of the world will hate you because you belong to Me*" (John 15:21NLT). We shouldn't be surprised or abandon our faith when we are persecuted. ([Philip Preaching Christ in Samaria](#))

**Charles Swindoll** makes an interesting practical observation - Few people in the twenty-first-century West have even experience religious **persecution**. (ED: HE IS REFERRING TO IMPRISONMENT FOR OUR FAITH, ETC) We may endure a little mockery at school, a sarcastic slam at the office, some ruffled feathers in the neighborhood, but little more. (ED: HOWEVER IF YOU ARE IN LEADERSHIP I WOULD ADD BE PREPARED FOR IT TO COME AT YOU FROM WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP!) It would be exceedingly revealing if **persecution** put our modern-day churches to the test. One wonders how many would quickly defect? Though the early believers fled, they did not defect. (Swindoll's Living Insights - NT Commentary - Acts).

I would add to Swindoll's comments that not only did they flee and not defect, but they were manhandled and did not murmur, complain or grumble (as far as we can tell from Luke's text). To the contrary, instead of **grumbling**, they went about **gospelizing the Gospel** (or as one writer said "gossiping the Gospel")! While Luke does not specifically tell us, it would seem the only way these believers could manifest such grateful hearts and courageous Gospel proclamation (remember some are going to areas inhabited by Samaritans who normally hated them!) is because they were filled with, controlled by and empowered by the Holy Spirit of Jesus. They leave quite an example for all believers of all ages to emulate. Let it be true again of Your global Church Lord. Amen

**Related Resources:**



- [Persecution Predicted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount](#)
- [Persecution - Synopsis of persecution of the church](#) - interesting article
- [Persecution - Dictionary articles](#)
- Phil 1:29 - [See Discussion of Persecution/suffering](#)
- 2Ti 3:12-[See Discussion of Persecution](#)

**And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria** - The word "all" does not mean all without exception, for Luke qualifies the quantity with except the apostles. In addition, we know from the succeeding chapters of Acts, that there was a viable, active church in Jerusalem. Thus many feel that the "all" refers primarily to the Hellenistic Christians, but we cannot be dogmatic.

Later in Acts **Luke** adds...

So then those who were **scattered** (diaspeiro) because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch ([See this map for locations](#)), speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. (Acts 11:19)

**Comment** - And Antioch would become the great missionary church that sent Paul out on three missionary journeys to the uttermost parts of the earth. So we see God's plan playing out - from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth

**Were scattered throughout** (1289)(**diaspeiro** from **dia** = throughout [denotes separation] + **speiro** = to sow seed) means literally to sow [hither and yon](#), to sow (seed) throughout, to scatter abroad and in this verse is used figuratively to refer to the dispersion of the Church out of Jerusalem. The famous use in the Septuagint describes " the LORD **scattered** them **abroad** from there (BUILDING THE TOWER OF BABEL) over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city." (Ge 11:9) Because of Israel's unfaithfulness and disobedience to her covenant with God, He declared (a prophetic promise) "'You, however, I **will scatter among** the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.'" (Lev 26:33-)

Sowing seed in the olden days was describing as broadcasting the seed when the farmer would toss the seed from his bag as he walked down the soil prepared to receive the seed. The soil of the Samaritan hearts had been prepared by the Spirit and probably also by Jesus pioneer missionary trip in John 4

**Vine** says **diaspeiro** "in general is suggestive of the effects of the scattering in the sowing of the spiritual seed of the word of life."

The root verb **speiro** is used by Jesus in His famous parable of the soils describing the "good soil" which the evangelizing believers and the evangelist Philip encountered in Judea and Samaria.

"And the one on whom seed **was sown** (**speiro**) on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Mt 13:23)

**Comment** - Philip was proclaiming the word into "good soil" in Samaria and the fruit of new lives in Christ was the result as the Spirit took the word implanted and used it to save their souls (James 1:21b+).

**Diaspeiro** - Acts 8:1, 4, Acts 11:19

**Diaspeiro** - 57v in the Septuagint -

Gen. 9:19; Gen. 10:18; Gen. 10:32; Gen. 11:4; Gen. 11:8; Gen. 11:9; Gen. 49:7; Exod. 5:12; Lev. 26:33; Deut. 4:27; Deut. 28:64; Deut. 32:8; Deut. 32:26; 1 Sam. 11:11; 1 Sam. 13:8; 1 Sam. 13:11; 1 Sam. 14:23; 1 Sam. 14:34; 2 Sam. 18:8; 2 Sam. 20:22; 1 Ki. 12:24; 1 Ki. 22:17; 2 Ki. 25:5; 2 Chr. 18:16; Est. 3:8; Est. 9:19; Ps. 44:11; Isa. 11:12; Isa. 24:1; Isa. 32:6; Isa. 33:3; Isa. 35:8; Isa. 41:16; Isa. 56:8; Jer. 13:24; Jer. 15:7; Jer. 18:17; Jer. 32:37; Jer. 40:15; Jer. 49:5; Jer. 49:36; Jer. 52:8; Ezek. 11:17; Ezek. 12:14; Ezek. 12:15; Ezek. 17:21; Ezek. 20:23; Ezek. 22:15; Ezek. 29:12; Ezek. 30:23; Ezek. 30:26; Ezek. 32:15; Ezek. 34:5; Ezek. 34:6; Ezek. 34:12; Ezek. 36:19; Dan. 9:7; Joel 3:2

**James Montgomery Boice** - There are different words for "**scattered**" in Greek. One means dispersed so that the item is gone from that point on, like scattering a person's ashes on the ocean's waves. That is not the word used here in Acts 8:1 and Acts 8:4. The word used here means **scattered in order to be planted**. It is exactly like the Hebrew word [jezreel](#), meaning "scattered" (ED: ACTUALLY IT MEANS "[GOD SOWS/SCATTERS](#)") but also "planted." It is what God did with Israel, scattering the Jews throughout the world because of their sin (SEE [DIASPORA](#)); but He also brought them back and planted them in their land. The disciples were scattered as a result of the persecution. But all the leaders did by scattering the disciples was to plant them in the places to which

they had been scattered, for there they “preached the word” (Acts 8:4). **Is that true of you?** Wherever you find yourself—whether scattered by work or family or education or some other means—have you considered yourself planted in that place? Have you put down roots and born fruit for Jesus Christ? That is what these early Christians did. It is because of this activity that even the bad things that had happened to them served to advance the cause of Christ. Later Paul would write, “We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Ro 8:28+). **The persecution of the early church, even the stoning of Stephen, illustrates that principle.** (Acts: An Expositional Commentary)

**Except the apostles** - This is an interesting qualifying statement. Remember the apostles are the ones who literally heard the words of Acts 1:8 and yet here we see they are remaining in Jerusalem and not going forth to Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest parts of the earth! What gives? Were they being disobedient the clear instructions of the Lord Jesus?

**Barclay on except the apostles** has an interesting hypothesis on why they did not leave Jerusalem - The apostles stood firm. Others might flee, but they braved whatever dangers might come; and they did this for two reasons. (a) They were men of courage. The novelist Joseph Conrad tells that, when he was a young sailor learning to steer a sailing-ship, a gale blew up. The older man who was teaching him gave him just one piece of advice: ‘Keep her facing it. Always keep her facing it.’ The apostles were determined to face whatever dangers threatened. (b) They were good men. Christians they might be, but there was something about them that won the respect of all. It is told that a slanderous accusation was once levelled against Plato. His answer was: ‘I will live in such a way that all men will know that it is a lie.’ The beauty and the power of the lives of the apostles was so impressive that, even at a time of persecution, the authorities hesitated to lay their hands upon them.

**Robertson** observes that “It remains a bit of a puzzle why the Pharisees spared the apostles. Was it due to the advice of Gamaliel in Acts 5:34-40? Or was it the courage of the apostles? Or was it a combination of both with the popularity of the apostles in addition?” (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**Guzik** sees a principle in Acts 8:1 - God can and will use pressing circumstances to guide us into His will. Sometimes we have to be shaken out of our comfortable state before we do what God wants us to do.

[Derek Thomas](#) outlines Acts 8:1-8

- The Great Persecution
- Great Evangelism
- The Great Signs
- Great Joy

Then **Pastor Thomas** asks a very interesting question - What do we intend God to do when we pray, ‘**Lord, make this church a mission-minded church**’”? Perhaps the very last thing we intend is that God would bring persecution and disturb our comfort and ease. Perhaps the next time we pray something like this, we should ask our brothers and sisters if they are ready for the consequences! Do they have their cars filled with gas, ready to take the high road out of the city to wherever God may be calling them? Perhaps we should add a “*warning*” message to our bulletins at missions conferences: “Praying for missions can seriously challenge your comfort zone!” ([Derek Thomas](#))

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## **C H Spurgeon - I. GOD INTENDED THAT HIS CHURCH SHOULD BE SCATTERED ALL OVER THE WORLD.**

**1. There was a tendency in our humanity at first to remain together;** hence the first grey fathers endeavoured to build a central tower around which the race should rally. But God confounded their language, and scattered them that they might people the world. Jerusalem was first the central point of Christianity, and the tendency doubtless was to keep the centre strong. I have often heard the argument, “Do not have too many out-stations, keep up a strong central force.” But God's plan was that the holy force should be distributed; the holy seed must be sown — to do this the Lord used the rough hand of persecution. One went this way, and one the other; and the faithful were scattered.

**2. Every Church endowed with the Spirit will be spread abroad.** God never means the Church to be shut up in a shell or, like ointment, enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air. Now that persecution has ceased godly men are scattered through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Sometimes we regret that young men should have to go to a distance, that families should have to migrate. But does not the Lord by this means sow the good seed widely? It is very pleasant to be comfortably settled under an edifying ministry, but the Lord has need of some of His servants in places where there is no light; and they ought of themselves to scatter voluntarily. Every Christian should say, “Where can I do most good?” And if we will not go afield willingly, God may use providential necessity as the forcible means of our

dispersion.

**II. GOD'S DESIGN IS NOT THE SCATTERING IN ITSELF, BUT SCATTERING OF A PURPOSE**— to preach the Word. The word "proclaim" is not quite so subject to the modern sense which has spoiled the word "preach." The latter has come to be a sort of official term for delivering a set discourse; whereas gospel preaching is telling the gospel out in any way. Note —

**1. The universality of the work of evangelising.** All the scattered went everywhere; there does not seem to have been any exception. You thought it would read "the apostles," but they were just the people who did not go at all. Generals may have to stand still in the centre of the battle to direct the forces; but this was soldiers' battles, and of this sort all the battles of the Cross ought to be.

**2. There were no personal distinctions.** It is not said that ministers preached the Word, scarcely anything has been more injurious to the kingdom of Christ than the distinction between clergy and laity. No such distinction appears in the Bible. "Ye are God's Kleros": all God's saints are God's inheritance. "Ye are a royal priesthood." Though God gives to His Church apostles, teachers, pastors, etc., yet not by way of setting up a professional caste who are to do all the work while others sit still. Every converted man is to teach what he knows.

**Acts 8:2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.**

KJV Acts 8:2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

- **devout** Acts 2:5; 10:2; Luke 2:25
- **made** Ge 23:2; 50:10,11; Nu 20:29; Dt 34:8; 1 Sa 28:3; 2 Sa 3:31; 2 Chr 32:33; 2 Chr 35:25; Isa 57:1,2; Jer 22:10,18; John 11:31-35
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BURYING A MARTYR

**Devout** (2126) ([eulabes](#) from **eu** = well + **lambano** = to receive, take hold) means literally taking hold of well ("carefully and surely" - Thayer) and hence cautious, [reverent](#), [devout](#), [pious](#). In the NT the idea is God-fearing. **Friberg** adds this was "a characteristic of one who carefully observes the law. Lk. 2:25; Acts 2:5; Acts 8:2; Acts 22:12. It is debated whether these were believers or non-Christian Jews. Most commentators feel these are pious Jews rather than believers (the storm of persecution had already hit the believers), "deploring the injustice of his death. They will have taken a considerable personal risk by thus identifying with Stephen." (Stott)

**Buried** (4792) ([sugkomizo](#) from [sun/syn](#) = together + [komizo](#) = to convey or carry) literally means to convey or carry together and was an agricultural term used to gather crops together in the harvest, as in the bringing in the [sheaves](#) ([pix](#)) or collect grain from the [threshing floor](#). Figuratively and euphemistically, [sugkomizo](#) was used of Stephen's burial to describe taking up his body to prepare it for burial (basically it encompassed all of the funeral arrangements). "In the NT, to bear away together a corpse for burial." (Zodhiates). The only other use in the Bible is in the Septuagint of Job 5:26 to describe dead bodies on a field for burning. How ironic that this verb was used of bringing in the harvest, because the "planting" of Stephen's body would mark the beginning of the season of sowing the Gospel and reaping the harvest which has continued even to our day! Stephen's short life bore much fruit (an understatement)! (See Jesus' instruction regarding the harvest - Mt 9:37, 38 - Are you a worker in His harvest, the greatest harvest in time and eternity? Don't miss your once in a lifetime opportunity!)

**NET Note** has an interesting comment on their **loud lamentation** - For someone who was stoned to death, lamentation was normally not allowed (m. Sanhedrin 6:6). The remark points to an unjust death.

**Uteley** adds that "The [Mishnah](#) permits the burial of blasphemers, but not with the **loud lamentations** made by those who bury them. These **devout men** grieved openly (1) in defiance of what happened or (2) in reference to the fact that what happened was not officially sanctioned."

**Loud** is **megas** which generally means great but in this context means loud (cf Mt 27:46; Mk 15:37; Lk 19:37; Acts 7:57; Acts 23:9; Rev 5:2)

**Lamentation** (2870) ([kopetos](#) from [kopto](#) = to lament) is used only here in NT and describes a beating of the head and breast which was the typical way Orientals showed deep mourning. This noun has several uses in the Septuagint that have eschatological



implications, the most striking be the passage in Zechariah 12:10+ which records "I (GOD) will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me Whom they have pierced (MESSIAH); and they **will mourn** (Lxx = kopetos) for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." In as very real sense the passage in Zechariah is an answer to God's plea to Israel in Joel 2:12+ to ""Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and **mourning** (Lxx = kopetos)." Joseph bewailed his father Jacob "with a very great and sorrowful lamentation (Lxx = kopetos)" (Ge 50:10). David writes "You have turned for me my **mourning** (Lxx = kopetos) into dancing (PLAY [STEVE GREEN'S SONG](#)); You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, (Ps. 30:11)

**Kopetos** - 12v in the Septuagint

Gen. 50:10; Est. 4:3 (= When Haman succeeded in getting Ahasuerus to publish an edict of extermination of the Jews, there was great **mourning** among the Jews); Ps. 30:11; Isa. 22:12; Jer. 6:26; Jer. 9:10; Joel 2:12; Amos 5:16; Amos 5:17; Mic. 1:8; Zech. 12:10; Zech. 12:11

**Acts 8:3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.**

KJV Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

- Acts 7:58; 9:1-13,21; 22:3,4; 26:9-11; 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Php 3:6; 1 Ti 1:13
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But** - Term of contrast. A funeral for a church member was followed by further violence against the church.

**Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house-** The imperfect tense of ravaging gives a "perfect picture" of Saul disrupting and devastating one house, then another, wreaking havoc over and over, again and again.

**Utley** on house by house - The early Christians would meet at (1) the local synagogues every Sabbath; (2) the Temple on special days or even most days; and (3) special locations or numerous homes on Sundays.

**Barclay** on **ravaging** - Saul, as the Authorized Version says, '*made havoc*' of the Church. The word used in the Greek denotes a brutal cruelty. It is used of a wild boar ravaging a vineyard and of a wild animal savaging a body. The contrast between the man who was savaging the Church in this chapter and the man who surrendered to Christ in the next is intensely dramatic. (The Acts of the Apostles)

**Paul Apple** on Saul's rampage against righteous ones - Fanaticism Expresses Itself in Extreme Cruelty. Learn a lot about the evil side of Saul in this passage; no wonder he marveled at the grace of God in saving him, the chiefest of sinners, the one who led in the persecution of the church.

**Ravaging** (3075)(**lumainomai** from **lume** = destruction) means to harm, damage, ruin, destroy, injure severely. The word pictures the tearing of a body by an animal! **Friberg** - "of irrational and relentless persecution - devastate, destroy, do great harm, severely injure." **BDAG** - "Of gluttons who, by their intemperance, damage their bodies."

**Lumainomai** - 15v in the Septuagint -

Ex. 23:8; 2 Chr. 16:10 (Asa oppressed = Hebrew - ratsats = crushed); Ps. 80:13; Pr 18:9; Pr 19:3; Pr 23:8; Pr 25:26; Pr 27:13; Isa. 65:8; Isa. 65:25; Jer. 48:18; Jer. 51:2; Ezek. 16:25; Da 6:22; Amos 1:11

**Gilbrant** - The word **lumainomai** suggests a pattern of wanton, wasteful destruction. It is related to the classical word **lumē** which means "an outrage." The verb is used in classical Greek for "injury," whether to a physical body through gluttony or to a nation through the devastation of warfare. It describes both physical and moral damage. The word occurs often in the Septuagint. It depicts merciless slaughter (Amos 1:11), the ravages of warfare (Jer. 48:18; Jer. 51:2), the wasting of a hedge by wild boars (Ps 80:13), the pollution of a spring (Pr 25:26), the corruption of morals through bribery (Ex 23:8), and the marring of beauty through immorality (Ezek 16:25). The result is always harmful destruction. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Paul Apple** on **persecution** and **ravaging** - Examples down through church history – every conceivable type of torture and cruel death you could imagine – detailed in [Fox's Book of Martyrs](#); Story of John Hus (see [youtube video](#) or [another video](#) or [John MacArthur speak of John Hus](#)) - not a bad representation of his life and death - see scene where the authorities attempt to get Huss to recant his faith but who dies singing of Jesus as he was engulfed by fire).

**Steven Cole** adds "From reading many stories of those who have given their lives for the cause of Christ, I have concluded that God gives special grace to them in their dying moments. The Czech martyr, Jan Hus, whose statue and church we saw in Prague, was promised safe passage to discuss his criticisms against the Catholic Church. But they betrayed him and burned him at the stake. He died, not cursing at his persecutors for their deception and brutality, but singing praise to God as the flames consumed his flesh."

**And dragging off men and women** - The present tense pictures Saul continually forcibly dragging believers irrespective of gender! A vivid picture of vicious persecution. One wonders if CNN would have had footage of these events? It is probably not a coincidence that these this same verb ([suro](#)) is used of Satan **sweeping** "away a third of the stars in heaven" (See note Rev 12:4+). Indeed, there is little doubt that Saul's sweeping away of saints was Satanically inspired! Even in one of his last letters Paul remembers his horrible actions writing

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though **I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor**. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; (1 Ti 1:12,13)

**Robertson on men and women** - A new feature of the persecution that includes the **women**. They met it bravely as through all the ages since (cf. Acts 9:2; 22:4). This fact will be a bitter memory for Paul always.

**John Stott** on Saul and **women** - "Not only did he not spare the **women**, but he did not stop short of seeking—and securing—his victims' death (Acts 9:1; 22:4; 26:10). Saul of Tarsus had blood on his hands, for several others followed Stephen into martyrdom." (The Message of Acts)

**Dragging** ([4951](#)) ([suro](#)) means to draw, pull, draw, drag away, lead by force (against their will), "as moving someone or something along by force drag (away), pull (along), **"dragged** him (Paul had been stoned) out of the city" (Acts 14.19) and in Acts 17:6 of **"dragging** Jason and some brethren before the city authorities;" **"dragging** the net full of fish" (Jn 21.8); of stars sweep away out of the sky (Rev 12.4) **Suro** may involve the notion of violence. Of dragging a heavy object with great effort.

**He would put them in prison** ([phulake](#)) (Acts 26:10) - **Put them in** is the verb [paradidomi](#) (imperfect tense) which means over and over he was handing them over to the power of the authorities. Paradidomi described the actions of the Jews against Jesus Who they "delivered ([paradidomi](#)) and disowned in the presence of Pilate." (Acts 3:13). Luke uses paradidomi in a similar context quoting Paul's confession that "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and **putting** ([paradidomi](#)) both men and women into prisons."

The writer of Hebrews addressing the persecutions of the first century Jews who were coming out of Judaism into Christianity exhorted them to

Remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict ([athlesia](#) = picture of struggling athlete engaged in rigorous contest) of sufferings, Partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. 34 For **you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one**. (Hebrews 10:33-34+)

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### Paul Apple's final applications

- Persecution is inevitable for the godly; don't be surprised by it; Prepare!
- Persecution accomplishes God's overall goals for the health and growth of His church - We can fortify ourselves by studying the grace that God provided to His servants who gave the ultimate sacrifice down through church history
- We should have solidarity and prayer support for our brothers and sisters who are under direct attack
- We should be confident in our ultimate victory as we focus on the vision of heavenly glory and the Advocacy on our behalf by the Righteous One

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**Rich Cathers - Moved by pain** - Sometimes it takes some tough times to get us to move into the place we're supposed to be. I'm not sure I want to say with confidence that the early church had become fat and lazy, staying in Jerusalem, but that's certainly what happens sometimes to us. And sometimes God has to let us experience a little discomfort before He has our attention. For many of you, it was a very tough time in your life that got you to the place where you started seeking God. For some of you, you might have come to church today because there's been a sort of crisis in your life, and you've begun to feel that you need to start seeking God for the answers. For some of us, it was a difficult time that led to the direction our lives have taken today. Pain isn't always a pleasant thing. But sometimes it gets us going in the direction we ought to be going.

**Illustration** - God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his

megaphone to rouse a deaf world. C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)

**Illustration** - God uses chronic pain and weakness, along with other afflictions, as his chisel for sculpting our lives. Felt weakness deepens dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away. To live with your "thorn" uncomplainingly—that is, sweet, patient, and free in heart to love and help others, even though every day you feel weak—is true sanctification. It is true healing for the spirit. It is a supreme victory of grace. The healing of your sinful person thus goes forward, even though the healing of your mortal body does not. (J. I. Packer)

**Illustration** -

- Cripple him, and you have a Sir Walter Scott.
- Lock him in a prison cell, and you have a John Bunyan.
- Bury him in the snows of Valley Forge, and you have a George Washington.
- Raise him in abject poverty and you have an Abraham Lincoln.
- Strike him down with infantile paralysis, and he becomes Franklin Roosevelt.
- Burn him so severely that the doctors say he'll never walk again, and you have a Glenn Cunningham who set the world's one mile record in 1934.
- Deafen him and you have a Ludwig van Beethoven.
- Have him or her born black in a society filled with racial discrimination, and you have a Booker T. Washington, a Marian Anderson, a George Washington Carver.
- Call him a slow learner, "retarded," and write him off as uneducable, and you have an Albert Einstein.

Life is about 20% in what happens to us and 80% in the way we respond to the events. - Ted Engstrom [Sermon](#)

**Acts 8:4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.**

KJV Acts 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

NET Acts 8:4 Now those who had been forced to scatter went around proclaiming the good news of the word.

- Acts 11:19; 14:2-7; Mt 10:23; 1 Th 2:2
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SCATTERED TO SCATTER THE GOOD SEED OF THE GOSPEL**

**Therefore** - Term of conclusion. This always begs the question what is being concluded? The pressure of persecution pushed them out of their "comfort zone" in Jerusalem.

It is important to note who it is who is '*gospelizing the Gospel*' (see notes below). Are these apostles? Clearly not (Acts 8:1b). Are they "seminary-trained" evangelists? Hardly! These are lay men and lay women, the Jerusalem Jewish converts to Christ.

It's very interesting. Kenneth Latourette, the Yale historian, says the chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession, but men and women who carried on their livelihood in some secular manner and spoke their faith to those they met in this natural fashion, that the expansion of the church at this point didn't depend upon the apostles, but on the grass roots, men and women gossiping the gospel as they went.

Now, think about that because these are men and women who've lost their homes, who have been scattered on the same day, so they probably left much of their belongings behind them. They may even have left members of their family who have been carried off into prison. And you might have expected them to lie low and to hide somewhere in caves until the trouble dies down and it's astonishing, it's breathtaking that these men and women are going about and they're gossiping the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God uses people in evangelism, people like you and me, ordinary folk. And the rule of our duty here is not that we are able to pry into the secret will of God and discern who the elect are. The rule of duty here is: God has commanded us to do this: 'Go into all the world. You are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and in the uttermost parts of the world.' And that's you and you and you. (See **Adrian Rogers** - [Every Christian An Evangelist](#))

**Derek Thomas** adds that "Renowned Yale historian Kenneth S. Latourette said that *"the chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession...but men and women who carried on their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those they met in this natural fashion."* This should be an example to every Christian today: like the early disciples, we, too, must take the Gospel with us wherever we go and speak about Jesus in our day-to-day conversations with those whom we meet. **This is the most effective evangelism of all.** There is something beautiful, untrained, and unforced about what these Christians did. As Everett Harrison notes, they left as *missionaries* rather than *refugees*. One might have expected them to leave Jerusalem saying nothing for fear of raising further persecution in their new environments. But those who love Jesus—or, better, those who know the love of Jesus—find it difficult to keep quiet about him or his love. **"The love of Christ constrains"** them (2 Cor. 5:14+). Will Metzger writes, *"In our world probably 99.9 percent of all Christians are not in the ministry. Unless everyone engages in evangelism—praying, initiating and fervently speaking the gospel—not much will happen. New birth into God's kingdom usually involves people as spiritual midwives."* This is church growth the early-church way—by every-member evangelism. This episode is instructive. God's church is not dependent upon buildings and stratagems and programs for its survival and growth. Bereft of the apostles, God equipped "ordinary" men and women to tell the story of what Jesus Christ had done for them. (Reformed Expository Commentary Acts - see related sermon). (Bold added)

**Those who had been scattered** - This is the same verb ([diaspeiro](#)) used in Acts 8:1 and as noted there literally meant to sow here and there as when one sows or scatters seed. How apropos, given that the believers who were being physically scattered would immediately began to scatter the good seed of the Gospel! They could have complained about the persecution, but instead of complaining to God they began proclaiming His Son. What a model to imitate!

In Acts 6:7 Luke recorded that in Jerusalem "The word of God kept on spreading." Now, like sowers with salvation seed, saints were sovereignly scattered beyond the confines of Jerusalem in ever widening circles, as when a rock is thrown in the center of a pond sending out ripples that reach to the uttermost parts of the pond! In this case the Gospel ripples are still rippling to the uttermost part of the earth for the glory of the Lord. Amen (Acts 1:8KJV).

**Went about** (imperfect tense)([1330](#))([dierchomai](#)) means they went through (from place to place) and is a verb frequently used by Luke to describe missionary activity (Acts 8:40; Acts 9:32; Acts 9:38, Acts 11:19, Acts 12:10; Acts 13:6; Acts 13:14; Acts 14:24; Acts 15:3; Acts 15:41; Acts 16:6; Acts 17:23; Acts 18:23; Acts 18:27; Acts 19:1; Acts 19:21; Acts 20:2; Acts 20:25)

**Preaching the Word** is the translation of most modern versions but is probably not the best translation. It would be more literally translated as **gospelizing the word** or could be paraphrased as *"gospelizing the Gospel."* **Barclay** renders it "Those who were scattered abroad went throughout the country telling the message of the good news."

**Stott** adds that "The statement that they **'preached the word'** is misleading; the Greek expression does not necessarily mean more than 'shared the good news'."

**Robertson on preaching the Word** - Evangelizing or **gospelizing the word** (the truth about Christ). In Acts 11:19 Luke explains more fully the extent of the labours of these new preachers of the gospel. They were emergency preachers, not ordained clergymen, but men stirred to activity by the zeal of Saul against them. The blood of the martyrs (Stephen) was already becoming the seed of the church. "The violent dispersion of these earnest disciples resulted in a rapid diffusion of the gospel" (Alvah Hovey).

**Preaching the word** (present tense)(the gospel, good news)([2097](#))([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) from **eu** = good, well + **aggéllo** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize; gives us English words [Evangel](#), [Evangelize](#)) means to announce good news concerning something. **Euaggelizo** was often used in the [Septuagint](#) for preaching a glad or joyful message (cf. 1Sa 31:9; 2 Sa 1:20; 4:10). **Euaggelizo** as it does in this passage usually has the technical meaning of publishing the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The present tense indicates that they were continually preaching. One use of [euaggelizo](#) (where it is actually used twice) in the Septuagint depicts exactly what these scattered believers were doing...

How lovely on the mountains Are the feet of him who **brings good news** ([euaggelizo](#)), Who announces peace and **brings good news** ([euaggelizo](#)) of happiness, Who announces salvation, And says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7 quoted in part by Paul in Ro 10:15+)

**Gilbrant** has an interesting note on the secular use of [euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) - This verb is related to the noun **angelos**, "messenger." Originally the term stood for proclaiming a military victory, "to bring good news" of various content from the battlefield. Such messages were not always reliable since deceptive messages were often brought. Due to political motives or in order to boost morale of the troops, false reports of victory were not uncommon. This naturally led to a certain degree of skepticism among those who received the message. Gradually the meaning of euangelizō expanded. It was used of public political decrees or of private messages of a joyous nature. In Hellenism the term acquired a religious-sacral significance in connection with an oracle. In this circumstance euangelizō might imply "to promise" something. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

Below are all the uses of [euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) in Acts - notice that **Acts 8 is the most concentrated use** of this verb in the NT -

- (used in **5 times out of 52 uses in the NT**)

Acts 5:42; **Acts 8:4**; **Acts 8:12**; **Acts 8:25**; **Acts 8:35**; **Acts 8:40**; Acts 10:36; Acts 11:20; Acts 13:32; Acts 14:7; Acts 14:15; Acts 14:21; Acts 15:35; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:18;

**Charles Swindoll** - Luke's summary passage (Acts 8:1-4) reassures the reader that Saul's campaign failed. Instead of wiping out the church, his efforts facilitated the plan of God. Stage one of God's plan saw the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the evangelization of Jerusalem; the believers had become His witnesses (Acts 2:1-7:60). The persecution became the catalyst for stage two: "Judea and Samaria" (cf. 1:8). (Swindoll's Living Insights - NT Commentary - Acts).

**Stott** adds that "What is plain is that the devil (who lurks behind all persecution of the church) over-reached himself. His attack had the opposite effect to what he intended. Instead of smothering the gospel, persecution succeeded only in spreading it. As Bengel comments, 'the wind increases the flame'. An instructive modern parallel is what happened in 1949 in China when the National Government was defeated by the Communists. Six hundred and thirty-seven China Inland Mission missionaries were obliged to leave. It seemed a total disaster. Yet within four years 286 of them had been redeployed in South-East Asia and Japan, while the national Christians in China, even under severe persecution, began to multiply and now total thirty or forty times the number they were when the missionaries left (the exact figures are not known).

**Life Application Commentary - BEHIND THE PAIN** - Persecution forced the believers out of their homes in Jerusalem, but with them went the gospel. Sometimes we have to become uncomfortable before we'll move. We may not want to experience it, but discomfort may be the best thing for us because God may be working through our pain. When you are tempted to complain about uncomfortable or painful circumstances, stop and ask if God might be preparing you for a special task.

**Illustration** of the Passion of the Jerusalem Saints for Gospeling the Gospel - I read of a Chinese farmer who had cataracts removed from his eyes at a Christian mission clinic. A few days later, the missionary doctor looked out his window and noticed this farmer holding the end of a long rope. In single file holding to the rope were several dozen blind Chinese who had been rounded up and led for miles to the doctor who had worked a miracle on this farmer's eyes. That's how we who have received God's gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ should be. We are so blessed that we want everyone to know, so that they can receive the same good news. (Steven Cole)

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## Good Gossip

Read: Acts 8:4-8

Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. —Acts 8:4

Acts 8:4 has been paraphrased as follows: "Those who were scattered abroad went everywhere gossiping the Word." It is interesting to note that the first meaning of the word gossip was to "chat" or "rehearse." The early Christians, when scattered by persecution, could not help but repeat the glorious message of the gospel to everyone they met.

Good gossip, in the original sense of the word, can become a glorious instrument for spreading the truths of the gospel. When you get together with your friends, do you make it a point to discuss the things of the Lord? David said, "My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long" (Ps. 71:24). Another psalm says, "Talk of all His wondrous works!" (Ps. 105:2).

A woman was discouraged because she thought she had no opportunities to serve Christ. She couldn't teach or sing or do much in the church because she had a large family to care for. Then one day she realized that she could testify to the people who made deliveries to her house. It proved to be a wonderful avenue of service, and the Word of God bore fruit. Through witnessing she found great joy.

Wherever you are today, remember to seize every opportunity to "gossip" the gospel to everyone you meet.

Gossip the gospel!

By Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**G Campbell Morgan** - They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word.—Acts 8.4

Again we are reminded of the place and power of suffering in the propaganda of the Word. That Word is always the Word of the Cross. The paragraph preceding these words is a condensed account of real suffering. The violent passions of hostility which had done Stephen to death swept on over all the Church in a blood of bitter persecution. The followers of the Lord, His witnesses were driven out from home and kindred. They were scattered abroad. It is easy to read the statement, but we should not forget what it



meant of anguish and apparent desolation. Those who in their anger brought it about would surely feel that they were at last putting an end to all that they so bitterly hated. They were mistaken. The witnesses can be scattered, but that is only to diffuse their witness over a wider area, and to aid in the propagation of their message. Persecution has never hindered the preaching of the Word. It is only by patronage that the enemies of the Gospel can weaken the witness of those who have believed and have received the fullness of the Spirit. Persecution ever compels the witnesses to complete dependence upon their Lord, and so to fuller realization of His grace and strength. That issues in more perfect conformity to His likeness, and more intense rest in Him. Thus the witness continues in the growing beauty of lives according to the pattern, and in the glad boldness of speech that testifies to the power of His grace. (Life Application from Every Chapter of the Bible)

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**Illustration** - In the center of main street in Enterprise, Alabama, stands one of the strangest monuments in the world. It's a memorial to an insect! Handsomely carved in stone is the likeness of a boll weevil. Many believe that divine providence was involved in the circumstances that led to the erection of this unusual statue. In early plantation days almost everyone in the community raised cotton. But as the years rolled on, a serious pestilence infested the area in the form of a small beetle that punctured the boll of the plant. As a result, it became almost impossible to bring a season's growth to maturity. George Washington Carver, along with several other scientists, became deeply concerned about the situation and began intensive studies to see if any substitute crop could be grown in that part of the country. Raising peanuts was the answer, for they could be planted and harvested with very little loss. In time, cotton gins were forgotten in that region, and it became known as an outstanding peanut center of the world. Soon the farmers' profits far exceeded what they had earned from their best cotton yield. In the end, they realized that the destructive insect they had feared had actually triggered the research that brought them prosperity. Perhaps there have been things in your life that have brought destruction. It doesn't have to be over. God can turn it around.

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## Scattered

Read: Acts 8:1-4

Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. —Acts 8:4

If I had been among the early Christians forced to leave Jerusalem because of persecution (Acts 8:1), what would I have said to my new neighbors? Would I have reminisced about how much I missed my home church? Would I have complained about how hard it was on the kids to start over in a new place? Probably!

But there's no hint of complaint among those displaced believers— only an enthusiastic witness to Christ the risen Lord. After being “scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria,” they “went everywhere preaching the Word” (Acts 8:1,4).

What began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost was not tied to geography, peace, or prosperity. It was the Spirit in them fulfilling Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

When God allows difficult circumstances in our lives—a lost job, a demanding family need, a relocation to another city, state, or country—can we see His hand and sense His power? May we be like those early Christians, accepting the Lord's leading and joyfully proclaiming His Word wherever we are.

The Holy Spirit gives us power  
To witness far and wide,  
Equipping us to do God's work  
And changing us inside. —Sper

The power that compels us comes from the Spirit who indwells us.

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## Of Starfish & Christians

Read: Acts 8:1-8

Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. —Acts 8:4

Did you know that if one of the arms of a starfish is severed, a new one will grow in its place? In fact, if a starfish is cut up, any piece that contains a part of the central disc will develop into a new starfish.

Some oyster fishermen found that out, much to their dismay, when their oyster beds became infested with starfish. The fishermen had cut up the starfish they caught and tossed the pieces back into the water. Rather than destroying them, however, they were actually helping them multiply.

For centuries, Christians have been hated and viciously opposed in many nations. But persecution has not destroyed Christianity. Even under the most dire circumstances, it has not only survived but thrived. Jesus said of His church that “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

First-century believers in Jerusalem were severely persecuted, but it resulted in their being scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. And wherever they went, they preached the Word and many more believed. In Acts 8:4-6, we read that multitudes responded to the preaching of Philip.

Yes, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how severely persecuted, continues to grow. Even the forces of hell itself cannot overcome it!

The church of Christ can't be destroyed,  
Though many enemies have tried;  
Whenever persecution comes,  
The church is spread and multiplied. —Sper

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. —Tertullian

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## **The Church In The World**

Read: Acts 8:1-8

Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. —Acts 8:4

I recently saw a photograph of people leaving a church after a service. They were carrying Bibles and smiling. As I looked at those men, women, and children, I thought, there goes the church. The building will stay, and it will be referred to as “a church.” But those bricks can’t preach and those pews can’t witness. Only people can do that.

Author R. C. Sproul wrote, “Where the people of God are, there is the church—under the lordship of Christ and indwelt by the Spirit.”

This is the essence of the commission Jesus gave to His disciples just before He left them. He promised them power from the Holy Spirit, and said they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). And when the first-century church of Jerusalem came under persecution, that’s what happened. They were scattered and proclaimed the gospel wherever they went (8:4).

When believers in Jesus Christ leave a worship service, the building stays, but God’s people—the church—fan out into the community. Throughout the week, they continue to be the church wherever they are in the world—in shops, universities, restaurants, and homes. I wonder, is the world hearing the gospel from the church?

The witness of the church on earth  
Must shine with brightest light  
To all who need the second birth  
And strength to live aright. —JDB

The world won’t go to the church, so the church must go to the world.

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## **Scattered To Serve**

Read: Acts 8:1-8

Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. —Acts 8:4

Saul hated Christians. He did all he could to hurt the cause of Christ when he launched his intense persecution of the early followers of Jesus. But when they fled Jerusalem to escape persecution, they proclaimed the gospel everywhere they went (Acts 8:4). This caused the church to grow more rapidly—just the opposite of what Saul intended.

Joseph Stalin didn't plan to assist the church in Russia during his purge of political and religious dissidents. But he did help it when he sent some pastors and Christian leaders to the labor camps of Siberia. From Magadan, where they got off the ships, the prisoners were sent in work gangs to forests and mines and remote areas to clear land, dig out vital ore, and cut roads through remote areas. It was grueling work that many did not survive.

But those believers were not silent. They banded together, and as they were sent from place to place they witnessed and taught, leaving behind clusters of believers. In many communities of Eastern Siberia, strong churches still stand and groups of Christians witness to the faith and courage of those dedicated servants.

If God has sent you to a new job, neighborhood, or environment, ask yourself, "To whom can I witness here?"

Will you be bold in your witness  
By giving lost sinners God's Word?  
Jesus will honor your service,  
And people will surely be stirred. —HGB

A small light can dispel great darkness.

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## Scattered!

Read: Acts 8:1-8

Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word. —Acts 8:4

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the US Gulf Coast and displaced an estimated 1.3 million households. With cities and towns evacuated, homes destroyed, and jobs gone, people relocated to communities in every state including Alaska and Hawaii. Because Christians are not immune to the storms of life, it's likely that thousands of people who love the Lord found themselves in places they never expected to live.

Yet many of those same people whose hopes and plans were shattered by Katrina would also bring God's love to others across the US. Like the early Christians who were forced out of Jerusalem by persecution, it could be said of them: "Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4).

**(EDITORIAL ADDENDUM: MY WIFE MET A BLACK LADY DIANE C. WHO HAD TO LEAVE NEW ORLEANS BECAUSE OF KATRINA AND SHE BECAME BIG PART OF OUR LIFE. DIANE C. WAS NOT A BELIEVER WHEN WE MET HER BUT THROUGH KATRINA AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES BECAME A BELIEVER AND THEN DIED A COUPLE OF YEARS LATER AT A RELATIVELY YOUNG AGE. SHE IS WITH JESUS SAFE FROM THE STORMS TO COME! IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE KATRINA CLEARLY PLAYED A ROLE IN HER CONVERSION STORY!)**

While none of us would choose this kind of financial loss and disruption, would we see it as an opportunity to share the hope Jesus Christ has given us?

The apostle Peter's letter reminded Christians who had been scattered among the nations to "be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

If we are uprooted, we can scatter the seeds of the gospel wherever we go.

We're always sowing seeds in life  
By everything we do and say,  
So let's make sure we sow God's Word  
Among the ones we meet each day. —Hess

There's no wrong place to share the gospel.

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**Acts 8:5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.**

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KJV Acts 8:5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

- **Philip** Acts 8:1,14,15,40; 6:5; 21:8
- **the city of Samaria.** Acts 1:8; Mt 10:5,6
- **preaching Christ** Acts 8:35-37; 5:42; 9:20; 17:2,3; John 4:25,26; 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2; 3:11
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

[Map from The Bible Journey](#) (a very interesting website). On the map note point (1) **Philip went down to Samaria** from Jerusalem (Acts 8:5+). (2) Philip's journey to the **desert** on the road going to Gaza (Acts 8:26+). (3) Philip transported to **Azotos** (Acts 8:40+)

## EVANGELISM 101 WON BY ONE

**Philip** ("lover of horses") - This is not Philip the apostle (Mt 10:3) but **Philip** who was put in charge of serving tables (Acts 6:2, 5). Alexander Whyte calls him the church's "first missionary." God's ways are amazing ways always! In this chapter we see that the spread of the Gospel is not initiated by the apostles, but by two men (Stephen and Philip) originally chosen to serve tables! Perhaps you are waiting tables in your church. Remain faithful, for whether God's providential plan has you continuing to wait tables or to go on and serve Gospel meals to the masses, rest assured that you will be found fruitful when the Lord of the Harvest returns!

### Related Resource:

- [Alexander Whyte's Bible Characters - Philip: Deacon And Evangelist](#)

**Barclay** - The fact that Philip preached there and that the message of Jesus was given to these people shows the Church unconsciously taking one of the most important steps in history and discovering that Christ is for all the world.

**David Thompson** has an interesting note - One critical thing to see here is that initially missionary work went into cities, not jungles. If you want to form a Biblical philosophy of missions it is wise to observe, as William Arnot said, missionary efforts were aimed at the "great cities" (Acts, p. 153). The city here is not named, but it was in a city.

**Went down to the city of Samaria** ([map](#)) - Jerusalem ([panoramic view](#)) sits on a hill (cf [Mt Moriah](#).) about 2,474 feet above sea level. To depart the city one must go down into the surrounding valleys of Judea ([see map - Jerusalem is main city in province of Judea](#)) and then head northward to Samaria. This topographical note reminds me of the song [Grace Flows Down](#) -- here we see the "Gospel flow down" from the mountaintop city of God. Clearly, one can see the parallel with Jesus' last "commission" to the apostles

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), and in all Judea and Samaria (Beginning in Acts 8), and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8+)

Second Kings gives us a good summary description of how the origin of the **Samaritans**

The sons of Israel (REFERENCE TO THE NORTHERN 10 TRIBES) walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them 23 until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day (10 NORTHERN TRIBES INTO ASSYRIAN EXILE IN 722 BC). 24 The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities.(2 Ki 17:22-24)

**Comment** - [Sargon II](#) the king of Assyria followed the common practice of replacing a deported people (in this case the Jews from the 10 Northern tribes) with foreigners who intermarried with the Jews he had not taken into exile. The result was what the full-blooded Jews interpreted as a mongrel race known as Samaritans. They were despised by the Jews because of the mixed heritage (mixture of Jewish and Gentile blood) and their worship which centered at Mount Gerizim (cf Samaritan woman's words to Jesus in John 4:20:24).

[Click here for more detailed note](#) on the identity of the Samaritans and why there was such animosity

between the Jews and the Samaritans.

**Thomas** - Jewish pilgrims crossed over to the east bank of the River Jordan in order to detour around the district of Samaria. There was even one incident, recorded in Josephus's Antiquities, whereby some Samaritans, in tandem with Greek Galileans, slew a great number of Jews. The entire issue was summed up by the apostle John, as he explains Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman: "**Jews have no dealings with Samaritans**" (John 4:9).

While **Philip** was not one of the men who heard these words from Jesus, it is certain that the apostles had relayed the Master's instructions to him. And so in obedience to His Lord, Philip goes to the despised land of Samaria! Why would he go to a people group which the Jews utterly detested and who in turn hated with equal hatred the Jews? Remember that although Philip was one of the original 7 deacons, he was also a man "of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," (Acts 6:3+). The text does not say it, but there is little doubt that Philip was filled with the Spirit of Jesus, and His Spirit was leading him to the next stage of the spread of the Gospel.

**Spurgeon** applies the Jewish Philip going to the hated Samaritans with the good news - Never you say again, dear friend, "I must not go there; I am not a proper person for that place." How do you know? The most unlikely person in the esteem of men may be the very person who is the special choice of God.

Breaking down the walls and fences

Keeping us apart

Happens every time the gospel

Penetrates a heart.

—Sper

**John Stott** on (preaching) **euaggelizo** and (proclaiming) **kerusso** - A notable feature of this chapter is the currency it gives to two distinctively Christian words for evangelism. Luke has already described the apostles as bearing witness to Christ, **announcing** (**kataggello**, Acts 4:2+) their message, devoting themselves to the ministry of the word of God, and teaching the people. But now he introduces the verb **kerusso** ('to herald') in relation to Philip's proclamation of Christ (Acts 8:5), and popularizes the verb **euangelizo** ('to bring good news'). The latter he has used once before (Acts 5:42), but in this chapter it occurs five times. Twice the object of the verb is the towns or villages evangelized (Acts 8:25, 40), while the other three times the object is the message itself, namely the good news of 'the word' (Acts 8:4), of 'the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ' (Acts 8:12), and simply of 'Jesus' (Acts 8:35). **This is a salutary reminder that there can be no evangelism without an evangel, and that Christian evangelism presupposes the good news of Jesus Christ. Effective evangelism becomes possible only when the church recovers both the biblical gospel and a joyful confidence in its truth, relevance and power.** (The Message of Acts) (Bold added).

**And began proclaiming Christ to them** - He is preaching Christ, not a church, not a creed, etc, but a Person, the Person of Christ. And we should do the same. Later in this chapter Luke gives a great description of Philip noting that he "opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him." (Acts 8:37). What came out of Philip's opened mouth was what (Who) filled his heart! May Philip's "tribe" increase to the glory of Christ. Amen.

Years later Paul would affirm that Philip's method was still the best method...

1 Corinthians 1:23 but **we preach Christ crucified**, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined to know nothing among you except **Jesus Christ, and Him crucified**.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is **Jesus Christ**.

**Proclaiming** (KJV = preached)(2784)(**kerusso** from **kerux/keryx** = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one who proclamation he makes) or to herald or act as a public crier - the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. **Kerusso** was used of the official whose duty it was to proclaim loudly and extensively the coming of an earthly king, even as **our gospel** is to clearly announce the coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16**note**)! The Imperial Herald would enter a town in behalf of the Emperor, and make a public proclamation of the message which his (human) sovereign ordered him to give, doing so with such formality, gravity, and authority as to emphasize that the message must be heeded! Think about this in regard to the Gospel of God which the proclamation from our Sovereign Savior and King! The herald told the people exactly what the emperor told him, nothing more, nothing less. He did not dare add to the message or take away from it.

The imperfect tense pictures Philip preaching Christ over and over, again and again. He would move on, stop and preach again is the picture. Philip was a man on mission (literally), the only person in the Bible specifically called an "**Evangelist**" (**euaggelistes**) (Acts 21:8) The Steve Green song "**The Mission**" is apropos ("The mission's still the same - Proclaim and live the truth in Jesus' Name.")



**Kerusso** in Acts - Acts 8:5; Acts 9:20; Acts 10:37; Acts 10:42; Acts 15:21; Acts 19:13; Acts 20:25; Acts 28:31

In Acts 8:12 Luke uses [euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) to describe Philip **preaching the good news**.

**Christ** (**Christos**) - This is literally "**The Christ**" (The Anointed One). This refers to **the Messiah** ([messias](#)) and is so translated by some versions (NLT, CSB, NRS, NAB, GWN). The Samaritans like the Jews were looking for the **Messiah** as we learn from Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well who declared to Jesus "I know that **Messiah** ([messias](#)) is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.)" (Jn 4:25)

As discussed in the note below, the Samaritans accepted only the first five books, Genesis through Deuteronomy ([Pentateuch](#)). You say so what? Well, if Philip is preaching **Christ** or **Messiah** to the Samaritans, it stands to reason that he was at least in part preaching Him from the [Pentateuch](#). The implication is that he is preaching Messianic prophecies from the Pentateuch, explaining how Christ is the fulfillment of prophecies like the [protoevangelium](#) from Genesis 3:15+, how Christ is the Prophet like Moses in Dt 18:15, 18.

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Messianic Prophecy](#)
- [What is the protoevangelium?](#)
- [Was Jesus a prophet?](#)
- [What should we learn from the Samaritan woman at the well?](#)
- [What is the significance of Jacob's well in Samaria?](#)

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#### **Question: "Who were the Samaritans?"**

**Answer:** The Samaritans occupied the country formerly belonging to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The capital of the country was Samaria, formerly a large and splendid city. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity to Assyria, the king of Assyria sent people from Cutha, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to inhabit Samaria (2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2-11). These foreigners intermarried with the Israelite population that was still in and around Samaria. These "Samaritans" at first worshipped the idols of their own nations, but being troubled with lions, they supposed it was because they had not honored the God of that territory. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Assyria to instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed from the books of Moses, but still retained many of their idolatrous customs. The Samaritans embraced a religion that was a mixture of Judaism and idolatry (2 Kings 17:26-28). Because the Israelite inhabitants of Samaria had intermarried with the foreigners and adopted their idolatrous religion, Samaritans were generally considered "half-breeds" and were universally despised by the Jews.

Additional grounds for animosity between the Israelites and Samaritans were the following:

1. The Jews, after their return from Babylon, began rebuilding their temple. While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans vigorously attempted to halt the undertaking (Nehemiah 6:1-14).
2. The Samaritans built a temple for themselves on [Mount Gerizim](#), which the Samaritans insisted was designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, established his son-in-law, Manasses, as high priest. The idolatrous religion of the Samaritans thus became perpetuated.
3. Samaria became a place of refuge for all the outlaws of Judea (Joshua 20:6-7; 21:21). The Samaritans willingly received Jewish criminals and refugees from justice. The violators of the Jewish laws, and those who had been excommunicated, found safety for themselves in Samaria, greatly increasing the hatred which existed between the two nations.
4. The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses (**ED:** [Pentateuch](#) same 5 books accepted by Sadducees) and rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions.

From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded the Samaritans as the worst of the human race (John 8:48) and had no dealings with them (John 4:9). In spite of the hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans, Jesus broke down the barriers between them, preaching the gospel of peace to the Samaritans (John 4:6-26), and the apostles later followed His example (Acts 8:25). ([Gotquestions.org](#))

**Holman Bible Dictionary** note on **Samaria** - While the term Samaria was first identified with the city founded by Omri, it soon became associated with the entire region surrounding the city, the tribal territory of Manasseh and Ephraim. Finally, the name Samaria became synonymous with the entire Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 13:32; Jer 31:5). After the Assyrian conquest, Samaria

began to shrink in size. By New Testament times, it became identified with the central region of Palestine, with Galilee to the north and Judea to the south. The name **Samaritans** originally was identified with the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom (2 Ki 17:29). When the Assyrians conquered Israel and exiled 27,290 Israelites, a "remnant of Israel" remained in the land. Assyrian captives from distant places also settled there (2 Kings 17:24). This led to the intermarriage of some, though not all, Jews with Gentiles and to widespread worship of foreign gods. By the time the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem, Ezra and Nehemiah refused to let the Samaritans share in the experience (Ezra 4:1-3 ; Nehemiah 4:7). The old antagonism between Israel to the north and Judah to the south intensified the quarrel. The Jewish inhabitants of Samaria identified Mount Gerizim as the chosen place of God and the only center of worship, calling it the "navel of the earth" because of a tradition that Adam sacrificed there. Their scriptures were limited to the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Moses was regarded as the only prophet and intercessor in the final judgment. They also believed that 6,000 years after creation, a Restorer would arise and would live on earth for 110 years. On the Judgment Day, the righteous would be resurrected in paradise and the wicked roasted in eternal fire. In the days of Christ, the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans was greatly strained (Luke 9:52-54; Luke 10:25-37; Luke 17:11-19; John 8:48). The animosity was so great that the Jews bypassed Samaria as they traveled between Galilee and Judea. They went an extra distance through the barren land of Perea on the eastern side of the Jordan to avoid going through Samaria. Yet Jesus rebuked His disciples for their hostility to the Samaritans (Luke 9:55-56), healed a Samaritan leper (Luke 17:16), honored a Samaritan for his neighborliness (Luke 10:30-37), praised a Samaritan for his gratitude (Luke 17:11-18), asked a drink of a Samaritan woman (John 4:7), and preached to the Samaritans (John 4:40-42). Then in Acts 1:8, Jesus challenged His disciples to witness in Samaria. Philip, a deacon, opened a mission in Samaria (Acts 8:5). ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

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**How Christ Should be Preached - C. H. Spurgeon.** Acts 8:5-8 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them....

**I. AS THE MESSIAH OF ANCIENT PROPHECY.**

**II. AS INCARNATE.**

1. Very man.
2. Very God.

**III. AS CRUCIFIED AND RISEN.**

1. Atoning for sin.
2. Triumphant over death.

**IV. AS GLORIFIED.**

1. For Himself.
2. For His people.

**V. AS JUDGE. Living to make Christ known: —**

I wonder how many Christian people here could have their biographies condensed into this line, **He lived to make Christ known.**" Might it not be said of one, he lived to open a shop, and then to open a second? or of another, he lived to save a good deal of money, and take shares in limited liability companies? or of a third, he lived to paint a great picture? or of a fourth, he was best known for his genial hospitality? Of many a minister it might be said — he lived to preach splendid sermons, and to gain credit for fine oratory. What of all these? **If it can be said of a man, "He lived to glorify Christ," then his life is a life. Every Christian man ought so to live. Oh that my memorial might be: "He preached Christ crucified"! (AND ALL THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CRY "AMEN AND AMEN!")**

**Acts 8:6 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.**

KJV Acts 8:6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

- **with one accord** Acts 13:44; 2 Chr 30:12; Mt 20:15,16; John 4:41,42
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The crowds with one accord - With one accord** is a single word in the Greek and is a favorite word for Luke (see uses below). The Greek word is [homothumadon](#) (from **homos** = same + **thumos** = temperament or mind - see uses below) which means that the Samaritan **crowds** were of one mind, characterized by a unity of mind or a crowd mindset of one purpose. Keep in mind that these are Samaritans and Philip is a Jew, so for them to be of **one accord** in regard to receiving the Word Philip proclaimed is amazing, and certainly suggests the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit preparing the soil of their hearts for the implantation of the Gospel seed sown and generation ([regeneration](#)) of spiritual fruit. And keep in mind that for the Samaritans to manifest a favorable reaction **with one accord** is by no means a given for not all the uses of **homothumadon** were positive - Read Paul's experience in Acts 18:12. This would also support that the Spirit was in some involved in orchestrating the Samaritan's unity of mind. Keep the context in mind -- Josephus writes of some Jews who were killed just for stepping foot on Samaritan ground!

Luke's uses of **homothumadon** - Acts 1:14; Acts 2:46; Acts 4:24; Acts 5:12; Acts 7:57; Acts 8:6; Acts 12:20; Acts 15:25; Acts 18:12; Acts 19:29

**Were giving attention to what was said by Philip - Giving attention** is in the imperfect tense (repeated action) which pictures the Samaritans paying attention and giving a favorable response to the miraculous signs again and again.

**Robertson** says "They kept on giving heed or holding the mind on the things said by Philip, [spell-bound](#), in a word."

**Giving attention** (4337) ([prosecho](#) from **pros** = before, toward + **echo** = hold) means literally to hold to, toward or before. Originally it was followed by the word "the mind" (nous) but at times "the mind" was omitted but still the idea of "the mind" was implied. **Prosecho** was used by Luke in Acts 5:35 when Gamaliel warned the Sanhedrin ""Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men." In Acts 16:14+ Luke uses **prosecho** in a positive setting (much like here in Acts 8:6), describing how the Lord opened Lydia's heart "to **pay attention to** (prosecho) what was said by Paul" (and she was born again). The clear implication in both the case of Lydia and that of the Samaritans is not only did they **pay close attention** but they also acted upon what they heard, and I would add they did so as the Father and His Spirit drew them (John 6:44).

It also clearly not a coincidence that the same verb **prosecho** is used twice by Luke in Acts 8:10-11 to describe the Samaritans "**giving attention to**" a man named Simon (Acts 8:9) because of his magic arts (Acts 8:11). Luke thus prepares us for a conflict between the light of the Gospel and the darkness of the devil's ambassadors of light.

**As they heard and saw the signs which he was performing-** What did they hear? Probably refers to the Word he was proclaiming. However they also likely "heard" the demons shriek as they exited the bodies of their victims. The **signs** ([semeion](#)) were miracles described in Acts 8:7 and they served to authenticate Philip's message.

**Barclay** renders it "The crowds listened attentively to what Philip had to say, as they heard his story and saw the signs which he performed.."

**He was performing** (4160) ([poieo](#)) is in the imperfect tense signifying that Philip kept on doing miracles from time to time.

**Robertson** - Philip wrought real miracles which upset the schemes of Simon Magus.

**Stott** points out that "What is certain is that, since neither Stephen (cf Acts 6:8) nor Philip was an apostle (THOSE WITH WHOM MIRACLES HAD BEEN RESTRICTED), Scripture does not warrant a rigid restriction of miracles to the apostles."

**Acts 8:7 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.**

KJV Acts 8:7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

- **unclean** Acts 5:16; Mt 10:1; Mark 9:26; 16:17,18; Luke 10:17; John 14:12; Hebrews 2:4
- **paralyzed** Acts 9:33,34; Mark 2:3-11
- **lame** Acts 3:6,7; 14:8-10; Isaiah 35:6; Mt 11:5; 15:30,31
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For** - Term of explanation. Luke explains why the crowds were giving attention to Philip.

**In the case of many who had unclean spirits** - This describes demon possession. Samaria was [rife](#) with satanic supernaturalism including demonic possession and Simon's sorcery (could there be any relation?)

**Unclean** (169) ([akathartos](#) from **a** = without + **kathairo** = cleanse from **katharos** = pure; related word [akatharsia](#)) in a moral sense refers to that which is unclean in thought, word, and deed. It can describe a state of moral impurity, especially sexual sin and the word foul is an excellent rendering. The idea is that which morally indecent or filthy. It is not surprising that this word is repeatedly applied to filthy demonic spirits in the Gospels and twice in Acts (Acts 5:16; Acts 8:7).

**They were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice** - NET = "crying with loud shrieks."

**and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed** - The implication of "many" is that not all were healed. Note that Luke is careful to separate those who were demon possessed and those who were physically sick.

**Had been paralyzed** (3886) ([paraluo](#) from **pará** = from + **luo** = to loose) means literally loosened at the side with no power over one's muscles and so to be paralyzed. Here **paraluo** is in the [perfect tense](#) which pictures a permanent state and thus the idea of paralyzed, enfeebled or taken with palsy.

**Lame** (5560) ([cholos](#) from **chalao** = to slacken, loosen) is an adjective describes that which is lame.

**Were Healed** (cured) (2323) ([therapeuo](#) from **therapon** = an attendant) means primarily to care for, to be an attendant, and therefore of a physician, to attend upon or treat medically, from thence comes the meaning to heal. **Therapeúō** means to heal miraculously in Mt. 4:23, 24; 10:1, 8; Acts 4:14 (Of lame man Peter healed), here in Acts 8:7 and Acts 28:9 (Paul on Malta).

**Furneaux** notes that "the servant was reaping where the Master had sown. Samaria was the mission field white for the harvest (John 4:35)."

#### Related Resources:

- [John Piper - Have You Exorcized a Demon?](#)
- [The Demonic \(unclean spirits\) in the NT](#) - Bob Utley
- [Clean, Unclean - Baker's Evangelical](#)
- [Can a Christian be demon possessed?](#)
- [Can a Christian today perform an exorcism? What does the Bible say about casting out demons?](#)
- [How do we distinguish a psychological disorder from demon possession?](#)
- [Is it possible to sell your soul to the devil?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about demon possession / demonic possession?](#)

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#### [What are Unclean Spirits?](#)

Answer: An unclean spirit is simply a New Testament synonym, a more descriptive Jewish term, for a demon. The terms unclean spirit and demon seem to be interchangeable in Scripture. There is no clear difference in their definitions. Some translations refer to them as "impure spirits."

Throughout the New Testament, the term unclean spirits ([akathartos](#) in the Greek language) is mentioned over twenty times. Throughout those passages we read that unclean spirits can possess people and cause them sickness (**ED: NOTE THAT MOST SICKNESS IS NOT RELATED TO DEMON POSSESSION!**) and harm (Matthew 10:1; 12:43; Mark 1:26; Luke 4:36; 6:18; Acts 5:16; 8:7), that they are searching for someone to possess if they are not currently possessing someone (Matthew 12:43), that some are more unclean or evil than others (Luke 11:26), that unclean spirits can interact with one another (Mark 5:1–20; Matthew 12:45), and that unclean spirits are under God's authority and must submit to Him (Mark 1:27; 3:11; 5:8, 13).

An unclean spirit or demon is "unclean" in that it is wicked. Evil spirits are not only wicked themselves, but they delight in wickedness and promote wickedness in humans. They are spiritually polluted and impure, and they seek to contaminate all of God's creation with their filth. Their foul, putrid nature is in direct contrast to the purity and incorruption of the Holy Spirit's nature. When a person is defiled by an unclean spirit, he takes pleasure in corrupt thoughts and actions; when a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, his thoughts and actions are heavenly.

Some people hold the idea that unclean spirits or demons are deceased humans who may or may not have been evil while alive. However, we know the unclean spirits mentioned in the Bible are not referring to the dead, for several reasons. One, humans are never called "spirits" when the word spirit is used as a stand-alone term, without a possessive. In Scripture, men are said to have a spirit/soul (saying "his spirit" in Proverbs 25:28 and 1 Corinthians 5:5), but men are not called "spirits." Another reason is that, once a person dies, he immediately goes either to eternal life with the Lord or to eternal darkness in hell (Hebrews 9:27; 2 Corinthians 5:6–8; Matthew 25:46). Human spirits, therefore, do not and cannot wander on earth in their spirit bodies. Any unclean spirit that wanders around, taking up residence in places or people or interacting with people in any way, is a fallen angel—a demon (Matthew 12:44).

All unclean spirits mentioned in Scripture are demons, and all demons are definitely unclean, unholy, impure, evil spirits doomed to an eternity in hell (Matthew 25:41).

## Acts 8:8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.

KJV Acts 8:8 And there was great joy in that city.

NET Acts 8:8 So there was great joy in that city.

- Acts 13:48,52; Ps 96:10-12; 98:2-6; Isaiah 35:1,2; 42:10-12; Luke 2:10,11; Ro 15:9-12
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE JOY OF THE LORD THE FRUIT OF CONVERSION

**Derek Thomas** - There is a deliberate contrast established in the passage: the church in Jerusalem is being ravaged, and the city of Samaria is experiencing "much joy" (Acts 8:1, 8)....The trials of one community had brought blessing to another. (Ibid)

The devil stole man's true **joy** in his successful temptation in the Garden (cf Ps 16:11), but the glorious Gospel received restores supernatural joy to our soul (cf Gal 5:22+). Beloved, I am a physician and used to tell folks they had a deficiency of this or that element (e.g., B12, etc), so let me ask you "Do you have a deficiency of supernatural, Spirit energized joy?" Remember that the phrase "joyless Christian" is a sad [oxymoron](#)!

**So there was much rejoicing in that city.** - Literally "and there came about." The idea something that was not in existence, came into existence. A city devoid of supernatural Spirit energized joy now has experienced the "birth" of great joy as the result of Philip's preaching the great Gospel!

**Rejoicing** (5479)([chara](#)) is a feeling of great pleasure, of inner gladness, or of delight. **Joy** is an emotion evoked by a sense of well-being. It is a deep feeling of happiness and contentment. **Joy** in the NT is virtually always used to signify a feeling of "happiness" **that is based on spiritual realities** (i.e., it is independent of what "happens"). **Joy** is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful heart and it is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful behavior. **Joy** is not necessarily an experience that comes from favorable circumstances, but is God's gift from His Spirit to believers (fruit in Gal 5:22+, Acts 13:52+, 1 Th 1:6+). In the present case of Samaria Luke gives no numbers of new converts, but there must have been many for the city to be filled with great rejoicing. In sum, **Joy** is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who is filled with the Spirit and knows all is well between himself and the Lord. There is a chorus from an old spiritual song that is apropos...

**Happiness happens**

**But joy abides**

**Barclay** - It is a false Christianity which brings an atmosphere of gloom; true Christianity radiates joy.

**William Arnot** on **great joy** - Hear this, ye butterfly flutterers, that flit from flower to flower, satiate with each sweet as soon as you alight upon it, and hastening unhappy to another, trying every flower all day, and at night bringing no honey home! Hear this, all ye who study hard to keep religion at arm's length, lest it should cast a gloom over your heart or home! When an earnest missionary who had risked his life for Christ's name preached in a city, the people, instead of growing gloomy, became glad. This is a phenomenon worthy of study. But do not mistake its meaning. The instinct which prompts the vain and worldly to keep religion away, lest it should destroy their pleasure, is a true instinct. Every creature's instinct is for its own preservation. To embrace Christ is to crucify the old man, who does not die without struggle and pain. But when he is put off a new nature is put on, and the new nature has new joys. What the Samaritans felt is the ultimate result, not the first effect, of preaching Christ offered to a city or a soul, and kept out seems a terror, but received becomes a joy which life cannot give or death destroy. ([Arnot](#))

**Great joy** - John Bowen, afterwards Bishop of Sierra Leone, being, while a young farmer in Canada, converted by a sermon, wrote in his diary, "I experienced such an ecstasy last evening in prayer that I doubted if I were in my right senses. Christ was slain for me. I could give myself up to Him unreservedly. I cannot describe my sensations of joy. I could not praise God sufficiently for the great scheme of salvation. I remained a long time giving thanks and praying that such a heavenly joy might not be taken away from me."

**Spurgeon** on **much rejoicing** - (1) **There was joy in Samaria because** the gospel was preached there. If men did but know it, the greatest boon a city can have is to have the gospel preached in it. Remember the old motto of the city of Glasgow, "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word." No city flourishes so well as that which has a clear, powerful, gospel bell ringing in the midst



of it. It is a famishing city which has not the bread of life; but it is a flourishing city which has the bread of life freely dispensed from the pulpit every Sabbath day by loving hands.

**(2) But there was still more joy in Samaria because** there were signs of blessing going with the gospel. Unclean spirits were driven out of those who had been possessed by them, and lame and paralyzed persons were made to walk. We work no such miracles now, in the physical world, but we work them in the spiritual realm; out of many men have we seen the evil spirits go as the cup of devils has been abandoned. Filthy blasphemy has been given up, and their speech has been seasoned with salt. Fornication has been forsaken, uncleanness of life has been hated and left, theft and dishonesty of every kind have become detestable. We have seen these miracles wrought again and again; we have some among us at this time to whom we might say, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed." The gospel has washed, and cleansed, and changed them; and it is going to do the same for others, for Jesus Christ has come to cast unclean spirits out of those who are possessed by them, and to make some receive divine strength who have hitherto been palsied so far as any holy action is concerned, that they may henceforth run gladly in the ways of God, and give up their whole lives to his service and glory. Oh, that it might be so with many here to-night! If it be so, there will be great joy in this city.

**(3) Once more, there was great joy in Samaria because** so many believed, and were saved. He that believeth in Jesus Christ is saved. The moment that he believes, his nature is changed, his sins are forgiven, and his heart is renewed. This great work is done in a moment, but it is never undone. The new life commences with the miraculous, regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, and that miracle is of such a character that it continues to thrill throughout the entire man until, at last, he is brought safely to heaven made perfectly like the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(4) There was also great joy in Samaria because** of the changed lives of those who believed. When a man is converted, he does not doubt the power of the gospel that converted him; and when men see the changed lives of well-known sinners, they are made to believe that the gospel that works such transformations must be true; or, if they doubt it, they do so in the teeth of the plainest evidence. If our preaching does not turn men from drunkenness to sobriety, from thieving to honesty, from unchastity to purity, then our gospel is not worth a button; but if it does all this, then this shall be the evidence that it comes from God, seeing that in the world, so sorely diseased by sin, it works the wondrous miracle of curing men of these deadly ills.

O my dear friends, what a happy city Samaria was when it was full of men healed, and saved, and converted, and rejoicing in Christ!

[\(Acts 8:8 Great Joy in the City\)](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [Biblical Joy and Hope](#)
- [Delight Yourself in the Lord](#)
- [Joy - Chara \(Greek Word Study\)](#)
- [How can I find joy in the midst of trials?](#)
- [Is there a difference between joy and happiness?](#)
- [How can I experience joy in my Christian life?](#)
- [What is the joy of the Lord?](#)

**Acts 8:9 Now 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;**

**KJV** Acts 8:9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

**NIV** Acts 8:9 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,

- **practicing magic** Acts 13:6; 16:16-18; 19:18-20; Exodus 7:11,22; 8:18,19; 9:11; Leviticus 20:6; Dt 18:10-12; 2 Ti 3:8,9; Rev 13:13,14; 22:15
- **claiming to be someone great;** Acts 5:36; John 7:18; 2 Th 2:4; 2 Ti 3:2,5; 2 Peter 2:18
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **SIMON THE "GREAT" ASTONISHES SAMARIA**

**Now** (NAS, NET, NIV, NJB) - **Now** means the momentary present here serves as a transition or [segue](#) into the following (devilish) supernatural story (Acts 8:9-24) which contrasts with the preceding truly (God ordained) supernatural exploits of Philip the

evangelist. Other versions (KJV, ESV) translate the Greek conjunction ([de - 1161](#) -see below) as "**but**" which would mark a "change of direction" (term of contrast) of the story. Certainly in context, the previous section is a picture of the light of the Gospel, whereas the following has at least some elements of the dark "fingerprints" of the devil.

**Wiersbe** comments that "It is a basic principle in Scripture that wherever God sows His true believers, Satan will eventually sow his counterfeits (Mt. 13:24–30, 36–43). This was true of the ministry of John the Baptist (Mt. 3:7ff) and Jesus (Mt. 23:15, 33; John 8:44), and it would be true of Paul's ministry also (Acts 13:6ff; 2 Cor. 11:1–4, 13–15). The enemy comes as a lion to devour, and when that approach fails, he comes as a serpent to deceive. Satan's tool in this case was a sorcerer named Simon." (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**John Philips** - "But." That spoils the picture. Everywhere there was love, joy, peace, repentance, revival, rebirth; everywhere except in the life of one individual. In the soul of a certain Simon the sorcerer Satan still reigned supreme. This man had met his match. He had power, the kind of power Satan can give. But he knew that what he had was poor and shoddy stuff indeed compared with the mighty power of Philip.

**Now** ([1161](#))(**de**) is a "[conjunctive](#)" particle; **(1)** most commonly to denote continuation and further thought development, taking its specific sense from the context and; **contrast** - but; **transition** - then, now (with no temporal sense); **(2)** to emphasize contrast; as a correlative with men (on the one hand)...but (on the other hand) (Mt 3.11); after a negative - but rather, instead (Heb 4.13 ); **(3)** to introduce background material into a narrative now (with no temporal sense) or left untranslated (Jn 11.18; this use is especially characteristic of John's Gospel); **(4)** to resume an interrupted discourse - and, then, or left untranslated (Lk 4.1); **(5)** used with other particles: *de kai*, = but also, but even (Mt 10.30); *kai...de* = and indeed, and also, but also (1 Jn 1.3)." (Analytical Lexicon)

**Gingrich** says that **de** is an "[adversative](#)" particle, never first in its clause and - Mt 1:2ff; but Mt 6:1; 1 Cor 2:15. Simply indicating a transition = now, then Mk 5:11; Lk 3:21; 1 Cor 16:12; that is Ro 3:22; 1 Cor 10:11; Phil 2:8. After a neg. = rather Lk 10:20; Acts 12:9, 14; Eph 4:15; Heb 4:13, 15. *de. kai*, = but also, but even - Mt 18:17; Mk 14:31; Jn 2:2; Acts 22:28; 1 Cor 15:15. *kai....de*, = and also, but also - Mt 16:18; J 6:51; Acts 22:29; 2 Ti 3:12. *De* may often be omitted in translation."

**De** - used over 356x in the NAS - Click [1161](#) and scroll down for list of verses in which "de" is used in NAS, KJV, CSB - In NAS = after(2), also(2), another\*(8), even(4), even though(1), former\*(1), however(6), moreover(1), moreover\*(1), nevertheless(1), now(267), or(6), other(1), other hand(4), others\*(3), partly(1), rather(1), so(12), suppose\*(1), then(6), therefore(1), though(1), what(1), when(3), whereas(2), yes(1), yet(25).

**There was a man named Simon** - **Simon** is an abbreviated form of **Simeon** (means "hearing" from [shama](#)). See [summary of the nine NT men](#) named Simon. **A T Robertson** adds an interesting note (but does not give a source) that "a number of messianic pretenders had this name (Simon)." This is made even more interesting by the fact that Simon was called the Great Power of God as a very similar phrase is applied by Paul to Christ (1 Cor 1:24).

As an aside note that a number of commentaries reference extra-biblical writings describing Simon, but whether these descriptions are the Simon of Acts 8 is open to debate. Therefore it is advisable to draw your conclusions about Simon from Acts 8, the only NT record of this man.

**Furneaux** comments on Simon and his sorcery - "In his person Christianity was for the first time confronted with superstition and religious imposture, of which the ancient world was at this period full".

**Who formerly was practicing magic in the city** - Luke had used **the city** in Acts 8:5 so presumably this is the same city as in that passage. **Formerly was practicing** is "had been practicing magic." **Louw-Nida** says that **was formerly** (imperfect tense) means "to exist prior to some temporal reference point." The **NLT** conveys the correct sense writing that Simon "had been a sorcerer there for many years." (Act 8:9NLT) Luke is not saying he had formerly been a sorcerer and no longer practiced sorcery. Before Philip had arrived in **the city** and begun to perform supernatural signs and wonders, Simon was already on the scene with his brand of occult supernaturalism.

**Robertson** explains that **formerly was practicing magic** - An ancient idiom (periphrastic), the present active participle **mageuo** with the imperfect active verb from *prouparchō*, the idiom only here and Luke 23:12 in the N. T. Literally "Simon was existing previously practising magic.

Peterson - Jews were strictly forbidden from any involvement in magical practices (Dt. 18:9–14) because of their association with idolatry and the demonic, and the earliest Christians adopted the same stance. (Pillar NT Commentary-Acts)

**Formerly** ([4391](#))(*prouparcho* from **pro** = before + **huparcho** = to be or exist) means literally to exist before, to begin before, precede in time, describing a previous state or way of acting. In the only other use *prouparcho* describes the fact that "**before they had been** (Herod and Pilate) enemies with each other." In both Acts 8:9 and Lk 23:12 **prouparchō** describes situations which

existed previously, but ceased to exist in the time frame of the narrative.

**Gilbrant** - Used transitively **prouparchō** can mean "to take the initiative"; used intransitively it means "to exist before" and can be used to describe former states or actions. Thus, in the papyri **prouparchō** refers to "already existing dykes" (*Moulton-Milligan*). (Ibid)

**Practicing magic** (3096)(**mageuo** from **magos** = a **sorcerer**) means to practice sorcery, be a magician, use witchcraft. **Logos** "To perform magical spells that harness occult forces or evil spirits to produce unnatural (**ED**: "supernatural") effects in the world." **Louw-Nida** - "to practice magic, presumably by invoking supernatural powers."

**Vincent on mageuo** - Only here in New Testament. One of the wizards so numerous throughout the East at that time, and multiplied by the general expectation of a great Deliverer and the spread of the Messianic notions of the Jews, who practiced upon the credulity of the people by conjuring and juggling and soothsaying.

Here is the question - was Simon simply an illusionist, a man with artfully crafted sleight of hand, etc? If we compare Simon with "a certain **magician**, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus" (Acts 13:6) also known as "Elymas the **magician**" (same word as the root **magos** here in Acts 8:9) in Acts 13:8-10 notice that Paul fixes his gaze on him and declares "'You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). The first point to note is that Elymas was opposed to the Gospel as it began to spread abroad (this was Paul's first missionary journey - Acts 13:4). Secondly, note that Paul calls him a "son of the devil" which would strongly support the premise that the magic was satanic in origin. **Adrian Rogers** agrees that Simon "he had established a relationship with demonic powers." We know that the future Antichrist's coming "is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders" (2 Th 2:9) Rogers goes on to add that "There is demonic power. The missionary told me of some gourds that had been used by the witch doctor. Pharaoh's magicians seemed to have the power to do devilish miracles. Don't be dazzled, don't dabble and don't be deceived."

**And astonishing the people of Samaria** - **Astonishing** is in the present tense picturing Simon's magic as continually amazing the people. Here Simon astonishes the people but in Acts 8:13 Simon himself is astonished by supernatural phenomena associated with the ministry of Philip.

**Astonishing** (KJV = **bewitched**, Acts 8:11)(1839) (**existemi** from **ek** = out + **hístemi** = to stand) literally means to stand out from or to stand outside oneself (and thus to be beside oneself). **Existemi** describes "the feeling of astonishment mingled with fear, caused by events which are miraculous, extraordinary, or difficult to understand." (BDAG) It can describe one who is so astonished almost to the point of failing to comprehend what one has experienced. Luke uses this verb 3 times in Acts 8 - Acts 8:9, 11, 13.

**Claiming to be someone great** - Claiming is literally "saying" but the context is that he was saying with arrogance or pride. And so the NIV renders it "He boasted that he was someone great." Simon is focused on himself and is full of pride and ego, which is the foundation of all false religion. Recall that it was pride that made a beautiful angel into a devil (cf Isa 14:12-14 - note 5 "I will" statements!).

**Criswell** observes that "This is Christianity's first sharp confrontation with the occult. Moses had listed no fewer than 10 "abominations" of the nations, particularly of Canaan. He strongly warned the Israelites just before crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land (Deut. 18:9-14). **Sorcery** is literally "magic arts," from **mageuo** (Gk.), the root for the English word **magic**." Moses warned the Israelites that Canaan would be filled with the practitioners of wizardry, necromancy, and divination. He then indicated to the chosen people that God was instituting prophecy precisely to teach and warn the Israelites about such things. **Sorcery** and its like were wholly unacceptable to the God of Israel (Lev. 20:6, 27; Dt. 17:2-5). Moses indicated that the prophets God would send, apparently beginning with Joshua, would teach the people to resist such practices. Prophecy would be established alongside the priesthood (Dt. 18:15ff.). This may be an instance of double futuristic application of prophecy because Peter treated this prediction as having been fulfilled by the coming of Christ (Acts 2:22-24). In Christianity's first encounter with the Samaritan culture, Simon stubbornly resisted and apparently never actually became a Christian (Acts 8:18-24). Just as Christianity was victorious in its first confrontation with sorcery in the spread of the gospel into Judea and Samaria, so in the final segment of the Great Commission (cf. Acts 1:8), the sorcerer Elymas vigorously tried to stop Paul and Barnabas from witnessing to the proconsul Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:8, 12). The missionaries demonstrated that the victory of the infant faith in its homeland would be repeated abroad. (Believer's Study Bible)

**Adrian Rogers** gives an interesting True/False question - Satan is against religion - true or false? Satan is not opposed to religion. He is in the religion business up to his ears. The first temptation was a religious one - to be like God. "Let me tell you how to be godly." It was a temptation to fall up, not down. Satan's chief weapon against the Gospel is false religion. God has been working in revival power and now there comes a conflict (Acts 8:8-9). There was great joy in that city. Heaven comes down and glory fills the soul. Revival brings joy and it also brings opposition. If you have never met the devil, it's because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. Satan's chief weapon against the Gospel is false religion.

**A T Robertson** - It is amazing how gullible people are in the presence of a manifest impostor like Simon. The Magi were the priestly order in the Median and Persian empires and were supposed to have been founded by Zoroaster. The word μάγοι [magoi] (magi) has a good sense in Matt. 2:1, but here and in Acts 13:6 it has the bad sense like our "magic."

#### Related Resources:

- [What is the difference between miracles and magic?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about white magic?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about black magic?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about magic, magicians, illusionists?](#)
- [Magic](#) - Bob Utley (interesting historical perspective)
- [Magic, Divination, And Sorcery](#) - Hastings Bible Dictionary
- [Magic](#) Baker Evangelical Dictionary
- [Magic](#) McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia
- [Magic](#) The Jewish Encyclopedia
- [Demons and Magic](#) - John MacArthur

**Acts 8:10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the great power of God."**

KJV Acts 8:10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

- **they** 2 Cor 11:19; Eph 4:14; 2 Peter 2:2; Rev 13:3
- **from** Jeremiah 6:13; 8:10; 31:34; Jonah 3:5
- **the great power** 1 Cor 1:24
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SIMON MAGUS ATTRACTS ATTENTION

**Simon Magus** ([Wikipedia](#) - note much of Wiki's discussion in not necessarily the Simon in Acts 8 - we have to stick with the Scripture) is not specifically given as his name in Acts 8 but was later applied to him by tradition. Magus was linked to him because the Greek word for **magician (magi)** is [magos](#) (in Acts 13:6,8) so this man is frequently nicknamed "Simon Magus." but has also been called by some the "Bad Samaritan!"

**F F Bruce** adds that "The word **"magus"** originally denoted a member of the Median priestly tribe, but it came to be used in an extended sense of a practitioner of various kinds of sorcery and even quackery, like Elymas, the sorcerer of Paphos in Cyprus, whom we meet later in the narrative of Acts (Acts 13:6–11). (NICNT-Acts)

**Peterson** adds "**magus** was borrowed from Persian, where it denoted a member of the priestly Median tribe. It came to be used of anyone possessing supernatural knowledge or ability (cf. the 'wise men' in Matt. 2:1)." (Pillar NT Commentary-Acts)

**And they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying** - **All** means without exception. While it could be hyperbole, clearly Simon's influence was extensive. **From smallest** (mikros) **to greatest** (megas). "All the people, from the least to the greatest, paid close attention to him" (Act 8:10NET) Simon's satanic sorcery successfully saturated all levels of the society of Samaria from [stem to stern](#) (so to speak).

**Giving attention** - see notes above on [prosecho](#) there (Acts 8:6) giving attention to the good news from God, and here to the lying wonders from Simon. As Wiersbe said 'Simon's sorcery was energized by Satan (2 Th. 2:1–12) and was used to magnify himself, while Philip's miracles were empowered by God and were used to glorify Christ.' Philip has now taken the place previously occupied by Simon.

**NET** translation is more literal - "This man is the **power of God** that is called '**Great**.'" (Act 8:10NET)

That Simon was called the **power of God** is certainly ironic, for when he witnessed the supernatural power of the Living God, he was **constantly amazed** (Acts 8:13) and desired to purchase some of this **power** for himself (Acts 8:18)!

**This man is what is called the great power of God**- Some commentators (Barton - Life Application Commentary) see Simon as a false Messiah and there is some Scriptural support, for **Paul** gives us the true **power of God** writing "but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ (or Messiah) **the power of God** and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor 1:24)

**Vincent on great power of God** - They believed that Simon was an impersonated power of God, which, as the highest of powers, they designated as the great.

**F F Bruce** says the Samaritans "accepted his own account of himself and regarded him as the grand [vizier](#) of the supreme God, the channel both of divine power and of divine revelation." (NICNT-Acts)

**Swindoll on great power of God** - This curious phrase essentially calls Simon a visible manifestation of God, or at least a demigod.

**Acts 8:11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.**

KJV Acts 8:11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

- **he had** Isaiah 8:19; 44:25; 47:9-13; Gal 3:1
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**And they were giving him attention** - This is the third use of this verb [prosecho](#) which is imperfect tense indicating that the Samaritans had repeatedly been giving attention to Simon's supernatural sorcery from the devil. But praise God, when Philip began to preach the Gospel accompanied by supernatural signs from God, the Samaritans "**were giving attention** ([prosecho](#))" to the Gospel which was "gospelled" by Philip.

**Charles Swindoll** comments that "Like technology today, "the practice of magic was omnipresent in classical antiquity." And like our near addiction to the convenience of smartphones and tablets, Wi-Fi devices and laptops, dependence on magicians and their magical props in the first century was epidemic. From superstitious curses to supernatural cures, people from every social class were exposed to the magic arts. One historian summarizes what most pagans believed about these practitioners: "Magicians had a direct link to the divine world, and magic was seen as a gift from the gods." These peddlers of falsehood commonly gained fear, respect, admiration, and money through their sleight of hand and deceptive illusions. Enter Simon the Samaritan, often called by Christian historians in the ancient church Simon Magus or Simon the Magician. He had become an expert in the magic arts." (Swindoll's Living Insights)

**Because** - Term of explanation. Luke explains why the least to the greatest were [paying attention](#) to Simon - supernatural signs.

**He had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts** - Philip's incursion into Samaria was not only into a land of potentially hostile hearers, but also hearers steeped in exposure to the effects of the forces of darkness! The battle lines were drawn for a classic conflict between light and darkness.

**Magical arts** ([3095](#))(**mageia** from **magos** = sorcerer) means magic and in plural magical arts or sorceries (as rendered by KJV).

**Gilbrant on mageia** - Mageia is the work of a sorcerer or magician whether genuine or fraudulent. It is related to the word magos, which originally identified members of the Persian priestly caste (Magians), but it came to be used commonly in classical Greek of those who possessed (supposedly) supernatural knowledge and power and who put it to work for a religious cause (cf. Liddell-Scott). The word is not found in the Septuagint. This term is found only once in the New Testament, Acts 8:11, where it describes the astonishing work ("sorceries") of Simon. What specifically those works entailed is unknown, but they had impressed the Samaritans for some time and had gained Simon a considerable following. However, the work of God through Philip amazed even Simon (Acts 8:13), perhaps exposing the true source (demonic) or true character (fraudulent) of his works. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Astonished** (perfect tense - state or abiding result)([1839](#)) pictures them as "out of their senses" (cf Mk 3:21). See previous note on [existemi](#). Used in Acts 8:9 of the Samaritan's reaction to Simon's sorcery and in Acts 8:13 of Simon's to signs performed by Philip!

**Acts 8:12 But 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.**



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KJV Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

- **they believed** Acts 8:35-38; 2:38,41; 16:14,15,31-34; Mt 28:19; Mark 16:15; Ro 10:10; 1 Peter 3:21
- **about the kingdom of God** Acts 1:3; 11:20; 20:21,25; 28:31; Luke 9:2,60
- both Acts 5:14; 1 Cor 11:11; Gal 3:28
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHILIP PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS

**But - Term of contrast.** This passage marks a change of direction from being influenced ("bewitched") by the darkness to surrendering to the light (Jn 8:12), from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light (cf Col 1:13+), from the devil to Christ (cf Acts 26:18+).

**When they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God** - Empowered by the Spirit, Philip preached with power. He was "gospelling" about the Kingdom of God. His words in accord with Jesus' words to Nicodemus "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the **kingdom of God**." (John 3:3) The **NET** has "they believed Philip **AS** he was proclaiming the good news." Notice Luke is very careful to distinguish signs versus salvation message -- In Acts 8:6 God used signs performed by Philip to garner the attention of the Samaritans ([see pix](#)), so that the supernatural signs served like a "finger of God" pointing them to the saving Gospel of God "gospelled" by Philip. Here is the important point - the faith of the Samaritans was not in the signs but in the Savior.

Let's look at an example from the Gospels where the Jews faith was in the **signs** not the **Savior**. This passage gives us a good illustration of "unbelieving belief" which we will discuss more fully regarding Simon's belief...

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. 24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. (John 2:23-25+)

**Comment** - These Jews were actually believing in the signs Jesus performed. The signs were like a "finger of God" pointing to Jesus as God. Jesus saw through their false profession and did not believe in them (in their profession) because He could see into their still uncircumcised hearts!

**John Piper** on John 2:23-25+ - This "faith" or "believing" was not genuine and Jesus could see into the heart and knew that it wasn't.

**Warren Wiersbe** adds - The words **believed** in John 2:23+ and **commit** in John 2:24 are the same Greek word. **These people believed in Jesus, but He did not believe in them!** They were **'unsaved believers'**! It was one thing to respond to a miracle but quite something else to commit oneself to Jesus Christ and continue in His Word (John 8:30-31 ED: NOTE THE ACTIONS OF THESE "BELIEVERS" IN Jn 8:58-59, cf Jn 8:44-46). John was not discrediting the importance of our Lord's signs, because he wrote his book to record these signs and to encourage his readers to trust Jesus Christ and receive eternal life (John 20:30-31). However, throughout the book, John makes it clear that it takes more than believing in miracles for a person to be saved. Seeing the signs and believing in them would be a great beginning; in fact, even the disciples started that way and had to grow in their faith (compare John 2:11 and v. 22). (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Alive).

**They believed Philip** - While this reading suggests they trusted **Philip** the man, clearly their trust was in the message from the man, the Word of God that flowed through Philip. God's preachers, teachers, ministers, etc, should be empty vessels, holy conduits through which the Holy Word flows by the power of the Holy Spirit. Dear pastor are you empty of self and filled with Savior (Spirit)? There is no other way to penetrate the spiritual darkness of our seductive age and the unholy hardness of men's selfish hearts! Our mantra needs to continually be "Not me, but Thee" and our prayer "Jesus be Jesus in me, no longer me but Thee." Amen!

**William Larkin** says that "Philip 'preaches' (Lk 4:18–19+/Is 61:1–2; Lk 24:47+) the **Christ** in Whose Person the **kingdom of God** has come and by whose name it spreads." (IVP NT Commentary - Acts)

**Criswell** writes that "**The kingdom of God**" is the main theme of Jesus' preaching. This is its first mention in Luke (Lk 4:43) where it occurs 32 times (cf. Mark 1:14, 15). The Jews understood this as the time when God would openly assume His royal power.

**David Peterson** - Stephen was literally '**gospel**ing about the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ'. The **kingdom of God** was the focus of Jesus' teaching (e.g. Lk. 4:43; 6:20; 7:28; 8:1, 10; 11:1, 16:16), and, in the course of his public ministry, he sent his disciples to preach the same message (Lk. 9:2; 10:9–11, [ED: cf the very last verse in Acts describing Paul = Acts 28:31]). After Pentecost, the apostolic preaching became more explicitly Christological, as the role of the crucified and resurrected Christ in the fulfillment of God's **kingdom** plans was more clearly understood. However, the **kingdom** remains the theological context in which to understand and proclaim Christ in Acts (Acts 1:3, 6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). (Pillar NT Commentary - Acts)

**For more** on the sometimes confusing topic the **Kingdom of God** see commentary notes on Luke 17:20+ and Luke 17:21+.

**Preaching** the good news ([2097](#)) see notes on [euaggelizo/euangelizo](#). Under God's sovereign control and power, the scattering of His Church in Acts 8 was accompanied by scattering of His Gospel seed. The following descriptions are synonyms Luke uses in Acts 8 to describe the Gospel...

- **Acts 8:4 Preaching the Word** (cf Acts 4:31, Acts 6:7, Acts 10:36, Acts 11:1, 19, Acts 12:24, 13:5, 7, 26, 44, 46, 49, Acts 14:3,25, Acts 15:7, etc)
- **Acts 8:5 Proclaiming Christ**
- **Acts 8:12 Preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ**
- **Acts 8:14 Received the Word of God**
- **Acts 8:25 Spoken the Word of the Lord**
- **Acts 8:25 Preaching the Gospel**

**And the name of Jesus Christ** - As Peter had said "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12+) It is interesting that Philip did not organize an apologetics class (nothing against apologetics) on "How to Refute Satanically Inspired Sorcerers" but instead he simply preached Jesus Christ, the Name above every name.

**John Philips** makes an important point regarding their belief - "It is important to note that their faith rested solidly on the preaching of the Word of God, not on the miracles Philip performed. The faith that rests on miracles is not worth much. If we win people with sensationalism we will need sensationalism to keep them. People who come for loaves and fishes will have to be kept with loaves and fishes."

**Believed** ([4100](#))([pisteuo](#) from [pistis](#); [pistos](#); related studies [the faith](#), the [obedience of faith](#)) means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust. To accept as true, genuine, or real. To have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something or someone. To consider to be true. To accept the word or evidence of.

In secular Greek literature, as well as in the New Testament, **pisteuo** (pistis, pistos) has a basic meaning of an intellectual assent or a belief that something is true. Michel says that this use arose during the Hellenistic period. During the struggle with skepticism and atheism, it acquired the sense of conviction concerning the existence and activity of the Greek gods.

The respected Greek lexicon author W E Vine defines belief as consisting of

- (1) a firm conviction which produces full acknowledgment of God's revelation of Truth - (2Th 2:11 -"in order that they all may be judged who did not **believe** [pisteuo] the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.")
- (2) a personal surrender to the Truth (Jn 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe** [pisteuo] in His name") and
- (3) a conduct inspired by and consistent with that surrender. (see related topic [obedience of faith](#))

**They were being baptized, men and women alike** - Luke elevates women as sharing equally with men in this new community, the Church (cf Gal 3:28+). Luke's favorite tense the imperfect depicts these new believers as being baptized, one after another. You can almost see them lining up! What a glorious sight!

**Were being baptized** ([907](#))([baptizo](#) from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid; stain or dip as with dye; used of the smith tempering the red-hot steel, used of dyeing the hair; of a ship that "dipped" = sank) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. A study of the 77 NT uses reveals that most of the uses of **baptizo** in the Gospels and Acts are associated with literal water baptism. Wuest describes the figurative meaning as "the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition."

**Baptizo** occurs 5 times in this one chapter - Acts 8:12, 13, 16, 36, 38.

The Greeks used **baptizo** to describe the dyeing of a garment, in which the whole material was plunged in and taken out from the element used. Baptizo was used of the act of sinking ships. Baptizo also meant to bathe of a boat which had been wrecked by being submerged and then stranded on the shore.

**Baptizo** is found most frequently in the book of Acts 21x in 19v - Acts 1:5; Acts 2:38; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:13; Acts 8:16; Acts 8:36; Acts 8:38; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:47; Acts 10:48; Acts 11:16; Acts 16:15; Acts 16:33; Acts 18:8; Acts 19:3; Acts 19:4; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16

**John Philips** quips that "Simon Magus lost his disciples. His cunning mind, however, was hard at work: "If you cannot beat them, join them" seems to have been his idea."

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**TODAY IN THE WORD DEVOTIONAL** - Most people associate the words Jew and Palestinian with images of tanks and bullets. The picture of Messianic Jews calling their Palestinian brothers and sisters caught in the crossfire of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to encourage them or to donate food and money is quite different. Yet despite the deep hostility between these groups, the gospel's power is greater. Says Salim Munayer, founder of the reconciliation group Musalaha, "There is an opportunity for reconciled Jews and Arabs to be an example ... to the whole Israeli society."

For many, reconciled Jews and Palestinians are hard to imagine. That's what it must have been like when the Samaritans received the gospel. A huge divide existed between Jews and Samaritans. Samaritans were viewed as worse than Gentiles because they were "half-breeds." They were considered heretics because they rejected the Jerusalem temple and only accepted the first five books of Moses as Scripture. Only the gospel could breach this great divide.

Because the Samaritans already had an expectation of a messiah, Philip used this foundation to proclaim the Good News. As we've seen, the gospel's advance is accompanied by signs and wonders. Because the occult was extensive in this area, it's not surprising that numerous exorcisms occurred (v. 7). But Philip wasn't the only one performing wonders. A magician named Simon had quite a following. Yet whereas Philip preached the kingdom of God, Simon was apparently preaching the "kingdom of Simon." It's hard to know at what level he believed (v. 13), but his response to Peter's rebuke (v. 24) suggests that he'd never really accepted Jesus as Lord.

The hardest part about today's passage is understanding why God delayed giving the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans until Peter and John arrived. Luke gives no indication that anything was lacking in Philip's sermon. Instead, delaying the outpouring of the Holy Spirit assured the Samaritan believers that they were full participants in the early church with the full blessing of the Jerusalem leaders.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

It's interesting to notice that Peter and John follow Philip's lead by continuing to evangelize Samaritan cities on their return to Jerusalem (v. 25). This should encourage us that powerful advances for the gospel are not always initiated by church leaders. In fact, many racial reconciliation efforts are at the grass-roots level. As we continue our study in Acts, prayerfully ask the Spirit to show you ways that you can help bring down the walls that still divide the body of Christ, whether they are ethnically or economically based.

**Acts 8:13 Even 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.**

KJV Acts 8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

- **believed** Acts 8:21; Ps 78:35-37; 106:12,13; Luke 8:13; John 2:23-25; 8:30,31; James 2:19-26
- **as he observed** Acts 3:10; 13:44; Hab 1:5; John 5:20; 7:21
- **signs and great miracles taking place** Acts 8:7; Mark 16:17
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

You are probably thinking "Now he's really lost his mind!" No, this depiction is intentional as it makes a graphic point about the

purpose of the signs performed by Philip (and signs and wonders in general). These supernatural signs were like supernatural fingers pointing to God and in this context to His Gospel. I love John Piper's illustration speaking about the error associated with Simon's signs...

**An Illustration of Simon's Error** - The simplest way I can think of to illustrate what went wrong with Simon is an experience every mother of toddlers has had. Suppose you have a one-year-old child sitting on your lap and suddenly in the window there is a beautiful bird and you hold out your hand to point at the bird and say, "Look, look at the bird." What does the child look at? He looks at your hand and the sign you are making with your fingers. He might even try to imitate the sign by putting out his index finger. He sees the sign. He is excited because you are excited. He joins in imitating the sign as best he can. But the problem is he never sees the bird. **The whole point of the sign is missed.** That is what happened to Simon the magician here in Acts 8. He saw the signs that Philip was doing. They were better than his own magical signs. He got excited about them. He followed Philip around and wanted to imitate them. But he never saw the bird in the window. He never saw the ugliness of his own sin, the need for repentance, and the glory of Christ in the gospel who forgives and makes new and clean. ([Simon's Perversion of Signs and Wonders](#))

[See note above](#) on John 2:23-25+.

Another example of "unbelieving belief" is the **parable of the soils**...

"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. (Luke 8:13+)

**Comment** - This is not a description of a person who believes and then falls away. Once saved, always saved is true, but the problem with these souls, like Simon, is that they were not truly "once saved." Furthermore salvation is shown to be true or genuine by perseverance to the end of one's life, but these individuals fall away (See [Perseverance of the saints](#)). If you continue in My word," Jesus told some who professed faith in Him, "then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). The writer of Hebrews reminded his readers, "We have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (Heb. 3:14+; Heb 3:6+).

**John Piper** commenting on Luke 8:13 says "**The faith is not real saving faith.** Paul taught the same possibility in 1 Corinthians 15:1–2+ when he said, "I preached to you the Gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—**unless you believed in vain.**" **There is such a thing as "believing in vain."** James called it "**barren**" faith or "**dead**" faith (James 2:20, 26+). So I conclude that Luke's point here in Acts 8 is that Simon's "faith"—his "believing" (described in Acts 8:13)—is **not a saving faith but a false faith, dead, barren, empty.** That's the first step in Luke's warning to us. **There is such a faith and it can rise right in the presence of true preaching and true miracles.** ([Simon's Perversion of Signs and Wonders](#)) (Bold added)

**ESV Study Bible** note - A few interpreters think this is saving faith because these people "**believe**," and though they "**fall away**" (from fellowship?), this is not an ultimate rejection of Christ **But it is more likely that this is temporary, merely intellectual "faith"** (cf. James 2:17) that is not saving faith, for these plants have no root (see Mark 4:17), they bear no fruit, and they do not persevere but last only for a while (on perseverance, see notes on John 6:40; Ro 8:29; 8:30; 2 Ti 2:11-13; Jude 21).

**Derek Thomas** - False professions are made, and short-term enthusiastic followers do fall away, as the parable of soils all too clearly indicates (cf Mt. 13:20–22+).

See also Mark 4:5-6, 16-17+ "Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. 6 "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.... (4:16-17+) "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.

Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21+ Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.....(13:20-21+) "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

**Even Simon himself believed** - It is interesting that the text does not say in **WHAT** Simon believed. Did he believe in Philip's

**preaching** or in his **miracles**? Did he believe the "finger" (see above analogy) but miss the object to which it was pointed? Either way, Simon's subsequent actions present us with a confusing picture which has resulted in essentially two main interpretations -- by far the majority opinion among conservative writers is the interpretation of Simon as a professor but not a possessor of Christ, what the old **Puritans** would have called "**a false professor**." Some have referred to this as a "temporary faith," more in his head than in his heart, which is another way to describe "intellectual assent." A very small percent of commentators think he was a genuine believer in Christ. He certainly appears to have a good start by being baptized and then following Philip (remembering that a follower of a person was often seen as a disciple of the one they were following).

**Simon** was what **John Wesley** was for a period of his life, an "**almost Christian**," a man who believed but had no changed heart, a man whose faith was superficial and intellectual. Dear reader, are you like Simon, a phony, a counterfeit, a sham and a pretender?

**Spurgeon** wrote that **Sudden Conversions not Always Genuine** - Fish sometimes leap out of the water with great energy, but it would be foolish to conclude that they have left the liquid element for ever; in a moment they are swimming again as if they had never forsaken the stream; indeed it was but a fly that tempted them aloft, or a sudden freak: the water is still their home, sweet home. When we see long accustomed sinners making a sudden leap at religion, we may not make too sure that they are converts; perhaps some gain allures them, or sudden excitement stirs them (ED: LIKE SIMON), and if so they will be back again at their old sins. Let us hope well, but let us not commend too soon.

#### **Related Resource:**

- [John Wesley's sermon - The Almost Christian](#)
- [Was Simon the Sorcerer a Saved Man? \(Acts 8:9-24\)](#)

**John Philips** - Simon's faith was spurious from the start. He was not won by Philip's message but by Philip's miracles. He "believed," it says. But what did he believe? Whatever it was he believed, it did not regenerate his soul. He was as lost after he "believed" as he was before he "believed," as the sequel of the story makes clear. He deceived Philip, however. Perhaps he even deceived himself. What Simon Magus coveted was not the Master but the miracles, not the Savior but the signs. How careful we need to be in preaching the gospel and in personal witnessing to distinguish between those who "believe" and those who believe. Simon Magus went so far as to be baptized. Certainly Philip seemed to have made a very notable convert.

**John Piper** commenting on Simon's "belief" says "something happens that shows this "belief" to be false....I take this (Acts 8:18-23) to mean that Simon was not truly converted. He has no part or lot in this matter of Christianity. His heart is not right with God. He still needs to repent. He is still enslaved to bitterness and iniquity. He is still in his sin and not yet converted. **This is confirmed by the entire tradition of the early church** that says Simon went on to become a heretic and not a true Christian (cf. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Jerome, etc.). And yet Luke says in Acts 8:13a, "Even Simon himself believed." The point I draw out of this is that there is a "faith" or a "believing" that does not save, even though it rises in the presence of true preaching and true miracles." ([Simon's Perversion of Signs and Wonders](#))

**Jack Arnold** - In Acts 8:9-25 we have a contrast between two men. Simon Magus who represents mere profession of faith in Christ, and Philip, the deacon and evangelist, who represents true possession of Christ. Philip received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and sought to follow Christ by preaching Christ to others. His message of Christ had a ring of authority and truth and the Samaritans were paying attention to what he had to say. Simon Magus, we shall learn, also believed in Jesus Christ, was baptized, and yet he did not follow Christ and lived only for himself. Simon was a professor, a phony, who was a hypocrite and an apostate from the Christian Faith. Simon was the first apostate from Christianity, and the first religious racketeer in the Christian church. Simon had a faith in Christ but this faith did not save him. The case of Simon Magus shows us again how the Devil seeks to divide Christians from within. The Devil's first attempt was in the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. His second attempt was to cause dissension among the widows in the local church at Jerusalem who felt they were being neglected. Now in the case of Simon Magus, we have another attempt to destroy the work of Christ. The Devil sows tares among the wheat in that a false Christian gets embedded with true Christians. ([Sermon](#))

**Charles Swindoll** on Simon's conversion - He did not become a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. (Swindoll's Living Insights)

**Adrian Rogers** on Simon's "belief" - Satan is looking for converts not casualties. In a clever move he brings Simon into the church. He desires not to work from the outside, but from the inside.. Simon was an unbelieving believer. That is clear from Acts 8:21. Simon believed the miracles but he did not receive the Lord Jesus. He was like so many today - a miracle-monger. He was entranced by the miracles. Not all belief is saving belief. (see John 2:22-25+).... I am afraid that there are thousands in church roles who are counterfeit Christians. They have never committed themselves to the Lordship of Christ. This is why we need the sure Word of God. Satan is a deceiver.. When your life comes to an end and you stand before the Lord, and He asks why should I let you into heaven: "An angel appeared unto me and told me I was a Christian." Satan laughs. "I was that angel." (2 Cor. 11:14)...Be careful



that you are not swept away by some devilish manifestation into a superstitious faith.

**Warren Wiersbe** believes that Simon's "faith was not in the Word of God, but in the miracles he saw Philip perform; and there is no indication that Simon repented of his sins. Simon (probably) continued with Philip, not to hear the Word and learn more about Jesus Christ, but to witness the miracles and perhaps learn how they were done....His faith was like that of the people of Jerusalem who witnessed our Lord's miracles (John 2:23–25+), or even like that of the demons (James 2:19). Simon continued with Philip, not to hear the Word and learn more about Jesus Christ, but to witness the miracles and perhaps learn how they were done." (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**Derek Thomas** - Simon Magus, who is said to have "believed," and yet receives a stinging word of rebuke from Peter that suggests he was never truly converted at all....there was no sign of Simon's repentance....Simon's offer of money to the apostles so that he might purchase their ability to bestow the Holy Spirit on others is troubling (Acts 8:18–19). It is as crass as it is naive. For Simon, the gift of the Holy Spirit was something to be dispensed in the same manner as he performed his satanic tricks, and he saw it as a way of making more money....Greed and self-promotion seemed to be his motives, and he lacked any semblance of a man who had been convicted by his sinfulness and had turned to the Lord for mercy. His religion was opportunistic and cavalier....there was Peter's assessment of Simon Magus. Nothing could be said in harsher and plainer terms. So blunt was Luke's Greek at this point that J. B. Phillips rendered what Peter said as "To hell with you and your money!," which, as I. Howard Marshall comments, "may sound like profanity, but is precisely what the Greek says." This is much more than an apostolic opinion; it is the uttering of a divine curse against Simon, "consigning him and his money to destruction." When Peter added, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:21), he was stating that Simon did not share in the blessings that the gospel brings. (Reformed Expository Commentary - Acts)

**John MacArthur**: "It becomes clear soon that Simon's baptism did not save him. Baptism has no power to take away sin. It is important, however, and commanded of all believers following salvation, though it plays no part in it. Simon viewed salvation as a purely ritualistic, external matter, an additional act in his life instead of the total transformation of his whole person on the inside (2 Cor 5:17). Faith that does not transform the life is not saving faith."

**Charles Ryrie** says: "Simon himself believed also. Peter's denunciation (verses 20-23) indicates that Simon's faith was not unto salvation (Jas 2:14-20)."

**Henry Morris** in the Defender's Study Bible says: "Simon's 'belief' was evidently only a belief in the reality of the signs and wonders performed by Philip (note Christ's rebuke of this kind of belief in Jn 4:48; cp Jn 2:23-25). These wonders were greater than those Simon was able to perform with his sorceries (Greek *mageia*, from which we get our word "magic"), and he was envious. In the early Christian literature, he was called Simon Magus, and was said to be a prominent enemy of the true faith."

**J. Vernon McGee**: "Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, and many men and women believed. Simon came in contact with Philip, and apparently he made a profession of faith under the ministry of Philip. I believe that Simon is the first religious racketeer in the church—but, unfortunately, not the last. He professes to be a believer during the sweeping revival in Samaria under the ministry of Philip. Simon believes, he is baptized, and he becomes a friend of Philip. You would certainly think he was a real child of God. However, he is not converted. We will see that there are also others who are professing believers, but they are not born again. They have the head knowledge, they go along with the crowd, but they are not saved. Although they have been baptized with water, they have not been baptized into the church of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. There are a great many people like that today. I receive many letters from people who have told me that since they have been studying the Bible along with our program, they have begun to examine their faith. Many have come to realize that they have just been following along with someone else and that they have not been genuinely, personally converted. Paul says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves ..." (2Co13:5). It is a very good thing to check yourself. See whether you are in the faith or not. This man Simon had all the outward trappings. He answered that he did believe in Jesus, and so he was baptized. But it was not a genuine faith."

**John Calvin** favors that Simon was "authentic": "But I do not agree with those who think he was only pretending to believe. Luke plainly says that he believed, adding the reason. How then does he come to betray himself as a hypocrite shortly afterwards? The answer is that there is a middle ground between faith and mere dissimulation. The Epicureans and Lucianists profess to believe while laughing inwardly, because they think the hope of eternal life is meaningless; in the end they are no more godly than dogs or swine."

**William Larkin** in the IVP NT Commentary: "Peter declares Simon unregenerate. He has no part or share. For Luke this can refer to either salvation (Acts 26:18) or ministry (Acts 1:17). Peter's further references to a heart ... not right before God (Acts 8:21) and being full of bitterness and captive to sin (Acts 8:23), as well as his call to repentance (Acts 8:22), which the early church normally addresses to the unregenerate (Lk 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20), and the earlier mention of destruction (Acts 8:20), all support the view that Simon is not regenerate."



**Kent Hughes** in Preaching the Word: Acts: The Church Afire: "Fascinated, he made a public profession of faith and was publicly baptized, but it was not a genuine conversion of the heart....Instead of asking for the Holy Spirit, Simon asked for the power to bestow the Spirit....Unfortunately, Simon may have never repented. His reply was insipidly lame: "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me" (v. 24). Only slightly moved by Peter's stern rebuke, he did not pray for forgiveness but rather asked Peter to do it for him. He did not repent as he was enjoined to do. So now his name lives in infamy."

**Longenecker** suggests that "Simon's belief in Jesus seems to have been like that spoken of in John 2:23–25—i.e., based on miraculous signs and thus inferior to true commitment to Jesus." (EBC)

**A T Robertson:** " He was an unconverted man in spite of his profession of faith and baptism. There is no evidence that he ever changed his life at all."

**Believer's Study Bible** (W A Criswell): "Simon the sorcerer was inwardly miserable and spiritually enslaved to sin. This statement suggests that Simon the sorcerer had not been saved. It also illustrates that baptism does not save. Simon's belief was merely intellectual assent to the claims of Christ rather than a profound experience of faith in the Person and work of the risen Lord."

**HCSB Study Bible - Even Simon** was one of those who **believed** the good news presented by Philip. The authenticity of his belief is doubtful. He seems to have been fixated on the **signs** and **miracles** that accompanied Philip's preaching, not the person of Jesus Christ....(In Acts 8:18-19) we see Simon's true heart. He was used to impressing the crowds with magic; now he wanted to impress them with his ability to impart the **Holy Spirit**. (Acts 8:20-22) By saying that Simon had **no part or share in this matter**, Peter confirmed that Simon had not truly converted to Christianity. His **heart** (meaning his will, affections, allegiance) was still **not right before God**. (HCSB Study Bible)

**KJV Study Bible:** "Simon the sorcerer made an outward profession of faith, but his response demonstrates his lack of spiritual life."

**Nelson Study Bible:** "Though this man was baptized, he had a long way to go in Christian doctrine and personal growth. Some people believe Peter's words in v21 indicate that Simon's confession and baptism were not genuine. Church history later associates Simon with heresy and identifies him as an enemy of the Christian faith. His actions have given to the vocabulary of the church the word "**simony**," which means buying and selling of church offices."

**John Gill** (1700's) writes: There is no reason to believe he truly repented.

**Kenneth Gangel** - We are almost as astonished as the Samaritans must have been when we read that Simon also believed and was baptized. Was this magician, whether charlatan or sorcerer, genuinely converted? The following paragraph will show us enough information to demonstrate that he was not. Remember that the word believe does not always mean saving faith in the New Testament (John 2:23-25<sup>+</sup>; Jas. 2:19). Apparently Simon was caught up in the excitement of the moment. Having recognized that Philip's miracles were considerably greater than his own, he followed the evangelist around to learn some new tricks. Any earning of God's gift denies God's grace. Somehow Simon never quite caught that basic message of the gospel. Arrington puts it this way: "His only hope was genuine evangelical repentance which he had not experienced. He had no real spiritual understanding of the faith that he claimed. His faith was imperfect; it was centered in man, not in Christ" (Arrington, 88-89). (Holman New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**New Geneva Study Bible:** "By his words and actions Simon proved that he did not believe in Christ. He was still "poisoned by bitterness" (Dt 29:18 Heb 12:15) and "bound by iniquity" (Ro 6:16; 8:8). **A profession of faith without repentance is invalid.**"

**Evangelical Commentary:** "The New Testament use of the word believe can have a range of meaning, from mental assent to certain facts (Jn 2:23; James 2:19) to justifying commitment (Ro 10:9,10). At any rate, Peter's warning (Acts 8:21, 23) and the possibility of this man being the Simon Magus of later notoriety (ED: THIS EXTRABIBLICAL EVIDENCE IS INTERESTING BUT DIFFICULT TO SUBSTANTIATE) do not encourage one to assume that he was a true believer."

**Stanley Toussaint** summarizes the evidence that suggests that Simon was not regenerate or a genuine born again believer - (1) Believe (pisteuo) does not always = saving faith. (Cf James 2:19 Jn 8:31,32) (2) Faith based on signs is not trustworthy (Jn 2:23-25, 4:48). (3) Luke never stated that Simon received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17,18). (4) Simon's "works": continued to have a selfish interest miraculous power (Acts 8:18,19). (5) The verb "repent" (metanoeo) used in Acts 8:22 is normally addressed to lost people (ED: IN ACTS IT IS ALWAYS USED IN CONTEXT OF SALVATION!). (6) Perish in Acts 8:20 is a strong, related to the "perish" in Jn 3:16. (7) The description of Simon in Acts 8:23 is a better description of a lost man than of one who is saved (cf. Dt 29:18). "Still one cannot be dogmatic on this point. The Lord knows those who are His (2 Ti 2:19)" (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**ED COMMENT:** While Toussaint gives a nice summary of facts, but look at Acts 8:21 which Toussaint did not allude to in his list of 7 facts and in that passage the verb for "**is**" (estin) is in the present tense which could be paraphrased "your heart is *continually* not right before God." Does that sound like the description of the heart

of a genuine believer? Also note that Toussaint only quoted the first half of the trustworthy statement in 2 Ti 2:19 to support the thought that we cannot definitely assess the status of Simon's salvation. The last half of 2 Ti 2:19 says "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to **abstain** (aorist imperative) from **wickedness**." Does that sound like what Simon ostensibly a new believer has done? Also notice that the word for **wickedness** is **adikia**, (used only 24x in NT) which is the same word Peter used in his scathing description of Simon in Acts 8:21 - "I see that you are (present tense - continually)...in the bondage of **iniquity** (**adikia** in 1 Jn 5:17 = **sin**!)." Peter is describing Simon as continually enslaved to sin. Does that sound like a new believer? Ultimately you will need to form your own opinion, but in the final analysis, ultimately the Lord Alone knows what transpires in Simon's heart. After all Judas had everyone except Jesus fooled until the very end!

**Constable** comments on this passage - "I see no reason to conclude that Simon's faith was spurious. The text says that he **believed** just as the others Luke mentioned (Acts 8:12), and there is no reason to doubt the reality of their faith."

**ED COMMENT:** While Constable is correct in stating "there is no reason to doubt the reality of their faith," the fact is that Luke gives us no details about the fruit of their faith, but he gives a definite description of the "fruit" of Simon's profession. It is also notable that Constable makes no statement that not all belief in the NT is saving belief. This is clearly a minority view and if works demonstrate the authenticity of one's faith, there is no evidence Simon's faith was saving faith. And Peter would seem to leave little doubt when he declared "**You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.**" (Acts 8:21) The danger of this genre of "generous" interpretation is that it gives credence to the idea that if one says they believe, then no matter how they live or act subsequently, they are regenerate or born again. This is a dangerous teaching and runs counter to many passages that teach a faith that truly believes is a faith that brings forth fruit in keeping with repentance, a faith that is not dead but has works that flow from genuine faith.

**C. I. Scofield**, in *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, agrees that Simon was a mere professor, not a genuine possessor. In the final chapter of this booklet ("Believers and Professors") Scofield has this heading: "BELIEVERS ARE SAVED, MERE PROFESSORS ARE LOST." The first example he gives of a mere "pretender" is that of Simon.

**Harry Ironside:** "We see in Simon a baptized man, a religious professor, who had not been regenerated" (Acts, p. 107, and see also his earlier discussion on page 106).

**John Phillips:** "Simon's faith was spurious from the start He was not won by Philip's message but by Philip's miracles. He 'believed,' it says. But what did he believe? Whatever it was he believed, it did not regenerate his soul. He was as lost after he 'believed' as he was before he 'believed,' as the sequel of the story makes clear...What Simon Magus coveted was not the Master but the miracles, not the Savior but the signs" (*Exploring Acts*, page 152-153)

**William MacDonald:** "It seems that Simon had not been born again. He was a professor but not a possessor" (p. 1605). **MacDonald** continues: "Peter's answer indicates that Simon was not a truly converted man: 1. 'Your money perish with you.' No believer will ever perish (John 3:16). 2. 'You have neither part nor portion in this matter'; in other words, he was not in the fellowship. 3. 'Your heart is not right in the sight of God.' This is a fitting description of an unsaved person. 4. 'You are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.' Could these words be true of a regenerate person? (*Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 1606)..

**Homer Kent** observed, "In all likelihood his belief (8:13) was only superficial and not true saving faith, as the following reasons indicate. (1) His belief seems to have been based upon the miracles which he beheld (vs. 13), and could be mere intellectual assent. Jesus usually discounted that kind of faith (John 2:23-25; 6:26,66). It is true that the same word is used for "believe" of Simon and the rest of the Samaritans, but the context must indicate the content of the belief. (2) Simon is contrasted to the others throughout the account. (3) The particular type of rebuke given to Simon makes it doubtful that he was saved. "Thy silver be with thee into perdition" (literal translation). "Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter." "Thy heart is not right." The expression "gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity" was OT terminology descriptive of most serious offenses (Deut. 29:18,20). (4) Simon exhibited no personal sense of sin, but only a fear of judgment. (5) The consistent testimony of church tradition associates Simon Magus with heresy" (*Jerusalem to Rome*, p. 80).

**F. F. Bruce:** "The nature of his [Simon's] belief must remain uncertain. No doubt it was sincere as far as it went, but was very superficial and unsatisfactory. Jesus Himself, we are told in John 2:23f., attached little value to the faith that rested on miracles alone" (*The Book of the Acts*, p. 179).

**Arno C. Gaebelein** wrote of Simon's total misunderstanding of salvation: "Thy money perish with thee!" The sorcerer with his wicked heart thought that the Gift of God could be purchased with money. In this the aim was the Gospel itself. Salvation and all that is connected with it, including the Spirit, is the Gift of God, without money and without price; it cannot be earned nor bought. He had no part nor lot in this matter. And this is true of all who in the depravity of their hearts think of obtaining the power of God by what

they do. He sees himself uncovered and exposed "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity" in spite of his outward profession, his baptism and association with Philip. (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 152).

Beloved, not every person you meet who says they **believe in Jesus** is a regenerate, born again believer. Of course we are **NOT** to be their judge, for that is God's purview Who Alone can see their heart. But if we see them say they believe in Jesus and yet continue to live like the devil, then we have reason and even a moral obligation to caution them to examine themselves as Paul warned the Corinthians

**Test** (peirazo in the present imperative) yourselves to see if you are in the faith; **examine** ([dokimazo](#) in the present imperative) yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test ([adokimos](#))? (2 Cor 13:5+)

Jesus the Judge of all mankind was very clear in His warning in Matthew 7. Notice his frightening "quantifying" adjective 'MANY!' (not few)...

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' (Mt 7:21-23+)

**Comment** - Constable's comments on Jesus' words are interesting in light of his belief that Simon's profession equated with possession of Jesus and the indwelling Spirit. Thus Constable comments *"Obedience to the Father's will determines entrance into the kingdom, not professed admiration for Jesus"* Constable however explains that he interprets obedience this way -- *"During Jesus' ministry doing the will of God boiled down to believing that Jesus was the Messiah and responding appropriately (John 6:29)."* He goes on to add that Jesus *"will say He never knew these **false professors**. Many people deal with holy things daily yet have **no personal acquaintance** with God because they are **hypocrites**. It is their failure to bow before divine law, the will of God, that renders them practitioners of **lawlessness** and guilty."* (ED: cf Peter's verdict on Simon as continually *"in the bondage of **iniquity**,"* where iniquity is adikia the Greek word for **lawlessness**).

Simon the Sorcerer's profession recalls an experience I had about 15 years earlier. I was sitting in a worship service when a well-known owner of one of the "gentlemen's clubs" was being baptized and the pastor was so excited as he asked for his testimony. But as I sat and listened to the man's testimony, there was a "dirtiness" about his description of his sordid lifestyle before he supposedly professed Christ. He focused on the "before" and not the "after!" I was disturbed in my spirit. Afterwards I went to teach my Sunday School class where we went through the Scriptures verse by verse. And guess who visited the class? You guessed it - the strip club owner who had just been baptized! And he sat right smack down in the front seat in the middle of the class. I remember asking questions to the class (which is how I would teach) and once he answered in a very confrontational and negative way, questioning what the Word of God said. I was again disturbed in my spirit (and was able to show him from other Scripture that this was indeed the sense of the passage he had questioned). I'm sorry I cannot tell you the end of the story -- he never came back to our class and I never saw him in church after that. Was he a genuine believer? That is certainly not my call, but I had serious reservations that his profession was truly possession. He reminds me of Simon the Sorcerer.

**And after being baptized** (see **baptizo**) - In my opinion based on Peter's assessment of his heart and need for repentance and continuation in bondage to sin (see below), Simon's belief was not belief that led to his salvation and certainly his baptism did not lead to salvation. Water baptism does save anyone! Only spiritual baptism saves, but it should be followed with the public testimony of literal water baptism. Paul explains spiritual baptism which occurs the moment a man or woman places their faith in Jesus Christ...

And in Him (CHRIST) you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands ([Circumcision of the heart](#)), in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in **baptism**, (see the false teaching of [baptismal regeneration](#)) in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, (Colossians 2:11-13+)

The fascinating fact is that Philip baptized Simon, so clearly at this point Philip did not question the legitimacy of his salvation experience. This would be left to the discerning spirit of the apostle Peter.

**J. C. Ryle** wrote about baptism over a hundred years ago:

I am aware that many do not admit the truth of what I have just said. Some tell us that all baptized people are members of Christ by virtue of their baptism. Others tell us that where there is a head knowledge we have no right to question a person's interest in Christ. To these views I have only one plain answer. The Bible forbids us to say that any man is joined to Christ until he believes. Baptism is no proof that we are joined to Christ. Simon Magus was baptized, and yet was distinctly told that he had "**no part or lot in this matter**" (Acts 8:21). Head knowledge is no proof that we are joined to Christ. The devils know Christ well enough, but have no portion in Him. God knows, no doubt, who are His from all eternity. But man knows nothing of anyone's justification until he believes. The grand question is: "Do we believe?" It is written, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "He that believeth not shall be damned" (John 3:36; Mark 16:16). If Bible words mean anything, to be without faith is to be "without Christ."

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Is baptism necessary for salvation?](#)
- [What is the symbolism of water baptism?](#)
- [Does the Bible teach believer's baptism/credobaptism?](#)
- [Does Acts 2:38 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Does Galatians 3:27 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Does Mark 16:16 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Does 1 Peter 3:21 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Does John 3:5 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Does Acts 22:16 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [What is the Catholic understanding of baptism?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about infant baptism / paedobaptism?](#)
- [What is the proper mode of baptism?](#)
- [What is the origin of baptism?](#)

**He continued on with Philip** - One might say this is Simon's "fruit" that demonstrates that he had a real root, that he was a genuine believer. However if that is the case, then Judas Iscariot would be classified as a genuine believer because he followed Jesus for three years! Simon's following of Philip is not evidence of genuine belief. And notice what Luke says captivated Simon's attention and amazed him -- not the unequalled miracle of spiritually dead souls made alive in Christ by grace through faith, but the miracles performed by Philip.

Luke uses a "strange" verb to describe Simon **continued on with Philip** - The verb is [proskartereo](#) which describes a steadfast single-minded fidelity to a certain course of action. Luke has used **proskartereo** 4 times (Acts 1:14, 2:42, 2:46, 6:4), referring to the devotion of believers to prayer and various forms of mutual ministry. The use of this verb to describe Simon following Philip is unusual.

**And as he observed signs and great miracles taking place** - **Observed** is [theoreo](#) (present tense; English = theater,) which describes Simon as continually observing the **signs** and **miracles** with sustained attention much as a spectator would at an athletic event. **Vincent** adds that **theoreo** "was more than simple seeing. The verb means looking steadfastly, as one who has an interest in the object, and with a view to search into and understand it: to look inquiringly and intently." (**Ed**: And even with a sense of amazement.)

**He was constantly amazed** - The present tense indicates Simon was continually in a state of astonishment at what took place presumably in association with Philip. Notice Simon's focus was on **signs and great miracles**, not saints experiencing miraculous conversions as they received the Gospel from Philip! Simon expresses no interest or desire in "gospelizing" the Gospel like Philip, but he did like Philip's signs and miracles! **Peterson** notes that "Obsession with the spiritual power of the apostles would soon prove to be the dominant issue for him (Acts 8:18–19)." (Ibid)

**Constantly amazed** (1839) See previous note on [existemi](#) which means to put out of place and hence, to be out of one's senses as in Mk 3:21 where they accused Jesus saying "He has lost His senses." This meaning gives us a striking picture of Simon's reaction! This is Luke's third use of **existemi** in chapter 8 (Acts 8:9, 11, 13 with only 17 total uses in NT) which clearly indicates it is a "**key word**" in this section. This present use marks a significant contrast with the previous two uses in which Simon's supernatural feats were amazing the masses, but here we see that the "amazer" is himself amazed! Simon as a sorcerer was familiar with the supernatural and he knows superior supernatural power when he sees it. But he will see even greater things yet when the apostles come down from Jerusalem!

**NET Note** - Now Simon, the one who amazed others, is himself amazed, showing the superiority of Philip's connection to God. Christ is better than anything the culture (**ED: OR THE DEVIL!**) has to offer.

**John MacArthur** has some sobering thoughts in his introduction to comments on Acts 8:9-24 - One of the most fearful realities in all of Scripture is that some who think they are saved will be eternally lost. Thinking they are on the narrow way of saving truth that leads to heaven, they are in reality on the broad way of religion that leads to destruction (cf. Matt. 7:13-14). They will one day hear from the Lord Jesus Christ the most shocking, terrifying words any human could ever hear: "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23). To their horror, they will discover too late that there is an entrance to hell at the edge of the very gates of heaven. Whenever the gospel is preached, it will inevitably produce both genuine saving faith and false faith. The seed of the Word will fall on good soil and bad soil (ED: cf Lk 8:13 and Lk 8:15). There will be branches who abide in the vine, and those that are cut off and burned (ED: Jn 15:2, 5). There will be those with working faith and those with demon faith (ED: James 2:14-22). There will be those to whom Jesus discloses Himself and those to whom He does not entrust Himself. There are those who "have faith to the preserving of the soul" and those who "shrink back to destruction" (Heb. 10:39). There will be wheat and there will be tares (ED: Mt 13:25-30). (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

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**Charles Swindoll - Faith that Saves** - Simon the Magician believed and was baptized, yet his attitudes and actions demonstrate that he clearly was not born again. Obviously, God expects something more than mere intellectual assent in conversion. So what kind of faith is "saving faith"?

**Saving faith**—the kind of belief God accepts as genuine and for which He grants the gift of His Spirit—is more than accepting as fact the historical personage of Christ. To accept the fact that a man named Jesus lived at some point in time and later died on a cross is merely a starting point. Furthermore, genuine belief must do more than admire Jesus or emulate Him or follow His teachings. It's not even enough to venerate Jesus as more than human.

Those kinds of belief make for a good beginning. But the kind of belief to which we have been called encompasses much more. First, the Greek term *pisteuō* means "to believe," that is, to acknowledge the truthfulness of a claim—that it corresponds with reality. When I say that I believe the book of Luke, I mean to say that I accept its content as truth. To believe in Christ is, first, to accept what He says as truth. Second, and more importantly, *pisteuō* means "to trust," "to rely upon," or "to derive confidence in" something or someone. When I say I believe in Jesus Christ, I declare that I trust Him, I rely upon Him, I have placed my complete confidence in Him; everything I know about this life and whatever occurs after death depends upon His claims about Himself and my positive response to His offer of grace. That is what God accepts as genuine faith, the kind that grants a person eternal life, fills him or her with the Holy Spirit, and begins an internal transformation. (Swindoll's Living Insights)

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[The Almost Christian Discovered](#); Or, The False Professor Tried By Matthew Mead, 1661

1. [Part 1](#)
  2. [Part 2](#)
  3. [Part 3](#)
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[The Christian Professor](#) John Angell James, 1837 THE DANGERS OF SELF-DECEPTION

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**Form or Power?** Spurgeon, "[The Form of Godliness Without the Power](#)"

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power."

A mere form of godliness joined to  
an unholy heart is of no value to God.

The swan, although its feathers are  
as white as snow, yet its skin is black.

God will not accept that 'external morality'  
which conceals 'internal impurity'. There  
must be a pure heart as well as a clean life.

The power of godliness must work within,  
or else God will not accept our offering.

There is no value to man or to God in  
a religion which is a dead form.

Sad is that man's plight who wears the  
name of Christian but has never been  
quickened by the Holy Spirit.

There is no use in a mere formal religion.  
If your religion is without spiritual life, what  
is the use of it? Could you ride home on a  
dead horse? Would you hunt with dead dogs?

Is false religion any better?

In the depth of winter, can you warm  
yourself before a 'painted fire'?

Could you dine off the 'picture of a  
feast' when you are hungry?

There must be vitality and substantiality,  
or else the form is utterly worthless; and  
worse than worthless, for it may flatter  
you into deadly self conceit.

How shameful will such a fruitless, lifeless  
professor be in eternity, when the secrets  
of all hearts shall be revealed! What shame  
and everlasting contempt will await him when  
his falsehood shall be detected, and his  
baseness shall fill all holy minds with horror!

What will be the hell of the false professor!

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power."

**Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,**

KJV Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

- **when** Acts 8:1; 11:1,19-22; 15:4; 1 Th 3:2
- **received** Acts 2:41; 17:11; Mt 13:23; John 12:48; 1 Th 2:13; 2 Th 2:10
- **Peter** Acts 3:1-3; Gal 2:9
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **APOSTLES SEND PETER AND JOHN TO SAMARIA**

**Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God**- As Kenneth Gangel quips "Time to bring in the first team!" Obviously someone returned to Jerusalem and related the events in Samaria to the apostles. **The Word of God** in this passage is clearly the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:1).

**Received** ([1209](#))([dechomai](#)) means more than simply to get something, but conveys the sense of a welcome reception of that



which is offered! These Samaritans who heretofore had expressed hostility toward their Jewish neighbors in the south, now in a very real sense "put out the welcome mat" (cf Col 4:10, Heb 11:31 = "welcome") for Philip and his proclamation of the Gospel. This in itself is a supernatural work! The hearts of the Samaritans was soil that God's Spirit had prepared that they would gladly receive the seed of the Word. Paul describes a similar reception of the Word of God by the Jews in Thessalonica writing...

For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received [paralambano](#) the Word of God (THE GOSPEL) which you heard from us, you **accepted** (dechomai) it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the Word of God, which also performs its work (cf Ro 1:16+) in you who believe. (1 Th 2:13+, dechomai also used in 1 Th 1:6+)

**They sent them Peter and John** - Why? Luke does not say, but it seems very reasonable to conclude that Peter and John as apostles had a stewardship to assure as far as possible the Body of Christ remain composed of genuine believers, thus in a sense they came as "fruit inspectors" (cf Mt 3:8, Acts 26:20+, Lk 8:15+, etc). In addition, recall that these believers are from the previously detested Samaritans, so sending the leaders of the new movement (Christianity) would signal a "truce," so to speak and foster unity between the Jewish church in Jerusalem and the Samaritan church (an answer to Jesus' incredible prayer - Jn 17:11, 21, 22) .

**Wiersbe** adds that "Jesus had given Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:13–20), which meant that Peter had the privilege of "opening the door of faith" to others. He opened the door to the Jews at Pentecost, and now he opened the door to the Samaritans. Later, he would open the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 10)." (Ibid)

It is interesting and perhaps a bit ironic that **John** was one of the apostles who came to Samaria because it was John who had asked Jesus " "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Lk 9:54+, context - Lk 9:51-55). But is this not the type of transformation wrought in a new heart that has believed in Jesus and is inhabited by the Holy Spirit? That's rhetorical of course. Now this zealous disciple is actually laying hands on people he considered as "half breeds" and on which he would never before have even laid a finger, much less a hand! That is the supernatural power of the Gospel in a person's life. Have you experienced this radical change in your heart? Do your life choices, decisions, etc demonstrate you truly have a new heart? And do not misunderstand - we are not talking about "*perfection*" but "*direction*!" Is your life generally oriented heavenward or is it still steadfastly hell ward? Your answer will make all the difference in this world and the world to come! Paul wrote that "if anyone is in Christ (BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH), he is a **new** ([kainos](#) - brand new) creature; the old things passed away; **behold** ([idou](#) = COMMAND TO LISTEN UP!), **new** ([kainos](#) = brand new, unlike anything before - new desires, new goals, etc) things have come." (2 Cor 5:21+) Now instead of John calling down literal fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, John was in effect "calling down" the fire of the Holy Spirit to "complete" the Samaritans, giving them the power to live a transformed life just as he was experiencing! Hallelujah! Thank You God for so great a salvation (Heb 2:3+)

**Peterson** - Tannehill suggests that the visit can be considered from two perspectives. First, Philip's mission is incomplete until Peter and John pray for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit. 'The result is a cooperative mission in which an established church affirms and contributes to the establishment of new churches.' Second, the effect on Peter and John is that they become convinced that the Samaritans are truly included in the messianic salvation. This event is comparable to Acts 10:44–48, where the coming of the Holy Spirit is a sign that God wants to include believing Gentiles on the same basis as believing Jews in the benefits of the New Covenant (cf. Acts 11:15–18). On both occasions, there is a stunning break with traditional cultural and religious barriers, as the Spirit draws Samaritans, and then Gentiles, together with Jews into the fellowship of Christ. (Ibid)

### Acts 8:15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

KJV Acts 8:15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

- **prayed** Acts 2:38; Mt 18:19; John 14:13,14; 16:23,24; Php 1:19
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PRAYER AND RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Who came down** (cf Acts 11:27) - See **Philip went down to the city of Samaria** (Acts 8:5+).

**Swindoll** - God didn't bring the apostles to Samaria to bestow the Holy Spirit but to witness the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit. The Lord delayed the falling of the Holy Spirit for the apostles' benefit, to assure them that He had accepted the Samaritans' belief and had made them full-fledged brothers and sisters in the kingdom. (See [Insights on Acts](#)).

**And prayed for them that they might receive ([lambano](#)) the Holy Spirit** - Prayer is mentioned in connection with the laying on of hands in Acts 6:6; 8:15–17; 13:3; 28:8.

**Prayed (4336)**([proseuchomai](#) from **pros** = toward, facing, before [emphasizing the direct approach of the one who prays in seeking God's face] + **euchomai** = originally to speak out, utter aloud, express a wish, then to pray or to vow. Greek technical term for invoking a deity) in the NT is always used of prayer addressed to God (to Him as the object of faith and the One who will answer one's prayer) and means to speak consciously (with or without vocalization) to Him, with a definite aim (See study of noun [proseuche](#)).

**Jack Arnold** comments on this passage -- This verse at face value seems to teach that the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit after they believed. Can a person be saved without the Holy Spirit? Was this some second work of grace? This is a very difficult verse and in some ways it does not fit my own theology, even though I have an explanation for it.

**View #1: Second Experience After Conversion** - This is the traditional Pentecostal-Charismatic view. These folks believe that a person is saved and receives the Spirit for salvation at that time, but then a person must receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit sometime later for sanctification and the manifestations of the Spirit, namely the gift of tongues. This baptism is received by the laying on of hands.

**View #2: Delay of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to Put the Samaritans into the Body of Christ** The book of Acts is a book of transition from the Old Testament dispensation to the New Testament dispensation. The Samaritans were half-breeds, half-caste, who were not fully Jewish. They had their own rival worship system to Jerusalem. The Jews and the Samaritans hated one another and both claimed to be the true followers of Jehovah-God. There was, therefore, a need to delay, in this particular case, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, putting these Samaritan believers into the body of Christ, so as to avoid two rival factions in the Christian church. The Samaritans had the Holy Spirit because they believed in Christ and they were regenerate, but they were not yet put into the body of Christ. They were still separate, individual, regenerate Christians, much like the Apostles and the one hundred twenty had been before the Day of Pentecost. There was a need to make a connection between the believers in Samaria and the believers in Jerusalem. Therefore, the Apostles Peter and John laid hands on them, identifying them with the Apostolic ministry and at that time they were put into the Body of Christ. Had this not been the case, the Samaritans may have thought that their brand of Christianity was distinct from the brand in Jerusalem, and there would have been two churches which would have destroyed the unity of the infant church. There is no specific mention of tongues in this context, although there may have been the special gifts of the Spirit bestowed at this time (including tongues) because Simon saw some kind of manifestation when hands were laid on the Samaritans.

If tongues were present, we must remember they were a sign to unbelieving Jews and they were to be a testimony to unbelievers about the truthfulness of the Apostolic message. Tongues are never a sign to believers but to unbelievers. ([Sermon](#))

**Acts 8:16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

KJV Acts 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

NET Acts 8:16 (For the Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

NLT Acts 8:16 The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

- **He had** Acts 10:44-46; 11:15-17; 19:2
- only Acts 2:38; 10:47,48; 19:5,6; Mt 28:19; 1 Cor 1:13-15
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For** - Term of explanation. What is Luke explaining? In context he is explaining what Peter and John prayed for the new believers in Samaria.

**He had not yet fallen upon any of them** - He of course is the Holy Spirit and is added by some translations (NET, NLT, NIV). Sadly

the KJV does not capitalize "he" (NKJV corrects this error) nor (surprisingly) does the **ESV**! "**He**" is God and should be recognized as such by being capitalized! Furthermore capitalization tends to refute the sad misunderstanding among some believers that the Spirit is an "it!" In fact sadly the "**New American Bible**" in fact says "for **it** had not yet fallen upon any of them!" The HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT AN "IT" BUT A "HE" AND HE IS GOD! (AS YOU CAN TELL THIS IS ONE OF MY PET PEEVES!) Why had the Spirit not come upon these believers as He did those at Pentecost?

**They had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**- This fulfills part of Jesus' commission to "Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (Mt 28:19) Luke shortens the command to baptism **in the Name of the Lord Jesus**

**Peterson** addresses why the Spirit **had not yet fallen** - The best explanation is that God himself withheld the Spirit until the coming of Peter and John, 'in order that the Samaritans might be seen to be fully incorporated into the community of Jerusalem Christians who had received the Spirit at Pentecost'. God withheld the gift for his own revelatory and salvific purpose, not because of an inadequate response on the part of the Samaritans. The apostles needed to be there as reliable witnesses on behalf of the Jerusalem church, not to impart the Spirit because of their office. Significantly, in 8:25 they return to Jerusalem to report what God has been doing. The delay in the sending of the Spirit put the Samaritans somewhat in the position of the Jewish disciples before Pentecost. They had a genuine faith in the risen Lord, but had not yet received the promised Holy Spirit. Neither the experience of those first disciples nor the experience of the Samaritans can be made the basis for a two-stage view of Christian initiation, either in a Catholic or Pentecostal sense. These were unique events in salvation history, not the normal pattern of initiation known to Luke. (See [The Acts of the Apostles](#))

**Acts 8:17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.**

KJV Acts 8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

- **they began laying their hands** Acts 8:18; 6:6; 9:17; 13:3; 19:6; Nu 8:10; 27:18; 1 Ti 4:14; 5:22; 2 Ti 1:6; Hebrews 6:2
- **they were receiving** Ro 1:11; Gal 3:2-5
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LAYING ON HANDS AND THE SPIRIT

This is a controversial verse so do not expect me to resolve the difficulties ably discussed by many expositors and commentators far more experienced than myself. While it is an interesting subject, the truth is that it is not really a "**salvific**" subject. In my estimation, a thoughtful study of Simon's profession of faith is far more important, especially in our age of so-called "**Easy Believism**" and the results of studies by Barna Reports that say 73% of Americans consider themselves Christians! Barna is even "skeptical" writing...

Even though a **majority of Americans identify as Christian** and say religious faith is very important in their life, these huge proportions belie the much smaller number of Americans who regularly practice their faith. ([State of the Church - 2016](#))

**Ed Comment** - My experience as I actively share the Gospel whenever the Spirit opens a door of opportunity, is that most of those I encounter tell me initially that they are "Christian" and a majority of those (I have not kept accurate stats) even say "Yes" when I ask them if they believe in Jesus Christ. As a result I have changed my approach now and simply ask people "If you died tonight where would you go?" And by far the majority (usually with no hesitation even though they are taken aback somewhat by this question) answer "Heaven." So far I've only had one man tell me "Hell!" My point of this short "excursus" is to emphasize that the understanding of what constitutes genuine belief and genuine regeneration (conversion, born again, et al synonyms) is FAR MORE IMPORTANT than differences genuine believers might have about the meaning and significance of Peter and John's laying on of hands and the Samaritan believers receiving the Spirit. This background introduction is not to minimize the issue of the Spirit, but to the contrary is an attempt to cause us to focus on issues that speak directly to whether a soul is saved or not!

**Then they began laying their hands on them**- The laying of hands was symbolic. The apostles' hands did not possess supernatural power. This visible act was to signify the receipt of the invisible Spirit.

**Related Resource:**

- [Laying on of hands - what does the Bible say?](#)

**And they were receiving the Holy Spirit** - When this occurred in Acts 2, the disciples spoke in tongues as evidence that the Spirit had come upon them. Luke makes no mention of any supernatural phenomena in this verse, but in the next verse he says "Simon saw" something that indicated the Samaritan believers received the Spirit. What did Simon see? Luke is silent and anything we might say is conjecture. Some commentators say this event was a "Second Pentecost" or a "Samaritan Pentecost" but personally I think this saying something the text simply does not tell us.

The scene described here regarding the Samaritans is unique and is not meant to be normative. Remember that this was a clearly a time of transition from the old order to the new, from dead Judaism to living Christianity.

**William Larkin** has an interesting explanation asking "why does God sovereignly delay the coming of the Spirit in this case? In order to preserve the unity of the church and the integrity of the church's crosscultural mission to all nations in the face of the inbred animosity between Jew and Samaritan. If God had not withheld his Spirit until the Jerusalem apostles came, converts on both sides of the cultural barrier might have found Christ without finding each other. Neither Samaritan nor Jewish Christians would have been assured that the Samaritans were truly regenerate and the spiritual equals of regenerate Jews (compare Acts 15:8–11). What Luke teaches us, then, is that the unity of the church and the unhindered advance of its mission into all cultures is so important to God that he will delay giving to a converted people what is their birthright, the salvation blessing of the Spirit, in order to ensure that these realities will be fully preserved. So the church today should deal with the matter of the Spirit's coming from the same standpoint. (IVP NT Commentary - Acts)

#### Related Resources:

- [When / How do we receive the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [When / How do we receive the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [Is there a second blessing subsequent to salvation?](#)
- [What is the gift of speaking in tongues? Is the gift of speaking in tongues for today?](#)
- [Who is the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today?](#)

**Acts 8:18** Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

KJV Acts 8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

- **he offered** 2 Kings 5:15,16; 8:9; Ezekiel 13:19; Mt 10:8; 1 Ti 6:5
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SIMON'S ATTEMPT TO BUY GOD'S GRACE

The painting above is *Peter's conflict with Simon Magus* by [Avanzino Nucci](#), 1620

**Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands** - Luke does not state what **Simon saw** indicating the Spirit's bestowal coincided with Peter and John laying their hands on the believers. Without doubt the Spirit came to the Samaritans in an objective, verifiable fashion. But since Scripture is silent on the fashion, it behooves us to be likewise and to focus on the more serious matter of the state of Simon's soul, the issue that is taken up in the following verses. Notice also that Luke does not specifically state that they laid hands on Simon and never says that he received the Spirit, and the following description strongly supports the premise that he did not.

**Polhill** writes that Simon "appears as more the onlooker than the participant, and his behavior scarcely betrays any spiritual enlightenment on his part. As a professional Simon was impressed with the commercial possibilities of the phenomenon he had just

witnessed. He therefore offered Peter and John money for the trade secret of how to dispense the Spirit through the laying on of one's hands." (New American Commentary-Acts)

**Charles Swindoll** - At last, we see that Simon had not received the Holy Spirit because he had not genuinely believed. This becomes evident in his viewing the power of the Holy Spirit the same way he had used magic—real or illusion—for selfish gain. In fact, his understanding of the gospel was so far off, he actually asked to purchase the Holy Spirit's power! (Swindoll's Living Insights)

**He offered them money** - See [chrema](#) below. Sadly Simon was like a lot of folks in the organized church in America -- he was in it for what he could get, not what he could give! Simon saw money in merchandising miracles (Does this sound familiar? Or perhaps you have never watched some of the "religious" programs on television!) As someone has well said, the hottest part of hell is reserved for folks like this!

**Tannehill** - 'Whenever religion is used to make its leaders seem great and powerful, and whenever religion becomes a commodity by serving the interests of those who have or want money, it has become corrupt.'

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**TODAY IN THE WORD DEVOTIONAL** - The April 3 plane crash in Croatia that took the life of U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and thirty-four others revealed shortcomings in the navigation equipment on military aircraft.

The pilots, attempting to reach the airport at Dubrovnik in pouring rain, were navigating with a compass and a radio receiver, which one official likened to working with a typewriter in the computer age. Officials at the Pentagon said they would improve safety and navigation equipment on military passenger planes in the future.

What a difference an excellent guidance system can make! Contrast, for example, the guidance given to evangelist Philip and to Simon the sorcerer. Although Luke doesn't say so explicitly, we know that Philip was led of the Holy Spirit to go to a city in Samaria (v. 5). Later he was directed by an angel and "caught away" by the Holy Spirit.

Simon, on the other hand, was under the guidance and control of Satan. He used magic and sorcery to beguile people. But when Simon tried to add the power of the Spirit to his bag of tricks, Peter warned him that he was heading for spiritual disaster.

Even though persecution was the surface cause of Philip's going to Samaria, we see in his ministry the next stage in the fulfillment of Jesus' mandate (Acts 1:1). Peter and John arrived to validate the authenticity of Philip's revival, and the apostles bestowed the gift of the Spirit on the Samaritan believers.

By the way, this is another important evidence of the transitional nature of the book of Acts. By the time we come to the epistles, Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is given at the moment of conversion (1 Cor. 12:13).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We'll never duplicate Philip's "travel arrangements," but we can imitate his faithfulness.

Remember, Philip didn't start out as an evangelist. He was one of the seven original table-servers in Jerusalem. Because he was faithful where God called him, he was tapped for wider service.

**Acts 8:19** saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

KJV Acts 8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

NLT Acts 8:19 "Let me have this power, too," he exclaimed, "so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!"

- Acts 8:9-11,17; Mt 18:1-3; Luke 14:7-11; John 5:44; 1 Cor 15:8,9; 3 John 1:9
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **SIMON'S SEDITIOUS DESIRE FOR SHAM SPIRITUAL POWER**

**Seditious** means overt conduct, in this case a desire, that is deemed by the legal authority (PETER AND JOHN) to tend toward opposition to that authority. **Sham** means something that is a counterfeit; not what it seems to be.

Saying, "**Give this authority to me as well** - Simon actually is [brazen](#) enough to speak this as a command, **give** being in the aorist imperative (Do this now! Don't delay!). He wants the same supernatural ability.

**Authority** (1849)([exousia](#)) in simple terms describes the right and the might.

**So that** - Term of purpose. Purpose of this authority which Simon in essence "demands."

**Everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit**- Note that Simon leaves out a crucial component here, and this is another clue that he does not have a clue about genuine salvation! **What does Simon omit in his request?** He does not say **give this authority to me** so that individuals might repent and believe and be saved and receive the Spirit. He is preparing to promote a counterfeit Gospel! But Peter is filled with the Spirit and with discernment and boldness.

**Polhill** notes that "Though a complete misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit, Simon's behavior was completely in character for a professional magician. Tricks of the trade were often exchanged among them in financial transactions. They were viewed almost as commercial commodities (cf. the enormous "market value" of the magical scrolls Paul persuaded the Ephesians to burn—Acts 19:19)." (New American Commentary-Acts)

**Acts 8:20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!"**

KJV Acts 8:20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

- **your silver** Acts 1:18; Dt 7:26; Joshua 7:24,25; 2 Kings 5:26,27; Daniel 5:17; Hab 2:9,10; Zech 5:4; Mt 27:3-5; 1 Ti 6:9; James 5:3; 2 Peter 2:14-17; Rev 18:15
- **you** Acts 8:22; Dt 15:9; 2 Kings 5:15,16; Pr 15:26; Mt 15:19
- **the gift** Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17; Mt 10:8
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But** - Term of Contrast. Peter as usual the lead spokesman turns this conversation in an entirely different direction.

**Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you"**- **J. B. Phillips** paraphrased Peter's words, "To hell with you and your money!" Peter was saying was "You and your money are both going to hell if you do not change your attitude."

**Swindoll** - Peter's response to Simon appears much harsher in the original Greek. The word for "**perish**" (8:20) refers to the total destruction of something, its utter ruin. (Ibid)

**NET Note** - "May your silver together with you be sent into destruction." This is a strong curse. The gifts of God are sovereignly bestowed and cannot be purchased.

**Peterson** - Use of the Greek [optative mood](#) (**ED: OFTEN USED TO INTRODUCE A PRAYER**) to express a wish...('May your money go with you to destruction') implies a curse against Simon, 'consigning him and his money with him to destruction'. (Pillar NT Commentary - Acts)

**ILLUSTRATION** - When [P T Barnham](#), the American showman and business man, once tried to entice C H Spurgeon to come to America and preach, guess how Spurgeon replied? He immediately sent Barnham a wire quoting Acts 8:20! Phillips paraphrase did not exist at that time or Spurgeon may well have used it! Can you imagine Barnham's reaction upon reading Spurgeon's stern reply?

It is notable that Simon looked like the "real deal" in the early stages of his so-called "conversion" - he believed, he was baptized, he followed Philip. And there is little doubt that Philip would not have baptized Simon had he thought that he was not authentic. The point is that Satan's counterfeits often look like real disciples. And that is why Jesus warned His disciples in the parable of the **wheat and tares**...

"But while his [men were sleeping](#), his enemy came and sowed [tares](#) (kind of [darnel](#), resembling wheat except the grains are black - [pix](#)) among the wheat, and went away. 26 "But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27 "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves \*said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' 29 "But he \*said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 'Allow both to grow together until the



harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn." (Mt 13:25-30)

**Comment** - In this case the Spirit gave Peter discernment to remove this "tare." The church in Samaria was in its infancy and a counterfeit miracle worker in its midst would have been potentially devastating. See [What is the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares?](#)

**Perish** (684)([apoleia](#) from **apo** = marker of separation, away from + **olethros** = ruin, death but **not** annihilation <> from **ollumi** = to destroy) means utter and hopeless loss of all that gives worth to existence. Note that contrary to popular opinion **apoleia** does not refer to extinction or annihilation or an end of existence, but to total ruin so far as the purpose of existence is concerned. This is Luke's only use of this word in the Gospel or Acts. Jesus uses this word in His description of two roads

**"Enter** (aorist imperative) through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to **destruction** ([apoleia](#)), and there are many who enter through it. (Mt 7:13+)

**Paul** writes words that are apropos to Simon -

"But those (LIKE SIMON) who want ([boulomai](#)) to get rich fall into temptation ([peirasmos](#)) and a snare ([pagis](#)) and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge ([buthizo](#)) men into ruin ([olethros](#)) and **destruction** ([apoleia](#))." (1 Ti 6:9)

**John MacArthur** comments - People who want to get rich are tempted strongly and often caught in painful, debilitating sin like an animal in a snare. Boulomai (want) refers to a settled desire, one born of reason, not emotion, and describes clearly those guilty of the sin of greed. The present tense of the verb empiptō (fall) indicates a continual falling into temptation and traps. Greedy people are continually entrapped by their consuming drive for more. Their pursuit of what they want is their passion. Their sinful behavior becomes compulsive and controls their lives. The Bible cautions against becoming entrapped by material things. In Dt 7:25 Moses warned the Israelites, "The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared (Lxx = [ptaio](#)) by it, for it is an abomination (Lxx = [bdelugma](#)) to the Lord your God." Love of money is a trap that needs to be carefully avoided....The wholehearted pursuit of material wealth ultimately ruins one's spiritual life. Plunge is from *buthizō*, which means "to sink," "submerge," or "drag to the bottom." The pursuit of riches ultimately drowns men. Olethros (ruin) is often used of the body, though it can have a more general meaning (cf. 1 Thess. 5:3). Apōleia (destruction) usually refers to the eternal ruin of the soul (cf. Rom. 9:22; 2 Thess. 2:3; Heb. 10:39; Rev. 17:8). The three terms together paint a picture of the total devastation of both body and soul. **Love of money destroys people.** (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 1 Timothy)

**Larkin** - . In a "curse formula," ironically similar to those found in pagan magical papyri (Haenchen 1971:304), Peter places both Simon and his money under a ban, consigning both to eternal destruction (compare Josh 6:17–18; 7:13–15). (IVP NT Commentary - Acts)

**Because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money** - Peter is explaining why he has just uttered such a "hellish" warning against Simon.

We derive our English term [simony](#) from this story. Compare Gustave Dore's [woodcut of Dante's inferno](#) related to **"simony"**.

**W. A. Criswell** on [simony](#) - The church became a part of the state at the time of [Constantine's conversion](#). Simony was already practiced but it increased in the buying of ecclesiastical office and benefits. A bishop's office could be bought for so much money. The same was true of an archbishop's office, a cardinal's hat, an ecclesiastical living in parishes and in monasteries. Simony finally gave rise to the Reformation when all over Europe [indulgences](#) were sold in order to get money to build St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome.

**R Kent Hughes** makes an excellent and very convicting point regarding [simony](#) - We could, no doubt, point to much of the same today but should mainly check our own hearts. We would be wrong to suppose this does not apply to us simply because we have not offered money for spiritual power. Simon tried to obtain spiritual power in order to promote himself, and anytime we seek spiritual power or abilities to put ourselves forward we make the same error. Preaching to gain recognition or status is **simony**. Serving with an eye to advancement in the church's power structure is **simony**. Seeking spiritual gifts for the promotion of oneself is **simony**. Even seeking to be godly so others will think we are godly is a type of **simony**. (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Thought** (3543)([nomizo](#) from **nomos** = law, custom) means to think or believe something without being fully settled in mind or opinion.

**Obtain** (2932)(**ktaomai**) means to get, procure, obtain or acquire something for oneself by purchase for a price. It describes when Judas "**acquired** a field with the price of his wickedness." (Acts 1:18). Ktaomai describes the commander who **acquired** this citizenship (Roman) with a large sum of money." (Acts 22:28).

**Gift** (1432)(**dorean** from **dorea** = a gift, something bestowed freely, without price, or compensation Jn 4:10; Ac 2:38; 2Co 9:15) conveys the basic meaning of "for nothing". God is always Giver of **dorea**. It pertains to being freely given, given without charge or without payment. As a free gift or gratis. Undeserved.

**Polhill** - Peter's words could be viewed as a prediction as much as a condemnation. Simon's greed was leading him down the path toward eternal destruction. Throughout Acts human greed is always depicted as a most destructive force. It certainly was so for Judas (Acts 1:18) and for Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11)....Simon was in severe danger that his avarice would destroy him as well. (cf 1 Ti 6:9-10+) (NAC-Acts)

**Money** (5536)(**chrema** from **chrāomai** = to use, need) describes a thing one uses and thus refers to money (Acts 4:37, 8:18, 20, 24:26). In Mk 10:23 and Lk 18:24 **chrema** refers to wealth, possessions or riches in Jesus' warning that it is hard for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of God (or get saved, because they have little sense of their eternal poverty and need in light of their temporal riches. Their possessions "possess" them!). **Friberg** adds that **chrema** refers to "what has been acquired to meet one's needs."

**Gilbrant** - Classical literature uses **chrēma** to indicate "things that are used or needed," such as goods, property, or money (cf. Liddell-Scott). It can also be used to express a large quantity or mass such as "a gigantic swarm of locusts" or perhaps "womankind" (ibid.). Frequently ktēma (2905), "possession," and chrēma, "what one desires or uses," are used synonymously (Liddell-Scott). **Chrēma** can be found in the Septuagint as a translation of the Hebrew keṣeph, "money"; nekhāšîm, "riches"; and rekhûsh, "what is gathered." The majority of its appearances in the Septuagint are in the apocryphal books. There wealth is seen as a reward for following God (Joshua 22:8; 2 Chronicles 1:11,12), although in the hand of a fool money is worthless (Proverbs 17:16). In the noncanonical literature **chrēma** generally means "money, wealth." Simon, son of Mattathias, for instance, spent his own money to arm the Jews (1 Maccabees 14:32). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Chrema** - 6x in 6v - money (4) , wealthy (2) - Mk. 10:23; Lk. 18:24; Acts 4:37; Acts 8:18; Acts 8:20; Acts 24:26

**Chrema** - 11v in the Septuagint - Jos. 22:8; 2 Chr. 1:11; 2 Chr. 1:12; Job 6:20; Job 27:17; Prov. 17:6; Prov. 17:16; Dan. 11:13; Dan. 11:24; Dan. 11:28

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## SIN OF SIMONY - Robert Morgan

A man named Simon brought money to the apostles in Acts 8, trying to purchase spiritual power. Peter, ever blunt, replied, "You and your money will both end up in hell if you think you can buy God's gift!" We aren't sure of Simon's outcome, but he unwittingly lent his name to church history. A deplorable practice arose during the Middle Ages — the buying of church offices and positions — and it was called simony.

Simony was so widespread by the eleventh century that the 22-year-old German king, Henry III, grieved for the church. On December 20, 1046, he called a synod in Sutri, 25 miles from Rome, to discuss the problem. Pope Gregory VI chaired the proceedings. But Gregory was among the worst simonites, having "bought" the papacy. When Henry reminded the churchmen of the need for integrity and purity among God's leaders, Pope Gregory spoke these remarkable words to the synod: I, Gregory, bishop, servant of the servants of God, do hereby adjudge myself to be removed from the pontificate of the Holy Roman Church, because of the enormous error which by simoniacal impurity has crept into and vitiated my election.

He asked, "Is it your pleasure that it be so?" The assembled clergymen answered unanimously: "Your pleasure is our pleasure; therefore so let it be." Gregory descended from his throne, removed his pontifical robes, fell to his knees, begged forgiveness, and fled the country.

But now another problem arose: None of the assembled bishops was unstained by simony. They had all bought their positions. After searching the land, an honest man named Suidger, bishop of Bamberg, was elected pope, but he lived less than a year. The next two popes also died quickly. Then Bruno was found, a good-looking, well-educated man of unblemished character and sincerity. Summoned to Rome, he arrived barefoot, dressed as a pilgrim and weeping. The people sang hymns of praise and consecrated him Pope Leo IX on February 12, 1049. He battled simony all his days, paving the way for the reforms later enacted under his associate and successor, Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII). (On This Day)

Read: Acts 8:9-25

Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!" —Acts 8:20

Police officers in St. Louis have had at least one easy arrest. It occurred at the back door of the police station when a drunk driver pulled his car right up to the booking window, thinking he was at Burger King. After attempting to place his order at what he thought was a drive-up window, the surprised driver was arrested by the booking officer and charged with drunk driving.

A man named Simon also got the surprise of his life. According to Acts 8, he was a former sorcerer in Samaria before becoming a follower of Christ. His surprise came when he walked up to the apostles and offered them money. He wanted them to give him the power to lay hands on people and impart to them the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter emphatically refused, and accused him of being under the influence of something worse than alcohol.

Peter wasn't overreacting. It's dangerous to think that the power of the Holy Spirit is like a product that can be bought and sold. The Spirit's work is a gift of God that is freely given on the basis of faith, and faith alone. He has given us His Spirit to accomplish His purposes, not ours. The Spirit cannot be bought or bargained for.

Thank You, Lord, for the gift of Your Spirit.

Holy Spirit, all divine,  
Dwell within this heart of mine;  
Cast down every idol throne,  
Reign supreme and reign alone.  
—Reed

We don't need more of the Spirit; the Spirit needs more of us.

By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 8:21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God."**

KJV Acts 8:21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

NJB Acts 8:21 You have no share, no part, in this: God can see how your heart is warped.

- **you have** Joshua 22:25; Ezekiel 14:3; Rev 20:6; 22:19
- **for** 2 Chr 25:2; Ps 36:1; 78:36,37; Hab 2:4; Mt 6:22-24; John 21:17; Hebrews 4:13; Rev 2:23
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SIMON'S CROOKED HEART

**You have no part or portion in this matter** ([logos](#)) - **No** is the Greek [ou](#) which signifies **absolute negation**. What **matter**? Luke has just been referring to the receiving of the Spirit, so that is what Simon has absolutely no part or portion. And of course by implication no Spirit signifies no authentic new birth or regeneration (Ro 8:11+). In turn Simon has no part in the privileges belonging to God's children (in this life or the life to come!)

**Polhill** adds that the word translated **matter** "is [logos](#), a word used throughout Acts for the Gospel (cf. Acts 8:4+) (**ED**: AND [logos](#) IS TRANSLATED "MESSAGE" 10X IN NASB). Simon had not responded to the gospel; he had responded to greed. He lacked the contrition and inner conviction that accompany a true response to the gospel.

**Part** (share) ([3310](#)) ([meris](#)) refers to (1) a portion of a whole that has been divided ("district" in Acts 16:12). (2) as in the present passage in Acts 8:21 to a share or an assigned portion (cf Lk 10:42, 2 Co 6:15 - "common") Paul uses this noun in his prayer for spiritual filling (Col 1:9+) for the saints at Colossae and the effects of filling joyously "giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to **share** in the inheritance of the saints in Light." (Col 1:12+).

**Share** (inheritance) ([2819](#)) ([kleros](#) from [kláo](#) = to break) was first a specially marked small object, pebble or a piece of wood used in casting lots as in Acts 1:17, 26. The object was thrown down in order to aid the making decisions a practice based on pagan views of chance (Greeks and Romans), or in the case of believers using the lot and interpreting the result as guided by God (see Acts 1:26+ in choosing Judas' replacement). **Kleros** also was used to refer to the **allotted portion** or **inheritance**, specifically

one's **possession** or **what is possessed** (Acts 26:18, 20:32, Colossians 1:12-[note](#))

(SPEAKING OF PAUL TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES) To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an **inheritance** ([kleros](#)) among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:18)

**Comment** - Peter's use of [kleros](#) and that Simon has absolutely no inheritance strongly substantiates the fact that Peter is treating Simon as a non-believer! Simon had not been sanctified (set apart) by (genuine, saving) faith!

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the **inheritance** ([kleros](#)) among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

**For** - Term of explanation. What is Luke explaining? In context he is explaining why Simon is a counterfeit, why he is not a genuine believer and thus why he has not share in the Spirit or spiritual life in Christ (or the Gospel).

**Your heart is not right before God** - Peter is saying the "control center" of Simon's being is not "straight" in the eyes of God. Peter literally is saying to Simon "your heart is continually absolutely (ou) not straight," which we could paraphrase as "Simon your heart is continually crooked before God!"

**Alexander Maclaren** put it this way "A heart right in the sight of God is the indispensable qualification for all possession of spiritual power, or of any blessings which Jesus gives." ([Simon the Sorcerer](#))

**Heart** (2588) see more on [kardia](#) below. The heart of Simon's problem was his heart (as it usually is for all of us!) His heart was habitually "[crooked](#) (dishonest, immoral, evasive)!"

**Right** (2117)([euthus](#)) when used as an **adjective** (as it is here) literally means straight or a straight line (Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4f; Acts 9:11) and figuratively as here in Acts 8:21 what is proper or right (cf 2 Pt 2:15). It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul uses **euthus** as an adjective to confront **Elymas the magician** (Acts 13:8+)

But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the **straight** (euthus) ways of the Lord? (Acts 13:9-10+)

**New Jerusalem Bible** has - "God can see how your heart is **warped**."

**God's Word Translation** has "God can see how **twisted** your thinking is."

**Larkin** - Peter declares Simon unregenerate. He has no part or share. For Luke this can refer to either salvation (Acts 26:18) or ministry (Acts 1:17). Peter's further references to a heart ... not right before God (Acts 8:21) and being full of bitterness and captive to sin (Acts 8:23), as well as his call to repentance (Acts 8:22), which the early church normally addresses to the unregenerate (Lk 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20), and the earlier mention of destruction (Acts 8:20), all support the view that Simon is not regenerate. (IVP NT Commentary-Acts)

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**Swindoll** - The activity of Simon Magus... illustrates several characteristics of a phony ministry. I see at least four.

1. The ministry exalts a person rather than Christ. You've got trouble when you're in a system (or a church) that exalts a person other than the person of Christ. Simon came on the scene and made exclusive claims to inspire devotion to himself. Spiritualists, magicians, and witch doctors have done this for millennia, creating fear in the community to establish themselves as the sole intermediaries between the spiritual and physical realms. Even today, I see men and women putting on modern-day "magic healing shows," and while they pretend to give God the glory, they cleverly establish themselves as the "go-to people" for healing and instruction.

2. The ministry draws a following with promises to solve temporal problems. Watch out for any ministry that promises to solve your financial, physical, relational, and emotional problems. Authentic Christianity can certainly make life better all around; obedience to the Lord and His transforming Holy Spirit can work amazing wonders. But no particular ministry can make those hard-and-fast claims. God grants healing and blessings and wisdom and freedom directly. You have a direct line to Him through prayer, and He will deal with you personally. You don't need to send money. You don't have to purchase a cloth or oil or water or books or any other token. And you certainly don't need some particular person claiming great power to pray for you.

3. The ministry exercises a counterfeit power. Beware the magic shows of some television evangelists; they

peddle their counterfeit power for donations. The “supernatural” exhibitions of faith healers convince no one but the gullible. They perform their illusions in very controlled environments, and either their “healings” are limited to mild improvements or they claim results difficult to verify.

The miracles of the Bible, like the healing of the beggar in Acts 3, had an immediate and visible impact; no one could deny their truth. The signs and wonders described in Scripture left no room for doubt by even the most ardent skeptics of the day. Nothing we see today fits this category of genuine miraculous activity.

4. The ministry demonstrates a preoccupation with the material rather than the spiritual. In phony ministries, you’ll hear a lot of talk about money, material wealth, buildings, private planes, and special equipment, but very little about what purposes they serve. All ministries need certain things to accomplish their missions, but authentic Christian ministries keep spiritual matters primary; for them, physical things serve spiritual purposes. For example, a ministry might want to raise money to purchase a building. If it’s a genuine ministry, the primary beneficiaries of the building will be the people the ministry serves.

Listen to the ministry leader carefully. Pay attention to what is said—and left unsaid. If the vast majority of his or her instruction concerns physical issues, such as health and money, beware! (Swindoll's Living Insights)

**Acts 8:22** "Therefore **repent** of this wickedness of yours, and **pray** the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

KJV Acts 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

NLT Acts 8:22 Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts,

- **Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours** Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; Ro 2:4; 2 Ti 2:25,26; Rev 2:21
- **pray the Lord** Acts 9:11; Dt 4:29,30; 1 Kings 8:47,48; 2 Chr 33:12,13; Isaiah 55:6,7; Amos 5:6; Mt 7:7,8; Luke 11:9-13; Rev 3:17,18
- **if possible** Daniel 4:27; Joel 2:13,14; Amos 5:15; Jonah 1:6; 3:9; 2 Ti 2:25
- **the intention of your heart may be forgiven you** Acts 8:20; Hebrews 4:12
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## REPENT, PRAY, SEEK RELEASE

Remember that the word forgive ("forgiven") includes the sense of let go of or release from obligation, release from debt, and in this context release from wickedness that holds him in bondage to unrighteousness (Acts 8:23)

**Therefore** - Term of conclusion. In view of Simon's heinous, persistent sin, Peter gives an offer filled with grace and mercy, a call to repent. God could forgive even Simon's greedy unholy desire to manipulate the Holy Spirit! Simon had not committed the [unpardonable sin](#)!

**Repent of this wickedness of yours** - **Repent** is a command in the aorist imperative, Peter calling Simon to do this now, don't procrastinate, do not delay, it is urgent! It is notable that the verb or noun for repent are used 11 times in 10 verses in Acts, and every use is in the context of salvation, the implication being that Simon needs to "**repent**" (present imperative) and **believe** (present imperative) in the Gospel." (Quoting Jesus in Mark 1:14).

**Repent** (3340) (**metanoeo** from **meta** = with, among + **noeo** = to think, exercise the mind <> from **nous** = mind; cf **metanoia**) means to have another mind. **Friberg** says it literally means to "perceive afterward, with the implication of being too late to avoid consequences." (Analytical Lexicon). **Metanoeo** means to change one's mind (or one's heart) in respect to sin, God, and self. To turn to God and from sin (Luke 15:7,10+ = "one sinner who **repents**", cf illustration of repentance 1 Th 1:9-note). While **repentance** involves an intellectual decision, it is more than that because the intellectual decision must then produce a change in one's behavior.

**Repentance** is aptly depicted by the military command "**About, face**!" The repentant person in effect turns around 180 degrees and goes the other direction. And keep in mind that the spiritual dynamics of true repentance are enabled by the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 5:31+, Acts 11:18+, 2 Ti 2:25+). In other words repentance is a work of grace and not merely a human effort, although it does require the repentant individual to make a [volitional](#) choice. Repentance then involves the mysterious interaction of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Further, this change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2 Cor 7:8, 9, 10, 11); but sorrow for sin, though it may cause repentance, is not repentance. Darrell Bock



writes "the point is that repentance involves a reorientation of perspective, a fresh point of view. When dealing with God's plan, it means to see that plan in a new way and to orient oneself to it. Luke demonstrates the fruit of repentance expresses itself concretely (Lk 3:10-14+). Repentance expresses itself in life, especially in how one treats others."

**Wickedness** (2549) (**kakia**) refers to the quality of wickedness and thus in a moral sense means depravity, vice or baseness (James 1:21, 1Peter 2:16, Acts 8:22). It denotes a vicious disposition, evilness, ill-will, spitefulness. **Kakia** is used in NT to describe the wickedness which comes from within a person. **Malice** describes a vicious intention and expresses the desire to hurt another and rejoices in it!

**Kakia** is found in the exhortation of **James** which would have been in order for Simon...

Therefore, putting aside (**apotithemi** - casting it off like dirty clothes) all filthiness and all that remains of **wickedness** (**kakia**), in humility (SOMETHING SIMON SEEMED BE BE LACKING - see Acts 8:9+) receive (see above for **dechomai**) the Word (THE GOSPEL) implanted, which is able (**dunamai** = present tense = continually has the supernatural power) to save (**sozo**) your souls. (James 1:21+)

**Comment** - If Simon had been willing to repent, he would have put aside all **wickedness** (**kakia**) and then would have received the Word and been saved. Ultimately Luke does not tell us whether he ever genuinely repented or not. We will have to wait until heaven to see!

**Pray the Lord that, if possible** (cf Ps 78:38) - **NET Bible** "Implore the Lord." **NET Note** on **if possible** - "that if possible the intent of your heart may be forgiven you." The passive construction is somewhat awkward in contemporary English and has thus been converted to an active construction in the translation (NET = "pray to the Lord that **He may perhaps** forgive you for the intent of your heart." Act 8:22NET).

**Pray** (aorist imperative - Do not delay!)(1189)(**deomai** from **deo** = to bind) means to ask for something with the sense of pleading, beseeching or begging with a sense of urgency and sense of desperate need.

**William Larkin** on **if possible** - The uncertainty in Peter's promise of forgiveness is based not on doubts about God's ability but on a recognition of Simon's current disposition of heart.

**Swindoll** explains **if possible** - The Greek phrase for "**if possible**" is *ei ara*, which is less tentative than the English rendering implies. "**If possible**" implies less than fifty-fifty odds, whereas *ei ara* implies near certainty if an effort is made. Then, in Acts 17:27, Paul told the Athenians that God created people for relationship with Himself so that "**if perhaps** they might grope for Him" they might "find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (emphasis mine). The phrase here implies that seeking God almost certainly results in finding Him. Peter's warning holds out the possibility that Simon's desire for God might have been smothered by his own envy and pride.

**Bob Utley** adds that "In this sentence it denotes a contingency based on Simon's willingness to repent and pray for forgiveness. His mindset and actions are a serious deviation from normative Christianity."

**The intention of your heart may be forgiven you** - The phrase **intention of your heart** is another way of saying "Your sin" (or "the sin of your heart"), because it is sin which needs God's forgiveness. And so the **NLT** paraphrases it "your evil thoughts." What was the intention of Simon's heart? The thought or notion that he could actually purchase the Holy Spirit! **May be forgiven** is the divine passive indicating God is the source of the forgiveness.

**Intention** (1963)(**epinoia** from **epi** = upon + **nous** = mind) means to think upon, and so **purpose**. According to **Marvin Vincent** **epinoia** literally means "a thinking on or contriving; and hence implying a plan or design." **W E Vine** says **epinoia** means "a thought by way of a design" (akin to **epinoeo**, "to contrive," **epi**, intensive, **noeō**, "to consider")." **Epinoia** describes a desire that a person intends to carry out. **Louw-Nida** says **epinoia** refers to "that which is intended or purposed as the result of thinking." **Reinecker** notes that the context shows **epinoia** is "Used in the bad sense of evil or hostile schemes or stratagems." (Linguistic Key to Greek New Testament)

**Epinoia** is only here in the NT and the Septuagint of Jer 20:10.

**Gilbrant** on **epinoia** - It is sometimes used to describe a person's "power of thought," "inventiveness," or the thing he had invented. Writers occasionally used **epinoia** to mean "an afterthought, second thoughts." The term often refers to a "purpose, plan, design." (Ibid)

**Liddell-Scott** on **epinoia** - 1. a thinking on or of a thing, a thought, notion, Thuc. 2. power of thought, inventiveness, invention, Ar. 3. a purpose, design,

**Heart** (2588)(**kardia**) does not refer to the physical organ but is always used figuratively in Scripture to refer to the seat and center

of human life. The **heart** is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will. Our heart is the "control center" of our being. In the present context clearly Luke is referring to the evil thoughts in Simon's heart. God is not nearly as interested in externals as He is the internal, the state of our heart for "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the **heart**." (1 Sa 16:7)

**Utley** on the **intention of your heart** - Sin begins in the thought life. The rabbis say that the mind is like a plowed garden ready for seed. What we allow in through our eyes and ears takes root. If we dwell on it, these thoughts become actions. (ED: AND THE NOUN EPINOIA LITERALLY MEANS TO THINK UPON).

**Longenecker** - 'Simon's response to the presence of God's Spirit and the evidence of God's power is one of those tragic stories that accompany every advance of the gospel. Whenever and wherever God is at work among people, there are not only genuine responses but also counterfeit ones.' (EBC)

**May be forgiven** (863)(**aphiemi** from **apo** = prefix speaks of separation, putting some distance between + **hiemi** = put in motion, send) conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation. Literally **aphiemi** means to send from one's self, to forsake, to hurl away, to put away, let alone, disregard, put off. It conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation and refers to total detachment, total separation, from a previous location or condition. It means to send forth or away from one's self. It refers to the act of putting something away or of laying it aside. In secular Greek aphiemi initially conveyed the sense of to throw and in one secular writing we read "let the pot drop" (aphiemi). From this early literal use the word came to mean leave or let go.

**Wuest** explains **aphiemi** from God's perspective noting that "It refers to the act of putting something away. God did that at the Cross when He **put sin away** by incarnating Himself in humanity in the Person of His Son, stepping down from His judgment throne, assuming the guilt of man's sin, and paying the penalty, thus, satisfying His justice, and making possible an offer of mercy on the basis of justice satisfied. When a sinner avails himself of the merits of that atoning sacrifice, **he thus puts himself within the provision God made. His sins were put away** at the Cross, and he comes into the benefit of that when he believes.

**Jack Arnold** sums up **Simon - The tragedy is that Simon thought he was a Christian** He had given intellectual assent to Christ but had never committed his life to Christ. He was *religious* but not *regenerated*. He had gone through all the *external* things to be a Christian but (*internally*) his heart was unchanged. He was near the kingdom but far from it. He was *almost a Christian* but was *Christless*. He was nearly persuaded, but was not persuaded. Simon had his faith in miracles, in baptism, in Philip and even in himself but he did not have genuine faith in Christ and never committed his life to Him. There are many people today in churches who have their faith in baptism, confirmation, church membership and good works but this faith does not save a soul from destruction. Men may also have faith in the doctrine of eternal security (a biblical truth) and not in Jesus Christ. Doctrine does not save; only Christ saves. Those who truly believe in Jesus Christ will have a changed heart and desire the things of God. The mark of a regenerate heart is a changed life. ([Sermon](#))

**Acts 8:23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."**

KJV Acts 8:23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

- **you are in the gall of bitterness** Dt 29:18-20; Dt 32:32,33; Job 20:14; Jeremiah 4:18; 9:15; Lamentations 3:5,19; Hebrews 12:15
- **the bondage of iniquity** Ps 116:16; Pr 5:22; Isaiah 28:22; John 8:34; Ro 6:17-22; Titus 3:3; 2 Peter 2:4,19
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GALL OF BITTERNESS**

## **BONDAGE OF INIQUITY**

**For** (gar) - Term of explanation. Peter is explaining why Simon is in desperate need of God's forgiveness.

**I see** (present tense - continually) **that you are** (present tense - continually) **in the gall of bitterness** - Peter has a discerning spirit. He discerns that Simon is "poisoned by bitterness." (NKJV) and that this was not just a passing problem, but a present tense (habitual) problem!

**Louw-Nida** explains that the **gall of bitterness** is "an idiom, literally 'to be in the gall of bitterness') to be particularly envious or resentful of someone - 'to be very jealous, to be terribly envious, to be bitterly envious.'"

**Zodhiates** adds that **gall of bitterness** "denotes extreme wickedness, highly offensive to God and all good men, likely to be hurtful

and destructive to others, for which much suffering is reserved in the world to come for unbelievers [cf. Dt. 32:32 - describes the wickedness of Israel's enemies was described as having its roots in Sodom and Gomorrah.])

A similar phrase (**gall and bitterness**) is found in the Septuagint of Deuteronomy 29:18-20 associated with a frightening "curse" on anyone who went after false gods and led others to do the same...

So that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root **bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood** (LXX = *chole kai pikria* = "gall and bitterness"). 19 "It shall be when he hears the words of this **curse**, that he will boast, saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered land with the dry.' 20 "The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. (Deuteronomy 29:18-20)

The writer of Hebrews warns his Jewish readers of the deadly effect of bitterness -

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of **bitterness** (*pikria*) springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled (*miaino*) (Heb 12:15+)

**Comment** - Notice that the "antidote" for bitterness is the grace of God (and not falling short of it!).

**Peterson comments** - The Lord's punishment for such people is severe (Dt. 29:20-21; Heb 10:26-31). There was a bitter poison in Simon that needed to be extracted. (Pillar NT Commentary-Acts)

**Gall** (5521) (**chole** from **cheo** = to pour or from **chole** = yellow; English - [cholecystectomy](#)) means literal gall offered to Jesus on the Cross (Mt 27:34, cf Messianic passage Ps 69:21). It was customary to mix wine with cholē to form a sedative. This opium mixed with wine caused a deep sleep, a sustained state of unconsciousness. The recipient became oblivious to his surroundings, and his pain was quickly numbed. Figuratively in the only other NT use of **chole** in Acts 8:23 Vine says "gall of bitterness stands for extreme wickedness, productive of evil fruit."

**Friberg on chole** - (1) as a bitter digestive fluid stored in the gall bladder in the body gall, bile; (2) as a bitter substance made from wormwood, a plant yielding a bitter-tasting dark-green oil that is alcoholic in its effect gall (Mt 27.34); (3) idiomatically, of a person be full of bitter poison, i.e. be very jealous, be bitterly envious (Acts 8.23) (Analytical Lexicon)

**Vine** - In the OT **chole** is used (a) of a plant characterized by bitterness (probably wormwood), Deut. 29:18; Hos. 10:4; Amos 6:12; (b) as the translation of the word mererah, "bitterness," Job. 13:26, e.g.; (c) as the translation of rosh, "venom;" in Dt. 32:32 "(grapes) of gall." In Job 20:25, the gall bladder is referred to (the receptacle of bile). The ancients supposed that the poison of serpents lay in the gall (see Job 20:14).

**Chole** - 10 verses in the Septuagint

Dt. 29:18 ("poisonous"); Dt. 32:32 ("poison"); Job 16:13; Job 20:14; Ps. 69:21; Pr 5:4 ("wormwood"); Jer. 8:14 ("poisoned"); Jer. 9:15 ("poisoned water"); Lam. 3:15; Lam. 3:19

**Gilbrant - Cholē** can be found in classical Greek from the Eighth Century B.C. meaning "gall, bile." Metaphorically it had the meaning of "giving one a disgust for a thing." For example, it was the custom of mothers to put gall on their nipples in order to wean a child (Liddell-Scott). The Septuagint uses cholē to translate the Hebrew word rō'sh, "head." In some instances where cholē translates rō'sh the NIV translates it as "poison" or "poisonous" (see Dt 29:18; 32:32; Jeremiah 8:14; 9:15). Cholē is also used to translate two additional Hebrew words: la'ānāh, which literally means "wormwood" but figuratively means "bitterness," and m<sup>e</sup>rōrāh which means "bitter things, gall," or "poison." (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Bitterness** (4088) (*pikria* from *pikrós* from *pik-* = to cut, prick) originally meant pointed or sharp, e.g., of arrows then more generally of what is "sharp" or "penetrating" to the senses, and so literally a bitter, pungent taste or smell. It was used of plants that produce inedible or poisonous fruit. Figuratively what is "painful" to the feelings (animosity, anger, harshness).

The [Septuagint](#) - bitter waters (Exodus 15:23), bitterness of the soul that results from external circumstances (Job 3:20; 7:11; 9:18, et al.), man's attitudes of bitterness (Jer 2:21; 15:17).

**Pikria** was used literally to describe plants that produced inedible or poisonous fruit. Greeks defined this word as long-standing resentment, as the spirit which refuses to be reconciled. So many of us have a way of nursing our wrath to keep it warm, of brooding over the insults and the injuries which we have received.

In the NT **pikria** is used in a metaphorical sense to describe animosity, resentfulness, harshness or an openly-expressed emotional hostility against an enemy. *Pikria* defines a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner man. Somebody does something we do not

like, so we harbor ill will against him. Bitterness leads to wrath, which is the explosion on the outside of the feelings on the inside.

**Rich Cathers on Bitterness, a "Root" Issue** - When I was a kid, my parents would sometimes assign me the chore of weeding out in the backyard. When a kid weeds, they usually tend to just pluck off the leaves on top, leaving the root. And the weeds always grow back. We have a plant in front of our house that I chopped down a few years ago, but was unable to get all of the root system. Every six months or so, some new stalks pop their head up, and the plant re-emerges. Bitterness produces lots of things in our lives, lots of things that defile many people. It can give us a quick temper with people. It can make us a grouch to be around. It can make us be a person who takes revenge on others. You can take care of those problems individually, but if you don't deal with the root, you'll still keep having problems. Bitterness is the result of unforgiveness. That's the root of bitterness. We must learn to forgive others....**Corrie Ten Boom shares** this true story in her book, *The Hiding Place*: "It was a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there -- the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanching face. He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. "How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein," he said. "To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!" His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him. I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness. As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me. And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on His. When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself." ([Sermon](#))

**And in the bondage of iniquity** - "Handcuffed to wrong doing." Peter uses the phrase **bondage of iniquity** to picture Simon as having falling into iniquity as when one is placed into [fettters](#) (shackles for the ankles or feet). Notice the tense Peter uses when he declares to Simon you **are...in the bondage of iniquity** - this is the present tense which could be paraphrased you are continually, habitually enslaved to sin. That is not the state of a true believer. Yes, sadly we give ourselves over to the power of sin at times and even more sadly even for a season, but sin is not our habitual practice for our the rest of our lives, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace." (Ro 6:14+). Paul goes on to add "But thanks be to God that though you were (PAST TENSE) slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Ro 6:17-18+) Simon had never been **freed from sin**! If sin is a person's lifestyle, and they have no power to say "No" to sin, then that person is not born again, not eternally safe in Christ, for when the Son sets you free you are free indeed.

**Swindoll on Bondage of iniquity** - that Simon's capacity for free choice had been so compromised by his dependence upon evil that he could not escape without help. In other words, if one seeks repentance, God will certainly grant it; the question is whether Simon actually wanted to repent.

**Bondage of iniquity** reminds me of Solomon's words (in the context of a stern warning regarding the dangers of sexual sin) in Proverbs 5:22

His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and **he will be held** (Lxx = sphiggo = bound tight) **with the cords of his sin.**

**Bondage** (4886) ([sundesmos](#)) describes that which binds together (used of a ligament in Col 2:19 which holds together the Body of Christ), "bond of unity" in Col 3:14, and "bond of peace" in Eph 4:3. It denotes a close, firm bond.

**BDAG** says **sundesmos** describes "a bond that confines/hinders," (cf "to loosen the **bonds of wickedness**" in Isa 58:6, NET has "to remove the sinful chains"). Simon is pictured as a man in fetters, the fetters being wickedness. This does not sound like a man who has ever been saved, because Jesus came to set the captives free (quoting Isa 58:6) (Lk 4:18) and as Jesus says below to the "unbelieving believers" when "the the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." This does not describe Simon -- if he were a new believer, it is very unlikely he would have sought to buy the gift of the Spirit. In fact, Peter would have laid his hands on him and he would have received Him, but that is not described in this section. In sum, Simon is almost certainly not a genuine believer.

**Bondage of iniquity** appears to be an allusion to Isaiah 58:6

Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the **bonds of wickedness** (Lxx = sundesmon adikias - identical to Greek in Acts 8:23), To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke?

**Iniquity** (93) ([adikia](#) from **a** = not + **dikê** = right) is a condition of not being right, whether with God, according to the standard of His

holiness and righteousness or with man, according to the standard of what man knows to be right by his conscience. It is worth noting that the only other use of [adikia](#) in Acts is in the description of another counterfeit **Judas Iscariot** who "acquired a field with the price of **wickedness** ([adikia](#))." (Acts 1:18+). Peter's use in his description of Simon hardly seems to be a coincidence, and again serves to substantiate the premise that Simon was an "**a false professor**" as the Puritans would say.

**Larry Richards** writes that [adikia](#) "means "wrongdoing," "unrighteousness," "injustice." Its focus is on the concept of sin as conscious human action that causes visible harm to other persons in violation of the divine standard. ([Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

It is interesting that Jesus like Peter also addressed a group of Jews who professed to have believed in Him but eventually sought to stone Him (Jn 8:59) for committing blasphemy (in Jn 8:58 basically saying He was God!). Here is what Jesus said to these believing non-believer Jews which is similar to Peter's statement to Simon that he was **in the bondage of iniquity**...

**As He spoke these things, many (JEWS) came to believe**([pisteuo](#) - SAME VERB DESCRIBES SIMON - Acts 8:13) **in Him.** 31 So Jesus was saying **to those Jews who had believed Him**, (NOTE THIS 'IF-THEN' CONDITIONAL CLAUSE WAS NOT AN ADDITIONAL "WORK" TO MERIT SALVATION, BUT WAS FRUIT THAT WOULD PROVE THEIR "ROOT" WAS REAL!) **"IF** you continue in My word, **THEN** you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (NO LONGER IN BONDAGE TO INIQUITY, BUT IN CHRIST FREE FROM THE RULING POWER OF SIN)." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone (THESE JEWS WERE EITHER POOR STUDENTS OF THE OT OR HAD SELECTIVE AMNESIA REGARDING ISRAEL'S 300 YEARS OF BONDAGE IN EGYPTIAN!); how is it that You say, 'You will become free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly (AMEN, AMEN), I say to you, everyone who commits (present tense - as one's habitual practice) sin is the **slave of sin**. (COMPARE PETER'S DESCRIPTION OF SIMON = **"IN THE BONDAGE OF INIQUITY"**) 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 "So if the Son makes you free, \*(see [eleutheroo](#)) you will be free ([eleutheros](#)) indeed. (Jn 8:30-36) ....Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." (JESUS WAS CLAIMING DEITY AND THE JEWS KNEW IT) Therefore they (THE SAME JEWS THAT HAD PROFESSED BELIEF IN HIM IN Jn 8:30!!!) picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. (Jn 8:58-59)

Mistaken souls, that dream of Heaven,  
And make their empty boast  
Of inward joys and sins forgiven,  
While they are slaves to lust!

Vain are our fancies, airy flights,  
If faith be cold and dead;  
None but a living power unites  
To Christ, the living head.

A faith that changes all the heart;  
A faith that works by love;  
That bids all sinful joys depart,  
And lifts the thoughts above.

Faith must obey our Father's will,  
As well as trust His grace;  
A pardoning God is jealous still  
For His own holiness.

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**Rich Cathers on Bitterness** - Bitterness is a root cause of problems in life. If I don't deal with the root, the thing that has caused me to be bitter in the first place, then I'm going to have all kinds of problems continually popping up.

**Illustration** - Dr. S. I. McMillen illustrates in a chapter entitled "The High Cost of Getting Even," from his book, *None of These Diseases*, how physical maladies including ulcers, high blood pressure, and strokes are connected to harboring resentment and hatred toward others. He says, "It might be written on many thousands of death certificates that the victim died of 'grudgitis.'" Dr. McMillen describes how hating a person enslaves the one who hates: *The moment I start hating a man I become his slave. I cannot enjoy my work anymore because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body; I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The man I hate may be miles from my bedroom, but more cruel than any slave driver he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my inner-spring mattress becomes a rack of torture. I really must*



*acknowledge that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour out my wrath.*

**Illustration - SILENT TREATMENT** - A man and his wife were having some problems at home and were giving each other the silent treatment. The next day the man realized that he would need his wife to wake him at 5 am for an early flight to Sydney. Not wanting to be the first to break the silence, he finally wrote on a piece of paper, "Please wake me at 5 am." The next morning the man woke up, only to discover it was 9 am, and that he had missed his flight! Furious, he was about to go and see why his wife hadn't awakened him when he noticed a piece of paper by the bed. It said, "It's 5 am, wake up." ([Sermon](#))

**Acts 8:24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."**

KJV Acts 8:24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

- **Pray** Ge 20:7,17; Ex 8:8; 10:17; 12:32; Nu 21:7; 1 Sa 12:19,23; 1 Kings 13:6; Ezra 6:10; 8:23; Job 42:8; James 5:16
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But Simon answered and said, "Pray ([deomai](#) in the aorist imperative) to the Lord for me yourselves** - Some suggest that this seems to indicate repentance on Simon's part, but that hardly seems to be the case. There is no suggestion of an [About, face!](#) response as one would expect in true repentance. Where is Simon's contrition and brokenness over his sin against God? There is none! He is still in an unregenerate, unrepentant state.

**Alexander Maclaren** - Simon was but slightly moved by Peter's stern rebuke. He paid no heed to the exhortation to pray for forgiveness and to repent of his wickedness, but still remained in substantially his old error, in that he accredited Peter with power, and asked him to pray for him, as if the Apostle's prayer would have some special access to God which his, though he were penitent, could not have. Further, he showed no sense of sin. All that he wished was that 'none of the things which ye have spoken come upon me. How useless are convictions which go no deeper down than Simon's did! What became of him we do not know. ' ([Simon the Sorcerer](#))

**F. Whitfield** - The worst of all mockeries is a religion that leaves the heart unchanged: a religion that has everything but the love of Christ enshrined in the soul.

**So that ([term of purpose](#)) nothing of what you have said may come upon me** - He is more concerned about escaping the coming consequences of his sin rather than present repentance from his sin!

This is an important passage for it shows that even after Peter had rebuked Simon, there was still no genuine repentance. Instead, he simply sought to escape the punishment! Simon's response was more akin to remorse than repentance. Simon's sorrow like that of the world recalls the words of Paul to the Corinthians..

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Cor 7:9-10)

The story of Simon issues a **strong warning** for those souls in America who claim they are "Christians" ([note](#)) and yet consciously and continually make choices to live like pagans, all the while exhibiting no evidence or fruit (deeds) in keeping with repentance (Acts 26:20+) indicative of the fact that they have ever genuinely repented and believed in Jesus for salvation. They are [syncretistic](#) "Christians," pseudo-Christians, false professors, lost "saved," unbelieving "believers" who think they can have "the best of both worlds," but will be shocked when they enter their next world of eternal punishment where they "pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Th 1:8-9).

Note that Luke does not record the outcome for Simon, but records from the early church fathers suggest that he remained unconverted. However, we do well to let the story end the way Luke ends it and not try to guess at Simon's fate. In fact Luke sets up a beautiful contrast between a faith that does not save (Simon) and a faith that does save (Ethiopian Eunuch).

**Kent Hughes** writes "We learn that spiritual power cannot be bought. The pursuit of God, not power, is what counts." (Php 3:10). (Preaching the Word-Acts)

**Polhill** sums up this story of Simon - Christianity has nothing to do with magic; magic is powerless before the genuine power of the

Holy Spirit. God's Spirit can neither be manipulated nor bought. Simon illustrated that. A proper response to God's gift of salvation is much more than simply a "what-is-in-it-for-us?" approach. It involves genuine commitment in response to the work of God's Spirit. (NAC-Acts)

#### Related Resources:

- [What is religious syncretism?](#)
- [What is unrepentance? What does it mean to be unrepentant?](#)
- [What does it mean to be contrite? What is contrition?](#)
- [What is godly sorrow?](#)
- [What is repentance and is it necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Christianity True and False](#)

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#### Toxic Look-Alikes

Read: Acts 8:9-23

Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness. —Acts 8:21-22

Our yard makes poison ivy happy. I learned this the hard way. Even though I was being careful, I came in contact with the plant and ended up with a nasty, itchy rash.

Poison ivy looks like many harmless plants, and it keeps company with some beautiful ones. One gardener couldn't figure out why she got poison ivy whenever she pruned her roses. She later discovered that a poison ivy vine was taking advantage of the tender loving care she gave to her rosebush.

Some people are like toxic plants. They look harmless, and they blend in with people who, like roses, are fragrant and beautiful.

Simon the sorcerer fit this description. He followed Philip and was baptized, but then he asked to buy the ability to lay hands on people so they could receive the Holy Spirit. Peter was appalled at his request and urged him to repent (Acts 8:22).

Sometimes people use the favorable environment of a healthy church as a network for selfish purposes. Like poison ivy among roses, they cause much misery. Like Simon, anyone who does this needs to repent, and everyone else needs to avoid contact with such a person. Spiritual look-alikes appear good but their "fruit" is toxic.

A Prayer: Help me, Lord, to be discerning and not let others lead me astray with their falsehood. May the fruit of my life be an example of a follower of Christ. Amen.

A false life belies a true faith.

By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 8:25 So, 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.**

KJV Acts 8:25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

- **when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord** Acts 1:8; 18:5; 20:21; 26:22,23; 28:23,28,31; John 15:27; 1 Peter 5:12
- villages Luke 9:52-56
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So when they had solemnly testified** - **They** is Peter and John. Solemnly testified seems to refer to parting exhortations related to the word of the Lord. It is difficult to discern the exact content of the apostle's message. Given the notorious example of Simon's false profession, the apostles may have emphasized the importance of repentance and genuine faith in Christ (cf Peter's words in Acts 2:40).

**Solemnly testified** (1263)([diamarturomai](#) from **diá** = intensifies meaning conveying idea of "thoroughly" + [marturomai](#) = witness,

bear witness) means to thoroughly bear witness, to testify earnestly, to charge as it if before witnesses, to exhort earnestly with authority in matters of extraordinary importance. This verb conveys the idea of giving a forceful order or directive.

**Diamarturomai** is found only 15 times in the NT with 9 of uses in Acts. Most (but not all) refer to some aspect of the Gospel, Acts 20:23 being an exception where the Spirit speaks to Paul.

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he (PETER) **solemnly testified** and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

Acts 8:25 So, when they (PETER AND JOHN) 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.

Acts 10:42 "And He (JESUS) ordered us (PETER IS SPEAKING) to preach to the people, and **solemnly to testify** that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

Acts 18:5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, **solemnly testifying** to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

Acts 20:21 **solemnly testifying** to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:23 except that the Holy Spirit **solemnly testifies** to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

Acts 20:24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to **testify solemnly** of the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 23:11 But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have **solemnly witnessed** to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."

Acts 28:23; When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by **solemnly testifying** about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

**They started back to Jerusalem** - It is easy to overlook this statement, but it is fascinating because before the "Gospel explosion" in Acts, these two pious Jews would very likely have hiked over to east of the Jordan River to avoid walking through Samaria! To the contrary, instead of avoiding Samaritans, they purposely preached to these previously hated people. Such is the supernatural transforming power of the Gospel. These apostles were obeying Jesus' instructions in Acts 1:8+ to be His witnesses in **Samaria**!

**And spoken the word of the Lord** - While this could signify they spoke the Gospel, it does not preclude speaking the Word in general (See NET Note below). And of course as Paul shows in the book of Romans the Gospel is not just the initial salvation experience, but includes daily salvation from sin ([progressive sanctification](#), [present tense salvation](#)) and the need to rely on the Holy Spirit's power to successfully walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

**NET Note** - The **word of the Lord** is a technical expression in OT literature, often referring to a divine prophetic utterance (e.g., Ge 15:1, Isa 1:10, Jonah 1:1). In the NT it occurs 15 times: 3 times as *rhema tou kuriou* (Lk 22:61, Acts 11:16, 1 Pe 1:25) and 12 times as *logos tou kuriou* (Acts 8:25, Acts 13:44, 48, 49; 15:35, 36; 16:32; Acts 19:10, 20; 1 Th 1:8, 1 Th 4:15; 2 Th 3:1). As in the OT, this phrase focuses on the prophetic nature and divine origin of what has been said." (**ED**: A NUMBER OF THE NT USES OF THE PHRASE CLEARLY REFER TO THE **GOSPEL** - e.g., Acts 13:49, 15:36, 16:32, 19:10, 20, 1 Th 1:8, 2 Th 3:1)

**And were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans**- Peter and John knew how to redeem the time! How important it is for believers today to not lose sight of shortness of our life and the length of eternity which is only a heart beat away, and, motivated by that certainty, to be "gospeling" the good news whenever the Spirit gives us opportunity.

**Preaching the gospel** (2097) ([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#)) in the imperfect tense pictures Peter and John giving out the Gospel, over and over, again and again for some 45 to 50 miles, over the dusty road, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

**Acts 8:26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)**

KJV Acts 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

- **An angel** Acts 5:19; 10:7,22; 12:8-11,23; 27:23; 2 Kings 1:3; Hebrews 1:14
- **Get up** 1 Chr 22:16; Isaiah 60:1-22
- **Gaza** Joshua 13:3; 15:47; Zech 9:5

- **desert** Mt 3:1-3; Luke 3:2-4
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

[Map from The Bible Journey](#) (a very interesting website). On the map note point (1) **Philip went down to Samaria** from Jerusalem (Acts 8:5+). (2) Philip's journey to the **desert** on the road going to Gaza (Acts 8:26+). (3) Philip transported to **Azotos** (Acts 8:40+)

## A STRANGE COMMAND

**But** - Term of contrast. This marks a change of direction in the ministry of Philip and also the contrast with Peter and John who went on their way to Jerusalem (Acts 8:25). The Spirit would direct Philip even further south (see map). Imagine yourself involved in a fruitful harvest of souls as Philip was in Samaria and word comes that it is time to change direction. It would be easy to question whether you are hearing clearly from the Lord. Perhaps that is why God sent a visible representative to Philip so there would be no doubt as to his new marching orders. In any event, despite this change in direction of his ministry, Philip does not hesitate but obeys. Have you ever been involved with a successful ministry, only to hear the Spirit tell you (I don't think God sends angels to us today, at least not to visibly give us an audible message) it is time to move on? Only a Spirit controlled man would obey what seems to be an illogical instruction.

**Kent Hughes** comments that "The Spirit first directed Philip through persecution to leave his ministry in Jerusalem and go to Samaria for a much wider ministry. Philip knew by experience that God directs by difficulties, but he did not believe that is the only way God leads. Next Philip was led by an angel. " (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**John Philips** introduces this section - Behind this abrupt command was the [foreknowledge of God](#), who knew all about the Ethiopian, knew the position he held in his native land, knew why he had come to Jerusalem, knew the deep, unsatisfied hunger of his heart, knew he was on the way home, knew all about his chariot, knew exactly where he was on the road, knew what book he was reading, knew his perplexity and his dogged persistence. We are now about to witness one of those amazing meetings that take place from time to time on earth, the details of which are all determined in heaven and directed by the Spirit of God. (Exploring Acts)

**An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying** - The KJV is incorrect - it is not "The angel" but "an angel" - there is no definite article ("the") preceding the word "angel." You may be thinking, so what? The phrase "the angel of the Lord" is a phrase which is frequent in the OT (Septuagint) to signify a Christophany or pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (see [Angel of the LORD](#)). That does not seem likely in this passage, which describes a divine messenger (angel) sent by God to give Philip specific directions. It should be noted that in Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 he does mention "angel" three times (Acts 7:30, 35, 38) and it is clear from the historical context that all three uses speak of a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ to Moses.

Luke has a number of passages that mention the interaction of angels with men (Acts 5:19; 10:7,22; 12:8-11,23; 27:23), all except one (Acts 12:23) being positive interactions. This is in keeping with the statement by the writer of Hebrews asking about angels "**Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?**" (Heb 1:14+)

**Kent Hughes** - All of us, all the time, are being touched by the ministry of angels, though we usually do not see them. The point is, God guided Philip in a new way, and Philip was enough in touch to respond....Philip obeyed the subjective inner voice of the Holy Spirit. He remained open as to how God would lead him. When we are in touch with the Holy Spirit, we will be sensitive to his guidance—sometimes through difficulties, sometimes through an inner voice, maybe even through angels—and thus we will be the touch of God to others. Philip was so in touch with the Spirit that he was not only flexible as to how the Holy Spirit would lead, but as to where the Spirit would use him. (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Ray Stedman** makes some interesting comments about **angels** - I've never had an angel appear to me. I have never seen an angel -- except for the one I married. I do not know anyone else to whom an angel has appeared. You may ask, "Does God still work through angels today?" and the answer is a resounding "Yes! He does." But they are not always visible. That is the difference. The ministry of angels, according to the Bible, goes on all the time. They are "ministering spirits sent forth to serve those who shall be heirs of salvation," says the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 1:14). All of us, all the time, are being touched and affected by the ministry of angels, but we do not see them. That is the difference between these early days of the church and the present. There have been well-documented experiences and incidences of the appearance of angels recorded in church history beyond the New Testament period. Many missionaries and others can still tell us stories of this, so it has not ceased entirely. And I believe that, as we draw nearer to the days of the return of Jesus Christ, we may well expect to see a return of angelic manifestation. But, at any rate, here is an unexpected agency through which the Holy Spirit works. **An angel** appears to Philip and gives him an unexplained command to go south and take the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. He could not have picked an emptier stretch of road. ([The Divine](#)

[Wind - Acts 8:25-40](#)).

#### Related Resources:

- [Do angels appear to people today?](#)
- [What does it mean that Satan masquerades as an angel of light?](#)
- [Are there angels among us?](#)
- [Do we have guardian angels?](#)

**Peterson** - References to an angel and the Spirit highlight the fact that the initiative in this mission is entirely with God. (Pillar NT Commentary-Acts)

**Get up** ([anistemi](#) - aorist imperative - Do this now!) **and go** ([poreuo](#) - present imperative - keep going) **south** - These are surprising commands -- to move on from a fruitful harvest to a desert road!

**South** could also be midday (see below) which makes the divine command to leave a field of successful evangelism and go to a hot desert road even more unusual. God's ways are clearly not our ways!

**South** ([3314](#))(**mesembria** from **mesos** = middle + **hemera** = day) literally means middle day and in the only other NT use in Acts 22:6 is used to mean "**noontime**." In Acts 8:26 it is a **metonymy** to signify a place, in this case a direction which would be south. It is translated "**south**" here probably referring to the position of the sun at midday which is toward the South, as Palestine is north of the equator. In the Septuagint **mesembria** usually means "noon" or "midday."

**Mesembria** - 24 verses in the Septuagint -

Gen. 18:1 = "**the heat of the day**"; Gen. 43:16 = "**noon**"; Gen. 43:25 = "**noon**"; Deut. 28:29 = "**noon**"; Jdg. 5:10; 2 Sam. 4:5 = "**his midday rest**"; 1 Ki. 18:26; 1 Ki. 18:27; 1 Ki. 20:16; 2 Ki. 4:20; Job 11:17; Ps. 37:6; Ps. 55:17; Cant. 1:7; Isa. 18:4; Isa. 58:10; Isa. 59:10; Jer. 6:4; Jer. 15:8; Jer. 20:16; Dan. 8:4; Dan. 8:9; Amos 8:9; Zeph. 2:4

**To the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)** - From Jerusalem to Gaza is about 49 miles.

**Desert** (*road not in Greek*) ([2048](#))(**eremos**) describes an empty or uninhabited place, in this context specifically a desert.

**NET Note** - The words "This is a desert road" are probably best understood as a comment by the author of Acts, but it is possible they form part of the angel's speech to Philip, in which case the verse would read: "Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza - the desert road."

Disappointment—His appointment,  
No good thing will He withhold;  
From denials oft we gather  
Treasures of His love untold.  
—Young

**John MacArthur** - Luke's footnote that this is a desert road underscores the strangeness of the Spirit's command to Philip. There were two roads from Jerusalem to Gaza (**ED: ONE BEING THE MORE TRAVELED ["KING'S HIGHWAY"](#) ALONG THE COAST - [SEE PIX-HIGHWAY IS MARKED WITH PURPLE](#)**), and the Spirit commands Philip to take the one that was seldom used (Simon J. Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary: Acts [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 311). It is also possible to translate the Greek phrase *kata mesēmbrian* (Toward the south) "at noon" (I. Howard Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 161). That rendering would "make the divine command to Philip all the more unusual and perplexing: at noon the road would be deserted of travelers because of the heat" (Marshall, Acts, 161). (MacArthur NT Commentary - Acts)

**Peterson** points out several interesting parallels between Philip and the OT prophet Elijah - Certain parallels with the prophet Elijah. Philip is addressed by an angel of the Lord (cf. 2 Ki. 1:15), moved from place to place by the Spirit (Acts 8:29, 39; cf. 1 Ki. 18:12), and runs down the road with the chariot of an important person (Acts 8:30; cf. 1 Ki. 18:46). (Pillar NT Commentary - Acts)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Years ago before the days of GPS and radar, the old Norwegian sea captains devised a way of navigating through the sometimes treacherous fjords at night. They set up a system of light houses at certain key points in the fjords. All the captain needed to do was to point his ship towards the lighthouse until he could see around the corner and get a glimpse of the next lighthouse. Then he'd turn his ship towards the second lighthouse until he could see the third lighthouse. We may want to see the whole map of what is up ahead for our lives, but often I find that God just shows us the next lighthouse. ([Rich Catthers](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - After listening to a sermon one Sunday, Queen Victoria wondered if she could be absolutely sure that she was saved. Unfortunately, her chaplain couldn't give her such assurance. This became known to a commoner named John Townsend. After much prayer and consideration, Townsend wrote a letter in which he urged the Queen to read John 3:16 and Romans 10:9-10. A few weeks later, he received a reply from Her Majesty confirming the assurance that she'd received from God's Word. Centuries before, the Lord also used another humble servant to bring salvation to another high-ranking official. Yesterday we saw how the gospel breaks down ethnic barriers; today we see how social and economic barriers are similarly eroded. We also see God's care for both entire cities as well as one individual. (Today in the Word)

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**ILLUSTRATION - IT MAKES NO SENSE** - In 1947, the astrophysicist [Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar](#) was scheduled to teach an advanced seminar at the University of Chicago. He was living in Wisconsin at the time and doing important research but agreed to drive the 100 miles twice a week to teach. The professor carried on with his plans, even though only two students enrolled in the course. He gave them his best, and ten years later these two students won the Nobel Prize in physics, rewarding Dr. Chandrasekhar's work. Dr. Chandrasekhar himself won the award in 1983. It seemed to make sense at the moment but later history proved it was worth it! The Holy Spirit's command to Philip to leave Samaria and go down to the desert might fall under that category! Is there something in your life which you have been told by God to do and it seems to make no sense? If you are absolutely sure it is from God and in agreement with His Holy Word, then the story of Philip may be just what you need to encourage you to obey. (Today in the Word)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - The late Dr. Paul Freed, founder of the global gospel broadcasting ministry [Trans World Radio](#), told of traveling in remote bush country in India. Freed's party came to a roadside stand and decided to try an experiment. They asked the proprietor if he had ever heard of Trans World Radio. He smiled, reached under the counter, and held up his transistor radio. He was a regular listener to TWR's programs, and even knew who Dr. Freed was. The wonder of the gospel is that it can reach anyone on any dusty road, anywhere in the world. The same Holy Spirit who directs the message of Christ to the hearts of listeners today sent Philip to the desert area south of Jerusalem to meet an African court official. (Read Dr Freed's online 163 page book [Towers to Eternity](#) -- It begins this way "A Monte Carlo radio station, formerly a base for Adolf Hitler's Nazi propaganda, now transmits Gospel broadcasts.") (Today in the Word)

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**F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily** - Desert means uninhabited. It seemed a strange providence that took Philip thither. He had been chosen to the honorable office of deacon, and there was probably plenty of work to do in connection with the scattered Church. Moreover, he had just completed a most successful mission in Samaria, where the multitude had given heed with one accord to the things he had spoken; but now he was suddenly landed in these lonely solitudes, where only chance travellers could be encountered. Did he not count it strange, and wish to get home to his four little daughters (Acts 21:9)?

There are many deserts in life! The solitude of a new country, in which you do not know the language. The solitude of a sick-chamber, in which the earnest worker suddenly discovers the limitations of physical weakness. The solitude of suspicion and dislike, which contrast strangely with some large and devoted circle. Thither God brings us not infrequently. No flower can thrive in unbroken light.

But in every solitude, if we wait patiently on the Lord, there are opportunities of service. There is always some inquiring soul in need of the precise help we can give. There is an old story of some monks to whom the Book of Revelation was being read. At the end each was asked to choose the promise he loved best. One said I will take this, "God shall wipe away all tears." Another chose, "To him that overcometh I will give to sit on my throne." The third replied, "I would choose, 'His servants shall serve Him.'" This latter was Thomas à Kempis, who afterwards wrote "The Imitation."

Not caring how to serve Thee much,  
But to please Thee perfectly."

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**ILLUSTRATION - GETTING UP AND GOING WHEN IT IS NOT CONVENIENT** - John Egglan had never preached a sermon in his life. Never. Wasn't that he didn't want to, just never needed to. But then one morning he did. The snow left his town of Colchester, England, buried in white. When he awoke on that January Sunday in 1850, he thought of staying home. Who would go to church in such weather? But he reconsidered. He was, after all, a deacon. (REMEMBER PHILIP'S ORIGINAL CALLING!) And if the deacons didn't go, who would? So he put on his boots, hat, and coat and walked the six miles to the Methodist Church. He wasn't the only member who considered staying home. In fact, he was one of the few who came. Only thirteen people were present. Twelve members and one visitor. Even the minister was snowed in. Someone suggested they go home. Egglan would hear none of that. They'd come this far; they would have a service. Besides, they had a visitor. A thirteen-year-old boy. But who would preach? Egglan was the only deacon. It fell to him. And so he did. His sermon lasted only ten minutes. I'll let the young boy tell the rest of the story...The boy's name? Charles Haddon Spurgeon. England's prince of preachers (Spurgeon's Testimony)

**Acts 8:27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,**

KJV Acts 8:27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

- **So he got up and went** Mt 21:2-6; Mark 14:13-16; John 2:5-8; Hebrews 11:8
- **and there was an Ethiopian eunuch** Ps 68:31; 87:4; Isaiah 43:6; 45:14; 60:3,6; 66:19; Jeremiah 13:23; 38:7; 39:16; Zephaniah 3:10
- **queen of the Ethiopians** 1 Kings 10:1; Mt 12:42
- **who was in charge of all her treasure** 1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32,33; Ps 68:29; Isaiah 56:3-8; John 12:20
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHILIP'S IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE

**So he got up and went** - Now keep the context in mind -- the angel gives a strange command to go to a strange place (desert at "high noon"), but does not give an explanation for the command. As an aside it reminds us of God's call to Abraham to leave his country, which he did by faith, which Philip also exercised. So how did Philip respond? "He did not say, "Well, I'll have to pray about this." He did not question God. He did not tell the angel to do it himself or send someone who was not in the midst of a revival like he was! What about sending one of those apostles in Jerusalem for they now have some time on their hands? And besides they are closer to Gaza than I am. He did not say to himself, "Well, I wonder if this is a call to a larger field of service." (Stedman) In a word, he did not hesitate (which is always disobedience), but instead immediately **OBEYED!** Philip was not *self* controlled but *Spirit* controlled. A self controlled man would very likely have sought to stay in Samaria where the harvest of souls was ripe! But not Philip. He is true to form, still a man "**full of the Spirit**" (Acts 6:3+). And so he obeys the angel's commands without hesitation and with no evidence of grumbling or disputing (cf Php 2:14+).

The **NAS, ESV, NLT, NIV** surprisingly do not translate the Greek interjection "**idou**" which means "**Behold**" an interjection added by the Spirit to gain our attention as we read the text. The **KJV** is more accurate rendering it "behold, a man of Ethiopia an eunuch." The behold calls our attention in this context to the providence of God -- the place to which was to go just happened to have a foreigner who just happened to be reading the Bible! Talk about coincidence! When we are in the center of God's will and filled with His Spirit, we are far more likely to experience similar "divine coincidences!"

**Kent Hughes** - Philip obeyed the subjective inner voice of the Holy Spirit. He remained open as to how God would lead him. When we are in touch with the Holy Spirit, we will be sensitive to his guidance—sometimes through difficulties, sometimes through an inner voice, maybe even through angels—and thus we will be the touch of God to others. Philip was so in touch with the Spirit that he was not only flexible as to how the Holy Spirit would lead, but as to where the Spirit would use him. Philip went from an exciting city and a growing congregation to a lonely desert road and a congregation of one. It would have been so easy to be discouraged. "Lord, do you really want me to go to the desert? There is nothing there but lizards. Have I not proved myself worthy of a broader ministry? I have been faithful in the small things—I even waited on the widows. And now the desert? Lord... !" But that is not how Philip responded. He was ready to serve anywhere anytime. This is a great example to emulate.... Philip was so in touch with the Spirit that he became the touch of God anywhere and in any way and to anyone that God asked him to be. He was flexible and sensitive to the Spirit's direction. These are wonderful qualities, but the transcending element of Philip's divine touch was his obedience to the Lord. (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**NET Note** on **behold** - This expression is used to portray Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian in a vivid way. In the English translation this vividness is difficult to convey.

**Steven Cole** on **behold** - When he got there, he was a bit surprised, as seen by the word, "behold" (8:27). What in the world is this Ethiopian official and his entire retinue doing out here in the midst of this forsaken road?

## ETERNITY IN AN ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH'S HEART

**And there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure** - So not only was Philip the first to go to the hated Samaritans, he now is the first to go to the detested Gentiles (cf "the

remotest part of the earth" in Acts 1:8+)!

Why would God send Philip from a flourishing ministry to one soul on a desolate desert road. As **Dr. S. Lewis Johnson** answers that "One sheep is enough to move the heart of God to love and His hand to action." (Read the parable of the lost sheep - Lk 15:3-7+).

Mark Guy Pearse - Never fear when the Lord bids us go down to the way "which is desert." The moment we set our foot in the wilderness we are the Lord's guests, and He ever keeps His table right royally furnished.

**Kent Hughes** on God's sovereignty and man's responsibility - As Lloyd Ogilvie says, "The Lord of all creation has ordained that he would do his work through us. Our seeking the Spirit's guidance and obeying what he wants us to do and say is the way he works to bless the world." God's sovereign work plus man's obedience brings the touch of God to needy human lives. Put another way, there are all kinds of "chance" meetings ready to take place in a life that is sensitive and obedient to God's leading. [Ian Thomas](#) (or [here](#)) tells of getting on an airplane and being so tired that he planned to just curl up and sleep. But then he heard a "psssst" and then another "psssst." Looking in the direction of the sound, he heard a man say, "I am reading in the Bible about Nicodemus in John 3, and I do not understand it. Do you know anything about the Bible?"...Divine appointments await us if we are obedient to God's leading ([See note on Henry Blackaby's "Experiencing God"](#)). That was Philip's experience, and it can be ours. (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Warren Wiersbe** tells a similar story - Late one afternoon, I was completing my pastoral calling and I felt impressed to make one more visit to see a woman who was faithfully attending church but was not a professed Christian. At first, I told myself that it was foolish to visit her that late in the day, since she was probably preparing a meal for her family. But I went anyway and discovered that she had been burdened about her sins all that day! Within minutes, she opened her heart to Christ and was born again. Believe me, I was glad I obeyed the leading of the Spirit! (Bible Exposition Commentary)

#### Related Resource:

- Alexander Whyte - [The Ethiopian Eunuch](#) (Whyte's Dictionary of Bible Characters)
- [Who Was the Ethiopian Eunuch?](#)

**Ethiopian** (128)(**Aithiopoulos** from **aithomai** = to burn + **ops** = face) which **Liddell-Scott** says this properly is termed "Burnt-face" which Thayer says means "[swarthy](#)," naturally having skin of a dark color. ( The country of Ethiopia refers to upper Ethiopia also called [Abyssinia](#).)

**Jack Arnold** observes that "While not all Ethiopians were black, the majority were and most Bible scholars agree that the Ethiopian Eunuch was probably a black man. This, then, would be the first account of a black man coming to Christ, for we know that the gospel is for all races of men without distinction." In any case, Philip was "color blind" as is the Gospel and as all believers should be!

#### Related Resources:

- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Ethiopia](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Ethiopia](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Ethiopia](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Ethiopia](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Ethiopia](#)

**MacArthur - Ethiopia** in that day was a large kingdom located south of Egypt. To the Greeks and Romans, it represented the outer limits of the known world (John B. Polhill, The New American Commentary: Acts [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 223). Its kings were believed to be incarnations of the sun god, and the everyday affairs of government were held to be beneath them. Real power lay with the queen mothers, known by the hereditary title Candace (Which is not a proper name, but an official title, like Pharaoh or Caesar). (Ibid)

**Steven Cole** on how the Ethiopian eunuch might have known about the God of the Jews - Knowledge of the one true God may have spread to this man's country about 900 years before, when the Queen of Sheba returned from her visit to Solomon. Also, there was a large Jewish colony in Alexandria, hundreds of miles north along the Nile River. The truth about God could have spread south from there. ([Sermon](#))

**Eunuch** (2135)(**eunouchas** from **eune** = a bed + **echo** = to have or keep) literally means "keep a bed" and describes one in charge of the bed chamber, such individuals generally being [castrated](#) or [emasculated](#) males. These men were employed as the keepers of oriental harems. One could also be a **eunuch** from birth (Mt 19:12) or by making a choice to live like a eunuch (related verb

[eunouchizo](#) only in Mt 19:12). In Genesis 39:1 **eunouchas** is used to translate Hebrew word for official ([saris](#) - 15/42x translated eunuch esp book of Esther, the rest as official), in Potiphar's case an official of Pharaoh. We know that Potiphar was married so he was not emasculated. **Zodhiates** explains that "Eunuchs often rose to stations of great power and trust in eastern courts so that the term apparently came to be applied to any high officer of court even though not emasculated (see Sept.: Gen. 37:36; 39:1). (Complete Word Study Dictionary)

**Eunouchas** - Matt. 19:12; Acts 8:27; Acts 8:34; Acts 8:36; Acts 8:38; Acts 8:39

**Eunouchas** - 32 verses in the Septuagint -

Ge 39:1; Ge 40:2; Gen. 40:7; 1 Sa 8:15; 1 Ki. 22:9; 2 Ki. 8:6; 2 Ki. 9:32; 2 Ki. 20:18; 2 Ki. 23:11; 2 Ki. 24:12; 2 Ki. 24:15; 2 Ki. 25:19; 2 Chr. 18:8; Est. 1:1; Est. 1:10; Est. 1:12; Est. 1:15; Est. 2:3; Est. 2:14; Est. 2:15; Est. 2:21; Est. 2:23; Est. 4:4; Est. 4:5; Est. 6:2; Est. 6:14; Est. 7:9; Isa. 56:3; Isa. 56:4; Jer. 29:2; Jer. 41:16; Jer. 52:25

**Gilbrant's** note on **eunuch** - The term eunuchos, "a eunuch," refers to "one in charge of the women," a "chamberlain." Because of that position the man was castrated so as to not pose a threat to the owner. It was also used of castrated animals, and in a figurative sense it could refer to a date without the pit. The heritage of the term is most apparent in its usage as an adjective for "watching the bed, sleepless" (Liddell-Scott). The Hebrew word [saris](#), "eunuch," lies behind **eunouchos** in the Septuagint. This term was also the title of a "court official" who, according to an ancient practice, was castrated (e.g., Esther 1:10; 2:3f.; 4:4f.). However, there is not conclusive evidence that all court officials ([saris](#)) were indeed eunuchs (e.g., 1 Ki 22:9; 2 Chr 18:8; Esther 1:1,10). On occasion the torment endured by a eunuch was employed as an image of anguish (Sirach 20:4; 30:20). The ancient world had differing views of eunuchs. On the one hand, in the religious cults of Asia Minor, becoming a eunuch transformed one into a state of existence more like the deity; as such this view was embraced by the cult's adherents (Schneider, "eunuchos," Kittel, 2:765-768). On the other hand, the rabbinic view considered the eunuch as being in violation of God's command to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). Further, eunuchs were excluded from the Israelite community of worship (Deuteronomy 23:1). However, Isaiah 56:3-5 promises a future worship community with eunuchs. (Acts 8:26ff. may be seen as a fulfillment of this promise.) The term occurs in only two New Testament contexts: Matthew 19:12 and Acts 8:26ff. The word apparently had two dominant meanings referred to in Matthew 19:12. To these Jesus added a third type, those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom. Undoubtedly the rabbinic view provided the backdrop for Matthew 19:12. The response of Jesus was given to a question about celibacy versus marriage (verse 10). With this context in view it is certain that Jesus was not recommending self-emasculation as a path to higher spirituality. Rather, Jesus was making an exception to the rabbinic view of marriage as obligatory. This exception is based on dedication to the kingdom of heaven over and above one's commitment to the natural order. Some believers in the early centuries did take it literally, however. Acts 8:27 speaks of the Ethiopian eunuch who was a court official for Candace. Whether or not this person was emasculated is questionable, although normally eunuchos refers to one in that condition. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**NET Note** on **eunuch** - The term **eunuch** normally referred to a man who had been castrated, but this was not always the case (see Gen 39:1 LXX, where Potiphar is called a eunuch). Such castrated individuals were preferred as court officials in the East, although Judaism opposed the practice. The Mosaic law excluded eunuchs from Israel (Deut 23:1), although God certainly accepted them (Isa 56:3-5; Wis 3:14). This individual was a high official, since he was said to be in charge of all her treasury. He may or may not have been a eunuch physically. He appears to be the first fully Gentile convert to Christianity, since the Samaritans mentioned previously (Acts 8:4-25) were regarded as half-breeds.

#### Related Resources:

- American Tract Society [Eunuch](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Eunuch](#) [Ethiopian Eunuch](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Eunuch](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Ethiopian Eunuch](#) [Eunuch](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Eunuch](#) [Ethiopian Eunuch](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Eunuch](#) [Eunuch](#) [Ethiopian Eunuch](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Ethiopian Eunuch](#) [Eunuch](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Eunuch](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Ethiopian Eunuch](#) [Eunuchs](#) [Eunuch](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Eunuch](#)

**Candace** is the Greek proper noun [kandake](#) (used only here in NT) which according to Wikipedia is "often Latinised as **Candace**, was the Meroitic language term for "queen" or possibly "royal woman". Contemporary Greek and Roman sources treat it as a title.

Several ruling queens of the ancient [Kingdom of Kush](#), with its capital at Meroë, bore the title, although it may have been a general title for women of the royal family. It is often taken to mean "queen-mother" or "mother of the reigning king", but although this was the common status of ruling kandakes, the term itself did not have this specific meaning. The name **Candace** is derived from the way the word is used in the New Testament, (Acts 8:27)." ([Wikipedia](#))

**Court official** (1413) ([dunastes/dynastes](#) [English = [dynasty](#)] from [dunamai](#) = to be able to, to be capable of, to be strong enough to do) denotes one who has a position to command others (ruler, potentate). It often refers to one in a relatively high position (politically speaking). In Luke 1:52 and Acts 8:27 **dunastes** refers to human rulers and in the only other NT use in 1 Ti 6:15 it refers to God and is translated **Sovereign**.

He would probably be the equivalent of a Secretary of the Treasury in America.

**And he had come to Jerusalem to worship** - The Ethiopian Eunuch was most likely a Jewish [proselyte](#). If he was indeed a literal eunuch (i.e., emasculated), he would not have been allowed to enter the Temple area (probably based on Dt 23:1), and in effect would have been a "second class proselyte." Even if he were allowed into the Temple, as a Gentile he could have gone no further than the Court of the Gentiles (see pix). However, as noted in the definition of eunuch ([above](#)) he may not have been emasculated as some high officials were described using the word eunuch (e.g., Potiphar an official, or "eunuch" of Pharaoh's court). Personally I think he was a literal eunuch. Nevertheless, what we can know with certainty is that this Ethiopian man had a desire in his heart to seek God and traveled by chariot a great distance (1000 miles one way which at the rate of 30 miles per day would have taken over one month and most of the way over hot, dusty roads - these are approximations). **The point is** this man went (way) out of his way to seek God! But when he arrived in Jerusalem, he may not have been allowed into the Temple if he was a physical eunuch (cf Dt 23:1). As the story unfolds God acknowledged the sincerity of the Ethiopian's heart desire to worship Him and thus providentially orchestrated events to assure that he would have a personal encounter with the Living God, Christ Jesus Himself!

**John Philips** writes that the Ethiopian eunuch "had come up to Jerusalem to worship and was now returning home. Jerusalem had left him disappointed and disillusioned, but his search...was not yet over." (Exploring Acts)

God rewards the seeking heart and this Ethiopian eunuch was a seeker of the true God

'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. (Jer 29:13)

**Jesus** made a similar declaration

"If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. (Jn 7:17)

**MacArthur** notes that "The eunuch is a classic example of one who lived up to the light he had. God then gave him the full revelation of Jesus Christ through Philip's ministry." (Ibid)

As an aside the preparation of the Ethiopian eunuch's heart (a Gentile from Africa) to receive the Word (from Isaiah 53+) implanted which was able to save his soul recalls to my mind many similar stories of others who have sought after God and whose hearts had been prepared by God's Spirit. **Don Richardson** has chronicled a number of these stories of individuals and groups from all over the world, men and women who were seeking God. While his book is not Scripture, it is historically accurate and serves to show the truth of Solomon's words in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that God "**has put eternity into man's heart**," (Ecc 3:11ESV). With that background below is an excerpt from Richardson's classic work entitled "[Eternity in their Hearts - Startling Evidence of Belief in the One True God in Hundreds of Cultures Throughout the World](#)". Richardson begins by asking the question...

In other words, **has the God who prepared the gospel for all peoples also prepared all peoples for the gospel?** If He has, then the current assumption, held by millions of believers and nonbelievers alike, that pagan people cannot understand and generally do not want to receive the Christian gospel, and that it is therefore unfair (and almost more work than it is worth) to try to get them to accept it, must be a false assumption. In the rest of this book, I will prove that this assumption is false. God has indeed prepared the Gentile world to receive the gospel. Significant numbers of non-Christians, therefore, have proved themselves many times more willing to receive the gospel than we Christians historically have been to share it with them.

**Worship** (4352) ([proskuneo](#) from **pros** = before + **kuneo** = kiss or adore) means to prostrate oneself in homage before another in the full sense of worship, not mere reverence or courtesy. When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshiped by angels. (Lu 2:13f). **Proskuneo** represents the most common Near Eastern act of adoration and reverence and also carries the idea of profound awe and respect. Clearly this Ethiopian eunuch had a devotion to God (as he knew him), a reflection of his seeking heart.

The word [proskuneo](#) literally means to kiss toward someone, to throw a kiss in token of respect or homage, to prostrate oneself in



homage, to do reverence to, to adore and so to worship and show respect. In the ancient Oriental (especially Persia) the mode of salutation between persons of equal rank was to kiss each other on the lips. When the difference of rank was slight, they kissed each other on the cheek. When one was much inferior, he fell upon his knees touched his forehead to the ground or prostrated himself, and as he was bowing down he would be throwing kisses toward the superior. It is this latter mode of salutation that is intended by Luke in using the verb [proskuneo](#), which is found 4x in Acts (Acts 7:43, Acts 8:27, Acts 10:25, Acts 24:11).

**Steven Cole** has an interesting question - After making this long journey, and considering that he (THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH) probably stayed in Jerusalem for a period of time, why didn't the Lord direct one of the apostles in Jerusalem to share the Gospel with him there? He could have led the man to Christ and given him a crash course in discipleship before he left. Meanwhile, Philip could have continued his fruitful ministry in Samaria. Later, Philip settles in Caesarea, where a centurion needed to hear the gospel. But rather than send Philip, who was there, God sent Peter, who was not there (chapter 10)! We cannot view world missions as an efficient, American business enterprise. God's ways are not our ways. Sometimes He does things that seem to us like a waste of money or personnel. Our job is not to question the Lord, but to be obedient. William Carey must have wrestled with God's "inefficiency" when, after 19 years of labor, a warehouse fire destroyed ten complete Bible translations, his massive polyglot dictionary, two grammar books, and all of the tediously shaped type fonts. But God used the tragedy to spread the word about the mission, and in two months enough gifts had poured into the mission to pay for the huge losses. "Carey accepted the tragedy as a judgment from the Lord and began all over again with even greater zeal" (Tucker, p. 120)....Someone has observed that in Acts 8 we see the conversion of [a son of Ham](#) (Ethiopian eunuch); in Acts 9, [a son of Shem](#) (Paul); and, in Acts 10, [a son of Japheth](#) (the Roman centurion). (JOHN PHILIPS WRITES - The three great racial families are now made one in the family of God. The curse of Babel, which enforced God's deliberate division of mankind, is reversed in the church. - Exploring Acts) These represent the three divisions of humanity after the flood. Thus Luke is showing us the Gospel going out to all the nations, just as Jesus had commanded (Acts 1:8+). In Revelation 5:9+, John sees before God's throne the four living creatures and the 24 elders singing,

"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

Until all whom Jesus purchased with His blood are brought to salvation, we must, as Paul put it,

"do all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10+). ([Sermon](#))

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**Rich Cathers on So he got up and went** - The first step in God's will. We are often looking for God's will in our lives. We talk about wanting all that God has for us. But it usually starts with a single step. We might say to ourselves, "Well fine, I'll get around to that, but I want to know what's up ahead!" Yet often God won't show you the next step until you take the first one. God didn't give Philip all the details about what was up ahead. He just said, "Go to Gaza".

**Example:** You may be saying to God, "When are you going to fix all the problems in my marriage?" And God responds, "When are you going to start loving your spouse like you should?" You respond with, "Well I know that it's important, and I plan to do that, but I want the problems fixed first!" Yet often God is waiting to fix the problems until you take the first step. It's important in understanding God's will for my life that I learn to take the step in front of me.

**Illustration** - At a conference in Ben Lippen, South Carolina, a young woman was giving testimony to her call to service. In the course of her message she held up a blank sheet of paper, saying that it contained God's plan for her life. The only writing on it was her signature at the bottom. Then she said, "I have accepted God's will without knowing what it is, and I am leaving it to Him to fill in the details." She was a true disciple, and she was on safe ground. With such a yielded will, the Holy Spirit would be able to guide her mental processes as she moved along the path of life. God is looking for the day when we'll just say "Yes" without having all the details. Often I find that I'm not told what "step 2" is until I've taken "step 1".

**Illustration** - Years ago before the days of GPS and radar, the old Norwegian sea captains devised a way of navigating through the sometimes treacherous fjords at night. They set up a system of light houses at certain key points in the fjords. All the captain needed to do was to point his ship towards the lighthouse until he could see around the corner and get a glimpse of the next lighthouse. Then he'd turn his ship towards the second lighthouse until he could see the third lighthouse. We may want to see the whole map of what is up ahead for our lives, but often I find that God just shows us the next lighthouse.

**Acts 8:28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.**

KJV Acts 8:28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

- **and he arose and went** Acts 17:11,12; Dt 6:6,7; 11:18-20; 17:18,19; Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2,3; Ps 119:99,111; Pr 2:1-6; 8:33,34; Jn 5:39,40; Col 3:16; 2 Ti 3:15-17
- **sitting in his chariot** Acts 28:25; Isaiah 1:1
- **the prophet Isaiah** Luke 3:4; 4:17
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SEEKING GOD IN HIS WORD

**And he was returning** ([hupostrepho](#)) **and sitting in his chariot** - He was returning to Ethiopia and he was not riding on Goodyear tires and a paved road! It would have been at the very least a bumpy ride and yet so eager is he to know God that he is reading the scroll! Note also the fact that he was sitting is evidence that he was a high official and that this chariot was not a little "one seater!" In fact in Acts 8:31 we see that there was room for Philip and logic tells us there would have also been room for a driver, because the eunuch is reading. And you know the law about driving and reading text!

**And was reading** ([anaginosko](#) - imperfect tense - over and over) **the prophet Isaiah** - Now keep in mind that he has just been to the "Holy City" and at the very least seen Herod's magnificent temple and other holy sites. One would think he would be talking about these grand sites as he meandered home to Ethiopia but that was not the case. Remember Paul's words stating that **"there is (absolutely) none that seeketh after God"** (Ro 3:11KJV) And yet here we see this Ethiopian eunuch seeking after God reading the prophet Isaiah! His seeking is clear evidence that the Spirit of God had placed in his heart a desire to read the Word of God that he might know the God of the Word. You can see the "soil" of his heart being "plowed" and "prepared" for the sower Philip to plant the seed of the Living Word. There is a principle here -- When we are sensitive to the Spirit and sense that He is calling us to share the Gospel with someone, we need to respond to His urging, for it is very likely that He has already gone before us and prepared the soil of their heart just as He had done with the Ethiopian eunuch.

**Reading the prophet Isaiah** - While Luke does not say specifically what he was reading, clearly he was not reading a book similar to the books we have today (Gutenberg did not begin to print books until circa 1439). And so he almost certainly was reading from a [scroll](#) ([pix of scroll](#)) of Isaiah (cf [Isaiah scroll](#)). Most Hebrews did not have scrolls as they were costly and the fact that he had obtained a scroll indicates his wealth, but even more his willingness to part with his money to obtain something he would only later come to recognize as priceless! If he was on Isaiah 53 presumably he had begun reading at the beginning as he returned home. And it just so happened that he had arrived at one of the most Messianic texts in the entire Old Testament! Philip's arrival at this point was no human accident but a providential appointment!

As **Jack Arnold** says "God, through the years and through various circumstances, had been preparing the Ethiopian Eunuch to believe. He was searching because God was moving and the day of his appointed salvation was drawing nigh. God was not only preparing the Eunuch but He was also sending Philip with the message of Christ to him. It was divine providence that these two men should meet, for an eternal transaction was about to take place. When Philip came, he was merely picking the ripe fruit which had been prepared by God. When God has a soul He is going to save, He will get the message of Christ to that person by one means or another." ([Sermon](#))

The words of Paul would be apropos to the events of this seeking Gentile...

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (OR GENTILE = THE ETHIOPIAN); for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (THE ETHIOPIAN IS A TRUE SEEKER) 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? (PHILIP WOULD SOON FILL THAT ROLE IN CONCERT WITH ISAIAH 53) 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? (PHILIP HAD BEEN SENT BY AN ANGEL - Acts 8:26 AND BY THE SPIRIT - Acts 8:29) Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" (WATCH PHILIP'S "BEAUTIFUL FEET" RUN UP TO THE CHARIOT -- PHILIP HAD SHOD HIS FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE! - Eph 6:15+) (Ro 10:12-15+)

**Steven Cole** has some excellent comments on the power of the Word of God in salvation - Don't underestimate the power of God's Word to bring people to salvation! As 1 Peter 1:23+ explains, "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." James 1:18+ states, "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth...." Paul tells Timothy that from childhood he has "known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15+). God's Word is powerful to save sinners.

I read of a Muslim priest who was asked to do a series of character studies on great people from the Koran: Abraham, Joseph,

David, and the prophet Jesus. When he came to prepare his talk on Jesus, he wanted more background information, so he borrowed a Bible and began to read the gospels. As he realized that Jesus was more than a prophet, his Muslim friends were appalled and excommunicated him. He continued to read and on his own trusted Christ as Savior. He went to a local Christian and asked if he could be baptized. He now works with [Operation Mobilization](#) doing evangelism among his own people (OM India Newsletter, Summer, 1997). (ED: WOW! HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!)

Thus **we should encourage people to read the Bible, especially the gospels**. Give out Gospels of John or New Testaments (ED: I ALWAYS ENCOURAGE THEM TO READ THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, ESPECIALLY PEOPLE I WILL PROBABLY NEVER ENCOUNTER AGAIN). When you share the gospel, have the person read the Bible verses himself. God uses His Word to bring sinners to salvation. ([Sermon](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - This Ethiopian represents many people today who are religious, read the Scriptures, and seek the truth, yet do not have saving faith in Jesus Christ. They are sincere, but they are lost! They need someone to show them the way. (Bible Exposition Commentary)

### Acts 8:29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

KJV Acts 8:29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

- Acts 10:19; 11:12; 13:2-4; 16:6,7; 20:22,23; Isaiah 65:24; Hosea 6:3; 1 Cor 12:11; 1 Ti 4:1
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [R A Torrey - Simple Methods by Which Any One Can Win Others to Christ](#)- Acts 8:29-30 (Select Your Man to Win, Lay Siege for him)

## THE SPIRIT GUIDES PHILIP'S STEPS

**Then** - This is a marker of succession.

**The Spirit said to Philip** - First an angel (Acts 8:26) and now the Spirit of God. What a supernatural life he must have been experiencing!

**Swindoll** - Luke doesn't tell us how the Holy Spirit spoke to Philip, but I lean toward his hearing an audible voice, not merely a thought in Philip's mind. (Ibid)

**Go up and join this chariot** - Whether this was an audible voice or a silent speaking of the Spirit to Philip's heart, it makes no difference. As Philip's subsequent actions demonstrate he was immediately obedient to the Spirit's commands.

**John Philips** has an interesting comment - We are not called upon to witness to everyone we meet, but we are called upon to speak to those who have been prepared by the Holy Spirit. Some years ago one of Scotland's great saints was walking across the Highlands with a young friend. They passed a shepherd. The younger man, perhaps to impress his colleague, accosted the shepherd, asked him if he was saved and gave him a tract. Expecting, perhaps, a word of commendation, he was surprised and rebuked when the old believer said, "Did you have the Holy Spirit's permission to speak to that man about his soul?" ...It is a great thing to be so in touch with heaven that our witness and our attempts at soul-winning are directed by the Lord. (Exploring Acts)

**MacArthur** comments - Although the eunuch's entourage must have been impressive, Philip was not intimidated. Boldness belongs to Spirit filled people (Acts 4:31). (Ibid)

**Go up** (4334) is the verb [proserchomai](#) which means literally to go to or approach which would be the main sense here. However this verb also has another interesting meaning which means to "draw near" (Heb 4:16), so Luke may have intended a play on words. Philip is to draw near to this pagan who is being drawn to God (cf Jn 6:44) as he reads God's Holy Word. Figuratively proserchomai had the sense of to worship, so unbeknownst to the Ethiopian eunuch, God had planned a personal worship service for these two men. Another divine coincidence.

**Join** (cling, cleave) (2853)([kollao](#) from **kolla** = glue) means literally to glue, cement, join or fasten together. The Ethiopian eunuch is inviting Philip to associate with him, to accompany him in his royal chariot. Here is a man of some degree of substance humbling himself to associate with a man who surely must have appeared to be a "commoner." Is this not another indication that the Ethiopian eunuch's heart was being prepared by the Holy Spirit who was cultivating in him the fertile soil of humility?

**Chariot** (716)(**arma**) is used on 4 times in the NT, three describing an ancient vehicle used for traveling (Acts 8:28; Acts 8:29; Acts 8:38) and once to describe a military vehicle or chariot of war (Rev. 9:9).

While Luke does not describe the chariot in detail, given the desert conditions it likely had a canopy to protect from the sun as well as a "private chauffeur."

**Arma** - over 150 times in Septuagint -

Gen. 41:43; Gen. 46:29; Gen. 50:9; Exod. 14:6; Exod. 14:7; Exod. 14:9; Exod. 14:17; Exod. 14:18; Exod. 14:23; Exod. 14:25; Exod. 14:26; Exod. 14:28; Exod. 15:4; Exod. 15:19; Deut. 11:4; Jos. 11:4; Jos. 11:6; Jos. 11:9; Jos. 24:6; Jdg. 4:3; Jdg. 4:7; Jdg. 4:13; Jdg. 4:15; Jdg. 4:16; Jdg. 5:28; 1 Sam. 8:11; 1 Sam. 8:12; 1 Sam. 13:5; 1 Sam. 15:12; 2 Sam. 1:6; 2 Sam. 8:4; 2 Sam. 10:18; 2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Ki. 1:5; 1 Ki. 4:20; 1 Ki. 4:21; 1 Ki. 4:27; 1 Ki. 7:33; 1 Ki. 9:15; 1 Ki. 10:29; 1 Ki. 12:24; 1 Ki. 18:44; 1 Ki. 20:1; 1 Ki. 20:21; 1 Ki. 20:25; 1 Ki. 20:33; 1 Ki. 22:31; 1 Ki. 22:32; 1 Ki. 22:33; 1 Ki. 22:35; 1 Ki. 22:38; 2 Ki. 2:11; 2 Ki. 2:12; 2 Ki. 5:9; 2 Ki. 5:21; 2 Ki. 5:26; 2 Ki. 6:14; 2 Ki. 6:15; 2 Ki. 6:17; 2 Ki. 7:6; 2 Ki. 8:21; 2 Ki. 9:21; 2 Ki. 9:27; 2 Ki. 9:28; 2 Ki. 10:2; 2 Ki. 10:15; 2 Ki. 10:16; 2 Ki. 13:7; 2 Ki. 13:14; 2 Ki. 18:24; 2 Ki. 19:23; 2 Ki. 23:11; 1 Chr. 18:4; 1 Chr. 19:6; 1 Chr. 19:7; 1 Chr. 19:18; 1 Chr. 28:18; 2 Chr. 1:14; 2 Chr. 1:17; 2 Chr. 8:6; 2 Chr. 8:9; 2 Chr. 9:25; 2 Chr. 10:18; 2 Chr. 12:3; 2 Chr. 14:9; 2 Chr. 18:30; 2 Chr. 18:31; 2 Chr. 18:32; 2 Chr. 18:34; 2 Chr. 21:9; 2 Chr. 35:24; Ps. 20:7; Ps. 68:17; Cant. 1:9; Cant. 6:12; Isa. 2:7; Isa. 5:28; Isa. 22:7; Isa. 22:18; Isa. 31:1; Isa. 37:24; Isa. 43:17; Isa. 66:15; Isa. 66:20; Jer. 4:13; Jer. 6:23; Jer. 17:25; Jer. 22:4; Jer. 46:9; Jer. 47:3; Jer. 50:37; Jer. 51:21; Ezek. 23:24; Ezek. 26:7; Ezek. 26:10; Ezek. 27:20; Ezek. 43:3; Dan. 11:40; Hos. 1:7; Hos. 10:13; Joel 2:5; Mic. 1:13; Mic. 5:10; Nah. 2:3; Nah. 2:4; Nah. 3:2; Hag. 2:22; Zech. 6:1; Zech. 6:2; Zech. 6:3; Zech. 9:10;

**Acts 8:30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"**

KJV Acts 8:30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

- **ran up** Acts 8:27; Ps 119:32; Eccl 9:10; John 4:34
- **Understand** Mt 13:19,23,51; 15:10; 24:15; Mark 13:14; Lk 24:44-45; John 5:39; 1 Cor 14:19; Eph 5:17; Rev 13:18
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHILIP RUNS WHILE THE EUNUCH READS

**Philip ran up** - Although the Ethiopian was on a chariot, it very likely was not moving that fast (either that or Philip was supernaturally enabled to run faster than normal - cf. Elijah in 1 Ki 18:46)). **Peterson** adds that "The chariot might have been an ox-drawn wagon, moving at not much more than a walking pace." (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** comments that "He **ran** to the chariot. He could hardly wait to see what God was going to do in this situation. Philip did not say, "I don't want to witness to a black man!" Or, "How can I, a puny little layman witness to the Secretary of Treasury?" Or, "I don't want anything to do with social weirdos like emasculated males!" Or, "I can't witness to this man; he is out of my social class!" No, Philip ran to witness."

**S Lewis Johnson** - And, by the way, he **ran** up to the chariot. Bishop John Taylor Smith used to say, "If he had not run, he would have been out of Isaiah 53 into Isaiah 54." But it was providence and God led him to the Ethiopian eunuch, just at the right time with what that man needed."

**Aitken** - That is not what some of us do. When God gives us a call we begin to creep thither. How many creeping, limping Christians there are! They have got something to do for God's glory, and they crawl instead of running. "I have a natural indisposition to occupy a post of publicity or to excite anything like general observation." My friend, what has thy natural character to do with it? Is it by your natural, or by your supernatural character, that you are going to glorify God?... Whenever God intimates His will, run, and you will find the cross will grow very light to willing feet. It is heavy to the man who crawls, but light to the man who runs.

**Ran up** (4370)(**prostrecho** from **pros** = to, toward + **trecho** = run) means literally to run to or towards and is used in this literal sense in all 3 NT passages (Mk 9:15; Mk 10:17; Acts 8:30). In the Septuagint **prostrecho** describes Abraham when he "ran from the tent door to meet them (ONE THE PRE-INCARNATE CHRIST - cf. Ge 18:13) and bowed himself to the earth." (Ge 18:2), of Essau running to greet Jacob (Ge 33:4), of young men running to tell Moses two men were prophesying (Nu 11:27).

**Prostrecho** - 4x in the Septuagint - Gen. 18:2; Gen. 33:4; Num. 11:27; Prov. 18:10

Proverbs 18:10+ The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous **runs** (Lxx -prostrecho) into it and is safe.

**And heard him reading Isaiah the prophet**- It was common in this time to read the Scriptures out loud. Why? Presumably because the ancient manuscripts had no punctuation and the words run together which led to the custom of reading slowly and out loud. As an aside, presumably his driver (and possibly others in the caravan heard the words of Isaiah).

**Kent Hughes** quips "And suddenly there stood Philip, God's hitchhiker. **"Have Spirit, will travel."** (Ibid)

**John Philips** - **"Run, Philip, run!"** The compulsion of the Holy Spirit was unmistakable. It was not just that he might miss the traveler, he might miss the text. The Holy Spirit knew just how far the eunuch had read in his perusal of the prophet Isaiah. He knew he had come to chapter 53, knew just how far down that strategic chapter he had progressed, knew just what soul-searching questions were welling up in that Ethiopian's heart. **"Run, Philip, run!"** There are times when the King's business calls for haste. This particular incident illustrates the magnificent timing of God. (Exploring Acts)

**William MacDonald** observes that "The utter lack of racial prejudice here is refreshing." (Believer's Study Bible)

**And said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"** - **Understand** is [ginosko](#) and **reading** is [anaginosko](#), a play on words. This is the boldness of a Spirit filled man! Philip a layman. The Ethiopian a royal official! That was no hindrance for Spirit emboldened Philip! (Acts 4:31+). O for just a touch of this man's boldness Lord. Amen!

**Jack Arnold** writes "Notice carefully that **Philip took the initiative**. He tactfully asked a question, hoping that it would open an opportunity to witness for Christ. Had Philip waited for the Eunuch to ask him a question, he may never have had an opportunity to witness. In all of our witnessing experiences, we should seek to take the initiative to open the door for the Gospel. We should also be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit so that when He tells us to speak we will do it in obedience."

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#### **A Personal Question - C. H. Spurgeon. - Acts 8:30-39**

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understand you what you read?...

At our meeting for prayer and fasting last Tuesday, a brother, who was, I think, the best man amongst us, made a confession of cowardice, and we all looked at him and could not understand how he could be a coward, for a bolder man I do not know. He told us that there was a man in his congregation who was a wealthy man. If he had been a poor man, he would have spoken to him about his soul; but, being a wealthy man, he thought it would be taking too much liberty. At last one of the members happened to say to him, "Mr. So-and-So, have you found a Saviour?" and bursting into tears, the man said, "Thank you for speaking to me; I have been in distress for months, and thought the minister might have spoken to me. Oh, I wish he had; I might have found peace."

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**Spurgeon - Morning and Evening** - We should be abler teachers of others, and less liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, if we sought to have a more intelligent understanding of the Word of God. As the Holy Ghost, the Author of the Scriptures is he who alone can enlighten us rightly to understand them, we should constantly ask his teaching, and his guidance into all truth. When the prophet Daniel would interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, what did he do? He set himself to earnest prayer that God would open up the vision. The apostle John, in his vision at Patmos, saw a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open, or so much as to look upon. The book was afterwards opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open it; but it is written first-"I wept much." The tears of John, which were his liquid prayers, were, so far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened. Therefore, if, for your own and others' profiting, you desire to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," remember that prayer is your best means of study: like Daniel, you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof, when you have sought unto God; and like John you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed, after you have wept much. Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the hammer; and the stone-breaker must go down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised, and there is not a stony doctrine in revelation which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. You may force your way through anything with the leverage of prayer. Thoughts and reasonings are like the steel wedges which give a hold upon truth; but prayer is the lever, the prise which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure hidden within.

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**Acts 8:31** And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

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KJV Acts 8:31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

- **How** Ps 25:8,9; 73:16,17,22; Pr 30:2,3; Isa 29:18,19; 35:8; Mt 18:3,4; Mk 10:15; Ro 10:14; 1 Cor 3:18; 8:2; 14:36,37; Jas 1:10,21; 1 Pe 2:1,2
- **And he** 2 Kings 5:9,26; 10:15,16
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PHILIP THE HITCH-HIKING DEACON: THE NEED FOR A TEACHER

**And he said, "Well, how could I-** BDAG has "How in the world can I?" This is an example of this Ethiopian eunuch, a very important man in his society, being willing to humble himself. He was willing to allow a "commoner" teach him the Word of God! As James said "God is opposed ([antitasso](#)) to the proud ([huperephanos](#)), but gives grace to the humble ([tapeinos](#))." (James 4:8+) This high government official had just placed himself in a position to receive God's grace!

**Unless someone guides me** - Spiritual truth can only be spiritually discerned. While the eunuch could read the passages and have a general sense of the concepts, he could not discern the spiritual meaning behind the words. For that, God had sent Philip who could explain the passages and show him how these passages pointed to Jesus. Ultimately of course it would be the Holy Spirit Who would open his heart to the things explained by Philip (cf Paul and Lydia in Acts 16:14+). As **Arnold** says "The Holy Spirit is the cause of salvation; Philip was but a vehicle for the truth, but without Philip the Eunuch would have never understood the truth."

**Jack Arnold** - The Eunuch's question is the haunting question of the seeking heart which echoes down through the ages. How can I understand unless someone helps me understand? That was a desperate cry for help. His soul was parched. His heart was empty. His mind was confused. The Ethiopian represents any seeking soul in this world. It may be your neighbor next door who is reading the Bible but does not understand it, or the hungry heart in France who is seeking reality or the Indian in the jungles of Brazil who wants more light about God. The question, "How can I understand?" is a very haunting question to a troubled soul. In his biography, Hudson Taylor tells of one incident where he led a Chinese man to Christ. The man asked [Hudson Taylor](#), "*How long have you known the good news of Christ in your country?*" Hudson Taylor said to this man who was full of joy in his new found faith, "*We have known it for a long time...hundreds of years, actually*" The man, an ex-Buddhist leader, said, "*Hundreds of years! And you never before told us? Why, my father sought for the truth for such a long time and never found it before he died! Oh, why did you not come and share the good news sooner?*" This verse teaches the importance of teachers. Quite often you will hear Christians say, "I'm just going to read the Bible for myself; I don't need any body else to teach me. I don't need Bible dictionaries, concordances and commentaries. I'll just read the Bible and what God says to me I will take action on." God, however, has given teachers to help us understand. Spurgeon used to say, "I never could understand why some set such value on what the Holy Spirit said to then, and so little value on what He said to anyone else." We all need people who know the Scriptures to help us understand the Scriptures. ([Sermon](#))

**Guides** (3594)(**hodegeo** from **hodegos** = guide, leader from **hodos** = way + **hegomai** = to lead) means literally to lead someone (escort, lead on the way - Mt 15:14, Lk 6:39, Rev 7:17. In the Psalms there are many verses that refer to God's leading (including His light, His truth, His Spirit). God's leading of Israel after Egypt - Ex 13:17). In Ps 23:3 "He **guides** me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake." **Figuratively** instruct, teach or guide as in Jn 16:13, Acts 8:31 and in the Septuagint - Ps 25:5, Ps 86:11.

**Hodegeo** - 40 v in the Septuagint -

Ex. 13:17; Ex. 15:13 = " You **have led** the people whom You have redeemed"; Ex. 32:34 = "go now, **lead** the people where I told you. Behold, My angel shall go before you"; Nu 24:8; Dt. 1:33; Jos. 24:3 God led Abraham = "**led** him through all the land of Canaan"; 2 Sa 7:23; 1 Chr. 17:21; Neh. 9:12 = "with a pillar of cloud You**led** them by day"; Neh. 9:19 = "To guide them on their way,"; Job 31:18; Ps. 5:8 = "O LORD, **lead** me in Your righteousness because of my foes"; Ps. 23:3; Ps. 25:5 = "**Lead** me in Your truth and teach me"; Ps. 25:9 = "He **leads** the humble in justice"; Ps. 27:11 = "**lead** me in a level path"; Ps. 31:3; Ps. 43:3; Ps. 45:4; Ps. 60:9; Ps. 61:2; Ps. 67:4; Ps. 73:24; Ps. 77:20; Ps. 78:14; Ps. 78:53; Ps. 78:72; Ps. 80:1; Ps. 86:11; Ps. 90:16; Ps. 106:9; Ps. 107:7; Ps. 107:30; Ps. 108:10; Ps. 119:35; Ps. 139:10; Ps. 139:24; Ps. 143:10; Eccl. 2:3; Isa. 63:14

Psalms 43:3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them **lead** me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places.

Psalms 61:2 From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;**Lead** me to the rock that is higher than I. (**Perhaps you need to be reminded today of His guiding hand, especially if you feel**

you have lost your way - [Pray song based on this verse](#))

Psalms 139:24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And **lead** me in the everlasting way.

Psalms 143:10 Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Let Your good Spirit **lead** me on level ground.

**And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him** - At just the right moment the Lord brought Philip across his path. The field was "ripe for harvest" (John 4:35), and Philip was God's laborer in the field. This was no coincidence. It was God's plan from the very beginning, and Philip was obedient to that plan. Philip's was responsive to God moving in his life. This reminds me of the simple but challenging principle of Henry Blackaby's popular Experiencing God course (which did have a major impact on my life) --

**Find out where God is at work  
and join Him there.**

**Henry Blackaby** undergirds this basic premise with seven realities...

1. God is always at work around you. (ED: ARE YOU WATCHING? ARE YOU AWARE?)
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work. (ED: ARE YOU LISTENING? ARE YOUR EARS PLUGGED WITH FILTH OF THIS FALLEN WORLD?)
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes and His ways. (ED: IT IS NOT A "SHOUT" BUT USUALLY A STILL, SMALL [NON-AUDIBLE] VOICE!)
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action. (ED: WILL YOU TRUST AND OBEY FOR THERE'S NO OTHER WAY TO BE HAPPY IN JESUS THAN TO TRUST AND OBEY?)
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing. (ED: ARE YOU WILLING TO DIE TO YOUR WILL, THAT YOU MIGHT SURRENDER GOD'S WILL?)
7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you. (Experiencing God)

**Acts 8:32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH."**

KJV Acts 8:32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

- **He was led** Isaiah 53:7,8
- **as a** Ps 44:11,12; Jeremiah 11:19; 12:3; 51:40; Ro 8:36
- **and as a lamb** John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Pe 2:21-24
- **does not open His mouth** Ps 39:2,9; Mt 26:62,63; Luke 23:34; John 18:9-11
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE SILENCE OF THE LAMB

**Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this** - He was reading not from the Hebrew version ([Masoretic text](#)) but from the Greek version of the Old Testament, the **Septuagint**. The **Ethiopian eunuch** just "*happened to be*" (aka, providence) reading from the prophecy of Isaiah 53+, probably the greatest Messianic prophecy in the entire Bible! Talk about God pitching Philip a "softball"! Isaiah 53 gives the truth of the Gospel as clear as any Old Testament text.

**Augustine** on Isaiah 53+ - "It is not a prophecy, it is a gospel."

**Polycarp** on Isaiah 53+ - "The Golden Passional of the Old Testament.

Isaiah 53 has been called the **Great Calvary Chapter**.

**Martin Luther** said of Isaiah 52:13-53:12+, "**Every Christian ought to be able to repeat it by heart.**" (Are you as convicted as I am? I have only memorized two verses and they are "hazy!") (See [Memorize the Word](#))

**Constable** notes that Isaiah 53+ "is also the middle chapter in part two of the book (chs. 40-66). Most of the approximately 80 references to Isaiah in the New Testament come from this chapter."

Isaiah 53+ is exalted by many and ignored by many others. Believers in Messiah revel in this great section of Isaiah. Jews who reject Jesus refuse to even read Isaiah 53+ in their synagogues. In fact Isaiah 53+ has been called "the torture chamber of the rabbis!" And yet it is most fascinating that it was the view of the ancient rabbis that Isaiah 53+ had reference to the Messiah though of course the ancient rabbis did not refer this to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the view of the Jewish paraphrase or the Targum. In chapter 52 in verse 13, the Targum reads, "Behold my servant the Messiah." So it's obvious that that particular paraphrase interpreted this passage of the Messiah to come. That's the view of many of the Midrashim and many of the late rabbis as well.

**David Thompson** - What is most interesting is something that Drs. Keil and Delitsch picked up on, and that is, even those Jewish rabbis who believed it did refer to the Messiah yet to come, missed the fact that He already did come (Isaiah, Vol. 7, p. 303). Jonathan Ben Uziel says in his Jewish commentary that he thought that this section referred to the Messiah yet to come (F. C. Jennings, Studies in Isaiah, p. 612). So even those, who believe this does refer to the Messiah, can't seem to realize God's Messiah did come to Jerusalem and was crucified there. Most modern day Jewish teachers totally disregard this text as referring to the Messiah and do not teach it to the people of Israel. The effect is that most in the nation Israel are blind concerning Jesus Christ. However, any honest exegetical approach to this text clearly shows that this is an amazing prediction of precisely what would happen to Jesus Christ. As Keil and Delitsch say **it is like Isaiah is writing this sitting "beneath the cross upon Golgotha"**. ([Sermon](#))

**William Kelly** says that the "The more modern writers, who dread the ancient application of the prophecy to the Messiah by their fathers, have invented a double means of escape, either by applying it to some distinguished man like Josiah or Jeremiah, or to the Jewish people elsewhere styled "My servant" in the prophecy. But in vain. This section is so punctually and exclusively applicable to our Lord that these efforts only prove the will of unbelief and its failure. In the beginning of chap. 49. we have already seen Christ, the Servant substituted for Israel who had been altogether wanting. We have seen in chap. 1. that the godly Jews are exhorted to obey the voice of this Servant of Jehovah, humbled though He has been among men, but vindicated of God, and indeed He Himself is God. ([Commentary](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** appropriately entitles his commentary on Isaiah 53 "Climbing Mount Everest." Like Mt. Everest, Isaiah 53 stands out in beauty and grandeur, but only because it reveals Jesus Christ and takes us to [Mt. Calvary](#). The messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 was held by Jewish rabbis till the twelfth century. After that, Jewish scholars started interpreting the passage as a description of the sufferings of the nation of Israel. ([SEE MORE DETAILED NOTE](#)) But how could Israel die for the sins of Israel ([Isa 53:8](#))? And who declared that Israel was innocent of sin and therefore had suffered unjustly (v. 9)? No, the prophet wrote about an innocent individual, not a guilty nation. He made it crystal clear that this individual died for the sins of the guilty so that the guilty might go free. The Servant that Isaiah describes is the Messiah, and the New Testament affirms that this Servant-Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God (Matt. 8:17; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Acts 8:27-40; 1 Peter 2:21-24). Isaiah 53 is quoted or alluded to in the New Testament more frequently than any other Old Testament chapter. The index of quotations in the appendix of my Greek New Testament gives at least forty-one different citations, and this may not be all of them. (Bible Exposition Commentary – Be Comforted - Isaiah). (Bolding Mine)

**Delitzsch** goes so far as to observe that "All the references in the New Testament to the **Lamb of God** (with which the corresponding allusions to the Passover are interwoven) spring from this passage (Isaiah 53:7) in the book of Isaiah."

**John Philips** - The text tells of the Messiah silent before His shearers. We see Jesus abused by the Sanhedrin, ridiculed by Herod, scourged by Pilate, scoffed at by the soldiers. We see Him stripped, seemingly as helpless in their hands as a sheep in the hand of its shearer. All the dignity that comes from dress was stripped away. But His silence clothed Him with a dignity no insult or injury of man could ever take away. (Exploring Acts)

**HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH** - What is this passage saying? Neither the sheep nor the lamb opens its mouth before they the experience either death or shearing. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in Mt 26:63; 27:12-14; Mk 14:61; 15:5; Lk 23:9; Jn 19:9; 1Pe 2:23.

The picture of **sheep to slaughter** of course predicts Jesus taking on the role of the Passover lamb which was sacrificed (Ex 12:3, 6 and 1 Cor 5:7; Jn 1:29; 1Pe 1:18, 19; Rev 5:6).

Below are the English translation of the Septuagint followed by the English translation of the Masoretic text. It is clear that the Ethiopian eunuch is reading from the Septuagint. For in depth commentary on Isaiah 53:7+.

**Septuagint**- And he, because of his affliction, opens not his mouth: he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. (Brenton's English Translation)

**Masoretic text** - He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. (NAS)

**Warren Wiersbe** - Isaiah 53 describes our Lord Jesus Christ in His birth (Isa. 53:1–2+), life and ministry (Isa. 53:3+), substitutionary death (Isa. 53:4–9+), and victorious resurrection (Isa. 53:10–12+). Isaiah 53:4+ should be connected with 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:7+ with Matthew 26:62–63; Isaiah 53:9+ with Matthew 27:57–60; and Isaiah 53:12+ with Luke 23:34, 37. (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**Lamb** (286)(**amnos**) refers to a lamb as for sacrifice. In classical Greek **amnos** was not specifically identified as a sacrificial animal as it was in the Bible. The 4 NT uses are all figurative descriptions of Jesus depicted as a sacrificial Lamb (Jn. 1:29+; Jn. 1:36+; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:19+). **Amnos** is used 96 times in the **Septuagint** and while the offering of sheep is alluded to in Ge 4:4 (flock which would probably include sheep), the sacrificial use of the **amnos** is not specified until the exodus of Israel from Egypt (Ex 12:5-7 but Lxx is not **amnos** but **probaton** - sheep). Nevertheless from this time onward in the **Septuagint** the **amnos** assumed a specific sacrificial role as in Ex 29:40,41, Lev 9:3+, Lev 12:6, 8+, etc). Of the 96 uses of **amnos** in the Septuagint, 75 are in context of a sacrificial offering. The **amnos** was to be without blemish (Lev 9:3+) and sacrificed twice daily (Ex 29:38-41). The most significant use of **amnos** in the OT is found in Isaiah 53:7+ which is quoted in Acts 8:32. The New Testament's usage of **amnos** provides a clear picture of Christ as the "lamb of God." 1 Peter 1:19+ says we were redeemed "with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ." So like the OT sacrifices of the lambs, Jesus was free of any defects as was His precious blood. He patiently endured His vicarious suffering (Acts 8:32, cf. Isaiah 53:7+), so that He might take away the sins of the world (John 1:29+).

It is interesting that the New Testament has three words for a 'lamb' - **amnos**, **arēn** and **arnion** and all are always used metaphorically, **arnion** being by far the most frequent. **Amnos** is not used in the descriptions of Jesus in the Revelation where the term **arnion** is used instead. John uses **arnion** once at the end of his Gospel referring to believers (John 21:15+) and then 27 times in the Revelation all describing Jesus (Rev 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3.).

#### **Amnos** in the **Septuagint** -

Gen. 30:40; Gen. 31:7; Gen. 33:19; Exod. 29:38; Exod. 29:39; Exod. 29:40; Exod. 29:41; Lev. 9:3; Lev. 12:6; Lev. 12:8; Lev. 14:10; Lev. 14:12; Lev. 14:13; Lev. 14:21; Lev. 14:24; Lev. 14:25; Lev. 23:18; Lev. 23:19; Lev. 23:20; Num. 6:12; Num. 6:14; Num. 7:15; Num. 7:21; Num. 7:27; Num. 7:33; Num. 7:39; Num. 7:45; Num. 7:51; Num. 7:57; Num. 7:63; Num. 7:69; Num. 7:75; Num. 7:81; Num. 7:87; Num. 15:5; Num. 15:11; Num. 28:3; Num. 28:4; Num. 28:7; Num. 28:8; Num. 28:9; Num. 28:11; Num. 28:13; Num. 28:14; Num. 28:19; Num. 28:21; Num. 28:27; Num. 28:29; Num. 29:2; Num. 29:4; Num. 29:8; Num. 29:10; Num. 29:13; Num. 29:15; Num. 29:17; Num. 29:18; Num. 29:20; Num. 29:21; Num. 29:23; Num. 29:24; Num. 29:26; Num. 29:27; Num. 29:29; Num. 29:30; Num. 29:32; Num. 29:33; Num. 29:36; Num. 29:37; Deut. 14:4; 2 Chr. 29:21; 2 Chr. 29:22; 2 Chr. 29:32; 2 Chr. 35:7; 2 Chr. 35:8; Ezr. 6:9; Ezr. 6:17; Ezr. 7:17; Ezr. 8:35; Job 31:20; Isa. 53:7; Ezek. 27:21; Ezek. 46:4; Ezek. 46:5; Ezek. 46:6; Ezek. 46:7; Ezek. 46:11; Ezek. 46:13; Ezek. 46:15; Hos. 4:16; Zech. 10:3

#### **Related Resources:**

- Lamb (721) **arnion**
- Lamb (704) **aren**

**Slaughter** (496)(**sphage** from **sphazo** = to slay) literally means to slaughter) by cutting or slashing the throat. Three uses - Acts 8:32+, Ro 8:36+, James 5:5. In Ro 8:36+ where "we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." **Sphage** is used idiomatically here in James 5:5 in the phrase "in a day of slaughter." **Gilbrant** says "**Sphagē** is used in classical Greek for the "slaughter" of animals, particularly for sacrifices. The term is used literally to identify the throat, "the place between the collar-bones where sacrifices are usually slain."" (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

#### **Related Resources:**

- [The Lamb Of God](#) - devotional
- [What does it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God?](#)

## Redemption by the Lamb of God

The Question in the Old Testament was...		The Answer in the New Testament is...		The Cry throughout eternity is...
Where is the Lamb?		Behold the Lamb!		Worthy is the Lamb!
The ram in the thicket	The Passover Lamb	The Lamb of God	Christ our Passover	The Lamb that was slain
Ge 22:1, 2, 7, 8, 13, 14 Jehovah Jireh: The LORD Will Provide	Ex 12:5, 6, 7, 13, 14 [Read Ex 12:1-51] 430 yr in Egypt, 30 yr free, 400 in bondage cp Ex 12:40 (430) with Acts 7:6 (400)	Jn 1:29, 36+ Jn 19:31, 32, 33, 36, Ps 34:19, 20 (See study of Jehovah Roi - The LORD is my Shepherd)	1Cor 5:7 Isa 53:7+ Acts 8:32, 33, 34, 35+ 1 Pe 1:18-19+ 1 Pe 2:24+	Jn 20:20, 27 Rev 5:6+ Re 5:12+ Re 19:7, 9+ Re 21:22, 2+ Re 22:1+ Re 22:3+
				<a href="#">Come Let Us Worship</a> <a href="#">Here I Am to Worship</a> <a href="#">We Bow Down</a>
<a href="#">CLICK HERE</a> and take a few moments out of your busy schedule <a href="#">Listen, watch and worship the Lamb of God!</a>				

**Acts 8:33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."**

KJV Acts 8:33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

NLT Acts 8:33 He was humiliated and received no justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

- **in humiliation** Php 2:8,9
- **judgment** Job 27:2; 34:5; Isaiah 5:23; 10:2; Hab 1:4; Mt 27:12-26; John 19:12-16
- **who will relate** Ps 22:30; Isaiah 53:8,12
- **for** Ps 22:15; Isaiah 53:10,12; Daniel 9:26; Zech 13:7
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SLAUGHTER OF THE LAMB

**IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."** - He is humiliated because He is deprived of just judgment. Then He seems to have no descendants because "His life is removed." Of course in the full context of Isaiah 53 Messiah has "descendants", for Isaiah records "He will see His offspring." (Isa 53:10+).

**Humiliation** (5014) (**tapeinosis**) means low, not high, not rising far from the ground. It describes a state of disgrace. It describes an experience of being **abased** or caused to feel shame (cf "despising the shame" - Heb 12:2+).

The word for **judgment** is **krisis** which gives us our English crisis, which in turn speaks of a turning point. The illegal treatment of Jesus would lead to the crisis of Calvary, the crucifixion which forever will mark the turning point of the history of the the world.

**Related Resource:**



- In depth verse by verse commentary of Isaiah 53.

Below is the English translation of the Septuagint followed by the English translation of the Masoretic text. Again it is clear that the Ethiopian eunuch is reading from the Septuagint. Note that the **words in bold** are not quoted by Luke in Acts 8:33. For in depth commentary on Isaiah 53:8 [click here](#).

**Septuagint-** In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken away from the earth: **because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death** (Isa 53:8 Brenton's English Translation)

**Masoretic text** - By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living **For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?** (NAS)

**Peterson** observes that "The portion (Isa 53:7-8) that is cited speaks only of the Servant's humble submission to an unjust death, though Philip may have explained the atoning significance of Christ's death and the consequences of his resurrection from the oracle as a whole (Is. 52:13–53:12)...The point has sometimes been made that the quotation contains no specific reference to the Servant of the Lord or to his vicarious suffering. Indeed, the final words of Isaiah 53:8 ('for the transgression of my people he was punished') are not cited. However, 'a common-sense view of the verses suggests that on a long slow journey the Ethiopian would be likely to cover more than six lines, and that these are quoted as a summary of a longer passage'. The quotation takes us to the whole so-called Servant Song (Isa. 52:13–53:12) and is to be understood in that literary and theological context." (Ibid)

**Acts 8:34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"**

KJV Acts 8:34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

- **of whom** Mt 2:2-4; 13:36; 15:15
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"** - The Ethiopian did not ask about the specific words of the text (which would not undoubtedly not be completely clear to him) but about the specific Person to whom the words referred. Keep in mind that the Ethiopian may have spoken with Jews about this passage when he was in Jerusalem. Jewish interpretation of the slaughtered sheep ranged from a reference to the nation of Israel, a reference to the prophet himself or a reference to the Messiah. Philip was prepared to "to make a defense ([apologia](#)) to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Pe 3:15+).

Philip was removed from a revival and directed to a desert, from a "congregation" of many to a "congregation" of one! God's way of saving individuals is not necessarily the way we would do it. George MacDonald's poem (quoted by Hughes) describes this tension of our way versus God's way regarding fields that are white unto harvest -- they may not be in the "fields" ...

I said: "Let me walk in the field."

He said: "No, walk in the town."

I said: "There are no flowers there."

He said: "No flowers, but a crown."

I said: "But the skies are black;

There is nothing but noise and din."

And he wept as he sent me back—

"There is more," he said; "There is sin."

I said: "But the air is thick,

And fogs are veiling the sun."

He answered, "Yet souls are sick,

And souls in the dark undone!"

I said: "I shall miss the light,

And friends will miss me, they say.”

He answered: “Choose tonight

If I am to miss you or they.”

I pleaded for time to be given.

He said: “Is it hard to decide?

It will not seem so hard in Heaven

To have followed the steps of your Guide.”

I cast one look at the fields,

Then set my face to the town;

He said, “My child, do you yield?

Will you leave the flowers for the crown?”

Then into his hand went mine;

And into my heart came He;

And I walk in a light divine,

The path I had feared to see.

### **Kent Hughes sums up the lessons from Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch...**

To bring a touch of the Master’s hand to those around us, we must:

1. Daily yield to the Spirit’s guidance, remembering that he guides in many different ways.
2. Understand and proclaim the gospel—the old, old story of God’s gracious rescue of repentant sinners.
3. Love people with God’s love. (Preaching the Word - Acts)

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### **Watching The Wind**

Read: Acts 8:26-34

He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. —Ecclesiastes 11:4

When it comes to telling others about Jesus, I’m sometimes like a cautious farmer who keeps his eye on the weather, looking for the perfect day to plant his crops. The season passes and he sows nothing. The opportunity is gone; the harvest is lost (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

I hesitate and wonder, “Is this person ready to listen to the gospel? Is this the time to speak?” You can never tell what’s going on in the depths of another person’s heart. Some may be dwelling in darkness yet longing for someone to lead them into the light.

The Ethiopian eunuch in his royal chariot seemed to have it all together (Acts 8:27). He enjoyed prestige, wealth, and power, yet inwardly he was empty and searching. He was reading Isaiah’s promise of the suffering Savior and trying to come to grips with his words. Right at that moment, Philip took the opportunity to tell the eunuch about Jesus (v.35).

I have a friend who often leads people to Jesus. I asked him once how he knew they were ready to receive the gospel. “It’s easy,” he replied. “I ask them.”

So I must stop worrying about the wind and the clouds and get on with it—scattering the seed wherever I go, regardless of the weather. You just never know. By David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Toiling through the changing seasons

In the sunshine and the rain,

Zealous sowing with compassion

Yields a wealth of golden grain.

—Anon.

Sowing the seed of God’s Word is never out of season.

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### **Finding Waldo**

Read: Acts 8:26–40

The [Ethiopian] asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Acts 8:34

Waldo is the cartoonish star of "Where's Waldo," a now-classic best-selling children's book series. Waldo hides himself in the crowded scenes on each page, inviting children to find where he's hiding. Parents around the world love the moments of sweet discovery when their children's faces signal they've found Waldo. They also enjoy the occasions when they're invited to help find him.

Shortly after Stephen, a deacon in the early church, was stoned to death for proclaiming Christ (see Acts 7), widespread persecution broke out against Christians, causing many to flee Jerusalem. Another deacon, Philip, followed these fleeing Christians into Samaria, where he proclaimed Christ and it was well received (8:6). While there, the Holy Spirit sent Philip on a special mission to "the desert road." It must have seemed a strange request given the fruit his preaching was producing in Samaria itself. Imagine Philip's joy, then, when he met and helped the Ethiopian court official find Jesus in the pages of Isaiah (vv. 26–40).

May we be prepared to share Christ as the Spirit leads us. By Randy Kilgore ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We too are often given the chance to help others "find Jesus" throughout the Scriptures so they may know Him more fully. Like a parent witnessing the joy of discovery in their child's eyes and like Philip helping the Ethiopian find Jesus, it can be exhilarating for us to witness the moment of discovery in those around us. As we go through our days, may we be prepared to share Christ as the Spirit leads us, whether they are people we know well or those we meet even just once.

The biggest work a Christian can do is to find his friend and introduce him to Jesus Christ.

**Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.**

KJV Acts 8:35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

- **opened** Acts 10:34; Mt 5:2; 2 Cor 6:11
- **beginning** Acts 18:28; 26:22,23; 28:23; Luke 24:27,44-47
- **preached Jesus** Acts 3:20; 9:20; 11:20; 17:3,18; 19:13; 1 Cor 1:23; 2:2; Eph 4:21; 1 Peter 1:11,12
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **OPENING THE MOUTH TO OPEN UP THE SCRIPTURES!**

**This is a perfect pattern for every preacher or teacher to imitate!**

**THOUGHT** - When you open your mouth to preach how many minutes is spent on your introduction of personal stories, humor, illustrations before you actually get into the pure milk of the Word? I have listened to sermons in Bible believing churches where the introduction was as long as 15 minutes of a 30 minute sermon! As one pastor says for many preachers their "front porch" (introduction) is bigger than the house (rest of sermon)! We need small porches and big houses (so to speak) when we preach!

**Then Philip opened his mouth** - What a play on words by Luke - The quote in Acts 8:32 (Isa 53:7+) says "**He does not open His mouth**," speaking of Messiah, and here Philip will **open his mouth** and explain to the eunuch that it was the Messiah Who did not open His mouth! In Mt 5:2 we read "He (JESUS) opened His mouth and began to teach them" the Sermon on the Mount.

**Opened** (455) (**anoigo** from **ana** = again + **oigo** = to open) means to open up, to open again, to give access to. This is the same verb used in the Septuagint of Isaiah 53:7+ ("did not open") and the quote in Acts 8:32. Anoigo is used in the idiom "*open the eyes*" (*anoigein tous ophthalmous*) meaning figuratively to cause someone to understand, which is exactly what Philip was proceeding to do to the mind of the Ethiopian eunuch!

**And beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.** - What is the clear implication? Jesus saturates Isaiah 53:7-8+ and of course the entire chapter of Isaiah 53+. Effective presentation of the Gospel calls for a presentation from the Scripture. Your testimony may get their attention, but only the Gospel in the Scriptures has the supernatural power to save their soul. There is another principle - when someone asks you to explain the meaning of Scripture, the best place to begin is to begin with the Scripture (cf [Compare Scripture with Scripture](#))! Are you, like Philip, knowledgeable enough in the Scriptures, to meet an inquisitive seeker where they are (cf Paul - 1 Cor 9:22, Apollos - Acts 18:22+, Stephen - Acts 7:2ff+)?

Talmage - A sermon devoted to metaphysics is a stack of dry cornstalks after the corn has been ripped out with the husking-peg. A sermon given up to sentimental and flowery speech is as a nosegay flung to a drowning sailor. A sermon devoted to moral essay is a basket of chips to help on the great burning. What the world wants now is to be told in the most flatfooted way of Jesus Christ, who comes to save men from eternal damnation. Christ the Light, Christ the Sacrifice, Christ the Rock, Christ the Star, Christ the Balm, Christ the Guide.

**Scriptures** (1124)(**graphe** from **grapho** = to write; English = graphite - the lead in a pencil!) means first a writing or thing written, a document. So what did Philip use? Not the NT writings for they were not yet written. He used the Old Testament. Keep in mind that almost every one of the 51 NT uses of **graphe** refer to the writings in the Old Testament (2 Pe 3:16+ might be considered by some as an exception for Peter is in part alluding to Paul's writings which are difficult to understand!)

**Preached** (the gospel)(used 5x - Acts 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40)(2097)(**euaggelizo/euangelizo** from **eu** = good, well + **aggéllo** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) means to announce good news, in this case the good news that God has sent His Son to be the Savior of mankind, of all who by grace will repent and believe in Him for eternal life.

**Jesus** (2424)(**iesous** is **transliteration** of the Greek **iesous**, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew name **Jehoshua** or **Jeshua** (**Yeshua**) which means *Jehovah is help* or *Jehovah is salvation*. His Name is what He accomplishes for mankind. How said that this Name (or Christ) is used in our society more often as a curse word than as a word signifying freedom from sin and eternal life in heaven!

**Steven Cole** - Just prior to this (ETHIOPIAN'S READING THE TEXT IN Isa 53:7-8), the eunuch would have read, "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused **the iniquity of us all to fall on Him**" (Isaiah 53:6+) Philip thus would have explained that we all have sinned. Because of our sin, none of us can merit eternal life by our own efforts or good deeds. Thus the Lord, to satisfy His holy justice, out of love for us, provided a substitute who bore the penalty we deserve. Jesus Christ bore God's wrath for our sin on the cross.

#### **Related Resource:**

- In depth verse by verse commentary of Isaiah 53.

Philip preached Jesus to him because he knew that Jesus is the key to unlock the meaning of the OT

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 **Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.** (Lk 24:25-27+)

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**" 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Lk 24:44-47+)

Jesus had declared to the Jews the value of the OT in revealing His true identity...

"You search the **Scriptures** (THE OLD TESTAMENT) because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 (HERE IS THEIR PROBLEM - NOT AS MUCH PROBLEM IN UNDERSTANDING AS A PROBLEM OF THEIR HEART!) and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. (Jn 5:39-40)

As Matthew Henry once wrote "The only reason why sinners die is because 'they will not come' to Christ for life and happiness: it is not because they '**cannot**,' but because they '**will not**'"

(AGAIN JESUS DECLARED) Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. 46 "For **if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.** 47 "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (Jn 5:45-47)

Luke does not give us detail, but Philip surely preached Jesus to him from all 12 verses of Isaiah 53:1-12 (This fourth **Servant Song**" in Isaiah actually begins in Isa 52:13-15+) and then related that to the fulfillment of this prophecy in the Person of Jesus, explaining to him the cardinal doctrines of Christ - His supernatural virgin birth, His sinless life, His crucifixion for sinners and His substitutionary death, His burial, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His promise to return. And of course he would have related to him how Jesus promised eternal life and the forgiveness of sins to all who would trust

in Him as their personal Lord and Savior.

So Philip begins with passages from Isaiah 52:13-53:12, a chapter that later (when the NT books were completed) would be quoted many times as referring to the Lord Jesus - e.g., John 12:38 and Ro 10:16 both quoting Isaiah 53:1+; ; Mt 8:17 quoting Isa 53:4+; Luke 22:37 (cf Mk 15:28) from Isaiah 53:12+, 1 Pe 2:22 quoting Isa 53:9+. 1 Pe 2:24 quoting Isaiah 53:5+ (See list of all [Isaiah quotes in the NT](#) or [arranged by NT book](#))

Given the fact that the Ethiopian was a **eunuch** Philip may have taken him to 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." Nor let the **eunuch** say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." 4 For thus says the LORD, "To the **eunuchs** who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, 5 To **them** (THE EUNUCHS) I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

**Comment** - Notice God's promise of an everlasting name to eunuchs who otherwise could not perpetuate their name because of their inability to have any offspring!

In a word, Philip taught the Ethiopian eunuch that the **lamb** Isaiah 53:7+ is none other than the Messiah, Son of God and Son of Man...

The next day he \*saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the **Lamb of God** Who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn 1:29)

**Peterson** sums up the Christology of the Isaiah chapter - The passage continues to be a powerful testimony to the person and work of Jesus and an effective means of evangelism. It begins with the claim that the Servant's suffering and exaltation will benefit many nations (Isa 52:13-15+). It continues with the amazing story of his rejection and suffering, claiming that this punishment by God was 'for our transgressions' (Isa 53:1-6+). Then comes the portion that the Ethiopian was reading, with its focus on the Servant's willingness to suffer and experience injustice (Isa 53:7-9+). The passage concludes with a further statement of God's intention to make his life 'an offering for sin', to 'justify many', and to 'bear their iniquities' (Isa 53:10-12+). The thoughtful reader may indeed ask, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else? There is no one else in history, apart from Jesus of Nazareth, to whom these words can truly be applied. (Ibid)

**Kent Hughes** - The principle here is clear: all of us are called to be in touch with the Spirit and with the gospel. All of us should be able to explain Christ from the Scriptures. Unfortunately, too few can do so. (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**Steven Cole** offers us great advice on how to be prepared to do what Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch's question - Every Christian should be able to do what Philip did here: Starting with any Scripture or spiritual topic, we should be able to preach Jesus to a seeking soul. If a person brings up **evolution**, you may need to say, "That's an interesting subject, and there are competent scholars on both sides of the issue. Sometime maybe we could discuss it at length. But the question that is far more important than evolution is, 'Who do you think Jesus Christ is?'" Whether the person brings up the problem of **suffering** or the question about the **heathen who have never heard** or whatever, after a brief answer, **steer the conversation back to Jesus Christ The person needs to know who Jesus is, what He came to do, his own desperate condition apart from Christ, and how to receive Christ by faith. Everything else is peripheral. If Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, Christianity is true. If He is not who He claimed to be, then Christianity is a fraud. It all centers on Him.** ([Sermon](#))

**ILLUSTRATION** - Reportedly a man stood up in one of D. L. Moody's meetings and said, "I have been for five years on the Mount of Transfiguration." "How many souls have you won to Christ?" was the sharp question that came from Moody in an instant. "Well, I do not know." "Have you won any?" persisted Moody. "I do not know that I have," answered the man. "Well," said Moody, "sit down then. When a man gets so high that he cannot reach down and save others, there is something wrong." It does little good to be in touch with the Spirit and the Word if we are not in touch with people. (Hughes)

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**Rich Cathers** - Do you care about them? Philip took notice of the fellow in the chariot and what he was reading. He expressed an interest in the man. I think one of the mistakes people make in personal evangelism is that we get so focused on the goal of sharing the gospel that we sometimes run right over the person we're talking to. I get the feeling from some people that they just think they're another "notch" in our "gospel belt", that we're not as concerned with them as we are with being able to make the claim that we've witnessed to another person.

**Illustration** - Sometimes it seems to be that we come across as a person who is not feeling very well. Our stomach is hurting and we feel a bit nauseous. We don't get to feeling better until we vomit this thing out of our stomach all over the person we're talking to. I know that is a gross illustration, but sometimes our sharing of the gospel comes across like this.



Philip took time to ask the fellow about his reading. He listened before he responded. Ask people about their lives. Ask them to tell you their story. Find out what they're interested in. There are going to be people like this eunuch where you're probably not going to see them ever again. But most people that you will share with are going to be people that you will see over a period of years. Don't cut the relationship short by ignoring them just so you can get to the gospel and feel better.

**People don't care how much you know  
until they know how much you care.**

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### **Adopt A Highway**

Read: Acts 8:26-40

Philip opened his mouth, and . . . preached Jesus to him. —Acts 8:35

Have you ever seen those adopt-a-highway signs as you've traveled along an expressway?

The Next 2 Miles Adopted By Employees Of Kane Industries.

Or it might be the Rockford Adult Hockey League or the Lincoln County Library Staff or the Sigma Rho Alpha sorority. In the state of Michigan, the group that adopts a section of highway commits itself to cleaning up litter two or three times a year.

Pastor Don Logue commented on this practice: "There is a great lesson to be learned if we compare the adoption of a highway with the responsibilities of Christians. Suppose Christians adopted the stretch of land closest to where they live or work, and assumed responsibility to see that some kind of testimony for Christ was given during the year in the homes closest to them."

When Philip walked the stretch of highway from Jerusalem to Gaza, he wasn't there to pick up broken harnesses or mangled chariot wheels. He was sent by the Holy Spirit to present Christ to a man from Ethiopia.

As believers, we have been called by God to witness for Christ in our areas of influence. Let's use wisely the opportunities He gives us.

Have you pointed the lost to Jesus  
And urged them in Him to believe?  
Have you told of the life everlasting  
That all, if they will, may receive? —Crosby

The best place to witness is where God has placed you.

By David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **A 'Must Read' Book**

Read: Acts 8:26-35

Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. —Acts 8:35

Shortly after the novel *Gone With The Wind* had been published, a young woman sat beside a history professor at a dinner. Trying to make conversation, she asked him if he had read it. "No," the professor answered. The woman admonished, "You'd better hurry up. It's been out 6 weeks." Then the professor inquired, "Have you read Dante's *Divine Comedy*?" "No," the woman said. The professor responded, "You'd better hurry up. It's been out 600 years."

These days, new books dealing with all sorts of subjects pour from printing presses in an overwhelming cascade. Even if we did nothing but read, we couldn't keep up with the output. So we must discriminate and decide what we'll read and what we'll ignore.

But there's one ancient book we must not ignore. It's the Bible, God's inspired Word. For many centuries, it circulated in scrolls and handwritten manuscripts. But ever since Johannes Gutenberg devised the printing press, Scripture has been reproduced in countless forms and editions.

Important as many books are, only the Bible reveals the good news about Jesus (Acts 8:35). Only the Bible teaches us how to please Him. So let's make sure we give the Bible the priority it deserves. It's a "must read" book.

The Bible is God's Word to us,  
Still fresh through all the ages;

And if we read it we will find  
God's wisdom in its pages. —Sper

Many books can inform, but only the Bible can transform.

By Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## One By One

Read: Acts 8:26-35

Philip . . . preached Jesus to him. —Acts 8:35

[Edward Payson](#) was a famous preacher in a bygone era. One stormy Sunday, he had only one person in his audience. Some months later, his lone attendee called on him: "I was led to the Savior through that service," he said. "For whenever you talked about sin and salvation, I glanced around to see to whom you referred, but since there was no one there but me, I had no alternative but to lay every word to my own heart and conscience!"

God saves us one by one. If you have access to one, that is your mission field. "Every soul with Christ is a missionary; every soul without Christ is a mission field," the slogan goes. One person cannot reach the entire world, but we can love our neighbor. "Who is my neighbor?" we ask. The next person we meet along the way.

The Spirit brought Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the Scriptures and needed someone to explain them to him (Acts 8:26-35). The Spirit gave Philip the right words to say, and the eunuch confessed his faith in Christ (v.37).

Ask God to bring you to the one He has prepared. He'll get you to the right place at the right time to speak to that individual. He will speak through your lips, work through your hands, and fulfill in you the great purpose of His will.

Father, we've been called to witness—  
Called to speak of Your dear Son;  
Holy Spirit, grant discernment;  
Lead us to some seeking one. —D. DeHaan

You are a success in God's kingdom if you are faithful where He has placed you.

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## The Whole Story

Read: Acts 8:26-37

Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. —Acts 8:35

Recently my 5-year-old grandson, Dallas, asked, "Why did Jesus die on the cross?" So we had a little talk. I explained to him about sin and Jesus' willingness to be our sacrifice. Then he ran off to play.

A few minutes later, I overheard him talking to his 5-year-old cousin, Katie, explaining to her why Jesus died. Katie said to him, "But Jesus isn't dead." Dallas replied, "Yes. He's dead. Grampy told me. He died on the cross."

I realized I hadn't completed the story. So we had another talk as I explained to Dallas that Jesus rose from the dead. We went over the story again until he understood that Jesus is alive today, even though He did die for us.

What a reminder that people need to hear the whole gospel. When a man from Ethiopia asked Philip about a portion of Scripture he did not understand, Philip "opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35).

Tell others the good news about Jesus: that we are all sinners needing salvation; that the perfect Son of God died to save us; and that He rose from the grave, showing His power over death. Jesus, our Savior, is alive and is offering now to live His life through us.

When someone wants to know about Jesus, let's make sure to tell the whole story!

Lord, Your story is amazing. Help us to tell all of it so others can put their faith in You and enjoy the salvation You offer to all who trust and believe.

Jesus said . . . , "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." John 11:25

## Seize The Opportunity

Read: Acts 8:26-38

Philip opened his mouth, and . . . preached Jesus to him. —Acts 8:35

Cedarville College president Paul Dixon tells the story of a high school girl who was in the audience several years ago when he was speaking about the need to tell others about Christ. As she listened, she decided she wanted to make a difference in her high school. She asked God to give her an opportunity.

The next day at school, one of her teachers who was fed up with the way things were going walked into his classroom and said, "I've had it. I'm tired of the hassle of teaching kids who don't have any respect. If any of you can tell me what life is all about and what our purpose is, go ahead."

Surprised, the girl raised her hand and explained that she had found answers to those questions in Jesus Christ. The teacher, who was an agnostic, invited her to stay after class and explain her beliefs. When she suggested that he attend an evangelistic meeting, he agreed. That Friday night he put his trust in Jesus as Savior, and today he's active in Christian service.

She had seized a God-given opportunity—like Philip did with the Ethiopian official (Acts 8:29-30).

We may have sweaty palms and cottonmouth as we witness to unbelievers. But when the Lord gives us the opportunity to talk about Him, let's seize it.

Father, we've been called to witness—  
Called to speak of Your dear Son;  
Holy Spirit, grant discernment;  
Lead us to some seeking one. —DJD

Any place can be the right place to witness for Christ.

By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## 'Do You Love Jesus?'

Read: Acts 8:26-40

Beginning at this Scripture, [Philip] preached Jesus to him. —Acts 8:35

A man was assigned a middle seat on an airplane. Tired and wanting to sleep, he was irritated when the young girl next to him with Down syndrome asked, "Mister, do you brush your teeth?" "Yes," he replied. "That's good. People who don't, lose their teeth."

A little later she asked, "Mister, do you smoke?" "No," he answered. "That's good. People who do, die."

After a long silence, she turned to him again, "Mister, do you love Jesus?" "Yes, I do," he responded. "That's good," she added. "People who do, go to heaven."

Though deeply touched, he settled back, hoping there would be no more questions. Just then the girl said, "Mister, ask the man next to you if he brushes his teeth."

Well, you can guess what followed. When she came to the question about Jesus, the second man became thoughtful. "I'm afraid I don't understand," he said. For the next hour the two men talked about eternal issues.

Sometimes opportunities for sharing God's love may come in unusual ways, as was the case in Acts 8 when Philip pointed a total stranger to Christ. If we are willing, He will bless even our feeblest efforts to tell others that Jesus loved them so much that He died for them.

People searching for an answer,  
Looking for a better way,  
Can discover truth and meaning  
If God's love we will display. —Sper

You can never speak to the wrong person about Christ.

## One Person A Day

Read: Acts 8:26-40

Philip . . . preached Jesus to him. —Acts 8:35

I was privileged to hear retired Salvation Army Commissioner Andy Miller speak at a Bible conference. At age 75, smartly dressed in his uniform, he spoke with gentleness, conviction, and a twinkle in his eye.

Commissioner Miller said that as a 19-year-old cadet in training he made a commitment to the Lord that he would tell one person a day about Christ's love. That's quite a commitment! Throughout his ministry he has led many to put their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Now, I know it's not easy to talk to some people about Jesus. But we can and should learn how, because it was Jesus' command to His followers before He returned to His Father in heaven (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8-9). In our Scripture reading for today, the Holy Spirit led Philip to the Ethiopian official and gave him the right words to say (Acts 8:26-40). And as we seek the Lord's help and depend on Him, He will do the same for us.

You may come in contact with one or with many people throughout your day. Consider the commitment that Commissioner Miller made years ago, and then ask the Lord what He would have you do. You too can be a witness of His love every day.

Your parting words, O Lord, give hope,  
They're filled with promise, joy, and love;  
What You have done, help us to share  
With Spirit power from above. —DJD

God longs to do for others what He has done for you.

By David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 8:36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"**

KJV Acts 8:36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

- **Look** Acts 10:47; Ezekiel 36:25; John 3:5,23; Titus 3:5,6; 1 John 5:6
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHAT? A BAPTISM IN THE DESERT!

**As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said 'Look! (idou) Water!'** - Once again we see God's hand of providence, for this was a desert road and yet they came to water for baptism. This is surely further evidence of God's providential provision (or His sovereign control) - **water on a desert road!** Nothing is too difficult for the Lord!

Clearly, at some point along this dusty road as the Ethiopian eunuch heard the Word about Christ preached, the Spirit had granted him faith to believe the Gospel for we know that "**faith** comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ.**" (Ro 10:17+).

**What prevents me from being baptized?** - Nothing of course, except a personal desire to be baptized. And so this is a rhetorical question which might be paraphrased, "I should get baptized, right?" (NET Note) Undoubtedly Philip had explained to the new convert that water baptism had been described by Jesus in Mt 28:18-19 and that it is an *outward* expression of an *inward* experience. Note that Philip did not command him to be baptized but this was the Ethiopian's personal choice. Let me ask you -- are you a believer in Jesus Christ? If so, have you been baptized? If you have not, than take a cue from a new Gentile convert on a desert road to Gaza!

The implication is that Philip had explained to him that believing in Jesus should be followed by baptism in His Name, the latter serving as a public confession of his profession. And if there was a [retinue](#) with the Ethiopian eunuch (as there most likely was considering his high position in the government), these individuals would have witnessed his confession.

**Prevents** (hinders) ([2967](#)) ([koluo](#)) means to hinder, forbid. Used 6 times by Luke in the book of Acts (Acts 8:36; Acts 10:47; Acts 11:17; Acts 16:6; Acts 24:23; Acts 27:43). For example, Peter uses **koluo** in regard to the baptism of the Gentile Cornelius....

(PETER DECLARED) "Surely no one can **refuse** ([koluo](#)) the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" (Acts 10:47)

**Being baptized** ([907](#)) ([baptizo](#) from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is used here in Acts 8:36 and means to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. Most of the 77 NT uses of **baptizo** in the Gospels and Acts are associated with literal water baptism. In Greek literature **baptizo** meant to put or go under water in a variety of senses. The Greeks used **baptizo** to describe the dyeing of a garment, in which the whole material was plunged in and taken out from the element used. **Baptizo** was used of the act of sinking ships.

**John Philips** writes regarding water baptism - For the onlooker it is a time of testimony. The believer witnesses to the world that he is now to be identified with Christ, the One the world has rejected.

**Phil Newton** on Baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch - The biblical manner of professing faith in Christ is through baptism. The idea of "*walking an aisle*" as the primary means of professing Christ is an addition of the past 125 years. Baptism is the outward means of expressing the reality of your inward faith in Christ. That has been the practice of Christians for 20 centuries. I would exhort any of you who have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord and yet have not been baptized since that time that you need to obey the Lord in baptism. Baptism should never be viewed as a convenient option for those who prefer it. **It is the biblical pattern for declaring your faith before the world. To neglect baptism is to bring into question the reality of your faith, for who is truly saved that is so ashamed of Jesus Christ that he refuses to be baptized?** Be assured that baptism has no power to save you. If you go into the waters of baptism as an unbeliever, you will come out as an unbeliever. Baptism is for believers, those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. Both Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went down into the water with the eunuch's entourage witnessing the baptism. It was a clear testimony that his old life of sin had been buried through the death of Christ and now he was a new creature in Christ. His testimony in baptism gave the eunuch a responsibility before those who witnessed this event. Don't you imagine that he had a lot of questions to answer before the audience who witnessed his baptism? "What were you and that stranger doing?" "Why did you get dunked under the water?" "What is the meaning of all this excitement and then stopping to enter the water?" **Baptism still raises questions.** And it should! It is a testimony that our old lives of sin have been buried with Christ, put to death at the cross as our Lord died there on our behalf. Now we are no longer the same. We are new creatures in Christ. Expect us to act different. Expect from us different attitudes. Expect us to treat people in a new manner. Everything has changed! (2 Cor. 5:17) I would imagine that there are some in our congregation today who have experienced the wonderful, saving grace of God, yet you have not taken this public stand of confession in baptism. I exhort you to join in the joy of our first century counterpart and follow Christ into the waters of baptism. The only thing that should hinder you from baptism is a lack of true faith in Christ (Acts 8:37). If that issue is settled, then stand publicly for your Lord in the waters of baptism. ([Acts 8:26-40 A True Faith Revealed](#))

**Acts 8:37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]**

KJV Acts 8:37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

- **If you believe with all your heart** Acts 8:12,13,21; 2:38,39; Mt 28:19; Mark 16:16; Ro 10:9-10
- **he answered** 1 Peter 3:21
- **I believe** Acts 9:20; Mt 16:16; John 6:68,69; 9:35-38; 11:27; 20:31; 1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 4:15; 5:1,5,10-13
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE:** This passage is not found in most manuscripts and while theological sound and even fitting with the context, if not considered to be part of the original text.

**Related Resource:**

- [Textual Criticism - What Is It?](#)



- [What is the Textus Receptus?](#)

The **NET Note** explains - A few later manuscripts (E 36 323 453 945 1739 1891 pc) add, with minor variations, 8:37 *'He said to him, 'If you believe with your whole heart, you may.' He replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'* Verse 37 is lacking in (other manuscripts). **It is clearly not a part of the original text of Acts.** The variant is significant in showing how some in the early church viewed a confession of faith.

**Steven Cole** comments that "We can infer (THE FACT THAT HE DESIRES BAPTISM), then, that God graciously imparted new life and obedient faith to this man when he heard Philip present the gospel. Apparently, inferring this was not enough for some early scribe who was copying the manuscript of Acts. So he inserted verse 37, where the eunuch confesses, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The verse is not in any of the early or best manuscripts, and the style, according to Greek scholars, is not Luke's style of writing. But even though the verse is not original to Acts, the eunuch must have given some such confession of his faith in Christ, or Philip would not have baptized him. The difference between this man's genuine faith and Simon's false faith (8:13) was that the eunuch's faith came from God, whereas Simon's faith came from himself.

**And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."** - This statement parallels that written by Paul

"that if you **confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved; for with the **heart** a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he **confesses**, resulting in salvation." (Ro 10:9-10)

**And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God"**

**Even is this verse is not found in the original manuscripts**, the principles are true and the necessity of true faith is highlighted in Acts 8 as Pastor Phil Newton observes...

The Ethiopian eunuch had a true faith. It stood in sharp contrast to Simon the magician who considered faith a matter of personal, selfish consumption, rather than for the glory of God. While Simon's false faith was exposed, the eunuch's true faith was revealed. But how about your own faith? Is yours a true faith that has united you savingly to God through Jesus Christ? Or is it a false faith of your own making and design, a faith that produces no lasting joy, a faith centered on self and not on Jesus Christ? My friend, come to Jesus Christ empty-handed and plead for His mercy. He is mighty to save! ([Acts 8:26-40 A True Faith Revealed](#))

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**Spurgeon - Morning and Evening** - These words may answer your scruples, devout reader, concerning the ordinances. Perhaps you say, "I should be afraid to be baptized; it is such a solemn thing to avow myself to be dead with Christ, and buried with him. I should not feel at liberty to come to the Master's table; I should be afraid of eating and drinking damnation unto myself, not discerning the Lord's body." Ah! poor trembler, Jesus has given you liberty, be not afraid. If a stranger came to your house, he would stand at the door, or wait in the hall; he would not dream of intruding unbidden into your parlour-he is not at home: but your child makes himself very free about the house; and so is it with the child of God. A stranger may not intrude where a child may venture. When the Holy Ghost has given you to feel the spirit of adoption, you may come to Christian ordinances without fear. The same rule holds good of the Christian's inward privileges. You think, poor seeker, that you are not allowed to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; if you are permitted to get inside Christ's door, or sit at the bottom of his table, you will be well content. Ah! but you shall not have less privileges than the very greatest. God makes no difference in his love to his children. A child is a child to him; he will not make him a hired servant; but he shall feast upon the fatted calf, and shall have the music and the dancing as much as if he had never gone astray. When Jesus comes into the heart, he issues a general licence to be glad in the Lord. No chains are worn in the court of King Jesus. Our admission into full privileges may be gradual, but it is sure. Perhaps our reader is saying, "I wish I could enjoy the promises, and walk at liberty in my Lord's commands." "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." Loose the chains of thy neck, O captive daughter, for Jesus makes thee free.

**Acts 8:38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.**

KJV Acts 8:38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

- **and he baptized him** John 3:22,23; 4:1
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BAPTISM OF THE EUNUCH

**And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.**

**Jack Arnold** makes an interesting point - The mode or way of baptism is not clear in this passage. At first glance it seems like immersion but the words "**they went down into the water**" and "**they came up out of the water**" can equally be translated "they went down to the water" and "they came up from the water." If this verse teaches immersion as the Baptists claim then both Philip and the Eunuch went under the water for the text says, "**They both went down into the water.**" Whether this verse teaches immersion, pouring or sprinkling is open to debate and in my opinion it is not worth arguing about. The important thing is that the Eunuch, as a believer in Christ, was baptized to show outwardly that he had been identified with Christ spiritually by faith and had come to new life in Jesus Christ. ([Sermon](#))

The following poem puts the "sacraments" in proper perspective -- I would prefer to use the word **ordinances**" instead of **"sacraments"** - see why - [What is the difference between ordinances and sacraments?](#)

The sacraments are holy signs  
And precious Gospel seals;  
They 'xhibit what the Lord designs,  
And what His Word reveals.

But these are not themselves the grace;  
Which signs and seals set forth;  
The supper's not the-sacrifice,  
Nor water the New Birth.

The sacraments were never meant  
A substitute for grace;  
They're not the truths they represent,  
Nor must they take their place.

Sinners may publicly profess,  
And signs and seals receive,  
Of what they never did possess,  
Or what they don't believe.

Men may baptize, but 'tis the Lord  
Regenerates the heart;  
None but the Spirit, by His Word,  
That blessing can impart.

Preserve us, Lord, from self-deceit,  
From resting on a sign;  
Bestow what symbols indicate,  
And give us life divine.

Let none who preach the Gospel hide  
This solemn truth from men;  
They may with water be baptiz'd  
Yet not be born again.

**Acts 8:39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.**

KJV Acts 8:39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

- **When they came up out of the water** Mt 3:16; Mark 1:10
- **the Spirit** 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Ezekiel 3:12-14; 8:3; 11:24; 2 Cor 12:2-4
- **But went on his way rejoicing** Acts 8:8; 13:52; 16:34; Ps 119:14,111; Isa 35:1,2; 55:12,13; 61:10; 66:13,14; Mt 13:44; Ro 5:2; 15:10-13; Php 3:3; 4:4; Jas 1:9,10; 4:16
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE SNATCHING AWAY OF PHILIP

**When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away**- Was Philip "*raptured*" away? Supernaturally transported? Possibly. In any event Luke conveys the picture that this was clearly a **sudden** departure. One moment he was with the Ethiopian eunuch. The next moment he has vanished into thin air! This reminds me of the old Star Trek show where Captain Kirk would request "[Beam me aboard!](#)" That was science fiction but Philip's story was truth which is stranger than fiction!

Passages like this always recall the experience of God's prophet Ezekiel being snatched several times by the Holy Spirit - Ezekiel 3:12-14; 8:3; 11:24;

I agree with **Pastor Steven Cole's** comment on **the Lord snatched Philip away** - Some do not take this to be a miracle, but it seems to me to be a miracle. The word "snatched" is the same word used to describe the church's being "caught up" to be with the Lord (1 Th. 4:17<sup>+</sup>). So God was sovereign in getting Philip to go to this Ethiopian man and in taking him away. As all the Scriptures proclaim, it is God who sovereignly works to save His elect. ([Sermon](#))

**John MacArthur** - By performing this startling miracle, the Holy Spirit confirmed to the entire caravan that Philip was indeed His spokesman. (Ibid)

**Snatched** ([726](#))([harpazo](#) from **haireomai**= to take for oneself) means to snatch or catch away or up.**Harpazo** depicts a sudden speedy snatching, without warning. The picture is Philip was taken by force with a sudden swoop and a force that could not be resisted, transporting Philip from the desert road to Azotus (see map below).

The picture of individuals **being snatched up and away** is seen in four NT uses...

1. Of the act of the Spirit of the Lord snatching Phillip away (Acts 8:39)
2. Of Paul being caught up to the third heaven (Paradise) (2 Corinthians 12:2,4)
3. Of believers being caught up to be with the Lord (1 Th 4:17-[note](#)) (One moment we are on earth, but in the next moment we will be in heaven!)
4. Of the "child" (Jesus) being caught up to God (Rev 12:5-[note](#))

**And the eunuch no longer saw him** - This might cause you to wonder who disciplined the Ethiopian eunuch? While I cannot be dogmatic, clearly as a believer, he now had his Teacher, the Holy Spirit, dwelling within (cf Jn 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7, 13-14) and surely in this unusual circumstance (presumably the only believer in Ethiopia), the Holy Spirit would guide him and lead him into all truth as he read and studied the Scriptures.

This left the Ethiopian eunuch with only One on whom he could direct his attention, and this is the way it should always be. As the hymn writer Kate B. Wilkinson says...

May His beauty rest upon me,  
As I seek the lost to win,  
And may they forget the channel,  
Seeing only Him.

John writes (in a different context but still true in principle and certainly applicable to the Ethiopian) '

But you have an anointing (THE SPIRIT) from the Holy One, and you all know.... As for you, the anointing (THE SPIRIT) which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing **teaches you about all things**, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.(1 John 2:20, 27+)

**But went on his way rejoicing** - In Acts 8:8 just as "there was much **rejoicing** in that city," now there is **rejoicing** in the desert!

Indeed, the response of a saved soul that receives the Gospel is rejoicing (cf Acts 13:48). And so he returns to Ethiopia as the first foreign missionary to the continent of Africa. And this was all the result of a man (Philip) who was willing to be led and used by the Spirit. "Because of Philip's sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit, the Eunuch was saved and the gospel then began to go to the uttermost parts of the earth." (Arnold)

**Steven Cole** - We do not know from history if he became an evangelist to his people, but it is not hard to imagine that he did. A life of joy in Jesus is hard to keep to oneself! It is the best advertisement for the gospel.

**John MacArthur** - Joy is a mark of a true believer (John 15:11; 17:13; Acts 13:52; Rom. 12:12; 14:17; 15:13; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 1:25; 1 Th 1:6; 1 Peter 1:8; Jude 1:24)(**ED**: LOVE THE LAST ONE IN JUDE -- THIS DESCRIBES OUR JOY IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND INDICATES THAT OUR JOY WILL BE ETERNAL! OH MY!).

**MacArthur** goes on to add - Luke does not give us the subsequent history of the **Ethiopian eunuch**. According to the church Father [Irenaeus](#), he became a missionary to the Ethiopians (Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 9 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 366).

[Wikipedia on Ethiopian Eunuch](#) - Church Father St. Irenaeus of Lyons in his book Adversus haereses (Against the Heresies, an early anti-Gnostic theological work) 3:12:8 (180 AD), wrote regarding the Ethiopian eunuch, "This man (Simeon Bachos the Eunuch) was also sent into the regions of Ethiopia, to preach what he had himself believed, that there was one God preached by the prophets, but that the Son of this (God) had already made (His) appearance in human flesh, and had been led as a sheep to the slaughter; and all the other statements which the prophets made regarding Him."

**Phil Newton** on **went on his way rejoicing** - And he should! When you know that God has saved you from the penalty and guilt of your sins, that He has redeemed you, that He has made you a new creature, that He has adopted you into His family, you ought to be **rejoicing**! Continual and consistent joy in the Lord characterizes those who have been born of God. One of the quickest ways to spot a Christian in a crowd is by seeing his joy in the Lord. This does not mean that he has a silly grin on his face all the time, but that the very countenance of his life demonstrates that deep within his being the Spirit of God dwells in him. God Himself, who is the fountain of all joy, inhabits this person. He cannot help but be joyful. Oceans of joy billow within him, for Christ, his all in all, dwells in him. A true faith rests in Christ alone. A true faith delights in open confession through baptism. A true faith continues to rejoice in the Lord, not for a few days or weeks, but through year after year after year. ([Acts 8:26-40 A True Faith Revealed](#)) (**ED**: Are you a little convicted by Pastor Newton's words on joy filled believers? I am. I wonder if others could "spot" me in a crowd because of my overflowing joy? Just something to think about, especially since this is the second time Luke describes believers as REJOICING (Acts 8:8+ and Acts 8:39)!

**R C Sproul** on the eunuch going on his way rejoicing - John Guest, an evangelist from England, told me of his conversion in Liverpool when he was a young man. He had gone to a meeting and heard the gospel for the first time and was converted. On his way home that evening, he ran through the streets of Liverpool jumping over every fire hydrant and kicking his heels together. He said it was the happiest day of his life because it was the day that he met Christ. The eunuch made that arduous trek all the way to Jerusalem to go through the rituals of the Old Testament, and on the way home he discovered Christ. The evangelist who explained Christ to him was taken away, but the joy of Christ stayed with him all the way home to his nation. (St. Andrew's Expository Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** - If the Eunuch had possessed one of our modern day hymn books, do you not suppose he would have broken out with this song:

O happy day that fixed my choice  
On Thee, my Savior and my God!  
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,  
And tell its raptures all abroad!

Tis done; the great transaction's done;  
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

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#### **J J Knap - He Went on His Way Rejoicing      Acts 8:39**

For what reason might the Lord have taken Philip away by a miracle from the eunuch, after he had proclaimed to him the gospel of the Lamb of God? Would it not be to teach the newly added one, that our faith may not even depend on the most eminent preacher, but must solely rest upon Christ, who was proclaimed to us by the messenger of peace?

Whatever it may be, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing, because he had found in Jesus Christ peace with God by the forgiveness of sins in His blood. With a free and open conscience, that was relieved of the pressing weight of his guilt; with a heart that rejoiced itself in God his Saviour, and that blessed Him for His seeking grace, that had followed him till upon the deserted road of Gaza; yes, who had sent an angel from heaven to make Philip to leave his busy labours for a lonely road,—in this manner he went his way with rejoicing.

We also go our way through life, but is it a journeying with rejoicing, because we know to be reconciled with the holy and righteous God? For many the journey is coming to an end. The grey head, the bent posture, the carved forehead, the darkened eye,—they are all undeniable signs of the approaching end of the journey. Only a few steps, and maybe we are at the finish. Even those who are very strong, have no assurance that there is still a long way ahead of them, because daily we also see the younger die. Our life is like a flower of the field, however, she does not always bloom; her stem is sometimes broken, when she stands in her full splendour.

If only on this journey the gladness of faith may be our share!

If only we did not have to move on towards the end with a frightened conscience!

If only we did not have to fear the threatening judgement!

Only the assurance that the Lamb of God was also led to the laughter for our sakes, and was silent before him who shears it, quickens the joy of the eunuch in our soul. It is not a joy such as the world offers us or to which sin invites us; but it is the deep and blessed peace of the children of God, that does not even leave us in a lonely road that we have to travel by ourselves. It is a joy that stays with us even upon a deserted road, because barren roads become with Christ happy roads, while they all lead to glory. Finally, it is a joy that shall never end: the end of the road is not the end of the joy, rather it will be the beginning of the joy of the Lord, of the joy of the wedding feast at the supper of the Lamb! (With Loins Girded)

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The Road to Salvation     Date preached:

By Rev. Peter Grainger

SCRIPTURE: Acts 8:26–40

INTRODUCTION: In every life won to Jesus, there are steps along the way. In most cases, there are three steps common on the “road to salvation”:

1. In the Desert (Acts 8:26–31): A Meeting Arranged
  - A. The Ethiopian: a man of status and wealth, and a seeker (Acts 17:26, 27).
  - B. Philip: a man full of the Spirit and wisdom, and a gifted evangelist (Acts 8:4–8).
2. In the Chariot (Acts 8:32–35): A Message Explained
  - A. The importance of the Scriptures (Is. 53).
  - B. The need for understanding the focus: the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9–15).
3. In the Water (Acts 8:36–40): A Faith Proclaimed
  - A. Trust in Jesus (Rom. 10:9).
  - B. Public Witness (Acts 2:38, 39).

CONCLUSION: The Ethiopian went away rejoicing (v. 39). Do you have the joy of Christ? If not, I invite you to accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord today! If you have, follow Philip’s example: Share your faith with confidence! (Nelson’s Annual Preacher’s Sourcebook - 2005)

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

KJV Acts 8:40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

- **at Azotus** Acts 15:46,47; 1 Sa 5:1; Zech 9:6
- **he kept preaching the gospel.** Luke 10:1,2; Ro 15:19
- **until he came to Caesarea** Acts 10:1; 21:8; 23:23,33; 25:4
- Acts 8 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



## SPIRIT TRANSPORTED PHILIP CONTINUES "GOSPELING THE GOSPEL"

[Map from The Bible Journey](#) (a very interesting website). On the map note point (1) **Philip went down to Samaria** from Jerusalem (Acts 8:5+). (2) Philip's journey to the **desert** on the road going to Gaza (Acts 8:26+). (3) Philip transported to **Azotus** (Acts 8:40+)

**But Philip found himself at Azotus** - See location of map above. Azotus is located where the [modern city of Ashdod](#) is found. This is about 20 miles north from Gaza.

**And as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel** ([euaggelizo/euangelizo](#) [5x - Acts 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40] in the imperfect tense - over and over) **to all the cities** - Don't you love Philip - wherever he went he preached the good news of Jesus Christ.

**In all the cities** - [See map showing Lydda and Joppa which would surely be among all the cities](#). The fruit of Phillip's evangelistic campaign may well include **the saints who lived at Lydda** (Acts 9:32+) and the disciple **Tabitha** in Joppa (Acts 9:36+).

**Until he came to Caesarea (Caesarea by the Sea)** - This is about 55 miles further up the coast and was the capital of Roman Judea. Apparently this was his home town for the next 20 years when Luke gives the last description of Philip...

On the next day we (PAUL AND LUKE) left and came to [Caesarea](#), and entering the house of **Philip the evangelist**, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. (Acts 21:8-9+)

Notice he is called "Philip **THE** evangelist" which suggests that *gospelizing the Gospel* was the "[warp and woof](#)" his life. And even though Philip became a "family man," it did not preclude his proclamation of the Gospel. Philip lived to share the Gospel. Father grant us grace by Thy Spirit to do the same for the glory of the Lamb. Amen.

And it should be noted that Philip is the only person in the NT specifically called an **evangelist** ([euaggelistes](#)). Of course other believers shared the Gospel and functioned as evangelists. For example in Paul's closing exhortations to his young disciple Timothy he commanded him to "**do** (aorist imperative) the work of an **evangelist** ([euaggelistes](#))." (2 Ti 4:5+).

**John Philips on Caesarea** - Caesarea had been built by Herod the Great in honor of Caesar Augustus. He called it Caesar Sabaste (literally, Caesar Augustus). It was the capital of all Roman administration for Palestine, and a thoroughly Gentile city. Here was stationed Cornelius, the Roman centurion Peter was soon to lead to Christ and in whose home the Gentile church was to be born. So Philip, although not chosen for that significant step, was there when it happened, a key man in a key place to follow up the new moving of the Spirit of God. (Exploring Acts)

**Steven Cole** concludes his sermon on the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch with some interesting quotations...

If evangelizing the lost, especially those of other cultures and nationalities, were up to our abilities, it would be hopeless. But, thankfully, evangelism depends on our sovereign God working through our obedience. In his book, [The Preacher's Portrait](#) [Eerdmans], **John Stott** shows that according to the Bible, lost people are both sightless and lifeless, blind and dead. Then he asks, "How can we reach him? Are we so foolish as to imagine that we can somehow, by our own argument or rhetoric, induce within him either spiritual understanding or life? No. It is not given to us to give sight to the blind or life to the dead. God alone is the author of light and life" (pp. 107-108). Later (p. 118) he cites **Charles Spurgeon**, who used to say over and over to himself as he climbed the stairs into his high pulpit, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, I believe in the Holy Ghost." Spurgeon wrote,

*The gospel is preached in the ears of all; it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher; otherwise men would be converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preachers' learning; otherwise it would consist of the wisdom of men. We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were mysterious power going with it—the Holy Ghost changing the will of man. **O Sirs! We might as well preach to stone walls as to preach to humanity, unless the Holy Ghost be with the Word to give it power to convert the soul.***

The same Holy Spirit who used Philip to reach the Ethiopian eunuch and who used Spurgeon to reach thousands with the gospel wants to use you and me to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to Flagstaff and beyond. With William Carey, let's obediently expect great things from God and attempt great things for God as we take the gospel to a lost world! ([Sermon](#))

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D.L. Moody once asked a man about his soul, and the man replied, "It's none of your business!"

“Oh, yes, it is my business!” Moody said; and the man immediately exclaimed, “Then you must be D.L. Moody!” It is every Christian’s business to share the Gospel with others, and to do it without fear or apology.

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“So Little Time”

John R. Rice

So little time! The harvest will be over,  
Our reaping done, we reapers taken home.  
Report our work to Jesus, Lord of Harvest,  
And hope He’ll smile and say, “Well done!”

How many times I should have strongly pleaded;  
How often did I feel to strictly warn,  
The Spirit moved, oh, had I pled for Jesus!  
The grain is fallen, lost ones not reborn.

Despite the heat, the ceaseless toil, the hardship,  
The broken heart o’er those we cannot win;  
Misunderstood because we’re oft peculiar,  
Still no regrets we’ll have but for our sin.

A day of pleasure, or a feast of friendship;  
A house or car or garments, lair or fame,  
Will all be trash, when souls are brought to Heaven.  
And then how sad to face the slackers’ blame!

The harvest white, with reapers few is wasting  
And many souls will die and never know  
The love of Christ, the joy of sins forgiven.  
Oh let us weep and love and pray and go!

Today we reap, or miss our golden harvest!  
Today is given us lost souls to win.  
Oh then to save some dear ones from the burning.  
Today we’ll go to bring some sinner in.

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#### **Bruce Barton - PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM LEARNED FROM PHILIP:**

- Be where God wants you (Acts 8:26–30, 39). God set up the appointment, timed the arrival of the Ethiopian, and told Philip which chariot and what to do.
  - Be watching the people around you (Acts 8:27, 32, 34). God will help you to perceive who will be receptive.
  - Be ready to adapt yourself to where others are (Acts 8:35–36). Philip began where the man was, then directly and clearly took him to where he needed to go. This means listening first, then meeting the person at his or her point of need or understanding.
  - Be bold in telling those you meet about Christ (Acts 8:35–36). (Life Application Commentary)
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#### **Charles Swindoll - Guidelines for a Winning Witness**

Philip’s example offers several guidelines for how to avoid becoming an obnoxious witness, an ineffective witness, or an apathetic witness (the bounty hunter, the egghead, and the secret agent mentioned on pages 153–154). I find five helpful guidelines in the deacon’s divinely appointed encounter with a stranger.

##### **Guideline #1: Be Sensitive.**

Put yourself in Philip’s sandals. Here he is in the midst of a super exciting ministry in Samaria, enjoying incredible success. Lives are being changed, families brought together, illnesses healed, and entire villages turning to follow Jesus Christ. Suddenly, the Lord says, “Leave all of that and go to a lonely road in the middle of nowhere.” Philip didn’t argue or resist. He obeyed. An effective witness maintains a sensitive heart, ready and willing to follow the Lord’s prompting. Effective witnesses don’t just suddenly arrive on the scene; they’re led by the Holy Spirit, the same Lord who brings that other person alongside and creates an opportunity leading to an encounter.

##### **Guideline #2: Be Available.**

Sensitivity has a twin named Availability. They always go together. You can't have one without the other. If you're sensitive to the leading of the Spirit, then you're available for obeying His prompting. Philip didn't question the Lord's decision to move him from large populations and great activity to a remote road; he simply obeyed. He recognized that kingdom building is God's enterprise; he was merely a laborer. Whether he worked in Samaria, Gaza, Azotus, or Caesarea, it didn't matter. He was available.

**Guideline #3: Be Proactive.**

It takes initiative to break the silence barrier. We don't want to be obnoxious, but we can't always lie back and wait for people to ask us for help. They don't know what they don't know! Most are confused by the whole subject of religion and, therefore, tentative about beginning a conversation. So, connect on a personal level, looking for opportunities to address a need they might have. Answer questions or clear up misunderstandings while remaining transparent about your beliefs. Philip saw an opportunity in the man's reading material. He asked a simple, unobtrusive, nonthreatening question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30).

**Guideline #4: Be Tactful.**

D. James Kennedy illustrates the quality of tact this way: "I once heard a man walk up to a woman and say, 'How are your kidneys today?' That's the truth! I actually heard the man ask that question. Her response? Did she hit him with her purse? No, she said the following: 'Oh, they're much better today, thank you, Doctor.' I overheard those words in a hospital room. The doctor had earned the right to ask that personal question. If you doubt that, stop the next [woman] you meet on the street and ask it yourself, and see what happens." All of which is to say, we need to earn the right to ask personal questions. We can do this by becoming a friend, by getting to know the people, by listening to what they have to say, by showing interest, by hearing them when they talk. Don't blame the lost person for being offended if you're offensive. That individual has every reason in the world to be offended. Earning the right to ask personal questions—and spiritual questions are among the most personal and sensitive of all—is the definition of tact.

**Guideline #5: Be Precise.**

Beginning at that Scripture, Philip "preached Jesus to him" (8:35). Isn't that great? He didn't talk about comparative religion or evidence for intelligent design. He didn't discuss theological issues or social ills. There's a time and place for those discussions, but they are tangential to what is primary: Jesus Christ and how we are to respond to Him. While we must be tactful and address questions or objections, we must not talk around the central issue. ([Living Insights Commentary](#))