

Acts 8 How to Become a Christian

- Stoning of Stephen for him was a coronation, for the Jews it was a condemnation.
- Several years gone by – witnesses 1:8 – to Samaria.
- God used persecution to spread the church, cf. Rm. 8:28

1. Persecution – v. 1-4

- 1: Saul: Sanhedrin's hitman; Chr. fled for safety/possibly thrown out
- 2: battered, blood-soaked body left; Jewish law allowed for proper burial of criminals, but no mourning
- 3: Chr. sad, Saul mad; havoc: beasts savagely tearing & ripping the bodies of their prey; see Paul's prison statements: 22:4, 19; 26:10-11
- 4: not: "Look what the world is coming to!" but "Look what is coming to the world!"

2. Samaria – v. 5-25

- 2nd detailed conversion in book
- Samaria: 1. between Galilee & Judea; 2. race result of Jewish captivity. Remaining Jews in Palestine intermarried Gentiles; 3. not far removed from God-worshippers, but not far removed from pagan-worshippers, either; 4. returning Jews refused Samaritan help – schism
- 5: Philip: not apostle, one of 7 (6:5); Hellenistic Jews born outside Palestine, not strong prejudices toward Samaritans; went down: all roads from Jerusalem are down
- 6: he could do miracles after apostles laid hands on him, couldn't pass on; credibility
- 7: demons: limited to time of Christ/apostles; Dr. Luke makes distinction spiritual/physical
- 8: natural reaction
- 9: magic: deadly-serious business, passed generations; pretended to come from God
- 10: convincing story
- 11: worshipped God, read Pentateuch that strongly condemned sorcery (Ex. 22:18)
- 12: real miracles; 1st mention of kingdom since Ch. 1; heard, believed, baptized > citizens
- 13: Simon: "hearing with acceptance," he was converted; magician astonished at real miracles
- 14: irony: John wanted to send fire on Samaritans (Lk. 9:52-54), needed to pass on miracles in Samaria
- 15: help strengthen church & message
- 16: those on outside cannot see one's obedience, miracles shows God's approval

- 17: God approved of actions: Samaritans in church; bestowing gifts allows it to function without Philip, or Peter & John
- 18: tried to buy gift from apostles; simony: sin in Middle Ages, buying or selling of church privileges; why? Anyone could do miracles now
- 19: wanted to be like apostles
- 20: lit: "May your silver go with you into eternal destruction!" Not automatically sent to Hell, but indicative based upon lifestyle.
- 21: "Your heart is not straight." Simon was converted but has fallen away.
- 22: if possible: not on God's part but Simon's; repentance & prayer were his only hope!
- 23: extreme; gall: bitter liquid; Heb: the greatest bitterness; sin enslaves
- 24: 1 John 1:9; genuine response from a pricked heart
- 25: P&J stayed a bit longer then preached all the way back to Jerusalem

3. Eunuch – v. 26-40

- Now going south of Jerusalem
- 1:8: End of the earth: Ethiopia considered colloquially as the end of the earth
- 26: direct command from an angel; Gaza: ancient Philistine coast city, Gen. 10:9, 2 Ki. 18:8
- 27: great concern for souls; Eunuch: castrated man (Mt. 19:12), not tempted in position of power; cannot enter sacred assembly, Dt. 23:1
- Couldn't be a priest, Lv. 21:20; Candace: title like Pharaoh, Caesar; travelled 1500 miles, couldn't worship with rest of people
- 28: wealthy man to own scroll of Isa. > tells of eunuchs one day being in God's fold
- 29,30: spirit now tells Philip; McGarvey: he left 1½ days before eunuch did to meet him – no wonder he ran!
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- 31: one must hear to understand, Rm. 10:14
- 32,33: no ch/v break, Luke records section so we know, Isa. 53:7-8
- 34: Jewish teachers struggled with Isa. 53, couldn't understand the suffering part of the suffering servant.

- 35: what a sermon! Not recorded, but we know what he preached because we know the end results. Best is to start where people are and bring them to Christ!
- 36: valley of Elah? David & Goliath. "Some, when they learn they should be baptized, look for a way out; the eunuch looked for a way in." Roper
- 37: some trans. don't include this verse, 2nd C qtd by Irenaeus; confession: essential to salvation – 10 most important words!
- Philip didn't interrogate about his life or understanding of great Bible doctrines – he has a lifetime to correct understanding & behavior.
- 38: immediate baptism; much water: both are fully immersed, no sprinkling!
- 39: came back out of water; spirit caught Philip away, gave instructions to go somewhere else; eunuch rejoices, sins gone!
- 40: Philip at Azotus: another Philistine city, North of Gaza.
- We meet Philip again in 21:8

Lessons:

- When persecuted, we are to be happy (Mt. 5:12, 1 Pet. 4:16), and go preach the Gospel everywhere we go!
- We learn from Simon: 1. the way to be saved (hear, believe, baptism); 2. the way to be restored (repent, pray). We would do well to learn from his story and realize we can fall away from obedience (Gal. 5:4).
- Skeptics claim the eunuch was sprinkled in the desert. If true, how could he & Philip both go into their canteen? Stop trying to make the Bible say something other than what it plainly does!

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