

# ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

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## Lesson 6

## Acts Chapter 8

From our last lesson we saw that the Church has begun to grow large within Jerusalem. Coming with this growth were ministry responsibilities that began to go beyond the gifts and talents of the Apostles. This led them to ask for help in meeting those needs so that they could continue attending to the study and spread of God's Holy Word and in attending to prayer. From this came a group of Hellenistic servants that today many churches will refer to as Deacons.

Prominent among that group will be two men, Stephen and Philip. In our lesson last week we looked at how God provided these servants with the abilities and gifts they needed to carry out the ministry responsibilities that they had been given. We also noted how this example reflected the role of the congregation in selecting from among themselves those who would serve within the local body, and giving them the authority and responsibility to carry out that service rather than being dependent on the Apostles to do everything.

We also saw Stephen's boldness in standing before the Sanhedrin and, we studied about the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus, who would stand and watch as Stephen was stoned to death.

This week we will observe the growth of the Church outside of Jerusalem and witness how God uses great adversity once again to spread the gospel and begin the process of taking the great saving message of Christ to the world.

What happened following that stoning will amaze you, as we look at it more closely this week – and its relevance to events in our own lives will become more apparent as we study the impact of adversity and the great victory God provides us through His Son Jesus the Christ.

This week's lesson focuses on the period when the evangelical movement of the Church began, and where the great mission emphasis it has today gets its roots.

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*For this week then, let's read Acts Chapter 8 then answer the following:*

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1. Who approved of Stephen's death?
  - a. ANSWER: Saul
2. Read the beginning phrase in Chapter 8 verse 2 and compare it with the beginning of verse 3. What point is Luke making in this comparison/contrast?
3. How did Saul, who would later become Paul, help to spread the gospel outside of Jerusalem? (Acts 8:1 and 8:4)
4. Who did NOT scatter when the church scattered?
5. What did Saul do that caused so many to scatter?
6. Did Saul want to destroy the church ... or just persecute it?



16. Does the Church have any "Simon"s today to confront? List some examples.
  
17. Was Simon saved? (Acts 8:13-25)
  
18. Find a definition for the word "simony", write it down and note why it applies to this lesson.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
19. What do Simon's "salvation" and his request of Peter tell us that we should be aware of today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
20. What happened in Samaria as a result of Philip's preaching and miraculous healings? (see verse 8)

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This week we began to see the spreading of the Gospel outside the city of Jerusalem, and the spread of the Church through the efforts of evangelical congregational members, including Philip, while the Apostles were still in Jerusalem.

Clearly we observed several things from this study. As members of a local congregation we are to spread the word of Christ, we are to rejoice during times of persecution, since our joy and persecution will help spread the Good News or Gospel Message about Christ. God is always in control, and His sovereign will is always accomplished.

We are also to be on guard for those who seek power and influence and who wish to make gain from their association with Christ and the followers of Christ. We are to be especially careful, as these are clever, smooth-talking people who can easily mislead.

I think too, that as we reflect on this lesson, we find that the Church has enemies both outside and inside its body, and that they can take the form of religious authority and attract people of great wealth and influence who do not have true advancement of the Kingdom of God at heart.

Finally, the strongest lesson that we can take away is the need for us, as Christ's Church today, is that of continuing to reach out to the lost, the hurting, and the needy; to both preach the Good News and to meet the physical and spiritual needs of those God places in our path. In the next lesson, we will encounter another such example as Philip meets the Eunuch from Ethiopia.

May God use our study to empower and embolden us to want to share the Good News with others and to seek out those in need; so that, through us, Christ might meet their physical and spiritual needs.

Yours in Christ,

**Wes**