

Acts Part 1 Study Guide

Lesson 7: The Work of Philip – Acts 8

1. The Gospel Spreads to Samaria – Acts 8:1-25

- A. Chapter eight represents a major turning point in the early history of the church. Not satisfied with the blood of Stephen, Saul of Tarsus, with the approval of the chief priests, begins a campaign of terror against the brethren – 8:1-3. God, however, uses the persecution to further His cause.
- B. Philip, one of the servants of high character and strong faith chosen to oversee care for the widows, becomes the focus of the early expansion as he preaches in Samaria. However, it is clear from Acts 8:1, 4 that many others did work similar to Philip.
1. Like Stephen, another of the seven chosen servants, Philip displays miracle-working ability. Luke simply acknowledges this without a detailed explanation, which he will supply shortly (8:14-19).
 2. Describe the effects of Philip's miracles:
 3. What synonymous terms describe Philip's preaching? What are the effects of this preaching?
- C. Simon's greed and the explanation of the transmission of spiritual gifts – 8:14-24.
1. Simon was duly impressed by the power of Philip to perform *legitimate* miracles, but he is overwhelmed by his past conditioning and inclinations when he understands the source of *conferring* this power upon others in Peter and John.
 2. The principle expressed here by Luke is of crucial importance in responding to those who insist that such miraculous powers are present today. Obviously, the possession of such power, if it currently exists, would be of tremendous importance and influence. *If it did exist today*, we should be the first to recognize and acknowledge it.
 3. But this is the only passage that *expressly* connects the necessity of an apostle's personal touch (in conjunction with his will) with the reception of such gifts (one might also compare 2 Timothy 1:6). In the absence of other references about methods of transmission (prayer, direct endowment from heaven), we are forced by respect for the revelation of God to "remain silent where the Bible is silent."
 4. Certainly, no one doubts the *ability* of God to confer spiritual gifts in any way He so chooses, even as He has the power to forgive sins on other conditions besides immersion in water. *But the issue lies in what is stated in the Scriptures, and consequently what is omitted by such positive precepts.* If the Scriptures indicated another viable method of transmission of these gifts that could be fulfilled in the present day, then we would conclude *from revelation*, not from the practice itself, that the power of God was operative today.

2. An International Seed Is Planted – Acts 8:26-40

- A. From Samaria, Philip is now directed to a Jewish proselyte, an Ethiopian man who is returning home from worshiping in Jerusalem. The spiritual interest of this man is demonstrated by his reading of the Scriptures as he bumps along in his chariot.
1. Describe the spiritual dimension of the treasurer from his interaction with Philip.
 2. What miracle does Philip work to persuade the treasurer to listen?
- B. The treasurer is already reading a Messianic passage, Isaiah 53. This gives Philip a starting place in presenting the concept that the Messiah has indeed come (8:35).
- C. Acts 8:35-36 would seem to present a “necessary implication.” Since Philip *“preached Jesus,”* and in response the treasurer asked about the possibility of being baptized, it would follow that Philip had spoken of the necessity of immersion as a part of preaching Jesus (see the similar conclusion from Philip’s preaching in Samaria – 8:5, 12-13).
- D. Thus we see by persecution and other means that Jesus is directing the growth of His kingdom. As faithful men and women respond in humble submission, even in the face of dire suffering, the Lord is able to use them to achieve His goal of offering salvation to the whole world. May we be as courageous and diligent in our day as Philip and others were in theirs.

Questions:

1. Specifically, who was/was not scattered from Jerusalem by the persecution?
2. What did those who were scattered do?
3. What terminology describes the influence of the Holy Spirit coming upon Samaritans?
4. What supernatural agencies are involved in Philip’s teaching the Ethiopian treasurer?
- 5a. How has it been demonstrated so far in Acts that men and women become Christians?
- 5b. What is the process?
- 5c. What principles are operative in this transition?