

Jesus Purifies His Church

Acts 4:36-5:16

- 1) **The gracious gift to the church through Joseph**—4:36-37 (positive)
 - a) The **giver**—Joseph is a Hellenistic/Diaspora Levite from the island of Cyprus (@ 275 miles NW of Jerusalem)
 - i) The apostles exercise authority over Joseph and rename him Barnabas.
 - ii) We will see Barnabas again in 9:27; 11:28-30; 13:2; and 15:2-12.
 - b) The **deliberate gift**—Joseph voluntarily sells his farmland [*agros*] (his primary source of income and status) and generously gives all the money to the church through the apostles (submission).
 - i) A specific example of the general truth in 4:34-35.
 - ii) Apparently, Levites could own land outside the boundaries of Israel. (cf. Num. 18:20, 24) (but see Jer. 1:1; 32:7-9)

- 2) **The contamination of the church by sin**—5:1-2 (negative)
 - When God is at work, beware of Satan’s attempts to make counterfeits. This illustrates what R. C. Sproul calls “Lying Donors.”
 - a) The **givers**—Ananias and Sapphira
 - i) Ananias means “Yahweh is gracious” and Sapphira means “beautiful.”
 - b) The **deceitful gift**—they sell some land (cf. 5:3) and give some of the money to the church (pseudo-submission) while pretending they have given all the money.
 - i) Others in the church had sold possessions earlier. (Cf. 2:45; 4:34)
 - ii) They agreed to embezzle part of the sale price. Both would have had to sign, having separate witnesses. She enables his financial fraud.
 - iii) Compare with the sin of Achan in Josh. 7:1-26. Luke uses the same word in Acts 5:2 as was used in the LXX of Josh. 7:1 [same verb aspect of *nosphizo*].

- 3) **The purification of the church by God**—5:3-11
 - It is NOT local church discipline.
 - a) God gives Peter knowledge of their deceit—5:3-4
 - i) Peter acknowledges Satan’s influence, but Ananias is still culpable.
 - (1) His attempt to lie to the Spirit was ineffective.
 - (2) This is an attempted invasion of the community of the Spirit by the powers of darkness, by means of Ananias. (Ben Witherington)
 - ii) Peter addresses the issue of giving freely to the church.
 - (1) They were not required to sell the land.
 - (2) They were not required to give any of the money to the church.
 - iii) Peter acknowledges the Holy Spirit as being God.
 - b) How does God purify the church?—5:5-10
 - i) With Ananias—5:5-6

- (1) Peter does not utter a word of judgment, nor do his words condemn Ananias to death, nor does he express a wish that he would die. (Eckhard Schnabel)
- (2) Cf. 5:5, 10-11; 12:23
- (3) Even after a shocking death, his corpse is treated with respect but without ceremony.
- ii) With Sapphira—5:7-10
 - (1) Peter gives her the opportunity to tell the truth—5:7-8
 - (2) Peter addresses her sin and announces her punishment—5:9-10
 - (a) They have arrogantly conspired [*sumphoneo*] against the Holy Spirit. They thought they could effectively deceive the Spirit of God!
 - (b) Her involuntary submission to Peter is contrasted with their earlier voluntary pseudo-submission. (cf. 5:2)
- c) God produces fear in the hearts of the people—5:11
 - i) In the hearts of church members
 - (1) Use of “church” [*ekklesia*] in Acts:
 - (a) Believers: 2:47 (?); 5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 20:17, 28
 - (b) Unbelievers: 7:38; 19:32, 39, 41
 - ii) In the hearts of all who hear about the event

PROGRESS REPORT # 3—OF JESUS’ WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—5:12-16

1. SIGNS AND WONDERS ARE TAKING PLACE AMONG THE PEOPLE
2. THE BELIEVERS ARE OF ONE MIND
3. SOME UNBELIEVERS WILL NOT ASSOCIATE WITH THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF THE DEATH OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA, BUT THEY STILL RESPECT THE BELIEVERS
4. MULTITUDES OF BELIEVERS ARE CONSTANTLY BEING ADDED TO THE ORIGINAL NUMBER
5. MANY SICK PEOPLE ARE BROUGHT TO THE JERUSALEM TO BE HEALED

Jesus Protects His Church From Opposition From Without And Within

Acts 5:17-6:7

- 1) **Jesus protects the apostles in prison**—5:17-41
 - a) Despite the opposition from ungodly religious leaders—5:17-26
 - i) The opposition described—5:17-18
 - (1) Their identity: upper-level Sadducean priests who are jealousy-filled—5:17
 - (a) This is a religiously motivated rage. (NET)
 - (i) They have the most to lose theologically and politically.
 - (b) The irony of being *jealousy-filled* instead of *Spirit-filled*.
 - (c) The “sect/party/school” [*haireisis*]
 - **Negative:** Divisions among Christians: Gal. 5:20; Heresies: 2 Pet. 2:1
 - **Neutral:** Sadducees: Acts 5:17; Pharisees: Acts 15:5; 26:5; Christians: 24:5, 14; 28:22
 - **Positive:** Divisions among Christians: 1 Cor. 11:19
 - (2) Their deliberate publicity: public arrest, public jail
 - ii) God’s opposition to the opposition’s arrest (5:18) and censorship (cf. 4:16-18)—5:19-20
 - (1) “An angel of the Lord” not “the angel of the Lord.”
 - (a) The irony of deliverance by an angel from the jail of those who don’t believe in angels.
 - (2) Note the description of the Gospel: *the whole message of this Life*.
 - (3) This is the first of three jail miracles: (apostles) 5:19; (Peter) 12:6-10; (Paul & Silas) 16:26-27
 - (a) Sometimes God rescues from prison and other times He does not.
 - iii) The fearful perplexity and ignorance of the opposition—5:21-26
 - (1) The humorous re-arrest of the obedient apostles.
 - (2) The jail doors were re-locked (by the angel?) and remained under guard. (cf. 5:19, 23)
 - (3) The apostles do not resist the unjust arrest.
 - (4) Imagine the perplexity of those who don’t believe in divine intervention.
 - b) The discussion between the religious leaders and the apostles—5:27-32
 - i) The official situation—5:27
 - (1) Note that nothing will be said about the escape from jail.
 - ii) The official accurate evaluation of God’s work through the apostles—5:28
 - (1) Past: You have disobeyed our orders.
 - (2) Past: “*You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.*”
 - (3) Future: “*You intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.*” (cf. Mt. 27:25)
 - iii) The bold response by the apostles—5:29-32
 - (1) They have a necessity to obey God—5:29 (cf. 4:19-20)
 - (2) They preach the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ—5:30

- (3) They explain the purpose of the exaltation of Christ—5:31
 - (a) To grant repentance to Israel
 - (b) To grant forgiveness of sins
- (4) They are co-witnesses of Christ with the Holy Spirit—5:32
 - (a) Cf. Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16
- c) The pragmatic advice of the respected Pharisee Gamaliel—5:33-39 (cf. 22:3)
 - i) The enraged intention of execution—5:33
 - ii) The authoritative, pragmatic counsel of Gamaliel—5:34-39
 - Note the absence of Scripture in Gamaliel's speech.
 - (1) Caution—5:35
 - (2) Remember two examples from history—5:36-37
 - (3) Third class condition (less probable)—5:38
 - (4) First class condition (assumed true for sake of argument)—5:39
- d) The response of the religious leaders—5:40
 - i) They attempt to intimidate and humiliate (stripped and probably flogged) the apostles
 - (1) Normally 13 lashes on the chest, 26 lashes on the back. (cf. Dt. 25:3; 2 Cor. 11:24)
 - ii) They command the apostles not to speak in the name of Jesus
- e) The courageous response by the apostles—5:41
 - i) They rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.
 - ii) Cf. Luke 6:22-23; 1 Pet. 4:12-16

PROGRESS REPORT # 4—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—5:42

- **Publicly:** THEY DO NOT CEASE TEACHING [*didasko*] AND PREACHING TO UNBELIEVERS [*euangelizo*] JESUS AS THE CHRIST EVERY DAY IN THE TEMPLE
- **Privately:** THEY DO NOT CEASE TEACHING [*didasko*] AND PREACHING TO UNBELIEVERS [*euangelizo*] JESUS AS THE CHRIST EVERY DAY IN EVERY HOUSE

- 2) **Jesus protects the church from division—6:1-6**
 - a) The initial problem—6:1
 - i) Greek-culture-influenced (Hellenists), Jewish-Christian widows were being neglected compared with Jewish-culture-influenced (native Hebrews), Jewish-Christian widows as the various needs were being care for. (cf. 2:44-45; 4:32-5:11)
 - (1) This is more than a simple language issue.
 - ii) This appears to be a *perceived* neglect marked by discontent, not an *intentional* one. It is understandable, however, considering the recent numeric growth.
 - b) Jesus protects the church through wise church leadership—6:2-4
 - The balance of leadership authority and congregational responsibility
 - i) They authoritatively summon the church together—6:2

- (1) Note that Luke identifies them as *The Twelve*, embracing the earlier choice of Matthias in 1:26. They had previously been identified by Luke as *The Eleven* (cf. Luke 24:9, 33; Acts 1:26; 2:14).
- (2) Observations:
 - (a) They do not ignore the problem, hoping it will simply go away.
 - (b) They do not attempt to assign blame to anyone.
 - (c) They do not attempt to do everything by themselves.
 - (d) They explain their desire (negative & positive) to delegate priorities.
- ii) They wisely suggest a course of action for the church to follow—6:3
 - (1) The **responsibility** of the church: the command to carefully *select*
 - (a) They do not expose the process to volunteers.
 - (b) Cf. Deut. 1:13
 - (2) The **membership** of the candidates: *from among you*
 - (a) It was a gathering of the congregation of the disciples/brothers.
 - (3) The **number** of candidates: *seven*
 - (a) Jewish town councils often had seven members.
 - (4) The **sex** of the candidates: *men* [*aner*]
 - (5) The **qualifications** of the candidates: godly and skillful: *of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom*
 - (6) The **accountability** of the candidates: *whom we may put in charge*
 - (7) The **limited responsibility** of the candidates: *in charge of this need*
 - (a) Limited in both scope and time
- iii) They devotedly maintain the proper sequence of their God-centered priorities—6:4
 - (1) Devoted to the prayer to God. (cf. 2:42; 3:1;
 - (2) Devoted to the ministry of God’s Word. (cf. 6:2)
 - (a) Reflected in James teaching in 15:13-21.
- c) The church’s responsible selection—6:5-6
 - i) They followed the instructions of the church’s leadership.
 - (1) There is no indication of how this selection took place.
 - ii) They choose seven males with Greek names, implying they are Hellenistic in background. Six of the seven were Jewish Christians.
 - (1) Only the first two, Stephen and Philip, are mentioned later in Acts.
 - iii) While the congregation chose the seven men, the leaders officially authorized them.
- d) Additional observations:
 - i) These are not officially deacons. This office only appears later in 1 Tim. 3:8, 10, 12, 13 and Phil. 1:1.
 - ii) There is no requirement that all churches must have seven deacons.
 - iii) Note the two-fold use of serving: *serve* [*diakoneo*] tables (6:2) and the *service* [*diakonia*] of the Word (6:4). Both can be genuine service to God and other believers.

- iv) Note the two-fold use of desires: *pleasing* [*arestos*] (6:2) and *pleased* [*aresko*] (6:5).

PROGRESS REPORT # 5—OF JESUS' WORK DONE IN JERUSALEM—ACTS 6:7

(summarized with three imperfect aspect verbs)

- THE POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD KEEPS ON SPREADING
- THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES KEEPS ON INCREASES GREATLY IN JERUSALEM
- A GREAT MANY OF THE PRIESTS ARE BECOMING OBEDIENT [*hupakouo*] TO THE FAITH
(Jeremias estimated there were @ 8,000 priests and @ 10,000 Levites during this time, divided into 24 groups that rotated every 2 weeks throughout the year.)

Jesus Takes A Martyr Home

Acts 6:8-8:3

- This is the last episode regarding the church in Jerusalem.
- 1) **The arrest of God's witness—6:8-7:1**
 - a) How does Luke describe Stephen?
 - i) He is full of grace and power—6:8a (cf. 6:3, 5)
 - (1) Five-fold fullness of Stephen: the Spirit, wisdom, faith, grace, power
 - ii) He does great wonders and signs—6:8b
 - (1) For the first time, someone other than The Twelve is doing miracles.
 - iii) He speaks with wisdom and the Spirit—6:10
 - iv) His face appears as the face of an angel—6:15
 - b) How does Luke describe Stephen's opponents?
 - i) The men from the Diasporan/Hellenistic synagogue(s) (1-5 synagogues) argue with him—6:9 (cf. Acts 24:12)
 - ii) They are incapable of resisting what and how he is speaking—6:10
 - iii) They secretly persuade certain men to distort the words of Jesus and Stephen—6:11, 13
 - (1) Cf. Mark 14:58
 - iv) They stir up the religious leaders against him—6:12
 - (1) This is the third of four times Christians stand before the Sanhedrin: 4:15 (Peter & John); 5:27 (The Twelve); 6:12 (Stephen); 22:30 (Paul).
 - (2) The three-fold charges against him include: disrespecting Moses and God, speaking against the Temple and the Law, promising destruction of the Temple and changing Jewish customs.
 - v) They stare at him, seeing something like the face of an angel—6:15
 - vi) The high priest (Caiaphas?) asks him to comment on the accuracy of the charges—7:1
 - 2) **The message of God's witness—7:2-53**
 - This is the longest recorded sermon in Acts with 1,014 words in the Greek NT.
 - Stephen does not defend himself, but rather selectively recounts God's work in Israel.
 - This seems to take place @ two years after Jesus' ascension. [@ April 35 AD]
 - a) God's work in the past—7:1-50
 - Note his use of the Law of Moses (despite the false charges)
 - i) God dealt with Israel through **ABRAHAM**—7:1-8 [Gen. 11-13, 15, 17]
 - (1) The God of the glory—7:2 (cf. Ps. 29:3)
 - (2) The God of the promise—7:3-8
 - ii) God dealt with Israel through **JOSEPH**—7:9-16 [Gen. 37-50]
 - (1) God was with Joseph, rescued him, granted him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, and appointed him governor over Egypt—7:9-10

- (2) Delivered Jacob's family through Joseph—7:11-16
 - Some have taken issue with Stephen's "inaccuracies."
 - (a) **Chronology**: his use of 400 years instead of 430 (7:6)
 - (i) Cf. Gen. 15:13-16; Gal. 3:17
 - (ii) From the last promise of Jacob in Gen. 46:1-4 to the Exodus was 400 years.
 - (b) **Numbers**: his use of 75 instead of 70 (7:14)
 - (i) Cf. Gen. 46:27 and Exo. 1:5 (Greek OT) with Deut. 10:22 (Hebrew OT).
 - (c) **History**: his statement regarding the tomb purchased from the sons of Hamor. (7:16)
 - (i) Cf. Gen. 33:19; Josh. 24:32
 - iii) God dealt with Israel through **MOSES**—7:17-43 [Exod. 1-3, 19-32]
 - (1) God kept His promise to Abraham—7:17
 - (a) Cf. Gen. 15:13-14
 - (2) God delivered Israel through Moses—7:18-41
 - (a) Despite Moses' imperfections
 - (3) God judicially abandoned Israel over to their sin—7:42-43
 - (a) Cf. Amos 5:25-27
 - iv) God dealt with Israel through the **JOSHUA, DAVID, and SOLOMON**—7:44-50 [Law—Exod. 25; Prophets—2 Sam. 7; 1 Kings 6-8; Writings—1 Chron. 17; 2 Chron. 3]
 - (1) God temporarily dwelt in the Tabernacle—7:44-45
 - (2) God temporarily dwelt in the Temple—7:46-50
 - (a) Cf. Isa. 66:1-2
 - b) God's work in the present—7:51-53
 - God deals with Israel through **STEPHEN**—7:51-53
 - The defendant becomes the prosecutor.
 - i) He accuses them of spiritual stubbornness and insensitivity—7:51a
 - (1) These are standard prophetic insults in the OT. (Craig Keener)
 - (2) Cf. Exo. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6, 13; 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 9:26
 - ii) He accuses them of actively opposing God's Spirit—7:51b
 - iii) He accuses them of actively opposing God's prophets—7:52a
 - (1) Cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 14; Neh. 9:26; Jer. 26:20-24
 - iv) He accuses them of betraying and murdering the Righteous One—7:52b
 - (1) Cf. Acts 3:14
 - v) He accuses them of being disobedient to the Law—7:53
 - (1) Law as ordained by angels: Deut. 33:2 (LXX); Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2
 - (2) Their false accusation against Stephen (6:11-14) was clearly demonstrated in their own hearts and lives.
- 3) **The response to God's witness**—7:54-8:3
- a) They are intensely angry—7:54
 - i) Not because they did not understand his sermon, but because they did.

- ii) This visceral response is a frenzied hijacking of the legal process concerning the false accusations against Stephen.
- b) Stephen stands in stark contrast to his accusers/murderers—7:55-56
 - i) Full of the Holy Spirit
 - ii) Gazes intently into heaven and ...
 - (1) Sees the glory of God
 - (2) Sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God (cf. Ps. 110:1)
 - These three options are summarized by L. Scott Kellum (EGGNT)
 - (a) To welcome Stephen?
 - (b) To intercede for Stephen?
 - (c) To be a witness (or judge) against the mob?
 - iii) Tells them what he sees in heaven.
 - (1) He identifies Jesus as the Son of Man. (the Messiah of Dan. 7:13-14)
 - c) They cover their ears (to not listen to his “blasphemy?”)—7:57
 - d) They take Stephen out of the city and stone him to death—7:58-59a
 - i) This is a leadership-sanctioned lynching. Perhaps they base their actions on Lev. 24:11-16 and Deut. 17:2-7.
 - ii) Normally the victim of stoning was stripped.
 - iii) Note how Saul is discretely introduced. (cf. Acts 13:9; 22:20)
 - (1) A “young man” [*neanias*] was between 24-40 years of age.
 - e) Stephen stands in stark contrast to his accusers/murderers—7:59b-60
 - i) Similar attitude to that of Jesus in Luke 23:34, 46.
 - ii) Stephen does not confess the sins of others, but he does pray concerning their forgiveness.
 - f) Saul savagely persecutes the church in Jerusalem—8:1-3
 - i) Saul’s guilt in Stephen’s murder is clearly stated. (8:1a) (cf. 26:10)
 - (1) It is difficult to determine if Saul’s “heartly agreement” indicates official voting or simply agreeing with putting Stephen to death.
 - ii) God providentially uses this persecution to spread His people beyond Jerusalem to fulfill Jesus’ statement in Acts 1:8. (8:1b)
 - iii) Saul’s savage response is in stark contrast to the godly men who mourn Stephen’s death. (8:2-3)

4) Summary

- a) Stephen’s speech is *not* Law or temple critical, it is people critical on the basis of the Law and the Prophets, and of a proper theology of God’s presence and transcendence and so a proper theology of God’s dwelling place. (Ben Witherington, emphasis added)
- b) The martyrdom of Stephen showed that the *intransigent* temper of the Jewish leaders had not been changed by the great events of Pentecost nor by the apostolic miracles and witness which followed. And it marked the end of the comparatively tranquil early days of the disciples in the city of Jerusalem. (Alva McClain)

- c) The scene also portrays what is dividing the new faith from Judaism: the honor Jesus receives. What is glorious to Stephen is blasphemy to his audience. The two views cannot be more divergent. (Darrell Bock)

Jesus Reaches Out to Samaria

Acts 8:4-25

- 1) **Jesus reaches out through Philip**—8:4-13
 - This section shows the results of the persecution—“therefore”—8:4
 - a) Example # 1: On the one hand, **generally**, the scattered believers go *everywhere* preaching [*euangelizo*] the Word—8:4
 - i) “Scattered” [*diaspeiro*] (cf. Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19) is related to 1 Pet. 1:1 [*diaspora*]. (cf. John 7:35; James 1:1)
 - b) Example # 2: And on the other hand, **specifically**, Philip (one of The Seven; 6:3-5) goes to the unnamed city in the region of Samaria—8:5-8
 - i) This was the third location named by Jesus in 1:8.
 - (1) About 35-40 miles north of Jerusalem.
 - ii) Who were the Samaritans?
 - (1) It had been the center of the northern Ten Tribes.
 - (2) It had been repopulated after the Assyrian Exile. (2 Kings 17)
 - (3) Remember Jesus’ earlier ministry here four years earlier. (John 4)
 - iii) What had been the typical Jewish attitude toward Samaritans up to this time? Cf. John 4:9
 - (1) Note the accusation by the Jews of Jesus in John 8:48
 - iv) What does Philip do among them?—8:5-7
 - (1) He preaches [*kerusso*] the theme of the Christ to them—8:5
 - (a) The Samaritans had an alternative coming ruler and prophet named Taheb (“Restorer”).
 - (2) He performs miracles among them to authenticate the message—8:6-7
 - (a) Releases demonized people
 - (b) Restores paralyzed and disabled people
 - v) How do the Samaritans respond?—8:6, 8
 - (1) Collectively paying close attention to what was being said by Philip
 - (2) Collectively rejoicing greatly
 - (a) For what reason(s) did they rejoice?
 - c) Example # 3: Simon the counterfeit—8:9-13
 - i) Simon’s background—8:9-11
 - (1) A legend in his own mind—8:9
 - (a) Practicing magic (astrology, divination, occult)
 - (i) This is the first confrontation with sorcerers: 8:9-24; 13:6-11; 16:16-24; 19:13-16
 - (b) Astonishing the people of Samaria
 - (c) Self-promoting: claiming to be someone great
 - (2) A legend in the mind of others—8:10-11
 - (a) An all-encompassing faith (“*giving attention to*”)
 - (b) An ongoing sense of awe (“*the Great Power of God*”)
 - ii) Simon’s profession of faith—8:12-13

- (1) Some appear to have responded with genuine faith concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and were immersed.
 - (a) Simon seems to be losing followers.
- (2) Simon jumps on the bandwagon and is utterly amazed by the miracles.
 - (a) He is clearly more impressed with the miracles than with the message of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. (cf. Jn. 2:23-25)
 - (b) He seems to become a groupie/enthusiast of Philip.
 - (c) The genuineness of his “conversion” remains to be seen.

iii) See the following chart by Philip Spencer.

Simon the Sorcerer	Philip the Evangelist
Works wonders (8:11)	Works wonders (8:6, 13)
Draws crowds (8:9-10)	Draws crowds (8:6-7)
Paid attention to (8:10-11)	Paid attention to (8:6)
Simon is “great power” (8:10)	Philip does “great powers” (8:13)
Simon “amazes” Samaritans with his claims and magic (8:9, 11)	Philip’s miracles “amaze” the Samaritans (8:13)

2) **Jesus reaches out through Peter and John**—8:14-25

- a) Peter and John are sent to officially evaluate the genuineness of the Samaritans’ salvation, and endorse Philip’s ministry—8:14-17 (cf. 11:21-22)
 - Will the Jerusalem believers accept the Samaritan believers?
 - i) They embraced the Word of God—8:14 (cf. 2:41; 11:1; 17:11)
 - ii) They are immersed—8:16
 - (1) They are not rebaptized.
 - iii) They receive the Holy Spirit—8:15-17
 - (1) **Negative:** This is not a “second work of grace” or a completion of an inadequate Samaritan salvation.
 - (2) **Positive:** This is recognition by the apostles that the Samaritan believers are genuinely spiritual equals with those in Jerusalem.
- b) Peter, the first among equals, confronts a counterfeit—8:18-24
 - Syncretism is the attempt to merge two or more different beliefs.
 - i) Simon attempts a bribe to obtain the authority [*exousia*] to give the Holy Spirit to others—8:18-19
 - (1) What, exactly, did Simon see or hear? There is no evidence the Samaritans spoke in tongues/different languages. (Cf. 2:11)
 - ii) Peter warns Simon of his danger—8:20-23
 - (1) The **threat** of Simon’s destruction—*perish*
 - (2) The **exposure** of Simon’s assumption—*you supposed*
 - (3) The **exclusion** of Simon’s heart from God—*you have no part or portion*
 - (4) The **necessity** of Simon’s repentance and forgiveness—*repent*
 - (5) The **result** of Simon’s unrighteous—*bondage of unrighteousness*
 - iii) Simon appears merely fearful of the consequences of his actions—8:24
 - (1) Is this repentance?

- (2) Cf. Jeroboam I (1 Kings 13:6) and Pharaoh (Ex. 8:8; 9:28; 10:17)
- c) Summary of the ministry to Samaria—8:25
- This verse is a transition to 8:26. It begins with “on the one hand ...” whereas v. 26 begins with “on the other hand ...”.
 - i) Peter and John solemnly witness [*diamarturomai*] and speak [*laleo*] the word of the Lord.
 - ii) Peter and John preach the gospel [*euangelizo*] to many Samaritan villages.
 - (1) The gospel begins to move away from an exclusive concern for Israel. (Darrell Bock)
 - (2) Note well the change in John’s heart. (cf. Luke 9:54)
 - iii) Peter disappears until 9:32, and John disappears until 12:2.
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- For further thought: was Simon genuinely saved? (Stanley Toussaint, BKC)
 - i) The verb “*believe*” does not always refer to saving faith. Simon’s faith could have been like that of the demons in James 2:19, merely intellectual assent.
 - ii) Faith based on signs is not a trustworthy faith (cf. John 2:23–25; 4:48).
 - iii) Luke never stated that Simon received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17–18).
 - iv) Simon continued to have a self-centered interest in the display of miraculous power (vv. 18–19).
 - v) The verb “*repent*” used in verse 22 is normally addressed to lost people.
 - vi) The word “*perish*” employed in verse 20 is strong. It is related to the word “perish” in John 3:16.
 - vii) The description of Simon in Acts 8:23 is a better description of a lost man than of one who is saved (cf. Deut. 29:18).

Jesus Reaches Out To Ethiopia

Acts 8:26-40

- 1) **The setting for this account—8:26-28**
 - This completes the “on the one hand ... on the other hand ...” from 8:25.
 - a) What is the location—8:26
 - i) @ 50 miles WSW of Jerusalem; 65-70 miles SW of Samaria
 - ii) There was another major road to the south that went through Bethlehem and Hebron and ended up south of Gaza.
 - iii) While the expression “go south” can refer to *direction*, it can also reference *time*, as in “go about noon.” (cf. Tyndale, Greek OT)
 - (1) This is the hottest part of the day in the driest region near the southernmost city in Canaan.
 - b) Who are the main characters?—8:26-28
 - i) **Philip—8:26**
 - Previously ministered in Samaria (Acts 8:5-25)
 - (1) He leaves behind new converts who have the Spirit to help them grow and be strong in the Lord.
 - (2) He leaves behind many to go where God wants him. But God has not told him what he will be doing in/near Gaza.
 - (3) He leaves to work with one man in a deserted place, but who is a potential witness to reach many in his own country.
 - ii) **The Ethiopian—8:27-28**
 - How does Luke describe this Gentile man?
 - (1) **Geographically**—from Ethiopia—a different country and continent
 - (a) From the Upper Nile region in Africa; Nubia in northern Sudan. Meroe is its capital city. It is about 200 miles south of Egypt.
 - (b) Because of the distance (@ 1,600 miles from Meroe to Jerusalem), if he came for Passover he would likely have stayed for Pentecost (50 days later). This is months and months of travel.
 - (2) **Physically**—a eunuch by birth, choice, or job responsibilities
 - (a) Not allowed to be a full Jewish proselyte (cf. Deut. 23:1)
 - (b) “Eunuch” was sometimes simply a title, similar to being celibate but not necessarily castrated. (cf. Gen. 39:1, LXX)
 - (i) Cf. Jer. 38:1-13
 - (c) Calling someone a “eunuch” was normally an insult (cf. Gal. 5:12).
 - (d) Remember the promises to eunuchs in Is. 56:3-5 & Matt. 19:10-12.
 - (3) **Socially**—a court official [*dunastes*] of queen (Candace is a title)
 - (a) The queen as probably Amantitere, who ruled AD 25-41.
 - (4) **Professionally**—in charge of all her treasure [*gaza*]
 - (a) Most of Rome’s trade with Africa further south came through Meroe. (NIVCBSB)
 - (5) **Spiritually**
 - (a) He is probably a God-fearer who had come to Jerusalem to worship.

- (i) Two words for Gentile God-fearers
 - 1. *Phobeo theos*: 10:2, 22, (Cornelius) 35; 13:16, 26
 - 2. *Sebo*: 13:43, 50; 16:14 (Lydia); 17:4, 17; 18:7 (Titius Justus)
 - (ii) Distinguished from a full proselyte (cf. 2:10; 6:5; 13:43)
 - (b) He is reading the OT Scriptures on his carriage journey home.
 - (i) This large (24' long), expensive scroll indicates his personal wealth, or at least access to wealth.
- 2) **How does Philip evangelize the Ethiopian?—8:29-35**
- a) He eagerly obeys the Holy Spirit—8:29-30a
 - i) Note the change from the angel in 8:26.
 - b) He listens and follows up with a question—8:30b
 - i) People in NT times normally read aloud, even when they were alone.
 - c) He accepts the man's humble invitation to join him and guide him—8:31
 - d) He answers the man's eager questions—8:34-35
 - i) Starts with the Bible passage in question (Is. 53:7b-8b)
 - ii) Preaches [*euangelizo*] Jesus to him from the Scriptures (LXX, Greek OT?)
 - (1) If he keeps reading in Isaiah, he will come to 56:3-5!
- 3) **What happened after the salvation of the Ethiopian?—8:36-40**
- 8:37 is found in only a comparatively few Greek manuscripts, beginning in the 500's AD, though non-biblical texts indicate awareness of something similar in the 100's AD.
 - a) Philip (a descendant of Shem. Cf. Gen. 9:26-27)
 - i) He ministers to (immerses) the Ethiopian.
 - (1) Note the providence of God in previously providing water in the desert for the baptism.
 - ii) He is taken by the Spirit (cf. 8:29) @ 20-25 miles NNE to Azotus (OT Ashdod of the Philistines)
 - (1) Cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16
 - iii) He ministers by preaching the gospel [*euangelizo*] in the various towns until he arrives in Caesarea, the capital of Roman Judea. (@ 50 miles further north)
 - (1) He seems to settle here, being found in this city nearly 20 years later. (cf. Acts 21:8)
 - b) The Ethiopian (a descendant of Ham. Cf. Gen. 9:26-27)
 - i) He is immersed by Philip.
 - (1) He takes the initiative and asks to be immersed.
 - ii) He goes on his way rejoicing. (cf. Acts 2:46; 5:41; 13:52; 15:3; 16:34)
 - (1) Perhaps because he was fully accepted into the Christian faith while having never been fully accepted by the Jewish religious system.

Further thoughts on baptism/immersion:

- 1) **LXX uses:** (2x)
 - a) 2 Kings 5:14; Isa. 21:4

- 2) **NT uses:** (@ 80x in 65 verses)
 - a) **Gospels:** (45x in 36 verses)
 - i) Matt. (11x): 3:6, 11 (2x), 13, 14, 16; 20:22 (2x), 23 (2x); 28:19
 - ii) Mark (12x): 1:4, 5, 8 (2x), 9; 6:14; 7:4; 10:38 (2x), 39 (2x); 16:16
 - iii) Luke (9x): 3:7, 12, 16 (2x), 21; 7:29, 30; 11:38; 12:50
 - iv) John (13x): 1:25, 26, 28, 31, 33 (2x); 3:22, 23 (2x), 26; 4:1, 2; 10:40
 - b) **Acts:** (21x in 19 verses)
 - i) 1:5 (2x); 2:38, 41; 8:12, 13, 16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47, 48; 11:16 (2x); 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:3, 4, 5; 22:16
 - c) **Epistles:** (13x in 10 verses)
 - i) Rom.: 6:3 (2x); 1 Cor.: 1:13, 14, 15, 16 (2x), 17; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29 (2x); Gal.: 3:27

- 3) **Explanation**
 - a) The standard Greek lexicon (BAGD; compiled by [LC-MS] Missouri Synod Lutherans) defines *baptizo* as: to put or go under water, to plunge, to dip, to immerse, to drown.
 - b) There are other NT Greek words for *sprinkling* [*rantizo*] or *pouring* [*ekcheo*].
 - i) Sprinkle [*rantizo*]: Heb. 9:13, 19, 21; 10:22
 - ii) Pour [*ekcheo*]:
 - (1) Matt. 9:17; 23:35; 26:28; Mark 2:22; 14:24; Luke 5:37; 11:50; 22:20; John 2:15
 - (2) Acts 1:18; 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45; 22:20
 - (3) Rom. 3:15; 5:5; Titus 3:6; Jude 1:11; Rev. 16:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 17
 - iii) Neither of these words are ever used in the NT for the local church ordinance of baptism.
 - c) Many Christian denominations will argue that the mode of baptism is not important, just obedience to the command for baptism.
 - i) Some of this thinking is based on the non-biblical writing of *Didache* (*The Teaching of the Twelve*), written @ 100's AD in the Middle East which includes the statement in chapter 7, ¹ *But concerning baptism [*baptisma*], thus shall ye baptize [*baptizo*]. Having first recited all these things, baptize [*baptizo*] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in living (running) water. ² But if thou hast not living (running) water, then baptize [*baptizo*] in other water; and if thou art not able in cold, then in warm. ³ But if thou hast neither, then pour [*ekcheo*] water on the head thrice in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*
 - ii) Non-biblical sources are not the basis for NT local church practice.