

Other sheep, One flock, One Shepherd

The gospel goes to Samaria & Africa

... other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring ... and there will be one flock and one shepherd John 10:16



Livingstone opened up the African interior to the gospel, but the first non-Jew to receive the good news was an Ethiopian. Islam shut down Africa to Christianity for more than a millennium

REVIEWING LAST STUDY:

1. Which commandment did the Temple cultists break?
2. What would you say we might emulate in Stephen's apologetic method with his accusers?
3. How does grace triumph at last in the martyrdom of Stephen and its eventual ramifications?

Study 10a: PROVIDENCE AND HUMAN PLANS (8:1-4)

8:1-2 Was the Judean and Samaritan mission *organized* by the apostles?

This persecution was overruled to scatter the Church, which had grown too prosperous and secure, and needed to be reminded of the Lord's injunction to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ... How often God has to drive us by trouble to do what we ought to have done gladly and spontaneously! -- **F.B. Meyer**, *Acts* p.488

The account sets this time of tribulation in encouraging perspective. The forcible dispersion of the Jerusalem church was a rich source of evangelization. The chapter will show its influence reaching distant Ethiopia.

It is noteworthy that, from this point onwards, the story proceeds in widening circles. It is also about to be revealed that the rabid persecutor was a tormented man, soon to be brought to surrender, and destined to be the greatest name in the the history of the Church. So seldom is it possible to judge the true significance of events at the time of their occurrence. -- **E.M. Blaiklock**, *The Acts of the Apostles* p.79

8:3-4 Who took the lead in the door-to-door ministry in Jerusalem?

Study 10b: THE SHEPHERD SEEKS SAMARIA (8:5-25)

8:5-8 If the mission of Philip was NOT systematically organized, why was it effective? (Heb.2:3,4)

... we certainly get the impression of a conservative body which was never responsible for any new ventures itself. -- **I. H. Marshall**

As in ministry of Christ Himself and of His apostles, so in the ministry of Philip these mighty works were external "signs" confirming the message that he announced. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *Acts* p.177

Jerusalem had just expelled the disciples, and would fain have crushed the Gospel; despised Samaria received it with joy. 'A foolish nation' was setting Israel an example (Deut.32:21; Rom.10:19). -- **Alexander MacLaren**, *The Acts of the Apostles* p.239

The very beginning of the story points to the one bond that unites to God, as being the sense of need and the acceptance with heart and will of the testimony of Jesus Christ. Such a disposition is shown in the Samaritans, who make a contrast with Simon in that they believed Philip *preaching*, while Simon believed him *working miracles*. The true place of miracles is to attract attention, to prepare to listen to the word. They are only introductory. A faith may be founded on them, but, on the other hand, the impressions which they produce may be evanescent. How subordinate then, their place at the most! And the one thing which avails is a living contact of heart and soul with Jesus Christ. -- **Alexander MacLaren**, *op.cit.*, p.244

8:9-13 Contrast Philip's gospel with that of Simon Magus (5:36,37; 20:30: Matt.24:24-31 -- note 2 emphases!)

8:14-17 Why did the Holy Spirit not fall on the Samaritans immediately?

... the diffusion of the gospel was not to sever it. Jerusalem was not over Samaria, but Samaria could not be independent of Jerusalem. The apostolic office must be recognized and honored. Again, by the presence of these leading apostles and the conferring of the miraculous elements attending the Spirit's presence, the new work was fully accredited as genuine. -- **James Stifler**, *Acts* p.70

John was sent with Peter to bring the fire of Pentecost to the very locality where formerly he and his brother had suggested that they should call fire from Heaven to destroy (Luke 9:54). -- **F.B. Meyer**, *op.cit.*, p.488

8:18-20 In addition to sorcery, what other sin has Simon become synonymous with?

SIMONY -- making profit out of sacred things (*American College Dictionary*)

Verses 9 and 10 suggests that Simon was a charlatan, who professed to be some form of mediator with God. It has always been difficult for some minds to realize that God is not remote, but ever ready to meet the questing and surrendered soul, open to the approach of faith, and not to be bought or persuaded by formulae or ritual. And all through the ages there have been those who have used this human quirk to usurp power. To persuade men that he possesses the secret of God's will, and the means of binding and conveying God's favour, has been the stock-in-trade of the imposter at all times ... Concerning Simon the following should be noted; his faith was concerned with miracles (13,19,20), and ended in amazement, not holiness; his view of God was materialistic. 'Simony' became a term for traffic in sacred things. -- **E.M. Blaiklock**, *op.cit.*, pp.79-80

8:21-25 Was Simon's belief real? What bondage of iniquity did he share with cultists? (Gal.1:6-9; 3:1-5; 4:6-11)

... he seems not to have got beyond the point of wondering at the miracles, as it is emphatically said that he did even after his baptism. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but was more interested in studying Philip to find out how he did the miracles than in listening to his teaching. Such an imperfect belief had no transforming power, and left him the same man as before, as was soon miserably manifest ... It is worth noting, in passing, how the profession of faith without anything more was considered by the Early Church sufficient ... But it was only head knowledge. There was in it no penitence, no self-abandonment, no fruit in holy desires; or in other words, there was no heart. It was credence, but not trust. -- **Alexander MacLaren**, *op.cit.*, pp.241, 244-245

Is Peter's counsel really appropriate to an unconverted man and a hypocrite? Would any worker to-day tell such an one to 'repent' and 'pray'? Yet Peter's words are exactly suited to a backslider. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *The Apostle Peter* p.105

NOTE: By what NAME is the authentic gospel identified? (vv. 5,12,16,35)

The trinitarian baptismal formula of Mt. xxviii. 19 and *Diache* vii. I does not appear in Ac. The reason may be, as suggested by G.F. Moore (*Judaism* I., pp.188f.), that while the trinitarian formula was appropriate for Gentiles turning to the true God from idols, baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus as Messiah was sufficient in the case of Jews or Samaritans, who had no need to profess monotheism. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Gk] p.187

Study 10c: THE SHEPHERD SEEKS AFRICA (8:26-40)

8:25-29 Who organized the Gaza (Philistia) mission? (cf. v.39)

How manifestly the meeting of these two, starting so far apart, and so ignorant of each other and of the purpose of their being thrown together, reveals the unseen hand that moved each on his own line, and brought about the

intersection of the two at that exact spot and hour! How came it that at that moment the Ethiopian was reading, of all places in his roll, the very words which make the kernel of the gospel of the evangelical prophet? Surely such 'coincidences' are a hard nut to crack for deniers of a Providence that shapes our ends! -- **Alexander MacLaren**, *op.cit.*, p.251

8:30-34 Is Luke saying human teachers are essential to correct Bible interpretation? (KEY: meaning of witness)

The difficulty the eunuch had was this, that the prophet did not seem to meet the requirements of this passage and yet he could think of no other person to whom they might properly applied ... his prompt acceptance of Philip's interpretation would indicate that he had learned much of the story of Jesus and needed only to have the prophecy of the OT properly connected with what he had heard in order to bring him to the Christian faith. -- **R.C.H. Lenski**, *Acts* p.344

What made him able to do without the guide that a few hours before had been so indispensable? The presence in his heart of a better one, even of Him whom Jesus promised to guide His servants into all truth. If those who believe that Scripture without an authorised interpreter is insufficient to lead men aright, would consider the end of this story, they might find that a man's dependence on outward teachers ceases when he had God's Spirit to teach him, and that for such a man the Word of God in his hand and the Spirit of God in his spirit will give him light enough to walk by, so that, in the absence of all outward instructors, he may still be filled with true wisdom, and in absolute solitude may go 'on his way rejoicing.' -- **Alexander MacLaren**, *op.cit.*, p.254

8:35-40 Like Stephen, Philip finds the gospel where? (Luke 24:25-27; 44-48)

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NEXT STUDY: The GOSPEL of GRACE

Why did Africa have to wait so long for the gospel?

What of the remainder of Africa, south of the Sahara? It was indeed a Dark Continent. First European contacts with Black Africa had come through the nefarious Slave Trade, in which the professedly Christian nations followed the Arab example in abetting the raiding of innocent tribes for slaves. **J. Edwin Orr** *The Light of the Nations* p.72

All around the Mediterranean congregations had sprung up, not least on the long North African coast. This region, hard to visualize now as a once great stronghold of Christianity, was a vital granary for the Roman Empire. The Gospel had taken hold in many populous areas, especially around Carthage (modern Tunisia and Algeria) and Alexandria, in the Nile Delta ... The patriarchate of Alexandria, so secure in the early centuries, was destined to be swallowed up by the Moslems. Likewise Antioch and Carthage. **Jeremy C. Jackson**, *No Other Foundation: The Church through 20 Centuries* pp.47,51