

LESSON 7

THE CHURCH IS SCATTERED

SAUL PERSECUTES THE CHURCH (8:1–4)

Jesus' plan for taking the gospel to the entire world had not come to fruition. At that point God stepped in and, in effect, said, "*It's time*—for the good news to get out of Jerusalem." We must tread lightly here. God did not instigate the persecution; Satan was behind it, using fanatical Saul as his tool—but God used it. Satan originated the persecution to destroy the church; God used it to spread the church (see Rom. 8:28).

1. Why did Paul persecute the church?
2. Why were the apostles not scattered with the other Christians?
3. How is the description of Paul's ravaging of the church in 8:3 in stark contrast with the unified habits of the church summarized in 2:46?

PHILIP GOES TO SAMARIA (8:5–25)

The theme of verses 1 and 4 is expanded later in chapter 11: "So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone" (11:19). For the moment, however, Luke concentrated on one specific Christian who shared the gospel not far from Jerusalem.

4. Why is this detailed account of conversions in Samaria called a "bridge" conversion?
5. In which city in Samaria might Philip have preached?
6. How did magic in those days differ with what we think of as magic today?
7. What contrasts can be drawn between the real miracles Philip performed and the pseudo-miracles of Simon?

8. What does “preaching Christ” involve, as modeled by Philip?
9. How can we know that Simon was truly converted in 8:13?
10. What does 8:16 mean when it says that the Spirit “had not yet fallen upon any of them”?
11. What two objectives did Peter and John hope to fulfill with their trip to Samaria?
12. How does 8:18 demonstrate that the ability to perform miracles has ceased?
13. What three truths does Peter’s response to Simon’s offer of money emphasize to every new convert?
14. What are the first and second “laws of pardon,” and how do people often confuse them?

THE CONVERSION OF AN ETHIOPIAN (8:26–40)

The flame of the gospel not only spread north from Jerusalem; it also spread south. In verses 26 through 40, we have the conversion of the queen’s treasurer, who took the good news back to Ethiopia. This narrative is another “bridge” conversion. The eunuch was probably a Gentile who had become a Jew; in other words, a Jewish proselyte—which would be another bridge between preaching to the Jews and the Gentiles.

15. Why did Luke most likely mention that the Ethiopian was a eunuch?
16. What clues do these verses give that demonstrate how religious the eunuch was?
17. What did Jewish teachers believe Isaiah 53 to be prophesying about?
18. Why was 8:37 most likely added to the text?
19. What does the eunuch’s baptism reveal about the common practices regarding baptism in the early church?
20. Why did the Spirit of the Lord most likely snatch Philip away (8:39)?