

Chapter Eight

Chapter 8

- This chapter begins in verse 1 with the statement, “Saul was consenting to his death”.
 - Whose death?
 - The artificial, man-made chapter and verse divisions in the Bible oftentimes stop thoughts that should be viewed as continuous.
 - It is important to see Saul as having been present at the persecution of Stephen. Later in Acts 22:20, Saul states, “When the blood of Stephen, your witness, was shed, I also was standing by, consenting to his death, and guarding the cloaks of those who killed him.”
 - The irony here is that Paul will later be tried for essentially the same charges that were falsely applied to Stephen.

- The text informs us in verses 1-8 that “a great persecution” began against the believers.
 - What was the net effect of this persecution?
 - What did those who were “scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria” actually do?
 - Do you see the sovereignty of God at work here?
 - When we see or experience persecution do we rebel against it in the flesh or see it as ordained by God to further His work?
 - As a hammer strikes hot iron and sends sparks in all directions, the same can be said for fleshly persecution aimed against God and His purposes.
- The account of the sorcerer Simon is reported in verses 9-11.
 - What do you make of someone claiming to be some “great one”?
 - Why were the people so impressed with Simon?
 - What was their standard used in determining his au-

thority?

- Why did the people continue to listen to him?
- Are there people today, perhaps in ministry, making a similar public claim about their own greatness?
- Are people in today's world similarly led astray by "signs and wonders"?
- The text in verse 12 states that the people responded to Philip's gospel message and believed and were immersed.
 - Was it the good news message of Philip that resulted in such evangelistic success or was it a display of "signs and wonders"?
- Verse 13 would appear to indicate that Simon also came to faith and was baptized, but later historical accounts seriously question the authenticity of his faith.
 - Is it possible that someone may appear to have a legitimate experience of salvation only to be found questionable at a later date?
 - What should that teach us about the wisdom of

making hasty or uninformed assessments of the spiritual condition of others?

- The Apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to minister to these Samaritans.
 - In Acts 1:8 we read, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.”
 - The pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the Jews in Acts 2, the Samaritans in Acts 8, and the Gentiles in Acts 10, should be understood as three broadening spheres of the ever-expanding gospel message.
- A question arises from the reading of this passage in Acts. How do you receive the Holy Spirit? Is there a specific sequence to the experience? Consider the following examples:
 - Acts 2:38 states, “Repent and be immersed, every one of you, in the name of Yeshua the Messiah for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - The order of sequence is repentance and faith,

baptism, and immediately receiving the Holy Spirit without laying on of hands.

- Acts 8:12 states, “... they believed ... they were immersed” and in verse 17, “... they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”
 - The order of sequence is faith, baptism, laying on of hands, and they received the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 19:6 states, “When Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them.”
 - The order of sequence is faith, baptism, laying on of hands, and they received the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 10:44 states, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the word.”
 - The order of sequence is faith, and they received the Holy Spirit without laying on of hands, followed by baptism.
- Ephesians 1:13 states, “In Him you also, having heard the word of truth, the Good News of your salvation – in whom, having also believed, you were

sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”

- The order of sequence does not appear to be a rigid formula. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in His manifestations.
- It appears that baptism and the laying on of hands can be applied anytime subsequent to faith in Messiah. Any attempt to make a rigid, legalistic sequence in the application of either ritual is not supported by the Scriptural evidence.
- When Simon saw the Apostles laying on their hands and the people receiving the Holy Spirit, what was his reaction as evidenced in verses 18 and 19?
 - What was wrong with his assumptions?
- What was Peter’s response and assessment of Simon’s spiritual condition as stated in verses 20-23?
 - How does this answer the earlier question regarding the spiritual status of Simon’s supposed faith?
- Verse 25 indicates that the Apostles “returned to Jerusalem and preached the Good News to many villages of the Samaritans.”

- The Scriptures do not indicate that the Apostles preached anywhere to the Samaritans on their way into Samaria prior to this incident with the Samaritan believers.
- Do you think their experience of seeing the manifestation of the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritan believers also helped the Apostles overcome any reluctance on their part regarding their prejudice against them?
- In Acts 8:26, Philip is instructed by the Angel of the Lord to go south into the desert.
 - Without anything else to go on, Philip is obedient. How do you account for such faith-filled obedience?
 - Is there a parallel here with the faith of Abraham when he was given similar directions to leave his home?
 - Is your faith strong enough to encourage such obedience?
- In verse 27, Philip has a divine appointment to witness to this Ethiopian.
 - How would this have turned out if Philip had not

had the faith to follow his assignment to go south into the desert?

- Have you ever missed divine appointments to witness to people based on your lack of obedience? If so, how can this example help you in the future?
- In verse 30, Philip met the Ethiopian at his point of need rather than beginning an unrelated sermon or memorized “canned witnessing script”.
 - How is that a good example for us to follow in our attempts to influence and guide others?
- In verse 35, Philip answered the immediate question of the prophecy in Isaiah and used this as a point of reference to other Scriptures to teach about Yeshua.
- Luke 24:13-27 relates the story of Yeshua’s post-resurrection appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.
 - Luke 24:27 states, “Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”
- What is the importance of understanding Messianic

prophecy as rooted in the Tanach (Old Testament)?

- We see the example of faith followed by baptism with no mention of the laying on of hands or any subsequent outward experience of the Holy Spirit.