

# **ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS**

## **LESSON SUBJECT**

# **SAMARIA RECEIVES THE GOSPEL**

## **SCRIPTURE TEXT: ACTS 8:1-25.**

**MEMORY VERSE:** Acts 8:12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSON.**

The first verse of chapter eight reveals a continuation of the violent hostilities vented against Stephen, as well as their escalation and spread toward all the church. Nowhere is the old adage any more true than here, that, "the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church". Saul, consenting unto Stephen's death, was a chief architect and executioner of the purpose of the Jewish rulers to destroy Christianity. That purpose would only ignite the dramatic spread of the gospel to the "regions beyond" Jerusalem.

It has now been about 6 or 7 years since the church was established in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Its activities had remained confined around Jerusalem up until now. Before his ascension, Christ had directed that they should be witnesses unto him in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, "AND IN SAMARIA", and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). Because of the persecution that arose after Stephen's death, "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the gospel, except the apostles".

The good side of these persecutions was that it drove them from their comfort zone, causing them to carry the gospel to other areas beyond Jerusalem. Then Philip went down to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. Keep in mind the vast cultural and religious disparity between the Jews and the Samaritans. The next great frontier for the gospel to penetrate is the city of Samaria. What work will the Lord do there?

## **DAILY SCRIPTURE READINGS AND THOUGHTS**

### **MONDAY – ACTS 8:1-4. – PERSECUTION HELPED THE GOSPEL TO SPREAD.**

#### **SCRIPTURE.**

V1. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. 3. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. 4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

## COMMENTS.

As we noted in the introduction, the escalating persecution against the church because of the message of the resurrection in the name of Jesus, was causing believers to leave the Jerusalem area and relocate in a more peaceful place (they thought). This move was not motivated by a weakened commitment, to Christ and the gospel, but instead by practical daily living. It must also be remembered that Jesus had said they would become witnesses of him in all the earth and this very well could have (and should have) been on their minds. When Paul was shipwrecked on his way to Rome, it must have been a frightful event. However it turned out that for 3 months he got to witness for Christ in a place he never intended to visit, and left believers there. With the disciples being scattered by the hardships of persecution, they, too, carried the gospel to regions they had no previous plans to visit.

## TUESDAY – ACTS 8:5-8. A NEW KIND OF JOY COMES TO SAMARIA.

### SCRIPTURE.

V5. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies and that were lame, were healed. 8. And there was great joy in that city.

### COMMENTS.

Philip, one of the deacons selected in chapter 6, went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. Without any hesitation, Philip preaches the first message (since the founding of the church) at the city of Samaria. The best way to describe the results of this preaching is to say that great revival broke out in Samaria. In a spirit of one accord they believed his message; great miracles attended the arrival of the gospel in this new outpost, and there was great joy in that city; a joy they had never known before. The marvelous work of redemption is changing Samaritan lives. There was reason for great joy.

## WEDNESDAY – ACTS 8:9-11 & 18-24. – THE DECEPTION OF WITCHCRAFT MEETS THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

### SCRIPTURE.

V9. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one. 10. To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God. 11. And to him

they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. V18. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19. Saying, give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20. But Peter said unto him, thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24. Then answered Simon, and said, pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

#### COMMENTS.

Simon the sorcerer, as he is known, making believe that he was the great power of God, has bewitched the people. He had the people believing in his sorcery and deception. No doubt the "unclean spirits" by which the people were possessed, which were cast out of them, was the sorceries, imaginations and deceptive evils, fostered and imposed upon them by Simon. But when Philip came preaching truth about life and God, the people could see how they had been deceived, and turned from this witchcraft to accept Christ. Even Simon could see the emptiness of his ways. There are still people today "under the spell", as it were, of some great one, be he a preacher or some other "sorcerer". Only the truth can "cast out" such "evil spirits".

#### THURSDAY – ACTS 8:12, 14-17. – SAMARITANS ARE BAPTIZED IN JESUS NAME AND RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST.

#### SCRIPTURE.

V12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. V14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). 17. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

#### COMMENTS.

"When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women". Then verse 16 says, they were baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus". When the apostles had come from Jerusalem, they laid their hands on them and prayed for them, and they received the Holy Ghost. This verse 16 dispels the theology that, "the moment you believe you have "thereby" been filled with the Holy Ghost. No doubt that "believing on Christ and being baptized" is definitely a distinct work of God through the gospel. However, this verse shows that the receiving of the Holy Ghost is a distinct act of God apart from

believing and baptism in water. The apostles laying their hands on them and praying for them, I believe, represents their approval of the work of the gospel to these hearts. It does not represent an act necessary in all events, because it is absent from other instances of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

#### **FRIDAY – ACTS 8:5 & 25. – SAMARITANS RECEIVE THE GOSPEL AS WELL AS THE APOSTLES.**

##### **SCRIPTURE.**

V5. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. 25. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

##### **COMMENTS.**

Who were these Samaritans? We know them as a mixed-breed of people; something which dates way back in their history. They were despised by the orthodox Jewish community as being unclean and ungodly. But we should not be too fast to disqualify them from the privileges of the gospel. Let us see who could possibly have made up these first Samaritan converts.

In John chapter 4, Christ stops by Jacob's well which was in Sychar, a city of Samaria. There he meets the (Samaritan) woman and changes her life. She goes and tells her friends, who, in turn, come to hear Christ. The scripture says that many Samaritans believed on Christ.

In Lk. 17:11-16, Jesus heals the 10 lepers and only one of them returned to glorify and give thanks and praise to God. "And he was a Samaritan".

In Lk. 10:30-37, we have the parable of the "Good Samaritan", who was shown to have more compassion than either the priest or the Levite.

We don't know for sure if any of these were present in Acts chapter 8, but we cannot say that they were not. It would be reasonable to assume that at least some of them were there to be the nucleus for the "First Church of Samaria".

#### **SUMMARY**

In Acts 1:8, the Lord declared that the disciples would be witnesses unto him in Samaria. In chapter 8, we see a beautiful, distinct fulfillment of this directive. They have believed (the deacon) Philip preaching the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. The apostles have come to Samaria and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. The Samaritans have received the same message and the same experience in God, by both baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as they did at Jerusalem at Pentecost. And there was great joy in that city.

**QUESTIONS.**

1. What worked to move disciples to go to regions beyond Jerusalem and preach the word?
2. What credentials did Philip have, qualifying him to preach the message of the gospel?
3. Name 3 undesirable characteristics of Simon the sorcerer.
4. Identify 3 major elements in the salvation of the Samaritans.
5. What is the connection between the stories of the woman at Jacob's well; one of the 10 lepers; and the events of Acts chapter 8?

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** What will it take for Christians to go where Christ would send them as witnesses for him?

**YOUR NOTES:**