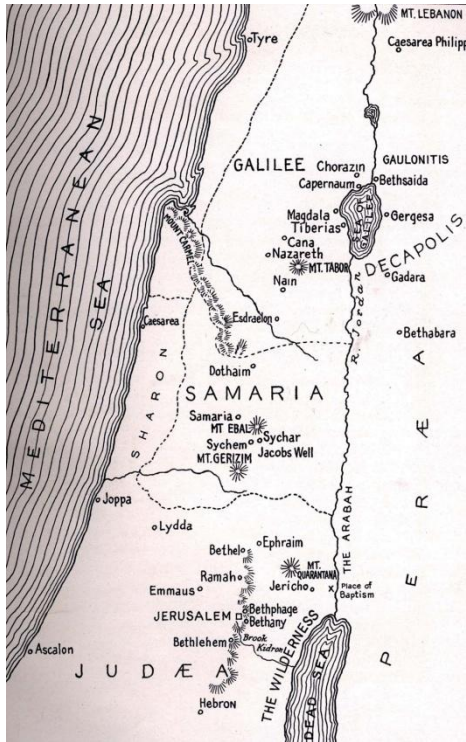


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 12



THE CHURCH SCATTERED BY PERSECUTION

Scripture Text: Acts 8:1-25

When persecution became so serious that one of the Jerusalem church was killed, laymen went everywhere preaching the Word. It had a positive effect on the early church. The Apostles stayed in Jerusalem. The others were scattered. They preached the Word everywhere. Preaching was the business of the whole church. It was evangelism, telling the Gospel to everyone they met.

We find that miracles were still convincing the people. The Holy Spirit proved sorcery and witchcraft to be wrong, to be an agent of Satan. Simon believed and was baptized without regeneration. Spiritual gifts cannot be purchased with money. The church must be kept pure and holy.

MEMORY VERSE: *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.*

—Acts 8:4

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Isaiah 19:18-25** Foreigners converted.

Tue.—**Ephesians 2:11-22** Gentiles become fellow citizens.

Wed.—**John 10:7-18** One fold and one shepherd.

Thu.—**Jonah 3** Preaching delivered Nineveh.

Fri.—**Isaiah 9:1-7** Light to all people.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 60:1-14 The dawn of Zion's glory.

Great Persecution

Acts 8:1-3 There was a great persecution . . . at Jerusalem. Beginning with Stephen's death, it spread. **They were all scattered abroad**—fled for safety—**throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles, they stayed in Jerusalem. Saul . . . committed them to prison**—Saul was a leader in it.

Gospel Is Preached in Samaria

Acts 8:4-8 **They that were scattered . . . went . . . preaching the word**—the most important duty to them. The church was not spending its time erecting buildings and gaining favor of the people. They were not joining clubs and trying to improve their standard of living through fleshly means. It was rather bringing them life through Christ. That activity crowded out all else. It was not their job, it was their life. **Philip**—one of the seven deacons (**Acts 6:5**), **went . . . to . . . Samaria**—not to hide, but he **preached Christ. The people . . . gave heed.** What attracted and convinced them? **Hearing and seeing the miracles.** This proved that supernatural power was working through Philip. **Unclean spirits**—demons—**came out of many . . . palsies, and . . . lame, were healed. Great joy in that city**—Samaria. No other joy equals the joy of salvation and the joy of seeing men and women set free from the binding power of Satan to begin a new life in Christ.

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Simon's Mistake

Acts 8:9-19 But there was . . . Simon . . . which . . . used sorcery. Sorcery is not an extinct evil. It is present and dangerous in our day. Its source is Satan. We see this spirit manifested more openly at the Halloween season. Sorcery and kindred practices are wrong. The people said, **This man is the great power of God.** He had deceived the people by the power of Satan. No doubt his work was a main cause of the demon possession there. God, through the power of the Gospel, cast out the demons. Many believed Philip's preaching and **were baptized**, including Simon. Simon **wondered, beholding the miracles**—his greatest interest, for he had done wonders too. He was not separated from his old life. It takes more than just to believe the preaching and be baptized for one to be separated from sin and the old life.

When the apostles . . . heard . . . they sent . . . Peter and John. They **prayed for them to receive the Holy Ghost**—freely, no waiting or striving or pleading, just complete yielding. They were already **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**, but **he**—the Holy Spirit—**was fallen upon none.** They had not heard the full message of complete salvation. It was a period of transition from idol worship to true worship in Jesus Christ. **Simon saw** the hands laid on and the Holy Ghost given. **He offered . . . money, saying, Give me also this power**—not the Spirit, but the power to give the Holy Spirit. Simon failed to see that salvation is a complete spiritual changeover, a death and a resurrection. He thought salvation an improvement of what he had, better wonders than he had done. To be saved, Simon must repent and leave his life of sin. He may have done this after Peter's rebuke. He asked Peter to pray for him.

A Clean Church

Acts 8:20-25 Peter said . . . Thy money perish with thee—because he thought to buy **the gift of God.** Simon tried to buy it with money. Some try to buy it with efforts or good works and other things. God does not bargain with men and women. He transforms them. He gives Himself to those who open their hearts to receive Him. Peter told him to **repent . . . and pray God** for forgiveness of this sin.

Simon seemed at first to be saved. The church accepted him. But God did not. When his condition was seen, it was not glossed over. Had it been, those excusing it would have been partakers of his guilt. Excusing it would have blinded Simon to his need. Telling him plainly kept the church clean and let Simon know how to get right with God. The Holy Spirit gives the saints power to discern the spirit controlling a person and wisdom of what to do and say. The church must not knowingly accept sinners as saints.

JUST A THOUGHT

Death is never an end, always a separation.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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