
Book of Acts – Course A

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If you have not already done so, save this lesson to your computer using the "save" feature of your browser or PDF reader. Then print out the lesson (or at least open it in your browser or PDF reader **offline** – not on the Internet). Read the lesson and **study in your Bible the passages indicated >>> Scripture <<<**. Following each passage, study each question that has a number enclosed in asterisks (*1*, *2*, etc.), and **write down your answers on paper**. Some questions include more than one number because they have more than one blank to fill in. ("Think" questions should be carefully considered for your own benefit, but your answers will not be submitted to us.) Please take your time, study each passage carefully, answer the questions honestly, and consider the applications to your own life (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15).

When you have studied the whole lesson and written down answers to all the indicated questions, return to the menu for this course on our web site at www.BibleStudyLessons.com and click on the link for the **answer quiz** for this lesson (or simply click on the link at the end of this lesson). Follow the directions to submit your answers and receive your grade. You will then be given an opportunity to see the correct answers to the questions. Please save this lesson and the correct answers for future reference.

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Thank you for your interest, and God bless your study of His word.

Persecution Helps Spread the Gospel – Acts 8,9

Lesson 6

Introduction:

Chapter 7 ended with the death of Stephen. We will see that this led to severe persecution, but the result simply helped spread the gospel.

I. Saul Leads the Persecution – Acts 8:1–4

>>> Please read Acts 8:1–4. <<<

1 Who arrested and imprisoned the disciples? (a) Peter, (b) Saul, (c) Mohammed, (d) Pharaoh, (e) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

2 What did the disciples do when they were scattered (v4)? Answer: The disciples went everywhere preaching the _____.

Comment: Saul had consented to Stephen's death, but that was not all. He persecuted disciples so fiercely that they had to flee Jerusalem.

The scattered disciples still did not stop preaching. Instead, everywhere they went they told people about Jesus. Even death and persecution did not stop their commitment to preaching. Note that all Christians became teachers. They did not leave this work up to a few leaders (cf. v4 to v1). The gospel spreads effectively when all members teach.

This begins the second major section of Acts. The gospel here began to spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria (see Acts 1:8).

II. Philip's Work in Samaria – Acts 8:5–13

>>> Please read Acts 8:5–13. <<<

3 What miracles did Philip do? (a) casting out demons, (b) healing paralyzed people, (c) healing lame people, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

4 How had Simon fooled the people? Answer: Simon used sorcery to convince them he had great _____ from God.

5 What resulted from Philip's work (v12,13)? (a) people believed, (b) people were baptized, (c) Simon was baptized (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

Comment: Philip had been one of the seven servants chosen in Acts 6, but the persecution sent him to Samaria. Jerusalem was in Judea. Samaria was the region north of Judea (see a Bible map). Jews hated Samaritans, because they were a mixed breed; but like their Master, Christians should love the souls of all men (cf. John 4:9 in context).

A man named Simon had used sorcery to fool the Samaritans into believing he had great power from God. But even Simon recognized the true miracles Philip did. As a result, Simon and many Samaritans believed and were baptized.

Once again miracles achieved the purpose of confirming the gospel to be from God (see on Acts 3:1,2). In order to serve this purpose, true miracles had to be superior to what was done by fakes and false prophets. In this case, even the false miracle worker recognized the superiority of true miracles (see also on Acts 4:13–18).

In particular, true miracles were clearly superior to the power of sorcery. Sorcery, witchcraft, astrology, and all Occult powers are repeatedly condemned in Scripture. They come from Satan and therefore are inferior to God's miracles. See Deuteronomy 18:9–14; Galatians 5:19–21; Revelation 21:8; 22:15; Acts 19:18–20; 13:4–12.

This event records the second great example of conversion in Acts. It may be summarized as follows:

The Conversion of the Samaritans – Acts 8:5–13

Hearing	Belief	Repentance	Confession	Baptism	Result
v5,6,12	v12,13			v12,13	(cf. Mark 16:16)

III. Laying on of Hands and Simon's Sin – Acts 8:14–25

The Coming of the Holy Spirit on the Samaritans

>>> Please read Acts 8:14–19. <<<

6 Who came to Samaria from Jerusalem? (a) Jesus (b) John the Baptist, (c) Peter and John, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

7 How did the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit? Answer: The apostles laid their _____ on the Samaritans.

Comment: The Samaritans had been saved from sin when they believed and were baptized (vv 12,13; cf. Mark 16:16). But the Holy Spirit had not fallen on them. In a sense all saved people have a relationship of fellowship with the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 6:19,20; Rom. 8:9), but clearly Acts 8 refers to something more than that. The Samaritans had received no miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Contrary to the beliefs of some, not all saved people receive supernatural gifts.

The apostles had received supernatural gifts when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2). We will see just one other recorded example of Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 10). But the Samaritans received power from the Spirit, not by Holy Spirit baptism, but by having apostles lay hands on them (Acts 8:17–19).

Note that Philip could do miracles, but apostles had to come from Jerusalem to give other people spiritual gifts. This shows that people, other than apostles, could not pass on the powers of spiritual gifts to others, even if they themselves possessed the powers. Only apostles could pass these powers on. See also Acts 19:1–7; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6.

Think: Since no one today can possess the qualifications of an apostle (Acts 1:21,22), what conclusion should we reach about people today having the power of apostles or people today receiving miraculous powers? Remember that these gifts served the purpose of confirming the gospel, and they existed when the written word was incomplete. When the word had been completely revealed and recorded, the gifts were no longer needed. (Cf. John 20:30,31; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; 1 Cor. 13; Jude 3.)

(Note: To learn more about whether or not Bible miracles are still occurring today, please see the links at the end of this lesson.)

Simon's Sin

>>> Please read Acts 8:18–25. <<<

8 What sin did Simon commit? Answer: He tried to buy the power to give people the _____.

9 How did Peter describe him? (a) his heart was not right. (b) wicked, (c) bitterness, (d) iniquity, (e) he would perish, (f) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

10&11 What was he told to do to be forgiven of his sin? Answer: Peter told Simon to _____ and _____ for forgiveness.

Comment: Simon had been converted as surely as had the other Samaritans (vv 12,13; cf. Mark

16:16). But he apparently allowed his old conduct to take control again. He sinned and clearly stood condemned. This shows that a child of God can so sin as to be lost. The doctrine of "once saved, always saved" contradicts many Scriptures. See John 15:1–6; Rom. 6:12–18; Gal. 5:1–4; 6:7–9; 1 Cor. 9:25–10:12; 2 Peter 2:20–22.

Simon was also told what to do to be forgiven. One who is not a child of God needs to believe, repent, and be baptized to be forgiven. If after that a child of God sins again, he does not need baptism again. Instead, he must repent and pray for forgiveness (v22). See also 1 John 1:8–10; Matthew 6:12; Luke 18:13,14. Other Christians may also pray for us, as Simon requested here (v24; see also James 5:16).

(Note: If you would like to learn more about whether or not a child of God can so sin as to be eternally lost, please see the links at the end of this lesson.)

IV. Conversion of a Treasurer – Acts 8:26–40

Introduction to the Treasurer

>>> Please read Acts 8:26–31. <<<

12 Whom did Philip find on the road to Gaza? Answer: Philip met a treasurer from the land of _____.

13 What was this man doing as he returned from Jerusalem? Answer: He was reading from the prophet _____.

Comment: An angel told Philip to go to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza (see a map). There he found a eunuch from Ethiopia, who was the queen's treasurer.

Note that this man was clearly religious. He had traveled by chariot from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God. As he returned home, he was reading the Old Testament. But we will see that he was still lost, because he did not know about Jesus (cf. John 8:24; 14:6; Mark 16:16; Acts 4:12). Clearly a person can be a sincere, devout religious person and yet be lost. See also Acts 10:1–4,22; 11:14; 23:1; 26:1–11; 1 Tim. 1:12–16.

The Spirit led Philip to teach this treasurer (v29ff). Never in the Bible did angels, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit ever tell a lost sinner how to be saved, although sometimes they would get a preacher together with the sinner (cf. Acts 9:1–19; 10:1–11:18). So today do not expect that God or the Holy Spirit will directly tell a sinner how to be saved. They must hear the message from inspired teachers, whose word today is recorded in the Scriptures. See also Rom. 10:14; 2 Cor. 5:18; 4:7; 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

The Baptism of the Treasurer

>>> Please read Acts 8:32–40. <<<

14 About whom did Philip preach to the treasurer? (a) Peter, (b) Moses, (c) Jesus, (d) John the Baptist, (e) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

15 What did the treasurer want to do as a result? Answer: He asked what hindered him from being _____.

16 What did he have to do first? (V37 – this may be in a footnote). Answer: He confessed that he believed Jesus Christ to be the _____.

17 How is baptism described? (a) they went down into the water, (b) Philip baptized him, (c) they came up out of the water, (d) all of these. Answer: _____.

Comment: The treasurer was reading Isaiah 53:7,8 about one who died without resistance. This is one of many Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. Philip used this passage to preach Jesus to him.

Preaching Jesus includes teaching about His will for our lives. As a result, the treasurer realized his need to be baptized and wanted to do so immediately. Bible examples emphasize the urgency of baptism (see Acts 2:41; 9:18; 16:33; 22:16). This is because baptism is essential in order to receive salvation (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21).

However, Philip said that, before the treasurer could be baptized, he must believe in Jesus. When the treasurer confessed his faith, Philip baptized him. Note that baptism is only for people who understand God's word and choose baptism on the basis of their own faith in Jesus (Mark 16:15,16; Gal. 3:26,27; Acts 8:12; Rom. 10:9,10). Do babies qualify?

Also note that Bible baptism involved going down into the water and coming up out of it (cf. Mark 1:9,10). Is this what denominations do when they practice sprinkling or pouring? Bible baptism involved a burial and a resurrection – please read Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12. This fits immersion, but not sprinkling or pouring.

Bible baptism was a complete immersion in water of a person who had chosen for himself to obey on the basis on his own faith and understanding. Any other water "baptism" is a human change in God's plan (cf. Matt. 15:9,13; Gal. 1:8,9; 2 John 9–11; Col. 3:17; Jer. 10:23 Rev. 22:18,19).

This example of conversion may be summarized as follows:

The Conversion of the Treasurer – Acts 8:26–39

Hearing	Belief	Repentance	Confession	Baptism	Result
v35	v37		v37	v38,39	Rejoicing (v39)

(Note: If you would like to study more about the action of baptism – sprinkling, pouring, or immersion – please see the links at the end of this lesson.)

V. The Conversion of Saul – Acts 9:1–19

Jesus' Appearance to Saul

>>> Please read Acts 9:1–9. <<<

18 Why did Saul go to Damascus? (a) to capture Christians, (b) to worship Christ, (c) to see relics, (d) to attend a "Christian rock concert." Answer: _____.

19 Who appeared to him as he traveled? Answer: _____ appeared to Saul from a bright, shining light.

20 What disability did he receive as a result? Answer: As a result Saul was struck with _____.

Comment: Saul was still persecuting Christians (cf. 8:1ff). As he traveled, Jesus appeared to him. This would have especially amazed him, because he believed Jesus was a fraud. When Jesus appeared, this convinced Saul that Jesus had been raised from the dead and therefore He was the Christ as His disciples had been preaching.

As in the case of the treasurer, God did not directly tell Saul how to be saved. Saul had to go into the city and be told by an inspired man. No one learns how to be saved by direct revelation. Jesus appeared to Saul, not to save him or to tell him how to be saved, but to make him an eyewitness that Jesus had been raised. This would convince him to believe in Jesus and qualify him to be an apostle (Acts 26:16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:1–8).

Jesus said that, in Damascus, Saul would be told what he "must do." Many preachers say there is nothing one must do to be saved. Is this what Jesus believed? See also Matt. 7:21–27; Acts 10:34,35; Rom. 6:17,18; Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:8,9; James 2:14–26; 1 Pet. 1:22,23; 1 John 5:3; 2:3–6.

After Jesus' appearance, Saul was blind. This continued to remind him that Jesus really had appeared to him. Also, when his sight was restored, he would be sure that the one who restored it was the one sent to tell him what he must do. As with all miracles, the purpose was to confirm that a message or messenger was really from God.

The Visit of Ananias

>>> Please read Acts 9:10–18. <<<

21 What did Saul do as he waited in Damascus (v11)? (a) rejoiced, (b) prayed, (c) celebrated, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

22 What task did the Lord say he had for Saul to do? Answer: Saul would bear Jesus' _____ to Gentiles, kings, etc.

23 What did Saul do as soon as his sight was restored? Answer: Immediately Saul arose and was _____.

Comment: The Lord sent a disciple named Ananias to tell Saul what to do. At first Ananias was reluctant to visit such a dangerous persecutor. But Jesus said He wanted Saul to preach the gospel, and that this man who had caused so much suffering would himself suffer for Jesus.

Ananias went to Saul, restored his sight, and told Saul what he must do. As a result, Saul arose and was baptized.

Some people believe a sinner is saved by "faith alone" or by praying, without baptism. But Saul clearly believed in Jesus on the road, and in Damascus he was praying. But he still had not been told what he must do to be saved. When Ananias told him what to do, he immediately was baptized. Read Acts 22:16 to see what Ananias told him. There is no example anywhere in the gospel of an unbaptized sinner being forgiven by prayer.

This conversion may be summarized as follows:

The Conversion of Saul – Acts 9:1–19 (cf. 22:3–16; 26:1–17.)

Hearing	Belief	Repentance	Confession	Baptism	Result
9:6				9:18	(Cf. 22:16)

(Note: To learn more about whether an unbaptized sinner can be saved by prayer, see the links at the end of this lesson.)

VI. Saul's Preaching – Acts 9:19–31

Preaching in Damascus

>>> Please read Acts 9:19–25. <<<

24 What effect did Saul's preaching have? Answer: People were _____ because he formerly opposed the gospel.

25 How did he escape those who tried to kill him? Answer: He was let down through the wall in a _____.

Comment: After Saul's conversion, he preached Christ in Damascus. People were amazed that he was proclaiming what he had so opposed.

Jesus had predicted that Saul would be persecuted for his new faith. After his conversion, Saul became the apostle Paul. Throughout his life, Jews resented him, because his conversion demonstrated the power of Jesus' resurrection. In Damascus, he escaped a death plot when disciples lowered him through the wall in a basket.

Saul's Work in Jerusalem

>>> Please read Acts 9:26–31. <<<

26 What did Saul try to do at Jerusalem? (a) commit suicide, (b) convert back to Judaism, (c) join the disciples, (d) deny Jesus. Answer: _____.

27 Who explained to the apostles about his conversion? Answer: _____ told the apostles how Saul had been converted.

28 Why did Saul eventually leave Jerusalem? Answer: He fled because again people tried to _____ him.

Comment: When Saul went to Jerusalem, he tried to become part of the congregation of Christians there. However, they feared him, remembering his former persecutions. Barnabas informed the apostles about his conversion, so the church received him. He immediately began preaching, but again persecution forced him to flee.

The Bible mentions many congregations or churches of disciples in various localities. Saul's example shows that a Christian should always associate himself or herself with such a local church. Christians have group responsibilities that can be fulfilled only in a local church. This includes worshiping, teaching, and group Bible study. To fulfill these responsibilities, each Christian should choose a

faithful local church and commit himself to its work.

Like Saul, when a Christian moves to a new locality, he should search out a faithful church and express his desire to be received as a member of that group. No Christian in the Bible ever, with God's approval, neglected to commit himself to be part of a local church.

Personal application questions:

29 Do you believe a child of God can so sin as to be eternally lost? _____

30 Is baptism an immersion, sprinkling, or pouring? _____

31 Can prayer save an unbaptized sinner? _____

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, [click on this link to submit your answers.](#)

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