**Acts 8:1**

\*After courageous Deacon Stephen exegeted the *Tanak* and then excoriated the Sanhedrin members for their failure to honor the Law, the holy place, and Moses’ prediction of the coming prophet Jesus, he put them on trial by interrogating the members about their murderous behaviour towards the prophets. They stoned him under the direction of Saul of Tarsus, the *“consenting”* henchman of the Sanhedrin.

\*The LORD employed Saul to force the Jerusalem Baptist Church to practice the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20)! The significantly-reduced mega-church (20,000 plus) learned several basic church truths, namely, the **agility** of the assembly and the **rejection of congeniality** with outside officials!

\*Under Saul’s leadership *“great”* persecution (vv. 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 27) occurred (cf. Acts 22:4), and God scattered (sowed) members (Rom. 8:28) throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee (Acts 9:31). Luke recorded that attack, and its acuteness, audience, and aftermath!

\*The apostles remained (possibly with widows). Later, the Jerusalem Baptist Church included Mary the mother of John Mark, Rhoda, James, and the brethren (Acts 12:12-17; cf. also Acts 1:13-14).

\*Later, the former Pastor Peter wrote to former members of the *diaspora* in Asia Minor (I Pet. 1:1)!

**Acts 8:2-3**

\*Church members buried and then lamented Stephen’s death. This “rising star” completed God’s will!

\*Saul made havock with his savage ravage of the assembly going to their houses and imprisoned and killed them (Acts 26:11; I Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). Interestingly, converted Saul suffered the consequences of stoning (Acts 14:19-21) and persecution (I Cor. 4:12; II Cor. 4:9) > *“an eye for an eye”* (Lev. 24:19-20)!

\*The “scattered church” refers to scattered church members, not to an invisible and universal church! Theologian R. Saucy argues that this verse teaches the universal church even when not assembled! No, the church members were scattered and started visible assemblies! When Covid came, church members who stayed home were not “the church.” *Ekklesia* means a visible assembly!

**Acts 8:4-5**

\*Luke revealed the “who,” “where,” and “what.” The Baptist church members went everywhere and preached the Gospel! This included another deacon, Philip, who preached Christ and baptized men and women (Acts 8:12) at the city of Samaria.

\*Since baptism is a church ordinance, Deacon Philip started the Samaritan Baptist Church with his family on the first Sunday and added saved sinners to it through baptism. He was qualified to pastor the church since he was qualified to be a deacon (married and children [I Tim. 3:2-4, 12]). Any faithful church member can start a church but only a qualified man can pastor a church!

**Acts 8:6**

The Lord Jesus had planted the seed of truth in Samaria (Jn. 4:4 ff.). The half-breed Samaritans needed signs accompanying the preaching (I Cor. 1:22) and they responded in united faith as ready candidates for church membership.

**Acts 8:7-8**

\*Luke revealed the spiritual darkness in apostate NK Samaria (cf. Eph. 2:1-2) as some in the population were demon possessed with unclean spirits, palsies, and lame. The power of the Gospel is stronger than the hold of Satan (II Cor. 4:4; I Tim. 1:11). Because of the liberating power of the Gospel, many had great joy!

**Acts 8:9**

 \*The vicissitudes of the Lord’s *“my church”* movement were aptly illustrated with the events of Pentecostal growth, Sanhedrin, martyrdom, scattering, church planting, joy, and demonic attack. The joy in Samaria was quelled by Simon the Sorcerer (*mageuo* [1x] > “magician”). Luke recorded the recognition, resistance, and result of the demonic opposition (vv. 9-24).

 \*Satan countered the first coming of Christ with many anti-Christs (I Jn. 2:18) including Simon whose black arts were condemned by Jehovah (Dt. 18:10-12). Cf. the history of occultism on Israel which sought signs (Ex. 8:7—>Rev. 13:13). Paul warned Christians about involvement with *“witchcraft”* (*pharmakeia* > drugs [Gal. 5:20]). Simon was a *“shaman”* (Hebrew word for eight [*shemonah*], beyond the number of man *“six”* and of God *“seven”* for supernatural realm and gave the ‘third’ eye).

 **Acts 8:10-11**

\*Simon had hubris just as his spiritual father the Devil (I Tim. 3:6). The dimly-illuminated Samaritans were influenced with the Gnosticism of the day and looked to this “great one” in the *pleroma* who taught “the Lies of the Garden” (deathlessness and deification [see Acts 17:18; Col. 2:8-10]).

\*He had a history with them because Simon *“bewitched* (*ecstasy*) *them with sorceries* (*mageia*).*”*

**Acts 8:12**

 \*Nevertheless, the power of the supernatural *“miracles”* (v. 6) accompanying the preaching of Deacon Philip was greater than that of Simon and thus the Samaritans believed the *“kingdom of God”* message (*“ye must be born again”* [Jn. 3:3-7]).

 \*Obviously, the Gospel message included the truth about the *“name of Jesus Christ”* (see Acts 2:38; 3:6; 4:10) which they *“believed”* (*aorist*) and were saved.

 \*Pastor/Deacon Philip baptized men and women into the Samaritan Baptist Church! He certainly did not baptize them into the membership of the Jerusalem Baptist Church! Now Samaritans were allowed in the Lord’s *“my church”* movement!!

**Acts 8:13**

 \*The powerful preaching of Philip so impressed Simon that he *“believed”* and was baptized. The Scripture teaches two levels of faith. For instance, Pharaoh believed (Ex. 9:27-28), and John warned about empty belief (Mt. 13:18-23; Jn. 6:66; 20:30-31; I Jn. 5:13; see also Jam. 2:19).

 \*Luke hinted at the concern about Simon, since his focus was upon the “sign-giver” Philip and he *“wondered”* (*existemi* > “was ecstatic”) about his power with *“miracles and signs.”*

 \*Baptist pastors receive the verbal testimony of repentance and faith and look for *“fruits meet for repentance”* (Mt. 3:8) for membership. It is possible that unbelievers become “members” (I Cor. 15:12; II Cor. 13:5) and in due time will show their heart and become candidates for church discipline (I Cor. 5:1-5; I Tim. 1:20). The Bible does not countenance a 6-month waiting period for pastors instructing non-members and waiting for fruit!

 \*Simon may have thought that Philip was a greater *“shaman”* with greater powers and that baptism was an initiation rite unto a higher ranking in the *pleroma*. In fact, Paul used the term *mueo* (*“instructed”* or “to be initiated” [into the mysteries]) used by Gnostics in Phil. 4:12. Paul’s initiation into the divine mysteries given by Christ (I Cor. 13:2; Rom. 16:25) was in part through suffering.

\*The platonically-influenced “church fathers” saw baptism as an initiation into Roman Catholic Gnosticism. Even the practice of forty-day “Lent” is blatant Stoickism or self-denial!

**Acts 8:14**

\*Baptism is authentication, and both water and Spirit baptism authenticates; neither experience regenerates. Water Baptism authenticates identity with the Lord’s Baptist assembly. Spirit Baptism authenticated identity with the Lord’s Baptist assembly, the new institution for Jews, then for Samaritans, and then for Gentiles. Immersion is always in something, either water or the Spirit (Mt. 3:11; Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-38).

 \*Through the Jew Philip preaching the Gospel, the Samaritans responded by faith. The apostles at Jerusalem knew the message of the temporary Spirit Baptism (and First Coming of the Spirit) and sent Peter and John to observe the expansion of the Lord’s movement of Baptist assemblies to include the “despised” Samaritans (Jn. 4:9)! Peter had the keys of the kingdom (Mt. 16:18-19) and was present with the evangelization of the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles (see Acts 10:1 ff.)

**Acts 8:15**

 \*Since Peter and John had received the Holy Ghost (Jn. 20:22) prior to Spirit Baptism (Acts 2), they prayed that the Samaritans would receive Spirit Regeneration. They had already believed and were baptized. Now, the Samaritan church members needed the simultaneous but distinct events of Spirit Regeneration and Spirit Baptism as the believers in Acts 2 had received. For instance, Peter and the nine were saved and baptized (in the Gospel accounts), Spirit Regenerated (Jn. 20:22), and now Spirit Baptized for public authentication by Christ in the Jerusalem Baptist Church.

**Acts 8:16**

 \*Luke accurately recorded that Spirit Baptism/Spirit Regeneration had not occurred yet, even though the Samaritans were believers and water baptized church members! The Spirit was not yet *“fallen upon”* (also *“poured out”* [Acts 2:17; 10:45] or *“baptized with/ in”* [Mt. 3:11]) on the Samaritans.

\*Spirit Baptism was the external ministry with signs and wonders denoting that the Lord had anointed His new institution (cf. Ex. 40:34-38; I Ki. 8:10-11; Ezk. 43:1-4) for the benefit of Jews that the Jewish Baptist assembly would now included despicable Samaritans and dirty Gentiles (see Acts 1:8).

**Acts 8:17**

 \*The representatives of the Jerusalem Baptist Church, Peter, John and Philip, observed that with the two apostles laying hands on the saved/baptized Samaritans they received simultaneously Spirit Regeneration/Spirit Baptism of the Holy Ghost. The former experience was private, invisible and permanent, but the latter experience was public, visible, and temporary (cf. Acts 2:33; Eph. 4:5).

 \*Whereas the “universal churchites” believe and teach dogmatically that Spirit Baptism is the event that regenerates the repentant sinner and places him in the Universal, Invisible, Mystical Body of Christ, they are biblically wrong and heretical at this point. C. C. Ryrie says that the day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the Church! Dr. Custer (BJU) says about Spirit Baptism that it is the event wherein every believer is placed into the body of Christ at the moment of conversion. Spirit Baptism continues today!

 \*Since Paul said there was “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5), which baptism is for today—water or Spirit baptism? These ecclesiological heretics say that Spirit Baptism is all one needs; not water baptism!

**Acts 8:18-19**

\*Simon the Sorcerer saw the apostles’ laying on of hands and the public Spirit Baptism with signs and wonders. He wanted to buy supernatural power from these “advanced Gnostic gurus”—Peter and John!

\*He demonstrated his lack of biblical faith and wanted to continue with spiritual power of occultism.

**Acts 8:20**

\*The second phase of Spirit Baptism that John the Baptist predicted occurred in Samaria with the First Apostle Peter and John observing. Since Peter had the keys to the kingdom of Heaven (Mt. 16:18-19) he was present when Jesus baptized the Jews and now the Samaritans in the Holy Ghost (Mt. 3:11). This baptism authenticated the Lord’s new institution, the Baptist assembly, and opened the doors for Jews and Samaritans to have equal rank in the new “my church” movement (cf. also Acts 10:1-11:18).

 \*Simon the Sorcerer “saw” the manifestation of Spirit Baptism and wanted to purchase the “occultic” power, showing the fruit of his lack of biblical salvation. He did not understand Spirit Baptism as many Bible commentators, past and present, do not understand!

 \*Peter, with his gift of prophecy had great discernment and boldly and bluntly confronted this servant of Satan. He imprecated a curse upon Simon Magus who attempted to thwart God’s plan for this new institution. He said *“thy money perish* (present optative) *with thee”* (literally “may thy money continue to perish with thee”), discerning his unsaved and perishing condition. He was **no** carnal Christian!

 \*The *“shaman”* Simon wanted to buy and sell spiritual blessings to continue to bewitch people and increase his greatness in the *pleroma*! His offense was against the Lord and His institution.

**Acts 8:21**

\*The reason that Simon was in the state of perishing was that he had no *“part”* (share or partnership) or *“lot”* (inheritance). He had not experienced being *“partakers of the* ***inheritance*** *of the saints in light”* (Col. 1:12)! The *“matter”* at hand was either regeneration or perish in hell!

 \*Simon Peter leveled at Simon Magus the truth that Asaph leveled at Israel, saying, *“For their heart was not right with him”* (Ps. 78:37a). Peter condemned this demon-possessed occultic priest!

**Acts 8:22**

\*After the condemnation came the command: *“repent”* (*aorist* imperative to change mind which results in change of behaviour)! This is the urgent message for all sinners (see also Acts 2:38 and 3:19), whether demon-possessed or not! The repentance was for *“this thy wickedness”* of his complete allegiance to the world view and practice of Satan.

 \*Biblical conversion requires two conditions: turning from sin (Lk. 13:3, 5) and turning to Christ in faith (Acts 16:31; Jon. 3:8-10; I Thes. 1:9; also Acts 3:19).

 \*The born-again experience is personal. It involves the personal prayer to God and the asking for forgiveness of *“the thought of thine heart.”* The Lord is the One who forgives the repentant sinner (cf. Jn. 20:23)!

**Acts 8:23**

 \*With biblical perception, the Apostle knew the state of Simon and condemned him, saying, *“thou art in the gall of bitterness”* (literally “you are presently in the state of extreme bitter envy”). Simon wanted Simon’s supernatural power! Further, he was in *“the bond of iniquity”* or contrastively, as Paul explained for the believer, *“for sin shall not have* ***dominion*** *over you”* (Rom. 6:14; 8:15).

**Acts 8:24**

 \*The response of Simon the Sorcerer was telling and pathetic. If he had previously repented and believed, he would have called on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-13). His prayer would have been personal: *“God be merciful to me a sinner”* (Lk. 18:13). Obviously, Peter was not going to repent for the Sorcerer! He couldn’t trick Peter or the Lord. Since no response, church discipline fell!

**Acts 8:25**

 \*The resounding silence to the spiritual outcome of Simon Magus revealed that he never repented and presumably was disciplined out of the Samaritan Baptist Church (Lk. 17:3-4).

 \*The Apostle Peter and John finished their mission in Samaria, recognizing that Spirit Baptism and Spirit Regeneration had occurred for the Samaritans, who could now become church members of Christ’s *“my church”* movement along with Jews. As they went back to report to the Jews in Jerusalem they continued to minister in the villages of the Samaritans (Mk. 16:15).

**Acts 8:26**

 \*Deacon Philip had been a faithful deacon (I Tim. 3:8 ff.), evangelist (Acts 21:8), church planter (I Cor. 3:7), and pastor (Eph. 4:11). He received his next assignment from *“the angel of the Lord”* and was called to go south and then west through the desert to Gaza.

\*Gaza was part of Judaea (see Josh. 15:47). Since there were churches in *“Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria”* (Acts 9:31), presumably there was a church in Gaza. The exegete must interpret the following activities with known truth. Philip had biblical ecclesiology, knowing that repentant sinners are baptized into the Baptist assembly (Acts 2:41) as the Lord sets them in the assembly (I Cor. 12:18).

**Acts 8:27-28**

 \*The Lord had orchestrated a divine meeting between a faithful servant and a seeking sinner. This Jew met the black man Gentile of Ethiopia (a Cushite from Ham) who was a *“eunuch”* (“a bed holder” or emasculated man over the harem [Dt. 23:1]). He had great authority (perhaps he had a delegation with him) for the wealth of Candance (title), and may have been a Jewish proselyte who came to worship (see Jn. 12:20).

 \*He was returning from Jerusalem with interest piqued in the *Tanak* and *the Book of Isaiah*.

**Acts 8:29-31**

 \*The Spirit directed the Spirit-filled Philip to join this Gentile in his chariot. This Hamitic dignitary was a seeker of truth and the Lord had the preacher of truth on hand (Heb. 11:6).

 \*With three staccato-like verbs, Luke said Philip *ran, heard*, and *said*. The treasurer was reading out loud to know where one word stopped and the next began since capitalization and punctuation were scarce or even non-existent. The Gentile proselyte could read the Hebrew text of the *Tanak* but did not have spiritual illumination (I Cor. 2:12-14). The Lord uses Baptists to give the will of God to the unsaved and the un-churched (see Acts 9:13-17).

 \*The high-ranking eunuch needed help and the Baptist deacon was ready (Isa. 52:7; Rom.10:15).

**Acts 8:32-33**

\*The man of God with the Spirit of God from the church of God employing the Word of God became the pattern for biblical evangelism.

 \*The Scripture he was reading was Isa. 53:7-8, one of the Isaianic Servant Songs (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12; cf. 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:1-7; and 61:1-2 [Lk. 4:18]). Luke paraphrased the preserved Hebrew words!

**Acts 8:34-35**

 \*Philip answered the question of identity and preached the Gospel of Jesus, including baptism. The passage speaks of the prophesied death of the Messiah. Philip knew to preach Jesus of Nazareth from the *Tanak* since it all pointed to Him (Lk. 24:44). The evangelist also heard Peter preach *“repent, and be baptized”* (Acts 2:38) and prepared the eunuch for biblical church baptism!! More to come!