

Acts 8:1-8

Introduction:

1. Remember, we do not base our (the Body of Christ) doctrine on the book of Acts. The book of Acts is a **trans**itional book showing the transition from Israel - promise and law, to the Dispensation of Grace. If you use Acts for doctrine, you are basing your beliefs upon changing ground and not **firm** footing.
2. Acts does have some truths we apply for today, but we get and base our doctrinal beliefs upon the epistles of Paul. Those epistles are for the church body today. We understand that there is truth in **every** dispensation, that every book in the Bible is truth for **all** time (Creation - sin - blood sacrifice - God's character and sovereignty - the Word of God - importance of faith and obedience - God's love of Israel - the future Tribulation and judgment - the Millennial Kingdom - coming of Messiah - God's honor and blessings to the righteous, etc.).

*However, only through the Mystery truths of revelation, given only to the Apostle Paul, do we base **much** of our doctrine (teachings) upon (Romans - Philemon).

Note: We do not interpret Paul's epistles in light of Acts, but we interpret Acts in light of Paul's epistles.

- a. Ex. The book of Acts does not tell us **when** the Body of Christ began, but in Paul's epistles Paul shows us it began with him, **mid**-Acts. *Richard Jordan says: #13-rebellion, #11-incompletion, and #9-fruit-bearing.
 - b. Ex. The book of Acts does not explain why Stephen's (full of the Holy Ghost) prayer was **not** answered then and Israel given another chance to believe. But Paul's epistles explain that God's plan for Israel did not fail but was only **inter**rupted. Stephen's prayer lined up with Israel's prophetic program, but he did **not know** of the coming Mystery program with Paul.
3. Also, here in Acts 7, when Israel committed the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, for those religious leaders, followers, synagogue leaders in agreement with them, they could **never** repent to be forgiven.
 - a. Also, the religious leaders who made the decision for Israel (theocracy) caused the **nation** to be judicially judged. National salvation for **that** generation (Luke 11:47-51) was taken away and Israel, as a nation, was set aside temporarily.

Matthew 23:24-36 - Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: Matt. 23:35 - That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Matt. 23:36 - Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

- b. However, individual Jews could believe then (and many did) that Jesus Christ was the Messiah - Son of God and be saved. Also, individual Jews could believe that Christ's **D.B.R.** for their sins was alone sufficient to save them when Saul-Paul came on the scene.

A. The Messianic Church's Persecution

Acts 8:1-4 - 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 Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. Acts 8:2 - And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. Acts 8:3 - As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Acts 8:4 - Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

1. Saul was ruthless in the name of religion. He stood out among all others because of his zealous hatred of the Little Flock's Messiah. *But Saul's intended purpose was to **win** the council's approval in order to make a living!

Galatians 1:13-14 - For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: Gal 1:14 - And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

*Saul used his religion to persecute believers, to **rise** in the Jewish ranks, and to make **money** "profited." Saul is making a name for himself as he climbs the religious ladder. He pleased the religious leaders of Judaism of his day.

2. 8:1 says [Saul was consenting unto his (Stephen's) death]. Some believe he was **voting** for Stephen's death. Being able to vote was only the Sanhedrin's right. Was Saul a member of the Sanhedrin?
3. Philippians 3:5-6 - Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Phil. 3:6 - Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

*Since Saul was most likely a member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, many believed he had been **married**. To be a member of the Sanhedrin, one had to have been married with children. This would make them more humane in their judgment of others.

*Some believe his wife **died or left** him when he believed in Christ.

1 Corinthians 7:7-8 - For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. 1 Cor. 7:8 - I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

4. No doubt this religious zealot was a **mad** man for Judaism that apostatized.

Acts 9:1,2 - And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, Acts 9:2 - And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Acts 9:13,14 - Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: Acts 9:14 - And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

Acts 26:10-12 - Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. Acts 26:11 - And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Acts 26:12 - Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

5. Here in Acts 8 it says [Saul, he made havock of the church]. Persecution was so intense that the Jewish believers scattered out from Jerusalem to surrounding areas of Judaea and Samaria.

*Some try to say that since the apostles stayed in Jerusalem they were being disobedient to the Great Commission. So God allowed persecution to force them to spread the message elsewhere.

- a. Here in Acts 8, we are still on Jewish ground. The church at Jerusalem is not the Body Church that Paul speaks about. To say the Little Flock was disobedient (and the 12 who remained in Jerusalem) was the opposite of the facts. The Jewish believers fled for their lives, not because God commanded them to leave Jerusalem.
- b. The 12 apostles stayed in Jerusalem. Remember, they were filled-with-the-Holy-Spirit men who were obedient in not leaving Jerusalem with the rest. The reason the 12 remained in Jerusalem is they understood perfectly their commission (1:8). They understood their message was to proclaim the Kingdom rights of Christ (not the gospel of grace today).

*For them to stay took real courage. Courage is conviction you know you are doing what is right!

- c. Why did they stay at this time in Jerusalem?

Matthew 5:35 - Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Luke 24:47 - And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Acts 1:8 - But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Matthew 19:28 - And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- (1) *These 12 apostles had been promised thrones in the Kingdom. The earthly kingdom was to be established at Jerusalem and could not happen until Jerusalem had accepted Jesus as Messiah.
 - (2) The 12, at this time, did not know the kingdom offer was over for the time being. They did not know they should not stay there, nor that God was moving to His new Dispensation of Grace.
6. God promised Abraham that the nations (Gentiles) would be blessed through a spiritual-believing Israel. How could this take place if Israel would not repent nor believe Jesus was Messiah? *The fact that the 12 remained in Jerusalem demonstrates Israel was not turning to Christ. Instead of embracing the message of Christ, Israel's leaders persecuted anyone who believed Christ was Messiah.
 7. There was [great lamentation] at Stephen's burial. He was a wonderful Jewish Kingdom believer. But also understand, it was the burial of Israel's Kingdom hope for a long time to come.
 8. No doubt, because of the persecution, Peter and the others possibly thought it was the beginning of the Tribulation which would, at its end, usher in Christ's return. Jesus had told them:

Matthew 24:29-30 - Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: Matt. 24:30 - And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Acts 1:11 - Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

*They still believed that Israel would believe, their kingdom set up, as it had been prophesied:

Zechariah 8:22,23 - Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Zec. 8:23 - Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

9. Verse 4 says they [went everywhere preaching the word]. *This persecution did not result in any preaching to the Gentiles until sometime later.

Acts 11:19 - Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

- a. The Body Church is **not** in view here in chapter 8. The 12, nor any other believer of Israel, preached the gospel of grace as today at this time.
- b. [preaching the word] What word? Paul was not saved yet. He had not written **any** of his epistles that reveal the mystery Body of Christ. So what word? The answer is Israel's/Christ's prophetic message to Israel found in O.T., Four Gospels, and early Acts.

B. Philip the Evangelist

Acts 8:5-8 - Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. Acts 8:6 - And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. Acts 8:7 - 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. Acts 8:8 - And there was great joy in that city.

1. Philip goes to Samaria and preaches Christ (living Messiah), and boom....**many** believe. It goes from persecution in verse 1 to **joy** in verse 8. Philip's Jewish message follows the commission given to Jewish believers.

Mark 16:17,20 - And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; Mark 16:20 - And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

2. Philip does not preach for salvation Christ **crucified**. The Jewish message from Pentecost on was that Jesus was the Christ. Remember:

Matthew 16:15,16 - He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Matt. 16:16 - And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

John 11:25-27 - Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: John 11:26 - And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? John 11:27 - She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

John 20:30,31 - And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: John 20:31 - But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Note: There is never any mention of **D.B.R.** for salvation by faith alone. But contrary:

Mark 16:15,16 - And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Mark 16:16 - He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Acts 2:38 - Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:35-37 - Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. Acts 8:36 - And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? Acts 8:37 - And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

3. Shortly after Paul is saved in Acts 9, he is taken by God to the Arabian desert and given portions of the mystery-secret. Notice the difference in Paul's message. It is **more** than Jesus is the Christ-Messiah:

1 Corinthians 1:17-18,23 - For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 1 Cor. 1:18 - For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 1 Cor. 1:23 - But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

1 Corinthians 15:3,4 - For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 1 Cor. 15:4 - And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

2 Corinthians 5:15,21 - And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 2 Cor. 5:21 - For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Romans 4:24,25 - But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Rom. 4:25 - Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

4. Samaria - About a thousand years prior to this time, the nation of Israel **di**vided. There became two kingdoms. The 10 tribes broke away from Judah and Benjamin apostasy. After the split, they were usually called the 10 N. Tribes and 2 (Judah) S. Tribes. The king of the N. Tribes ruled as King of Samaria, the capital city of worship. Under King Jereboam, Northern Israel **re**nounced Jerusalem, the Temple, and even the worship of Jehovah. Samaria became the counterfeit religious center for idolatrous worship (1 Kings 13:32-33, Ezekiel 16:53).
 - a. After the Babylonian captivity, the Jews did not allow the Samaritans to help **re**build the temple of Jerusalem (Ezra 4). The Samaritans built a **rival** temple on Mt. Gerizim (John 4:20). They also **inter**married with Gentiles (Syrians), becoming known as half-breeds (1/2 Jew and 1/2 Gentile).

John 4:9,12 - Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

John 4:12 - Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

- b. *These verses show the Samaritan was an **Israelite**. So Philip's going to Samaria was not a departure from the Jewish Kingdom program. Nor was it the sending of the gospel to the Gentiles through Israel's unbelief (not **yet**).
- c. Since these were **Jews**, that explains the miraculous deeds being done by Philip. Signs were associated with Israel and the Kingdom. *These signs later **ceased** when Israel, as a nation, was set aside.

1 Corinthians 1:22a - For the Jews require a sign,

Acts 28:26-28 - Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: Acts 28:27 - For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Acts 28:28 - Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

*Isn't it **ironic** that the Samaritans, who had apostatized, are here in Acts 8 joyfully accepting Jesus Christ as Messiah. But Israel's leaders had rejected their Messiah and even persecuted those who did believe Jesus was the Christ - Messiah.

Luke 19:14 - But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.