

GTW – Acts of the Holy Spirit – Acts 8:1-40

“The Church Persecuted and Scattered, The Church Expands in
Samaria, Northern Africa (Ethiopia), Caesarea”

October 7, 2020 – Dr. C. Patrick Hartsock

The Power and Purpose of God Sovereignly Using “Diaspora” to Accomplish His Purposes:

- **Tower of Babel resisting being scattered:** “Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be **scattered** (*diaspora* in the Septuagint) over the face of the whole earth.”
Genesis 11:4
- **God scattering people all over the earth:** “So, the LORD **scattered** them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.”
Genesis 11:8
- **God scattering his own people from Jerusalem:** “Now those who had been **scattered** (*diaspora*) by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews.” Acts 11:19
- **God scattering his own people throughout:** “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God’s elect, exiles **scattered** (*diaspora*) throughout the provinces of **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia**, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...”
1 Peter 1:1-3
- The word *diaspora* derives from a Greek term meaning dispersion. .”*diaspora*” is a scattered population whose origin lies in a separate geographic locale. Historically, the word *diaspora* was used to refer to the involuntary mass dispersion of a population from its indigenous territories, in particular the dispersion of Jews.
- The verb form of *diaspora* is *diaspeiro*. This verb appears in only three instances in the book of Acts we are studying (Acts 8:1b, 4; 11:19). In each instance, *diaspeiro* relates to the scattering of the Christians of Hellenistic and Jewish origin (Greek-speaking Jewish Christians and Jewish converts from the diaspora) in areas where there was a non-Jewish majority (Acts 11:19), but also in the area around Jerusalem and toward Samaria
Acts 8:1
 - The unique contribution of these verses in the use of *diaspeiro* is that those who were scattered served essential factors in the expansion of early Christianity to missions
(Acts 8:4-8, 40; 11:19-21).

- ***“Diaspora”*** and missions can be seen as related through the contextual check of the diaspora passages for implicit elements of mission outreach of the early church. A contextual check of these passages in Acts shows God’s sovereignty in the Jewish Christian diaspora. In fact, God’s sovereignty establishes the framework for the missionary expansion of Christianity.” *
- ***“Diaspeiro” Passages for Missions***
 “The earlier context of Acts 8:1b and 8:4 dealt with persecution and martyrdom. In Acts 7:54-60, the stoning of Stephen happened. Right after Stephen’s martyrdom, Luke immediately narrated the breaking out of a “great persecution...Saul carried out this persecution by trying to destroy the Jerusalem church. He went from house to house, heartlessly and systematically dragging off men and women and putting them into prison...”* Acts 8:1a.; 8:3
- “Aside from persecution, the later context revealed the emphasis on missions. The Hellenized and Jewish Christians, who were scattered in the diaspora, “preached the word wherever they went.” Particularly, Philip preached about Christ in Samaria (Acts 8:5). As a result of his preaching and miraculous signs, people listened. Many were healed and were rejoicing (Acts 8:6-7). Many people also believed Philip’s message and were baptized.”* Acts 8:12
 *Passages from Lausanne Conference on Evangelism
- Thus, we can see that persecution (along with martyrdom) became the trigger of the diaspora of Hellenized and Jewish Christians. These Christians used their diaspora outside of Jerusalem to be the setting for their missionary efforts.
 - God sovereignly used the “diaspora” of missionaries expelled from China in 1949

Small group or personal reflection question: When has the Lord ever “scattered” (*diasporaed*) you so you could be used by him in a new place (state, city, country, etc.)?

- ² “Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.” Acts 8:2-3

Small group or personal reflection question: What would you do if the secular culture started attacking Christians, dragging them out of their houses and putting them in prison because of their biblical and Christian beliefs?

“The Lord Fulfills His Prophecy of Acts 1:8 through “*Diaspora*”

- “Those who had been **scattered** (*diapsero*) preached the word wherever they went. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in **Samaria** and proclaimed the Messiah there. ⁶ When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷ For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.” Acts 8:4-8
- “Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way, he met **an Ethiopian eunuch**, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

“The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” ^[37] ³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized,” Acts 8:26-38

- “Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached **Caesarea**.” Acts 8:40

Comparisons and contrasts of Philip’s evangelism to Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch

- **Comparisons:** Shared the gospel of Jesus Christ (vs. 12, 35)
Both believed and were baptized (vs. 12, 36-38)
- **Contrasts:** Samaritans – Half-Jewish, Half-Gentile, and Asiatic
Ethiopian eunuch – Black African, probably a Jewish proselyte

How the prophesy of Jesus in Acts 1:8 began to be fulfilled in the early church:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem (Acts 2-3)**, and in all **Judea (Acts 4-8)** and **Samaria (Acts 8:5, 25)**, and to **the ends of the earth (Acts 8:27, 40)**.”

The contradictions of Simon’s belief and life:

- “Now for some time a man named **Simon** had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, ¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” ¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women...
 - **Simon himself believed and was baptized.”**
 - “When **Simon saw** that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, **he offered them money** ¹⁹ and said, “**Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.**” Acts 8:18-19

Peter answered:

1. **“May your money perish with you,** because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!
2. ²¹ **You have no part or share in this ministry,** because **your heart is not right before God.**
3. ²² **Repent of this wickedness and pray** to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.
4. ²³ **For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”**
5. ²⁴ Then Simon answered, **“Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.”**

Small group or personal reflection question: Have you ever encountered someone who professed to believe in Jesus, yet their life and lifestyle contradicted their profession? How did you go on with a relationship with them? Or did you?

- **Continuing outreach to the Samaritan people:** “After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many **Samaritan villages.**” Acts 8:25

- **The Samaritans:** “The word Samaritan means guardians, keepers, protectors (of the Torah). **Descendants of** the tribes of Ephraim and Manassah (two sons of Joseph). **818 Samaritans exist to this day.**”* *Wikipedia – Samaritans

One way the Holy Spirit moved in the early church:

➤ **The Holy Spirit spoke and led the early church:**

- **“Now an angel of the Lord (“The Spirit told Philip” – vs. 29 below) said to Philip,** “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ **The Spirit told Philip,** “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”
- **Philip obeyed the Spirit:** “Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked...”
- **The Spirit knew the Ethiopian was reading a Messianic passage:**
³¹ “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: ‘He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.’”
- **The Spirit knew the Ethiopian was struggling with the passage and Philip was the perfect one to address his struggle:** “The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.”

Small Group or personal reflection question: Has the Holy Spirit ever led you to minister to, share Christ with, or help someone understand the faith more fully and deeply?

- **Baptism was the outward sign of an inward conversion:** “As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?”³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.”

The Holy Spirit is moving in the 2/3 world with visions, dreams, signs and wonders.

Small group or personal reflection question: Why do you think the Holy Spirit is moving that way frequently and fully outside the Western world, and yet not moving as frequently and fully inside the western world.