

The Acts of the Apostles and Life in the Early Church

SESSION 3

THE CHURCH EXPANDS: JUDEA, SAMARIA, ANTIOCH



Today's Cast of Important People from Acts


Philip

Paul

Peter

Cornelius

Philip vs. Simon the Magician – 8:4-25

1. Persecution cannot stop God's power (remember Gamaliel)
 2. Contrasting examples of the use of God's power (Philip/Simon)
 3. Simon offers to purchase power of HS (8:18-19)
 4. Luke: God's power is free, cannot be bought, controlled, manipulated; Christianity is not to be confused with magic or occult
 5. Like Ananias + Sapphira, Simon's "heart is not upright before God"
8:20-23
 6. Illustrates old order vs. kg of God
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Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch – 8:26-40

1. Story foreshadows full-scale evangelization of the Gentiles in ch. 10-11, 15
2. Angel indicates that it's God's plan, not Philip's
3. Eunuch was probably a "God-fearer" limited from full participation in Jewish practice (see Deut 23:1)
4. Reading Isa 53:7-8, cf. Isa 56:3-5 – *"What's to prevent me...?"*
Nothing, the Kg of God has arrived *fulfilling Isa 56:3-5*
5. Scene portrays the *power of God's Word to transform lives*

The Conversion of Saul – 9:1-19

1. “One of the most dramatic passages in all of Scripture.”
2. “Conversion”?
3. **Paul** will play the central role throughout 2nd half of Acts, but still secondary in importance to God’s overall plan
4. Story told 3 times (9, 22, 26) = living proof of Gamaliel principle (5:38-39)
5. **“Call Stories”** in Bible (Moses, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc.): a) God encountered, b) unworthiness expressed, c) reassurance given, d) person commissioned
6. Paul’s accounts: 1 Cor 15, Gal 1, 2 Cor 12, Phil 3

Peter and Cornelius – Acts 10-11

1. Along w/ ch. 15, = major turning points in Acts; legitimizing Gentile inclusion via Peter's approval (at God's prompting / initiative), **cf. Lk 4**
2. Cornelius and Peter's Visions
3. Peter's account points to an **amazing transformation**: "What God has made clean, you are not too call profane" (10:15)
4. 10:28 – "God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean"
5. 10:34 – "I see that God shows no partiality"
6. 10:44 – Pentecost for Pagans parallels Acts 2

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES



The Church Spreads to Antioch – Acts 11

1. Indicates persecution fosters geographical spread of Christianity
2. **Antioch** = great city in Syria on the Mediterranean, 50,000 people
3. Barnabas and Saul team up
4. “Christians” 11:26
5. James (brother of John) killed by Herod Agrippa, Peter arrested, freed by angel
6. Herod (“the voice of a god”) punished by a gruesome death

The Council of Jerusalem – Acts 15

1. The problem – 15:1-12
2. James' argument – 15:13ff, cites Amos 9:11-12 as affirming this is God's plan. So, don't obstruct Gentile inclusion
3. 15:20 – compromises that will allow for G/J table fellowship
4. Important: early Church reaching decision not by dictating God's action but by discerning God's will as presented in God's Word.
5. Gentile inclusion issue now settled, Luke can now focus on Paul and Christianity's spread to "ends of the world"

For Next Week...

Ideally, read Acts 16-28

Or

17, 20, 27-28

