

# Week 14

## The Church is Dispersed – Part IV

### The Ministry of the Church in Samaria

As violent persecution of the church began with the martyrdom of Deacon Stephen, most of the church fled to prevent the fire of the movement from being extinguished. The Christians were not running for fear. They ran to spread the Word so that the gospel would spread to the whole world. It is interesting to note the 12 Apostles stayed behind in Jerusalem.

No doubt the powers that be in the Jewish leaders thought they had won when they saw the followers of the Twelve dispersed. The Apostles knew that the church must always maintain a presence in Jerusalem, the 'City of the King', and so they stayed.

Luke describes how Stephen was given the first Christian burial. He tells us that Stephen was buried by "certain devout men", it was no doubt a large event in which there was "great lamentation" throughout the movement. There was no doubt left in anyone's mind just how far the Establishment of the Jews was willing to go to stop the gospel from going forward.

Luke picks up the story of the church with the ministry of Philip (one of the original seven deacons), in Samaria. It was an amazing thing that the church first went to Samaria. The Samaritans were hated by the Jews. The Samaritans were part Jew and part Assyrian (and other nationalities) that were formed through the inter-marriage of the Jews with their captors during the Assyrian captivity of the northern tribes of Israel. As such they were no longer 'real' Jews in the eyes of most. Even their religion was co-opted as they were not present for much of the Old Testament era, as the Jewish faith and practice developed.

The ministry of Philip was filled with signs and wonders as he preached Jesus as Messiah. His ministry was so great and filled with power that he won over Simon, one of the 'great' sorcerers among the people. This was a very important conversion as the people saw Simon as one having God's power.

When word reached the Apostles in Jerusalem, they were astounded, and sent Peter and John to witness these great conversions. As Peter and John join up with the ministry in Samaria, we see strong scriptural proof for the doctrine of a "Second Blessing". The Samaritans had become believers in Jesus Christ and were saved. However, they had not received the Second Blessing, the Great Gift, the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

A. THE MINISTRY OF DEACON PHILIP (8:4-40)

- a. The church is scattered beyond Jerusalem into Samaria, preaching the Word
- b. Saul menaces the church
- b. Philip's miraculous ministry in Samaria
  - 1. The conversion of Simon the Sorcerer
  - 2. The sin and repentance of Simon
- c. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-39)
- d. Philip en route to Caesarea (40)

