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The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 8



Review of Chapter 7

- Stephen answers the high priest by recounting salvation history starting with Abraham, continuing with Moses and the giving of the Law, then concluding with the prophecies concerning Messiah.
- Moses prefigures Jesus Christ, the Messiah:
 - As a baby, he was saved from pharaoh's slaughter as Christ was saved from that of Harrod;
 - Moses had to flee Egypt as Christ fled Judea for Egypt;
 - Moses was rejected by his own as Christ was rejected and not recognized among his own;
 - Moses led Israel to temporal salvation as Jesus Christ led Israel and all the world to eternal salvation through His live-giving Incarnation, death and resurrection;
 - Moses instructed the Israelites to sprinkle the blood of a lamb on the lintel of their doors that the angel of death may pass over them (Passover); Christ is the ultimate and final passover lamb: by His shed blood He has defeated sin and death on the cross, delivering us to eternal salvation for all who put Him on in baptism (Gal. 3:27)
 - Moses led the Israelites to the promised land; Christ leads the New Israel through His Church to His eternal and Heavenly Kingdom.
- In his conclusion, St. Stephen accuses the Jewish leaders of resisting the Holy Spirit just as their ancestors did in putting the prophets to death.
- Finally, Stephen accuses the Jewish authorities of having put the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to death, those "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." (v. 53)
- God validated St. Stephen's testimony through the vision of heaven that he was granted in which he saw Jesus sitting at the right hand of God the Father in heaven (v. 55).
- St. Stephen convicted those who heard him as evidenced by the rabid furry with which they rushed to stone him to death, making him the protomartyr of the Church.
- St. Stephen, like Christ on the cross, was innocent of the crime of blasphemy. He, like Christ, asks that the sin of his murderers not be held against them (v. 60).
- Saul (the future St. Paul) was the one who consented to and was even in charge of stoning St. Stephen (v. 58).

Chapter 8

- Q: What do we learn about early Orthodox Christian burial in these first verses?
- Q: What are the aftereffects of St. Stephen's martyrdom?
- Q: How does God work through the evil being perpetrated against Christ and His Body, the Church? How is this an example of God redeeming evil?
- Q: What do we learn further about Saul?

Q: What evangelism has taken place thus far in Samaria? Why are the Samaritans so quick, in part, to respond to the Gospel presented by the deacon, St. Philip (6:5)?

Q: What does “belief” involve, as we see with the example of Simon the sorcerer (vv.9-13)?

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mk. 16:16)

Q: How does the Church respond to the news of the reception of the Gospel in Samaria? What does this reveal about how order and ministry works in the Church?

Q: How is the Holy Spirit conferred to those in Samaria who believed and were baptized?

n.b. Verse 16—“they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus...” does not mean that they had not received baptism as the Lord Himself instructed in Matt. 28:19, “Go ^{la}therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....” The emphasis here is not to neglect the Holy Trinity, but to distinguish Christian baptism from that of the Forerunner and baptizer, John.

Q: What do we make of the example of Simon (vv. 18-24)? What was his sin?

Q: What does Philip’s question to the Ethiopian eunuch teach us regarding our need of the Church?

Q: What do we learn about the Ethiopian eunuch? What does God’s outreach to him reveal?

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
And who will declare His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth.” (Isaiah 53:7,8)



Q: In what ways do we see these verses fulfilled in Christ’s Passion, death, and resurrection?

n.b. These verses from the Prophet Isaiah are read as the presbyter (priest) cuts and prepares the Lamb, a cut out section of the offered bread, that will become by the power of the Holy Spirit the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, together with the words at the end, “The Lamb of God is sacrificed, He who takes up the sins of the world for the life of the world and its salvation.”

“Observe how it is Providentially ordered. First he reads and does not understand; then he reads the very text in which was the Passion and the Resurrection and the Gift.... Mark the eager desire, mark the exact knowledge: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XIX on Acts 8:26,27)

Q: Why did the Lord then ‘spirit Philip away’?

