

The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 9



Review of Chapter 8

- St. Stephen is mourned by the Church, revealing death as the enemy Christ God became incarnate to defeat on the cross by His resurrection. It is right as Christians to mourn the loss of those who have gone before us and to see death as an enemy that we in Christ will, likewise, vanquish.
- Even as Saul consented to and oversaw those who had stoned St. Stephen, he “made havoc of the church” (v. 3), beginning the first general persecution of the Church, throwing the faithful in prison.
- The persecution resulted in the scattering of the Church and the spread of the Gospel.
- Philip preaches the Gospel to the Samaritans. They eagerly receive the Gospel, believe, and are baptized.
- When the Apostles hear of the conversion of the Samaritans, they send Peter and John to anoint them (lay hands on them—Chrismation) to receive the Holy Spirit.
- Among those who believed in Samaria is a sorcerer named Simon, who later sought to ‘buy’ the power of the Holy Spirit and was strongly rebuked by the Apostles (vv. 20-24), as the power of the Holy Spirit cannot be purchased.
- Philip is sent by the Holy Spirit to a eunuch from the Court of Candice of Ethiopia. The eunuch is reading Isaiah 53, which contains prophecies of the Messiah. The eunuch is perplexed by this passage. Philip explains them to him as prophecies concerning Jesus Christ.
- This encounter between the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip demonstrates the need for the Church to interpret the Scriptures and Orthodox (right-believing) Faith. The eunuch believes and is baptized.
- The Lord spirits Philip away, demonstrating in dramatic manner that it was God who had sent Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch.

End of Chapter 8

“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.”

Chapter 9

Q: What do we learn about the scope of Saul's charge in verses 1-2? Who was at risk from him?

Q: Why is it significant that those who believed in Christ God were called "of the Way" (v. 2)? What does this teach us about what Christianity is meant to be?

Q: Why does the Lord say to Saul, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"? (v. 5)

n.b. "goads," verse 5, means "a spiked stick for herding animals."

Q: What is meant by, "it is hard for you to kick against the goads" (v. 5)?

Q: Why do you think the Lord temporarily blinded Saul? Why is his blindness significant? (v. 6)

"This furious assailant of Christ, the man who would not believe in His death and resurrection, the persecutor of His disciples, how should this man have become a believer, had not the power of his resurrection been great indeed.... The man who is so frantic as even to shed blood and cast men into prisons, all at once believes!" (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XIX on Acts 8:26,27)

n.b. "Ananias," v. 13, "was likely one of Saul's targets for arrest in Damascus. He later served as first bishop of that city." (Orthodox Study Bible, p. 1484)

n.b. "The Orthodox Church of Antioch continues an unbroken succession to the early Damascus Church and to this day is headquartered on the street called Straight." (ibid.)

Q: What stands out to you the most in Saul's conversion?

Q: What is significant in Saul's preaching in the synagogues?

"He was not ashamed of the change, was not afraid while the very things in which he was glorious aforetime, the same he destroyed." (St. John Chrysostom, Homily XX on Acts 9:10,12)



Chapel of Ananias, Straight St., Damascus

n.b. "Hellenists" (v. 29) here refers not to converts but to Greek speaking Jews from the diaspora.

Q: What is the result for the Church in Saul's conversion?

Q: What is significant in the miracles of healing and even the raising of the dead that God works through the Apostles (vv. 32-42)?

n.b. Notice the parallels between St. Peter's raising of Tabitha (Dorcas) and Christ's raising of the synagogue ruler's daughter in Matthew 9:22-25).

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father." (John 14:12)