

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

Saul Ravages the Church

Acts 8:1-3 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. (3) As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

It is important to note that Stephen prayed the same manor of pray as our Lord when he was dying at the hand of those who rejected his message. See **Acts 7:60; Lk 23:34; Act_3:17; 1Co_2:8; 1Ti_1:13.**

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...

I am going to suggest that Saul, more specifically his conversion, was the answer to Stephen's prayer; just as the Holy Ghost was the answer to our Lord's dying prayer at Calvary. **Mat_12:31; Mar_3:29; Luk_12:10.**

Blasphemy of the Holy Ghost: Those who refused to accept the Son of Man as being from God, are those that spoke against him and blasphemed his name as they do today. To blaspheme is to "*speak of the Supreme Being in terms of impious irreverence; to revile or speak reproachfully of God, or the Holy Spirit*", or to "*arrogate the prerogatives of God*".

In the case of Stephen, the ruling class of religious leaders in Jerusalem were *challenging God more than what is proper*; insomuch as they were making *undue claims* against Stephen, and the Holy Ghost which was directing his paths. **Luke 12:8-12.**

*****See notes on Acts 7:58-60, and the four timelines of the Kingdom Gospel.*****

consenting unto his death... Saul's feet being where Stephen's coat was laid just prior to his stoning. Laying items at someone's feet was evidently an act professing devotion to that person, in regard to what was laid. Compare **Act_4:37; Act_5:8-9.**

Thus, Peter charged Ananias and Saphira with having "lied" unto God, **Act_5:3-4.** Ruth laid at the feet of Boaz, implying her devotion and love for him. **Rth 3:7.**

- So, the priests laid their clothes at Saul's feet, confirm their devotion to him.
- Saul was the student of Gamaliel, but, as we will see, did not hold to the same philosophy. **Act 5:39, 22:3.**

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

Act 5:39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

Consenting means he APPROVED of the execution. **Acts 22:20.**

Scattered abroad... Due to the persecution lead by Saul, against the followers of Jesus, the believers were scattered into the outlying regions of Jerusalem. Up until this time they had remained in the city gathering daily at the Temple on Solomons Porch. **Acts 2:36; 47; 5:12, 42.** Acts Chapter 8 is the first division in the book.

*****See notes on Acts 1:8*****

The book of Acts is divided into three parts. Acts 1:8

1. The events in Jerusalem. Chapters 1-7
2. The events in Judea and Samaria. Chapters 8-12
3. The events in the Uttermost parts. Chapters 13-28

*Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in **Jerusalem**, and in **all Judaea**, and in **Samaria**, and unto the **uttermost part of the earth**.*

The book can also be divided into two distinct ACTS.

- I. **Act I.** To the Jew. The ministry is confined to the Jew ONLY, or direct gentile proselytes. The principal human agent is Peter. Confined to the geographical area of parts 1 and 2 above.
- II. **Act II.** To the Jew FIRST. Once the gospel had spread to the uttermost parts, the message of salvation was extended to the Gentiles, but was always sent to the Jew first. The principal human agent is Paul.

except the apostles... The 12 Apostles had built a big church in Jerusalem. The early believers gathered daily at the Temple, preaching and teaching Jesus, and a great many man, women, and priests believed. With the persecution which arose after the stoning of Stephen, The Apostles stayed in Jerusalem while a good many of believers were scattered into Judea and Samaria (North and South). **Rom 11:4-6, 16-29.**

Isaiah 6:13 But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

God always keeps a believing remnant in the land, the Apostles remains as a witness to the unbelieving priests. The persecution of Saul, and havoc that he caused, enlarged the geographical area of the believer's ministry.

made havock of the church... Saul's testimony is one of great zeal. He followed orders like a good soldier, even though his orders were inhumane. The work HAVOCK means "*to waste; to destroy; to lay waste causing wide and general destruction.*" **Act_7:58, Act_9:1-13, Act_9:21, Act_22:3-4, Act_26:9-11; 1Co_15:9; Gal_1:13; Php_3:6; 1Ti_1:13**

Act_14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

The persecution of the Church in the early Acts Period was a "first fruits" of the coming persecution of the entire world. **Mat_5:11; Mat_5:44; Mat_10:23; Mat_23:34; Luk_11:49; Luk_21:12; Joh_5:16; Joh_15:20.**

*****See Matthew 24*****

*Luke 21:10-14 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: (11) And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. (12) **But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.** (13) And it shall turn to you for a testimony. (14) Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:*

The coming earthquakes, *famines, pestilences, and great signs* are a testimony to the believers who are persecuted for Jesus' name. Jesus will feed and take care of THEM, during this time of great tribulation when the wrath of God is poured out upon the unjust.

*****See JER 30:7-24; Rev 6:9; 14:10; 20:4*****

Committed them to prison... The Jewish Council had no power to put the believers to death, **Joh_18:31**. But they had power to imprison, until the government could be brought in to issue the death sentence; Paul frequently refers to his zeal in persecuting the church, **Act_26:10-11; Gal_1:13**.

Prior of the coming tribulation period, the time known as "Jacob's Trouble", is that believers will be cast into prison.

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

(Rev 2:10) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

FEAR: Fear is not an attribute a Christian should possess, even when their promise is going to prison. **Mat 10:28; II Tim 1:7.**

(Mat 10:28) And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

PRISON: You can read about that in Fox's Book of Martyrs, Christians have historically been persecuted for their faith. And one day, it may be prison.

TRIED: God permits the devil to throw some of the members of this church into prison, to TRY them. Acts 16:23,37; 26:10; Heb 11:36

TEN DAYS: The phrase ten days is mentioned eleven times in the Bible, five times it has to do with being judged, or tried.

1Sa 25:38 And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

Jer 42:7 And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah.

Dan 1:12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

Act 25:6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

And here in Revelation Chapter 2, the church at Smyrna is asked to be faithful for ten days – unto death.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH: At lot of people take this and say, "see, you have to be faithful to God unto death to be saved". But that's not what it's saying at all, God did not say be faithful UNTIL death. He said UNTO.

- UNTIL is talking about duration. "To; used of time."
- UNTO is talking about a particular event. "and to; of no use in the language, as it expresses no more than to."

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

Rev 2:10 Cont...

The use of UNTO is implying the affliction would be brief, but that it might be fatal to some. Those who were about to die should remain faithful to their Savior "and to" the very point of death.

Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Compare the this with the direction Paul gave Timothy:

2Ti 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Being faithful is not a condition of your salvation, it is how God tries it.

CROWN OF LIFE: The Crown of life is mentioned TWO times in the Bible, James 1:12 above and here. This is not eternal life in heaven, this is referring to everlasting physical life on earth. Rev 20:4. There is a total of FIVE crowns in the Bible promised to believers:

- I. The incorruptible crown: **1 Cor. 9:24,25**. While this may or may not be a literal crown given to saints, certainly our reward will be eternal.
- II. The crown of rejoicing: **1 Thess. 2:19, 20**. This crown of rejoicing is the very fact that we will be in the presence of the one who saved us at his coming.
- III. The crown of life: James 1:12. For those believers who are called to endure trials, and tribulations...
- IV. The crown of righteousness: 2 Tim. 4:8. For those in the Body of Christ who keep the faith and do RIGHT. They endure afflictions, to the work of an evangelist, and perform THEIR ministry to the full.
- V. The crown of glory: 1 Pet. 5:1-4. As promised to God's Heritage who shepherd the flock.

(Rev 2:11) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

OVERCOMETH: To overcome means to conquer; to vanquish; to subdue. They must vanquish and subdue their FEAR in order to conquer the trial set before them.

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

Rev 2:10 Cont...

1Jn 5:4-5 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. (5) Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

SECOND DEATH: The promise to the church at Smyrna is that if you overcome, you will not be hurt of the second death. And those who are born of God will not taste of the second death (1 Jn 5:4-5). Also see Rev: 20:6, 14; 21:8.

Rev 20:5-14... Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power... death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

*****SEE Matthew 25:31-46*****

The "Jews" who cast Jews into prison are "*Jews who say they are, but are not*". See **Rev 2:9**. These will go away into "*everlasting punishment*".

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

Philip Proclaims Christ in Samaria

Acts 8:4-8 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. (5) Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. (6) And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. (7) For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. (8) And there was great joy in that city.

Preaching the word... the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus is the reason the believers were being persecuted, yet everywhere they went they continued to preach the word.

City of Samaria... Now the story moves to Samaria as commanded by our Lord in **Acts 1:8**. Samaria is NORTH of Jerusalem, yet Philip is noted in verse (5) as going DOWN to Samaria; This is because the city of Jerusalem is the highest hill in in the region, most everything is DOWN from Jerusalem.

Preached Christ... Philip did not preach repentance from sins, holy living, water baptism as a necessity for personal salvation; in fact, Philip did not preach personal salvation at all. He preached Jesus Christ. **Acts 4:10-12, 26; I John 5:1; Rev 11:15**. In doing so a great revival was experienced in Samaria.

John 4:25-26 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. (26) Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

John 6:68-69 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. (69) And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

Simon the Magician Believes

Acts 8:9-14 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: (10) To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. (11) And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. (12) But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (13) Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. (14) Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

sorcery, and bewitched the people... The word sorcery literal means *magic*, and it's only use in the Bible is in reference to Simon here in Samaria. We have no power, *to produce literal magic*, unless it comes from a spirit. The sorcery Simon used was witchcraft and was expressly forbidden by God. **1Sa_15:23; 2Ki_9:22; 2Ch_33:6; Mic_5:12; Nah_3:4; Gal_5:20.**

SOR'CERY, noun Magic; enchantment; witchcraft; divination be the assistance of evil spirits, or the power of commanding evil spirits.

BEWITCH'ED, participle passive Fascinated; charmed.

2Ch_33:6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

Simon believed *the word of God*, was then saved, and followed the Lord in baptism.

the kingdom of God... Part of the Kingdom message included the name of Jesus, as well as His coming Kingdom. **Acts 1:3,8; 14:22.**

(Rev 1:9) I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John, in Revelation Chapter 1, has been revealing the glory of God up until verse eight, and now he is going change themes and say: hey it's me, I am writing this, and I am your brother...

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

1. John is their companion in Tribulation...

Tribulation means pressure, affliction, anguish, to be burdened, face persecution, or trouble.

The word occurs 19 times in the new testament, it is the way our love for Christ is tested, and how we work patience into our lives.

Rom_5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

1Th 3:3-5 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. (4) For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. (5) For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

2. John is *also* their companion in The Kingdom...

While we may endure tribulation for a different reason today, tribulation was the method for earth Christians to enter the millennial kingdom.

Act 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Our Salvation has two stages. The Method and the Means.

- The MEANS is the, means by which, we receive the method. It is "[the method used to attain an end](#)"
- The METHOD is the [way or manner](#) by which salvation occurs.

EXAMPLE: In Ephesians 2:8, GRACE is the means by which we are saved, FAITH is the method used to obtain the grace.

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

It is the same in construction. Let us say I was planning on building a brick chimney, two stories tall. We know the METHOD in which we construct a masonry chimney stack, brick and mortar. But what are the MEANS? That would refer to the Plans, engineering, scaffolding, etc...

Likewise, tribulation or "kingdom saints" will have a twostep process to obtain entrance into the Millennial Kingdom. By FAITH through TRIBULATION.

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

3. John is also their companion in the patience of Jesus Christ...

To endure through tribulation or trials, one must have patience. And tribulation was something that the early church endured, for the Kingdom was in sight.

Heb 10:32-37 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; (33) Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. (34) For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. (35) Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. (36) For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (37) For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Act 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Biblical patience is not what we think of in the modern sense. It is not a temperament of calm repose. It is NOT to forbear what is annoying to you.

What the bible tells me to do is to stay in the faith and do not quit when I am persecuted, and to have GRACE for those around me.

John was imprisoned on an Island called Patmos for:

God reveals Jesus Christ to John while he is on an Island called Patmos, and John was told to write down what he sees. **Rev 1:2.**

(Rev 1:2) Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

What John WRITES, is the WORD of GOD. It is the BIBLE. He is talking about a written book, a book that was to be read by the seven churches.

(Rev 1:3) Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

(Rev 6:9) And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

(Rev 19:13) And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

(Rev 20:4) And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

While it is true that Jesus Christ is the Word of God; it is also true that God has a book, that has been written by men, through the inspiration of God - and that book is called the word of God. We should not take it lightly...

Rev 1:10 ...What thou seest, write in a book...

Rev 22:18-19 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: (19) And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

John is on the isle for two reasons, the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus. When you have the word of God, read it, believe it, and follow it; the testimony of Jesus will follow.

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Heb 9:16-17 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. (17) For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

The early Christians thrown in prison for the word of God - a book - that they read, preached from, copied, and passed around. Christians are still persecuted for that very thing today.

We do not wish to abolish teaching and to make every man his own master, but if the curates will not teach the gospel, the layman must have the Scripture, and read it for himself, taking God for his teacher. ~ William Tyndale

We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's." To which Tyndale passionately responded: "I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the Scriptures than thou dost! ~ William Tyndale

Acts Chapter 8:1-14

Back to Acts 8:14....

the word of God... The phrase "the word of God" is not *necessarily* a reference to the Holy Scriptures, the salvation message, or the Living Word; it is like saying "*have you received word*". The words which they received were from God as He would have them hear it.

That would be Jesus, as Philip had preached in verse 5, and his death, burial, and resurrection as the Jewish Messiah & Heir to the throne.

Peter presented Jesus as: (**Acts 2, 3, 4, 5. Then see Acts 5:42.**)

- Approved of God
- Resurrected
- The Lord of David
- The Heir of David's Throne
- Ascended into Heaven and at God's right hand
- Lord and Christ (Christ meaning anointed)
- The Holy One
- Prince of Life
- coming back
- the only name by which we can be saved.
- A Prince and a Saviour.

Stephen presented Jesus as: **Acts 7**

- The Just One
- Standing on the right hand of God

And Philip continued to *preach Jesus*. Nothing has changed in the believers message or their ministry.

Acts 5:41-42 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. (42) And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.