

Our **GUIDE**

for little ones

Published by the
Protestant Reformed Sunday School Association
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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 65

Simon the Sorcerer

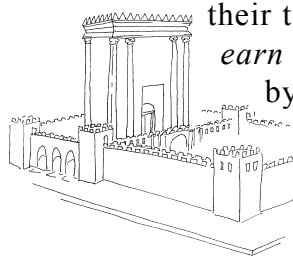
Acts 8:9-24

Stephen, you will remember, was one of the first seven deacons. The Jews killed him. They hated him — because he spoke the truth about *Jesus*. What did Stephen say? He said that Jesus was the promised *Messiah*. All of the Old Testament prophecies and pictures, Stephen said, were fulfilled ... by Jesus.

Did the Jews know what that meant? Oh, yes. They knew that it meant that the sacrifices were ... *finished*. No need, anymore, to have *priests* who would kill *lambs*. No need, anymore, to have a *temple*. The temple is just ... a *building*. Why? Because God's people now have the *real thing*. They have *Jesus*.

To the people of God, the teaching of Stephen was marvelous, glorious *truth* — truth that brought *salvation* for *sin-*

ners. To the unbelieving Jews, it was *blasphemy*. It turned all of *their* teaching right upside down. They wanted to *keep* their sacrifices. They wanted to *keep* their temple. They wanted to *earn their own salvation* — by obeying *Moses' laws*.



Surely they didn't need the help of *Jesus of Nazareth!*

So ... what will they do? They will kill the Christians! They will stamp out Christianity — by *persecution*.

That's what *they* would do. But

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

Jesus rules in heaven. He has all power. He uses even the raging of the church's enemies for His people's *good*. Even *persecution!*

It was the *persecution* that made Christianity *spread*. The Christians had to *flee*. And wherever these Christians went, they *spoke* about their *faith* — their faith in *Jesus*. The Jews had hoped that persecution would *snuff out* the fire of Christianity. But it did just the opposite. Like an exploding volcano, it scattered Christianity far and wide.

Even into Samaria. Even, that is, among a people who were not really *Jews*. They were a kind of *mixed race* — part Jew and part Gentile. The Jews hated them and would have nothing to do with them. And now, into Samaria come the *Christians!*

One of those who went to Samaria was a man by the name of Philip. He was another of the first seven deacons. He went to Samaria as an *evangelist*. He could *preach*. And, like Stephen, he could do *miracles*. All in the name of Jesus. The Samaritans *listened*. And they *believed*. There was *great joy* in that city. Great joy among the *Samaritans*.

There was in the city, however, a man who was not at all happy that Philip was there. His name was Simon. He was a *sorcerer*. For a long time he had “bewitched” the people with his sorceries.

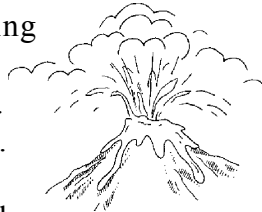
He had *fooled* them. He was probably a *fortune-teller*, and one who sold *good-luck* charms. And the people *believed* all of that. They thought that Simon was a *great one*, a man of *God*.

Until Philip came. Then the people saw *real* miracles. And they heard preaching like they had never heard before. They believed Philip. They were baptized. And they no longer thought that *Simon* was some great one.

Well, Simon decided he'd better check it out. So he went to hear Philip. And when he listened, he, too, believed that Jesus of Nazareth must really be the Messiah. So, along with many other Samaritans, Simon also was baptized.

Then one day Peter and John came to Samaria. They noticed right away that something was *missing*. None of the believers in Samaria had yet received the *special gifts of the Holy Spirit*. Those special gifts were *important*. Why? Because they were used by God to bring *other people* into the church. When the Christians were suddenly able, for example, to speak in different languages, other people would know that *God* was with the Christians. Special gifts therefore *helped people believe in Jesus*. So Peter and John prayed that the Samaritan believers also be given those gifts. The apostles then laid their hands on the believers, and immediately they received the gifts of the Spirit.

Simon was watching. “Ah,” he thought, “if only *I* could do that! Then I would again have people following *me*.”



Maybe Peter and John will be willing to share that power with me.” Simon was willing even to *pay* them something, if they would give him the power that they seemed to have in their hands. So ... he offered them *money*.



But Simon had it all *wrong*. He was thinking about *power*, and *me*, and *money*. Peter and John had not at all pretended to have power ... in their hands. *Christ, alone*, gives spiritual gifts. Peter and John couldn't. Nor did Philip have the power, in *himself*, to do miracles. He did them in *Jesus' name*. Always, and in everything, did Peter and John and Philip put *Christ first*. Simon didn't. With him, it was always, "*Me first!*"

Peter answered Simon sharply. "Thy money perish with thee." Peter said, "because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thy heart is not right with God." No hope could there be for Simon ... if he did not repent.

Did Simon ever repent? The Bible doesn't tell us. But we can be sure that there was a lesson in it all for the Samaritans, as there is also for us. The lesson was about spiritual gifts. Think about that. May we desire to have spiritual gifts? Oh, yes. We *should*. But *why*? Not to make *us* look good. That's what *Simon* wanted. But to help *others*. To point them to ... *Jesus*.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. In what land did Philip the evangelist preach about Jesus?
2. What did Philip do in Samaria besides preach about Jesus?
3. Who was unhappy that Philip did all those miracles in Samaria?
4. What happened when Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritan believers?
5. Why did Simon want to be able to do what Peter and John did?

The Ethiopian Eunuch

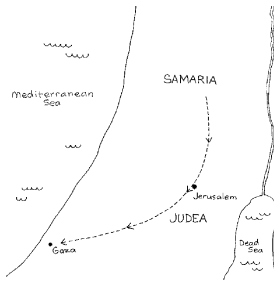
Acts 8:25-40

Christianity started in the city of Jerusalem. Right smack in the center of the land of the *Jews*. It *grew* there. It *grew amazingly* there. About 20,000 people. But the church must not *stay* there. It must *spread*. And it did. Do you remember how? It was *persecution* that did it. Hundreds of Christians fled out of Jerusalem. Yes, *Christians*. Not hundreds of *preachers*, but hundreds of just plain, ordinary Christians. They all talked about Jesus, wherever they went — in all parts of Judea and even ... into *Samaria*.

Yes, Samaritans *believed*. Peter and John understood how *important* that was. Samaritans, remember, were not full-blooded Jews. But they *believed*. They were *baptized*. And they received, *from God*, the *Holy Spirit*. The gospel, therefore, is not only for *Jews*, but also

for *Samaritans*. For God had given His Spirit to *both*.

But is that *all*? Is the gospel only for Jews and Samaritans? No, it's for *Gentiles* too. Listen.

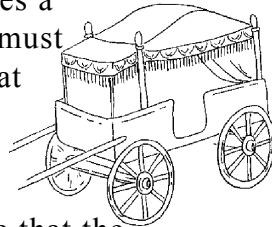


“Arise,” said an angel of the Lord to Philip, “and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.”

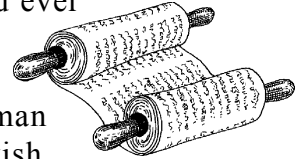
That seems strange, doesn't it? No explanation is given, no reason. Just, pack your bags and go. Do you have a lot of work to do in Samaria? Never mind that. There's work for you right now ... in the *desert*.

More surprises are in store for Philip. As he trudges along that hot, lonely desert road, he sees a chariot approaching. It must have been easy to see that it was the chariot of an important man, a rich man. But who could it be? And might it be true that the Lord had sent him to this road to meet this chariot? Philip watches with interest as the chariot gets closer, and then he sees that the man riding in it is ... black. A *Gentile*, therefore. And, besides, a man of a different *race*. Surely the Lord could not have sent Philip here for *this*!

Perhaps to Philip's surprise, the Spirit told him, “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.”



So Philip did so — on the run. And when he got closer, he heard the man reading (can you believe it?) from the book of *Isaiah*! Who would ever have expected *that*, out on this desert road? But, as Philip soon found out, the man already knew about the Jewish religion.



He lived far south, in the land of Ethiopia. He was a eunuch. He worked for Candace, the *queen* of the Ethiopians. And in that work he must have done some business with Jews, and learned to know, and to *believe*, their religion. He understood, then, that the gods of the Ethiopians were *idols*. He believed in Jehovah, the God of the Jews, and he believed that this God was to be worshiped in His temple in Jerusalem. So he went there — probably at the time of one of the Jewish feasts. And now he is on his long journey back to Ethiopia — reading from Isaiah as he rode in his chariot.

What exactly was he reading? Chapter 53. These words: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth.”

That was a beautiful prophecy. A prophecy of the *Messiah*. A prophecy, therefore, of *Jesus*. But the Ethiopian eunuch didn't know that yet. He was learning about the *prophets*. But he knew nothing about the *gospel*.

It was just at that moment that Philip caught up with the chariot and asked, “Do you understand what you're

reading?” “How can I,” the Ethiopian asked, “without someone to guide me?” He then invited Philip to come up into the chariot, to help him understand.

God had said, “Do it.” So Philip did it. He went up into that chariot. Perhaps for the next several hours, as the chariot rolled on through the desert, Philip sat there, next to the Ethiopian, and told him how Isaiah 53 was about *Jesus*. And God worked faith in the man’s heart, so that he *believed*. And he

wanted to be *baptized*. When they came near to a river, the Ethiopian said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

Think about that. For hundreds of years of Old Testament history, God had *one special people* — the children of Abraham, the Jews. Gentiles, during all of those hundreds of years, were ... *outside the church*. And now, here sits an *Ethiopian*. He hears about the church of Christ, and he says, “Let me *in*. I want to be *baptized*.”

Will Philip say, “Oh, no, I can’t do *that*. You’re not a son of *Abraham*”? Or, “Oh, no, I can’t do *that*. You have the wrong color *skin*”?

No, God Himself had commanded Philip to go to this desert road, and then to go up into this chariot. Philip understood. “If thou believest with all thine heart,” Philip said, “thou mayest be baptized.” The man answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” That was *faith*. That was *enough*. They

stopped the chariot. They went down into the water. And Philip baptized him.

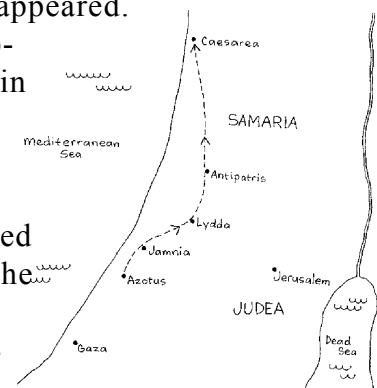
The Lord Himself had thrown open — to the Gentiles — the door of the church. An Ethiopian was the first to enter. Many would follow. But not quite yet. The great apostle to the Gentiles would not be *Philip* ... but *Saul*, the persecutor of the church. And the apostles themselves must yet learn that it is *right*.

God had other work for Philip. For, as soon as Philip and the Ethiopian came up out of the water, Philip was snatched away by the Spirit of the Lord. He just plain disappeared.

And then he reappeared suddenly in Azotus. He preached there, and from city to city, till he reached Caesarea, where he

made his home.

The Ethiopian eunuch also went on his way — *rejoicing*. Why? Because he had just been *transformed* — *changed* — from darkness to *light*. And how had that happened? Was it just a *coincidence*, was it just by *chance*, by *accident*, that he happened to meet Philip the evangelist? No, the Ethiopian knew better than that. God had sent his servant out into the desert — to bring *one lone sinner to repentance*. Think about that. Just ... for *me!*



How Well Did You Listen?

1. Where did God tell Philip to go next?
2. What was the Ethiopian eunuch reading when Philip met him?
3. What did Philip tell the Ethiopian about Isaiah 53?
4. When they came to some water, what did the Ethiopian want Philip to do?
5. What happened to Philip when they came back out of the water?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. How did persecution turn out to be

a very good thing for the church?

2. Why was Simon the sorcerer upset that Philip did miracles in Samaria?
3. Who (really!) gave the Holy Spirit to the Samaritan believers?
4. How was the Ethiopian eunuch different from the people of Samaria?
6. How did Philip know that it was God's will that he teach this Ethiopian?

Memory Verse

Acts 8:39b "The eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Color the picture of the desert.

