

- Last week we continued our study of the book of Acts. We looked at the way the apostles and followers of Christ were conducting themselves immediately after Christ's departure. We saw how Peter and John performed a notable miracle early on, and how Peter preached another gospel sermon. We also looked at how the apostles behaved when persecuted, and at the consequences for disobedience by believers. We looked at how nonbelieving political leaders treated the apostles. Finally, we looked at why deacons were appointed, and what happened when one of them was arrested.
- This week we are going to look at the way this deacon defends himself and what happens to him. We will look at the role Saul played in this event and how he ended up doing the exact opposite of what he was doing previously. We will also look at the fact that not all believers fully understand the power of God when they say they accept it, and at Philip's role in converting a key figure. Finally, we will look at the conversion of the man named Saul and why it was so significant.
- The deacon Stephen when arrested preaches a long sermon in which he recounts in detail the history of the Jewish people, with special emphasis on the inheritance of the current land from God even though the Jewish nation was constantly disobeying God. Along the way he quotes [Amos 5:5-27](#) and [Isaiah 66:1-2](#). Stephen mentions several people they revered, including Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David and Solomon. He focused specifically on Moses as the lawgiver from God and compares them to the lawbreakers of Israel for rejecting Christ who brought them the new law. ([Acts 7:1-53](#)).
- The leaders who had Stephen arrested were already mad at this sermon. Then Stephen has a vision of God and Jesus in heaven and tells them about it. That is the last straw for them and they stone him to death, making him the first person we read about dying for Christ. While the stoning is taking place, those who are throwing the stones take off their coats and put them next to a man named Saul for him to watch them. ([Acts 7:54-60](#))
- From that day forward, the Christians are persecuted, led by the person named Saul, and many Christians flee Jerusalem but the apostles stay there. Stephen is buried. ([Acts 8:1-3](#))
- The apostle named Philip went to a region called Samaria and starts doing miracles and preaching there. One of the persons he converts was a well-known magician called Simon. When the apostles hear what is happening in Samaria they sent Peter and John there to help. When Simon sees that Peter and John are transferring the power to perform miracles by laying hands on people, Simon tells them He wants the power AND the ability to lay hands on people also. Peter tells Simon he cannot buy the gift and urges him to repent. Simon does. ([Acts 8:4-25](#))
- The moral of this incident is that it is easy to slip back into our old ways after we are converted. In Simon's case, he was so used to magic that he was again attracted to it once he saw it. But we also learn from Simon's case that forgiveness is possible if we truly repent.

- Philip is told by an angel where to find a man who managed the Queen of Ethiopia's treasure. This man was known as a eunuch which means he was castrated so that he could be trusted around the Queen. The man was in his chariot coming back from worshipping in Jerusalem (he was obviously a convert to Judaism) and reading **Isaiah 53:7-8**. Philip asks what he is reading and so the eunuch shows him. He tells Philip he can't understand it unless someone explains it to him and wonders who this passage is talking about. Philip takes the opportunity to preach to him starting at that passage. They come upon a body of water and the eunuch wants to be baptized. Philip ends up baptizing him. As soon as he does, the Lord takes Philip away and transports him to another city. (**Acts 8:26-40**)
- This is an example of baptism that is very important. They were following Peter's instruction in **Acts 2:38**. They did so right away and obviously went underwater.
- Meanwhile Saul was still persecuting Christians. He took a group of followers and set out on the road to a major city called Damascus. As they were going along the road a very bright light shone down on Saul and Jesus identifies himself, and tells Saul to go into the city where Saul will find out what he needs to do. The other men in Saul's company hear the voice but see no one and Saul is blind and unable to eat or drink for three days. (**Acts 9:1-9**)
- There is a follower of Christ named Ananias in Damascus. The Lord appears to him and instructs him how to minister to Saul. Ananias protests because Saul is the most feared guy there is for a Christian. The Lord tells Ananias he has big plans for Saul. Ananias goes to Saul, heals his blindness and baptizes him. Saul begins to eat and drink again. (**Acts 9:10-19**)
- Saul starts preaching in Damascus, where people are amazed at his teaching which is the opposite of how he acted before. His life is immediately threatened by the Jews who are determined not to let him leave but Saul gets away anyway because some other followers of Christ lower him over the wall inside a basket. (**Acts 9:20-25**)
- Saul goes to Jerusalem where he preaches and is also threatened. So, he is sent toward Caesarea and then the place where he was from (Tarsus) and the church continues to grow along the way. (**Acts 9:26-31**)

1. Who was Stephen and what did he say when he was on trial?
2. What happened to Stephen?
3. Who was Saul and what did he do?
4. Who is Simon the magician?
5. What is the moral of the incident with Simon and what else do we learn from this incident?
6. Who did we read of Philip converting from Ethiopia?
7. What passage was the Ethiopian reading?
8. What important lesson can we learn about Philip's conversion of the Ethiopian?
9. Describe Saul's experience on the road to Damascus.
10. Who is Ananias and what does he do for Saul?
11. How does Saul amaze people at Damascus? How does he get away?
12. What happens to the church during the time Saul is being sent around?