



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Triumph over Tyranny: Joy in the Second Capital!

APRIL 22-24, 2015

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Acts 8:1-8 *“And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles. 2) And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3) But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4) Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the Word. 5) And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. 6) And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. 7) For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. 8) And there was much rejoicing in that city.” (NASB)*

“THE PERSECUTION, WHICH SEEMED TO BE NEGATIVE, WAS IN REALITY A POSITIVE FACTOR. IT LED TO THE FIRST GREAT MISSIONARY OUTREACH BY THE EARLY CHURCH. SATAN’S ATTEMPT TO STAMP OUT THE CHURCH’S FIRE MERELY SCATTERED THE EMBERS AND STARTED NEW FIRES AROUND THE WORLD.”
JOHN MACARTHUR

Why was Saul so violently furious with Stephen and the Church? How does the word “scattered” point to a great coming harvest of souls for Christ? Why do the devout men risk their lives to give Stephen a proper burial and mourn for him? What caused this sudden intense persecution? How did the church respond to such persecution? Why did Philip go to the next closest Capitol? For what specific reasons was there “much rejoicing” in this Capitol city?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- APRIL 29-MAY 1: ACTS 8:9-24 A LEADER WITH FALSE FAITH—TRUSTING FINANCES
- MAY 6-8: ACTS 8:25-40 PHILIP FINDS A LEADER WITH TRUE FAITH

Saul had no doubt been continually defeated in debate by Stephen in his own synagogue, the “*Synagogue of the Freedmen*” where the Hellenistic Jews from Cilicia and other regions would meet (Acts 6:9-10). Their inability to “*resist the wisdom of Stephen*” had angered Saul and his comrades so much that they “*stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council*” (the Sanhedrin, the Congress of Israel), where they set up false witnesses against him. Stephen’s defense became a sermon so powerful and bulletproof that the roles were reversed and he indicted the entire Sanhedrin for their rebellion against their own God! Especially in that they were repeating the precise persecution of the prophets that their fathers had done, when “*they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murders, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it*” (Acts 7:52-53). The conviction over their sin becomes so intense that they are “*cut to the heart*” and because they had no weapons, they seem to have literally “*bit on him with their teeth*” (54). Suddenly Stephen shouts, “*Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!*” (56) At this they drown him out with their shouts while holding their ears and run at him as a lynching mob and cast him out of the city and stone him, after laying down their clothes at the feet of the probable instigator, “*a young man named Saul*” (58). But Stephen conquered through his final prayer for his enemies, “*Lord, do not charge them with this sin*” (60). Little does Saul know that Stephen’s prayer would be answered by the Lord and determine his destiny in life and eternity! The taste of Stephen’s blood only excites more of the same in the heart of this ravenous wolf and that very day Saul begins to hunt down other sheep within the Church!

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3 AND 11:30AM – WOODBRIDGE – BOB EVANS, 13900 NOBLEWOOD PLAZA
THURSDAY @ 7:00AM – CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)
FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT

Virginia

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“THEY WERE DISGRACED, FLOGGED, THEIR GOODS WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM AND THEY WERE DRIVEN OUT OF THE CITY. ALL THIS THEY STOOD JOYFULLY. THERE IS NO RECORD OF ANYONE APPEALING TO ROMAN LAW.”

ARNO GABELEIN

I. CRUEL PERSECUTION

ACTS 8:1-3

Paul later described his persecution upon the church as an unbelieving leader, *“this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities”* (Acts 26:10-11). No matter how wrong he was or how clearly his treachery was proven, he absolutely refused to repent, therefore fierce hostility was his only other option. Thus, Saul not only took pleasure with *“hearty agreement”* in the death of Stephen, but also many others. He had united the Sanhedrin’s opposing parties against the church & he took full advantage of it.

“THERE IS MENTION MADE OF WOMEN, THAT IT MAY BETTER APPEAR HOW DESIROUS HE WAS TO SHED BLOOD, WHO HAD NO RESPECT OF SEX, WHOM EVEN ARMED ENEMIES ARE WONT TO SPARE IN HEAT OF WAR. THEREFORE HE SETTETH FORTH BEFORE US A FIERCE AND CRUEL BEAST WHO HAD NOT ONLY LIBERTY GIVEN HIM TO RAGE, BUT HAD ALSO HIS POWER INCREASED TO DEVOUR AND DESTROY GODLY MEN, AS IF A MADMAN HAD PUT A SWORD IN HIS HAND.”

JOHN CALVIN

II. CONTINUAL PROCLAMATION

ACTS 8:4-7

In the face of such horrendous tyranny by the leaders of Israel, not only did *“devout men”* bury Stephen and make

loud lamentation over him, honoring him and proving his innocence, but the believers who escaped Jerusalem *“went about preaching the Word.”* The boot camp training with the Apostles was sufficient and they do not cover or hide, but boldly evangelize with the Word of God. The word for *“scattered”* means *“to sow”* and sets up a precise contrast with Saul’s hurting and killing in that they were suddenly spread out like seed giving new life and healing to others. Philip is the greatest example and fulfills the command of Acts 1:8 by strategically going to the next closest capital, *“the city of Samaria.”* Though normally Jews would have nothing to do with the Samaritans because of hatred built up over hundreds of years, the racial barriers were erased with the Gospel, and in unity they *“were giving attention”* to Philip as he boldly proclaimed to them *“the Christ”* in that He was the loving promised Messiah like Moses who would deliver them from the bondage of sin, and performed signs of healing.

“HE FLED TO SAMARIA, PROBABLY TO ITS CAPITAL CITY, AND THERE WITH SUCH POWER HE PROCLAIMED THE FAITH FOR WHICH HE HAD BEEN PERSECUTED THAT THE RESULTING EVENTS HAVE BEEN CALLED “THE SAMARITAN PENTECOST.”

CHARLES ERDMAN

III. CAPITOL PLEASURE

ACTS 8:8

While Jerusalem mourns the tyranny of its murderous leaders, the humble half-breed Samaritan capital is full of rejoicing because *“they believed Phillip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and they were being baptized, men and women alike”* (8:12).

“ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE. BE THANKFUL TO HIM AND BLESS HIS NAME. FOR THE LORD IS GOOD”

PSALM 100:4

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Does your heart picture a Saul or a Stephen in your relationship to Christ and His people?
- 2) Are you willing to be a bold witness for Jesus Christ and His Word, even in time of persecution?
- 3) Will you promote joy by strategically targeting those in the capitol with your prayers and proclaiming the Word of God?