



Portion:

Title:

SCRIPTURES

- Acts 8-9
- Genesis 50:20
- Proverbs 16:9

INSTANT...

- Not the Intended Effect
- Persecution to Preaching
- Peter in Joppa (PART I)

When is instant a good thing? “That’s the \$64,000 question.” And ironically, the use of that colloquialism is the perfect object lesson to explain the nuances of “instant.” I’m sure you’ve heard the phrase... “That’s the \$64,000 question.” It’s not formal or meant to be literal, but certainly typical and used often, recognizable by just about everyone in the conversation. But where did it come from? The expression originated in 1941 on the CBS quiz show, “Take It or Leave It.” A contestant could choose to take a small prize or bet everything on a bigger prize, the largest being \$64,000. If he opts for the immediate smaller payout, he’d satisfy his desire for instant gratification. But hold out, and he can win the ultimate prize. Maybe 64K does not seem so ultimate in 2023, however, that amount in 1941 equates to a much larger pile of cash today. Hold out, get the answer right, and in 2023 you’d take home nearly \$1.5 million!

I took one of my sons to dinner about twelve years ago when he was eleven years old. I slid a twenty dollar bill across the table and told him he could have it right away. His eyes were wide with excitement. Twenty bucks is a big deal for an eleven year old. But, before he could slip it out from under my fingers, which pressed it firmly against the table, I offered him this: you can take the twenty dollars now, or you can wait one year and I will give you one hundred dollars instead. For everyone listening, you know that any investment that can yield five-fold returns in twelve months is breathtaking. But, for an eleven year old, those calculations were not dominating his thoughts. What was alluring was the instant benefit of the twenty dollars. That evening, my son somehow figured it out and chose wisely; he held off for the hundred. But, more important was the lesson, especially in this instant-gratification-instant-satisfaction world in which we live. Instant or immediate gratification is simply the urge to satisfy a craving right now, without considering its long term effects or the bigger picture. Fast food; point of purchase sales; substances to change your mood; ordering out instead of cooking at home; procrastination instead of immediately doing what's necessary; and hijacking the benefits of marriage without the commitment of marriage, like premarital sex and cohabitation, are all driven by desires for instant gratification.

The entirety of our culture has gone the way of...in an instant! Just add water; no assembly required. I want it, I want it now, and I want it easy. Do it to me or for me! It's the microwave lifestyle. It's instant coffee, oatmeal, yeast, rice, soup, mashed potatoes, and pudding. Remove from the freezer; remove from the package, and bake at 400 degrees for 40 minutes. Don't let it thaw out first—place it directly from the freezer into the oven. And, get over it; it's not the end of the world if you must preheat the oven first!

Moreover, instant gratification and instant satisfaction do not end with food-stuffs. That's just surface tension. Below "just add water" is: instant access, instant results, instant answers, and instant messenger. It's an Instagram world. And when there's a problem to solve, it's instant cures, instant relief, and instant repair.

But, when is instant a good thing? "That's the \$64,000 question." If we turn it around and see it from God's perspective, God wants instant obedience; instant action; instant transformation; and an instant change in direction, worship, attitude, mindset, beliefs, and choices... Yes, you have instant access to God, so when you look for results, answers, cures, relief, and satisfaction, the only way to be truly gratified is by instant obedience to Him, as demonstrated by your actions. God speaks and you say, "Here am I! Send me. What do you want me to do?"

PROPHETIC SEED:

“Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, **“Who are You, Lord?”** Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he, trembling and astonished, said, **“Lord, what do You want me to do?”** Then the Lord said to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”” Acts 9:4-6 NKJV

PROPHETIC FRUIT:

“Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?” But **Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.**” Acts 9:20-22 NKJV

Let's Set the Scene: Portion in a blurb

Introduction

Last week in [All Used Up for God](#) we witnessed the rapid expansion of the Church and the need to raise up new leaders who

could serve other areas of ministry, especially the daily distribution of resources to take care of the poor, the needy, and the widows.

Seven men were assigned leadership roles, Stephen being one of them. His effectiveness placed a target on his back and he soon became the subject of false accusations in an attempt to indict Him. It is yet another example of the vitriol of the religious elite, desperate to maintain control of their religious system. The growing popularity of those who claimed Y'shua is the Messiah represented an existential threat to their ability to stay in power and maintain control over the Jewish population. But, despite their best attempts the religious hypocrites were losing their grip and even many members of the priesthood were converted. The testimony of the apostles and the miracles were just undeniable and they too came to acknowledge that Y'shua was indeed the Messiah.

Stephen was dragged before yet another kangaroo court overrun by a high priest and priesthood who had become despotic, corrupt, and had descended to such depths of depraved leadership that they would resort to anything to stop these Y'shua-followers. Nevertheless Stephen, with the demeanor of angel and the knowledge of a Torah scholar, defended his position. They claimed he spoke against Moses and God, that he spread blasphemy against the temple, the priesthood, Judaism and the law, and that Y'shua, who he claimed was the Messiah, wanted to destroy the temple and

disregard the customs of Moses. Remember, those were false accusations brought by lying witnesses. After listening to his defense, it's undeniable; he was clearly innocent of all charges. And ironically, he used his expertise in the Torah and Prophets, the very things they claimed he was violating, to demand his own acquittal. He was not only innocent of all charges, but he had demonstrated, by use of Torah, that Y'shua is truly the Messiah!

But they don't care. They are not in search of truth, only to eliminate any opposition that threatened their grip on power. As a result Stephen was stoned to death, all while he displayed Christlike forgiveness of his enemies, right up to the very moment of his last breath. And then we were introduced to the main character whose life and story will dominate the rest of the Book of Acts—Paul. But we met him first as Saul, a Pharisee of Pharisees, a man who had such a visceral hate for “Christians” that prior to his conversion he became their greatest enemy. His first public display of such took place as he served as the overseer of Stephens execution.

This week we will witness the most shocking and abrupt about-faces imaginable. It's immediate, comprehensive and permanent! To repeat, our first introduction to Paul, the would-be most prolific writer of the New Testament; the formulator of written Christian theology and doctrine; and one of the greatest leaders in Church history; was as Saul, its greatest enemy. Last week we floated the

idea that through his relationships with Gamaliel, his mentor and teacher, it was highly probable that Paul was present at all the recent trials in the Sanhedrin we've read about: Y'shua's in Matthew 26, the previous two trials involving the apostles in Acts 4 and 5, and the one against Stephen in Acts 6 and 7. It seems very possible that his disdain and visceral hatred for Y'shua-followers comes from personal experience and those emotions fuel his continued persecution here at the start of Acts 8.

But, before we encounter what might be the most dramatic turn-around in the Holy Scriptures, we join Philip preaching and bringing miracles to Samaria. His testimony is so compelling that Simon, a famous sorcerer in the city, has a true conversion. And in order to fully appreciate this key moment in Bible history, you must recognize that Philip is only in Samaria because the disciples of Y'shua, other than the original apostles, were fleeing Jerusalem to avoid persecution from the likes of Saul.

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem the apostles are notified about the work and effectiveness of Philip and they send Peter and John to Samaria to investigate. They introduce the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with the laying on of hands, to all those who had recently been baptized in the name of the Lord. When Simon, the recently converted sorcerer, sees the Spirit's power in motion, he offers to pay Peter and John for a little download for himself. It comes across

as if he is hoping to add this feature to his bag of magic tricks. Boy does Peter lay into him—in exactly the way we’d come to expect from him. The rebuke is scathing and Simon immediately repents.

At that time, Philip is prompted by the Lord to move on from there and on his journey he encounters a eunuch from Ethiopia. Philip is directed by the Holy Spirit to approach the man who he finds reading from the scroll of Isaiah (what you would know today as Isaiah 53:7-8). The eunuch is sure he cannot really understand what he is reading on his own, nor to whom Isaiah is referring, and Philip steps in to explain. The outcome is wonderful; the man comes to believe Y’shua is the Messiah and Philip baptizes him right away. Immediately Philip literally disappears from there in a nanosecond, as he is whisked away by the Spirit, and he reappears in another city.

Then our attention turns back to Saul who was on a mission to persecute Christians. He was given authority by the high priest to travel to the synagogues of Damascus and to arrest all who had converted and to bring them bound back to Jerusalem for judgment. But God has a different plan for Saul. He is about to be smacked into another universe. Saul is stopped in his tracks by an encounter with Y’shua Himself! He is knocked to the ground, blinded by the light, and chastised harshly by the audible voice of Y’shua. Saul’s immediate response, and I mean immediate, is to change course.

“Who are You, Lord?” And, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” It’s that definitive!

The Lord commands him to go into the city and that he would receive further instructions. He obeys instantly! The men with him saw nothing but did hear the same audible voice. It’s obvious that Paul was previously blinded to the truth about Y’shua, but here he gets up off the ground and is literally blind; the men with him had to lead him by the hand to Damascus, where he fasted three days and sat sightless. Simultaneously, a man named Ananias was given a vision about Saul and that he would be coming to him to “receive his sight.” Ananias knows Saul’s reputation and he is reasonably apprehensive. But, the Lord assures him it is all good, that He has big plans to use Saul and that He will show Saul that he’s been chosen for both great ministry and great suffering. Ananias obeys and meets with Saul, touches him, and immediately the scales of blindness fall from his eyes; he is encountered by the Holy Spirit and is then baptized.

After Saul recovers from the fast and from his dramatic experience, his intention in Damascus shifts from persecution to preaching. He both confounds the Jews and is rejected by them; nevertheless he does prove to them that Y’shua is the Messiah. He proves it but they won’t accept it, so Saul goes from an enemy of the church to an enemy of the Jews, who then plot to kill him. It’s

stunning how, in an instant, Saul finds himself on the other side of the “gavel” and how immediate his persecution began, that which God had just revealed to Ananias. *“For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”* Saul is forced to escape under the cover of darkness and literally under the cover of a basket, and he returns to Jerusalem, for the first time as an overt friend to “Christianity.” Understandably, the people who know his reputation are apprehensive and scared, but Barnabas risks it and brings Saul to the apostles to whom he relates his testimony. Saul then disputes with the Hellenists in Jerusalem, over the messiahship of Y’shua, and they too want to kill him, so he flees the city and heads toward his hometown of Tarsus. Saul’s first visit to Jerusalem as a convert is short lived, but the Church continues to grow. He’ll be back a few more times on his journey to spread the Gospel.

Then our attention turns back to Peter. What is he doing? He’s now in Lydda, a city near Joppa, and we watch him heal Aeneas, a man bedridden for eight years. The miracle turns many people to the faith. Then, over in Joppa a devout woman named Tabitha falls ill and dies. Disciples in Joppa knew that Peter was in a nearby city and they send for him. Peter immediately comes to Joppa and God uses him to raise this devout woman from death to life. The testimony draws many more people to the Lord. Peter stays for a

while in Joppa with a man named Simon. This sets the stage for yet another About-Face!

Acts 8

Saul Persecutes the Church (Acts 8:1-3)

1. Saul was the leader from the Sanhedrin who presided over Stephen's execution (See: [All Used Up for God](#))
 - (a) He also headed up the formal persecution of those who believed Y'shua was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel.
 - (b) Saul literally went from house to house and dragged people to prison, just for believing.
 - (c) It caused masses of disciples in Jerusalem to disperse into other areas of Judea, very likely back to their hometowns.
 - (d) The original apostles stayed put in Jerusalem.
 - (e) Stephen was buried and many mourned his death.

Christ is Preached in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8)

2. The scattering did not have the effect Saul had hoped.
 - (a) Instead, it caused the message to spread even further.
 - (b) Philip was one of those who went out and he headed to the city of Samaria.
 - (c) After hearing what he had to say and seeing the miracles God performed through him, multitudes came into agreement with Philip—Y'shua is the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel.
 - (d) Great delight filled the atmosphere of the city.

A Sorcerer's Profession of Faith (Acts 8:9-13)

3. Philip's impact goes beyond the everyday citizens of the city, as in Samaria there was a well-known sorcerer named Simon.
 - (a) Simon represented himself as a great man. The people believed him, as he amazed them for years with his "magic."
 - (b) They believed he operated with great power and that his power came from God!
 - (c) However, when Philip came along they witnessed the true power of God.
 - (d) They heard the message of the kingdom and how it comes through faith in Y'shua, who is the Christ, and they are inspired to be baptized.
 - (e) Simon was also convinced and he too was baptized.

The Sorcerer's Sin (Acts 8:14-25)

4. The apostles, who remained in Jerusalem, heard the testimonies about what was happening through Philip in Samaria.
 - (a) They commissioned Peter and John to go check it out.
 - (b) Peter and John arrive and they pray for all those who had believed, and were already baptized in Y'shua's name, to have an encounter with the Holy Spirit.
 - (c) Peter and John lay hands on the new converts and it happens.
5. Simon sees this happening and his old nature rises.

- (a) He wants to harness what Peter and John can do, so he too can lay hands on the people and “give them this Holy Spirit experience.” (That’s what magicians do.)
 - (b) So, he offers to pay to receive the impartation, so he can impart it to others.
 - (c) It’s seems that Simon has come across as if he wants to add the power of the Holy Spirit to his magic trick tool belt.
 - (d) Peter goes ballistic! Is it a bit overboard? You decide (Remember, Simon is a brand new Christian)!
6. You think you can purchase the gift of God?
- (a) Your money should burn and you along with it!
 - (b) As far as God is concerned, your heart is dark, and you won’t be participating in any impartation of the Holy Spirit.
 - (c) What you can do is repent and pray that God forgives the perverse thoughts and intentions of your wicked heart.
 - (d) It’s obvious that you are still intoxicated with wretched beliefs and sold under sin.
7. Simon responds instantly...
- (a) Peter, please pray that nothing you’ve just said is true. (It seems that Simon is authentic.)
 - (b) Peter and John preach in the surrounding villages of Samaria and then return to Jerusalem.

Christ is Preached to an Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)

8. Philip leaves Samaria and his ministry continues...
 - (a) He is inspired to head to Gaza and on his journey he meets an Ethiopian eunuch who is an important delegate of the queen of Ethiopia.
 - (b) He heads her financial affairs and he's on his way back from Jerusalem from a time of worship.
 - (c) He was in his chariot reading from the scroll of Isaiah.
9. The Holy Spirit tells Philip to catch up to this man's chariot and ask him if he comprehends what he is reading.
 - (a) Of course not! He, like most Jews of the day, could only understand what would be explained to them by the Pharisees, Scribes and Priests.
 - (b) The eunuch asks for an explanation and we discover he is reading specifically from Isaiah 53:7-8. Who is this about?
 - (c) Philip shows him the truth about Y'shua using Isaiah 53...
"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter..."
 - (d) The eunuch believes instantly that Y'shua is the One and has Philip baptize him.
 - (e) Immediately after the baptism, Philip is transported by the Spirit to another location and he continues to preach there!

Acts 9

The Damascus Road: Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-9)

10. Now we turn our attention back to Saul and his self-appointed task to destroy the disciples of Y'shua.
 - (a) He requests his boss (the high priest) to officially commission him, in writing, to go after these criminal followers of Y'shua.
 - (b) He wants to head to Damascus to arrest anyone who has converted and bring them back in chains to Jerusalem to stand trial for blasphemy, maybe even be put to death.
11. On his travels, however, he is the one who gets arrested.
 - (a) The light of God in Christ strikes him to the ground and he hears the voice of Y'shua call him by name... *"Why are you persecuting Me?"*
12. What's more stunning (if that is even possible) is Saul's reaction.
 - (a) **Paul's Question:** *"Who are You, Lord?"*
 - (b) **Y'shua's Reply:** *"I'm Y'shua, and when you harm the people whom you are hunting, you harm Me! And trust Me, the prod drives the animal, not vise versa, if you know what I mean! And if you don't, let Me clarify. In this relationship Saul, you are the animal and I am the prod, and it is impossible for the animal to resist the prod."* This reply is very effective!
 - (c) **Paul's Response:** *"I give up. What do You want me to do?"*
13. Saul gets his marching orders—post-encounter with Y'shua...

- (a) Go into Damascus and wait for my next instructions.
- (b) He's willing to comply, but when he stands he's totally blind.
- (c) The men who are with him must lead him by the hand into Damascus. (They heard the voice but did not see the light.)
- (d) The Lord has him fast and sit in his blindness for three days before He reveals Saul's next step.

Ananias is Commissioned (Acts 9:10-16)

14. While Saul is having his encounter and being told to head into Damascus to await further instructions, God is simultaneously preparing Ananias to receive him.

- (a) Ananias, I have an assignment for you.
- (b) He's instantly ready, *"Here I am, Lord."*
- (c) He is told where to go and with whom to meet, and that his target is simultaneously having a vision about him.
- (d) Your target is Saul of Tarsus, and your assignment is to lay hands on him so that he might receive his sight.
- (e) Ananias is understandably apprehensive as he is aware of Saul's reputation and mission, and that he has the blessing of the high priest to carry out his systematic persecution.

15. Then the Lord reveals something magnificent and it is obviously an encouragement to Ananias.

- (a) The Lord tells Ananias, *"In Saul's attempt to carry out his own plan, I intercepted him and he was blinded by My light."*

- (b) “I’ve chosen this man to be the one to spread My name to world: to pagans, leaders, and to our very own people.”
- (c) “And I will show him the suffering he must endure to do so, and he will accept it gladly.”

Ananias Baptizes Saul (Acts 9:17-19)

16. Ananias meets up with Saul and announces his mission

- (a) “Receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”
- (b) Instantly, Saul’s eyes are opened and Ananias baptizes him.
- (c) Saul breaks his fast and spends some days with the disciples recovering before he moves on.

Saul Preaches Christ (Acts 9:20-22)

17. Saul goes from persecuting Christ to preaching in the synagogues that Y’shua is the Son of God.

- (a) The testimony of Saul’s about-face conversion stuns the city and his powerful message proves dumbfounding to the Jews in Damascus.

Saul Escapes Death (Acts 9:23-25)

18. It’s time for Saul’s persecution to begin.

- (a) Just as it affected Saul only days earlier, the truth that Y’shua is the Messiah angers the hard-hearted—they won’t believe.
- (b) So, they do what we’ve come to expect them to do when Y’shua is the object of their hatred; they scheme to kill Saul.
- (c) This time he is able to escape because the plan is uncovered.

- (d) Saul could not leave through the city gate, however, because he was being sought after. So, one night, faithful disciples help him escape by lowering him down in a basket from the walls of the city and he heads back to Jerusalem.

Saul at Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30)

- 19. When Saul arrives in Jerusalem, it was difficult for him to link up with other disciples, as no one trusted that his conversion was real; they are actually concerned it might be a trick.
 - (a) Barnabas takes a chance and brings him to the apostles.
 - (b) Saul uses the opportunity to share his entire testimony about what happened to him on the road and his experience with Ananias, and later as he preached in Damascus.
 - (c) He boldly shares in Jerusalem for a while, but when a dispute arises with the Hellenists, they try to kill him.
 - (d) Saul leaves Jerusalem for Caesarea and then goes onto his hometown of Tarsus.

The Church Prospers (Acts 9:31)

- 20. There are surprising results from the scattering of the disciples into the surrounding areas of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, as well the testimony of Saul's conversion.
 - (a) The Church grew in reverence for the Lord; in relationship with the Holy Spirit; and in the number of converts throughout the region.

Aeneas Healed (Acts 9:32-35)

21. Peter moves on to Lydda, a city 11 miles southeast of Joppa.

- (a) He encounters Aeneas, a paralyzed man confined to bed for eight years.
- (b) Peter says, "*Y'shua heals you,*" and the man gets up instantly.
- (c) All those from of Lydda and the plain of Sharon on the coast, who saw the man who had been healed, were converted.

Tabitha (Dorcas) Restored to Life (Acts 9:36-43)

22. At Joppa, a wonderful and charitable disciple named Tabitha became sick and died.

- (a) Some disciples knew Peter was in Lydda nearby, so they sent for him to come quickly.
- (b) He stopped what he was doing and headed over to Joppa.
- (c) Peter sees they are mourning over Tabitha's death, so he puts everyone out of the room.
- (d) He kneels and prays over the woman, "*Tabitha, arise.*"
- (e) She opens her eyes and Peter helps her sit up.
- (f) He calls the people back into the room and he presents her to them alive!
- (g) The story spreads in the city and many believe in Y'shua.
- (h) Peter remained in Joppa for a while and he stayed with Simon, a tanner.

NOT THE INTENDED EFFECT

1. Persecution Expands Outreach

A. Saul was the central figure of early church persecution...

(1) Rewind to the end of last week... (**Acts 7:57-60**) (See: [All Used Up for God](#))

(a) When Stephen was dragged out of the court and stoned, Saul was the overseeing member from the Sanhedrin.

1. “Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. **And the [false] witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.** And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”
Acts 7:57-60 NKJV

a) To keep his blood from spattering all over their clothes, they left their garments with Saul (Paul) who was overseeing the execution.

(b) As we will soon see, Saul will himself face similar challenges after his conversion; the same challenges he posed for those he persecuted before his conversion.

1. “For I will show him how many things **he must suffer for My name’s sake.**” Acts 9:16 NKJV

(c) Why will Saul face persecution?

1. “And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, **if the witness is a false witness**, who has testified falsely against his brother, then **you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother**; so you shall put away the evil from among you.”

Deuteronomy 19:18-19 NKJV

2. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for **whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**”

Galatians 6:7 NKJV

- a) Because Stephen was executed based on the testimony of false witnesses.
- b) And because Saul was overseeing the execution.
- c) And because a false witness will receive the punishment the accused would suffer!
- d) And because a man will reap what he sows.
- e) More on Paul’s life of suffering in a moment.

(2) Saul continues his persecution of the Church (**Acts 8:1-3**)

- (a) Saul was the leader from the Sanhedrin who presided over Stephen’s execution.

1. “Now **Saul was consenting to his death**. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they **were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles**. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for **Saul, he made havoc of the church**, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to **prison.**” Acts 8:1-3 NKJV
 - a) Saul spearheaded the formal persecution of those who believed Y’shua was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel.
 - b) He literally went from house to house and dragged people to prison, just for believing.
 - c) It caused masses of disciples in Jerusalem to disperse into other areas of Judea, very likely back to their hometowns.
 - d) The original apostles stayed put in Jerusalem.
 - e) They buried Stephen and mourned his death.

B. The Exploits of Philip

(1) Christ is Preached in Samaria (**Acts 8:4-8**)

- (a) What did those who were scattered do? They preached the word outside of Jerusalem!

1. “Therefore **those who were scattered** went everywhere **preaching the word**. Then **Philip** went down to the city of **Samaria** and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the **miracles** which he did. For **unclean spirits**, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were **possessed**; and many who were **paralyzed** and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”

Acts 8:4-8 NKJV

a) Scattering the church did not have the effect Saul had hoped. Instead, it caused the message to spread even further.

1) **Saul’s efforts to stop the spread of the Gospel of Christ, accelerated its advancement:** “But as for you, **you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good**, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.” Genesis 50:20 NKJV

2) **Later, Paul would teach that very concept to the Church:** “And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to

those who are the **called according to His purpose.**" Romans 8:28 NKJV

- b) Philip was one of those who went out as a result and he headed to the city of Samaria.
 - c) After hearing what he had to say and seeing the miracles God performed through him, multitudes came into agreement with Philip.
 - d) And great delight filled the atmosphere of the city.
- (b) Throughout the narrative of Acts 8 and 9 you will notice a consistent theme. When applicable, it will be pointed out in each section. The theme is INSTANTLY!
1. **Instantly:** those who were scattered went everywhere and preached the word!
 2. **Instantly:** the multitudes heeded the things spoken by Philip!

(2) A Sorcerer's Profession of Faith (**Acts 8:9-13**)

- (a) The things about the kingdom of God and testimony about who Y'shua is can transform even those who think they are great without Him.
1. "But there was a certain man called **Simon**, who **previously practiced sorcery** in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, **claiming that he was someone great**, to whom they all gave heed,

from the least to the greatest, saying, **“This man is the great power of God.”** And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. **But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,** both men and women were baptized. Then **Simon himself also believed;** and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.” Acts 8:9-13 NKJV

- a) Philip’s impact goes beyond the everyday citizens of the city, as in Samaria there was a well-known sorcerer named Simon.
- b) He represented himself as a great man and the people believed he was because he amazed them with his “magic” over a long stretch of time.
- c) They believed he operated with great power and that his power actually came from God!
 - 1) Remember, Samaritans are closely related to Jews, so when they refer to God, they are referring to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not a pagan god.

- d) However, when Philip came along they witnessed real power from God and it became obvious that Simon was not operating with God's power.
 - e) They listened to the message about the kingdom and how it comes through faith in Y'shua, who is the Christ, and they were inspired to be baptized.
 - f) Simon was also convinced and he too was baptized.
- (b) Treading on thin ice... *"...**claiming that he was someone great**, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, **"This man is the great power of God."***
1. "Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to **harass some from the church**. Then he **killed James** the brother of John with the sword." Acts 12:1-2 NKJV
 2. "So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and **gave an oration** to them. And **the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"** Then **immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God**. And he was **eaten by worms and died**. But the word of God grew and multiplied." Acts 12:21-24 NKJV

- a) Simon shifted and obviously moved away from believing in his own greatness and acknowledged Christ!
 - b) Herod made no such concession and Yahweh took him out!
- (c) The theme is INSTANTLY!
- 1. **Instantly:** Simon himself was amazed by God and believed and was baptized!
 - 2. **Instantly:** Herod was struck down by God for not giving glory to God!
- (3) The Sorcerer's Sin (**Acts 8:14-25**)
- (a) Old habits die hard and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit!
 - 1. "Now when the **apostles who were at Jerusalem heard** that Samaria had received the word of God, they **sent Peter and John** to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might **receive the Holy Spirit**. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. **They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.** And when Simon saw that through the **laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that**

anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” But Peter said to him, **“Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!** You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for **your heart is not right** in the sight of God. **Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.** For I see that you are **poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”** Then **Simon answered** and said, **“Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.”** So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” Acts 8:14-25 NKJV

- a) The original apostles, who remained in Jerusalem, heard testimonies about what was happening through Philip in Samaria.
- b) They commissioned Peter and John to go investigate.
- c) Peter and John showed up on the scene and prayed for all those who had believed, and were

already baptized in Y'shua's name, to have an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

d) They laid hands on the new converts and that is what happened...they *"received the Holy Spirit."*

(b) Baptism of the Holy Spirit vs. Baptism (in water) in the name of Y'shua.

1. Baptism in water is what a convert chooses to do as a sign of their faith—it is commanded to be done as a testimony, just like circumcision. It does not confer anything upon someone, but rather is an outward expression of obedience after one has believed.

2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is when a believer has his first encounter with the Holy Spirit and can occur with or apart from the moment he first believes.

3. The moment someone comes to faith may or may not include a tangible encounter with the Holy Spirit. That does not mean the Spirit is not in them. The Spirit comes to dwell in everyone the moment they believe.

a) **You are indwelled by the Spirit instantly:** "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells in you**, He who raised Christ from the dead will also **give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**" Romans 8:11 NKJV

- b) **Yet, you may experience the Spirit later:** “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” **And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” John 20:21-23 NKJV
4. Nevertheless, each person may experience how this shows up in a different way. These people who responded to Philip were no more or no less born-again because they had not yet had an expressed experience with the Holy Spirit. In other words, the moment they believed, they were redeemed and the Holy Spirit took up residence in their hearts!
5. **Food for thought:** The apostles and disciples who believed and followed Christ before Pentecost had not experienced the Holy Spirit, as such, until then.
- a) *“I indeed **baptize you with water** unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**”*
Matthew 3:11 NKJV

6. Some do have their encounter with the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith. It seems that those who came to faith on Pentecost were likely baptized with water and fire the same day! As well as Cornelius and his family; the “Spirit fell” and they were baptized in water in Y’shua’s name at the same time!

a) “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be ***baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**” Acts 2:38

NKJV

b) **“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.** And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, **because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.** Then Peter answered, **“Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”** And he **commanded them to be baptized in the name of**

the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

Acts 10:44-48

7. And some don't have their encounter with the Holy Spirit until later, as we see here in Acts 8...
 - a) “For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. **They had only been *baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** Then they laid hands on them, ****and they received the Holy Spirit.**” Acts 8:16-17 NKJV
8. In Acts 19 we see it this way...(It's mixed: baptism of repentance by John, and then baptized in Y'shua's name and in the Holy Spirit at the same time!
 - a) “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, **“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”** So they said to him, **“We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”** And he said to them, **“Into what then were you baptized?”** So they said, **“Into John's baptism.”** Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a **baptism of repentance**, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they

heard this, they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them**, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.” Acts 19:1-6
NKJV

- (c) Old habits die hard! Simon sees all this Holy Spirit stuff happening and his old nature rises.
1. He wants to harness what Peter and John can do, so he too can lay hands on people and “give them this Holy Spirit experience.”
 2. That’s what magicians do. They provide “supernatural experiences” for the people they wish to enamor!
 3. He offers to pay for to receive the “impartation talent” and Peter goes ballistic!
 4. Is it a bit overboard? You decide (Remember, Simon is a brand new Christian)!
 5. You think you can purchase the gift of God?
 - a) Your money should burn and you along with it!
 - b) As far as God is concerned, your heart is dark, and you won’t be participating in any impartation of the Holy Spirit gifts.

- c) What you can do is repent and pray that God forgives the perverse thoughts and intentions of your wicked heart.
 - d) It's obvious that you are still intoxicated with wretched beliefs and sold under sin.
6. Simon responds instantly...
- a) Peter, please pray that nothing you've just said is true. (It seems that Simon is authentic.)
7. Peter and John preach in the surrounding villages of the Samaria and then return to Jerusalem.
- (d) Old habits die hard! Simon's "Pay for play" offer... Why would he do such a thing?
1. Remember, we do get access to a new nature instantly when we are born again, but we also still have access to our old nature.
 2. Saul himself, later as Paul in the letter to the Romans says it best! Even with access to the Holy Spirit, the temptation to go back to your old nature remains. And Simon is fresh off his born-again experience. Sure his eternal destination has been permanently altered (assuming his faith is authentic), but his personality has not changed, nor those things which are alluring to his flesh!

3. No one says it better... (the theology of two simultaneously coexisting natures) This will explain why you still wrestle after you are born again.
- a) **The New Nature:** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” II Corinthians 5:17 NKJV
- b) **Continued Access to the Old Nature:** “For we know that **the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin**. For what I am doing, I do not understand. **For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do**. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, **it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me**. For I know that in me (that is, **in my flesh**) **nothing good dwells**; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, **it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.**” Romans 7:14-20 NKJV

c) **Two Spirits:** “For what man knows the things of a man except **the spirit of the man** which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except **the Spirit of God**. Now **we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God**, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” I Corinthians 2:11-12 NKJV

4. Why do you still wrestle? You possess resurrection power and the right to use it to either walk in the Spirit or resurrect your old nature (the spirit of man)! The old is no longer your identity, but it is who you can still choose to be (*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Mat. 26:41*). And it's obvious that Simon is still intoxicated with his wretched beliefs and sold under sin.

a) **Resurrection Power:** “and what is the exceeding greatness of **His power toward us who believe**, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ **when He raised Him from the dead** and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,” Ephesians 1:19-20 NKJV

- b) **Choosing the flesh:** “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, **are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**” Galatians 3:3 NKJV
- c) **You must choose:** “For those who **live according to the flesh** set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who **live according to the Spirit**, the things of the Spirit.” Romans 8:5 NKJV
- d) **The fight:** “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**” II Corinthians 10:4-5 NKJV

(e) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Hands were laid on them and they received the Holy Spirit
2. **Instantly:** Simon offered them money
3. **Instantly:** He was rebuked
4. **Instantly:** He Repented

(4) Christ is Preached to an Ethiopian (**Acts 8:26-40**)

- (a) Philip moves on to his next assignment, all because believers were chased from Jerusalem.

1. “Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, **“Arise and go** toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert. **So he arose and went.** And behold, **a man of Ethiopia**, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. **And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.” So Philip ran** to him, **and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah**, and said, **“Do you understand** what you are reading?” And he said, **“How can I, unless someone guides me?”** And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this [Isaiah 53:7-8]: ***“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.”*** So the eunuch answered Philip and said, **“I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”** Then Philip opened his mouth,

and **beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.** Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. **What hinders me from being baptized?**” Then Philip said, “**If you believe with all your heart, you may.**” And he answered and said, “**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.**” So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. **Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away,** so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But **Philip was found at Azotus.** And passing through, **he preached** in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”

Acts 8:26-40 NKJV

- a) Philip leaves Samaria and his ministry continues...
- b) He is inspired to head to Gaza and on his journey he meets an Ethiopian eunuch who is an important delegate of the queen of the Ethiopians.
- c) He heads her financial affairs and he's on his way back from Jerusalem from a time of worship.
- d) He is riding in his chariot reading from the scroll of Isaiah.

- 1) That alone means he has access to great wealth, as the common man did not possess copies of the scrolls; they would need to attend synagogue on the Sabbath to hear readings from the Torah and Prophet scrolls read aloud.
- e) The Holy Spirit instructs Philip to catch up to this man's chariot and ask him if he comprehends what he is reading.
 - 1) Of course he doesn't! He, like most Jews of the day, could only understand what would be explained to them by the Pharisees, Scribes and Priests.
 - 2) And this is one of the reasons why Y'shua and the apostles faced such opposition when they stood before the "elite class of educated religious leaders!" They knew the Word; the common man should not have access to such knowledge; and it bothered the religious class!
 - 3) **Y'shua:** "And the Jews marveled, saying, "**How does this Man know letters, having never studied?**" John 7:15 NKJV
 - 4) **Peter and John:** "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that

they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13 NKJV

- f) The eunuch asks for an explanation and we discover he is reading specifically from Isaiah 53:7-8. Who is this about?
- (b) Philip shows him the truth about Y’shua, starting at that scripture in Isaiah...
 - 1. “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment [Acts 8:33 says; In His humiliation His justice was taken away.], And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living [Acts 8:33 says; For His life is taken from the earth.];* For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.” Isaiah 53:7-8 NKJV
 - a) This eunuch believes instantly that Y’shua is the One and has Philip baptize him.
 - b) The moment the eunuch’s head comes out of the water Philip is transported in the Spirit to another location and he continue to preach there!

c) Y'shua did that too...

1) **Y'shua suddenly appears in room:** "Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you."
Luke 24:36 NKJV

2) "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, **when the doors were shut** where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, **Jesus came and stood in the midst**, and said to them, "Peace be with you."" John 20:19 NKJV

(c) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Philip went as instructed
2. **Instantly:** Philip ran to the Ethiopian man
3. **Instantly:** Philip preached Jesus
4. **Instantly:** the eunuch believed and was baptized
5. **Instantly:** Philip vanished

PERSECUTION TO PREACHING

2. This is what Yahweh intended!

A. The Damascus Road

(1) Saul's Conversion (**Acts 9:1-9**)

- (a) Saul continues his rampage to arrest believers when he is the one who gets arrested by Y'shua!
1. "Then **Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord**, went to **the high priest** and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of **the Way**, whether men or women, he might bring them **bound to Jerusalem**. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly **a light shone around him from heaven**. Then he **fell to the ground**, and **heard a voice** saying to him, "**Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?**" And he said, "**Who are You, Lord?**" Then the Lord said, "**I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.**" So he, trembling and astonished, said, "**Lord, what do You want me to do?**" Then the Lord said to him, "**Arise and go into the city**, and you will be told what you must do." And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, **hearing a voice but seeing no one**. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and **brought him into Damascus**. And he

was **three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.**" Acts 9:1-9 NKJV

- a) Now we turn our attention back to Saul and his self-appointed task to destroy the disciples of Y'shua.
 - 1) He goes to his boss (the high priest) and asks to be officially commissioned, in writing, to go after these criminal followers of Y'shua.
 - 2) He clearly has a relationship with the High Priest, likely because he was a student of Gamaliel. (See: [All Used Up for God](#))
 - 3) He wants to head to Damascus to arrest anyone who has converted and bring them back in chains to Jerusalem to face the council and maybe even be executed.
 - 4) We already know he is willing to do such from what we witnessed with Stephen in Acts 7.
- b) On his travels, he is the one who gets arrested.
 - 1) The light of God in Christ strikes him to the ground and he hears the voice of Y'shua call him by name... "Why are you persecuting Me?"
 - 2) We first learned what this light looks like on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17.

c) And what is even more stunning (if that is possible) is Saul's reaction.

1) **Paul's Question:** *"Who are You, Lord?"*

2) **Y'shua's Reply:** *"I'm Y'shua, and when you harm the people whom you are hunting, you harm Me! And trust Me, the prod drives the animal, not vise versa, if you know what I mean! And if you don't, let Me clarify. In this relationship Saul, you are the animal and I am the prod, and it is impossible for the animal to resist the prod."*
This reply is very effective!

3) **Paul's Response:** *"Okay, I give up. What do You want me to do?"*

d) Let's compare Saul's receptive response to another character who would not receive the message—the opposition posed by Pharaoh.

1) **Saul:** **(It is hard for you to kick against the goads...)* *"Who are You, Lord?"* And, *"Lord, what do You want me to do?"*

2) **Pharaoh:** **(Pharaohs heart was hard...)* *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let*

Israel go.” (See: [Disruptive Technology](#), Acts 5, Pharaoh’s decent into darkness.)

- 3) **Reference:** “Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’ ” And Pharaoh said, “**Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.**”” Exodus 5:1-2 NKJV

e) Then Saul gets his first marching orders...

- 1) Go into Damascus and wait for my next instructions. (As we will see in a moment, Saul is having a vision about a man named Ananias.)
- 2) It is interesting to see that Saul’s original plan was to go to Damascus and God’s plan too is that he goes into Damascus, but not for the same reason! “*A man’s heart **plans his way**, But the Lord **directs his steps**.*” Proverbs 16:9 NKJV
- 3) He complies, but when he stands up off the ground he is completely blind, so the men who are with him must lead him by the hand into Damascus. (The men heard the voice but did not see the light.)

- 4) The Lord has him fast and sit in his blindness for three days before He reveals Saul's next step.
- 5) Fasting and Blindness—the physical blindness was symbolic of his spiritual blindness—blinded to the truth of Y'shua.

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?"
2. **Instantly:** Saul responded, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"
3. **Instantly:** Saul realized he had been blind all along
4. **Instantly:** Saul went into the city.

(2) Ananias is Commissioned (**Acts 9:10-16**)

(a) Ananias is apprehensive but willing.

1. "Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, **"Ananias."** And he said, **"Here I am, Lord."** So the Lord said to him, **"Arise and go"** to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And **in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias** coming in and putting his hand on him, so **that he might receive his sight.**" Then Ananias answered, "Lord, **I have heard** from many **about this man**, how much

harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here **he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.**” But the Lord said to him, **“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”**” Acts 9:10-16

- a) While Saul is having an encounter and being told to head into Damascus to await further instructions, God is also preparing Ananias to receive him.
 - 1) Ananias, I have an assignment for you.
 - 2) He’s instantly ready, “Here I am, Lord.”
 - 3) He is told where to go and whom to meet and that his target is simultaneously having a vision about him.
 - 4) Your target is Saul of Tarsus, and your assignment is to lay hands on him, so that he might receive his sight.
 - 5) Ananias is understandably apprehensive as he is aware of Saul’s reputation, mission, and that he has the blessing of the high priest to carry it out.

- b) Then the Lord reveals something magnificent and it is obviously an encouragement to Ananias.
 - 1) I intercepted him in his attempt to carry out his own plan and I blinded him with My light!
 - 2) “I’ve chosen this man to be the one to spread My name to world: to pagans, leaders and to our own people.”
 - 3) “And I will show him the suffering he must endure for My name’s sake to do so, and he will accept it gladly.” (Ref. [All Used Up for God](#))
- c) Tell Saul suffering is in his future!
 - 1) He is well aware of what he has done, how he has done it, and how a man must reap what he sows.
 - 2) “Do not be deceived, **God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**”
Galatians 6:7 NKJV
- d) Part I: God to Ananias in Acts 9:10-16
 - 1) God called Ananias to give Saul sight and he responds the way a man of God should respond. He does not try to hide, instead he offers himself...“Here I am, Lord.”

2) **Just as Isaiah responded:** “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Then I said, “**Here am I! Send me.**”” Isaiah 6:8 NKJV

3) **Just as Samuel responded:** “the Lord called Samuel. And he answered, “**Here I am!**”” I Samuel 3:4 NKJV

(3) Ananias Baptizes Saul (**Acts 9:17-19**)

(a) Saul’s eyes are opened!

1. “And **Ananias went** his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, **the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.**”

Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he **arose and was baptized.** So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.” Acts 9:17-19 NKJV

a) Ananias meets up with Saul and announces his mission. “*Receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.*”

- b) Immediately, Saul's eyes are opened and Ananias baptizes him.
- c) Saul breaks his fast and spends some days with the disciples recovering before he moves on.
- d) Part II: Ananias to Paul Acts 9:17-19
 - 1) Receive your sight: The scales of falsehoods, deception, and the religious spirit fall off Saul as his eyes are opened.
 - 2) Saul's born again encounter was on the road to Damascus; his Holy Spirit encounter is here with Ananias.

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Ananias says, "Here I am, Lord.
2. **Instantly:** Ananias went into the city
3. **Instantly:** Ananias lays hands on Saul
4. **Instantly:** the scales fall from Saul's eyes
5. **Instantly:** Saul is baptized
6. **Instantly:** Saul experiences the Holy Spirit

B. Post Conversion Action

(1) Saul Preaches Christ (Acts 9:20-22)

- (a) From persecuting those who believed Christ was the Son of God to preaching in the synagogues that Christ is the Son of God!

1. “**Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.** Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “**Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name** in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?” But **Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews** who dwelt in Damascus, **proving that this Jesus is the Christ.**” Acts 9:20-22 NKJV

- a) The testimony of Saul’s ***about-face** conversion stuns the city and his powerful message ****confounds** the Jews in Damascus.
 - 1) ***About-Face:** a reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.
 - 2) ****Confounds:** defeats, overthrows, invalidates, negates, contradicts, discredits, quashes, demolishes, destroys; disproves, proves false
- b) Saul silenced the Jews exactly like those who came before him (Y’shua, Peter, John, and Stephen)
 - 1) **Y’shua:** “And **no one was able to answer Him** a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare

question Him anymore.” Matthew 22:46 NKJV

(See: [Mic Drop](#))

2) **Peter and John:** “And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, **they could say nothing against it.**” Acts 4:14 NKJV (See: [A Profound Challenge](#))

3) **Stephen:** “And **they were not able to resist** the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.” Acts 6:10 NKJV (See: [All Used Up for God](#))

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Paul preached Christ
2. **Instantly:** People were amazed
3. **Instantly:** Paul confounded the Jews
4. **Instantly:** Paul proved Y’shua was the Christ

(2) Saul Escapes Death (**Acts 9:23-25**)

(a) It’s time for Saul’s persecution to begin

1. “Now after many days were past, **the Jews plotted to kill him.** But their **plot became known to Saul.** And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.” Acts 9:23-25 NKJV

- a) Just as Saul felt a few days earlier, the truth that Y'shua is the Messiah angers the hard-hearted.
- b) **Convict a soft heart and you get repentance;** {Saul on the road to Damascus} **convict a hard heart and you get violence** {Saul at the stoning of Stephen}. DJH
- c) Paul would later pen the doctrine that explains this process: "*For **when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. {8} But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*****"
Romans 5:6, 8 NKJV
- d) Those whose hearts are hard, and can't believe, do what has become commonplace; they scheme a way to kill Saul.
- e) They do to him what they did to Y'shua, the Apostles, and Stephen.
- f) This time he is able to escape because the plan is uncovered.
 - 1) It won't always be that way, as we will see in upcoming chapters of Acts, and his testimonies in written in other letters.

g) He could not leave through the city gate as he was being sought after, so one night faithful disciples helped him escape by lowering him down in a basket from the walls of the city and he heads back to Jerusalem.

(3) Saul at Jerusalem (**Acts 9:26-30**)

(a) Saul arrives in Jerusalem and it is difficult for him to link up with other disciples, as no one trusts that his conversion is real; they are actually concerned it might be a trick.

1. **“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.** When the brethren found out, they brought him down to

Caesarea and **sent him out to Tarsus**." Acts 9:26-30
NKJV

- a) Barnabas takes a chance and brings him to the apostles...It makes sense that he would because he was named Barnabas (a Son of Encouragement) by the apostles because of his nature (Acts 4:36-37).
- b) Saul uses the opportunity to share his entire testimony about what happened to him on the road and his experience with Ananias, and later as he preached in Damascus.
- c) He boldly shared for a while, but when a dispute arose with the Hellenists, they tried to kill him.
 1. The Hellenists are Jews who speak Greek and are influenced by Greek culture.
 2. Remember, people in Jerusalem know Saul, as he was part of Stephen's execution and very likely part of all the recent trials in the Sanhedrin (Y'shua's in Matthew 26, and the three trials in Acts 4-7).
 3. Saul's first post-conversion trip to Jerusalem must come to an end and he escapes Jerusalem for Caesarea, and then goes onto his ***hometown of Tarsus**.

4) He will visit Jerusalem three more times before he dies. (#1 Acts 11-12; #2 Acts 15; #3 Acts 21)

d) *Saul returns to his hometown...

1) "But Paul said, "**I am a Jew from Tarsus**, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.'" Acts 21:39 NKJV

2) "'I am indeed a Jew, **born in Tarsus** of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.'" Acts 22:3 NKJV

3) "So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called **Saul of Tarsus**, for behold, he is praying." Acts 9:11 NKJV

(4) The Church Prospers

(a) There are surprising results from the scattering of the disciples into the surrounding areas of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, as well as Saul's conversion.

1. "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were **edified**. And **walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of**

the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Acts 9:31
NKJV

- a) The Church grew in reverence for the Lord; in relationship with the Holy Spirit; and in the number of converts throughout the region.

PETER IN JOPPA (PART I)

3. Peter’s Exploits

A. Setting the stage for Peter’s about-face!

(1) Aeneas Healed (**Acts 9:32-35**)

- (a) Peter moved on from Samaria to Lydda, a city 11 miles southeast of Joppa.

1. “Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named **Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years** and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, “**Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.**” Then he arose **immediately**. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.”
Acts 9:32-35 NKJV

- a) He encounters Aeneas, a paralyzed man confined to bed for eight years.

- b) Peter tells him, “Y’shua heals you,” and the man got up immediately.
- c) All those from of Lydda and from the plain of Sharon on the coast, who saw the man who had been healed, were converted.

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

- 1. **Instantly:** Aeneas rose when Peter said Y’shua healed him.

(2) Dorcas Restored to Life (**Acts 9:36-43**)

(a) At Joppa, a wonderful disciple named Tabitha became sick and died.

- 1. “At **Joppa** there was a certain disciple named **Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas**. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she **became sick and died**. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since **Lydda was near Joppa**, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. **Then Peter arose and went with them**. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which

Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "**Tabitha, arise.**" **And she opened her eyes,** and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he **presented her alive.** And it became known throughout all Joppa, and **many believed** on the Lord. So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner." Acts 9:36-43 NKJV

- a) Some disciples knew Peter was in Lydda nearby, so they sent for him to come quickly.
- b) He stopped what he was doing right away and headed over to Joppa.
- c) Peter sees they are mourning over Tabitha's death, so he puts everyone out of the room.
- d) He kneels and prays over the woman, "Tabitha, arise."
- e) She opens her eyes and Peter helps her sit up.
- f) He calls the people back into the room and he presents her to them alive from the dead.
- g) The story spread in the city and many believed in the Y'shua.

h) Peter remained in Joppa for a while and he stayed with Simon, a tanner.

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Peter went when he was called to Joppa because Tabitha had died.
2. **Instantly:** Tabitha opened her eyes rose from the dead when Peter told her to rise.

B. Up next: Peter comes face-to-face with his need for an about-face...

(1) **About-Face:** a reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.

(a) Peter is about to have a supernatural experience which will give him “an **INSTANT** reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.”

1. “Now send men to Joppa, and **send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon,** a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do.” Acts 10:5-6 NKJV
2. “Then he said to them, “**You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection** as soon as I was

sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"” Acts 10:28-29 NKJV

- a) **About-Face:** a reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.

Summary: NOT THE INTENDED EFFECT

1. Persecution Expands Outreach

A. Saul was the central figure of early church persecution...

- (1) Rewind to the end of last week... (**Acts 7:57-60**) (See: [All Used Up for God](#))
 - (a) When Stephen was dragged out of the court and stoned, Saul was the overseeing member from the Sanhedrin.
 - 1. To keep his blood from spattering all over their clothes, they left their garments with Saul (Paul). who was overseeing the execution.
 - (b) As we will soon see, Saul will himself face similar challenges after his conversion; the same challenges he posed for those he persecuted before his conversion.
 - (c) Why will Saul face persecution?
 - 1. Because Stephen was executed based on the testimony of false witnesses.
 - 2. And because Saul was overseeing the execution.

3. And because a false witness will receive the punishment the accused would suffer!
 4. And because a man will reap what he sows.
 5. More on Paul's life of suffering in a moment.
- (2) Saul continues his persecution of the Church (**Acts 8:1-3**)
- (a) Saul was the leader from the Sanhedrin who presided over Stephen's execution.
 1. Saul spearheaded the formal persecution of those who believed Y'shua was the long-awaited Messiah of Israel.
 2. He literally went from house to house and dragged people to prison, just for believing.
 3. It caused masses of disciples in Jerusalem to disperse into other areas of Judea, very likely back to their hometowns.
 4. The original apostles stayed put in Jerusalem.
 5. They buried Stephen and mourned his death.

B. The Exploits of Philip

- (1) Christ is Preached in Samaria (**Acts 8:4-8**)
 - (a) What did those who were scattered do? They preached the word outside of Jerusalem!

1. Scattering the church did not have the effect Saul had hoped. Instead, it caused the message to spread even further.
 2. Saul's efforts to stop the spread of the Gospel of Christ, accelerated its advancement
 3. Later, Paul would teach that very concept to the Church.
 4. Philip was one of those who went out as a result and he headed to the city of Samaria.
 5. After hearing what he had to say and seeing the miracles God performed through him, multitudes came into agreement with Philip.
 6. And great delight filled the atmosphere of the city.
- (b) Throughout the narrative of Acts 8 and 9 you will notice a consistent theme. When applicable, it will be pointed out in each section. The theme is INSTANTLY!
1. **Instantly:** those who were scattered went everywhere and preached the word!
 2. **Instantly:** the multitudes heeded the things spoken by Philip!

(2) A Sorcerer's Profession of Faith (**Acts 8:9-13**)

- (a) The things about the kingdom of God and testimony about who Y'shua is can transform even those who think they are great without Him.
1. Philip's impact goes beyond the everyday citizens of the city, as in Samaria there was a well-known sorcerer named Simon.
 2. He represented himself as a great man and the people believed he was because he amazed them with his "magic" over a long stretch of time.
 3. They believed he operated with great power and that his power actually came from God!
 4. Remember, Samaritans are closely related to Jews, so when they refer to God, they are referring to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not a pagan god.
 5. However, when Philip came along they witnessed real power from God and it became obvious that Simon was not operating with God's power.
 6. They listened to the message about the kingdom and how it comes through faith in Y'shua, who is the Christ, and they were inspired to be baptized.
 7. Simon was also convinced and he too was baptized.
- (b) Treading on thin ice... "...**claiming that he was someone great**, to whom they all gave heed, from the

*least to the greatest, saying, “**This man is the great power of God.**”*

1. Simon shifted and obviously moved away from believing in his own greatness and acknowledged Christ!
2. Herod made no such concession and Yahweh took him out!

(c) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Simon himself was amazed by God and believed and was baptized!
2. **Instantly:** Herod was struck down by God for not giving glory to God!

(3) The Sorcerer’s Sin (**Acts 8:14-25**)

(a) Old habits die hard and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit!

1. The original apostles, who remained in Jerusalem, heard testimonies about what was happening through Philip in Samaria.
2. They commissioned Peter and John to go investigate.
3. Peter and John showed up on the scene and prayed for all those who had believed, and were already baptized in Y’shua’s name, to have an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

4. They laid hands on the new converts and that is what happened...they *“received the Holy Spirit.”*
- (b) Baptism of the Holy Spirit vs. Baptism (in water) in the name of Y’shua.
1. Baptism in water is what a convert chooses to do as a sign of their faith—it is commanded to be done as a testimony, just like circumcision. It does not confer anything upon someone, but rather is an outward expression of obedience after one has believed.
 2. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is when a believer has his first encounter with the Holy Spirit and can occur with or apart from the moment he first believes.
 3. The moment someone comes to faith may or may not include a tangible encounter with the Holy Spirit. That does not mean the Spirit is not in them. The Spirit comes to dwell in everyone the moment they believe.
 - a) **You are indwelled by the Spirit instantly.**
 - b) **Yet, you may experience the Spirit later.**
 4. Nevertheless, each person may experience how this shows up in a different way. These people who responded to Philip were no more or no less born-again because they had not yet had an expressed experience with the Holy Spirit. In other words, the

moment they believed, they were redeemed and the Holy Spirit took up residence in their hearts!

5. **Food for thought:** The apostles and disciples who believed and followed Christ before Pentecost had not experienced the Holy Spirit, as such, until then.
 6. Some do have their encounter with the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith. It seems that those who came to faith on Pentecost were likely baptized with water and fire the same day! As well as Cornelius and his family; the “Spirit fell” and they were baptized in water in Y’shua’s name at the same time!
 7. And some don’t have their encounter with the Holy Spirit until later, as we see here in Acts 8...
 8. In Acts 19 we see it this way...(It’s mixed: baptism of repentance by John, and then baptized in Y’shua’s name and in the Holy Spirit at the same time!
- (c) Old habits die hard! Simon sees all this Holy Spirit stuff happening and his old nature rises.
1. He wants to harness what Peter and John can do, so he too can lay hands on people and “give them this Holy Spirit experience.”

2. That's what magicians do. They provide "supernatural experiences" for the people they wish to enamor!
3. He offers to pay for to receive the "impartation talent" and Peter goes ballistic!
4. Is it a bit overboard? You decide (Remember, Simon is a brand new Christian)!
5. You think you can purchase the gift of God?
 - a) Your money should burn and you along with it!
 - b) As far as God is concerned, your heart is dark, and you won't be participating in any impartation of the Holy Spirit gifts.
 - c) What you can do is repent and pray that God forgives the perverse thoughts and intentions of your wicked heart.
 - d) It's obvious that you are still intoxicated with wretched beliefs and sold under sin.
6. Simon responds instantly...
 - a) Peter, please pray that nothing you've just said is true. (It seems that Simon is authentic.)
7. Peter and John preach in the surrounding villages of the Samaria and then return to Jerusalem.

(d) Old habits die hard! Simon's "Pay for play" offer... Why would he do such a thing?

1. Remember, we do get access to a new nature instantly when we are born again, but we also still have access to our old nature.
2. Saul himself, later as Paul in the letter to the Romans says it best! Even with access to the Holy Spirit, the temptation to go back to your old nature remains. And Simon is fresh off his born-again experience. Sure his eternal destination has been permanently altered (assuming his faith is authentic), but his personality has not changed, nor those things which are alluring to his flesh!
3. No one says it better... (the theology of two simultaneously coexisting natures) This will explain why you still wrestle after you are born again.
 - a) **The New Nature:**
 - b) **Continued Access to the Old Nature:**
 - c) **Two Spirits:**
4. Why do you still wrestle? You possess resurrection power and the right to use it to either walk in the Spirit or resurrect your old nature (the spirit of man)! The old is no longer your identity, but it is who you

can still choose to be (*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Mat. 26:41*). And it's obvious that Simon is still intoxicated with his wretched beliefs and sold under sin.

- a) We have resurrection power within us!
- b) We can choose live in the Spirit or resurrect the the old nature (live in the flesh).
- c) We all must choose!
- d) The fight is a spiritual battle!
- (e) The theme is INSTANTLY!
 - 1. **Instantly:** Hands were laid on them and they received the Holy Spirit
 - 2. **Instantly:** Simon offered them money
 - 3. **Instantly:** He was rebuked
 - 4. **Instantly:** He Repented
- (4) Christ is Preached to an Ethiopian (**Acts 8:26-40**)
 - (a) Philip moves on to his next assignment, all because believers were chased from Jerusalem.
 - 1. Philip leaves Samaria and his ministry continues...
 - 2. He is inspired to head to Gaza and on his journey he meets an Ethiopian eunuch who is an important delegate of the queen of the Ethiopians.

3. He heads her financial affairs and he's on his way back from Jerusalem from a time of worship.
4. He is riding in his chariot reading from the scroll of Isaiah.
5. That alone means he has access to great wealth, as the common man did not possess copies of the scrolls; they would need to attend synagogue on the Sabbath to hear readings from the Torah and Prophet scrolls read aloud.
6. The Holy Spirit instructs Philip to catch up to this man's chariot and ask him if he comprehends what he is reading.
7. Of course he doesn't! He, like most Jews of the day, could only understand what would be explained to them by the Pharisees, Scribes and Priests.
8. And this is one of the reasons why Y'shua and the apostles faced such opposition when they stood before the "elite class of educated religious leaders!" They knew the Word; the common man should not have access to such knowledge; and it bothered the religious class!
9. The eunuch asks for an explanation: We discover he's reading from Isaiah 53:7-8. Who is this about?

10. Philip shows him the truth about Y'shua, starting at that scripture in Isaiah...
 11. This eunuch believes instantly that Y'shua is the One and has Philip baptize him.
 12. The moment the eunuch's head comes out of the water Philip is transported in the Spirit to another location and he continues to preach there!
- (b) The theme is INSTANTLY!
1. **Instantly:** Philip went as instructed
 2. **Instantly:** Philip ran to the Ethiopian man
 3. **Instantly:** Philip preached Jesus
 4. **Instantly:** the eunuch believed and was baptized
 5. **Instantly:** Philip vanished

Summary: PERSECUTION TO PREACHING

2. This is what Yahweh intended!

A. The Damascus Road

(1) Saul's Conversion (**Acts 9:1-9**)

- (a) Saul continues his rampage to arrest believers when he is the one who gets arrested by Y'shua!
1. Now we turn our attention back to Saul and his self-appointed task to destroy the disciples of Y'shua.

2. He goes to his boss (the high priest) and asks to be officially commissioned, in writing, to go after these criminal followers of Y'shua.
3. He clearly has a relationship with the High Priest, likely because he was a student of Gamaliel. (See: [All Used Up for God](#))
4. He wants to head to Damascus to arrest anyone who has converted and bring them back in chains to Jerusalem to face the council and maybe even be executed.
5. We already know he is willing to do such from what we witnessed with Stephen in Acts 7.
6. On his travels, he is the one who gets arrested.
7. The light of God in Christ strikes him to the ground and he hears the voice of Y'shua call him by name...
"Why are you persecuting Me?"
8. We first learned what this light looks like on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17.
9. And what is even more stunning (if that is possible) is Saul's reaction.
10. **Paul's Question:** *"Who are You, Lord?"*
11. **Y'shua's Reply:** *"I'm Y'shua, and when you harm the people whom you are hunting, you harm Me! And*

trust Me, the prod drives the animal, not vice versa, if you know what I mean! And if you don't, let Me clarify. In this relationship Saul, you are the animal and I am the prod, and it is impossible for the animal to resist the prod." This reply is very effective!

12. **Paul's Response:** "Okay, I give up. *What do You want me to do?*"
 13. Let's compare Saul's receptive response to another character who would not receive the message—the opposition posed by Pharaoh.
 14. **Saul:** ***(It is hard for you to kick against the goads...)** "Who are You, Lord?" And, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"
 15. **Pharaoh:** ***(Pharaohs heart was hard...)** "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." (See: [Disruptive Technology](#), Acts 5, Pharaoh's decent into darkness.)
- (b) Then Saul gets his first marching orders...
1. Go into Damascus and wait for my next instructions. (As we will see in a moment, Saul is having a vision about a man named Ananias.)

2. It is interesting to see that Saul's original plan was to go to Damascus and God's plan too is that he goes into Damascus, but not for the same reason!
3. He complies, but when he stands up off the ground he is completely blind, so the men who are with him must lead him by the hand into Damascus. (The men heard the voice but did not see the light.)
4. The Lord has him fast and sit in his blindness for three days before He reveals Saul's next step.=
5. Fasting and Blindness—the physical blindness was symbolic of his spiritual blindness—blinded to the truth of Y'shua.

(c) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?"
2. **Instantly:** Saul responded, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"
3. **Instantly:** Saul realized he had been blind all along
4. **Instantly:** Saul went into the city.

(2) Ananias is Commissioned (**Acts 9:10-16**)

(a) Ananias is apprehensive but willing.

1. While Saul is having an encounter and being told to head into Damascus to await further instructions, God is also preparing Ananias to receive him

2. Ananias, I have an assignment for you.
3. He's instantly ready, "Here I am, Lord."
4. He is told where to go and whom to meet and that his target is simultaneously having a vision about him.
5. Your target is Saul of Tarsus, and your assignment is to lay hands on him, so that he might receive his sight.
6. Ananias is understandably apprehensive as he is aware of Saul's reputation, mission, and that he has the blessing of the high priest to carry it out.
7. Then the Lord reveals something magnificent and it is obviously an encouragement to Ananias.
8. I intercepted him in his attempt to carry out his own plan and I blinded him with My light!
9. "I've chosen this man to be the one to spread My name to world: to pagans, leaders and to our own people."
10. "And I will show him the suffering he must endure for My name's sake to do so, and he will accept it gladly." (Ref. [All Used Up for God](#))
11. Tell Saul suffering is in his future!
12. He is well aware of what he has done, how he has done it, and how a man must reap what he sows.

13. Part I: God to Ananias in Acts 9:10-16...God called Ananias to give Saul sight and he responds the way a man of God should respond. He does not try to hide, instead he offers himself..."Here I am, Lord."

(3) Ananias Baptizes Saul (**Acts 9:17-19**)

(a) Saul's eyes are opened!

1. Ananias meets up with Saul and announces his mission.
2. "Receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
3. Immediately, Saul's eyes are opened and Ananias baptizes him.
4. Saul breaks his fast and spends some days with the disciples recovering before he moves on.
5. Part II: Ananias to Paul Acts 9:17-19... Receive your sight: The scales of falsehoods, deception, and the religious spirit fall off Saul as his eyes are opened. Saul's born again encounter was on the road to Damascus; his Holy Spirit encounter is here with Ananias.

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Ananias says, "Here I am, Lord."
2. **Instantly:** Ananias went into the city

3. **Instantly:** Ananias lays hands on Saul
4. **Instantly:** the scales fall from Saul's eyes
5. **Instantly:** Saul is baptized
6. **Instantly:** Saul experiences the Holy Spirit

B. Post Conversion Action

(1) Saul Preaches Christ (Acts 9:20-22)

(a) From persecuting those who believed Christ was the Son of God to preaching in the synagogues that Christ is the Son of God!

1. The testimony of Saul's ***about-face** conversion stuns the city and his powerful message ****confounds** the Jews in Damascus.
2. ***About-Face:** a reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.
3. ****Confounds:** defeats, overthrows, invalidates, negates, contradicts, discredits, quashes, demolishes, destroys; disproves, proves false
4. Saul silenced the Jews exactly like those who came before him (Y'shua, Peter, John, and Stephen)

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Paul preached Christ
2. **Instantly:** People were amazed
3. **Instantly:** Paul confounded the Jews

4. **Instantly:** Paul proved Y'shua was the Christ

(2) Saul Escapes Death (**Acts 9:23-25**)

(a) It's time for Saul's persecution to begin

1. Just as Saul felt a few days earlier, the truth that Y'shua is the Messiah angers the hard-hearted.
2. *Convict a soft heart and you get repentance {Saul on the road to Damascus}; convict a hard heart and you get violence {Saul at the stoning of Stephen}. DJH*
3. Paul would later pen the doctrine that explains this process:
4. Those whose hearts are hard, and can't believe, do what has become commonplace; they scheme a way to kill Saul.
5. They do to him what they did to Y'shua, the Apostles, and Stephen.
6. This time he is able to escape because the plan is uncovered.
7. It won't always be that way, as we will see in upcoming chapters of Acts, and his testimonies in written in other letters.
8. He could not leave through the city gate as he was being sought after, so one night faithful disciples helped him escape by lowering him down in a basket

from the walls of the city and he heads back to Jerusalem.

(3) Saul at Jerusalem (**Acts 9:26-30**)

- (a) Saul arrives in Jerusalem and it is difficult for him to link up with other disciples, as no one trusts that his conversion is real; they are actually concerned it might be a trick.
 1. Barnabas takes a chance and brings him to the apostles...It makes sense that he would because he was named Barnabas (a Son of Encouragement) by the apostles because of his nature (Acts 4:36-37).
 2. Saul uses the opportunity to share his entire testimony about what happened to him on the road and his experience with Ananias, and later as he preached in Damascus.
 3. He boldly shared for a while, but when a dispute arose with the Hellenists, they tried to kill him.
 4. The Hellenists are Jews who speak Greek and are influenced by Greek culture.
 5. Remember, people in Jerusalem know Saul, as he was part of Stephen's execution and very likely part of all the recent trials in the Sanhedrin (Y'shua's in Matthew 26, and the three trials in Acts 4-7).

6. Saul's first post-conversion trip to Jerusalem must come to an end and he escapes Jerusalem for Caesarea, and then goes onto his ***hometown of Tarsus.**
 7. He will visit Jerusalem three more times before he dies. (#1 Acts 11-12; #2 Acts 15; #3 Acts 21)
 8. *Saul returns to his hometown...
- (4) The Church Prospers
- (a) There are surprising results from the scattering of the disciples into the surrounding areas of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, as well as Saul's conversion.
 1. The Church grew in reverence for the Lord; in relationship with the Holy Spirit; and in the number of converts throughout the region.

Summary: PETER IN JOPPA (PART I)

3. Peter's Exploits

A. Setting the stage for Peter's about-face!

- (1) Aeneas Healed (**Acts 9:32-35**)
 - (a) Peter moved on from Samaria to Lydda, a city 11 miles southeast of Joppa.
 1. He encounters Aeneas, a paralyzed man confined to bed for eight years.

2. Peter tells him, "Y'shua heals you," and the man got up immediately.
3. All those from of Lydda and from the plain of Sharon on the coast, who saw the man who had been healed, were converted.

(b) The theme is INSTANTLY!

1. **Instantly:** Aeneas rose when Peter said Y'shua healed him.

(2) Dorcas Restored to Life (**Acts 9:36-43**)

(a) At Joppa, a wonderful disciple named Tabitha became sick and died.

1. Some disciples knew Peter was in Lydda nearby, so they sent for him to come quickly.
2. He stopped what he was doing right away and headed over to Joppa.
3. Peter sees they are mourning over Tabitha's death, so he puts everyone out of the room.
4. He kneels and prays over the woman, "Tabitha, arise."
5. She opens her eyes and Peter helps her sit up.
6. He calls the people back into the room and he presents her to them alive from the dead.

7. The story spread in the city and many believed in the Y'shua.
 8. Peter remained in Joppa for a while and he stayed with Simon, a tanner.
- (b) The theme is INSTANTLY!
1. **Instantly:** Peter went when he was called to Joppa because Tabitha had died.
 2. **Instantly:** Tabitha opened her eyes rose from the dead when Peter told her to rise.

B. Up next: Peter comes face-to-face with his need for an about-face...

- (1) **About-Face:** a reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.
- (a) Peter is about to have a supernatural experience which will give him “an **INSTANT** reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.”
1. **About-Face:** a reversal of direction; a complete change of opinion or behavior.

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

1. What happened according to Acts 8:1-8 to cause the Church to spread outside of Jerusalem?

- A. What was Saul's intention?
- B. Where did Philip go? What did he do? And what was the outcome?
- C. Relate the following two scriptures to Saul's intention and Philip's results. (See: Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28)

2. Philip's preaching and miracles did not only bring the common people to the faith...

- A. What famous person from the city of Samaria also believed? (See Acts 8:9-13)
- B. What was he famous for? What did the people think of him and why?
- C. What happened to another famous person who the people had similar thoughts about, who did not come to the faith? (See Acts 12:21-24)

3. According to Acts 8:14-25, why might we say old habits die hard?

- A. What did Simon witness? What did he want? And what did he want to do with it?
- B. What was Peter's reaction? (Give each detail!)

- C. What was Simon's reaction to Peter? Do you feel it was authentic? Why or why not?
- D. Amalgamate Paul's explanation of "old habits die hard?" (See: II Corinthians 5:17; Romans 7:14-20; I Corinthians 2:11-12)
- E. Why can we be certain that it is our choice to decide if we would rather let the Holy Spirit dominate us or to resurrect our old nature? (See: Ephesians 1:19-20; Galatians 3:3; Romans 8:5; II Corinthians 10:4-5)

4. Staying in Acts 8:14-25, what do you think is meant that...

- A. *"Peter and John prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."*
- B. Use the following passages to formulate a narrative that explains the difference between one's moment of being born again and a tangible encounter with the Holy Spirit. (See: Romans 8:11; John 20:21-23; Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:38; 8:16-17; 19:1-6)
- C. With all you have read, do you believe a person has the Holy Spirit in them the moment they are born again, or must they receive the Holy Spirit (be Baptized in the Holy Spirit) separately to possess the Holy Spirit? Explain your reasoning.

5. Philip continues his fruitful exploits in Acts 8:26-40.

- A. Who does he encounter and what is the man reading?

- B. How does Philip use it to lead him to the truth about Y'shua?
- C. Why is it rare that this man would possess a physical copy of what he was reading? How do you think he obtained it?
- D. Why is it expected that this man would not understand what he was reading? (See: John 7:15; Acts 4:13) *Hint: this is why the religious leaders were amazed by Y'shua, Peter and John.*
- E. What is the outcome of their encounter and what happens to Philip? How might this relate to John 20:19 and Luke 24:36?

6. Saul's intention was not to cause the spread of the Gospel and it was not his intention for this to happen either...

- A. Describe the events of Acts 9:1-9.
- B. What two questions does Saul ask immediately that prove his conversion was real?
- C. Why do you believe Saul was physically blinded?
- D. Differentiate Saul's response with Pharaoh's in Exodus 5:1-2.
- E. How does Proverbs 16:9 apply to Saul's life?

7. While Saul is having his encounter on the road to Damascus, Ananias is having one in Damascus. (See Acts 9:10-16)

- A. What is his immediate response to God?
- B. How is his response similar to Isaiah and Samuel? (See: Isaiah 6:8, I Samuel 3:4)
- C. Why is Ananias understandably apprehensive?
- D. What is he told that assuages his fear?

8. Saul and Ananias finally meet in Acts 9:17-19.

- A. Saul had his born again experience on the road, but what happens here with the Holy Spirit?
- B. What happens with his eyes and what do you believe it symbolizes?

9. What action does Saul take in light of all that happened and how is it received? (See Acts 9:20-22)

- A. Compare the reaction of the Jews to Saul to the following events. (See Matthew 22:46; Acts 4:14; 6:10)
- B. What do they eventually do to Saul that causes him to leave Damascus? (See Acts 9:23-25)
- C. Where does he go from there? How is he received?

10. Paul heads from Damascus back to Jerusalem in Acts 9:26-31.

- A. How is he received by the leaders?
- B. What does he do?
- C. How is he received by the people?
- D. What is the outcome?

11. In Acts 9:32-35 and Acts 9:36-43, Peter is back in focus...

- A. Describe the events in Lydda.
- B. Describe the events in Joppa.