

Luke introduces us to Saul

1. Observation and exposition of Acts 8:1-3
2. The take-away for us?

Observation and exposition of Acts 8:1-3

1. Read **Acts 8:1-3**
2. "And Saul approved of his execution."
 - a. "approved" along with **7:58** could signify that he led the opposition against Stephen
 - b. Saul may have belonged to the synagogue where Stephen had been speaking
 - i. Compare **6:8-10** and **22:3**
 - ii. Not out of the question that Saul also saw, heard, or possibly interacted with Jesus when Jesus was in Jerusalem.
 - c. Why was Saul so against Christianity?
 - i. He understood, as did Stephen, that Judaism and Christianity were not compatible, not complementary, not both right. Christianity was not just a sect or offshoot of Judaism.
 1. See **Galatians 3:13**
 - d. Saul did not take the moderate approach that Gamaliel, his teacher, took.
 - i. Do a character sketch of Saul on the whiteboard.
 - ii. **5:33-40**
 - iii. **22:1-3**
 - iv. **Philippians 3:4-6**
 - v. **1 Timothy 1:12-17**
 - vi. The zeal of youth, perhaps?
 1. My example at RBC
3. "on that day a great persecution"
 - a. Who was involved?
 - b. What caused or triggered this persecution?
 - i. See **11:19**
 - c. What was the result of this persecution?
 - i. **8:4, 11:19-20**
4. "against the church in Jerusalem"
 - a. First introduced to this word "church" in **5:11** (or **2:47**)
 - b. Used twice here

- c. Again in **9:31** to wrap up this segment about Saul
 - d. Then it becomes much more frequent in Acts
- 5. “they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria”
 - a. All? Does this mean every single believer in Jerusalem at that time? Context!!
 - b. Hyperbole
 - i. “exaggeration for effect”
 - ii. “exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally”
 - iii. Examples?
 - 1. In the Bible:
 - a. **Matthew 23:24**
 - b. **John 12:19**
 - c. **Judges 20:16**
 - 2. In English:
 - a. “Raining cats and dogs”
 - iv. Justin Taylor article
 - c. So is this verse hyperbole?
 - i. Some say yes
 - 1. “except the apostles”
 - 2. “devout men buried Stephen”
 - a. Who were these devout men? Jews who disagreed with Stephen’s execution? Or Christians still in Jerusalem?
 - 3. “Saul was ravaging the church...”
 - a. But if they were “all” scattered, who was left to ravage?
 - 4. Compare **11:19-20**
 - ii. Some say no
 - 1. The persecution was primarily against Hellenistic Jewish Christians, like Stephen.
 - d. In my observations and opinion, Luke tends to use hyperbole and other figures of speech, and then sometimes qualifies what he means.
 - e. One more example (not from Luke-Acts)?
 - i. **John 1:29** and **Ephesians 5:25**
- 6. Where were the Romans? Did they allow this kind of behavior? i.e. Saul “entering house and after house” and dragging men and women to prison?
- 7. If this persecution had not happened, would the gospel have spread as intended?

The take-away for us

Resources

1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, F. F. Bruce
2. *The Book of the Acts*, F. F. Bruce
3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, David G. Peterson
4. *The Message of Acts*, John Stott
5. *The Acts of the Apostles*, Ben Witherington III
6. <http://www.tentmaker.org/Biblematters/hyperbole.htm>
7. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/did-jesus-ever-exagerrate/>