

The Acts of the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:26-9:22

Acts 7-8 are fascinating because they deal, as chapters, with those people in the gray area between unmistakably Jewish and unmistakably Gentile. What makes the Ethiopian in Acts 8 just such a borderline case? What makes his identity as a eunuch so troubling, and what is a *Kandake*?

Why does the Ethiopian have an Isaiah scroll? What question does he have about the passage from Isaiah 43, and how does Philip (again, probably Philip the *diakonos/minister*) respond to the question? What kind of exit does Philip make at the end of this story? Does your Bible have an Acts 8:37?

Acts 9:1-2 reveals a couple things, first that a Christian community had arisen in Syria/Aram, and second that Saul is already a savvy political operator, using the authority of the Roman-sponsored Jerusalem temple to make raids on Christian communities out of the temple's sphere of influence. However, as we know, things turn out differently. What elements of this famous encounter do you most vividly remember, and what emphases in the text strike you as things you've forgotten?

In Acts 9:10-18, a very different Ananias from the one in Acts 5 becomes the one who welcomes his grave enemy and sets up a moment of divine forgiveness. What echoes does Acts set up with Jeremiah in Acts 9:15? (Hint: look at Jeremiah 1:10.) How does Ananias address this enemy of Christ, and what literary device from Acts 2 returns in verse 18?

In Acts 9:19, what does the setting for Saul's proclamation say about his identity? (Or, to put it differently, who else has proclaimed in synagogues in Acts?) Why is the Stephen-parallel particularly fitting for the beginning of Saul's career as a Christian? Why is he still called Saul at this point? (Hint: he doesn't get called Paul until Acts 13.)