

## Issues to be addressed in interpreting Acts 8.1-9.31

1. Why would Saul want to destroy the Jesus movement (8.1-3)?
2. What do we know about Samaria and Samaritans at the time we find Philip going there to “proclaim the Messiah to them” (8.5ff)?
3. What was “magic” in this time and place? Why was it deemed “evil” by so many? (8.9ff)
4. What do we make of Simon’s request to buy the power to confer the Holy Spirit on people? Why might Peter’s response be so harsh? (8.18-24)?
5. How are we to understand the complex description of the man Philip encounters in the wilderness (8.27)? What “religion” do we understand he comes to the encounter carrying? What “religion” do we understand him leaving with?
6. What do we know about the various cultural markers in 8.27 and how they shape our interpretation of the story?
7. What interlinguistic and/or intercultural issues should we consider in the encounter between Philip and the man and the passage from Isaiah (8.30-35)?
8. Philip “found himself at Azotus” and ended up in Caesarea (8.40). What do we know about these two cities in relation to the unfolding story?
9. Saul seeks authority from the “high priest” in the form of letters to the synagogues in Damascus? What do we know about such authority and the state of things in Damascus as Saul heads there (9.1-2)?
10. What scriptural echoes do we hear in the description of Saul’s epiphany (9.3-6)?
11. How do we interpret Saul’s three days of fasting (9.9)? Grief? Prayer? Shock? Something else?
12. We meet a “disciple in Damascus named Ananias” (9.10). Why suddenly speak of “disciples” in this section? How, in Luke’s narrative, do they relate to “apostles”?
13. After Ananias and Saul meet, “something like scales” fall from Saul’s eyes and he suddenly begins to proclaim Jesus “is the son of God” (9.20). What do we understand changed in Saul? A “new religion” (i.e., a “Jew” is now a “Christian”)? A new calling (i.e., the persecutor is now the proclaimer)? A new understanding of God’s will for Israel (i.e., a change from religion of empire to religion of creation)?
14. Seemingly out of nowhere, we hear of *hoi Ioudaioi* (9.22), traditionally translated “the Jews”? Who are these people in relation to those addressed earlier in Acts as “Israelites”?
15. Why might Barnabas be the only one to stand up for Saul in Jerusalem (9.27)?
16. Why are “the Hellenists” trying to kill Saul now (9.29)?