

## **Acts: Judea & Samaria**

### **Acts 8:1–25**

Don't be surprised that this week's study is trying to accomplish a variety of goals. We are returning to Acts after some months away, so we are partly reorienting ourselves. And, as the gospel message breaks out of Jerusalem and into the wider world for the first time, Luke showcases *several* of his key themes. We note some of those themes this week, and we will see many recurring in coming weeks.

### **Recap Season 1**

Where has Luke brought us in the story so far?

- Review Acts 1:1–11. What are the key plans Jesus has for his followers?
- Skim the rest of Acts 1–7. How does the gospel message progress around the city of Jerusalem? What opposition arises? What happens?
- Check 7:53–8:1. How has Luke chosen to finish his first 'season'?

### **Begin Season 2**

Read though this week's passage, 8:1–25. It's effectively the first episode in a new season of Luke's drama. 😊

- If it helps, find a map. Where is Samaria in relation to Jerusalem? to the wider world?
- What threats does the gospel message face in this new location?
- How are those threats resolved?

Have you considered before that Luke's record of early church history is not exhaustive? How does it make you feel to hear that Luke has an agenda for his readers? From all of Acts that we've seen so far (and later chapters that you recall) what do you think are the main points of his agenda?

### **Respond to this week's episode**

Our passage this week shows the gospel message spreading out beyond Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, God's people typically waited in Jerusalem for outsiders to come to them. Now we see God's people carrying the gospel message outwards to those wider nations.

- Do you think individual church members, and GWAC as a whole, lean more one way or the other?
- Do you think we show favouritism concerning which people we share the good news with?
- What opposition have you seen (or do you fear) making it hard to share? Consider a range of possibilities, whether overt spiritual powers, real/perceived constraints of societies and governments, individual timidity, etc.
- How do you think Luke would counsel us to respond?

Our passage also addresses the issue of church unity. The Holy Spirit is withheld so that the members of the Jewish church might recognise God's acceptance of the Samaritans. Are there cultures or denominations you are reluctant to embrace as part of God's people?

**Pray** about all the above, including our responses as individuals, as congregations, and as a church.