

SCATTERED ON PURPOSE

Acts 8:1–25 | #8 of Acts: The Road Before Us | Dave Geldart | July 5, 2026

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Dilan): Welcome, Connect Cards, Giving, Youth Camp Report

1. [1] INTRODUCTION

- a. Let me ask you something before we open Bibles:
 - i. Has something ever gotten ripped away from you —
 - 1. a job, a plan, a place you loved, a relationship —
 - 2. and only later did you realize it was the best thing that could've happened?
 - ii. I'm thinking about that high school girlfriend I was in love with,
 - 1. how devastated I was when she broke up with me first year of college.
 - 2. And how hindsight has made me so extremely grateful that didn't work out!
- b. Now, hold that feeling.
 - i. Because that's what's about to happen to the entire church in Acts Ch. 8.
- c. For seven chapters now, we have not left Jerusalem.
 - i. Jesus died and rose there
 - ii. Pentecost happened there —
 - 1. The Holy Spirit came
 - 2. three thousand saved,
 - 3. a lame man healed at the temple gate,
 - 4. Stephen preached,
 - 5. Stephen died.
- d. Look around this room.
 - i. Look at the maps we've hung on these walls all summer.
 - ii. So far, everything we've read about has been in the same city.
 - 1. That ends today.
- e. Jesus told us this was coming.
 - i. [2] Before he ascended, he gave his followers a roadmap.
 - ii. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8, NIV)
 - iii. Jesus didn't predict that. He prescribed it.
 - 1. The road was always going to go from

2. Jerusalem. To Judea. Then Samaria. And eventually the ends of the earth.
- f. For seven chapters we've only seen word one.
- i. Today, word two and word three show up in the very same chapter.
 1. Judea and Samaria.
 - ii. And they don't show up because the church planned a strategic expansion.
 1. **On the contrary, the church had gotten quite comfortable right where they were in Jerusalem.**
 2. We only get to Judea and Samaria because the church got
 3. [3] scattered – on purpose.
- g. Reorientation.
- i. Two weeks ago, Effie walked us through Acts 7, Stephen's trial and execution.
 - ii. Last week, Nate Rovenstine preached from Acts 1:8 and 2 Peter 1,
 1. casting a vision for multiplying disciples, leaders, and churches.
 2. More than once, he told us how encouraged he was to see our maps on the wall — the steps we're taking
 - a. this church, he said, is already starting to think like Acts!
 - iii. Hold those two sermons in one hand and today's text in the other —
 1. Nate gave us the vision, Effie gave us the push,
 - a. Acts 8 gives us the mechanism.
 - iv. Kingdom Multiplication doesn't happen because somebody writes "multiply disciples, leaders, and churches" on a vision document.
 1. It happens the way it happens in Acts 8.
 - a. Messily. Painfully.
 - b. Through ordinary people getting pushed out of their comfort and into somebody else's life.
 - v. A rock hits still water and doesn't just sink — it sends rings outward, past where it even landed.
 1. **That's been our word all year: Ripple.**
 2. But a rock only ripples because it disturbs something first.
 - a. Acts 8 is what happens when the disturbance is real, and the ripple goes further than anyone standing there could have imagined.
- h. [4] Let's read it: Acts 8:1-4

- i. *And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (Acts 8:1-4, NIV)*
- j. **PRAY** (if Dilan didn't already)

2. NOT DEFEAT BUT DEPLOYMENT

- a. Stephen is dead.
- b. The church is grieving.
- c. Fear has settled over Jerusalem like smog.
- d. And then their worst fears materialize: great persecution broke out!
 - i. And all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
 - ii. That's not a coincidence.
 - iii. That's the exact roadmap Jesus laid out in Acts 1:8.
 - 1. And not because anybody planned it that way.
- e. Notice who stays and who goes:
 - i. The apostles — the twelve, the famous ones — stay put in Jerusalem.
 - ii. Everybody else leaves:
 - 1. moms, dads, teenagers, servants, merchants, widows —
 - 2. most with names we'll never know this side of heaven.
 - iii. **[5] The mission of God was never designed to run through twelve extraordinary men —**
 - 1. **it was always meant to run through thousands of ordinary, Spirit-filled people. (repeat)**
 - 2. It was true in Acts 8.
 - a. And it's still true in Kansas, two thousand years later.
 - iv. We slip into the wrong assumption more than we'd like to admit —
 - 1. that mission belongs to the staff, to whoever's holding the mic.
 - 2. Acts 8 won't let us believe that:
 - a. the heroes here are mostly unnamed,
 - b. just regular believers carrying Jesus with them when their world fell apart.
- f. **That means: this building is not the mission. You are.**

- i. This room is where we get equipped and sent from —
 - 1. it was never meant to be the only place ministry happens.
- g. Now, don't misread this passage as God approving of what happened to Stephen.
 - i. [6] Look at verse 2 again: *Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.*
 - 1. Real grief. Real tears. A real funeral for a real friend.
 - ii. Christians can be in a hurry to get to Romans 8:28 —
 - 1. yes, God works all things together for good,
 - 2. but we have to grieve first.
 - iii. The Bible never tells us to minimize suffering to celebrate sovereignty:
 - 1. **God doesn't remove the pain, He redeems it** —
 - 2. two very different promises, and only one is in your Bible.
 - iv. This is the Old Testament story of Joseph all over again —
 - 1. Joseph's own brothers sold him into slavery, and years later, when he held their lives in his hands:
 - 2. [7] he said this instead: *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Genesis 50:20, NIV).*
 - v. That's Good and Salvation not instead of evil — But Even Through evil.
 - 1. That's the pattern running all the way to the cross,
 - a. where humanity's worst moment became heaven's greatest rescue —
 - 2. the same pattern is running through Acts 8.
 - a. Saul thinks he's defeating a movement;
 - b. he's actually God's unwitting deployment system.

3. WHEN BELIEVERS LIVE SENT

- a. [8] Look again at verses 3 - 4
- b. Saul isn't standing on the sidelines holding coats —
 - i. Luke's language is violent on purpose:
 - ii. house to house, dragging people out,
 - 1. men and women alike, thrown into prison for following Jesus.
- c. Sit with that for a second — imagine it happening tonight right here in St. George, in MHK, in Wamego:
 - i. your door kicked in, your kids crying in the next room,

- ii. arrested for what you believe about Jesus, facing probable execution.
- iii. There are believers on this planet answering that question with their lives right now.
 - 1. **What would that do to your faith?**
 - 2. No casual Christianity survives that kind of pressure —
 - a. only the real thing does.
- d. And here is the key sentence in this passage:
 - i. *Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.*
 - ii. Not the apostles. Not the professionals.
 - 1. Everybody.
 - a. They lost their homes, but not their witness.
 - b. They lost their safety, but not their mission.
 - 2. Whatever Saul took from them,
 - a. he could not take the gospel out of their mouths.
- e. This is the engine behind what Nate cast vision for last week:
 - i. multiplying disciples, leaders, and churches.
- f. True Multiplication has never run through a stage —
 - i. it runs through ordinary people who understand they're sent,
 - ii. not just on Sunday morning,
 - 1. but Tuesday at the feed store, Wednesday at school, Saturday at the kid's soccer game.
- g. It's no different with our LIFE Groups —
 - i. we don't multiply because staff dreams up a clever program,
 - ii. we grow because ordinary people get sent out to start something new,
 - 1. even when it's easier to stay cozy where they are.
 - iii. Because contrary to what feels natural,
 - 1. Scattering isn't a threat to what God's doing among us —
 - 2. it's usually the shape of it!
- h. Picture a full salt shaker sitting closed on the table —
 - i. Practically worthless no matter how much salt is inside it.
 - ii. The only way salt does what salt is for is if somebody breaks the seal and shakes it loose —
 - iii. When you tip it upside down and scatter it across the piping hot French fries, that's when the magic happens.

- i. Salt stuck in the shaker is not a flattering picture of what happens to a comfortable church.
 - i. But it's an honest one.
- j. The church gathered is a beautiful thing.
 - i. We need it. We're doing it right now.
 - ii. But the church scattered is the thing the enemy cannot stop.

4. [9] SMALL ACTS CREATE BIG RIPPLES

- a. *Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:5-8, NIV)*
- b. Luke zooms in on shaken grain of salt – one man named Philip
 - i. — not the apostle, but the one we met back in chapter 6,
 - ii. one of the seven chosen to wait tables so the apostles could pray and preach.
- c. Watch how simple his obedience is:
 - i. Philip goes, Philip preaches Christ. That's it.
- d. And look what happens next: crowds of lost people gather, people get healed, people get free — a whole city fills with joy.
 - i. Philip just showed up and opened his mouth,
 - 1. **and the Holy Spirit did the rest.**
 - ii. That should take the pressure off every one of us —
 - 1. God isn't asking you to fix Pottawatomie or Riley County.
 - 2. He's asking you to obey him in the next conversation in front of you;
 - a. he handles what happens after that.
- e. We've used the word ripple all year, and I'm not apologizing for using it once more — this is the chapter that word plays out most clearly!
 - i. Stephen dies, believers scatter.
 - ii. Regular believers obey, and cities change.
 - iii. None of them could see the whole ripple while standing in the middle of it. Neither can you.

5. GOD LOVES THE PEOPLE WE AVOID

- a. [10] There's something easy to miss in verse 5:
 - i. Philip goes to **Samaria**.

- ii. A first-century Jew wouldn't have.
- b. Jews and Samaritans had centuries of mutual hatred behind them —
 - i. racial, religious, political —
 - ii. and a good, observant Jew planned his routes to avoid Samaria altogether.
- c. But Jesus never avoided it — to the great discomfort of his disciples!
 - i. You may remember the woman at the well,
 - ii. remember the parable of the good Samaritan
- d. He'd already been preparing his followers to see a wider road than the one they knew.
- e. Now in Acts 8, it becomes official church policy: the gospel crosses the line nobody wanted crossed.
- f. Every generation has its own Samaria —
 - i. a group of people we've quietly decided isn't our mission field,
 - ii. people who make us uncomfortable,
 - iii. people who take extra effort,
 - iv. people we assume won't respond, aren't worth the drive.
- g. Acts 8 says Jesus is already there —
 - i. already working, already preparing hearts before we ever show up with an excuse not to go.
 - ii. Because he loves them.

6. A LIFESTYLE OF REPENTANCE

- a. *[11] Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized,*
[12] both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. (Acts 8:9-13, NIV)
- b. Simon the Sorcerer is a fascinating character
 - i. And not quite the cartoon villain some make him —
 - ii. he'd built his identity on being the powerful one in town,

- iii. and something in him recognized Philip's power as both real and greater.
- c. Luke says it plainly twice: Simon believed and was baptized.
 - i. Simon became a Christian!
- d. Then Peter and John arrive from Jerusalem.
- e. *[13] When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of [14] the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17, NIV)*
- f. Simon watches. Then he does something that ruins the moment.
- g. *When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because [15] your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin." Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me." (Acts 8:18-24)*
- h. That's a pretty sharp rebuke. Peter doesn't soften it.
 - i. Here's why: Simon's heart had changed, but his thinking hadn't caught up
 - ii. He still thought spiritual power was something you acquire and control.
- i. Notice: That desire to be useful to God wasn't evil,
 - i. but it was tangled with old patterns of control, bitterness, self-promotion,
- j. It'd be easy to decide this proves he was never really converted — but Luke never says that.
 - i. What we see instead is a brand-new believer with leftover wiring,
 - ii. getting corrected, and responding with humble repentance:
 - 1. "Pray to the Lord for me."
- k. Christian maturity was never about arriving at a place where you no longer need to repent — it's about getting quicker to do it!
 - i. About shortening the time it takes you to move from your knee-jerk sinful response to your 2nd REPENTANT response

- ii. All of us carry leftover wiring and mixed motives we haven't fully named or understood.
 - 1. AND THAT'S OK
- iii. **God doesn't wait for us to get perfect before he starts working in us!**
 - 1. **That's the word some of you need to hear from God this morning.**
- iv. And that should make us slower to write off the believer next to us whose theology's still tangled. Whose behavior is still messy.
- v. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.
 - 1. All of us are still being invited into an ongoing lifestyle of sweet repentance.

7. THE RIPPLES KEEP GOING

- a. *[16] After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages. (Acts 8:25, NIV)*
- b. Notice they don't take the direct road home — Peter and John preach their way back to Jerusalem, village after Samaritan village.
- c. One act of obedience keeps producing another:
 - i. Philip obeys, a city changes;
 - ii. Peter and John show up, and the movement spreads into a dozen more villages nobody named.
- d. **This is how God's kingdom grows — not through one dramatic event, but through faithful people, one after another, refusing to stop where the last person stopped.**

8. [17] APPLICATION

- a. Acts 8 doesn't leave us with a feeling —
 - i. it leaves us with people who did something as life threw them curve balls:
 - ii. Philip went, Peter and John laid hands on people, Simon repented.
- b. I'm going to give you three ways to scatter on purpose this week.
 - i. Straight out of this text.
 - ii. You've got a place on your notes handout to write these down as we go.
- c. **[18] ONE: NAME YOUR JUDEA.**
 - i. Judea wasn't exotic to these believers, and it wasn't home either —
 - 1. it was the next town over,
 - 2. same kind of people, same culture, just outside their everyday radius.

- 3. No job pulling them there, no errand, no built-in reason to show up.
- ii. That's different from your workplace or your neighborhood —
 - 1. that's your Jerusalem, and you're already standing in it.
- iii. Your Judea is a little farther out:
 - 1. the town fifteen minutes down the highway that you drive past but never stop in —
 - 2. somewhere in Pottawatomie or Riley County:
 - a. Westmoreland, Olsburg, Zeandale, Randolph, St. Marys, Ogden, Junction City —
 - 3. where you have no real reason to slow down and be present,
 - a. except that God might want you there.
- iv. Write down a name, a town —
 - 1. maybe someone you've lost touch with out that way.
 - 2. Not a plan, just the name.
 - 3. **If you don't know, briefly pray and ask God to show you a name.**

d. [19] TWO: TAKE PHILIP'S (next) STEP, NOT PETER'S WHOLE CHAPTER.

- i. Philip didn't launch a full campaign.
- ii. He went a little further out, and he talked about Jesus.
 - 1. One step. God did the rest.
- iii. Pick one of these next steps this week. Just one:
 - 1. Invite a neighbor over (or out)
 - 2. Ask a coworker how they're really doing
 - 3. The next time someone tells you they're struggling —
 - a. pray for them right there, out loud,
 - b. instead of saying "I'll pray for you" and meaning later.
 - 4. Or, the next time you're undergoing difficulty and disruption, look for new opportunities to speak of Jesus in the midst of it
- iv. Don't pick all four.
 - 1. Philip didn't need four ideas. He needed obedience to one.
 - 2. **What's your next step of obedience?**

e. [20] THREE: GO TOWARD YOUR SAMARIA.

- i. To first-century Jews, Samaritans were a whole category,
 - 1. an entire group already written off before anyone met a single one of them.
- ii. So for this one, think of who your Samaria is.

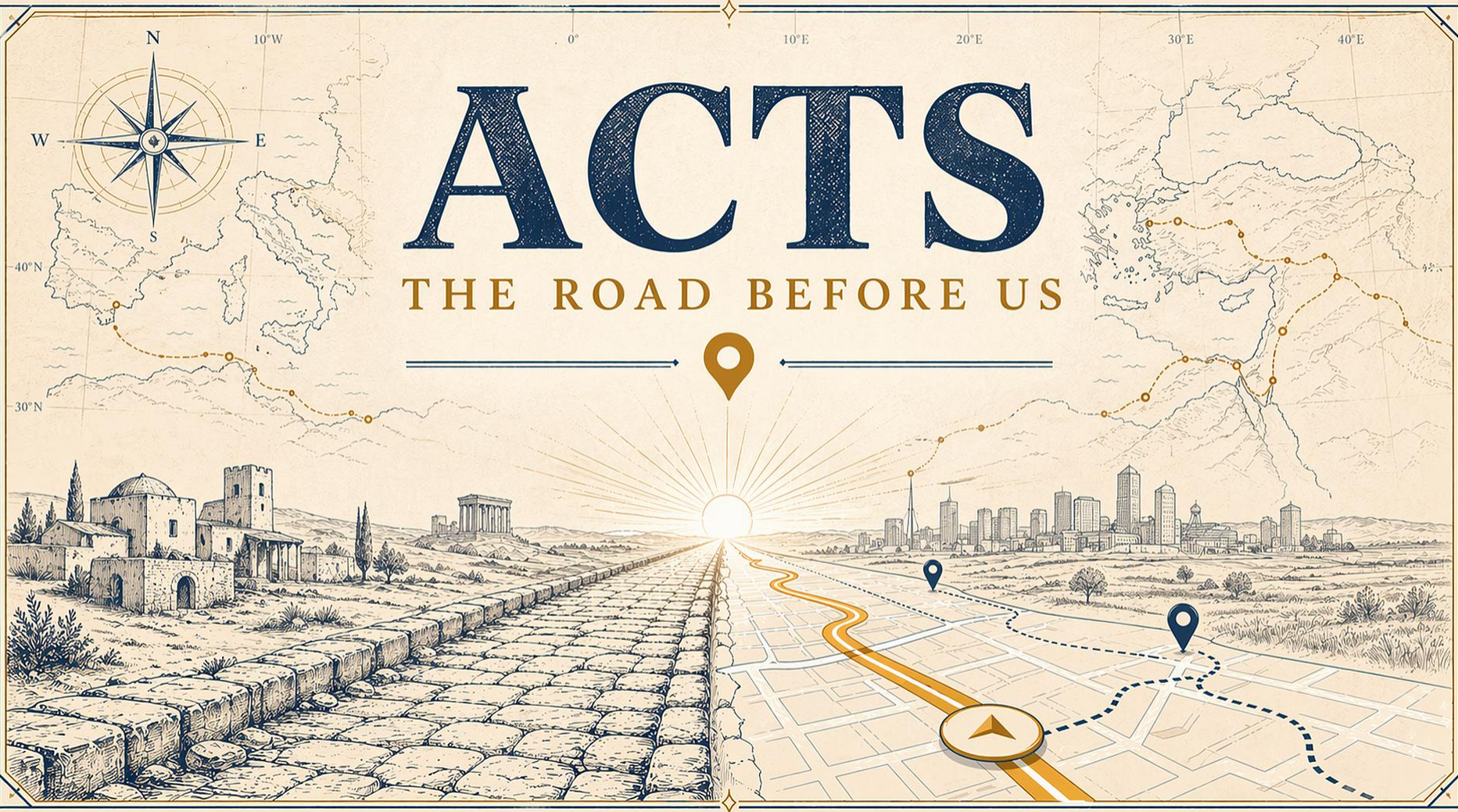
1. Maybe it's a specific person, or more likely, it's a category of people:
 2. a certain town, a certain background, a certain politics, a certain past.
 - a. The people who make you uncomfortable.
 - b. Frustrated. Angry.
 - c. The people you try to avoid.
 3. Whoever comes to mind when I say "not my kind of people" — that's the one this application is for.
- iii. Whatever comes to mind, write it down:
1. a name, or a category of people that's beyond your comfort zone.
 2. Nobody's going to see it but you and God.
- iv. **Ask God right now: "What would it look like for me to move toward my Samaria – with who I wrote down?"**

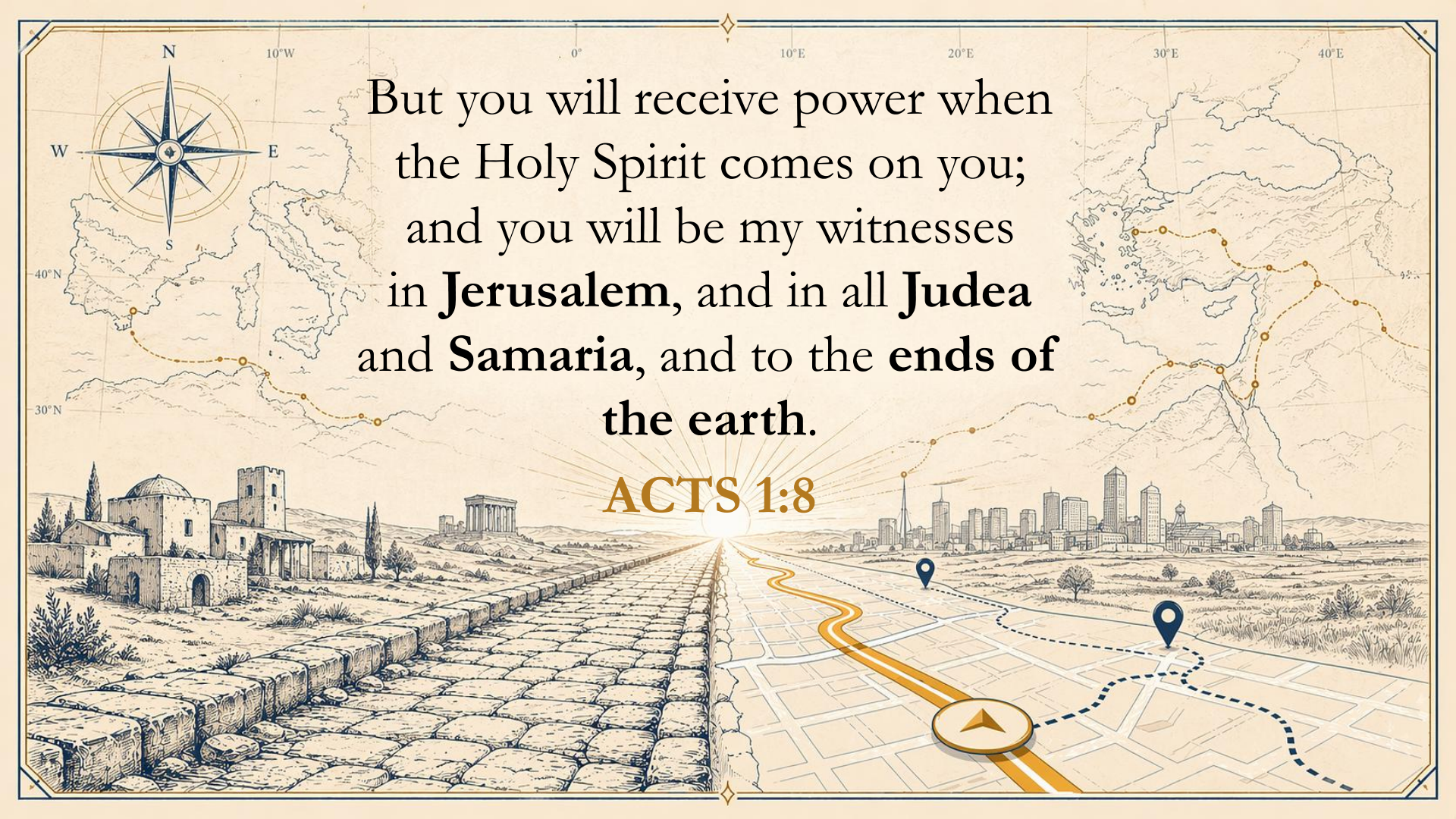
9. [21] CONCLUSION: SCATTERED ON PURPOSE

- a. Stephen died. The church scattered.
- b. But contrary to how it looked on the ground,
 - i. the church wasn't being destroyed in Acts 8,
 - ii. it was being planted, one scattered believer at a time.
- c. Still today, we serve a God who brings mission out of disruption,
 - i. and multiplication out of what was meant to be our undoing.
- d. **Some of you are in the middle of your own unplanned scattering right now —**
 - i. It's disruptive. And it's not pleasant. You're not certain what's going on.
 - ii. I can't promise you'll understand what God's doing with it today;
 1. Acts doesn't make that promise either.
 - iii. But I can tell you God is never limited by circumstances that feel like they're limiting you — he's already at work in places you haven't arrived at yet.
- e. So as we leave this room,
 - i. remember: church doesn't end when we walk out that door. **Church scatters.**
And the Kingdom of God grows
- f. May God scatter us well.
 - i. May the ripples of one obedient step carry the name of Jesus further than any of us could plan on our own.
- g. Amen.

ACTS

THE ROAD BEFORE US



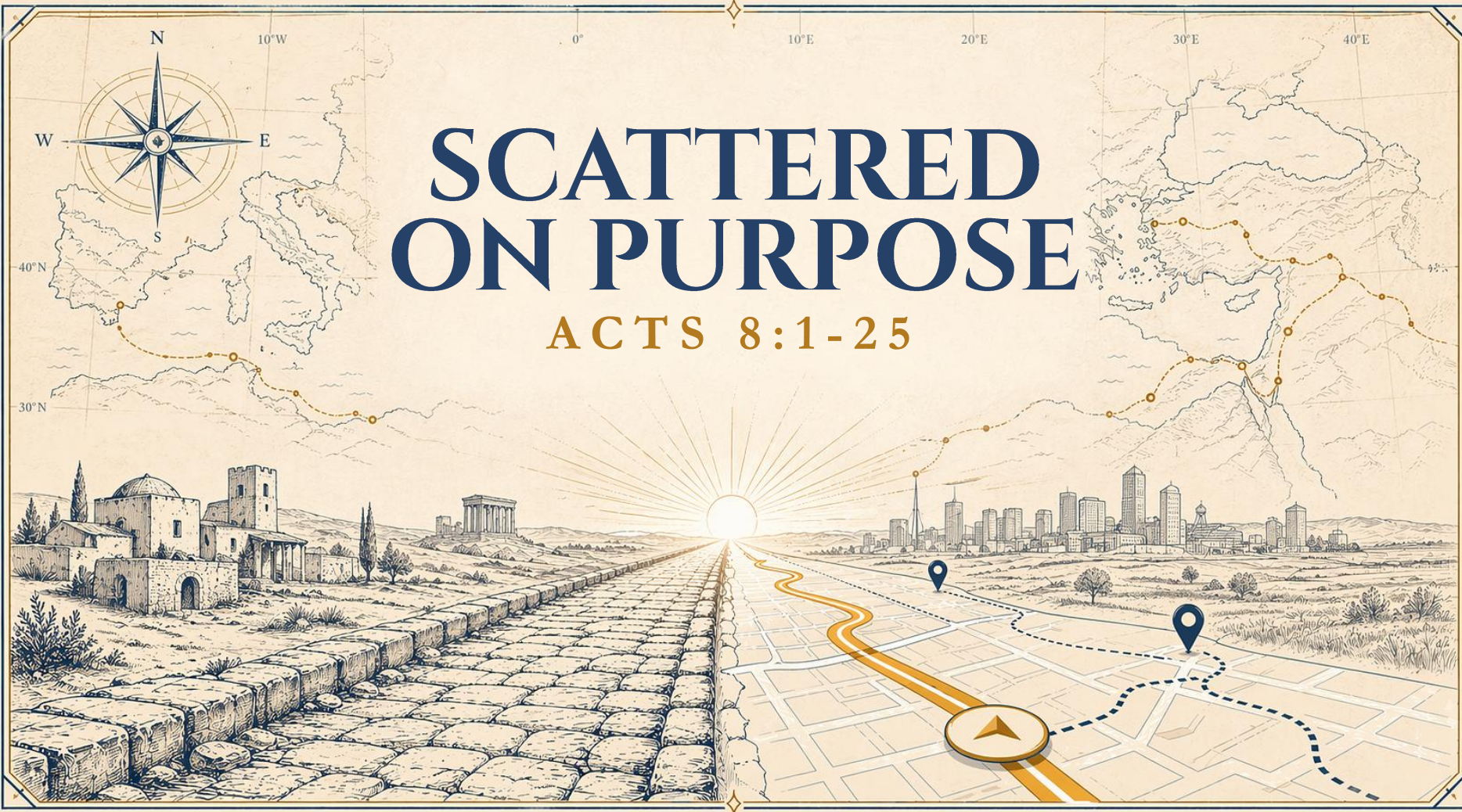


But you will receive power when
the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my witnesses
in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea**
and **Samaria**, and to the **ends of**
the earth.

ACTS 1:8

SCATTERED ON PURPOSE

ACTS 8:1-25



SCATTERED ON PURPOSE

ACTS 8: ¹ And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. ⁴ who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.



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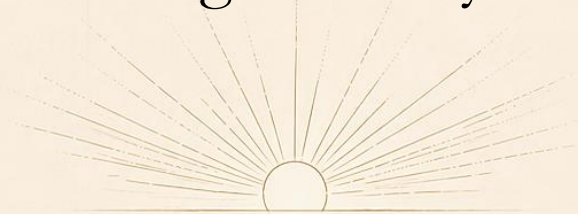
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GENESIS 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.



WHEN BELIEVERS LIVE SENT

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ACTS 8: ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and

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A LIFESTYLE OF REPENTANCE

ACTS 8:⁹ Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great,¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.”¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.¹² But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized,



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¹⁴ When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. ¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of



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²⁰ Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!

²¹ You have no part or share in this ministry, because

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ACTS 8: your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³ For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”

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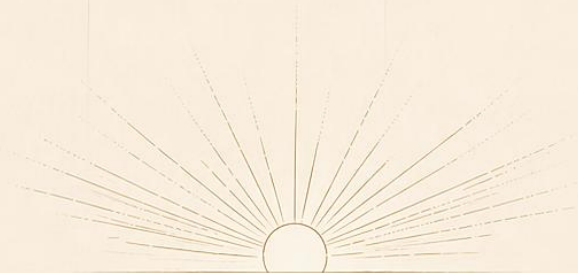
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APPLICATION

THREE WAYS TO SCATTER ON PURPOSE:

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SCATTERED ON PURPOSE

ACTS 8:1-25

