

CHAIN REACTION

Acts 8:1-4

There are mechanical, chemical and nuclear chain reactions as well as _____ chain reactions
An interpersonal chain reaction was started when the 1st Christian _____ was stoned by a mob of Jews

I. MARTYRDOM → WIDESPREAD _____

The word _____ is used for the first time in Acts in v. 1: the first general persecution of Christians
For the first time, the _____ of Judaism united in their determination to stamp out Christianity

A. *Vivid Central Color:* _____ Ravaged the Church

- 1) The verb in v.3 is very strong; it speaks of cruelty—Saul went _____ to _____ seeking Christians
- 2) “There is nothing so cruel as _____ zeal”: today we see this kind of religious violence in Islam

B. *Soft Foreground Color:* Devout _____ Buried Stephen

- 1) The word “devout” is used in Acts not of Christians but of Jews who kept the _____ of Moses
- 2) Despite Saul, there were unbelievers who _____ Stephen enough to give him a decent burial

C. *Contrasting Background Color:* Saul Became _____

- 1) Saul abruptly becomes a major part of this story with no introduction because the readers knew him
He became the Paul who spread the _____ far and wide and led many of them to faith in Christ
- 2) Historian of the early church, Tertullian: “The _____ of the martyrs is the seed of the church”

II. PERSECUTION → CHRISTIAN _____

A. Christians Protected Themselves from Persecution by _____

We do not _____ our Lord by fleeing persecution; believers have been fleeing persecution since Acts 8

B. Christians Were Scattered Like _____ Being Sown

In the language of the NT, there are 2 words translated “scattered”: 1) one means scattered with the result that _____ is left; 2) here Luke used a word that means scattered in order to _____

III. DISPERSION → WIDESPREAD _____

A. Lay Evangelism Led to the Expansion of the _____

- 1) The word “preaching” in v.4 means “evangelizing”: wherever they were scattered they _____
- 2) Lay Christians (never ordained) did the _____ thing, shared the gospel wherever they went

B. Their Evangelism Was Particularly Effective among the Samaritans

The Samaritans saw that Christians were treated like they were by the _____ & embraced the gospel

APPLICATIONS FROM THE BIG PICTURE—the entire Chain Reaction

A. This Chain Reaction Led the Church to Obey Christ’s _____ in Unprecedented Ways

- 1) God permitted this general _____ of the church to cause it to obey the Great Commission
- 2) In Acts 8 is the first Christian Diaspora; we are living thru the _____ Christian Diaspora

B. This Chain Reaction Is One of the Ways in Which Jesus Is Fulfilling His Promise to Build His _____

There is nothing good about COVID-19, but in the middle of this pandemic, Jesus Christ IS building His church and He is not letting the gates of _____ prevail against it!