



KINGDOM WITNESS THROUGH ACTS 8 PERSECUTION

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA

Scripture presents God as the King whose dominion cannot fail. The book of Acts shows that opposition did not silence the church; it scattered believers and carried the message forward. As the gospel of the kingdom was preached and received, new places were reached—yet disciples were also warned not to replace God's word with human traditions.

PRIMARY PASSAGES

Acts 1:8

Acts 8:1-3

Acts 8:12-14

Psalms 103:19

Daniel 7:13-17

Mark 7:8

KEY TAKEAWAYS

God's throne and rule are established; His kingdom endures and continues through all generations (Psalms 103:19; Psalms 145:13).

The promised kingdom is portrayed as increasing without end and connected to the Son of Man's dominion (Isaiah 9:7; Daniel 7:13-17).

The church's mission is witness-making through the Holy Spirit's power (Acts 1:8).

Persecution can scatter believers, but it cannot stop the spread of the message (Acts 8:1-3).

The gospel preached included the kingdom of God, and its reception opened new regions to the word (Acts 8:12-14).

Disciples must guard against elevating traditions above God's commands (Mark 7:8; Matthew 15:1).

INTRODUCTION

The story of God's people is not driven by circumstances but by God's reign. Scripture presents God as the King whose dominion is established and enduring. When opposition rises, God's kingdom does not retreat; instead, His purposes continue as His people bear witness. Acts 8 shows a church under persecution—pressured, scattered, and attacked—yet the gospel advances into new places. This study follows that movement: beginning with God's throne, tracing the promised unending kingdom, receiving the mission of Holy Spirit-empowered witness, learning how persecution can propel gospel spread, and guarding discipleship from empty tradition that displaces God's commands.

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalms 103:19 — A declaration of God's established throne and sovereign rule over all, grounding faith and mission in His kingship.

SCRIPTURE READING (CONT.)

Psalms 145:13 — Affirms the enduring nature of God's kingdom across generations, shaping perseverance and long-term hope.

Isaiah 9:7 — Promises a kingdom that increases and has no end, setting expectations for the ongoing expansion of God's rule.

Daniel 7:13-17 — Portrays the Son of Man receiving dominion from God and places the rise of earthly kingdoms under God's ultimate authority.

Acts 1:8 — Jesus defines the church's purpose: empowered by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses, moving outward to wider circles.

Acts 8:1-3 — Describes persecution against the church, resulting in scattering and highlighting Saul's violent opposition.

Acts 8:12-14 — Shows the gospel of the kingdom of God being preached and received in Samaria, with the wider church recognizing the spread of the Word.

Mark 7:8 — Jesus warns against abandoning God's command in favor of human tradition, protecting the integrity of worship and obedience.

SCRIPTURE READING (CONT.)

Matthew 15:1 — Introduces conflict over tradition, prompting self-examination about whether practices align with God's Word.

KEY POINTS

1. **START WITH THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM** — Mission and suffering are interpreted correctly only when God's reign is placed first. God is not competing for authority; His throne is established, and His rule is real and comprehensive. Because God's kingdom endures through all generations, believers are not forced into panic by changing conditions. The stability of God's kingship produces steadiness in witness. When the church remembers that ...

KEY POINTS (CONT.)

1. START WITH THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM (CONT.) — God rules, it can face pressure without believing that opposition is ultimate. The kingdom of God is not fragile, and faithful obedience is never wasted.

- Begin prayer and decision-making by acknowledging God's authority and reign (not merely personal needs).
- Identify one fear or pressure that makes witness feel risky, and reframe it in light of God's enduring rule.
- Practice gratitude for ways God has sustained faith across generations in Scripture and in the church.

Scripture: Psalms 103:19 Psalms 145:13

KEY POINTS (CONT.)

2. SEE THE KINGDOM PROMISED AND UNENDING — The prophets describe God's kingdom as increasing without end. This establishes expectation: God's purposes are moving forward, not shrinking under resistance. Daniel's vision links dominion to the Son of Man while also acknowledging that earthly kingdoms rise and fall. That contrast trains believers to avoid placing ultimate hope in temporary powers. Hope in God's unending kingdom strengthens endurance. When circumstances shift, Scripture teaches that God's dominion remains the defining reality.

- List the “temporary kingdoms” that most shape daily thinking (status, security, approval), and submit them to God’s rule in prayer.
- Choose one habit that expresses allegiance to God’s kingdom (truthfulness, mercy, reconciliation) and practice it intentionally this week.
- When discouraged, reread these promises to restore perspective before reacting to pressure.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:7 Daniel 7:13-17

KEY POINTS (CONT.)

3. RECEIVE THE MISSION: SPIRIT-EMPOWERED WITNESS — Acts 1:8 defines the church's calling: witness through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's empowerment is not presented as an abstract idea but as the strength and guidance needed to testify to Jesus. Witness is outward-moving by design. The pattern pushes beyond familiar boundaries, calling believers to speak and live the message where it has not yet taken root. This mission aligns with the kingdom of God: as the gospel is proclaimed, God's reign is announced, received, and displayed through transformed lives and communities.

- Pray specifically for the Holy Spirit's help to be a clear witness in one relationship or setting.
- Prepare a short explanation of the kingdom of God and why Jesus matters, using simple words you can share naturally.
- Take one step beyond a familiar boundary (a different background, neighborhood, or social circle) with humility and love.

Scripture: Acts 1:8

KEY POINTS (CONT.)

4. PERSECUTION SCATTERS, BUT THE WORD SPREADS — Acts 8 presents persecution as real and painful: believers were attacked and scattered, and Saul actively tried to destroy the church. Scripture does not minimize the cost. Yet the scattering did not end witness; it relocated it. What looked like disruption became movement, and movement created new opportunities for the gospel to be carried outward. This does not call persecution “good,” but it shows persecution is not sovereign. God remains King, and His kingdom advances even when His people are pressured.

- If facing opposition, ask: “How might God use this displacement or pressure to extend witness?” and write one practical possibility.
- Support believers under persecution through prayer and tangible care, refusing isolation and fear.
- Commit to faithful obedience in small actions (speech, integrity, compassion) even when it costs something.

Scripture: Acts 8:1-3

KEY POINTS (CONT.)

5. PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM, AVOID EMPTY TRADITION — In Samaria, people received the message that included “the kingdom of God,” and the spread was recognized beyond the first community. The gospel was not confined to one familiar place or group. At the same time, discipleship requires vigilance: Jesus warns against replacing God’s commands with human tradition. Tradition can be helpful when it serves Scripture, but dangerous when it becomes a substitute for Scripture. Kingdom witness must therefore be both bold and faithful—crossing ...

KEY POINTS (CONT.)

5. PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM, AVOID EMPTY TRADITION (CONT.) —

boundaries with the message while remaining anchored in God's Word rather than human additions.

- Evaluate one practice you consider "normal" in faith and ask: Is it commanded in Scripture, or is it tradition that should remain flexible?
- Look for one opportunity to participate in God's work beyond familiar boundaries with humility, as the gospel reached Samaria.
- When disagreements arise, prioritize clarity from Scripture and obedience to God over preserving preferences.

Scripture: Acts 8:12-14

Mark 7:8

Matthew 15:1

GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: Use these questions to guide the group from seeing → understanding → applying.

OBSERVATION

- What does Psalms 103:19 explicitly claim about God's throne and rule?
- According to Psalms 145:13 and Isaiah 9:7, what words describe the duration and growth of God's kingdom?
- In Daniel 7:13-17, what is given to the Son of Man, and how are earthly kingdoms portrayed in relation to God's rule?
- What does Acts 1:8 say the Holy Spirit empowers believers to do, and where is witness intended to go?
- In Acts 8:1-3, what actions are taken against the church, and what immediate result occurs for believers?
- In Acts 8:12-14, what message is preached and what indicates that Samaria truly received the Word?

INTERPRETATION

How does starting with God's kingship change the way persecution is interpreted in Acts 8?

Why is it significant that the preached message is described as the "kingdom of God" in Acts 8:12?

INTERPRETATION (CONT.)

What does the scattering in Acts 8 suggest about God's ability to advance His purposes during hardship?

- How do Daniel's visions help believers keep perspective when earthly powers appear strong or threatening?

What is the danger Jesus identifies in Mark 7:8 and Matthew 15:1, and how can that danger distort witness?

How do Holy Spirit empowerment (Acts 1:8) and boundary-crossing gospel spread (Samaria) fit together?

APPLICATION

- Where is fear or pressure currently tempting you to silence witness, and how can Acts 1:8 reshape your response?
- What "boundary" (social, cultural, relational) might God be calling you to cross with humble love, as the gospel reached Samaria?
- How can you prepare to speak about the kingdom of God in a simple, faithful way this week?

APPLICATION (CONT.)

- What is one practical way to support believers facing persecution—through prayer, care, or advocacy within your community?
- Which tradition in your religious life needs honest evaluation so it does not replace God's command (Mark 7:8)?
- How can your group keep Scripture central so that shared practices remain servants of obedience rather than substitutes for it?

PRAYER FOCUS

- Ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen bold, clear witness to Jesus and the kingdom of God.
- Pray for believers facing persecution to endure with faith and joy and to keep speaking the gospel.
- Confess and renounce any tradition that replaces God's commands, asking for Scripture-shaped obedience.
- Intercede for the gospel to cross cultural and relational boundaries with humility and love.

NEXT STEP

Identify one boundary you avoid and take a concrete step to share the gospel of the kingdom of God there, relying on the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

God's everlasting kingdom provides the foundation for fearless, faithful witness. Acts 8 shows that persecution can scatter believers, but it cannot stop the Word; the gospel of the kingdom of God advances into new places, including Samaria, through Holy Spirit-empowered testimony. A wise response is both courageous and careful: courageous to witness beyond familiar boundaries, and careful to reject any tradition that displaces God's commands. God remains King, and His kingdom continues through all generations—calling His people to steady, Scripture-shaped witness.