



The Book of Acts
Bringing in a New Dispensation
The Gospel vs. Sorcery, Part 2
Acts 8:12-25

We left off last time with one of the seven of Acts 6, Philip, going down to Samaria to preach the Messiah to the people there. As he preached Jesus and His kingdom to the people they, with one accord, believed what Philip taught. What convinced them was the miracles which he did (8:6). There was great joy in the city since unclean spirits which was a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Mark 16:17,

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."

Other healing miracles occurred (vs. 7); the healing of paralysis and those unable to walk. The result of these apostolic miracles was great joy in the city of Samaria.

Philip's entry into that city and his miraculous healings and preaching of the kingdom was supplanting another man's ministry in that same city, a man called Simon. He too had performed many miracles among the people of Samaria before Philip arrived, and they had believed him as if he had the great power of God (vs. 10). We have then this contrasting and comparison of good and evil, both of which astonished and amazed the people.

As God worked miracles in Scripture, so too the adversary can also do the same. Read Exodus 7 where Pharaoh's magicians duplicated or mimicked some of Moses' miracles. Therefore, we have to be careful and be wise. Miracles in and of themselves should not persuade us. In the dispensation of grace, it must be the completed Word of God that persuades. Everything we do or believe must align itself with the word of God.

Nevertheless, the people of Samaria are believing Philip's message.

Verse 12 —

It is now revealed what *gospel* Philip was preaching; **the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ** (as the King).

This preaching was not the message we preach today. It was not accept Jesus as your personal Savior and receive the gift of God by grace through faith. The gospel preached by Philip was the same we have seen thus far in Acts, and it required action on the part of the one believing, repentance and **baptism**. The Samaritans believed in the **name of Jesus Christ**.

We do not in this way believe in the **name** of Jesus for salvation, in fact we would never give a gospel presentation that said, “Just believe in the name of Jesus.” We also do not preach the gospel of the kingdom. We believe and preach the gospel the completed work of Jesus Christ, His death, burial and resurrection. Paul wrote, later in 1 Corinthians 15:1,3-4,

“I declare unto you the gospel...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he was raised the third day according to the scriptures.”

Our salvation is by grace through faith, not of ourselves. It is a gift, not of good deeds.

Verse 13 —

The message of Philip and the miracles performed by him were so convincing, **Simon believed also**. Now Simon is himself amazed rather than “bewitching” others (vs. 9). Later in verse 20 Simon will be rebuked by Peter. **He continued with Philip, and** was amazed at what he saw. The word **miracles** in Greek is *δυναμις*, a powerful work: **Signs and great powerful works**.

Verses 14 —

Now the apostles which were at Jerusalem. We were told in 8:1 that as persecution spread throughout the assembly (*ekklesia*), the Jews were scattered *throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria*, except the apostles. They have continued preaching the gospel of the kingdom in Jerusalem. Their work there was not finished.

Philip has gone out to preach the gospel in Samaria. When the apostles in Jerusalem **heard that Samaria had received the word of God**; The **word of God** they heard was the *things concerning the kingdom of God* (This is not the *gospel of salvation by grace through faith and not of works*), and that Jesus, the one they killed, was the Messiah. This might be about a year after the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost. Dating is always speculative, but most believe Pentecost was about A.D. 33.

In the year A.D. 34, Philip went out and preached. The Samaritans believed in the Messiah, but there was a difference from those in Jerusalem who had believed in Jesus. The Samaritans had not yet received the Holy Ghost, unlike the apostles and those who believed on the day of Pentecost.

Therefore, They (the apostles) **sent unto them** (the Samaritans) **Peter and John**. This is the fifth time Luke refers to **Peter and John** ministering together (Luke 9:28; Luke 22:8; Acts 3:1,3,11; Acts 4:13,19; Acts 8:14).

In the gospels, Jesus sent the apostles out by *two and two* (Mark 6:7). We see these two men together often. Apparently Peter and John were the “A” team! Peter had been given by Jesus the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19), meaning he had the authority to open the door of the Kingdom

for Israel. His role was to preach the kingdom gospel, for Israel (the circumcised), not the gospel of grace. We see that clearly in Galatians 2:7.

“When they saw that the gospel¹of the uncircumcision (Gentiles) was committed to me (Paul), as the gospel of the circumcision (Jews) was unto Peter...”

Paul had a particular gospel, as did Peter.

Verses 15,16 —

When they (Peter and John) **were come down, prayed for them** (the Samaritans), **that they might receive the Holy Ghost**, which had not yet **fallen upon them**. Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 28:19,20 they were to *baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. The Samaritans were **only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. They believed, but were without the Holy Ghost for a period of time.

I was always taught that the Holy Spirit comes upon a person immediately when they believe and that this filling of the Spirit upon belief is the mark of the church age. If it is the mark of the church age, then we have a problem with that belief since the Holy Spirit did not come upon the Samaritans when they believed. As I have said throughout this class, I don't believe the church as we know it today began at Pentecost. There is a transitional period in the book of Acts. Acts is a transitional book!

Verses 17, 18—

There are three primary statements made in the book of Acts about the Holy Ghost:

Acts 1:5, *baptized with the Holy Ghost (power given)*.

Acts 2:4, *filled with the Holy Ghost (speaking in other languages)*.

Acts 8:17, **Received the Holy Ghost (more power given)**.

“Baptized, filled, received” all seem to be synonymous.

When these things happened, there was a noticeable event that went along with them. In relation to being *baptized in the Holy Ghost*, Acts 1:8 says there would be *power* given. In relation of being *filled with the Holy Ghost*, there was speaking in other languages (Acts 2:4). And, in relation to *receiving the Holy Ghost*, while a description is not given, apparently it was accompanied by some kind of power since **Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands...he offered them money**.

¹ “of the” is in the Greek genitive which can mean *possessive*. Paul possessed a gospel, and Peter possessed a gospel.

Whatever it was that happened to the Samaritans when they **received the Holy Ghost**, Simon the Sorcerer wanted that power and was willing to pay for it.² **He offered them money.** Apostolic power could not be purchased. There were twelve apostles with this power.

Are those who believe in Jesus Christ today by *grace through faith* filled with the Holy Ghost? A special *filling* is never mentioned by Paul for believers in the dispensation of grace (one exception could be Ephesians 5:18). Believers in the dispensation of grace are *sealed with that holy Spirit of promise* (Ephesians 1:13). Paul doesn't define what he means by *sealed*. To be sealed would imply something that is fully protected (Rev. 7:3; 9:4). We might conclude, our eternal status, or the status of our soul is protected because we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We also know from Scripture that believers today (Jew or Gentile) are of the *same body*, there is no Jewish assembly or Gentile assembly (or, there shouldn't be), we are one *ekklesia*, that is, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Verse 19 —

Therefore, whatever this power was that was given when the Samaritans *received the Holy Spirit* (and I think we might say it was the power of speaking in other tongues and perhaps other apostolic miracles as we saw in Acts 2), Simon wanted it so that **whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.**

The power could not be purchased, and it was not transferable. Meaning that apostolic power ended with the death of the twelve apostles. It was not passed down to the next generation. The apostles were presenting kingdom authority. We do not present the kingdom today. While we know the kingdom will come on earth, we are looking for *“that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13). Otherwise referred to as The Rapture of the Body of Christ, the Church.

Acts 8:20-25 | Peter's Response to Simon the Sorcerer

Verse 20 —

Thy money perish with thee...thought that the gift of God may be purchased. The Holy Spirit was a promised gift given by God himself for whom He desired. A person couldn't choose the gift, or pay for it.

Your money perish with thee. Earlier in Acts 5 we saw the sin of Ananias and Sapphira when they held back money for their own gain, and lied to God. Here, Simon wants to give money for his own gain. Either way, holding back something from God was an offense worthy of perishing. But not today. God requires nothing from us. Each one purposes in his own heart what he sows, 2 Corinthians 9:7, God loves a cheerful giver).

Verses 21,22 —

² There is a word in the English dictionary that comes from this account in verse 17. It is called “Simony” which means “The buying and selling of religious privileges, for example pardons or benefices.”

Simon's problem was that **his heart was not right in the sight of God**. His only hope would be to **repent and pray God** that he **may be forgiven**. Simon's sin was deep. The only hope Peter holds out for Simon is to pray and hope for the best. It was not a sure thing he would be forgiven.

In the dispensation of grace we never have to doubt our salvation. We have complete assurance. We are *saved not of ourselves, it is a gift, not of works* (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Verses 23, 24 —

This is the last we will hear of Simon. Did he repent and did God forgive him? Or did he perish with his money? The passage doesn't say. It appears Simon was not willing to pray to God himself.

There are a couple of ways we could look at this. Whichever one we land on we need to remember this is not the dispensation of grace.

First, we could say Simon's answer to Peter doesn't hold out much hope for him, **Then answered Simon...Pray ye to the Lord for me**. Simon was in the **gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity**, therefore he was too far gone and had no desire to pray to God. He wanted power.

Another thought is that Simon understood that Peter had the *keys to the kingdom* and could pray to God for him so that he might not perish and be able to enter the Kingdom. The passage doesn't say which it was. We can only speculate. But it might appear that Simon knew he had a wrong heart and attitude since he said to Peter, pray **that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me**.

So, Luke, the author leaves us hanging as to the eternal future Simon.

Verse 25 —

When they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, i.e., the national gospel, they (Peter and John) **returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans**.