

Christ is Preached in Samaria (the Sorcerer and the Holy Spirit)

January 20, 2019 PM

Acts 8:1-25

Verses 1-3 – Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time, a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

The First Persecution Following the Death of Stephen

- Saul consented to the death of Stephen, one of the deacons from chapter 6.
- This sparked a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem.
- Christians were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
- Saul made havoc of the church; going from house to house, putting brothers and sisters in prison.

Acts 8:1-25

Verses 4-8 – Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

The Effect of the Great Persecution on the Church

- Those who fled Jerusalem preached the word everywhere they went.
- Philip, another of the deacons of chapter 6, goes to Samaria and preaches Christ.
- The Samaritans were considered “half-breeds” by most Jews; those Jews left behind by the Assyrians mixed with the Gentiles from the other parts of the Assyrian Empire.

The Effect of the Great Persecution on the Church

- There were Samaritans who had been believers in Jesus (see Woman at the Well – John 4).
- So preaching Christ involves more than believing.
- Multitudes listened to Philip's preaching.

The Effect of the Great Persecution on the Church – Part 2

- Here we see the purpose of miracles, to persuade the people to listen to the preached word of God.
- Unclean spirits came out of many, but NOT all.
- Many who were paralyzed and lame were healed, but NOT all.
- This is further evidence that the purpose of the miracles was NOT to cleanse those who were possessed by unclean spirits or to heal the paralyzed and lame.

Acts 8:1-25

Verses 9-11 – But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the great power of God.” And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.

Acts 8:1-25

Verses 12-13 – But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

Simon the Sorcerer Becomes a Christian

- Simon had formerly astonished the people of Samaria by practicing sorcery and claiming to be great.
- All the people believed that Simon had the power of God.
- Due to his sorcery, the people listened to anything Simon had to say; giving him great power over them.
- Simon doesn't seem like a great prospect for the gospel.

Simon the Sorcerer Becomes a Christian – Part 2

- The Samaritans who had formerly been under the influence of Simon believed what Philip preached about the kingdom of God and the authority of Jesus.
- Simon believes and is baptized; he continues to follow Philip.
- Simon is amazed to see actual miracles and signs performed by Philip (remember the Witch of Endor – 1st Samuel 28).

Acts 8:1-25

Verses 14-17 – Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The Laying On of the Apostles' Hands

- The Apostles hear that there are new Christians in Samaria.
- They send Peter and John → Why?
- The Samaritans had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus so they were Christians. It is the same today; when someone is baptized by the authority of Jesus, that person is a Christian.
- None of the new Samaritan Christians had been given the ability to perform signs and miracles.

The Laying On of the Apostles' Hands – Part 2

- Peter and John laid hands on the new Samaritan Christians, and they received the Holy Spirit.
- These new Samaritan Christians were now able to perform signs and miracles.
- Philip could perform signs and miracles, but he could not give these new Christians that ability.

The Laying On of the Apostles' Hands – Part 3

- Once the Apostle John died on the Isle of Patmos, there was no one left who could pass onto others the ability to perform signs and miracles.
- This is one of the more powerful proofs that the gifts of the Holy Spirit exist no longer.
- If every Christian was to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, why were Peter and John sent to Samaria?

The Laying On of the Apostles' Hands – Part 4

- If any Christian who had the gifts of the Holy Spirit could pass on those gifts to others, why were Peter and John sent to Samaria?
- No one today has the gifts of the Holy Spirit because there is no one alive today who was also alive at a time when one of the Apostles was alive. No Apostle lived past the 2nd Century. No one now alive has been alive since the 17th Century, much less the 2nd Century.

The Laying On of the Apostles' Hands – Part 5

- Paul will write in 1st Corinthians 13:10 that the gifts of the Holy Spirit will cease when the completed word of God would come. We no longer need proof that our message is from God, we have the Bible.
- Paul will later write in Ephesians 4:5 that there is one baptism; the Holy Spirit preserved this for us so that we would know that there is no longer a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:1-25

Verses 18-21 – And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

The Sin of the Sorcerer

- Simon saw what happened when Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritan Christians.
- He offered money to Peter and John so that he could have that ability.
- Note that he did not offer money to Philip because Philip did not have that ability.
- Peter rebukes Simon of this sin and warns him of the consequences.

Acts 8:1-25

Verses 22-25 – Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” Then Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.” So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

The Repentance of the Sorcerer

- Peter exhorts him to repent in hope that Simon might be forgiven.
- This seems like a pretty big sin and yet Peter gives Simon hope.
- Simon takes advantage of this opportunity by repenting and asking Peter for prayer. (By the way, this means there is hope for me and you.)

The Apostles Return to Jerusalem

- Following this Peter and John return to Jerusalem; preaching in many villages of the Samaritans along the way.
- The ultimate effect of the great persecution of the church is that the gospel of Jesus spreads further and faster than ever.
- Is the next great persecution headed our way?
- Will we be a part of the great growth of the church that will result?

What does God's Word say I must do to become a Christian?

1. I must **HEAR** the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:17)
2. I must **BELIEVE** that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24)
3. I must **REPENT** of my sins (Acts 17:30)
4. I must **CONFESS** that Jesus is the Son of God (Matt. 10:32)
5. I must **BE BAPTIZED** for the remission of my sins (Acts 2:38)

God will then add you to His church as a Christian; from that point you must live **faithfully** until death.
(Rev. 2:10)

What does God's Word say I can do as a Christian when I need help?

- You can **CONFESS** your sins and **PRAY** for one another as Simon asked Peter (James 5:16)
- You can ask for what you need in **PRAYER** (Philippians 4:6)
- You can increase the power of your prayer by joining in **PRAYER** with this congregation (Matthew 18:19)

Remember that **PRAYER** is **NOT** your last resort!
PRAYER is your access to the **DYNAMITE** of God!