

Acts Study #49 February 1, 2023

"The Persecution"

Part 3

Acts 8

Introduction: When we stopped our study last week we were in Samaria with Philip where the Lord sent him to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God had equipped Philip with the power to do miracles to confirm his message to the Samaritans and this led to many Samaritans coming to Jesus Christ and the city being filled with joy.

Notice Acts 8:5-8

The joy was the result of the Gospel breaking through the darkness that existed within the city. Last week we considered how depression, anxiety, immorality and sadness begin to vanish when the Light of God breaks through the darkness in people's lives. This is exactly what was happening in this city. This joy is what people today are searching for, but they are enslaved to sin and without the Gospel it is impossible for them to get free.

Romans 6:6-8, 12. 17-18

⁶ *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

⁷ *For he that is dead is freed from sin.*

⁸ *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*

¹² *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

¹⁷ *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

¹⁸ *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

Man was made to serve and to worship God but while he is a slave to sin he can do neither. Man knows there is something missing from his life, he just does not know what it is, therefore we see people in the world going from one thing to another in an attempt to find what is missing.

As Philip preached the Gospel and as he exercised his power to do miracles there was a man who was watching very closely. His name was Simon, and he was a wizard. He was a man who was going to be used by Satan.

Notice Acts 8:13

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This is the verse that we stopped on last week. At first glance it appears as though Simon was saved but closer reading of this chapter proves otherwise. Simon believed but his belief was not unto salvation. He had his mind set upon the miracles that Philip did. He was not concerned about eternal life but he only desired to have the power Philip had. It was all about personal gain for Simon as we will see as we move through this chapter.

In all of this we must not miss what is happening here. This is a fulfillment of what Jesus had foretold in a parable concerning the Church age.

Matthew 13:24-28

²⁴ *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:*

²⁵ *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.*

²⁶ *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.*

²⁷ *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?*

²⁸ *He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.*

Simon was a tare among the wheat. This was another plan of Satan cause problems within the church. When Satan cannot destroy the church, he will join it to work from the inside.

□ **The Power of the Cross at Samaria**

Notice Acts 8:14-17

This is a very unique situation here in Samaria. When these people believed they did not receive the Holy Spirit immediately. It was not until Peter and John came from Jerusalem and prayed for them and laid their hands on them that they received the Holy Spirit. We are going to see two reasons why this happened in a moment but first there is something which we must consider.

Today there is a teaching that says there is a "SECOND WORK OF GRACE" and that is when a believer receives the Holy Spirit. In other words they teach that a believer does not get the Holy Spirit the moment they believe but afterwards as a SECOND WORK OF GRACE the believer receives the Spirit. This teaching is taken from the passage before us but if you remember when we started into this study I reminded you that we cannot get our theology from this book. This is a transitional book in which we see the transition from Judaism to Christianity. There are things in this book that do not occur in the church

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today. One would be the story of Ananias and Sapphira who brought deception into the church. If the Spirit of God worked like this today and we sang the hymn "I surrender all" there would not be any of us left alive. The basement would need to be turned into a morgue.

Getting back to the Holy Spirit, He is not given as a second work of grace today. We receive the Holy Spirit the moment we are saved.

Romans 8:9

⁹ *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

This verse is very clear that if someone does not have the Holy Spirit they are not saved. But there are churches around here that teach the Spirit is given as a second work of grace and they will pray over people and lay hands on them thinking that will cause the Spirit to come upon them. This is NOT biblical!

So why did Peter and John come from Jerusalem to Samaria to lay hands on the believers and pray over them to receive the Holy Spirit?

1. Peter was given the keys to the kingdom.

Matthew 16:18-19

¹⁸ *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

¹⁹ *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Peter was given the keys to the "Gospel door" and when the Jews were saved on the day of Pentecost, we know that Peter was there and he was the spokesman. Therefore, Peter had to be present when the "Door of the Gospel" was opened to the Samaritans. The Gospel will go to the Gentiles in Acts chapter 10 and Cornelius will be saved and it will be by Peter that the "Door of the Gospel" will be opened to all the Gentiles.

Acts 10:30-32, 34, 44

³⁰ *And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,*

³¹ *And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.*

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³² Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

³⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

⁴⁴ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

So, as we get to Acts 10 the "Door of the Gospel"/entrance into the body of Jesus Christ has been open for all and Peter has been the apostle to open the door since he was given the keys. This then raises another question, "What about Saul of Tarsus?" Why was Peter not present on the Road to Damascus when Paul got saved? Notice what Paul said.

Acts 22:3

³ I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Paul was a Jew and the door for the Jews had already been opened on the day of Pentecost. Getting back to the point, Peter and John came down from Jerusalem because Peter had the keys to the kingdom. So what was the second reason why Peter and John came from Jerusalem to Samaria to lay hands on the believers and pray over them to receive the Holy Spirit?

2. To prevent a later division.

Notice the words of Ironside from his commentary on Acts:

"Why did not these Samaritans receive the Spirit of God the moment they professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? The reason is perfectly clear. For something like 500 years the temple at Jerusalem and the temple at Mt. Gerizim had been rival sanctuaries. The Jews in the south and the Samaritans north of Jerusalem had each claimed to be God's chosen people, and there was intense rivalry between them. One can understand that if the Spirit had immediately fallen on these Samaritan believers, when they received the Word, then the strife between the Jews and Samaritans might have been perpetuated and there might have been, down through the centuries, two different groups of Christians, each claiming to be the true Church. But when the apostles came from Jerusalem and identified themselves with the believing Samaritans, and God gave the Holy Spirit to them in answer to the prayers of the apostles, the work was recognized definitely and openly as

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one—there was but one Body, whether Jews in Judea or Samaritans in Samaria. All were joined into one Body of which the risen Christ was the Head.”

Notice Acts 8:14-17 again.

I want you to notice that John is part of all of this therefore he is in favor of the Samaritans receiving salvation. I point this out because I want you to see the change in John by looking at something he said before the cross.

Luke 9:51-56

⁵¹ *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*

⁵² *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.*

⁵³ *And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

⁵⁴ *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

⁵⁵ *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.*

⁵⁶ *For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.*

John wanted to see the Samaritans destroyed with fire but as we come to Acts 8 he is at peace with the Samaritans as believers who are members of the church. I believe what we see here is the power of the cross.

Romans 6:3-6

³ *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

⁴ *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

⁵ *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

⁶ *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

One more thought from these verses. What was the purpose of laying on of hands? Notice the words of Phillips:

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"In the Bible, the laying on of hands is always a symbol of identification. In the Old Testament the sinner identified himself with his offering by laying his hands upon it. Then, when it was slain, it was as though he had been slain. By laying their hands on the Samaritans, Peter and John formally identified themselves, the rest of the apostles, and all the Jewish church with the new believers. Henceforth they would be one church. There would be one Lord, one faith, one baptism. What a happy ending to centuries of strife and ill will!"

Conclusion:

Here in all of this we are reminded of the power of the cross. Whitcomb comments on the animosity between the Jews, the Samaritans and the Gentiles.

"One of the most difficult things for a Jew to accept was that a person who was one hundred percent Gentile could believe the gospel and become saved without first becoming a Jew. It was hard enough to accept the salvation of Samaritans, but Gentiles? The very idea itself was totally revolutionary, and to most Jews, repulsive."

Acts 11:1-3

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

² *And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,*

³ *Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.*