

- A Study in Acts -

Chapter Eight – Spread of the Church and the Gospel

ACTS 8:9-17:

In our previous lesson, we were introduced to the spread of the church via persecution that wreaked havoc on the church in Jerusalem. At the forefront of this persecution is Saul, whom we were introduced to by Luke at the end of **Chapter seven**.

Luke would also bring Philip to the front of the story, and record his going down to Samaria, where he would preach Christ and testify of this great message by performing miracles. This universally created joy in the area.

In this lesson, we will be introduced to Simon the sorcerer, and his interaction with the Gospel and the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

Text #1:

Acts 8:9-13 “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,¹⁰ to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the great power of God.”¹¹ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.¹² 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.¹³ 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.”

Sorcery: The practice of sorcery was in every situation, the practice of the art of magic, the art of deceiving people’s sight primarily, but their senses in general! This will be the case here as well! Both the people and Simon would be readily able to tell the difference between the things done by Simon (for the purpose of prestige), and the miracles of Philip (for the confirmation of the Gospel – **Mark 16:20**).

God’s attitude concerning mediums of sorcerers has never been in question; He does not approve!

Exodus 22:18 “You shall not permit a sorceress to live.”

Leviticus 20:6 “And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.”

Deuteronomy 18:10 “There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer*”

Isaiah 47:9 “But these two *things* shall come to you In a moment, in one day: The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness Because of the multitude of your sorceries, For the great abundance of your enchantments.”

Full Example of Conversion: It should also be noted before we move on that the presentation of miracles or wonders did not, by their presence, exclude the need of these individuals to obey the truth of the Gospel's message. We see that not only did they recognize the power of God, but also heard, believed, and obeyed the words they were spoken as well!

This confirms the universal method by which God would use to distribute His message for the salvation of man to the world (which also prevents Him from being a respecter of persons – **Acts 10:34**).

1 Corinthians 1:21 “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

Note: It should also be noted that the Samaritans were willing to listen and take to heart the words spoken to them. We find a similar sense of readiness during the account of the Lord passing through Samaria as He traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem – read: **John 4:39-42**.

Text #2:

Acts 8:14-17 “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

First: Philip had been given by the laying on of the Apostle's hands, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Philip; however, could not bestow this gift to anyone else. These gifts could only be bestowed by the hands of the Apostles – see also: **Acts 19:6**.

Second: What were these spiritual gifts? In **1 Corinthians 12:8-10**, we learn that there were nine of these spiritual gifts given for the benefit of all, or mutual profit (**1 Corinthians 12:7**); and only came to those whom the Spirit willed (**1 Corinthians 12:11**).

Third: As God is a God of order and not chaos, we should also note, “What was the purpose of these gifts?” The simple answer is that the “**Body of Christ**”, the “**Called Out**”, or the church came into existence before the **written** word. Because of this, those who have obeyed the Gospel preached would now need to know the expectations of life in the kingdom of Christ (how to worship correctly, walk correctly, etc...). These spiritual gifts would provide for the benefit of all, three primary things; edification, exhortation, and comfort – **1 Corinthians 14:3**.

Fourth: We would also be instructed by the Apostle Paul, as he wrote to Christians who had these spiritual gifts; yet, were abusing them, that they were temporary until that which was perfect would come – the written word!

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 “Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. ¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

The written word now does for every single Christian, what these gifts did in part before.

Fifth: We also learn that from this text in Acts and that from the letter to the Corinthian Christians that, these gifts were not given to every single Christian (**Acts 8:21**), the presence of these gifts were not in and of themselves the completion of good works – as we know that the Christians in Corinth had virtually every problem imaginable even with these gifts.

Sixth: It is also important to note that Luke records, prior to them receiving these gifts, that **“They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”**. This, once again, emphasizes the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is disseminated in two parts; that which is preached for conversion and that which is preached and taught for proper Christian living (conversion then doctrine)! This is the word that was spoken to the Apostles by the Lord before His ascension to the Father, note:

Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (Conversion) ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you (doctrine); and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

The importance of these spiritual gifts resides in the doctrinal (teaching) portion of the lives of these believers, and should be emphasized today as even more necessary to know the word of God through scripture, in order to maintain our doctrinal relationship with God through Jesus Christ!

1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

1 John 2:3-6 “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.”

2 John 9 “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”

This demonstrates a post conversion plan of salvation, which the children of God today, often fail to truly appreciate!