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SIMON THE SORCERER AND THE SAMARITAN PENTECOST

STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBERS 30
ACTS 8:9-24

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Here we have the story of a successful unbeliever. Simon the Sorcerer was successful, but though a believer, he never carried his business success over into his Christian living. We are going to see here how the church was not a Jewish monopoly, but Gentiles are to be included into the family of God. The Church Age began with Jews only, and one of the first issues that arose was concerning including Gentiles into the Christian family. The issue was this--were Gentiles a real bonafied part of the body of Christ or are they second class citizens of the Kingdom? This question was first answered here at the Samaritan Pentecost.

ACTS 8:9 "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:" Simon had been born near the city of Samaria in a village called Gitton. As a youth he had great gifts. He was educated in the University of Alexandria, Egypt. Here he became acquainted with Gnosticism and adopted Gnosticism as his belief. He called himself one of the highest aeons. Some individuals had more of the divine spark than others, according to Gnosticism. "Beforetime" is used here to show that he used sorcery before his conversion. Sorcery is a Greek word for the practice of magic.

ACTS 8:10 "To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." The great reception given to Simon's magic work and philosophy is listed in this verse. No one went to sleep on him. He appealed to all walks of life. "This one is the great power of God." This phrase is taken from Gnosticism, and Simon had the divine spark. He loved such recognition and popularity. He lived on praise and approbation lust. Every believer faces this same problem. Let us remember that we are not to do our Christian service in this spirit. The old sin nature works in this direction, with great emphasis on power and approbation lust.

ACTS 8:11 "And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries." This is a description of Simon prior to his conversion. They kept on putting him at the top for he had amazed them for a long time.

ACTS 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Here we have the impact of Philip's preaching. Many believed. (It is in the aorist tense and this means in a point of time they had believed and their belief would continue forever.) Eternal security is clearly taught in this Greek verb. You may be sure that Philip gave them the good news. He didn't talk about their sins but about the good news of Christ. The good news is the message that Christ will take care of their sins, so the important thing is to tell them of Christ and not condemn them for their sins. Sin is not the issue, for their sins have been judged already. This issue was simply this--"Do you believe in Jesus Christ or not?" This is always the issue in witnessing. We are to tell what has been provided for sinners in Jesus Christ. Confess and believe are non-meritorious acts. So, Philip kept on proclaiming the good news about Christ. Please note, The name of Jesus Christ. Philip talked about the person of Jesus Christ. Baptism here means identification with Jesus Christ in his death, and identification with Jesus Christ raised up to live forever. Here, we have water baptism before the baptism of the spirit.

The Assyrians had conquered Samaria, and they brought the Elamites in and stationed them in Samaria. The Elamites mixed in and married with the Jews and as a result came the Samaritans. They are half Jew and half Elamite. So bitter hatred developed

between the Samaritans and the Jews. When Jews traveled north from Jerusalem, they usually by-passed Samaria by crossing the Jordan, proceeding northward through Peraea, then back across the Jordan again. The hatred between Jews and Samaritans went all the way back to the time when the Samaritans tried to interfere with the building of the second temple. Jews just hated Samaritans and Samaritans just hated Jews. Now when Samaritans were converted, they moved into the grace of God and had just as much place in the church as had the Jews. When people are converted, they all stand equal before God. There is no distinction with God in sex or nationality or economic standing. The solution to man's problems is regeneration and nothing else. You can legislate freedom, but you cannot legislate equality. The only place of equality is in regeneration. This is why the Baptism of the Spirit occurred here last. Here is strong racial prejudice. But God had a great plan. God took Peter and John, who had been in the midst of the Jerusalem Pentecost, and let them have a part in the Samaritan Pentecost.

ACTS 8:13 "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done." Simon believed. The aorist tense suggests that it was a genuine conversion. He was baptized and kept hanging around Simon Peter because he wanted that power. Human power is always impressed with divine power. (Note when someone like Billy Graham comes around and see how people hang around him.) Simon the Sorcerer is terribly impressed. He just kept on hanging around and he just kept on being amazed. These amazing miracles just made his mouth drop open and he couldn't really believe it.

ACTS 8:14 "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:" Peter and John were sent down to investigate the situation. Peter and John were leaders among the apostles and were the best informed of the apostles. They have now come to Samaria.

ACTS 8:15-17--THE SAMARITAN PENTECOST "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." It was really an investigation. Here was a major doctrinal break-through. Please notice that Peter and John were completely free from prejudice, and they laid their hands on them and prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

In verse 16 please notice that they had believed, had been baptized, but as yet had not received the Holy Spirit. So they were in the very same condition as the disciples of John as described in Acts 19.

Here in Acts 8 and also in Acts 19 we have a parallel phenomenon.

In Acts 8--Disciples of Philip--born again saints minus the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 19--Disciples of John the Baptist minus the Holy Spirit.

In both instances they were Old Testament saints in principle. In both instances they came in contact with apostles and became New Testament saints. Gentiles were just as much in the church as Jews.

Verse 17 states that they laid their hands on them and the same thing happened to them as happened on the day of Pentecost. There were evidently many lines of converts and they laid their hands on all of them.

ACTS 8:18 "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money." When Simon saw this he offered them money--not to get the Holy Spirit but to have power so he could lay his hands on people and they would receive the Holy Spirit. Simon the Sorcerer knew a good thing when he

saw it. He figured that the apostles were doing this for free, but he realized there were lots of people who would pay big money for something like this. If he could get the local contract and have the Samaritan franchise on this thing of dispensing the Holy Spirit, he would have it made.

ACTS 8:19 "Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." It in substance is the attack of religion on true Christianity. He wanted to be No. 1 man and he wanted to have power and money. Principle-- Money cannot purchase any spiritual blessing. And this includes tithing. You can't bribe God to do something for you. What do you really want? What is the most important thing that you really want? Remember, you can't bribe God for it. Have you been trying to bribe God lately? Remember, you tithe because you believe in God and his cause, and the blessing he pours out on you may be material or it may be spiritual. Leave the reward to him, and you do what you know you ought to do.

Maybe you try to bribe God by going to Bible class, or by going to Prayer Meeting. It doesn't work that way. What you receive from God depends on who and what God is and not on who and what you are.

Simon just kept on saying that he wanted them to give him this power so he could dispense the Holy Spirit to others.

ACTS 8:20-23--The Rebuke From Simon Peter "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Peter didn't say, "Thy money perish with you" but rather, "Thy money will be your destruction". Simon is already a wealthy man. Simon is under the sin unto death just like Ananias and Sapphira. (Perish is in the optative mood and means a wish and a warning to him of what is about to happen to him.) Simon had thought that the Holy Spirit and the giving of the Holy Spirit could be purchased with money, and that is where you get the word "SIMONY".

In verse 21 Peter tells Simon the Sorcerer that he will never be a leader in the Christian movement and he will never be an apostle. Simon can't take part in this kind of an operation. He was a great and successful unbeliever but he is not going to make a great believer. Simon the Sorcerer's problem was in the mind.

In verse 22 he is told to change your mind in this thy wickedness. He is told to pray to God, and if he does it sincerely, he will be forgiven.

In verse 23 Simon Peter shows this Sorcerer the real source of his trouble. Bitterness is the attitude of frustration. The bond of iniquity means that he is filled with human viewpoint and is a slave to his mental attitude sins.

ACTS 8:24 "Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Here is a real change of attitude. But he failed to follow instructions, and so far as we know, he never did become a great believer. Every person has to live his own life. You have to pray for yourself. Simon the Sorcerer said, "You pray for me". But Simon the Sorcerer is going to fade out of the picture because he didn't repent, confess, and get back into fellowship with God.