

## Episode 1141 Acts 8 Part 2-Philip and the Samaritans

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. After the stoning of Stephen, the ekklesia of Jerusalem were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, except for the twelve. Philip, the second of the seven now that Stephen was dead, headed north into Samaria, and went straight to the capital city of Samaria. He proclaimed Christ, and many believed. Formerly, a sorcerer named Simon had amazed the people there by his power, and they thought he was the power of god.

III. Simon the Sorcerer. Acts 8:9-13.

A. Verse 12. The truth quickly demonstrated itself as being superior to the error. Under God's government, every false idea that binds men is going to be broken. Here it was only in part. In the total, the folly of all falsehood will be made obvious to all.

1. Philip preaching Christ (verse 5) is defined as proclaiming the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 28:23 and 31. A kingdom is a government. Philip told them God is going to govern this world someday. In Acts, this government was already there among them in its early stages.
2. A "name" is a reputation. Reputations are based on a perception of one's character. Jesus Christ's name is His character and reputation in the sight of God. When they believed this, they believed the truth about Him.
3. Because the blinding power of tradition is so strong, very few people will believe that the phrase "they were baptized" did not mean they were dipped in water or had it poured or sprinkled on them. Maybe there was a ceremony or ritual here, but the important thing is that they were identified. Why do people want to read some ritual into it every time the word baptism appears? If the Greek word were translated instead of transliterated, the very nearest we could come to the truth in English would be to say they were identified. In other words, this means that they were personally and publicly identified with Jesus Christ. Philip may have performed a water ritual over them, but this ritual was nothing without the reality, and the reality was there without the ritual. Of course, this man of God, being one sent of God, was able to perform a ritual. This public identification with Jesus Christ was of the utmost importance in the Acts period, for without public identification, there was no blessing. There could be no secret believers in the Acts period. God was working openly. He sent God-commissioned men. They spoke a Divinely-inspired message. That message was confirmed with signs following. God worked in the most open and public ways, and He expected people to respond in public ways, even submitting themselves to the hands of the one who proclaimed the message. While they themselves became identified with Jesus Christ, there was also a ceremony of identification. Remember that the ritual is the least part, and the reality is the most important part. The Samaritans did not fail in this very important matter, but today there are literally millions who go through a ritual they call baptism, yet they never identify themselves with Jesus Christ. We live in a time when the ritual has forced out the reality, and people do not

think about the reality or pay any attention to it. If any think I go too far in emphasizing the reality, I say the time has come when the tables should be turned, and we should put the overemphasis, if there is to be overemphasis, on the reality and not the ritual. This will keep us from fooling with the forms of godliness and yet denying the reality thereof.

4. To be identified with the name of the Lord Jesus does not mean to be dipped in water, while the one doing the dipping claims he does it in the name of the Lord Jesus. It means to have sought identification and to have become identified with the character of the Lord Jesus in all He is. It is the thing we would seek for today. Oh, how I long to have people identify me with the Lord Jesus Christ, to consider me as linked up with Him! That is what we want and seek. Philip was able to make this official. Philip had power from the Spirit, and could identify things meaningfully before God. He had power to prove he could act as God's identifier. When people attempt to baptize today, what power can they show to prove they have authority to identify in God's sight? It is like a young man might want to join the US Army. He goes to the recruiting office, he takes the preliminary examinations, and he fills out all the forms. Next there is a recruiting sergeant there who tells him to raise his right hand. Now this one who has sought an identification with the army and wants to be a soldier becomes an official part of the army. His desire is made official by the fact that the recruiting sergeant has sworn him into the army. From now on he is in. He is no longer a civilian. He is part of the military, under military rule. He cannot just walk out on it. Once a recruiting sergeant who has the authority to do so identifies a man with the army, he is in the army. So when men like Philip who had the authority to do so identified someone, then that man was identified. He was responsible, and he took on himself all the responsibilities of being a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as we have already seen, these responsibilities were not light. It was a difficult thing to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, a matter of great responsibility, in the 33 years of which the book of Acts is the history.
- B. Verse 13. Even Simon had to yield to Philip. He sees his own fakery. The Bible says Simon believed. Some ignore this, but we should believe it. This man who had amazed others by his own supernatural works is now amazed by the miracles performed by Philip. We are told by the Spirit of God that this man believed, and though his faith may have been too much based on the miraculous, nevertheless I for one believe that his faith was real.
  1. After he believed, Simon was baptized. This identified Simon irrevocably with the name, the very character, of Jesus Christ.
  2. This baptism was done by Philip, God's official representative, who had every divine right to do so, and so we cannot doubt but that it was genuine. If a baptism is truly significant, it must be every time it is done. Baptism was significant every time it was done in Scripture. It was never done in error. If Philip baptized Simon as a believer, then he was a believer.
  3. There is no such significance in water baptisms performed today.

4. Simon stays with Philip, which was the right thing to do. Philip's miracles outshone his like the sun outshines the moon, so he was amazed. He used to be the one doing the amazing! (Verse 9)
5. His difficulty is caused by the fact that too much of his former life was probably carried forward into the new. I am not going to judge this man too harshly just because of a mistake he later made trying to buy God's gifts.

#### IV. Peter and John Give the Spirit. Acts 8:14-17.

- A. Verse 14. The apostles remain unhurt in Jerusalem. Philip did not have the authority that the twelve did, so they sent (*apostello*) Peter and John with the authority of all twelve of them. See how these men who are already the Lord's apostles now become the twelve's apostles. This was a job, not an office. This gives us an idea of the kinds of things the twelve were probably doing as the Acts period wore on.
- B. Verse 15. Holy Spirit" = *pneuma hagion* or "spirit holy," without "the" in front, emphasizing the power of the Holy Spirit, not His Person. This is not what happens when we believe today and are sealed, Ephesians 1:13. This had to do with receiving His power. At this time, every believer was given a miraculous gift from the Holy Spirit, as Christ promised in Mark 16:17. In Samaria, these gifts were not granted immediately upon believing, but only when the twelve came and laid their hands on each person and prayed for them. Thus, the twelve confirmed the work in Samaria.
- C. Verse 16. They were identified with the name, that is the complete character, of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit had been held back from them until now. The translators have called the Spirit "He" here. There is no pronoun in Greek. It could be "it," speaking of the Spirit's powerful gift, which had not yet fallen upon them.
- D. Verse 17. Again, the Holy Spirit is *pneuma hagion*. The power was not the same for each one, for they all received different gifts. I Corinthians 12:11. If ever two men were mediators between God and men, these two men were here. This was not yet the dispensation of grace in which there is one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, I Timothy 2:5. These men could mediate the gift of the Holy Spirit by simply laying their hands on the heads of these men. We have seen that these Samaritans, who have already been identified with the name of the Lord Jesus, are now to be identified with the Holy Spirit. Philip could not identify them with the Holy Spirit. He was not an apostle. He had not been commissioned to do that. In Judea and Samaria this was the work of the apostles, and Peter and John had been sent from Jerusalem to do this work. This work was so manifest that people could actually see the results. Simon was one who saw this great work of God.

#### V. The Error of Simon. Acts 8:18-25.

- E. Verse 18. "The Holy Spirit" in Greek is *to pneuma to hagion*, which usually means the Person rather than the power. The *Companion Bible* suggests that this is emphasizing that it is the same holy power as in verse 15, so this could be a rare exception to our rule that "the" always means the Person.
  1. These gifts were obvious things, and must have caused great excitement. They had seen Philip doing miracles, but now they could all do them as well!
  2. They probably formed a line, and Simon was waiting in it. He had been happy until now to watch Philip get the honor he used to get. Now, though, everyone is going to have power. He will get his own gift, but will just be a face in the

crowd. He wanted to get back a superior place, but each one of these gifts was miraculous, amazing, and wonderful. How could he again be superior?

3. He decides the only way is to get authority like Peter and John to be able to give power to others. If he could get this, he would once again be more honored and respected than others!
4. Simon had probably paid much money for some of his former magic power and spells, and now he offers Peter and John money.

VII. Conclusion: The great power that Philip displayed in Samaria caused the great majority of the Samaritans to identify themselves with Jesus Christ. They did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, however, until the apostles, those God commissioned with authority to do so, came down and laid hands on them. Simon, though he had become a believer as well, was bitter over losing his influence, and thought he saw in the power of the apostles to give out miraculous power an opportunity to return to his former respect and influence. However, his offer of money for the gifts of the Spirit was highly insulting to God. God's great gifts cannot be purchased for us with dirty money, but only by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Let us trust in His eternal payment, and never think that God's favor can be bought by something as frivolous as money.