



## Acts 8:14-25 | Session 20 | The Samaritans, the Spirit, and Simon the Sorcerer

### Acts 8:14-25 | Peter and John

In session 19 Simon the Sorcerer amazed the Samaritans with his magic. When he saw the true power of God through the miracles of the apostle Philip (8:6, 13), he knew he must have that same power (this will be evident in 8:18). Philip preached the gospel of the kingdom, also in Samaria, and the name of Jesus, the Anointed One and many of the Samaritans *believed*, and so did *Simon* (8:13).

Verses 14, 15, 16—

**Now the apostles which were at Jerusalem.** We were told in 8:1 that as persecution spread throughout the assembly (*ekklesia*), the Jews were scattered *throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria*, except the apostles. Philip has gone out to preach the gospel in Samaria. When the eleven apostles who remained in Jerusalem **heard that Samaria had received the word of God**; The **word of God** they **heard** was the *things concerning the kingdom of God* (This is not the *gospel of salvation by grace through faith and not of works*), and that Jesus, the one they killed, was the Messiah. This is taking place about a year after the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost. The Samaritans believed in the Messiah, but had not **received** the Holy Ghost, as did the apostles and those who believed on the day of Pentecost.

**They** (the apostles) **sent unto them** (the Samaritans) **Peter and John**. This is the eighth time Luke refers to **Peter and John** ministering together (Luke 9:28; 22:8; Acts 3:1; Acts 3:3; Acts 3:11; Acts 4:13, 19; Acts 8:14). Jesus sent the apostles out by *two and two* (Mark 6:7). We see them together so often, apparently Peter and John were the “A” team! Peter had been given the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19) by Jesus, meaning he had the authority to open the door of the Kingdom for Israel. His role was to preach the kingdom gospel, for Israel (the circumcised), not the gospel of grace. We see that clearly in Galatians 2:7.

**When they** (Peter and John) **were come down, prayed for them** (the Samaritans), **that they might receive the Holy Ghost**, He had not **fallen upon them** yet. Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 28:19,20 they were to *baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*. The Samaritans were **only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. They believed, but were without the Holy Ghost for a period of time.

Verses 17, 18—

There are three primary statements made in the book of Acts about the Holy Ghost: Acts 1:5, *baptized with the Holy Ghost*; Acts 2:4, *filled with the Holy Ghost*; and Acts 8:17, **Received the Holy Ghost**. “*Baptized, filled, received*” all seem to be *synonymous*. When these things happened, there was a noticeable event that went along with them. In relation to being *baptized in the Holy Ghost*, Acts 1:8 says there would be *power* given. In relation of being *filled with the Holy Ghost*, there was speaking in other languages (Acts 2:4). And, in relation to *receiving the Holy Ghost*, while a description is not given, apparently it was accompanied by some kind of power since **Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands...he offered them money**. Whatever happened to the Samaritans when they **received the Holy Ghost**, Simon the Sorcerer wanted that power and was willing to pay for it<sup>1</sup>

Are those who believe in Jesus Christ today by *grace through faith* filled with the Holy Ghost? Not in the same manner as we see here. All who believe certainly have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, but a special *filling* is never mentioned by Paul for

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<sup>1</sup> *There is a word in the English dictionary that comes from this account in verse 17. It is called “Simony” which means “The buying and selling of religious privileges, for example pardons or benefices.”*



believers in the dispensation of grace (one exception could be Ephesians 5:18). Believers in the dispensation of grace are *sealed with that holy Spirit of promise* (Ephesians 1:13). Paul doesn't define what he means by *sealed*. To be sealed is to be fully protected (Rev. 7:3; 9:4). We might conclude, our eternal status, or the status of our soul is protected because we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. We also know from Scripture that believers today (Jew or Gentile) are of the *same body*, there is no Jewish assembly or Gentile assembly, we are one *ekklesia*, that is, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

Verse 19—

Therefore, whatever this power was that was given when the Samaritans *received the Holy Spirit* (and I think we would have to agree it was the power of speaking in tongues and perhaps other apostolic miracles), Simon wanted it so that **whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost**

#### Acts 8:20-25 | Peter's Response to Simon the Sorcerer

Verse 20—

**Thy money perish with thee...thought that the gift of God may be purchased.** The Holy Spirit was a promised gift given by God himself on who He desired. A person couldn't choose the gift, or pay for it. **Your money perish with thee.** Earlier in Acts 5 we saw the sin of Ananias and Sapphira when they held back money for their own gain, and lied to God. Here, Simon wants to give money for his own gain. Either way, holding back something from God was an offense worthy of perishing (not today; Corinthians 9:7). This is another indication we are not reading about our dispensation here.

Verses 21,22—

Simon's problem was that **his heart was not right in the sight of God**. His only hope would be to **repent and pray God** that he **may be forgiven**. Simon's sin was deep. The only hope Peter holds out for Simon is to pray and hope for the best. It was not a sure thing he would be forgiven. In the dispensation of grace we are *saved not of ourselves, it is a gift, not of works* (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Verses 23, 24—

This is the last we will hear of Simon. Did he repent and did God forgive him? Or did he perish with his money? The passage doesn't say. It appears Simon was not willing to pray to God himself. There are a couple of ways we could look at this. First, we could say Simon's answer to Peter doesn't hold out much hope for him, **Then answered Simon...Pray ye to the Lord for me**. Simon was in the **gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity**, therefore he was too far gone and had no desire to pray to God, he simply wanted power.

Another thought is that Simon understood that Peter had the *keys to the kingdom* and could pray to God for him so that he might not perish and be able to enter the Kingdom. The passage doesn't say which it was. We can only speculate. But it might appear that Simon knew he had a wrong heart and attitude since he said to Peter, pray **that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me**. So, Luke, the author leaves us hanging!

Verse 25—

**When they had testified and preached the word of the Lord**, i.e., the national gospel, they (Peter and John) **returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.**

