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**A0838 – September 21, 2008 – Acts 8:5-24 – The Preaching In  
Samaria**

**Acts 8:5-24** Φίλιππος δὲ κατελθὼν εἰς [τὴν] πόλιν τῆς Σαμαρείας ἐκήρυσσεν αὐτοῖς τὸν Χριστόν. <sup>6</sup>προσεῖχον δὲ οἱ ὄχλοι τοῖς λεγομένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Φιλίππου ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν τῷ ἀκούειν αὐτοὺς καὶ βλέπειν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει. <sup>7</sup>πολλοὶ γὰρ τῶν ἐχόντων πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα βοῶντα φωνῇ μεγάλη ἐξήρχοντο, πολλοὶ δὲ παραλελυμένοι καὶ χωλοὶ ἐθεραπεύθησαν· <sup>8</sup>ἐγένετο δὲ πολλὴ χαρὰ ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ. <sup>9</sup>Ἄνθρωπος δὲ τις ὀνόματι Σίμων προῦπηρχεν ἐν τῇ πόλει μαγεύων καὶ ἐξιστάνων τὸ ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρείας, λέγων εἶναι τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν, <sup>10</sup>ὧς προσεῖχον πάντες ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου λέγοντες· οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ καλουμένη μεγάλη. <sup>11</sup>προσεῖχον δὲ αὐτῷ διὰ τὸ ἰκανῶς χρόνῳ ταῖς μαγείαις ἐξεστακέναι αὐτοῦς. <sup>12</sup>ὅτε δὲ ἐπίστευσαν τῷ Φιλίππῳ εὐαγγελιζομένῳ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἐβαπτίζοντο ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες. <sup>13</sup>ὁ δὲ Σίμων καὶ αὐτὸς ἐπίστευσεν καὶ βαπτισθεὶς ἦν προσκαρτερῶν τῷ Φιλίππῳ, θεωρῶν τε σημεῖα καὶ δυνάμεις μεγάλας γινομένας ἐξίστατο. <sup>14</sup>Ἀκούσαντες δὲ οἱ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἀπόστολοι ὅτι δέδεκται ἡ Σαμαρεία τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς Πέτρον καὶ Ἰωάννην, <sup>15</sup>οἵτινες καταβάντες προσηύξαντο περὶ αὐτῶν ὅπως λάβωσιν πνεῦμα ἅγιον· <sup>16</sup>οὐδέπω γὰρ ἦν ἐπ’ οὐδενὶ αὐτῶν ἐπιπεπτωκός, μόνον δὲ βεβαπτισμένοι ὑπῆρχον εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. <sup>17</sup>τότε ἐπέτιθεσαν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐλάβανον πνεῦμα ἅγιον. <sup>18</sup>Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Σίμων ὅτι διὰ τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν τῶν ἀποστόλων δίδεται τὸ πνεῦμα, προσήνεγκεν αὐτοῖς χρήματα <sup>19</sup>λέγων· δότε κάμοι τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἵνα ὧς ἐὰν ἐπιθῶ τὰς χεῖρας λαμβάνῃ πνεῦμα ἅγιον. <sup>20</sup>Πέτρος δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν· τὸ ἀργύριόν σου σὺν σοὶ εἶη εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὅτι τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνόμισας διὰ χρημάτων κτᾶσθαι· <sup>21</sup>οὐκ ἔστιν σοι μερὶς οὐδὲ κλῆρος ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ, ἢ γὰρ καρδία σου οὐκ ἔστιν εὐθεῖα ἐναντι τοῦ θεοῦ. <sup>22</sup>μετανόησον οὖν ἀπὸ τῆς κακίας σου ταύτης καὶ δεήθητι τοῦ κυρίου, εἰ

ἄρα ἀφεθήσεται σοι ἡ ἐπίνοια τῆς καρδίας σου, <sup>23</sup>εἰς γὰρ χολὴν πικρίας καὶ σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας ὀρῶ σε ὄντα. <sup>24</sup>ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Σίμων εἶπεν· δεήθητε ὑμεῖς ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ πρὸς τὸν κύριον ὅπως μηδὲν ἐπέλθῃ ἐπ’ ἐμὲ ὧν εἰρήκατε. (NA27)

**Acts 8:5-24** Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them. <sup>6</sup>The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. <sup>7</sup>For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out *of them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. <sup>8</sup>So there was much rejoicing in that city. <sup>9</sup>Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; <sup>10</sup>and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, “This man is what is called the Great Power of God.” <sup>11</sup>And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. <sup>12</sup>But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. <sup>13</sup>Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. <sup>14</sup>Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup>who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup>For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup>Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup>Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, “Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” <sup>20</sup>But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup>“You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup>“Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup>“For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.” <sup>24</sup>But Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord

for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

Alright, we've seen the initiation of the first great persecution of the church on the day of Stephen's murder. Stephen's murder marks the official rejection by the national leadership of the kingdom offer. Remember, Jesus came offering the kingdom. He preached the kingdom is at hand, if you will accept Me as the King, your kingdom will come Israel, you can have your political freedom from Rome, you can have your spiritual freedom from sin, you can have your golden age, but only if you accept Me as the Messiah. See, the coming of the kingdom is contingent, contingent on Israel's acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. But they rejected Him and the greatest manifestation of that rejection was the crucifixion of their own Messiah. It was a judicial catastrophe, it violated civil procedures, it violated the Law of Moses, it was a murder. Now what do we see with Stephen? Another judicial catastrophe, another violation of civil procedures, another violation of the Law of Moses, another murder. They are doing just what their fathers did; they are filling up the measure of the sins committed by their forefathers. And so the murder of Stephen is the official rejection of the second offer of the kingdom. The nation Israel got two kingdom offers in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and both offers were rejected by the national leadership. So Jesus and Stephen are turning points in Jewish history, they mark the official rejection of the first and second kingdom offers. This is why we would say, theologically speaking, the kingdom is no longer “at hand.” The kingdom will still be preached in the Book of Acts but it will not be “at hand” until the future Tribulation. And so in Acts the murder of Stephen seals the judgment of Jerusalem.

So with that formal rejection we move to stage two of the witness, the regions of Judea and Samaria. If we look at a map Judea is the region around Jerusalem and Samaria is to the north. The Jews hung around Judea, the Samaritans stayed up in Samaria. Let's review what we know of the Samaritans. First, the Jews simply had no dealings with these people. You don't sell sheep to them, you don't marry their girls, it was strictly hands off. Second they set up a rival worship system. This involved two temples and two canons of Scripture. The Samaritans worshipped up on Mt Gerizim where they had built a rival temple. The Jews worshipped up on Mt Moriah. The Samaritans, their canon was called the Samaritan Pentateuch, it consisted of the first five books of the OT with various scribal changes. The

Jews, generally speaking, had the whole OT as their canon, just as you and I in the English Bible. A third point, an important point is that both Samaritans and Jews expected a Messiah, but the Samaritans looked for a Samaritan Messiah and the Jews a Jewish Messiah. So these are rival systems of religion and if you know anything about these Middle Eastern people you know they are never going to hold hands with people of a different religion. Blood is shed over these issues. Yet somehow the gospel is going to make peace here. So we point out this background so you can understand the tremendous barriers that have to be broken down and who better to do it than Stephen's fellow deacon, Philip.

Verse 5, **Philip went down to the city of Samaria** and this is probably the main city Sebaste, it was the main cultural center, the capital of the region, this is a strategic location and there he **began proclaiming Christ to them** and the imperfect shows us this went on and on for awhile. Day after day he would go out in the streets of Sebaste preaching Christ, Jesus is the Christ, and he'd go over to the marketplace and preach Jesus is the Messiah. Now there's nothing tempestuous about preaching Christ to Samaritans, they expected Christ to come but a Jewish Christ, that was offensive. So Philip is having to engage in apologetics here, he's having to defend and I suggest that his method since we know they shared the first five books of Moses, was he could take their own Scriptures, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and show that the Christ would be Jewish not Samaritan. This is the same way I engage Jehovah's Witnesses, they have the New World Translation where their special translators have come in and made all the little changes so they can erase the deity of Christ. But there are still passages they haven't found yet. So when they come to my door I just pull out my New World Translation and show from their own scriptures that Jesus Christ is God. That's a powerful apologetic methodology. And that's probably what Philip did; show them from their own Samaritan Pentateuch that the Christ was a Jew.

And in verse 6, **The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.** You can see they are closely evaluating Philip, they're listening to what he says, probably because of the sight and sound phenomena. Notice, they were hearing and seeing

**signs.** What they heard apparently was in v 7, the screams of demons as they were exorcised from people, this was a region of intense demonism. Demonism always accompanies false religion. Demons author and thrive on the practitioners of false religion. And Philip is casting them out. So now we see miracles in a new region and we see a new man performing them, Philip. Now, don't get the idea that all the believers were doing miracles. What we see in the Book of Acts is the Apostles and the apostolic legates doing miracles. The legates were the official emissaries of the apostles; they went out in the authority of the apostles so they had some of their powers. Stephen was one such emissary who did miracles and Philip is too. They were authorized by the apostles. But the buck stops there. Philip and Stephen couldn't go and authorize someone else, they couldn't transfer power to anyone, only the apostles could do that and therefore no apostolic succession. When the apostles died that was it. Peter was not the first Pope and Peter's powers were not passed on through successive Popes and to Pope Benedict XVI. Only the original apostles had this authority. When they died the canon was complete and there was no more need for signs because the word of God had been authenticated

And with Philip we see this power manifested in signs. Why? To signify that the plan of God is moving out, Jesus said, "I will be with you" and obviously He is with Philip accomplishing these miracles. And so the Samaritans are paying attention to two things. The words of Philip and the works of Philip. It's always this way, for on one hand Philip must come with the word of God, you can't respond in faith if there's no content to believe but on the other hand he comes with signs, how do you know the content is from God, how do we know Philip is the genuine article and not just some magician. See, you have to have both. And so Philip gives both the content and the sign that authenticates the content. And the signs he did far outranked the demonic magic practiced in Samaria. Nobody else was able to exorcise demons because they were doing their works by means of demons. Satan will not cast out Satan. This is the same argument Jesus made when they accused Him of doing His miracles by the power of Satan. If that was so then why is it that Satan casts out Satan? See, Philip was cleansing the area of demons not using demonic powers. And what this shows is there is a qualitative difference between demonic miracles and God's miracles and if you put the two side by side people can tell. This is just like the time of Moses when he would go in before Pharaoh and he'd say, "Look Pharaoh, because you

hardened your heart I'm going to change the Nile to blood, I'm going to send frogs throughout the land," and each time Pharaoh would call in his sorcerers and they'd do the same thing until finally one day Moses waltzes in and says, "Alright, I'm going to send gnats throughout Egypt" and Pharaoh says, "Alright boys, conjure up some gnats and they wave their arms and go through all the formulas and finally they say, "Pharaoh, we can't do that, something's going on here, that's the finger of God." And so there's a qualitative difference. Demonic manifestations can only go so far and then it becomes obvious who has the real power. And that's the point of the Exodus battles and that's the point of the Acts battles. God is supreme over all and when He moves into an area He evacuates evil. So this is just small taste of the future removal of all evil. This isn't going to go on and on, this evil and suffering in the world. God is going to separate it out in the end and we're getting a foretaste of that in the Book of Acts miracles.

And notice another thing in verse 7, there's a difference between having an **unclean spirit** and having a physical illness. Some people try to say that all physical illness is due to demonic possession. But the text here distinguishes healing **paralyzed** and **lame** people from those who had demons. Now it is true that there are cases where people are ill because of demonism but that's not true in every case. If that were true in every case then medicine wouldn't fix any problems because medicines don't exorcise demons, only God can do that. So Luke, a medical doctor makes a clear distinction between the two. And so both kinds of problems were being solved in Samaria. And he concludes **there was much rejoicing in that city**. And of course there was because demonic oppression was being removed by God's power.

In v 9 we meet the greatest demonic magician in that region. **Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;**<sup>10</sup>**and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."**<sup>11</sup>**And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.**<sup>12</sup>**But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.**<sup>13</sup>**Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking**

**place, he was constantly amazed.** Alright, in verse 9 we meet Simon the sorcerer sometimes called Simon Magus. What do we know of him? We know he was given an extraordinary amount of attention in early Christian writings. Irenaeus in his *Against Heresies* says that Simon was the founder of Gnosticism. Gnosticism was a secret system of knowledge, a dualistic worldview. These people thought that through secret arts they could attain deeper knowledge and that was salvation. Modern parallels would be things like the New Age Movement, things like Masons or the Illuminati, all groups that claim a special knowledge that can be attained through mystical methods, normally you move through the ranks and when you get to the next level you get certain privileges and they impart more knowledge to you. It's all just deeper levels of demonism, occultic activity. Well, Irenaeus says, the founder of a system like that called Gnosticism was Simon. Paul warns Timothy about these people in 1 Tim 6:20 when he says it is "knowledge falsely so-called." Paul wrote the whole letter of Colossians against the doctrines of the Gnostics. John wrote his first epistle to combat people who had strains of Gnosticism in their thought. You should know this became a very influential group in the first century and by the second century they had produced a lot of literature that we hear about today, Dan Brown, author of the DaVinci Code popularized some of this Gnostic material. Things like the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, all pseudo-Christian works, it's just Gnostic literature and people get all interested in these books wondering, "Why isn't the Gospel of Thomas in the Bible?" And play it up like Constantine decided what the canon of Scripture was and he left out these other books, and we've all been following a lie. Historically that story is a farce. God providentially determined the canon of Scripture, it was recognized by hundreds of thousands of Christians who sent representatives on their behalf and there was almost unanimous agreement across the board at the Council of Nicea on what books that made up the NT canon. They did not *determine* the canon they *recognized* what God had already determined. And anyone who has half a brain can read these extra-canonical books and see they are Gnostic not Christian. And therefore never recognized as Christian. It's a whole different worldview.

Now we don't know for sure but we do get report that Simon founded this Gnostic sect. Justin Martyr tells us Simon was a very influential magician, he got followers in Samaria and in Rome where he apparently moved and there he disturbed Christians and turned the Roman authorities on them. We

also have some tradition in the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* and the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* and *Homilies* that says he was the untiring adversary of Peter. Again we don't know for sure if this is the same Simon but the early church fathers make the identification and say that Simon would follow Peter around and always just like a wag he'd be bothering him and yelling and mocking in the background. And one day they were up in Rome and he and Peter had a magic contest and Simon got beat real good and that's the last we hear of him. We don't know all this for sure, but at any rate, what we do know is that he was a well-respected magician up in Samaria and in v 9 he was **astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great.** <sup>10</sup>**and they all, from least to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."** Now look at this title, this Simon was a self-professed **great** one and he had done all these great magic up in Samaria and they were clinging to him, they were following after him and in the literature you read about this man he had everyone doing him favors. See, he had everyone afraid of him and so they served him and they even gave him this title **the Great Power of God.** Now what this is, this is a title of the grand vizier, the grand vizier was the chief spokesmen of a king and whatever he said that was the word of the king and you better do it. And so they are identifying him as the God's spokesman and whatever he says that is God's word. So they're submitting to this man, they're worshipping this man and who is he really but a false-Messiah. What is a false-Messiah but an antichrist, a demonic impostor? When you think of the anti-Christ I know what we all think, we think of 666, we think of the great satanic end times leader. Now that's true but there are also lesser antichrists. For example, John the Apostle says in his first epistle, "just as you have heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared." See there were little antichrists in his day, there are antichrists in our day and then there is the ultimate antichrist, the antichrist yet to come. Simon is one of those little antichrists who is a demonic impostor who tries to draw men after himself. And he was having all kinds of success in Samaria, verse 11, **they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.** So he's got deep roots in Samaria, he's got a large following because these people think they saw something great. But then verse 12, watch what happens when you put God's power up against Satan's. <sup>12</sup>**But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and**



**women alike.** <sup>13</sup>**Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.** Look at the categorical difference between Philip's miracles and Simon's magic. Even Simon was amazed by what Philip was able to do. So like most magicians in the ancient world if they wanted to learn a trick they would move in to get a closer look, try to find out how he did it. So operation flesh is at work.

Now, because of the magnanimity of the miracles in verse 12 the people of Samaria **believed Philip** and notice the two fold message. On the one hand he's speaking of the **good news about the kingdom** and on the other the **good news of the name of Jesus Christ**, let's look at the latter, the name of Jesus Christ, now that's the gospel, and what Philip preached was **the name**. What did we find in early Acts? How did the apostles heal the lame man up on the steps of the Gate called Beautiful? The name of Jesus. What do we mean by the name? We mean authority. Jesus Christ has authority. Authority to do what? Forgive sin. So this is the good news, that Jesus had been crucified on the cross to pay for the sins of the whole world, including Samaritan sins, and He was resurrected on the third day, that's the content they **believed**. Barriers were coming down because Jesus was a Jew and they had been looking for a Samaritan Christ. But that's not all, there's more offensive material here to be overcome. Philip also **preached the good news about the kingdom of God**. Now what's this? Why is this offensive? Because he's showing that the kingdom is Jewish not Samaritan. So the Samaritans were wrong, the kingdom of God is a Jewish kingdom not a Samaritan one. And I can just see some of our postmodern emergent Christians saying, "Oh, Philip, how can you be so dogmatic, you can't be so certain about truth, why, you're pushing them away being so decisive." But Philip didn't buy into the philosophy of postmodernism. The hard things have to be said, we can't soft peddle the gospel to reach people, try to make it palatable to them. The gospel is offensive. It doesn't mean be unkind, but you do have to be clear about truth, you do have to be prepared to give people answers. And so Philip was sitting there saying, "Alright, turn in your Samaritan Pentateuch over to Gen 3 (not that they had chapter divisions) let's trace the seed promise, now turn to Gen 12, Abraham's seed, now turn to Gen 49, Judah, the seed is going to come through Judah, alright boys, according to your own source material who is the Messiah going to be? A Jew or a Samaritan? A Jew. Now you're welcome to believe in Him, He died for

your sin, but don't give me this Samaritan baloney. And just to authenticate this message here's a miracle or two. And these overshadowed anything Simon Magus ever dreamed of, so these people who had been following him for years officially believed in Jesus Christ and rejected Simon. He's not "the Great Power of God," Jesus Christ is the Great Power of God. And so they were being **baptized in his name**. That's water baptism.

Now watch this because these people have believed, they have now been water baptized but they haven't been Spirit baptized. That doesn't happen till Peter and John come up in vv 14, 15 and 16, so there's a delay, they've believed and been water baptized but they haven't received the Spirit. Now this is why I warn you about building doctrine out of Acts. If you try to do that you contradict yourself because watch, what's the normal sequence in the epistles (Rom 8:9). Believe, at which moment you are Spirit baptized, placed in the body of Christ, and only after that are you water baptized. Is that the sequence here? No, these guys are water baptized before they are Spirit baptized. Why this strange order, why this strange delay? Because Acts is a book of transition, that's why and transitions by nature are not normal, something is happening here, I don't know if you see the significance, but a new group of people is about to enter the church, after 2,000 years we've lost the impact of what this means. "Today, oh yes, anyone can believe, Jew, Gentile, African, Chinese." But here we're talking about an exclusive Jewish body of Christ from Acts 2-7, there's Samaritans, it was only Jews, now we've got Samaritans believing in Jesus Christ. So the walls of division between these two groups have to come down if you're ever going to get unity. So you're going to have to have the apostles authenticate this. Is this really happening? Is it really going to be Jews and Samaritans in the same body?

And so Philip continues, in verse 13, **Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed**. So here we have the man who was called the Great Power of God and he's amazed because he really is seeing the Great Power of God and it isn't him. And so he's moving in close, this was the technique of magicians they'd hear about some great magical power and they'd try to get close to the magician, discover how he's doing it. So to get close he **believes** and is **baptized**. Now he's one of them see and he's going to figure out Philip's

secret so he's following him around and this goes on day after day, another imperfect voice, **he was constantly amazed.**

Now we turn back to the report that reaches Jerusalem, verse 14. **Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,** <sup>15</sup>**who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.** <sup>16</sup>**For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** <sup>17</sup>**Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.** Now this is what we call the Samaritan Pentecost. In Acts 2 you have the Jewish Pentecost, in Acts 8 you have the Samaritan Pentecost, in Acts 10 you have the Gentile Pentecost and in Acts 19 you have the Disciples of John the Baptist Pentecost. Four Pentecost's in the Book of Acts, and in every one you have a different order of events signaling transition. So the Samaritan Pentecost, verse 14, they receive the report back in Jerusalem and **Peter and John** are sent to Samaria. Why do they send two apostles? Because you have to have two witnesses to authenticate. So they're going to be the witnesses and it's interesting that John is going because he once had a particular hatred for the Samaritans. In Luke 9:52ff records the event where he and James went down to Samaria to make some preparations for Jesus and when they refused to receive Jesus John said, "Jesus, do you want me to command fire to rain down on them and consume them?" It's another one of those passages that shows the animosity between these two groups. And yet now John's apparently learned grace orientation because he's going to them. So in verse 15 they **came down** to Samaria **and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.** Again, another strange thing here, praying for people to receive the Holy Spirit? How many times in the epistles are we commanded to pray for a person to receive the Holy Spirit? Never. Why are they doing this? Because this is a transition period and though they had believed and been water baptized they were not officially baptized into the body of Christ yet. Verse 16 gives the explanation, **For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**<sup>i</sup> After praying for them in verse 17, **they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.** More strange events, these things did not happen on the Jewish Pentecost, there's a difference. Here they pray, then they lay on hands and they receive the Holy Spirit. Two questions here. One, why did Peter and John **lay hands on**

**them?** It's hard to say but maybe it showed they were fully accepted by the leaders of the Jerusalem church. In light of the animosity it would demonstrate that the believers in Jerusalem fully fellowship between the two groups. And as a confirmation of this the Samaritans **were receiving the Holy Spirit**. Second question, how did they know they were receiving the Holy Spirit? First observation here is that there was some manifestation. We're not told what it was but something happened so they could see they were receiving the Spirit. I suggest it was tongues. You have a manifestation of tongues on all the other Pentecost's; Acts 2, Acts 10 and Acts 19, so I suggest that tongues was manifested here. Why? To authenticate to the apostles that the Samaritans were incorporated into the body of Christ.<sup>ii</sup> Tongues was absolutely necessary to authenticate because you had a situation where the church could splinter here into two groups, this was an occasion for the church to fragment and then you would have rival sects of Christians; Samaritan Christianity and Jewish Christianity. This is being avoided at all costs by the Spirit of God. Remember, when an organization is young it is critical that you have unity, it is not a time for funny business, people that want to mess around and cause division can destroy a whole movement so to avoid that you have this manifestation here of tongues. And since this was the same thing the Jews experienced back in Acts 2, "Hey, God's doing the same for them, we're all part of the same thing" and that means unity.

Verse 18, **Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."** <sup>20</sup>**But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup>"You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup>"Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup>"For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."** <sup>24</sup>**But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."** So we finish with Simon and we want to draw a principle from this. What happened here is that Simon saw that the laying on of hands imparted the Spirit and now if he could purchase the final key to this then he could reproduce this and he

would be great again and everyone would shout his name, he'd get his prestige back, he'd get his followers back. See, this is just a ploy of the flesh. He's a man deeply entrenched in carnality, there's no question about it. What is a question and what is difficult to reconcile is verse 13, which says he believed with Peter's stiff rebuke. So we want to handle this difficulty in a minute. Was Simon a real believer or not?

But let's just see first what this fleshly man is doing. He comes to Peter and John in verse 19 and **he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."** See, he wants to be able to reproduce this miracle. That's all he wants. He's not interested in bringing unity to the Church, Jew and Samaritan in one body; he's interested in getting everyone's attention, being able to knock people's socks off with his great power, being able to shock people into worshipping him, "Oh, look at Simon, he's "the Great Power of God." See, this is one of the weaknesses of the sin nature. We all have strengths and weaknesses and this man's weakness was power and authority. Some of you want power, everyone to bow at your feet so you can satisfy your lust. That's Simon, trying to buy Peter off, and this incidentally is the origin of the practice of "simony" which comes from Simon's name. Simon was the first to get this started in the church. Simony came down in Church History to be a huge problem in the state-church of Roman Catholicism. See the state officials would buy into some church office with bribes and then they were on the inside see and they could get the confessions of people and then they could control people, keep them under their thumb because these people lust for power. That's all the confessional is, a way to discover people's dark secrets so the priest can control people, keep them in a state of fear. So this became a tremendous problem which was transferred over into another state-church system you're after the Reformation called the Church of England. This is always the problem with melding the church and state, these people tend to have a weakness in the area of power lust. And they play off people who have money lust and together the two support each other in a bid for honor and power. It's all the politics of the sin nature. And that practice, in the Church at least, started with Simon.

But in v 20 Peter says, **"May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!** In other words

Peter says, “To hell with you and your money,” that in fact is how one translator put this, “To hell with you...” Now, we wonder here as Peter says this if Peter had in mind a man who came before him earlier in Acts with a large sum of money, wanting to get his name on the treasury ledger as the biggest donor of the century or something. Remember the husband-wife duo of chapter 5; Ananias and Sapphira? “Hey honey, let’s sell some of our property and say we’re giving all the proceeds to the Church like Barnabas and then we’ll get our name in lights.” Now who’s committing the big sin but Simon? And you have to wonder here if Peter thought, “Is Simon is going to die right here on the spot? Has he committed a sin unto death?” And apparently not, this Simon was just a spiritual idiot at the time. He doesn’t even know what he’s asking. So Peter offers this stiff rebuke You can’t buy the **gift of God**. See, the gifts of God are sovereignly bestowed on men in accordance with God’s pleasure, not purchased.

Verse 21, **“You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup>“Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup>“For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.”** And this is what leads commentators to say that Simon wasn’t really a believer though it says he believed in v 13. So what’s the answer? Well, there’s no doubt that Peter is abrasive here but we’re also quite certain Simon believed. What we can say is that when a person believes they are justified, +R, but that doesn’t mean that all the years of negative volition, all the idolatry, all the baggage of our pre-Christian lives suddenly vanishes. All believers come over with a certain amount of HVP baggage, -R learned behavior patterns, and as long as there’s no doctrine in the soul there’s no change in the lifestyle. So what we’re observing here is a believer who has no doctrine and therefore his life reflects what it has always reflected up to this point, HVP. And that’s why verse 23 Peter uses what we would call ‘biblical curse words’ to describe this condition, you are in the **gall of bitterness**, this is a Hebrew expression used of a poor, green-yellowish liquid, “You’re just sick Simon, you’ve got a disease.” So I take it he was a believer. But some people, because of v 22 think he wasn’t. Maybe God will forgive you if you’re not already condemned to hell or something. But the sense of v 22 in the Greek grammar is not like what you read there, the sense is that *if* you repent Simon the Lord will forgive. Maybe you will repent, maybe you won’t but if you do the Lord will forgive. And so I

take it this is believer's repentance. <sup>24</sup>**But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."** Now we have no indication that Simon ever did repent. We have no indication that Peter prayed for him. But if early church historians are correct in identifying this Simon as the untiring adversary of Peter, following him around, bothering him all the time, then this man may have never got straightened out spiritually. Which does lead me to question whether this man really did believe the gospel, but it says he did and thus our principle; that a genuine believer can carry over his habit patterns into the Christian life. If we consider v 11 carefully we see that Simon had been involved in demonism for a "long time." So this was a deeply rooted sin pattern. These patterns can be so deeply rooted in our lives that we may never escape them; we can continue even in demonic activity. We have other cases in Scripture like Lot, Abraham's nephew. From reading that man's resume in the OT there is no indication he was a genuine believer. But when you come to the NT Peter says he was (2 Pet 2:7). So there are people who are poor excuses for Christians but Christians nonetheless. And yet like Peter I issue a strict rebuke to all of you believers who are carrying on in your old sin patterns, who think you can just go on walking in the flesh with no eternal consequences. You need to repent of your wickedness and walk by the Spirit. You need to put off the deeds of darkness and walk in the light.

Alright, so what have we seen? We've seen that the Samaritans are in on the ball game now and to bring them in without causing a big disruption some strange events took place. And that's what we mean by transition. You can't take these events and normalize them for all time. If you do that you contradict other passages. Why the strange things? Because there were barriers that existed between Jews and Samaritans that had to be overcome and to confirm to the apostles that a genuine unity had been achieved by the Spirit of God, that indeed Jew and Samaritan were united in one body, therefore these signs were necessary. And in verse 25 they head back to report this great progress to Jerusalem. Next week we'll continue in Philip's evangelism, next time to a fellow from Ethiopia, the word is going out.

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<sup>1</sup> Why only in the name of the Lord Jesus, what about being baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as Jesus commanded in Matt 28. Probably because the Samaritans were already monotheists, they already believed in the one true God, all that was needed was that they acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior. For us who

are Gentiles, we are a part of all nations and our background is pagan polytheism and thus we need to be baptized in the name of the Triune God.

<sup>ii</sup> In Acts 2 it was to authenticate to the apostles that the Holy Spirit had come but the nation Israel was not ready so it also pointed back to Isa 28 and served as a warning to the nation Israel that judgment was coming, a judgment which occurred in AD70.

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