

# Scattered into Judea and Samaria Samaria; Simon the Sorcerer; Miracles; Ethiopian Eunuch

## Saul made havoc of the church

The terrible events that occurred at this time are summed up in the following descriptions. Saul was “entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison (Acts 8:3).” He was “**breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord** (Acts 9:1).” In a later description he also revealed, “**I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. 11 And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme** (Acts 22:3-5)”



## Philip went to the city of Samaria

Since the main city by that name had been destroyed by Hyrcanus; and renamed Sebaste, no one has been able to exactly place this city, but the best guess is the city of Sebaste. As Philip began his work, Luke is clear that it was very productive. Luke makes it clear that both the word he spoke and the miracles he performed had an impact on these people.

*And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city. Acts 8:6-8*

## Simon the Sorcerer

Simon practiced the art of magic (NAS; ESV) or sorcery (KJV; ASV; NKJV) which is a general term for doing things that led others to think he had power over the future or over problems and difficulties. We do not know exactly what these powers were, but comparing them to other incidents in the NT we get a vague idea.

*Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false*

*prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus, 7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? Acts 13:6-10*

*Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. Acts 19:13-19*

Since there is nothing new under the sun, the things we deal with today are similar to this. In its more benign form it is Samantha or Endora on Bewitched, the Wicked Witch of the West on Wizard of Oz, It is Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolfman. It is the Horoscope, palm reading, Ouija boards, mediums, and Spiritists. It is Est, New Age, Shirley McLean and channeling. It is demon possession and exorcism, it is the lucky rabbit’s foot, lucky numbers, knocking on wood. It is voodoo, fear of graveyards after dark, bad luck in breaking a mirror, walking under a ladder and a black cat.

In short it is the belief in any power other than God that holds and influence and sway over us. The sin of idolatry and sorcery results from the perversion of a wonderful emotion God gave us. It is the ability to feel awe, reverence and respect. It forms the very heart of our ability to worship God, but man has perverted it as a means of gaining wealth and power. We see this clearly in Simon's request to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. His perverted thinking was that he could use this power to gain even further influence over others.

What is important is that Simon was amazed because compared to what he was doing, Philip was doing things beyond his comprehension.

*And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. 11 But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. Ex 7:10-11*

*20 And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. ... 22 Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said. Ex 7:20-22*

*And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt. Ex 8:7*

*Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. 19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "**This is the finger of God.**" But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said. Ex 8:18-19*

Simon did not want the ability to perform miracles, he wanted Peter's ability to pass on miracles. This let the inspired Peter who knew the hearts of all men (Ananias and Sapphira) to condemn Simon.

*But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21 "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 "For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." 24 Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." Acts 8:18-24*

What exactly was the Holy Spirit concerned with here. Is he now revealing that sometimes even when we repent we may not be forgiven? Since this is the only verse that speaks this way, it must be Simon and not God. Some people come to the gospel much more bound and enslaved to sin than others.

*To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. Titus 1:15-16*

For repentance to bring forgiveness, one must truly change their mind and turn from sin. Even if it happens again seven times in a day, it is still forgiven if the sin is truly removed. That was the concern here for Simon. He was "*poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.*" This strong warning was given so Simon could see his true condition. His answer has been variously interpreted. Some see him so concerned that he even wanted Peter to pray for him while others see him simply brushing off Peter telling him he could pray for him if he wanted.

## **Miracles, Wonders and Signs**

When God gave the Law to Moses, he wanted no doubt he was the author. For this reason, many miracles were performed. First, Israel witnessed the ten plagues and the opening of the Red Sea. Then they were given water from the rock and the manna each morning. At Mt Sinai they heard God speak the ten commandments and witnessed the amazing sights God created. When Moses came down from the mount his face glowed. There were other miracles until the death of Joshua, and then God began working among the people in much the same way that he does today.

When Jesus came, God did exactly the same thing. Jesus performed many different miracles during his ministry culminating with his resurrection. After he returned to heaven, the apostles began to perform miracles. These miracles continued in the first century, but just like Israel under Moses, after God fully proved that Christianity was under Christ he again stopped the miracles and began working with the church in different ways than miracles.

### **THEIR PURPOSE:**

*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man **attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs** which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- Acts 2:22*

*And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and **confirming the word through the accompanying signs.** Amen. Mark 16:19-20*

how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, **4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit,** according to His own will? Heb 2:3-4

Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was **bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.** Acts 14:3

### **BEGAN WITH THE APOSTLES.**

This is what Jesus had promised and was fulfilled when the apostles were baptized by the Holy Spirit.

**the apostles whom He had chosen, ... you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.** Acts 1:2-5

**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;** and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

Only the apostles were promised the baptized with the Holy Spirit and only the apostles performed miracles.

26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And **he was numbered with the eleven apostles.** 1 Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, **they were all with one accord in one place.** 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then **there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.** 4 **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.** Acts 1:26; 2:1-4

**But Peter, standing up with the eleven,** raised his voice and said to them, Acts 2:14-15

Then fear came upon every soul, and **many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.** Acts 2:43

And **through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people.** And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Acts 5:12

### **GIVEN TO THE DISCIPLES**

The transition occurred soon after the apostles appointed the seven men to help them with the work of the church.

And **Stephen**, full of faith and power, **did great wonders and signs** among the people. Acts 6:8

And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by **Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.** Acts 8:6

### **DID THE DISCIPLES PERFORM MIRACLES BY THE BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

We know the apostles received power when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. How did the other disciples receive this power? Were they also baptized in the Holy Spirit. Luke made it clear in Acts that they did not.

1. Peter commanded baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** Acts 2:38

2. Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus did not give power of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles to the Samaritans. But since it was the same baptism Peter commanded it did give remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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.** Acts 8:15-16

3. The power to perform miracles Those who had received the Holy Spirit were then commanded to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (using water for remission of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit).

Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? 48 And he commanded them to be **baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.** Acts 10:47-48

Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (Lord Jesus) was in water, brought remission of sins, but did not give the Holy Spirit or the power to perform miracles.

## HOW THE ABILITY TO PERFORM MIRACLES WAS PASSED TO THE DISCIPLES.

1. The apostles heard the Samaria had received the word of God.

*Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, Acts 8:14*

2. When Peter and John arrived, they prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit and then laid hands on them.

*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. Acts 8:15-17*

3. Simon saw exactly how this was done he wanted the ability to do it himself:

*And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, Acts 8:18*

4. This continued through the rest of the NT.

*And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Acts 19:6*

*Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 2 Tim 1:6*

Since Acts makes it clear only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and were able to pass on the ability to perform miracles, what does this mean about performing miracles today?

Since there is now only one baptism, and there are no apostles left to lay on their hands how could it be received?

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; Eph 4:4-5*

Spiritual gifts were needed in the first century to confirm that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and the Bible is God's word. Once that was accomplished then there was no further need of miracles. At that time they ceased.

*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. 1 Cor 13:8-10*

It is important to note that when Jesus described those who were in error who were not doing the will of God and when Paul described the falling away and the man of sin being revealed, they both warned that miracles would be one of the main proofs that would lead them into error.

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' Mt. 7:21-23*

*And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2Th. 2:8-12*

We know the miracles were validated in the NT. We know that with miracles today, there is no way to get the power and no need for it since the word has been confirmed. God had even prophesied that such things would end.

*"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. 2 "It shall be in that day," says the Lord of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. 3 It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, 'You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord.' And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies. Zech 13:1-4*