

## 26. The Lord Gave the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans

In our last topic, we saw that persecution in the city of Jerusalem caused many of the followers of Christ to flee from Jerusalem for safety. That did not stop the growth of the church because we saw that those who were scattered shared the Gospel wherever they went. We want to show our physical and spiritual children how to share the Gospel wherever they go by our example so that they will be equipped to do the same. In our topic today, we will see why the Holy Spirit came on these new Samaritan believers as a group instead of at the moment of salvation.

Before Philip had arrived at the city of Samaria, a man by the name of Simon had exercised a great influence in that city. Acts 8:9-11 says, “But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God.’ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.” Here, we see that Simon had that great influence because he practiced sorcery.

The word translated “sorcery” means the *practice of magic or witchcraft*. Deuteronomy 18:9-12 says, “When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, *or one* who conjures spells, *or* a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you.” Israel was forbidden to do these things because those who practice such things depend on the power of demons.

Simon had amazed the people of Samaria by the things that he did through the power of demons. As a result, he had been able to maintain control over the people for a long time. In fact, he had claimed to be someone great for a long time. The people thought that the things that Simon did were through the power of God. That should not surprise us, because 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 says, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” Here, we see that many false teachers claim to get their power from God when they are actually depending on Satan for power. This is one of the ways Satan is able to deceive many people.

Acts 8:12-13 goes on to say, “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.” Satan is the great deceiver. However, the miracles that God was doing through the ministry of Philip were genuine miracles. The people heard the message of Philip as he preached concerning the kingdom of God and the death and resurrection of Christ. They saw the genuine miracles that God was performing through Philip and they quickly realized that the things that Simon had been doing were not genuine. This caused

many people to repent of their sin and place their faith in Christ. They were then baptized in the name of Christ as a public testimony of their faith in Christ.

We read that Simon also believed. In fact, he was also baptized. However, we do not read that there was any repentance in his life. That is why it is important to understand the difference between true repentance and false repentance. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 says, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” People are always sorry when they have done something wrong and get caught. Here, we see the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation. Worldly sorrow produces death because people are only sorry that their sin was exposed. In the next topic, you can decide what kind of repentance Simon showed.

Simon began spending time with Philip because he wanted to see the miracles that were happening. He was filled with amazement as he saw the signs and miracles that the Lord was performing through Philip. Here, we see that Simon could clearly see the difference between the way that he had deceived the people and the genuine miracles that God chose to do through the power of the Holy Spirit. That reminds us of one reason why each Christian is given the power of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 says, “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.” The power of the Holy Spirit is given to Christians so that we can be witnesses of Christ and speak about Him with boldness instead of having to depend on our own strength.

The apostles at Jerusalem heard what was happening in Samaria. Acts 8:14-17 goes on to say, “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” Here, we see the concern of the apostles to help the Samaritans develop in their new life in Christ.

The apostles immediately sent Peter and John to see what was happening in the city of Samaria. Peter and John came and saw that the people of Samaria had repented and placed their faith in Christ. However, they realized something unusual. They realized that the Samaritans had not received the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit is the down payment and guarantee of our salvation, we see God had a reason for not giving them the Holy Spirit immediately.

There are four times in the book of Acts that people received the Holy Spirit as a group. In Acts 2, the Jewish followers of Christ were all present together in the Upper Room where they were waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4 says, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” We see three things happened here. The apostles were present. All the believers received the Holy Spirit as a group. The Holy Spirit gave them the ability to speak and share the wonderful works of God in other languages.

Here in Samaria, the Samaritan people were mixed Jewish and Gentile. As a result, the Jews rejected the Samaritans, but God wanted the church to realize its oneness in Christ. Again, there were apostles present. All of the new believers received the Holy Spirit as a group. Although there is no mention that they were able to speak the wonderful works of God in other languages, it is possible that they did so because Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was received by the Samaritans when the apostles laid their hands on them. Acts 8:18-19 say, “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’” Something happened that caused Simon to recognize that Christ had done something unique.

The other two times people received the Holy Spirit as a group are in Acts 10 and Acts 19. In Acts 10:44-45, we read, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.” Here, we see that the first group of Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit received the Holy Spirit as a group and spoke in tongues. This time, Peter was present so there was an apostle to verify the fact that the Gentiles had also received the Holy Spirit. In fact, Peter had also brought six other Christians with him who could also verify that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit. Acts 11:12 says, “Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.” Peter knew he would be questioned when he returned to Jerusalem and so took witnesses.

In Acts 19:1-6, Paul went to the city of Ephesus. In this city, he found Jews who had a strong faith in God but had never heard of the death and resurrection of Christ. As a result, they were like Old Testament saints. Acts 19:5-6 says, “When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.” Here, we see that a group of Old Testament saints received the Holy Spirit as a group and spoke in tongues. In this case, Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why each group received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues the first time that they received the Holy Spirit as a group. This was verified by one or more apostles each time. God wanted to make certain that there was unity in the church between all Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how various groups received the Holy Spirit.