

CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITANS

(Acts 8:4-25)

A. **In the beginning**, the church in Jerusalem grew rapidly & with very little resistance (2:41; 4:4).

1. What was it that sparked so much interest & resulted in so many conversions?

a. The facts of the gospel (Rom 5:8-9; 1 Cor 15:3-5).

b. The promises too (Acts 2:38; 3:19-20, 26).

c. What right thinking person would not “gladly receive” these words in faith, repent & be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ?

B. **But the apostles’** work was also faced with great opposition.

1. The priests, the captain of the Temple & the Sadducees were “greatly disturbed” that the resurrection of Jesus was being taught (Acts 4:1-3).

2. And so little by little they ratcheted up the persecution against the church.

a. First, Peter & John were arrested & threatened not to preach in His name (Acts 4:21).

b. Then all the apostles were arrested & beaten (Acts 5:40).

c. Finally, Steven was stoned to death by angry mob of unbelieving Jews (Acts 6:8-7:60).

C. **After Steven’s death**, persecution became widespread, & many saints left Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4).

1. But as they left the city, they went everywhere “preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).

[Then we are introduced to an evangelist named Philip, whose preaching resulted in the conversion of many Samaritans & a lone Eunuch from Ethiopia.

Today, we're going to take a look at the conversion of the Samaritans.]

I. PHILIP'S WORK AT SAMARIA (8:4-13)

A. Read 8:5-8.

1. Work: Philip came & preached Christ to them.
2. Work: Philip performed many miracles.
3. Result: The multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip.
4. Result: There was great joy in that city.

[The next reading is a fuller account of these verses, & will help to explain why there was great joy in the city.]

B. Read 8:9-13.

1. Work: Philip preached the things concerning the kingdom of God.
2. Work: Philip preached the things concerning the name of Jesus Christ.
3. Result: The people [who once believed Simon to be the great power of god] now believed Philip.
4. Result: Both men & women were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, including Simon.
5. Result: There was great joy in that city because every believer, in what Philip was teaching, had been healed by the power of God.

- a. Some rejoiced because they had been healed & forgiven on the same day. Others rejoiced with them in that fact, & in the reality of their own acceptance by God.

II. PETER & JOHN'S WORK AT SAMARIA (8:14-25)

A. Read 8:14-17.

1. Work: Peter & John were sent to Samaria by the other apostles, after hearing that the people had received the word of God.
2. Work: Peter & John prayed that the Holy Spirit might be given to those who were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
3. Work: Peter & John laid hands on them.
4. Result: They received the Holy Spirit.

B. Read 8:18-25.

1. Work: The new convert Simon wanted to purchase this ability of the apostles, but Peter rebuked him for intruding into matters that did not pertain to him.
2. Work: Peter commanded him to repent of his wickedness & pray to God to have the thoughts of his heart forgiven.
3. Result: Simon humbly asked Peter to intercede in prayer for him.
4. Work: Peter & John didn't waste any steps, they preached in many Samaritan villages before returning to Jerusalem.

[This is the record of the first preaching of the gospel to those not fully Jews.

Samaritans were a mixed race & held in utter contempt by most Jews (cf. Jn 4:9).

What I would like to do next is make some observations about this text that will help us understand it better.]

III. OBSERVATIONS

A. Philip's preaching is described in 3 ways.

1. He “preached Christ” (5).

a. He may have surveyed the OT prophets concerning the work of Christ, beginning with Moses (Deut 18:18-19).

b. The Samaritans accepted only the writings of Moses, but if they could be convinced that Jesus was the Christ of whom Moses spoke, then their hearts would be open to the other prophets of God like David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah – to name a few (Psa 2:6; 45; 110:1-4; Isa 9:6-7; 32:1-2; Jer 23:5-6; 30:9; Zech 9:9)

2. He “preached the things concerning the kingdom of God” (12).

a. The kingdom promised (Dan 2:44) was now in existence (Col 1:13; Rev 1:9); it was a spiritual kingdom & not the physical kingdom they expected.

3. He “preached the things concerning...the name of Jesus Christ” (12).

a. No longer was there authority in the name of Moses, now all authority resided in the name of Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18).

b. He was now their new King & Lord (Acts 2:36).

c. He was exalted to the right hand of God to be Prince & Savior (Acts 5:31).

- d. He was reining from heaven, & the apostles were His ambassadors sent to reconcile them to God (2 Cor 5:18-20).
- e. Jesus had commissioned the very message that Philip was preaching to them (Mat 28:19-20).

B. Samaritan's response is described in 3 ways.

- 1. "With one accord they **heeded** [to hold the mind towards; pay attention to, be cautious about, apply oneself to, adhere to (Thayer's)] the things spoken by Philip (6)."
 - a. Partly due to the miracles they watch him perform.
- 2. "They **believed** Philip as he preached the things concerning the K of G & the name of JC" (12).
 - a. They had taken the first step toward the forgiveness of sins & their salvation (Mk 16:16).

- 3. "They [were] **baptized** in the name of the Lord Jesus" (16).
 - a. This implies that Philip's preaching about Jesus Christ & the Kingdom of God included the command to be baptized.

[This next point has to do with the belief that many have that Simon was not truly converted to Christ.

They say he was not saved & therefore never fell from grace as indicated in the text.]

C. Simon's conversion is described in 4 ways.

- 1. "Simon himself also believed" (13).
- 2. "He was baptized."
- 3. "He continued with Philip."

4. He asked Peter to “pray to the Lord” for him, so that he would not continue to be “poisoned by bitterness & bound by iniquity” (23-24).

[Was Simon saved?]

- a. Belief & baptism is what a good & honest heart will do when he hears the gospel.
- b. Continuing with the saints in the learning process is what a Christian will do.
- c. Asking for prayers is what a Christian will do when he repents of a public sin (1 Jn 1:9; Jas 5:16).

[Simon was saved, but his sin could have caused him to be lost if he had not repented & prayed.]

D. Holy Spirit’s bestowal is described in 3 ways.

[The expression “receive the Holy Spirit” (15) is a metonymy for receiving a miraculous gift from Him (1 Cor 12:7-11).

A metonymy is figure of speech where a word or phrase is substituted for another. It is like when we refer to our government as “Washington”, or as when Jesus referred to the fruit of the vine as “the cup”.

So in the context of Acts 8, were not discussing “the gift of the Holy Spirit” given to one when he obeys the gospel (Acts 2:38; 5:32), but were referring to the impartation of the miraculous gifts, which were given to the early church until the revelation of God’s will was complete.]

1. The presence of apostle[s] was necessary (14).
 2. Prayer was necessary (15).
 3. The laying on of the apostle’s hands was necessary (17-18).
- a. Only the apostles had the authority & the ability to dispense the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, 26-2:4; Rom 1:11; 2 Tim 1:6).

b. Only the Holy Spirit could decided which gift to give & to whom it would be given (1 Cor 12:11).

c. What about Philip? Why couldn't he do for the Samaritans what Peter & John had done?

1) He had a good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit & wisdom (6:3).

2) The apostles had laid their hands upon him to impart a spiritual gift (6:6).

3) He could perform miracles (8:6).

4) But he was not given "the Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4-8; John 16:13); because he was not an apostle, he was an evangelist.

5) So he could not do for the Samaritans what Peter & John could do for them.

6) Remember, Simon had learned that the hard way (8:8-23).

CLOSING

A. The conversion of the Samaritans teaches us several great lessons:

1. To preach Christ is to connect the OT prophecies concerning the Christ & the Kingdom of God - to the name of Jesus.
2. To preach Christ is to command those who believe the gospel to be immediately baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.
3. A Christian may fall out of favor with God; he may so sin as to be lost, but God will forgive him through repentance & prayer.
4. The laying on of the apostles' hands dispensed the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

God's Plan For Our Salvation:

Hear the gospel of Christ: Acts 2; 13; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be the Son of God, Savior, Lord, Christ: Jn 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31

Repent of sin: Acts 2:38; 17:30; 1 Jn 3:4; Acts 3:19

Confess faith in Christ: Rom 10:9-10

Baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins: Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3-4; Acts 2:38

Be Obedient to Christ: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 Jn 9; Rev 2:10; Jn 12:48