

2-The Scattered Are Gathered (Acts 8:18-40)

In the history of the Church there have always been those who appear to be part of the covenant community but who are really out to use God to enrich themselves (Achan, Judas, Ananias, Sapphira). It appears that is the case with Simon the magician.

Acts 8:18-19 "Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

1. What was the outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit among the Samaritans?

A. It must have been something supernatural for it to appeal to Simon.

We are told that Simon believed the gospel and was baptized, but has he truly repented of his old ways of claiming special powers from God as a way to attract followers — and to make money.

Acts 8:20-23 "But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could acquire the gift of God with money! 21 "You have no part or share in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 "Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart will be forgiven you. 23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of unrighteousness."

Simon sees the impact of the Spirit on these Samaritans as a money-making opportunity. He is not acting like a believer and Peter is speaking to him as if he is not a believer.

Acts 8:24 "But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

B. Has Simon had a change of heart?

Simon does not pray himself. Is he more interested in avoiding the consequences of sin than in forsaking his sin? This is an important question we must wrestle with in our lives. Is my life defined by repentance? Do I repent because I got caught or because I'm listening to the conviction of God's Spirit?

C. The Samaritans have been welcomed in this new covenant community.

Acts 8:25 "So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans."

2. An outcast gathered. (The Ethiopian Eunuch)

A. Philip left Jerusalem to gather outsiders and outcasts.

Acts 8:26-27 "But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Get ready and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) 27 So he got ready and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,"

This man is described as an Ethiopian. The area he is from is referred to in scripture as "Cush" (Ps. 68:31; Isa. 11:11; Zeph. 3:9-10). He is an official in the court of Candace.

Acts 8:27-28 "So he got ready and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading Isaiah the prophet."

B. He seems to be on a personal quest.

Perhaps he had heard about the God of Israel and how he dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem. He made the journey to Jerusalem, only to discover that he couldn't gain entrance to the temple. Not only is he a Gentile; he's a eunuch. The law given at Mount Sinai had made it clear that:

Deuteronomy 23:1 "'No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off may enter the assembly of the LORD.'" (Also Isaiah 56:3-5; 8)

Holiness is now solely a matter of being joined to Jesus Christ by faith.

Acts 8:29-33 "Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." 30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED LIKE A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND LIKE A LAMB THAT IS SILENT BEFORE ITS SHEARER, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. 33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUSTICE WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL DESCRIBE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS TAKEN AWAY FROM THE EARTH." (Isaiah 53:7-8)

C. God is working ahead of us in the lives of people.

Acts 8:34-35 "The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him."

What would Philip's explanation of this passage sound like?

The unwelcome outcast found himself being welcomed into the people of God. He wanted to be marked as belonging to the people of God.

D. "What prevents me from being baptized?"

Acts 8:36-40 "As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 38 And he ordered that the chariot stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea."

The eunuch is rejoicing. There had been much joy in Samaria.

Jesus is still gathering. He is working in and through his people to draw others to himself.

Matthew 24:31 "'And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET BLAST, and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

What is your part? Focus on the "one."

