

Acts 043

Faith Alone

Acts 8:5-9

April 3, 2024

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Let's go to Acts 8:5.

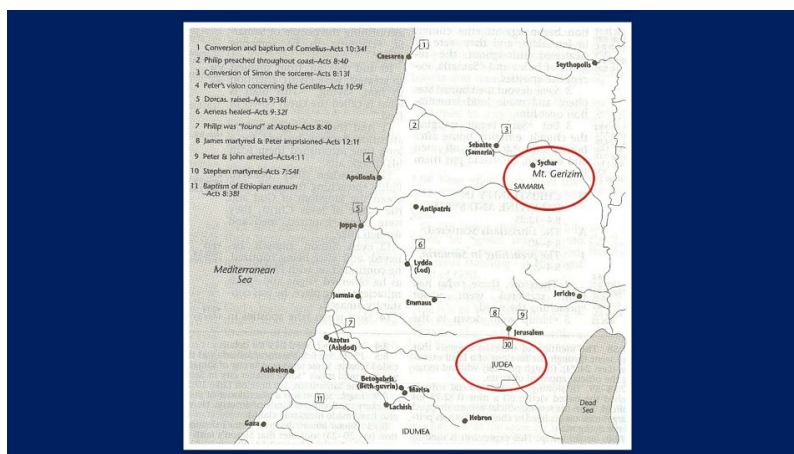
Acts 8:5-40
Philip's Ministry

- I. Samaria (8:5-25)
- II. Judea (Acts 8:26-40)



We are now in a section of the Book of Acts which relates to another deacon. This particular deacon's name is Philip. The first deacon that we learned a little bit about was Stephen, in Acts 7. Now we are learning about a second deacon named Philip. His ministry basically spans from Acts 8:5-40.

You can take Acts 8 and you can divide it into two, geographically. There is Philip the deacon's ministry in Samaria, Acts 8:5-25; and then there is Philip the deacon's ministry in Judea, Acts Acts 8:26-40. Up north is Samaria. That is where Philip ventured into. Then down south is Judea.



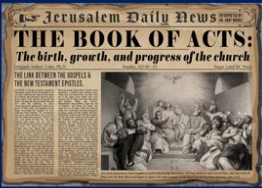
You will notice that Jerusalem, where the church was born, is right in the middle, between Samaria and Judea. As you move up north, there is Samaria, and as you move down south from Jerusalem, you have a reference to Judea. The first part of Philip's ministry takes place in Samaria, and the second part of his ministry takes place in Judea. The first part of his ministry is recorded in Acts 8:5-25, and the second part of his ministry, in Judea, is recorded in Acts 8:26-40.

We start tonight Philip's ministry in Samaria, Acts 8:5-25. That is where he went: up north into Samaria from Jerusalem.

I. Ministry in Samaria

Acts 8:5-25

- A. Evangelization in Samaria (5-8)
- B. Simon's conversion (9-13)
- C. Peter & John lay hands on the Samaritans (14-17)
- D. Peter rebukes Simon (18-25)



So here is basically what happened in Philip's ministry in Samaria: you have the evangelization of the Samaritans, Acts 8:5-8; then you have the conversion of Simon the sorcerer, Acts 8:9-13, which is a major hot button issue. Almost every commentary that you read will tell you that Simon was not really saved—he was not a believer—his faith was spurious.

The Calvinists say that Simon was not saved because he did not persevere in good works, so his faith was never real. The Arminians would say that he lost his salvation. This is really a good thing to ask people if you are trying to figure out where they are on the doctrine of grace. Ask them about the conversion of Simon the sorcerer. Most people who do not understand the doctrine of grace will basically say that Simon the sorcerer was never saved.

I think there is very, very convincing evidence here—in fact, I think the evidence is irrefutable—that he was saved. The reason people do not think he was saved is that they are reading the text through the lens of their own theological system, rather than allowing the language of the text to correct their theological system.

Almost every single commentary you read on this is going to get it wrong. I am going to try to show you that Simon clearly was saved. He just had not had a lot of time to grow. In fact, he had no time to grow. So he was still thinking in a worldly, carnal sense. His conversion is described in Acts 8:9-13.

Then in Acts 8:14-17, Peter and John have to come and lay hands on the Samaritans for them to receive the Holy Spirit, which is weird from our standpoint. When someone is saved, they get the Holy Spirit immediately. Romans 8:9 says that if you do not have the Spirit of Christ, you do not belong to Christ. But here is a case where some people believe and are saved, and they do not get the Holy Spirit right away. The apostles have to come from Jerusalem to lay hands on these Samaritan believers so that they can receive the Holy Spirit.

This is something that the Holy Spirit did intentionally in this unique case, because of something called the Jewish-Samaritan racial conflict. This conflict went all the way back to seven hundred years before the time of Christ. I will show you where that conflict came from.

If the Holy Spirit had come immediately upon the Samaritans without this delay, and the Samaritans did not understand that they belonged to Jerusalem, and Jerusalem did not understand that they belonged to Samaria, because we are now all one in the body of Christ, what would have happened would have been two churches right out of the gate. You would have had a Jerusalem church and a Samaritan church.

The seven-hundred-year conflict would have just been dragged right into the Church Age. So this is a peculiar case where the Holy Spirit was delayed to prevent this rupture from occurring. We will get into that in Acts 8:14-17.

After Simon the sorcerer is saved, he wants power, Acts 8:18-25, because he sees Peter operate in power as he lays hands upon the Samaritans and they receive the Holy Spirit. So Simon, who was a man of power—black magic and things of that nature—wanted that power for himself in the Church Age. He is rebuked by the apostle Peter in Acts 8:18-25.

Simon, at the end of that experience, expresses remorse. That is one of the reasons I think he was saved: he expresses remorse and he asks for Peter to pray for him. So this is taking place in Acts 8:18-25. This is all under Philip's ministry in Samaria, Acts 8:5-25.

That is the big picture. Now, obviously we are not going to get through all of this today. I know you guys are shocked by that. That is the direction that we are moving in. So first of all, notice the evangelization of Samaria, Acts 8:5-8.

A.

Acts 8:5-8 Evangelization of Samaria

1. Philip's preaching (5)
2. Samaritans' response (6a)
3. Authenticating signs (6b-7)
4. Result: joy (8)



We have Philip's preaching, Acts 8:5. The Samaritans response to the preaching, Acts 8:6a. There are authenticating signs and wonders, Acts 8:6b-7. The result of this whole conversion—the massive conversions here in Samaria—is joy, Acts 8:8.

Notice, first of all, Philip's preaching, Acts 8:5. Acts 8:5 says:

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them" (Acts 8:5).

Now, who is Philip? Philip is one of the seven deacons that were selected to handle the distribution of food for the widows in Acts 6. You might remember that in Acts 6:5, these seven deacons were selected. The first deacon mentioned was a man named Stephen. Stephen, the first deacon mentioned, is the focal point of the end of Acts 6 up to his martyrdom in Acts 7.

The second deacon selected, according to Acts 6:5, was Philip. So Philip becomes the focus of attention now that Stephen has passed from the scene. Philip becomes the focus of attention here in Acts 8. Initially Philip is called a deacon, but over in Acts 21:8 he is given this name, "Philip the evangelist."

So here is an example of an individual who is functioning as a deacon, but who also felt compelled to go to Samaria to share the gospel. He was a very good deacon, but he was also a very prominent evangelist. He was operating under the office of deacon, functioning with the gift of evangelism. That is who this man Philip is. You look at Acts 8:5, and it says,

"Philip went down [very important language there] to the city of Samaria..." (Acts 8:5).

Whoever wrote this book—we believe it is Luke; liberals think that someone wrote this long after the fact—demonstrates a great deal of knowledge of the geography of the nation of Israel. Jerusalem is elevated geographically. So when it says here, in Acts 8:5,

"Philip [coming from Jerusalem] went down to the city of Samaria..." that is exactly accurate.

In Galatians 1:17 Paul says this concerning Jerusalem:

"nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me;..."
(Galatians 1:17).

"Up to Jerusalem"—"down from Jerusalem"—those are geographically accurate. This book (Acts) could not have been written by someone who was not an eyewitness to the things that are being described in this book. It is written by someone who was there, who understood the geography of the area.

In fact, in your Book of Psalms, you have 150 psalms in your Psalter. The Book of Psalms is divided into five books. There is a special group of Psalms, Psalms 120-134, that are called the Psalms of Ascent. "Ascent" means "[going] up." That unit of material, Psalms 120-134 are the Psalms that were sung by the Jews as they were going up to Jerusalem to participate in the various Jewish feasts, three of which were mandatory. (Leviticus 23 lays all of that out.).

As the Jews were traveling to celebrate these various feasts, they were going up. So what developed out of that were these Psalms of Ascent that they sung as they were going up to Jerusalem, geographically, to celebrate the various feasts of Judaism.

When you go to Israel (I say "when" and not "if," because you are going to get there one way or the other—you are going to be there for the Millennial Kingdom, so you might as well go over now and check out your real estate and see where you are going to live and all of that kind of stuff), if you are on a really good tour group, the bus driver will put it into the gear that is needed to geographically go up to Jerusalem.

Then the tour guide will have the people on the bus either read or sing or or chant together some of the Psalms of Ascent. You get the feeling of what it was like in ancient times (of course, they were not on buses) of the Jewish people, as they were traveling upward to Jerusalem to participate in these various feasts.

Here is Philip the deacon, the second deacon selected, functioning also as an evangelist, leaving Jerusalem, going down to Samaria. This word "Samaria" is a big deal. You see it there in Acts 8:5, and if you go back to the very end of Acts 8:1, you will see the word "Samaria." That is a very big deal, because that signals that we have shifted in our outline of the Book of Acts.

Remember that the outline of the Book of Acts was given by none other than Jesus after He rose from the dead, but before He ascended? He was speaking to His disciples, and He made this statement in Acts 1:8. In so doing He gave an outline. I think Luke records this because Luke uses this as an outline for the Book of Acts. Jesus said to His disciples,

"but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem,..." (Acts 1:8).

That is part one of the Book of Acts, Acts 1-7, which we have completed.

"...and you shall be My witnesses...in all Judea and Samaria,..." (Acts 1:8).

That is part two of the Book of Acts, Acts 8-12, which we are now entering.

"...and you shall be My witnesses...to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

That is part three of the Book of Acts: the three missionary journeys of Paul, then finally, at the end of the Book of Acts, how Paul made it to Rome. Once the gospel gets to Rome, Luke stops recording history, because the assumption is that all roads lead to Rome. So once the gospel hits Rome, it is going to go everywhere. Paul the Apostle is really highlighted with his missionary journeys and trip to Rome. That is the third section, Acts 13-28.

Structure (Acts 1:8)

- Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)
- **Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12)**
- Remotest part of the earth (Acts 13–28)
 - 1st missionary journey (Acts 13–14)
 - Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1-35)
 - 2nd missionary journey (Acts 15:36 –18:22)
 - 3rd missionary journey (Acts 18:23–21:17)
 - Trip to Rome (Acts 21:18–28:31)



We finished part one, Acts 1-7. Now we are entering into part two of the Book of Acts, Acts 8-12: the ministry in Judea and Samaria spearheaded by Philip. Philip is going to go into Samaria first in Acts 8, and as we will see later in the chapter, he is going to go into Judea. The church is going to have a ministry in those outer areas.

Paul, who is not even Paul yet, is not converted yet. He does not get converted till the next chapter, Acts 9. Paul is going to take the gospel to the remote parts of the earth through his three missionary journeys and trip to Rome, where the gospel is going to get outside the borders of Israel. That is in Acts 13-28.

So when you see this word "Samaria" mentioned twice (once in Acts 8:5 and once in Acts 8:1), that is a signal that we are now in the middle interior section of the Book of Acts. So Philip goes and he leaves Jerusalem, and he goes down to Samaria, and he begins preaching the gospel.

A.

Acts 8:5-8

Evangelization of Samaria

1. Philip's preaching (5)
2. Samaritans' response (6a)
3. Authenticating signs (6b-7)
4. Result: joy (8)



Notice the Samaritan's response in Acts 8:6. Acts 8:6 says,

"The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip,..." (Acts 8:6).

Now, the Greek here is interesting. Basically, the way it translates is that they were giving heed—these Samaritans—to what Philip was saying, and they kept on giving heed. They listened to him and they kept listening. These were people who were very interested in spiritual things and spiritual truth.

Philip's ministry to the Samaritans was authenticated by signs and wonders. You see that in Acts 8:6b-7. Acts 8:6-7 says,

"...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" (Acts 8:6-7).

So Philip's ministry to the Samaritans is commemorated through signs and wonders. Now, why is God allowing signs and wonders to take place to the Samaritans through Philip? One reason is that Simon the sorcerer has been active in Samaria for many years (this is the guy who is about to get saved), and he was able to 'wow' the whole city with his satanic signs and wonders.

God is showing that Satan is not the only one in the miracle business. The Holy Spirit is also in the miracle business. So Philip's ministry is commemorated also with various signs and wonders, as God is showing that anything Simon can do through Satan's power, He can do as well.

There are many such accounts in the Book of Acts of people performing signs and wonders. But what you will notice in the Book of Acts is that the people performing the signs and wonders are either number one, the apostles themselves, or number two,

people whom the apostles had laid hands on—people who had personal contact to the apostles—delegates of the apostles.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum has made that comment many times, as we have been using some of his material going through the Book of Acts. Earlier in the Book of Acts he said this:

"Verse 12 provides evidence of apostolic authority. The account of the second persecution of the church begins by describing apostolic signs (v. 12a)."¹

He is talking about something that happened back in Acts 3-4. He makes this statement:

"Again it is important to note that in the book of Acts, only the apostles and the apostolic [de]legates, who were appointed by the apostles by the laying on of hands, were able to perform miracles, signs, and wonders (e.g. Acts 6:8). [113] This fact has come out four times before (Acts 3:6-7; 4:22, 33), and now it is repeated once again in this verse."²

So yes, signs and wonders are happening in the Book of Acts, but they are being conducted by the apostles or those functioning under the delegated authority of the apostles like Philip the deacon, Stephen the deacon, etc.

Since the apostles are now all dead and have been dead for 2,000 years, our basic doctrinal position is that we do not see this level of miracles that we see in the Book of Acts, where people have different spiritual gifts of healing, etc. so that anybody they lay hands on gets healed. That was something that was a reality in apostolic times. We do not believe that it is something that is a reality today.

If you look at the Sugar Land Bible Church position statements, you will see that we express ourselves on this very clearly. However, we are also very clear that even though there is no apostolic gift of healing today, that does not detract from the fact that God can and does heal today. It is just that when God does it, He does it directly rather than indirectly through someone having some gift of healing.

I very much do believe in divine healing. I was dependent on that with the prayers of everybody praying for me from Wednesday through Monday. I believe in miracles. I believe God heals. I believe in divine providence. I just believe that when God does it, He does it directly rather than indirectly through someone claiming they have some sort of apostolic gift.

That is the shift that has taken place in this realm of miracles from the Book of Acts to the present. You will notice there in Acts 8:7 a distinction between physical problems and demonically caused problems.

¹ Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Acts*, 129.

² Ibid.

Look at Acts 8:7. It says, concerning Philip's preaching and healing ministry, which the Samaritans were open to,

"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" (Acts 8:7).

So in the first part of Acts 8:7 you have demonic issues—people being possessed by demons—demons coming out of people. In the second part of the verse, it almost puts it in a different category: you have people that had physical problems. So can demons cause physical problems in people? Yes, they can. Luke's Gospel talks about a woman who was bent over physically for a long time. Jesus, in Luke's Gospel, where the story is recorded, makes a statement that Satan put her in that position.

There are many, many other examples of Satan or demons causing physical problems in people. Paul the Apostle, in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10, suffered from a thorn in the flesh, which was physical. He called it a messenger from Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7). So very clearly the realm of the satanic, the realm of the demonic, can cause physical problems in people.

However, it is also equally true that not all physical problems that people suffer from are necessarily related to some kind of interface with Satan or demons. The truth of the matter is that we would all have physical problems even if Satan completely left us alone, because we are living in a cursed world. We are not getting any younger, amen? It says in Genesis 3:19,

*"For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).*

You put enough miles on the car and you have to start taking it in more frequently for repairs. It is just a matter of aging—getting older. This last week I had recovery from some physical problems that, for the first part of my life, I did not even know I was susceptible to. I am not going to attribute that to Satan and the demonic. It is just the fact that I am living in a non-resurrected body, which is going right back into the dirt from which it came—which is what God said would happen when our forebears had their foray into original sin.

**Not all Physical Infirmities are
Attributable to Satan/Demon**

- Matt 8:5-13
- Matt 9:19-20, 27-30
- Matt 12:9-14
- Matt 14:35-36



In fact, there are a number of examples in Matthew's Gospel (we do not have time, obviously, to look these up, but you could jot these down) of people having physical infirmities, and Satan and the demons are not even mentioned. So sometimes people have physical infirmities because of the realm of Satan and the demonic. But we should not infer that every physical problem somebody has is somehow demonically caused.

I think it is interesting that Luke—who is a doctor, by the way—separates demonic oppression in the first part of Acts 8:7 from physical oppression in the second part of Acts 8:7. It is almost as though he is saying that there can be a relationship between the two, but do not jump to the conclusion that every problem people have physically is related to Satan and the demonic.

Then as this ministry spreads, you see the joy of the people, which is always the case wherever Jesus is proclaimed and experienced. What does it say in John 8:32?

"and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

It does not say, "You shall know the truth, and the truth is going to make you miserable your whole life." Jesus goes on, in John 8:36:

"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

You get around Jesus and you get around His teachings, you get around the Holy Spirit, you get around the people of God, you get around a church that wants to follow the things of the Lord, and what you will find is people walking in joy, not in misery. A lot of people claim the name of Christ, but they are walking in total misery. I would say that they are really not walking with the true Jesus. They are walking in some kind of religious form of legalism, because Jesus is not in the business of destroying the lives of people. He is in the business of liberating the lives of people.

Look at how the Samaritans react in Acts 8:8 to what Philip is doing here as the Holy Spirit is using him. Acts 8:8 says,

"So there was much [not a little bit—much] rejoicing in that city" (Acts 8:8).

Jesus in John 10:10 made this statement:

"The thief [referring to Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

It is Satan who is oppressing people and trying to destroy people. John 8:44, of Satan, says,

"...He was a murderer from the beginning..." (John 8:44).

It is Satan who wants to destroy your life, ultimately—your health, your outlook on life, your emotional composition, your finances. Anything that is good in your life Satan is out to wreck.

When I was in Campus Crusade for Christ (today they do not even call it that; they call it "Cru" because they think "Crusade" is too politically incorrect; I liked it the old way myself, not because I am into crusades, but it was just a statement that we are serious about Jesus—"Campus Crusade for Christ") they had this statement that we would use when we would evangelize people. We would say, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," which actually is true. That is from John 10:10.

But there is a converse to that. If God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, let's just go the inverse here: Satan hates you and has a terrible plan for your life. The deception is that people think, "Well, if I follow the things of the world and I follow the things of Satan, then the bondage of religiosity is going to leave me and I will really be happy. The further I get from God, the happier I am going to be."

How many of our youth think that? "I gotta get away from Mom and Dad. I have to get out there and sow some wild oats. I have to be free to be me. And boy, I am really going to experience enlightenment." The truth of the matter is that it is a deception that they are under. It is the exact opposite. The further you get away from God, the more miserable you are. The closer you are to God, the more you walk in joy. That is what is happening with these Samaritans.

Here is Philip preaching the good news. Miracles are happening. Healings are happening. Demons are being cast out of people. And Acts 8:8 says that in that particular city, the city of Samaria, there was not just rejoicing, but *"there was much rejoicing"* (Acts 8:8).

I. Ministry in Samaria

Acts 8:5-25

- A. Evangelization in Samaria (5-8)
- B. Simon's conversion (9-13)
- C. Peter & John lay hands on the Samaritans (14-17)
- D. Peter rebukes Simon (18-25)



So we have the evangelization in Samaria. The church has left Jerusalem and is now evangelizing outside the borders of Jerusalem, which is what Jesus said the church would do when He gave them their instructions that Doctor Luke uses in Acts 1:8 as an outline of the book. Now, as all of these Samaritans are coming to faith, so does this magician, this dealer in black magic, named Simon. His conversion is recorded in Acts 8:9-13.

B.

Acts 8:9-13

Simon's Conversion

1. Simon's deception (9-11)
2. Samaria's response to Philip's preaching (12)
3. Simon's response to Philip's preaching (13)



We have Simon's deception, Acts 8:9-11; Samaria's response to Philip's preaching, Acts 8:12; and then in Acts 8:13, Simon himself responds by way of faith to Philip's preaching, just as the Samaritans did, and he too is saved. And it is not fake faith. It is real faith, because the same word "believe" that is used in Acts 8:12 to describe the Samaritans' conversions, which nobody questions, is the identical word that is used to describe the conversion of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:13.

So you cannot play this game where you take the use of the word "believe" one way in Acts 8:12, and a totally different way in Acts 8:13. Nobody would ever read any sane piece of literature that way. Yet that is how the majority of commentators, exegetes, theologians, and preachers treat these verses: "The conversion of the Samaritans was real. The conversion of Simon the sorcerer was not real."

Now, why are they doing that? Because they are reading the biblical text through the lens of their a priori theological system, whether it be Calvinism or Arminianism. According to Calvinism, you have to have fruit to prove that your faith is real. If there is no fruit, your faith was never real. Or according to Arminianism, Simon maybe was saved, but he lost his salvation.

Those systems are so ingrained in the thinking of people that it becomes almost like a set of lenses, a set of eyeglasses—a prism, if you will—through which they read the Scripture. If you were never taught any of those systems—let's say you are a brand-new Christian and you do not know anything about Calvinism or Arminianism—there is no way that you would read those verses as inconsistently as do the professionals out there.

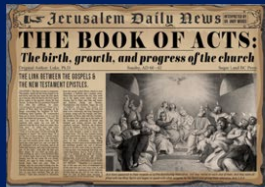
So Simon is actually going to believe and be baptized. Why in the world would Philip baptize Simon if Philip thought Simon's faith was not real? That does not make any sense in and of itself. Simon is going to believe and he is going to be baptized just like the rest of the Samaritans, in the prior verse (Acts 8:12), believed and were baptized. Everybody knows or thinks the Samaritans' faith was legitimate, but they do not think Simon's faith was legitimate.

Simon the sorcerer, now a Christian, is going to do some weird things, some power-seeking things. Well, why is he doing that? He has had no opportunity to grow in the middle of his salvation. He does not understand the walk of obedience, of discipleship. What does Paul tell us to do in Romans 12:2? He tells us to renew our minds.

Why do I have to renew my mind as a Christian? Because my mind thinks a certain way as an unsaved person, and just because I got saved does not mean my mind has been completely corrected. I have to constantly learn to think God's way, and it is a process. Simon has had no opportunity for that process, so that is why he is going to do some odd things here. It has nothing to do with the authenticity of his initial salvation. It has to do with his lack of opportunity to grow in the middle tense of his salvation.

1. Acts 8:9-11
Simon's Deception

- a) The deceiver (9)
- b) The deceived (10)
- c) The deception (11)



As you go into Acts 8:9-11, you have a description of Simon pre-conversion. What was this guy doing exactly in Samaria, Acts 8:9-11? We have the deceiver, Simon, Acts 8:9; the deceived, the Samaritans, the type of deception that the Samaritans were under before the truth of the gospel penetrated Samaria, Acts 8:10; then you have the deception that Simon was using on the population of Samaria, Acts 8:11.

First of all, notice the deceiver, Acts 8:9. Acts 8:9 says,

"Now there was a man named Simon [this is in Samaria], who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;" (Acts 8:9).

That is a description of pre-converted Simon, pre-Christian Simon, performing miracles to the point that the whole city of Samaria was in a state of deception. Question: How does a man who does not know God at all perform miracles? We have been trying to cover a lot of this in 2 Thessalonians concerning the coming of the Antichrist, which we have been covering in Sunday School—the Antichrist coming with signs and wonders.

How can the Antichrist come with signs and wonders when he does not even know God? How can Simon the sorcerer perform signs and wonders when he does not know Jesus? The answer is that God is not the only miracle worker in the universe. Satan

performs miracles too. Satan cannot perform miracles on an equal level to God because Satan is a created being. God is the Creator. No one does miracles greater than God.

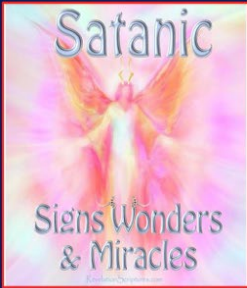
But having said that, Satan can put on a pretty good show. To us, as we look at satanic miracles, it is as if they are coming from God because they are real miracles. It is just that from our vantage point, we do not understand that they are not as powerful as God's miracles.



Satanic/Demonic Miracles



1. Exod. 7–8
2. Deut. 13:1-3
3. Job 1:12-19; 2:7-8
4. 1 Sam. 28?
5. Matt. 7:21-23; 24:24
6. Luke 4:5
7. Acts 8:9; 16:16
8. Gal. 1:6-9
9. 2 Thess. 2:9
10. Rev. 13:3, 13, 15; 16:13-14



In our 2 Thessalonians teaching, I have shown this chart or list a number of times. We will not walk through all of these verses. We have in Sunday School. But it is a list that shows you every single miracle that I know of in the Bible that God has nothing to do with.

Does God perform miracles? Of course He does. But what about all of these other miracles taking place that God is not responsible for? Where do those miracles come from? The very first entry there, Pharaoh's magicians,—how are they able to imitate, for the first couple of plagues, exactly what Moses and Aaron were doing, when Pharaoh's magicians had no connection to God at all?

Well, they were obviously dialed into occult powers. So these occult satanic powers are real, and this is what Simon was dialed into. This is how he had these magical arts abilities. In fact, the name for "sorcery" here is where we get Simon's second name that he is commonly known by: "Simon Magus." "Magus" comes from the Greek word that is used here to describe Simon's satanic powers.

So, you do not legitimize something based on an experience. You do not say, "I had an experience, therefore it is of God." A lot of people think that way—truth is determined by an experience. That should be far from your thinking, because you know enough of the Bible to understand that the devil can give all kinds of experiences as well. Truth is never determined by an experience. Truth is always determined by whether the experience and the teaching and lifestyle of the miracle worker line up with God's Word?

God cannot lie. He cannot say something one day and something different another day. It is, the Scripture says, impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). So that becomes the barometer, or the standard, that we use to determine if something is of God or not. Now, most of the Christian world does not think that way. They are just looking for an experience. "If I had an experience—if I had a dream—if I had a vision—it must be of God."

But if you are astute in biblical truth—which you guys are, or you would not be here—you never determine truth by an experience. You just say about the experience, "Well, that is very interesting, but does the doctrine and the content of the character of the miracle worker align with what God has already said?" Now, if that happens, then maybe I am open to it being true. But a miracle in and of itself means absolutely nothing in terms of ascertaining what is true and what is not.

Here it is very obvious that Simon is not of God even though he is performing miracles, because as you look at the rest of Acts 8:9, it says,

"...in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, [Now, does this sound Christ-like to you?] claiming to be someone great;" (Acts 8:9).

Does someone who is walking by the power of the Holy Spirit walk around and claim to be someone great? No, because the Holy Spirit produces humility in people. That is not the power of the Spirit as much as it is the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [Does Simon sound gentle here, claiming to be someone great?] self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

So obviously you look at Simon and you see these miracles and you say, "Those are interesting miracles. They do not prove truth. Let's look at your teaching and your character. Obviously, Simon, you are not of God, because your character is the exact opposite of what the Holy Spirit produces. He produces humility in people."

In fact, what did Jesus Christ do? Did He come into the world claiming to be someone great? The opposite is true, right?

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Philippians 2:7 says of Jesus,

"but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7).

I do not know about you, but in all of these paintings of Jesus, where He looks like a male model, he looks like Fabio. I do not mean to disappoint any of the ladies out there, but I think he was probably just an average-looking guy. There is actually language in Isaiah 52 and 53 indicating that he was just a run-of-the-mill guy. He is the Creator of

the universe, but He did not come into the world and make Himself something great. In fact, this is the guy who surrendered His own life on a cross, one of the most—if not the most—humiliating ways to die.

So Simon is performing miracles, but he is clearly not Christ-like. Christ did not come into the world announcing Himself as someone great. But Simon wants everybody to follow him because of this miracle-working power that he has. This is what it means to test the spirits. First John 4:1 says,

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets [like Simon the sorcerer, for example] have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Simon is a tremendous deceiver in Samaria, and his deception that he is unearthing here is so powerful that he is deceiving an entire city, Acts 8:10—

"...from the smallest to the greatest,..." (Acts 8:10).

So we will pick it up next time here with Acts 8:10, seeing how the Lord actually took this man, Simon the sorcerer, and brought him to faith. Even though this man, Simon the sorcerer, as a Christian, is going to do some weird things, it is not attributable to the fact that he was never saved, as I will show you. It is attributable to the fact that he has had zero time for growth and mental renewal.

This will move into the rest of Philip's ministry in Samaria, and then midway through Acts 8, he is going to be told to leave Samaria and move into Judea, because the Holy Spirit knows someone is coming down the road named the Ethiopian eunuch. The Ethiopian eunuch's conversion will take place, and that is how the gospel will initially make it into Ethiopia.