

Acts 8:5-17

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Acts 8:5-8. Philip proclaimed to them the Christ

5. Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6. The multitudes listened with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the signs which he did. 7. For unclean spirits came out of many of those who had them. They came out, crying with a loud voice. Many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. 8. There was great joy in that city.

5. “Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ”

There are two Philips in the New Testament:

- The first is Philip the Apostle, who was commissioned as an apostle in Matthew 10:3 (See also Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14). John (1:43-48; 6:5-7; 12:21-22; 14:8-9)—and Acts (1:13).
- The second is Philip the Evangelist (we have been referring to him as the Deacon), who was one of the seven men chosen to take care of certain administrative tasks (Acts 6:1-6). He is called Philip the Evangelist in Acts 21:8. The Philip in today’s discussion is Philip the Evangelist.

What do you know about Samaria?

6. “The multitudes listened with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the signs which he did”

The multitudes receive Philip enthusiastically. And they listened “with one accord to his preaching and observing the signs that he performed.

What is a sign? A sign is something that points to a reality beyond itself. In both Old and New Testaments, “signs” or “signs and wonders” crack open heaven just a bit to give earth-bound people a glimpse of Godly truths. That’s what happened when Philip preached, exorcized demons, and healed.

We most often refer to them as Miracles.

7. “For unclean spirits came out of many of those who had them. They came out, crying with a loud voice. Many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed”

These are the signs that Philip worked. They break down into two categories: First, the exorcism of unclean spirits and second, the healing of people who had been paralyzed or lame. These signs served two purposes:

- First, they helped the individuals who were healed or from whom unclean spirits were exorcized.
- But most important, they got people’s attention and confirmed that Philip was working by the power of God. These were miracles with an evangelistic purpose.

8. “There was great joy in that city”

Of course, there was great joy! It had been a great day! People had gotten together in a large crowd, and had seen signs and wonders. Marginal people had been transformed so that they were no longer marginal. That in itself would have occasioned great joy.

But there was something else going on here too—something even more important. Philip had proclaimed Christ to them (v. 5).

Acts 8:9-13. Simon the Sorcerer

I chose to not exegete this scripture, but I rather like the story. So here is the scripture for review and general discussion.

9. But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who used to practice sorcery in the city, and amazed the people of Samaria, making himself out to be some great one, 10. to whom they all listened, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is that great power of God.” 11. They listened to him, because for a long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. 12. But when they believed Philip preaching good news concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13. Simon himself also believed. Being baptized, he continued with Philip. Seeing signs and great miracles occurring, he was amazed.

These verses tell the story of Simon the sorcerer, a man with a reputation for great power. However, when Philip preached the Good News, the people believed and were baptized, and Simon the sorcerer also believed and was baptized.

“Seeing signs and great miracles occurring, (Simon) was amazed.” The point is that Simon was a man who was accustomed to wielding great power, but who came to see in the ministry of Philip even greater power at work.

Acts 8:14. The apostles at Jerusalem sent Peter and John

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

14. “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them”

The Jerusalem church is the mother church, and the apostles constitute its key leadership. Luke doesn’t specify the motive for sending Peter and John to Samaria, but I think there are at least three possible motives:

- First, they would want to verify that the new believers in Samaria were well-grounded in the faith.
- Second, they would want to render assistance, to the extent that assistance might be needed.
- Third, they would want to demonstrate their acceptance of the Samaritan believers as fellow-members of the church.

Will one of you please read Luke 9:52-54. Boanerges

8:15-16. Peter and John prayed for them

15. who, when they had come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit; 16. for as yet he had fallen on none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of Christ Jesus.

15. “who, when they had come down, prayed for them”

We don’t know why these believers have not yet received the Holy Spirit.

Nothing appears wrong with Philip’s evangelism or that the Samaritans’ belief is defective. They have been “baptized in the name of Lord Jesus”

Everything seems to be in order—with the exception that they have not received the Holy Spirit in spite of doing everything right.

16. “for as yet he had fallen on none of them.”

We have nothing written to tell why they have not received the Holy Spirit.

It seems to me that it’s possible the apostles are looking for a confirming sign. If Mrs. Harris was here she would say they weren’t speaking in tongues.

But it also seems possible that God withheld the Spirit to give these apostles from Jerusalem an opportunity to bring their personal ministry to bear upon these Samaritans.

16b. “They had only been baptized in the name of Christ Jesus”

In that culture, people considered a person’s name to be more than a simple label to identify that person. They believed that something of the person’s identity was tied up in the name. The name expressed something of the person’s identity. They also assumed that a name possessed something of the power of the one who wore that name.

Acts 8:17. And they received the Holy Spirit

17. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

17a. “Then they laid their hands on them”

The Jewish people practiced the laying on of hands as a way of conveying authority or power.

In the Old Testament, Moses laid hands on Joshua to commission him (Numbers 27:18-23). In the New Testament, the apostles laid hands on people to heal them (Matthew 9:18; Acts 28:8), to impart the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6), and to ordain them for a particular work (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 2 Timothy 1:6).

In this instance, the laying on of hands has another very special connotation. It demonstrates that these apostles from Jerusalem regard these Samaritan believers as worthy of spiritual gifts.

17b. “and they received the Holy Spirit”

We aren't told how people knew that they had received the Holy Spirit, but it must have had a visible manifestation such as speaking in tongues. Simon, the magician, was sufficiently impressed that he offered the apostles money if they would give him the power to convey the Holy Spirit through the laying on of his hands—an offer that the apostles rejected soundly (8:18-24).