

THE ONCE AND FUTURE CHURCH

#10: Great Joy in the City

April 8-10, 2006

⁴Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. ⁵Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. ⁶When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was great joy in that city. ⁹Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, ¹⁰and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” ¹¹They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. ¹²But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. ¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. ¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money ¹⁹and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” ²⁰Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.” ²⁴Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.” ²⁵After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Acts 8:4-25 TNIV

Introduction: As we began our study of Acts Jesus’ ascension to the right hand of Christ and command that his followers “be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,” so we complete our journey with the birth of the missionary movement.

- I. The First Missionaries
 - A. God used persecution to interrupt the complacency of the church in Jerusalem and scatter believers to preach.
 - B. Among these first missionaries was Philip, who effectively evangelized Samaria through signs and teaching.
 - C. There was great joy in the city!
- II. The First Missionary Enterprise
 - A. Simon the sorcerer is presented as the first significant person outside of Jerusalem to hear the Gospel and believe.
 - B. Philip confronted Simon, and God used Simon’s fame to attract persons “both high and low” to the Gospel message.
 - C. Though they followed Philip and were baptized, those attracted by him did not understand the need of personal relationship with Christ and inner transformation.
 1. The Bible indicates that the people were attracted to Philip’s works, just as they had been to Simon’s.
 2. The Bible indicates that the people believed Philip, but not that they believed in Jesus Christ.
 3. Simon and all of the others followed Philip everywhere because they were astonished by his miracles.
 4. The people were baptized “into the name of Jesus,” but not into relationship with the risen Lord.
- III. The First Missionary Conversions
 - A. The Apostles apparently heard that people were being attracted but not transformed, so they set out to show them how to follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance.
 - B. Simon demonstrated the failure of the people to understand when he tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - C. The Apostles’ taught Simon and the others that repentance was the only way to salvation in Jesus Christ and charged him to turn away from his bitterness and sin.
 - D. The church was planted in Samaria and the Gospel proclaimed in other villages, and the Peter and John returned to Jerusalem.
- IV. The First Missionary Lessons
 - A. God uses persecution to break our complacency and send us to the ends of the earth.
 - B. We must ensure that our witness leads people to become related with Jesus Christ rather than impressed with us.
 - C. There are no shortcuts to salvation, only repentance will do.
 - D. Apart from inner transformation by the Holy Spirit, belief and baptism mean nothing.

Conclusion: In God’s sovereignty, He acts to bring persons into right relationship with Him by sending us “to the ends of the earth.”