

Lesson 6 – Simon and the Eunuch

Text: Acts 8

Main Characters: God, Philip, Simon, Peter, an Ethiopian eunuch

Key Passages:

- Acts 8:4 – The persecution of the church had the opposite of the intended effect; Christ was preached.
- Acts 8:22 – Peter instructed Simon to pray to God for forgiveness of his sin.

Main Storyline:

The stoning of Stephen marked the beginning of great persecution against the early church at Jerusalem. As a result of the persecution, the disciples were scattered throughout the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria. The persecution did not stop the spread of the Gospel; in fact, those who were scattered went all throughout the area preaching about Christ, quickly spreading the news of Jesus.

One of those scattered, Philip, went to the city of Samaria to preach about Jesus. (This Philip was not the apostle, but one of the seven chosen in Acts 7; recall that the apostles remained in Jerusalem according to Acts 8:1.) The people there were amazed by the miracles that Philip performed, and they listened and obeyed what Philip was teaching. The city was overwhelmingly glad to receive the good news of Christ.

There was one man there, Simon, who had previously practiced sorcery in the city (essentially magic tricks). He regularly performed this sorcery for the people in order to convince them that he was someone. Simon was very successful with this; all of the people were saying, “This man is the great power of God.” However, when Philip began to preach, many people believed in Christ and were baptized. In fact, Simon also was baptized and began to follow Philip; he was amazed by the (true) miracles that he had been performing.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard about the obedience in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to the city. The apostles prayed that some of the disciples might receive the Holy Spirit. Then the apostles laid their hands on some of them, and those disciples received the Holy Spirit (just as Philip had in Acts 6).

When Simon recognized what was happening, he offered Peter money in exchange for the power to bestow the Holy Spirit upon others (as the apostles could). Based on the dialogue which followed, it appears that Simon did not have pure motives in his request; perhaps he was looking to regain the attention of the people. Peter rebuked Simon for his request, specifically because Simon’s heart was not right with God. Peter instructed Simon that he needed to repent of his wickedness and pray to God to ask for forgiveness. Simon was penitent, and he asked Peter to also pray to God that he would not be punished for his actions.

When the apostles finished preaching in the city, they returned to Jerusalem; they also preached the Gospel to many others along the way. An angel of the Lord instructed Philip to leave the city and follow the road from Jerusalem to Gaza (southward through the desert). Philip obeyed the angel and went on his way.

Along the way, he saw a high-ranking Ethiopian eunuch (official of the queen) on the same road. The eunuch had come to Jerusalem to worship and was on his way back to Ethiopia (going southward, just as Philip). The eunuch was reading the book of Isaiah in his chariot when Philip saw him. The Holy Spirit instructed Philip to catch up to the chariot. Philip ran up to the chariot and asked the eunuch if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch remarked that he could not understand unless someone would teach him to understand. The eunuch asked about a specific part of Isaiah 53 (a prophecy about Jesus’ death). Philip, starting from that passage, preached Jesus to the eunuch. As they were going down the road, they saw some water, and the eunuch asked to be baptized. The eunuch stopped the chariot, and Philip baptized the eunuch. When they came out of the water, Philip was carried away to Azotus by the Spirit. Philip continued preaching through all of the cities until he came to Caesarea (northward along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea).

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Only the apostles had the ability to pass on the power of the Holy Spirit to others.
- 2.) If one has already been baptized, in order to be forgiven of one’s sins, he must repent and pray to God.
- 3.) God is able to make a way for people who are seeking to obey to learn how to obey (Matthew 7:7-8).