

ACTS 8:9-17

Introduction:

Stephen has been martyred and the kingdom offer has been stalled - put on **hold**. Saul of Tarsus is making havoc of the Messianic Church. The persecution is so terrible that the Jewish believers **flee** from Jerusalem for their lives. Only the 12 apostles remain steadfast (1:8) in Jerusalem. Philip is being used by God to minister to the half-breed Jews in Samaria.

Note: Don't forget, at this time, their message was still in "Time Past", still the same kingdom message of Messiah. Paul and the Dispensation of the Gospel of Grace (Acts 20:24) had not arrived on the scene as **yet**.

A. Satan Counter Attacks

Acts 8:9-11 - But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: Acts 8:10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. Acts 8:11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

1. Now we learn the setting, or atmosphere, of **apostate** Samaria. They had been led by demonic forces, led by a man named Simon. Simon, through demonic forces and magic, had done many miracles and that caused the Samaritans (from the least to the greatest) to **yield** to his control.

*Before Philip's arrival, Simon had bewitched the people. "Bewitched" has the idea that he removed their senses-**discernment**-rationale in order to accept him as someone who was **great**.

2. Simon's magic was a mixture of science, superstition, astrology, divination, and occultic practices. His feats could have been magic, trickery and **demonic**.
 - a. *The people were so impressed with Simon that they believed he had **deity** power! In truth, Satan was getting ready to use Simon to spread false doctrine within the Kingdom Church. Like many charlatan magicians of his day, Satan **fooled** him into believing he possessed powers.
 - b. Lesson: We are to never sell Satan short. Oftentimes when one performs a seeming miracle, it isn't a gimmick - but **Satan's** power.

B. God Super Abounds

1. Simon's power could not stop God's power from working. Philip's message was received by the

Acts 8:12 - But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Samaritans and a **move** of God began to happen.

2. [kingdom of God] [name of Jesus Christ] Philip's message was about Israel's crucifixion and rejection of Israel's Messiah. However, the One Israel had murdered had risen and was alive! If they, **individually**, would repent from their **national** sin and believe Jesus was indeed the Christ-Messiah, they would not be under God's judicial judgment of the nation. They would be allowed to be in a living covenant of Abraham. If they would do right, they would be blessed. But, if they did wrong, they would be cursed.

*Remember, the **Law** also was a vital part of their daily living and relationship with God.

- a. Acts 15:1, 5-6 - And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. Acts 15:5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses. Acts 15:6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.
 - b. Acts 21:19-21 - And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. Acts 21:20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: Acts 21:21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.
3. The Samaritans, after receiving and believing Philip's kingdom gospel, repented and were baptized. That follows the **Jewish** message of Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38.

Note: There is still no mention of Christ's D.B.R. **for** man's sins!

C. Simon's False Profession

Acts 8:13 - Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

1. As more people believed Philip's message, Simon saw that if he could do what Philip did - oh the **money** he could make. But also, Simon saw his own popularity **declining** and his followers began to dwindle. Filled with pride, he had to do something to maintain his control.

*Simon's focus wasn't the message - but he longed for the **signs**, wonders, and miracles. Simon knew Philip had something greater than his own magic tricks and demon-assisted miracles.
2. Simon goes through the **outward motions** of faith (baptism) in order to get closer, so he could find out how he could get Philip's miraculous power.

*We would call Simon's faith only an **intellectual** faith. It certainly was **not** a saving faith in the Jewish sense (James 2:24). He acknowledged the facts going on.

Example: John 2:23-25 - Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. John 2:24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, John 2:25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

3. So it was with Simon. Outwardly, he seemed like the rest and joined in their actions. But, Simon had not trusted in Jesus Christ Messiah within his **heart**. He only had given mental assent, being convinced of Philip's claims and power.

James 2:19 - Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

*This is not saving faith. Saving faith is one's heart trusting:

Acts 8:37- And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Acts 16:14 - And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Romans 10:9-10 - That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Rom. 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

4. Lesson: Today there are untold multitudes who say they believe the Bible is the Word of God. They even intellectually believe Christ died for them, but they are not saved. That is because they have not believed, truly trusted Christ in their heart (soul - inner man).

5. Simon viewed salvation as a purely ritualistic outward matter, a professional interest in finding out Philip's amazing power!

* Baker: According to writers such as: Justin Martyr, Jerome, Irenaeus, Epiphan, and Hippolytus,

* Simon Magnus with drew from early Christianity and initiated a movement of his own which was a

* mixture of Christianity and pagan gnostic ideas. According to Jerome, Simon made this claim

for

* himself: "I am the Word of God, I am the Comforter, I am Almighty, I am all there is of God."

A Rabbit Chase

D. Simon Magnus

1. The R.C.C. says Peter went to Rome and served as head of the church from A.D. 42-64.

Answer:

a. Paul was saved around A.D. 36-37. In Galatians 1, Paul says that after 3 years he went up to see Peter in Jerusalem - making it about A.D. 40. Later Peter was arrested under Herod Agrippa's reign. Herod died in the 4th year of the reign of Claudius. This was late A.D. 45 and Peter was still in Jerusalem. Now, there is a 3-year discrepancy with Rome's tradition. The R.C.C. says Peter was supposed to have already been in Rome for 3 years.

b. In Galatians 2, Paul says 14 years after his first visit to Peter, he went to Jerusalem again to see Peter (Gal. 1:17-18, 2:1). That brings us up to A.D. 54!

c. In A.D. 58, Paul wrote the book of Romans. Paul greets 27 people by name and there is no mention of Peter. That would be unthinkable if Peter were the head of the church at Rome, serving as the first pope. Peter was not at Rome, but in Babylon!

d. Romans 15:20 - Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

*If Paul were going to Rome, he would be building upon Peter's foundation - IF Peter Had Been There!

e. Remember Galatians 2:7, 9 - But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; Gal. 2:9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

*Paul would go to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. Wasn't Rome the **Gentile** headquarters of the known world? Peter would have no cause to go there. But, Paul would have every reason to go there to fulfill the commission given to him.

2. So the question is - **who** then did go to Rome?

- a. I believe it was none other than Simon Magnus of Acts 8:9-11. He was known as Simon the Great One. Some historians contend that it was this same Simon who went to Rome and became **famous**, even surpassing the popularity he enjoyed in Samaria.
- b. Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165) spoke of this Simon of Samaria.

".....After Christ's ascension into heaven the devils put forward certain men who said that they themselves were God: AND THEY WERE NOT ONLY NOT PERSECUTED BY YOU, (i.e. the Christians), but (you) even deemed them worthy of honors. There was a Samaritan, Simon... who in the reign of Claudius Caesar (approximately 42-45 A.D.), and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty works of magic, by virtue of the art of the devil's operating in him. He was considered a "god", and as a god was honored by you with a statue, which statue was erected on the Tiber River, between the two bridges and bore this inscription, in the language of Rome; "SIMONI DEO SANCTO" - "To Simon, the Holy God." (The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Encyclopedia Britannica Press, 1950, Volume 1, 1st Apology of Justin, Chapter 26, Pg. 171).

Note: This could **never** be Peter: Acts 10:25-26 - And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. Acts 10:26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

- c. Rome was always a polytheistic culture. Simon Magnus had deceived the Samaritans with his demonic powers. A growing number of historians contend it was Simon Magnus who was the one who went to Rome and established a **pagan** version of Christianity in first century Rome.

*Note: *The Story of the Christian Church* by Jesse Hurlbut said:

"...of all the periods in the church's history, it, (i.e., the first century after Paul's death) is the one about which we know the least...FOR FIFTY YEARS AFTER ST. PAUL'S LIFE A CURTAIN HANGS OVER THE CHURCH THROUGH WHICH WE STRIVE VAINLY TO LOOK, and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D., with the writings of the church fathers, WE FIND A CHURCH, IN MANY ASPECTS, VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT IN THE DAYS OF... ST. PAUL."

Now there is a **brief interruption in Simon's story here in Acts 8.

E. The Apostles Setting the Record Straight

1. These verses are important to Israel. Because of Philip's preaching, there were a number of Samari-

Acts 8:14-17 - Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Acts 8:15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: Acts 8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Acts 8:17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

tans who believed in the **King**dom Gospel.

*But remember the **rift** between the 10 Northern Tribes and the 2 Southern Tribes? The N. Kingdom had interracial marriages. So the Samaritans of the North were considered half-Jew and half-Gentile, or half-**breeds**. The Samaritans were considered **outcasts** and the full Jews avoided them when they could.

2. But the real problem of this schism was that Samaria had been made the capital center of worship on Mt. Gerizim. They had **apostatized**. However, **God** had made Jerusalem (in Judah - the S. Tribe) the center of Israel's worship.
3. The Samaritans here in Acts 8 must **renounce** all this and recognize Jerusalem as the true seat of authority. Also, Jerusalem would be where Christ would reign and the 12 apostles sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28).
4. Jerusalem (not Mt. Gerizim) will be the **headquarters** of God dealing with Israel. For this to happen, Samaria (10 N. Tribes) must **repent** and be healed before Christ can reign. Israel's 10 N. Tribes and 2 S. Tribes must be **united** (Ezekiel 37:15-19).

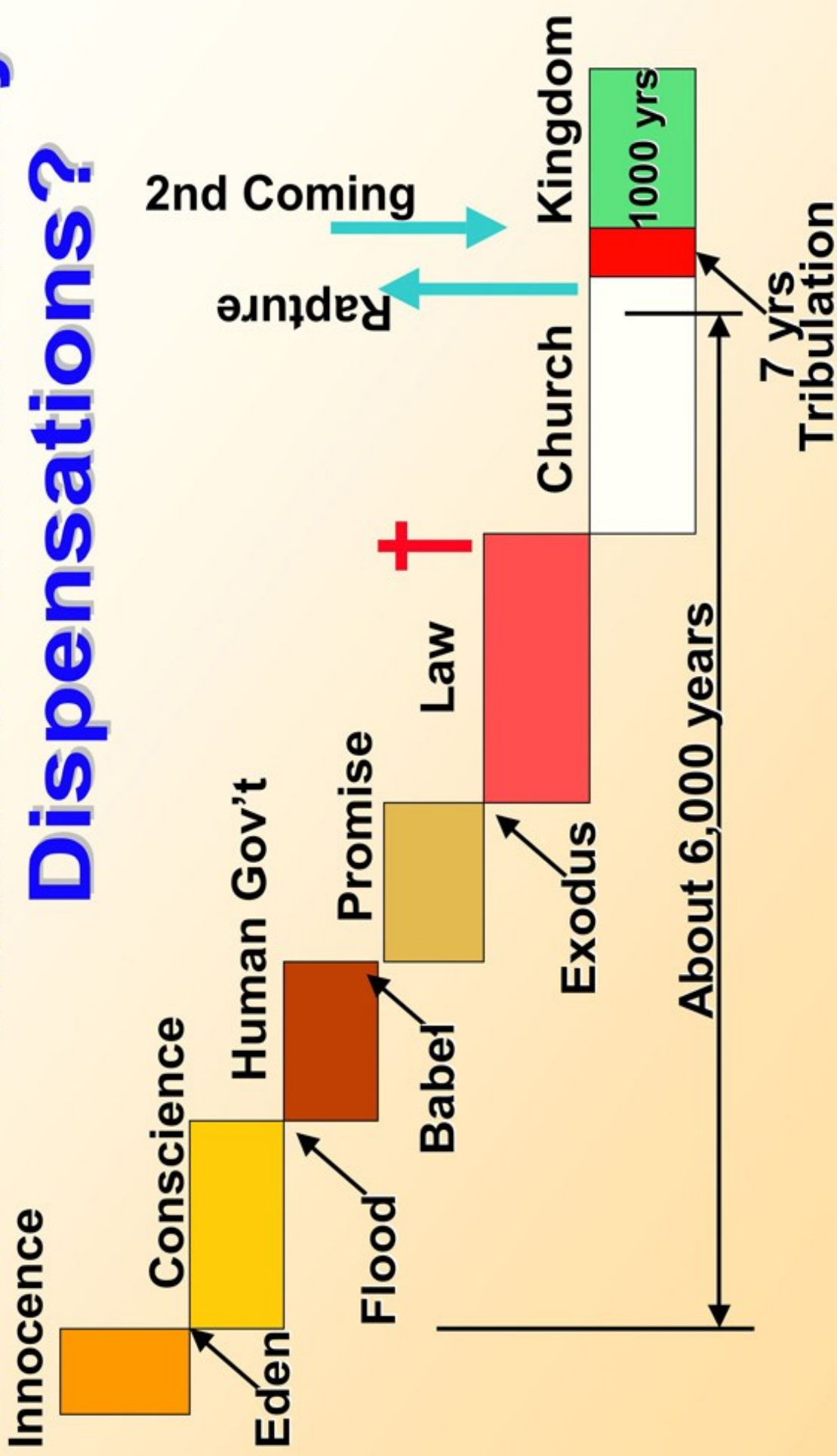
Ezekiel 37:19 - Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

5. Because of all of this, the Samaritans, after believing Philip's message did **not** receive the Holy Spirit **until** apostolic representatives from Jerusalem came and demonstrated their divine office.

Note: When Peter and John laid hands on these believing Samaritans, they received the Holy Spirit. This testified that Jerusalem is where to worship, **God's** place, and not Samaria.

*Also, Peter and John were under apostolic authority. The fact that the Holy Spirit had been with **held** demonstrated to the Samaritans that they could not have **any** spiritual life and power without God's appointed authorities: Jerusalem and the Apostles' ministry.

What do we mean by Dispensations?



SEVEN ADMINISTRATIONS