

“There was a man named Simon...”

Acts 8:9-24

Introduction

Satan continues his relentless campaign to destroy the newborn Church of Jesus Christ: *Counterfeits The Parable of the Weeds* (Matthew 13:24-30; 37-43).

1. Counterfeits showed up with John the Baptist: Matthew 3:7-8
2. Counterfeits came around during Jesus’ ministry: Matthew 23:15, 33
3. Counterfeits vexed Paul during his ministry: Acts 13:6-12; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4

I. Simon the ‘Great’ – Sorcerer & Deceiver (vv9-11)

What preexisting conditions predispose a society to superstition and idolatry?

1. Absence/Rejection of God
2. Desperation
3. Loss of faith in God
4. Uncertainty/Disunity
5. Heightened regard/reverence for and reliance upon (i.e., *faith in*) science

“Simon” was a Samaritan. He was a sorcerer who was considered by many as a type of deity.

“the power of God that is called great.”

“Magus” singular from the Latin ‘magi’ (cf. Mt. 2), Zoroastrian priests.

A major trait of the Hellenistic world was *syncretism*.

Simoni Deo Sancto, ‘to Simon the Holy God.’

“simony,” paying for a position or influence in the church.

This “magic” of Simon’s was no sleight of hand side show similar to something you might see in Las Vegas.

This type of black magic is forbidden by God (Deut. 18:10-14).

Simon’s abilities were originated and energized by Satan.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; (cp. Isaiah 14:12-15)

II. Philip – Gospel Preacher & Baptizer (vv12-13)

Philip was a faithful Gospel preacher.

1. He preached “the word” (v4), he “proclaimed to them the Christ” (v5), and “he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (v12).

2. Philip's preaching was validated by God with miracles that included healings and exorcisms (v7).
3. The genuine faith of the Samaritans under Philip's preaching was confirmed when Peter and John show up and the Holy Spirit comes upon them (vv14-17).

The Samaritans received the gospel and are being baptized by a Jew! (cf. Eph. 2:11-22)

Did Philip miss something?

No. Simon did.

Simon was obsessed with the idea of power.

"When the miraculous assumes priority, it can actually become a hindrance to faith" (Polhill).

Miracles are for verification. They are a means to a vital end—*conversion*—not an end in themselves.

True conversion is permanent – eternal. Miracles are temporary. They eventually fade away.

When heart and soul are won by and for Christ, it is His victory, and He establishes permanency.

The call to all sinners "Repent and be baptized" and receive forgiveness and the remission of sin.

"he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." 2 Corinthians 5:15

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Romans 6:3-4

III. Peter & John – Apostles & Faith Verifiers (vv14-17)

The apostles are sent by God during this transitional time to verify professions of faith as the gospel expands from Jerusalem to Judea, and Samaria, and on to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8).

God sent the apostles to verify the conversions of the Samaritans with the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in speaking in tongues.

This pattern of apostolic verification of faith is normative for this transitional period in Acts.

Acts 2:38-39; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 19:1-6

Baptism in the Triune God, which includes the Holy Spirit, is necessary for true conversion to take place.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19

IV. Simon the Shrewd – Power Broker (vv18-20)

V. Peter – Truth Teller (vv21-24)

Simon's conviction is one-dimensional and self-serving.

He shows no sense of conviction for his sin: his pride, arrogance, making market of his religion.

All he cared about and requested prayer for was the negative consequences of his sin! Not the sin itself.

“If your faith is not a living power, leading to love and self-surrender, it is really naught” (Maclaren, 245).

May we forever remember that the treasury of God's blessing stored for us in Christ Jesus, is attained only by humbly acknowledging our sin and placing our faith in Jesus alone for the hope of salvation.