

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 17:5-24

Confession of Sin: 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

Sermon: Religious Confusion part 3 Acts 8:14-17

Benediction: Romans 15:13

INTRODUCTION

In this present series of studies on Religious Confusion, we first went back to John chapter 4, to see the Samaritan woman at the well, talking to the Lord Jesus. We saw her several points of religious confusion; last week, we studied here in Acts chapter 8, and saw the one main point of religious confusion among these Samaritans---that they were believing a false teacher, a mere magician. In both cases, the coming of the good news about Jesus Christ dispelled the religious confusion and set the people to worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

Today, to finish this series of studies, we are taking a different perspective on religious confusion. Instead of looking at the religious confusion of the Samaritans shown here in Acts chapter 8, we are going to look at the religious confusion in our time caused by wrong interpretation this chapter. Something happened when the gospel was preached in Samaria that is a beautiful display of God's grace, but it has been wrongly interpreted in at least two ways, producing at least two confusing false practices in the churches. Today let us have any confusion in our minds over these ideas cleared up by the Word of God, and our hearts moved to worship Him.

Read the text: Acts 8:14-17

A moment ago I mentioned two false, confusing religious practices that have grown out of wrong interpretation of this passage of scripture. I don't intend to explain these two errors in great detail, but in case you are not familiar with them, let me describe each very briefly.

The first of these two is the Roman Catholic practice of "confirmation."

-the bishop extends his hands and recites a prayer, and anoints the forehead of each person with oil by laying his hand on each, saying, "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit." By Confirmation, the baptized are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit [condensed from the Catholic Catechism].

The second is the Pentecostal/Charismatic practice of the "second blessing" or "baptism of the Holy Spirit."

-All believers should expect and seek baptism in the Holy Spirit, an experience distinct from the new birth, witnessed by the physical sign of speaking in other tongues. [condensed from Assemblies of God "Fundamental Truths"]

BODY

I. In the days of Moses and Joshua, and of the judges, and of the kings of Israel and Judah, the people had sinned against God terribly, repeatedly, over the course of many generations and centuries

-as a result, God had punished them

-most of Israel, the northern tribes, had been conquered and deported by Assyria, and mixed with foreigners, until Israel had become the mixed-race pagan nation of Samaria

-Judah, the southern-most tribe, had been conquered and deported by Babylon, but allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem and the surrounding territory of Judea; but they were subject to foreign rule---first by the Persians, then by the Greeks, then by the Romans.

-But God is full of grace; He favors those who have no good in them and deserve only His wrath; He loves those who are not lovely, and who do not love Him; He chooses those who have rejected Him; He saves those who deserve only destruction, and cannot save themselves

II. And so, through the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah and Daniel, God promised that in the future He would bless His people richly; that a Son of David would reign forever over a mighty, restored kingdom that would fill the whole earth;

-He promised that at that time He would pour out His Spirit on both men and women, both old and young, and even on servants, so that they would prophesy.

-He promised that the great kingdom would be based on a new covenant, made not only with Judah, but also with the rest of Israel

-He promised that the great kingdom would bless not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles

III. All of this was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ

-when He had died to atone for sins for sinners, then had risen from the dead

-He told His disciples to go preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name, in Jerusalem and Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth

-But He told them that before they did that, they were to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them

IV. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Jewish believers, then, on the day of Pentecost, showed all the Jews who had not yet believed that Jesus of Nazareth truly was the fulfillment of the promises of the great kingdom of God.

-see? The promise was that when the Kingdom of God came, God would pour out His Spirit on His people; since the Spirit was poured out on the disciples of Jesus at Pentecost, it must then be Jesus who is the great King, and the Kingdom of Heaven must be in Him!

-but since the Holy Spirit cannot be seen by human eyes, how could the Jews see that the Holy Spirit was in Jesus' disciples? How did He show Himself? by causing the believers in Christ to praise God, in languages they had not learned, which has come to be called, "speaking in tongues!"

-in this way it was proven to the Jews who had not yet believed that the Kingdom of Heaven was here, in this movement that followed Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ

-what amazing grace from God in heaven! The Jews, who had sinned against the Lord in so many ways for so many centuries, were granted forgiveness of sins and a place in the Kingdom of Heaven through Jesus Christ the Lord!

IV. But the New Covenant was not being made with Judah only; no, the Kingdom would include all Israel

-Jesus' command was not that His disciples stay forever in Jerusalem and Judea, but that they go preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in Samaria, also

-So it was that Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and the people believed and were baptized

-But they did not immediately have the Holy Spirit fall on them in power to speak in other tongues or prophesy or perform miraculous signs

-Instead, God caused this to happen when the Jewish apostles came down from Jerusalem, prayed for them, and laid their hands on them

-When they did, the Holy Spirit came down upon the Samaritans in such a way that those watching could see it happening

-So, the Jews---Philip, Peter, John, and any others present, could see that the Holy Spirit of God

had descended upon the Samaritans; they, too were part of the Kingdom of God; they, too, had received forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ!

-So, also, the Samaritans, who had separated from the religion and kingdom of the Jews a thousand years before, were re-united to the house of David; they were shown that the authority of Jesus Christ was vested in these Jewish apostles;

-This is the amazing significance of what happened there in Samaria in those days, as recorded in Acts chapter 8---that God, by His grace, granted salvation to all Israel, even the Samaritans!

-Here is where the Roman Catholic Church and the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have gone wrong; they don't see this event for what it was---as a one-time sign to the Jews that the Samaritans had received the Kingdom of God. Instead they think it a phenomenon that all Christians in all places and times should seek for themselves, and expect to happen to them.

V. When we come to Acts chapter 10, we will see how the process was completed when the Holy Spirit of God descended even on the gentiles in the household of Cornelius.

VI. Of course the question must arise---what, then, should we make of the Pentecostal/Charismatic church's belief in the "second blessing" or "baptism of the Holy Spirit" resulting in "speaking in tongues"?

-That is a false practice based on wrong interpretation of the scriptures

-Their version of speaking in tongues and prophecy are not manifestations of the Holy Spirit of God, but of something else. I do not know what all is going on inside the Pentecostal, who may truly love the Lord Jesus, but follows this false practices of speaking in tongues.

-Is it misguided imagination?

-Is it some influence of evil powers?

-I cannot examine

-But as for us, let us not be confused by their false religious experience; let us worship the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth, with the spirit and with the mind.

"receive the Holy Spirit"

"he had not yet fallen on any of them"

Instead of trying to give an exhaustive doctrine of the Holy Spirit at any one place where He is mentioned, we will learn something at every step, and so arrive at the end of our studies in Acts with a well-rounded understanding of His way of relating to the church.

Please recall that I taught you, when we were studying in Acts chapter 2, that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church.

The pentecostals' claim that they have experienced this is not any proof to us at all of its reality.

Peter needed help in this; God gave it to him in the form of a vision and instruction.

JRY:

This was going also to Samaria, which was the remainder of Israel, corrupted by centuries of pagan religion and intermarriage with the gentiles. Then it would go on to

the gentiles, who had no historic or ethnic connection to Israel at all.

Confusion:

Roman Catholic rite of confirmation

Pentecostal/Charismatic belief in the second blessing or baptism of the Holy Spirit