

**Ministry of The Holy Spirit**  
**Simon Magnus**  
**Acts 8:9-24**

Last time...Stephen's witness to the Sanhedrin sparked a great persecution against the Church in Jerusalem

Saul of Tarsus zealously mistreated the followers of Jesus Christ, trailing them to their homes and dragging them off to prison

But...in the hands of God, the persecution was the fuel that moved the Church to Step 2 of Acts 1:8; the Gospel went to Judea and Samaria

Philip the Evangelists was exceeding fruitful in the city of Samaria...and there was great joy in that city

This time...a man named Simon in the city of Samaria

This is the only passage of Scripture that mentions him, but much is written of him in early Church history and the Church is still "dealing" with his doctrine to this day

In Acts 6...

First: an attack on the Church from within...murmuring

Then: an attack on the Church from without...Jews from outside Jerusalem

In Acts 8...

First: an attack on the Church from without...Saul and persecution

Then: an attack on the Church from within...Simon Magnus

v9-11 Simon...sorcery...some great one:

But...v5-8

In the city of Samaria, with a long history of idolatry, lives this man Simon  
He has been astounding the citizens of Samaria with sorcery/magic...

- creating illusions with sleight of hand and deceptive devices
- interacting with the spiritual realm with incantations and conjuring
- a tool of Satan

Simon also told the people of Samaria that he was a great one,  
an elite in spiritual matters

Perhaps he told them something far more heretical...

And all the people of Samaria

- believed Simon
- gave him their attention
- gave him praises..."He is the great power of God!" (Wow!!!)  
(can be interpreted: "He is the God of great power.")

By his skill in deception and the powers of darkness, Simon had great influence  
and power over the people  
And undoubtedly a healthy revenue stream that comes with those things  
But all that changed when Philip the Evangelist came to town

v12 But when they believed Philip:  
Philip came as light (Matt 5:14-16) into the darkness

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Philip preached

1. the kingdom of God (Acts 1:1)
2. the name of Jesus Christ

And the people of Samaria were

- turned to the Living and true God from idols (1 Thes 1:9)
- delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God (Col 1:13)
- obedient – baptized (Matt 28:19, Matt 3:11a, Col 2:12, Rom 6:3-5)
- set free (John 8:31-32)

Suddenly, Simon is out of business

v13 Simon himself believed...baptized...continued...wondered:  
Simon was taken in by this new thing being done by Philip; he was also baptized

Q: Does baptism save?  
Hold that thought

And Simon shadowed Philip, watching and wondering with astonishment at the  
miraculous things Philip was doing

Who was doing?  
The Holy Spirit  
Philip was NOT telling the people he was some great one, as Simon had

v14-16 the apostles...receive the Holy Ghost:  
Word got back to Jerusalem that the Samaritans  
(of all people! Hated by the Jews but loved by God)  
had received/accepted/believed the Word of God (John 1:11-13).

Upon hearing this Good News, the apostles, remaining in Jerusalem to stand  
against the religious powers there, sent a delegation to further the work  
of God

Peter and John went to Samaria and prayed for the people to receive the Holy Spirit

Did not Philip? Could not Philip?

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts according to His will (1 Cor 12:8-11)

The Holy Spirit was “in” the people (John 14:17), sealing them as the people of God with the Holy Spirit, the earnest of their inheritance (Eph 1:13-14), but He (v16, a Person not The Force) had not yet come “upon” them (Acts 1:8, Luke 24:49)

Their baptism by Philip was in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sin (John the Baptist’s baptism of water),  
NOT the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Jesus’ baptism)

v17 hands on...Holy Ghost:

After praying for the people regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit,  
Peter and John laid hands on them  
And they received the Holy Spirit, just as they had received the Word of God (v14)...by faith

Luke 11:9-13

v18-19 Simon saw...offered them money:

Simon was observing/shadowing Philip.  
Then 2 others came to town, coming alongside Philip.  
So Simon was watching them also  
And when he saw what happened with Peter and John, he wanted that power too!

Simon reveals his heart –

he is NOT asking that the apostle’s hands be laid on him that he might receive the promise of the Father,  
he wants to buy something that will help him recover his business

Simon offered money

- worldly riches taken from the people of Samaria using sorcery/magic/deception to enrich himself

- an echo of Matt 4:8-9

to Peter and John in exchange for “this power”

- “ability”
- “privilege”
- “force”
- “mastery”

Simon had power and influence in Samaria but lost it when Philip came to town  
“This power” is exactly what Simon needed to get back that power and influence  
over the people...and their riches

From him we have the word “simony”  
“the making of profit on sacred things”

His motive is

- to be a great one again (v9), an elite in spiritual matters
- lust for worldly things – power, influence, money
- the praises of men
- “mastery” and glory for himself, not for God

v20-21 But Peter said:

Peter, filled with the Spirit, rebukes Simon with very strong language

Thy money (“silver”, “cash”) perish (perdition, ruin in GaHenna) with thee

Simon is on the road to eternal destruction, not on the road to eternal life

His heart is not right with God, it is corrupt

Matt 6:24

1 Tim 6:9-10 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a  
snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts,  
which drown men in destruction and perdition. For  
the love of money is the root of all evil: which  
while some coveted after, they have erred from the  
faith, and pierced themselves through with many  
sorrows

His mind is corrupt, thinking the gift of God/heavenly riches can be  
purchased with money/worldly riches

His faith is corrupt, still self-centered (“me”, “I”), his god is Mammon

With a corrupt heart and mind and an insincere faith, Simon has  
neither a share or a participation  
nor an inheritance

in the work God is doing among all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem

Simon is not saved, not born of the Spirit of God

His baptism did not save him, it only got him wet

A master of deception has deceived himself

He does not believe any differently than he did before Philip showed up

v22-23 Repent...For I perceive:

Peter tells Simon to

1. repent, to think and act differently, of his wickedness/depravity/evil
  - sorcery/magic/darkness
  - pride and self-glorification of being some great one, an elite in spiritual matters
  - worship of Mammon
  - lust for the “mastery” over men and for the praises of men
2. pray that God would forgive him for his wicked mind and heart

Peter has discerned the spirits

We are told to

- not covet the things of the world (Ex 20:17, Rom 7:7, Col 3:5)
- covet the very best spiritual gift of God (1 Cor 12:31a)

What is the very best spiritual gift in this situation?

Discernment of spirits (1 Cor 12:10)

Peter is given the very best spiritual gift and he discerns rightly, that Simon is

- poisoned with bitterness, a device of the devil (2 Cor 2:10-11)
- poisonous to these new believers (Heb 12:15)
- still bound with the chains of sin...not set free by grace thru faith

v24 Pray ye to the Lord for me:

Simon would not personally go to the Lord Jesus Christ,  
asking instead for someone to go for him

Simon is not personally humbling himself at the feet of Jesus

We MUST come personally to Jesus Christ to be forgiven of our sin and set free

The husband's faith does not help his wife

Wife's the husband

Parent's the child

Child's the parent

Did Peter pray for Simon?

Scripture does not say, but I doubt it

Has Simon godly sorrow that works repentance unto salvation or the sorrow of the world that works unto death (2 Cor 7:10-11)

Did Simon repent?

Matt 3:8, 10

Matt 7:15-21

Matt 12:33

We have the writings of the Church fathers to give us answers and understanding  
2 volumes of the 10 volume set *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, the writings of the early Church  
Fathers, before Constantine's Council of Nicea in 325 AD  
*Ancient Church Fathers, What the Disciples of the Apostles Taught*, the teachings of the  
eyewitnesses of the eyewitnesses and a summary of the 10 volume set

MUCH is written of Simon Magnus in their writings that shed light on this passage of Scripture  
but also of his enduring infection in the Body of Christ

Peter himself wrote Vol 7, page 452-453

Ignatius (a disciple of the Apostle John):

Simon Magnus was a “wicked offshoot of Satan’s, his firstborn son.”  
(of many heretics in the Church)

Justin Martyr (a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John and very  
familiar with Simon Magnus):

“I despised the wicked and deceitful doctrine of Simon”

Was told by Samaritans that they recognized Simon as the great power of God,  
Acts 14:12-like, where Paul healed a cripple and the townsfolk exclaimed,  
“The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!”  
and called Barnabas Jupiter and Paul Mercury

Writings from the *Earliest Heretics*:

Of these the first of all is Simon Magnus, who in the Book of Acts of the Apostles  
earned a just sentence from the Apostle Peter.

He had the hardihood to call himself the Supreme Virtue, that is, the Supreme  
God; and moreover to assert that the universe had been originated by his  
angels and that he had descended in quest of an erring demon named  
Wisdom (who ended up being a woman named Luna that he lusted for).

Simon:

Adept in sorceries...by the assistance of demons...attempted to deify  
himself.

But the man was a cheat, and full of folly, and the Apostles reproved him  
in the Acts.

Simon foolishly paraphrased the Law of Moses.

e.g. Deut 4:24.

Simon affirms that fire is the originating principle in the universe...  
God is a fire.

There is a two-fold nature to fire – secret and manifest.

The secret portion must be discerned by the intellect because it evades the  
senses...it cannot be discerned by an insufficient intellect.

Simon the Samaritan...of feigned faith, supposing that the apostles themselves performed their cures by a greater knowledge of magic and not by the power of God...He, then, not putting faith in God, set himself eagerly to contend against the apostles, in order that he himself might seem to be a wonderful being, and applied himself with still greater zeal to the study of magic that he might better overpower multitudes of men. This man, then, was glorified by many as if he were a (Roman) god; and he taught that it was himself who appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father, while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit.

This Simon, deceiving many in Samaria by his sorceries, was reproved by the apostles and was laid under a curse...

And journeying as far as Rome, he fell in (contended) with the Apostles. And to him Peter offered repeated opposition.

(Simon Magnus left for Rome at some point and Peter resolved to follow him to oppose him)...

he (Simon) stated that if, he were buried alive, he would rise the third day. And accordingly, having ordered a trench to be dug by his disciples, he directed himself to be interred there.

They, then, executed the injunction given; whereas he remained in that grave until this day, for he was not the Christ.

Clement (disciple of Apostles Peter, John, and Paul) in his memoirs, *Recognitions of Clement*, records the many confrontations with Simon Magnus by the Apostles Peter and Paul in Rome

Vol 8, pgs 479-484

Vol 8, pgs 96-117

#### Simon Magnus

- a native of Gitta, a village of Samaria
- left Samaria, travelled to Alexandria Egypt to study magic
- exceedingly well trained in Greek literature
- most vehement orator
- called himself The Standing One, a term from Egyptian Gnostics meaning a being from a higher plane of existence, one who cannot fall by any corruption, to lead humans to their true path of godhood
- railed against Peter in condescending ways
  - uneducated
  - poor fisherman
  - knave/servant
- the beginning of the demonic heresy called Gnosticism

### Gnosticism and the Church:

- an infection that afflicts the Body of Christ to this day
- the reason the Holy Spirit inspired 1 John (keyword: know), 2 John
- modern English translations of the Bible use the Alexandrian manuscripts; Alexandria and Rome being the centers of Gnosticism infection in the Church
- many heresies extinguished...but not all

### Some Gnostic heresies that remain in...are entrenched in...Christianity

- Sacraments i.e. perfect knowledge is attained by baptism, spiritual marriage, and last rites
- use of mantras to bring about an altered state of consciousness...  
the emptying of one's mind so God can enter in  
Contemplative Prayer in Christianity today thru the Desert Fathers (RCC mystics)
- After-death purging of sins before going to heaven, in a place later known as purgatory
- Transubstantiation
- Practice of celibacy by the elites, who alone have sufficient intellect to know the secrets of God
- Jews were to be destroyed, leading to Replacement Theology
- by Valentinus (100-160 AD), born in Upper Egypt, educated in Alexandria, founder of the Roman and Alexandrian schools of Gnosticism
  - Saving faith comes from your spirit if you are one of the chosen (born saved)
  - Others are not predestinated to be saved but are predestinated for hell
  - Some might be saved through works (Salvation by works)
  - Those predestinated to be salvation do not need to practice good works
  - (influencing the theology of Augustine, John Calvin and John Knox )

### Today, many people are deceived by

- Gnosticism – only the elite have sufficient intellect to know (*gnosis*, knowledge) the secrets of God, common folk do not and must get it from the elite
  - Spiritual pride
  - Arrogance
- RCC...roots in Gnosticism
  - Dark Ages when the Holy Roman Empire was the spiritual and civil lord over all
  - Simony reigned
  - The office of the Pope was sold to the highest bidder, staying in the hands of a few of the wealthiest families in Italy
- Calvinism...roots in Gnosticism

### Today, there is a great need for the discernment of spirits

Matt 24:4

1 John 4:1-3

Note: Read the 7 Letter to the 7 Churches with Gnosticism in mind as context



## **Application**

1. Do we desire God's power in our life?

Motive check!!!!

Motives counts and God knows our motives

Do we want to serve God or serve ourselves?

Ask the Lord to test our heart (Ps 139:23-24).

This requires submission, humility, and faith...all of which God desires of us

2. 1 Cor 12:11

One Body

Many parts

Each gifted by the Holy Spirit, according to His will

All serving the Head of the Body vs itself

Pray for the very best gift...needed right now

Broadly, in these days, discernment of spirits is needed

3. Preach

The Kingdom of God

The name of Jesus Christ