

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Acts: The Continuing Earthly Ministry Of Our Lord Jesus Christ
Part V: The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To Samaria
(Acts 8:4-25)

I. Introduction

- A. Because of today's Charismatic Movement, questions arise concerning passages in the Book of Acts where Christian leaders lay their hands on others that they might receive the Holy Spirit.
- B. The first such passage is found in Acts 8:14-17 where the Apostles laid hands on Samaritan new converts.
- C. However, we cannot conclude from this event that Christian leaders must today lay hands on new believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for the Biblical context and history of Acts 8 reveals its events were **unique**, intending to **reveal a new truth** for the **whole Church ERA** (as follows):

II. The Ministry Of The Universal Church In Its Spread To Samaria, Acts 8:4-25.

- A. The persecution of the Jerusalem Church had caused believers to scatter even to Samaria, with Philip, a Grecian Jew initially chosen to minister with Stephen, evangelizing there, Acts 8:4-5 with Acts 6:5.
- B. The Samaritans heeded Philip since his words were validated by God's miracles through him, Acts 8:6-8.
- C. Even Simon, a past sorcerer who had formerly pretended to be a great spiritual man, made a profession of faith in Christ upon heeding Philip's preaching and witnessing his God-empowered miracles, Acts 8:9-13.
- D. News of these conversions, joy and the evidence of God's work in Philip's ministry reached the Jerusalem Apostles, so they sent Peter and John to Samaria to investigate these events, Acts 8:14.
- E. Upon their arrival, the Apostles noticed that though the Samaritans had truly believed and been baptized by water (Acts 8:12), they had not yet received the Holy Spirit as had the Jerusalem Jews, Acts 8:16. Thus, they laid their hands on these Samaritans that they might receive the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:15, 17. The reason for this act was to show **God GRACIOUSLY purified** these Samaritans in view of the **context**:
 - 1. This delay of the Holy Spirit's arrival on the Acts 8 Samaritan believers contrasts with what occurs today, for the Spirit now indwells one the instant he believes in Christ, cf. Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 12:13. [In proof of this, the Corinthian believers were all baptized by the Spirit though not all had spoken in tongues, 1 Cor. 12:13, 30 (where verse 30 is a rhetorical question expecting a negative answer)!]
 - 2. However, in the Acts 8 era, Jews separated from Samaritans (John 4:9b), for the latter were of mixed Jewish and Gentile blood in violation of the Law (Deut. 7:1-4), resulting in centuries of their apostasy, 2 Kings 17:24-41; thus, the professions of faith by Samaritans in Acts 8 could have left Jewish believers thinking they were still holier than the Samaritans and still were to be separate from them!
 - 3. Thus, when the "pillars" of the Jerusalem Church, Hebrew Jews and Apostles, Peter and John (Gal. 2:9a), arrived and confirmed the conversion of the Samaritans, and then laid their hands on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, **ALL believers** then knew the Body of Christ was **ONE** due to God's **purifying GRACE**, that it was composed of Jewish **and EVEN Samaritan** believers **in spiritual UNION with one another**, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978 ed., fn. to Acts 8:15-17.
- F. God's **GRACE** is **emphasized** in the incident involving Simon in Acts 8: when he tried to buy from the Apostles the power to give the Holy Spirit to others, Peter critiqued Simon, saying the Holy Spirit was a **gift of God's grace** that **no one could buy**, Acts 8:18-24. Simon was "thinking in terms of magical powers rather than repentance of heart," so he was to repent, to align with belief in **God's grace**, Ibid.
- G. The **grace** of God sets the theme for the remaining events in Samaria in this context: the Jerusalem, Jewish Apostles thus preached there and in other Samaritan villages, confirming Philip's outreach and the **GRACIOUS** inclusion of **Samaritan** believers **with Jewish** believers into **ONE Church**, Acts 8:25.

Lesson: *When the formerly apostate Samaritans trusted in Christ, the Apostles laid their hands on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit to affirm that they were not a separate, unholy Church, but a GRACIOUSLY CLEANSED part of the ONE Body of Christ begun at Pentecost with Jewish believers.*

Application: *(1) May we see that all TRUE believers are purified by GRACE and so belong to Christ's Universal Body! (2) Also, we do not lay hands on new believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit today; God's GRACE has positionally PURIFIED ALL believers, so we ALL are ONE BODY in Christ!*