



# EXPOSING DECEPTION IN THE CHURCH

Warren W. Wiersbe, [\*The Bible Exposition Commentary\*](#),  
vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 435–438.

## **ACTS 8:9 – 20 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great,

<sup>10</sup> to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the great power of God.”

<sup>11</sup> And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.

<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.





<sup>13</sup> Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,

<sup>15</sup> who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

<sup>16</sup> For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>17</sup> Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.



18 And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!"





# SIMON THE SORCER: A CLEVER DECIEVER

- A fundamental principle in Scripture is that wherever God sows His true believers, Satan will eventually sow his counterfeits (Matt. 13:24 – 30, 36 – 43).
- This was true of the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:7ff) and Jesus (Matt. 23:15, 33; John 8:44), and it would be true of Paul's ministry also (Acts 13:6ff; 2 Cor. 11:1 – 4, 13 – 15).
- The enemy comes as a lion to devour, and when that approach fails, he comes as a serpent to deceive. Satan's tool, in this case, was a sorcerer named Simon.



# AMAZEMENT IS NOT ALWAYS THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

- The word translated "bewitched or astonished" in Acts 8:9 and 11 means "astounded, confounded." It is translated as "wondered" in Acts 8:13.
- The people were amazed at the things that Simon did, and therefore, they believed what he said.
- They considered him "the great power of God." Simon's sorcery was energized by Satan (2 Thes. 2:1 – 12) and was used to magnify himself, while Philip's miracles were empowered by God and were used to glorify Christ.





## **2 THESSALONIANS 2:3 – 4 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

<sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

## **2 THESSALONIANS 2:9 (NKJV)**

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,



# WE MUST REPENT OF OUR SINS.

- Simon started to lose his following as the Samaritans listened to Philip's messages, believed on Jesus Christ, was born again, and baptized.
- What does it mean that "Simon himself believed"? (Acts 8:13)  
We can answer that question best by asking another one:

**What was the basis of his "faith"?**

His faith was not in the Word of God but in the miracles he saw Philip perform, and there is no indication that Simon repented his sins.



## **ACTS 3:19 (NKJV)**

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

## **2 CORINTHIANS 7:9 – 10 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.

<sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.



# WE MUST BELIEVE WITH ALL OUR HEARTS.

Simon certainly did not believe with *all* his heart (Acts 8:37).

## ACTS 8:37 (NKJV)

Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

Simon’s faith was like that of the people of Jerusalem who witnessed our Lord’s miracles (John 2:23 – 25), or even like that of the demons (James 2:19).





## JOHN 2:23 – 25 (NKJV)

<sup>23</sup> Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.

<sup>24</sup> But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men,

<sup>25</sup> and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.



# **JAMES 2:19 (NKJV)**

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble!





# ULTERIOR MOTIVES

Simon continued with Philip, not to hear the Word and learn more about Jesus Christ, but to witness the miracles and perhaps learn how they were done.

## MATTHEW 7:17 – 20 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

<sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

<sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.



# THE SPIRIT OF GOD UNITES US.

Two Apostles, Peter and John, needed to come from Jerusalem, put their hands on the converts, and impart the gift of the Spirit to them.

## WHY?

- Because God wanted to unite the Samaritan believers with the original Jewish church in Jerusalem.
- God did not want two churches that would perpetuate the division and conflict that had existed for centuries.





## EPHESIANS 2:14 – 19 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

<sup>15</sup> having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

<sup>16</sup> and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

<sup>17</sup> And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

<sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

<sup>19</sup> Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,



# KEYS OPEN DOORS

- Jesus had given Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:13 – 20), which meant that Peter had the privilege of "opening the door of faith" to others.
- He opened the door to the Jews at Pentecost, and now he opened the door to the Samaritans. Later, he would open the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 10).
- Remember that the first ten chapters of Acts also record a transition period, from the Jew to the Samaritan to the Gentile.





# GOD'S PATTERN FOR TODAY

God's pattern for today is given in Acts 10:

- the sinner **hears** the Gospel,
- **believes** it,
- **receives** the gift of the **Holy Spirit**,
- and then is **baptized**.

It is dangerous to base any doctrine or practice *only* on what is recorded in Acts 1–10, for you might be building on that which was **temporary** and **transitional**.



# REVEALED WICKEDNESS

- The ministry of the two apostles fully revealed the wickedness of Simon's heart.
- Simon not only wanted to perform miracles but also the power to convey the gift of the Holy Spirit to others — and he was quite willing to pay for this power!

**This passage gives us the word *simony*, which means “the buying and selling of church offices or privileges.”**





# **The early church had its priorities straight:**

- Paul put a fortune-teller out of business in Philippi and ended up in jail (Acts 16:16 – 24).
- Paul also gave the silversmiths trouble in Ephesus and helped cause a riot (Acts 19:23 – 41).

**The early church had its priorities straight: it was more important to preach the Word than to win the support of the wealthy and influential people of the world.**



**Peter's words to Simon give every indication that the sorcerer was not a converted man.**

## **ACTS 8:20 (NKJV)**

But Peter said to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!

- Peter uses strong language. Simon’s heart was not right before God.

## **ACTS 8:22 (NKJV)**

Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.





## MATTHEW 7:21 – 23 (NKJV)

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’

23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’



# SIMON WAS FULL OF POISON

## ACTS 8:23 (NKJV)

For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”

- Simon had never truly been born again.
- Simon's response to these harsh words of warning was not encouraging. He was more concerned about avoiding judgment than getting right with God!





# PETER EXPOSED THE WICKEDNESS

- Simon was one of Satan's clever counterfeits; had Peter not exposed the wickedness of his heart, Simon would have been accepted as a member of the Samaritan congregation!
- As men and women of God, we must **not allow** these behaviors to continue in the church and take advantage of the body of Christ.

