

Simon Wants to Buy Power

Key Verse: “*When Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money.*”
—Acts 8:18

Selected Scripture:
Acts 8:9-24

TODAY’S LESSON IS THE

interesting account of a man named Simon, who was a sorcerer in the region of Samaria. He had evidently achieved some success in this practice, since the account reads that many people in the area gave heed to him, even saying that he had power from God. (Acts 8:9-11) However, this all changed when Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen (see

lesson of October 7), began preaching to the people in this area.

Philip’s preaching was so effective that “when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (vs. 12) Even Simon professed belief, and was baptized. He “continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” (vs. 13) Given Simon’s background, however, as well as the events that followed, the motivation of Simon’s “wonder” at the miracles and signs he witnessed is highly questionable.

Nevertheless, the gospel message continued to be well-received, so much so that word got back to the

apostles at Jerusalem, so they sent Peter and John to assist with the work. As apostles, they had the ability of the laying on of hands, and of giving the Holy Spirit. The account explains that although those, including Simon, had been baptized “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. (vs. 16) This points out to us an important truth that mere outward baptism in water does not necessarily signify that God has accepted one into covenant relationship with him. Such acceptance is only shown by the begetting of the Holy Spirit.

Peter and John proceeded to confer the begetting of the Holy Spirit to those whose baptism and consecration had given evidence of being accepted by God. It is clear from the account that Simon, although one of those baptized, did not receive this begetting. Rather than inquiring of Peter and John as to why he had not received the Holy Spirit, he wrongly focused on the power they had to give it. Our Key Verse says that Simon offered the apostles money to have the power they had in this regard. He said, “Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.”—vs. 19

Peter’s response to Simon was quick and to the point. The ability to give the Holy Spirit, or any of the other apostolic powers, could not be purchased with money. Furthermore, anyone who had such a desire was not in a proper condition of heart. He told Simon, “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” (vss. 21,22) Not only could Simon not be given the power of conferring the Holy Spirit to others, which is what he desired, he was not even in a condition of heart to receive the begetting himself—he had no part in this matter, Peter said. Thus, how vital it is to heed the words: “Keep thy heart with all diligence;