

Simon The Sorcerer

Introduction

- I. Every generation of people has had to contend with charlatans, con-artists, flimflam men and hucksters.
 - A. A century ago they came in the form of rain-makers and snake oil salesmen.
 - B. Today, this genre of men often push “religion” as a means of making merchandise of the brethren and “by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words” (2 Peter 2:3).
- II. One of the greatest stories of conversion in the book of Acts deals with a con-artist called Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:5–13).
 - A. Prior to his conversion, Simon would have made a good televangelist.
 - B. He could have had his own TV show and felt right on home on stage with several noble preachers of our day.
 - C. Simon had everything going for him.
 - D. His credentials as a “faith healer” would have been impressive.
- III. The early “Church Fathers” wrote much about this man—some of their accounts are highly imaginative.
 - A. There is nothing more known for certain about this man other than what Luke wrote about him.
 - B. He is known as “Simon Magus” or “Simon the Sorcerer.”
 - C. His name “Simon” suggests he was of Jewish or Samaritan origin.
- IV. In this lesson we want to notice some of the things about his “religion” and the way many of the Samaritans viewed him.

Discussion

I. Simon Made Great Claims

- A. Simon claimed “that he was someone great” (Acts 8:9).
- B. Look at the differences between Simon the Sorcerer and Philip:
 - 1. One preached himself, the other preached Christ.
 - 2. One man amazed his audience with “sorcery,” while the other man performed genuine miracles by the Spirit of God.
 - 3. One man had to rely upon gullible people, the other man called for faith in the Son of God.
 - 4. This really is the difference between the religion of Jesus Christ and the superstitions which the world calls religion.
- C. Philip went into the region of Samaria to preach Christ—to preach that the Messiah had come and to make known his teachings.
 - 1. The same truths had before been stated in Samaria by our Savior Himself (John 4:3–5).
 - 2. Maybe why they gladly received the word (John 4:39–42).
 - 3. The field had been prepared by Jesus Himself—He said the fields were “already white for harvest” (John 4:35).
 - 4. It is in this field that Philip enters and is blessed in his labor.
- D. Simon made great claims, but he was a fraud!

II. Simon Drew Large Numbers Of People

- A. The people of Samaria “all gave heed” to Simon (Acts 8:10).
- B. Many people want to be a part of the “mega-ministries.”
 - 1. Large numbers are not wrong by themselves.
 - 2. Oral Roberts built the largest hospital owned by any church.
 - 3. Jim and Tammy Bakker built the third largest theme park in America
- C. Many would be impressed with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:17–22).
- D. Just because a preacher has a large following does not mean his message is pleasing to God (cf. Matt. 18:20).
- E. Simon the sorcerer had a large following, but he was a thief!

III. Simon Had Many Influential Followers

- A. Simon’s followers came from all classes of people, “from the least to the greatest” (Acts 8:10).
- B. Some people get real excited when a famous politician or Hollywood star is a member of their church.
- C. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34–35).
- D. Christ did not promise popularity (Matt. 10:22).
- E. The New Testament church was composed of *former* prostitutes, drug users, adulterers and homosexuals (1 Cor. 6:9–11).
- F. Jesus rejoiced when sinners came to Him (Luke 15:1–7).
- G. Not many “noble” people will come to Christ (1 Cor. 1:18–26).
- H. Simon had “great” people follow him, but he was a charlatan!

IV. Simon Could Offer Moving Testimonials

- A. The Samaritans said, “This man is the great power of God” (Acts 8:10).
- B. If you dared to question the claims of Simon he would have supplied you with a list of folks willing to give personal testimony about his ability.
- C. Every witch doctor in Africa and every Voodoo priest in Haiti can supply you with a list of references of people the “healed.” What does it prove?
- D. What about his audience? Were they all liars?
 - 1. God allows Satan to blind the eyes of some (John 12:39–40; 2 Cor. 4:4).
 - 2. God will allow people to believe a lie (2 Thes. 2:9–12).
 - 3. When an honestly mistaken man sees that he is mistaken, he either ceases to be honest or he ceases to be mistaken!
- E. Simon could offer you testimonials, but he was a flimflam man!

V. Simon Could Perform Astonishing Feats

- A. Simon was able to “astonish” his audience with his feats (Acts 8:11).
 - 1. Simon’s sleight of hand and Houdini-like powers amazed the people.
 - 2. Like many “faith healers” today, he could probably cure everything from headaches to vertigo (2 Thes. 2:9).
 - 3. Of course, Simon could not make the lame to walk, the blind to see or raise the dead like the apostles did (Acts 3:6; 9:40).
 - 4. The magicians in Pharaoh’s court imitated Moses (Exo. 7:11).
 - 5. “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12).
 - 6. The Ephesians were commended because they “tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Rev. 2:2).
- B. Simon could perform astonishing feats, but he was a huckster!

VI. Simon Had Been A Long Time Resident Of Samaria

- A. Simon was not a newcomer to Samaria, for he had been able to dupe people “for a long time” (Acts 8:11).
 - 1. Perhaps as long as five to seven years.
 - 2. Around 27 A.D. Jesus had been to Sychar (near the city of Samaria).
 - 3. It is possible that Simon arrived in the after just after Jesus left, and finding people still influenced by the Master, he capitalized on their excited feelings for his own purposes.
- B. Some people believe longevity in a town is proof that God is with you.
- C. Some even brag that their church established the town.
- D. Simon was a long time resident of Samaria, but he was an impostor!

Conclusion

- I. Just because a church makes great claims, has a large number of influential members, offers moving testimonials about astonishing feats and has existed in town for 50 years—that is no proof that God is with them.
 - A. Simon had all of this and more!
 - B. Young people, don’t allow yourself to be influenced by these things.
- II. We are happy to report that when Simon saw the genuine power of God, he, along with many others, gave up on his religious scam (Acts 8:12–13).
- III. We are 10,000 miles and 2,000 years removed from the church established in Jerusalem in the second chapter of Acts, but we can become what they were by doing what they did (Acts 2:38–42).
- IV. God is not going to force you to obey the truth—He will allow you to believe a lie (2 Thes. 2:11–12).