

The Sound of *Many Waters*

Many Waters is a weekly article written by Ron Cipic, lead pastor of Grand River Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. To comment or ask a question about this piece, write to Pastor Ron at pastors@grandriverchurch.org. Related Scripture verses for further study are cited at the end of this piece.

The Great Power of God

"Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from the smallest to the greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, 'This man is what is called the Great Power of God.' And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts." ~Acts 8:9-11 (NASB)

Simon was a warlock living and practicing his magic in Samaria at the time Philip, the evangelist, ministered there. It is interesting that before Philip's arrival in Samaria, Simon was considered by the Samaritans to be the "Great Power of God." So whatever works Simon was performing caused the people to believe that he was practicing his craft for the good of the people. Since the Bible provides no account of what Simon actually did, we can only speculate as to what he was up to; but whatever he did, it was not the sort of thing that would cause the people to believe he was a representative of the dark side. This is evidenced by the name given Simon.

In fact, when Philip came to town and revival broke out, Simon is accounted as one of those who believed in Christ. He was even water baptized. Luke reports that after his supposed conversion, Simon followed Philip around in amazement, as Philip performed "great miracles" in the Lord's name. It was not until Apostles Peter and John came to town that Simon's true

identify was revealed. The apostolic ministry of the church was and is empowered by Christ to discern who is a real prophet and who is not.

Peter and John came to Samaria to impart a further blessing by the Holy Spirit. The true believers in Samaria were already under His influence, but the apostolic leaders in Jerusalem saw fit to send Peter and John to them that they might even enjoy more of His wonderful presence. Luke reports that "they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'"

As the apostles manifested the true and Great Power of God – the Holy Spirit -- Simon coveted that Power for himself that he could be seen and known as one who could bestow such blessing. Simon sought to be even more famous, not to make God even more famous through his ministry. Peter severely rebuked Simon saying "your heart is not right before God." Peter continued: "...you are in the gall (hardness) of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." So "repent of this wickedness of yours..."

Simon had "believed" in Christ and been water baptized, but he had not become the real deal. Let us not forget: even demons believe that Jesus is Lord. But they are void of His presence. Simon wanted to fill others with the Holy Spirit but he himself had not been filled. How do we know? The fruit...No holiness, no Holy Spirit. *RC*

Study Verses: Acts 8:1-24; Mt. 7:15-23

July 16, 2007