

The Eunuch

Acts 8:25—8:40

The Holy Spirit was originally given to Israel in Jerusalem. This follows how the Gospel of the Kingdom was to be spread, beginning in Jerusalem then advancing throughout Judea, Samaria and finally to the uttermost parts of the world (Acts 1:8). Unfortunately, the gospel was rejected time after time in Jerusalem by the religious leaders. After the final rejection by the leaders, with the stoning of Stephen, the gospel began to be actively spread beyond Jerusalem, going into the area of the northern 10 tribes. Although the offer of the Kingdom was withdrawn, individual Israelites were still being given the opportunity to believe. The Kingdom that was once preached as being “at hand” by Jesus and the Disciples, is no longer going to be set up any time soon. The Kingdom will still be a physical reality (contrary to what may teach today), but the timing of the setting up of the Kingdom has changed. As the Gospel was moving beyond Jerusalem into Samaria, they received the word with gladness, unlike what happened in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit that was once a phenomenon only in Jerusalem was now being given outside of city of Jerusalem.

It is important to see that the Holy Spirit was not given to these Samaritan believers when they believed, but it happened only after Peter and John traveled from Jerusalem into Samaria to personally give them the Holy Spirit. This was the official beginning of the spread of the Kingdom gospel beyond Jerusalem in following the orders of Jesus Christ in Acts 1:8. Even though the Kingdom was no longer at hand, these believers are still looking forward to the Kingdom being set up with Jesus Christ sitting on the throne ruling from Jerusalem. The Kingdom is no longer “at hand,” but will be set up perhaps 2,000 years later following the Second Coming. The national promise of a Kingdom has been pushed off (from our perspective), but individual Israelites still need to be saved.

Notice how the Holy Spirit is not functioning in the manner that He functions today. During the Kingdom program, the Holy Spirit was outwardly manifesting Himself to Israel with the sign gifts, including speaking in tongues and prophesying. These outward demonstrations run contrary to how we receive the Holy Spirit in this Dispensation of Grace. We exhibit no outward demonstration of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Also, the Holy Spirit is automatically given to us immediately when we believe. In the Kingdom program, believing and the giving of the Holy Spirit are two separate events. Those who do not rightly divide Israel’s Kingdom program from our Grace program often try to bring these two manifestations of the Holy Spirit together by saying we are given the Holy Spirit when we believe and then there is a “second blessing” of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by the speaking in tongues. This is what happens when people obtain their doctrine from the book of Acts and fail to properly divide Israel’s program of the Kingdom from the Church’s program of Grace.

Outreach program

Philip was in Samaria, an area just north of Judea, along with Peter and John. The Holy Spirit had just been given to the Samaritans, which was the beginning of the fulfillment of the unification of the two kingdoms of Israel being brought together (Ezekiel 37:15—23). Israel had been split into the southern two tribes and the northern 10 tribes since Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, treated the Israelites so harshly that the northern 10 tribes broke ties with the southern two kingdoms with Jeroboam as their king.

As Philip, Peter and John headed back to Jerusalem, an angel of the Lord came to Philip and told him to travel south on a desert road leading to Gaza. It was there that Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53 and trying to understand its meaning. I believe it is significant that this meeting took place well outside of Jerusalem and that the eunuch did not have a clue what this meant. He had come from the

religious capital of Israel, but the leaders were so godless that they were incapable of teaching Scripture correctly. With all the events of the past several months surrounding Jesus Christ, they should have been able to connect Isaiah 53 with Jesus Christ. This happened at the southwestern corner of the region of Judea and was part of the plan to reach out to all of Israel, in spite of being rejected in Jerusalem. Philip was now reaching out to a proselyte instead of a natural-born Israelite with the Kingdom gospel (Isaiah 56:3—5).

This account is often understood, by those who say the church began in Acts 2, to show the spread of Christianity and in fulfillment of the Great Commission. However, the Gospel of Grace was not revealed until the Apostle Paul was raised up by God (Ephesians 3:1—5; Romans 16:24—25). This story is actually showing the final condemnation against Israel for rejecting the Messiah. Here, the Jews rejected the message but the proselyte gladly accepts Jesus Christ as Messiah. The rejection by the leaders in Acts 7 stands in stark contrast to the Samaritans (half-breed Jews) and the proselyte (Gentile) accepting the good news of the Kingdom.

The sermon

The eunuch was reading out of Isaiah 53, and he wondered of whom this passage was speaking. It was, of course, about Jesus Christ led as a sheep to the slaughter as He went to the cross and shed his blood for the sins of the world. Philip used this passage to preach Jesus Christ to him. He could only have preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, the very same message preached to the Samaritans and to those in Jerusalem. The Gospel included believing in Jesus Christ as Messiah and baptism. This is exactly what happened to the eunuch, he believed and was baptized.

This particular account of Philip being baptized is often used by Baptists to “prove” that baptism is to be done by immersion. They understand that Philip going “down into the water” means complete immersion. The biggest problem with this is that it says they both went down into the water. In other words, if this passage proves immersion, then the pastor would also need to dunk himself under the water with the person he is baptizing. This passage only states that they went down to the water, most likely they had to walk down a bank to get to the water. There is no indication that the Holy Spirit came upon the eunuch after he was baptized.

Teleportation

Philip was told by the Lord to go on this road leading to Gaza and was told to meet up with the man in the chariot. Once he had baptized the eunuch, the Holy Spirit miraculously transported Philip to Azotus, a city close to the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 30—40 miles away to the West. He then traveled up the coast to Caesarea, a city at the Northern tip of Samaria on the Mediterranean Sea. The Gospel of the Kingdom was being spread to all regions outside of Jerusalem.

This is a confusing time, from a dispensational point of view because the Jews had officially rejected the offer of the Kingdom with the stoning of Stephen, and the Apostle Paul has not yet been raised up with the Gospel of Grace. It helps to understand that there has been no other gospel revealed up to this point, and that there were many Israelites who still needed to here the good news of the Kingdom. They still had the hope of the Kingdom, but the fulfillment was delayed. This is why Peter explains to the Jews who are concerned that the Kingdom promises are not being fulfilled by telling them that God is not slack concerning His promises (2 Peter 3:9). The Second Coming and setting up of the Kingdom will happen just as He promised they would, even though God did not fulfill these things when they thought He should.

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