

There would be a considerable Gentile population. The Jews always despised the Samaritans, who were a mixed race. They accepted the Pentateuch as their Bible, but along with this they had many superstitious beliefs. That Philip and the church should be willing to preach the gospel in Samaria is a sign that the Christians were growing away from Jewish prejudice. *Proclaimed unto them the Christ* (Rev. Ver.). The Samaritans believed that a great prophet would come as Messiah, John 4 : 25.

V. 6. *Multitudes* (Rev. Ver.). It was a popular and general movement. *With one accord gave heed*. They were more open-minded than the people of Judaea. See John 4 : 39-42. *When they heard, and saw the signs* (Rev. Ver.). The people seemed to have been impressed chiefly by the signs. They were probably like the inhabitants of Jerusalem mentioned in John 2 : 23, 24. And yet the Samaritans to whom Jesus had spoken, had exhibited a very pure faith, John 4 : 41, 42.

V. 7. *Unclean spirits*; "so called because they defiled and degraded both body and soul." Those thus afflicted are always put in a class by themselves in the gospels and Acts. Their case was more aggravated than that of ordinary disease. *Crying with a loud voice*. The evil spirit was in full possession. *With palsies*; paralyzed, so that they could not use their limbs.

II. Many Baptized, 9-12.

V. 9. *Simon by name*. He is usually known as Simon Magus, (the Magician) and became famous in the history of the church as "the father of heresies." He was a Samaritan by race and had attained great power. *Used sorcery*. Magic is the wider word. The heart of magic was the belief that it was possible, by means of certain secret devices or charms or names, to get control over the evil spirits who held rule in this world. The practice of it came especially from the East. (Num. 22 : 6, etc.; Josh. 13 : 22.) Even in the Old Testament the Israelites had been warned against it, (Deut. 18 : 10, 11) and the Christian church found magic an evil that had to be resisted. Half-pagan Samaria was a good soil on which it might

flourish. Sorcery was as much to be resisted in those days as spiritualism or Christian Science to-day. *Bewitched them*; Rev. Ver. "amazed." It is the same word as "wondered" in v. 13. The effect of his wonders was to fill the people with astonishment at his power, so that he had a great following. *Himself was some great one*. The magician always directed the people to himself, not to God. The apostles, when they wrought miracles, always gave the glory to Jesus Christ.

V. 10. *This man is that power of God which is called Great* (Rev. Ver.). In the contemporary speculations of their Gentile neighbors and even to some extent among the Jews, there was a theory that the distance between God and the world was filled up by orders of beings or "powers" (emanations of the Godhead), getting nearer in likeness to God as they were nearer in rank. Simon probably taught that he was the greatest of these powers. The ancient and learned church father Jerome states that Simon said, "I am the word of God. I am omnipotent. I am the whole of God."

V. 12. *Philip*, like his Master, preached the *kingdom of God*, with its laws of conduct and the promise of forgiveness of sins. (See ch. 1 : 3.) Philip laid stress on the necessity of repentance and a pure and holy life, all of which was made possible through the name of *Jesus Christ*, that is because of what He was and did.

III. Simon, the Sorcerer Also, 13.

V. 13. *Simon also believed*. It was not with a pure faith, as the result proved; but he believed that this Name "Jesus Christ" could produce greater miracles than any other. So, in order to get some of the power, he enrolled Himself by baptism as one of His followers. His admiration for Christ was not for His wonderful character and the redemption which He had brought, but for the marvellous power that the Name had in doing wonderful works.

The Church at Jerusalem, where the apostles still were, was the seat of authority. This missionary ingathering of the Samaritans was novel. It must be investigated; so, as we learn from vs. 14-17, the two lead-