

**ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING**  
**XVIII. The Superiority Of Christianity Over The Occult And Demoniacs**  
**(Acts 8:18-25)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as it is presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 8:18-25 records an "incident" to demonstrate "the superiority of Christianity over the occult and demoniacs," (Ibid., p. 373), and we view this passage for our insight, application, and edification (as follows):

**II. The Superiority Of Christianity Over The Occult And Demoniacs, Acts 8:18-25.**

- A. One of the men who responded to Philip's evangelistic ministry in Samaria was Simon the sorcerer, Acts 8:9-13. He had practiced "magic, quackery, and various kinds of sorcery" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 8:9) what had also involved "demonic powers" (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 372)
- B. Though Acts 8:13 reports that Simon also "believed" and was "baptized," and that he continued with Philip, being awed at his miracles, Bible scholars are divided as to whether Simon truly believed in Christ since Peter's later denunciation of him when he tried to buy the power to confer the Holy Spirit upon others (Acts 8:18-19) **arguably** treated Simon as an unbeliever. (Ibid., p. 373) Regardless whether Simon truly believed or not, his activity **before** his *profession* of faith included demonic activity: the Greek noun *mageia* ("magic, magic arts") and Greek verb *mageuo* ("to practice magical arts") describe his former activities (Thayer's Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1963, p. 385; Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. IV, p. 359), and these words suggest involvement with demons. (Ibid., p. 356-359; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.)
- C. Thus, whether Simon truly believed and then became controlled by his sin nature or whether he had not truly trusted in Christ but was merely impressed by Philip's miracles much as many people were superficial believers in having been impressed only by Jesus' miracles (John 2:23-25), after Simon's *profession* of faith, he was awed at how the apostles could lay their hands on others to receive the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:18a.
- D. Accordingly, Simon offered the apostles money if they would give him the power to confer the Holy Spirit on people when he laid his hands on them, Acts 8:18b-19.
- E. Peter denounced Simon for making this offer, charging that his money perish with him because he thought he could purchase the gift of God with money, Acts 8:20. Opposite the humanly manipulative acts of the occult and demonism that marked Simon's past, Christianity was marked solely by God's grace, His unmerited favor.
- F. Peter then announced that Simon had no part or share in this "matter" (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 374) of conferring the Holy Spirit on others, for his heart was not right before God, Acts 8:21.
- G. Simon was to repent of his wickedness and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of his heart might be forgiven him, for Peter testified that he had perceived that Simon was in the "gall of bitterness" and in the bond of iniquity, Old Testament expressions that describe apostacy, a departure from God, Acts 8:22-23; Ibid.
- H. In response, Simon asked that Peter might pray to God in his behalf that nothing of which Peter had warned would come upon him, Acts 8:24. Whether Simon was a repentant believer or a fearful unbeliever, he "was apprehensive about the outcome of his tragic request (Acts 8:18-19)," Ibid.
- I. Peter and John then ministered the Gospel in many Samaritan villages, testifying and preaching the Word of God, an amazing thing for Hebrews to do in Samaria! (Acts 8:25a; Ibid.) The work of the Holy Spirit had overcome the past magical art practices of Simon besides the deep-seated, long-term division between Jews and Samaritans, so, in great spiritual triumph, the apostles finally returned to Jerusalem, Acts 8:25b.

***Lesson:*** *Though Samaria had been heavily influenced by Simon's sorcery and demonic activity to where all Samaria had referred to him as "the power of God that is called Great" (Acts 8:10 ESV), and where there had been a deep-seated, long-term division between Jews and Samaritans, the arrival of Biblical Christianity in the Holy Spirit's power with the Gospel by Philip and the ministry of apostles Peter and John completely overcame the occultism and demonism practiced by Simon as well as the great division between Jews and Samaritans in Christ.*

***Application:*** (1) *May we confidently rejoice in the vast spiritual superiority of Biblical Christianity to the occult and demonism.* (2) *May we align with the unmerited favor of God, His grace, for divine blessing in our ministries!* (3) *May we find in our mutual fellowship with Christ mutual fellowship with one another, cf. 1 John 1:5-7.*