

THE GREAT REVIVAL IN SAMARIA: A STUDY ON REVIVAL ACTS 08:05–25

Introduction

The need of the hour is revival, a true movement of God in the hearts and lives of people, both within and without the church. This is an excellent study on revival.

- I. The preacher: Philip (v. 5).
- II. The essentials for revival (v. 6).
- III. The evidence of revival (vv. 7-25).

JOHN 04:05 SAMARIA, SAMARITANS

Samaria was the central part of Palestine. Palestine was a small country, stretching only 120 miles north to south. The country was divided into three sections:

- => Judea, the southern section
- => Galilee, the northern section
- => Samaria, the central section, lying right between the two

There was bitter hatred between the Jews and Samaritans. Two things in particular caused this hatred.

1. The Samaritans were mongrel or half Jews, a mixed breed *by birth*. Centuries before (about 720 B.C.), the King of Assyria had captured the ten tribes of Israel and deported a large number of the people, scattering them all throughout the Media empire (see 2 Kng. 17:6-41). He then took people from all over the Assyrian empire to transplant them into Samaria to repopulate the land. The result was only natural. Intermarriage took place and the people became a mixed breed, a breed including...
 - the transplanted people
 - the weak of the land who had been left behind
 - the outcast and irreligious who had intermarried with the original Samaritans

The fact of a mixed breed, of course, infuriated the strict Jews who held to a pure race.

2. The Samaritans were mongrel or half Jews, a mixed breed *by religion*. The transplanted heathen, of course, brought their gods with them. Eventually the God of Israel won out, but the Samaritan religion never became pure Judaism. Three things happened to cause this.
 - a. When Ezra led the Jews back from exile in Babylon, the first thing the Jews did was to start rebuilding their temple. The Samaritans offered to help them, but the

Jews rejected their help, declaring that the Samaritans — through intermarriage and worship of false gods — had lost their purity and forfeited their right to worship the only true God. This severe denunciation embittered the Samaritans against the Jews in Jerusalem.

- b. The Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim to stand in competition with the Jewish temple at Jerusalem.
- c. The Samaritans twisted both the Scripture and history to favour their own people and nation.

=> They twisted Scripture in that they accepted only five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. (Just imagine! They missed all the richness and depth of the Psalms and prophets.)

=> They twisted history in that they claimed three great events took place on Mt. Gerizim that set it apart as a place of worship. They claimed it was the place where Abraham offered Isaac, where Melchizedek met Abraham, and where Moses built his first altar after leading Israel out from Egyptian bondage. □

I. Acts 08:05 The Mission of Philip

The preacher was Philip, a layman, one of the first deacons (Acts 6:5). This is important to note:

=> the first great evangelistic thrust outside Jerusalem was carried out by *a layman*.

=> the first time the term *evangelist* is used, it is used with a layman (Acts 21:8).

Philip *preached* (ekerussen) and proclaimed Christ. Later on he is said to *preach* (euaggelizomeno), to announce the glad tidings, “the good news of the kingdom of God” (v. 12). These two great words are used in the New Testament for proclaiming the gospel. Philip, the layman, was a true servant of the Lord, a lay believer who preached Christ. He was a layman who dedicated his time and energy to proclaiming the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Thought 1. Great revival necessitates great laymen sold out to Christ, laymen willing to preach Christ. Note that the following Scriptures are given to believers, not to the clergy.

Mat 10:7 *As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’*

Mat 10:27 *“What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.”*

Mat 28:19-20 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey every thing I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

Acts 4:20 *"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

Acts 5:20 *"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."*

Acts 8:5, 35 *Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.*

Acts 11:19-20 *Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.*

2 Cor 4:13 *It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.*

Titus 2:15 *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

II. Acts 08:06 The Essentials for Revival

The essentials for revival are twofold.

1. Note the word "all": The people must act together, be of *one accord*, of one mind, spirit and purpose; in full cooperation. All must be willing to *hear* the message and see the miracles. If people oppose and shut their ears and close their eyes to the messenger, they cannot have revival. There has to be an openness, a willingness and oneness of spirit with the preacher and his message.
2. The people must *pay attention* (proseichon), keep their minds and hearts upon the message.

Mat 13:16 *"But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."*

Mat 13:23 *"But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

Luke 6:21 *"Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."*

Luke 8:15 “But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”

Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

1 Th 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Deu 6:6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

III. Acts 08:07–25 The Evidence of Revival

The evidences of revival are eightfold.

1. Evidence one: lives are changed — miraculously. People who cannot help themselves are healed. Note that people possessed with evil spirits were changed: the evil spirits were cast out (see Mk. 3:11; Lk. 4:41). People with diseased and crippled bodies were healed. The power of God was clearly witnessed.

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

1 Pet 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.

2. Evidence two: great joy is experienced. A man who truly came to know Christ was filled with joy, the joy...

- of sins forgiven
- of power to live
- of knowing God’s presence
- of deliverance
- of hope for eternity
- of security and assurance and confidence

Luke 10:20 “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

John 15:11 “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

John 16:24 “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

John 17:13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.”

2 Cor 6:10 *Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*

1 Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*

3. Evidence three: deliverance from great depths of sin, from false prophets and religion and sorcery. The depth of sin can reach no deeper than these people found themselves. They were gripped and enslaved by error, false teaching and false hope.
 - a. The people had been enslaved by a false prophet, a religious imposter, Simon.
 - => He bewitched people: amazed, astonished, and secured their following.
 - => He used sorcery: magical arts, witchcraft, spirit mediums, astrology, charms, spells, divination or fortune-telling.
 - => He claimed that he was “someone great.”
 - b. The people had been enslaved by a false religion: “all” gave him all their attention; all followed his leadership and teaching; all “both high and low” *confessed*, “this man is the divine power known as the Great Power.”

Thought 1. Think how gullible people are in following false prophets and their teaching.

- c. The people had been enslaved for a long time. They had been held in bondage to the false prophet and false religion for *a long time*. But now, they had been freed by the power of Christ.

Thought 1. False prophets and false religions differ in their teachings and methods of enslaving people. But they are all false, and their followers can be delivered only by the power of Christ.

Mat 7:15 *“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”*

Mat 24:11 *“And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”*

Mat 24:24 *“For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect — if that were possible.” (see Mk. 13:22)*

Acts 20:30 *Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*

1 Tim 4:2 *Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.*

Rom 16:18 *For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.*

1 Tim 4:1 *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

2 Tim 3:13 *While evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

2 Pet 2:1 *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

1 John 2:22 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son.*

2 John 1:7 *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

4. Evidence four: believing the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and being baptised.

a. Philip preached two major subjects.

=> He preached the kingdom of God (see *Kingdom of God*, Mt. 19:23-24).

Mat 10:7 *As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'*

Mark 1:14-15 *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

Luke 4:43 *But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."*

Luke 9:2 *And he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*

Acts 8:12 *But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women.*

Acts 20:25 *"Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again."*

Acts 28:23 *They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.*

=> He preached the name of Jesus Christ (see *Name of Jesus*, Acts 3:6).

b. When the people heard the message...

- they believed (see *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2:24).

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

John 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

Rom 10:9-10 *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

- they were baptised (see *Baptism*, Acts 2:38).

5. Evidence five: false professions. It is doubtful that Simon was making a genuine confession of Christ (see vv. 18-24). When people experience true revival there will always be counterfeits. The existence of counterfeits and hypocritical professions dramatize and cause the genuine confessions to stand out even more.

Mat 7:21 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

Mat 7:6 *"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces."*

Titus 1:16 *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

6. Evidence 6: the reception and manifestation of the Holy Spirit (vv. 14-17). The apostles were the leaders, the supervisors of the church. Therefore, when they heard of the revival at Samaria, they sent Peter and John to investigate. Why was an investigation necessary? Because of the bitter enmity and racial prejudice between the Samaritans and Jews (see *Samaritans*, Lk. 10:33).

When Peter and John arrived, they discovered that the Samaritans had believed and been baptized, but the Holy Spirit had not "yet come upon" any of them. (See *Holy Spirit*, Acts 8:14-17.)

7. Evidence 7: the rebuke of hypocrisy. The point is clearly seen in the incident with Simon (see Scripture and outline above, pt. 5, vv. 18-24).

Note Simon's request for the apostles to pray for him. It seems that he did not pray himself nor confess and repent to the Lord Jesus. This was the same approach Pharaoh took with Moses, begging for prayer, but never repenting (Exo. 8:8; 10:17).

8. Evidence 8: the opening of hearts for evangelism. Note...

- how open the Samaritans were to the Jewish preachers of the gospel.
- how the apostles went into the villages of the Samaritans to preach.

Thought 1. The fruit of revival is more revival, the opening of hearts for both the preaching and receiving of the gospel.

Acts 4:20 *"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

2 Cor 4:13 *It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.*

Psa 66:16 *Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*

Isa 63:7 *I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.*

Jer 20:9 *But if I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. ■*

ACTS 08:14–17 HOLY SPIRIT

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Acts 08:14-17

This is a puzzling passage to some because the Samaritans are said to have already believed and been baptised, yet the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon them. They had not yet received Him. Note four points.

1. There is no legitimate question about the Samaritans being truly saved. Philip knew the Lord and was filled with the Spirit himself (Acts 6:3, 5). He possessed the power of the Spirit (Acts 8:6-7) and preached the gospel in clear terms. He knew how people were saved and what was involved in salvation. Therefore, two things seem unthinkable and impossible...
 - that Philip actually did not proclaim the full gospel (this position would be contrary to what the Scripture says).
 - that Philip could be deceived by *all* the people (this position would be contrary to the Spirit's leadership in Philip's life).
2. Scripture declares, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). If a person is truly saved, the Holy Spirit has entered his heart and life. Scripture is abundantly clear on this point.
3. In light of the above two facts, the Samaritans apparently had two experiences with the Holy Spirit.

- a. The Holy Spirit actually entered their hearts and lives when they *believed* and were *baptised* (vv. 12, 16). When they believed, they were actually *born again*, becoming new creatures in Christ (Jn. 3:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:17).
 - b. The Holy Spirit *came upon, poured Himself out*, unfilled and manifested His presence and power on the very special occasion when Peter and John visited the new believers. Christ taught there would be special manifestations and infilling of the Holy Spirit. (See *Manifestations of the Holy Spirit*, Jn. 14:21; note, Jn. 14:21-22.) The experience of the apostles and of the church throughout the *Book of Acts* demonstrates clearly there is more than just one significant experience with the Holy Spirit. The early believers experienced periodic manifestations or special infilling. They had need for such experiences, and down through history as the need has arisen, God has given special manifestations or infilling of His Spirit to all obedient believers.
4. There was a very special need existing between the Samaritans and Jewish believers. The Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies. They despised each other (see *Samaritans*, Lk. 10:33. See Mt. 15:26-27; Jn.4:9, 27.) The Holy Spirit needed to fall upon the Samaritans as much for the sake of the Jews as for the Samaritans. The Jews, especially the Jewish leaders, needed to *see* and *experience* the Holy Spirit falling upon the Samaritans. By witnessing the sight, they would know and testify to God's reception of the Samaritans. A wedge would be driven into the barrier that had separated the two nations for so long. And the Jerusalem Church would have to accept the Samaritans because of the evidence of God's acceptance (see *Holy Spirit, Pentacost*, Acts 2:1-4; note, Acts 10:44-48).

There is also perhaps some significance in the fact that God sent the Holy Spirit upon the Jews first (Acts 2). Then, to progressively break the entrenched barrier of racial prejudice between the Jews and Gentiles, He sent the Spirit upon the half-Jews and half-Gentiles (Acts 8). Finally, He was able to send the Spirit upon the full-blooded Gentiles (Acts 10). In other words, there is some truth to the fact that there was...

- a Jewish Pentecost (Acts 2).
- a Samaritan Pentecost — a half-Jew and half-Gentile Pentecost (Acts 8).
- a Gentile Pentecost (Acts 10). □