

Prayer and the Gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8v1-25)

Background

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and they continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came, Peter preached in Jerusalem and many were saved.

Questions

Following the death of Stephen and the persecution that followed, believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

- Where did Philip go? What did Philip do? What were the results (5-8)?
- Where did the apostles go? What did the apostles do? What were the results (1, 14-15)?
- Which of the events in Samaria should we pray would be repeated? Which events should we understand to be unique? Compare 8:14-17 with 2:1-4, 38-39; 5:29-32; 8:14-17; 9:17; 10:44-45; 11:15-17; 19:1-7.

The Holy Spirit was at work in Samaria before the apostles arrived. However, he did not come upon the Samaritan believers in his fullness until the apostles had prayed for them. This was a sign that the New Testament church was to be built upon the apostles; it promoted unity among Judean and Samaritan believers.

- Should we pray that believers would receive the Holy Spirit? What should we pray? See, for example, Rom 15:13; Eph 3:16; 1 Thess 5:23.

Application

Everyone who believes in Jesus receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. We should pray for a greater experience of his presence in our lives.

Acts 2v1-4

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2v38-39

38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Acts 5v29-32

29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: “We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

Acts 8v14-17

14 Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, 15 who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.