

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 8

Samaria: A Second Gift**What We Found**

The strangest paragraph in Acts, taken at inventory: the Samaritans believed Philip's preaching and were genuinely baptized, men and women, with joy in the city, and Luke breathes no criticism of their faith. And yet the Spirit "had not yet fallen on any of them." The apostles did not shrug; they sent Peter and John in person, and the two prayed for the Samaritans that they might receive the Holy Spirit, laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Real baptism; a real further gift; a real apostolic act between them. Whatever its observable effect, which Luke does not describe, it was compelling enough that Simon the magician, a professional in the amazement business, tried to buy it, and his name became the permanent name of that sin. And we finally caught the oldest pattern in this study: the dry bones rose in two stages, body first and breath second (Ezekiel 37:8-10); the apostles received the Easter breath and were still told to wait for power (John 20:22; Acts 1:4-5). The Church has long seen in such passages a picture of God giving the Spirit in more than one act, for more than one purpose, in His own order. Read that way, Samaria is not an exception to the story. It is the story, happening to a church.

Voices of the Church**VOICES OF THE CHURCH**

St. Cyprian of Carthage (*Letter to Jubaianus, around AD 255*)

What was done with the Samaritans is done now among us: those baptized in the Church are brought to the leaders of the Church, and by prayer and the laying on of hands they obtain the Holy Spirit and are perfected with the Lord's seal. Not a new ceremony, but the Acts 8 pattern, still running.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

Tertullian of Carthage (*On Baptism, around AD 200*)

Walking through initiation as his church practiced it at the turn of the third century: after the bath in water, the hand is laid on, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through blessing. Both moments, washing and hand with invocation, were there, in order.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*)

Philip could preach, work signs, and baptize, yet the giving of the Spirit waited for Peter and John: this gift belonged to the apostles. The deacon evangelized, and the apostles completed what he began; the division of roles was the order of the Church working as designed.

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together. Once this week, unhurried: parent, place your hand on your candidate's head or shoulder and pray one sentence of blessing over them, out loud, in your own words. Candidate, receive it without deflecting; then place your hand on your parent's shoulder and pray one sentence for them. Sixty seconds is enough. Blessing is allowed to feel awkward the first time. Do it anyway.

Memory Verse

"Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:17)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Simon wanted the Spirit's power for what it could do for him. What is the difference between wanting God's gifts and wanting God?

Before Next Session

Read Acts 19:1-7.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1288, 1315.