

Acts 8:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

Analysis

And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. Simon Magus had maintained spiritual authority over Samaritans through occult practices, demonstrating how false religion enslaves through deception and manipulation.

The phrase had regard indicates respect, attention, and submission. Simon's influence resulted from his bewitching—Greek *existēmi*, meaning to amaze or astound through extraordinary phenomena. Yet his power derived not from God but from demonic sources or skilled deception.

The contrast with Philip is stark: Simon bewitched (enslaved through deception), while Philip proclaimed truth that liberates. False religion offers spectacular displays that impress but don't transform; true gospel offers grace that saves. Reformed theology emphasizes discernment—not all supernatural phenomena originate with God.

This warns against evaluating spiritual authority solely by external displays of power. True apostolic ministry produces genuine conversion, not mere amazement. The Samaritans' long captivity to Simon's sorcery shows how false teaching establishes deep roots, requiring gospel truth's liberating power.

Historical Context

Simon Magus became a significant figure in early church history and anti-heretical literature. Church fathers identified him as a proto-Gnostic, allegedly founding a heretical sect. His attempt to purchase apostolic power (Acts 8:18-19) gave rise to the term 'simony'—buying or selling spiritual office.

Sorcery and magic flourished in the Greco-Roman world. Samaritans' heterodox Judaism may have made them vulnerable to syncretistic spiritual practices. The lengthy duration (of long time) indicates Simon's established influence, making the Samaritans' conversion to Christ even more remarkable—demonstrating gospel power over entrenched spiritual bondage.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How can believers discern between genuine spiritual power and deceptive spiritual manipulation?
2. What characteristics distinguish true gospel ministry from false teachers who 'bewitch' through impressive displays?
3. In what ways do modern spiritual movements repeat Simon's pattern of amazing people without transforming them?
4. How does the gospel liberate those enslaved to false religious systems?
5. What responsibility do church leaders bear to protect congregations from spiritual deception?

Interlinear Text

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|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------|---------------------|-------------|-------|
| προσεῖχον | δὲ | αὐτούς | διὰ | τὸ | ἱκανῶ | χρόνῳ | ταῖς |
| they had regard | And | them | because | G3588 | that of long | time | G3588 |
| G4337 | G1161 | G846 | G1223 | | G2425 | G5550 | |
| μαγείαις | ἐξεστακέναι | αὐτούς | | | | | |
| with sorceries | he had bewitched | them | | | | | |
| G3095 | G1839 | G846 | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Acts 8:9 (Parallel theme): But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

Galatians 3:1 (Parallel theme): O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?