

# COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIANITY

Acts 8:5-24

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

- a) When God works, Satan also works.
- b) Satan is not against religion.
  - i) One of Satan's chief tools in his bag of tricks is religion.
- c) The very first temptation in the Garden of Eden was a religious temptation; it was a temptation not to be ungodly, but to be godly.
  - i) "...and ye shall be as gods."
  - ii) Genesis 3:1-5
    - (1) It was not a temptation to fall down, but to climb up.
- d) Acts 8:5-13
  - i) There was a revival in Samaria.
  - ii) There was great joy in the city because Jesus was present.
    - (1) There is always joy when there is real revival.
  - iii) Whenever God opens the windows of Heaven to bless us, the devil opens the doors of hell to blast us.
  - iv) Whenever there is real revival, we can expect satanic opposition.
- e) Satan is a counterfeiter; rather than deny the faith, he counterfeits the faith.
- f) When we live for God, we can expect opposition.

## 2) DON'T BE DAZZLED BY THE SATANIC FORCE OF FALSE RELIGION (Acts 8:9-10)

- a) Sorcery is another word for witchcraft.
  - i) Witchcraft is alive and well in our world today.
  - ii) Many people fail to understand the supernatural power behind witchcraft.
- b) Simon the sorcerer was not simply a magician, but he was in league with the devil.
  - i) There is coming another, the Antichrist, who will have sorcery as one of his chief tools.
    - (1) 2 Thessalonians 2:9
      - (a) "Lying wonders" are miracles that deceive.
- c) Revelation 16:14
  - i) Demonic spirits will lead kings and rulers of this world to Armageddon.
  - ii) These demonic spirits will work "miracles."
- d) Pharaoh's magicians performed miracles when Moses performed miracles of God.
  - i) Exodus 7:11-12, 22
  - ii) Exodus 8:7
- e) Don't be deceived by the power of false religion; flee from it.

## 3) DON'T BE DECEIVED BY THE SUPERFICIAL FAITH OF FALSE RELIGION (Acts 8:13-21)

- a) Not all false religion is in the occult; it sometimes moves into the church.
- b) Simon the sorcerer was not a true believer.

- i) He believed not in the Master but in the miracles.
  - (1) His faith was superficial.
  - (2) He saw the power that was manifest in the New Testament church, and he wanted to be a part of it. But he never met the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ii) Acts 8:21
  - (1) God works miracles.
  - (2) Satan counterfeits miracles and works devilish miracles.
- c) Never put your faith in miracles; put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - i) Simon never truly believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - ii) Not all belief is saving belief.
    - (1) There are those in churches today who give a mental assent to the facts of the Gospel but have never met Jesus Christ.
- d) There were those in the New Testament who followed Jesus, not because they wanted to know Him or because they had repented of their sins, but because they had seen Him perform miracles. They followed Jesus for the miracles' sake.
  - i) John 2:23-25
- e) Superficial faith never truly bows the knee to Jesus; it never acknowledges Him as Lord.
  - i) James 2:19
- f) Don't trust in a supernatural experience alone as proof of salvation.
  - i) Today's churches are filled with those who have had spiritual experiences but have never been born again.
  - ii) 2 Corinthians 11:14
  - iii) Revelation 13:13-14
  - iv) John 5:24
    - (1) Salvation is through Jesus Christ alone.

#### 4) DON'T BE DESTROYED BY THE SELFISH FOCUS OF FALSE RELIGION (Acts 8:9-24)

- a) Selfishness is the fuel that empowers false religion.
  - i) Simon was focused on himself.
- b) Self-centeredness is pride. It is what made the devil the devil.
  - i) Isaiah 14:12-14
    - (1) Jesus taught us to pray, "Not my will, but Thine be done."
    - (2) Satan said, "Not Thy will, but mine be done."
  - ii) All false religion is self-centered; it focuses on self.
  - iii) In the Garden of Eden, Satan appealed to Eve's pride.
    - (1) Genesis 3:4-5
- c) 1 Timothy 6:3-4
  - i) What drives liberalism in seminaries? Pride.
  - ii) What causes unbelief in the Word of God? Pride.
  - iii) What made the devil the devil? Pride.
  - iv) What fuels false religion? Pride.
  - v) If you want what is real, lay down your intellectual pride and call out to Jesus.
- d) Acts 8:19-20
  - i) Simon was not in this for what he could give but for what he could get.
- e) Acts 8:23

- i) False, self-centered religion brings two things:
  - (1) Bitterness
  - (2) Bondage
- ii) The word “gall” means “poison.”
  - (1) False religion is a poison.
    - (a) There are people in churches today who have met religion but have never met Jesus.
    - (b) They are troublemakers everywhere they go because their religion has never satisfied them, and it never can.
    - (c) They are disillusioned and have unfulfilled desires because they “got in” for the wrong reasons, and they never have satisfaction.
- f) Even in Simon’s so-called “repentance,” he was still full of self.
  - i) Acts 8:24
  - ii) Rather than Simon praying for himself, he asked Peter to pray for him.
  - iii) Furthermore, he asked Peter to pray that he would escape the consequences, not that he would get right with God.
  - iv) There was no change in Simon’s heart and life.
- g) The difference between a true child of God when he sins and an unsaved person:
  - i) An unsaved person fears the consequences of his sin.
  - ii) A saved person is broken-hearted that he has broken the heart of God.

## 5) CONCLUSION

- a) The devil is not opposed to religion. Rather, he is up to his ears in it.
  - i) He uses religion for his own destructive purposes.
- b) Our faith and trust need to be in Jesus alone because He is Lord.
- c) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- d) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
  - i) Romans 3:23
  - ii) Romans 10:9-10
  - iii) Romans 10:13
  - iv) Acts 16:31