

Unstoppable Kingdom

With Diversity: Priceless Kingdom

Acts 8:5-25

The definition of “priceless” is “so precious that its value cannot be determined”. We throw that term around so much that it has somewhat lost its gravity (i.e., priceless antique, priceless work of art, etc.). Very few things in the world are truly priceless. Even friendships, love, and happiness are labeled priceless yet the value rests in the eye of the beholder.

Stephen has just given his life for the Kingdom of God, and persecution against followers of Jesus has hit a new high. Thousands (including **Phillip**) gave up their homes, their businesses, and their entire way of life to the Unstoppable Kingdom. Why? Because, unlike antiques...

Main Idea: The Unstoppable Kingdom is a Priceless Kingdom

“⁵ Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶ And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷ For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was much joy in that city. ⁹ But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰ They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” ¹¹ And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles^[a] performed, he was amazed. ¹⁴ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” ²⁰ But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” ²⁴ And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.” ²⁵ Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”

Acts 8:5-25

Main Idea: The Unstoppable Kingdom is a Priceless Kingdom

I. **Priceless Diversity** - Acts 8:5-7, 25

Samaria: In 721 BC, inhabitants of the northern kingdom of Israel (later, Samaria) were taken into exile where they would intermarry with the Assyrians and Cuthites for many generations. In 587 BC (134 years later) the inhabitants of the southern kingdom of Judah (later, Jerusalem and surrounding areas) were taken captive by Babylon, but since they were not allowed to intermarry, they maintained their ‘unadulterated’ Jewish lineage unlike the Samaritans when they returned as ‘half-breeds.’ What followed was a blood-feud that showed no signs of slowing down...

“For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans...” **John 4:9b**

“Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ...Now when they (Peter & John) had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”

Acts 8:5, 25

“The Gospel had now moved from ‘Jewish territory’ into Samaria where the people were part Jew and part Gentile. God in his grace had built a bridge between two estranged peoples and made the believers one in Christ, and soon He would extend that bridge to the Gentiles and include them as well.”

Warren Wiersbe

There is no other entity, organization, or club in the history of the universe which has the diversity of the Unstoppable Kingdom. Human beings have always grouped up by race, language, culture, economics, or affinity. Yet, the Unstoppable Kingdom of God has thrived everywhere it has gone!

II. **Priceless Unity** – Acts 8:8-17

God did something amazing, that had never happened among anyone other than the Jews. Samaritans were being saved under the preaching of Phillip, so the Apostles in Jerusalem were so excited and intrigued they sent two of the most prominent of their group, Simon Peter and John, to check it out. They affirmed the genuineness of (most of) the Samaritans.

“Who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” **Acts 8:15-16**

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave for free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” **Galatians 3:27-28**

We can come together despite our differences in the Unstoppable Kingdom because we recognize the value of every member, and we understand that Christ is the only hero among us. Unlike most associations and organizations in the world, humility is a virtue and not a sign of weakness.

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in

your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” **Romans 12:14-17, 21**

III. **Priceless Sacrifice** – 8:18-24

There is a strange character in this passage known as Simon, who had practiced magic in the past. Before Phillip arrived with the gospel of Jesus, Simon had the attention and the fear of the people. Luke tells us that Simon believed and was baptized but gives no indication of the sincerity of it all.

“Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”” **Acts 8:18-24**

Throughout church history, any attempt to buy or sell sacred things has been called “*SIM-only*” based on this passage. The great reformer, Martin Luther was so enraged by the selling of indulgences that it was a major part of his 95-theses. But, just across the street from his parish, a man named John Tetzel sold indulgences claiming that people could buy their relatives out of hell. He would say, “*As soon as you drop your money in the pot, the soul jumps right out of the fire of purgatory.*” Today, blasphemous prosperity gospel preachers are spreading a similar lie (i.e., Give me money, & get rich!).

What makes this so offensive to sincere followers of Jesus is that it cheapens the significance of the cross of Jesus. Any attempt to buy, earn, win, deserve, or merit the grace or gifts of God is slanderous to the cross.

“Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” **1 Peter 1:18-19**

“He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” **2 Corinthians 5:21 (CSB)**

Invitation: Simon the sorcerer couldn’t buy God’s grace, and neither can we. Scholars disagree on whether he was saved. Early church fathers indicated that he was not and that he actually propagated heresy in his generation. But, we still have time to receive the gift of God’s grace by faith...

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **Romans 6:23**

Lord’s Supper: Jesus has given to us a very special way to remember his priceless sacrifice and it’s called communion or the Lord’s Supper.

“...the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” **1 Cor 11:23b-26**

Take time to reflect on Christ’s sacrifice for your sins. If you have not yet placed your faith in Christ, turning from your sins, then now is the time. If there are unconfessed sins in your life, confess and repent before the Lord. And, when you are ready, join us at the table and receive the elements of the Lord’s Supper as a reminder of Christ’s sacrifice for you!

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities:

- *CSB Study Bible* – Trevin Wax, General Editor (2021)
- *The Bible Exposition Commentary* – Warren Wiersbe (1996)
- *Word Pictures in the New Testament* – A.T. Robertson (1933)
- *The New American Commentary: Acts* – John B. Polhill (1992)
- *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* – F.F. Bruce (2017)
- *Acts for Everyone* – N.T. Wright (2008)
- *Acts: The Church Afire* – Kent Hughes (1996)
- *Acts* – K.O. Gangle (1998)
- *The Kingdom of God* – Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1992)
- *Kingdom First* – Jeff Christopherson (2015)
- *The Kingdom Agenda* – Tony Evans (1999)