

Great Persecution of the Faithful Has Hit Yerushalayim

In my last post, we learned that the **Emissaries Are Rounded Up Yet Again and Warned by the Sanhedrin**. In this post, we learn about a **Great Persecution of the Faithful Has Hit Yerushalayim**.

Following the stoning of **Stephen** in Acts 7, *there arose intense persecution against the Messianic Community in Yerushalayim; all but the emissaries were scattered throughout the regions of Y'hudah and Shomron*. ~ Acts 8:1 (CJB) Picking up the story in verse 14: *When the emissaries in Yerushalayim heard that Shomron (Samaria) had received the Word of God, they sent them Kefa¹ and Yochanan,¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Ruach HaKodesh.¹⁶ For until then, he had not come upon any of them; they had only been immersed into the name of the Lord Yeshua.¹⁷ Then, as Kefa and Yochanan placed their hands on them, they received the Ruach HaKodesh.*

From a theological standpoint, the work of the **Ruach HaKodesh** is one spiritual process (Ac 2:38-39). Still, in the experience of the early **Kehilah**, not all aspects of His work are necessarily manifested simultaneously. Luke emphasizes the prophetic empowerment dimension of the **Ruach** (Ac 1:8) so much that he rarely mentions other aspects of the **Ruach's** work known in the **Tanakh** and early **Judaism**; this prophetic empowerment aspect could be in view here, although **Philip's** hearers were already converted in 8:12.

Ancient **Judaism** provides rare examples of laying on of hands for prayer. In the **Tanakh**, hands were laid on to impart blessings in prayer (Gen 48:14-20). Early converts received the **Ruach HaKodesh** at the laying on of hands by **emissaries** or **evangelists**. Some suggest that this was God's plan to ensure that new believers received trustworthy instruction and got connected to God's chosen leaders.

¹⁸ Shim'on saw that the Spirit was given when the emissaries placed their hands on them, and he offered them money. ¹⁹ "Give this power to me, too," he said, "so that whoever I place my hands on will receive the Ruach HaKodesh."

Here we see **Shim'on's** true heart. He was used to impressing the crowds with magic; now, he wanted to impress them with his ability to impart the **Ruach HaKodesh**.

²⁰ But Kefa said to him, "Your silver go to ruin - and you with it, for thinking the free gift of God can be bought! ²¹ You have no part at all in this matter; because, in the eyes of God, your heart is crooked. ²² So repent of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord. Perhaps you will yet be forgiven for holding such a thought in your heart."

By saying that **Shim'on** had *no part at all in this matter*, **Kefa** confirmed that **Shim'on** had not truly converted to **Messianic Judaism**. His *heart* (meaning his will, affections, allegiance) was still **crooked**.

²³ For I see that you are extremely bitter and completely under the control of sin!" ²⁴ Shim'on answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that none of the things you have spoken about will happen to me."

It is not clear whether **Shim'on's** words sprang from genuine repentance or were themselves only more sham, deception, and hypocrisy.

²⁵ Then, after giving a thorough witness and speaking the Word of the Lord, Kefa and Yochanan started back to Yerushalayim, announcing the Good News to many villages in Shomron." ~ Acts 8:14-25 (CJB)

¹ This is another example of **Kefa** being seen as the early leader of the **emissaries**.

After several episodes in **Shomron, Kefa, Philip**, and any other **emissaries** traveling with them returned to **Yerushalayim**. They evangelized *many villages in Shomron* along the way, tearing down ethnic barriers with the global gospel of **Yeshua**.

In my next post, we will jump forward to Acts 9 to learn that **Kefa Performs More Miracles**.