

### 3 Transitional Baptisms: Peter's Keys: (2) Laying on of Hands for Samaritans in Acts 8:12-17; & (3) Faith Alone in Christ Alone for Gentiles in 10:43-48a

#### B. The Samaritans (Acts 8):

1. Peter holds the key to the kingdom of the Church for the Samaritans. The key for them is the laying on of the apostles' hands but the question arises as to why did these people need their own personal key for entry into the body of Christ?
2. First of all we need to know who the Samaritans are. Samaria is the name given to the Northern Kingdom during the time of the divided monarchies. However, immigration and deportation later changed the makeup of the population but the name remained the same.

Youngblood, Ronald F. (gen. ed.). *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1119:

**Samaritans.** Until the rise of Assyrian power in the ancient Near East, Samaria was occupied by the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The city of Samaria was the capital of Israel. But the city fell to the Assyrians in 721 B.C. Most of the leading citizens of the Northern Kingdom were deported to places in Syria, Assyria, and Babylonia.

Sargon II [king of Assyria] replaced the deported Israelites with foreign colonists. These newcomers intermarried among the Israelites who remained in Samaria. Later their numbers were increased when Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal [subsequent kings of Assyria] sent more Assyrian colonists to the district of Samaria. These people took the name "Samaritans" from the territory and attempted to settle the land. So the Samaritans were a "mixed race" contaminated by foreign blood and false worship.

3. Over the centuries, bitterness developed between these interlopers and the Jews of the Southern Kingdom. By the first century A.D. this hostility was so strong that the people of Galilee would travel down to Jerusalem through Transjordan rather than through Samaria.
4. In Acts 8 we find Philip the Evangelist on a missionary trip to the city of Samaria. Philip captured the attention of "multitudes" according to verse 6 and many of them believed in Christ after which Philip performed the visual-aid ritual of baptism:

**Acts 8:12 -** And when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

5. Please note that these Samaritans believed in Christ after which they were baptized by immersion into water. However they were not baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. This required Peter and his keys.

**Acts 8:14 -** Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

**v. 15 -** who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

**v. 16 -** (For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized [ in water by immersion ] in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

6. Note that in effect these Samaritans became like Old Testament believers when they responded to Philip's Gospel message. They were saved and Philip baptized them in water. But they did not enter into the "spiritual building" of the New Testament's universal church. This was up to Peter:

**Acts 8:17 -** Then they [ **Peter and John** ] began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

7. Peter has just opened the door for the Samaritans and it stays open for the Samaritans. From this point forward whenever a Samaritan believes in Jesus as the Messiah he is saved *and* baptized by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ and membership in the universal church, the body of Christ.
8. This event amounts to a Samaritan Pentecost. The “spiritual building” is now made up of Jews and a mixed-race of Jewish-Assyrians. Next come the Gentiles.

**C. The Gentiles (Acts 10):**

1. Gentiles may be defined as anyone other than a Jew. Since the Samaritans were partly Jewish they had their own Pentecost. Now the rest of the human race will have its.
2. The first Gentile to enter the door of the “spiritual building” of the body of Christ is a Roman aristocrat who is also a centurion, which is the rank of a commander of a *centuria* of about 100 infantrymen.
3. The *centuria* is part of a *cohort* (containing five or six *centuria*), called *cohors* in Latin and *σπείρα, speira* in Greek but translated into the English as the “Italian band” (KJV), “Italian Regiment” (NIV), “Italian cohort” (NASB), or “battalion” (Scofield’s NASB textual note). This *Italian Cohort* has been identified as *cohors II Italica* which is known to have been stationed in Syria in A.D. 88 [NET Bible, 2043, fn. 25].
4. Cornelius lived in Caesarea on the coast of Samaria where his headquarters were based. He was God-conscious and was very pro-Semitic however he did not yet know how to be saved.
5. God recognized his positive volition and chose this *centurio* as the one who would be the Church Age’s first Gentile baptized by the Holy Spirit.
6. This requires Peter to bring his keys, therefore an angel instructs Cornelius to dispatch some of his men to Joppa, also a coastal community 30 miles south of Caesarea.
7. In the meantime, Peter is given a situation report through the agency of a trance by which God prepares Peter for his mission to Caesarea. (v. 10)
8. Peter is still steeped in the legalism of the Mosaic Law and the oral traditions. He is yet to realize that these regulations have been removed by Christ and that a new dispensation has begun which will include Gentiles.
9. The first lesson on this subject is to present to a very hungry Peter the image of beasts that the Law previously excluded as edible, all wrapped inside a tablecloth. (vv. 11-12)
10. Peter rebels at this idea in verse 14 but is told in verse 15, “What God has cleansed, no longer consider to be unholy.” Peter is then instructed to accompany the three-man detail that is arriving at the door.
11. The next day Peter and some associates accompany the three men to Caesarea and the description of the Gentile Pentecost is related by Luke in Acts 10:24-48.
12. On arrival, Peter is introduced to Cornelius who has assembled a group of his relatives and friends. (v. 24)

13. The centurion then relates in detail his encounter with the angel and how he had been instructed to contact Peter in Joppa. (vv. 30-33)
14. Peter then delivers to the group a Gospel message which reviews for them the events of the Incarnation, the public ministry of the Lord, and His crucifixion at Jerusalem. (vv. 34-43)
15. Peter's final comment was a clear presentation to these Gentiles of *how* to be saved:  
**Acts 10:43 -** "Of Him all the prophets bear witness and through His name everyone who believes [ πιστεύω, *pisteuō* ] in Him receives forgiveness [ ἄφεσις, *aphesis* ] of sins [ ἁμαρτία, *harmartia*, *presalvation sins* ]."
16. At this point Peter is interrupted. Hearing *how* to be saved resulted in immediate positive response to the Gospel and all these people were not only saved but were instantaneously baptized by the Holy Spirit:  
**Acts 10:44 -** While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.  
**v. 45 -** And all the circumcised believers [ Jewish Christians, or Messianic Jews ] who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit [ baptism of the Holy Spirit ] had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.
17. Seeing this, Peter recognized what he had observed in Jerusalem at the Jewish Pentecost and in Samaria at the Samaritan Pentecost. As in each of these cases Peter organized a post-salvation baptism:  
**Acts 10:47 -** "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?"  
**v. 48a -** And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.
18. Peter has just opened the door for the Gentiles and it stays open for the Gentiles. From this point forward whenever a Gentile believes in Jesus as the Messiah he is saved and baptized by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ and has membership in the universal church, the body of Christ.
19. This event is the Gentile Pentecost. The "spiritual building" is now made up of Jews, a mixed-race of Jewish-Assyrians, and the Gentiles.
20. From this point forward whether Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile, the baptism of the Holy Spirit not only enters each individual into union with Christ but also with all the assets that accompany this gift.
21. Water baptism continued to be practiced throughout the book of Acts but its function was strictly a ritual to teach the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
22. In Acts 2, water baptism was part of the formula for forgiveness of sins before the baptism of the Holy Spirit could occur.
23. In Acts 8, Philip conducted a water baptism for the Samaritans but the baptism of the Holy Spirit did not occur until Peter and John arrived and laid their hands upon the converts.
24. In Acts 10, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was given to those Gentiles assembled in Cornelius's home at the moment of their faith alone in Christ alone and water baptism was a footnote to the event.
25. As the canon of Scripture moved toward its ultimate conclusion the emphasis in the ritual of water baptism faded.

26. There is very little mention of water baptism in the epistles of the New Testament and the passages that do so address problems that occur due to over-emphasis on the importance of this ritual.

## **VII. The Corinthian Schisms:**

1. The importance that God places on the teaching of His Word rather than on the rituals that illustrate its doctrines is brought into stark focus by the events that confronted Paul in Corinth.
2. The various problems that were common in the Corinthian church take Paul sixteen chapters to address. But the first one he challenges has to do with schisms that developed among its members over the subject of water baptism.
3. This ritual has caused so much controversy throughout Christendom that denominations choose to define themselves by their attitude toward baptism rather than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
4. It is far worse when these controversies create schisms in the local church so that the Word of God is suppressed as the top priority.
5. We will sum up our study by observing how Paul deals with these issues in Corinth:

**1 Corinthians 1:10 -** Now I exhort you fellow believers through the name of Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same things, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be of the same disposition and judgment.