



## Are You Right?

Have you ever studied with someone who said, “That sounds good while you are talking; it seems to be right, but my preacher sounds good when he is doing the talking. It confuses me. How can I know what is right?” This individual knows that when one man says one thing and another speaks the very opposite, something is wrong. He may decide that the fault lies in the Bible, that “you can prove anything by the Bible.” How can they, or you, know if you’re right?

### How You Cannot Know

Recorded in the eighth chapter of Acts, Philip went to Samaria and “*proclaimed Christ unto them.*” Many were saved, because they believed his preaching and were baptized, both men and women (**Acts 8:12**). However, before Philip did this preaching in Samaria, another preacher had been there. “*Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, ‘This man is what is called the Great Power of God.’ And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts*” (**Acts 8:9-11**). Right here, we can learn some things by which one CANNOT be sure he is right before God!

One cannot be sure he is right because the preacher CLAIMS to be speaking God’s will. Simon went about “claiming to be someone great” and the people were convinced that “This man is what is called the Great Power of God.” Was he? Did his claims make him such? The mere fact that a preacher or teacher CLAIMS to be speaking God’s word does not prove that it is the truth.

One cannot be sure he is right because a doctrine is POPULAR or widely believed. Some people seem to want to go with the majority. They may “join” a certain church simply because they notice that “most of the people in town go there.” Surely “that many people cannot be wrong.” Look at Samaria. Simon’s preaching was extremely popular. Did that make Simon’s teaching right? Even though they all followed this popular imposter, it is clear from the Bible that they were in error. Many more people deny the God of the Bible than accept Him. Those who deny the inspiration of the Bible greatly outnumber those who receive the Bible as the word of God. Does this mean that atheists and infidels are right? (**Matthew 7:13-14**). No more than the case in Samaria proved that followers of Simon were right.

One cannot be sure he is right because of the PROMINENCE of those believing a doctrine. We are too easily impressed by prestige. Note that in Samaria they “they all, from smallest to greatest” were following him. The “greatest” in town surely would have included the socially prominent, the most highly educated, and the wealthiest. Did that make them right? One may say, “The smartest, best educated people of this city are members of this church. Do you mean to tell me that all of these brilliant people are wrong?” What about the Samaritans? It must be admitted that they were dead wrong, even though the “greatest” in the city were involved.

One cannot be sure he is right because of his FEELINGS, or his sincerity. Occasionally one asserts vigorously that he knows he is saved because he feels so good about his condition. Is this enough? Look at the Samaritans again. They really thought Simon was possessed of God's power. Certainly their feelings were sincere and genuine. Doubtless, everyone of them could have testified that he felt sure Simon was a man of God and that they were right to follow him. Were they right? Everyone can see that they were completely wrong. If they could sincerely "feel" that they were right, and yet be wrong, is it not possible for the same to be true today?

### How You Can Know

In reading the eighth chapter of Acts, any person can readily see that there is one way to tell whether a thing is right—examine what has been preached. That "preaching" may be right, or it may be wrong. If it is wrong, it will not matter about the claims the preacher makes, or how many other people believe it, or how prominent the people are, or how good it makes the person feel. No other chapter in Scripture places as much emphasis on WHAT men preached in the first century as this chapter: early disciples went everywhere preaching "the word" (**Acts 8:4**); Philip preached "Christ" (**Acts 8:5**); he preached "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (**Acts 8:12**); Samaria received "the word of God" (**Acts 8:14**); Peter and John preached "the gospel" as they returned to Jerusalem (**Acts 8:25**); later Philip taught the eunuch by the use of "scripture" and he preached "Jesus" to him (**Acts 8:35**).

One thing must be concluded from a study of this chapter of the Bible—in order for any doctrine to be right, it must be found in "the word of God" or in the "gospel." Nothing else will suffice.

This chapter not only tells us what Philip preached, it also tells us what the people DID. When Philip preached Christ, he preached faith and baptism. Look again to **Acts 8:12**: *"But 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."* It was the same with the eunuch. When Philip preached Jesus to him, he preached belief and baptism (**Acts 8:35-38**). When the gospel is preached, it will instruct men to do what men were told to do. When people are not taught to do what the Samaritans did, surely it is because they are being taught something other than the truth.

Let everyone resolve to test everything he believes by the word of God—we can be sure that we are right before God. There need be no doubt. Are you right?