

Badges & Uniforms

- How do we show our allegiance to something?
 - show all the badges and uniforms
 - even things like way we dress, posters we put up on our bedroom walls...
- Baptism as a sign of belonging, of declaring allegiance to Jesus
- When the people in the story were baptised, they were saying they belonged to Jesus.
 - we can be a member of the GB or BB and go to school and like a particular pop group....
 - but being baptised is a way of saying that Jesus isn't just one of the things you belong to, he's the most important, the top priority
- They were saying: magic isn't able to really help us; only Jesus can
 - he's the one who has healed all these people!
- And when a parent gets their child baptised, or when someone comes and gets baptised as an adult, they are declaring that they believe that to true for them too:
 - only Jesus is really able to help us, no matter how powerful or important or clever anything else may seem

Taking a bath

- Those badges tell you something about the thing you belong to:
 - rugby top - strong, tough game
 - Girl's Brigade badge has their logo, which symbolises something of their heritage
 - SU badge has a lamp, reminding of a key verse from the bible, (Psa 119:105) Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
 - even school uniform says something: uniforms were partly a way of saying everyone is equal, everyone has as much right and chance to learn as everyone else!
- What does baptism tell you about declaring that you are a follower of Jesus?
 - got a picture of what a baptism might have looked like in Jesus time; this is actually what someone thinks it might have been like when Jesus himself was baptised!
 - what's involved at a baptism? what happens? looking for water!!
- Why do you think water is involved in baptism?
 - symbolise washing!

Why?

- not because we are **dirty on the outside!**
- but because we are **dirty on the inside!**
- **Dirt is sin:**
 - wrong things done, said, thought; things we need to say sorry for!
- **The water** that is sprinkled on or that someone is covered in at a baptism **doesn't wash away the sin!**
 - but it reminds us that we can become Christians, become friends with God because **Jesus has washed away our sin**
- So when someone is baptised they are saying, by their actions:
 - **I'm a sinner; I've done bad stuff; I need Jesus to wash me; and I'm happy to stand out and declare he has washed me!**
 - **that's why I think he's the most important person in my life!**
- For the early Christians baptism **reminded them of something else too:**
 - when a person was baptised they were **completely immersed;**
 - the early Christians saw in that a **reminder of Jesus dying,** going down into the tomb, but then **coming alive again!**
 - so being baptised was like dying to our old life (without God) and coming alive into a new life, with Jesus as our friend and Lord!
- **Wow!**

Plant Analogy

- Seed scattered in persecution
 - focus on one plot of land - Samaria
- Seed germinates through preaching
- Seed grows as Spirit comes

- Separation of acceptance of Christ in saving faith and coming of Spirit is **not** the norm!
 - allows for very particular affirmation of Spirit coming on them with **official sanction** from Jerusalem
 - **schismatic Samaritans!**

Power Struggle

- Power of magic in Simon
 - however we interpret his claims to divinity or otherwise, the nature of his magic powers
 - he had influence and power

- Into this situation comes the gospel, carried by Philip:
 - who is going to win the struggle, whose power is greater?
 - even the one known as "**The Great Power**" could not stand up to Jesus!
 - and so many **accept the good news**, a good news that liberates and brings healing and release, not captivity to a boaster and an influence grabber!
- This is the true nature of the gospel:
 - powerful, and able to transform for the good whole lives and indeed communities

Imperfect Christians

- Final thing that is worth pondering in this passage is how it deals with the reality of imperfect Christians:
 - Simon seems to have come to a genuine faith;
 - yet he is still besotted with power - following Philip around watching the miracles!
 - when the Holy Spirit is given, he senses that here is the source of the power that energised Philip's preaching and healing
 - and, crudely, he wants a piece of the action!
- His fundamental priority - **his own and influence** - has been so far unaffected by the gospel
 - he may well be saying, "Lord, Lord" to Jesus, but his actions and attitudes belie that profession!
 - and he is in danger big time!
 - he is still captive to - and maybe captivate by - sin

- Warning & encouragement here for us:
 - this is a dangerous situation, one it is perilous to allow to continue
 - but it is also one out of which there is way: [repentance and prayer](#)
 - none of us are perfect Christians, sorted Christians, we are all imperfect to some degree
 - we all stand with Simon
- [Not told how Simon ended up....](#) [not told how we will end up...](#) we have choice... [how will we choose?](#)