

Acts 08 - 3rd Persecution; The Diaspora; Simon the Sorcerer; Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

II. Outreach in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1—12:25)

- (1) Persecution scatters church into Judea and Samaria (8:1-4)
- (2) Philip evangelizes Samaria (8:5-25)
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Acts 8

II. Outreach in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1—12:25)

- (1) Persecution scatters church into Judea and Samaria (8:1-4)

1 Now Saul approved of putting Stephen to death.

And **on that day a great persecution** began against the **church** in Jerusalem, and they were all **scattered** throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, **except for the apostles**.

1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death.

And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

1 Now Saul heartily approved of putting Stephen to death. That day a severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and everyone except for the apostles was scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

- "Now" - this word connects to the events of Acts 7

- "...approved" - *syneudeokeō*, to be pleased with; to approve or consent to

— Saul not only agreed with the Sanhedrin's decision to stone Stephen, he took pleasure in it (Cf. 22:20)

- It's likely that Saul is watching Stephen's execution, he is hearing Stephen say things like, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit" (7:59) and, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (7:60)
- Saul saw the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in Stephen while he was being executed, and it's highly likely that a seed is being planted in his heart
- The Bible consistently portrays personal evangelism using agrarian metaphors (John 4:35-38; 1 Cor 3:6-8)
- Once this seed is planted, the Holy Spirit will begin to water that seed and bring it to fruition
- "...on that day" - the same day Stephen was martyred the third persecution of the Church began
- The Sanhedrin was so angry about what Stephen said that they took it out not only on Stephen, but on the entire Jerusalem church
- This 3rd persecution of the church is the worst yet, often called the "Great Persecution" of the church. The previous two persecutions were minor in comparison, and brought by the Sadducees, who were upset that the disciples were preaching a resurrected Christ (they didn't believe in the resurrection).
- This persecution is much worse because now the Pharisees are joining with the Sadducees to persecute the church
- "...great persecution" - the first two persecutions of the Church came from the Sadducees alone, but this one came from both the Sadducees and Pharisees
- The Church in Jerusalem was the object of the persecution. The persecution that began in Acts 6-7 continues into Acts 8, where it became a "great persecution" of Christian Jews.
- The progression went from a warning (4:21), to flogging (5:40), to martyrdom (7:58-60), and now widespread persecution
- "...church" - *ekklesia*, shows that the church began prior to Paul, contrary to the belief of hyper/ultra dispensationalists (Cf. v3; 2:47 [NKJV]; 5:11; Phil 3:6)
- Saul is still Saul at this time, he is not yet Paul until Acts 9
- Man never begins new dispensations...only God does. Paul's responsibility was to explain the church, not start it.
- "...scattered" - *diaspeirō*, the verb form of *diaspora*
- The scattering of believing Jews (the church) out of Jerusalem and into Judea and Samaria is a fulfillment of what Jesus said in 1:8
- Another reason why God used persecution to scatter the believing Jews out of Jerusalem was due to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
- Unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem turned against believing Jews, resulting in many believers leaving Jerusalem for more secure places to live. They took the gospel seed with them and planted churches in all Judea (Cf. 1 Thess 2:14) and Samaria

- The point is that now the Jewish believers in Jerusalem became the dispersion of messianic evangelism and discipleship
- This persecution was hard on the Christians, but good for the Church since it resulted in widening evangelism. It also, for the first time, created the need for the first writings of the NT, resulting in the first Gospel written (Matthew) to give Jewish believers an authoritative writing to fall back on.
- Previously, if a Jewish believer had a question, they could simply find one of the twelve apostles and ask them. However, as believers were forced (dispersed) out of Jerusalem, they no longer had access.
- "...except for the apostles" - the apostles remained in Jerusalem probably to continue to shepherd what limited flock remained
- When you understand this, then you can understand why there needed to be a NT. If the apostles remained in Jerusalem, but much of the church scattered to Judea and Samaria, there would be no way for the apostles to teach/disciple the flock.
- The believers in the *diaspora* needed to receive letters/epistles from the apostles in order to grow in their faith (1 Peter 1:1; James 1:1)

Eusebius (260-340 AD), *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.5.3

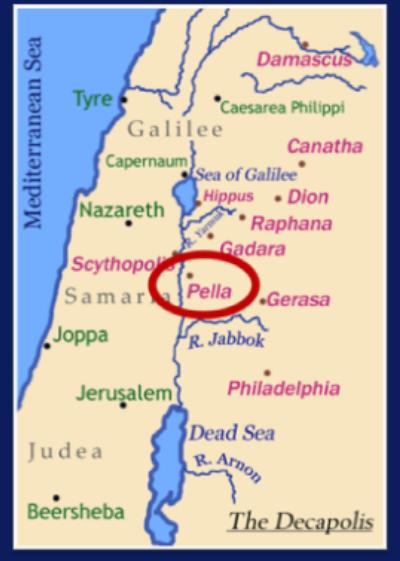
"But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella. And when those that believed in Christ had come thither from Jerusalem, then, as if the royal city of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were entirely destitute of holy men, the judgment of God at length overtook those who had committed such outrages against Christ and his apostles, and totally destroyed that generation of impious men."

Epiphanius (*De pond. et mens.* 15) also records this flight of the Christians to Pella.

Pella

Pella was a town situated beyond the Jordan, in the north of Perea, within the dominions of Herod Agrippa II. The surrounding population was chiefly Gentile.

See Pliny V. 18, and Josephus, B. J. III. 3. 3, and I. 4. 8.



- 2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and **mourned loudly** for him.
- 2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.
- 2 Devout men buried Stephen as they mourned loudly for him.
- 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.
 - "...mourned loudly" - it was against the Jewish law and tradition to mourn at the death of a criminal; these devout men loved Stephen and were so hurt by his execution that they mourned "loudly"
- 3 But Saul *began ravaging* the church, entering **house after house**; and he would drag away **men and women** and put them in prison.
- 3 But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.
- 3 But Saul kept trying to destroy the church. Going into one house after another, he began dragging off men and women and throwing them in prison.
- 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.
 - "...ravaging" - *lymainō*, to keep on trying to destroy; to affix a stigma to; to dishonor; to ravage; used only here in the NT. Saul was extremely angry, which shows that a seed had been planted and the Holy Spirit was working on Saul's heart
 - The LXX used it in Ps 80:13 to describe wild boars destroying a vineyard. The verb is the inceptive imperfect form, meaning the beginning of the action,
 - Saul was a leader in the persecution in Jerusalem (9:1-2, 29; 22:4-5; 26:11)

- He not only went “into every house” arresting Christians (Cf. 2:46; 5:42) and putting them in prison, but also went into synagogues (Cf. 6:9) and tried to force believers to blaspheme there (22:19; 26:11)
- Most Christians think that when a person you're evangelizing gets upset, they are far from God. But that is often not true...it is typically true that the more upset they are, the closer they are to belief in Christ, and their anger is their active suppression of what the Spirit is doing inside of them.
- In 2 Sam 12:5, when Nathan confronted David with his sin by means of a parable, David's “anger burned greatly.” Nathan then told David that he was that man.
- David's anger indicated that his repentance was closer rather than further away
- It's interesting that Saul studied under Gamaliel (Cf. 22:3). Remember what Gamaliel told the Sanhedrin in 5:34-39? He said to not persecute this church because if it was not of God, it would fizzle out and die. But if it was of God, you're going to find yourself fighting against God.
- Saul evidently chose to not abide by these words, to cast them aside, and go full throttle to persecute the church
- "...house after house"- Saul went to private homes because that's where the church met at this time
- There were no churches, cathedrals, or church buildings; the early church always met in homes (Cf. 2:46)
- "...men and women" - notice the inclusion of women; Saul understood at this point the importance of women to God, so he included them in his persecution of the church (Cf. 22:4-5)

- 4** Therefore, those who had been scattered went through *places* preaching the word.
- 4** Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.
- 4** Now those who were scattered went from place to place preaching the word.
- 4** Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.
- When we endure persecution or hard times, we often shut down any type of evangelistic effort, until we first get ourselves back to a comfortable state
- Evangelism is not a priority if my comfort and ease of life are threatened in any way. But not so with the early church...the "Great Persecution" and scattered resulted in them preaching the Word.
- This verse is a good introduction to the ministry of Philip, who takes center stage in v5-40
- He was the second deacon (Stephen was the first); he was scattered into Samaria and began preaching the Word

Phil 1:12: Now I want you to know, brothers *and sisters*, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,

(2) Philip evangelizes Samaria (8:5-25)

(A) Samaritan ministry (8:5-8)

5 **Philip went down** to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming the Christ to them.

5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *began* proclaiming Christ to them.

5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began to preach the Messiah to the people.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

- "Philip" - one of the seven deacons chosen to handle food distribution for the widows (Cf. 6:5); not the apostle from Acts 1

— Philip was operating in the office of deacon, but he was also called an "evangelist" (Cf. 21:8)

- "...went down" - people travel "down" from Jerusalem, and they travel "up" to Jerusalem due to the fact that Jerusalem is set at a higher elevation (Cf. Gal 1:17)

— Psalm 120-134 are called the "Psalms of Ascent" because they were songs that the Jews would sing as they travel up to Jerusalem to celebrate the various feasts

Samaritans

About 800 years before Philip left for Samaria, Assyrian kings deported most Israelites from this area (722 BC). The Assyrians brought pagan captives from other lands to live there, and the remaining Israelites inter-married with them. Their offspring were called Samaritans. The Jews considered their religion a corruption of Judaism—they worshipped on Mount Gerazim instead of in Jerusalem, and they had their own priesthood. While Jews viewed Samaritans as beneath them, Samaritans viewed themselves as pure tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Later, when Jews rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, Samaritans were prohibited were prohibited from participating. In opposition, they built their own temple. Through the years, the bitterness between Jews and Samaritans intensified. Traveling Jews often went miles out of their way to avoid even stepping foot in Samaria.

6 The crowds were **paying attention** with one mind to what was being said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

6 The crowds, hearing his message and seeing the signs that he was doing, paid close attention to what was said by Philip.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

- "...paying attention" - *prosechō*, imperfect tense meaning they initially paid attention, and they continued to pay attention to what Philip was saying

— The Samaritans were very interested in the message that Philip was preaching

— Philip (along with Stephen, Paul and Barnabas) were the only non-apostles to perform miracles in Acts

— God used signs and wonders to authenticate Philip's preaching because Simon the Sorcerer had a long career of performing satanic signs and wonders in Samaria, and the population was very familiar with him

7 For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of *them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed or limped *on crutches* were healed.

7 For *in the case of* many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of *them* shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

7 Unclean spirits screamed with a loud voice as they came out of the many people they had possessed, and many paralyzed and lame people were healed.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

- This verse describes two issues in Samaria:

1. Those who were possessed by demonic spirits
2. Those who had physical handicaps or issues

— Not all physical infirmities are the result of Satan or demons. Most are simply the result of original sin and the fact that everyone is susceptible to the effects of the Fall.

— Luke, the author, was a doctor so he is especially cognizant of medical topics in his writings. Here, he clearly separates those who possessed a demon from those who had "run of the mill" physical infirmities.

Not All Physical Infirmities Are Attributable to Satan/Demons

- Matt 8:5-13
- Matt 9:19-20,27-30
- Matt 12:9-14
- Matt 14:35-36

8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.

8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.

8 As a result, there was great rejoicing in that city.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

- Philip is reaping the seeds that Jesus sowed among the Samaritans (John 4)
- In fact, Jesus prophesied to His disciples that they would reap what others had sown. Pointing to the Samaritan fields, He said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).
- It was likely the fact that the Jerusalem Jews rejected Philip that made him appealing to the Samaritans, since they had also experienced rejection by those same Jews
- If the Twelve had evangelized Samaria, it's likely they would have been rejected, just as they were earlier (Cf. Luke 9:51-56). But God, in His wisdom, used a Hellenist Jew, who shared their fate, to evangelize them, and the Samaritans received and accepted his message.

(B) Simon's conversion (the 8:9-13)

- 9** Now a man named **Simon** had previously been **practicing magic** in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, **claiming to be someone great**;
- 9** 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;
- 9** Now in that city there was a man named Simon. He was practicing occult arts and thrilling the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great.
- 9** But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:
 - This verse describes Simon the Sorcerer pre-conversion: he was practicing black (satanic) magic and was claiming to be someone great because of the miracles that Satan was performing through him
 - The miracles that Simon performed were real miracles, not sleight of hand trickery
 - Satan has tremendous miracle working power, it's just from the human perspective it's not evident/obvious that his power is not as great as God's power. See Satanic/Demonic Miracles in Scripture.
 - We do not legitimize or authenticate something based on an experience. Many people think, I had an experience, therefore it was from God. Truth should never be determined by an experience.
 - Any experience we have should be evaluated based on the lifestyle of the person and through the prism of God's Word. If the lifestyle/reputation of the person lines up with the Word of God, then the experience was legitimate. If not, it was from Satan.
 - "...Simon" - Simon Magus, a magician; "Magus" is the transliteration of the Greek word *magos*, meaning magician or sorcerer
 - Another man was doing miracles in Samaria, but by satanic power
 - "...practicing magic" - the ability to control people and/or nature by demonic power; this wasn't one or two miracles, it was a long-running pattern

- "...claiming to be someone great" - pre-conversion, Simon's lifestyle/reputation did not line up with the Word of God

— The Holy Spirit does not produce pride in people, He produces humility. In addition, no glory is given here to God at all. All the glory for the works Simon is doing is going to himself.

10 and all *the people*, from small to great, were paying attention to him, saying, "This man is the Power of God that is called Great."

10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."

10 Everyone from the least to the greatest paid close attention to him, saying, "This is what we call the great power of God!"

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

- Everyone in this city was deceived by Simon, from the poor and those with little influence, to the greatest (those with much influence) (Cf. Rev 13:16)

- The Samaritans did not have a biblical worldview, so any miracle they see they automatically attribute to God. They were ripe for deception.

11 And they were paying attention to him because for **a long time** he had astounded them with his magic arts.

11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

11 They paid careful attention to him because he had thrilled them for a long time with his occult performances.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

- "...a long time" - after Simon trusts in Christ, he has no time to have his mind renewed, to learn a biblical worldview, or to make any progress whatsoever in the second tense of his salvation

— Before we are saved, our mind knows nothing of the things of God, and we do not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 16:13) to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

12 But when **they believed** Philip as he was **preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ**, both men and women were being baptized.

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.

12 But when Philip proclaimed the good news about the kingdom of God and about the name of Jesus the Messiah, men and women believed and were baptized.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

— "...they" - the Samaritans who heard Philip's message, including Simon the Sorcerer (Cf. v13)

— "...believed" - *pisteuō*, the single and sole condition for salvation/justification; upwards of 150x in the NT, salvation is conditioned upon belief alone (Cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31)

— "...preaching the good news about the kingdom of God" - the content of the Samaritans (and Simon's) faith; Philip proclaimed God's kingdom program to the Samaritans

— The Samaritans believed the kingdom of God would be a Samaritan kingdom. It was important that Philip convey to them that it was going to be a Jewish kingdom. Jesus had to do the same thing with the Samaritan woman (John 4:22); Jerusalem, not Mount Gerizim, will be its capital.

— Many people believe that because Philip preached about the kingdom that the millennial kingdom had arrived. They get that from a handful of passages in Acts that talk about the kingdom (Cf. 1:3,6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31)

— Amillennialism takes these mentions of "kingdom" (*basileia*) in Acts to mean that Jesus instituted some spiritual form of the kingdom at His first coming, and this is what Philip, Paul, etc. are preaching in Acts.

— The kingdom, when it arrives, will be a Jewish kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem, not a Samaritan kingdom headquartered on Mount Gerazim, which is what these hybrid-race Samaritans had invented

— Philip wanted these Samaritans to get saved, but he wanted them to get saved with the correct truth, not founded on the false teaching that characterized the Samaritans for hundreds of years

— "...and the name of Jesus Christ" - they had to get their theology correct about the Kingdom of God, and they had to correctly identify that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth (Cf. 4:12)

— The true Messiah that must be trusted to receive salvation was Jewish, not a Samaritan (Cf. John 4:22)

— These Samaritans, including Simon the Sorcerer, placed their trust/belief in Jesus Christ, then they were water baptized

— Baptism is an outward reflection of an inward reality. These people had come to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, then they immediately demonstrated that decision by being water baptized.

Alva J. McClain

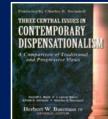
Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 424–26.

“The term ‘kingdom’ (Gr. *basileia*) occurs 8x in Acts as referring to the divine rule. In the Book of Acts this ‘kingdom of God’ appears as something future, the term being used, as James Orr has observed, ‘in an almost exclusively eschatological sense.’ The argument advanced by some, that since the apostles throughout the Acts period preached ‘the things concerning the kingdom of God’ (19:8), therefore the Kingdom must have already been established is not very good logic. Most of us preach and teach many things in the Christian faith which are not yet realized in experience. No sensible person would argue that because the apostles continually preached the resurrection of the dead, therefore, it must have already taken place.”



Stanley D. Toussaint

“Israel and the Church of a Traditional Dispensationalist,” in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 242.



“[T]he word Kingdom does not occur in Acts 2. It is difficult to explain why Luke does not use the term if the kingdom is being inaugurated. He employs it **45** times in the gospel and uses it two more times in Acts 1. [O]ne would expect Luke to use the word if such a startling thing as the inauguration of the kingdom had taken place. The fact that Luke uses kingdom only **8** times in Acts after such heavy usage in his gospel implies that the kingdom had not begun but was in fact, postponed.”

Philip wants these Samaritans to come to faith in Christ, but he wants them to do so by also understanding the entire truth. He focuses on the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ because he knows that these Samaritans have 700 years of false teaching in their history, and he needs to break through that false teaching with the truth that the kingdom will be

Jewish, not in Samaria, and that Jesus Christ was Jewish, not a Samaritan. Salvation did not come through a Samaritan Messiah, but through a Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ.

13 Now even Simon himself **believed; and after** being **baptized**, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was **repeatedly amazed**.

13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

13 Even Simon believed, and after he was baptized he became devoted to Philip. He was amazed to see the signs and great miracles that were happening.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

— "...believed" - *pisteuō*, same word used in v12 to describe the Samaritans. There's no reason, even with his subsequent wrong thinking, to conclude that Simon's faith did not meet the standard of saving faith.

— Why do many Christians and most commentators take the salvation of the Samaritans at face value, but doubt that Simon was saved, when the message they believed in was the same, the word used to describe their belief is the same, and the response to the message (baptism) was the same?

— Many interpreters (McGee, Toussaint, Wiersbe, Fructenbaum) conclude that Simon was an unbeliever (Cf. v24). His faith was grounded in miracles rather than in the name of Jesus.

— If your method of interpretation can say those in v12 are saved, but Simon in v13 is not, you have a poor method of Bible interpretation. What you're doing, obviously, is making the Bible fit your preconceived theology and distorting the Word of God rather than letting the Bible shape your theology. If you have to internally contradict yourself to get God's Word to fit your theology, your theology is not biblical.

— "...and after" - after what? After Simon believed.

— Every single time someone is water baptized in Acts, it takes place *after* faith alone in Christ alone. It never takes place before someone has placed their trust in Christ.

— This is why evangelical Christian churches do not perform infant baptism. First, sprinkling was not the form of baptism that was practiced by John the Baptist or the early church. Second, infants do not have the mental capacity to be saved, therefore baptizing them prior to faith alone in Christ alone is out of order.

— "...baptized" - *baptizō*, water baptism; an outward symbol of an inward reality

— Water baptism doesn't save anyone, but it's a testimony to the world of what has happened in our hearts (baptism of the Holy Spirit, Cf. 1 Cor 12:13)

- Water baptism is an outward symbol of the Spirit baptism that took place immediately at the point of faith, when we were "baptized" into Christ's body, the church
- Who baptized Simon? Philip did. Would Philip, if he believed Simon was not truly saved, still baptize him? Of course not. Philip believed that Simon was a genuine conversion. Philip obviously had no reservations about Simon's newfound faith.
- "...repeatedly amazed" - newly saved Simon began following Philip around, watching him perform "signs and great miracles"
- Simon had only been saved a very short period of time...no time to develop a habit of Bible study, prayer, or fellowship. All Simon knew from his pre-conversion days (5 minutes ago) was signs and wonders (sorcery).
- So when he saw Philip performing these signs and great miracles, he was amazed because that is what his previous life was all about. He had not yet come to realize that his previous works of sorcery from of the devil, and Philip's signs and great miracles were borne from God Himself.

Why Simon was Saved

1. Simon believed (8:12-13)

Luke uses the same word (*pisteuō*) to describe Simon's salvation that he uses in v12 to describe the salvation of the other Samaritans. Simon did not only believe, but he believed in the right thing. Faith is only as good as the object you have faith in. The Samaritans, and Simon, placed their trust in the bold message of Philip in v12.

2. He was baptized (8:12-13)

Simon followed the same process after faith/conversion as all of the other Samaritans: water baptism. Philip obviously had no reservations about the authenticity of Simon's faith, otherwise he would not have baptized him.

3. Simon experienced remorse (8:24)

After Simon was rebuked by Peter, he expressed remorse. This is evidence that the Holy Spirit is indwelling Simon and working on him. It's doubtful that Simon would've expressed such remorse without the Holy Spirit's conviction. This is a "secondary" evidence of Simon's salvation (the primary evidence is the promises of God).

After considering the reasons above, why do many commentators believe that Simon was not saved/justified?

1. He had "spurious" faith (Luke 8:13; James 2:19)

In a commentary on John 2:23-25, William Hendriksen says: "*Many trusted in His name; i.e., because of the manner in which his power was displayed they accepted Him as a great prophet and perhaps even the Messiah. This, however, is not the same as saying that they surrendered their hearts to Him. Not all faith is saving faith...*"

If all faith is not saving faith, then what is saving faith? They explain it by the acronym COPS: Commitment, Obedience, Perseverance, Service. And you better begin demonstrating these things fast, very fast, after you're saved, otherwise your faith is not a "saving faith."

If you buy into "all faith is not saving faith" it is impossible for you to have any assurance of your salvation. The type of faith that doesn't save, according to these people, is called "Easy Believism."

The background for thinking all faith is not saving faith is the belief that faith is a gift from God, and it is only given to the "elect" whom God has chosen. All others are "doomed from the womb." Because, they say, no human being has the ability to believe in Christ of their own free will, God has to first give the gift of faith to those whom He's "elected."

So if you happen to have the "right" kind of faith (with COPS), then you probably have received the gift of faith, but you really cannot be 100% sure. You really have to wait until the end of your life to see whether or not you were given the gift of faith and are really saved.

The two favorite passages of those who believe this are the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:13) and, of course, James 2:19.

Rebuttal

When someone brings in James 2:19 to argue a salvation issue, they are mixing apples and oranges. Salvation is not open/not an option for Satan or the demonic realm.

Salvation is not applicable to demons, so you can't use James 2:19 to argue about a type of belief that may or may not be authentic.

In the case of Simon the Sorcerer, or the people referred to by John in John 2:23-25, we're talking about human beings, to whom the plan of salvation is available. So you can't argue that a verse that refers to the belief of demons, to whom the plan of salvation is not open to and that is commenting on a completely different topic than salvation, to argue that a person's faith may or may not be authentic.

Also, in James 2:19, the gospel is not being presented. The name of Jesus is not present. James is simply saying that "You believe that God is one? Good, congratulations. The demons also believe (that God is one), and tremble."

James wrote to believing Jews to encourage them toward good works as an outworking of their faith. He never says that if they don't produce good works, their faith was non-existent; but he does say that if they don't produce good works, their faith is "useless" (*nekros*, "dead").

Acts 8 - Jesus is mentioned; James 2 - Jesus is not mentioned

Acts 8 - topic is human salvation; James 2 - topic is demonic salvation, which is not even possible

In response to the use of Luke 8:13 as evidence that Simon had a "spurious" faith: in the four parables of the soils, many interpreters assume that the only person saved is the person where the seed fell on good soil, it was watered, and it bore fruit. The standard interpretation of these parables assumes (not from the text) that the three others are unsaved.

However, biblically speaking, in three of the four soils the person is saved. Other than the seed that fell on good soil, in the other two examples (the seed that fell on rocky soil and the seed that fell among the thorns), the worries and stress of life choke the believer's maturity. They are saved, but they aren't making progress in the middle tense of their salvation.

According to our understanding of life, it begins at conception. The same is true with spiritual life...it also begins at conception (belief in Christ). We need to make a distinction between birth issues and growth issues. Jesus said that both the seed that fell on rocky soil and the seed that fell among the thorns "grew up" meaning that the seed was germinated and began to grow, but that growth was stunted in some manner. The idea of "spurious" faith says that the seeds that fell on the rocky soil "believe for a while" (Luke 8:13), but when temptation comes they fall away, meaning they were never saved because they did not persevere. And the seed that fell among the thorns, it "grew up" (Luke 8:6), but they bear no fruit to maturity (it's a maturity problem, not a birth problem).

2. He had "miracle faith" (John 2:23-25)

Those who believe Simon wasn't saved believe that he had "miracle" faith...he only believed because of the miracles that Philip performed. Simon observed the signs and was "repeatedly amazed" (v13), so he only believed because of the miracles he saw. They state that Simon never received the "gift of faith" which is always accompanied by commitment, obedience, perseverance, and service (COPS).

Rebuttal

When you read the John 2:23-25 passage, it says that these people didn't just observe the signs that Jesus did and had "miracle faith." The text also says that they "believed in His name" (*pisteuōeis*). Every time this Greek construction is used in John's Gospel, it refers to someone who is authentically born again (Cf. John 20:31). The entire purpose of John's Gospel is to describe the signs (seven of them) that Jesus performed in order to authenticate Him as the Messiah and Son of God. So why does Jesus say that He did not "entrust" Himself to them? Because they had not yet had the time to become obedient to Him, thus were not yet His "friends" (Cf. John 15:13-15). It's not that something was wrong with these newly saved people, they simply had not yet had the time to grow in their faith and spiritual maturity.

Jesus did not "entrust" them yet with additional divine insight/disclosure because they did not yet demonstrate a pattern of obedience (because of lack of time). The issue with these people is not whether they have the right faith to be saved; the issue is whether they will demonstrate a pattern of obedience in their lives so as to become "friends" of God.

3. Repent (2 Peter 3:9)

After Simon was trying to purchase the Holy Spirit, Peter rebukes him and tell him he needs to repent v22). And they say that the word "repent" only applies to unsaved people (Cf. Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9). Evidently, according to them, saved people do not need to repent.

Rebuttal

The idea that repentance only applies to non-believers is ridiculous. Read the letter from Jesus to the seven churches in Revelation. These believers are told to "repent" many, many times (2:5; 2:16; 2:21-22; 3:3; 3:19). Five of the seven churches were commanded to repent by Jesus Christ Himself. The repentance that Jesus commanded to these five churches was not a repentance for salvation, but a repentance to restore fellowship with Him.

4. Perish (John 3:16)

Because Peter uses the word "perish" (v20) while speaking with Simon, and because they take the definition of "perish" from John 3:16, they conclude that Simon was not saved and Peter is saying that he will go to hell.

Rebuttal

But Peter is not saying that because silver does not perish, so "perish" here must mean something else. Peter saying "May your silver perish with you" does not mean Peter is saying Simon was unsaved. He is saying that if Simon didn't repent and begin to experience mental renewal, there are things in your life that will begin to perish: ministry opportunities, rewards at the Bema Seat judgment,

5. Description of the lost (Acts 8:21,23)

Peter rebukes Simon harshly in v21,23 because of his desire to "purchase" the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter says to Simon that he is "in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

Rebuttal

How much time did Simon have to grow in the middle tense of his salvation? Maybe 1 hour. What Bible study program was he on? What discipleship training program did he

join? What small group Bible study did he start attending? None, zero, because he had just been saved.

Spiritual growth is a process. We have to continually avail our minds to the Word of God in order to grow, and that takes time and effort on our part. Simon had none of this. He had no biblical worldview or training. He knew nothing. He received a free pass out of hell, but the Holy Spirit had not yet begun to work in his life and growth.

6. Simon never received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18)

Verse 17 makes the point that all of the Samaritans who believed received the Holy Spirit, but it never explicitly says that Simon received the Holy Spirit (v18).

Rebuttal

Argument from silence. The text does not say that everyone received the Holy Spirit except Simon. You have to read into the text what you want it to say to believe that Simon did not receive the Holy Spirit.

But Philip baptized Simon, so evidently Philip believed that Simon was saved.

7. Founder of gnosticism

They state that Simon was an enemy of the true faith and the founder of gnosticism

Rebuttal

If this is true, Satan can use believers just as much as he can use an unbeliever. Jesus told Peter, Get behind me Satan! Peter was saved, but he was being used at that time as a tool of Satan to try to disrupt Jesus' pathway to the cross.

Ananias and Sapphira were saved, but Peter asked Ananias, Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?

What about Martin Luther, was he saved? Of course, no doubt. The leader of the Protestant Reformation. But read what Martin Luther said about the Jews; see [Martin Luther](#)

Couldn't the same thing happen to Simon that happened to Martin Luther? If we question Simon's salvation based on his alleged founding of gnosticism, we also need to question Martin Luther's salvation.

(C) Apostolic approval (8:14-17)

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

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

14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaritans had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

- Many Samaritans coming to a saving knowledge of Christ was cause for concern in the Church of Jerusalem. The seriousness with which the Jerusalem believers viewed the conversion of Samaritans is reflected by the sending of two of the most influential members of "the Twelve" to investigate the matter.
- They had questions regarding if it was possible for Samaritans to be saved. Was it really possible for Samaritans to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah, considering their centuries of antagonism and hatred of the Jews?
- "...had received the word of God" - they placed their faith in Christ
- "...Peter and John" - the apostles sent Peter to meet with the Samaritans to confirm their salvation because of what Jesus said in Matt 16:19: **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.**
- What Jesus gave to Peter were the keys to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is always portrayed as future in Acts, so what Jesus gave Peter the power to do was to "open the door" to the kingdom to various people-groups.
- Peter used these metaphorical "keys" to open the door to the future kingdom for the Jews (Acts 2), for the Samaritans (Acts 8), and will use them for the Gentiles (Acts 10)

15 who came down and prayed for **them** that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

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

15 They went down and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

- "...them" - the Samaritans who had placed their faith in Jesus
- It was important that both the Samaritan and Jewish Christians believed that God united them in Christ
- It was also important for the apostles to witness the Holy Spirit come upon the Samaritan believers
- The apostles sensed the presence of a genuine work of God, and this was confirmed by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritan believers
- When Peter and John went to Samaria, they observed that these Samaritans had, like themselves, also accepted Jesus as Messiah, but had not yet been baptized by the Holy Spirit
- They asked God to send His Holy Spirit to baptize them, as He had baptized the Jews who believed in Jesus

16 (For **He** had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

16 Before this, he had not come on any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

- "...He" - the Holy Spirit

- These Samaritans had been authentically saved, water baptized, but had not yet received the Holy Spirit

— This is a unique, non-normative situation in which a person believes in Jesus Christ by faith alone and is saved, but was not indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the point of faith (Cf. Rom 8:9)

— Why is this happening? The delayed indwelling by the Holy Spirit was due to the racial hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans were of a different religion than Judaism, with different worship locations, laws, etc.

— If the Holy Spirit would have indwelt the Samaritans immediately, without the laying on of hands by the Jewish apostles, the Samaritans would've created a completely separate sect within the church. There would have been a Jewish church and a Samaritan church. Such an idea is completely contrary to God's purpose for the church (Cf. Eph 2:14-15).

— So to demonstrate that the Samaritan church now belonged to the Jews, and the Jewish church now belonged to the Samaritans, that both were now one in Christ, which transcends man's racial divisions.

— The Baptism (indwelling) of the Holy Spirit is the act of God alone that invisibly attaches a believer to the Body of Christ (the church) at the point of faith, regardless of their location, ethnicity, gender, previous religious background, etc.

- It's important to understand that there are events that took place and are documented in Acts that are not normative for the church today. This is one of those events. Acts is a historical book rather than a doctrinal book (as opposed to the modern day charismatic movement, which bases their whole emphasis on the book of Acts).

— Today we don't accept the idea that a person gets saved, then the Holy Spirit indwells them at a later time, just because we see that happening here. We understand that Acts is a transitional book, and therefore does not always document the normative Christian experience.

— Because of the transitional nature of Acts, you can take something that only happened in Acts and call it normative for the church today. You must also see it in the epistolary literature.

17 Then **they** began laying their hands on **them**, and **they** were receiving the Holy Spirit.
17 Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.
17 Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.
- "...they" - Peter and John
- "...them" - the new Samaritan believers
- "...they" - the new Samaritan believers

Does what happened in Jerusalem and Samaria set a precedent for a "second blessing" experience (i.e., the baptism of the Spirit as a separate work of God subsequent to regeneration)? Paul described normative Spirit baptism in 1 Cor 12:13 and Rom 8:9. The person who has not experienced Spirit baptism is not a Christian (Rom 8:9). Therefore the instances of Spirit baptism in Acts, when it followed salvation later, must have been exceptional occasions. This unusual separation of salvation and Spirit baptism is understandable. People needed to perceive Spirit baptism as such at the beginning of the church's history. God baptized believers with the Spirit—in this way—to validate Jesus' promise that He would send the Spirit to indwell believers permanently, something not occurring previously (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). See Tag: **3 Baptisms?**

The Differences in the Order of Receiving Spirit Baptism

In Acts 2, the Jews received Spirit baptism, and now in Acts 8, the Samaritans receive it. Since many people try to build a doctrine of the Holy Spirit from these historical events, it might be wise to note the differences in the order by which the baptism of the Holy Spirit was received by the different groups of humanity.

In the case of the Jews, the order was: (1) repentance; (2) water baptism; (3) Spirit baptism. In the case of the Samaritans the order was: (1) they believed; (2) they received water baptism; (3) the laying of hands by the apostles from Jerusalem; and (4) Spirit baptism.

In Acts 2, water baptism followed Spirit baptism; in Acts 8, water baptism preceded Spirit baptism. Also, there was the laying on of the apostles' hands in Acts 8, but no laying on of anyone's hands in Acts 2. This shows that there was no consistent pattern in the Book of Acts, so one cannot take a historical incident and make a theology out of it. See: **Delay in Spirit Baptism in the Book of Acts** section in [Holy Spirit](#) for more details.

(D) Simon's remorse (8:18-24)

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

- Simon had been steeped in paganism and Satanic magic for much of his life. When he sees what Peter and John did, he wanted the "Christian version" of this magic.

— Just because Simon was just saved, doesn't mean his worldview had changed, doesn't mean his lust of the flesh had disappeared, and it doesn't mean that he now understood the difference between his sin nature and new nature

— The fact that Simon was still interested in power shouldn't be surprising. He's had no time to adjust his paganistic worldview, no time to grow, no time to be around more mature believer, no discipleship whatsoever.

- When the apostles laid hands on the Samaritans and they received the Holy Spirit, Simon saw power being displayed...and he wanted some. This was the same fleshly desire that he had before he believed for salvation, but he just hadn't learn to reckon his sin nature dead yet.

19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

19 and said, "Give me this power too, so that when I lay my hands on someone, he will receive the Holy Spirit."

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

- Simon had ambition, which was good, he just went about it in the wrong way

— He desired greatness in his newfound Christian life because that's what he was used to before he was saved (Cf. v9)

— Simon is demonstrating lust of the flesh, which isn't only of a sexual nature. Lust of the flesh includes our desire for power, an appetite for recognition or popularity. Note the repetition of "me....I....my" in Simon's request.

20 But Peter said to him, "May your **silver perish with you**, because you thought you could acquire the gift of God with money!

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

20 But Peter told him, "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God's free gift with money!"

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

- "...silver" - what Simon tried to use to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit

- "...perish with you" - many interpret this as Peter is telling Simon that he's not saved and will "perish" in hell (John 3:16)

— Peter is obviously using "perish" here (same Greek word) differently than how Jesus used it in John 3:16. Peter is not telling Simon that "he" is going to perish if he does not change his mind ("repent," v22) about venturing forward in the flesh and acquiring power for yourself, you will forfeit rewards. It was his opportunity to earn reward will perish.

— Believers can do things in our sin nature that cause us to lose benefits/blessings we could have had, to disappear. One of those things that can "disappear" is rewards at the Bema Seat judgment (Cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 2 John 8; Rev 3:11).

— Paul was very concerned about his own reward "perishing" (Cf. 1 Cor 9:27)

21 You have no part or share in this matter, for **your heart is not right before God**.

21 You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

21 You have no part or share in what we're saying, because your heart isn't right with God.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

- "...your heart is not right before God" - what many commentators point to in arguing that Simon was not saved. However, there are many examples in Scripture about people who didn't have their heart right before God:

1. Peter tried to talk Jesus out of going to the cross. In response, Jesus told Peter, Get behind Me, Satan (Matt 16:23).
 - Peter was obviously saved, but because he pursued worldly thinking at that time, Satan exploited it.
 - Peter didn't change his position in Christ at that point, but he experienced broken fellowship with Christ.
2. Eph 4:26-27 says, Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.
 - If I'm harboring anger and bitterness toward someone, and I'm in that state for a long period of time, then Satan can use that excursion into the flesh, not to possess me, but as an opportunity to influence my life for his purposes.
3. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) - clearly saved, but lied to the church about giving the proceeds from their sale of land, and God struck them dead (maximum divine discipline).

4. 1 Thess 5:19 says "Do not quench the Spirit." Since this was written to believers, we must have the ability to quench the Holy Spirit.
5. Eph 4:30 says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..." Since this was written to believers, we must have the ability to grieve the Holy Spirit.

- In none of the above examples is the salvation/justification of the person(s) involved called into question. It is their fellowship with the Lord that is hindered through excursions into the flesh, not their eternal salvation.
- It's likely that Peter is realizing and growing in his spiritual gift of discernment/discriminating of spirits (v23; Cf. 1 Cor 12:10). He could look at Simon and see that his heart was not right before God.

22 Therefore, **repent** of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord *that, if possible*, the intention of your heart will be forgiven you.

22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

22 So repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your heart's intent may be forgiven you.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

- "...repent" - *metanoeō*, Peter commands Simon to "change his mind" about how to go about receiving the power of God

— Simon did not do anything outwardly wrong (murder, adultery, etc.); his sin was in his thinking or mindset. Peter is telling Simon to "change his mind" about how he goes about acquiring power and authority, or even his need to do so.

— Peter is not telling Simon to pray for judicial forgiveness (in order to be saved) because that occurred when Simon believed (Cf. v13). He is telling Simon that he needs to change his mind and seek forgiveness from the Lord in order to restore fellowship.

— Many people say that Peter told Simon to "repent" therefore Simon wasn't saved. That's ridiculous! Christians should develop a lifestyle of repentance. As God's Word soaks into our minds and the Holy Spirit points out certain things in my life that aren't right, I'm told to repent (change my mind) and invoke 1 John 1:9 (confession, followed by God's forgiveness).

- "...if possible" - this absolutely cannot mean that God may or may not forgive Simon, depending on His mood at the time. That would directly violate God's faithfulness and justness (1 John 1:9).

— "if possible" here refers to Simon and whether or not he will repent; it doesn't pertain to whether or not God will forgive him

23 For **I see** that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of unrighteousness."

23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

23 For I see that you're being poisoned by bitterness and you're a prisoner of wickedness!"

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

- "...I see" - Peter's spiritual gift of discernment/discriminating of spirits in action (Cf. v21)

- Simon was in bondage to his sin nature, because he had no other options. Now that he's a believer, he has not learned to reckon his sin nature as dead *because he hasn't had time nor the teaching to do so.*

— Simon spent his life until that point in a constant quest/lust for power. He wielded this power, authority, and popularity in Samaria as an unsaved person. Now that he's saved, he has not learned to reckon the sin nature dead as Paul instructs us in Rom 6. He's still living with that lust for power, he's just doing it now as a believer.

— At this point in his spiritual growth, he has simply slapped a coat of Christian paint over his lust for power because he didn't know any better

24 But Simon answered and said, "**Pray to the Lord for me** yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

24 Simon answered, "Both of you pray to the Lord for me that none of the things you have said will happen to me."

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

- Simon is remorseful after Peter's rebuke...

— In addition to the use of the word "believe" (*pisteuō*) as well as the fact that Philip baptized him (v13), this is additional evidence that Simon was saved (Cf. James 4:5)

— "...Pray to the Lord for me" - Simon likely didn't feel worthy to pray to the Lord himself, so he asked Peter to pray for him

(E) Apostolic influence (8:25)

25 So, when **they** had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

25 So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

25 After they had given their testimony and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, continuing to proclaim the good news in many Samaritan villages.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

- "...they" - Peter and John

- Once Peter opened the door to kingdom entrance to the Samaritans, the door stayed open (Rev 3:7-8)

(3) Philip evangelizes the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26-40)

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Get ready and go south to **the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.**" (This is a desert road.)

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)

26 Now an angel of the Lord told Philip, "Get up and go south on the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a deserted road."

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

- A new commission from God to Philip, delivered by an angel

- "...the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza" - the *Via Maris* ("The Way of the Sea"); it was a well-known trade route that connect Egypt with Mesopotamia

— The angel instructed Philip where to go, but didn't give him a reason why or what would happen. God forced Philip to obey Him by faith.

— God did the same thing to Paul on his second missionary journey (Cf. 16:6-10). He told him to avoid going to Asia (northern Asia Minor) and also avoid going to south to the cities he visited during his first missionary journey.

— God knew that Peter would eventually evangelize the region of Asia (1 Peter). God wanted Paul to go to Europe to plant the seed of the gospel there, which he did.



Stanley D. Toussaint

Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 374

“Though Luke gave no record of God’s commanding Philip to preach to the Samaritans (v5), God did sovereignly direct Philip toward Gaza. The highway is referred to as the desert road. The expression may refer to a desert road or a desert city. Ancient Gaza was destroyed in 93 BC and the city was rebuilt nearer the Mediterranean in 57 BC. The old city was called Desert Gaza. The Greek for the angel’s command could be translated, ‘Arise and go to the south to the road...that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert.’ This reference to the road in 8:36 may imply that the road, not the city, was in a deserted area.”

Philip Tells an Ethiopian Eunuch about Jesus

Luke recorded this incident to show the method and direction of the church’s expansion to God-fearing Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism at this time. The Ethiopian eunuch had visited Jerusalem to worship, was studying the OT, and was open to instruction by a Jew. Therefore he was much more sympathetic to the Christians’ gospel than the average Gentile. This man appears to have been the first full-fledged Gentile that Luke recorded being evangelized in Acts, though he may have been a *diaspora* Jew.

This story was probably relayed by Philip to Luke when he and Paul were entertained in Philip’s house at Caesarea, 20 years later (21:8).

27 So he got ready and went; and there was an **Ethiopian eunuch**, a court official of **Candace**, queen of the Ethiopians, who was **in charge of all her treasure**; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,

27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,

27 So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, who was a member of the court of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was in charge of all her treasures and had come up to Jerusalem to worship.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

- Immediate obedience, but Philip may have questioned God's timing at this point because he was evangelizing in Samaria, a region that was away from God for over 700 years, and experiencing huge converts
- But God had more important things for him to do, like plant a seed of the gospel in Africa
- "...Ethiopian eunuch" - a proselyte (a non-Jewish convert to Judaism); in the ancient times officials in the palace were eunuchs to protect the harem, but as time went on that title tended to be an office (a high military or political figure), not necessarily a condition imposed biologically.
- Because he was a eunuch, he wasn't a full-fledged proselyte, he was a "half proselyte" (Cf. Deut 23:1)
- He was, however, a very sincere seeker of God. And the Lord knew that once he was evangelized, the gospel would penetrate the highest levels of the Ethiopan monarchy.
- "...Candace" - not a proper name, but a title similar to "czar" or "kaiser" (king of Germany); her personal name was evidently Amanitare (25-41 AD)
- "...in charge of all her treasure" - this eunuch was very influential as he was in charge of all of the queen's treasure
- Ethiopia at this time described a kingdom located south of modern Egypt in Sudan; it lay between the first Nile cataract at Aswan and the modern city of Khartoum
- An Ethiopian at that time would be assumed to be black; this is how Ethiopians are described by Herodotus and others [Herodotus 2.22, 3.131]
- There is no evidence that there was any prejudice based on skin color in antiquity
- See [Ark of the Covenant: A Relic with a Future?](#) for conjectures on the purpose for the Eunuch's trip to Israel.



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 200-201



"The text states that he was a eunuch. Eunuchs were often employed by oriental rulers in positions of high office. They were also male servants of female dignitaries, but only placed in such positions after having been castrated... Politically, he was a highly influential official under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. 'Candace' (*Kandakēs*, in Greek) was not a proper name, but the title of the queen of Ethiopia, much like the word 'Kaiser' was the title of the king of Germany and 'Czar' was a title of the king of Russia."



Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

The Book of Acts, 200-201



“Because the king of Ethiopia was considered to be a child of the sun and therefore a person too sacred to be involved with secular functions of the royal court, all such duties fell to the queen mother, who had the title of ‘Candace.’ As a result, she was the real power behind the throne, and Ethiopia was a de facto matriarchy. The eunuch was in charge of her treasure, which means he held one of the highest governmental positions. His influence in Ethiopia would therefore have been very considerable.”

28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading Isaiah the prophet.
28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.
28 Now he was returning home, seated in his chariot, and reading from the prophet Isaiah.
28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet.
- This eunuch was on a spiritual pilgrimage, as a Jewish proselyte, to Jerusalem
— He had some type of spiritual encounter while in Jerusalem, now he is reading the most famous OT prophet, Isaiah, to get further understanding

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and **join this chariot.**”
29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.”
29 The Spirit told Philip, “Approach that chariot and stay near it.”
29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.
- This is the confirmation for Philip to go...in v26 God used an angel to instruct Philip, here it is God the Holy Spirit speaking to Philip directly
— God here is invoking the ancient principle of having a matter be confirmed by 2-3 witnesses
— If God is leading you to do something or go somewhere that is a radical life change, it's good to invoke this principle and ask the Lord to confirm it by 2-3 witnesses
— "...join this chariot" - *kollaō*, literally "glue yourself to this chariot"
— What the angel and Holy Spirit are asking Philip to do took courage to carry out on Philip's part. The eunuch was a high government official with a security detail.
— Philip was risking his life by carrying out this command

— But if Philip had refused the instructions of the angel and Holy Spirit and remained in Samaria, God's work would have still been done for this Ethiopan eunuch, it just wouldn't have been Philip who received the honor and reward for doing it (Cf. Esther 4:14)

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "**Do you understand what you are reading?**"

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah out loud.

Philip asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

- "...Do you understand what you are reading?" - Philip is not referring to the meaning of the words, but of Whom the words spoke

— A very important question that Philip asked the eunuch because many read but few actually comprehend, many hear but do not listen, many see but do not understand (Cf. Is 6:9)

— The Holy Spirit does not eliminate the need for human teachers or diligent study; the Spirit is given to make study effective

31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

31 The man replied, "How can I unless someone guides me?" So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

- The eunuch could not understand what he was reading; he needed a teacher to explain it to him (Cf. Eph 4:12)

32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED LIKE A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND LIKE A LAMB THAT IS SILENT BEFORE ITS SHEARER, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He does not open His mouth.

32 This was the passage of Scripture he was reading: "Like a sheep he was led away to be slaughtered, and like a lamb is silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

- The eunuch was specifically reading Is 53:7-8...

- Philip responded to the eunuch's confusion by explaining how Jesus had fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant

33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUSTICE WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL DESCRIBE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS TAKEN AWAY FROM THE EARTH."

33 "In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth."

33 In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his descendants? For his life is taken away from the earth."

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

- Most Jews regarded Is 52:13—53:12 as referring either to their nation or the Gentile nations

— Jesus quoted from Is 53 as finding fulfillment in His Passion (Luke 22:37); Philip followed Jesus' interpretation

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?"

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"

34 The eunuch asked Philip, "I ask you, who is the prophet talking about? Himself? Or someone else?"

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

- Philip is now sitting with the eunuch in the chariot, and the eunuch asks Philip to provide some context to the Isaiah 53 passage that he is reading

— The eunuch is asking Philip to "make a defense" to him who "asks you to give an account for the hope that is within you" (1 Peter 3:15)

— We are called to prepare ourselves through our knowledge of the Word to give an answer to those who are seeking answers about Christ, whether they are saved or not

— It would've been embarrassing, and the Lord wouldn't even have placed Philip in this position, if he wasn't able to explain Isaiah 53 to this eunuch. He would've missed out on the blessing of being used for a great evangelical opportunity.

35 Then **Philip opened his mouth**, and beginning from this Scripture he **preached Jesus to him**.

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

35 Then Philip began to speak, and, starting from this Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus.

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

- "...Philip opened his mouth" - "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Rom 10:17)

— Philip expounded the OT Scriptures, beginning with Isaiah 53, so this eunuch could understand that the entire OT pointed to Jesus Christ

— "...preached Jesus to him" - Philip preached a Person: The Lord Jesus Christ

- This is a good example of the Spirit of God using the Word of God through a Man of God to bring salvation to the Elect of God (Cf. 1 Peter 1:23-25)

— The word "beginning" shows that Philip also used other Scriptures besides Is 53 to proclaim the gospel

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch *said, "Look! Water! **What prevents me from being baptized?**"

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch *said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water. The eunuch said, "Look, there's some water. What keeps me from being baptized?"

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

- The desert road crossed several stream beds that empty water from higher elevations into the Mediterranean during wet months

- The Ethiopian may have already known about water baptism since he held an interest in Judaism; the Jews required water baptism of Gentile converts

- "...What prevents me from being baptized?" - the Jews did not baptize physical eunuchs and take them in as proselytes of Judaism (Deut 23:1)

— The treasurer may have asked this question because he was a physical eunuch

37 [And Philip said, "If you **believe** with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I **believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

37 Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." He replied, "I believe that Jesus the Messiah is the Son of God."

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

- "...believe" [2x] - *pisteuō*, the single condition that God has put forth for a person to be saved

— The eunuch placed his faith/belief in the correct object, Jesus Christ

- Rather than simply fulfill the eunuch's request to be baptized, Philip first confirms the eunuch's faith/belief in the right object, Jesus Christ

— Water baptism always follows faith in Christ, it never occurs prior to a person placing their faith in Christ

The acceptance of the Samaritans (v4-17) and an Ethiopian into the new faith demonstrates expansion beyond not only the geographic boundaries of Jerusalem and Judea but also beyond the cultural and racial boundaries of both Hebraic and Hellenistic Judaism. It is highly significant that the accounts both of these expansions include approval given by the undeniable presence and activity of God.

38 And he ordered that the chariot stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

38 So he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

- Philip follows the process of water baptism by full immersion, not by the sprinkling of infants

— The only biblical support people use to support infant baptism is the covenant with Abraham, where circumcision (on the 8th day) was instituted for newborns

— However, that was God's program for Israel, which has nothing to do with water baptism, which is God's program for the church

— In passages dealing with water baptism, the Greek word for "sprinkling" (*rantismos*, 1 Peter 1:2) is never used; neither is the Greek word for "poured" (*spendō*, 2 Tim 4:6)

- Reasons why full immersion water baptism is the biblical norm include:

1. Christ's baptism (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10)
2. Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (v36-38)
3. Water baptism best symbolizes our union with Christ (Rom 6:3-5)

4. Water baptism best symbolizes the believer as a new creation (Gen 1:6,9; 2 Cor 2 Peter 3:5)

39 When **they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord **snatched** Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing and did not see Philip again.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

- "...they came up out of the water" - Philip and the eunuch both came up out of the water, implying water baptism by full immersion

— If Luke wanted to communicate the means of baptism as "sprinkling" or "pouring" of water, he would've used other Greek words (Cf. 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Tim 4:6). Other reasons to believe that baptism in the early church was by full immersion include:

- Christ's baptism (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10)
- Ethiopian eunuch's baptism (Acts 8:38-39)
- Full immersion best symbolizes our union with Christ (Rom 6:3-5)
- Full immersion best symbolizes a new creation (Gen 1:6,9; 2 Peter 3:5; 2 Cor 5:17)

- "...snatched" - *harpazō*, same word used to describe the rapture of the Church

- We learn through the writings of early church fathers that this Ethiopian eunuch brought the gospel to Ethiopia [Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 12, sections 8-10]

Various "Raptures" in the Bible

1. Enoch (Gen 5)
2. Elijah (2 Kings 2)
3. Christ (Acts 1:11; Rev 12:5*)
4. Philip (Acts 8:39*)
5. Paul (2 Cor 12:2,4*)
6. John (Rev 4:1-2)
7. Two Witnesses (Rev 11)

* Greek word (*harpazō*) used

40 But Philip found himself at **Azotus**, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to **Caesarea**.

40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

40 But Philip found himself at Azotus. As he was passing through that region, he kept proclaiming the good news in all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

- Philip was raptured out of Gaza and brought to Azotus/Ashdod, and he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities along the Mediterranean coast north to Caesarea

- Philip eventually settled in Caesarea (Cf. 21:8-9), which was the official residence of the governors of Judea. It is the place where civil and military governors typically went.

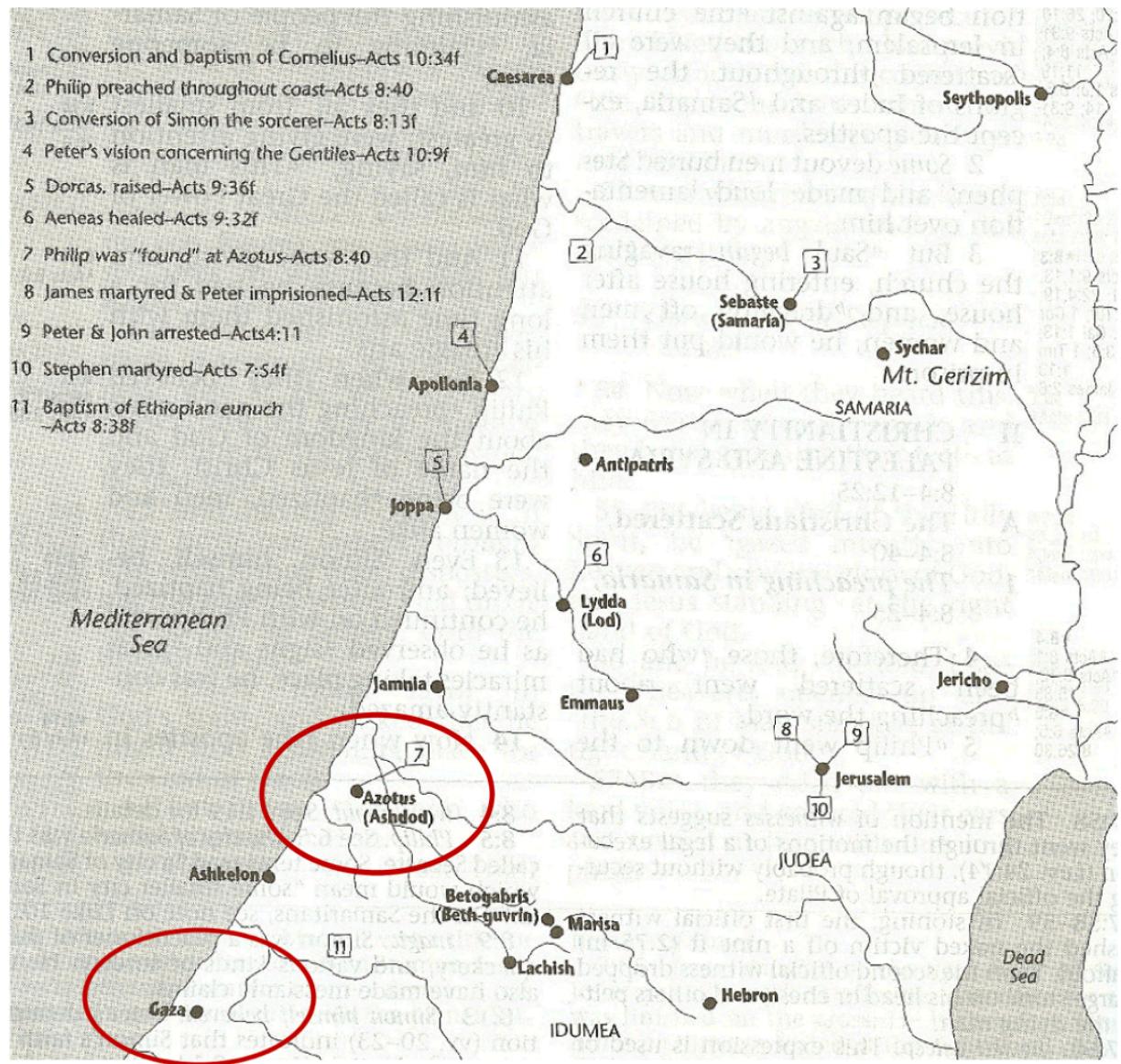
- "...Azotus" - ancient Ashdod

- "...Caesarea" - Caesarea Sebaste; built by Herod in honor of Augustus (Greek *Sebastos*). Between Carmel and Joppa, 55 mi NW of Jerusalem (not Caesarea Phillipi, which is north of the Sea of Galilee)

- Roman procurators resided there; present ruin has an inscription of Pontius Pilate

- 20 years later, we find Philip living in Caesarea (21:8-9)

- Because of Philip's movement, Caesarea became the new center of Judean Hellenistic evangelism and discipleship until 66 AD



The very first Christians were Jews (2:1–8:4). Then Samaritans became Christians (8:5–25). Now, a Gentile, who was either a Jewish proselyte or a near-proselyte, entered the church. Probably all these converts thought of themselves, at this point, as simply religious Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Only later did they learn that what God was doing, was not just creating a group of believers in Jesus within Judaism, or a faithful remnant, but a whole new entity, namely: the Christian church (Cf. Eph 2-3).