

Acts 044

Was Simon Saved?

Acts 8:10-12

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Let's take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 8:10. On Wednesday evenings we are continuing our verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Acts.

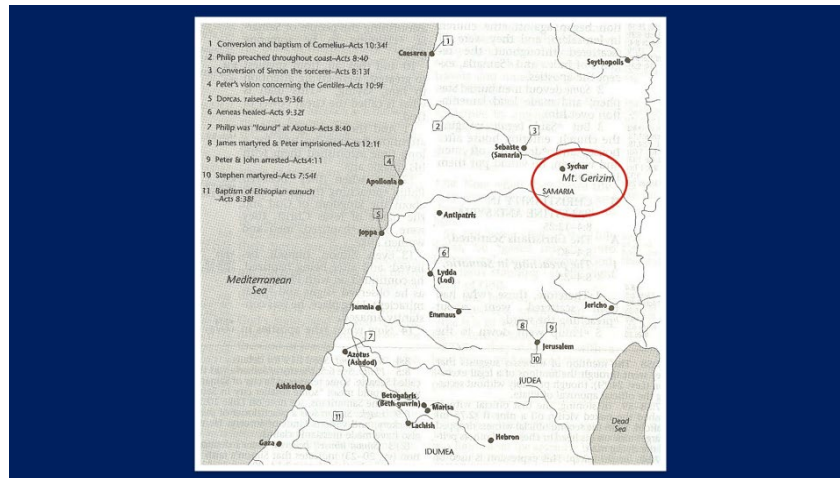
Acts 8:5-40
Philip's Ministry

- I. **Samaria (8:5-25)**
- II. **Judea (Acts 8:26-40)**



We are in a section in the Book of Acts where the church in Jerusalem, through Saul of Tarsus, has been scattered. They have moved out to different areas, including Samaria. Acts 8 focuses on a key person who was pushed out of Jerusalem into Samaria, named Philip.

Philip was a deacon. He was the second deacon named when the apostles established the deacons in Acts 6. But here you see Philip functioning not so much as a deacon, but as an evangelist. We have a record of his ministry here in Acts 8. It has two parts to it: his ministry in Samaria in the first half of the chapter (Acts 8:5-25); and then his ministry in Judea in the second half of the chapter (Acts 8:26-40).



So this is where Samaria is. That is where Philip is, up north from Jerusalem. Last time we saw the evangelization of Samaria by Philip, Acts 8:5-8.

I. Ministry in Samaria

Acts 8:5-25

- A. Evangelization in Samaria (5-8)
- B. Simon's conversion (9-13)
- C. Peter & John lay hands on the Samaritans (14-17)
- D. Peter rebukes Simon (18-25)

Then someone else gets evangelized: Simon the sorcerer, Acts 8:9-13.

B. Acts 8:9-13

Simon's Conversion

- 1. Simon's deception (9-11)
- 2. Samaria's response to Philip's preaching (12)
- 3. Simon's response to Philip's preaching (13)

We left off last time with the description in Acts 8:9-11 of Simon and who he is and his deception that he was wowing everybody into through black magic and things of that nature prior to his conversion.

1.

Acts 8:9-11
Simon's Deception

a) The deceiver (9)

b) The deceived (10)

c) The deception (11)



We saw Simon's deception: Simon the deceiver, wowing—amazing—a whole city with his miracles that he was performing as he was tapped into the dark side (Acts 8:9). Then as you go down to Acts 8:10, you see all of those deceived by Simon. In fact, if you look at Acts 8:11, you will see the words *"a long time."* Simon had been deceiving this whole city, this whole area, with black magic for a long time.

You see the deception people were pulled into in Acts 8:10. It says,

"and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, 'This man is what is called the Great Power of God'" (Acts 8:10).

You are dealing here with people who do not have a biblical worldview. Any miracle they think they see happening, they automatically assume that it comes from God. They do not have a concept like we do in the Christian worldview that yes, although God is the ultimate performer of miracles, Satan has a lot of power too, and he can perform miracles as well.

So this whole city is really in this state of deception. All of the classes of society in this city were deceived, from the very smallest, (people of little influence) to the greatest (people with the greatest influence). When I see that, I cannot help but think about the false prophet who is coming, yet future. Revelation 13 says of him, describing the events of the Tribulation Period, in the famous "mark of the beast" passage,

"And he [the false prophet] causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead," (Revelation 13:16).

This coupling of opposites that you see here shows you the worldwide deception that the false prophet will bring the world into one day. I have some quotes from a few commentaries. One says,

"Revelation 13:16 uses the terms 'small and great,' 'free and slave,' 'rich and poor' in order to describe those under the influence of the second beast. Such a coupling of opposites is a way of stressing the totality of human society."¹

"John mentions six classes of people from the social, cultural, and economic categories. Because 'all' ('pantas') probably refers to all of the classes rather than all of the individuals, these groups taken together comprise the entire human population."²

"These classes should be understood as communicating universality due to the fact that they encompass every civic, class, and cultural rank."³

One more commentator says,

"Thus, commentators have recognized the language of Revelation 13:16 as a formula for universality and the entire human population."⁴

So one day the false prophet will come and will deceive the whole world. Simon here in Acts 8 is a prefigurement of that. He is not deceiving the whole world. He is deceiving a locality, because you will see the word "Samaria" there in Acts 8:5, and you see the word "Samaria" at the end of Acts 8:1. Simon is a prefigurement, if you will, of the coming false prophet who will not just deceive everyone in Samaria, but will deceive the whole world.

Simon apparently had a lot of power. He was deceiving people from the smallest to the greatest. That would include everyone in between. His deception is described there in Acts 8:11. It says,

"And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts" (Acts 8:11).

Now keep in mind those words *"a long time" (Acts 8:11)*. When Simon believes, there is no opportunity for him to have his mind renewed as a new believer, because he had been thinking the same way for a long time. So he is going to pull into his post-conversion experience the old way of thinking, because he had not had the time for discipleship, for mental renewal.

This is a truth about Christians: your mind works a certain way before you get saved. Then you get saved, and yes, we are new creatures in Christ Jesus. But just that we are

¹ William Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 260.

² Ibid., 261.

³ John Constable, *Notes on Revelation*, 126.

⁴ Robert Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, 179-180.

saved does not mean we immediately jettison old mental habits. We still think the way the world thinks. Part of the mark of discipleship is to submit ourselves to the authority of Scripture, search the Scriptures daily, and allow mental renewal to take place.

This is an opportunity that Simon, once he believes, has not had yet. As a Christian, he is still thinking the way he used to think as an unbeliever, having been in this position of power, tapped into satanic power, amazing an entire city with his satanic power for a long time, Acts 8:11. So Simon, for a long time, was deceiving Samaria, and then Philip the deacon/evangelist shows up. Philip begins to spread the good news, and you have there in Acts 8:12 Samaria's response to Philip's preaching.

Notice, first of all, Act 8:12. It talks about the faith of these new Samaritan believers. It says,

"But when they believed Philip..." (Acts 8:12).

There is a single condition that is necessary for a lost sinner to be saved. There is one action verb for the lost sinner to fulfill, and that is to believe. To believe what? To believe on the message of Jesus Christ. "Believe" means to trust. The moment a human being who is lost, dead in their trespasses and sins, exercises faith in this way is the moment they are justified before a holy God.

The Samaritans fulfilled that single condition, because it says in Acts 8:12,

"...when they believed Philip..." (Acts 8:12).

Lewis Sperry Chafer tells us,

*"...upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only (cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31)."*⁵

One of the classics is Genesis 15:6, concerning Abraham.

"Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

Another classic passage on this is John 3:16, which you all know well.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes [the single condition] in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Another really classic passage on this is Acts 16:30-31, where the Philippian jailer asks,

"... 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They [Paul and Silas] said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,..." (Acts 16:30-31).

⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

Salvation is not complicated. God has made it simple for a reason: human beings can take no credit in it. When I receive something as a gift, I do not get the glory. The giver of the gift gets the glory. God wants people to spend eternity with Him. So He has designed salvation in such a way that it is not overly complicated.

It does not rest on standardized test scores or vocabulary ability or IQ. It just requires a simple understanding of the things of Jesus Christ—that He died and paid a penalty for the sins of the world; He rose again on the third day; He offers us eternal life; and we trust in that, not in ourselves. The moment that happens, a person is saved.

That is what is happening here in Samaria. They just have a simple evangelistic message spearheaded by Philip, and many, many Samaritans are believing. What is interesting is that nobody doubts the salvation of these Samaritans. But commentator after commentator after commentator looks at Acts 8:13, which uses the exact same word "believed" relative to Simon, and they switch their method of thinking right between two verses. They say, "Well, although the Samaritans were authentic believers, Simon was not." I will explain why they think that a little bit later.

Acts 8:13 says,

"Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized,..." (Acts 8:13).

So if the word "believe" is enough to convince commentators that the Samaritans were saved, why can Simon, saved one verse later, not also be a believer?

2. Acts 8:12
Samaria's response to Philip's preaching

- a) Faith (12a)
- b) Content (12b-c)
- c) Response of faith: baptism (12d)



You have the content of what these Samaritans believe. Their faith is mentioned in Acts 8:12. What exactly did they believe? The content is given in the rest of Acts 8:12. Notice what it says:.

"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" (Acts 8:12).

b)

Acts 8:12b-c

Content

1) Hebrew kingdom (12b)

2) Hebrew messiah (12c)



So what exactly did these Samaritans believe? They believed in the message of the kingdom of God. The Greek word there for "kingdom" is "basileia" (βασιλεία). The word is used eight times in the Book of Acts. A lot of people think that because Philip preached the good news of the kingdom the Millennial Kingdom had arrived in spiritual form. A lot of people teach that because there is a handful of texts in the Book of Acts indicating the preaching of the kingdom.

Let me give you those passages quickly. One is Acts 1:3, which we have already studied. It says,

"To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering [referring to Jesus], by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

There is the Greek word "basileia" (βασιλεία): "kingdom." The word is used again in Acts 1:6:

"So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6).

The word "basileia" (βασιλεία) is used here in 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" (Acts 8:12).

The word "basileia" (βασιλεία) is also used in Acts 14:22. Now, some of these are obvious references to a future kingdom, this verse being one of them. Acts 14:22 says,

"strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22).

The Greek word "basileia" (βασιλεία) is also used in Acts 20:25.

"And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face" (Acts 20:25).

"Basileia" (βασιλεία) is also used twice at the end of the Book of Acts concerning the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Acts 28:23 says,

"When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening" (Acts 28:23).

There is one more reference in Acts 28:31. It says,

"preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered" (Acts 28:31).

So there are about eight texts in the Book of Acts that mention this "kingdom," the Greek word "basileia" (βασιλεία). What people think is, "Well, obviously Jesus started the Kingdom in an invisible spiritual form—at His First Coming, the Kingdom arrived. This is what the Apostle Paul is preaching—the present existence of the Kingdom."

That is a belief called "Amillennialism." "A-" is a negation meaning "no." "Millennium" means "a thousand years." These folks, by and large, do not believe that there is a future thousand-year Kingdom because we are in the Kingdom now in a spiritual form. So they grab these eight passages and they say they are proof that the spiritual form of the Kingdom had arrived.

Let me give you this quote here from Alva J. McClain. It is very helpful on this issue. I think he has it right in his classic book, "The Greatness of the Kingdom." I quote it in my book, "The Coming Kingdom," where both McClain and myself and Dr. Toussaint (whom I will mention here in a second) are arguing that we are not in the Kingdom now. If this is the Kingdom, I must be living in the ghetto section, basically, because I do not really see Kingdom conditions of world peace and all that kind of stuff. We are arguing that the Kingdom is yet future, after Jesus comes back at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

So if that is true, how do we handle these eight passages in the Book of Acts that make it look as though the Kingdom is here? Paul went around preaching the kingdom. Philip here is preaching the kingdom. McClain says,

"The term 'kingdom' (Grk. 'basileia') occurs eight times 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 [a famous theologian] has observed, 'in an almost exclusively eschatological [futuristic] sense.'...The argument advanced by some, that since the apostles throughout the Acts period preached 'the things concerning the

kingdom of God' ([Acts] 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."⁶

So, part of the Christian message is the future hope of the Kingdom. We are headed for a better world, amen? Are you looking forward to that? Now, just because you talk about it as a future hope does not mean that it is happening now, any more than preaching a sermon on the future resurrection body means that we are in the future resurrected body now. (That is part of the Christian hope. Did you guys all know you are destined for a future resurrection body? Some of you look like you could use one. I think I could use one about this time.).

Just because you talk about that as part of the future Christian hope does not mean that we are in the future resurrected body now. You could lead a Bible study as a Christian on the Book of Revelation, which is a book primarily about the future hope of the Christian, and just because you are leading a Bible study on the Book of Revelation does not mean you are saying that the Book of Revelation is occurring right now.

So that is how to understand these passages about the "kingdom." In all of these passages—eight of them—the "kingdom" is never defined. You have to read into it what the Old Testament already revealed concerning the Millennial Kingdom. It is a time period when Israel is the head and not the tail. It is a time period when Israel is regenerated as a nation. It is a time period when the Dead Sea will come back to life.

It is a time period when people will beat their swords into plowshares. World peace will break out. It is a time period when Junior in the backyard will put his hand into the cobra's nest, and nobody will be worried about it. It is a time period when people will die at the age of one hundred and everybody will be shocked that such a young man died at such an early age. Lifespans will be elongated, etc.

That is how the Kingdom is defined in the Old Testament. So when we see the word "kingdom" in the New Testament with no definition, we are not free to just read into it whatever we want. We have to bring in that Old Testament meaning. Eight times in the Book of Acts it talks about how the early Christians went around preaching the "kingdom." It is not a statement that we are in the Kingdom now. It is a statement that the Kingdom is part of the Christian hope, so part of Christian teaching and Christian proclamation says, "If you believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved, and you are a citizen of the coming Kingdom."

That is how to handle these eight passages in the Book of Acts where the word "basileia" (βασιλεία) is used. Now, Dr. Toussaint brings up something very important concerning Luke, who wrote not just the Book of Acts, the sequel, but also his prequel,

⁶ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 424–26.

called the Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke is part one; the Book of Acts is part two. The Gospel of Luke records the earthly ministry of Christ; the Book of Acts records the ministry of Jesus through the newborn church after His ascension from the right hand of the Father. Luke and Acts are part one and part two of the ministry of Jesus.

Dr. Toussaint, regarding Luke's two-part set, Luke and Acts, makes a very important observation about the Kingdom. He says,

"[T]he word Kingdom does not occur in Acts 2...."⁷

That is where everybody thinks the Kingdom started. That is a little strange when the word "basileia" (βασιλεία) is not even in Acts 2. At any rate, he goes on and he says,

"...It is difficult to explain why Luke does not use the term ['basileia' (βασιλεία)] if the kingdom is being inaugurated. He employs it forty-five 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 eight times in Acts after such heavy usage in his gospel implies that the kingdom had not begun but was in fact, postponed."⁸

You always have to keep this in mind: when Luke writes his prequel, part one, the word "basileia" (βασιλεία), "kingdom," is found forty-five times. That is a massive usage. But when Luke gets to part two of his book, The Book of Acts, he only uses the term "basileia" (βασιλεία) eight times.

So why such a heavy usage in Luke, but a minimal usage in Acts? The answer is that in Luke the Kingdom was on the table. It was being offered to the nation of Israel. The King was present. They had a golden opportunity to receive the King on the King's terms. This is what is called the offer of the Kingdom to a nation, sometimes called the gospel of the Kingdom. Had the nation responded, the Millennial Kingdom, hypothetically, would have appeared.

But we know the sad story. The Pharisees, the leadership of Israel, attributed Christ's miracles to Beelzebub, and the moment they did that (Matthew 12 talks all about it) the Kingdom offer was withdrawn. Once you get to Matthew 12, heavy mention of the Kingdom stops, because the Kingdom is no longer in play. It is no longer being offered to the nation of Israel. We are then, at that point, in an age of postponement, the Inter-Advent Age, the Church Age, which we are in now. We have been living in it for 2,000 years.

The Kingdom is not in play right now. It is not imminent. It is not an immediate expectation, because the King is not here. Israel had an opportunity to receive it. She rejected it. The offer was pulled off the table. What we are now in is the Church Age, when we preach the gospel. Part of the gospel is that one day the Kingdom will be

⁷ 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.

⁸ Ibid.

established on Planet Earth. One day after the Rapture, during the Tribulation Period, the offer of the Kingdom will be re-extended to Israel, and Israel will get it right a second time. She will receive the offer, and the Millennial Kingdom will come.

But we are not in that age right now. We are not in that time period. The Kingdom offer has been withdrawn for a season. We are in a different age, a different dispensation, called the Church Age, or the Inter-Advent Age. So that is why Luke, in part one of his two-part series (Luke and Acts), says, "Kingdom," "Kingdom," "Kingdom," "Kingdom," "Kingdom," "Kingdom," over and over again. The Kingdom was in play during Luke's Gospel. It was being offered.

But in part two (Acts), the word "kingdom" is only used eight times, referring to a future Messianic hope as part of Christian teaching of the future hope—not arguing that we are in the Kingdom now, because the Kingdom is no longer being offered today. Rather, what is being offered is the gospel of personal salvation to men and women, who can trust the gospel and consequently be saved, and become citizens of the coming Kingdom.

So all of this needs to be explained when you read statements like this about Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God. He is not offering the Kingdom. He is not saying that the Kingdom is here. It is one of those scant eight references in the Book of Acts where a Christian is preaching the gospel of salvation, which includes the hope of participating in the coming Kingdom.

So what Philip is saying here to these Samaritans is very, very important. The import of what Philip is saying here will not make sense to you unless you have a little bit of background on the Jewish-Samaritan conflict. This is a racial conflict that goes back seven hundred years. Let me try to sketch it together for you, if I could.

ISRAEL'S JUDGMENTS

- Division of the kingdom in 931 B.C. (1 Kgs. 12)
- Assyrian judgment in 722 B.C. (2 Kgs. 17)
- Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kgs. 25)
- Rome *Diaspora* in A.D. 70 (Luke 19:41-44)



God said to Israel all the way back in the Law of Moses, that "if you disobey Me, I will bring discipline." Remember, after Solomon's reign, the nation of Israel was divided into the two southern tribes, Benjamin and Judah, and the ten northern tribes. Well, after that division, the Northern Kingdom of Israel went downhill really fast into idolatry. God,

in the Law of Moses had said, "I will bring discipline." So He brought discipline on the Northern Kingdom through the Assyrians in 722 B.C. You can read all about that in 2 Kings 17.

The Assyrians came and pushed the Northern Kingdom out of their land, and the land was empty. So what the Assyrians did was they brought in a bunch of Babylonians to replace the Jews that had been evicted. You read all about this in 2 Kings 17:24-33. Let me just read those verses to you. They say,

"The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and from Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel...." (2 Kings 17:24).

So the Northern Kingdom was taken out of their land in 722 B.C. The Assyrians replaced the Jews who had been evicted by God with Babylonians.

"...So they [the Babylonians] possessed Samaria and lived in its cities. At the beginning of their living there, they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them. So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, 'The nations whom you have carried away into exile in the cities of Samaria do not know the custom of the god of the land; so he has sent lions among them, and behold, they kill them because they do not know the custom of the god of the land'" (2 Kings 17:24-26).

"You brought in a bunch of Babylonians to replace the Jews, but God is still a holy God, and when these people act up because they do not know any better, God brings discipline through various sources like lions."

"Then the king of Assyria [the one who evicted the Hebrews in 722 B.C.] commanded, saying, 'Take there one of the priests whom you carried away into exile and let him go and live there; and let him teach them the custom of the god of the land'" (2 Kings 17:27).

"Now, here is what we will do. We will make these people obedient. We will bring in a Jewish priest from exile to teach these people how to live so that the lions will not keep devouring them."

"So one of the priests whom they had carried away into exile from Samaria came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses of the high places which the people of Samaria had made, every nation in their cities in which they lived" (2 Kings 17:28-29).

So the Babylonians started to mix Judaism with paganism together. This is the origin of the Samaritans, seven hundred years in advance that we are reading about here in Acts 8.

"The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of the Sepharvaim. They also feared the LORD and appointed from among themselves priests of the high places, who acted for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the LORD and they served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile" (2 Kings 17:30-33).

So what happened was that these Babylonians were brought in. They were blatantly disobedient. So the king of Assyria says, "Okay, we are going to have to teach these people the truth." So they brought in a priest to teach them the ways of the Lord. But all the Babylonians did was they mixed together the things of God with their paganism. As a result, they started to intermarry with the Jews in the land, many of the Jews still in the Southern Kingdom.

So what was inadvertently created in 722 B.C., probably out of good intentions, was a hybrid religion and a hybrid race. Jews were intermarrying with Babylonians, and they were embracing some of the things of God, but in a practice called syncretism, trying to work in their own paganism at the same time. They became a hybrid race practicing a hybrid religion. That is who these Samaritans are.

The pure Jews, the pure Hebrews, hated the Samaritans, and the pure Samaritans hated the Jews. This conflict between the two groups existed for seven hundred years. Seven hundred years is a long time. That is the lifespan of the United States of America times two—almost times three.

So if you are interested in racial reconciliation and things like that, those kinds of issues that people are talking about today, the truth of the matter is that we have the greatest Book that deals with that subject. We are not the first people who have had to deal with racial reconciliation. The Samaritan-Jewish conflict goes back seven hundred years before the time of Christ. These people hated each other.

When the Jews, the Hebrews, got back from the Babylonian captivity, and started to rebuild the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed seventy years earlier, these Samaritans, this hybrid race who practiced a hybrid religion, wanted to help with the construction project. The pure Hebrews said, "No help from you Samaritans. We do not want your help with the temple at all." You will see all of that transpiring in Ezra 4:1-4. The Samaritans resented that.

Around this time period, when Nehemiah started to rebuild the walls around the city of Jerusalem, there was an antagonist in the Book of Nehemiah named Sanballat. When you study Sanballat in Nehemiah 6:1-19, you will see that he was a Samaritan. In fact, the Samaritans, with their hybrid religion, would not go to Jerusalem to worship. "You arrogant Jews go to Jerusalem. We are going to go somewhere else called Mount Gerizim."

Now, where is Mount Gerizim? See how close it is to Samaria?



Going back to the time of Moses, God told Moses, when the children of Israel entered the land coming from the east, crossing the Jordan, "I want half of the tribes to go up to Mount Gerizim and read the blessings of the Law, the blessings for obeying God. I want the other tribes, the remaining six, to go to Mount Ebal. [You can see that Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal were right next to each other.] And once you get up to Mount Ebal, I want you to read the curses of the Law." So Mount Ebal was known as the "Mount of Cursing," and Mount Gerizim was known for the "Mount of Blessing."

So when this hybrid religion and hybrid race (the Samaritans) started, obviously you would not go and make Ebal your headquarters, because that is where the curses were read. They gravitated toward Gerizim. That is why in John 4:20, when Jesus is ministering to the Samaritan woman, she says this:.

"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain [Gerizim], and you people [Jews, Hebrews] say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship"
(John 4:20).

So Gerizim is where the Samaritans went to worship. They would not go to Jerusalem like the pure Hebrews. Consequently, what developed between these groups over seven hundred years was pure racial and religious hatred between the groups. That is why, when Jesus, in Luke 9, went into a Samaritan village, and they would not receive his message, James and John, pure Hebrews, said, "Lord, shall we not call down fire from heaven and destroy these people?" (paraphrase, Luke 9:54).

Why would you say something like that? That is so over the top. Well, it is not over the top if you are a racist and you hate the Samaritans because they are a different race, a hybrid race, and hold a different religion. By the way, that is the Love Apostle, John, talking there, saying stuff like that.

It says this in Luke 9:51-56:

"When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans [exactly where our Acts 8 story is taking place] to make arrangements for Him. But they [the Samaritans] did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51-53).

"Jesus, we do not want anything to do with you because we are all about Mount Gerizim and you are all about Jerusalem."

"When His disciples James and John [the sons of Thunder] saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But He turned and rebuked them [and said, 'You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;']" (Luke 9:54-55).

In other words, "You are basically racist, and against people because of their religion."

"[f]or the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.]" And they went on to another village" (Luke 9:56).

The hostility between the two groups, which existed for seven hundred years, boils right to the surface, with James and John saying, "Let's just nuke these people and just get to get the show on the road here." That is why, when you are reading Luke's Gospel and you come to Luke 10:25-37, the good guy in the whole thing is the Good Samaritan—not the Levite, not the priest, not the Hebrew, but the Samaritan is the guy who helps out. You are supposed to read that and you are supposed to be shocked. It is supposed to take your breath away. "You mean the Samaritans can do some good?"

That is why when Jesus, in John 4, ministers to the woman at the well, none of the disciples, the pure Jews, can believe that He is talking to her. First of all, she is sexually immoral. That is strike one. Secondly, she is a woman. Women in that time had no rights whatsoever, so that is strike number two. Then if all of that were not bad enough, she is a Samaritan. So why would you waste your time with her?

Not only can the disciples not believe He is talking to her, but the woman cannot believe He is talking to her either, since she knows this racial tension that has gone on for seven hundred years. John 4:9 says,

"Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)" (John 4:9).

Why does John 4:9 say "(For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)"? Because of this background that I am giving you here.

John 4:27 says,

"At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, 'What do you seek?' or, 'Why do You speak with her?'" (John 4:27).

The disciples could not believe that the Son of God would waste his time with someone who is sexually immoral, strike one; someone who is a woman, strike two; and someone who is of the wrong race, strike three. I will add another strike: someone who is of the wrong religion, strike four. Why would You waste Your time talking to her?

The fact that Jesus goes out of His way to minister to her shows you that Jesus does not operate by the racial hatred that controls Planet Earth. He is interested in redeeming souls. Their creed, color, religion, and ethnicity do not matter. He is interested in people. But the disciples are interested in continuing to foment racial hatred.

Once you understand this background, then you start understanding why Philip, as he is evangelizing these people in Samaria, is emphasizing the things that he is emphasizing. Why is he talking about the Kingdom? Why is he mentioning the Kingdom as a future Messianic hope? Why even bring that up?

Because he wants them to understand that the Millennial Kingdom is coming to the earth, not through Mount Gerizim, the way they think; it is coming to the Earth through the city of Jerusalem. That is why Philip is emphasizing the Kingdom in his evangelism. It is necessary for them to know that the Millennial Kingdom would be a Hebrew Kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem, not a Samaritan kingdom headquartered in Gerizim, which this hybrid race and hybrid religion invented.

In other words, "I want you people to get saved, but I want you to get saved to the right truth." Old Testament prophecy is pretty clear, is it not? What city is going to be the headquarters of the earth one day in the Millennial Kingdom? Jerusalem. Isaiah 2:1-4 in the Old Testament makes this very clear:

"The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

Now it will come about that

In the last days

The mountain of the house of the LORD

Will be established as the chief of the mountains,

And will be raised above the hills;

And all the nations will stream to it.

And many peoples will come and say,

'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

To the house of the God of Jacob;

That He may teach us concerning His ways

And that we may walk in His paths.'

For the law will go forth from [Gerizim—it does not say that] Zion

And the word of the LORD from [Samaria—it does not say that]

Jerusalem.

And He will judge between the nations,

And will render decisions for many peoples;

And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Nation will not lift up sword against nation,

And never again will they learn war."

Zechariah predicts the same thing:

"Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem [this is in the Millennium] to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths" (Zechariah 14:16-18).

In other words, if you want to worship Jesus during the Millennial Kingdom, you have to go to Jerusalem. If you will not do that, then there is an immediate punishment.

When Satan is released from his abyss at the end of the thousand-year Kingdom, Revelation 20:9 says that he gathers a rebel army.

"And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city,..." (Revelation 20:9).

When Satan gets his chance to rebel at the end of the thousand years, Revelation 20:7-9, he gathers this army against the beloved city. Now, what is the beloved city? It is Jerusalem. Why does Satan attack Jerusalem when he gets one last shot at rebellion? Robert Thomas says,

"At the end of the Millennium that city [Jerusalem] will be Satan's prime objective with his rebel army, because Israel will be a leader amongst the nations."⁹

Even the devil knows where the nerve center, or headquarters, of the Millennial Kingdom will be. The Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, is very clear prophetically: the Kingdom will be located in Jerusalem. So that is why, when Philip is evangelizing these Samaritans, he wants them to understand exactly who it is they are believing in. They are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who one day—not today, but one day—is coming back to this planet. He is going to establish His throne not on Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans have gone for seven hundred years, but he is going to set it up in Jerusalem.

⁹ Robert Thomas, *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*, 207.

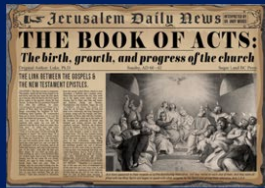
What is happening is that these Samaritans are believing the message. They are putting aside their religion, they are putting aside their racial hatred, and they are embracing the gospel. That becomes a prototype related to how you fix racial tension in our country, or in any other country, for that matter. Rather than get into all the politics of everything, preach the gospel. What you will see is people of all ethnicities believing it, because in the church there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

Skin color does not mean anything to God in terms of dividing us. You will see people who formerly hated each other coming together. Of all of the talk—and there is a lot of talk in the culture today about race tension, and Christians are getting involved in racial reconciliation and all of these kinds of things—I hear almost nobody talking about Acts 8 yet. Acts 8 is one of the greatest treatments you will find anywhere on the whole subject of racial reconciliation in the whole Bible, if not in the whole world, several times over.

As far as the content of the faith is concerned, Philip says he is emphasizing the Kingdom because he wants the Samaritans to understand where the Kingdom is going to be located. He does not want them to misunderstand and try to throw their paganism into their newfound gospel. So he wants them to embrace the true Jesus by faith.

b) Acts 8:12b-c
Content

- 1) Hebrew kingdom (12b)
- 2) Hebrew messiah (12c)



Then Philip, by way of content, mentions something else back in Acts 8:12:

"But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ,..." (Acts 8:12).

Philip wants the Samaritans to believe, which they are doing, in the true Jesus. Acts 4:12 says,

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The true Jesus came to the world through Israel, not through Samaria. The true Jesus has one-hundred-percent pure Jewish blood flowing through His veins. He did not come into the world through the Samaritan religion. In John 4:22, this is what Jesus said to the woman at the well whom He was ministering to:

"You worship what you do not know;..." (John 4:22).

In other words, "You are a Samaritan and you are over there on Gerizim thinking you are worshiping God. You are not worshiping God at all."

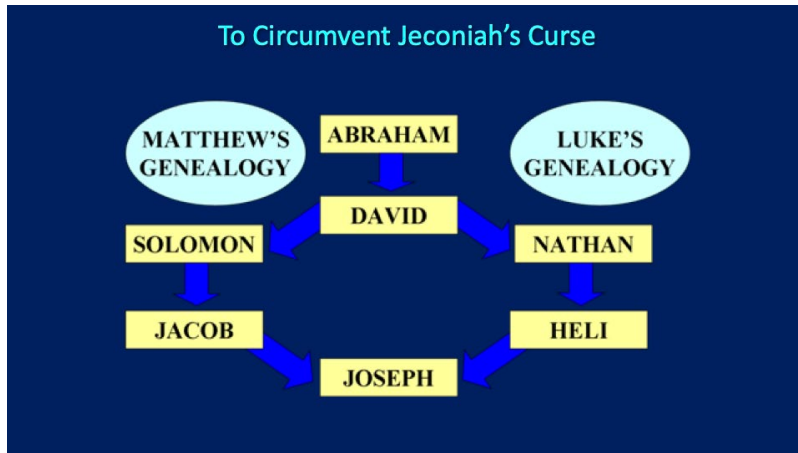
"You worship what you do not know; we [Jews, Hebrews] worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22).

So as Philip is doing this evangelization of Samaria, he is not compromising one bit about who Jesus is. A lot of people are believing. He wants to make sure they are believing the right thing: a Jewish Messiah; a Jewish Kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem is our future hope. "All this Samaria stuff that you guys have been doing for seven hundred years—it is false."

We know that Jesus came into the world through the nation of Israel because His genealogy is given in Matthew 1, where He is linked back to David, and then from David back to Abraham. The genealogy stops there because Matthew is interested in documenting the Jewish heritage of Jesus.

Jesus Genealogy According to Matthew		
1. Abraham	15. Solomon	29. Shealtiel
2. Isaac	16. Rehoboam	30. Zerubbabel
3. Jacob	17. Abijah	31. Abiud
4. Judah	18. Asa	32. Eliakim
5. Perez	19. Jehosaphat	33. Azor
6. Hezron	20. Jehoram	34. Zadok
7. Ram	21. Uzziah	35. Achim
8. Amminadab	22. Jotham	36. Eliud
9. Nahshon	23. Ahaz	37. Eleazar
10. Salmon	24. Hezekiah.	38. Matthan
11. Boaz	25. Manasseh	39. Jacob
12. Obed	26. Amon	40. Joseph
13. Jesse	27. Josiah	41. Jesus
14. David	28. Jeconiah	

Now, in Luke's Gospel, Luke 3, most people believe, is the genealogy from Jesus' maternal side, Mary. The Matthean genealogy is the genealogy through Jesus' legal father (Joseph), not His biological father, because He was virgin-born.



In both genealogies Jesus is connected back to David. You will see David in both genealogies. David, of course, is connected back to Abraham. So whether you are studying the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 or in Luke 3, He is Jewish. He is a Hebrew. He is a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, Paul the Apostle, in Romans 9:5, says, concerning the privileges of the nation of Israel,

"whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen" (Romans 9:5).

So Paul, in Romans 9:5, says that Jesus was Jewish. Why in the world would Philip put so much emphasis on the name of Jesus Christ as he is evangelizing the Samaritans? Why does he place so much emphasis on the coming Kingdom as he is evangelizing the Samaritans? He is trying to break through seven hundred years of religious and racial tension between two groups.

He wants these people to get saved, but he also wants them to come to the understanding of who they are coming to. They are not coming to some kind of Samaritan Messiah. They are coming to a Messiah who was born through the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That has to do with the content of their faith.

2. Acts 8:12
Samaria's response to Philip's preaching

- a) Faith (12a)
- b) Content (12b-c)
- c) Response of faith: baptism (12d)

The Samaritans believed in the right Jesus, Acts 8:12. What did they do at the very end of Acts 8:12?

"...they were being baptized, men and women alike" (Acts 8:12).

Well, what is this business about baptism? What is baptism? Baptism—here we are talking about water baptism—is an outward symbol of an inward reality. In other words, you believe the truth about Jesus. Consequently, you are saved. At that point, the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:13, takes the new believer, regardless of their gender or religion or whatever they are—American or whatever—and connects them to the body of Christ that has been in existence for 2,000 years.

It is called the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, by which you are identified at the point of faith with Christ's body worldwide. That is an inward reality that happens to somebody. When this inward reality takes place, water baptism is an outward symbol of that inward reality. Water baptism does not save anybody. Spirit baptism saves the soul. But to symbolize on the outside what has transpired on the inside, the first step of obedience for a Christian to pursue would be water baptism. That is why all these people (Samaritans in Acts 8) start getting water baptized.

Now, if they had died in the next split second between faith and baptism, would they go to hell? No, because all water baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality. If they had died prior to belief, then they would have gone to hell. But if they believed, died, and were not water baptized, then they would not have gone to hell, because baptism is just an outward symbol of an inward reality.

Notice who is getting baptized:

"...men and women alike" (Acts 8:12).

This demonstrates the emphasis that Luke is placing on women. Women were treated as sub-class citizens in the time of Christ, as is evidenced by the disciples' reticence when Jesus was ministering to a Samaritan woman. "She is the wrong gender. Why are you talking to her?"

Well, Jesus does not care about man's rules. He cares about people. He will walk through any religious wall man sets up if it involves reaching a lost soul. He will walk through any gender barrier that man sets up if it involves reaching a lost soul. He will walk through any religious barrier that man sets up if it involves reaching a lost soul.

Here, Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, post-ascension, is continuing this ministry through the church, through Philip. So Philip is walking through religious barriers, gender barriers, ethnic barriers, and racial barriers, because Jesus does not care about all that stuff the way man does. He cares about human beings. Consequently, both men and women alike are believing now on the true Jesus Christ and are being saved.

B.

Acts 8:9-13

Simon's Conversion

1. Simon's deception (9-11)
2. Samaria's response to Philip's preaching (12)
3. Simon's response to Philip's preaching (13)



What is interesting is that nobody doubts these salvations, but when the exact same thing happens to Simon, people doubt his salvation. Acts 8:13 says,

"Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized,..." (Acts 8:13).

Simon was a Samaritan. He too believed and was baptized. Everybody church says, "Well, he was not saved because he does not act the right way here." Well, there is a reason he does not act the right way. He has had zero time for growth. So his mind is still speaking, functioning, in a worldly way, the way it had been functioning for a long time prior to his conversion.

Next time I will go through the arguments both pro and con. I will give you the full debate on it—why I am convinced that Simon was an authentic believer because he believed and was baptized just like the rest of the Samaritans, whose salvation nobody doubts.