

- 1) Let's begin by looking at this unique situation with the Holy Spirit not coming immediately to the Samaritans.

Acts 8:14–17 (NIV)

- 2) Philip becomes the ground breaker here.
 - a) Jesus had commanded that they go to the Samaritans but Philip, as far as we know, is the first.
 - b) The Samaritans had at one time been idol worshipers but by this time that was over and they worshiped the true God.
 - c) However, they were not on the same page as the Jews because they were not totally accepting of the scriptures – only the first 5 books.
 - d) We must add however, they were looking for a Messiah just like the rest of the Jews.
 - i) But, without the understanding of the details provided by the prophets.
 - e) Additionally, there was much animosity – actually hate – between the Jews and the Samaritans.
 - f) All of these factors fed into the need which the apostles felt to go to see if they were truly believers.
- 3) We also have an interesting twist here in another way.
 - a) Scripture tells us that they (the apostles) wanted to assure that they received the Holy Spirit since they had only “been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”.
 - b) This situation is unique in that except for those who had been baptized with John's baptism, others appear to have received the Holy Spirit at their baptism.
 - c) If we go back to Acts 2, we see this:

Acts 2:38–39 (NIV)

- d) From this, we can imply that the Samaritans had **not** experienced the gift of the Holy Spirit in the same way as the believers on the day of Pentecost.
- e) Barton in the LABC says:

Many scholars believe that God chose to have a dramatic filling of his Spirit as a sign at this special moment in history—a “Samaritan Pentecost” paralleling the Pentecost that the apostles had experienced in chapter 2.

Bruce Barton et al., Life Application New Testament Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 501.

- f) Though Luke does not give specifics, we must conclude that this “laying on of hands” did deliver the Holy Spirit to these new members and that proofs were seen by all.
- 4) Now, back to our sorcerer friend Simon who we started talking about last time ...

Acts 8:18–24 (NIV)

- 1) There are two basic ways one can look at Simon at this point.

2) We are told in vs. 13 that:

¹³ Simon himself believed and was baptized

3) **So, Either**, he did believe and was baptized and probably even received the gift of the Holy Spirit himself by the laying on of the apostles hands.

4) **Or**, he believed but was up to no good from the very point he was baptized.

5) John MacArthur takes this later view as do some others.

a) Even some of the early church fathers attributed a man named Simon (a Samaritan) with being one who was a gnostic and actually claimed to be God incarnate.

i) (from my brief dive into this, he may or may not be the same Simon)

6) One other commentator put forth that Simon foolishly believed that Peter and John were in the same business as he was.

7) All that said, however, if, we deal with what Luke tells us here, though Simon does mess up badly, I think he really was a believer.

a) First, we really need to note that he does NOT want the gift of the Holy Spirit to endow him with supper powers.

i) Yes, he was amazed at the powers that Philip had, the miracles, and signs he performed.

ii) However, what Simon desires is: “this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit”.

b) Now, here is probably the place where he goes bad – why does he want this ability.

i) For the good of those on whom he lays his hands or to gain more accolades for himself?

ii) Perhaps to sell the gift of the Holy Spirit for money?

c) Whatever the reason, Peter is obviously appalled by his request and sees it for the sinful act that it is in his heart.

d) Again, we are not privy to Simon’s heart at the level God is however, we cannot ignore what his attitude is when Peter confronts him directly.

8) What I think we must conclude here is that the problem was what Simon tried to do.

“May your money perish with you, because you thought you could ***buy the gift of God with money!***”

9) To bring this perhaps into a little clearer focus, N.T. Wright comments:

any attempt to bring the spirit under human control is a nonsense and to be rejected outright.³

³ Tom Wright, [*Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 130.

10) His heart was wrong – and I think of some importance is that Peter challenges him to repentance.

- a) Some commentators seem to think that Peter even ousts him from the community with his comment.

You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God

11) Peter does make one further comment that should be considered:

For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.

So, what say you – Simon a total bad guy or just a believer that made a mistake?

12) We really don't have the final answer so...

13) As an aside here, if you have ever heard the word simony, it means the buying or selling of pardons, benefices, and other ecclesiastical privileges and it comes from Simon and what he did.

Acts 8:25 (NIV)

- 1) A little restatement and review here might add some perspective.
- 2) Remember the Samaritans were Jews (of a sort).
- 3) Samaritans kept to a form of Judaism but with significant elements changed.
- 4) Not liked by the average Jew – remember the Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus' conversation with her and the disciples reactions to her.
- 5) To say it clearly, these 3 guys (Peter, John, and Philip) were definitely outside their comfort zones and breaking new ground.
- 6) This was definitely part of what Jesus had explicitly told them to do.

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

- 7) This might be a baby step for what God is going to call on Peter to do shortly.
- 8) Now, Philip's adventure continues with (as we will see) a couple of drastic changes in location.

Acts 8:26–38 (NIV)

- 1) Before we get started discussing this, we need to address the status of verse 37.
 - a) Verse 37 is likely left out of some of your later translations.
 - b) It will be in the KJV.
 - c) The reason is that it is not found in earlier manuscripts meaning that it was likely added by a well meaning scribe at some later time.
 - d) The verse reads:

[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.”]

- 2) O.k. looking at this passage ...
- 3) The first thing to note here is that God is sending Philip in the opposite direction from his home in Caesarea.
- 4) Also, God, thru the angel is in charge of setting up this meeting and the subsequent conversion.
- 5) There are many scholarly opinions regarding the actual status of the of the eunuch.
 - a) Jew, Gentile, God fearer, proselyte, or something in between all these.
- 6) If we look at the facts given us in this scripture, we can get a picture that is as complete as we need without missing the major point which we will get to in a moment.
 - a) **Fact 1** – he had been in Jerusalem worshipping.
 - b) Given Fact 1, we must conclude **Fact 2** – he is either a proselyte or a God fearer.
 - c) **Fact 3** – he is seeking knowledge about the scriptures and is at least aware of the coming Messiah.
 - d) **Fact 4** – Gentile, proselyte, God fearer, or something in between, he is NOT a native Jew. He is Ethiopian and by that of a different race AND conversely, he must be a Gentile from that perspective.
 - e) He could not have been a proselyte because he was an eunuch and would not be allowed in the temple.
 - f) N.T. Wright comments here:

But there was something about the Jewish God and the Jewish way of life which had attracted him, as it did with many in the ancient world (if you think of the kind of gods that were worshipped by other nations, and of the kind of practices that were often associated with them, you might well see Judaism as a wonderful oasis of clean, calm wisdom).

- 7) There are a few more things we need to look at about this incident.
 - a) The eunuch had a scroll of at least the book of Isaiah.
 - i) In this time, one could not run to their local Barns & Noble and purchase a copy of this scroll.
 - ii) To have ones own personal copy, would require hiring a scribe and having that scribe transcribe a copy for you.
 - iii) Even if you could find one already written out it would not be cheap. Either way – not an inexpensive thing to have.
 - b) He was reading the scroll.
 - i) He either knew Hebrew and had an Hebraic copy or he knew Greek and had a copy of the Septuagint.
 - ii) Bottom line – he was a learned person.
- 8) From Philip’s side of this, he is sent down a road with really no idea as to why.

- 9) He meets the eunuch and only at that point is he given further directions – simply – “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”
- 10) From that point, Philip is on his own – he sees, he hears, and without hesitation, he takes action.
- 11) Philip gets into the chariot with the man and explains the Gospel to him based on his reading and question.
- 12) Final result is that the man is baptized and becomes a believer in God’s Son.
- 13) From all this, I think we can conclude that **God’s point here is Jew, Gentile, Samaritan, or WHATEVER!!** Take my Gospel to them.
- 14) Again and truly, it makes no difference what real label we put on this man.
 - a) He is NOT someone that the apostles would have considered a major or even minor part of their “target audience” – but, he is part of God’s “target audience”.

O.k. – A democrat, a republican, a Palestinian, a Russian and a Ukrainian are all in a chariot reading Isaiah – What would you do?

In all seriousness, if you found yourself in a situation where someone needed help understanding scripture, what would you do?