

# John 8:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

## Analysis

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The religious leaders' response reveals their bankruptcy of argument. Unable to answer Jesus's logic (v.46-47), they resort to ad hominem attacks. **Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?** This dual slander attempts to discredit Jesus through ethnic bigotry and demonic accusation.

"Samaritan" (Σαμαρίτης/Samaritēs) was a devastating epithet from Jewish lips. Samaritans were despised as half-breed apostates who worshiped on Mount Gerizim rather than Jerusalem (4:9, 20). The Mishnah later stated, "He who eats the bread of a Samaritan is like one who eats pork." By calling Jesus a Samaritan, they questioned His Jewish heritage, covenant membership, and right to teach in the temple.

"Hast a devil" (δαιμόνιον ἔχεις/daimonion echeis) escalates from ethnic slur to spiritual accusation. They had previously attributed His miracles to Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24), claiming demonic rather than divine power. This charge is not mere insult but blasphemy—attributing the Holy Spirit's work to Satan, the "unforgivable sin" Jesus warned against (Matthew 12:31-32).

The conjunction "and" links the two accusations: as a Samaritan, He's a heretic; as demon-possessed, He's deceived and deceiving. Both charges attempt to explain away His teaching without engaging its truth. This is the refuge of those who cannot refute the argument: attack the arguer.

## Historical Context

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Samaritan-Jewish hostility dated to the Assyrian conquest (722 BC) when Assyria deported Israelites and imported pagans who intermarried and syncretized worship (2 Kings 17:24-41). Jews returning from Babylonian exile rejected Samaritan help rebuilding the temple (Ezra 4:1-3), cementing centuries of mutual hatred. By Jesus's day, Jews traveling from Galilee to Judea would cross the Jordan to avoid Samaritan territory.

Ironically, Jesus had recently ministered to Samaritans (John 4), and would later make a Samaritan the hero of a parable exposing Jewish prejudice (Luke 10:25-37). The label "Samaritan" was meant as insult but actually highlighted Jesus's mission to "other sheep not of this fold" (10:16)—Gentile inclusion in God's family.

The demon-possession charge reflected Jewish categories for explaining the inexplicable. Confronted with Jesus's wisdom, miracles, and moral authority, they had three options:

1. acknowledge Him as Messiah
2. dismiss Him as demon-possessed, or
3. kill Him.

They chose all but the first. This exchange foreshadows His trial before the Sanhedrin, where false witnesses sought evidence for execution (Mark 14:55-59).

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. When we cannot refute biblical truth, how are we tempted to attack the messenger rather than examine our hearts?
2. What does this slander reveal about the human heart's capacity for self-deception when confronted with inconvenient truth?
3. How should Christians respond when accused falsely, following Jesus's example in the next verse?

## Interlinear Text

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Απεκρίθησαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπον αὐτῷ Οὐ  
answered Then G3588 the Jews and said unto him not  
G611 G3767 G2453 G2532 G2036 G846 G3756

καλῶς λέγομεν ἡμεῖς ὅτι Σαμαρείτης εἰ σύ, καὶ  
well Say we that a Samaritan art thou and  
G2573 G3004 G2249 G3754 G4541 G1488 G4771 G2532

δαιμόνιον ἔχεις  
a devil hast  
G1140 G2192

## Additional Cross-References

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**John 7:20** (Evil): The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

**John 8:52** (Evil): Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

**Matthew 10:25** (Parallel theme): It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

**Matthew 12:24** (Evil): But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

**Matthew 10:5** (Parallel theme): These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

**Matthew 15:7** (Parallel theme): Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

**John 4:9** (Parallel theme): Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

**John 10:20** (Evil): And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?