

Phillip's Preaching

Read Acts 8:4-40

In Acts 8:4-40, the persecution in Jerusalem led to Church leaders spreading out according to the outline of Acts 1:8. Philip went to Sychar in Samaria. This city had been considered hostile towards the Jews. Previously, Jesus had ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well. She became a believer in Jesus before His crucifixion and resurrection. As a result of her witness, many Samaritans became believers, too (John 4:1-42)!

Jesus prepared the ground for Philip's preaching in Samaria. The people were eager to hear Philip's teaching, supported by the miracles he performed in the name of Jesus Christ. This led to many conversions.

Completing his work in Samaria, an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, telling him to go on a desert road towards Gaza. There, he met an Ethiopian eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah. This man, who worked for Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, had been in Jerusalem and was on his way home. He was reading from the book of Isaiah. The Holy Spirit instructed Philip to "go up" into the chariot, leading to Philip explaining the scripture from Isaiah, which foretells the coming of Jesus Christ. As a result, the eunuch believed in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and immediately asked for baptism. After being baptized, he went on his way rejoicing.

Talking Points

- One of the seven deacons appointed as servant leaders by the apostles, Philip, went to Samaria after the Jerusalem persecution began.
- Samaria, previously hostile towards Jews, had seen a number of its citizens believe that Jesus was the Messiah due to the witness of the Samaritan woman who had interacted with Him at the well.
- The people of Samaria were eager to hear Philip's teachings about Jesus Christ, and his miracles further supported what he said.
- Philip's preaching led many Samaritans to believe in the resurrected Lord Jesus.
- An angel of the Lord then directed Philip towards a desert road leading to Gaza.
- On this road, Philip encountered an Ethiopian eunuch, an official of Queen Candace, who was reading from the book of Isaiah.
- Under the instruction of the Holy Spirit, Philip joined the eunuch in his chariot and explained the scriptures, which foretold the coming of Jesus Christ.
- The eunuch, convinced by Philip's explanation, professed his belief in Jesus Christ and was immediately baptized by Philip.
- The eunuch returned home rejoicing.

Background

At Caesarea Philippi, a significant event underscored the divine nature of Jesus. Conversing with His disciples, Jesus asked them about the public opinion of His identity. When the disciples relayed various theories, Jesus turned the question onto them, asking, "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" Peter, moved by divine revelation, responded, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus, acknowledging this revelation, designated Peter as the rock on which He would build His Church and entrusted him with the "keys of the kingdom."

Keys unlock doors. In Acts 2, Peter unlocked the door of the Church to Jewish people. But what about those who aren't Jewish?

Following the reception of the gospel presented by Philip to the Samaritans (see lesson # in the Old Testament series), the Church door needed to be opened to people of partially Jewish descent. As the custodian of the "keys of the kingdom," Peter was entrusted with that responsibility. Peter placed his hands on them and prayed they would receive the Holy Spirit. Immediately, the Samaritans were empowered to speak other languages, just as the Jews had been at Pentecost in Jerusalem.

Philip left Samaria enroute to Gaza. An Ethiopian eunuch, an official of Queen Candace reading from the book of Isaiah, serves as a second example of this intended inclusion in the Body of Messiah Jesus. The eunuch, like the Samaritans, was also likely to have been partially Jewish. After Philip explained the scripture, the eunuch's heart was opened, and he desired immediate baptism. The eunuch then returned home rejoicing, a testament to the transformative power of Jesus Christ. This event highlights the universal nature of God's Kingdom and how it transcends cultural and religious boundaries.

Bible Conversations

1. Practice explaining Peter's role in establishing and expanding the Church according to what happened at Caesarea Philippi.
2. How did Jesus' ministry lay the foundation for Philip's and Peter's ministry in Samaria?
3. Discuss the significance of the Holy Spirit falling on Jews in Acts 2 and Samaritans in Acts 8.
4. Read Isaiah 56:4-5. Why did the Ethiopian eunuch return home with such joy? How does this passage parallel with what happened in Samaria?