

Phillip [The Deacon and Evangelist]

Phillip was one of the seven who were chosen as deacons of the early church at Jerusalem, [Acts 6:5].

On the persecution of the church following the Martyrdom of Stephen, Philip took the gospel message to Samaria, where his ministry was blessed, [Acts 8:5-8].

Acts 8:4-8 [New King James] *“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralysed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”*

Demons or unclean evil spirits are ruled by Satan.

They are fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion against God, who can cause a person to be mute, deaf, blind or insane, or tempt people to sin.

Demons are active and real but Jesus Christ has authority over them and has given this authority to some of His followers, as we see in the actions of Philip.

Although Satan and his demons are allowed to work in our world, [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19], God is in complete control over everything that happens.

Acts 8:9-13 [King James] *“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: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptised, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”*

This is a man also known as Simon Magus, and is an example of a false apostle as the Corinthian church was warned to avoid, [2 Corinthians 11:13-15] empowered to do what they do by Satan. Simon’s true nature was shown to Peter and John when they arrived having heard at Jerusalem that Philip was reaching Samaritans with the gospel message, [Acts 8:14-24].

Simon only wanted the power of the Holy Spirit to add to the power he already had as a minister of Satan.

Jesus Christ personally warned that there would be an increase of such false prophets just before His Second Coming, [Matthew 24:24].

Peter and John then spent time preaching the gospel message in villages of the Samaritans before returning to Jerusalem.

The apostles were not convinced that the gospel message was for Gentiles [non-Jews] or even Samaritans [half-Jews] until Peter’s experience with Cornelius, [Acts 10:1-47].

Philip was next directed by God for a special work, to meet with an influential Gentile.

Acts 8:26-39 [New King James] *“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, ‘Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is desert. So he*

arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go near and overtake this chariot.' So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.' So the eunuch answered Philip and said, 'I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptised?' Then 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.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptised him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing."

How God used this man after his conversion is not recorded in God's Word, but such a supernatural event must have been important to God in His plan to spread the gospel message to the Gentiles.

Philip, after this incident with the Ethiopian eunuch, was supernaturally taken to Azotus, the Philistine Ashdod, and from there conducted an itinerant ministry until he reached the port of Caesarea, [Acts 8:40].

Events allowed Philip to be Paul's host many years later, [Acts 21:8].

The conversion of the Gentiles that was begun by Philip was continued across the whole Roman Empire by Paul.

Philip's life presents a challenge to Christians and non-Christians who are reminded that the gospel message is also for them.

Lessons from Philip's life –

God finds great and various uses for those who are willing to obey Him wholeheartedly.

The gospel message is for all human beings.

The whole Word of God, Old and New Testaments, help us to understand more about our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Both mass response [the Samaritans] and individual response [the Ethiopian eunuch] are valuable to the Creator God.