

Philip Preaches Christ in Samaria

Text: Acts 8:1-8

Introduction:

Following the martyrdom of Stephen, a great persecution has arisen, and many from the church at Jerusalem, were forced to flee out of Jerusalem and into all of Judea and Samaria. And those who were scattered "went everywhere preaching the word." Indeed the enemy sought to flush out the light of the Gospel, but in doing so, we saw that they only, ultimately, further unraveled the will of God, as the Gospel was now making its way outward into all of Judea and Samaria!

This morning, we begin to move the magnifying glass, over to one of those church members, who was forced to flee outward, into the land of the "half breeds," the Samaritans (the product of Jews mixed with Gentiles from the time of the Babylonian captivity). This morning, we consider the ministry of Philip, the deacon evangelist, as he brings the glorious news of Christ to the Samaritans.

I. Philip Preaches Christ in Samaria

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them" (vs. 5).

Perhaps, no one was more despised than the Samaritans. Their half Jew, half Gentile mixture, brought them into disfavor with both Jews and Gentiles. You get a sense of their enmity and separation from the "pure bread" Jews, when the Samaritan woman by the well (in John 4), is shocked by Jesus' request for her to give him a drink of water. "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, to give you a drink?" Jews and Samaritans don't associate together, especially from the standpoint of the Jews. The Samaritans were a despised people.

And furthermore, the Samaritans worshiped on their own mountain (Mt. Gerizim), rejecting true Temple worship, which took place in Jerusalem. While they believed in the same God of the Jews, even expecting a coming Messiah (The "Taheb"), they only embraced the first five Books of the Old Testament (The "Pentateuch"; Genesis through Deuteronomy). They had great regard for the Patriarchs, but again, they lost sight of the fact that salvation was "of the Jews," and thereby created their own idolatrous practices.

And so, Philip, we are told, went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them! Philip brought Gospel hope to these rejected, misinformed, deceived and misguided people. And here, we begin to see how God has a people from every tribe, and tongue and nation. Those utterly rejected by man, have a place in God's glorious plan of redemption, and brethren, what a blessing it will be, to one day see Samaritans, among the church triumphant, in glory! Philip preached to them! And what did Philip preach? Christ! He offered them the same Savior, who meets every culture and every people, right where they are, sharing the same desperate need of forgiveness of sins, and grace in Christ! Every nation, every language, every people group, every culture has that same common disease of sin in the soul, and is born alienated from, and at enmity with, the One Common Creator, who created all of us! And so, everyone desperately needs the redemption, freely offered in the risen Christ! Philip carried this truth into Samaria! And what was the response of these heathen, "half-breeds?"

"And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did" (vs. 6).

The multitudes "heeded" Philip's message of the Christ; they listened and they responded in belief. "With one accord," they heeded his message. There was a great movement of the Holy Spirit, such that they believed the message being preached to them, concerning the Christ! That same Spirit, who was at work in Jerusalem, had powerfully moved among these Samaritans! And the message, now being preached beyond Jerusalem and Judea, into Samaritan territory, was likewise accompanied by miracles. As Stephen, the deacon, was empowered by the Spirit to perform signs and wonders, as an accompaniment to his message, among the Hellenistic Jews, Philip, the deacon, was likewise empowered to perform such miracles among the Samaritans. The Gospel of Christ was pressing outward, and it would continue to press outward to the ends of the earth, as the foundation of Christ's church; the foundation for the fulfillment of God's mystery of uniting Jew and Gentile into one body, was being laid!

"For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed" (vs. 7).

Here, we are given a description of the kinds of miracles, which were performed by the Holy Spirit, through Philip. People, who were afflicted by demon possession, were freed from their bondage. And those who were paralyzed and lame, gained strength in their bones and muscles, and walked. Again, signs of the new creation and the ultimate coming, glorious

resurrection from the dead, were displayed, as the kingdom of God was breaking through with great power!

"And there was great joy in that city" (vs. 8).

Needless to say, there was great joy in that city. Demon possessed people were set free, lame and paralyzed people were walking, and most of all, salvation through Jesus Christ had come upon them! Indeed, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" When a war was in progress, those waiting back at home, longed to hear of the outcome of the battle [They didn't have video equipment and embedded reporters back then...you had to wait for a messengers return]. And when that messenger came running back, you would see him at a distance, and if he had good news for you; if he came with the news that your side was winning, you wanted to grab that messenger and hug him tightly, simply because he brought the good news into your ears! His feet were beautiful to you! Well brethren, what is it like to be trapped and condemned in your sin, without any natural hope of salvation, only to have a Philip enter your city with the good news of all that the risen Christ had done for sinners, such that any and all who believe in Him, will be saved! Is there any better moment of joy imaginable?! And yet, so many today are in desperate need of such news, having no hope beyond the brief time frame of this wicked and corrupt life, full of misery!

II. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

- 1) Who will go, brethren? What else matters? Who will go and proclaim this Gospel?
- 2) See the fruit of Stephen's death and the great persecution? Let us see times of suffering, persecution and trial, as perhaps, golden Gospel opportunities!
- 3) A ministry to Jw's and LDS...etc [in light of Samaritan "cult-like" religion]

Amen!!!