

PART 11: THE GOSPEL TO SAMARIA

ACTS 8:4-25

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MAIN IDEA

As a result of the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem, beginning with Stephen, the gospel began to spread from Jerusalem to Judea, and Samaria just as stated in Acts 1:8. Philip, one of the seven deacons appointed to serve under the apostles, successfully took the gospel to the Samaritans.

I. WHO WAS PHILIP?

There are four different men named Philip mentioned in the Bible. Acts 8:4-25 is referring to Philip the evangelist.

- Herod Phillip I (son of Herod's 3rd wife)
- Philip II (son of Herod's 5th wife)
- Philip the Apostle
- Philip the evangelist

Philip the evangelist was one of the original seven deacons selected to serve in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5). Philip had a heart for evangelism, and, when the "great persecution" arose in Acts 8:1, Philip left Jerusalem to become an evangelist in Samaria (Acts 8:5–12).

After the church in Samaria was started, Philip was used by the Holy Spirit to bring the gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch, a member of the court of Candace, the Ethiopian queen. Philip found the eunuch sitting in his chariot, reading Isaiah and trying to make sense of the prophet's words. Philip offered to explain, and the eunuch invited him to come up and sit with him. In the end, the eunuch was saved and baptized (Acts 8:26–39). Immediately following the baptism, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away to Azotus, where he continued to preach the gospel in the towns from there to Caesarea (Acts 8:40).



Twenty years later, Philip is mentioned again, still in Caesarea (Acts 21:8–9). Paul and Luke and others were traveling to Jerusalem, and they stopped at Philip's home in Caesarea. They stayed with Philip for several days. Philip had four unmarried daughters at that time, all of whom had the gift of prophecy. That is the last time the Bible mentions the evangelist Philip.

II. WHO WERE THE SAMARITANS?



The Samaritans occupied the country formerly belonging to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The capital of the country was Samaria, formerly a large and splendid city. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity to Assyria, the king of Assyria sent people from Cutha, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to inhabit Samaria (2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2-11).

These foreigners intermarried with the Israelite population that was still in and around Samaria. These "Samaritans" at first worshiped the idols of their own nations, but being troubled with lions, they supposed it was because they had not honored the God of that territory. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Assyria to instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed from the books of Moses, but still retained many of their idolatrous customs.

Additional grounds for animosity between the Israelites and Samaritans were the following:

1. They were considered as "half-breeds." Because the Israelite inhabitants of Samaria had intermarried with the foreigners and adopted their idolatrous religion, Samaritans were generally considered "half-breeds" and were

universally despised by the Jews.

2. They opposed the rebuilding of the Jerusalem walls. The Jews, after their return from Babylon, began rebuilding their temple. While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans vigorously attempted to halt the undertaking (Nehemiah 6:1-14).
3. They built their own idolatrous temple. The Samaritans built a temple for themselves on "Mount Gerizim," which the Samaritans insisted was designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, established his son-in-law, Manasses, as high priest. The idolatrous religion of the Samaritans thus became perpetuated.
4. They harbored Jewish criminals. Samaria became a place of refuge for all the outlaws of Judea (Joshua 20:6-7; 21:21). The Samaritans willingly received Jewish criminals and refugees from justice. The violators of the Jewish laws, and those who had been excommunicated, found safety for themselves in Samaria, greatly increasing the hatred which existed between the two nations.
5. The Samaritans embraced a religion that was a mixture of Judaism and idolatry. They rejected the Old Testament (Tanakh) except for the Torah. The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses and rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions (2 Kings 17:26-28).

From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded the Samaritans as the worst of the human race (John 8:48) and had no dealings with them (John 4:9).

In spite of the hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans, Jesus broke down the barriers between them, preaching the gospel of peace to the Samaritans (John 4:6-26), and the apostles later followed His example (Acts 8:25).¹

III. APPLICATION: HOW TO SHARE THE GOSPEL TODAY

Like Philip the evangelist, we too can share the gospel with others today:

A. By Sharing the Four Spiritual Laws of Salvation

1. Law #1: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life (John 3:16; 10:10).
2. Law #2: Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life. (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).
3. Law #3: Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life. (Rom. 5:8; John 14:6).
4. Law #4: We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, ask

¹ Who Were the Samaritans? <https://www.gotquestions.org/Samaritans.html>

for forgiveness of our sins and trust in him (John 1:12; Eph. 2:8-9).²

B. By Sharing the “Romans Road”

1. The Problem (Romans 3:10, 23): All have sinned and fall short of God's glory. The Scriptures tell us, “No one is acceptable to God!”
2. The Consequences (Romans 5:12; 6:23): Sin entered the world because one man sinned. And death came because of sin. Everyone sinned, so death came to all people.
3. The Solution (Romans 5:8; 10:9-10): God has shown us how much he loves us—it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us! If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.
4. The Assurance (Romans 10:13): Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

C. The “Sinner's Prayer”

“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior.”³

² Four Spiritual Laws <<https://crustore.org/four-laws-english/>>. Accessed November 28, 2019.

³ The sinner's prayer is a prayer a person prays to God when they understand that they are a sinner and in need of a Savior. Saying a sinner's prayer will not accomplish anything on its own. A true sinner's prayer only represents what a person knows, understands, and believes about their sinfulness and need for salvation.