



# ACTS 8:4-40

## Philip

# Last week in Acts..



- ▶ *The over-worked Apostles decided to choose seven men to be deacons.*
- ▶ *Stephen and Philip are among the 7 men chosen.*
- ▶ *Stephen was arrested for his teachings and is ultimately stoned to death by a crowd who was angered by his speech. Saul watched the cloaks of those who killed Stephen and then began an active persecution of Christians.*
- ▶ *In his speech, Stephen accused the Jewish leaders of not following the Law, of rejecting the prophets and of killing the Messiah about whom the prophets had prophesied.*
- ▶ *Stephen had a vision of Jesus Christ **standing** at the right hand of God.*
- ▶ *He asked the Lord to forgive those who stoned him and he gave up his spirit.*

# Some of the things to continue to look for when reading Acts of the Apostles....

- ▶ Miracles and healings done in the name of Jesus Christ (Philip in Samaria) vs 7
- ▶ Mass conversions (Samaria)
- ▶ Angels vs 26 (spoke to Philip)
- ▶ The importance of prayer and worship. Vs 15, 22, 24
- ▶ Emphasis on work of the Holy Spirit vs 18, 29, 39,
- ▶ Institution of sacraments in the early Church vs 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 38
- ▶ The four “marks” of the Church, **One**, **Holy**, **Catholic** and **Apostolic**.

# Acts 8:1-3



- ▶ On that day, there broke out a severe persecution of the church in Jerusalem, and ***all were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*** <sup>2</sup> Devout men buried Stephen and made a loud lament over him. <sup>3</sup> *Saul*, meanwhile, was trying to destroy the church; entering house after house and dragging out men and women, he handed them over for imprisonment.



# Backlash against all Christians.



- ▶ The words of Stephen were so inflammatory and accusatory of the Jewish leaders, that the result was not only anger against Stephen but against all Jewish-Christians.
- ▶ Christians left Jerusalem in fear, including Philip. However, they did not stop spreading the Word, the Good News of Jesus Christ!
- ▶ Note that the Apostles remained in Jerusalem.

## Acts 8:4-8

- ▶ <sup>4</sup> Now those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. <sup>5</sup> Thus Philip went down to [the] city of ***Samaria*** and proclaimed the Messiah to them.
- ▶ <sup>6</sup> **With one accord, the crowds** paid attention to what was said by Philip when they heard it and **saw the signs he was doing.** <sup>7</sup> For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice, came out of many possessed people, and many paralyzed and crippled people were cured. <sup>8</sup> **There was great joy in that city.**

# Philip the deacon also known as Philip the evangelist.

Not the same Philip who was an apostle, this Philip was one of the seven selected to assist the Apostles along with Stephen.

He is one of those who left Jerusalem when the persecutions became violent. Samaria was a safe haven away from danger.

Like Stephen, he is also a preacher. If he was, indeed one of the 70 or 72 that Jesus sent out to preach and heal, then he also knew Jesus and was quite familiar with Christian teaching.



# Samaria



Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel; In the first century, the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans was strained because of deep-rooted prejudice.

Samaritans were descendants of Joseph through his sons Manasseh and Ephraim.

After the Assyrians conquered the Northern tribes of Israel (722 BCE), they resettled that land with foreigners. Those people intermarried with the Israelites in the region. The foreigners also brought their pagan gods. The Jews accused the Samaritans of idolatry, straying away from YHWH, and considered them a mongrel race.



# A Man full of Wisdom and the Spirit

- ▶ Philip, like Stephen, was full of wisdom, the Holy Spirit and was trustworthy. But as a “deacon” he also performed Baptisms, preached effectively, healed the sick, AND performed exorcisms.
- ▶ Philip could read the Prophets and interpret their meaning in light of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus.
- ▶ Philip successfully evangelizes in Samaria performing great works that were previously ascribed to the Apostles.

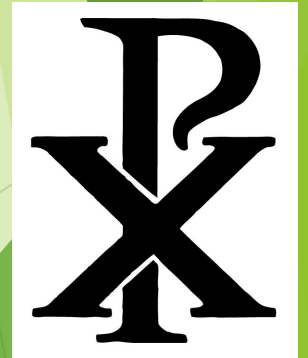
## Acts 8:9-13

- ▶ <sup>9</sup> A man named Simon used to practice magic in the city and astounded the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great. <sup>10</sup> All of them, from the least to the greatest, paid attention to him, saying, “This man is the ‘Power of God’ that is called ‘Great.’” <sup>11</sup> They paid attention to him because he had astounded them by his magic for a long time, <sup>12</sup> but once they began to believe Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, men and women alike were baptized. <sup>13</sup> Even Simon himself believed and, after being baptized, became devoted to Philip; and when he saw the signs and mighty deeds that were occurring, he was astounded.
- ▶ (mass conversions and women)

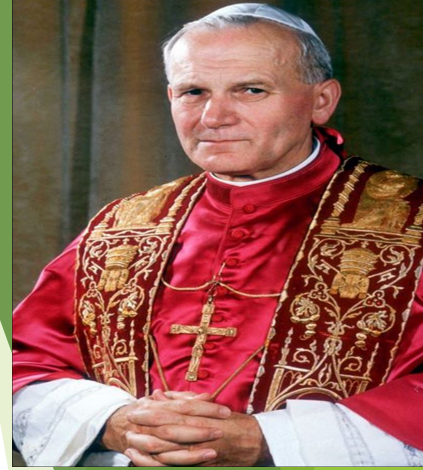
# Simon Magus, Simon the Magician



- ▶ Simon had been mystifying the Samaritans for some time when Philip arrived. Nothing more is said of this man in the *New Testament*, other than what is said in Acts 8.
- ▶ Some early Christian writers and commentaries suggest Simon was an early Gnostic, combining aspects of Pagan religion with Christianity. However, Gnosticism did not rear its head until the second century.
- ▶ Luke merely calls him a magician and a Samaritan, who heard the word, was baptized and claimed that he believed in Jesus Christ and was devoted to Philip.



# Baptism and confirmation



In the early centuries of the Christian Church confirmation was performed immediately after Baptism. Later, when the Church grew and sufficient Bishops were not available, and when infant baptism became the norm, the two sacraments became separated.

Pope John Paul II explains “ the nature of the sacrament of confirmation grows out of this endowment of strength which the Holy Spirit communicates to each baptized person, to make him or her- as the well known language of the Catechism puts it, a perfect soldier of Christ, ready to witness boldly to his resurrection and its redemptive power; ‘ You shall be my witnesses’.

# Acts 8:14-16



<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup> who went down **and prayed for them**, that they might receive the **holy Spirit**, <sup>16</sup> for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid hands on them and they received the holy Spirit.

(two things to watch for in Acts- prayer and the Holy Spirit)



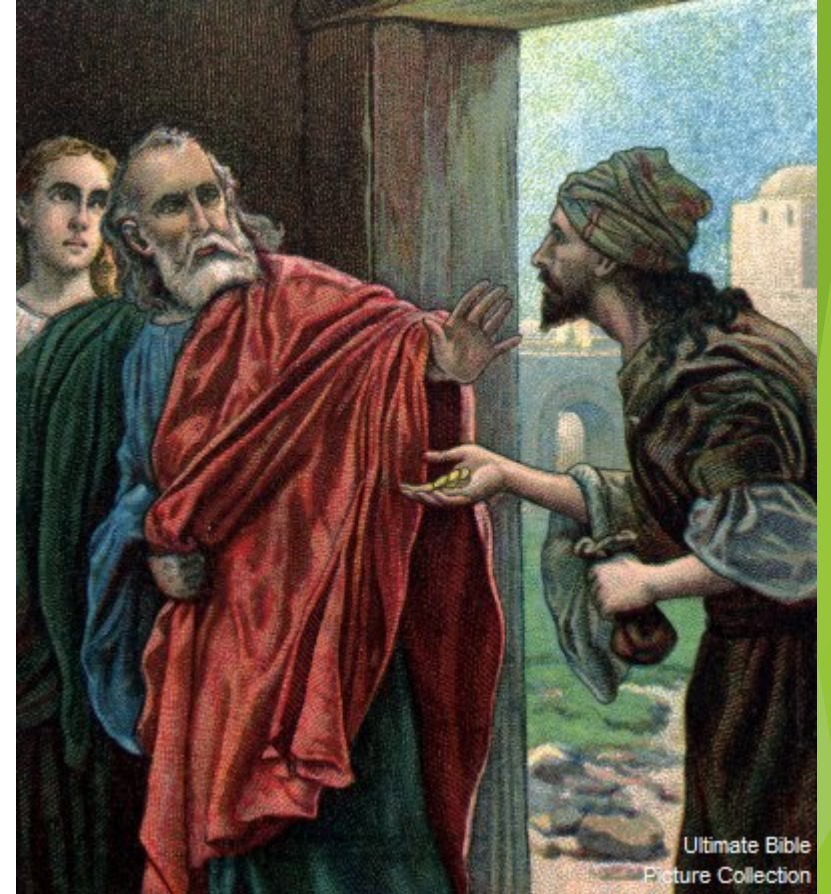
# Peter and John are sent to Samaria

- ▶ The Apostles had remained in Jerusalem when the persecutions began.
- ▶ Who sent them? Probably the Apostles as a group.
- ▶ Why were they needed to impart the Spirit?
- ▶ Anchor Bible suggests there was not a proper baptism done by Philip.
- ▶ It could be that because these were SAMARITANS that special attention was thought to be needed.
- ▶ It is significant that “non-Jews” outside of Judea had accepted the Word of Jesus Christ as “The Way.”

# Acts 8:18

- ▶ <sup>18</sup> When Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money <sup>19</sup> and said, "Give me this power too, so that anyone upon whom I lay my hands may receive the holy Spirit."

(Does this appear to be good intention but lack of understanding? Or is it greed?)



# Simony



- ▶ The presence of Peter and John was needed in order to have this confrontation between the Magician and the Apostles.
- ▶ The Apostle's power is not their own. It is God working through them. It is power and grace that cannot be purchased.
- ▶ Simon claims to be in control of his magic and power and to be the source of his own power. Simon charges for his acts of trickery. Claiming he has the power of God is blasphemy. He is an imposter, when it comes to magic. He desires their power and wishes to purchase it.

# Acts 8:20-23

- ▶ But Peter said to him, “May your money perish with you, because you thought that you could buy the gift of God with money. <sup>21</sup> You have no share or lot in this matter, for **your heart is not upright before God.** <sup>22</sup> **Repent of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, your intention may be forgiven.** <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are filled with bitter gall and are in the bonds of iniquity.”
- ▶ Peter suggests that Simon is bitter because of Philip’s successful preaching and the Apostle’s ability to confer the Spirit.

# Peter and the magician

- ▶ Peter rejects Simon's offer and sets the matter straight.
- ▶ Even though Simon has accepted Jesus Christ and has been baptized, he does not have complete understanding. Perhaps he is one of those who did not receive the Holy Spirit? His heart is not yet converted.
- ▶ Baptized Christians must still align their actions and hearts with God.
- ▶ Peter calls for **repentance** from his wicked ways and evil thoughts.



# Simon asks for their prayers

## Peter and John preach to other Samaritans

- ▶ <sup>24</sup> Simon said in reply, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.” <sup>25</sup> So when they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem and preached the good news to many Samaritan villages.
- ▶ (Is Simon sincere, frightened by Peter’s curse, or truly repentant? Peter’s comments were harsh. Did he see Simon’s true character?)

Power  
Envy  
Jealousy  
Greed  
Desire  
SORCERY

# Acts 8:26-31

- <sup>26</sup> Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, “Get up and head south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert route.” <sup>27</sup> So he got up and set out. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, that is, the queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup> The Spirit said to Philip, “Go and join up with that chariot.” <sup>30</sup> Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” <sup>31</sup> He replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?” So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.

# First the Samaritans now An Ethiopian Eunuch

- ▶ The message of Jesus the Christ is reaching out to non-Jews!
- ▶ Recall that in Matthew 10:5-7 that when Jesus first sent the Apostles out they were to remain in Israel or Judea. Jesus said:
- ▶ “Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. <sup>6</sup> Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> As you go, make this proclamation: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

There was a plan. **First** the message of Jesus Christ was to be given to the Jews that the Messiah and the Kingdom of God was at hand. **After the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus** the message is to be sent to the ends of the earth.

# Jesus' post resurrection instructions

- ▶ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”
- ▶ Matt 28:19-20



# The Ethiopian

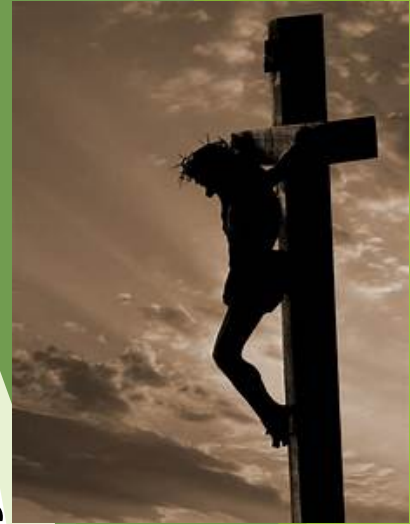
- ▶ Philip receives a message **through an angel**.
- ▶ The call was therefore, of *divine* origin.
- ▶ Being successful with Samaritans, he is called to evangelize to another foreigner.
- ▶ Physically castrated men were often used in the ancient Near East as keepers of the royal harems and often became highly placed officials in royal court. However the term was not always *literal* in the first century. It is not certain that he was in that condition.
- ▶ It is likely that he was a “God-fearer” or a proselyte. He would not have been able to actually enter the Temple for worship even though he was a believer.





# The Ethiopian Eunuch

- ▶ The Ethiopian is reading Isaiah while he is traveling. Philip explains this prophecy and its meaning in light of the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Isaiah takes on new meaning, one of hope, forgiveness of sin and everlasting life for all men who call on Jesus' name.
- ▶ The Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 is a difficult passage for Jews who anticipated a triumphant Messiah to be a warrior-king, like David. It provides an “ah ha!” moment for the Ethiopian after Philip instructs him.
- ▶ The Messiah has come, for us, for our souls and for our sin. Jesus is the Paschal Lamb, sacrificed for us and our salvation. **THIS IS THE MESSAGE OF THE VERSES HE WAS READING.**



# Baptism of the Ethiopian



Vs 36: “Look, there is water. What is to prevent my being baptized?”

Any physical ailment, illness or deformity prevented Jews from entrance to the Temple and participation in the spiritual life of the community.

Adults should be instructed in tenants of the faith before being baptized.

Infants and young children are baptized for spiritual grace.

Baptism is a sacrament of initiation into the Christian Community.

# Acts 8:39-49

- ▶ <sup>39</sup> When they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup> Philip came to Azotus, and went about proclaiming the good news to all the towns until he reached Caesarea.
- ▶ Philip is taken away in a divine manner. It is another sign of God's presence for the eunuch.
- ▶ Philip is needed elsewhere to continue to proclaim the Good News.

# Quick Review

- ▶ A time of persecution of Jewish-Christians had begun with Saul in Jerusalem after Stephens death.
- ▶ Many Christians including Philip the deacon, flee. The Apostles stay.
- ▶ Philip goes to Samaria and preaches and teaches to those hated by the Jews. They respond to the message of Jesus Christ **with joy**. They are baptized. Peter and John hear of this and go to impart the Spirit upon the Samaritans.
- ▶ A magician named Simon is among them. He too is Baptized and believes but he wants the power of the Apostles and offers to pay for it. Peter Chastised him. (You cannot serve 2 masters, manna and God)

# Quick Review



- ▶ Philip received a message from an angel to travel to Gaza.
- ▶ He meets a wealthy Ethiopian Eunuch who is reading Isaiah.
- ▶ Philip interprets the meaning of Isaiah's Suffering Servant in light of Jesus, the Messiah's life, death and Resurrection.
- ▶ The Eunuch believes and asks for baptism. Philip baptizes him and is miraculously taken away by the Spirit and continues to preach on his way to Caesarea.
- ▶ The Eunuch responds to the Good News with rejoicing.





## LESSONS LEARNED

- ▶ The response to the Good News of Jesus Christ is joy, and rejoicing. (Samaritans and the Ethiopian)
- ▶ The Disciples are now taking the word of Jesus Christ to Gentiles as well as to Jews.
- ▶ Simon the Magician offers an example of a heart that was not ready to accept the grace of God as a free gift. He still needed to repent and rid his heart of greed, self-interest, jealousy and the desire for power.
- ▶ Simon serves as a contrast to the actions and motivations of the Apostles and Philip.



# Let us Pray

- ▶ *Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, fill us with joy, as you renew the face of the earth. Let us pray constantly for your guidance. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations.*
- ▶ *We ask you this through Christ Our Lord. Amen*

