

SEVENTH DAY



BAPTIST®

This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



Called to Break Down Barriers Study Scripture: Acts 8:26-39 Lesson 11, August 12, 2017.

Key Verse

Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Acts 8: 35.

INTRODUCTION

Today we turn to one of the strangest stories in the Bible. It really demonstrates for us that when believers react normally to the various stimuli (in this case persecution), they still live perfectly normal lives. In so doing they preach the truth at every opportunity through the empowering of the Spirit and God works in his sovereign, unexpected ways to bring his sheep to him.

Believers have been instructed by Jesus to be His witnesses. Last lesson we saw an evangelist working in Jerusalem but who had been driven by persecution and sent by God to the city of Samaria, to preach to a people that Jews had detested for hundreds of years.

His preaching shook up the city and many of the Samaritans came to believe in Christ, were baptized and received the Spirit, thus becoming one in Christ with Jews, instead of being bitter enemies.

We are told that after this extraordinary evangelistic effort in Samaria, the Apostles Peter and John, as well as Philip, had preached in many Samaritan villages, the normal, expected activity of the people of God.

Today's lesson however, will not be about the normal, orderly, commonplace activity of the Spirit. We are now introduced to the extraordinary, unusual and unpredictable way that the Spirit sometimes works.

We see a surprising assignment given by an ‘out of this world’ messenger, a strange journey, a long conversation, then a conversion and a baptism, the evangelist suddenly snatched away in an eerie fashion, the new convert going on his way rejoicing with great joy, just as the converts in the cities of Samaria had previously rejoiced.

This critical matter of being led by the Spirit, being open and receptive to the call of God, understanding that we might be called on by God, to do something different from what we have previously done, is certainly something on which we should meditate.

One writer advises:

“When God scatters the followers of Jesus because of persecution, he is helping them to fulfill the purpose that Jesus has given them. Go, be disciples, not just in Jerusalem, but in Judea and Samaria. Don’t worry about the ends of the earth yet. We’ll get there soon enough. We were never meant to stay in one place. When you think about the church, this is probably what you imagine....

But what if all the little pieces of the church were meant to be scattered? What if we are most “the church” when we are out there? Scattered as engineers and stay at home parents, and students, and neighbours, and professionals, and sales people, blue collar, white-collar, no-collar, retired, studying, and looking for work. Maybe we are meant to be scattered. So when God scatters us, let’s be faithful. Be aware of your motivations. Don’t try to co-opt God’s power for your own benefit. But when you do, fall on Christ. He is our hope. He is our forgiveness. He is the one at work. And he is the one who makes our work fruitful”.

This incident brings to mind Psalm 68:31-33, which predicted that:

“ Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hand unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice.”

In this mighty work of God, the knowledge of Christ goes out to where the convert would live and himself witness in fulfillment of Scripture.

The importance of Jesus’ instruction is clear then: ‘You shall be my witnesses, not only in Jerusalem and in Judea, not only in Samaria, but also to Religious Foreigners’.

It will also pay us to remember the words of Jesus to Nicodemus recorded in the Book of John 3:6-8
“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you ‘You must be born again’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit”.

In this lesson we will also be reminded why we hold to certain beliefs.

We believe that baptism of believers in obedience to Christ's command, is a witness to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We believe in baptism by immersion as a symbol of death to sin, a pledge to a new life in Him.

Romans 6:3-4; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41; Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:11; Galatians 3:26-27

TEXT

Verse 26. The evangelist Philip is yanked out of a successful missionary effort by an angel. Angels are used in a variety of ways throughout Scripture and they are literally messengers of God. Scripture declares angels to be ministering spirits to the saints (*Heb 1:14*).

Some believe that this refers to a dream or a vision as in the case of Joseph and Mary in Egypt (*Matt 2:13*).

But the message to Philip was a very specific set of directions; he was to head south from Samaria where he had been ministering and head for Gaza. This was a specific, unusual, but unexplained command. His journey would take him through some desert terrain. There were multiple routes to get to Gaza from Samaria, but the angel picked one of the worst and emptiest stretches of road. This was a seldom used road, it was desolate area, with no villages or towns along the way.

It is evident that God was orchestrating something very important. Of course, we know that every believer is precious to God, and He shows us constantly how we too can be instrumental in the grand scheme of salvation.

Philip did not stop to “pray” about his call, nor do we have evidence that he objected that this errand sounded foolish, whether or not he was being sent to a larger field of service, or why God was calling him from the great awakening going on in Samaria, to travel on a road where there was nothing. He was filled with the Spirit and therefore when an angel gave him instructions he knew that he was also obeying the Holy Spirit. He left immediately to attend to the business of the Gospel.

One commentator gives us an insightful comment pertaining to the meaning of desert: **“This may refer either to the “way” or to the “place.” The natural construction is the latter. In explanation of this, it is to be observed that there were “two” towns of that name, Old and New Gaza. The prophet Zephaniah Zep 2:4 said that “Gaza” should be “forsaken,” that is, destroyed. “This was partly accomplished by Alexander the Great (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 11, chapter 8, sections 3 and 4; book 13, chapter 13, section 3). Another town was afterward built of the same name, but at some distance from the former, and Old Gaza was abandoned to desolation. Strabo mentions ‘Gaza the desert,’ and Diodorus Siculus speaks of ‘Old Gaza’” (Robinson’s *Calmet*). Some have supposed, however, that Luke refers here to the “road” leading to Gaza, as being desolate and uninhabited. Dr. Robinson (*Biblical Res.*, 2:640) remarks: “There were several ways leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. The most frequented at the present day, although the longest, is the way by Ramleh. Anciently there appear to have been two more direct roads. Both these roads exist at the present day, and the one actually passes through the desert, that is, through a tract of country without villages, inhabited only by nomadic tribes.” “In this place, in 1823, the American missionaries, Messrs. Fisk and King, found Gaza, a town built of stone, making a very mean appearance, and confining about five thousand inhabitants” (Hall on the Acts).”**

Verse 27. Let us pay close attention to Philip’s response, and discern from it the character and attitude of one who is an unpaid employee in the ‘gospel business’. Having received his orders from the boss there was no hesitation in obeying God’s word.

It is important to note also, that since Philip was a Spirit filled man, he understood that the command to move came from the true God. This was not a deception brought by a false angel, an emissary of Satan. He knew the voice of God and would not listen to “another voice”.

Philip was in a state of preparedness when the word of God came to him. Thus, he did not require a month to pray and fast, in order to discern if this was the will of God, but moved with a sense of urgency. He did not debate or deliberate or calculate the benefits of such a move, he simply obeyed the word of God.

Here was a man whose motives were pure before God and who understood that there is no room for self in God’s work. This displayed his trust in God – when he moved to do God’s work out of pure motives, he knew that God would not let him go in the wrong direction.

Let us note a few things that would probably stall us from heeding God’s word.

- 1) **Over analyzing the situation.** Philip could have considered the route to Gaza to be too long or too dangerous and think of an alternative route, of which there were many – of course he would have missed the encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch.
- 2) **Require more information** – When embarking on a journey we often want a certain level of detail. But notice here that God did not tell Philip why to go, just where and when. In wisdom God tells us what we need to know.
- 3) **Leaving a lucrative situation** – Philip was instrumental in literally turning a whole city to Christ. I’m certain most if not all of us would have questioned God as to why leave now? This really demonstrates faith and trust in God’s wisdom and a secure knowledge that Christ will build His church. The Church does not belong to us, we belong to Christ.

One writer comments on an important lesson that he can learn from this:

“ Well, there is a place for the ordinary, as Verse 25 teaches us. But there must also be a place for that unpredictable partner of God, the sovereign, vital, fresh ministry of the Holy Spirit which moves in ways that nobody can anticipate...

This is lesson that God is forever teaching us, and certainly it is what is being brought out by this account. This is the creative strategy of the Holy Spirit, the freedom to interfere, the freedom to override a program, and to change it and to make something new. The church has suffered terribly by ruling that out, by so organizing everything that there is no room for the Spirit to move.

I often think of the scheduled revivals that are advertised... Well, how do you schedule the Holy Spirit that way? That always appeared ludicrous to me.

It would be like having all the weatherman of the United States meet together to plan where the hurricanes are going to be next year, or the tornadoes. You cannot schedule a tornado, and you cannot schedule the Holy Spirit. He must be free to move in ways beyond our planning.”

Note however that all this activity of the Spirit was in line with prophecy. There are many new things that we see in churches which are not consistent with the Scriptures and in fact come straight out of paganism. These are not the works of the Spirit.

We also note from this great and amazing account, that the Spirit of God is adequate to handle every single adventure that the people of God might have, for He has prepared all of it in advance.

It is on the way to Gaza that Philip encountered the Ethiopian Eunuch; we are told several things about this man.

Ethiopia at that time was a great kingdom south of Egypt and it was from here that he came and was returning. He was a Eunuch. In ancient times this meant that he would have been emasculated. This was a custom especially practiced by those who were employed in the king's harem, for obvious reasons.

It seems that the lack of sexual desire and the inability to please a woman were closely linked with ones ability to singlemindedly devote oneself to an important task. It was therefore customary to emasculate men who were in such positions of authority.

The eunuch was a high- ranking official, being the Minister of Finance, as it were.

In fact, however, by 120 A.D. the term 'eunuch' had become synonymous with a government official; so it is possible that by this time the Ethiopian Eunuch was not physically emasculated, but is called such because of his office.

One commentator however states: that he may have been emasculated as Philip refers to him as both an official and a eunuch. If this was indeed the case, then it may also imply that he was a God fearer and not a proselyte and would also have been denied access to the temple, according to (*Deut 23:1*). However, we note that he was returning from worshiping at Jerusalem. It is certain that God was already for some time preparing the heart of this man.

Paul in 1 Cor. 7:32-38 stresses that the purpose of being a eunuch is in order to devote oneself completely to the work of God. Jesus also comments on the practice in Matthew 19:12

“For there are some eunuchs ... - Jesus proceeds to state that there were some who were able to receive that saying and to remain in an unmarried state. Some were so born; some were made such by the cruelty of men; and there were some who voluntarily abstained from marriage for the kingdom of heaven's sake - that is, that they might devote themselves entirely to the proper business of religion. Perhaps he refers here to the Essenes, a sect of the Jews who held that marriage was unsuitable to their condition; who had no children of their own, but perpetuated their sect by adopting the poor children of others. Eunuchs were employed chiefly in attending on the females or in the harem. They rose often to distinction, and held important offices in the state.”

What this all amounts to is that we are looking at a man of great responsibility, great authority, and therefore great influence throughout all of Ethiopia and probably Egypt. This

was a prepared man, a prepared vessel, most perfectly capable of spreading the word of God in his country and elsewhere.

God uses prepared men and women.

The queen of Ethiopia is mentioned, at first glance it appears that her name is Candace. Candace however was not the name of the queen, but a title such as Pharaoh or Caesar, that was given to the Queen's Mother. In places in those ancient times, the king was revered as a god and as such the political and state affairs were actually left for the queen's mother to administer.

It may seem strange for Philip to record such detail; however as we study the Scripture we find from time to time nuggets of secular history that really authenticate the historical accuracy of the Scripture.

But even more important is the fact that God teaches us that He is to the heart of both the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the Prince and the Pauper. He calls all without prejudice, and He will use different kinds of men to do His work.

The Christian Church in Ethiopia can look back at the origin of their Church and realize that it had come from a responsible, intelligent source, a man who had great responsibility and authority, who had been searching for truth, but whose success did not answer all the questions in his life.

He needed real spiritual answers in his life and he had investigated the Jewish faith, and was attracted to it. It is in this area that he would find the truth, for in that journey into Israel he found Christ his Redeemer. If such a man as he found the truth in Christ, they would be well advised to follow this eunuch.

Verse 28. The Eunuch was returning from worship, his thoughts were evidently engrossed in that worship experience and as he traveled he continued in the Scripture. Far too often we as believers will attend church for divine worship, but as soon as we leave, our Bibles are sealed and our conversations turn to things other than the 'just heard' sermon.

The Eunuch saw the importance to continue in the Scripture. He was undoubtedly reading from the translation of Isaiah into Greek called the Septuagint. This translation was made in Egypt for the special use of the Jews in Alexandria and throughout Egypt and was what was commonly used in those parts. This was a scroll, and certainly would have cost this eunuch a lot of money.

Given the recent rise of the persecution of Christians, it is likely that he was exposed to the current events, which would be a prelude to and make his encounter with Philip more focused, so the whole event was being orchestrated by God.

When we think of chariots our minds might return to the images that we have seen in certain screen presentation of the Scripture. This often means a speeding chariot pulled by two horses. A chariot however might come in various forms –

“His carriage; his vehicle. The form of the carriage is not known. In some instances the carriages of the ancients were placed on wheels; in others were borne on poles, in the form of a “litter” or palanquin, by men, mules, or horses.”

What we can ascertain is that it was a large size. Firstly he sat and read, it is probable that it was chauffeured, it is unlikely that someone of his status drove his own vehicle especially on long journeys.

He was an important man, the representative of a foreign court, and therefore would be dressed in rich clothing. Traveling from what Jews and Romans considered the farthest place, literally the rim of the Earth, he would undoubtedly be surrounded by a retinue of soldiers. He would be traveling in some style so that he would be able to sit and read while he was being driven. This chariot was such that we are told that later Philip could join him in the chariot for a long reading and conversation.

Verse 29 – 30. We are told that the Holy Spirit spoke to Philip and told him to join the Eunuch in the chariot. It is supposed that the Holy Spirit communicated His will directly to Philip's mind; though it is not impossible that he heard an audible voice.

Philip then ran to join the chariot. This took a certain amount of boldness and courage. This was a man of power and wealth, but Philip did not fear telling 'important people' about Jesus. The sense here is not that he was miraculously empowered to run faster than speeding horses, as is often depicted in movies; but for the reason mentioned above, it rather speaks of his haste to obey the word of God.

Note how amazing is the work of the Spirit, for this situation involved tremendous timing and preparation of both the mind and activity of Philip and the mind and activity of the eunuch.

Philip was commanded by an angel and so walked along a lonely desert road along which people rarely traveled. The important eunuch chose to use that road and passes by Philip. At the precise moment the chariot and the retinue passes Philip, he hears the eunuch reading from the Book of Isaiah. In the ancient world it was a common practice to read aloud.

Philip heard that he was reading from the very passage of Scripture that predicts the coming of the suffering Saviour, the Messiah. This was a very familiar passage of Scripture from Isaiah 53, which every evangelist would have to use when teaching about Jesus of Nazareth. Philip was now flowing along with the Holy Spirit and he was ready to do the work of an evangelist. He now would begin to recognize why he had been sent into the desert.

The Eunuch was prepared by God and he did not appear startled, which probably would have been the case, had a strange man suddenly appeared running beside a speeding chariot.

Philip now addressed this dignitary, without fear of rejection. He politely asked the Eunuch if he understood what the passage of Scripture meant.

Verse 31. The Eunuch's reply was a general acknowledgement that he required help in understanding the passage. We witness here the humility that accompanies true conversion unlike that of Simon the Sorcerer. His profession of faith was proven to be bereft of any evidence of true conversion, he was full of pride and as Peter tells us still bound by sin.

The Eunuch held one of the highest positions as a state official, he was probably wealthy and highly educated. He was likely multilingual and was reading from the Greek Old Testament. Yet despite his status, wealth and education, there was no claim to be great, as it was with Simon; rather he recognized that he was removed from the proper understanding of scripture, by language and customs.

It is likely that he had considerable difficulty reconciling the current Jewish concept of the Messiah with Isaiah's prophecy and so humbly admitted his inadequate understanding. *"How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."*

This idea of a suffering Savior had always puzzled Jews, and they were many attempts to reconcile the Messiah coming in triumph and victory, and one was suffered and died. They obviously did not like to think that their Deliverer would undergo those ignominious experiences. The Jews interpreted the identity of the Suffering Servant in several ways:

1. The Suffering Servant was the nation itself, for it had suffered from many wars, exiles and persecution.
2. The prophet Isaiah himself could have been the Suffering Servant. Isaiah was thought to have been martyred by Manasseh.
3. The Suffering Servant could actually have been the Messiah. So one popular view was that there were two Servants, the first winning victories and then dying, and the other miraculously appearing to complete the victories.

No wonder that the eunuch was confused about the meaning of the passage and needed help. He now humbly, recognizing his deficiencies as well as his attainments, and understanding his need to be taught, invited Philip to join him and perhaps shed some light on this Scripture. He did not take it as an insult for a stranger to ask him if he understood what he was reading.

Verse 32. The Eunuch was reading:-

"...He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."

This seven hundred year old prophecy, with striking accuracy pictured the ordeal of Christ in every aspect of His trial and death, the 'Passion of Christ'. The passage is set in Isaiah 53 that spells out in its essence the ministry of the Messiah. The chapter begins with the fact that His own people will reject Him, just as they rejected the word of the prophet.

'He came unto his own, but his own received him not.' Before the Father he grew up as a tender plant: but to the Jews he was as a root out of a dry ground. 'He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.'

The prophet goes on to describe Him as a man acquainted with grief on whom the sin of the world was laid; He alone bore this burden and endured the greatest physical, emotional and spiritual anguish; He alone paid the price for our sin.

The Messiah stood before a court of His own subjects; all manner of false accusations were hurled at Him, yet He said nothing in His defence. He is likened to sheep, who without resistance are led

to their death. This of course is symbolic of His complete submission to the will of the Father; *for it pleased the Lord.* (Is. 53:10)

Verse 33. *“In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:...”*

The humiliation of Christ refers to Him laying aside His heavenly glory and becoming a servant to all.

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil 2:6-8

‘...his judgment was taken away...’ the Judge of all the earth was denied justice. The sham of a trial that was put on, violated every judicial law. They paid people to lie under oath and ignored all standard protocol having already determined to put Him to death. Jesus was abandoned; there was not even one who came to His defence.

“and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth...” this phrase has been given a number of interpretations, however it is most widely accepted in light of the context, to refer to the custom that a public appeal be made that anyone may testify to the character of the alleged criminal.

“It was the custom among the Jews, when they were taking away any criminal from judgment to execution, to call out and inquire whether there was any person who could appear in behalf of the character of the criminal - whether there was any who, from intimate acquaintance with his manner of life, could say any thing in his favour? This circumstance I have noticed before, and it has been particularly remarked in the case of Stephen: see at Act 7:60. In our Lord’s case, this benevolent inquiry does not appear to have been made; and perhaps to this breach of justice, as well as of custom, the prophet refers; and this shows how minutely the conduct of those bad men was known seven hundred years before it took place.”

Verse 34. The Eunuch now asked Philip of whom the passage spoke; it is obvious that he had given some thought to the passage, yet he was understandably confused.

Let us remember that there were many who had claimed to be Messiah. Now a man named Jesus and whose followers proclaimed him to be the Messiah, was crucified. Three days later he was said to have been resurrected and appeared to many people, shortly after he ascended to heaven.

Then His followers claimed that the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, which resulted in boldness to preach the gospel and thousands came to accept Jesus as the Christ.

The revival was explosive and a servant believer in the young church named Stephen preached a message that so agitated the conscience of the leadership of Israel, that they were revolted at the message and stoned Stephen and serious persecution of Christians began. Thousands of new converts fled Jerusalem.

It was possible that the Eunuch was not exposed to these events. But if he was, he still was unable to make the link between the current events and the prophecy of Isaiah.

We may understand his difficulty, in view of the fact that the ancient Jewish scholars were also divided as to whom the passage referred, and that as stated there were those who claimed it referred to the people of Israel, others to Isaiah, but there were some who believed it to be the Messiah.

Verse 35. So beginning at this Scripture in Isaiah Philip preached Christ, that is he preached the gospel from the Old Testament Scriptures. This is all that he had, he did not have a pocket New Testament, the gospel of John or the book of Romans – Paul had not even been converted yet, but was still actively persecuting the church.

Note that Philip started on the same page as the Ethiopian eunuch. But he did not stop there and he went on much further, opening the great mystery of the gospel concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Philip undoubtedly did exactly what Jesus Himself did to the disciples who traveled with Him on the road to Emmaus.

The gospel really begins in the book of Genesis and the entire Scriptures are about the plan of redemption, so it is possible to both directly and indirectly preach the gospel from almost any passage. It is therefore important that we are well versed in the Scriptures, that when the opportunity arrives we to are able to preach Christ.

Philip showed him that Jesus of Nazareth exactly corresponded to the description given the prophet, and that he referred to the Messiah, and that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. How far Philip detailed the circumstances of the life and death of Christ is unknown. What follows shows also that he stated the design of baptism, and the duty of being baptized.

Verse 36. Continuing in the Scriptures as they traveled, it is evident that Philip had communicated the importance of baptism. It is one of two ordinances commanded by Jesus that we should observe and part of the ‘great commission’.

Passing by some water the Eunuch asked if there was anything else about Jesus that he needed to know, which lack of knowledge prevented him from being baptized as a sign that he accepted that Jesus of Nazareth was Messiah, and that he was committed to Jesus. He was saying ‘there is no reason why I should not be baptized’.

This showed that there was a change of heart and evidence of true conversion. This is the completely opposite attitude to what Simon the Sorcerer of Samaria displayed.

Let us note the importance of baptism; it is on par with the Lord’s Supper or Communion, of which Jesus said, ‘if you do not take then you have no part with me’, (John 13:4-9). 1 Cor. 11:27-30 also shows us that eating the Lord’s Supper unworthily is a serious matter. Now Jesus said that when you believe, you should also be baptized. Of course something may be wrong if you believe you are converted but have no desire to be obedient to Christ and be baptized.

Baptism does not save, you believe and then you are baptized. However, because the Scripture links salvation so closely to baptism, some teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. On the other extreme are those who say that because baptism does not save then it must be optional. Both extremes are wrong.

Baptism is a public acknowledgement that you have decided to follow Jesus; that you believe He is the Son of God, that He died and rose again to remove or pay the penalty for your sin. It is symbolic of our old nature being buried with Christ and then being raised to newness of life.

It is very important that we realize that the symbol of baptism carries a very specific meaning, and if we alter that symbol we are in grave danger of losing the true meaning.

The Scripture however points to the practice of immersion. We see in the case of both Jesus and the Ethiopian Eunuch that they went down into, and came up out of the water.

In the case before us we see a man who was traveling through the desert; it is highly likely that he had several containers of water for the journey. That being the case and if sprinkling water for baptism was what he understood from Philip's presentation of the gospel, then there would have been no need to purposefully stop the chariot at some pool of water and for them both to get out and go down into the water.

Moreover, all of the instances of baptism recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (Act 2:38-41; Act 8:26-39; Act 9:17, Act 9:18; Act 22:12-16; Act 10:44-48; Act 16:32-34) suggest the idea that it was by dipping that a person was baptized, i.e. by immersion.

Early in church history certain confessions of the faith or creeds taught that baptism by immersion was correct.

Verse 37 – 38. Many commentators declare this verse to be actually missing from the more ancient and most trustworthy texts, however it can be said that the sentiment of this verse embodies the clearest statements of faith and the acknowledgement of the sovereign lordship of Christ.

Having made public such a confession of faith, Philip then baptized the Eunuch. It is interesting to note here, that it was at the first opportunity on the profession of faith, that he was baptized.

We today seem to be in the habit of taking baptismal candidates through an intense series of discipleship studies before we'll allow them to be baptized. It seems that our thought is that with teaching and a period of testing as it were, we will ensure that they are really saved. This does not seem to be the biblical model. We ought to baptize on the profession of faith and then teach, remembering that conversion is really the work of the Spirit, not our discipleship program.

Remember also that Philip baptized Simon the Sorcerer, on the profession of his faith. There will undoubtedly be times when we baptize those who are not really converted, but conversion is the prerogative of the Spirit, we are simply to share the gospel and baptize those who profess to believe.

CONCLUSION

God is still attracting people to Him. The world has not changed. The angels are still around. The Spirit still offers us opportunities. Are we willing to see them, and to obey the Spirit?

Would we go out on a desert road to do a work of witnessing? Are we available for surprising assignments?

Note that Philip in a sense only began officially in the Church as a waiter but he did not stay that way as he was filled with the Spirit and enabled by the Spirit was open to the call of the Almighty.

There is no indication that after he left the eunuch he expected to have a dramatic leading as he had toward and in Samaria and on this dusty desert road. But note he continued preaching all the way up the coast until he came to Caesarea.

Are you looking carefully at the adventure of the Spirit filled life told us here?

The Spirit filled life will undoubtedly have many routine, seemingly ordinary moments, but remember that these seemingly “ordinary” moments have been touched, as one writer states, **“with the flame of heaven”**.

The Spirit filled life therefore is not ordinary life. God is at work in our lives in an amazing way. God will intervene in unusual ways but He will intervene in the “ordinary” in order to achieve His will.

So be prepared for both. Make yourself available.

The world is hungry to hear the Gospel and we should be careful not to pass by religious strangers. Let us go and bring joy to strangers.

If we do not go, if we are not willing to go, we will be hindering Christ.