



The Word

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→ Philip's journey

Mediterranean Sea

Sea of Galilee

Samaria

SAMARIA

River Jordan

JERUSALEM

Judea

Dead Sea

Episode 18



North and South

ACTS 8:4-25

*In the previous episode:
Stephen is murdered
and the church is
scattered.*

*In this episode:
The gospel is on
the move!*



ACTS 8:4-25

⁴ Those who had been scattered
preached the word wherever they went.

⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria
and proclaimed the Messiah there.



God cannot be contained

The church has quickly gone from a popular new movement to facing terrible persecution.

But how do the persecuted Christians respond?

- Instead of keeping quiet, they talk about Jesus wherever they go. The Word keeps spreading. **(v. 4)**

As the Christians scatter, they take the good news of the gospel with them, just as Jesus said: *'and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'*. (Acts 1:8)
God cannot be stopped.

An example is Philip (one of the newly appointed leaders looking after the needs of the church). He goes to Samaria to tell them about Jesus. **(v. 5)**

This is a huge moment in the story of Acts. It's when the spread of the good news about Jesus really takes off.

But why the spotlight on Samaria?

An Old Testament connection

Samaria is an important place in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, Israel split into two kingdoms: the North (which became Samaria) and the South (Judah, later Israel).

The Samaritans were seen as outsiders, not part of God's people. Jews and Samaritans hated each other. But the Old Testament also promised that the arrival of God's King, the Messiah, would unite North and South again.

'I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms.'
(Ezekiel 37:22)

Where Philip goes is better translated as 'the city of Samaria'. But it hadn't been called Samaria for sixty years, so Luke is making a deliberate link with these Old Testament promises.

How Samaria responds to the news about Jesus is going to be important.

⁶ When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said.

⁷ For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed.

⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

Philip in Samaria

Crowds gather to hear Philip and to see the miracles he's doing.

What's the reaction?

- The people in Samaria are listening carefully to Philip, seeing God at work through him. **(v. 6)**

What Philip says is backed up by the same kinds of miracles that the apostles did back in Jerusalem. Evil is beaten; the sick are healed. **(v. 7)**

No wonder there is great joy in the city! **(v. 8)**

Under attack, the gospel explodes outwards, bringing the people of Samaria back to God, just as was prophesied.

God's plans for His kingdom are very much on track.

⁹ Now for some time a man named Simon had practised sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, ¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, ‘This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.’

¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.

Sorcery: powerful ‘black magic’ calling on evil spirits.

The real deal?

What challenge does Philip face to his message?

- There's already a spiritual celebrity in Samaria: Simon, a sorcerer... who boasts about being someone very important. **(v. 9)**

What is Simon's life like?

- He's popular with all sorts of people, rich and poor. **(v. 10)**
- They are amazed by him and his dark magic, which he has been doing for some time. **(v. 11)**

Notice the contrast between Philip and Simon. For Simon, it's all about his own greatness. He's pleased that people call him the '*Great Power of God*'. With Philip, it's all about Jesus.

But Simon is going to get a lesson in real power.