



According to the Holy Gospel of St. John, St. Phillip was the third of the twelve disciples to follow the Lord Jesus Christ after St. Andrew. St. Phillip, though, has the great distinction of being the very first that the Lord Jesus Christ directly invited into His discipleship. The Lord Jesus Christ "found Phillip" and with the simple command of "*Follow Me*" (John 1:43) he willingly became the third of the twelve to follow the Lord. The Lord apparently was looking or searching for one such as St. Phillip.

St. Clement of Alexandria states that St. Phillip was the young man who when commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ to "Follow Me" begged to return home first and bury his deceased father. The often quoted reply, "*Let the dead bury their own dead; but you go and preach the Kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:60) was in response to St. Phillip's ardent request. St. Phillip did as the Lord Jesus Christ instructed without comment or question following the command, such was his willingness to follow the Messiah.

In the first three Holy Gospels of the New Testament there is no further mention of St. Phillip other than

in the listing of the twelve apostles which occurs in each Holy Gospel.

St. John the Evangelist portrays St. Phillip the disciple as very devoted, kind-hearted and sincere three qualities which may have drawn the Lord Jesus Christ to "find" St. Phillip, yet at times we also know that St. Phillip was very literal in his interpretation of the Lord Jesus Christ's power and teachings.

St. Phillip was from Bethsaida a small fishing village on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and was initially a follower of St. John the Baptist. Encouraging Nathaniel (Bartholomew) into the discipleship of the twelve, St. Phillip told him, "*We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*" St. Phillip was well versed in the Holy Scriptures and believed the Lord Jesus Christ's mission was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. When Nathaniel asked St. Phillip how could something good come from the obscure village of Nazareth, St. Phillip encouraged, "*Come and see*" (John 1:45-46). St. Phillip's response was not one of irritation at being doubted but kind and believed for himself that this in truth was actually the Messiah. St. Phillip's missionary zeal was apparent from its inception of discovering the Lord.

After teaching the five thousand near Bethsaida the Lord Jesus Christ tested St. Phillip's understanding of His power. The Lord asked St. Phillip how to feed the five thousand. St. Phillip gave the Lord Jesus Christ a very practical answer to His problem, not anticipating a miracle was about to be performed. His reply was, "*Two hundred denarii's would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little*" (John 6:7). St. Phillip's intellect apparently was great by his response but evidence of his outlook displayed lack of spiritual understanding. While the multitude was not sent away as St. Phillip suggested neither are we told of St. Phillip's indignation that his advice was not adhered to. St. Phillip's was a willing spirit still in spiritual infancy but willing to grow toward maturity.

At the Last Supper, St. Phillip again displayed an example of one who did not fully understand the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly mission. Following the subtle withdrawal of Judas Iscariot and St. Peter's adamant declaration of not betraying the Lord, St. Phillip earnestly asked for a personal experience to fortify his faith, "*Lord show us the Father and we shall be satisfied.*" The Lord Jesus Christ rather impatiently replied, "*Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know Me? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the*

*Father?"* (John 14:8-9). St. Phillip must have quietly and thoughtfully absorbed this reprimand as the Holy Bible does not tell us St. Phillip rebutted the Lord's comments in the least.

St. Phillip is identified as one of the eleven who were present in the Upper Room after the Holy Crucifixion, prior to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:13).

St. Eusebius the Scholar and Church Historian writes that St. Phillip preached the Holy Gospel in Phrygia and died at Hierapolis. A church dedicated in honor of St Phillip was discovered in this city. Further supporting this is writing by Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, to Victor the Pope of Rome near the end of the second century:

(I speak of) Phillip, one of the twelve apostles who is laid to rest at Hierapolis. Also his two daughters, who arrived at old age unmarried. His other daughter also, who passed her life under the influence of the Holy Spirit, reposes at Ephesus. Polycrates (c 190).

The writing refers to two daughters of St. Phillip who had lived in virginity until old age at Hierapolis and mentions another daughter who was reposed in his own city of Ephesus.

St. Clement of Alexandria stated that St. Phillip was martyred under Domitian the Emperor being crucified with his holy head turned downwards.

May we all lead others to the Lord Jesus Christ with the devoted heart and missionary zeal of His disciple whom He sought out, St. Phillip. By quietness of example and kindness of heart he led others to the Lord letting the dead bury the dead and preaching Eternal Life in a world to come for all those who would but only listen. St. Phillip gave his life for his holy testimony in the beginning slow to spiritually comprehend and in the end spiritual understanding and love consumed his holy life.

Bishop Youssef  
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern  
United States