

# **“Water Baptism And The Ethiopian Eunuch”**

## **Acts 8:26-40**

Message by Michael J. Barnard

July 30, 2023

**Teaching Aim:** To explore the circumstances surrounding the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. To recognize God moved Philip from fertile spiritual ground in Samaria and sent him to a faraway desert road to meet one man. To see how the providence of God was at work in this story as Philip arrived to minister to the Ethiopian eunuch in just the right place at just the right time. To understand the connection between our salvation and water baptism realizing once saved, every Christian should follow the Lord in water baptism shortly thereafter.

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)**

#### **Part I: Philip sent on a divine mission to meet the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-28a)**

1. As we pick up our story, the stoning to death of Stephen and subsequent persecution against the Christians in Jerusalem caused believers to scatter throughout the region; all that is, except the Apostles. (See **Acts 8:1-2**) How do you see the command of Jesus in **Acts 1:8** beginning to be fulfilled in **Acts 8:1**? Why would great courage be required for men to step forward and bury Stephen? (See **Acts 8:2**)
2. As part of the scattering, Philip traveled to the region of Samaria to minister to a people who were despised by the Jews. This resulted in a fruitful spiritual ministry for Philip (See **Acts 8:1-25**) Who approached Philip to give him a new mission (**vs. 26**)? What command did the Lord give to Philip through this angel? Where is Gaza and what famous group of people lived there during Old Testament times? (See Commentaries) What group of people lives there today and who are they constantly fighting against?
3. God commanded Philip to leave his fruitful mission field in Samaria and go to a desert far away. Did Philip argue with God because of the success he was having? What did he do (**vs. 27a**)? Who did Philip meet when he arrived at this lonely place (**vs. 27**)? What was this individuals’ job and how powerful was he? According to the Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms, “*Providence refers to God’s superintending activity over human actions and human history, bringing creation to its divinely determined goal.*” How do you see the providence of God at work in this story.

4. Where was ancient Nubia (or Ethiopia) located in biblical times (**vs. 27**)? What are two ways we can interpret this title “*eunuch*”? Was “*Candace*” a name or an official title? (See Commentaries) What did the Ethiopians believe about their king? Who did ruled?

## **Part II: Philip given the opportunity to share Jesus to this government official (Acts 8:28b-35)**

1. What was the Ethiopian eunuch doing when Philip first saw him (**vs. 28**)? Was this a military chariot or was it more like an ox drawn wagon? What book of the Bible was the Ethiopian eunuch reading out loud? Why might this book be of particular interest to him? (See **Isa. 56:3-5**)
2. Initially Philip had been sent to Gaza by an angel, now the Holy Spirit directs his paths to meet one-on-one with this important eunuch (**vs. 29**). Do you think Philip was sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in his life? Why is it important for us to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives today? How has the Holy Spirit led you in the past?
3. As Philip obeyed the Lord, he had to run to catch up to the chariot (**vs. 30**)? What bold question did Philip ask the eunuch? Why was the man reading out loud? Which book of the Bible? Being from Africa, what most likely was the color of this man’s skin. Why is it important for members of the body of Christ to not be prejudiced? (See **John 13:34-35**)
4. **Isaiah 53** is one of the most interesting chapters in the entire body. Today the Jews believe **Isaiah 53** is talking about the nation of Israel. Christians look at **Isaiah 53** and see an impelling picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ prophesied some 700+ years before Christ. Of all the Messianic prophecies in the Bible, **Isaiah 53** stands out as perhaps the greatest. Why? Today we often see pictures of Jesus as a handsome man, but was He? What can we learn about the appearance of Jesus from **Isaiah 53:1-2**?
5. According to **Isaiah 53:3-5**, what did Jesus do for us on the cross? Why did He do this? (See **John 3:16-17**) The New International Version (NIV) of the Bible translates **Isaiah 53:5** as, “*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*” Does it surprise you that this was written so clearly over 700 years before Christ? Is **verse 5** a reference to “*physical healing*” or “*spiritual healing*”?

6. How did the Ethiopian eunuch respond to Peter's offer of help (**vs. 31**)? What passage from the Book of Isaiah was the man reading from (**vv. 32-33**)? Who was this passage about? What can we learn about the eunuch from the way he treated Philip (**vs. 34**)? How high of an official was this man in the Ethiopian government?
7. What can we learn about Philip from **verse 35**? Would you say that Philip had mastered the Hebrew Scriptures and knew exactly where to find the Messianic prophecies needed to explain Jesus in **Isaiah 53:7-8**? Why didn't Philip take the eunuch to the New Testament to explain his need for Christ? Why do you think so many Christians won't even read the Old Testament today? Is Jesus in the Old Testament? Where?

### **Part III: The baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch and the subsequent miracle (Acts 8:36-40)**

1. Although they were in a deserted place, the Ethiopian eunuch's caravan came upon a pool of water somewhere along the Gaza strip. Who expressed the desire to stop and be baptized in **verse 36**? How did the eunuch come to this point? Do you think Philip had expressed to him the need to get baptized after coming to faith in Christ? Note: In God's providence, He had them at just the right place at just the right time once again.
2. What instructions did Philip give to the eunuch in **verse 37**? **Verse 37** is found in the King James Version (KJV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible, but not in most other translations. Why? (See Commentaries) Are Philip's instructions in **verse 37** consistent with the teachings in the rest of the Bible? (See **Rom. 10:9-11**)
3. Who commanded the chariot to stand still in **verse 38**? Why? What kind of a testimony would this be for the rest of the royal caravan observing? Water baptism is a public proclamation of our faith in Christ, much like a marriage ceremony. Why should every believer undergo water baptism? (See **Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:20-21**)
4. What mode of baptism was used in this case (**vs. 39**)? How do we know? What happened as soon as Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch came up out of the water? Was Philip's departure miraculous in nature? (See **2 Kings 2:11**) The Greek word for "*caught*" is the same word used in **1 Thess. 4:17** for "*the catching away*" or rapture of the church.

5. What was the response of the Ethiopian eunuch according to **verse 39b**? Church Father Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.) said, *"The eunuch returned to Ethiopia and became a missionary to his own people."* Was Philip's leaving the 99 to reach 1 person worth it? How excited were you when you first came to Christ? How has your life changed since?
  
6. Where did Philip end up (**vs. 40**)? What is another name for this ancient Philistine city? (See Commentaries) Gaza was located 20 miles from "Azotus" (or "Ashdod") and 60 miles from "Caesarea." What did Philip do all the way to Caesarea. It appears that Philip may have stayed in this major city for the next 20 years. Why do many people believe this? What can we learn from **Acts 21:7-9** which was written 20 years after Luke's account in **Acts 8:40**? What does **Acts 21:7-9** teach us about Philip's legacy?
  
7. How can we use the following strategy of Philip to reach people for Christ today?
  - 1) Philip was sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in his life.
  - 2) Philip had developed a good understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures (The Old Testament) – particularly in regard to the prophecies about Jesus.
  - 3) Philip began the discussion with the man right where he was at spiritually.
  - 4) Philip used the Scriptures to show the eunuch that Jesus truly is the Jewish Messiah.
  - 5) Philip convinced the eunuch that after coming to faith in Christ, he needed to undergo water baptism shortly thereafter.

#### **MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

- Through an angel, God sent Philip on a mission to meet 1 man on a remote desert road.
- This story is an example of leaving the 99 to find the 1 lost sheep. (See **Matt. 18:12-14**)
- Many Christians don't read the Old Testament, but the entire Bible is truly the story of Jesus.
- The Book of Isaiah has more Messianic Prophecies in it than any other Old Testament book.
- Philip skillfully used the Hebrew Scriptures to lead this important official to Christ.
- Water baptism is identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Scripturally, people believed and then they were baptized shortly thereafter. (See **Acts 2:38; 8:36-37; 10:44-48; 16:11-15, 30-34**)
- Philip, *"the evangelist,"* shared the gospel with people everywhere he went and so should we.