

The Book of Acts

Lesson 22

Philip & The Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40)

32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” (quotation from Isa. 53:7b-8)

God evangelizes the world through obedient Christians who explain God’s Gospel to others.

Temple Law declared that any man who **“was emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD.”** (Deuteronomy 23:1). This doesn’t mean that the Eunuch from Ethiopia wasn’t physically emasculated, he could have been, but it means it is preferable to see the term “Eunuch” as a title describing his high place in the government of the Candace of Ethiopia (not a proper name of an individual, but that of a dynasty of Ethiopian queens— like Pharaoh and Caesar). The monarchy of Ethiopia claims to trace its genealogy from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10). The fall of King Haile Selassie ended this presumed dynasty in 1974.

John 12: 32 **“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”** The Spirit opened the way for Philip to come to the man. The Spirit opened the Scriptures to the seeking sinner. The Spirit opened the sinner’s heart to the Savior.

Only the Spirit can teach the sinner the truths of the Gospel, but He has ordained that it is only by the foolishness of the proclamation of the Gospel through whom the Spirit works. God has ordained that obedient Christians are essential to the work of Gospel giving. Salvation is a cooperative work of the evangelist and the Spirit. When the Spirit brings a prepared servant and a contrite sinner together, there will be sowing and harvesting!

Verse 35 – **“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”**

The death and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, can be taught from these verses (Isaiah 53:7b, 8). But Philip must have gone on through the chapter. The scroll probably contained at least the whole chapter from which Philip could preach Jesus.

Verse 33 - **“In His humiliation His judgment was taken away.”** Jesus appeared in such a condition that Pilate, though convinced of His innocence, did not consider Him important enough to risk his reputation for His deliverance. “Taking away His judgment” means the trials of Jesus denied Him the legal rights of Jewish justice.

Verse 33b - **“For his life is taken away from the earth.”** He died, so who will pass on his name & heritage? Romans 8:29 - **“Because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”** His physical death didn’t stop reproduction through Him.

Verse 35 - ***“He began at the same Scripture....”*** According to Christ’s own testimony there are things concerning Him in all Scripture. ***“Search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of Me.”*** Wherever you read, you hear a voice saying, ***“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.”***

Verses 36-38 – ***36And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he (Philip) baptized him.***

The act of baptism is a public confession of what God has done in a person’s heart through faith in Christ. It is obvious that Philip explained the meaning and significance of baptism as the first obedient step after salvation. Those who do not believe in immersion argue that there could not have been enough water in the desert to dunk a man. But “they both went down into the water” and “they came up out of the water” indicate that it was a deep enough pool for immersion. The Greek word for “baptize” means to dip under, and immersion best pictures what baptism symbolizes, namely, complete identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. (Romans 6)

In the New Testament baptism was adult baptism or baptism of those who were mature enough to understand the Gospel and to choose to receive Christ. Saving faith always precedes water baptism. The 1st written record of “infant baptism” was when the Roman Emperor Valens insisted his dying son be baptized in AD 370. He believed the false teaching that saving grace is transferred to the one being baptized, that the cleansing of salvation takes place in baptism. The Catholic Council of Mela made infant baptism law in AD 416 nearly 400 years after Christ, again based on the false idea that baptism is a means of saving grace. In the Roman Catholic Church, infant baptism is required as a means of securing eternal life for infants. Infant Baptism is sometimes referred to as paedo-baptism from the Greek *pais* meaning "child." It is contrasted with "believer's baptism," or credo-baptism-- Latin “*credo*” meaning "I believe." The one condition to baptism is a personal confession of faith in Jesus. Children can certainly believe and therefore they can be baptized. Small children, too young to believe, should not be baptized until they have understanding as illustrated by the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Verses 39 &40 - ***39And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus (Ashdod), and as he passed through, he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.***

As the men came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. That which Philip taught the Eunuch was sufficient to produce future growth. But even though the eunuch never saw Philip again, he went on his way rejoicing. Remember, the fruit of the Spirit is joy. The Eunuch has the Spirit. There is no need for the signs of Pentecost for the Ethiopian Church that will spring from this man.

God had met the longing of the Ethiopian’s heart. He knew that Jesus had forgiven his sins and given him eternal life. He knew how to identify himself as Christ’s by water baptism. We do not know if he became an evangelist to his people, but it is not hard to imagine that he did. A life of joy in Jesus is hard to keep to oneself! It is the best advertisement for the Gospel.

The Spirit left Philip at Azotus (Ashdod), about 20-30 miles north of Gaza, on the trade route paralleling the Mediterranean lying on the great road from Tyre to the North and Egypt on the South. Philip continued preaching to the cities along the trade route all the way to Caesarea, about 95 miles north. The route which Philip would naturally take on this journey led through Lydda and Joppa. In Acts 9:32-36 we read that there was an organized and flourishing Christian church here a little while later. It appears from Acts 21:8 that Philip and his four unmarried daughters lived in Caesarea and made it the head-quarters of his work as an evangelist. This family hosted the Apostle Paul and his company (including Luke) for many

days when they were on their way to Jerusalem. This is significant, because it appears that he may have settled in Samaria in the North, but the Providence of God brought Him to settle in Caesarea in the South.

The Spirit didn't change Philip's ministry of proclaiming Christ, but He did change where Philip was to do his work. He kept on doing what he always did, preaching the Gospel to the people within the cities as he traveled. He used a logical pattern to carry out His God given ministry. So it is with you and me. We don't need to ask where, for God places a person by Providence among people some, like the Ethiopian want to know more. Some others will be resistant of that first "seeding." But we will reap, if we faint not. (Galatians 6:9)

According to Scripture, lost people are both sightless (unable to see Eternal truths) and lifeless (unresponsive to God). Unsaved people are blind and dead to God's truth. How can we reach them? Are we so foolish as to imagine that we can somehow, by our own arguments, logical presentations, induce within an unsaved person either spiritual understanding or life? No. It is not given to us to give sight to the blind or life to the dead. God alone is the author of light and life.

"The gospel is preached in the ears of all; it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher; otherwise men would be converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preachers' learning; otherwise it would consist of the wisdom of men. We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were mysterious power going with it—the Holy Ghost changing the will of man. O Sirs! We might as well preach to stone walls as to preach to humanity, unless the Holy Ghost be with the Word to give it power to convert the soul." Charles Spurgeon