

Acts Part 24 – The Ethiopian Eunuch

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney Wednesday, March 2, 2016

Last week we dealt with evidence that Simon the Sorcerer was never saved and there was no Biblical proof that he ever was but that he had made a false profession of faith because of his desire to have the power of the Holy Ghost available to him to use for his own purposes. We saw how Simon was the epitome of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and how he represented the tares.

Tonight I want us to finish out this chapter by looking at Philip with the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

† Acts 8:26-40

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readeest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

The Bible says “the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip,” and further down in verse 29 the Bible says “the Spirit said unto Philip,” and further down in verse 39 it says, “the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.” Friends, it is the Holy Spirit that begins the work in every man and woman that leads up to salvation. We see in these verses that the Spirit led, said, and caught. He led Philip to the Eunuch, he said for Philip to go near the chariot, then he caught away Philip.

He leads him to a place called Gaza. Gaza was a city about 50 miles south of Jerusalem. The road Philip was on ran all the way from Jerusalem to Egypt. Gaza is one of the oldest cities in the world. Most people are familiar with the term “Gaza strip,” that is a strip of land controlled by the Hamas Palestinians and it borders Israel on one side and the Mediterranean Sea on the other side. There is a lot of contention there. The old city of Gaza that Philip would have been in was a main hub for people traveling back and forth from Egypt and Jerusalem.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

Ethiopia is the most populous landlocked country in the world, as well as the second-most populous nation on the African continent. The definition of Ethiopia is “black.” So when the Bible says a man of Ethiopia it means he was a black man. The ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, said that the Ethiopian men were the “tallest, and handsomest men in the whole world.” †

According to Homer’s Odyssey, Ethiopia was considered to be at “the end of the world.” § So, this would fulfill Scripture of the Gospel being spread in Jerusalem, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world.

“an Eunuch of great authority” Eunuchs are mentioned in the Bible numerous times. A Eunuch is a castrated male. Jesus speaks about these: **Matthew 19:12: For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.**

Eunuchs were used as chamberlains in the King’s palace. They would watch over the women. When a Eunuch proved to be faithful and loyal to the Queen, they would often be promoted to higher positions, such as the Ethiopian Eunuch was that we are reading about tonight. The Bible says that this Ethiopian Eunuch had great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians and he had charge of all her treasure.

“Candace queen of the Ethiopians.” Candace was not this queen’s given name such as “Candace Cameron” or “Candace Bergen.” Candace was a title such as Pharaoh or Caesar. There were several queens in history that had the title of Candace.

“who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,” The Eunuch was in a high position in charge of the queen’s treasury. He had been in Jerusalem to worship, no doubt during the time of the Passover. Since he had been to Jerusalem to worship then he was obviously a Jew. Most likely he had been in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified and had probably heard of his resurrection as well.

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

The Eunuch was reading from the Book of Isaiah. Probably because of everything that had taken place with Jesus, he was probably reading from Isaiah because it deals with the Messiah and he was most likely interested in it.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

I love how Philip is obedient to the Holy Spirit. You can only imagine what kind of world we would live in today if more people were obedient to the Spirit. Philip was so excited about following God’s will that he ran up to the chariot.

Albert Barnes made some good comments about Philip’s obedience in his commentary in the Bible. Listen to what he says about this:
A thousand difficulties might have been started in the mind of Philip if he had reflected a little. The eunuch was a stranger; he had the appearance of a man of rank; he was engaged in reading; he might be indisposed to be interrupted or to converse, etc. But Philip obeyed without any hesitation the instructions of the Spirit, and “ran” to him.”

We should be as obedient as Philip and we might see more results.

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

Obviously the Eunuch was having difficulties understanding the prophecies of the Messiah. He was like most Jews believing that the Messiah would come in on a white horse as a conqueror. But, Isaiah portrays the Messiah as meek and lowly and one that would suffer greatly. It was hard for the Jews to accept that. So he invites Philip to join him in the chariot so he could help him understand the Scripture.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

The Eunuch was reading from **Isaiah 53:7-8:** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. **8** He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

The Eunuch was confused at who the Scripture was speaking of. He wanted to know if Isaiah the Prophet was speaking of himself in these passages or of someone else.

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus

I wish we knew what all Philip said to the Eunuch. He obviously informed him that the Scriptures in Isaiah was speaking of the Messiah and the Messiah was Jesus, the One that had been crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. This was the Jews Messiah they have been waiting for all of these years.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

Philip had obviously also told the Eunuch about baptism because he now asks what was hindering him from being baptized? That is a very important question. I was talking to a man not long ago about salvation and he asked me if a person had to be baptized to be saved. Believe it or not that is a very frequent question that I get.

If you ever have someone ask you if baptism is a requirement for salvation, just explain it to them like this. When Jesus was hanging on the cross dying for our sins, there were two thieves beside him, one on both sides.

Luke 23:39-43: 39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

The thief on the cross realized he was a sinner in need of a Savior, while hanging there he trusted Jesus as His Savior and Jesus told him that he would be with him in paradise. Nowhere do we see that that man was ever baptized. If baptism was a requirement he would have had to be taken off the cross and baptized before he died, but he was not.

So, no, baptism is not a requirement for salvation, however, you are required to be saved before you are baptized. The Baptism is an outward sign to the world that you have died to Christ and risen a new man. You are following in the footsteps of Jesus and baptism signifies that. As Baptist we consider Baptism as a Church ordinance. We observe only two; baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The Eunuch asked Philip what was hindering him from being baptized, look at what Philp says to him:

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

And there we saw that salvation is a requirement for baptism. There is no other reason for a person to be baptized. Infant baptism is unbiblical. The Catholics believe baptism is a sacrament and they baptize infants believing that it cleanses them from their sins. You won't find that teaching in the Bible. Baptism always follows salvation. Salvation is believing in Jesus to save you from your sins.

Now, I made mention of this last week and I have also discussed it before in our King James Bible study. If you happen to be using an NIV version Bible (and I hope you are not) you would notice that verse 37 is not in those bibles. Here is how the NIV reads: **Acts 8:36-38:**³⁶ *As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?"* ^{[37] [c]} ³⁸ *And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.*

Verse 37 has been completely removed and instead a footnote is inserted at the bottom of the page that says: **(c) Acts 8:37 Some manuscripts include here Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."**

So in the NIV the eunuch never had to trust Jesus as Savior, he was simply baptized without believing... You must be careful to make sure you only trust the King James Bible.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

So, after the Eunuch professes faith in Jesus Christ, Philip then takes him into the water and baptizes him the biblical way.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

And just like that, the Holy Spirit takes Philip away from that place and into another. Wow, what a miracle!

[†] All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version

[‡] History of Herodotus 3:19

[§] Homer's Odyssey 1:22-23

^{**} Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible