

Acts 8:25-40 “Evangelism and the Ethiopian Eunuch” June 23, 2024

Intro:

Two weeks ago, we looked at the first part of chapter 7 remembering that Saul was pushing for the martyrdom of Stephen and continuing to persecute the church. They were spread out of Jerusalem and Judea. Phillip, one of the seven deacons chosen in chapter 6 is also considered an evangelist, goes to Samaria and encounters Simon the Sorcerer. Peter and John are dispatched to deal with these Samaritans having received the gospel and end up confronting Simon and that’s where we pick up the story in verse 25.

Concerning the outline of Acts, it can be divided into 4 parts:

I. Chapters 1-7 have 3 sermons in Jerusalem:

II. Chapters 8-12 have 3 conversions:

- A. Samaritans (half Jews)
- B. Ethiopian Eunuch (proselyte to Judaism)
- C. Cornelius (Gentile)... notice the progression.
-Conversion of Saul

III. Chapters 13-20 have 3 journeys of Paul to the Gentiles

IV. Chapters 21-28 have 3 of Paul’s trials:

- A. Felix
- B. Festus
- C. Agrippa

This follows the pattern given by Jesus in 1:8 “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit come on you and you will be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth.”

So, the gospel has gone to Jerusalem. The people largely receive it while the Jewish authorities reject it. God moves the focus to Samaria, hence section two of the book of Acts.

Not all authorities were opposed to the gospel. The Jewish authorities by and large, reject the message and commence to persecute the disciples. Here we have another authority from out of town. He is almost certainly a black man and a convert or proselyte to Judaism who has made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship (v27). His travel would have certainly lasted some

time, as much as a year. He might have even been present during the time that Jesus was there. We don't know.

He is the treasurer of Candace of Ethiopia. Candace is a title not a name. It's like Pharaoh, the ruler of the Egyptians. He is called a eunuch which would have been one who could have been literally physically emasculated, or the term was also used to denote someone who was trustworthy. We do not know which sense is intended here but know that is how the text describes him.

He was reading out loud, which was common for people to do in that time. Those who could read would read out loud and Phillip would later hear him as he approached the chariot.

-research how many times the Bible says to "hear the word of the Lord." We are not explicitly commanded to read but are commanded to hear. Certainly, this is a euphemism to obey however, there is immense benefit from reading out loud.

The Spirit told Phillip to go and join the chariot, so he did. I do not know the specifics as to how Phillip knew the Spirit told him to do this nor does the text describe how he knew, it just states that it happened and Phillip obeyed, AGAIN. Surely, there's a lesson there.

The eunuch is reading Isaiah 53 (Q5).

Suffering servant was difficult to combine with the idea that the messiah would be a conquering ruler (Psalm 2 & 110).

Q5: Phillip used that Scripture and proclaimed the good news to him (v35).

Life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

Baptism

Not baptismal regeneration. Very important.

Does not guarantee salvation but also is a requirement of Jesus (Matt 28:18-20).

Credo & paedo baptism. All, non-covenant converts are credo.

Contra Baptist's insistence that the term is only used for immersion, this is simply not true. It could mean sprinkling, splashing, pouring, etc. There are several ways to verify this. Kittel has several pages on it. A good Greek lexicon also bears this out. However, we will immerse if someone wants it.

All trinitarian baptism accepted. Any others (Mormon, oneness Pentecostal) excluded.

Textual Variant v37 is a part that was most likely added later to offer greater clarity to what happened. It is almost certainly not part of Luke's original autograph. Some have made the case that modern translations (anything other than the KJV) have taken out parts of the Bible. Gail Riplinger has made this somewhat popular in the last 20-30 years. If, you have concerns about this, please refer to James White's book The King James Only Controversy. There are also numerous videos on YT where he discusses this issue of what is called the Majority Text or Textus Receptus. I'm also happy to talk about it outside of this message. Suffice it to say that I don't think that there's anything nefarious about this. We can still affirm that people need to be born again and make a profession of faith without this particular text as it's affirmed in other places.

The Ethiopian goes back home and may have indeed been the forefather of what is known as Coptic Christianity. You can look that up for yourself.

Encouragements:

1. Trust God when he leads you into Gaza. Perhaps you don't understand and don't want to go. Perhaps it doesn't make sense to you. Have a good attitude and trust the sovereignty of God.
2. Preach the gospel. Proclaim the good news! 5x in 40 verses (v4, 12, 25, 35, & 40.)

My strategy is twofold. 1. I preach the gospel regularly to those I know personally. I pray for boldness when I know that I will have an opportunity and I pray every Friday for those I know that need to be saved, that God would open their hearts. 2. I also pray that I'll be faithful at a moment's notice to proclaim the good news as God directs my path, meaning that as God sovereignly puts me with people that I didn't plan for, I am cognizant that my ultimate purpose is evangelism.

Closing Prayer:

Our great God and Father in heaven, thank you for this passage and the example of these godly men who risked and even gave their lives for what matters most. Would you give us a keen understanding of Your ways as described and prescribed in the Bible? Would you move us by your Spirit to boldly proclaim the good news to everyone you would send us to at work and home? Would that your Spirit make us wise in this present evil age and at the same time as innocent as doves as Jesus commanded us. Bring us near now as we remember the sacrifice of Christ and make us whole and complete for every good work. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions:

1. Who were “they” in v1? Hint: see v14.
2. “They” bore witness and spoke the word of the Lord and were proclaiming the gospel in many villages in Samaria (v25).
3. What was Phillip told to do in v26? Why do you think the Lord told him this?
4. Who was the Ethiopian eunuch in v27?
5. The man was reading Isaiah 53. In summary, what does that passage say?
6. Phillip used that Scripture and proclaimed the good news to him (v35).
7. What did Phillip continue to do in v40?
8. What is the repeated pattern in this passage? What does that tell *us* about what Luke was intending to highlight? What does he intend his readers to *do*?

Application:

1. Who do you think God may be calling you go to? What are you doing about it?
2. How are you proclaiming the good news? If you’re not, get to it.
3. What is your evangelism strategy? If you don’t have one, get one. Write it down.
4. Be a learner and study the Scriptures as questions in your evangelism come up. It’s ok to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.” Then follow up.