**Baptism - An Act of Obedience**

**Acts 8:26-40**

**03/20/2022**

1. Introduction

2. God sets up a divine appointment and opportunity for obedience

 A. Phillip is told by and angel to go, so he immediately goes

 B. The influential Eunuch under Candace is returning to Ethiopia on the Gaza Road

 C. The Lord arranges a meeting

 D. The Eunuch opens the door for evangelism

 E. There is water nearby

3. Phillip’s Act(s) of Obedience

 A. When told to, he goes to the road to Gaza

 B. He approaches the designated chariot

 C. He takes the opportunity to evangelize and teach

 1. He knows the answer (Luke 22:37)

 D. He goes into the water and baptizes the Eunuch

4. The Eunuch’s response to God (belief and obedience)

 A. He was already worshiping in Jerusalem

 B. On his return home, he was reading scripture

 C. He sought to know the truth

 D. Upon believing, he immediately felt the need to identify with Christ

 E. He went on His way rejoicing

5. Lessons for the modern believer

 A. Yield to the Holy Spirit – Let Him drive your behavior and desires

 B. The desire to be baptized is a normal response to belief/salvation

 C. Immediate, immersive water baptism is normative

 D. Baptism is a symbolic act of personal identification with Christ

 E. Baptism is NOT a requirement for salvation

Introduction:

 I’m so excited for today. As with every Sunday, we are here to celebrate, but today is extra-special. Today is Baptism Sunday. We have two people today (Sarah Watson and Adam Melcher) that have decided to follow Jesus, and they want to show it. We are privileged as fellow disciples of Christ to witness the outward expression of the inward commitment of these three believers. I for one, am inspired and encouraged.

 As a result of this special celebration, we will take a break today from our deep dive into Genesis. Today we will read the story of a man who truly sought to know the truth, God’s response to this desire, and of this man’s instant obedience to God, and his equally immediate response at the time of belief in Jesus. Please open your bibles to Acts chapter 8.

**“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. 27And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” 30So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” 31And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32Now 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.
33In his humiliation justice was denied him.
    Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”**

**34And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” 35Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 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?” 38And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 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. 40But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.”**

 From our reading, you’ll notice that God orchestrates a divine meeting between the Ethiopian Eunuch and Phillip. Phillip is told by an angelic messenger to head down to the road to Gaza, so he does. Meanwhile, a wealthy, influential Ethiopian Eunuch is heading back to Nubia in Ethiopia after having been in Jerusalem on a pilgrimage. He is cruising in the back of a chariot in what most likely is a large caravan, reading a scroll containing the book of Isaiah. Apparently, he’s having a little trouble making sense of the prophecy (Isaiah 53) that he is reading.

 Phillip is watching the caravan when the Holy Spirit tells him to chase down a certain chariot. When he jogs up beside the vehicle, he hears the eunuch reading from Isaiah. This might sound a little weird, but it would have been weirder not to hear him reading, since reading aloud was normal, and reading silently was almost unheard of, if you’ll pardon the pun. Due to the grammatical nature of both Hebrew and Greek, reading silently was rare. It was necessary to sound things out due to the lack of punctuation present in both languages. Anyway, Phillip jogs up beside the chariot and asked the man if he knew what he was reading. The man is like, “uh, no. I need help.” He then asks Phillip to come on up and ride. Also, it is the right time of year for this to happen – I’ll explain later.

 A couple of interesting things of note are: The eunuch is obviously devout and seems to be seeking the truth. He has just been to Jerusalem, where there is undoubtedly a buzz around town due to what’s been going on not only with the recent death, resurrection and reappearance of Jesus, but the movement of this growing Jewish sect that is devoted to Him. The Eunuch is reading scripture. He is obviously wealthy. We know this not only because of his status as the treasurer for The Candace, or Queen of Ethiopia, but by the fact that he owns a chariot, is most likely traveling with an entourage and he has a copy of Isaiah, which was something only the wealthy could afford in those days.

 The stage has been set for this story of belief and obedience. We’ll start with the obedience of Phillip here. In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells the disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Obediently, Phillip is evangelizing in Judea here, in response to the commission given by Jesus. An angel appears and tells him to go over to the road to Gaza. That’s it. Just head down there. Phillip is on a need-to-know basis. Phillip does what he is told, making this meeting possible.

 On the road, Phillip is hanging out awaiting the next instruction. A caravan is passing by, and the Holy Spirit tells him to run up beside a certain chariot, so he does. Think about that. You’re just standing there, and God tells you to do something kinda weird. Has that ever happened to you? Did you do it? I can tell you it’s happened to me, and most often I have failed to obey. “But what if they think I’m some kind of weirdo?” I have news for you, most people think you’re weird, so what? Anyway, notice how Phillip opens the evangelistic encounter – with a question.

 When asked to hop in the chariot, Phillip does, and shares Jesus with the eunuch. When the eunuch believes and expresses the desire to be baptized, they get it done. Later when Phillip is dropped into the middle of a town called Azotus, he preaches his way up to Caesarea.

 In this passage, Phillip is found to be willing and obedient, and God’s purposes are accomplished through him. As for the Ethiopian Eunuch, his is also a story of obedience. To begin with, when we meet the eunuch, we find him returning from Jerusalem, where he had been worshiping. He is obviously devout, but the only way we have any compulsion to worship or seek is through the Holy Spirit. We know this from Romans 3:11 which reminds us that there are none who seek Him of their own volition. The Eunuch displays this unnatural desire for the Lord by his act of worship and the fact that he is reading scripture on the way home. He is unwittingly yielded to the Holy Spirit who is obviously working in the situation.

 Everything we see from the eunuch in this story indicates obedience. When he perceives that this stranger jogging beside his chariot can help him understand scripture, he invites him up. He learns from Phillip, and obviously comes to faith in Christ (through OT scripture, the testimony of Christ offered by Phillip, and the revelation of the Holy Spirit).

 Immediately upon believing, the eunuch desires to be baptized. What does this signify? He clearly understands the need to put the old man to death and identify with the risen Christ. In other words, at the Spirit’s compulsion, the man obeys and commits completely to the Lord. Once Phillip finishes baptizing him and disappears(!), the obedient eunuch goes joyfully on his way, rejoicing in the Lord.

Notes:

Phillip allowed the Holy Spirit to operate in him, just as Jesus promised in Acts 1:8.

God teed up the ball for Phillip. The Eunuch is reading from Isaiah 53, and Phillip knew full well what Jesus said in Luke 22:37 “For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’ For the things concerning Me have an end.”

Jesus is saying here that He is the fulfilment of Isaiah 53! It was easy for Phillip to connect the Eunuch with Jesus based on the passage he was reading.

When God requests something from us, He makes a way for it to happen. In the passage (v. 26) the place where Phillip intercepts the eunuch is described as a desert. There was a small window during the year where it would have been possible to find enough open water to dunk someone in. At the moment the eunuch believed on his journey, there was water. This place was likely the Dhirwah Fountain, a famous watering hole. It was the right place at the right time. God provided.

If you are reading from the King James or the New King James, you have a verse 37 which reads,

**“Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”**

**And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”**

This verse is not present in the newer translations. The reason for this is that the KJV and thus the NKJV are based on the Textus Receptus, from which originated the first printed Greek New Testament, which then became the basis for the translation of the New Testament into English by William Tyndale, and the King James translation. Most subsequent translations come from the Majority Text, which is a combination of all known Greek NT manuscripts. Very few of these manuscripts contain a verse 37, so it’s thought that a scribe added it, since it was common practice in the early church to make this stipulation clear before baptizing someone.

The eunuch is in a position of power and influence, with close access to the Candace (not a name, a position), the Queen of the Kingdom of Kush which is now Nubia. This queen was probably named Amanitare (AD25-41). So the Eunuch works for Amanitare and he’s headed back to the capital city, Meroe. The Eunuch was not actually an Ethiopian. This was a term used for anyone from that area. Historically, there was a Christian movement in Nubia in the first century that lasted well into the Muslim era, some 700 – 900 years. It is very likely the conversion experience of the Ethiopian Eunuch had everything to do with it. An act of obedience on the part of the eunuch and Phillip may have resulted in the salvation of thousands!

About the religious background of the Eunuch. Deuteronomy 23 stipulates that no Eunuch could ever be a full proselyte, so the Eunuch was in a sort of second class of Judaic followers or converts, called God-Fearers. They were allowed to attend Synagogue and read scripture, but that was it. What does is say about the Eunuch that although he was excluded from full participation in the religion of the One True God, He fervently sought after Him anyway?

Lessons for the Believer:

A. Yield to the Holy Spirit – Let Him drive your behavior and desires (Romans 12:1-2)

**“I appeal to you therefore, brothers,by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:1-2)**

B. The desire to be baptized is a normal response to belief/salvation (Acts 2:41)

**“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41)**

C. Immediate, immersive water baptism is normative (Mark 1:9-11)

**“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.”**

D. Baptism is a symbolic act of personal identification with Christ based on the faith of the believer (Colossians 2:12)

**“…buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.**

E. Baptism is NOT a requirement for salvation (Luke 23:42-43)

**“And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” 43And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

Gospel Presentation: