

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 29TH-30TH, 2023 // BAPTISM

### BAPTISM IN THE DESERT (ACTS 8:26-40)

The book of Acts tells the story of the early Church.

- Acts 1 records the ascension of Jesus into Heaven, and in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit is poured out in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and the Church is born.
- In response to Peter's powerful declaration of the gospel, 3,000 people were baptized and added to the church (Acts 2:41).

As the Church continued to spread the message of Jesus across the region, powerful miracles and workings of God's power were seen.

- Phillip, one of the seven deacons chosen to care for the poor in the Christian community in Jerusalem (Acts 6), had ministered powerfully in Samaria and witnessed miracles as he'd preached the gospel (Acts 8:4-8).

Now God sends "an angel of the Lord" to him, commanding him to go to a road in a desert.

- This must have seemed strange to Phillip. He wasn't "called" by an angel to Samaria; the intense persecution in Jerusalem had led him to Samaria, yet God showed up mightily.
- Now he receives a miraculous "call" from God—but to the middle of the desert...?

As he starts walking down this desert road, he realizes that Gaza isn't the target at all, but rather a person—an Ethiopian eunuch.

- In God's value system, it doesn't matter whether one preaches to thousands in a city or ministers to one person in the desert—faithfulness to where God calls is the only issue.
- Notice that Phillip doesn't know where he's going as he starts walking, and yet he moves anyway.

This eunuch was the "treasurer to the queen" on his way home from temple worship, most likely in an ox-drawn chariot.

- He was probably a "proselyte" or a gentile who had converted to Judaism.
- He was reading from Isaiah the Prophet as he rolled down the road from Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit told Phillip to join him, so Phillip ran to the chariot and asked the eunuch, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

- The eunuch, in turn, invites Phillip to join him in the chariot and explain to him the truth of the gospel.
- What does this look like in our modern context? Think of sitting next to someone on an airplane that has a Bible open in their lap...

### "DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE READING?" (VS. 30)

Hearing and understanding the gospel is necessary for saving faith, and saving faith precedes baptism.

- If an individual doesn't understand the gospel, and yet they still get baptized out of obligation, peer or family pressure, or "magical thinking," they just get wet.
- Phillip begins to explain the gospel (vs. 35).
- Isaiah 53 speaks of the "suffering servant" (the Messiah) whose death and suffering would be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of God's people.
- Phillip explains the gospel to this man: that God is holy, humanity has sinned against this holy God, Jesus atoned for our sins on the cross and rose again, and Jesus forgives and restores if we place our faith in Him.

### "WHAT WOULD KEEP ME FROM BEING BAPTIZED?" (VS. 36)

As Phillip explains the good news of Jesus to this eunuch, there's a point where he must have placed his faith in Jesus.

- The eunuch seems to understand that professing faith in Jesus involves baptism (probably because Phillip explained it to him).
- Vs. 37 wasn't written by Luke and was inserted later as a scribal commentary—but it is very helpful to understand historic Christian thought.

The eunuch requests that Phillip baptizes him, and they both go down into the water where he's baptized.

- Why? Because water baptism is how Christians publicly and symbolically profess faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- This is how Christians have professed faith in Jesus as Lord for the past 2,000 years of Church history.

As Phillip and the eunuch emerge from the water, a miracle occurs as the Spirit "takes Phillip away."

- This is one of the only mentions of this kind of miracle (teleportation) happening in the Bible.
- Phillip "appeared" in a place called Azotus, where he continues to preach the gospel.
- The eunuch goes on his way rejoicing as he "sees Phillip no longer."

### DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE READING?

- God is holy, perfect, and just (Psalm 92:15).
- We are sinners who justly deserve the sentence of death and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23).
- Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins on the cross and rose again in victory (Col. 1:14).
- Jesus forgives, restores, and offers us new life if we place our faith in Him as savior and Lord (Jn. 3:16).

### WHAT WOULD STOP ME FROM BEING BAPTIZED?

- Not hearing or understanding the gospel.
- Not having real, allegiant, repentant faith in Christ alone.
- Pride, fear, and an unwillingness to obey.
- Lack of true love for the Lord (Jn. 14:15).
- A false and unbiblical understanding of grace and a false and unbiblical view of discipleship.

### REPENTANCE.

Repentance is sorrow for sin, walking away from it, and committing to leave it behind and walk in obedience to Christ.

- Acts 3:19

### REPENTANCE IS...

- Turning from sin (Matt. 4:17; Acts 3:19).
- Turning from self (Luke 9:23; Mark 8:35).
- Changing of the mind and heart (Isaiah 55:6-7).
- A personal decision to make a clean break from lifestyles and patterns of sin
- A submission to the Word of God and ways of God and what it says about us, our sin, life, and who God is (Psalm 51:4).

### FAITH IN CHRIST.

Saving faith in Christ is personal trust in Jesus as a living person who offers forgiveness of sins, eternal life with God, and a life in the Kingdom of God here and now.

- Acts 16:30-31
- An active trust in the power, promise, and person of Christ for salvation (John 6:37).
- An absolute surrender to the Lordship and authority of Christ (Romans 10:9).

### PRAYING A PRAYER?

Since personal faith in Christ must involve an actual decision of the will, it is often very helpful to express that decision in spoken words.

### WATER BAPTISM IS A STEP OF OBEDIENCE FOR ANY TRUE

### DISCIPLE OF JESUS.

- Acts 2:37-38, 41
- Matt. 28:19-20
- Matthew 3:16-17

Baptism is simply our public, symbolic profession of faith in our allegiance to Jesus as Savior and Lord.

- It's our way as disciples of Jesus of publicly declaring before the people of God...
- "I've repented of my sins" (burial by water).
- "I've been cleansed of my sins" (washing by water).
- "I am a new creation in Christ" (rising from the water).
- "I intend to follow Him with my life" (identifying with Christ).

Baptism is something we do physically that symbolizes what God has done in us spiritually.

- Baptism is how we as disciples of Jesus profess the change that has occurred in us through active faith in Jesus Christ.
- Baptism symbolizes the washing and cleansing of sin we experience in salvation (Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16).
- Baptism shows that we've been forgiven, covered, and given a new life and purpose.
- Baptism symbolizes the union we share with Christ as we find in Him salvation and embrace His call to discipleship (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12).
- Baptism shows that we've been changed and given a new identity (2 Cor. 5:17)!
- Baptism is a symbol of beginning the Christian life, so it's given only to those who have already begun the Christian life (Acts 2:41)—it shows outwardly what's already happened inwardly.

### "WHAT ARE WE SAYING WHEN WE'RE BAPTIZED?"

1. I believe that I'm a sinner unable to make myself right before God.
2. I believe Jesus died for me the death I deserved because of my sin and rose again.
3. I've repented of my sin.
4. I'm trusting in Christ to be made right before God.
5. I now want all the world to know it.

### RELIGION VS. GOSPEL

- So often the focus in religion becomes on what we must do for God, but the gospel begins with and is founded upon what God has done for us in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).
- We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).
- We obey Him because we love and we trust Him (1 John 2:3-6).
- If there is an absence of obedience in your life to God, it's because there's an absence of love in your heart for God.
- If there's an absence of love in your heart for God, it's because you don't understand just how much He's loved you first because you don't truly understand the gospel.
- You can trust Him: obey Him.

### OUR RESPONSE...

- We must repent of our sins, receive His sacrifice for our sins, surrender to Him as Lord, and commit our lives to Jesus fully (this is the starting line).
- If we claim Him as Lord, we will obey Him by being obedient in baptism: this is our first step as a disciple.
- If we truly are a disciple, we will follow Jesus and obey Jesus out of a heart of love, gratitude, and trust, being passionate about His priorities, and joining Him in His mission on earth as our Lord, master, and friend.