

There is Water in the Plan – The Ethiopian Eunuch

Scripture Text: Acts 8:26-40

The events in Acts record the history of the Lord's Church.

Events in Ac. 8 happen approximately between 36 AD (Stephen martyred) and 37 AD (Paul converted).

1. Background – Acts 8:1-25

Luke devotes nearly the same length to one man as he did all of Samaria

- 4 Results of the death of Stephen, scattered abroad – preaching the Gospel
- 5 Goes to Samaria (half-breeds in Jewish opinion), Cf. John 4
- 9 Simon the Sorcerer introduced
- 12 Heard, Believed, Baptized
- 13 Simon baptized also
- 14 Peter and John sent – needed to impart the Holy Spirit
- 18 Simon wanted to physically buy the gift of the Holy Spirit
- 22 Told to repent of this wickedness
- 25 Preaching continues

2. Story – Acts 8:26-40

- 26 Phillip has a successful preaching career in Samaria (v. 5-8); we may not always understand at the time the point in things

Angel directing Philip

Gaza – 50 miles distance

Any road to Gaza leads South

Gaza is the last watering place before the desert or road to Jerusalem or Egypt

Some Greeks take it to mean “midday” – urgent – people rarely travelled at midday

- 27 Ethiopia figured in myths and legends as the very end of the world (“every living creature”)

Ethiopia: South of Africa

- Black Africans in Greek
- Existed since about 3000 BC
- Kingdom of Meröa – flourished since the 8th Century BC

- Luke doesn't specify if this Candace was the ruling queen mother, generally used, or the King's wife
- One queen who was ruling during this time was Queen Nawidemak

Eunuchs:

- Sometimes the Septuagint used the term "eunuch" to refer to officials who were not true eunuchs
- However, since it is repeated five times (27, 34, 36, 38, 39) refers to true eunuch
- Controlled the royal wealth (chariot, personal scroll of Isaiah, servants)
- Regarded as "half-men" by Greeks – barred from worshipping (Deut. 23:1)
- 1st Gentile Christian

This man was very dedicated to God to travel this far to worship

Psalm 68:31, Jeremiah 38:7 – OT contact with Ethiopians

He was either: (1) a Jew – tribe of Dan had some go to Ethiopia (secular history, Jew by birth); (2) a proselyte (Jew by choice); (3) a Gentile and thus the first Gentile convert. Since so much emphasis is placed on Cornelius (Ac. 10 & 11), it seems likely (1) or (2).

Traveled 1500 miles to worship.

28 Only the wealthy owned a four-wheeled chariot, covered carriage as envisioned here

Reading from Isaiah 53

29 Spirit directing Philip

30 Ran – McGarvey theorized that for Philip and the eunuch to meet at this place, Philip would have had to leave at least 1 day before the eunuch did – no wonder he ran! Probably a leisurely pace until now. The Lord knew how long it would take. (McGarvey, *Commentary on Acts*, p. 152)

Common practice to read aloud

Divinely orchestrated

Isaiah 53:7-8

31 Willingness to ask for help when he didn't understand the passage

32 Jewish teachers often took for granted that their Biblically literate primary hearers know the context of the passages they cited

No chapters and verses yet – citing the whole passage to let the readers know

33 Justice violently taken away from Him – died an unrighteous sentence

34 Elsewhere in this section of Isaiah (41:8; 42:1-4; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4; 49:3)

- The "servant" is Israel (42:18-19)

- God raises one up within Israel to fulfill His mission and suffer on behalf of Israel (49:5-7; 52:13-53:12)
- Later, God declares that He welcome eunuchs and Gentiles (56:3-8)

35 Great lesson on evangelizing – start where they are and teach Christ to them

36 True castration would not allow circumcision although sometimes it only the testicles – not of true eunuchs from this region in this period

Being welcomed – he understood to be under a new covenant

Water could be:

- Brook in the Valley of Elah (David & Goliath) [McGarvey's position
- Wadi El-Hasi just north of Gaza
- Water from a spring in one of the many pools in the area

37 10 most important words one can say

38 Both went down – *story*

39 Come out – went all the way down

Joy is associated with salvation in Acts

Like Elijah – II Kings 2:11

Probably told everyone he knew and saw about the great events to happen to him!

OT Prophets caught away in visions – Ezekiel 3:12, 14

40 Azotus – Ashdod in OT – one of 5 Philistine cities

19 miles from Gaza, 60 miles from Caesarea

Philip left here; next appearance is 20 years later (still in Azotus) in Acts 21:8

3. Applications

1. Everyone needs the Gospel.
2. Don't be afraid to ask for help when studying the Word.
3. When evangelizing, one of the most effective ways is to start where they are.
4. Baptism comes after the confession, for the remission of sins.
5. Baptism involves going completely under the water.

From George W. DeHoff, the most effective way of evangelizing:

- If you are the only Christian in an area of 100,000 people and you convert one person today
- Tomorrow, both of you convert one soul each
- Following day, all four of you convert one soul each
- Following day, all eight of you convert one soul each
- In one month, all 100,000 people would be converted at a rate like this!

July 31, 2019 PM Rockliff Church of Christ VBS