

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

Turn your bibles with me to Acts 8

We have been studying this wonderful book the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to provide a historical account of the works of the Holy Spirit within the early church – and for the most part, the Holy Spirit still works within the church today in the same way.

One of the things that we have seen over and over again in our studies is the empowering of the Holy Spirit upon individuals.

We have seen it with the Apostles and Stephen – and last week we began to see it in the life of Philip.

Philip – like Stephen, was a servant who was faithful in serving tables – and God used him to do greater things for the Kingdom of God.

You might remember that, in response to the persecution of the early church, the Holy Spirit led Philip up to Samaria where he was faithful – and God used him to bring the gospel to the Samaritans and usher in a spiritual awakening in the area.

In our study this evening, we are going to see that God is not done with Philip – and we will see how this new calling applies to the church today.

Let's pray...

[Act 8:26-40 NKJV] 26 Now **an angel of the Lord** spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." **This is desert.**

So, we pick up the events here in chapter 8 – after rebuking Simon – Peter and John return back to Jerusalem and Philip continues to serve in Samaria until he receives a message from an angel of the Lord.

And that message – “Philip, God is going to use you somewhere else.”

Now, I want you to notice that even during the church age, God uses angels to do His will.

[Heb 13:2 NKJV] 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so [doing] some have unwittingly entertained angels.

So God still uses angels to this day.

But notice that the angel is the one communicating this message to Philip.

Some people might say, “Couldn't the Holy Spirit have done that Himself?”

After all, we have seen what angels are capable of – a few Sundays ago we saw one angel kill 185000 Assyrians.

And the answer is “yes”

But don't miss this wonderful encouragement: God, in His grace, opens up His plan to include His creatures – which includes His angels and us.

Did God have to send this angel to send the message – no. But, it was His delight to include this angel in the ministry.

And in the same way, God wants to include us in His work – wherever we are – not because He needs us, but because He loves us.

I asked you to make a note of how the verse ends: “This is desert.” Just in case we didn't know!

Luke is setting a scene for us here.

First of all, Philip was being asked to leave a city full of revival to go down to a deserted place.

He had been hanging out in Samaria, preaching the Gospel, performing miracles. People were getting saved left and right. It was a genuine revival. And now the Lord says to him, “I want you to leave and go sit in the desert.”

To make matters worse, to go from Samaria to Gaza (show map), one had to go through Jerusalem.

And we all know what was happening in Jerusalem during this time – persecution. That was the reason that Philip had fled to Samaria in the first place.

Philip had no idea what he was going for or what he should do when he got there!

Here's the thing: Being a servant, means obeying the orders we're given.

As Christians, we no longer have the right to self-direct.

And that's really not a bad thing, because we know that the Bible says the way that seems right to men ends in destruction.

It says that when we go our own way, we go astray.

But the reminder is here that God's word is often going to challenge us and demand surrender.

And we can respond in disobedience or bow before the Lord and say, "Your will – be done"

Even when it doesn't make sense or more difficult or dangerous, the question becomes – will we be obedient to what He has called us to do?

Philip could have argued and said, why am I going to a deserted area???

People are responding here

There is no one where you are sending me.

But as we will see, Philip was obedient to the command that was given to him.

**27 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.**

So we see the obedience of Philip here –

He heads out on the road to Gaza – not knowing what God had in mind –

We don't even know how long he was out there in the middle of nowhere.

And then Philip sees a royal caravan.

And in the royal caravan – was an Ethiopian.

Not just any Ethiopian but the Treasurer of Ethiopia.

He was a high level government official.

He was responsible for the economic well-being of the kingdom and during this time,

Ethiopia was a fairly powerful and prosperous kingdom.

He was also a eunuch.

During this time – it was common to castrate the men that served in the Queen's court.

The scriptures tell us that he had come to Jerusalem to worship God.

We don't know how he had heard about the God of Israel – some say it might have been the Queen of Sheba – who came from Ethiopia to meet Solomon and see the Temple of God.

Some say that when she returned, she told everyone what she had witnessed and they were passed down from generation to generation.

So as the Ethiopian is returning home, he is reading the book of Isaiah – out loud - apparently, he didn't get car sick.

**29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."**

So this time, the Holy Spirit gives Philip the command –

And He reveals to Philip the next step.

The first step was to leave Samaria – and once Philip completed that – he was given the next step.

And church, that is the way that the Holy Spirit works.

We usually only get enough information to get us to the next step.

And once we get to far enough, we begin to see and understand why we had to go through the step that didn't make sense at that particular time and place.

The problem for many of us is that we don't take that initial step -

**30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"**

It is very doubtful that this high level government official was traveling alone.

He most likely had guards that were with him and those guards would most likely be walking alongside of the chariot.

That is how Philip was able to catch up the chariot and overhear the Ethiopian reading from the book of Isaiah –

But notice how Philip sees this as an open door to share the gospel.

Philip didn't simply come up to the Ethiopian and introduce himself as the guy who did miracles and wonders in Samaria –

His focus and desire is to talk to this man about the Word of God, because Philip understood that the Word of God has power.

It is the WORD of God that matters most and it is the Word that advances the work of God.

**31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.**

When I first moved out here, I remember seeing a roadside billboard between Phoenix and Tucson – about "The Thing"

And it would tell you on what exit you had to get off on.

And every time I have driven between up and down I10, I always see the sign.

I have never gone to see the thing and really have no intentions of seeing it.

And the reason that I bring this up is because there are many who see their Christianity as simply a billboard.

As long as I point the way – I am doing my part.

The Ethiopian had plenty of billboard in his life – that is why he had made his way up to Jerusalem in the first place –

And when he got to Jerusalem, there were plenty of billboard pointing to the temple.

He wanted to know God, he wanted to be redeemed and restored, he was hungry for salvation.

However, when he got to the temple – all he found was empty religion with no real connection to God.

You see, the Ethiopian didn't need billboards, he needed a guide – someone who was going to walk him through the message of the gospel so that he could finally know the truth and be set free.

He needed someone who loved enough to help him understand.

And that's the kind of love that changes lives and opens people's eyes to what God's word is really saying. It's the kind of love Philip had.

And that is what we are all called to do.

**32 The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." 34 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?"**

Turn with me to Isaiah 53 –

Because here we see what the Ethiopian was reading when Philip climbs into the chariot with him.

**[Isa 53:3-8 NKJV] 3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, [our] faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He [was] wounded for our transgressions, [He was] bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace [was] upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned,**

**every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.**

So, Isaiah 53 – of course speaks about Jesus Christ.

How the Messiah was going to suffer and how he was going to go through an unfair trial and ultimately killed.

So the Ethiopian is reading this portion and he doesn't know who this is referring to.

Is Isaiah talking about himself or about someone else?

Now, was it coincidence that that the Ethiopian was reading this portion of scripture?

No – you see, the Holy Spirit was not only working in Philip – He was also working in the Ethiopian.

And in Isaiah 53 – the Ethiopian read about his own sinful nature and also about the Savior – and now sitting next to him is someone who can't wait to talk to him about the very book he is reading.

**35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.**

Following the resurrection, the scriptures tell us that that Jesus taught His disciples how the Old Testament scriptures spoke of Him and His mission –

The Apostles then instructed the new believers in these things – and one of those believers was Philip who is now instructing the Ethiopian in these things.

That all the scriptures point to Jesus Christ.

I see two important lessons for us church here

1. We see the importance of knowing the scriptures – would we know what to say if we ever encountered someone like the Ethiopian? Now, we may not have the answers to all their questions but, we can say, “I don’t know but I will find out and get back to you” – but we shouldn’t let this be an excuse to not know the scriptures.
2. Preach Jesus - We may not know who Obadiah or Amos are or what their books are about – But as believers, we do know who Jesus is. And we know the gospel message. And we must understand that God has given us the privilege of sharing Him to others.

So, as we serve the Lord, we want to have more and more of Jesus to preach as we learn more about Him and draw nearer to Him day after day.

**36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, [here is] water. What hinders me from being baptized?"**

Luke doesn't record the entire conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian.

We don't know how long Philip had been in the chariot with him – apparently Philip had been telling him about believing in Jesus and in being baptized –

When they come upon some water – the Ethiopian decides that he wants to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the gospel message that Philip has been sharing with him.

He's ready to make a decision - He wants to be baptized -

**37 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."**

Notice Philip's response to what the Ethiopian has asked.

Philip doesn't tell the Ethiopian that before getting baptized he is going to have to go through a two month course.

He didn't tell him that he would have to become a member of a church in order to be baptized.

He simply said – if you believe with all your heart, you may.

The gospel message is simple -

**[Rom 10:9 NKJV] 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

Later on in the book of Acts, we will find the Philippian jailer asking Paul and Silas the question - Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

And their response -

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved

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

Here we see that water baptism in the New Testament involves full immersion.

The word that is used for baptized – means full immersion.

It is supposed to symbolize the death of our old nature.

And when we come out of the water – it symbolizes the newness in life we have in Christ as we identify with His resurrection.

That is why immersion is so important – if it could be done by simple sprinkling, then Philip could have sprinkled the Ethiopian while they were in the chariot with any water that he might have been carrying – but he went into the water with the Ethiopian to baptize him.

**39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.**

As the Ethiopian was coming out of the water – he never saw Philip again.

The word that is used here for caught – is the same word that is used when it talks about the rapture of the church.

Philip was immediately transported somewhere else.

Now, think about this, the Ethiopian is going back home to Ethiopia – he is going to be the first Christian to set foot in Ethiopia – and share the gospel after one bible lesson.

Yet history reveals that the Gospel went out with power once he got back and revival broke out.

He went home to a mission field with the Word of God, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and, though he wouldn't yet have an understanding of every Scripture, we know that he had all the training he needed to start being used by God, because he had been shown how to get an understanding of every Scripture, and that was to find Christ on every page.

By the way – Coptic Christians

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

So as Philip is transported 20 miles away from where he was – he continues to be obedient to the Lord and preach the gospel as he makes his way to Caesarea – where he will settle down and we will see him again in chapter 21.

And we see an example in the life of Philip of someone who was obedient to God's calling and how God was able to use him.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I

accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

