

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 27 | ACTS 8:26-9:2

ACTS 8:26-40 | PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

- Verse 26 –
 - There is no definite article for angel, so it is an **angel of the Lord** that appeared to Philip with a command to go **unto Gaza, which is desert**.
 - No indication is given as to how this angel appeared.
- Verses 27-34 –
 - The man from Ethiopia **had come to Jerusalem for to worship** the God of the Jews, at the Temple (vv. 27-28).
 - Now, rather than an angel, **the Spirit** spoke to Philip (v. 29), who went to the the chariot and heard the eunuch reading Isaiah 53:7-8, and asked him whether or not he understood. The eunuch desired to know **of whom speaketh the prophet**.
 - The passage being read is that of the Suffering Servant (which begins in Isaiah 52:13 and going through 53:12).
 - The eunuch is well on his way to the truth because he is reading the Word and he is asking the right questions (inquisitive, identification questions). He recognizes that *someone* is prophesied, and he wants to know the identity of the One whose life would be taken. These questions led the eunuch to Christ.
- Verse 35 –
 - Preaching Jesus is not the same as preaching the Gospel of grace, and the Gospel of grace is not found in Isaiah 53, though Jesus is.
 - In this chapter, Jesus is presented as the Suffering Servant who would provide healing by His stripes and would go to prison yet be taken away, who would be **cut off out of the land of the living** because of **the transgression of my people** (v. 8).
 - From this chapter, one with knowledge of a coming Messiah could recognize (after the fact) that Jesus was the promised Messiah and could trust that this Messiah would someday return and reign.
 - One could not build our gospel of grace from this chapter.
- Verse 36 –
 - It would be pure speculation to believe that the Baptism of the Eunuch was different than all baptisms that came before.
 - Nothing in the Scripture gives any hint that this is not the Baptism of repentance taught by John the Baptist and Peter.
- Verse 37 –
 - There is no reason to doubt this verse as unreliable, as most modern versions do.
 - Acceptance of the Kingdom Gospel required belief, and, by this point, required belief that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) and Son of God.
 - That this belief is also required in Paul's Gospel is not evidence that Paul's Gospel was already being preached. Rather, it is only testimony that some of the same elements (namely, faith) were required in both the Gospel of grace and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

- Verse 38 –
 - The Bible only has one kind of baptism, and that is by immersion.
 - Today baptism is almost completely seen as “an ordinance of the church” and thus performed only by ordained ministers and only during a church service, and thus always publicly.
 - In the New Testament, there are no records of “church service” baptisms (though the baptisms of John the Baptist were public).
- Verses 39-40 –
 - After the baptism, Philip was **caught away**. This is a translation of the same word, ἀρπάζω [harpazo] as in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 which teaches of the rapture.
 - Presumably **the Spirit of the Lord** also gave the eunuch some information so that **he went on his way rejoicing**.
 - Philip **was found at Azotus**, a word which means *stronghold*, and was likely a reference to Ashdod. He then **preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea**, where later Cornelius would be the first gentile to hear the message (thus Peter was not preaching to gentiles).

ACTS 9:1-2 | THE PERSECUTION BY SAUL

- Chapter 9 begins approximately two years after Pentecost.
- The **disciples of the Lord** are the believers who are still in the **synagogues** (v. 2), thus the **high priest** has authority over their activity.
 - Note: when church and state are married, someone is always going to die.
 - At this point there was not name of this group other than **this way**, which was the way of believing that Jesus was their Messiah.
 - Those of **this way** were faithful Jews who were under persecution because followed the doctrine of the Apostles.
- Those who would be discovered (were the mission not cut short) would be taken **to Jerusalem**. Why to Jerusalem?
 - Because the entire Jewish world was still governed from Jerusalem for religious purposes.
 - Even though the citizens of Damascus were outside the realm of the Judean region, they were within the Roman Empire.
 - Roman Law would have trumped Jewish Law (as it later did for Paul), but many Jews were not Roman citizens.
 - Roman Citizenship was for:
 - Freeborn residents of Rome proper.
 - Soldiers of 10 years of service.
 - Individuals or territories that aided the empire.
 - Bribery of the list keeper.
 - Special action of the Senate.
 - Freeborn descendant of a freeborn citizen.