

Acts 8:36-40

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/acts/acts-8/acts-836-40/>

The eunuch asks to be baptized in water on the side of the road. Philip asks if he believes in Jesus, and the eunuch confesses his faith. Philip baptizes him, and immediately afterward he is transported supernaturally by the Holy Spirit to the city of Azotus. The eunuch rejoices for his new faith and new life. Philip journeys to Caesarea, preaching along the way.

The Ethiopian *eunuch* and *Philip* travel *along the road* for some undisclosed amount of time, riding in the diplomat's chariot. Philip teaches the *eunuch* what Isaiah 53 means, how it spoke of Jesus, and he shares the good news of Jesus's death and resurrection with this traveler. Presently *they came to some water*; a pond or oasis on the side of the desert road toward Gaza. The eunuch has listened intently to Philip's message and wants to take action. Seeing the pond, he says, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

Philip replies, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

The Ethiopian does *believe*, and confesses his faith, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

He calls out to his driver and *ordered the chariot to stop*. He and Philip *both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and Philip baptized him*. Jews were baptized for many reasons, most often related to purification laws. But in this instance, this baptism was the baptism for a new believer to publicly display their faith in Jesus. The believer is submerged into the water, symbolic of death, and rises from the water, symbolic of being raised to a new life:

"having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."
(Colossians 2:12)

Jesus commanded the apostles to baptize believers "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

It is a celebratory ceremony, a confession of faith. It is faith that saves the believer from the penalty of sin, and gives them a new birth (Romans 4:3; John 3:14-16). Baptism does not save from sin. Rather, it is done to declare and illustrate the new resurrected life a believer now has thanks to the gift of God, only received by faith in His Son (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is an early (in this case the first) step in declaring "I want to walk in the way of life instead of the way of death."

Something amazing and unexpected happens immediately after this baptism: *they came up out of the water and the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away*. Philip vanished, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The newly baptized *eunuch no longer saw* Philip. He disappeared into thin air. This did not seem to disturb the *eunuch* (indeed, it could be considered another attesting miracle, showing the power of God at work among men). This new believer *went on his way* back to the palace of the Queen of Ethiopia (v. 27, probably in the land of Cush, south of Egypt) *rejoicing* about the glory of God and His saving love.

Interestingly, a few chapters further on from what the *eunuch* was reading in Isaiah, God speaks directly to eunuchs:

“To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths,
And choose what pleases Me,
And hold fast My covenant,
To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,
And a name better than that of sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.”
(Isaiah 56:4-5)

This Ethiopian *eunuch* could never have children, sons or daughters, but he has now joined the family of God and will have a place in His house, with an everlasting name as a child of God. He will have an inheritance that is even better, because he chooses to walk in God’s ways, and please Him.

But Philip was transported to another location, sent by God to continue preaching the good news. He *found himself at Azotus* (Ashdod), formerly a Philistine city by the Mediterranean Sea, though it had been conquered by the Maccabean kings of Israel, and still had a strong Jewish population under Roman rule. The distance from Gaza to Azotus is about thirty miles. So, Philip would have been whisked away quite a distance.

Starting in *Azotus*, Philip went on a solo missionary journey: *as he passed through Ashdod he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities*, such as Joppa, walking north along the coast for about 60 miles *until he came to Caesarea* ([see map](#)).

Despite the persecution waged by the Pharisees and Sadducees and the shattering of the church in Jerusalem, the gospel continues to spread. In fact, the persecution and shattering is like glass shards that spread the gospel. The good news of Jesus’s death and resurrection has now overflowed to ethnic groups other than the Jewish people. It has come to the Samaritans, to an Ethiopian (a Cushite, who will presumably spread its message into Africa), and now along the coastal cities of the Mediterranean.

We will see Philip the Evangelist one last time in Scripture, in Acts 21, where we learn he has four daughters who are each gifted with prophecy. It appears that he settled down in Caesarea, for that is where the Apostle Paul and Luke, the author of Acts, stay with him in his house, toward the end of Acts:

“On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven [deacons], we stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin

daughters who were prophetesses.”
(Acts 21:8-9)

To see a short 3 minute tour of Caesarea click "Videos" in the right sidebar.

Biblical Text

³⁶ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch *said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁷ [And 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.”] ³⁸ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.