

Acts 049

Baptism by Immersion

Acts 8:34-38

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All right, let's take our Bibles this evening and open them to Acts 8:34. Lord willing, we are going to see if we can finish Acts 8 tonight. Acts 8, as you know, revolves around the ministry of Philip, the second deacon selected. He has a ministry in Samaria in the first half of the chapter, and then he moves from Samaria down south to Judea.

Acts 8:5-40

Philip's Ministry

I. Samaria (8:5-25)

II. Judea (Acts 8:26-40)



It is at this point that he is in the middle of a revival in Samaria. Something was happening that really had not happened for seven hundred years. There was starting to be reconciliation between the Samaritans and the Hebrews. The reason for that was that many of the Samaritans were coming to know Christ personally as Savior, and they were becoming members of the Body of Christ, fellow joint heirs with the Jews in this new man called the church.

II. Ministry in Judea

Acts 8:26-40

- A. Angel directs Philip (26)
- B. Philip's obedience (27a)
- C. Ethiopian Eunuch's introduction (27b-28)
- D. Holy Spirit directs Philip (29)
- E. Philip's witness to the Eunuch (30-35)
- F. Eunuch's conversion & baptism (36-38)
- G. Philip's separation from the Eunuch (39)
- H. Philip's evangelization of the Coastal Plain (40)



Then the Holy Spirit, at the height of Philip's success, tells him to leave Samaria and head to a road that connects Jerusalem and Gaza. First the angel directed Philip, and secondly, the Holy Spirit directed Philip. Philip, of course, has no idea why he has to leave a successful revival. Neither the angel nor the Holy Spirit told Philip why he had to leave. But the Holy Spirit knew something that Philip did not know. Do you guys agree with the fact that God knows things you do not know? The Bible says His ways are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The Holy Spirit knew that the Ethiopian eunuch was traveling on that particular road, down the coast of the land of Israel (from north to south, on a highway called the Via Maris, which means the "way of the sea," and basically connects Egypt to Mesopotamia).

The Holy Spirit also knew that on his way back the Ethiopian eunuch stopped in the Jerusalem area to worship. The eunuch from Ethiopia that we described last time was what you would call a proselyte, and he just happened to be reading Isaiah 53. What a coincidence. He was a God seeker. He did not know the way of salvation.

So that is why the Holy Spirit redirected Philip, and that is why Philip left a revival in Samaria and stood on this road. The Holy Spirit knew that the eunuch would come through and would encounter Philip, and that Philip would have the opportunity from Isaiah 53 to lead the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ, and that this encounter was how the gospel would penetrate down south into Ethiopia.

So had Philip stayed in Samaria, we could argue that God would have found somebody else to get the gospel to Ethiopia. But God wanted to use Philip. So God had a bigger impact for Philip's life than simply enjoying a wonderful revival in Samaria. The Holy Spirit did not tell any of this to Philip ahead of time—just told him to obey. Philip did what he was told. What we are going to read about here is a miraculous conversion of this Ethiopian eunuch. This is how Philip's life had an even bigger effect than just evangelism in Samaria.

So you come to Acts 8:30-35. The angel has directed Philip. Philip has obeyed. We have introduced who the Ethiopian eunuch is. We talked about that last week. Not only did an angel direct Philip to leave Samaria and stand on this road, but the Holy Spirit did the same thing, Acts 8:29. Now Philip has an opportunity to evangelize the Ethiopian eunuch.

What you have there in Acts 8:34-35 is the eunuch's question. Philip now has climbed into the chariot of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Ethiopian eunuch is reading Isaiah 53 at that split second, which, as you know, is a prophecy about Jesus written seven hundred years in advance. The providence of God in setting up this divine encounter is amazing.

Then you come to Acts 8:34, where the Ethiopian eunuch now asks Philip a question. It says in Acts 8:34,

"The eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or someone else?'" (Acts 8:34).

So there the Ethiopian eunuch is reading Isaiah 53, and we know whom Isaiah 53 is about. It is a prophecy made seven hundred years in advance that Isaiah made of the suffering, crucified Messiah, Jesus Christ. Here is this Ethiopian eunuch reading this passage, and he does not have all of the information. He wants to know from Philip (who has climbed up into the chariot because he is obeying what God told him to do), "Whom is this passage talking about?" What an evangelistic opportunity.

First Peter 3:15 says,

"but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;" (1 Peter 3:15).

So the Christian is called to prepare himself by studying God's Word, being conversant with spiritual things, because you just never know when the moment is going to arise when God has (pardon this expression) aligned the stars—aligned the circumstances—to put an evangelistic opportunity right into our laps. That is what Philip has here.

It would have been rather embarrassing if Philip had said, "Oh, I do not know anything about Isaiah. I do not know anything about Isaiah 53." But he was a devout Jew. He had studied the prophet Isaiah. He was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a deacon in the first church that started in Jerusalem. So he was a prepared instrument. He was a prepared vessel. And that is why the Lord put Philip in the path of this Ethiopian eunuch.

So the Ethiopian eunuch asked this question: "Whom is Isaiah 53 talking about?" Basically what he is wanting to know is "Whom is the referent?" That is the technical word for this. "Whom is Isaiah 53, specifically Isaiah 53:3-8 (which you can see he was reading in Acts 8:32-33), talking about?"

E. Acts 8:30-35
Philip's Witness to the Eunuch

1. Philip's question (30)
2. Eunuch's answer (31)
3. Eunuch's reading (32-33)
4. Eunuch's question (34)
5. Philip's witness (35)



That is a great question in prophecy. When you are reading a prophetic section of the Bible, you want to ask yourself, "Whom is it referring to?" The eunuch wants to know, "Is this referring to Isaiah or somebody else?"

Take, for example, Psalm 22:16-18, where David writes,

*"For dogs have surrounded me;
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
They have pierced my hands and my feet.
I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare at me;
They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 22:16-18).*

That is Psalm 22, talking about David's struggles. And when you are reading Psalm 22, it is obvious, though Psalm 22 was written a thousand years before Jesus ever showed up, that David, in this psalm, goes beyond his immediate circumstances and starts talking about somebody else. It becomes obvious as you look at this that he is talking about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit gave David a truth that transcended his own immediate trials and gave him in the process a Messianic picture, a Messianic prophecy, of the coming Messiah. David says things like this here:

"...They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16).

David's hands and feet were never pierced, but Christ's hands and feet were pierced. Then David says,

"I can count all my bones...." (Psalm 22:17).

That is a reference to the fact that when Jesus was crucified, none of His bones would be broken because He was the fulfillment of the Passover lamb, none of whose bones could be broken. That is why when the authorities came to get the victims off the crosses (so they could get on with their religious activity, Passover), the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs.

As the victims of crucifixion were dying, typically what the Roman soldiers did to get them to die faster was they broke the legs of those being crucified. When you are being crucified, you are being pulled down and you are suffocating, so you try to get your next breath of air by pushing yourself upward and breathing in. So that is how those dying on the cross kept themselves alive for longer periods of time.

But the Roman authorities and the Jewish authorities wanted these people to die faster. So they went and broke the legs of the victims on the cross so they could not push themselves upward.

John's Gospel tells us that when the Roman soldiers got to Christ and they were getting ready to break His legs, they did not have to because He was already dead (John 19:31-37). That is a fulfillment of this psalm where it says,

"I can count all my bones...." (Psalm 22:17).

None of Christ's bones could be broken, or else He could not have fulfilled the typology in the Passover lamb, none of whose bones could be broken (Exodus 12:46). That is why when people give Communion, they sometimes make a mistake: they talk about the body of Christ that was broken for you. That is actually a wrong statement.

Christ's body was never broken. None of His bones were broken. So when I do Communion here, I like to say that Christ's body was sacrificed for us, and was our substitute. I try not to say that His body was broken, because once you say His body was broken, He could not have fulfilled Psalm 22:17 or Exodus 12:46, which typologically indicate that Christ's bones could not be broken.

Then David writes,

"They divide my garments among them,..." (Psalm 22:18).

That fits Jesus.

"...And for my clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 22:18).

Remember, the Roman soldiers gambled for Jesus' garments. So Psalm 22 is talking about David's issues and David's problems and David's trials. But obviously a thousand years in advance, he goes beyond his immediate circumstances as the Holy Spirit is giving him insight and utterance, and he starts talking about the Messiah who is coming.

Well, that is basically what is happening in Isaiah 53.

*"...HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER;
AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARERS IS SILENT,
SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH" (Acts 8:32).*

In other words, Isaiah predicts that in front of His accusers, Jesus would remain silent. You see the frustration in Pilate and the Jewish authorities. They would say things to Jesus like, "Don't You want to defend Yourself? Don't you know I have the power of life and death over you?" And Jesus really would not open His mouth to defend Himself. He would just say things like, "Well, you would have no power if it were not given to you from above." The reason Jesus did not open His mouth to defend Himself was that Isaiah 53 indicated that He would not.

*"IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY;
WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION?
FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH" (Acts 8:33).*

This is what the Ethiopian eunuch is reading. He had probably just read Isaiah 53:5, which is another prophecy indicating that the Messiah would be pierced. So the eunuch just has a basic question for Philip: "Who is this talking about? Is this talking about Isaiah or somebody else?" So this gives Philip a chance to preach Jesus from that passage.

You see Philip's witness in Acts 8:35.

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35).

The first thing you notice here is that Philip opened his mouth. The reason that has to be emphasized is that we have today what is called "social gospel." People think that evangelism is doing some kind of humanitarian work for somebody.

In fact, in our missions committee, we had some problems early on (that is why we had to revamp things) of missionaries that would come to Sugar Land Bible Church, supported by our church, who would do their missions moment and say things like, "Well, out there in the field, we really do not share the gospel unless someone asks us. What we do is we dig wells and do Habitat for Humanity kinds of things. We do not really get too much into the gospel unless we are asked."

Well, I am sorry. That is not missions work. That is humanitarian work. And there is nothing wrong with doing humanitarian work as a missionary, as long as you use that as a platform to preach the gospel, because it really does not do anybody any good to send people to hell on a full stomach. You can meet all these temporal needs in people's lives, but you have to give them the good news that they need so as to be saved. So it was at that point that we started to revamp our missions, what kind of missionaries we were going to support at this church, etc.

You will notice that Philip here is doing real evangelism, because he opened his mouth. He spoke up. I heard of a guy whose idea of being an evangelist or a missionary to his neighbors was going over and mowing his neighbor's lawn. When he was asked, "How long have you been doing that for your neighbor?" "Oh, I have been doing that for about twenty years." "Okay, well, in the course of those twenty years, have you ever had any opportunity to share with him or her the good news of Jesus Christ?" "Oh, well, that really is not my focus. I will get around to that in due course."

Well, what have you done for twenty years? You have kept someone's lawn immaculate, which is nice, but you have not done anything in terms of evangelism. So that is what the social gospel is. Social gospel is all about doing humanitarian works. The gospel typically is not shared at all. And that comes grossly short of what the Bible teaches about the Great Commission. You can be a lovely person. You could have wonderful, copacetic personality skills. You can do all kinds of help and work for other people. But at some point you have to open your mouth and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

That is what Philip is doing here. He is not acting like a social gospel guy. He sees an opportunity, he sees what the Ethiopian eunuch is reading, he is asked a question, and he immediately begins to share the good news of Jesus.

Romans 10:14-15 says,

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear

without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!'" (Romans 10:14-15).

At some point you have to open your mouth and proclaim the truth. Whatever else you are doing in terms of being nice, meeting temporal needs—that is only a platform to preach the truth. But if you build a platform and you never use it to preach the truth, then we are not really doing what God has called us to do, which is to preach the gospel to every creature.

Romans 10:17 says,

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

So this expression here—*"Philip opened his mouth "* (Acts 8:35)—is actually a big deal. Acts 8:35 says,

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture [Isaiah 53] he preached [proclaimed: "kerysso" (κηρύσσω)] Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35).

He did not say, "Let's have an interfaith dialogue. You have part of the truth, and I have part of the truth. Let's meet in the middle somewhere." That is what interfaith dialogue is. Protestants and Catholics have been involved in interfaith dialogues ever since Chuck Colson in interfaith dialogue.

Now we have interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims. It is this idea that we are all common Abrahamic faiths, and the truth is somewhere in the middle. So you give your two cents and I will give my two cents, and we will talk it out, and we will meet in the middle somewhere." That is called interfaith dialogue.

You notice that Philip had no interest in interfaith dialogue. He did not say, "Hey, what do you Ethiopians believe? Here is what we Hebrew Christians believe. Let's talk this out and meet in the middle." Philip came at this with the idea that he had the truth, and he was there to share the truth with a person that did not know the truth. So he actually opened his mouth when the opportunity presented itself and he proclaimed Jesus Christ.

Philip obviously believed that Isaiah 53 was Messianic. He believed in Messianic prophecy. One of the things that makes Jesus unique is that there is a whole history written about Him before He even showed up—hundreds and thousands of years in advance—a history called Messianic prophecy. Jesus is the only person who has ever walked this earth the details of whose life, intimate details, were recorded long before His birth. Neither Muhammad nor anybody else has a similar pre-written history.

Philip knew enough to understand that Isaiah 53 was Messianic prophecy. When Jesus rose from the dead, He appealed to Messianic prophecy. When He was walking with His disciples on the Emmaus Road, it says in Luke 24:27,

"Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27).

What Scriptures? Hebrew Bible. As Jesus was walking on the Emmaus Road, He was showing how the tiny minutiae of Hebrew Bible pointed to Him. Isaiah 53 probably was one of the passages that He quoted.

Everybody wants to have been alive during some phase of Christ's ministry. I hear a lot of people say, "I wish I had just heard the Sermon on the Mount." I do not know if I would have liked the Sermon on the Mount because it was really hellfire and damnation. "If you are angry, you are a murderer and you are in danger of the fires of hell." It is stuff we need to hear, but I do not know if I wanted to be alive when Jesus was giving the Sermon on the Mount.

If I had to pick a part of Christ's ministry that I could be on the ground floor for, I would pick the Emmaus Road conversation. In His resurrected body Jesus was walking on the Emmaus Road with the disciples who were slow to believe, and He was showing them how Hebrew Bible pointed to Him. Then in Luke 24:44 it says,

"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled'" (Luke 24:44).

Now, the Law of Moses is "Torah." The prophets are "Nabiim" (or "Nevi'im"). (The "-im" ending in Hebrew connotes plurality.) The Psalms is the most prominent book in the "Ketuvim," which means "writings." Law is Torah; prophets are Nevi'im; writings are Ketuvim (the most prominent book in Ketuvim is Psalms).

Torah, "T"; Nevi'im, "N"; Ketuvim, "K"—"TNK." That is how the Hebrews started to call Hebrew Bible "Tanakh." What Jesus is saying here on the Emmaus Road is, "The whole Tanakh—Hebrew Bible—points towards Me." He is appealing to the fact that long before He walked the face of this earth, there was a history written about Him hundreds and thousands of years in advance.

Jesus made the same appeal to the Pharisees. In John 5:39, He says to the Pharisees,

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me..." (John 5:39).

Then He says in John 5:46,

"For if you believed Moses [who wrote Torah], you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46).

So Jesus is claiming to be the fulfillment of Hebrew Bible. So Philip, when He has this opportunity, obviously understands Messianic prophecy and he understands whom Isaiah 53 is speaking of, who the referent is—not just Isaiah, but someone who transcended Isaiah: the Messiah. Philip uses that Scripture to lead the Ethiopian eunuch to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Paul the apostle did the exact same thing. When Paul is ministering in the Book of Acts (we are going to see his conversion in the next chapter, which maybe we will get to next week), Paul always goes to the synagogue first. When he is outside of the land of Israel evangelizing, he goes to the synagogue first. The only time he does not go to a synagogue first would be in places like Philippi, where they did not have a synagogue. But his typical pattern is always to go to the synagogue first, where the Jewish people are worshipping.

He always goes there first, because those are the people that he has the most common ground with, because they have Tanakh—they have Hebrew Bible. He tries to show them that Hebrew Bible points towards Yeshua, or Jesus. When the Jews are unreceptive, then he goes to the Gentiles.

When evangelizing the Gentiles, Paul does not start with Tanakh, because the Gentiles do not have Tanakh or Hebrew Bible. He appeals to the Bible that they did have, which is creation. God has revealed Himself in two sources: special revelation: Tanakh (and later, the rest of Scripture); and general revelation: creation and conscience. So when Paul is speaking to the Gentiles, he does not quote Isaiah 53 or any other Messianic prophecy. He appeals to the Bible that they do know, which is general revelation. But when Paul goes to a new city, he will typically go to the synagogue first and he will appeal to Hebrew Bible.

For example, in Acts 17:2-3, it says, of Paul's activity in Thessalonica,

"And according to Paul's custom, [so this is what he always did] he went to them [the Jewish people in the synagogue], and for three Sabbaths [a three week period of time where he was in the synagogue trying to appeal to the Jews based on the Scripture that they had: Tanakh] reasoned with them from the Scriptures [What Scriptures would those be? Tanakh. There is no New Testament yet.], explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ'" (Acts 17:2-3).

So whether it is Paul, Jesus, or Philip, they all believed in this reality called Messianic prophecy. One of the very tragic things that has happened in my lifetime at our evangelical institutions of higher learning, our seminaries. is that there is amongst Old Testament scholars a complete and total denial of Messianic prophecy.

I sat under one scholar who told me that there are only two Messianic prophecies in the whole Bible. So I finally said, "Which ones?" He acknowledged that Micah 5:2, the prophecy of the Messiah being born in Bethlehem, was one. The other one, he said, was Isaiah 61:1. Jesus quotes that Scripture in the synagogue in Nazareth, you remember, and He says, "This Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (paraphrase, Luke 4:21).

So according to this particular individual that I had classes from, the only two Messianic Scriptures were Isaiah 61:1 and Micah 5:2. So we asked him, "Well, what about Isaiah 53?" He did not even think that Isaiah 53 was a Messianic prophecy. I have no idea

what Jesus was saying to the disciples on the Emmaus Road. That would be a pretty short conversation if there were only two Messianic prophecies in Scripture—you just quote two Scriptures and you are done.

But I get the impression that Jesus went into depth in terms of Messianic prophecy. He probably started with Genesis 3:15, which is the first Messianic prophecy in the whole Bible. I would think thrown into the mix would be Daniel 9:25, which indicates the exact day that Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, proclaiming Himself to be the Messiah.

I would think He would throw into the mix Daniel 9:26, which says that the Messiah must be cut off. I think He would quote Psalm 22:16, which talks about His hands and his feet being pierced, as we talked about earlier; Zechariah 12:10, which prophesies that the Messiah will be pierced; Isaiah 53:5, which prophesies that the Messiah will be pierced.

There are just countless Scriptures Jesus could have gone to in the Emmaus Road walk. But according to this particular Old Testament scholar, there are only two Messianic prophecies. This is what makes the work of Dr. Michael Rydelnik such a big deal. He is the head of Jewish studies at Moody Bible Institute, and he is trying to scholastically and academically counter all these so-called Old Testament scholars today who are denying the reality of Messianic prophecy.

Michael Rydelnik is in a very good position to do that, because he is Jewish himself, Hebrew, and he was actually led to the Lord through all of these Messianic prophecies that the modern brand of scholarship is saying are not Messianic prophecies. Rydelnik is saying, "If those are not Messianic prophecies, then I was led to the Lord under false pretenses."

You can find his stuff in written form. He has an encyclopedia of Messianic prophecy ("Handbook of Messianic Prophecy"). He even allowed me to write a couple articles for it. He has a book called "Messianic Hope," which is exposing this trend of the denial of Messianic prophecies in our evangelical institutions.

It is a shocking thing to see people moving this direction, because this is not coming from liberals—this is coming from our own guys, who are conservatives and evangelicals who are massively downplaying Messianic prophecy. The late Ed Hindson was on the cutting edge of this. He did either his doctorate or his master's thesis on Isaiah 7:14: why Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy about the virgin birth of Christ. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum has a lot of good stuff on this in his book called "Messianic Christology."

But really, the key guy out there who is going against this modern trend of denying Messianic prophecy is Dr. Michael Rydelnik. That becomes important work, because what Philip is doing here in Acts 8:35—opening his mouth and beginning from this Scripture, preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch—that does not even make sense if Isaiah 53 is not Messianic.

What Paul is doing in Thessalonica in Acts 17:2-3 does not make any sense unless the Hebrew Bible has Messianic prophecies in it. What Christ says to the Pharisees in John 5:39, 46 does not make any sense without the reality of Messianic prophecy. Christ's

whole conversation with the disciples on the Emmaus Road does not make any sense without the reality of Messianic prophecy.

So obviously, we do not want to go too far and read Jesus behind every rock and tree in the Old Testament. We do not want to do that. I have seen people come up with some crazy interpretations of things that supposedly point towards Christ. I get that. I do not want to read the New Testament back into the Old. But at the same time, the Old Testament, Hebrew Bible, has on its own plenty of Messianic prophecies in it.

So that was Philip's mindset, and that is how he took this opportunity to share Jesus with this Ethiopian eunuch who was a spiritual man but was struggling to find the referent behind Isaiah 53. This then leads to the Ethiopian eunuch's conversion, and then after that, his baptism. Look at Acts 8:36-37.

"As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' [And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he (the Ethiopian eunuch) answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.']" (Acts 8:36-37).

So you will notice that, first of all, the eunuch needed to believe in the right object. Faith is only as good as the object it is placed in. But the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:37, did fulfill the condition. He did believe, which means to trust, in the finished work of Jesus Christ that Philip just made him aware of through a prophecy about Jesus written seven centuries in advance.

So the condition has been met. The eunuch is saved. He is justified. You will notice that there is a single condition, and only one condition, that has to be met before the lost sinner is justified before a holy God. The Ethiopian eunuch had fulfilled that condition by believing, or trusting, in the finished work of Jesus Christ. That condition, according to Lewis Sperry Chafer, is mentioned 150 times in Scripture. He says,

*"...because upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only (cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31)."*¹

These you know well:.

"Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

With each of these, there is only one condition for the lost sinner to meet.

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

Peter and Silas were asked by the Philippian jailer,

"... 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus [the right object], and you will be saved,...'" (Acts 16:30-31).

Believing in Jesus is the only thing God asks people to do.

Then, what follows after conversion through faith alone in Christ alone is baptism. The eunuch is a believer, Acts 8:37, because of the good news Philip preached to him, Acts 8:35, based on Messianic prophecy, Acts 8:32-33. So now, as a new believer, he wants to get baptized, Acts 8:36.

"As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?'" (Acts 8:36).

So what is baptism? It is obvious here that we are dealing with water baptism because the eunuch sees water. Well, water baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality. Baptism in and of itself does nothing for a human being. What has happened to a person, spiritually speaking, has already transpired at the point of faith alone in Christ alone. Water baptism is just a symbol that this reality has happened to a person.

So you are giving an outward acknowledgment of an inward reality that God has already done. The baptism that is of most importance is Spirit baptism, which is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:13:

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized..." (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Now, this is talking about identification. That is what the word "baptized" means.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

So when a person trusts in Christ, the Holy Spirit takes the person at the point of faith alone in Christ alone and identifies, or attaches, them, spiritually speaking, to the Body of Christ. So when a person is water baptized, that is an outward symbol to the world as a testimony that this reality has happened.

It is interesting that the Ethiopian eunuch wants to give, naturally, an outward testimony through water baptism of the spiritual reality that has transpired in him. You will notice also that baptism can take place anywhere. Sugar Land Bible Church does not have a baptismal pool. We baptize people in swimming pools and things of that nature.

Are we really allowed to do that? Don't you have to baptize people in a church? Not necessarily. You could baptize them in the ocean. You could take them down to Galveston and baptize them. You can baptize them in a swimming pool. I was actually baptized in a jacuzzi, and I am not really sure how I was completely immersed, but they managed to do it in a jacuzzi.

It does not have to be in a church. It is just anywhere where there is water available for full immersion, so that you can give an outward testimony to the world that now you belong to Jesus Christ.

By the way, I noticed an email that went out from our church listing people wanting to get baptized. Whenever there is an inquiry, we just put the email out and see if anybody wants to get baptized.

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, we encourage you to pursue water baptism. You just have to take one Sunday class with Pastor Jim for forty-five minutes, where he explains to you what I am trying to explain: that baptism does not save anybody, but it is an outward symbol of what has already happened to a person.

It is always a great time in our church to see a lot of people getting baptized. So if you are interested in that and you have never been water baptized, I would encourage you to contact the church office so that we can set that up for you and for others.

Now notice Acts 8:38. It says,

"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" (Acts 8:38).

Sprinkling or Immersion?

- Sprinkling? Other words (1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Tim. 4:6)
- Immersion?
 - Christ's baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10)
 - Ethiopian eunuch's baptism (Acts 8:38-39)
 - Best symbolizes our union with Christ (Rom. 6:3-5)
 - Symbolizes a new creation (Gen. 1:6, 9; 2 Pet. 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17)



So what we believe the Bible teaches is baptism in full immersion. In other words, when you are baptized, it should cover every part of your body. Now, why is that? Well, this slide here will help you with that. A lot of people baptize by sprinkling water on people's heads.

When I told my dad I was now a Christian and wanted to get baptized, he pulled out all the family pictures where I was baptized as an infant by sprinkling in the Episcopalian church. So there I am, looking at all these black and white photos of the priest pouring water on my head as an infant, and I have my mouth open and I am screaming as if there is no tomorrow. So that is what is called infant baptism, which we do not believe is accurate biblically.

An infant with an inability to speak cannot make a public profession of Jesus Christ. Baptism does not precede conversion, as you will see here in Acts 8. Every time baptism is spoken of in the Book of Acts, baptism always follows conversion. We will baptize any infant in this church that can come forward, speak into this microphone, and share with us their testimony about how they came to Christ.

The practice of infant baptism is basically unbiblical. The only Scriptural support people who want to promote infant baptism have is God's covenant with Abraham, where the newborn was circumcised on the eighth day. That is the only Scriptural support they have. And of course, that has nothing to do with baptism. That is circumcision, and that is God's program with Israel. What we are dealing with here is God's program for the church.

So, the practice of infant baptism is unbiblical. The practice of sprinkling in baptism is unbiblical. Let me give you some reasons for why we embrace full immersion and not sprinkling. For one thing, the Greek language has a lot of words for sprinkling that could have been used here, and yet those words were not used.

First Peter 1:2 says,

"according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood:..."
(1 Peter 1:2).

The Bible knows how to use the word "sprinkled." But it does not do that here (Acts 8:38-39).

The Bible knows how to use the word "pouring," like pouring water on somebody, but it does not do that here. In 2 Timothy 4:6, Paul says,

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering,..." (2 Timothy 4:6).

So if infants were baptized, we would find an example somewhere, which we do not in the Book of Acts or anywhere else. If it was baptism through sprinkling, there are all kinds of words that could have been used, but in baptism contexts they are not used.

So what then, are some reasons for full immersion? Well, there are four vast reasons. Number one, Christ's baptism was in full immersion. Matthew 3:16 says,

"After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water;..."
(Matthew 3:16).

Mark 1:10 says,

"Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening,..."
(Mark 1:10).

We embrace baptism in full immersion because it is obvious that full immersion is what is happening to the Ethiopian eunuch. In fact, if you look at Acts 8:38, it says,

"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" (Acts 8:38).

Acts 8:39 says,

"When they came up out of the water,..." (Acts 8:39).

It does not say, "While they were standing on the shore, with Philip baptizing the eunuch by sprinkling."

"When they came up out of the water,..." (Acts 8:39).

That is an obvious reference to full immersion. If water baptism is a symbol of Spirit baptism, when a person believes in Christ and is baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit takes all of the person. The Holy Spirit does not just take a little room in the corner. He takes a person and baptizes them spiritually from head to toe and everything in between. That is what the Holy Spirit already did.

So the question becomes, "What form of water baptism would best symbolize that?" Not sprinkling, which only concerns part of the body, but full immersion, which would symbolize the Holy Spirit getting all of a human being.

Romans 6:3-5 says,

"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection," (Romans 6:3-5).

So when a person trusts Christ, not only does the Holy Spirit take them at the point of faith and connect them to Christ's Body, metaphorically—this new man called the church—but they also become identified, which is what baptism means, into Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

In other words, when Christ died, you died. When He was buried, you were buried. When He rose from the dead, you rose from the dead. When He ascended into heaven, that is what happened to you, spiritually speaking. That is why Ephesians 2:6 says that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. That is legally your new position.

You may not feel like it. You may not understand it. But that is irrelevant. That is what happened to you. In other words, when a person trusts Christ, they are identified not just with the Body of Christ, but they are identified into the complete transaction of Jesus Christ. His death is your death. His burial is your burial. His resurrection is your resurrection. His ascension is your ascension.

So when you were baptized, in that sense, the Holy Spirit got all of you. He did not get seventy-five percent, or fifty percent, or twenty-five percent. So since water baptism is an outward symbol of that reality, the question becomes, "What mode of baptism best symbolizes that reality?" Not sprinkling someone's head, but complete and full immersion into water.

You see this connection with coming out of the water. In Acts 8:38 they both went down into the water, and then it says,

"When they came up out of the water,..." (Acts 8:39).

Now think just for a minute: something coming out of the water. Can anybody remember the first time that is referenced in the Bible? Hint: it is under bullet point four. There is a Scripture there that starts with the letter "G": Genesis 1—creation. That is how the original creation happened. Everything was water, and when God formed the earth, He brought the dry land out of the water. Genesis 1:6 says,

"Then God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters'" (Genesis 1:6).

So we have waters above—a canopy, the sky—and then waters below. Then God wanted to form dry land. If the whole earth is a giant ball of water, where did the dry land come from? It came up out of the water just like the Ethiopian eunuch is coming out of the water.

Genesis 1:9, recording the creation week, says,

"Then God said, 'Let the waters below the heavens [the oceans] be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so" (Genesis 1:9).

So my understanding is that the dry land, or the earth, or the "eres" (Hebrew: אֶרֶץ), came up out of the water, just like the Ethiopian eunuch did.

Peter makes reference to this in 2 Peter 3:5. He says,

"For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water," (2 Peter 3:5).

So that is the original creation. It is earth coming out of the water.

When you become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, what do you become? A new creation. Second Corinthians 5:17 says,

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

So when you are a new Christian, you are a brand-new creation, just as the earth at one time was a new creation. So since the original creation came out of the water, is it not

appropriate that you, as a brand-new creature in Christ Jesus, would come up out of the water just like the earth?

So whether you are looking at Christ's baptism, the Ethiopian eunuch's baptism, which mode of baptism best symbolizes Spirit baptism, or whether you are looking at the model of the original creation—you put those four details together, and clearly the mode of baptism that God anticipates, or expects, from His church is immersion in full water.

Well, what if you get saved and you never had a chance to get immersed in water? Does that mean you are not saved? No, because water baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality. It just symbolizes what has already happened. The important thing is that you were Spirit baptized. But if you are never water baptized—let's say you die before your water baptism—it does not mean you go to hell. It just means you are walking in disobedience as a Christian.

I know a little something about that, because I got saved at age sixteen, and I got into a conflict with my father. I got saved when I was sixteen, about 1983, and I told my dad, "Hey, I am a Christian now. I want to get baptized," meaning, "I want to reverse all that infant baptism stuff that I was subjected to and had no choice in." He thought I was joining a cult, so he said, "Well, I need you to go talk to the priest. You can do it, but before you do it, you need to go talk to the Episcopalian priest."

So let me ask you a question. What sixteen-year-old kid wants to go talk to a priest? I did not want to talk to the priest, so I just—and I am not necessarily proud of this; I am just telling you the way it happened in my life—postponed water baptism until I was out from under his roof, which was a number of years later, because I went through college and graduate school and things like that.

So it really was not until about the age of twenty-seven, something like that, that I got baptized in a jacuzzi by the guy who led me to Christ. They were able to stuff me into the jacuzzi some way. I remember that when I was water baptized, it was not like I got saved all of a sudden. I was already saved. But I remember the spiritual opportunities starting to open up for me that were shut before.

It was almost as if the Lord was saying to me, "Okay, you have finally been faithful in the first thing I called you to do. Now I can trust you with other things." So if a Christian makes a conscious decision not to get water baptized, it really has nothing to do with their salvation. Really it is disobedience because God's expectation is that we would be water baptized in full immersion as an outward symbol. It does not save us, but it is an outward symbol, really, to the rest of the world that we now belong to Jesus.

So that takes us to Acts 8:38. We did not quite make it to the end, did we? But we have one more Wednesday until the spring quarter ends, so we will try to do Acts 8:39-40 next time. "Well, Andy, there is no way you can fit Acts 8:39-40 into a whole hour." Well, just just try me. So we will do Acts 8:39-40 next time.