

## **Baptism: For God's people: By God's people.**

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Acts 8:26-39

<sup>26</sup> Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south<sup>[a]</sup> to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) <sup>27</sup> So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship <sup>28</sup> and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." <sup>30</sup> So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" <sup>31</sup> He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. <sup>32</sup> Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup> In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
Who can describe his generation?  
For his life is taken away from the earth."

<sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup> As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?"<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>38</sup> He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip<sup>[c]</sup> baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

Okay you guys; breathe! There is so much good stuff going on in this story that I think we're going to bust out bullet points and definitions and other books in our Bible. I'm excited too!!

Let's start here: who *doesn't* know what a eunuch is? A eunuch is sometimes a word we use to describe a person, usually male, who has had their reproductive organs surgically removed – and when referenced in the Bible, they have usually had it done so they can have a really important job. In this passage, our Ethiopian eunuch

happens to be one of those men with a really important job.

While we read through this passage, we see an angel direct Philip to make this journey where he meets his Ethiopian friend, and at the closing end of this passage Philip feels the Holy Spirit call him away to evangelize (or minister, share the good news) elsewhere. How special it is to know that God put Philip in a position to answer a call to minister to a man who many thought less of due to his appearance.

So; here we are they have ended up sharing a chariot. Now, we know (because: Google and verse 28 gave us a hint) that the scripture referenced is Isaiah 53:7-8.

<sup>7</sup>He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

<sup>8</sup>By a perversion of justice he was taken away.  
Who could have imagined his future?  
For he was cut off from the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people.

Reading those passages in Isaiah must have been really difficult for someone who didn't understand much about God or Jesus or the Bible. If he had read on a little further in Isaiah he would have read "For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." Isaiah 56:4-5

Philip ministered to the Ethiopian eunuch and helped him to understand Jesus' love for us and spread the good news.

It didn't take long (or maybe it did: I imagine it could have been awhile) before they came upon water, and what did we learn last week about baptisms? They require two things: God's word and water.

Last week we heard about John baptizing hundreds, maybe thousands, of people.

This week; Philip baptized one Ethiopian man.

God's people being made new, by God's people.