

You must Believe before you get Baptised

Text: Acts 8:26-40

Introduction:

1. Many are confused about the true meaning of Baptism. Millions around the world believe that they are going to heaven because they were baptized as babies (christened, sprinkled). But does baptism save us from sin? What does it all mean?
2. This passage is one of the clearest passages in the New Testament on the subject and answers not only the question of what baptism is all about but more importantly, the way someone is truly saved. As we are going to see, you've got to believe before you get baptised!
3. Observe 3 truths in the passage:

I. A Searching Sinner (Vs. 27-28)

A. He was seeking the Lord (Vs. 27)

1. His Situation (Vs. 27a)
 - a. He occupied a high position under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians having "charge of all her treasure."
 - b. He was a eunuch which means he had been castrated after the common practice of the day for those who worked in the queen's court as her attendants.
 - a. The word 'Candace' was a title of all Ethiopian queens. Similar to the title 'Pharaoh' in Egypt.
 - b. Despite his high station in life, he sensed something was missing. There was an inner longing in this man to know the truth.
2. His Search (Vs. 27b)
 - a. His quest took him all the way to Jerusalem in search for an answer to the emptiness of his heart. This demonstrates that he was a man who was earnest to know the truth. That would have been about 2,500 km's one way! Remember, there was no Ethiopia Airways back then!
 - b. Seeking God is the starting point to knowing the truth:
 - i. Isaiah 55:6-7 "**Seek** ye the LORD while he may be **found**, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked **forsake his way**, and the unrighteous man **his thoughts**: and let him **return** unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

- ii. Jeremiah 29:13 “And ye shall **seek** me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.”
- c. God saw this man’s honest, seeking heart and sent Philip to give him the truth. Behind this whole story, we see the hand of God orchestrating the events to bring the seeking sinner in contact with a soul-winning servant.

B. He was Searching the Scriptures (Vs. 28)

- 1. Clearly his search for the truth in Jerusalem had ended in disappointment as on the journey back he was still seeking for answers. But in the Providence of God, he had procured a copy of Isaiah’s prophecy. In those days, this no doubt would have cost a great deal of money.
- 2. He was looking in the right place! The Word of God is the truth and has the answers to all of life’s questions. Most importantly, it answers the question of how a guilty sinner can be reconciled to God. John 17:17 “...thy word is truth.”

II. A Salvation Sermon (Vs. 29-35)

A. The Messenger: Philip (Vs. 26, 29-30a)

- 1. Philip was an Evangelist who had been seeing a real revival in Samaria (see Vs.5-8). It says something of Philip that he obeyed what must have seemed at the time as a very strange command indeed! We don’t get the slightest hint of a protest to the Lord’s command on the part of Philip. This whole account is a testament to Philip’s obedience:
 - a. Vs. 27 “And he arose and went...”
 - b. Vs. 30 “And Philip ran thither to him...”
- 2. Philip was an available vessel that God could use to bring others to Himself. Those who are submitted to the Lord and sensitive to the leading of the Spirit are the type of people the Lord will use as instruments to lead others to Himself.

B. The Message: Christ (Vs. 30b-35)

- 1. The Question (Vs. 30b-31)
 - a. The Evangelist’s question (Vs. 30b)
 - b. The Ethiopian’s question (Vs. 31) There is a challenge in this sermon for every Christian. Lost souls need guidance to help them find Christ! It won’t be done by an angel (Vs. 29). God uses people to lead other people to Himself. We can’t save a soul but we can point them to Christ who can!
- 2. The Quotation (Vs. 32-33)
 - a. He was reading from Isaiah 53 and at that particular moment, from Vs. 7-8.
 - b. The date of the prophecy: Approx. B.C. 712

c. The theme of the prophecy: The sufferings of Messiah. This man was confused as to whom the prophecy pointed. Was it referring to the prophet Himself or someone else?

d. Read Isaiah 53:3-8. Focus on Vs. 5-7.

e. In these verses we observe two key things:

i. **Sin Described:**

- 'transgressions' = to cross over a boundary; to rebel and disobey.
- 'iniquities' = perversity; lawlessness
- "own way" = 'sin' means to miss the mark. Sin is going our own way.
- I. John 3:4 says, "...sin is the transgression of the law."
- For example:
 - "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."** Have you always put God first?
 - "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain."** Have you ever used God's Name to express anger or disgust? E.g. Oh my ...?
 - "Thou shalt not kill"** Have you hated which is murder of the heart?
 - "Thou shalt not commit adultery"** Have you lusted in your heart?
 - "Thou shalt not steal"** Have you ever stolen something?
 - "Thou shalt not bear false witness"** Have you ever lied? Rev. 21:8 says that **"...all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."**

ii. **Salvation Provided:**

- What did Christ do with our sin? He took it upon Himself. It was all laid upon Him.
- Christ was 'wounded' (pierced), 'bruised' (crushed, beaten), 'chastised' (punished)
- God loved us so much he sent His only Son to die in our place and pay the full price for our sins (John 3:16-17; Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 1 John 4:10).

3. The Exhortation (Vs. 34-35)

- a. "preached unto him Jesus" = the word 'preached' is the word 'evangelised'. It comes from the word 'Gospel' and therefore means to announce good news. This was good news indeed! Philip 'Gospelized' him. The good news was that:
- b. **Jesus Christ was the answer to this man's emptiness** – "**I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.**" (John 10:10)
- c. **Jesus Christ was the answer to this man's quest for the truth** – "Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**" (John 14:6)
- d. **Jesus Christ was the answer to this man's search for salvation** – "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

- e. **Jesus Christ was the answer to this man's longing for eternal life** – “He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 5:12) “**And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**” (John 17:3).

III. **A Submissive Step (Vs. 36-39)**

A. **The Prerequisite for Baptism (Vs. 36-37)**

1. “what doth hinder me to be baptized” = clearly Philip had not only explained the Gospel but also explained that baptism was the next step of obedience after salvation. The word ‘hinder’ means to prevent, keep from. Philip’s answer contains one of the most important verses on the subject of baptism in the whole Bible.
2. “if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest” = saving faith is the requirement for baptism. That is because baptism doesn’t save you. You don’t get baptised to get saved; you get baptised because you are already saved! The phrase “with all thine heart” is vital. This is no superficial faith that just accepts some facts mentally. This is faith from the heart (Rom. 10:9-10).
3. “And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” = His confession of faith in Christ

B. **The Process for Baptism (Vs. 38-39)**

1. The imagery is clearly that of immersion. They go down into the water and then come back up out of the water.
2. The word ‘baptise’ means to immerse, to dip, to plunge. No other mode is found in the Bible and they are all inventions of men.

C. **The Picture of Baptism**

What does the ordinance of baptism picture?

1. Submission to Christ – it is the believer’s first major step of obedience after salvation (Matt. 28:19-20).
2. Confession of Christ – it is a public testimony of a believer’s faith in Christ. An outward sign of an inward change (Acts 8:37).
3. Identification with Christ – it is a portrayal of my union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6).

Conclusion:

1. Have you received Christ as your personal Saviour? If not, will you receive Him now into your heart and life?
2. As a believer, are you sensitive to the Spirit’s leading in relation to winning souls for Him? Are you an available vessel for God to use?