

Week 15

The Church is Dispersed – Part IV

The Ministry of Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch

It is a striking and important point to note that the ministry of Philip, and the early church by extension) was directed by the Holy Spirit, and the ministry of the Spirit was mediated to Philip through the “Angel of the Lord”. They didn’t just go wherever they thought best. God was directing the spread of the gospel to where He knew it would be received to spread along the most efficient path.

On the way south, through Gaza, there was a highway that was well traveled to the African continent. Here, Philip finds a man who is the high court of the Queen of Ethiopia. Interestingly, although a native of Ethiopia, he is either a convert to Judaism or at least a God-fearing man.

Converts to Judaism were not unusual in gentile world, as people tired of the immorality of their pagan cultures and searched for a deeper meaning to life. This search for significance is a sign of how humanity is born into this world with an innate desire for union with our creator. All religion is an attempt at filling that innate need.

We see the Eunuchs search for faith as he is reading some of the most messianic revealing scriptures, Isaiah, chapter 53. In this passage once can see, and no doubt many had heard, how this man, Jesus of Nazareth’s life, had fulfilled those very messianic prophecies.

As Philip preached Christ to the Eunuch, beginning from Isaiah 53, it is important to note that the gospel spread throughout the known world with only the Old Testament to preach from. The New Testament was just now being lived out and would one day be written. Too often we feel the Old Testament is of no value now that the New Testament has come but that is not true at all. In fact, The Old reveals the Christ with power and wonder that come from prophetic fulfillment and not just historical record.

It is also important to note that Philip, and the other early church leaders saw Baptism as the ‘entrance rite’ to this newly found faith, and that it was of utmost importance. It never occurred to Philip that this Eunuch could become a part of the church movement without being baptized. It was and still should be critical to our understanding of being “in Christ”.

The passage doesn’t tell us the mode of Baptism that was used by Philip. We do know from historical records of the early church in the late first and early second centuries that immersion was the preferred mode, however other modes were permitted when there wasn’t enough water present for immersion.

A. THE MINISTRY OF DEACON PHILIP (8:4-40)

- a. The church is scattered beyond Jerusalem into Samaria, preaching the Word
- b. Saul menaces the church
- b. Philip's miraculous ministry in Samaria
 - 1. The conversion of Simon the Sorcerer
 - 2. The sin and repentance of Simon
- c. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-39)
- d. Philip en route to Caesarea (40)

