

# Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:1-40)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Acts

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## I. Review from Prior Lesson

- a. After Stephen's bold speech before the Sanhedrin (**Acts 7**), he was stoned to death.
- b. At the stoning of Stephen, we were introduced to Saul of Tarsus (later to become known as the apostle Paul), who is involved in the death of Stephen.
  - i. "Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul." (**Acts 7:57-58**, NKJV)
- c. We now turn to **Acts 8**, which focuses on two stories involving Philip. Both have important lessons for us.
  - i. The gospel preached in Samaria, with the conversion of Simon the sorcerer.
  - ii. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.

## II. Christians Scattered; Philip Preaches in Samaria

- a. Read **Acts 8:1-8**.
- b. The storyline:
  - i. General persecution breaks out against the Christians in Jerusalem.
  - ii. Stephen is buried by godly men who lament his death.
  - iii. The apostles remain in Jerusalem, but many of the other Christians are scattered throughout the surrounding area (Judea and Samaria).
  - iv. Saul persecutes the Christians, even going from house to house and dragging off both men and women to prison.
  - v. Philip, whom I assume was one of the seven men selected by the apostles to take care of the distribution of bread to the widows (**Acts 6:5**), goes to Samaria and preaches there.

1. John Chrysostom identified Philip as one of the seven.
    - a. “And the Angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” And he arose and went.’ (**Acts 8:26**) It seems to me, this (Philip) was one of the seven...”
      - i. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homily No. 19 on Acts*)
  2. Eusebius said the same regarding Philip being one of the seven.
    - a. “Philip, also, one of those who had been ordained to the office of the deacons, being among those scattered abroad, went down to Samaria. Filled with divine power, he first proclaimed the divine word to the inhabitants of that place.”
      - i. (Source: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 2, chapter 1)
  3. However, I am aware that some people have thought this might be referring to another man named Philip; for example, perhaps to the apostle by the same name.
- c. A basic principle in Scripture: Satan uses persecution to try to destroy the church. However, God, in His sovereignty, can use even Satan’s strategies to achieve His own purposes.
- i. Here, as a result of the persecution, the gospel is spread to new regions (throughout Judea and Samaria).
  - ii. Consider how the Lord has used oppression from Satan and from the world to accomplish His own ends.
    1. The story of **Job**, where a righteous man (Job) is persecuted severely, but it all serves to purify his faith in the end.
    2. In the story of **Daniel**, we see how God used the Babylonian Captivity, to cure his people of idolatry and to teach them about the kingdom of God.
    3. In the gospels we see how Judas was used by Satan to betray Jesus to death. However, that betrayal of Jesus fulfilled prophecies and led to the deliverance of millions from sin and death.

4. Alexander the Great, who spread Greek language and culture from Europe through Egypt, the Middle East, Persia and India. That paved the way for the Greek language, and the Scriptures, translated into Greek (the LXX) in Alexandria, so that the prophecies could be read throughout the ancient world.
  5. The Romans, fierce pagan conquerors, who created a system allowing safe and rapid travel by road and sea throughout Europe, North Africa and into Syria, opening the way for the gospel to spread.
  6. Modern wars, death, sickness, and other tragedies, which may be instigated by Satan, nevertheless often turn the hearts of people back to seeking God.
- iii. Jesus had warned his disciples in advance, that they would be persecuted.
1. “Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.” (**Luke 6:22–23**, NKJV)
    - a. Persecution of God’s people is nothing new. The prophets were persecuted, Jesus was persecuted, and His followers should expect to be persecuted as well.
  2. “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” (**Matthew 10:23**, NKJV)
- d. Philip “preaches Christ” in Samaria and performs miraculous signs (healings, casting out unclean spirits).
- i. A few comments regarding Samaria.
    1. This was the land between Judea (in the south) and Galilee (the Jewish area in the north).
    2. It was occupied by the Samaritans, a people generally hated by the Jews. Samaritans were considered spiritual ‘half-breeds’; they believed in Moses and the law, but worshiped God at Mount Gerazim (instead of in Jerusalem) and had certain other practices that differed from the Jews.

- a. This is why Jesus used a Samaritan example to drive home his point about 'loving your neighbor' in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, in **Luke 10:25-37**.
  - b. Also, of the ten lepers healed in **Luke 17:11-19**, the only one who returns to give thanks is a Samaritan, whom Jesus refers to as "this foreigner".
3. Consider the story of Jesus' time in Samaria in **John 4**, where he encountered the Samaritan woman at the well.
- a. "Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." (**John 4:9**, NKJV)
  - b. Jesus received a very positive reception from the people in that area, after the woman at the well spread the word regarding Him.
    - i. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did.' So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word." (**John 4:39-41**, NKJV)
  - c. Jesus' famous statement regarding the fields being white for harvest was said *in Samaria!*
    - i. "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (**John 4:35**, NKJV)

### III. Simon the Sorcerer Believes and is Baptized

- a. Read **Acts 8:9-13**.
  - i. Simon was a famous sorcerer in Samaria.
    - 1. Sometimes he is referred to as '*Simon Magus*', based on the Greek and Latin (as found in the Vulgate) root words in **Acts 8:9**, meaning 'to practice magic', from which we get our English word 'magician'.

- ii. Simon is a sorcerer or magician. **Question:** Was this simply based on clever trickery, or was Simon using occult powers?
  1. Demons and unclean spirits are real.
  2. Satan is real and powerful.
  3. Examples of the occult in Scripture include:
    - a. Magicians in Pharaoh's court, who opposed Moses and Aaron.
      - i. **Exodus 7:8-12**, sorcerers turn their staffs to snakes.
      - ii. **Exodus 7:22**, sorcerers turn water to blood.
      - iii. **Exodus 8:3**, sorcerers bring up frogs onto land of Egypt.
      - iv. However, the sorcerers were unable to create lice and tell Pharaoh: "This must be the finger of God!" (**Exodus 8:14-15**)
    - b. "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer...."  
(**Deuteronomy 18:10**, NKJV)
    - c. The Witch of Endor called up the spirit of Samuel from the dead, for King Saul. (**1 Samuel 28**)
    - d. Before being taken into captivity, the Israelites are told in **Jeremiah 27:9** not to listen to the sorcerers among them who are saying they will not be taken into captivity in Babylon.
    - e. Sorcerers are called to try to interpret the dream of the king of Babylon in **Daniel 2:2**.
    - f. In **Revelation 21**, where it speaks of the sins that will lead to being cast into the lake of fire, sorcerers are on the list.
      - i. "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, *sorcerers*, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the

lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (**Revelation 21:8**, NKJV)

4. **The bottom line for us:** The Scriptures make it clear that Satan and the occult are real, powerful, and dangerous. We don't need to *fear* them. However, we do need to stay in the vine of Jesus, avoid any entanglement with the occult (even out of curiosity), and we need to warn others.
  - a. “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.” (**John 10:28-29**, NKJV)
  - b. **Question:** What was the message Philip preached to the people of Samaria?
    - i. He “preached Christ” to them. (**Acts 8:5**)
    - ii. He preached “things concerning the kingdom of God”. (**Acts 8:12**)
      1. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (**Matthew 24:14**, NKJV)
      2. In **Acts 2**, Peter also preached Jesus as the king over God's kingdom.
        - a. Peter said Jesus was the Christ, the one destined to rule from the throne of David, in fulfillment of prophecy. (**Acts 2:30**, pointing back to **2 Samuel 7**, **1 Chronicles 17** and **Psalms 2**)
        - b. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God, waiting for all His enemies to be made His footstool. (**Acts 2:33-35**, pointing back to **Psalms 110**)
    - iii. The response of the people is that they believe and are baptized.
      1. “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.’” (**Mark 16:15-16**, NKJV)
      2. “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise

is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38-39, NKJV)

- c. Contrast this with the popular modern gospel taught in many evangelical Protestant circles.
  - i. ‘Romans Road’ is a popular study series used in an attempt to take an unbeliever to saving faith.
    1. Romans was written to a church (to people who were already Christians), to explain the Jew/Gentile issue, and what happened to the Jews (who had been a part of the kingdom of God; but were torn out).
      - a. There is no mention of the *kingdom of God* in the ‘Romans Road’ evangelistic study.
      - b. There is nothing about the *necessity of repenting from sin* if we want to be saved, in the ‘Romans Road’ approach.
      - c. Also, there is no mention of baptism in the Romans Road study.
        - i. (In this chain-type study loosely based on going through the book of Romans, they somehow manage to *detour around the first half of Romans 6*. There, Paul speaks of how we died to sin and were buried with Christ in baptism.)
    2. In debunking this approach to a group from conservative Anabaptist background, I asked why on earth someone would go to **Romans** to learn how to become a Christian. Why not go to the book where unbelievers are actually becoming Christians to learn:
      - a. What was the message that was preached?
      - b. What was the response of those who came to faith?
        - i. How did people become Christians?
      - c. **Question:** In which book or letter should we look?
        - i. Obvious Answer: **Acts**.
        - ii. Rather than try to amend the ‘Romans Road’ or create an alternative Road / Path / Highway to replace it, perhaps we should just take a look at

how it was done in the beginning. Let us see how the gospel was presented, and how those with open hearts to the truth responded, in the book of **Acts**.

1. That can provide the most trustworthy path for us to follow today!

#### IV. Simon Tries to Bribe the Apostles

- a. Read **Acts 8:14-25**.
- b. Simon sees that the Holy Spirit was given when the apostles lay their hands on people.
  - i. The apostles in Jerusalem send Peter and John to Samaria, after hearing that Samaritans are becoming Christians.
  - ii. The apostles pray and lay hands on the Samaritan Christians.
    1. The apostles do this because the Spirit had not yet “fallen on” any of the Samaritan Christians.
    2. The *apostles had this ability* to pass along the Spirit; however, it appears that Philip did not have the same ability.
    3. This phenomenon so impressed Simon (the former sorcerer) that he attempted to bribe Peter to obtain the same power.
- c. **Question:** When it speaks of the *Holy Spirit being given* at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, what does that mean?
  - i. Note that *all Christians* have the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit.
    1. “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (**1 Corinthians 3:16**, NKJV)
    2. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (**1 Corinthians 6:19**, NKJV)
    3. “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (**2 Corinthians 1:21-22**, NKJV)
    4. “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you



were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,” (**Ephesians 1:13**, NKJV)

5. We are spiritually reborn “of water and the Spirit”, which early Christian writers understood to refer to water baptism, at which time the person being baptized should receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. (**John 3:3-5, Acts 2:38**)
  - ii. Therefore, I assume that Peter and the other apostles had the ability to pass along *a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit*. Through this, the Spirit would “fall on” someone in a way that was visibly apparent (for example through the ability to perform miraculous signs).
    1. So while Philip had the ability to *perform* miraculous signs, he *did not have the ability to pass that gift along to others*. (However, the apostles did have the ability to pass that gift along to others.)
  - iii. My conclusion is that Peter had this ability to pass along this miraculous power to others. It was that ability that Simon (the former sorcerer) wanted so badly for himself, and for which he was willing to pay money.
- d. **Question:** Does this passage *prove* ‘cessationism’ (the doctrine that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased after the second generation of the apostles)?
  - i. I was taught ‘cessationism’ in the Churches of Christ many years ago. The justification for that teaching was based on the following:
    1. The apostles had the ability to pass along the miraculous gifts to others.
    2. However, others (like Philip) who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit and could do miracles, could not pass along those gifts to others.
    3. Therefore, after the second generation died off, there could be no more miraculous gifts (according to this logic, anyway).
  - ii. However, this passage makes a statement that the apostles could pass along the gifts, while not specifically closing the door to other ways that someone could receive these abilities.
  - iii. I recall listening to an audio message by David Bercot many years ago, *What the Early Christians Believed about Gifts of the Spirit* (available through Scroll Publishing). In that lesson, Bercot made the point that whether the gifts had ceased should be treated as a *historical question*

(history showing either that they ceased or that they did not), as opposed to being treated as a purely theological question.

1. Origen, a Christian teacher from Alexandria in Egypt, writing c. 248 AD, indicated that in his day (obviously long after the second generation after the apostles had died off) that while the miraculous gifts present at the beginning of the church had largely died off, they did, in fact, continue on in some places.
  - a. “The Holy Spirit gave signs of His presence at the beginning of Christ’s ministry. And after His ascension, He gave still more. But since that time, these signs have diminished, although there are still traces of His presence in a few who have had their souls purified by the Gospel, and their actions regulated by its influence.”
  - b. (Source: Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, article on ‘Gifts of the Spirit’, p. 302; from Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, p. 614)
- iv. Also, let us never forget that the ability to perform miraculous signs in the name of Jesus is no guarantee that the one performing such signs will be saved.
  1. “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (**Matthew 7:22-23**, NKJV)
- e. **Question:** What if someone commits a serious sin after becoming a Christian?
  - i. Some of the things I have heard well-meaning believers say (which I believe *do not* align with the Scriptures) include:
    1. It is impossible for a Christian to lose his or her salvation. Therefore, they will be saved by the imputed righteousness of Christ. After all, we are totally depraved by nature, anyway and saved by the unmerited favor of God.
    2. When we are baptized, all our sins past, present and future are forgiven at that moment.
    3. Falling into a serious sin shortly after being baptized is a sure sign that the person never repented properly in the first place.

The person likely never became a Christian, and therefore should be re-baptized.

4. There is no hope for the person who has returned to serious sin. After all, if someone “falls away,” they cannot be brought back to repentance.
  - a. “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, *if they fall away*, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” **(Hebrews 6:4–6, NKJV)**
  - b. “For *if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” **(Hebrews 10:26–27, NKJV)**
- ii. **Question:** What did Peter tell Simon, the former sorcerer?
  1. Simon’s spiritual condition was that he was now out of saving fellowship with God.
    - a. “You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your *heart is not right in the sight of God*. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that *you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity*.” **(Acts 8:21–23, NKJV)**
  2. Peter tells him to “repent and pray” that God might forgive him.
    - a. His baptism and original conversion were not in question by Peter.
    - b. After we sin, we need to repent and pray.
    - c. This is not ‘cheap grace’. Peter does not guarantee that he is automatically forgiven. He must first repent! This is sobering.
  3. Other examples where a Christian was in serious sin that jeopardized their salvation.

- a. Read **1 Corinthians 5:1-5**, about a Christian involved in sexual immorality with his father's wife.
- b. Read **Revelation 2:18-23**, about Jezebel and others in the church who were involved in sexual immorality.

iii. **Lessons for Us:**

1. Someone who is a Christian can lose their salvation. Our salvation is contingent on our continuing to walk with Christ. 'One saved / always saved' (unconditional eternal security) is a false teaching.
2. Committing serious sin after baptism does not necessarily mean that we never repented in the first place (and that our baptism was invalid).
3. When someone sins after baptism, they need to repent and pray that God may forgive them.
4. Let us strive to be *neither more lenient nor stricter* than Jesus and Paul were in addressing sin in the church.

f. **Epilogue:** What ever happened to Simon the Sorcerer?

- i. His fate, what happened after this encounter with Peter, is mentioned by multiple early Christian writers. See article on 'Simon Magus' in *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, edited by David Bercot.
  1. Simon renounced the Christian faith, went to Rome, returned to his old sorcery ways, amazed the Senate and the people of Rome, and started a sect there.
  2. He was in repeated conflict with the apostles afterward, including Peter.
  3. A statue in his honor was erected by the Tiber River.
  4. He took a woman named Helena, a former prostitute, along with him. He claimed to be the Supreme Father, and that Helena was his Primary Conception.
- ii. Justin Martyr (also originally from Samaria), in his *First Apology* (written c. 160 AD) was writing to the Senate and the people of the city of Rome. They would have been familiar with the stories about Simon, since he ended up in Rome according to multiple testimonies. Consider what Justin Martyr told them regarding Simon:

1. "There was a Samaritan, Simon, a native of the village called Gitto, who in the reign of Claudius Caesar, and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty acts of magic.... He was considered a god, and as a god was honored by you with a statue. This statue was erected on the Tiber River, between the two bridges. It bore the following inscription in the language of Rome: 'To Simon, the holy God.' ... And almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship him. They acknowledge him as the first god."
  - a. (Source: Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p.171; as quoted in Bercot, David W., *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, p. 614)
  
2. "The Samaritans, Simon and Menander, did many mighty works by magic and deceived many. They remain deceived. Even among yourselves [i.e., the pagan Romans], as I said before, Simon was in the royal city of Rome in the reign of Claudius Caesar. He so greatly astonished the sacred Senate and the Roman people that he was considered a god. He was honored with a statue, just like the others whom you honor as gods.... *I advise you to destroy that statue.*"
  - a. (Source: Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p.182; as quoted in Bercot, David W., *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, p. 614)

## V. The Ethiopian Eunuch

- a. Read **Acts 8:26-40**.
- b. Storyline:
  - i. An angel directs Philip to go to the desert road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is southwest of Jerusalem, quite a distance from Samaria. (Samaria is north of Jerusalem.)
  - ii. Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer for the queen of Ethiopia, was returning home after going to Jerusalem to worship. He is reading out loud from the scroll of Isaiah.
    1. The word "Candace" means "queen" in an ancient African language.
  - iii. Spirit tells Philip to run and overtake the chariot, which he does.
  - iv. Philip asks the Ethiopian if he understands what he is reading. The Ethiopian admits that he does not understand and asks for help.

1. This is a wonderful example of humility and an earnest desire to learn spiritual things.
  - v. Philip joins him in the chariot. He is reading from **Isaiah 53** and wonders who the writer is speaking of regarding the Suffering Servant.
  - vi. Philip begins there and preaches Jesus to him.
  - vii. We are not provided with a detailed description of the message Philip preaches to the Ethiopian. However, we do have the response of the Ethiopian to whatever Philip preached.
    1. They come to water, and the eunuch asks, “Why can’t I be baptized?”
  - viii. They both go down into the water. After Philip baptizes the eunuch, Philip is “taken away” by the Spirit.
- c. **Question:** What happened to **verse 37**?
- i. While **Acts 8:37** is in the KJV and NKJV, as well as the old Douay-Rheims version (Roman Catholic translation based on the Vulgate), this verse is missing in most modern translations. It is included in the KJV and NKJV because those translations are based on the Greek text of the particular manuscript used by the KJV translators, the Textus Receptus. However, that verse is missing from the texts that most other modern Bibles are based on, whether the eclectic Nestle-Aland/UBS Text or the Majority Text.
  - ii. Note that one early Christian writer, Cyprian (a bishop from Carthage in North Africa) does quote this verse in one of his works, writing c. 250 AD:
    1. “43. *That he who believes can immediately obtain (i.e., pardon and peace).*
    2. “In the **Acts of the Apostles**: ‘Lo, here is water; what is there that hinders me from being baptized? Then said Philip, If you believe with all your heart, you may.’” (**Acts 8:37**)
      - a. (Source: Cyprian, *Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews*, book 3; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 545)
- d. **(Warning) Trick Question:** Does the Bible say a lamb or a sheep?
- i. Which of the following sounds right to you? “He was...

1. “Led as a *sheep* to the slaughter, and as a *lamb* before the shearers is silent...”, *OR*
  2. “Led like a *lamb* to the slaughter, and as a *sheep* before the shearers is silent...”?
- ii. In the Masoretic Text (Hebrew text used as the basis for most modern Old Testaments), **Isaiah 53:7** reads: “He was led like a *lamb* to the slaughter...”
1. However, **Acts 8:32** says it *the other way!*
    - a. “The place in the Scripture which he read was this: ‘He was led as a *sheep* to the slaughter; And as a *lamb* before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth.’” (**Acts 8:32**, NKJV)
    - b. **Acts 8:32** is not a mistake. The text that the Ethiopian is reading is following the Septuagint (LXX), a translation of the Old Testament Scriptures into Greek that was made by Jewish scholars c. 200-250 BC. This is the version that generally is quoted by Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament when they are quoting from the Old Testament. Also, the LXX was the version favored by early Christian writers (during the first 300+ years of the church).
    - c. You can see this for yourself (that **Acts 8:32** is based on the LXX) if you do a comparison of the **Acts** passage with the **Isaiah 53:7** in the LXX. You don’t even need to be able to read Greek. You can use interlinear translations (such as the Apostolic Bible Polyglot) and see that the Greek words and letters match.
    - d. The Ethiopian and Philip, riding in the chariot, are reading Isaiah from the LXX. This follows a pattern we have seen before in **Acts**.
      - i. Similarly, we saw Peter quoting **Psalms 2** from the LXX (where the Masoretic Text and LXX differ), in **Acts 2**.
      - ii. Similarly, we saw Stephen following the text of the LXX in **Acts 7**, regarding the number of people referenced in **Exodus 1:5**, and in his quote from **Amos**.

- iii. This is one reason why we tend to favor translations that are based on the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic Text when reading the Old Testament. We want to read the same version of the Scriptures that they were reading!
- e. Read **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, from a translation based on the LXX text.
- f. Building on our list of Scriptures used by the apostles and early Christians in **Acts**, this passage from **Isaiah** is one more prophecy about Jesus.
  - i. Was this prophecy used as evidence only with the Jews (or perhaps with those who, like the Ethiopian, happened to be caught reading this passage from the Old Testament)?
  - ii. Or was it used to persuade Gentiles as well?
- iii. Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-4**.
  - 1. “Christ *died for our sins* according to the Scriptures.”
  - 2. **Isaiah 53** is *the classic prophecy* that speaks of Christ dying *for our sins*. It says this four different times, all in the context of being led like a sheep to the slaughter:
    - a. “He bears our sins and suffers for us....” (**Isaiah 53:4**)
    - b. “... and the Lord delivered Him over for our sins.” (**Isaiah 53:6**)
    - c. “... and He shall bear their sins.” (**Isaiah 53:11**)
    - d. “... and He bore the sins of many, and was delivered over because of their sins.” (**Isaiah 53:12**)
  - 3. Keep in mind that in **1 Corinthians**, Paul is writing to a predominantly Gentile church.
    - a. “You know that *you were Gentiles*, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.” (**1 Corinthians 12:2**, NKJV)
- g. The Ethiopian eunuch is the first black Christian convert discussed in the Bible. He is from Ethiopia in Africa (the ancient African kingdom of Aksum).
  - i. Was he a Jew or a convert to Judaism?
  - ii. It is not clear to me whether the first Gentile convert to the faith mentioned in the New Testament was the Ethiopian eunuch, or if that distinction should belong to Cornelius (**Acts 10**).



- iii. There is a tradition that the Christian church was founded in Ethiopia very early, and that it remained robust over many centuries.
  1. From Irenaeus, bishop of the church in Gaul, writing c. 180 AD:
    - a. “For this reason, also, Philip, when he had discovered the eunuch of the Ethiopians’ queen reading these words which had been written: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb is dumb before the shearer, so He opened not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away;” and all the rest which the prophet proceeded to relate in regard to His passion and His coming in the flesh, and how He was dishonored by those who did not believe Him; easily persuaded him to believe on Him, that He was Christ Jesus, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and suffered whatsoever the prophet had predicted, and that He was the Son of God, who gives eternal life to men.
    - b. “And immediately when [Philip] had baptized him, he departed from him. For nothing else [but baptism] was wanting to him who had been already instructed by the prophets: he was not ignorant of God the Father, nor of the rules as to the [proper] manner of life, but was merely ignorant of the advent of the Son of God, which, when he had become acquainted with, in a short space of time, he went on his way rejoicing, *to be the herald in Ethiopia of Christ’s advent.*”
      - i. (Source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 23; found in *Ante-Nicene Fathers* vol. 1, pp. 494–495)
  2. From Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea and church historian:
    - a. “[*the Ethiopian eunuch*] was the first of the Gentiles that received of the mysteries of the divine word from Philip. The apostle, led by a vision, thus instructed him and he, becoming the first fruits of believers throughout the world, is said to have been the first, on returning to his country, that proclaiming the knowledge of God and the salutary abode of our Savior among men. So that, in fact, the prophecy obtained its fulfillment through him: ‘Ethiopia stretched forth her hands unto God.’” (**Psalm 68:31**)

- i. (Source: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 2, chapter 1)
- 3. For more on the early history of the church in Ethiopia, see:
  - a. *The Lost History of Christianity*, a book by Philip Jenkins; see chapters that discuss the history of Christianity in Ethiopia.
  - b. *Abyssinian Christianity: the First Christian Nation* (Note: I have read a review of this book but have not read the book.)
- h. Scriptures that may provide some insights on the question of the *mode of baptism* (immersion, pouring and/or sprinkling).
  - i. It says Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch “went down into the water”, then “come up out of the water” (**Acts 8:38-39**).
    - 1. Certainly, someone traveling on a long journey through the desert in a chariot would have some drinking water on hand in a container. However, the Ethiopian responds with the request for baptism when they pass a natural body of water which they can both go down into for the baptism.
    - 2. **Question:** What does that indicate about baptism?
  - ii. “Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was *much water* there. And they came and were baptized.” (**John 3:23**, NKJV)
  - iii. Baptism is described as being “buried with Christ”. (**Romans 6:4**, **Colossians 2:12**)
    - 1. I don’t normally think of burying a dead person by sprinkling a little dirt on the body. I normally associate a burial with putting the dead person’s body completely underground!
  - iv. To be healed of leprosy, it says Naaman was “baptized” in the Jordan River (same Greek word in the LXX as ‘baptized; in the New Testament), dipping seven times. (**2 Kings 5:14**, LXX)
  - v. Paul said that Christian baptism is foreshadowed by the Israelites crossing the Red Sea in **Exodus**, with a wall of water on each side, deep enough to drown the Egyptian soldiers. (**Exodus 14:22**, **1 Corinthians 10:2**)
  - vi. Similarly, Peter says that baptism was foreshadowed by the Flood of Noah (**Genesis 7**, **1 Peter 3:19-21**)

- vii. Note that the first mention of baptism by any mode other than immersion is in an early Christian writing called the *Didache*, written around 95 AD. In that work, we find the following practical instructions regarding baptism:
1. “Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running [literally, = *living*] water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water, and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. And before the baptism let the one baptizing and the one who is to be baptized fast, as well as any others who are able. Also, you must instruct the one who is to be baptized to fast for one or two days beforehand.”
    - a. (Source: *Didache*, chapter 7)
  2. Note that the preferred options all involve immersion (in running, cold or warm water). *Only if there is not sufficient water available for immersing* is the option of pouring three times offered as an alternative.
- viii. **Question / Challenge:** When it comes to the mode of baptism, *wherever possible*, why not simply do it the original way, as preferred by the early Christians? (by immersion)