

Acts 8:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

Analysis

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. The baptismal act demonstrates obedience's immediacy, mode's symbolism, and conversion's public nature.

Commanded the chariot to stand still shows the eunuch's authority and eagerness. Despite pressing business returning to Ethiopia, baptism took precedence. This exemplifies proper priority—spiritual obedience supersedes temporal concerns. The royal official used his authority not for convenience but for righteousness.

They went down both into the water describes baptismal mode. The phrase suggests immersion rather than sprinkling, though debates continue. Regardless of mode, baptism symbolizes death, burial, and resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:3-4). The symbolism works whether emphasizing cleansing (sprinkling) or identification with Christ's death/resurrection (immersion).

Both Philip and the eunuch entered water together, emphasizing baptism as relational act—joining visible Christian community through authorized administrator's act. He baptized him marks conversion's public seal. Reformed theology sees baptism as covenant sign, marking entrance into visible church and testifying to invisible realities of union with Christ.

Historical Context

Early Christian baptism often occurred in natural water sources—rivers, pools, springs. The Gaza road passed through semi-arid region, making water discovery significant. Archaeological evidence and early Christian writings (Didache, Justin Martyr) suggest preference for running water and immersion when possible, though pouring sufficed when necessary.

The immediate baptism reflects early Christian practice—conversion followed quickly by public identification. Later church development introduced catechumenate (instruction period) and restricted baptism to special occasions (Easter), but Acts-era Christians baptized new converts promptly. This baptism around 35-37 CE represented Christianity's advance toward Africa, fulfilling Great Commission's global scope.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does immediate baptism demonstrate proper spiritual priorities?
2. What theological realities does baptism symbolize regardless of specific mode?
3. In what ways does baptism serve as both personal testimony and communal identification?
4. How should urgency for baptism balance with adequate instruction and genuine conversion?
5. What does baptism communicate about visible church membership and covenant community?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐκέλευσεν	στῆναι	τὸ	ἄρμα	καὶ	κατέβησαν		
And	he commanded	to stand still	G3588	the chariot	And	they went down		
G2532	G2753	G2476		G716	G2532	G2597		
ἀμφότεροι	εἰς	τὸ	ὔδωρ	ὃ	τε	Φίλιππος	καὶ	ὁ
both	into	G3588	the water	G3588	both	Philip	And	G3588
G297	G1519		G5204		G5037	G5376	G2532	
εὐνοῦχος	καὶ	ἐβάπτισεν	αὐτόν					
the eunuch	And	he baptized	him					
G2135	G2532	G907	G846					

Additional Cross-References

John 4:1 (Baptism): When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,