

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 the chariot And they went down
G2532 G2753 G2476 G3588 G716 G2532 G2597

ἀμφότεροι εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ ὅ τε Φίλιππος καὶ ὁ
both into the water both Philip And G3588 G5204 G5037 G5376 G3588
G297 G1519 G3588 G5204 G5037 G5376 G3588

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,

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