

## Why Stop the Chariot?

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In Acts chapter eight, Luke records a conversation that convinced a man from Ethiopia to be baptized. This account is typical of Luke's writing. He documents the spread of the Gospel message and how people responded. After learning the Gospel message from a man named Philip, the Ethiopian was baptized: "And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him"(Acts 8:36-38).

When people were persuaded that Jesus had been raised from the dead, they were baptized into water for the remission of their sins. Baptism was and is a transformative act as sinners submit themselves to the King of kings. This is the culmination of God's grace and our faith. New life is given in baptism (Rom. 6:1-4; Titus 3:3-7).

Surprisingly, baptism is a sticking point for many people. Most do not believe we must be baptized to be saved. For most, baptism is optional, a nice thing to do, and or a demonstration of salvation. To prove the need for baptism in salvation, let's use some basic logic in connection to the Ethiopian's baptism.

### Why Stop the Chariot If...

**1. Salvation can be gained by just being a good person?** Many people do not believe they need to be baptized to be saved because they consider themselves good people. They work for a living. They pay their bills. They take care of their families. If a neighbor is in trouble, they help. Surely, this is all God requires of them. They mistakenly think that good works can earn their salvation.

The Ethiopian was a good person. He was a treasurer for the Queen of Ethiopia, Candace. He was honest and trustworthy. Also, he was a eunuch. This was to ensure purity in working closely with the Queen. While this man was ethical and moral, he needed to be baptized to be saved.

**2. Salvation can be gained by just being religious?** In addition to the Ethiopian's ethics and morals, he was a religious man. He had traveled nearly 1,000 miles in a chariot to worship in Jerusalem. He was devoted to God; yet, he was not saved.

There are many people today who are religious. They attend worship; yet, they have not been baptized for the remission of their sins. All the piety in the world will not save anyone. Only obedience will save.

**3. Salvation can be gained by just reading the Bible?** When Philip found the Ethiopian, he was reading the Scriptures. He had a copy of Isaiah. Most people did not have personal copies of the Old Testament. Typically, each Jewish community had scrolls that were kept at the

synagogue and used by officials. The fact this man had a personal scroll says something about his position and devotion.

Today, the Bible is more accessible than ever in history. Most carry it around in their pockets on a cell phone. People may begin or end their day reading the Bible. They may read it on their break at work. Yet, all the reading in the world will not save anyone. This is not stated to discourage reading the Bible. Jesus wanted His message to be read and understood. Additionally, He wanted His message to be obeyed.

What do we do with what we read? When we read Jesus's command, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16), how do we respond? For those who refuse to be baptized, Jesus will ask, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46).

**4. Salvation can be gained by just listening to the Gospel?** Philip and the Ethiopian discussed the Scriptures. The Ethiopian had been reading Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Lamb of God; yet, the Ethiopian did not understand the prophecy. Philip taught him about Jesus. While the Ethiopian gained an understanding of the prophecy, Jesus, and the Gospel, this understanding alone was not enough for him to be saved.

There are people today who have heard the Gospel preached. They have listened to countless sermons. They can explain the Gospel book, chapter, and verse, but they have not been baptized. People like this must heed the warning of James: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (Jas. 1:22).

**5. Salvation can be gained by just believing the Gospel?** After the Ethiopian gained an understanding of Jesus, he expressed his belief in Jesus. Surprisingly, the issue of belief was discussed in the context of baptism: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:36-37).

There are people today who believe there is a God, Jesus is His Son, and the Bible is His word; yet, they refuse to be baptized. If belief alone was sufficient to receive salvation, why did the Ethiopian stop the chariot and have Philip baptize him?

**6. Baptism is not necessary for salvation?** If you do not believe baptism is essential for your salvation and you are still reading this article, please answer this question. If baptism is not essential for salvation, why did the Ethiopian stop the chariot and have Philip baptize him?

The Ethiopian stopped the chariot to be baptized for the remission of his sins. He wanted to be reborn into the family of God. He wanted the hope of eternal life. He wanted to be obedient to His Creator. He wanted to prepare for judgment. He wanted to be saved.

## **Conclusion**

Why did the Ethiopian stop the chariot if baptism was unnecessary for his salvation? Applying simple logic to a documented account of a man's baptism makes clear our need to be baptized to be saved. So, do you need to stop the chariot? Do you need to be baptized? If you believe with all your heart, you may!