

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 8

Ver. 1. *And Saul was consenting unto his death*, etc.] This clause, in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic versions, stands at the close of the preceding chapter, and which seems to be its proper place; and so it does in the Alexandrian copy: that Saul consented to the death of Stephen, and approved of that barbarous action, is evident from his taking care of the clothes of the witnesses that stoned him; but the word here used signifies not a bare consent only, but a consent with pleasure and delight; he was well pleased with it, it rejoiced his very heart; he joined with others in it, with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction; this, and what is before said concerning his having the clothes of the witnesses laid at his feet, as well as what follows, about his persecuting the saints, are, the rather mentioned, because this violent persecutor was afterwards converted, and became an eminent preacher of the Gospel; and these accounts serve to set off and illustrate the grace of God, which was abundant towards him.

And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem: it began “on that day”, as the words may be rendered, on which Stephen was stoned. As soon as they had put him to death, these bloodthirsty wretches were the more greedy after the blood of others; and being now in great numbers, and filled with rage and fury, fell upon the members of the church wherever they met them, and killed them; for that more, besides Stephen, were put to death, seems plain from (~~4830~~ Acts 26:10) and, according to some accounts, though they cannot be depended on, two thousand persons suffered at this time: and if this was the case, it might be called a great persecution:

and they were all scattered abroad; not all the members of the church, nor perhaps any of the private ones; for we afterwards read of devout then that carried Stephen to his grave; and of the church being made havoc of by Saul; and of men and women being haled out of their houses, and committed to prison by him; but all the preachers of the word, except the apostles; for they that were scattered, went about preaching the word, (~~4188~~ Acts 8:4, 11:19) They seem to be the seventy disciples, and other

ministers of the word, on whom the Holy Ghost fell at the day of Pentecost, or was since bestowed; among who were Philip, who went to Samaria; and Ananias, who was at Damascus; and others that went as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch: and particularly they are said to be dispersed

throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria; where their ministry was so greatly blessed, to the conversion of souls, that there were quickly many churches planted and formed in these parts, as appears from (~~<408E>~~Acts 9:31) so that this persecution was for the furtherance and spread of the Gospel: that upon this dispersion any of them came into France and England, or into any other parts of Europe, is not probable; since the particular places they went to are mentioned; and since they preached to Jew only: and this scattering by reason of the persecution, was of all the preachers,

except the apostles; the twelve apostles, who stayed at Jerusalem to take care of the church; to encourage the members of it to suffer cheerfully for the sake of Christ and his Gospel; and to animate them to abide by him: and this was not only an instance of courage and constancy in them, and of the divine protection and preservation of them, in the midst of their enemies; but also of the timidity of their adversaries, who might be afraid to meddle with them; remembering what miraculous works were performed by them, and how they had been delivered out of prison, and especially the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who were struck dead by Peter. Beza's ancient copy adds, "who remained in Jerusalem".

Ver. 2. *And devout men carried Stephen to his burial*, etc.] These men were not Jewish proselytes, but members of the Christian church; who were eminent for their religion and piety, and who had courage enough, amidst this persecution, to show a respect to the dead body of this holy martyr; which they took from under the stones, washed it, and wound it up in linen clothes, and put it into a coffin, or on a bier: they did everything preparatory to the funeral, which, is chiefly designed by the word here used, rather than the carrying of him out to his grave; though this also they did, and buried him: and to bear a corpse and follow it to the grave, and bury it, were with the Jews ^{f382} reckoned among acts of kindness, mercy, and piety, and which would not fail of a reward; they have a saying ^{f383}, that

“he that mourns, they shall mourn for him; and he that buries, they shalt bury him and he that lifts up (his voice in weeping lamentation), they shall lift up for him; he that accompanies (a dead

corpse), they shall accompany him; he that “carries”, they shall carry him;”

as these devout men did, who would not suffer Stephen to be buried in the common burying place of malefactors, but interred him elsewhere, in a more decent manner: but whether they had leave from the sanhedrim so to do, or whether they did this of themselves, is not certain; if the latter, which seems most likely, it is an instance of great boldness and resolution, and especially at this time; for

“they did not bury one that was stoned in the sepulchres of his fathers, but there were two burying places appointed by the sanhedrim, one for those that are stoned and burnt, and another for those that are slain with the sword and strangled ^{f384}.”

So that, they acted contrary to the Jewish canon, as they also did in what follows:

and made great lamentation over him; though they did not sorrow as those without hope, yet they did not put on a stoical apathy; but as men sensible of the loss the church of Christ had sustained, by the death of a person so eminent for his gifts and grace, they mourned over him in a becoming manner: in this they went contrary to the Jewish rule, which forbids lamentation for those that died as malefactors, and runs thus ^{f385}

“they do not mourn, but they grieve; for grief is only in the heart;”

their reason for this was, as the commentators say ^{f386}, because they thought that

“their disgrace was an atonement for their sin:”

but these devout men knew that Stephen needed no such atonement, and that his sins were atoned for another way: otherwise the Jews looked upon mourning for the dead to be to the honour of him; hence they say ^{f387}, that mourning

“is the glory of the dead — whoever is backward to the mourning of a wise man shall not prolong his days; and whoever is sluggish in mourning for a good man, ought to be buried alive; and whoever causes tears to descend for a good man, lo, his reward is reserved for him with the holy blessed God.”

Ver. 3. *As for Saul, he made havoc of the church*, etc.] Did evil to the saints, destroyed them that called upon the name of Christ, (⁴⁹¹³Acts 9:13,21) and persecuted and wasted the church of God, as he himself says, (Gal 1:13) and now did Benjamin, of which tribe Saul was, ravine as a wolf, (⁰⁴²⁷Genesis 49:27)

Entering into every house; where the saints dwelt:

and haling men and women: in a violent manner, without any regard to age or sex:

committed them to prison; delivered them up into the hands of the chief priests and magistrates, in order to be committed and sent to prison; this he himself confesses, (⁴²¹⁴Acts 22:4, 26:10).

Ver. 4. *Therefore they that were scattered abroad*, etc.] By reason of the persecution in Jerusalem: the seventy disciples, and other ministers of the word; or the hundred and twenty, excepting the apostles,

went every where; or *went through* the countries of Judea and Samaria, as far as Phenice, Cyrus, and Antioch:

preaching the word; the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions add, “of God”, and so some copies; the Gospel, which is the word of God, and not man; which was not of men, nor received from men, but came from God, and by the revelation of Christ; and which was good news and glad tidings, of peace, pardon, righteousness and salvation, by Jesus Christ.

Ver. 5. *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria*, etc.] The city which was formerly called Samaria, but now Sebaste; it had been destroyed by Hyrcanus, and was rebuilt by Herod; and called by him, in honour of Augustus, by the name of Sebaste^{f388}; and so R. Benjamin says^{f389}, that

“from Luz he came in a day to Sebaste, [^]WRMWÇ ayh, “this is Samaria”; where yet may be discerned the palace of Ahab king of Israel — — -and from thence are two “parsas” to Neapolis, this is Sichem.”

Which last place, Sichem, is by Josephus said to be the “metropolis” of Samaria; and is thought by Dr. Lightfoot to be the city Philip went to, and where our Lord had before been, and preached to the conversion of many persons: this place lay lower than Jerusalem, and therefore Philip is said to go down to it; and who was not Philip the apostle, but Philip the deacon,

for the apostles abode at Jerusalem; and beside, though this Philip preached the Gospel, and baptized, and wrought miracles, yet did not lay on hands, in order that persons might receive the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; this was peculiar to the apostles, and therefore Peter and John came down for this purpose, when they heard of the success of Philip's ministry: the subject matter of which follows:

and preached Christ unto them; that Christ was come in the flesh, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and that he was the Son of God, and the alone Saviour of men; who by his obedience, sufferings, and death, had wrought righteousness, procured peace and pardon, and obtained eternal redemption for his people; and was risen again, and ascended into heaven, and was set down at the right hand of God, where he ever lived to make intercession, and would come again a second time to judge both quick and dead.

Ver. 6. *And the people with one accord*, etc.] The inhabitants of the city of Samaria, as one man, came to hear the word:

and gave heed to those things which Philip spake; they listened to them, took notice of them, gave their ascent to them, believed and embraced them; being induced thereunto, not only upon the evidence by which these things came, but by reason of the miracles which he wrought, for the confirmation of them: for it follows,

hearing and seeing the miracles which he did; and which are particularly mentioned in the next verse.

Ver. 7. *For unclean spirits*, etc.] Devils, so called because they were unclean themselves, defiled others, and delighted in impure persons and places; (See Gill on "~~400~~ Matthew 10:1")

crying with loud voice; showing their unwillingness to remove, and the irresistibility of divine power they could not withstand:

came out of many that were possessed with them; who had for a long time dwelt in them, and had greatly afflicted them:

and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed; by Philip, in the name of Christ, through a word speaking, or by touching them, without making use of any means or medicines.

Ver. 8. *And there was great joy in that city.*] Both on a spiritual account, for the good of their souls, through the preaching of Christ and his Gospel to them; and on a temporal account; for the good of their bodies, or their friends, being dispossessed of devils, and healed of their diseases.

Ver. 9. *But there was a certain man called Simon,* etc.] Who, as Justin Martyr^{f390} says, was a Samaritan, and of a village called Gitton; and so a Jewish writer^{f391} calls him Simeon, *ynwrmçh*, “the Samaritan”, a wizard: here is a

but upon this new church, the success of the Gospel in this place, and the joy that was there; a man of great wickedness and sophistry plays the hypocrite, feigns himself a believer, and gets in among them; (See Gill on “~~Acts~~ Acts 5:1”),

which beforetime in the same city used sorcery; who before Philip came thither, practised magic arts; wherefore he is commonly called “Simon Magus”, for he was a magician, who had learned diabolical arts, and used enchantments and divinations, as Balaam and the magicians of Egypt did:

and bewitched the people of Samaria; or rather astonished them, with the strange feats he performed; which were so unheard of and unaccountable, that they were thrown into an ecstasy and rapture; and were as it were out of themselves, through wonder and admiration, at the amazing things that were done by him:

giving out that himself was some great one; a divine person, or an extraordinary prophet, and it may be the Messiah; since the Samaritans expected the Messiah, as appears from (~~John~~ John 4:25) and which the Syriac version seems to incline to, which renders the words thus, “and he said, I am that great one”; that great person, whom Moses spake of as the seed of the “woman”, under the name of Shiloh, and the character of a prophet.

Ver. 10. *To whom they all gave heed,* etc.] Were not only attentive to the strange things he did, and to the wonderful things he gave out concerning himself; but they believed what he said and did as real things, and were obedient to him: and that

from the least to the greatest; which does not so much respect age, though the Ethiopic version renders it, “from the younger of them to the eldest of them”, as state and condition; persons of every rank and quality, high and

low, rich and poor, magistrates and subjects, from the meanest to the greatest of them; and so the Syriac version renders it, “both great”, or “noble, and mean”; he drew the attention, and commanded the regard, both of princes and peasants, of the learned and unlearned, of the great men, and of the common people, who one and all wondered at him, and applauded him:

saying, this man is the great power of God; or as the Alexandrian copy and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version read, “this is the power of God which is called great”; they took him for the supreme Deity, or as Justin Martyr^{†392} expresses it, they accounted him the first, or chief God, or they looked upon him to be the Messiah, “the great power of God”: as the Syriac version renders it; and who should be great, and called the Son of the Highest, (~~413~~ Luke 1:32).

Ver. 11. *To him they had regard*, etc.] Which is repeated from the foregoing verse, for the sake of what follows:

because that of a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries; or because he had, it may be for many years, astonished them with his magic arts, and the pranks he played in the use of them.

Ver. 12. *But when they believed Philip*, etc.] Though they had been carried away so long with this deceiver, and had been so much attached unto him, and held in admiration of him; yet when Philip came and preached Christ unto them, such was the power that attended his ministry, and such the efficacy of divine grace that was exerted, that they not only gave heed unto him, but believed what he said:

preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God; concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, the Gospel dispensation, the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel; and concerning the kingdom of grace, which is spiritual and internal, and which lies not in external things, as meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace, and joy; and concerning the kingdom of glory, the meetness for it, which lies in regenerating grace, and the right unto it, which is the righteousness of Christ:

and the name of Jesus Christ; concerning the person of Christ, as the Son of God: and the offices of Christ, as prophet, priest, and King; and the virtue of his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, for pardon, justification, and atonement: the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions read this

clause, “in the name of Jesus Christ”: and connect it with the following words,

they were baptized, both men and women: that is, when, they heard Philip preach the Gospel, and believed in Christ, the sum and substance of it, and made a profession of faith, they were of each sex, both men and women, baptized by immersion, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 13. *Then Simon himself believed also*, etc.] With an historical and temporary faith, as that Jesus was the Messiah, etc. or at least he pretended, to believe this, and professed that he did believe, what others did, and Philip preached:

and when he was baptized; upon profession of his faith, which he so artfully made, that Philip could not discover his hypocrisy: but taking him to be a sincere believer, admitted him to baptism: after which,

he continued with Philip; kept close to him, and got into a familiar acquaintance with him; and constantly attended on his ministry, as if he had been a sincere disciple and follower of Christ:

and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done; he was as much amazed at the miraculous performances of Philip, as the inhabitants of Samaria had been at his, which he could observe were real things; and this increased his wonder, and threw him into an ecstasy, that he was scarce himself: whereas he knew that what he did were only sham performances, and legerdemain tricks.

Ver. 14. *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem*, etc.] Not that there were some at Jerusalem, and some elsewhere; for they all tarried at Jerusalem, when the rest of the ministers of the word were scattered abroad; though it is possible, that by this time, some of them might have departed from hence; but it seems more probable, that they were as yet all here: these

heard that Samaria had received the word of God; that is, they heard that the Samaritans, who only received the five books of Moses, and that not the Hebrew, but their own copy of them, now received not only the whole Bible, but the Gospel of Christ, as preached by Philip; which they might hear by a letter, or messengers sent from Philip to them, to acquaint them with the success of the Gospel; or from some persons, who had been in those parts: upon which

they sent unto them Peter and John: who were not only fellow apostles, but very familiar and intimate companions; these they sent to confirm the doctrine of Philip, and establish the young converts in it, and to form them into a Gospel church state, and ordain ministers over them.

Ver. 15. *Who when they were come down,* etc.] To the city of Samaria, where Philip was, and these converts dwelt:

prayed for them; for some of them, unto God:

that they might receive the Holy Ghost; the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, as to be able to speak with tongues, to prophesy and work miracles: they might pray for them all, that they might have a larger measure of grace, and more spiritual light and knowledge; and that they might be established in the doctrines of the Gospel, and hold fast the profession of their faith unto the end; but it can hardly be thought that they should pray for them all, both men and women, that they might have the above extraordinary gifts, which were not necessary to them all: and that these are meant by the Holy Ghost is clear from what follows, since he was not yet fallen on any of them, which cannot be understood in any other sense; and seeing it was something visible, which Simon could discern, and therefore cannot mean internal grace, and an increase of that.

Ver. 16. (*For as yet he was fallen upon none of them,* etc.) They had received him as a spirit of illumination and sanctification, and as, a spirit of conversion and faith; they had been regenerated, enlightened, and sanctified by him; and were converted by him, and brought to believe in Christ, and live, by faith upon him; they were baptized believers, and no more; as yet, none of them had gifts qualifying them for the ministry; and still less could any of them speak with tongues, or prophesy, or work miracles; the Holy Ghost had not yet descended on them for such purposes:

only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: all as yet appeared in them was, that they were believers in Christ, and had been baptized in his name, upon a profession of their faith; and more than this they had been called to, or qualified for: the word “only”, does not respect the form of baptism, as if they had been baptized only in the name of Christ; whereas they were doubtless baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; but refers to baptism itself, which was the only ordinance as yet administered to them.

Ver. 17. *Then laid they their hands on them*, etc.] The Ethiopic version adds, “who had been baptized”; but not upon all of them, men and women, only on some they were directed unto by the Spirit of God; whom he had designed, and now would qualify for the work of the ministry, that so this new church, might be supplied with proper officers, pastors, and teachers, to feed them with knowledge and with understanding, and who might not only have ministerial gifts to qualify them for preaching the Gospel, but extraordinary ones, which would serve for the confirmation of it; and for this purpose the apostles, “both” of them, as the Arabic version reads, laid their hands on them: for it will not seem probable, that they laid their hands upon the women, on such an account; and it will hardly be received, that they should lay their hands on Simon Magus, otherwise he would have received the Holy Ghost too; so that it seems a plain case, that imposition of hands was not used to them all:

and they received the Holy Ghost; that is, they received the gifts of the Holy Ghost; so that they could prophesy and speak with tongues, and heal diseases, and do other wonderful works: and since now these effects have ceased, the rite and ceremony which was peculiar to the apostles as such, it should seem should cease likewise.

Ver. 18. *And when Simon saw*, etc.] Whence it appears, that the Holy Ghost, or his gifts, which were received by imposition of hands, were something visible and discernible; and so something external, and not internal; otherwise they would have been out of Simon’s reach, and would not have fallen under his notice; but he saw,

that through laying on of the apostles’ hands, the Holy Ghost was given: he saw, that upon this men began to prophesy, and to speak with divers tongues they had never learned, and to work miracles, cure men of their diseases, and the like: and when he observed this,

he offered them money; to purchase such a power of conferring the like gifts, on whomsoever he should lay his hands: hence buying and selling spiritual things, or what relate thereunto, are commonly called “simony”: a vice which has greatly prevailed in the church of Rome, and among its popes; and who therefore may be more properly called the successors of Simon Magus, than of Simon Peter.

Ver. 19. *Saying, give me also this power*, etc.] He does not ask them to lay their hands on him, that he might receive the Holy Ghost, and have these

gifts to exercise himself, but that he might have the power of conferring them on others:

that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost; in which he discovered his ambition and avarice: his ambition, that he might be above Philip; who though he had these gifts, yet had not a power to lay on hands, and thereby convey them unto others; he perceived that this was purely apostolical; and indeed, what he requested was more than what the apostles could do; for though upon their prayers, and through the imposition of their hands, the gifts of the Spirit were bestowed upon men; yet they never could, nor did give a power to others, to do as they did; and his avarice prompted him to this, that he might make gain of it; not by doing miracles himself, but by conveying a power to others to do them.

Ver. 20. *But Peter said to him*, etc.] With great abhorrence and indignation, resenting and detesting his proposal:

thy money perish with thee; or “go into destruction with thee”; signifying, that he would not touch his money, or have anything to do with that or him either, in any such way: the words do not so much design an imprecation on his person, as an abhorrence of his sin; and rather show what his sin deserved than what he desired might be; for the apostle did not simply wish his damnation, since he afterwards exhorts him to repentance, and to pray for forgiveness; but threatens, and even predicts what would be his case, should he live and die in such a state, in which he appeared to be:

because thou hast thought that the gift of God; the Holy Ghost, and his extraordinary gifts, which are freely given, when and to whom the Lord himself pleases:

may be purchased with money; he appears to have a wrong notion of the Spirit of God and his gifts, and of the grace of in bestowing them; as well as a wicked design of purchasing them with money, in order to sell them again; so that it was a sullyng and lessening of the grace of God, as well as seeking himself, his own ambition, and filthy lucre: and let such observe how near they come to his sin, who seek to obtain the grace of justification, and the free gift of eternal life, by their own works.

Ver. 21. *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter*, etc.] Or business of the gift of the Holy Ghost; signifying, that as he had not the grace of the Spirit of God implanted in him, so he should not have any of the gifts of the Spirit bestowed on him; and much less a power of communicating them

to others, through laying on of hands: or “in this word”; the word of the Gospel, preached by the apostles; and in any of the blessings published in it, as the forgiveness of sins, a justifying righteousness, and eternal life; and so the Syraic version renders it, “in this faith”; neither in the grace of faith, nor in the doctrine of faith: it seems to answer to a way of speaking frequently used among the Jews, that such and such persons, **ql h p̄hl ʿya**, “have no part or lot”, in the world to come^{f393}. The Ethiopic version reads, “because of this thy word”; because for his money, he had desired to have a power of bestowing the Holy Ghost on persons, through the imposition of his hands; which showed he had no share in the grace of God, and would have no part in eternal life, thus living and dying:

for thy heart is not right in the sight of God; he had not a clean heart, nor a right spirit created in him; he had not true principles of grace wrought in him; his heart was full of covetousness, ambition, and hypocrisy; he had no good designs, ends, and aims, in what he said and did; in his profession of faith, in his baptism, in his attendance on Philip’s ministry, and in his request for the above power, of conferring the Holy Ghost: his view was not the spread and confirmation of the Gospel, or the enlargement of the kingdom and interest of Christ, and the glory of God, but his own applause and worldly interest; and therefore, however he might be thought of by men, to be a good and disinterested man, he was otherwise in the sight of God, who is the searcher of the heart, and the trier of the reins of the children of men.

Ver. 22. *Repent therefore of this thy wickedness*, etc.] For a great piece of wickedness it was, to offer money for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to imagine, that could be purchased with money; and what made the wickedness still greater was, the evil design he had in this, to advance himself in opposition to Christ and his apostles, as he afterwards did; and when the apostle puts him upon repentance, his view is to show the heinousness of his crime, the need he stood in of repentance, and that without it, his case must be miserable:

and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee; though he was in a state of nature, the apostle exhorts him to the duty of prayer; for prayer is a natural duty, and binding upon all men, though none but a spiritual man can perform it in a spiritual way: and though this sin of Simon’s was a very heinous one, and came very near unto, and looked very much like the sin against the Holy Ghost, yet it was not the unpardonable

one; it might be pardoned by the grace of God, and through the blood of Christ; and therefore Peter, who wished his salvation and not his damnation, put him upon prayer for it; which was possible, though difficult, but not certain: the apostle says not this, as doubting; if it was a case wholly to be despaired of, then he would not have directed him to the means; and yet the wickedness was so horribly great, and he in such a wretched hardened state, that there was no great hope or expectation of his repentance, and so of the application of pardon to him: however, this advice was not given ironically: Peter was too grave and serious to speak sarcastically, or break a jest upon a man in such circumstances; whom no doubt he heartily pitied, though he abhorred his sin: the Syriac version renders it, “the deceit of thine heart”: and the Ethiopic version, “the evil thought of thine heart”; and such it was.

Ver. 23. *For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness,* etc.]

Alluding to (^{<15298>}Deuteronomy 29:18, 32:32) with which compare (^{<3125>}Hebrews 12:15) and signifying, that he was in a state of nature and unregeneracy; under the power and dominion of covetousness, ambition, and hypocrisy; and in a way pernicious to himself, infectious to others, and ungrateful to God, and to good men; and that instead of the root of the matter, the truth of grace being in him, there was nothing in him but the bitter root of sin; which bore gall and wormwood, and everything that was nauseous and disagreeable:

and in the bond of iniquity; referring to (^{<3162>}Proverbs 5:22, ^{<2816>}Isaiah 58:6) and suggesting, that he was held fast bound in the bonds of sin, and with the cords of iniquity, or was entirely under the government of his lusts: the preposition εἰς, which we render “in”, may retain here, as is by some observed, its proper sense of “for”, or “into”; and have the same signification it has in (^{<3115>}Hebrews 1:5) “I will be to him for a father”, or “a father”, and “he shall be to me for a son”, or “a son”: and then the sense of Peter is, I plainly perceive and clearly see by thy words and actions, that thou art nothing else but a lump of bitter gall, and a bundle of sin and wickedness.

Ver. 24. *Then answered Simon, and said,* etc.] Whose conscience might be touched, and smote with what Peter had said; and he might be terrified with the wrath of God, and filled with fear of his judgment coming upon him for his wickedness, and might now stand trembling before the apostles: and if this was not his case, he was a most hardened and audacious wretch;

and his following words must be understood in a different sense, from what they might seem to have, when they came out of his mouth:

pray ye to the Lord for me; the Arabic version reads, “pray ye two”; the words are addressed both to Peter and John; for though Peter only spake to him, yet John joined with him, and assented to what he said, and approved of it; and which he might signify either by word or gesture; wherefore Simon desires both of them, that they would pray to the Lord for him; but whether he was serious, and in good earnest in this, is a question; since there is no reason to believe he truly repented, from the accounts given of him by ancient writers; who always represent him as an opposer of the apostles and their doctrine, as the father of all heresies, as a blasphemous wretch; who gave out that he was the Father in Samaria, the Son in Judea, and the Holy Ghost in other places; and as a very lewd and wicked man, who carried about with him a whore, whose name was Helena; whom he called the mother of the universe, and gave out the angels were made by her, and the world by them; with many other errors, blasphemies, and impieties: so that it should rather seem, that though Peter was serious in his advice to Simon, yet he was not so in his request to him; but in a sarcastic sneering way, desired his prayers for him; suggesting, that he was not in any pain about what he had said: and if he was in earnest, he did not take Peter’s advice to pray for himself; nor did he declare any repentance for his sin; and his desire that the apostles would pray for him, might not be from any sense he had of the evil of his sin, but from a slavish fear of the evil, or mischief, that was like to come upon him for his sin, as appears by what follows:

that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me; as that his money should perish with him, and he with that; or that he should go into destruction; that everlasting destruction and ruin would be his portion; and that he should have no part nor lot in eternal life, unless he repented, and his sin was pardoned: and this confirms what has been before observed, that John assented to what Peter spoke, or said the same, or such like things to Simon as he did.

Ver. 25. *And they, when they had testified*, etc. That is, Simeon (or Peter) and John, as the Syriac version expresses it; when they had bore their testimony to, and by it confirmed the Gospel as preached by Philip, and had established the young converts in it, and against the errors of Simon Magus:

and preached the word of the Lord; or of “God”, as read the Alexandrian copy, and the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions; when they had preached the Gospel in the city of Samaria, the same as Philip had preached before; whereby it appeared, that there was an harmony and agreement between them:

returned to Jerusalem; to the rest of the apostles there, to give them an account, how they found things at Samaria; what they had done, and what they had met with: and upon their return, whilst on their journey, they stopped at several places, which lay in their way;

and preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans; their first commission in (⁴⁰⁰⁵Matthew 10:5) being now cancelled, and a new one given them to preach the Gospel to every creature; and being appointed witnesses for Christ in Samaria, as well as in Jerusalem and Judea; (⁴⁰⁰⁸Acts 1:8).

Ver. 26. *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip*, etc.] To inquire who this angel was, whether Michael or Gabriel, or the tutelar angel of Ethiopia, or of the eunuch, or of Philip, is too curious; it was one of the ministering spirits sent forth by Christ, to serve a gracious purpose of his, and for the good of one of the heirs of salvation:

saying, arise; at once, make haste and speed, and quick dispatch; the phrase denotes readiness, alacrity, and expedition:

and go toward the south; the southern point from the city of Samaria, where Philip now was; or to the south of Jerusalem: the parts of Gaza, Lydda, Jamnia, Joppa, etc. were called the “south”: hence often mention is made of such a Rabbi and such a Rabbi, that he was *amwrd*, “of the south” ^{f394}; so R. Joshua, who was of Lydda, is said to be of the south ^{f395}. The Ethiopic version renders it at “noon time”, and so the Arabic of Deuteronomy Dieu; as if it respected not the place whither he was to go, but the time when he was to go; and that it might be about the middle of the day, the following narrative seems to confirm:

unto the way which goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert: this place is sometimes called Azzah, and sometimes Gaza, which is owing to the different pronunciation of the first letter of it; it was first inhabited by the Avim, or Hivites, who being destroyed by the Caphtorim, they dwelt in their stead, (⁴⁰²³Deuteronomy 2:23). It fell to the lot of the tribe of

Judah, but could not be held by it, because of the giants which remained in it; and was, as Jerom says ^{f396}, a famous city of Palestine in his day; and was formerly the border of the Canaanites towards Egypt; and the way to Egypt lay through it, in which the eunuch was travelling: the way from Jerusalem to this place lay through Bethlehem, as the above ancient writer observes, on (²⁸¹⁵Jeremiah 31:15) where he says

“some of the Jews interpret this place thus; that Jerusalem being taken by Vespasian, through this way (Bethlehem and Ephratah, of which he is speaking) to Gaza and Alexandria, a vast number of captives were led to Rome.”

And as the same writer elsewhere says ^{f397}, Bethlehem was six miles from Aella (or Jerusalem) to the south, in the way which leads to Hebron; and it is commonly believed that the way to Gaza was through Hebron, and is the way in which they go to it now; and to a hill near this place Samson, carried the gates of Gaza, (^{2761E}Judges 16:1-3) And this also was to the south of Jerusalem, and two and twenty miles from it ^{f398}: and it is also said by the same author ^{f399}, that there is a village called Bethzur, and in his time Bethhoron, in the way from Jerusalem to Hebron, about twenty miles from the former, at which there was a fountain, where it was reported the eunuch was baptized by Philip. There was it seems another way from Jerusalem to Gaza, through Diospolis, or Eleutheropolis, and so to Ascalon, and from thence to Gaza ^{f400}: and this was the road the eunuch went, if their conjecture is right, that he was baptized in the river Eleutherus; but which way he went is not certain, nor where he was baptized. The situation of Gaza was, according to Arrianus ^{f401}, as follows:

“Gaza is distant from the sea at least twenty furlongs (two miles and a half), and the access unto it is sandy and deep, and the sea near the city is all muddy. Gaza was a great city, and was built on high ground, and encompassed with a strong wall: it was the last of those cities inhabited, as you go from Phoenicia into Egypt, **επι τη αρχη της ερημου** “at the beginning of the desert”.”

Which last words seem to furnish out a reason why it is here called Gaza, “which is desert”; because it was situated where the desert began: though this clause is differently understood; some apply it to Gaza; as if the sense was “Gaza the desert”, to distinguish old Gaza which was destroyed by Alexander the great, and as Strabo says ^{f402}, “remained desert”, from new Gaza, built at some distance from it: Jerom has ^{f403} this distinction of old

and new Gaza; there is scarce any appearance, he says, of the foundations of the ancient city; and that which is now seen is built in another place; and an unknown Greek writer makes express mention of new Gaza, which is the city itself; and speaks of another Gaza at some distance, which he calls Gaza, $\eta \epsilon\rho\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma$, “the desert”^{f404}: but the haven, which was seven furlongs distant from Gaza, was not called new Gaza till Julian’s time: it was first called Majuma, and afterwards Constantia, by Constantine; either from his son Constantius, or his sister Constantia, it having embraced the Christian religion^{f405}: wherefore, as Beza observes, no regard could be had to this distinction in the times of Luke; and though it was besieged by Alexander and taken, yet it did not become a desolate place; it had its walls, gates, and fortifications afterwards; and was after this taken by Ptolomy, and then by Alexander Janneus; it was repaired by Gabinius, and given to Herod by Augustus^{f406}: so that it could not be said to be desert, in the times of Philip and the eunuch, with respect to its inhabitants and fortifications: it seems rather therefore to be so called, for the above reason, because situated at the beginning of the desert; and the whole space between the parts of Egypt next the Nile, and Palestina, is called “the desert”, both by Arrianus^{f407} and Josephus^{f408}: others apply this epithet to the way, and read it as do the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, “to the way of the desert which goes from Jerusalem”; meaning the wilderness, which lay in the way from Jerusalem to Gaza. This place was distant from Jerusalem about seventy five miles; for from Jerusalem to Ascalon was, as Josephus^{f409} says, five hundred and twenty furlongs, which make sixty five miles; and from Ascalon to Gaza were ten miles, as our countryman Mr. Sandes Says^{f410}; though according to the Itinerary of Antoninus^{f411}, the distance was sixteen miles. The Talmudists make mention of this place, they represent it as a very pleasant place to dwell in; they say^{f412}, Gaza is $hpy hywyn$, “a beautiful habitation”; they speak of three famous markets, and one of them was the market of Gaza^{f413}; and very near to this city there was a beast market^{f414}; and to which may be added, though it may not serve to strengthen the reason of its name being called Gaza the desert, there was a place on the border of the city, which was named $atrygs atbrwj$, “the desert of the leper”^{f415}: there were also brooks about the parts of Gaza and Azotus^{f416}; in one of which, if the eunuch was near Gaza, to which he was going, he might be baptized; since it is uncertain whereabouts Philip met him, and where the place of water was, in which the ordinance of baptism was administered to him. This city is now called Gazera, or Gazara, and is inhabited by Greeks, Turks, and Arabians.

Ver. 27. *And he arose and went*, etc.] As soon as he had his orders, he immediately obeyed them; he made no dispute about the matter, though he was directed only part of his way, and had no account of what he went about, or was to do;

and behold, a man of Ethiopia; or “a man, an Ethiopian”; an Hebraism, such as “a man a Jew”, (^{<3023>}Zechariah 8:23) wherefore his being called a man, is no contradiction to his being an eunuch; for the word “man” does not regard his sex, but with the other the country of which he was; and it is the same as if he had only been called an Ethiopian, which signifies one of a black countenance; for Ethiopia was not so called from Ethiops, the son of Vulcan, who is said to reign over it, but from the colour of its inhabitants; (^{<2413>}Jeremiah 13:23, ^{<3007>}Amos 9:7). This country in the Hebrew language is called Cush, and the people of it Cushites, from Cush the son of Ham, (^{<0106>}Genesis 10:6) And so Josephus says ^{f417}, that the Ethiopians over whom he (Cush) reigned, are now by themselves, and by all in Asia, called Chuseans; and so likewise the inhabitants of upper Ethiopia, or the Abyssines, are to this day called Cussinns, by the Portuguese. Geographers make mention of two Ethiopias, one in Africa, divided into upper and lower, and which is here meant; and the other in Asia and a part of Arabia, and which is the Ethiopia spoken of in the Old Testament: a note of admiration is prefixed, to observe to us what was remarkable in providence that just at this time, and in this way, such a man should be travelling; and what was still a greater wonder of grace, that such an one should be the object of God’s peculiar favour, and should be chosen and called, have the Gospel preached to him, and be admitted to an ordinance of it; whereby some prophecies began to have their accomplishment in part, (^{<1031>}Psalms 68:31, ^{<3010>}Zephaniah 3:10)

An eunuch of great authority; he might be one that was literally so, it being common for eastern princes and great men to have such persons as guards over their wives, to preserve their chastity; and so hereby was a fulfilment in part of (^{<2508>}Isaiah 56:3-5) though this word is used to denote a person in office: so Potiphar is called **syr**s, an eunuch, though he had a wife, and which we rightly render an officer; and the Chaldee paraphrase renders it, **abr**, “a prince”, or great man, (^{<0301>}Genesis 39:1). So Balaam is said ^{f418} to be one of the king’s eunuchs, and yet Jannes and Jambres are said to be his sons; and the word Dynastes here used, which we translate “of great authority”, may be considered as explanative of the word eunuch; to teach

us, that this word was not expressive of his case, but a title of office: it is reported of this eunuch, that after his conversion he preached the Gospel to the inhabitants of Zeylan and Arabia Felix, and in the island of Traprobane in the Red sea, and at last suffered martyrdom^{f419}: this great person said to be

under Candace queen of the Ethiopians; that is, of those Ethiopians who inhabited the island of Meroe; for Candace, or Candaoce, as Pliny^{f420} reads it, was a common name of the queens of that island, as Pharaoh was of the Egyptian kings, and Caesar of the Roman emperors: the word Candace signifies a governor of children, that is, servants; it is derived from the Ethiopic word *ynq*, “Kani”, which signifies to govern; and from *qđ*, “Dak, a child”, or servant; and the king of the Abyssines is to this day called Prestar Chan, or Kan, a prince of servants, who is commonly and corruptly called Prester John; and Chan, or Kan, is a well known name for an emperor or governor in the eastern countries as with the Tartars and Persians, witness the late famous Kouli Kan. Some say^{f421}, her proper name was Judith, others Lacasa^{f422}, and others Hendake, or Indich; which, as Ludolphus^{f423} observes, is no other than Candace; though this last name Indich, according to Zaga Zabo, an ambassador of the king of the Ethiopians, was the name of the eunuch himself; his words, as reported by Damianus a Goes^{f424}, are these;

“we, almost before all other Christians, received baptism from the eunuch of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, whose name was Indich:”

who had the charge of all her treasure; was her lord treasurer; which shows, that he was not an eunuch to her on account of chastity, but an high officer in her kingdom: the word Gaza here used, signifies in the Persian language treasure, or treasury^{f425}. The Ethiopic version takes it for the name of a place, and renders it, “and he was governor of the city of Gaza”, but very wrongly: “and had come to Jerusalem for to worship”; hence he seems to have been either a Jew by birth, or rather a proselyte to the Jewish religion; and had been at Jerusalem at one of their annual feasts, the passover, “pentecost”, or tabernacles, to worship the God of Israel, whom he believed to be the only true God.

Ver. 28. *Was returning*, etc.] From Jerusalem, having finished the parts of divine worship he came to perform; and it is remarkable, that though he must doubtless have heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and what had passed in

Jerusalem lately, and of his apostles, yet heard them not; or however, was not converted by them, nor believed in Jesus; his conversion being ordered to be at another time, in another place, and by another instrument:

and sitting in his chariot: as was the manner of princes and great persons:

read Esaias the Prophet; the Book of the Prophecies of Isaiah the Prophet; and in (^{<4017>}Luke 4:17) it is called the “Book of the Prophet Esaias”; and in the note there, (see Gill on “^{<4017>}Luke 4:17, I have observed, that the prophets, especially the larger ones, were sometimes in separate and distinct books, and so might be the prophecy of Isaiah; and such an one was delivered to Christ, in the synagogue of Nazareth; and such an one the eunuch might have, and be reading in it: hence we read ^{f426}, that Daniel should say to the Israelites, who came to discourse with him about the prophecies of Jeremiah, bring me, says he, **hy[çy dps**, “the Book of Isaiah”); he began to read, and went on till he came to this verse, “the burden of the desert of the sea”, etc. (^{<2201>}Isaiah 21:1) and both the Arabic and Ethiopic versions here read, “the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.” (See Gill on “^{<4017>}Luke 4:17”). Some think the eunuch might be reading over some passages of Scripture in this prophet, which he had heard expounded at Jerusalem, to refresh his memory with what he had heard. This prophet is a very evangelical one, and very delightful and profitable to read: many things are prophesied by him concerning the Messiah, and particularly in the chapter in which the eunuch was reading; and this being a time when there was great expectation of the Messiah, such passages might be read and expounded in their synagogues, which concerned him: however, the eunuch improved his time, as he was travelling in a religious way, which was very commendable; and as this was the occasion and opportunity which the Holy Ghost took to bring on his conversion, it may serve greatly to recommend the reading of the Scriptures.

Ver. 29. *Then the Spirit said unto Philip,* etc.] Not the angel, a ministering Spirit, as in (^{<4026>}Acts 8:26) but the Holy Spirit, as the Syriac and Ethiopic versions read, the same with the Spirit of the Lord, (^{<4039>}Acts 8:39) who spoke unto him, either by an articulative voice, such as was the Bath Kol among the Jews; or inwardly, by a secret impulse upon him, he directed him, saying:

go near, and join thyself to this chariot; he bid him make up to the chariot, he saw driving on the road at such a distance, and follow it, and attend it

closely; and not leave it, till an opportunity of conversing with the person in it offered.

Ver. 30. *And Philip ran thither to him*, etc.] Being very ready to obey the divine order, and hoping he might be an instrument of doing some good, which might issue in the glory of God, and the welfare of men:

and heard him read the prophet Esaias; that is, “the Book of Isaiah the Prophet”; as before; and so the Ethiopic and Arabic versions read here, as there: he read it out, with a clear and distinct voice, so that Philip could hear him; and this he did, partly through reverence to the word of God, and partly to fix his attention to it the more, that he might the better understand and remember it, and also for delight and pleasure: it is very likely, that it was the Book of Isaiah in the Hebrew tongue in which he was reading, and which language he might understand, though he might be at a loss about the sense of the prophet:

and said, understandest thou what thou readest? meaning not the language, but the sense; for overhearing him, he perceived it was a prophecy in Isaiah he was reading; which was not so easy to be understood as laws and precepts are, which command this, and forbid that; whereas prophecies were more abstruse, and regarded things to come.

Ver. 31. *And he said, how can I, except some man should guide me?* etc.] Which shows that he was of an excellent spirit and temper; since instead of answering in a haughty and disdainful manner, as great men are too apt to do; and instead of charging Philip with, impertinence and insolence, in interrupting him whilst reading, and putting such a question to him, he expresses himself with great and uncommon modesty; with a sense and confession of his ignorance and incapacity and of the necessity and usefulness of the instructions of men, appointed of God to open and explain the Scriptures: and though he wanted such a guide, and could have been glad of one, yet he was willing to use all diligence himself in reading, that he, might, if possible, come at some knowledge of the truth; which was very commendable in him; and no doubt but the spirit he was in was much owing to his reading the word, and to the Spirit of God disposing his mind in this manner:

and he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him; which is an instance of his great humanity and courteousness, and of his meekness and condescension, as well as of his vehement thirst after the knowledge of the

Scriptures; he concluding, or at least hoping by Philip's question, and by the air and look of the man, that he was one that might be useful to him this way.

Ver. 32. *The place of the Scripture which he read was this*, etc.] Or the paragraph or section of Scripture; that part of it in which he was reading was (²⁵¹⁰Isaiah 53:7,8) which shows, that by this time the Scriptures were divided into sections, chapters, and verses; whereas the Jews say the whole law at first was but one verse ^{f427}.

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before the shearer. The metaphors of sheep and lamb express the innocence, meekness, and patience of Christ in his sufferings and death; and his being like these when led to the slaughter, and dumb before the shearer, show his willingness to suffer and die for his people, and to become a sacrifice for their sins. The allusion is to the sheep led either by the butcher to the slaughter house, or by the priest to the altar, and to the lamb of a year old being silent while it is shearing; and both denote the voluntariness of Christ in his sufferings, the stripping him of his good name, credit, and reputation among men, and of all worldly substance, though Lord of all, and even of the common blessings of nature, as of meat, drink, and raiment, and the light of the sun; and particularly the stripping him of his clothes, when his raiment was parted, and lots cast on his vesture, is very aptly signified by the shearing of the lamb, all which he took very patiently; and his being led forth to be crucified, when he was offered up as a sacrifice on the cross, very fitly answers to the sheep being led to the slaughter, without showing any reluctance. It was a custom with the Heathens to offer no creature in sacrifice, that struggled as it was led, or made an opposition, or showed any reluctance: it is remarkable, that there was nothing of this kind to be observed in Christ, who gave himself an offering, and a sacrifice; the reasons of which were, because of the great love he bore to his people: and because of the good and advantage that would come to them thereby: he was content to be poor, that they might be rich; to be made sin, that they might be made righteousness; to become a curse, that the blessings of the covenant might come upon them; to be stripped of all things, that they might enjoy all: and because no other sacrifice could atone for their sins; and because it was his Father's will, which always involves his own.

So opened he not his mouth: in defence of himself, when such false things were laid to his charge, and which he could have so easily refuted, and yet

answered to nothing, to the astonishment of his judge; the reason was, because he had the sins of his people on him, for which he was willing to suffer; and therefore declined self-vindication, lest he should hinder the judicial process against him; nor did he open his mouth against his enemies by way of threatening or complaint, when they spat on him, blindfolded, and buffeted him, and bid him prophesy who smote him; and when the chief priests, Scribes, the common people, and thieves mocked at him, and reviled him on the cross, he opened not his lips unto them, nor against them, only for them, saying, Father, forgive them; nor did he open his mouth against the justice of God, as bearing hard upon him; neither did he complain of the strictness of its demands, abating him nothing; nor of the severity and weight of its strokes, not sparing him at all; nor did he say one word against his people, whose sins brought all his sorrows and sufferings on him, but made intercession for the transgressors, whose sins he bore.

Ver. 33. *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away*, etc.] The humiliation, or low estate of Christ, lay in his assumption of human nature, with the weaknesses and imperfections of it; in the meanness of his parentage and education; in the sorrows he endured from his cradle to his cross; in his last conflict with Satan in the garden; in his being apprehended, bound, scourged, and condemned, both by the sanhedrim, and the Roman governor; and in being enclosed with the assembly of the wicked soldiers, who put on him their own clothes, and a crown of thorns on his head, and a reed in his hand, and then in a mock manner bowed to him as king of the Jews; and last of all in his obedience to death, even the death of the cross, and in his being laid in the grave. Now in this his low estate, “his judgment was taken away”; in the text in (^{281B} Isaiah 53:8) the words are, “he was taken from prison and from judgment”; which some understand of his sufferings, and render the words thus, “by an assembly, and by judgment he was taken away”; that is, by the Jewish sanhedrim, and by the judgment or sentence of Pontius Pilate, his life was taken away: and others interpret it of his resurrection from the dead, when he was taken or delivered from the prison of the grave, and could not be held any longer by the cords and pains of death; and from the judgment or condemnation under which he lay, being justified in the Spirit, when he was raised from the dead. The words, as here cited, differ from the original text; which have caused some to think, that there was a different reading of these words, which the Septuagint followed, and Luke after them. Dr. Pocock ^{f428} has proposed a translation of the Hebrew text, as agreeable to this citation,

without supposing a various reading, thus, “because of affliction, even from judgment he is taken; or when he was humbled, he was taken from judgment”; it being all one whether he was taken from judgment condemnation, and punishment, as at his resurrection, or whether his punishment was taken from him: though the sense of the words, as they are here cited, rather seems to be this; when he was taken and bound by the Jews, and detained by them a prisoner, and arraigned before the high priest, and at Pilate’s bar, and false witnesses suborned, which was his time of humiliation and affliction; when he was reproached, blasphemed, buffeted, and spit, upon, justice was not done him, right did not take place, but was removed from him, and he was treated in a most unjust and unrighteous manner:

and who shall declare his generation? not his divine or human generation; nor the sorrows of his life; or the duration of his life since his resurrection; nor the numbers of his spiritual seed and offspring; senses put upon the words they will by no means bear; but the generation or age in which Christ lived, which for its wickedness among themselves, and their barbarity to him, and ill usage of him, cannot be sufficiently described and declared; and a great deal of it they themselves own; (See Gill on ⁴⁰⁰⁶Matthew 10:36”) (See Gill on ⁴⁰²⁹Matthew 12:39”)

for his life is taken from the earth, not in a common, but in a judicial way; in the most cruel, barbarous, and unjust manner, in a violent way; though not without his Father’s will, and his own consent; and though his life was taken from the earth, he now lives in heaven, and that for evermore.

Ver. 34. *And the eunuch answered Philip, and said,* etc.] After he had read the passage out, and Philip had put the question to him, whether he understood it; and after he had taken him up into his chariot to sit with him, and instruct him:

I pray thee, of whom speakest the prophet this? being desirous of knowing who was the subject of this famous prophecy: which to know was very useful and edifying, and was not a matter of mere indifference and speculation, but of great moment and concern. A like way of speaking, in order to know the sense of a passage, is used by the Jews ^{f429}: thus upon reading (³⁸⁰²Proverbs 31:2), it is asked,

“of whom does Solomon say this Scripture? he does not say it but of his father David.”

Does he speak

of himself or of some other man? which is very properly and pertinently put; since there might be some appearance of its application to Isaiah, who suffered under Manasseh; and it might be applied to different persons, as it has been since by the Jews; as to Josiah, Jeremiah in particular, and to the people of Israel in general, though very wrongly: Josiah could never be intended, as one of their noted commentators^{f430} expounds the paragraph; since it was not the sins of the people that were the cause of his death, but his own, and his vanity in meddling with what he had nothing to do with, and had no real call unto; nor can it be said of him that he did no violence, or that he bore the sins of others, and died for them, and made his soul an offering for sin; nor were his days prolonged; nor did the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hand: nor is the passage applicable to Jeremiah, as another of their writers^{f431} would have it; he was not free from sin; nor was he wounded for the sins of his people; nor did he undergo his sufferings with patience; nor had he a large number of disciples; nor was he extolled and exalted, as this person is said to be: much less, as others^{f432} say, is the whole body of the people of Israel in captivity intended; since one single individual as spoken of throughout the whole; and is manifestly distinguished from the people of Israel, whose sins and sorrows he was to bear, and for whose transgressions he was to be stricken and wounded. In all which they go contrary to their Targum^{f433}, Talmud^{f434}, and other ancient writings^{f435}, which interpret many things in this section or paragraph of the Messiah^{f436}: however, as it might be differently understood, or difficult to be understood, the eunuch very appropriately puts this question.

Ver. 35. *Then Philip opened his mouth*, etc.] With freedom and boldness, and spoke clearly and distinctly, and expounded the passage to him. This is a phrase frequently used in Jewish writings, especially in the book of Zohar^{f437}, when they give an account of this or the other Rabbi interpreting any place of Scripture; as for instance, R. Eleazar **j tp**, “opened”, and said, “my sabbaths you shall keep”, etc. Again, R. Aba **j tp**, “opened”, and said, “and Manoah said unto his wife”, etc. Once more, “R. Simeon opened”, and said, “the heavens declare the glory of God”, etc. and

began at the same Scripture: “the fifty third of Isaiah”: and preached unto him Jesus of Nazareth; how that he was the true Messiah, and the person there designed, and that very rightly; for the Jews themselves, the ancient

ones, have interpreted several passages in that chapter of the Messiah, as has been before observed; he showed him how that he was born of a virgin, made under the law, and yielded perfect obedience to it in his life; and that he suffered and died for the sins of his people, and made satisfaction for them, and brought in an everlasting righteousness to justify them before God, and had obtained eternal redemption for them; that he was risen from the dead, was ascended into heaven, and now sat at the right hand of God, and ever lived to make intercession for transgressors; and would come a second time to judge both quick and dead; and in the mean while had left rules for the gathering, and forming, and governing his churches; and had appointed persons to preach his Gospel, and to administer the ordinances of baptism, and the supper of the Lord, which were to continue till his second coming.

Ver. 36. *And as they went on their way*, etc.] In the road from Jerusalem to Gaza; Philip preaching, and the eunuch hearing, and conversing in a religious and spiritual way together; and Beza says in one exemplar it is added, “conferring one with another”; about the person and office of Christ, the doctrines of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it; as appears by what follows, both by the eunuch’s request to be admitted to baptism, and his confession of faith:

they came unto a certain water; which some say was at Bethhoron, in the tribe of Judah or Benjamin; and others think it was the river Eleutherus; the former is more likely; concerning which Jerom^{f438} gives this account:

“Bethzur in the tribe of Judah, or Benjamin, and now called Bethhoron, is a village as we go from Aella (or Jerusalem) to Hebron, twenty miles from it; near which is a fountain, springing up at the bottom of a mountain, and is swallowed up in the same ground in which it is produced; and the Acts of the Apostles relate, that the eunuch of queen Candace was baptized here by Philip.”

This place was about two miles from Hebron; since that, according to the same writer^{f439}, was twenty two miles from Jerusalem. Borchardus^{f440} seems to place it further off from Hebron:

“from Hebron are three “leucas”, or six miles, northward, declining a little to the west, to Nehel Escol, that is, “the brook of the cluster”, from whence the spies carried the cluster of grapes; to the left of this valley, for the space of a mile, or half a leuca, runs a

river, in which Philip baptized the, eunuch of queen Candace, not far from Sicelech.”

And, according to Jerom^{f441}, Escol lay in the way from Bethzur to Hebron. This account of the historian sets aside that weak piece of criticism on *Ac# 8:38* used by some persons; as if when Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, no more is meant, than that they went to the water side, or descended to the bank and brink of the river; seeing, here it is said, they came to a certain place of water; they came to the river itself, or the river side, and after this went down into it.

And the eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? This question shows, that he had some knowledge of the ordinance of baptism, which he had received from the ministry and conversation of Philip; and that he had some desire after it, as regenerate persons have, after divine things, after Christ, his word, and ordinances; and that he was willing to take the first opportunity of submitting to it, but was jealous lest he should not be qualified for it; and therefore modestly proposes the affair to Philip, and desires to be examined and judged by him: and it also suggests, that there are some things which might be a just bar to this ordinance, as want of grace, and a disorderly life and conversation, which were the hindrances to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who came to John’s baptism; and these are sufficient ones, even though persons may be born in a Christian land, and of believing parents, and have had a good education; yea, though they may have much notional light and speculative knowledge: but where the good work of grace is begun, and when a soul is spiritually enlightened, and has evangelical repentance for sin, and true faith in Christ, and sincere love to him, nothing should hinder: not any thing on his side; not a sense of his own unworthiness, which will never be otherwise, but rather increase; nor the corruptions of his heart and nature, which will always remain, as long as he is in the body; nor fears of falling away, since there cannot be more danger after baptism than before, and Christ is the same who is always able to keep from it; nor the reproaches of the world, which should be esteemed above riches; and more especially, since to be ashamed of Christ, his word, or ordinances, is highly resented by him; nor the opposition of relations and friends, who, though they are to be regarded and listened to in civil matters, yet should have no sway in religious ones to move from the cause of Christ; nor any difficulty in the ordinance itself, since it is but water baptism, and not a bloody one, such as Christ was baptized with, and some of his followers have been

called unto: nor should anything hinder on the side of the administrator, when the above is the case; as not being circumcised, but Gentiles, as in the times of the apostles, (~~4007~~ Acts 10:47) so not the former life and conversation of the person, though it has been ever so wicked, as the instances of the crucifiers of Christ, of the jailor, of Saul the persecutor, and many of the Corinthians, show; nor the weakness of grace; the day of small things is not to be despised, nor a bruised reed to be broken, or smoking flax to be quenched: agreeably to this the Ethiopic version renders it, “who doth hinder”, etc.

Ver. 37. *And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest*, etc.] Intimating, that if he did not believe, he had no right to that ordinance; though he was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, a serious and devout man, and was employed in a religious way, when Philip came up to him, and was very desirous of being instructed in the knowledge of divine things; and yet notwithstanding all this, he had no right to the ordinance of baptism, unless he had faith in Christ, and made a profession of it; nor would Philip administer it to him without it; from whence it appears, that faith in Christ, and a profession of it, are necessary prerequisites to baptism: and this faith should not be a mere historical and temporary faith, nor a feigned one, but a believing in Christ with the heart unto righteousness; or such a faith by which a soul relinquishes its own righteousness, and looks and goes unto Christ for righteousness, life, and salvation, and rests and relies upon him for them; and it should be a believing in him with the whole heart, which does not design a strong faith, or a full assurance of faith, but an hearty, sincere, and unfeigned one, though it may be but weak, and very imperfect. And that this is necessary to baptism is manifest, because without this it is impossible to please God; nor can submission and obedience to it be acceptable to him: nor indeed can the ordinance be grateful and pleasing to unbelievers; for though it is a command that is not grievous, and a yoke that is easy, yet it is only so to them that believe; nor can any other see to the end of this ordinance, or behold the burial, and resurrection of Christ represented by it, or be baptized into his death, and partake of the benefits of it; and besides, whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God: which though a short, is a very comprehensive summary of the articles of faith respecting the person, offices, and grace of Christ; as that he is a divine person, truly and properly God, the only begotten of the Father, of

the same nature with him, and equal to him; that he existed from all eternity, as a divine person with him, and distinct from him; and that he is the Christ, the anointed of God, to be prophet, priest, and King; and is Jesus, the only Saviour of lost sinners, in whom he trusted and depended alone for righteousness, life, and salvation. This whole verse is wanting in the Alexandrian copy, and in five of Beza's copies, and in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions; but stands in the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions, and in the Complutensian edition; and, as Beza observes, ought by no means to be expunged, since it contains so clear a confession of faith required of persons to be baptized, which was used in the truly apostolic times.

Ver. 38. *And he commanded the chariot to stand still*, etc.] That is, the eunuch ordered his chariot driver to stop; for to him it better agrees to give this order than to Philip; though otherwise the words are so placed, that it would be difficult to say who gave the command.

And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him: upon which Calvin has this note;

“hence we see what was the manner of baptizing with the ancients, for they plunged the whole body into water.”

And indeed, other mode had been practised then, as sprinkling or pouring of water, there would have been no necessity of their going out of the chariot, and much less of their going down into the water; and as for change of apparel, it cannot be reasonably thought that so great a man should take so long a journey without it. In like manner the Jewish ablutions and purifications, which were performed by immersion, and therefore called baptisms, (³⁹¹⁰Hebrews 9:10) are spoken of in the same sort of language as here: so a profluvius person, and a woman that had lain in, were obliged **l wbj l hdryç**, “to go down and dip”^{f442}.

“It is a tradition of the Rabbins^{f443}, that he that sees any nocturnal pollution on the day of atonement, **l bwj w drwy**, “goes down and dips himself”. — And so all that are obliged to dipping, dip according to their custom on the day of atonement; the profluvius person, man or woman, the leprous person, man or woman, the husband of a menstruous woman, and one defiled with the dead, dip according to their custom on the day of atonement.”

Ver. 39. *And when they were come up out of the water*, etc.] Which is another circumstance, showing that baptism was then performed by immersion; with this compare (^(~~ARIG~~) Matthew 3:16) and so it is said of the high priest, when he washed himself on the day of atonement, **hl [l bj w dry**, “he went down and dipped, and came up”^{f444}; and so any other person that was obliged to dipping on any account, **hl [w l bj w dry**, “went down and dipped, and came up”^{f445}. And again it is said^{f446}, it happened to a servant maid of Rabbi, **htl [w hl bj ç**, “that she dipped herself and came up”.

The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; as soon as the ordinance was over; so that the eunuch had no opportunity of rewarding him for his instructions and labour; and this might be done on purpose to show that he had no mercenary end in joining himself to his chariot; and this sudden rapture and disappearance might be a confirmation to the eunuch that this whole affair was of God. The Spirit of the Lord took up Philip, just as he is said to lift up Ezekiel, between earth and heaven, (^(~~ARIB~~) Ezekiel 8:3) and carried him above the earth as far as Azotus. The Alexandrian copy, and one of Beza’s, and some others, read the words thus, “the holy Spirit fall upon the eunuch, but the angel of the Lord caught away Philip”; the same angel, it may be, that bid him go toward the south:

that the eunuch saw him no more; neither at that time, nor perhaps ever after; for one went one way, and another way:

and he went on his way; towards Ethiopia; and, as the Ethiopic version reads, “into his own country”; which is one reason why he saw Philip no more: however, he went thither

rejoicing, as he had great reason to do; being blessed with the saving knowledge of Christ, and true faith in the Son of God, and admitted to the holy ordinance of baptism; having first received the baptism of the Spirit, or having the grace of the Spirit bestowed on him, and implanted in him: and, according to some copies just now mentioned, after his baptism the Spirit fell on him in an extraordinary manner, and that without imposition of hands; so that, upon the whole, he had great reason to rejoice.

Ver. 40. *But Philip was found at Azotus*, etc.] The same with the Ashdod of the Philistines, famous for the temple of Dagon, (^(~~ARIB~~) 1 Samuel 5:1)

where the Septuagint call it Azotus, as here: and so it is called in the Apocrypha:

“Howbeit all the hindmost of them were slain with the sword: for they pursued them unto Gazera, and unto the plains of Idumea, and *Azotus*, and Jamnia, so that there were slain of them upon a three thousand men.” (1Mac 4:15)

“Whereof when Apollonius heard, he took three thousand horsemen, with a great host of footmen, and went to *Azotus* as one that journeyed, and therewithal drew him forth into the plain. because he had a great number of horsemen, in whom he put his trust.” (1Mac 10:77)

“But Jonathan set fire on *Azotus*, and the cities round about it, and took their spoils; and the temple of Dagon, with them that were fled into it, he burned with fire.” (1Mac 10:84)

“And when he came near to *Azotus*, they shewed him the temple of Dagon that was burnt, and *Azotus* and the suburbs thereof that were destroyed, and the bodies that were cast abroad and them that he had burnt in the battle; for they had made heaps of them by the way where he should pass.” (1Mac 11:4)

where mention is made of Beth Dagon, and the idol’s temple in it; and by Herodotus ^{f447}, Pliny ^{f448}, and Ptolomy ^{f449}; and it is now called Palmis, according to R. Benjamin ^{f450}; it was about fifty four miles from Jerusalem, and two hundred and seventy furlongs, Or four and thirty miles ^{f451} from Gaza:

and passing through; or, as he passed along through that and other places:

he preached in all the cities; that lay in his way; which shows his zeal and diligence:

till he came to Caesarea; not Caesarea Philippi, (^{<4163>}Matthew 16:13) but that which was before called Strato’s tower, and was rebuilt by Herod, and called Caesarea, in honour of Augustus Caesar ^{f452}; and not by Caesar himself, as R. Benjamin says ^{f453}: it was six hundred furlongs, or seventy five miles from Jerusalem ^{f454}, This place was famous for Jewish Rabbins, and their schools of learning; frequent mention is made of *yr̄syqd*

^ynbr, “the Rabbins of Caesarea”^{f455}; here Philip seems to have stopped, and stayed awhile.