

# WHAT IT MEANS TO PREACH CHRIST (Acts 8:5)

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Philip, the evangelist, holds a great meeting in Samaria—rather I should say—several great meetings and many people were baptized. In all of these meetings he preached only one thing—Jesus Christ. Notice the text: **“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them”** (Acts 8:5). Now, just what does it mean to preach Christ? What do we include, and what do we exclude? What do we say something about, and what do we say nothing about? Often people will remark—“I think you should just preach Jesus and say nothing about so and so or this and that.” Well, is that the way Philip did it? Did Paul do it that way? How did the apostles preach? That is a question for some of my own preaching brethren to ponder over—for some of them have the speak-softly, tread-lightly, step-carefully, method-of-approach kind of soft-pedal preaching, too. I wouldn’t call it “soft-soap”—it slanders soap; for soap is a mighty good thing, but I have never found that kind of preaching good for anything except to spoil the brethren, and please the sectarians. The apostolic way of preaching is the only right way to preach. How, then, did Philip preach Christ? Take this passage: **“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women”** (Acts 8:12). Don’t you suppose Philip should have just preached Jesus and said nothing about the “kingdom,” or “the name,” or about being “baptized”?

## PHILIP PREACHED THE KINGDOM

There were many theories about the kingdom of Christ then and there are many now. The Jews then thought that Christ would be king on earth, and they rejected Him because He did not establish the kind of a kingdom they expected. Now, Philip preached the kingdom to these Jews whose materialism was the ground of their rejection of Jesus Christ. When he preached Christ—he did not preach the Christ come, but that Christ had come. Then when he preached the kingdom, he likewise preached the kingdom that had come, and not a kingdom to come. Some today are making the same mistake the Jews made in their speculations concerning a future kingdom of Christ on earth, when as a matter of fact he has only one, the present one, and the one Philip preached. John, the Baptist, preached: **“The time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand.”** During John’s time the kingdom was “at hand”—approaching. It was then that Jesus told His disciples to pray **“thy kingdom come”**—praying and preaching should always be consistent. If it is still right to pray “thy kingdom come” then we should still preach as did John that the kingdom is “at hand.” But we should now preach, not what John preached, but what Philip preached, and should adjust our praying to fit the preaching. John’s preaching and the disciples’ prayer were both before the establishment of the kingdom, and the simple principle of the right division of the Word of God should

be applied. Still later, Jesus said to the disciples **“Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power”** (Mark 9:1). John said that it was **“at hand,”** the disciples prayed for it **“to come,”** and Jesus said they would live to see it come. Evidently it has come, or Methuselah was just a baby compared with some people living, since they were to live until it came. Well, when Jesus died on the cross a man by the name of Joseph asked for His body and Luke said he was among those who **“waited for the kingdom.”** So, it still had not come when Jesus died. The Lord arose from the dead, fulfilled His forty days on the earth, and when He was ready to ascend the expectant disciples asked Him when He would restore the kingdom to them—when they might expect that kingdom—and He told them to wait for the power which should come with the Spirit (Acts 1:6-8). They waited in Jerusalem. The Spirit came on Pentecost, (Acts 2) the power came with the Spirit; and the kingdom came with the power (Mark 19:1); thus, the preaching before the cross and the prayer of the disciples and the waiting of Joseph and the expectancy of all the disciples found reward on Pentecost in the fulfillment of all these prophecies and promises concerning the kingdom. After Pentecost, the kingdom was preached, and all things concerning it, as an existent thing, and not a future thing. Thus, it was that Philip preached Christ on the kingdom question by preaching that Christ is King (not a crown prince) and has a kingdom (not just a vestibule) and is on His throne (not sitting in His Father's arm chair in the parlor). To preach Christ is to preach all that Christ has and all that Christ is. Yet, after so many years of preaching on the establishment of the church, or kingdom, some brethren now, under the influence of a late obsession concerning a future earthly kingdom, will object to such preaching. I know of a case in one church where a certain brother (a leader) took exception to the reading of Luke 22:29-30 at the Lord's Supper. **“I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.”** When it comes to pass that what the Lord Himself said about His table in His kingdom cannot be read without objections, more preaching is needed on both the kingdom and the table (the Lord's Supper), which is in the kingdom. If we do not have the kingdom, we do not have the supper, and in that case, we do not even have Christ. No wonder Philip preached the kingdom when he preached Christ. So should we.

### **PHILIP PREACHED THE NAME**

Now, many people say that “there is nothing in a name.” Then Philip preached “nothing”—or something in which there is “nothing” (take it either way); for he preached the name. What name did he preach, friends? Did he preach the Baptist name? Did he preach the Methodist name? Did he preach any human name, Catholic or Protestant? Verily no, for no such things or names existed. The text says Philip preached “the name of Jesus Christ.” Well, if men preach only the name of Jesus Christ today, as Philip did then, will it—can it—make Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, Mormons and Catholics—or a lot of other

stray what-nots? Friends, the world has heard so much of this name and that name, some church or what church, that it is beginning to wonder whether Jesus Christ ever has a church or not. There is only one name under heaven whereby men may be saved. **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). When men preach any other name, they are not preaching Christ, and they are not preaching salvation. Since no man could become a human thing, bearing a human name, without that human name being preached, it simply follows that if only the name of Christ should be preached, there would not be a human denomination on the face of this earth today—exactly as it should be. For men to say that “there is nothing in a name,” and “one church is just as good as another,” and “it makes no difference what one believes”—all such is a lot of religious profanity that the devil has put into circulation. Yes, Philip preached the name of Jesus, the only saving name.

### **PHILIP PREACHED BAPTISM**

Now, why didn't Philip preach Jesus and say nothing about baptism? For the same reason that Jesus did not say **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel”** and say nothing about it. Jesus said something about baptism—yes, enough about it that every sectarian debater today is trying to get Mark 16:16 out of the New Testament by telling people that it is not inspired but interpolated. When a preacher has to use an “interpolated” argument to get around passages of scripture in the way of his doctrine, he is getting in a mighty bad way. It is an unbelief that borders on infidelity. It's getting too close to blasphemy for a man to be comfortable, and I don't believe they are comfortable. Who could be, trying to defend false doctrine? It's the hardest thing a man ever attempted to do and will make an infidel out of him if he keeps it up. That is exactly the reason we are having to fight modernism in religion today—preachers have turned infidel and do not themselves believe the Bible. Why, friends, Jesus Himself could not even tell the apostles to preach the gospel without mentioning baptism—it reads, **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”** But I hear somebody say (a preacher): “It doesn't say ‘he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned.’” No, for the reason that the man who does not believe could not be baptized. He couldn't if he would, he wouldn't if he could, and it wouldn't do him any good if he did! Don't oppose the Lord's words, friends, and don't turn infidel and say that Mark's record of it was not inspired. Believe what it says and do it—and be saved.

But how did Philip preach baptism? That story is in the eighth chapter of Acts also. Read the story of Philip and the eunuch. The angel directed Philip to leave his work in Samaria and go southward “unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” What was the purpose or ministry of the angel? Simply to put the preacher to his task. It did not enter the law of pardon, nor the man's conversion. The miracles of the New Testament never became a

part of the law in any case of conversion. When the Word of God was in the man, it required miracles and signs to confirm it; but now the Word of God is in the book, revealed, and confirmed, and the miracle gives place to the law. In the beginning, God created the world by the miracle. Adam was created. He was not an improved monkey nor a glorified ape—he was created; but the next man was born. The miracle of Creation did not become a part of the created world in any part, but only the means of creating the world. So, the miracles and signs of the New Testament do not become a part of the revealed Will of God, but the means of revealing the Will of God. We should not magnify the miracles attending cases of conversion and repudiate the law. So, the angel performed the special purpose of all such, and we hear no more about the angel. But the Spirit directed Philip to join the chariot. What is the office, or work, of the Holy Spirit in the case? If you will observe that the direct influence of the Spirit was on the inspired preacher, and not on the unsaved man, it will not be hard to see. The influence of the Holy Spirit in conversion is through the Word of God—rational, intelligent, through testimony. The Holy Spirit never makes anybody act idiotic, conversion is not a convulsion, and repentance does not take place in a nightmare. Philip then ran unto the chariot—why the preacher, if the Holy Spirit operates on the sinner direct? What then was the task of the preacher? Ah, “he preached unto him Jesus”—that’s God’s only plan—preaching. **“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”** By man the gospel shall be preached to man—that is the divine plan. But what did it mean to preach Jesus? It meant just what preaching Christ meant back in Samaria where Philip had closed his other meeting. Did he preach baptism? He must have—as the man wanted to be baptized in the first water he saw. But he preached something before baptism. The man was reading Isaiah 53 and Philip **“began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.”** He preached the incarnation of Jesus (His life in the flesh); he preached the humiliation of Jesus (His chastisement for the iniquities and transgressions of man); he preached the atonement of Jesus (His death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and the offering of His blood for man’s redemption); and he preached the commands of Jesus (how Jesus commanded the gospel to be preached as stated in the three records of the last commission). When the man heard it, he believed it, and announced his faith in the simple confession—the gospel confession: **“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”** The chariot was stopped. They went into the water. He was baptized. He resumed his journey rejoicing, while the preacher departed for other fields to preach Christ.

### **HOW THE EUNUCH WAS BAPTIZED**

But how was the eunuch baptized? Let the text speak. 1. They came unto a certain water. 2. They both went down into the water—both Philip and the eunuch. 3. He was baptized—and came up out of the water. Did you do that when you were baptized? If you did not, then you were not baptized. No amount of objecting can destroy the simplicity of the narrative. But it is often insisted that “into” just means

“unto.” Well, just kindly refer to your text and observe that it reads that they came “unto” the water, and then went “into” it. If “into” means “unto,” then what does “unto” mean just above into? And if “down into the water” means that they stayed out of the water, then when it says “they came up out of the water,” does that mean they stayed in it? It is harder to get around the simple narrative of this conversion than it is to believe what it says. If it be argued that they were in the middle of a desert and couldn’t have had water sufficient for a case of immersion—be reminded that the text says, water, unto the water, down into the water, and up out of the water. And furthermore, it was the town of Gaza which was desert—deserted—and not the country around, a desert. Anybody who thinks that it was a desert ought to study geography as well as the Bible.

Then what did the man do—what was the duty of the man? It was plain and simple:

1. He heard the word.
2. He believed the word.
3. He confessed his faith in the Christ.
4. He was baptized.
5. He was saved and rejoiced.

What church did he belong to? The one to which the Lord added people (Acts 2:47). What denomination did he belong to? Try to classify him and witness a failure. He obeyed the gospel, was saved, added to the church, without “joining a denomination.” Then, if you will do what he did, you will be what he was. Friends, these gospel narratives are in the divine text for the exact purpose of telling us what to do and how to do it. They are too plain to be misunderstood, and only unbelief could keep you away. Why not take the Lord at His Word and do what He says? It is a plain issue—obey or rebel—which will you do?~

*Deceased*