

Acts 8:37 - Is it inspired Scripture or not?

Acts 8:37 - "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." - completely omitted in many modern versions

In order to see the importance of this verse we need to look at the surrounding context to see that the Ethiopian eunuch asks a direct question and the vital answer to his question is missing in such versions as the NASB (some of them), the NIV, RSV, ESV, Jehovah Witness version, and most Catholic bibles.

Acts 8:36-38 "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? (Notice the direct question: "What doth hinder me to be baptized?") The next entire verse is omitted by many modern versions.

Acts 8:37 "AND PHILLIP 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 8:38 "And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Phillip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

Verse 37 is considered by many modern versionists to be a "minority reading" since it is not found in the majority of remaining Greek texts, nor in Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, A or C. Manuscript D is missing the whole section from Acts 8:29b through 10:14, so it is of no help one way or the other.

It should be pointed out, however, that for every one "minority reading" in the KJB there is easily a 20 to 1 ratio of minority readings to be found in versions like the NASB, NIV, ESV. There is in fact a great deal of historical and manuscript evidence for the inclusion of this entire verse, and I have no doubt that it is an important part of God's inspired word.

The evidence in favor of including this verse is quite massive. It is found in the Greek texts of Stephanus 1550, Beza, and Elzevir. It is in manuscripts E, 4, 36, 88, 97, 103, 104, 242, 257, 307, 322, 323, 385, 429, 453, 464, 467, 629, 630, 913, 945, 1522, 1739, 1765, 1877, 1891, and others.

It is also the reading found in the Old Latin manuscripts that predate anything we have in Greek, including the Old Latin texts of ar, c, e, gig, h, l, m, ph, and r. Even the notes in critical text editions tell us that this verse existed in the Old Latin copies, some Coptic versions, the Ethiopic, Georgian, and Slavonic, the Syriac Peshitta and Armenian early Bible versions. It is also found in the Vulgate Clementine.

Early church fathers who witness to it's being a part of inspired Scripture are Irenaeus, Cyprian, Chromatius, Tertullian, Ambrosiaster, Pacian, Ambrose, Augustine and Theophylact.

Many church fathers who lived before anything we have in the way of Greek copies directly quote this verse, including Irenaeus 178 A.D., Tertullian 220, Cyprian 258, as well as Ambrosiaster 384, Ambrose 397, Augustine 430, and Venerable Bede of England in 735.

For example, Cyprian (200-258 A.D.) supports the inclusion of verse 36-37 Textus Receptus when he says, "In the Acts of the Apostles Treatise 12:3: Lo, here is water; what is there which hinders me from being baptized? Then said Phillip, If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." (The Treatises of Cyprian)

Irenaeus (115-202 AD), Against Heresies 3.12: "Philip declared that this was Jesus, and that the Scripture was fulfilled in Him; as did also the believing eunuch himself: and, immediately requesting to be baptized, he said, I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God."

Augustine (354-430 AD), Sermon 49: "The eunuch believed on Christ, and said when they came unto a certain water, See water, who doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip said to him, Dost thou believe on Jesus Christ? He answered, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Immediately he went down with him into the water."

The entire verse stands in a multitude of Bible versions both old and new, English and foreign. It is found in Wycliffe 1395, Tyndale 1525, Coverdale 1545, the Great Bible (Cranmer) 1540 - "Philip sayde vnto him: If þu beleue with all thyne hert, thou mayest. And he answered, and sayde: I beleue that Iesus Christ is the sonne of God.", Matthew's Bible 1549, the Bishop's Bible 1568, the Douay-Rheims of 1582, the Geneva Bible 1599, Mace N.T. 1729, Wesley's translation 1755, Whiston's Primitive N.T. 1745, Webster's translation 1833, Murdock's Translation 1851, Worsley Version 1770, Amplified Bible 1987, the NKJV 1982, Young's, Green's Modern KJV 2000, the KJV 21st Century Version 1994, the Third Millennium Bible 1998, Knox Bible 2012, the Aramaic Bible in Plain English of 2010 and even in the latest Catholic translation, called the Catholic Public Domain Version, of 2009.

Many well known theologians and other Bible commentators in times past have confessed their belief that Acts 8:37 is inspired Scripture and belongs in the Bible. Among these are the Westminster Confession, John Calvin, Dean Burgon, Matthew Henry, John Gill, Theodore Beza, John Owen, John Dick, Charles Hodge, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Charles G. Finney, John Charles Ryle, Abraham Kuyper and Jonathan Edwards.

The whole verse is included in the following modern foreign language versions: Afrikaans 1953, the Arabic Life Application Bible 1998, Albanian, Bulgarian 1940, Chinese Traditional and Union versions, Dutch Staterling, Luther's German Bible 1545, and other German Bibles like the Schlachter Bible of 2007 - "Da sprach Philippus: Wenn du von ganzem Herzen glaubst, so ist es erlaubt! Er antwortete und sprach: Ich glaube, dass Jesus Christus der Sohn Gottes ist!", the Danish, Dutch Staten Vertaling, Finnish 1776, the French La Bible de Geneva 1669, the French Martin 1744, the Louis Segond 1910 and 2007, the French Ostervald 1996, the French La Bible du Semeur 1999 - "Si tu crois de tout ton cœur, tu peux être baptisé. ---Oui, répondit le dignitaire, je crois que Jésus-Christ est le Fils de Dieu.", the Haitian Creole Bible, Hungarian Karoli and the Hungarian New Translation of 1990, the Italian Diodati 1649, the Riveduta of 2006 and the 1991 New Diodati - "Filippo disse: «Se tu credi con tutto il cuore, è possibile». L'eunuco rispose: «Io credo che Gesù Cristo è il Figlio di Dio». ", Japanese JKUG, Korean (in brackets), Latvian, Maori Bible, Modern Hebrew Version N. T. - "אם פילפוס יאמר: 8:37הוא: האלהים בן המשיח ישוע כי מאמין אני ויאמר ויען לך מתר לבבך בכל אתה מאמין", the Modern Greek Version used in the Greek speaking churches all over the world - "Και ο Φιλιππος ειπεν· Εαν πιστευης εξ ολης της καρδιας, δυνασαι. Και αποκριθεις ειπε· Πιστευω οτι ο Ιησους Χριστος ειναι ο Υιος του Θεου."

The entire verse is also found in the Nederlands Handelingen 1988, the Norwegian Norsk 1930 and the 1978 En Levende Bok, the Portuguese Almeida of 1681 and the modern Almeida - "E disse Filipe: É lícito, se crês de todo o coração. E, respondendo ele, disse: Creio que Jesus Cristo é o Filho de Deus.", the Portuguese O Livro of 2000, Rumanian, Romanian Cornilescu and the Romanian Nouă Traducere În Limba Română of 2007, Russian Synodal 1876 and Zhuromsky N.T., the Polish Nowe Przymierze of 2011, the Spanish Reina Valera 1909, 1960, 1995, Spanish Biblia de las Américas 1997 (Lockman Foundation), Contemporánea of 2011 and the 2010 Reina Valera Gomez bible,- "Felipe le dijo: «Si crees de todo corazón, puedes ser bautizado.» Y el eunuco respondió: «Creo que Jesucristo es el Hijo de Dios.»", the Russian Synodal Bible and the Russian Easy to Read Version of 2007 - "the Tagalog Ang Salita ng Diyos 1998, Turkish N.T. 1994, Ukrainian Bible and Easy to Read Ukrainian Bible of 2007, the Somali Bible of 2008, the Vietnamese Bản Dịch Bible of 2011, the Chinese Union Traditional and the Chinese Contemporary Bible of 2011 put out by the International Bible Society.

Yet here in the USA, the NIV, ESV, RSV, ISV, NET and Holman Christian Standard versions unite in omitting this entire verse, which results in the Ethiopian eunuch asking a question to which Phillip gives no answer.

The ever changing NASBs are interesting in that the NASB of 1963 completely omits the verse from the text as does the 1972 and 1973 editions, but the 1977 NASB as well as the 1995 edition now put the verse back in the text [but in brackets] indicating doubt as to its authenticity. Nice to have a "bible" with [brackets] around the verses like the NASB so often does, isn't it?

The Catholic versions are in their usual disagreement one with another. The older Douay-Rheims of 1582 and the Douay of 1950 both contain the entire verse, but the more modern UBS based versions like the 1968 Jerusalem bible, the St. Joseph New American Bible and the 1985 New Jerusalem (all based on the United Bible Society ever changing critical text) omit the verse, but the 2009 Catholic Public Domain Version puts it back in!

The inconsistency of the NIV is seen in that the NIV 2000 Portuguese version called Nova Versão Internacional contains the whole verse of Acts 8:37- "37 Disse Filipe: "Você pode, se crê de todo o coração". O eunuco respondeu: "Creio que Jesus Cristo é o Filho de Deus"

The NASB is a bit peculiar in that the 1960, 1972 and 1973 editions read: V. 37 (see footnote). Then the verse is placed at the bottom of the page. Notice the note used - it says: "Late manuscripts insert...". Then in 1977 and again in 1995 the NASB put the verse back in the text but this time in brackets. The NIV omits the verse jumping from 36 to 38. Then in a footnote says "Some late manuscripts...." Do you see how they are fudging the truth here? A more truthful statement would be: "so read several ancient versions; many early church Fathers quote the verse, and it is included in a large number of Greek manuscripts."

The footnotes are of interest to see how they change in the versions that omit these words. The RSV and NRSV also omit the verse, but they tell us in the footnote: "OTHER ANCIENT AUTHORITIES ADD..." But then the ESV revision of the RSV omits the verse and says: "SOME MANUSCRIPTS add..." See how they downplay the evidence in favor of this reading? It should also be asked - Why then did the NASB put the verse back in the text after having omitted it for so long? Which Bible is really the inspired word of God? I and many others know, but do you?

Dr. Thomas Holland, in his book *Crowned with Glory*, deals with the evidence for the inclusion of Acts 8:37. Further along in his article - which can be seen in its entirety at this site: - http://av1611.com/kjbp/faq/holland_ac8_37.html - , he asks: "If the text were genuine, why would any scribe wish to delete it? In his commentary on the book of Acts, Dr. J. A. Alexander provides a possible answer. By the end of the third century it had become common practice to delay the baptism of Christian converts to assure that they had truly understood their commitment to Christ and were not holding to one of the various heretical beliefs prevalent at that time. It is possible that a scribe, believing that baptism should not immediately follow conversion, omitted this passage from the text, which would explain its absence in many of the Greek manuscripts that followed. Certainly this conjecture is as possible as the various explanations offered by those who reject the reading."

In a recent online discussion about this verse, a Christian who himself does not believe that any text or any translation is the pure and perfect words of God, claimed that Acts 8:37 is not part of the Byzantine text which King James Bible defenders say they believe in. I then asked him "WHICH Byzantine text?" and then provided him with the following information.

Byzantine text - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

<http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/biblegreek/?id=4&book=Acts&chapter=8>

Acts 8:37 - εἶπε δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος· εἰ πιστεύεις ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας, ἔξεστιν. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπε· πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

Byzantine text - <http://kainh.homestead.com/kainh.html>

Modern Greek New Testament - from Unbound Scriptures online

<http://unbound.biola.edu/>

Here you need to type in Acts 8:37, then look for the Bible version they call Modern Greek. This modern Greek text clearly includes the whole verse of Acts 8:37.

I also have a copy of the Greek New Testament all with Greek fonts. It is a light blue hard cover copy of what they call The New Testament in Ancient and Modern Greek. It is dated 1954. The entire verse of Acts 8:37 is included (and not even in brackets) and is found on page 316.

Folks, if you want the true "book of the LORD" (Isaiah 34:16) then get yourself the King James Holy Bible.

Friends don't let friends use Modern Vatican Versions.

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