

- A Study in Acts -

**Chapter Eight – Spread of the Church and the Gospel**

**ACTS 8:26-40:**

In our previous lesson, Luke revealed the work of Philip in Samaria, and consequently, the Apostles of the Lord traveling down to them in order to bestow spiritual gifts.

At the conclusion of these events in Samaria, Luke is now going to reveal that Philip is going to be Divinely moved to the south. An angel of the Lord; as a Divine messenger (**Hebrews 1:14**), will instruct Philip to go to the road between Jerusalem and Gaza.

His Divine instruction to Philip at this time, is not mysterious, but in fact is accomplishing the very purpose of the spread of the Gospel to the world. Note that the message does not come to anyone miraculously, but the only miraculous intervention here is bringing preacher and sinner together!

**Text #1:**

**Acts 8:26-29** “Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert.<sup>27</sup> So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,<sup>28</sup> was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.””

**Gaza:** This city sets on a hill along the caravan route to Egypt and was once one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. It lies about 50 miles S.W. of Jerusalem and was connected to Jerusalem by a highway.

Keep in mind that Philip was north of Jerusalem prior to the instruction to go south. This would have been a lengthy journey from **verse 25** to **verse 26!**

**Desert:** This term being translated desert is also found in **Matthew 14:15**; where it is translated as a “**deserted place**”. This is the meaning of the term here as well. We know that it is not devoid of water, as in a true desert, because of the statement found in **verse 36**. It is simply a place without permanent residence or unpopulated.

**Ethiopia:** This is a nation that has often been connected to the Bible narrative. It is located south of Egypt and was inhabited by the sons of Cush, the grandson of Noah – **Genesis 10:6-8**.

**Eunuch:**

**First**, a eunuch is an emasculated man. This was a common practice among servants with great responsibility in order to devote themselves to their duties. This is explained by Luke in the narrative, “**of great responsibility under Candace**”.

The scriptures mention emasculated men on more than one occasion. In the Law of Moses, emasculated men were not allowed to serve in the temple, or allowed into the assembly of the people – **Leviticus 21:16-23; Deuteronomy 23:1**. In the prophesied spiritual kingdom of heavenly Zion, even the emasculated man will be given a place and an everlasting name – **Isaiah 56:4** (fulfillment taking place here). The Lord would refer to emasculated men who would become such for the sake of control over lust of the flesh for the security of their place in the kingdom – **Matthew 19:12**.

**Second**, Candace the queen of the Ethiopians was a title used for this line of rulers, like Pharaoh, or Caesar.

**Third**, it should be noted that the eunuch traveled from his native country to Jerusalem to worship. This suggests that he has been made a proselyte to the Jewish faith and also then explains his desire to know the teaching of **Isaiah**. Even as devote as he is demonstrated within the text to be, we must recognize that he along with all men can only come to God now through Jesus Christ – **Acts 4:12**.

**Text #2:**

**Acts 8:30-31** “So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”<sup>31</sup> And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.”

Having been instructed by the Spirit, Philip would overtake the eunuch’s chariot and consult him concerning his comprehension of the text he is reading. A good instructor attempts to ascertain the level of understanding of the student, and then begins his instruction there. This is the wisdom of God for the dissemination of the Gospel to the world - **1 Corinthians 1:21** “**For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.**”

**Text #3:**

**Acts 8:32-35** “The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

**“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth.”<sup>33</sup> In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.” – Isaiah 53:7-8**

<sup>34</sup> So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”<sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

**Scripture:** The passage being read by the eunuch was from the final of four Servant songs which Isaiah makes known concerning the work of God’s Messiah – The first song is found in **Isaiah**

**42:1-13**; the second in **Isaiah 49:1-13**; the third in **Isaiah 50:4-51:8**; and the fourth in **Isaiah 52:13-56:8**.

Isaiah is effectively two books in one through the work of the prophet. The first part is the Assyrian period (**chapter 1-39**), which is immediate and poignant to the need to repent during the Assyrian crisis. It concludes with some very dire words concerning the future of Judah.

The second book (**chapter 40-66**) is often referred to as the Babylonian period. The entire second narrative stands as a universal challenge from God through Isaiah to the idolatrous influences that Judah is flirting with. Have these idolatrous gods predict anything and have it come about! All the while God through Isaiah is giving detailed looks into the future. Thus, the four Servant songs are part of God's great work of showing true hope for the righteous (few that they were). A detailed look into a kingdom, the likes this world has never known (justice, mercy, peace, inclusion without prejudice, etc...). The text being read by the eunuch is a glimpse into the coronation of this Great Servant of God, which would be a suffering victory!

**Isaiah 53 – Suffering victory of God's Great Servant.**

**Isaiah 54 – The King on His throne and the splendor of Zion.**

**Isaiah 55 – An invitation will go out.**

**Isaiah 56:1-8 – The invitation will include the Gentiles.**

This would be an intricate and detailed view of the events unfolding here in the book of Acts; as well as the fulfillment of the work of Jesus of Nazareth as this great Servant of God, now after His suffering, on His throne.

A fitting place for the eunuch to be reading to initiate the teaching of Jesus to him. Philip would have an easy time starting from this source teaching and demonstrating that Jesus was this Great Servant of God, and the salvation Isaiah would speak of has come to those who believe in Him.

**Text #4:**

**Acts 8:36-40** “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

<sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.”

And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

<sup>38</sup> So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup> Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup> But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.”

**Preached Jesus:** As Philip began to instruct concerning Jesus from the passage in Isaiah, the following events speak volumes on the results of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are many who state a different conclusion from what they say is the preaching or witnessing of Jesus Christ??? The fact of the matter is evident from the conclusion of the eunuch, having heard the true Gospel of Christ; you cannot preach Jesus Christ, without preaching baptism!

The same result on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (**Acts 2:38**), the same result in Samaria (**Acts 8:12-13**), the same result for Saul of Tarsus (**Acts 9:18**), the same result for Cornelius (**Acts 10:48**), etc.

The fact of the matter is that Philip gives us an insight in his response to the eunuchs' question by stating **"If you believe with all your heart, you may"**; which tells us that baptism is only for true believers (does this mean that there is a difference between true believers and those who simply say they are believers? YES!).

**The Great Confession:** Having been instructed concerning the fact that baptism is for true believers of the true Gospel, the eunuch, with clarity of mind, makes the great confession – **"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."**

**Baptized Him:** Completing the conversion process, Philip baptizes the eunuch in an act of true submission. This demonstration for the purpose of establishing precedence is the first of many times when we, as servants of the Highest God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, will submit to one another in the fear of the Lord – **Ephesians 5:21**. It should also be noted that they went down into the water in order for the eunuch to be submerged (the definition of the word baptize).

**Concluding Events:** The eunuch would continue along his way to Ethiopia rejoicing in his new state. Philip would leave from there and go on to Azotus (this was the city of Ashdod of the O.T.; a chief city of the Philistines – **1 Samuel 5:1-8**), and came to Caesarea.

Luke writes that Philip would go from Azotus to Caesarea (Caesarea is about 60 miles north of Azotus), preaching along the way. Luke records Philip in Caesarea, and does not speak of him again until **Acts 21:8**; where we find him still in Caesarea where Luke includes the title of evangelist to his name. So, for anywhere from 15-18 years, Philip has stayed in Caesarea and engaged in the work of an evangelist – 'one who speaks well the glad tidings' (**2 Timothy 4:1-5**), demonstrating the wisdom of the Lord in putting evangelists in all His bodies (**Ephesians 4:11**).