



Acts 8:26-40 | Session 21 | The Evangelist and the Ethiopian

Acts 8:26-40

Verse 26—

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, we have to determine who spoke to Philip. Simply stated, it's "an angel." The word **angel** is translated from the Greek word *angelos* which can mean *one who is sent or, a messenger*. This occurs in the apostolic era in which God interacted directly through supernatural means. We should not build a doctrine that angels direct us today. We are led by the word of God, and when it comes to doctrinal issues our instructions come from the epistles (or letters) of the apostle Paul. In this verse, an *angelic* messenger was sent to Philip to give him directions on where he should go to preach the word of God.

Arise, and go toward the south. Philip, one of the seven (Acts 6:5), moves now from Samaria to the fulfillment of the Gospel being taken to the "ends of the earth." Jesus told of this happening in Acts 1:8, *Jerusalem, Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*. **The way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza**, evidently indicating which road Philip was to take. This would have been the coastal route as opposed to some other route.

Verse 27—

And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia. The Greek word for **Ethiopia** is *aithiops* (*i-thee-ops*), which is *aitho* (*to scorch*), and *ops* (*the face*). The word *aithiops* can mean *black*. It probably refers to the part of Africa below Egypt. **An eunuch.** It could mean one who was emasculated, but also one who was naturally incapacitated from birth (Matthew 19:12). Whatever the case here, this man was **of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians**. The idea of **great authority** could mean this man was a prince or a ruler. **Candace** was a title, like Pharaoh, or Caesar. This man was important enough to have **charge of all her treasure**, which would make him a very important man. We might picture a large entourage who **had come to Jerusalem to worship** (Greek word for **worship** here is *proskuneō* which is to *prostrate* oneself in reverence. The church today associates worship more with music). This would indicate he was a Jew, as Jews traveled to Jerusalem to *proskuneō*.

Verse 28—

Was returning. This entourage of the eunuch was on their way home when Philip came upon them. **And sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.** This Ethiopian had to have been a man of great means since he had a *scroll of the prophet Esaias* (Greek is *haysaheas*, that is, Isaiah). He was also sitting at his leisure, in his chariot, reading.

Verse 29—

Then the Spirit said unto Philip. Note the KJV and other translations use of the capital "S." This is an interpretive matter in which they assume the Greek word *pneuma* here is referring to the Holy Spirit. The plain sense seems to connect this *pneuma* as the *angel* (*spiritual being*) who directed Philip in verse 26. But, it could be the Holy Spirit (*pneuma* is used again in verse 39). **Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.** The angel pointed out the specific chariot in the entourage to catch up with and, literally, *keep company* with **this chariot**.

Verse 30—

Philip ran thither (towards), **and heard him read the prophet Esaias**, apparently out loud. Reading aloud was standard basic grammatical education in the ancient world. Reading aloud was also a tool for memorization. There is evidence that Jewish students also learned the Torah by reading it out loud. Therefore, to Luke's readers, he need not explain why Philip heard the man reading.



Understandest thou what thou readest? This is a good question to ask someone even today when they read the Bible. It is a good way to get a conversation started.

Verse 31—

How can I, except some man should guide me? The timing is right for Philip to join up with the Ethiopian since he needs some help in understanding what he is reading. Philip must have said something to the man to indicate he could help since the Ethiopian **desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.**

Verse 32-34—

To show how much of a divine appointment this was (directed by God through the *pneuma*), the Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah 53:7,8. This is a passage we apply directed to Jesus as *the suffering servant*. He doesn't know it yet, but the Ethiopian is on his way to understanding that Jesus was the Messiah. His question to Philip, **of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?** The correct questions lead this man to belief in the Messiah.

Verse 35—

Then Philip...preached unto him Jesus. This is where many misinterpret what is happening here. To preach Jesus is not to preach the gospel of grace that we believe today. Philip is preaching the kingdom message of belief through repentance and baptism (as we will see in verse 38). The gospel of grace requires only belief, and not repentance or baptism. Realizing the difference in those two gospels is called *rightly dividing* (2 Timothy 2:15). Many today preach that one must "repent" in order to be saved, but if they were asked, "What about baptism?" they would say, "No, not baptism." We can't pick and choose a salvation that fits our theological ideas. Philip is preaching Jesus from the Isaiah passage in which there are too many correlations between Isaiah's suffering servant and Jesus to be anyone else. That is, *so opened he not his mouth*, Jesus did not open his mouth at his "trial" because he accepted his death as God's plan; *in His humiliation* we see many passage in Luke that connects the Isaiah passage with Jesus's humility beginning with his birth (Luke 1:48; 3:5; 14:11; 18:14); and his *judgment (or his justice) was taken away* as Jesus was Holy and Just (Acts 3:13-15), but was condemned unjustly (Luke 22:66-71; 23:23-24).

Verse 36-38—

As Philip taught the gospel of the kingdom, i.e., repentance and baptism, the Ethiopian said, **I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God** (vs. 37) and repented. That is, he had *faith* that Jesus was Messiah, but his *faith* did not and could not justify him (Justify means to be declared righteous by God). While he had to have faith (belief) he would still be required to perform all of the Jewish rites and ceremonies under the law of Moses. Philip taught the gospel that it is only through repentance and baptism could one have the forgiveness of sins (See Acts 8:12). In other words, a work had to be performed. The Law had to be obeyed (Romans 2:13). Later, we will see a dispensational change; salvation which comes to an individual by grace through faith and not of works (Acts 13:38,39; 15:11).

And he baptized him.

Verse 39,40—

A miracle happened in front of the Ethiopian's eyes. Philip is **caught away** by the **Spirit of the Lord**. The Greek word for **caught away** is *harpazo*. It is the same word found in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. We get our concept of the Rapture from this word. This must have been tremendous confirmation that what Philip had explained to him was true that he **went on his way rejoicing.**

But Philip was found at Azotus (Ashdod). Till he came to Caesarea (Acts 21:8).

