

# ACTS

## Chapter 8

*Saul Ravages the Church*

**And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.**

**8:1** *approved.* Saul's eagerness to support Stephen's death anticipates his future persecution of Christians. (TLSB)

*except the apostles.* For the apostles to stay in Jerusalem would be an encouragement to those in prison and a center of appeal to those scattered. The church now went underground. (CSB)

*arose...great persecution* – Through Stephen, the line of division between Christianity and Judaism was sharply drawn for the first time. Persecution came not only on the apostles but on the whole Church. (TLSB)

*scattered throughout regions of Judea and Samaria.* The beginning of the fulfillment of the commission in 1:8—not by the church's plan, but by events beyond the believers' control. (CSB)

The apostles' responsibilities to the Church required them to stay in Jerusalem under threat of arrest and death. They had faced arrest before (5:18). (TLSB)

The Holy Spirit kept blessing the teaching and preaching, and new members were multiplied daily from the city and the surrounding towns. How easy to forget that the Savior had said something about Judea and Samaria and the world. After all, the matter of the needy had been settled peaceably. They were once again of one heart and mind, studying the Word and waiting for Christ's return. Wasn't that what He said they were to do? But it was now the Lord's time to move His children out. And so He allowed the blessing of persecution. The majority of those fleeing the city seemed to have ended up in Samaria. This was natural since Samaria was nearby, and the Sanhedrin and their subordinates had no authority in this country. (LL)

**8:3** *was ravaging.* The Greek underlying this phrase sometimes describes the ravages of wild animals. (CSB)

With hindsight, Luke shows that Christ's command to proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth (1:8) was partially fulfilled because of this persecution and the scattering of the Church. (TLSB)

“On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme” (Acts 26:1-11). He had approved of Stephen's execution, and he wanted to follow through by destroying the church. The Sanhedrin provided temple guards for the raids which he conducted. (PBC)

**8:1–3** Stephen’s death and Saul’s persecution of Christ’s followers illustrate the fulfillment of the prophecy that the world would hate the Gospel and kill those who believed it (Mt 24:9–10). The omnipotent God made the world’s fanatical hatred serve His purpose in proclaiming the Gospel throughout the entire world. When you are persecuted for the sake of the Gospel, trust that your Lord is at work in the midst of such circumstances. As the cross shows, He can work blessings for you and for others, despite all curses and condemnations. • “Praise for the first of martyrs Who saw You ready stand To help in time of torment, To plead at God’s right hand. Like You, our suff’ring Savior, His enemies he blessed, With ‘Lord, receive my spirit,’ His faith, by death, confessed.” Amen. (LSB 517:7) (TLSB)

*Philip Proclaims Christ in Samaria*

**4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was much joy in that city.**

**8:4** *preaching the word.* Many witnesses to the gospel went everywhere proclaiming the good news. The number of witnesses multiplied, and the territory covered was expanded greatly (cf. 11:19–20). (CSB)

Philip proclaimed the Gospel in Samaria in fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy. (TLSB)

The gap left by Stephen’s death is quickly filled by other witnesses. Stephen’s preaching will be carried on and extended by Philip, and his role of suffering witness will be taken over by the young man, Saul, introduced at the moment of Stephen’s death. The experience and work of Stephen and Saul will be similar, and both of these figures resemble their Lord. The continuity between Stephen and Saul could encourage the conviction that the Lord will continue to have powerful witnesses despite human opposition, which cannot halt the divine purpose.

From this point on the apostles must repeatedly catch up with a mission that is sparked by other persons and other forces. This shift does not make the apostles unimportant. They become the stabilizing, verifying, unifying element in a mission that moves to new areas and groups without their planning or control. As the mission begins to move beyond Jerusalem and Judea, it is useful to distinguish two roles within it: the role of the initiator and the role of the verifier. The apostles shift at this point from the former to the latter role. That is, their function is reduced to recognizing and confirming the work of the evangelists who bring the gospel to new areas and groups. The twelve intended to perform the “ministry of the word” themselves while the seven cared for the daily ministry of serving tables (6:2-4), but now those scattered, including Philip, appear as preachers of “the word”, with no indication that the twelve have authorized this. The fulfillment of Jesus’ commission in 1:8 does not wait until the apostles are ready to include Samaria. While they are trying to maintain Jesus’ claim on Jerusalem, the mission moves forward through Philip. (Tannehill)

It was not one of the Twelve but one of the Seven who began the work of preaching to non-Jews. That does not mean that the apostles were disobedient to the great commission or reluctant to begin carrying it out. They did their work where they were until God’s providence or special direction placed them elsewhere. The gospel, accompanied by signs, did its work among the Samaritans as it had among the Jews in Jerusalem. (PBC)

The Samaritans are not Gentiles. Indeed they lay claim – not without some justice – to being an ancient and deeply traditional form of the religion of Israel. In their eyes, it was the Judeans who were the interlopers and innovators. But in the eyes of contemporary Judeans, they were at best among the “lost sheep” of Israel. The evangelism of them by Philip therefore continues the work of Jesus in reaching out to the marginal and outcast among the people inviting them to a full participation in the restored people of God forming around the Prophet whom God raised up. (Sacra)

**8:5 Philip.** One of the Seven in the Jerusalem church (6:5), who now becomes an evangelist, proclaiming the Christ (Messiah); see also 21:8. Philip is an example of one of those who were scattered. (CSB)

*a city of Samaria.* Some manuscripts have “the city of Samaria,” a reference to the old capital Samaria, renamed Sebaste or Neapolis (modern Nablus). (CSB)

Never named. Sebaste, Sychar, and Shechem are likely candidates. Jesus had preached in the area (Jn 4) and was known to some of the Samaritan people (Jn 4:39–42). (TLSB)

**8:4-8** Philipp preached, taught, healed, and cast out demons. Christ had given the disciples authority to heal the sick and cast out demons. (Mt. 10:8) (TLSB)

**8:4-8** The ancient hatred between Jews and Samaritans underscores the corrosion of sin in the world. Christ, however, through His death and resurrection, makes all people one in Him (Eph 2:11–22). View people of every race and kind as precious to Jesus. His blood washes away all sin, and His Spirit makes us one. • Father, beat down Satan under our feet, and give us faithful laborers for Your harvest field. Through Your Word of salvation, give to all nations peace and harmony. Amen. (TLSB)

*Simon the Magician Believes*

**9 But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. 14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” 20 But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” 24 And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.” 25 Now when they had testified**

**and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.**

**8:9** *Simon*. In early Christian literature the “sorcerer” (Simon Magus) is described as the arch-heretic of the church and the “father” of Gnostic teaching. (CSB)

Such practices were common in the ancient world (cf 19:19). Archaeologists often find ritual incantations that involve spiritual powers, curse people, or cast spells (Hebrew term for “magician” means priest or shaman of superstitious practices rather than a priest of the Samaritan religion and temple of Mount Gerizim. (TLSB)

**8:10** *the power of God*. Simon claimed to be either God himself or, more likely, his chief representative. (CSB)

Simon cleverly deceived many into believing he had divinely imparted powers. (TLSB)

**8:12** *believed Philip* – The power of the Gospel overcame the empty show of Simon’s magic. (TLSB)

*baptized* – Under the old covenant, only males were circumcised (Gen. 17:10). But in the new covenant, Baptism consecrates both men and women in the one faith (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:11-14). (TLSB)

**8:13** *Simon himself believed and after being baptized*. † Some have questioned whether Simon’s faith was genuine. Since he was baptized, he had faith, as Luke states. But later, as it happens to other believers, he misunderstood the reception of special spiritual gifts, and his heart was “not right before God” (v. 21). We hope that Peter’s admonition (vv. 20–23) resulted in Simon’s repentance. (CSB)

The Lord’s miracles and the convincing power of the Gospel converted even Simon, who then accompanied Philip by heeding the teaching or supporting his work. (TLSB)

**8:14-17** The outward gift of the Spirit through the apostles’ prayers and laying on of hands served to unity the Church, binding together Jew and Samaritans who practiced different yet related religions. The two elements of Baptism are water and the Word (Eph 5:26; cf Mt. 29:19; John 3:5; Acts 2:38). Notice that Peter and John did not re-baptize those who had been baptized. The one Baptism conveyed the gifts of faith in Christ and eternal salvation which are worked by the Spirit through water and the Word. (TLSB)

**8:14** *had received the word of God*. † They believed the gospel proclaimed by Philip. (CSB)

*sent Peter and John*. The Jerusalem church assumed the responsibility of inspecting new evangelistic efforts and the communities of believers they produced (see 11:22). (CSB)

The Seven had not become the apostles’ peers when they were chosen for the work of distributing welfare. They worked under their supervision. (PBC)

**8:15-16** *Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them* – On Pentecost, a public demonstration of the Spirit’s approval was given. Luke records that this public demonstration appears as new groups were received into the one Church through the ministry of the apostles: Samaritans (ch. 8), Gentiles (ch. 10), and the disciples of John the Baptist (ch. 19). Note that in each case, these

groups knew God's Word and the promise of the Messiah from the OT. The preaching and gift of the Spirit confirm to them that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. (TLSB)

**8:16** *had not yet fallen on any of them.* Since the day of Pentecost, those who “belong to Christ” (Ro 8:9) also have the Holy Spirit. But the Spirit had not yet been made manifest to the Christians in Samaria by the usual signs. This deficiency was now graciously supplied (v. 17). (CSB)

**8:17** *laid their hands on them.* Cyril of Jerusalem: “Peter and John came down, and with prayer, and the laying on of hands, imparted the fellowship of the Holy Ghost” (NPNF 2 7:130). (TLSB)

*received the Holy Spirit* – Why did God delay the giving of the Spirit? God used this unique situation to demonstrate to the apostles and the Samaritans and to the whole church that the old barriers between Jews and non-Jews had been removed. The church was to be one church, not a Jewish church and a Samaritan church separately. The Lord demonstrated this to the apostles and accomplished this through the apostles as an object lesson on the unity of all believers. (PBC)

The Holy Spirit miraculously distributed His charismatic gifts to those Samaritan believers on whose heads the apostles laid their hands. They, too, could speak in tongues and perform miracles of healing (1 Cor. 12:7-13). “All these gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines” (1 Cor. 12:11). (LL)

**8:18** *he offered them money.* Simon had boasted of having great powers before and now he tried to buy this magical power he believed the apostles possessed. (CSB)

Simon assumed that his money and former persuasive ability would bring him new powers. (TLSB)

The Holy Spirit is God's gift, not to be bought or in any way earned. To imagine that a gift can be bought is to turn grace into a business transaction. (PBC)

**8:19** *power.* Gk *exousia*, “authority.” He sought to purchase apostolic authority and continue his influence among the Samaritans. (TLSB)

**8:20** Peter pronounces a curse on Simon to emphasize rejection of Simon's offer. (TLSB)

*the gift of God.* God commanded His people to provide for servants of the Word (Nu 18:24; Ac 28:10; 1Tm 5:17). However, the Gospel, and the blessings thereof, cannot be bought or sold. God's blessings and authority are gifts of God (Eph 2:8–10; 4:7–14). The Early Church Fathers attribute the beginning of heresies to Simon, though this is likely a simplification of the history. Irenaeus of Lyons: “This man, then, was glorified by many as if he were a god; and he taught that it was himself who appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit” (ANF 1:348). Simon became known as the “arch-heretic,” and the attempt to buy authority in the Church was named “simony.” (TLSB)

**8:21** The bitterness in Simon of which Peter spoke was not anger or hatred toward the apostles. It was the bitterness of unbelief which God will not stomach, which he will spit out. Luke does not say whether Simon repented or not. Second-century Christian writers referred to him as the father of all heresies. (PBC)

Without hesitation, Peter condemned this lust for power and warned Simon that he had sinned. (TLSB)

**8:22** *Repent ... and pray.* Peter's warning to Simon is similar to John the Baptist's warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt 3:2) and Jesus' warning to the Pharisees (Mt 12:25). (TLSB)

Peter urged Simon to have a genuine change of heart (repentance) concerning his attitude and to turn to the Lord for forgiveness. Praise the Lord, Peter's strong words worked. The Holy Spirit worked the change in Simon's heart, and he tasted the full joy and peace of Christ's forgiveness. And there was joy among the angels in heaven! (LL)

*if possible.* The matter is so serious Peter anticipates swift judgment (cf 5:1–5; Nu 12). (TLSB)

**8:23** *gall of bitterness.* Simon is enslaved to sin. Cf Rm 6:17. (TLSB)

**8:24** Unlike Ananias and Sapphira (5:1–5), Simon immediately asked Peter to intercede on his behalf and to remove the curse. Cf 1Jn 1:8–10. (TLSB)

**8:25** *preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages* – The apostles had begun to preach the gospel to non-Jews, using the opportunity of the return trip to Jerusalem to do so. God was keeping the promise he had made through Joel, the prophecy which Peter quoted on Pentecost. (Acts 2:17; --Joel 2:28) (PBC)

The apostles expanded Philip's work of preaching and teaching. (TLSB)

By having the apostles return to Jerusalem, he maintains contact with the center of the mission, but by having them preach to villages on the way, he shows that the apostles not only approved the Samaritan mission but also took an active role in it. (Sacra)

**8:9–25** The power of the Gospel, which reaches even the most unlikely people, is illustrated in the lives of the Samaritans. God and His grace cannot be bought. A person's life is transformed only by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word. Today, ask the Lord to bless your study of His Word. He will transform you and bless your service according to His gifts and good pleasure. • Father, all too often I have treated Your grace as something I could purchase or earn. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake, and let Your Holy Spirit work mightily in my life, that I might imitate Philip and proclaim Your Word of life. Amen. (TLSB)

*Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch*

**26** Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south[d] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. **27** And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship **28** and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. **29** And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” **30** So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” **31** And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

**“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.**

**8:26-40** The Gospel is spreading—from Jerusalem to Samaria to Africa (through the Ethiopian), and then, in subsequent chapters, to Saul (and we know what happens through him!) and Cornelius. From Samaritan to persecutor to centurion to eunuch, the Gospel spreads not only to nations but also to people who previously had been shut out of a place among God’s people. The death and resurrection of Christ means that all barriers to a life with God are broken down. Forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and a share of his Spirit are God’s gifts to everyone. “What is to prevent my being baptized?” asks the eunuch (v 36 RSV). Nothing at all! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

Philip had been elected a deacon in Acts 6. In 8:4–25, Philip preaches Christ in a Samaritan city, having left Jerusalem as a result of persecution, no longer being needed there. As a result, one Samaritan, Simon the Sorcerer, believes and is baptized by Philip. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

The various conversion accounts that Luke reports in Acts show the Gospel’s widening scope, as anticipated by Jesus in 1:8. After taking the Gospel to the Samaritans, Philip delivers it to an Ethiopian eunuch. As with the Samaritans, the Ethiopian is one still connected to Israel, for he is returning from worship in Jerusalem. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:26-29** The evangelism effort is God’s idea. The church is a bit slow to grasp the implications of the Gospel, and God is busy in rather direct ways to get his servants on the right track—or, to be more specific, on the right road. The Ethiopian (ancient usage) is God’s choice. As a eunuch, he would have been a second-class citizen, even as a proselyte (Deut 23:1). But as an educated man, an official of the Candace (a title, not a name), he must have wondered about his status and the tension between the Torah and Isaiah 56. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**8:26** *an angel of the Lord*. Or, “uninhabited.” The Lord moves Philip from the exciting, expanding work in Samaria to a place with no people. (TLSB)

*go toward the south – mesēmbrian*. In the LXX it is translated both as “noon” and as “south.” If it means “noon,” this unlikely time to depart could have been part of God’s plan to arrive at the right moment to intercept the Ethiopian. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

*from Jerusalem to Gaza*. A distance of about 50 miles. (CSB)

Does *erēmos*, “desert,” modify “road” or “Gaza”? The road is not deserted until after Gaza. Commentators point to two cities, an old and a new. Old Gaza was destroyed by Alexander and

deserted. New Gaza, according to Josephus, was a Hellenistic town along the coast destroyed in AD 66. (See Yehudah Rapuano, “Did Philip Baptize the Eunuch at Ein Yael?” *Biblical Archeology Review* 16, no. 6 [November–December 1990], 45–49, for some excellent pictures of possible baptismal sites and a route map.) It matters little. The point is that Philip was being directed to what looked like an unlikely spot to preach. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:27** *rose and went* - The NIV’s translation might imply the two were traveling in opposite directions. The Greek says nothing about a meeting. Most likely, Philip caught up with the man. This was not a hard thing to do, considering that the eunuch’s vehicle had to be traveling slowly enough for him to be reading. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

*an Ethiopian.* Ethiopia corresponded in this period to Nubia, from the upper Nile region at the first cataract (Aswan) to Khartoum. (CSB)

OT “Cushite,” known to Israelites through contacts with Egypt and Sheba. Judeans fled into Egypt during the Babylonian exile and settled on the island of Elephantine in Upper Egypt (near modern Aswan). They likely spread the faith southward into Nubia (Sudan) and Ethiopia. The Falasha religion of Ethiopia likely had ancient Jewish roots. (TLSB)

The Ethiopian was not from the area we know as Ethiopia today. “Ethiopian” simple means that he was a black man. He was from the kingdom of Nubia, which was located on the upper Nile River between Aswan (in modern Egypt) and Khartoum (in the Sudan). (PBC)

*eunuch* – A eunuch could not be a full-fledged covert to the faith of Israel (see Deuteronomy 23:1), but this man was a God-fearing Gentile believer. (PBC)

It was not uncommon for castrated males to hold positions of importance in oriental courts. It seems certain that Luke intends us to see this man as sexually mutilated. Such a condition precluded full participation in the assembly. The eunuch may be marginal within the Pharisaic definition of the people of God, but he is a mighty person in his own land (over all the queen’s treasury!). His chariot is capacious enough for himself and the scrolls and a guest. He speaks elegant Greek. He has a driver. Whoever the “historical Ethiopian” might have been, therefore, Luke clearly wants his readers to see him as a part of the “ingathering of the scattered people” of Israel. (Sacra)

*Candace.* The traditional title of the queen mother, responsible for performing the secular duties of the reigning king—who was thought to be too sacred for such activities. (CSB)

Likely Amantitere (c AD 25–41; called Kandake in inscriptions), who ruled at Meroë and is mentioned by Roman authors. (TLSB)

Candace: not a name, but a title like Pharaoh, given to the queen mother, who was the real head of state. Her husband, the king, was unimportant because the ruling king, her son, was considered the son of the Sun. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

*had come to Jerusalem to worship.* If not a full-fledged proselyte (Dt 23:1), the Ethiopian was a Gentile God-fearer. (CSB)

A convert to Judaism likely returning from an annual festival. Cf Ex 34:23. (TLSB)



*proskunēsōn* is a future active participle indicating purpose: “to worship.” The Ethiopian was one of the so-called “God-fearers,” who was attracted to Israel’s God and worshiped him but had not become a Jew by circumcision. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:28** *reading ... Isaiah.* A man of considerable means (affording a large scroll) and education. (TLSB)

Most likely the Ethiopian was reading from the Septuagint, not only because Luke quotes it in the following verses, but because he wouldn’t have had access to Hebrew scrolls nor would he have been able to understand the Hebrew language. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:29** *join this chariot.* The Spirit may have given Philip the swiftness to catch the chariot (cf 1Ki 18:46), or the Ethiopian travelers may have been resting. (TLSB)

Philip did not choose to approach the chariot under his own intuition. The Spirit was guiding the entire meeting. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:30-33** Philip seizes the moment. One could hardly have asked for a more appropriate biblical text for the two men’s consideration. It helps that the eunuch is keen to understand the message of the Word. Remember, however, the role his own self-interest has played. He has a personal reason to want to understand; the Law is driving him to the cross (something he doesn’t understand quite yet). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

The quotation is direct from the LXX, Is 53:7–8. It is remarkable that Isaiah 52–53 appears so sparingly in the New Testament in connection with Jesus. This is the first explicit identification of the Servant with Jesus in Acts. Yet the messianic connection was abandoned by Jews, so much so that this section of Isaiah was omitted from their public reading, though the sections before and after were read. No doubt this was because the Christians had applied it to Jesus successfully. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:30** *heard the man reading.* It was customary practice to read aloud. (CSB)

In ancient times, people typically read aloud. Luther: “It pleased God not to give the Spirit without the Word.... He could, of course, do this apart from the Word; but He does not want to do it that way” (WLS § 2050). (TLSB)

Ancient manuscripts were written in capital letters with no spacing or punctuation between words and sentences. One had to read out loud, sounding out the words. (Burgland)

*Isaiah* – He did something unprecedented – he bought a scroll of Scripture. Remember, there were no bookstores with scrolls just lying around to purchase. Also remember who he was – a black man and a eunuch. The purchase of this scroll must have cost him a pretty penny! But, more important, note the hand of God at work, for it was surely the Lord’s providence that had placed Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, into this searching man’s hands and caused him to be reading the choicest part of the book when Philip caught up to him. (LL)

**8:31** *unless someone guides me.* The Ethiopian eagerly acknowledged that he did not understand the prophet. Luth: “We should hear God’s Word with fear and study in it with humility; we should not pounce upon it with our own notions of what is right” (WLS § 4758). Contrast the

Ethiopian's eager listening with the arrogance of the synagogue of the Freedmen (6:9–14). (TLSB)

*odēgēsēi*. The NIV's "explains," while adequate, misses wonderful connections to the travel imagery and the work of the Spirit that Jesus promises in Jn 16:13, better caught by "guide" or "lead." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:32-33** Prophecy regarding Jesus' suffering and death for the sins of the world. (TLSB)

**8:34** *whom...prophet this about ... ?* Beginning with Isa 53 (see v. 35), Philip may have identified the suffering servant with the Davidic Messiah of Isa 11 or with the Son of Man (Da 7:13). (CSB)

Classic questions for interpreters of Is 53. (TLSB)

The eunuch understands the meaning of the passage, but does not know the identity of the Servant (the "fourth song" in Isaiah's prophecy). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

The answer one gives to this question is like the answer one gives to Jesus' "Who do you say the Son of Man is?" (see Mt 16:13–16). Some Jews believed that the Servant Messiah was being described; others believed Israel was meant. Philip uses the passage as the starting point to tell the eunuch the Good News about Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:35** Philip demonstrated that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. Cf Mt 3:15. (TLSB)

*good news*. The way of salvation through Jesus Christ. (CSB)

**8:36** Philip's testimony about Christ likely included accounts of Baptism. Luther: "Whoever is baptized in Christ is baptized through His suffering and blood, or, to state it more clearly, through Baptism he is bathed in the blood of Christ and is cleansed from sins" (WLS § 127). Cf Is 56:3–4. (TLSB)

*they came to some water*. There were several possibilities: a brook in the Valley of Elah (which David crossed to meet Goliath, 1Sa 17:40); the Wadi el-Hasi just north of Gaza; water from a spring or one of the many pools in the area. (CSB)

Understanding what God has done for him in Christ, the eunuch is determined to receive the gifts of God. There is an urgency to the proclamation and promise of salvation that will admit no delay. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

As Luke describes the event, Philip's words make so much sense and are so obviously true that the eunuch is ready to be baptized. Had Philip been a Judaizer, he would have had an answer to the official's question, "What prevents me from being baptized?" (ESV). First, you are not a Hebrew; second, you are a eunuch. When the Ethiopian has been baptized, the promise of God in Is 56:5 concerning eunuchs comes to pass: "I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off." Surely the days of which Isaiah spoke have now come! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

**8:38** As a convert to Judaism, the Ethiopian was already well-instructed in biblical teaching. Therefore, Philip did not hesitate to baptize him. (TLSB)

**8:39** *the eunuch saw him no more* – The eunuch was no longer excluded from full-fellowship with the people of God. Another non-Jew was added to the company of believers. We do not know from Scripture or from history whether other believers were gathered by his testimony to the Savior after he returned home. (PBC)

The Lord provided both the resources and means to carry out the mission. (TLSB)

*rejoicing.* Joy is associated with salvation in Acts. (CSB)

The message of salvation through Christ goes out to all people, bringing forgiveness and blessing (Rm 1:5, 16). Ethiopian Christians trace their beginning to this man, though Ethiopian kings did not officially adopt Christianity until c AD 350. (TLSB)

The push toward mission, from God's perspective, continues. Philip is a means to the greater end of establishing relationships between God and people. His job with the Ethiopian is done, and he is off, in an aura of mystery and gravity, to another task. The Ethiopian seems not to miss him much; he is overwhelmed with happiness. In the resolution of the tension in his own life, he has in his Baptism a new life. No wonder there is rejoicing! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

**8:40** *Azotus.* OT Ashdod (see 1Sa 5:1), one of the five Philistine cities. It was about 19 miles from Gaza and 60 miles from Caesarea. (CSB)

Identified with Ashdod. One of five chief cities of Philistia, between Gaza and Joppa, where Jews and Gentiles likely dwelt side by side. (TLSB)

*Caesarea.* Rebuilt by Herod and with an excellent harbor, it served as the headquarters of the Roman procurators. The account leaves Philip in Caesarea at this time; his next appearance is 20 years later, and he is still located in the same place (21:8). (CSB)

**8:26–40** God leads Philip to bear witness to and baptize an important official from Ethiopia, ensuring that Jews in Africa and also Ethiopians would likewise receive the Gospel. The Holy Spirit brings the eunuch to faith through the Word and Baptism. Today, rejoice in the Word and Baptism you have received, through which the Holy Spirit continues to work in your life. •Father, through Your Holy Spirit, rekindle my desire to read and hear Your Word, acknowledge Your gifts in Baptism, and respond with joy and care for others. Amen. (TLSB)