

# THE KINGDOM SPREADS TO AFRICA

Acts 8:26-40 (ESV)

God redeemed the persecution of the Jerusalem Church by bringing salvation, healing and joy to the city and territory of Samaria. God accomplished this through Deacon Philip and then used Philip to spread the Kingdom to Africa!

Let's pick up the story in Acts 8:26.

## Acts 8:26-29 Philip Meets an Ethiopian Official

God sent Philip to make contact with an Ethiopian official returning from Jerusalem where he had been worshipping God at the Temple. The **Ethiopia** referred to here, (as in Is. 18:1; Jer. 13:23; Ezek. 30:4, 5, 9,) is what is called *Upper Ethiopia or Habesh*. It is not the same territory as modern-day Ethiopia. In the first century AD, this Ethiopia included parts of southern Egypt, eastern Sudan and Eritrea.<sup>1</sup> The point is that through this Ethiopian official, the kingdom of God spread to the African continent! This gentleman served as head of the Federal Treasury for Queen Candace of Ethiopia. The name *Candace* seems to have been a general designation for Ethiopian queens, much like the name Pharaoh was for Egyptian kings and Caesar for Roman emperors.<sup>2</sup>

This gentleman was reading from Isaiah 53 when Philip came to his chariot – probably more like a covered wagon designed for long trips.

## Acts 8:30-35 The Ethiopian Asks for Help

Isaiah 53 is one of the most important passages in all of the Old Testament. Isaiah 53 clearly predicts the death and resurrection of Messiah. When you read it, you feel like you're reading what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. For this reason, many Jewish synagogues the world over refuse to read or teach Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53 should be highlighted in your Bible.

It must have been pure joy for Philip to share the story of Jesus of Nazareth Who fulfilled Isaiah 53 in every detail. The gentleman believed and when they came to a body of water, expressed his desire to be water baptized.

## Acts 8:36-40 The First African Believer!

To our knowledge, this is the first African believer. As he returned to Ethiopia, he took the story of Jesus of Nazareth with him.

In the meantime, God sent Philip to the coast where he continued to evangelize as he traveled north, eventually reaching Caesarea.

From this episode, we discover that early on, the gospel made its way to Africa. As Jesus said, His followers will be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. There are people groups in the

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<sup>1</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

world today who have yet to hear the story of Jesus of Nazareth. It remains God's desire that these peoples be reached. We want to be used of God to reach unreached or underreached people groups by being a sending church. To be a sending church we must be a giving church. We are committed to our missionaries having 100% of the financial support they need to be successful on the field. I hope you, too, want your church to be a sending church. If so, will you prayerfully take a fresh look at your financial giving? At this point, we are \$47k behind in our giving to support our budget which includes the support of our missionaries. Please pray God would enable us to continue to give generously that we might continue to be a sending church.

From this episode, we experience one of the most powerful types of evidence that the Bible is inspired by the God the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 53 was written 6-7 centuries before Jesus of Nazareth lived, yet it reads like a report of what happened to Jesus at the hands of Israel's rulers. The specific details of the prophecy make it impossible to be of human origin – his silence, his being pierced, his being buried with the rich, his coming back from the dead. When we read the Bible, we are reading God's revelation to us inspired by the Holy Spirit. Of this we can be very confident.

And the heart of God's revelation is Jesus of Nazareth, fully God fully man, crucified, buried, resurrected and coming again!

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**Voice of the Martyrs Needs for August:**

Nerf Balls / Dental Floss / Gauze for Bandaging