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## NEW ZEALAND BIBLE CLASSES

### PREACHING THE RISEN CHRIST

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #3: Philip and the Eunuch

Reading: Acts 8:26-40

So Acts 8 this evening, and as our chairman has said, reading from verse 26 to the end, which you will obviously have worked out, is the story of Philip the evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch. Now let's just remind ourselves again, why we're sitting at the tables, because I've got a lot of stuff to talk about tonight, you need to have your pencils at the ready, ready to fly, because we're going to try and get some stuff down in our margins. Remember what we've said before, over the years we hear many interesting and perhaps useful things in terms of bible study, but if we don't do something intelligently about it now, it's likely that you'll never remember most of those things. In fact, many of you will know that the average statistic is, that after 24 hours of any study that you've heard, only 20% retention remains, which means, unless you take some notes tonight, you're going to forget 80% of everything I tell you this evening. That's a distressing statistic, I would like to see you beat the odds on that, by having your pencils ready.

Well, we're going to deal again this evening then, with Philip the evangelist, and just a note about that, by the way, before we move on into the record proper this evening, now where was he called Philip the evangelist? Well, it wasn't in this chapter, but it's in the 21st chapter and the 8th verse, he's known as Philip the evangelist, and what's interesting about that, you might just like to take a note of this, the word 'evangelist' means literally, Philip the 'preacher' (2099), and what's interesting is that same word that's used for the 'evangelist' in chapter 21, is the key word in Acts 8. So now, if you've got a coloured pencil, this would be a good thing to colour in, just a little dash of colour so we can highlight that word in the Acts of the apostles and chapter 8, because it is the key word, and it marks the role of Philip out. So here it is, it's the word 'preaching' found in verse 4, 'they went everywhere **preaching** the Word' and among those who went preaching, of course, was Philip. It's the word in verse 12, 'when they believed Philip **preaching** the things'; it's the word '**preached**' in verse 25, 'and preached the gospel'; it's the word '**preached**' in verse 35, when it says, 'that Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and **preached** unto him Jesus (he evangelized unto him Jesus); and it's the word found in verse 40, 'Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he **preached** (evangelized) in all the cities'. So in Acts 21 verse 8 it says he's called Philip the evangelist, well, that's the key word that's used to describe Philip's

labours in this chapter. And just that little spot of colour would highlight that for us, that he is properly called by that name because that truly was the mission of this man.

Well, here's his next work of evangelizing and starting from the 26th verse, we take up the record tonight. It says there, that 'the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza', now the first interesting thing about verse 26, is that here was a specific instruction from the angel of the Lord, and clearly the idea behind this is, that it authenticated what was being done here. It wasn't that this happened through some chance or coincidence, Philip was going to do what he did here under the express commandment of God, as it were! In fact, it's possible that the others in Jerusalem, to where they had returned, perhaps knew of this same angelic appearance to Philip. So he's told now specifically, he's separated out for this work, 'arise and go toward the south'.

Now do you see the word 'south' in verse 26, the word 'south' is normally translated in the Septuagint translation of the New Testament, as '**noon**' noonday (3314) and the reason why it's translated 'south' here is because, in the Middle-East in the region of Palestine, at noonday the sun was due south. So that the Greek word came to represent 'noon' or the 'south' which was the direction of the sun at that time. So we could take it both ways, so we could say that he was instructed to go south, but it may also be taken that he was instructed to head off on this particular journey at noonday. What's interesting about that is this, that we know from other scriptural records that at noonday they didn't travel, because it was the hottest part of the day. The roads were empty at noonday, no one travelled when the sun was at its zenith in those lands, if they could possibly avoid it! Yet Philip was asked to actually go travelling, to have a rendezvous with someone, at the very time when there would be no one on the road, noonday. Yet as a mark of his faith, when he's asked to do that, he obviously responds immediately, 'arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza which is desert'. Now, by the way, you'll see that phrase at the end which is rather unusual 'unto Gaza which is desert', and it should be read that way, because when it says 'unto Gaza which is desert', what the Acts of the apostles is telling us now, is that this was **old Gaza**, this was ancient Gaza as opposed to **new Gaza**.

Well, let me tell you a little bit about Gaza: Gaza was a main trading city on the route down to Egypt. It flourished because everything that went to Egypt passed down through the city of Gaza, so it was on the main highway south. In fact, what happened was, Alexander the Great came and laid siege against Gaza (but he never destroyed it) but later on in BC.93, it was wiped out by Alexander Jannaeus who was, of course, one of the Maccabees and he wiped the city out. In fact, later on in BC.57 about 40 years later, it was rebuilt by a man called Gabinius, but he didn't build it in the same spot. He moved the city about 2 miles out closer to the sea, and what that left was old Gaza about 2 miles inland, as simply a deserted ruin. It was known from that time forth as 'Gaza of the desert', that is, deserted Gaza, empty Gaza, desolate Gaza, Gaza of the

wilderness to differentiate it from the real new Gaza which was where everyone actually lived. So where has Philip been asked to go? He's been asked to go in the middle of the day when no one travels, down to an empty ruin in the middle of nowhere, to Gaza which is of the desert.

Now why would you go there? Well, verse 27 says, 'he arose and went', so I suppose there's a tremendous lesson there, isn't there? that when he received instruction in the truth, he didn't hesitate but simply got on with the job and he went where he was asked to go straightaway; no doubts, no arguments, no 'why would I be going there?' He arose and went: **and behold**, says verse 27, and you can almost imagine the note of surprise, because right out there in the middle of the wilderness, where no one should be, he bumped into a person. Well, well, well, it's almost as if this was providentially arranged, and of course, it was, that was the whole point! It was organized by the Spirit that this meeting should take place. So it says, 'he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians'. Now the word 'Candace' here was an hereditary title for some female rulers, who ruled over the kingdom of Cush from the city of Meroe. So it was a famous kingdom that was in the region of what we'd call Sudan today, and Candace was the hereditary title of these women rulers for many generations. They were quite famous, they were famous queens, they went to battle, they warred against other nations and this man was an eunuch under one of these queens that took it as a hereditary title. We're told about these queens through a number of historical writers including Pliny and Dio Cassius, who both record the details of these queens, who ruled in the kingdom of Cush. So this man was a man of Ethiopia, he was a Cushite but he was also an eunuch of great authority, in fact, he had charge of all her treasure; he was the treasurer of the kingdom. Now that's interesting because normally a man of this authority and of this wealth and of this responsibility, well, he'd hardly be interested in the truth, and yet he'd come to Jerusalem for to worship. So here was a man who despite his authority and despite his power, was interested in spiritual things, enough to take him from the land of Africa to Jerusalem in order that he might strive to worship the God of Israel in that particular place!

The word 'eunuch' is only found in 2 places in the New Testament, and this is one of them. The other place (and we won't look it up) but you might just like to take a note of it; and I'm going to read it out to you, anyway, is Matthew 19 verse 12, and what the Lord says in Matthew 19 verse 12 is this, 'For there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb, and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake'. Now we presume that the eunuch of Ethiopia of Acts 8 was one of the second sort, although we can't be absolutely sure; he was made a eunuch of men because that was the custom of the day, that a male man in authority of the kingdom, would be made a eunuch and then would be put in charge of the responsibilities of the kingdom. But as a result of that, of course, family life was permanently denied to this particular person; they could never bare children, they could never, in fact, have a family. Well, this man, this unusual man, but a man with great

responsibility, had gone to Jerusalem, say the record, in order that he might worship.

He was returning, says verse 28, and he was sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah'. Now before we move on, do you notice that in verse 30, '**he heard him read**', so when it says in verse 28 that the man was reading Isaiah the prophet, verse 30 tells us, how did he do his readings? Why, out loud! So here's one of the great principles of bible study, if you want to study the bible, do your readings out loud, it's the very best way to do study, and always has been. The Ethiopian eunuch did it that way, as a result of that, Philip heard him reading the text. I can just imagine Philip's reaction when he ran up to the chariot because, of course, he would hear the words, and I think the moment Philip heard the words, he knew instantly what the prophecy was that the Ethiopian eunuch was considering at the time. So now, Phillip says to him in the 30th verse, 'Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, how can I except some man should guide me; and he desired Philip to come up and sit with him'. So in the middle of the desert, right out in the middle of nowhere, two men sat in a chariot and talked about the truth, and Philip knew that he had obviously been guided to that place to meet this man, to talk about the principles of the truth on this occasion.

By the way, do you notice the humility of the Ethiopian eunuch because here's a man of great authority yet in verse 31, 'How can I understand except some man should guide me; and he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him', that he would join him in the chariot and expound the scriptures to him. So we have a meeting between these two men!

Now verse 32 says, 'the place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not his mouth: In His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth'. Now if I said to you, where is that taken from? you would correctly tell me that it's from Isaiah 53 verses 7 and 8 because the margin tells you that! By the way, if you haven't got that coloured in, that's the next thing we should do because the chapter that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading from was Isaiah 53.

Now can you imagine Philip thinking now, 'if ever there was a scripture about the suffering servant that he could use to preach the truth to teach this man about, I mean, what a classic chapter for this man to be reading? He's reading the most famous prophecy in the Old Testament about the suffering of Christ; but by the way, he isn't just reading that! because we know from looking at verse 33 carefully, that **he's not reading** from the Hebrew version. He's reading from the Greek version, this man was reading from a scroll of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament; we know that because in verse 33, when it says at the end of the verse, 'His life is taken from the earth', that doesn't come from the Hebrew, that comes from the Greek version of Isaiah 53. So he's reading a Septuagint copy, a Greek copy, and what's interesting

about that phrase, verse 33, 'His life is taken from the earth', I would think the Ethiopian eunuch would have thought, 'what does that mean? does that mean that he's ascended into heaven? His life is taken from the earth, was this a prophecy of the ascension of a person into heaven or from the earth? Well, that's going to be part of the puzzle, part of the riddle that Philip is going to explain to this man. So he's reading from Isaiah 53!

Well, it's interesting, let's just look at a couple of things then. In verse 32, he makes reference to the lamb, the lamb dumb before his shearer. Now the lamb as a symbol, is only found in 3 places in the New Testament: here's one of them, so let's have a look at the other two! The first one is John 1, and just notice the overtones here that are to be found in the gospel of John 1. The place of the scripture he read was this, 'He was led like a lamb dumb before his shearer', well here are the other two references to a lamb in the New Testament; the first one, of course, is John 1 verse 29, it says there, 'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith 'behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'. Now the first thing to notice, by the way, do you see the margin for the word 'taketh away' in John 1 verse 29, what does it say in the margin? it says '**beareth away**', and refers us to, why! Isaiah 53 verse 11. So one of the passages that John Baptist had in mind when he mentioned this is John 1 verse 29; was it the same prophecy that Philip is about to expound to the Ethiopian eunuch; 'behold the Lamb (286) which taketh away the sin of the world'? Now some of you might know this, but it's a terribly interesting point if you don't, and that's this, do you know that under the Law of Moses, there was a whole schedule of offerings for sin; and there was a lamb, there was a lamb that the Law of Moses provided as a sin offering, but it was a female lamb. The one offering that the Law of Moses never provided for was a male lamb of the flock for sin. Yet the one of John 1 verse 29, is the man who is given as the lamb of God which was the one offering the Law of Moses could never provide; and what will that offering do? it will **take away** the sin, not just of the Jews but of the **world**, says John. The sins of the world, now the part of the reality of that is about to be seen in Acts 8, where the preaching of the 'slain Lamb' is now about to be given to a man who's not a Jew; he a man of the world, he's a man of the rest of the world, and the Lamb of God which was able to take away the sins of **everyone**, is now going to be preached to the Ethiopian eunuch, in fulfilment really of the words of John, 'behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'.

Now here's the other reference in the New Testament to the lamb, and it's in 1 Peter, of course, 1 Peter 1 verses 18 to 20, 'Forasmuch as you know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb (286) without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you'. So here then, is a lamb as well that's going to be offered, and by the way, the terms of verse 19 'a lamb without blemish and without spot', reminds us and takes us back, not to Isaiah 53 on this occasion, but why! Exodus 12, and this is the Passover lamb. This is a description of the Passover lamb that had to be without blemish and without spot, so this one who's spoken of in 1 Peter, to the blood of Christ, is the lamb by which **our sins might be**

**passed over**, and He's the lamb which taketh away the sin of the world. Now here's the three great references to the lamb in the New Testament, in this particular use of the word.

Ah, I hoped you'd ask that question! It's a different word altogether for the word 'lamb' in the book of Revelation. In fact, the word 'lamb' in the book of Revelation literally means 'a lambkin' (721) in other words, a little wee lamb; and yet what's remarkable in the book of Revelation is that that lamb is the hero of the whole book of Revelation. It's actually a different word, so these are the three references for the normal word for 'lamb' found in the New Testament record; John 1, Acts 8 and 1 Peter 1. Now let's go back to Acts 8 then, and make a note about this, it's all terribly interesting but what are we going to stick in our margins. So let's get back to some bible marking then: what will we put against verse 32 where it says, 'like a lamb dumb before his shearer?' I think what we ought to put in margins is something like this, that the lamb has sacrificial overtones. That the reference to the lamb is a reference to the principle of sacrifice, because the two other occasions where we find this is John 1 verse 29 and 1 Peter 1, **the lamb is in the context of sacrifice for sin**, isn't it? So this is the overtone then of the story of the lamb that we find in Acts 8 here and verse 32; what a perfect place and what a perfect theme for Philip to begin his exposition on the atoning work of Christ, but the lamb of Isaiah 53.

Now let me show you something else interesting! So you'll notice this, and by the way, this is all careful reading but there's something else I want you to mark in as well in the next verse. So let's read from verse 32 now and imagine that you're the Ethiopian eunuch: 'The place of the scripture which he read was this, 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth: In His humiliation His judgment was taken away; and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, verse 34, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?' Now did you notice what the Ethiopian eunuch didn't say? b&s, he never said, what is the chapter all about? he didn't say, what is all this about? He said, **who is it all about?** and there was a particular reason why he wanted to know **'who'** is was all about? of **whom** speaketh the prophet? He wanted to know the man of Isaiah 53! Now why did he want to know that? Well, he wanted to know it because of what verse 33 says, that it says of this man, the man of the prophecy, in his humiliation his judgment was taken away and who **shall declare his generation?**' meaning who will ever declare or talk about the family of this man? The moment the eunuch read those words, he felt a kinship because here was a man who had no generation, no family that could declare him, and he said, 'that's me!' I'm a eunuch, I can never have a family, what's this prophecy about? no, he says, 'who's this prophecy about?'

So this is what happened, I believe, he read that and he said in verse 34, 'The eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, **of whom** speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?' and Philip it says, 'opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus'. I can just see Philip taking a great big breath

and away he went! He would say, 'give me that scroll', and he'd take the scroll out of the man's hand and he would say, 'you just have a look at this!' So what we're going to do now is I'm going to show you what I think Philip did; of course, we can't prove it, but you see what it says, 'he began at the same scripture and preached Jesus unto him'. Now just come back to Isaiah 53 now and let's turn up the scroll that the eunuch was reading, and let's work our way through the scroll. We're just going to work our way part way through because I'm going to come back to it later on; so in case anyone thinks I've missed an important point, please don't, because I haven't!

So in Isaiah, we know where he was reading from, he's reading from Isaiah 53, but that story, that part of the scroll of Isaiah begins in chapter 52 verse 13. This is where the story of the servant begins, and you can just imagine Philip preaching these words to the Ethiopian eunuch. He would start by saying, 'well, firstly, it is a prophecy about a real man; and before I tell you about this man, he says, I want you to know about the end of the man. The end of the man is in the beginning of the prophecy and it says this in verse 13, 'Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider'. So Philip would make the point that firstly, the prophecy was about a real man, that the ultimate destiny of this man was to be **lifted up and exalted and to be very high**, because of the success of his labours which would involve, verse 15, many nations. Not just Jews, many nations including Gentiles of whom the Ethiopian eunuch was one!

Then he'd take him through the particular section that the eunuch was reading with such tremendous interest himself and that was the 8th verse of chapter 53, 'He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken'. It would be Philip's privilege to show him how that Christ was the one who made Himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heavens sake; and how He was cut off in the flower of His manhood, having never had a family, having never married, having never raised children, with no generation to declare Him! So there was a kinship of spirit between the man of this prophecy and the Ethiopian eunuch who was now reading this story with such desperate interest. Then Philip would say, 'do you want to see the story of that man?' Verse 10, 'it all happened because of God's purpose to bruise Him; God put Him to grief: God made His soul an offering for sin, but as a result of that, He saw His seed; He prolonged His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many, for He will bear their iniquities.' So Philip would be able to explain to the eunuch that the man who had no family to declare Him in verse 8, yet wondrously had a multitudinous seed in verse 10. But that those children that belong to this man, were begotten by a principle entirely spiritual rather than flesh and blood. That this man **did** have a family but that it was born by means of the power of the Word operating in their lives, rather than through the principles of natural procreation; and that he, the

eunuch could also be part of that family, if he wanted to be, if he wanted to participate in the benefits of the labours of that servant'.

Then he would say, 'Look at this!' and he'd roll the scroll just a little further until chapter 54 verse 1 turned up, and he'd say, 'look, 'Sing O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Yahweh. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles', and so here was the promise of a whole divine family now, born by spiritual principles, and although he was a Gentile, he could be part of that promise. He could be part of that divine family that was spoken of in this particular chapter.

Then Philip would say, 'Do you want to know a little bit more about those children?' and he'd roll the scroll on just a little further, and he'd take verse 11 of Isaiah 54. He'd say, 'now look, O thou afflicted (this is a promise to Jerusalem, he says, where you've just been) O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of Yahweh; and great shall be the peace of thy children'. Here is the promise to Jerusalem that she was going to beget offspring from all sides who would be counted as her family but born not according to the natural principle of the flesh but the operation of the power of God's word in their lives; and that he, the eunuch, could be part of that promise if he wanted to be involved.

Then Philip would say, 'and all you've got to do is this! and he'd roll the scroll a little further on and he'd come to Isaiah 55 and verse 3 and it would say there, 'Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him (that man) for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of Yahweh thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel', and Philip would be able to proclaim to the eunuch, the fact that this hope, the hope of being involved in these things, was extended to other nations and to other peoples including himself.

Now come back to Acts 8, and I think, implicit in the unrolling of the scroll, he would be able to preach the sacrifice of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, all out of that story in Isaiah 53 and the begetting of a spiritual family that was involved. So when it says in verse 35, Philip took a big breath and opened his mouth and '**began at that scripture**' and preached unto him Jesus, I can just see that happening. I can just see him unrolling that scroll, point after point just coming out of those chapters, and it's as if Philip's talk was all laid out from there, it just was all laid out in the book, and all he did was read the scroll. You can imagine the eunuch's eyes just growing wider and wider and wider, as he read that story with Philip



and had it explained to him.

By the way, before I mention verse 36, do you know what the Jews said about Isaiah 53? You see, the Christians, the believers of the New Testament had, of course, understood that Isaiah 53 was a prophecy of Christ and His suffering.; and the Jews didn't like that, of course, it came too close to the bone for them. There was too much that was fulfilled in the circumstances of the death of Christ and the mysterious disappearance of the body, that marched a little too closely to Isaiah 53 for the liking of the Jews. So they abandoned the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 and they said 'it belongs to Israel', it's a prophecy of the nation! that Isaiah 53 is the suffering of the nation, and not only did they apply the prophecy to the whole nation rather than to one man, but they took that whole section of scripture Isaiah 52 verse 13 to 53 verse 12, and they excluded it from the haftarah. Now the haftarah was the public readings that the Jews had from the prophets, they chopped that whole bit out! They said, 'we won't read that anymore!' The Jews actually cut that whole section out of their readings of the prophet; they were desperately uneasy about Isaiah 53. Although they tried to make it apply as a prophecy to the nation, they knew deep down, that it was the prophecy of a particular man and they didn't like to think who that man might be, who this sacrificial lamb might be!

Verse 36 says, '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?' Now you know, a couple of interesting things about this, one is, and we can't prove this, of course, but one is, Judges 1 verse 16 which says, 'that in this southern region, this southern region was a land that was given to Caleb's daughter'. Now I don't know if you remember the record but it was given to Caleb's daughter as a dowry; the lands of the south, the very region where Philip is at the time, travelling in the chariot. Do you know what's interesting about the dowry of the southern lands that were given to Caleb's daughter, in Judges 1? They were notable for this, that they had springs of water attached to them, which is what made them so useful, which is what made the land so valuable; imagine that the water which they came across in Acts 8 was one of the springs given to Achsah; how appropriate that would be, because Caleb was a Gentile and in the territory awarded to a Gentile and granted to his daughter, that was filled with springs of water, another Gentile was about to be baptized in. We can't prove that, it's just an interesting idea! But here's another one!

You know in Acts 8 verse 36 when the eunuch says, 'what doth hinder me to be baptized?' I think he knew that the Law forbade eunuchs to enter the congregation! Deuteronomy 23 verse 1. No eunuch was ever allowed to enter the congregation of Israel, and so the eunuch having heard this wonderful message of hope and joy concerning the work of the man of Isaiah 53 and how out of His labours a whole spiritual family would be born; I think he said to Philip, 'is there anything like Deuteronomy 23 that might stop me from being involved in this promise?' And do you know what I think Philip's answer would have been? I think Philip would have said, 'just give me that scroll again, one more time!' and he would have taken him back to the

scroll and would have rolled it on just a little further (so let's just go back to the scroll, b&s, because we rolled it from chapter 52 to chapter 53, to chapter 54, to chapter 55), but when the eunuch said to Philip, 'doth anything hinder me to be baptized?' 'can I really be part of this?' I think Philip would have taken the scroll and rolled it just one more time and he would have showed him this reference. Oh, can you imagine the eunuch's response to this?: Isaiah 56 and verse 3, 'Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to Yahweh, speak saying, Yahweh hath utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith Yahweh unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths (what was he doing in Jerusalem?) and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off'. Oh yes, says Philip, nothing hinders you to be baptized!' Can you imagine the joy of Philip unrolling that part of the scroll? and can you imagine how the eunuch would have felt, when he heard the promise of Isaiah 56? It's almost as if it had been written especially for him.

So we come back to Acts 8 and it says, verse 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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him'. And a man of Ethiopia, b&s, as a result of this wondrous meeting on the desert road, was brought into the joy and into the privilege of the truth through the waters of baptism. By the way, isn't it a marvellous quotation concerning baptism? **they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch.** So baptism was **bodily immersion** and he washed his sins away in those waters of the south.

It's interesting actually because you just think about this, so remember how we said there's three great men who bridged the story of Acts, Peter, now Philip and finally Paul.

Peter is going to preach the truth to **Shemites** who are of Asia, because that whole region of the Middle East was part of the continent as it were of Asia.

Philip in this chapter is going to preach the truth to a **Hamite** of the continent of Africa.

Paul in the balance of the book of Acts, is going to preach the truth to **Japhethites** of Europe.

And the three great continents by which the land mass of the world of that day was divided, Asia, Africa, and Europe are all going to be brought into the scope of the truth by the labours of these three men, Peter, Philip and Paul, the Shemites, the Hamites, the Japhethites; Asia, Africa, Europe, oh, so beautifully balanced. Luke who writes the story, I'm sure he saw all of those things, and here we are, right in the middle point of

that, and this man is going to go back to Africa, to Ethiopia, and take the truth with him. Do you know what this was, b&s? it was a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

Come and have a look at Psalm 68, this the bible said would happen and it's going to happen with greater extent in the age to come, but this man, this one remarkable man of Acts 8 was in earnest of a tremendous conversion yet to come, in that part of the world. Psalm 68 verse 29, 'Because of thy temple at Jerusalem (that's where he'd been), because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. Verse 31, 'Princes shall come out of Egypt; and Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto Yahweh'. **Ethiopia will stretch out her hands unto God** and the earnest, b&s, and the earnest fulfilment of that psalm yet to be completed in its fullness, was in the conversion of this man in Acts 8. He was the first man, as it were, the first creature of Ethiopia who would hold out his hands unto God and accept the goodness of the truth. Zephaniah 3, so this was all bible prophecy being fulfilled in the conversion of this man; now in Zephaniah 3 verse 9 it says, 'For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they **all** may call upon the name of Yahweh to serve Him with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. In that day thou shalt not be ashamed for all thy doings'. So the prophecy here again, was that the day is coming when a pure language will enable everyone from all nations to call upon God, even those who are beyond the rivers of Ethiopia shall come, says Zephaniah 3 verse 10 and here's the first man from that place. Here's the beginning of the outworking of those prophecies being fulfilled.

Coming back to Acts 8 and verse 39, it says, 'And when they were come up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing'. Now that's interesting, isn't it? because you see, clearly from verse 39, it tells us that Philip was only there for that one moment, that one purpose which was to save this man; to evangelize this man, and when that purpose had been fulfilled and accomplished he was instantly removed. By the way, just as an aside, that word 'caught away' in verse 39, is the same word in 1 Thessalonians 4 verse 17, now what's interesting about that is that's the well known rapture verse, 'that we which are alive and remain, shall be **caught up** (726) together with the Lord in the air', and so the teaching of the rapture as a doctrine is, that we'll be caught up in the air and we'll be left dangling there as a sort of delicious future, left in the middle of the air. But the same word is used here concerning Philip and he wasn't left dangling in the air, because although he was caught away (same Greek word) verse 40 says, he was **found at Azotus**; he actually ended up in another place. The force of the word 'caught away' here, simply means **he was taken from one spot and moved to another** and that's exactly what we believe the word means in 1 Thessalonians 4 as well, that the saints will be transported from one place to another destination at that particular time.

'So the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip and the eunuch saw him no more, but he went on his way rejoicing'. You know, I think sometimes, we don't appreciate the greatness of the truth that we have, b&s. Just hold your hand in Acts 8 and come back

to chapter 2, and just have a look at this string of quotations. This is against the word '**rejoicing**' in Acts 8 verse 39; you know that was the experience of those who came to the truth in the book of Acts. In chapter 2 verse 46 it says, 'they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat **with gladness and singleness of heart**'. So there's the first experience, 'they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart', that's what the experience of the truth was for them. Chapter 3 verse 8, 'He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, **walking and leaping and praising God**', and although, of course, a miracle had been performed, there was joy associated with the teaching of truth that the man had received on that particular day, Acts 3 verse 8.

Chapter 5 verse 41, 'And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name**', they loved the truth, b&s, and they rejoiced even in times of adversity and despair. Here in Acts 8 and verse 39, the Ethiopian eunuch is baptized, he receives the truth, Philip disappears, he can't see him anymore, but he goes back to his responsibilities in Ethiopia, **rejoicing in heart** that he has found the truth.

Chapter 16 verse 34, the famous chapter of the Philippian jailer and we're told there in Acts 16 and verse 34, 'And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and **rejoiced, believing in God with all his house**'. You know, the truth in those days, b&s, preached by these men, was a thing of great joy to those who received it. We ought to realize that it's the same truth that's been given to us. We need to discover that same sense of rejoicing that the believers had in these times of the Acts of the apostles, when the world was turned upside down.

And where had Philip gone? Well Acts 8 verse 40 says, that Philip was found at Azotus. Now by the way, Azotus is actually Old Testament **Ashdod** and Ashdod in verse 40 is 30 kilometres north of Gaza, and I think they travelled south from Gaza in the chariot while they were unravelling the scroll, so the Spirit caught him away, and he's found 30 kilometres to the north; suddenly he turns up in another place. In fact, not only is he found at Ashdod, but verse 40 says, 'and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea'; and there was not only Ashdod, but there was Jamnia and Lydda and Joppa and Antipatris as he marched up the coastline through all of that territory, and he finally came to Caesarea, which is, of course, Caesarea Sebaste rather than Caesarea Philippi, it's Caesarea on the coast, and he converted that whole region, did Philip the evangelist, and he came marching up that whole coastline of Israel, preaching as he went in **all the cities**. He was truly the great bridging point between Peter and Paul in this work of taking Christ to all the nations.

So a happy man went back to Africa on that day, with the knowledge that although he was an eunuch and might never have a family in this present life, that he would have a name that could never be cut off, and he could have spiritual offspring better than sons and daughters. The finest family he could ever hope for, all revealed in the scroll on that day, when a man ran up alongside of him and said, 'do you know what your reading?',

and he had the wit and the wisdom to say, 'well, I don't know unless some man should guide me'. It was the best thing that the man uttered in his life, b&s, was to invite Philip into the chariot on that day! and to witness with wonder as Philip unravelled that scroll, section by section and preached unto him Jesus.

Let us share the joy of that story!