

## The Gospel in The Old Testament (Acts 8:26-35)<sup>a</sup>

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### Context

1. **Philip was preaching in Samaria**
2. **Peter and John came from Jerusalem, laid hands on the Samaritans, and they received the Holy Spirit**
3. **The 2nd stage in the gospel going to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth**
4. **Philip is now sent to minister to an individual Ethiopian, the beginning of the 3rd stage (a Gentile)**
  - A. **Peter won't be present, so Spirit Baptism won't occur with Gentiles until Acts 10, when Peter visits the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion**

### Passage

*[26] 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. [27] 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, [28] was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. [29] Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." [30] So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" [31] And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. [32] 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. [33] In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth." [34] So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" [35] Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.<sup>1</sup>*

### Themes - touch on four insights found within this passage

1. **FIRST: God's leading often differs from our expectations**
2. **SECOND: The gospel is clearly presented in the Old Testament**

3. **THIRD: An incredible blindness afflicts those without spiritual ears to hear**
4. **FOURTH: Scripture trumps the varied and changing interpretations of science**

### **FIRST: God's leading often differs from our expectations**

1. **Philip is presently in the ministry “hot spot” in Samaria where exciting miracles and church growth is taking place**
2. **God leads him to a *desert area* to minister to a lone individual**
3. **Hi-level diplomat, great influence: *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 (Acts 8:27)***
  - A. **sitting in his chariot**
  - B. **““Ethiopia” here refers not to modern-day Ethiopia but to ancient Nubia, the region from Aswan in southern Egypt to Khartoum, Sudan.”<sup>2</sup>**
  - C. **“Candace was a title given to the queen-mother, as Pharaoh was used of the king of Egypt. Governmental power rested in the hands of Candace, for the royal son, worshiped as an offspring of the sun, was therefore above such mundane activities as ruling over a nation. Rulership was therefore vested with the queen-mother.”<sup>3</sup>**
4. **Like the Italian centurion named Cornelius, who we'll meet up with in chapter 10, this man is in the process of coming to faith**
  - A. **Traveling on a round-trip of over 2,000 miles to Jerusalem to worship God and Philip finds him on his way home sitting in his chariot *reading the Jewish Scriptures***
  - B. **This is not the first Ethiopian eunuch in Scripture who found faith in the God of the Jews**
    - I. **An Ethiopian eunuch by the name of Ebed-Melech (“servant of the king”) was a eunuch in Zedekiah’s house who ministered to Jeremiah (Jer. 38:7-13; 39:16-18).**
    - II. **Isa. 56:3-5 - *Do not let the son of the foreigner Who has joined himself to the LORD Speak, saying, “The LORD has utterly separated me from His people”; Nor let the eunuch say, “Here I am, a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, Even to***

***them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off.” (Isa. 56:3-5)***

5. **Ethiopian church as a result**
6. **We can't see what God is doing, what “threads” he is weaving, how a seemingly insignificant interaction here leads to enormous impact elsewhere**

## **SECOND: The gospel is clearly presented in the Old Testament**

Isaiah 53, one of the “holy of holies” in the Old Testament: where this Ethiopian man just “happened” to be reading, probably in his daily time of devotion

1. **[1] Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?**
2. **[2] For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.**
3. **[3] He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.**
4. **[4] Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.**

Jesus was considered a criminal by many and was despised by the religious leaders. Many even today consider his death on the cross to be the failure of his movement—although this passage reveals it has quite another purpose.

5. **[5] But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.**
6. **[6] All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**

The iniquity (sinful errors) of all men were to be laid upon this individual. Notice the substitutionary emphasis of this portion. The individual is punished for the transgressions of others yet in his punishment those who transgressed are healed.

7. **[7] He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.**

The individual did not attempt to defend himself from the accusations brought against him.

8. **[8] He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.**

The individual was put to death. His death was associated with the sins of the people.

9. **[9] And they made His grave with the wicked-But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.**

History records that Jesus was crucified between two common criminals and buried in a rich religious leader's personal tomb.

10. **[10a] Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin,**

His soul (life) was made an offering for sin. His death was required in order to atone for the sins of others.

11. **[10b] He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.**

12. **[11] He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.**

By his death, the individual will make many righteous. This is what many Christians call "the great exchange," when the sins of mankind are placed upon Jesus and his perfect righteousness is then accounted to those who accept his work on their behalf. The sins of man lay upon God incarnate and the righteousness of God cover/clothe the sinful ones.

13. **[12] Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.**

The "intercession" described here relates to the reconciliation of humans, who are sinful by nature and by practice, with a holy God who will not abide with sin.

14. **History 101 Quiz: who could this be? Can we think of anyone from the record of history?!!**

- A. **A Jewish individual**
- B. **A man without sin, truly righteous in the eyes of God**
- C. **A man of sorrows, rejected, who died a cruel death**

- D. **At his death, he bore the sins of others**
- E. **His death reconciled others to God**
- F. **Hmmm....**

### **THIRD: An incredible blindness afflicts those without spiritual ears to hear**

#### **1. Jewish Study Bible<sup>4</sup>**

- A. **“One of the most difficult and contested passages in the Bible, these fifteen verses have attracted an enormous amount of attention from ancient, medieval, and modern scholars. In particular the identity of the servant is vigorously debated.”<sup>5</sup>**
- B. **Who is the servant?**
  - I. **The nation of Israel: “The passage . . . describes the nation’s unjust tribulations at the hands of the Babylonians . . . as well as the nations salvific role for the world at large.”<sup>6</sup>**
  - II. **The godly among Israel: “. . . the passage describes a pious minority within the Jewish people; this minority suffers as a result of the sins committed by the nation at large.”<sup>7</sup>**
  - III. **A specific individual? “Other scholars argue that the servant in this passage is a specific individual [and] . . . identify the servant as the Messiah *but this suggestion is unlikely, since nowhere does [the Second] Isaiah refer to the Messiah, and the absence of a belief in an individual Messiah is one of the hallmarks of [Second] Isaiah’s outlook (in contrast to that of First Isaiah).*”<sup>8</sup>**
    - a. **Explain First- and Second-Isaiah view, chapters 1-39 vs. 40-66.<sup>9</sup>**
    - b. **First, they divide the book in half, then they state that since the Messiah is only referenced as an individual in the first half (a questionable assertion to begin with) that he can’t be in view in the second half—when in fact this very passage clearly indicates just the opposite!**

#### **IV. Other ideas: Jeremiah, Moses**

#### **C. Jesus?**

- I. **“Christians have argued that this passage in fact predicts the coming of Jesus. Medieval rabbinic commentators devoted considerable attention to refuting this interpretation.”<sup>10</sup>**
- II. **No kidding!!!**
- III. **“Scholars debate whether these lines describe the literal death of the servant or the severe straits he was in. Exaggerated descriptions of one’s plight as equivalent to death are common in the Bible;”<sup>11</sup>**
- IV. **“Either he is saved from a fate like death, or he is actually described as being resurrected. In the latter case, his resurrection is probably a metaphor for the renewal of the nation at the end of the exile.”<sup>12</sup>**

## 2. **Examples from Stone Edition of the Tanach<sup>13</sup>**

- A. **“This is a prophecy foretelling . . . Israel’s rejuvenation.”<sup>14</sup>**
- B. **Regarding, “He was cut off from the land of the living” (v. 8): “When Israel’s exile is finally ended, the nations will marvel that such a generation could have survived the expulsion from “the land of the living,” i.e., the Land of Israel”<sup>15</sup>**
- C. **Substitutionary atonement? “Israel’s suffering was a punishment for its own sins”<sup>16</sup>**

## 3. **What did the Man they can’t find say?**

- A. **Jesus quotes from the very same prophet, Isaiah, when describing this extreme Spiritual blindness and hardness of heart (Mat. **13:13-16**)**

Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;<sup>17</sup>

4. **The miracle of salvation - this Ethiopian man knew the passage spoke of an individual, a man, and received the explanation offered by Philip!**

## **FOURTH: Scripture trumps the varied and changing interpretations of Science**

1. **Diagnosing the human condition**
2. **Predicting the future with certainty**
3. **The case of Isaiah**
  - A. **Conservative scholars believe the book to have been written no later than 680 B.C.**
  - B. **However, prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the earliest copy of Isaiah's book was from around 900 A.D. – some 1600 years later.**
  - C. **With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, all this changed.**
  - D. **Great Isaiah Scroll**
    - I. **Dated by radiocarbon and analysis of paleography (historic style of writing)**
    - II. **No later than 150-100 B.C.**<sup>19</sup>
  - E. **All evidence we have establishes unambiguously that Isaiah was written before the birth of Christ**
    - I. **DSS**
    - II. **Septuagint**
    - III. **Quotations by NT authors**
    - IV. **References in intertestamental literature**
      - i. **Those who want to bend Scripture to fit the latest scientific interpretation should reconsider**
        - **When will SETI come up with Isaiah 53?**
        - **When will science be able to predict the future with 100% accuracy?**
        - **Christians who compromise on areas where scientific interpretations are being inconsistent!**
  - F. **The message of Isaiah is “scientifically impossible”**
  - G. **The virgin birth is “scientifically impossible”**
  - H. **The resurrection is “scientifically impossible”**

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**Endnotes:**

1. [NKJV](#), (Acts:26-35)
2. [Ref-0038](#), Acts [8:27](#)
3. [Ref-0038](#), Acts [8:27](#)
4. [Ref-0934](#), 890-892
5. [Ref-0934](#), 890-891
6. [Ref-0934](#), 891
7. [Ref-0934](#), 891
8. [Ref-0934](#), 891
9. This theory is undermined by the inspired commentary of the Apostle John who attributes both Isa. [53:1](#) and Isa. [6:10](#) to a single author named Isaiah (John [12:28-40](#)).
10. [Ref-0934](#), 891
11. [Ref-0934](#), 891
12. [Ref-0934](#), 891
13. [Ref-0196](#), 1046-1048
14. [Ref-0196](#), 1047
15. [Ref-0196](#), 1046
16. [Ref-0196](#), 1048
17. [NKJV](#), (Mat. [13:13-16](#))
18. [WIKIPEDIA](#), *Dead Sea Scrolls* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead\\_Sea\\_Scrolls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls)
19. "The Isaiah Scroll, designated 1QIsa and also known as the Great Isaiah Scroll, was found in a cave near the Dead Sea (Qumran Cave 1) with six other scrolls by Bedouin shepherds in 1947, later known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scroll is written in Hebrew and contains the entire Book of Isaiah from beginning to end, apart from a few small damaged portions. It is the oldest complete copy of the Book of Isaiah known, being 1100 years older than the Leningrad Codex, and the most complete scroll out of the 220 found at Qumran. Pieces of the Isaiah Scroll have been carbon-14 dated at least four times, giving calibrated date ranges between 335-324 BC and 202-107 BC; there have also been numerous paleographic and scribal dating studies placing the scroll around 150-100 BC."<sup>18</sup>

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**Sources:**

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0038** John Walvoord and Roy. B. Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983).
- Ref-0196** Nosson Scherman, ed., *Tanach - The Stone Edition* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 2001).



**Ref-0934** Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004). ISBN:0-19-529751-2<sup>d</sup>.

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### Links Mentioned Above

- a - See [http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts\\_by\\_Tony\\_Garland/26\\_Acts\\_8\\_26-35/index.htm](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/26_Acts_8_26-35/index.htm).
- b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
- d - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?0-19-529751-2>.