

2012 Camp Hill Evangelism Series

Part 3 “What is Our Message?”

By Doug Hamilton

Acts 8:25-39

Vs. 25-28 So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.²⁶ But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert *road*.)²⁷ So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,²⁸ and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

- Philip the evangelist had just completed his ministry in the region of Samaria, experiencing much success for the kingdom of God. All the way back to Jerusalem they preached Jesus and the message of salvation.
- It was through divine direction that he was sent on a southwest course from Jerusalem to Gaza. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said to His disciples “...*but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*” We are about to witness the spreading of the gospel to the far reaches of Ethiopia, for God had arranged a meeting between Philip and a Eunuch.
- This Eunuch was a cabinet member of Queen Candice from Ethiopia that was coming back from worship in Jerusalem. He was her treasurer that likely was doing some business while in Jerusalem.
- The eunuch was reading a copy of the scriptures from the comfort of his chariot stagecoach. This same eunuch had many strikes already against him which must be calculated into the equation.
 - 1) He was a foreigner. A person from outside the native land of Israel would be frowned upon when coming to Jerusalem to worship. They simply were not of high standard in the Jews eyes (Ruth 2:10).
 - 2) He was a Eunuch. It was common for a eunuch to be emasculated before coming into to service of a harem of for a queen. It was so that there would be no worry of funny business. That also left him unable to be part of the assembly (Dt 23:1).
 - 3) He was a different race. The name “Ethiopia” means “*Burnt Face People*”, meaning that they simply were not a blend to all of the home-grown Jews.
- It is not a fluke that he was reading from the Book of Isaiah. This was the book that offered hope to outcasts like him just paragraphs away. Isaiah 56:3-8 offered a future promise of glory and acceptance for the Eunuch.

Is 56:3-8 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely separate me from His people.” Nor let the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”⁴ For thus says the Lord, “To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant,⁵ **To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, And a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.**⁶ “Also the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, To be His servants, everyone who keeps from

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profaning the sabbath And holds fast My covenant; ⁷ Even those **I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable** on My altar; For **My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.**” ⁸ The Lord God, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.”

- With Jesus, nobody is a foreigner; nobody is a mutant; nobody is the wrong colored skin. The color of the souls are the same, regardless of race, from olive-skinned to albinos, from Greeks to Asians, the gospel is an equal opportunity redeemer! This eunuch was about to find this out.

Vs. 29-31 Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” ³⁰ Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹ And he said, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

- The Ethiopian Eunuch was not alone in his journey, likely having a large entourage with him. Philip was told to by the Spirit to approach the Eunuch. He heard him reading from the scroll of Isaiah and offered some interpretive assistance.

Vs. 32-34 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

“HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. ³³ “IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH.” ³⁴ The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?”

- The fact that he had his own copy of Isaiah communicates he is a person of great wealth, for it had to be copied by hand. He was reading it out loud because there were no divisions or punctuation on ancient scrolls. This was a common practice for understanding and committing to memory the words of God.
- The passage that he was meditating on was from Isaiah 53. Even though Luke only quotes verses 7-8 from that passage, rest assured that Philip shared the entire “Fourth Servant Song” (Is 52:13-53:12). This is the most graphic Old Testament description of the crucifixion of Christ.

Is 52:13-53:12 Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. ¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you, *My people*, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men. ¹⁵ Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand. ¹ Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. ³ He was despised and forsaken

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of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*? ⁹ His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

- Jesus was beaten and bloodied so bad that He was unrecognizable on the cross. There was nothing attractive about the way He died. His friends grimaced while he was crushed, pierced, scourged, mocked, slaughtered, smitten, oppressed and judged. He could have called ten-thousand angels, but kept silent for the sake of the sheep that He so-loved. He was cut off from God and died alone.
- He went through all this for you and me, for the sins that separate us from God. He bore our sins and forgave us of our transgressions. The Eunuch went into the passage not knowing Whom it referred to, but ended up knowing Jesus as the Messiah.

Vs. 35-40 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” ³⁷ [And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”] ³⁸ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

- This area is believed to be near Tell el-Hesi (about forty miles southwest of Jerusalem). Today there is still a fresh spring at this location, functioning as an oasis amidst the dry fields.
- Notice that at that very scripture Philip opened his mouth at that passage and began to teach the Eunuch about Jesus. He obviously preached about the life of Jesus, the crucifixion of and the resurrection, for the Isaiah passage dictates it. When they came to the pool of water the Eunuch was requesting to be baptized. Why?

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- Was it because he was hot from the ride in the sun?
- Was it because he was dirty and needed a bath?
- Was it because he needed to practice his breaststroke?
- He wanted to be baptized because an evangelistic soul cannot preach Jesus and the plan of salvation without baptism.
- The condition was that he believed with all his heart that Jesus was the Son of God. How do we know he did? Don't just take his word for it, look what he did. He was baptized, for that is the confirming action of a person that truly believes in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is why he went away rejoicing, for he knew that Isaiah 53 and 56 had come true in his life! He was no longer a foreigner, a mutant or an Ethiopian. He was a CHRISTIAN!

What do we learn from here?

We are the people of God with a message from God called the gospel. It is not just any message, but *the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Rom 1:16)*. What is the message that we need to communicate to others?

We must communicate...

1) The Authenticity of His Word.

- The Eunuch trusted the sacred writings of God. When that is true, then there is a glimmer of hope to accept the words of Christ. We need to be prepared to share a message of authenticity.
 - Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.
 - Acts 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.
 - 2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.
 - Prov 3:3-4 Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.

2) The Predictability of the Messiah.

- Philip was able to show that Jesus was the fulfillment of scripture. We cannot properly understand that Jesus can be Lord if cannot present Him as a Master Planner.
 - Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”
 - Dt 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.

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- Rom 15:4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

3) The Fragility of Mankind.

- The Eunuch was an outcast from the God of the Jews. It did not matter that he was rich or employed by a queen, his best would never be good enough. He knew his own fragility.
 - Romans 5:10-18 “There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.” ¹³ “Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,” “The poison of asps is under their lips”; ¹⁴ “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness”; ¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ And the path of peace they have not known.” ¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”
 - Every single one of us cannot approach God in any way. Our righteousness is like filthy rags to God.

4) The Sincerity of Christ.

- Philip showed a side of Jesus that was descriptive and quite sobering. He showed that Jesus had to die in such a way for us. His death spoke in a way that said, “I love you this much.”
 - John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
 - John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.
 - Rom 5:7-8 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

5) The Responsibility of Ourselves.

- Philip showed the Eunuch the path of accepting Jesus Christ through a believing, repentant and confessing immersion into Christ.
 - Mark 16:16 “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved...”
 - Acts 2:38 Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...”
 - Acts 22:16 ‘Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’
- This Eunuch rejoiced when he came up out of the water because he knew what he believed, the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

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- 1 Cor 15:3-4 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,
- He took it upon himself to take Jesus up on the offer. He ran into the arms of a waiting Savior.

What is the message we are to communicate to the lost world?

- 1) The Authenticity of His Word.
- 2) The Predictability of the Messiah.
- 3) The Fragility of Mankind.
- 4) The Sincerity of Christ.
- 5) The Responsibility of Ourselves.