

Philip, An Ethiopian, and Isaiah, Part 2—Acts 8:26-40—11/2/25

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Open your Bibles to Acts 8 as we continue to learn from this section where Philip evangelized an Ethiopian from the prophet Isaiah.

I'll begin by reading Acts 8:25-40 so follow along. [READ]

Last week we began studying this as an example of when evangelism happens, of what was taking place in this model of evangelism.

We clarified that evangelism is proclaiming good news, right?

It is announcing or reporting the Good News of salvation from sin.

Salvation is being saved & rescued from the penalty of sin that we deserve & the power of sin that enslaves & rules us.

We all know that we are sinners, that we have sinned & that we do sin, & we know that such crimes against our Creator deserve judgment.

That's all hard-wired into the human conscience & cannot be escaped by religious rituals or rage against it.

The only way to appease the guilty conscience is to cleanse it, to free it with complete forgiveness that can only come from God.

That forgiveness can only be granted when the penalty is paid.

Only Jesus can do that for others & that's what makes Him good news.

That's why Acts 8:35 more literally could be translated that Philip preached the good news of Jesus to him.

And the exciting thing is that you can announce that like Philip did.

If you know the Good News of Jesus, you can report the glad tidings of who Jesus is & what He has done.

And Philip gave us an example of when that happens as we began observing last Sunday with the first 3 of 6 descriptions.

We've begun outlining 6 observations of when evangelism happens that we can apply to motivate our evangelism.

As we consider the quote from Isaiah 53 & celebrate communion today, we'll only cover 1 of those 6 points.

Yet today's point is the essential point about evangelism.

But 1st recall that last week, we observed that evangelism happens when Christians obey like we saw Philip obeyed.

And as we saw in other verses last week, evangelism is not an option to add to your life if you feel like it.

Proclaiming the excellencies of Christ is why you exist—it's part of why you were saved as 1st Peter 2:9 says.

We can step out to obey that when we know God is sovereign over the details of our lives & the lives of those we encounter.

So we noted 2ndly last week that we can be encouraged in knowing that evangelism happens when God orchestrates.

We must be aware when God moves as He did in the life & circumstances of Philip & this Ethiopian eunuch to prepare them for an evangelistic conversation on a lonely desert road.

God planned that & He had been working in the Ethiopian's life probably for years to draw him to worship.

And then God had orchestrated details of Philip meeting him.

Just as those details connecting at that exact time are astounding, so are the specific privileges of your life to deliver the Gospel to you.

God always governs all existence, but we want to be encouraged by that as we see that evangelism happens (1) when Christians obey & (2) when God orchestrates.

Then 3rdly last week, we said that evangelism happens when Scripture is opened, when the word of God is opened & explained.

In verses 30-31, Philip asked the Ethiopian if he understood what he was reading & the Ethiopian said he needed a guide.

And as it was for Philip, it can be our delight to guide others.

So we want to do that rightly—we want to be accurate guides.

We want to be faithful teachers who know Scripture & can explain it in a way that can be followed, that does not seem forced or confusing.

We want the clear meaning of Scripture to speak.

We want people to see & hear from the text of God's own words.

And part of explaining the plain sense of any passage of Scripture is putting it in perspective with all Scripture.

That means putting it in the flow of God's redemptive plan & how that connects with the lives of those we are evangelizing.

And that brings us to our 4th overall point continuing from last week—that evangelism happens when Jesus is preached.

Evangelism happens when (1) Christians obey & (2) God orchestrates, (3) when Scripture is opened, & (4thly) when Jesus is preached.

Point #4 overall & our main point today is that evangelism happens when Jesus is preached.

Read verse 35 again to see that clearly. [READ]

Evangelism happened there when Jesus was preached.

That's today's main point & I'll add 3 modifiers to it, 3 ways it's done.

But first notice that evangelism is not merely humanitarian kindness to provide for people's physical or other needs.

True evangelistic outreach is not merely hosting lots of fun activities that people can enjoy & make friends & feel a part of a community.

Real evangelism is not even offering a seminar on morality or healthy living or helpful work skills or financial management.

Evangelism must include proclaiming Jesus & explaining who He is & why He matters.

And that proclamation must come from Scripture—it must be rooted in & flowing from God's Word.

We're going to cover 3 ways to preach Jesus from the Scriptures as we ponder Philip, the Ethiopian & Isaiah.

Look back at Acts 8:30-35 & let's read that again. [READ]

Evangelism happens when Scripture is opened as when the Ethiopian read Isaiah & recognized the value of a guide or teacher to help him.

The help that faithful teachers bring is often from the context of a passage & its place in the flow of progressive revelation.

We know God has revealed Himself & His plan throughout history in increasing measures, in that sense through time progressively.

God's story was progressing from creation in Genesis 1-2 to the fall into sin & God's promise of a Deliverer in Genesis 3.

That's the foundation of creation by God & corruption of man's sin.

All humans are hard-wired knowing that God exists & has a moral law, but they need to be reminded of that foundation.

They need to be told truth they have suppressed by believing lies like evolution & by excusing or minimizing their own sins.

By proclaiming God's design & sin's destruction, we provide the framework to rightly preach Jesus.

So you might say 1st today that evangelism happens when Jesus is preached **with historic promises**.

As a 1st of 3 expansions on how evangelism happens when Jesus is preached, we 1st say it is **with historic promises**.

To help people understand the Scriptures & their connections to Jesus, we show the theological preparations that point to the need for Jesus.

We can reference specific OT promises that point to Jesus, but we can also explain building expectations that pointed to Him.

And listen—we do not need to try to find Jesus in the OT in places where He was not referenced—that just undermines our credibility.

There are plenty of specific prophecies of Him & theological categories that prepare for & progress toward Him.

We have enough that can be clearly explained without insisting that Jesus was the point of every OT passage in a way that's forced.

We want to preach Jesus from promises that can be followed.

That historic approach was the evangelistic method in all of Acts.

The preaching in Acts explains historic promises & theological categories & expectations that God gave through time.

That was vital because the coming of Jesus & the writings of the NT were not the beginning of a new religion.

Christianity was not a new invention to solve age old problems.

Rather, Christianity was the historic hope of all time that began with the promise of the Seed to crush sin & Satan after the fall.

You know that & need to keep it foundational in evangelism.

Genesis 3:15 said that promised Conquering Seed of the woman would be bruised, but He would overcome & win the ultimate victory.

That's the foundation of the first book written by Moses that describes how God passed down that Seed promise in time.

Moses's writings include the sacrifice of animals because sin required death & animals were substitutes offered to atone for sin.

Such imagery was part of the worldview of OT prophets like Isaiah when he wrote about One who would die like a lamb.

Those are some of the theological categories that framed the hope of the historic promises read by the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8.

Read verses 32-33 again to consider those. [READ]

First note that this was Scripture, a term for what was written as God's inspired revelation through His proven spokesman like Isaiah.

The subject here was the Servant of the Lord, which sometimes pointed to a Person & at other times could be understood collectively as Israel as a whole or as a remnant within Israel.

Isaiah 53 clearly used the singular pronoun "He" & that's quoted in Acts 8:32-33 in this section taken from the Septuagint, which was the Greek translation of the OT often used in that time.

Verse 32 quotes the second half of verse 7 of Isaiah 53 with two comparisons of how this One was like a sheep & a lamb.

This Servant of the Lord was peaceful & quiet like these different aged animals going to death or to a shearing haircut.

And verse 33 makes clear this was to death, for his life was removed from the earth as the Septuagint version stated it.

In the older Hebrew, that phrase of Isaiah 53:8 says that He was cut off out of the land of the living.

To be cut off out of the land of the living is another way of translating having *his life removed from the earth*.

The meaning is the same & the word for earth is the same as the word for land in Hebrew so both translations make sense.

But read verse 33 again as that may raise questions. [READ]

When it says that His judgment was taken away, it helps to know that the word for judgment could be justice.

So the sense is that His righteous judgment, His just treatment, was taken away in the sense of being removed.

This Man did not get justice—He was not treated righteously.

That was in His humiliation, His being humbled, pressed down.

That humiliation agrees with the Hebrew translation to English in Isaiah 53:8 that says by oppression & judgment He was taken away.

The point in both translations is the same unjust oppression.

Then finally let me tell you that the word ‘*relate*’ or ‘*recount*’ or ‘*describe*’ in the question in the middle of verse 33 simply means to tell or give a detailed account of to someone.

So the idea is a question—Who would have told His generation of the shocking fact that his life was removed from the earth?

The idea is who would’ve thought this would happen to Him?

English versions render the Hebrew in Isaiah 53:8 like this: “*As to His generation, who considered...*”

Though the word order seems a bit different in English translations of Isaiah 53:8 & Acts 8:33, they get at the same meaning.

I share those details to show how the Greek translation was not different in meaning from the original Hebrew of Isaiah.

We want to be diligent to study & explain such things so it’s clear that anyone can follow the connections of truths & texts & it’s not obscure.

Because Scripture is our clear, sufficient, inerrant authority, you should be able to search it to understand its meaning.

And don’t miss the meaning in this quote—it was the unexpected shock of this One who was unjustly killed & endured it with silence.

That’s what Isaiah described & the eunuch understood that.

But what the eunuch did not know was of whom the prophet Isaiah was speaking & what the significance of this death was.

Read verse 34 to see that. [READ]

Pay attention here—the eunuch understood the meaning of the text, but he did not understand the fulfillment of that meaning.

He understood what the words said, but he did not know of whom the words spoke or in whom they were fulfilled.

He expected some real, historic person to experience what was written.

So he was asking about fulfillment & that's the 2nd description of how Jesus was preached to note from Acts 8:32-35 today.

Evangelism happens when Jesus is preached with historic fulfillments.

That's point #2—evangelism happens when Jesus is preached (1) with historic promises & (2) with historic fulfillments.

The Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip for clarification of the referent, the one referred to by the prophet's words.

He was not asking about the sense of what the words meant or whether those words should be taken literally or figuratively.

The comparison to a sheep & a lamb was obviously a figure of speech, not an exact equation of Him to a literal sheep or lamb.

In interpretive terms, we would say that the eunuch understood the sense or meaning, but not the referent or fulfillment.

The eunuch was asking if Isaiah himself had later been killed this way or if this referred to & was fulfilled in someone else.

And listen—those are not always either-or, mutually exclusive.

Sometimes there's both a near fulfillment & a far fulfillment, a lesser referent or fulfillment & then a greater referent or fulfillment.

I mention that to help you more generally understand the way OT prophecies can work.

The author can have one meaning of the words & yet be pointing to a future fulfillment that is greater than the closer, lesser fulfillment.

For example, that can happen with some promises of judgment & with God's promises to King David & his descendants.

Of course, the question the eunuch asked in verse 34—of whom does the prophet say this?—has only one answer in the case of Isaiah 53.

But that kind of question does not always have a either-or answer—sometimes it's a both-and answer.

I tell you that because we need to give the OT writers credit for having a robust theology of the Deliverer who was coming as King.

We need to realize that OT saints were not ignorant.

Rather, 1st Peter 1:11 mentions OT prophets *seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ & the glories to follow.*

They expected a Christ who would suffer & be glorified, but they did not know who He was.

And that's what the eunuch was asking—who was this Servant of the Lord?—or in other words—how was this passage fulfilled?

So we can see that Jesus was preached from Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch with both promises & fulfillments.

God gave promises for Jesus & then He fulfilled those promises.

Some promises yet remain to be fulfilled & those matter too.

Since all God's promises were historically given & then have been or will be historically fulfilled, our message is not cloudy or mysterious.

All that God has promised has happened in history or will happen in future history & we preach Jesus in that light.

Read verse 35 to consider how Philip did that. [READ]

Philip opened his mouth—that's important—you cannot keep your mouth closed if you want to evangelize.

You cannot remain silent if you want to honor Christ & reach others.

Philip opened his mouth & started preaching Jesus beginning from the exact Scripture the Ethiopian eunuch was reading.

He began at that passage & must have explained that passage in its context of the Suffering Servant of the Lord Yahweh.

He must have told of the surrounding verses that describe this unjust death as endured to atone for the sins of His people.

He must have set that need for atonement in the context of sacrifices that pointed to the wages of sin as death as God warned in the Garden.

Philip must have then explained how Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53 in His sinless life given to pay sin's penalty for His people.

He must have told of Jesus' resurrection & ascension & future return.

We know Philip began with Isaiah 53 & answered the eunuch's question by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus to him.

If you think on all that, you may realize that we can't fully preach Jesus without anchoring His Person & work in OT revelation.

A biblical worldview is built from ancient history forward.

Yet we must also always be mindful that OT theology was forward-looking with longing for the coming of the Christ.

So as we preach the OT, we must explain the NT fulfillments.

In that sense, we are preaching the whole Bible in some measure when we are preaching Jesus because He is the center of it all.

A biblical worldview starts in the beginning & rises to Jesus' marvelous 1st Coming & then looks forward to His 2nd Coming.

And in evangelism, we touch on all those aspects at some level, which brings us to a 3rd & final point this morning.

Point #3 is that evangelism happens when Jesus is preached **with present applications**.

We've said evangelism happens when Jesus is preached (1) with historic promises, (2) with historic fulfillments, & now 3rdly, with present applications.

Evangelism preaches Jesus **with present applications**.

Note 2 words that end verse 35—to him; Philip preached Jesus **to him**.

Philip brought the reality of Jesus **to** the Ethiopian eunuch.

He proclaimed the Good News of Jesus **to him**.

Philip announced & reported & explained who Jesus was & how Jesus was Good News if those listening trusted Him.

And we know that Philip said more of Jesus' call to repent of sin & trust in Him because the eunuch quickly wanted to be baptized.

So we know that Philip's evangelism had present applications.

He did not merely answer the eunuch's question by saying, "Oh, that's about a man named Jesus."

He must have told more than who Jesus is & how Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53 because of how the eunuch responded.

In that way, evangelism involves persuasion—announcing Good News in Jesus in a way that shows why He is Good News.

Such present applications that necessitate a response.

There is no neutral response to Jesus.

Know that for yourself & know that for your evangelism.

You will bow before Jesus one day as your final Judge or you will bow before Him now & forever in faith as your saving King.

So surrender yourself to Him today.

Give Jesus your allegiance & affection above all else.

Let's turn back to Isaiah 53 to see why we can trust Him from the historic promises that Jesus fulfilled.

Let's read & remember what Jesus accomplished for His people as we prepare to praise Him at His communion Table as we close.

Turn to Isaiah 53 & read that prophecy in its context with me—
Isaiah 52:13-53:12. [READ]

That is the glorious Servant of the Lord, the Lamb of God who suffered for His people to save us from our sins.

If you know Him, we welcome you to remember Him in the Lord's Supper now as we close.

And if you don't know Him, we urge you to watch & pray that you will see His glorious worth & trust Him today.

Take time to seek Him in prayer silently on your own & then I'll lead us in prayer as we come to the Lord's Table.