

1. What Luke was saying, then

The commission – doing Jesus work - an over-riding theme in the whole book

Firstly Luke's Acts presented the commission of Jesus Himself just prior to His ascension into heaven, when he instructed the Apostles:-¹

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth".

This represented for Luke the opening stanza and message, the rest of his writings in Acts revealed how and where this commission were fulfilled by the Apostles and the disciples in the early church.

This particular story cannot be read in isolation

The way in which this story of the eunuch was told could bear some resemblance to another story of Luke's "on the road to Emmaus" where a stranger joined two travellers and opened up the scriptures to them, took part in a sacramental act (Eucharist) and then disappeared from view, leaving the travellers in the story deeply affected emotionally. ²

¹ Acts 1:8

² Luke 24:12-24

Jesus' death and resurrection was the subject of conversation in both stories narrated by Luke; both stories employed a messianic interpretation of the Old Testament.

This story provides an example of how Luke arranges his information – like Hellenistic historians – into geographical and ethnic groups. In ancient Greek geographical works there was considerable interest in Ethiopia, precisely because of their ethnic and racially distinctive features.³

To the “Ends of the earth”

As well, Ethiopia was frequently identified with the “ends of the earth” – in a way that Rome most definitely was not, Rome was considered to be the “centre of the universe”.⁴

The story considered first in its wider context

The story followed logically from Jesus' commission⁵; it covered Peter's explanation to the Jews at Pentecost,⁶ the election of Philip as one of the seven to serve the Greek widows, the development, exploits and eventual death of the first of the seven Greek Jews - Stephen, and the development and exploits of the second of the elected, Philip in Samaria.

³ I Howard Marshall –*The Acts of the Apostles* – England – Inter-varsity press 1980 - P161

⁴ Ben Witherington –*The Acts of the Apostles; a socio-rhetorical commentary* – Michigan –Eerdmans – 1998 –P290

⁵ Acts 1:8

⁶ Acts 2:38 – “*Repent and be baptized*”

You will recall that Samaria was the second of the localities mentioned by Jesus in His commission to the disciples. The wider context of this particular story is shown in the following table.

Illustration of Ethiopian Eunuch story in context of Missionary effort - to the Gentiles, to the Ends of the earth							
		Judea		Samaria	Gentiles		
Acts 1:8		Acts 2:41	Acts 6:7-9	Acts 9:31	Acts 8:26-40	Acts 9:3-5	Acts 10:48
Be My witnesses		about three thousand were added to their number that day	The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.	It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.	Ethiopian Eunuch	Saul on the Damascus Road	Cornelius (Roman) and his household
Jesus		Peter	Stephen	Philip - Peter, John	Philip	Paul - Annanias	Peter

Philip's actions in Samaria

I. Howard Marshall⁷ points out that where the preceding story from Luke was concerned with Philip in Samaria and a mass movement towards accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour; in this story under review, there was a single convert who comes from the far south.

In the former story in Samaria, there was no specific divine guidance leading to the evangelistic venture, but here in this story, at every stage God through His angels and Spirit could be seen overruling what happened.

F. Scott Spencer⁸ expresses a lightly different thought. He writes

"After a fairly lengthy account of missionary activity in one locale – Samaria – Luke's narrative turns his emphasis on scattered movement "from place to place".

⁷ I Howard Marshall – *Tyndale new Testament commentaries – Acts* – England-Inter-Varsity Press – 2004 –P160

⁸ F. Scott Spencer – *Journeying through Acts : a literary-cultural reading* –Massachusetts-Hendrickson – 2004 –P100

Spreading the Gospel from Samaria and beyond

Framing this particular story, Spencer suggests, are symmetrical reports of the two apostles (Peter and John) and Philip's evangelistic tours, fanning out from Samaria through numerous intermediate stations en- route to different destinations; back to Jerusalem the religious capital for Judaism for Peter and John (8:25), and out to Caesarea, the Roman provincial capital for Philip (8:40).

Spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles

The story as included here by Luke both because it is about Philip and because it formed part of the gradual progress of the church spreading out to include the Gentiles; which is the main subject matter of Luke-Acts.

Frederick Bruce⁹ adds a further dimension to Luke's story. He suggests that historically this story shows that the Hellenists, rather than Peter, took the lead in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles.

Dealing with outsiders was not a problem for Philip, he was an outsider himself, a Greek in Jerusalem¹⁰ – selected and appointed to provide food for the Greek widows.

⁹ Frederick .F. Bruce – *The Acts of the Apostles : the Greek text with introduction and commentary* – Michigan – Eerdmans – 1990 – P535
Dated: 18/11/2015

One of the major themes throughout Luke-Acts and which this story of Philip fully supported is the theme of the universalisation of the Gospel – that the Gospel is for all people from the last, least, and lost, to the first, most and found.

This story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch was part of the promise being fulfilled, because the prophecy extending the universality of the Gospel is in the actual text of Isa 52:10 says

"All the ends of the earth shall see God's salvation "

This is where the Ethiopian came from –according to judgments in Luke's times.

This thought about the remoteness of Ethiopia is suggested by several writers, including Ben Witherington in his socio-rhetorical commentary.¹¹

"The eunuch" foreshadows a subsequent Gentile conversion story.

We conclude our reflections in this initial section from the international critical commentary,¹² with the thought that the eunuch was a stage more removed from the "People of God" than Cornelius, whose story follows in Acts Ch 10. (Refer subsequent writings on the Ethiopian eunuch)

¹⁰ Acts 6:1-7

¹¹ Ben Witherington –*The Acts of the Apostles; a socio-rhetorical commentary* – Michigan –Eerdmans – 1998 –P294

¹² J.A. Emerton, C.E.B.Cranfield, G.N. Stanton (eds) - *International critical Commentary* –Scotland – T&T Clark, 1994 – P420

The eunuch's conversion marked an even more radical stage in the rise of Gentile mission than Peter's visit to Caesarea and the conversion and baptism of Cornelius the Roman Army Commander and his household.

The authors of the International critical commentary have suggested that originally the two stories represented rival claims to tell the story of the origin of the Christian mission beyond Judaism – Both persons (the eunuch and Cornelius) had demonstrated to be sympathetically interested in Judaism and its religion. However, their acceptance into the faith presented a major inclusion issue for early Christian missionaries.

Comparison of features between events recorded for Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius				
	Eunuch		Cornelius	
Initiation	Angel	Acts 8:26	Angel	Acts 10:3
Status	Ethiopian Eunuch, senior official	Acts 8:27	Centurion - Italian Regiment	Acts 10:2
Evangelist	Philip	Acts 8:38	Peter	Acts 10:25
Location	Desert road	Acts 8:26	Caesarea - Cornelius house	Acts 10:25
Evidence of seeking	Worshipping in Jerusalem; reading Isaiah	Acts 8:27, 8:28	Devout, God-fearing, prayed and gave generously	Acts 10;2
Testimony of Jesus provided	The goodnews about Jesus	Acts 8:35	Gave witness to Jesus	Acts 10:36-43
Baptism	Went down into the water	Acts 8:38	Baptized in the name of Jesus	Acts 10;47
Holy Spirit	Went on his way, rejoicing	Acts 8:39	The Holy Spirit came on all who heard.	Acts 10:44-46
Number involved	1		Large gathering - family and friends	Acts 10:27
Afterwards	Nil		Church community was formed	Acts 18:22

In the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch Luke moved the concentration away from Jerusalem, and supported Jesus commission to the church of the expansive missionary thrust to the "*ends of the earth*"^{13, 14}.

The man returned to his own distant country, the episode evidently aroused no immediate problems for a church that was still developing its attitude towards the inclusion of Gentile converts (refer Jerusalem Counsel).¹⁵

2. Who were the characters – and what were their role(s?)

The Ethiopian Eunuch

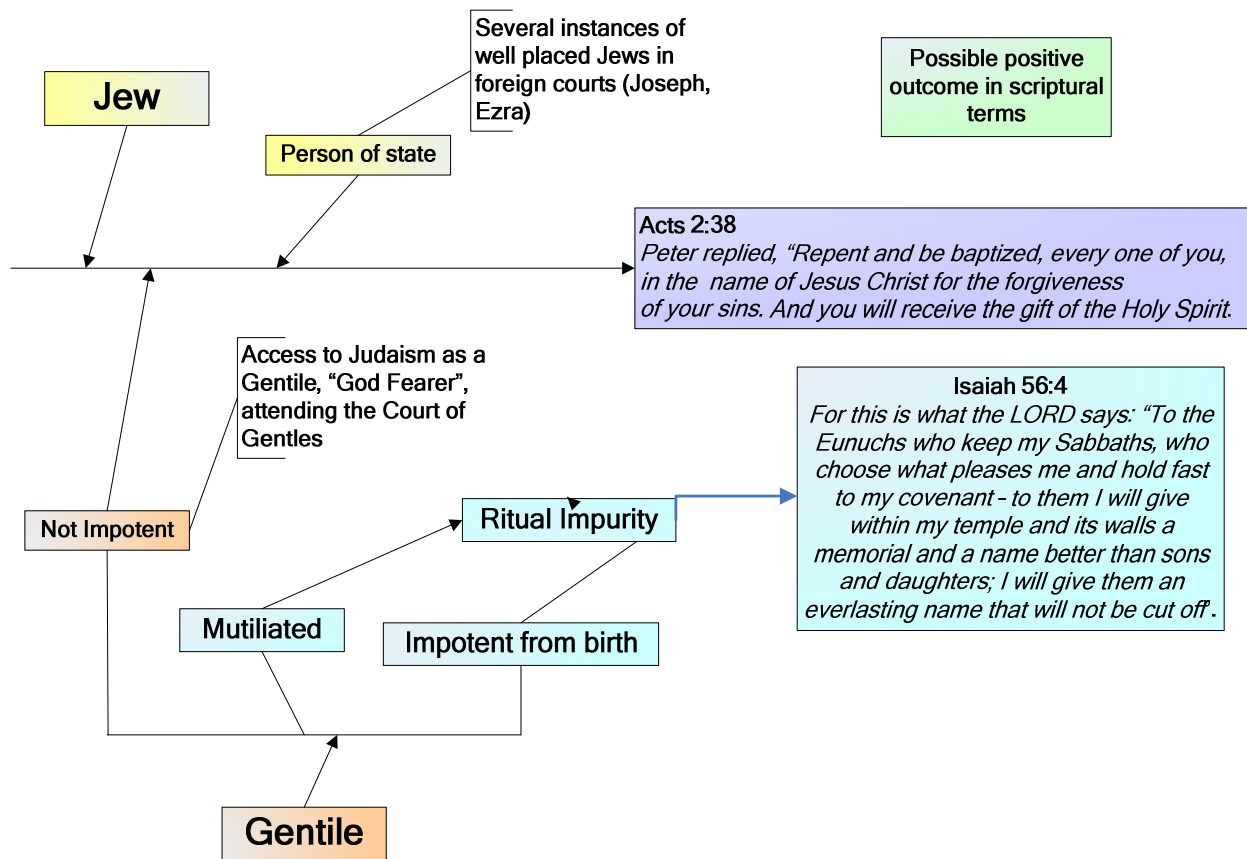
Depending on his status, the eunuch had little initial opportunity for a relationship within Judaism. After Jesus death, resurrection and ascension, as witnessed by the early disciples, a wide range of possibilities opened for him.

Analytical diagram of status of eunuch and scripture for acceptance into Judaism – at the time of Luke

¹³ Acts 1:8

¹⁴ Astrid B Beck and Allan C Myers (Eds) – *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* – Michigan – Eerdmans 2000 –P1639

¹⁵ Acts Ch 15



The above table shows that scriptures pointed to Jesus as being the answer for the eunuch's search— as no doubt Philip pointed out to him.

Luke was silent on the status and religious affiliations of the eunuch. Whether the eunuch was a Jew, a Gentile, and/or an impotent eunuch, the above table shows that he was able to find full acceptance in Judaism through the person of Jesus; which he subsequently did.

Whilst this issue of the status of the eunuch could pre-occupy the writer's mind for some time, the gap being bridged by acceptance in Christianity was wider or smaller depending upon the conclusion of his "un-specified" status.

In the end, all of the writers agreed that the story extends the spread of the kingdom to a person remote from Jerusalem, and probably remote from Judaism, and in that sense it reflected a focus on the issue of acceptance and inclusiveness of all peoples into the Christian faith.

Most of the writers whom I researched (Arnold, Barrett, Spencer, and Gaventa – in particular) all¹⁶ agree on these facts:-

- The Ethiopian was a Gentile from a foreign land.
- He was regarded as being in a state of religious impurity.¹⁷
- The man was a finance minister, in charge of the entire Treasury in his government. His possession of a scroll of Isaiah suggested that he was a person of means – these documents were expensive because they had to be copied by hand.
- He was literate, he was reading aloud, both because the way that the text was written (no word divisions or punctuation) and to aid his memory.
- He humbly sought and accepted the divinely-directed prophets from both Isaiah and Philip. (This is in contrast to the initial reaction of Simon the sorcerer in Samaria, and also Namaan – the Syrian Army commander).¹⁸

Luke was again silent on the offer of salvation being made by Philip to the eunuch through Jesus revealed in Scripture for both Eunuchs¹⁹ and for Gentiles.²⁰

¹⁶ Clinton E Arnold – *Acts* – Michigan – Zondervan 2002 – P47; J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield, G.N. Stanton (eds) - *International critical Commentary* – Scotland – T&T Clark, 1994 – P423; C.K. Barrett – *The acts of the Apostles – a shorter commentary* – Scotland – T&T Clark 2002 – P125; and F. Scott Spencer – *Journeying through Acts : a literary-cultural reading* – Massachusetts-Hendrickson – 2004 - P102.

¹⁷ Acts 8:36 – “what hinders me?”

¹⁸ 2 Kings 5:12-14

¹⁹ Isa 56: 3-5

²⁰ Isa 49:6

The story was concerned with the conversion of a Gentile. He was a very significant person to be converted, in many ways. This was supported by reference to his authority as a court official, his education, and his access to resources.²¹

Philip – the Evangelist

Another Philip was introduced in Acts as a member of the seven,²² appointed by the Apostles to care for the feeding of Greek widows.

There has been discussion whether Philip was the same person mentioned as one of the twelve apostles or as the evangelist who travelled to Samaria, the desert road to dialogue and convert the Ethiopian, and then through various places to Caesarea²³ where he lived.

Luke did not identify this Philip as one of the Apostles. In Luke's writing in the early periods the Twelve Apostles remained in Jerusalem.²⁴ Luke subsequently gave this Philip a title of Evangelist²⁵.

The selection and character of Philip²⁶

Philip was chosen as one of a group of seven men, to carry out the various tasks for the feeding of the Greek widows who were being overlooked. The twelve (Apostles) wanted to devote more time to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The men chosen needed to excel

²¹ I Howard Marshall –*The Acts of the Apostles* – England – Inter-varsity press 1980 –P160

²² Acts 6:1-7

²³ Acts 21:8-9

²⁴ Acts 8:1

²⁵ A person who seeks to convert others to the Christian faith, often (but not always) by public preaching –**Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English**– Oxford University press –Oxford – 1999.

²⁶ Acts 6:1-7

not only in natural abilities to administer, but to demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit. The people chosen were all Hellenists. That is, they all came from the offended group within the church. Each of the seven men selected had a Greek name.²⁷

Philip preached to and baptised the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-13), instructed and baptised the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), and preached elsewhere as well until finally settling in Caesarea (Acts 8:40). He was domiciled in that city, where he was later referred to as "the evangelist" (Acts 21:8).²⁸

In Acts 6:1-6 Luke described the selection criteria and the job description for which Philip was successful.

"Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

This proposal pleased the whole group.

They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."

Here, from the dictionary²⁹, is a commonly accepted profile of Philip which indicated how his character was perceived. Philip was:-

Known	<i>Be aware of, through observation, enquiry, or information, be</i>
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²⁷ Clinton E Arnold –Acts – Michigan –Zondervan 2002 – P68

²⁸ David J Webber- <http://www.angelfire.com/ny4/djw/lutherantheology.actsvi1-6.html>

²⁹ **Concise Oxford Dictionary of current English**– Oxford University Press –Oxford – 1999.

	<i>absolutely sure</i>
Full	<i>Containing or holding as much of or as many as possible, having no empty space</i>
Spirit	<i>The non-physical part of a person, which is the seat of emotions and character – regarded as surviving after death</i>
Wisdom	<i>The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting; insight into that which is truth.</i>

We can see that the seven men chosen were special indeed. They were further impacted by the acceptance of the whole group and by the laying on of hands by the Apostles.

In Acts, Luke described the exploits of Stephen as he fulfilled the work assigned to him and beyond. Luke also described some of the works of Philip; two of the seven men chosen initially for a feeding and distribution task.

Remember, from the text, Philip demonstrated all of these character traits, before he was chosen. In the end, God's guidance was paramount for Luke. In this episode, His guidance is evidenced by an Angel and then by the Holy Spirit.

The angel of the Lord and the Holy Spirit – providing supernatural direction

An angel is described within the scriptures as:-

- A spiritual being, primarily a messenger for God.³⁰
- Angels are a part of the creation of God, created either in the beginning or sometime before the foundation of the earth.³¹
- They are of a higher order than humans.³²
- They are greater in power and might.³³
- They are not to be worshipped by humans.³⁴

³⁰ Gen 16:7, Exod 3:2

³¹ Ps 148:2-5

³² Heb 2:7

³³ 2 Pet 2:11

Luke used angels at the beginning of another book which he wrote, and in Acts, he finished the story of Jesus life on earth, also with an angel. It is not surprising then that this particular story started and ended with a supernatural event.

In Luke's Gospel, angels announced the birth of Jesus and in multitudes they sang at his birth.³⁵ They were also involved at His resurrection and His ascension.³⁶

The particular story was set in motion by an angelic command to Philip which took him away from the scene of successful evangelism in Samaria and led him to a place which must have seemed wholly inappropriate for further Christian mission work.³⁷

This section of the narrative was reminiscent of the story of Elijah, who was apt to be moved from one place to another at short notice by the Spirit of Yahweh.³⁸ Moreover, in this section, as in the story of Elijah, it is difficult to distinguish the angel of the Lord from the Spirit of the Lord.³⁹

The angel and the spirit are used with little or no difference between the two agencies. Luke was writing that the conversion was planned by God – not Philip – who used his messenger to bring together the evangelist and the Gentile already interested in the Scriptures⁴⁰.

³⁴ Col 2:18

³⁵ Luke 1:26-28

³⁶ Matt 28:17 and Acts 1:11

³⁷ I Howard Marshall – *Tyndale new Testament commentaries – Acts* – England-Inter-Varsity Press – 2004 –P161

³⁸ 1 Kings 18:12

³⁹ Bob Deffinburgh – <http://www.bible.org/page.php>

⁴⁰ J.A. Emerton, C.E.B.Cranfield, G.N. Stanton (eds) - *International critical Commentary* –Scotland – T&T Clark, 1994 – P422

It was not clear why the angel of the Lord is replaced by the Spirit within the story, what is important is that Philip's journey and the subsequent action were seen to have been instigated by God, and thus were seen as part of His intention.

With respect to the inclusion of the Spirit as an initiator for Philip, we may presume that no ordinary person would approach a traveller of higher social rank, and therefore Philip needed the inward assurance from the Holy Spirit that this was what was intended.⁴¹ The conversion of the Ethiopian was planned not by Philip, but by God.

Ethiopia – the origin of the eunuch

The kingdom of Ethiopia, south of Aswan, had existed since the 8th century BC. Its two chief cities were Meroe and Napata. In the conversion of this Ethiopian, Luke or some of his readers might have seen fulfilment of the promises of Psalm 68:31 and Zephaniah 3:10.

Since *Homer's* time, the Ethiopians were regarded as living on the edge of the world. Ethiopia was rich in natural resources and was known for its wealth and trading.⁴²

⁴¹ I Howard Marshall – *Tyndale new Testament commentaries – Acts* – England-Inter-Varsity Press – 2004 –P161

⁴² Job 28:19, Isa 43:3, Dan 11:43

Not only did Ethiopia refer to a geographical territory, but it also indicated an ethnicity of black-faced peoples.⁴³ The territory of the Philistines, including the city of Gaza was itself one of the five cities of the Philistines. It had recently been rebuilt by the Roman governor Gabinius.

Clinton Arnold⁴⁴ writes that the Bible identifies Cush, the son of Ham as the father of the Ethiopians.⁴⁵ Ethiopia referred to in Luke's time was the land south of Egypt – what is today the Sudan and modern Ethiopia. The term "Ethiopia" referred to "the burnt-faced people" (which is not necessarily black – as in African).⁴⁶

Ethiopia is mentioned in a number of Biblical prophecies – Is 20:3-4, Ezekiel, 30:4 and Zephaniah Zeph 2; 12. In his commentary, F. Bruce⁴⁷ warns that Ethiopia's judgment is no different than Israel's (Amos 9:7); in fact the conversion of Ethiopia would allow her to share Israel's blessings (Isa 45:14).

The desert road – Gaza – Chariot – the place of meeting

The Oxford Bible commentary writes that Luke's geography is more exact than commentators give him credit.⁴⁸

⁴³ Jer 13:23

⁴⁴ Clinton E Arnold – *Acts* – Michigan – Zondervan 2002 – P68

⁴⁵ Gen 10:16

⁴⁶ Clinton E Arnold – *Acts* – Michigan – Zondervan 2002 – P69

⁴⁷ Frederick .F. Bruce – *The Acts of the Apostles : the Greek text with introduction and commentary* – Michigan – Eerdmans – 1990 – P.335

⁴⁸ John Baron and John Muddiman (eds) – *Oxford Bible Commentary* – Oxford – University press -2001-P.1039

Philip's route due south from Samaria intersected at Eleutheropolis with the Jerusalem-Gaza road. The road went south from Jerusalem to Hebron, and then west towards the coast at Gaza.⁴⁹ Even the timing of the journey was miraculous; just at that moment, Philip's path crossed the route of the Ethiopian pilgrim heading west to strike the coast road towards Egypt.⁵⁰

Scott Spencer⁵¹ suggests that while Philip might have been given a directional order –south, the context of the Angelic command *mesembria* (Grk) may also refer to a time direction, scheduling his journey at noon.

The commentary implied that Philip was given an unusual directional command, both in direction and in time. For the desert was in the south, and also nobody travelled at noon because of the temperature – an unusual and foolish time to travel!

The location where their paths crossed was off the beaten path of regular traffic – considered possibly to be a place for reorientation and transformation – as with the Israelites on their way through the Sinai desert away from Egypt to the Promised Land!

There was significance in the direction of his transforming trek through the desert as it is the reverse of the Israelites wilderness course; the eunuch was heading away from Judaism's holy land back to his native African country.

⁴⁹ I Howard Marshall –*The Acts of the Apostles* – England – Inter-varsity press 1980 –P161

⁵⁰ John Baron and John Muddiman (eds) – *Oxford Bible Commentary* – Oxford – University press -2001-P.1039

⁵¹ F. Scott Spencer – *Journeying through Acts : a literary-cultural reading* –Massachusetts-Hendrickson – 2004 P101

Luke was at pains to point out to his readers that this encounter was instigated by God – whether He used an angel or His Spirit. Philip was directed to go towards the south. Clinton Arnold ⁵² advises that the Greek (*horma*) was frequently used for chariots of war, but could also be used for some type of carriage for a long journey (As Joseph used on his trip from Egypt to Hebron to bury his father; Gen 46:29)

If the eunuch in his chariot covered an average of 25 miles per day, the trip to Jerusalem would have taken between 48-60 days; and round trip 96-120 days.

Further, if he was able to sit and read on his journey, he did not travel alone. It was probably ox-drawn, as Philip was able to run and join it⁵³

⁵² Clinton E Arnold –*Acts* – Michigan –Zondervan 2002 – P71

⁵³ J.A. Emerton, C.E.B.Cranfield, G.N. Stanton (eds) - *International critical Commentary* –Scotland – T&T Clark, 1994 – P421

3. How the story flowed

Summary of the story

There are many ways of summarising the story as it was related by Luke.

The best summary which I found was from Beverly Gaventa⁵⁴, I am relating her theological discourse, because in itself, it contains some very interesting words which themselves could be a fruitful exegetic study in their own right.

“Discerning the theological importance of this story requires that readers take seriously its fantastic character.

The timing in the heat of noonday, the location in the wilderness, the exotic description of the Ethiopian, the citation of a bewildering passage of scripture, and the divine direction all contribute to the impact of the story – to say nothing of the Spirit’s unusual mode of transportation.

Luke offers a story suffused with the unexpected, and in so doing he represents the Ethiopian as the ideal convert, one who is already seeking God, who hears and responds, and who rejoices in the gift of the gospel.

That this particular convert comes from the boundary of the experience and his audience – an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a powerful official in a court from the end of Luke’s world – suggests that he anticipates all those from the “ends of the earth” who will rejoice in the good news of Jesus Christ”.

⁵⁴ Beverly Gaventa – *Acts – a commentary* – Nashville – Abingdon – 2003 – P145

The conclusion for the characters in the story

God, through his agent, continued to control the event. The eunuch was now a baptised Christian. Philip's work for him was done.

Philip - "The Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away "

The same word *harpazo* (Grk) is used by Paul to refer to the "snatching up" of people to meet him in the air at His second coming.

This was not without precedent in the Bible. The Spirit of the Lord transported Elijah from one place to another.⁵⁵ Philip was whisked away to Azotus, by supernatural means, just as when he started on this assignment.⁵⁶ The phrase 'Spirit of the Lord' is also found in 5:9 and Luke 4; 18.

Caesarea appeared to be Philip's home; he next appeared to be there in the book of Acts – at a later date.⁵⁷

Scott Spencer⁵⁸ concluded that although this was an abrupt end of the story, Philip's boundary-breaking mission was appropriately capped off by his sudden miraculous removal from the scene.

While he continued his evangelistic tour up the coast to Caesarea, the spirit blows where it wills.

⁵⁵ 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16

⁵⁶ J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield, G.N. Stanton (eds) - *International critical Commentary* –Scotland – T&T Clark, 1994 – P425

⁵⁷ I Howard Marshall – *Tyndale new Testament commentaries – Acts* – England-Inter-Varsity Press – 2004 –P165

⁵⁸ F. Scott Spencer – *Journeying through Acts : a literary-cultural reading* –Massachusetts-Hendrickson – 2004 –P104

The eunuch -"*Went on his way rejoicing* "

Joy is one of the hallmarks and signs of new life in the messianic era⁵⁹ and was possibly used by Luke as evidence that the Ethiopian received the Holy Spirit.

Ireneus (A.D. 120-202) wrote, "This man was also sent into the regions of Ethiopia, to preach what he himself had received."⁶⁰

In terms of class of people who the eunuch had access, while Luke is silent on this, he would be able to witness in turn to the Queen and her family, other government officials, members of his department, and possibly other eunuchs. Truly a rich source!

⁵⁹ Acts 2:46; Luke 2:10

⁶⁰ Clinton E Arnold -*Acts* - Michigan -Zondervan 2002 - P71

4. What was Luke saying, in this story

Scripture – as a keynote for dialogue and conversion⁶¹

Most of the writers whom I researched agreed with I Howard Marshall⁶² when he described the Scripture which the eunuch was reading as coming from a passage of prophecy which referred to a servant of God who suffered humiliation of all kinds and bore the consequences of the sin of others. He thus makes some atonement for their sins and was finally exalted by God.

Ben Witherington⁶³ points out that this scriptural quotation is at the heart of the passage of the whole story, and forms its hinge. The focus on a shorn and shamed figure in Isaiah implicitly paralleled the eunuch's debased situation.

Eerdmans dictionary of the Bible⁶⁴ points out that the sharing by Philip – as represented by Luke, revolved around the affirmation that Jesus not only died on the cross, but that he died on the cross for our sins – in fulfilment of bible prophecy – according to the scriptures.⁶⁵ Scot Spencer⁶⁶ adds that Philip identified the rejected, vindicated, crucified, ascended Jesus as the humiliated exalted Isaianic servant, who sympathized with the plight of the social and religious outcasts and opened a way for them into the household of God.

⁶¹ Quotation from Isaiah 53:7,8

⁶² I Howard Marshall – *Tyndale new Testament commentaries – Acts* – England-Inter-Varsity Press – 2004 –P163

⁶³ Ben Witherington –*The Acts of the Apostles; a socio-rhetorical commentary* – Michigan –Eerdmans – 1998 –P292

⁶⁴ Astrid B Beck and Allan C Myers (Eds) – *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* – Michigan – Eerdmans 2000 P.67

⁶⁵ Acts 2:22-24

⁶⁶ F. Scott Spencer – *Journeying through Acts : a literary-cultural reading* –Massachusetts-Hendrickson – 2004 P104

Spencer continued the thought that this could explain the eunuch's eagerness to embrace Philip's message and asked for baptism on the spot. In the inclusive messianic community founded by the suffering risen Jesus, the eunuch found the understanding and acceptance he has been seeking.

Marshall⁶⁷ has a fitting comment on the actual conversion; he offers that the Ethiopian was led to faith by the realization that the prophetic Scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus.

Evangelism – an example of how its done

The eunuch would have observed that Philip was clothed as a Jew, and so it would have been natural to invite him to interpret the reading. Jesus had assisted the men on the road to Emmaus with interpretation of Scripture, so here Philip was invited to interpret scripture, in a similar fashion.⁶⁸

The Ethiopian did not ask for a teacher, but for a guide. Guides are considered as the ones reach out and encourage people on their walk and with their decisions. Philip instructed this enquirer on the sufferings of Jesus in reference to the fulfilment of biblical prophecy.⁶⁹ Philip got in the chariot alongside of the Ethiopian; he also accompanied him to the water.

When Philip spoke, he represented Jesus as the One of whom the prophet spoke, and further claimed that the fulfilment of prophecy in Jesus constituted 'Good News'. He pointed out the life of Jesus and its correspondence with the account of the Messiah, given in Isaiah

⁶⁷ I Howard Marshall – *Tyndale new Testament commentaries – Acts* – England-Inter-Varsity Press – 2004 –P163

⁶⁸ I Howard Marshall – *Tyndale new Testament commentaries – Acts* – England-Inter-Varsity Press – 2004 –P163

⁶⁹ Patrick Reardon – *As it is written* – Touchstone June 2006

Baptism – the result of evangelism

It was the normal practice in the early church for baptism to follow immediately after conversion. (2:38, 41, 8:12, 13). As in those cases quoted, Luke does not dwell on the how and the wherefore of baptism.

The request for baptism shows (a) how hungry the man was, and (b) how thorough Phillip had taught him – the rite which represented his identification with the death of Jesus, and incorporated him into the community of believers through baptism, as outlined by Peter on Pentecost.⁷⁰

Obedience – a keynote for all followers

The directions which Philip received from both the Spirit and the angel were very strange directions – (whether south to the desert or south in the middle of the day) – however, Philip followed them and demonstrated his faith his faithfulness, and his obedience.⁷¹

God's plan – is paramount

In the former story of Philip in Samaria, there was no special divine guidance mentioned, leading to the evangelistic venture, but here in this story, at every stage the spirit could be seen orchestrating what had happened.

⁷⁰ Clinton E Arnold –*Acts* – Michigan –Zondervan 2002 – P73

⁷¹ Ben Witherington –*The Acts of the Apostles; a socio-rhetorical commentary* – Michigan –Eerdmans – 1998 –P294

The Angel took him away from a successful evangelistic campaign and led him to a place which could be adjudged wholly inappropriate.⁷²

Special stress was placed throughout the narrative on God's engineering of this conversion, and thus it was part of God's plan.⁷³

⁷² I Howard Marshall –*The Acts of the Apostles* – England – Inter-varsity press 1980 –P160

⁷³ Ben Witherington –*The Acts of the Apostles; a socio-rhetorical commentary* – Michigan –Eerdmans – 1998 –P293

5. Other points of Scripture.

In the appendix attached , I have enumerated both Old and New Testament references which directly or indirectly pertain to this story. It has already been noted that Luke was writing for an audience of mainly Jews, who were searching for answers about the new Christian faith as fulfilment of Old Testament scripture. The Old Testament writings would have been well-known to most of his audience.

The purpose of the Appendix is not just to demonstrate Luke's use of the Old Testament writings, and the current yet to be accepted New Testament writings, but to demonstrate the consistent and recurring patterns of God's thoughts, promises, and actions throughout all of Scripture.

The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, as narrated by Luke, is no exception to this finding in the preceding paragraph.

End of Essay

Appendix 1⁷⁴ – Reference of the Ethiopian eunuch story to Old and New Testament writings

Topic	New Testament Ref	Old Testament Ref
Summary	Luke 24:13-35 The road to Emmaus	
Setting My witnesses to ... the ends of the earth Acts 1:8	Luke 2:32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."	Isaiah 49:6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles , that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."
Philip , known to be full of the spirit and wisdom Acts 6:5	Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.	Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor Joel 2:28-29 I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
the Ethiopian eunuch - - an important official Acts 8:27	Matthew 19:12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage ^[a] because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."	Isaiah 56:3-8 For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant-to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. Psalms 68:31 Envoys will come from Egypt; Cush [a] will submit herself to God.
the desert road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza Acts 8:26	Luke 1:80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.	Isaiah 40:3 a voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD, ^[a] make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.
he went to Jerusalem to worship Acts 8:27	John 4:20 "...on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."	1 Samuel 1:3 Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli,

⁷⁴ James Strong – *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* – USA – Abingdon - 1989

Topic	New Testament Ref	Old Testament Ref
		<p>were priests of the LORD.</p> <p>2 Kings 18:22 And if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"-isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem"?</p>
<p>sitting in his chariot Acts 8:28</p>		<p>Psalms 68:17 The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary.</p>
<p>reading from the book of Isaiah the prophet Acts 8:30</p>	<p>Luke 4:16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.</p>	<p>2 Kings 22:10 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.</p> <p>Nehemiah 8:8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.</p>
<p>The spirit told Philip Acts 8:29</p>	<p>Luke 1:28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."</p> <p>Luke 2:9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.</p>	<p>Genesis 16:7 The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.</p> <p>2 Kings 1:3, 15 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them</p>
<p>"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter" Acts 8:32</p>	<p>Romans 8:36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."</p>	<p>Psalms 44:22 Yet for your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.</p> <p>Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.</p>
<p>Unless someone guides me. Acts 8:31</p>	<p>Luke 24:25-27 25He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26Did not</p>	<p>Jeremiah 31:32-34 33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the LORD.</p>

Topic	New Testament Ref	Old Testament Ref
	<p>the Christ^[a] have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"</p> <p>27And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.</p>	<p>"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."</p>
His baptism Acts 8:38	<p>Luke 3:21 When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened.</p> <p>Also refer to Acts 2:38 – Peter’s sermon on what must be done to be saved.</p>	
The Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away Acts 8:39	<p>Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,</p>	<p>1 Kings 18:12 I don't know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you when I leave you.</p> <p>2 Kings 2:16 Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley."</p>
Went on his way rejoicing. Acts 8:39	<p>Luke 15:10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."</p>	<p>Psalms 105:43 He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.</p> <p>Psalms 117 1 Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! 2 For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD endures forever</p>

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