Acts Chapter 8: The Gospel Advances

Introduction

Acts 1:8
8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

When Jesus commissioned the Church, he promised they would receive the Holy Spirit which will give them POWER to be "My Witnesses" in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the "end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In Acts 8, we see the first "Evangelist" and "First Mission" outside Jerusalem. Here we meet *Philip the Evangelist* (Acts 21:8), who scripture uses as our prototype. The Holy Spirit is taking the Church beyond the city of Jerusalem to Samaria and Ethiopia. God has chosen to use individuals to deliver the message of the Good News (The Gospel) to the lost.

In Acts 7, we see the first martyr, Stephen, like Philip, he was appointed as deacon or server to the Hellenist widows. Both Stephen and Philip's ministry expanded, from serving tables to serving the Gospel. Setting the model for future "Gospel workers", we are called to grow, from milk drinkers to meat eaters, from students to teachers, as the writer of Hebrews puts it (Hebrews 5:11-14).

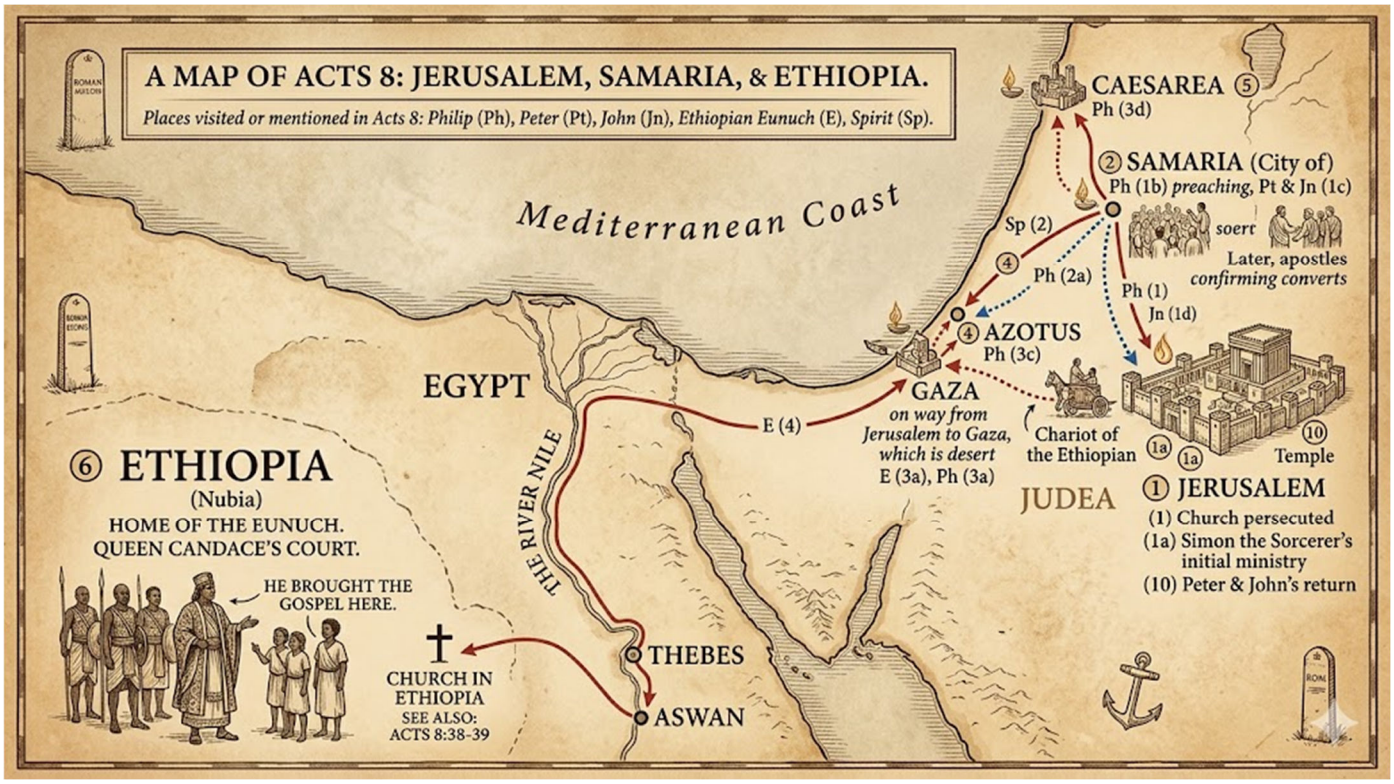
It's interesting to note, what is driving the church is persecution, Saul does not want to pacify the new church as his teacher Gamaliel (Acts 5:34) had recommended, he wants to imprison and crush it. This Persecution causes the church to flee Jerusalem, Philip the deacon (Acts 6:5), later becomes the Evangelist, flees Jerusalem, but he takes the Gospel with him. Samaria is an adversary to Jews, but the Gospel comes with Philip, and he is empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel.

Saul Ravages the Church

Chapter 8 picks up from Chapter 7, we last see Stephen, the first *Martyr*[1], Saul the Pharisee, later

[1] Witness is literally in the Greek: Martyr, as translated from Acts 1:8, μάρτυς martus *mar'-toos*

Paul, in charge of the attack. Did Saul have any understanding of the Messianic prophesies and the suffering of the Messiah foretold in scripture? No, just like Jews today, most Jews do not understand the two portraits of the Messiah. Saul viewed Jesus as a false messiah, leading the Jews astray. Only later do the blinders come off his eyes, then he sees "Suffering Messiah" of the prophets (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Daniel 9:26, Isaiah 50). Saul thinks he is fighting for God, opposing Christianity.



Acts 8:1-3
1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.
3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

VS 1-3

Saul was put in charge of the Jewish response to "Christian" Evangelism, the answer was prison and death. The effect? The church scattered and so did the Gospel. **Persecution** in many ways purifies the Church, why? Because only sincere believers will be willing to give their lives for the Gospel. Secondly, it shows the depth of faith for those receiving persecution. If Satan could have his way, he would eliminate the church, but Jesus has all authority. Satan can only go as far as God will permit, as we see in Job, Satan complains that there is a hedge around Job this prohibits him doing what he wants.

Job 1:9-10
9 Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason?
10 Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

Of uncertain affinity; a *witness* (literally [judicially] or figuratively [generally]); by analogy a "martyr": - martyr, record, witness.

The same goes for the church and the apostles, why does Stephen die and Philip remain alive? We have let God make his decisions and choices, but be obedient to his calling in our lives. **Devout men** stepped forward to bury Stephen despite persecution.

With the persecution, came the expansion of the Gospel, because the church did not keep quiet about the Good News of Christ but began to spread it beyond Jerusalem. The persecution seemed aimed at the Greek speaking Jews, such as Stephen and Philip who both had Greek names. Philip goes to Samaria, and with him the Gospel.

Wherever we go, we have the hope of God's Salvation with us, we have the opportunity of being God's evangelists just like the persecuted first century church. In the last days, we are promised there will be a horrendous persecution, but we also see the result, so we know there is no reason to fear death. They are killed on earth, but they go to Heaven as we see in Revelation, they come out of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 7:14).

Revelation 7:9
9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

Philip Proclaims Christ in Samaria[2]

Acts 8:4-8
4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.
5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.
6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.
7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.
8 So there was much joy in that city.

Vs 4-5

When you know the Truth and Power of the Gospel, you are empowered by the Holy Spirit, you can't help but to continue to proclaim the Good News. So, the Spirit moved **Philip** to go to Samaria (*Sebaste*). Now **Samaria** was hostile to a Jewish presence, they were not the best of friends, so Philip was not going to a safe place. The same goes for us, who are also called, we are not guaranteed a peace and joy when we present the Gospel, but we know God is in control, and nothing can happen to us that He is not aware of.

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[2] To understand Samaritan messianic beliefs during the period of the Book of Acts (1st Century CE), we have to look at the **Taheb**—a figure distinct from the Davidic "King-Messiah" expected by many Judeans of the time.
While Judean expectations often focused on a military or royal deliverer from the line of David, Samaritans looked for a **prophetic restorer**.

The Taheb: The "Restorer"

The word *Taheb* literally means "the one who returns" or "the restorer." Unlike the Jewish Messiah, the Taheb was not expected to be a king. Because Samaritans only accepted the **Pentateuch** (the first five books of the Moses) as scripture, their eschatology was rooted exclusively in those texts.

Key Characteristics of the Taheb

- **The Second Moses:** Their primary scriptural proof was **Deuteronomy 18:15-18**, where God promises to raise up a "prophet like Moses." To Samaritans, the Taheb would be this figure—a supreme teacher and lawgiver.
- **A Human Figure:** He was viewed as a mortal man, not a divine being. He would live for a time (often cited as 110 years, like Joshua), restore the true worship at **Mount Gerizim**, and then die.
- **Restoration of "Favor":** Samaritans believed they were living in the *Fanuta* (a period of Divine Disfavor). The Taheb would usher in the *Rahuta* (the period of Divine Favor), finding the lost vessels of the Tabernacle which they believed were hidden on Mount Gerizim.

In John 4, Jesus met the Samaritan woman of Sychar at the well and then spent 2 days teaching the people. (John 4) Many believed, so the soil had been prepared for the Gospel, since they would have talked to other Samaritans before Philip arrived.

The Samaritans were considered half-breeds and apostates by Jews for three reasons.

1. Ethnicity: the Assyrians when the conquered Israel, the northern kingdom in 722 BC, they brought in Assyrian settlers and removed Israelites into Assyria. These Samaritans were not full descendent of Jacob according to the Jews (2 Kings 17:24)
2. They accepted only the Mosaic Law, which they changed to focus on Mt. Gerizim rather than Jerusalem, so they were considered apostate. They focused on the coming of *the Taheb*, rather than the Messiah.
3. Judah conquered Samaria and destroyed their temple on Gerizim during the reign of John Hyrcanus I (134-104 BC) one of the Maccabean rulers. The Romans liberated Samaria from Jewish control in 63 BC, so animosity was lasting.

VS.6-8

God worked signs and wonders through the hand of Philip, just like Peter was given attention in the Temple by healing the lame man, the same was happening in Samaria. This provided both confirmation and demonstrated the authority behind Philip message. To this day, God provides miracles and signs to reach lost groups when missionaries arrive to present the Gospel. The signs and miracles during the time of Jesus was to confirm his ministry to those who had doubts.

> John 20:30-31
> 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;
> 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Like Jesus demonstrated his authority over life, health; the lame and blind were healed, and the weather, his “Witnesses” were being given that authority also to validate their message. Unclean spirits, fallen angels are subject to Philip, also the paralyzed and lame were healed, showing that their bodies were also subject to the authority of Jesus’s “Witnesses”. People rejoiced because they saw the Hope of the Kingdom of God.

Simon the Magician Believes

Samaria was also known as Sebaste, it was under the influence of a “Magi” known as Simon who claimed to be the “Great” power of God. He amazed city with his magic, now Philip presence, signs and healings challenged his authority. The battle is taking place in the “Spiritual Realms” Philip has the authority of Jesus, taking charge over demonically controlled territory under the Simon the Magician authority. This is an example of the spiritual authority given to the saints. This is the same authority you and I have, when we know our position in Jesus Christ.

> Ephesians 6:12
> 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

> Acts 8:9-13
> 9 But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.
> 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.”
> 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.
> 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Vs 9-13

According to church tradition, Simon became a major obstacle to Peter and the early church after this event in Acts 8, his is one of the early founders of the Gnostic movements which opposed Christianity with heretical teachings.

Church tradition regarding Simon Magus (the "Sorcerer") goes far beyond the brief encounter in Acts 8. While the Bible leaves him at a moment of apparent repentance, early Christian writers—most notably Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus—transformed him into the "Father of All Heresies." According to tradition, Simon didn't just fade away; he became the primary antagonist to the Apostle Peter and the founder of *Simonianism*, a precursor to Gnosticism. Some of the Gnostic teaching are even with us today, in both Islam and Mormonism.

Elements of Gnostics have found its way into Islam, where the Jesus of Islam is nearly identical the Gnostic teacher Basilides view of the cross. For example, Basildes[3] who live in 107 AD, 500 years before Mohammad taught, Jesus did not die on the cross, but a substitute, Simon of Cyrene was changed to look like Jesus and Jesus did was caught up into Heaven. Gnostics who fled persecution escaped into Arabia and Mohammad adopted some of their teaching including the belief Jesus did not die on the cross, but a phantom[4] was crucified in his place.

So, the belief of Simon was not genuine as we shall see later, it was only a means to an end. We see this today in Churches, it's nothing new Satan goal is to stop the Gospel, he has external means, through persecution, threats, violence and doctrinal opposition such as Islam and Communism. He also tries to attack from within, bringing his agents within the church to present false heretical doctrines opposed to God's WORD.

2 Corinthians 11:4
4 For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Galatians 1:7-9
7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.
9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Simon the Magician was baptized and stayed with Philip, he was watching the miraculous signs and saw the draw it was bringing Philip. He wanted what Philip had, so when Peter arrives we see the real Simon.

Peter and John Visit Samaria

The apostolic authority was maintained when word came of Philip work in Samaria, Peter and John both came to confirm and affirm. The receiving of the Holy Spirit referred to here is the outward signs that were manifest at Pentecost by the believers in Acts 2. Without the Holy Spirit, one cannot be saved (John 3:3)

Ephesians 1:13-14
13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

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[3] Basilides was one of the most influential and early "Gnostic" teachers in Alexandria, Egypt, active between roughly **117 and 138 CE** (the reigns of Emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius).
While most of his original works—including a massive 24-volume commentary on the Gospels called the *Exegetica*—were lost or destroyed, we know of him through the biting critiques of later "heresy-hunting" Church Fathers like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus.

[4] Gnostic influence on Islam in the Quran: **Surah 4:157**: and for boasting, "We killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah." But they neither killed nor crucified him—**it was only made to appear so.**[1] Even those who argue for this ´crucifixion` are in doubt. They have no knowledge whatsoever—only making assumptions. They certainly did not kill him.

Acts 8:14-17
14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,
15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,
16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

VS. 14-17

Peter and John arrive on the scene, to pass along apostolic confirmation. Samaria was still part of Israel, even if they were rejected by Judah, the southern kingdom. The Church in Samaria would also be part of the New Covenant; this is evident because Peter and the rest of the church do not view them as Gentiles. We can compare this reaction to an almost an utter amazement when Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit in Acts 10-11. Peter reports the following almost in disbelief that the Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit like the Jews.

Acts 11:17-18
17 If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"
18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

Received the Holy Spirit was a visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts 2, where Peter quotes from Joel, being that would speak in languages, see visons, dream dreams (Acts 2:17-19).

The Samaritan Schism

c. 30–40 CE

Following his encounter with Philip and Peter in Acts, tradition says Simon relapsed. He began traveling with a woman named Helen, whom he claimed was the "First Thought" (Ennoia) of God, rescued from a brothel in Tyre.

Rome and the Statue

c. 45–50 CE

Justin Martyr (writing c. 150 CE) claims Simon traveled to Rome during the reign of Claudius. He allegedly performed such impressive miracles that he was honored with a statue on the Tiber River inscribed "Simoni Deo Sancto" (To Simon the Holy God).

The Flight and Fall

c. 64–68 CE

The most famous legend (from the *Acts of Peter*) describes a final showdown in Rome. Simon attempted to prove his divinity by flying over the Forum. St. Peter prayed for his fall; Simon's "demonic support" vanished, and he fell to earth, breaking his legs and eventually dying of his injuries.

The Transformation: From Sorcerer to Heresiarch

Early Church Fathers documented a dramatic and often supernatural rivalry between Simon and the Apostles that lasted for decades after the events in Samaria.

Peter and Simon Magus

Acts 8:18-25
18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,
19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."
20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!
21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.
22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.
23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."
24 And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."
25 Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Vs 18-25

Here is where the true nature of **Simon** comes to the forefront, he sees the "Spiritual Authority" of Peter, in that Holy **Spirit** became manifest when Peter

laid his hands on the Samaritans. Simon saw the spiritual power, but he did not understand it. He saw it as a **power** and money-making opportunity, showing the hardness of his heart.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Philip is God's example for the church; "How to Evangelize", after preaching in territory of Samaria, now God has him on another mission. The Gospel spreads through people, inspired by the Spirit. We need to be open to God's calling, now he is called to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza.

Acts 8:26-40
26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place.
27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship
28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.
29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."

VS 26-29

An angel: Not all of us have an angel telling us what to do, but we do have the Holy Spirit, we just have to be open to listening. God will give us the prompt; we must follow through. How is Philip being used here? He is helping a searching individual understand the prophets. He is being moved to the place, so he can help another soul understand God's message in Isaiah.

A Jewish presence in Ethopia has been traced to the time of Solomon

Philip Explains Isaiah 53

Acts 8:30-40
30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"
31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.
32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.
33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."
34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?"
35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.
36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?"
38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.
39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.
40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

VS 30-40

The Holy Spirit uses Philip as the model of Evangelism in the way the Gospel is presented. The Ethiopian was in Jerusalem to worship, and maybe he heard about events that happened. He heard about Jesus, and claims of the Messiah, and he was seeking to understand. Because Philip understood

Isaiah 53, God could use him to help the Ethiopian understand what he was reading. The same goes for me and you, the more we understand, the more God can use us to help others also understand.

There are two portraits of the Messiah in scripture, one is the conquering King who will rule the world, the other is the suffering Messiah, who will die for the sins of the world. Because Judaism focused only on the "Conquering" King Messiah, they missed the "Suffering" Servant Messiah. Most of the world still misses the Servant Messiah, who will die for everyone's sins. This is what Philip helped the Ethiopian understand from the prophet Isaiah. This is also a major focus in Paul's ministry in the book of Acts, and also what Jesus' emphasis about himself.

> Luke 24:25-27
> 25 And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
> 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"
> 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
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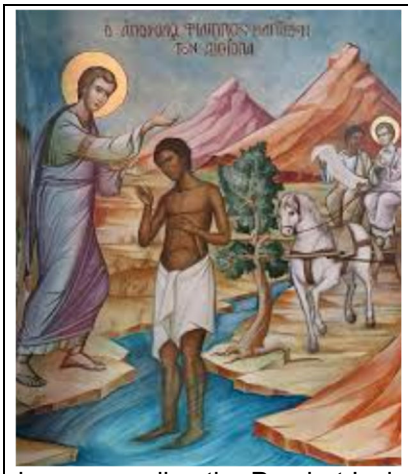
> Acts 17:2-3
> 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,
> 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

Isaiah 53 is one of the most powerful witnesses of Jesus, since it was written 700-years before his birth, and it is in every Jewish Bible, but it is hidden from most people's sight. It clearly teaches a man will come who will bear the sins of the world, just as the Gospel teaches. It literally is the Gospel in the Old Testament:

> Isaiah 53:4-7
>
> 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.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.7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.



The Ethiopian Tradition

1. Identity and Name
While the Bible refers to him only by his title (the treasurer of Queen Candace), Ethiopian tradition provides him with a specific name: **Qeqinos** (or Bachos). He is revered as a saint, and his journey is seen as the fulfillment of **Psalm 68:31**: *"Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."*

2. The "Apostle" to Ethiopia
Church tradition holds that after Philip baptized him, the eunuch returned to the Kingdom of Aksum (ancient Ethiopia) and immediately began evangelizing. For this reason, he is often called the **"Apostle of the Ethiopians."** * **Pre-Christian Context:** Tradition suggests he was already a "God-fearer" or a Jewish proselyte, explaining why he was in Jerusalem to worship and why he was reading the Prophet Isaiah.

- **The Transition:** His conversion marks the moment Ethiopia moved from the Old Covenant (Hebraic/Solomonic traditions) to the New Covenant.

3. Historical Impact on the Church
While the formal establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as a state institution occurred later in the 4th century under **St. Frumentius**, the tradition of the eunuch serves a vital role:

- **Apostolic Succession:** It provides the Ethiopian Church with a direct, unbroken link to the original Apostles and the very first decade of the Christian movement.
- **National Identity:** It reinforces the "Solomonic" claim of the Ethiopian people, bridging the gap between the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon and the Christian era.

4. Liturgical Commemoration

The Ethiopian eunuch is frequently depicted in Ethiopian iconography—usually in a chariot with Philip or standing in the water of baptism. His story is a centerpiece of the **Timkat** (Epiphany) celebrations, which commemorate the baptism of Christ and, by extension, the baptism of the Ethiopian nation.

The Jews of Ethiopia

Origins and Legends

The exact origins of the Beta Israel are debated by historians, though several traditional narratives exist:

- **The Solomonic Line:** According to the *Kebra Nagast* (The Glory of Kings), the Beta Israel are descendants of the retinue sent by King Solomon to accompany Menelik I—his son with the Queen of Sheba—back to Ethiopia.
- **The Lost Tribe:** Another prominent tradition holds that they are descendants of the **Tribe of Dan**, who fled south to avoid the civil war in the Kingdom of Israel or the Assyrian conquest.
- **The Nilotic Migration:** Some historians suggest they may have descended from Jews who fled Egypt after the destruction of the First Temple, traveling south along the Nile into the Ethiopian highlands.

The Return of the Jews of Ethiopia

Isaiah 11:11-12
11 In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, **from Cush**, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. 12 He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

The Return: Operations Moses and Solomon

In the late 20th century, the community faced intense pressure from famine and political instability under the Derg regime. Following a 1973 ruling by Israel's Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef that confirmed their Jewish status, the Israeli government began massive clandestine rescue missions:

1. **Operation Moses (1984–1985):** Thousands of Ethiopian Jews walked through the desert to camps in Sudan. Many died of starvation and disease before being airlifted to Israel.
2. **Operation Solomon (1991):** As the Ethiopian government neared collapse, Israel executed a massive 36-hour airlift, transporting over 14,000 people to Israel on 35 non-stop flights.

Modern Day

Today, there are approximately **160,000** Israelis of Ethiopian descent. While the community has faced significant challenges regarding socio-economic integration and systemic discrimination, they have also made profound contributions to Israeli politics, medicine, the arts, and the military. The story of the Beta Israel remains a powerful symbol of the "Ingathering of the Exiles."