

1. The LORD commands His Church to go to unexpected places.
 - a. God calls His people to places which He has ordained (1)
 - i. An angel of the LORD spoke to Philip
 1. This "angel of the LORD" is a messenger of the LORD
 - a. Angels are messengers - it's what the title "angel" mean
 - i. Thus, when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, an "angel from heaven appeared, strengthening him" means that an angel gave him strength by speaking God's promises to him
 - ii. This is vital to understand in that context because the strength which Jesus needed in the moments of pain/suffering/anxiety/temptation was the Word of the Father - the promise that He would be raised up, so that he could endure the cross and despise its shame (Heb)
 - b. The message to Philip was “to go to the road which leads from Jerusalem to Gaza according to the noonday sun”
 - ii. This work of the messenger of the LORD lays the groundwork for the sovereignty of God’s underlying presence throughout this entire story
 1. Yes, it’s a very unexpected place, but God is sovereignly working out all the interactions in this story
 - b. God calls some people to very unexpected and unpromising places (2)
 - i. The LORD, through His messenger, told Philip to go to a place without any evangelistic merit
 1. Get up and Go!
 - ii. He was told to go at midday
 1. possible euphemism for "south"
 2. It seems improbable that the meaning is merely "go south" because the detail that follows (upon the road, the one going down from Jerusalem to Gaza) is so specific as to render the direction to get there from Samaria moot.
 3. Thus, it appears that the command indicated that Philip was to proceed at midday.
 - a. Why? - it's hot and unexpected
 - i. God often uses the unexpected people and times and places in order to show His great power over all things
 - ii. Gideon and the 300 (Judges 7)
 1. All the judges, really: Ehud was left-handed, Jephthah was a pirate, Deborah was a woman, Gideon was a coward, Samson was a sexual deviant and fool, etc.
 - b. It’s an unexpected time to run into travelers in a “desolate place”
 - iii. He was to travel a desolate road to a desolate place
 1. “the road going down from Jerusalem to Gaza”
 2. Gaza was an ancient Philistine city
 3. It was on the coast of the Mediterranean, approximately 50 miles as the crow flies to the WSW of Jerusalem (about the distance from Eugene to Reedsport)
 - a. It may have been that, having been to the Samaritans, Philip assumed that he was being called to proclaim the gospel to the Philistine city, an ancient enemy of Israel
 - i. Gaza was condemned by Amos (1:6-7), Zephaniah (2:4,10) and Zechariah (9:5-8) for its role, like Samaria, in delivering over Judah to the Babylonians
 1. Particularly Zephaniah 2:4, where Gaza is prophesied to be "deserted" (Acts 8:26, 'this place was deserted'), and the Philistines driven out "at midday" and "uprooted"

2. Philip's ministry reveals the good news that God reconciles previous animosity, a redemption under one king - salvation to all peoples in the name of Jesus Christ
- b. It would have taken Philip multiple days to travel the entire road, over some pretty difficult country
 - i. He didn't know what the plan was, how long it would take, what he would find in Gaza, etc.
 - ii. Walking in faith *without knowing the details*, is a mark of one "full of the Spirit and of wisdom"
 - iii. Not only is the plan unknown, but it seems quite worse than his previous context
 1. All of this is very weird - moving from a place of wonderful success in proclamation, power, and transformation to a place that seem extraordinarily unfit for such ministry
 2. It's not a city, particularly if Gaza is the ancient city, which was destroyed a hundred years earlier, but even the road "is a wilderness place"
 - iv. This meant that he had to leave a successful ministry in Samaria to go!
- c. When God calls us to unexpected places, we can trust that He will provide unexpected results
 - i. "so he rose up and went"

2. The LORD calls unexpected people to Himself.

- a. God calls those who are far off in distance, culture, and experience (3)
 - i. An Unexpected Outsider Whom God Has Called Appears!
 1. BEHOLD!
 - a. Vivid description of the completely unexpected encounter with the character to be explained
 - b. The "deserted" road in the noonday sun is not where you expect to run into the Secretary of the Treasury of the Queen of Ethiopia.
 2. an unexpected ethnicity - Ethiopian Man:
 - a. Ethiopia, biblical Cush or Nubia, is in North Africa
 - i. The Greek name, Αἰθίοψ (*Aithiops*), is a compound word of "αἶθω" (*aitho* - to burn) and "ὤψ" (*ops* - face)
 - ii. Thus, this was an African man with dark skin, most likely present-day Sudan
 1. Again, God is preeminently showing that the gospel is for ALL people without distinction!
 3. An unexpected condition - Eunuch
 - a. Most likely a castrated man
 - i. Men who were to serve in positions of power, influence, and responsibility and around women were usually castrated in order to protect regal lineage
 1. Those who served a King's harem, for example
 2. And those who were allowed into the Queen's chambers, like this man most likely was
 - ii. This indicates his prestige, influence, power, and competence
 - iii. Yet, not all with the title "eunuch" were physically castrated
 - b. However, it does appear that Luke is pointing out his physical disability in order to reveal his "exclusion", even more than the Samaritans
 - i. denied inclusion into the "assembly" (Deut 23:1) – humbled and excluded, at least partially
 - ii. It would have been the case in 2nd Temple period that he was most likely not even allowed to become a proselyte because of this condition

- iii. Thus, the gospel is seen as the foil to his exclusion on the basis of the suffering and imputed honor of Christ in Isaiah 53 & 54
 - 4. An unexpected position - High Court Official (*Dynastus*)
 - a. He was a trustworthy, competent, powerful man
 - i. Luke is writing this letter to Theophilus, who is also a nobleman, and this particular information would be encouraging that powerful and socially successful people also recognized Jesus as the Christ
 - b. of Candace - Title like Pharaoh, Queen of Ethiopia
 - i. in charge of all her treasure - very, very powerful man in whose charge is great responsibility
 - ii. This goes to show us that powerful, successful, and educated people can also submit to the lordship of Christ Jesus
 - 1. Just as some people prejudge the poor and minimized in society, so also some can prejudge the wealth and powerful in society
 - 2. Both prejudices are erroneous: the gospel transcends social status
 - 5. An unexpected purpose - had come to Jerusalem to worship
 - a. believed in the God of the Jews, even though he was not allowed all the way in to the assembly
 - i. We see a man who is desperate to know the LORD, against the odds (Ethiopian, eunuch, powerful, wealthy, etc.)
 - b. He is revealed to be striving to understand the Scriptures
 - 6. Doing unexpected things
 - a. He was reading the prophet Isaiah while sitting in his chariot
 - b. He must have been wealthy to afford his own copy of a major prophet
 - c. He must have truly treasured God's Word to purchase it, and read it on a chariot ride
 - i. You get the idea that he couldn't wait to read it, having been to Jerusalem, maybe purchased it there
 - ii. He is excited to understand, urgency covers this moment
- b. God calls us to reach those who are outside our culture by His Spirit (4)
 - i. The Spirit spoke to Philip
 - 1. First, an angel of the LORD
 - a. The angel would have been visible and necessary for such an odd request
 - 2. Now, the Spirit speaks to Him
 - a. To speak to a man reading the Scriptures isn't as odd.
 - c. God calls us to get near to those who are outside our culture (5)
 - i. Go and join this chariot
 - 1. Literally, go and "glue together"
 - a. It is a strange word, not the usual word for fellowship or "with"
 - i. Used in 5:13, where "none of the people dared to unite with them, but called them great"
 - ii. Used in 9:26 of Paul's attempt to unite to the church in Jerusalem, but they would not because they were scared of him
 - iii. Used in Rom 12:9 "abhor what is evil; cling to what is good"
 - b. It means to cling or stick to something so that it is inseparable and united in purpose and direction
 - 2. Thus, the Spirit tells Philip to go and get really, really, close to that chariot. :)
 - d. God calls us to be bold, daring, and adventurous to get near to them (6)
 - i. And Philip ran to it...
 - 1. See the eagerness of Philip in his obedience, even when asked to do weird and unexpected things

2. The image is one of Philip, having tucked the long edges of his garments up into his belt (girded) to loose his legs to run without interference, gradually catching up to the chariot *and jogging next it, suspiciously close*
3. The LORD creates unexpected opportunities to proclaim Him.
 - a. Preparing to proclaim Christ begins with knowing God's Word (7)
 - i. So close that he "heard him reading the prophet Isaiah"
 1. So Philip is so close that he can hear what the official is reading
 - a. In the ANE most people would read aloud, not silently
 2. He is so familiar with the Scriptures that he recognizes it as the prophet Isaiah
 - a. This is also because Jesus has applied this particular portion of Isaiah to himself, as recorded in Luke 22:37 (quote from Isaiah 53:12) and John 12:38 (Isa 53:1)
 3. Sometimes we get so focused on the strategy of commending the gospel to people, we forget that the power of commendation to the heart of man is the Word of God itself!
 - a. Isaiah 55:11 – ‘my word never returns to me without fulfilling the purpose for which I sent it’
 - b. God creates opportunities for proclaiming the gospel to an individual (8)
 - i. Now Philip knows what to do!!
 1. Note that the Spirit did not tell Philip to speak to the man. He moves now on the basic premise that he is to proclaim the gospel.
 - a. He doesn't need another command to do so!
 - b. He also probably is glad to see somebody to talk to. :)
 2. He simply asked some basic questions of the man
 - a. There is great value in asking questions to verify what people's concerns are, concerning Truth, values, understanding
 3. He asks a pertinent and personal question: "Do you really know what you are reading?"
 - a. "really" is an intensive particle modifying "to know"
 - b. There is an untranslatable particle, "*ara*", which indicates anxiety, concern, or impatience.
 - i. That is, Philip is anxious that this man understand what he is reading, i.e. that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 was just crucified and raised from the dead a little while ago in Jerusalem!
 - c. Note that he begins with a question to understand what the man was really intending in reading Isaiah 53.
 - i. Was he interested in "really knowing"?
 - ii. Was he reading Isaiah to understand intellectually or obediently?
 - iii. Is he open to *receiving* the gospel?
 - d. This is a great example of how to proclaim the gospel in a private one-on-one discussion
 - i. Do you understand what this *means*?
 - ii. Not merely what it says, for the man knew what it said, but rather what it means
 4. The man admits the necessity for help to understand.
 - a. "How can I, unless someone will guide me?"
 - i. Consider the humility in this simple question, particularly coming from such a powerful, responsible, competent man!
 - ii. He invited Philip to come into his own chariot and sit with him.
 1. This also shows us the importance of sound interpretation of the Scriptures and the necessity of instruction, teaching, and explanation of the Word of God
 2. The Word of God is powerful, as it is understood
 - a. It is not magic – just read it and magically things happen

- a. this is a man of power
 - 2. Both Philip and the eunuch *together* enter into the water
 - a. this is a strong phrase of equality, fellowship, brotherhood, belonging
 - i. this is vital to message of the passage - the eunuch, inhibited from inclusion in Temple worship, servant of a foreign power, wealthy and powerful, gets into the same water, at the same time, in the same gospel as Philip, the preacher and guide, the Jew, the traveler with no wealth or power, walking on a road to nowhere
 - 3. Philip baptizes the Ethiopian as one who submits to the rejected and resurrected Jesus (Isa 53-54)
6. The LORD combines unexpected people into one New Family.
 - a. The Spirit of the LORD reconciles believers, though they remain separated by distance (12)
 - i. The Spirit of the Lord took Philip away immediately
 - 1. The word "carried" is an odd word, which means "seized, snatched, forcibly grab and drag off"
 - a. It is used of what predators do to prey or what thieves do to plunder
 - b. It is a somewhat violent word, indicating a sudden and unexpected parting of ways
 - c. This could indicate that Philip immediately disappeared, supernaturally, or that he simply was compelled to leave on and head North and the parting seemed premature
 - 2. But the point is that he and the eunuch are separated unexpectedly by the Spirit of the Lord
 - a. The sovereignty of God in this passage is overwhelming
 - b. In fact, there is a close allusive reference in Amos (again!) 3 concerning Ashdod (Azotus), Samaria, and God's seizing of His people from out of all the nations
 - i. Amos 1:11, 3:4
 - ii. The judgment of God upon the enemies of Israel, fulfilled in the exiles and destruction hundreds of years before Philip, are being redeemed in God's sovereign salvation of people from among their very tribes!
 - b. The gospel does not call us to leave our varied cultures, but rather to live in them differently – with joy! (13)
 - i. The eunuch continued going where he was going
 - 1. believing the gospel does not mean leaving our normal roads of life
 - a. he was not to depend upon Philip, or pursue Philip, or cling to Philip
 - i. The text uses the word "for" to connect this phrase and the joy in which he walked
 - ii. "the eunuch did not see him any longer, FOR he proceeded on his road rejoicing"
 - 1. that is, the reason why the eunuch didn't see Philip was not merely because the Spirit seized Philip, but rather because he kept going in the direction of his journey, i.e. back to the Queen in Ethiopia
 - b. The point is that the Ethiopian man never saw Philip again, because he went on to his normal work and social circles in Ethiopia and Philip went North towards Azotus, Joppa, and eventually settled in Caesarea (Acts 21:8), up the coast from Gaza about 75 miles
 - 2. however, it does mean that we walk those roads differently
 - a. he went rejoicing
 - b. The gospel leads to great joy
 - c. Philip travels through Philistine country proclaiming the gospel that God is reconciles outsiders through Jesus (14)

- i. Philip continues preaching through Philistine country, reconciling former enemies and bringing the unexpected ones into the Kingdom of God as full heirs
 1. Philip “was discovered in Azotus”
 - a. “was discovered” is a passive form, indicating that others observed him (found him) in Azotus, later
 - i. The wording does not, necessarily, though it could be, a miraculous disappearance and reappearance
 - ii. In fact, the passive form seems to indicate that “nobody saw him again, including the Ethiopian, until he was seen in Azotus”
 - b. Azotus is the NT period name for the ancient city of Philistine Ashdod (1 Sam 5)
 2. As God fulfills His promise through Zechariah
 - a. Zechariah 9:4-12