

## **Acts 8:26-40<sup>ii</sup>**

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 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 silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea

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### **<sup>ii</sup> About the First Reading: Acts 8:26-40**

Philip has been presented as evangelist to the despised Samaritans. Now he has been sent to another outsider. Ethiopia in the first century referred to southern Egypt, now the Sudan. The eunuch may have been a Gentile proselyte or a "God-fearer," who accepted much but not all of the Jewish law. As a eunuch, he would have

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been barred from Jewish worship, although Isaiah prophesied the inclusion of eunuchs.

The fourth servant song from Isaiah (Isaiah 52:13–53:12), which becomes the inspiration for the eunuch's inquiries, was central for the early Church's understanding of Jesus' death and resurrection as Christians searched the scriptures to find confirmation of what they had seen to be true.