

The Book of Acts: Embracing All Nations

David Feddes

To the ends of the earth

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.** (Act 1:8)

Spirit for all

We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. (Acts 2:11)

I will pour out my Spirit on **all people**. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams... The promise is for you and your children and **for all who are far off**—for all whom the Lord our God will call. (Acts 2:17,39).

Culture clash in church

- The Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. (Acts 6:1)
- *Seven Spirit-filled men with Greek names were chosen as leaders to handle this problem, including Phillip the evangelist.*
- Still today different cultures experience practical problems in church.

Scattered to Samaria

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. (Acts 8:1-5)

For centuries Jews and Samaritans despised each other. Nobody volunteered to go to Samaria, but the Spirit drove Philip there.

Gospel for Africa

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” (Acts 8:26-29)



Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet.

Future for foreigners and eunuchs

Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.” And let not any eunuch complain, “I am only a dry tree.” For this is what the LORD says: “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. (Isaiah 56:3-5)

Joy for foreigners

And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him...these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer... for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:6-7).



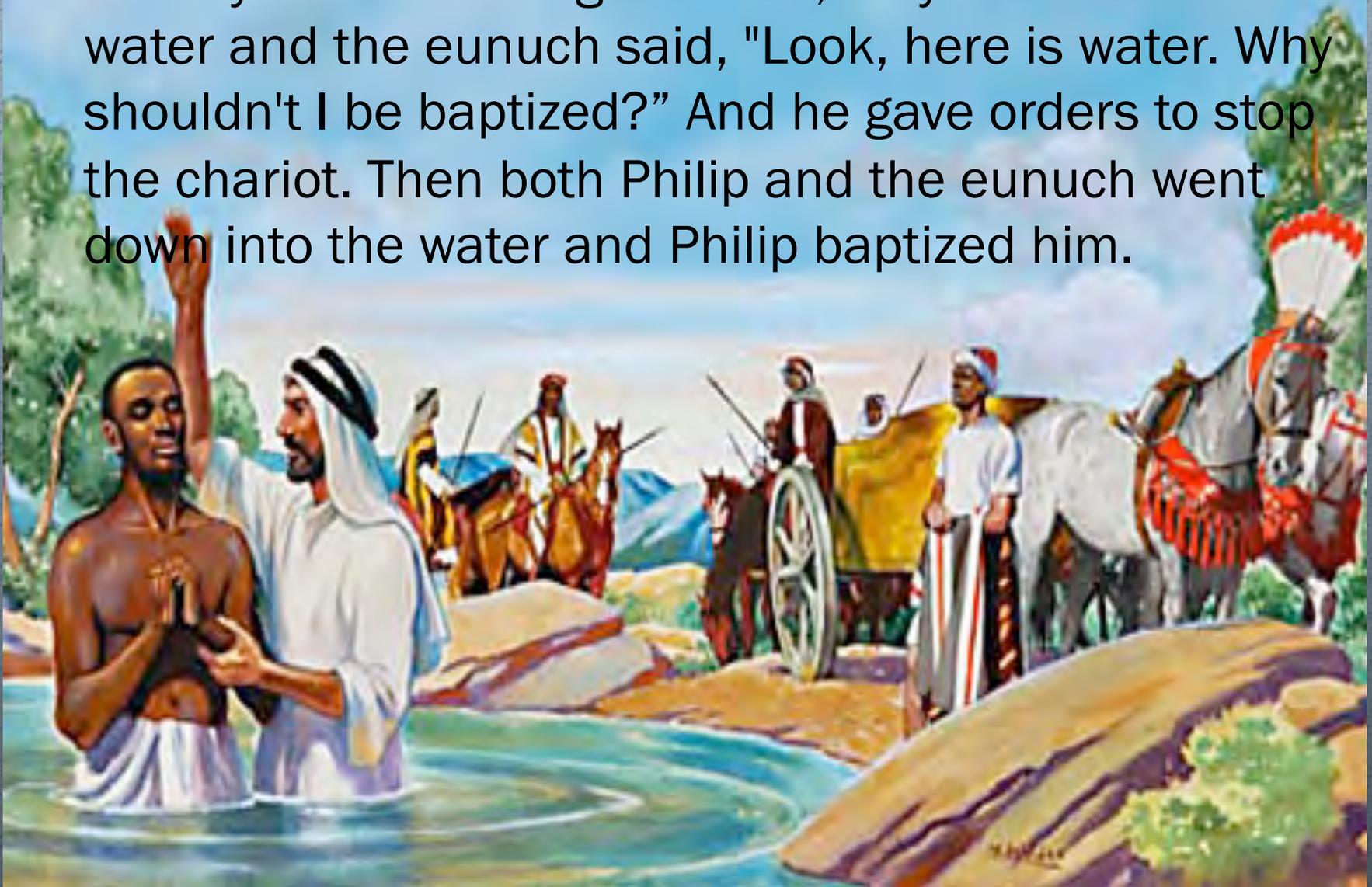
“Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:32-35)

As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.





New vision for a new covenant

“Do not call
anything impure
that God has
made clean.”
(Acts 10:15).

Roman sends for Jew



Cornelius saw an angel appear in his house and say, “Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.” (Acts 11:13)

Angels expand missions

- An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road.”(Acts 8:26).
- As angel told Cornelius, “Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter.” (Acts 11:13)
- Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. (Revelation 14:6)
- Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?
(Hebrews 1:14)

Spirit Without Favoritism



“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right...” While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. (Acts 10:34, 44)

Scattered among Greeks

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. (Acts 11:19-20)

The Spirit used persecution in Jerusalem to scatter Christian Jews not only among half-breed Samaritans but also among Greeks.

Accepting cultural variety

- Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1)
- *The Holy Spirit guided a leadership meeting in Jerusalem to accept Gentile Christians without requiring them to become like Jews.*
- Still today the Spirit guides us to accept others without forcing our culture on them.

Facing Gentile prejudice

“These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” (Acts 16:18-20)

Facing Jewish prejudice

A Jewish mob in Jerusalem wanted to kill Paul when they thought he had brought a non-Jew into the temple. They settled down somewhat when Roman soldiers moved to restore order. Then they listened to Paul speak for awhile until he said that Jesus had told him, "Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles." The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" (Acts 22:21-22)

One race: the human race

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him... now he commands **all people everywhere** to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:26-27)

Not for Jews?

Perception: Christianity might be okay for Gentiles, but it's impossible to accept Jesus as Messiah and still remain a good Jew.

Reality: Jesus and his whole family were Jewish. All of Jesus' apostles were Jewish, and all New Testament writers except Luke were Jewish.

Not for India?

Perception: Christianity is new to India and doesn't really belong there.

Reality: The apostle Thomas went to India. For almost 2,000 years, there have been Christian people in India. Bishop Pantaenus of Alexandria moved from Africa to India about 1,800 years ago. A bishop from India was at the Council of Nicea in the year 325.

Not for Africa?

Perception: Islam was the original religion of Africans. Christianity was the religion of slave owners and segregationists.

Reality: Christians were in Africa 600 years before Muslims invaded Africa. Muslims profited from the slave trade.

Racist clergy

The Black People of Australia, exactly the same race as the African Negro, cannot take in the Gospel. All attempts to bring them to a knowledge of the true God have as yet failed utterly ... Poor brutes in human shape ... they must perish off the face of the earth like brute beasts.

(Charles Kingsley, chaplain to the queen in the late 1800s, canon of Westminster, Cambridge professor)

Mission Wisdom

What I have seen here would shatter to pieces everything that the famous preacher had proclaimed... Had Christ been brought in the same way in other places, equally blessed results would as surely have followed, for He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. (John Paton)

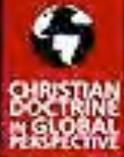


The twenty-first century is the century of global Christianity. Since God expects all Christians to be about advancing his rule in the world, mission today must become the responsibility of the global church.

(Tite Tienou, Mission Professor and Dean of Trinity International University)



People of color now represent the majority of Christians in the world... Making the case for Christianity on the basis that it is a worldwide global religion can, especially in Africa, erase the stigma of Christianity as a white man's religion. (*Tite Tienou*)



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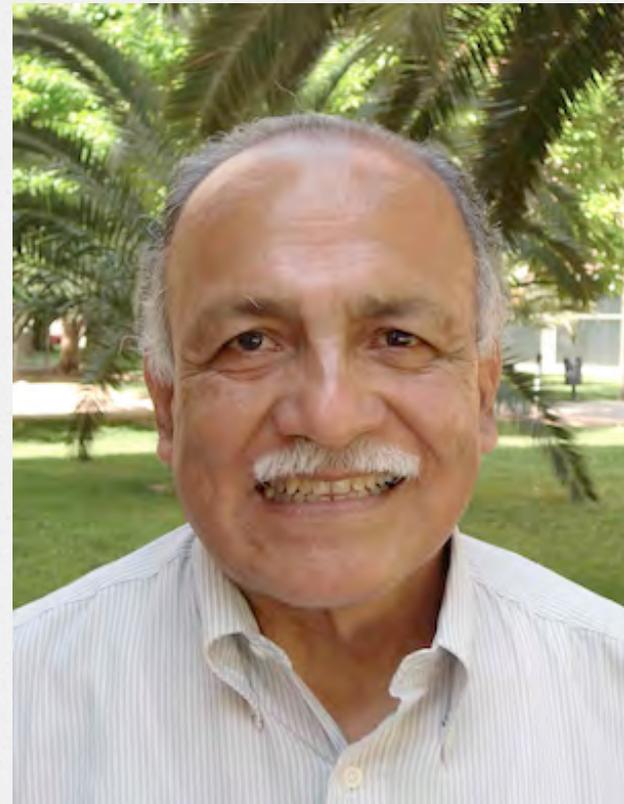
The New Global Mission

THE GOSPEL FROM EVERYWHERE TO EVERYONE



Samuel Escobar

The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone





Embassy of God, the largest church in Ukraine, is led by Nigerian Pastor Sunday Adelaja.

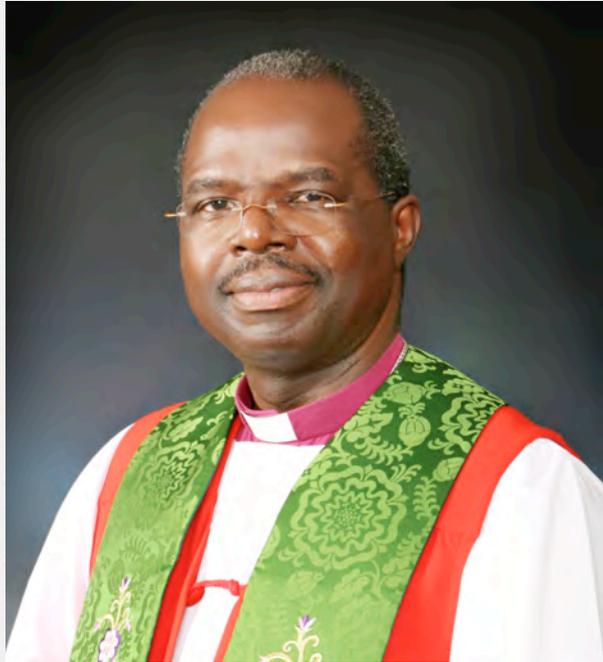
The world's largest church is
Yoido Full Gospel Church,
led by David Yonggi Cho



Global Christian correction?



Liberal American Bishop John Shelby Spong said bishops from Africa and Asia are “just one step up from witchcraft.... Scientific advances have given us a new way of understanding homosexual people. In dealing with the Third World this knowledge hasn't percolated down...If they feel patronised that's too bad.”



**Henry Luke
Orombi**
Archbishop,
Church of Uganda

It's a human failure to understand God's primary design and His calling on us... We tell them it is sin. We don't want to call it anything else. The problem in America and the Western world is they don't want to call it sin. They want to give it another name. We don't want this.



Dr. David Githii

Moderator,
Presbyterian Church
of East Africa
4.2 million members

How can they bless what God has called sin? The Bible does not allow this. My people will not accept it... When your missionaries came to our land, they brought us God's Word and told us it is true. Have you forgotten God's Word? Do you no longer believe it?"

Baptism without barriers

- Ethiopian: “Why shouldn't I be baptized?”
- Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

Baptism without barriers

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-28).

Baptism without barriers

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13).

You have taken off your old self ... and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Col 3:9-11)

One family

Jesus has destroyed the the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility... through the cross... For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household... There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 2:14-19; 4:4-6)