

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Key Verse: “*Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*”
—Acts 8:35

Selected Scripture:
Acts 8:26-39

A DEACON BY THE NAME

of Philip had been preaching the gospel in Samaria, when an angel of the Lord instructed him to journey south and go on the road that went “from Jerusalem unto Gaza.” (Acts 8:5,26) Philip “arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had

charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.”—vss. 27,28

The eunuch’s desire to worship God was indicated not only by having traveled alone the great distance from Ethiopia to Jerusalem, but especially by his searching and reading the Scriptures. The custom at that time was to read aloud. Evidently, as Philip was walking, he heard the eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah as the chariot passed by.

Through the Holy Spirit, the Lord directed Philip, “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias.” (vss. 29,30) The passage the eunuch was reading was: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall

declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.”
—vss. 32,33; Isa. 53:7-9

Philip kindly asked the eunuch, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” (Acts 8:30) The eunuch humbly answered, “How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. . . . And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, . . . of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?”—vss. 31,34

Our Key Verse tells us that Philip indicated to the eunuch that the Prophet Isaiah was speaking of Jesus. Here is an example of God’s usual method for teaching a truth-seeker. He uses his inspired Word as the text, and sends his representative to expound upon it. In this case, God’s providence was manifested in the scriptures which the eunuch was reading. This opened up the opportunity for Philip to instruct him, starting with the very foundation principle of the doctrine of Christ—that Jesus died as “a ransom for all.”—I Tim. 2:5,6

Philip’s teaching of the eunuch must have been very comprehensive. We believe he also explained the special privilege for those who fully consecrate themselves now, during the present Gospel Age, to do God’s will and to become, if faithful unto death, joint-heirs with Christ. (Rom. 6:3-14; 8:16,17) After learning about the heavenly call and making a full consecration to God, the eunuch was anxious to give outward witness of this by water baptism, or immersion. (Acts 8:36,37) As we recall, water baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” had been authorized by God beginning on the Day of Pentecost.—Acts 2:38

After Philip baptized him, the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:39) No doubt Philip also rejoiced in being used by God as a chosen vessel to bear his name to one of his beloved children. May we also have such occasions for rejoicing in God and in his providences manifested toward us in giving witness to the Gospel message. ■