

## Lessons Learned From the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-39

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** The eighth chapter of Acts records the preaching of Philip:
2. Some say this was the apostle Philip, a native of Bethsaida the hometown of Andrew and Peter (Jn. 1:44); however, I don't believe this to be the case.
3. Rather, this Philip was one of the "seven" in the Jerusalem church who were selected to serve as deacons and minister to the needs of the Grecian widows who were Christians (Acts 6:1).
  - A. It's obvious this "Philip" isn't Philip the apostle; "*Philip the evangelist*" also identified in Acts 21:8.
  - B. Why? Because this Philip was one of the seven men to attend to the "*daily distribution*" of the Hellenist widows in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6).
  - C. And, these seven men were selected for this ministry because "*It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.*" (Acts 6:2); where the "we" refers to the 12 apostles (Acts 6:2).
  - D. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Philip the apostle would be selected for a job designed to relieve the apostles of such duties.
4. Philip the evangelist's was one of those who were "*scattered abroad*" by the persecution that arose when Stephen was martyred (Acts 8:4); imagine being persecuted yet when these disciples were scattered they "*went everywhere preaching the word.*"
5. His preaching is recorded in Acts 8; he first preached to the Samaritans (vv. 5-12; **v. 5**: "*and preached Christ to them*" and **v. 12**: "*they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.*"), then Simon (v. 13), and finally the Ethiopian treasurer (vv. 26-39).
6. The cases of conversion in the book of Acts provide us with a wealth of instructive teaching whether we are a Christian or non-Christian.
7. **3** In this lesson we are interested in the conversion of the Ethiopian treasurer and we want to note the eight things he did and make application to ourselves.

### II. CONCLUSION:

1. **4** He Went to Worship:
  - A. Verse 27 mentions the fact that the Ethiopian "*...had come to Jerusalem for to worship.*"
    - (1) He was not there on vacation, to sightsee or conduct business; he had come to worship; he is obviously a proselyte to Judaism.
    - (2) Why? Because he had traveled to Jerusalem to observe the feasts as required by the Law of Moses (Deut. 16: feasts of Tabernacles, Passover, Pentecost).
    - (3) One cannot be 100% certain, but I think it is reasonable the eunuch had been in Jerusalem to observe both the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Pentecost.
    - (4) That being the case, I think it also highly probable he had witnessed at least some of the events surrounding the ministry of Jesus, His preaching, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection, and establishment of the church; or at least he heard about them.
  - B. Importantly, has it occurred to you how far this man of Ethiopia traveled in a chariot to worship?
    - (1) Nearly 1,000 miles one way! This would not even be an easy trip today, whether by airplane, train or car. But he traveled by chariot! Acts 8:28

- (2) Would you be willing to travel a great distance to worship God? He did!
  - (a) I've read that using this mode of travel one can travel, at best, about 30-40 miles per day.
  - (b) Therefore, the eunuch's trip took a good month each way!
  - (c) If he went to Jerusalem to observe both Passover and Pentecost he probably spent at least eight to ten weeks in Jerusalem (4-4.5 months! Imagine the time and effort!).
  - (d) Imagine how grueling such a trip would be; imagine the hardship, the expenses, the danger; yet he was determined to fulfill his obligation to worship God!
- (3) When we lived in Wisconsin in the early 1980's we had to drive 60 miles to services; in Michigan, when we worshiped at Flint, we drove 75 miles to services; many times we drove up to 3 hours to attend a gospel meeting; not boasting. It was just a fact of life!
- (4) We are so blessed here in Indiana with so many faithful congregations within convenient driving distance. We drive by two faithful churches every time we attend services!
- (5) The eunuch serves as a wonderful example of one who put worshiping God as his top priority! Assembling with the saints should also be a top priority anytime we have the opportunity!

## 2. **5** He Read the Scriptures:

- A. I am also impressed with what he did on his journey home from worship.
  - (1) The Bible says he, "*was...sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet*" (v. 28).
  - (2) Specifically he was reading Isaiah 53, the heart of all messianic prophecy (an important scripture that converts many from Judaism to Christianity).
  - (3) He was reading out loud as the text says Philip "*...heard him read...*" (v. 30)!
- B. When I travel, especially by airplane, I like to read. On our way to China to pick up Dawne I read *The Rape of Nanking* and the Bible (~20 million WW2 dead in China, second only to Soviet Union).
  - (1) The eunuch took advantage of his time by reading the Bible.
  - (2) Most likely he read from a scroll, not the book form we have today; we also need to spend as much time reading the Scriptures as possible. Why?
    - (a) The Scriptures are "*the words of eternal life*" (Jn. 6:68).
    - (b) God promises us "*the way of escape*" from every temptation (1 Cor. 10:13); but how did Jesus escape temptation? Matt. 4:1-11
    - (c) Paul told Timothy: **2 Tim. 3:16-17**: "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"
    - (d) Note that last phrase: the Scriptures make "*the man of God...complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*"; doesn't that make our reading of the Scriptures an important priority?!
- C. God's word is understandable (Eph. 3:1-5), doesn't mean, however, that "*some things [are not] hard to understand*" (2 Pet. 3:16).
  - (1) That's why it is so critical for us to have evangelists and teachers (**Eph. 4:11-12**: "*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*"); we need to encourage all Christians to develop their ability to teach others the gospel!
  - (2) Paul also alludes to this in **Romans 10:14-15**: "*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*"

- (3) What happened to the eunuch as he read? He was having difficulty understanding it, so he did what everyone should do if he is having trouble understanding the Scriptures; he...

3. **6** He Asked a Question:

- A. The treasurer of Ethiopia did what everyone should do when they do not understand — he asked a question. *“I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?”* (v. 34; explain my conversion).
- B. Over the years I have always welcomed an honest question about the Bible (rare!).
- (1) Such questions are often indicative of one with *“a noble and good heart.”* (Lk. 8:15)
  - (2) Such an attitude is necessary to accept the word of God (**Jas. 1:21**: *“receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”*).
  - (3) This was the attitude of some at Thessalonica; note Paul’s description of them: **1 Thess. 2:13**: *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”*
  - (4) The only people I’ve ever been able to convert with the gospel were people willing to ask honest questions from the Scriptures.
- C. For various reasons (fear, timidity, prejudice), some are afraid or unwilling to ask questions.
- (1) Many are afraid to ask questions thinking it may be a silly question.
  - (2) The only silly question is the one you do not ask when you really want to know!
  - (3) Remember: asking an honest question from the Scriptures is always a good thing; it is indicative of one with *“a noble and good heart.”* (Lk. 8:15)
- D. Let us always imitate the eunuch in this regard; always willing not to be satisfied until our questions about the Scriptures are answered.

4. **7** He Heard Preaching:

- A. When the eunuch asked his question, *“...Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus”* (v. 35).
- (1) Wouldn’t you like to have heard the sermon Philip preached?
  - (2) Well, we do have his outline: *“he preached unto him Jesus.”*
- B. When Philip preached Christ in Samaria, he preached *“...the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ”* and *“they were baptized, both men and women”* (v. 12). His lesson must have been quite comprehensive.
- C. Preaching is so very important: *“...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:17; Mk. 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20).
- D. Anytime we have the opportunity to hear the gospel preached it should be a priority to hear it!
- (1) Take advantage of every service, every Bible class, every gospel meeting (including the gospel meetings of other congregations!).
  - (2) When able to hear preaching we need to be good listeners (pay attention, take notes, meditate on the points made, make personal application, and share with others).
- E. Remember: the eunuch traveled over 1,000 miles to hear the gospel preached! He made an enormous sacrifice and effort! Are we willing to make a similar effort? Matt. 5:6

5. **8** He Applied the Sermon to Himself:

- A. The sincerest and most earnest hope of all gospel preachers is that those listening to the sermon will have soft and pliable hearts that are willing to make personal application of the lesson to themselves (**Matt. 23:3**: “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.”; 2 Sam. 12:1ff; v. 7: “Thou art the man!”).
- B. However, often folks apply sermons to everyone but themselves. “I wish so and so was here; he/she really needed to hear that sermon!” or “I hope my husband/wife is paying attention!”
- C. In **Isaiah 66:2** the Lord says: “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.” The eunuch had such a spirit!
- D. How do we know? Because he was willing to make personal application of Philip’s sermon to himself. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (v. 36).
- E. You might underscore the word “me” because obeying the gospel is an individual affair.
  - (1) We need to be ever vigilant we maintain a soft, pliable heart; always open to the instruction of God’s word (**Prov. 4:23**: “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”).
  - (2) Some words from Psalm 119 speak to this important characteristic:
    - Psa. 119:2**: “Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!”
    - Psa. 119:11**: “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.”
    - Psa. 119:36**: “Incline my heart to Your testimonies,”
- E. We all need to imitate the Ethiopian eunuch in this regard: apply the lesson to ourselves!

6. **9** He Confessed His Faith:

- A. To the Ethiopian’s question Philip responded, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said...” Well, he said what Paul said Timothy had confessed: **1 Tim. 6:12**: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”
  - (1) Now notice what he said: “...I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (v. 37).
  - (2) He didn’t say, “I believe that I’m already saved because I feel it in my heart” or “I believe that God for Christ’s sake has pardoned my sins.” He simply confessed His faith in Christ (Matt. 16:18).
- B. Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32); **Rom. 10:10**: “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”). Why so important?
  - (1) When we confess that Jesus is the son of God; we are accepting the most profound facts in the history of the universe; we acknowledge His claims!
  - (2) This means we believe Jesus meets the qualifications! **Rom. 1:4**: declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. This also means:
    - ✓ Jesus is qualified to be “head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” (Eph. 5:23)
    - ✓ Jesus “is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11-12)
    - ✓ Jesus is the only one qualified to add the saved to the church! Acts 2:47

- ✓ Therefore, He is the “rock” upon which the church is built! He is the FOUNDATION! I **Cor. 3:11**: *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

C. Have you made the confession the Ethiopian made?!! **Phil. 2:9-11**: *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, I O that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, I I and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

## 7. **10** He Was Baptized:

- A. Upon the confession of his faith, the eunuch, not Philip, stopped the chariot “...and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him” (v. 38).
- B. We learn many important things about baptism from this conversion account.
  - (1) Why didn’t he just wait till he got back home? The fact that he stopped the chariot says something about the urgency of being baptized (Acts 22:16); *time is of the essence!*
  - (2) The Bible clearly teaches baptism saves. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...” (Mk. 16:16).
  - (3) Baptism is “...for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38).
  - (4) Through baptism one “put[s] on Christ” (**Gal. 3:26-27**: *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* Surely one cannot be saved unless he “puts on Christ”!
  - (5) Through baptism one expresses “a good conscience toward God” (**1 Pet. 3:21**: *“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”*).
  - (6) In baptism, the penitent believer expresses his/her faith in God’s promise to wash away our sins (**Col. 2:12**: *“buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”*).
  - (7) This case of conversion also clearly demonstrates Bible baptism is immersion in water (Acts 8:36: *“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’”*; Col. 2:12).
    - (a) Philip didn’t just sprinkle or pour a little water upon the eunuch; they both went down into the water and he baptized (i.e., immersed) him!
    - (b) It will do no good to say they were in a desert and desert means a place of no water.
    - (c) First of all, the word “desert” doesn’t always indicate a lack of water (**Matt. 14:13**: *“When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.”*)?
    - (d) Sometimes it just means an uninhabited place; and, to say there was no water is to deny what the text clearly affirms.
    - (e) There was water, the treasurer saw it, and there was sufficient water for two grown men to go down into it and for the baptism (i.e., immersion) to take place.
- C. When you are baptized as the Bible teaches, it will take place the same way; if you’ve not been properly baptized; what is hindering you?!

## 8. **11** He Went on His Way Rejoicing:

- A. What was the result of this conversion: The text says the eunuch “...went on his way rejoicing” (v. 39; **Lk. 15:7**: *“...joy in heaven...”*).

B. There are many reasons for rejoicing when one becomes a Christian, a child of God:

- (1) One is now in Christ (Gal. 3:27; **1 Pet. 2:9-10**: “*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*”),
- (2) One becomes a new creature (**2 Cor. 5:17**: “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”),
- (3) One gains access all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3),
- (4) One receives redemption (**Eph. 1:7**: “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*”
- (5) One receives salvation (**2 Tim. 2:10**: “*Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*” Acts 2:41, 47; Eph. 5:23),
- (6) One is reconciled to God (Col. 1:19-22).
- (7) One gains hope and the promise of eternal life (**1 Jn. 5:11**: “*And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.*”).

C. Are you rejoicing? If not, you need to imitate the Ethiopian eunuch NOW!

### III. CONCLUSION: 12

1. I would like to have met up with the eunuch after he was baptized; wouldn't you?
2. Can you imagine the conversation? Wouldn't you like to hear him tell the story?
3. Are you willing to do what this man did?
  - ✓ Go to worship,
  - ✓ Read the Scriptures,
  - ✓ Ask honest questions about the Scriptures,
  - ✓ Hear gospel preaching,
  - ✓ Apply gospel preaching to your life,
  - ✓ Confess your faith in Christ,
  - ✓ Be baptized into Christ,
  - ✓ Rejoice over salvation.

Adapted from an article (*Eight Things a Treasurer Did*) by John Isaac Edwards.