

Acts 8b

The Jewish people tended to be isolationists. Though their sacred Scriptures told them to be an influence on the world, a nation of priests, they tended to be snobbish about interacting with outsiders. We can see this clearly in Jonah's reaction to his call to Ninevah. He was actually angry when they repented. This isolationism was a reaction to their history of compromise. They felt that if they did not keep themselves pure, they would soon be worshipping idols and return to captivity. They never seemed to find themselves able to be the separated people of God and reach out to present Him to the world. They needed the Holy Spirit indwelling them. This is the call of the church and the theme of the Book of Acts.

In the first half of this chapter, the radical step of reaching out to the despised Samaritans was taken by Philip and approved by the church. This was in accord with Jesus' example but very different from the attitudes of the nation. In this half of the chapter, God used Philip to take the next step, reach out to a Gentile, sometimes referred to as a "God fearing Gentile". (Acts 10:1-2) This was the progressive steps to reaching out to the entire Gentile world.

26 Angel means messenger. It is rare that God uses angels to communicate an instruction to man, but remember this is a first for the church, reaching out to Gentile believers in Judaism. There were two roads to Gaza. The desert road was the one less traveled and the hottest route. Philip went from a booming revival to a lonely desert at the command of God. It doesn't seem logical. It certainly wouldn't be our choice, but it was God's.

27 Philip didn't hesitate to obey. We should be so quick to go where the Lord directs even when it doesn't seem to make sense. The eunuch was obviously a seeker. Perhaps he had run into the Jewish community in Alexandria and been impressed. The kings of Ethiopia were thought to be the incarnation of the sun god, but it was the queens that held the power. Their title was Candace. This eunuch was the current Candace's Minister of Finance. Perhaps he saw that wealth did not satisfy and was searching for something spiritual that did. If he was an emasculated eunuch, he would not be allowed into the Temple. He may have attended a synagogue. His hunger to know the true God had led him to Jerusalem, but he was still searching.

28 His hunger had driven him to purchase a scroll of Isaiah. That would be quite an investment and difficult for a Gentile to purchase! (Jeremiah 29:13) Did he purchase Isaiah because of Isaiah 56:3-5? The chariot probably had a driver and may have had some guards.

29 The angel spoke at first, and now the Spirit fills in the details. Those big black bodyguards didn't intimidate Philip. Or maybe they did and he just went ahead and obeyed.

30 Here is a great witnessing tip, ask questions! A question invites conversation and puts the person in place of greater openness than if you start with statements or teaching. It gives you a chance to see if the Spirit is working on the person. It was customary to read aloud in that era.

31 What an open door! This was quite out of the ordinary to invite a stranger to come near a public official, but the Ethiopian was spiritually hungry and trying to understand the passage.

32 –33 He read the prophecy of Isaiah (53:7-8) concerning the Messiah. This was a Holy Spirit set up. Philip's heart must have leaped for joy when he heard where the eunuch was reading.

34 It almost couldn't get any better, but then the man asked of whom the passage was referring. If that isn't an invitation to share the Gospel! Sometimes the fruit is so ripe, it falls into your hands. Remember, Philip's obedience to the Holy Spirit put him in the right place at the right time. In that day, the interpretation presented in synagogues was that the servant was the nation of Israel or Isaiah himself. That didn't make sense to the eunuch.

35 If we are knowledgeable enough about the Scriptures, we can lead anyone to the Messiah from almost any passage. Philip was able to relate to a person of another culture the truth of the Gospel message. 1Peter 3:15

36 The eunuch believed and wanted to be baptized. He may have been baptized when he was converted to Judaism, but now he has seen the fulfillment of Judaism and he is ready to die to his old life and be a "little Christ" –Christian.

37 Is not in the oldest manuscripts, but some kind of confession like this must have been given.

38 This may have been a cistern as they are in the desert. They went down into the water indicates immersion.

39-40 Beam me up Scotty! The Lord needed him to be in another city and so He instantly moved Philip to Azotus, a town south of Caesarea. This isn't the first time this happened in Scripture. The sudden disappearance would have been a confirmation to the whole caravan that the message was from God. (1Kings 18:12; Ezekiel 3:12) Tradition has the eunuch bringing the Gospel to many in Ethiopia. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. He found what he came looking for!