

# THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 8:26-40.

LESSON 292 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### Acts 8:26-40

<sup>26</sup> And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

<sup>27</sup> And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

<sup>28</sup> Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

<sup>30</sup> And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

<sup>31</sup> And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup> The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

<sup>33</sup> In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

<sup>34</sup> And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

<sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

<sup>36</sup> And as they went on *their way*,

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### I Philip's Ministry to the Eunuch of Ethiopia

1. Philip was sent by an angel into the desert where he met a man from Ethiopia, Acts 8:26-28.
2. The Spirit told Philip to join the man in the chariot, Acts 8:29.
3. The eunuch was reading prophecy concerning Christ, Acts 8:30-33;

Isaiah 53:7 -8

<sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

<sup>8</sup> He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

4. Starting at the prophecy, Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, Acts 8:34, 35.

### II The Conversion and Baptism in Water of the Eunuch

1. The eunuch asked to be baptized in water, showing that he had been taught that command of Jesus, Acts 8:36
2. He was told, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," Acts 8:37;

Acts 3:19

<sup>19</sup> Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

Mark 11:24

<sup>24</sup> Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

Mark 16:15-18

<sup>15</sup> And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

<sup>16</sup> He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

<sup>17</sup> And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

<sup>18</sup> They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

John 1:12

<sup>12</sup> But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

John 3:14-16

<sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

<sup>15</sup> That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 6:35

<sup>35</sup> And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

they came unto a certain water:  
and the eunuch said, See, *here is*  
water; what doth hinder me to be  
baptized?

<sup>37</sup> And Philip said, If thou believest  
with all thine heart, thou mayest.  
And he answered and said, I  
believe that Jesus Christ is the Son  
of God.

<sup>38</sup> And he commanded the chariot  
to stand still: and they went down  
both into the water, both Philip  
and the eunuch; and he baptized  
him.

<sup>39</sup> And when they were come up  
out of the water, the Spirit of the  
Lord caught away Philip, that the  
eunuch saw him no more: and he  
went on his way rejoicing.

<sup>40</sup> But Philip was found at Azotus:  
and passing through he preached  
in all the cities, till he came to  
Caesarea.

**John 12:46**

<sup>46</sup> I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth  
on me should not abide in darkness.

**Romans 1:16**

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the  
power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to  
the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

3. After being baptized, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing,  
Acts 8:38-40;

**Romans 8:16**

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are  
the children of God:

**1 Peter 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye  
see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable  
and full of glory:

**Psalms 51:12**

<sup>12</sup> Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me  
with thy free spirit.

### **NOTES:**

#### **Leaving a Revival**

Philip, the evangelist, one of the seven deacons who previously had been chosen to assist the Apostles, had been in a wonderful revival in Samaria. Many had believed the Word of God that was preached there by Philip and were rejoicing in their new-found joy and peace. Peter and John had been sent to Samaria by the other Apostles and had been wonderfully used by God to lead the Samaritans in to deeper spiritual truths and richer experiences with God. Then Peter and John had gone back to Jerusalem, and it was at this time that an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip and told him to arise and go toward the south.

This was no small journey that God asked Philip to take, considering that they did most of their travelling on foot Philip was to pass through Jerusalem again, which city he had left only a short time before because of persecutions. We are not told whether he talked with the Apostles there. All we know is that he continued his journey southward until God directed him to a chariot bearing a eunuch of Ethiopia.

#### **Finding God**

This Ethiopian official had been up to Jerusalem to worship. He was a man who had a certain fear of God and was searching for more of God. But he had failed to find in the rituals of the Temple worship that for which his heart was hungering. How many people have entered the door of a cold, formal church, only to leave disappointed and sick at heart because of a lack of the Spirit and power of God there! At times past in Israel's history, the glory of God had filled the Temple in Jerusalem until the priests could not stand to minister. Only a short time before this visit of the eunuch, the Temple priests had led the very mob who had cried against Jesus and said, "Crucify him." They had rejected the Son of God! God's Presence was no longer with them! A church without Christ is spiritually dead. It is the same with the human heart: so long as Christ is enthroned in the heart it is full of spiritual life and hope; but when other things crowd Christ out, that heart is spiritually dead.

When a person hungers for God, the Lord finds ways to reach that soul. We have received letters from those who found an Apostolic Faith paper that had been discarded even in such remote parts of the world as the diamond fields of South America. They never knew how those papers came to be in the places where they had been found, but they read them, and through the

truth obtained from those papers they found God. The Lord called Philip away from a prosperous revival that this one man might find salvation. God will send the Truth around the world, if need be, to reach one honest heart who is longing for the better way to live.

### **Searching for the Truth**

The title of "eunuch" was often given to persons in authority in court, even though its literal meaning did not actually apply to them. This man had charge of the treasures of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. He was a trusted man. But he was seeking for something to satisfy his innermost soul. He, no doubt, had plenty of this world's goods; and if they could have brought satisfaction into his life, he would not have been going up to Jerusalem to worship. Soul thirst will carry people hither and yon in their effort to find the satisfaction they desire. Many people are ignorant of what it takes to quench that thirst; and they will try to satisfy themselves on the pleasures of this world, only to find that the things the world gives are but empty bubbles that break and vanish. God alone can fill and satisfy the hungry human heart.

This is not the first time that we read of an Ethiopian eunuch who was righteous and who wanted to do the will of God. In the reign of Zedekiah, when evil men cast Jeremiah into a dungeon to sink in the mire, Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch of the king's house, heard about it and used his influence with the king to have Jeremiah brought out of the dungeon. Ebed-melech threw old soft rags down to Jeremiah, to put under his arms so that when they drew him out the ropes would not cut his flesh. There was no racial prejudice in that man's heart, for the Ethiopian's skin was black and Jeremiah was a Jew. The eunuch loved and honoured Jeremiah because he was a Prophet of the Lord. The black man helped the Jew out of the dungeon! In today's lesson, we find Philip, possibly a Grecian Jew, taking a long journey to tell an Ethiopian the story of Jesus.

### **Preaching Jesus**

As Philip drew near to the chariot, he heard the eunuch reading the wonderful fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. What a golden opportunity to tell this man about Jesus! Philip did not let the opportunity escape. When the eunuch read, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his Shearer, so opened he not his mouth," he wanted to know of whom the Prophet spoke. Philip took the same passage of Scripture and preached Jesus. Philip showed the eunuch that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the promised Messiah. There is no doubt but that in doing so he explained the whole teachings of the Christian faith. Jesus' birth, life, doctrine, miracles, passion, death, and resurrection, together with the ordinance of water baptism, must have been the subjects of their conversation that day. It was a blessed opportunity for Philip, and he no doubt thought that he must cover all the ground he could in his explanations that day for he might never see the eunuch again.

The eunuch believed the story as Philip told it, and when they came to water, he wanted to be baptized. Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." This shows clearly and emphatically that heart belief is imperative to salvation. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). The Lord deals with the heart, and until the heart is changed there is no complete transformation of the outward life. Man may make certain limited reforms and changes in his conduct, but he is not a

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Who was Philip? and what work was he at one time given to do?
2. What did the Lord tell Philip to do at this time?
3. Whom did Philip meet in the desert?
4. What chapter in the Bible was the eunuch reading? About whom was the chapter written?
5. What question did the eunuch ask Philip?
6. How did Philip answer the question asked by the eunuch?
7. When they came to water, what did the eunuch want to do?
8. Explain the mode of water baptism taught by the Scriptures.
9. Who are eligible for water baptism? Why are sins not washed away in water baptism?
10. What is typified and symbolized in the ordinance of water baptism?

"new creature" until God has forgiven his transgressions and given him power over sin by the Blood of Jesus. The eunuch had that faith which springs from the heart, and he wanted to be baptized in water. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

### **Water Baptism**

Water baptism is an outward symbol of an inward work that has already been wrought in the heart. Some people believe only with their mind and are baptized in water, thinking the water will wash away their sins. But they soon find that no change was wrought in their heart and they are still in the same carnal condition they were in before they were baptized. Others teach that water baptism is not necessary, and leave it out altogether. Others have been baptized when they were but infants and think that that baptism is sufficient. But the Word of God clearly teaches us that we must first believe and then be baptized. The belief here mentioned is that belief which brings an answer from Heaven, an assurance that one's sins are forgiven, that his life is changed. Signs will follow such a belief, and the Spirit of God will witness that the individual is a child of God.

Then there are those who do not like to be buried in the water. They prefer to have the ordinance performed by having water poured on their heads while they kneel in the water. But in the Bible we read, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore **we are buried with him by baptism** into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:3-5).

Both Philip and the eunuch went into the water. There Philip baptized the eunuch. We know that the eunuch was truly converted, for he went on his way rejoicing. He had believed and obeyed the commandment of the Lord, and his burden was gone. This obedience, in itself, would give him great joy. What he failed to find in the empty rituals of the Temple worship in Jerusalem, this man of Ethiopia found in the desert with a lone preacher telling him the story of God's salvation.

There was no choir of trained voices present to sing the praises of God, but there was joy in the hearts of the two men who honoured God and obeyed His commandments that day on the hot, burning desert. There was no sign of organized worship around the penitent that day as his heart reached out for the truth, but God was there to reveal it to him and to help him believe and receive the promised salvation. God is not confined to certain places. He can work anywhere. Neither is God restricted in any other way. He can work with any person who lifts a hungering heart's prayer to the Throne of Mercy.

Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). It is a glorious privilege to obey the commands and ordinances of God, and we find genuine joy when we do so. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing, and so will each and every Christian who obeys the command of Jesus and is baptized in water as soon as possible after he is born again.