

ACTS 8:26-40: THE LORD, PHILIP & THE ETHIOPIAN EUNICH: EVANGELISM

The severe persecution that scattered the Jerusalem Church only served as a catalyst for evangelism. Acts 8 & 9 record three very clear instances of salvation thru these efforts: 1) the Samaritans including Simon, 2) the Ethiopian Eunich, and 3) Saul (the Apostle Paul). In this paper, we focus on the salvation of the Ethiopian Eunich.

8:26-40 Understanding the Text

v. 26 The Initiator: "**an (not "the") angel of the Lord**": this special messenger from the Lord initiates the evangelism by telling Philip to leave Samaria, where he was enjoying numerical success, and to go to the desert to talk to one man. Compare this with modern day evangelism.

v. 27a The Human Messenger: "**and he (Philip) arose and went,**" i.e., he was obedient.

v. 27b, 28 The Needy Soul: the Ethiopian Eunich (eunichs were commonly employed as court officials in antiquity in the East)

- he had STATUS; a δυναστης / dunastes, a potentate.
- he had WEALTH; the Sec. of Treasury in Ethiopia
- he had RELIGION; a proselyte to perverted Judaism
- he had MATERIAL SECURITY; a stretch - limousine chariot
- he was SINCERE; he had traveled over 800 miles to worship
- he was POSITIVE; BUT HE WAS LOST & EMPTY.

GOD SENDS PHILIP TO THIS NEEDY MAN.

v. 29 The Holy Spirit: directs Philip to the Eunich. For the phraseology "the Spirit said," see Acts 10:9 (to Peter), 13:2 (to teachers at Antioch), 20:23 (to Paul). How? Verbally? Possibly through prophetic utterance or through a personal, spiritual sense of urgency.

v. 30, 31 Ancient scrolls were and still are easier read aloud, except by experts.
Note two practical and logical questions with great theological significance:
1) Philip: "Do you understand what you are reading in the Scriptures?"
2) Eunich: "How can I indeed unless someone guide me?"

Principle: the unsaved need guidance in Scriptural matters: see I Corinthians 2:14.

v. 32, 33 HE WAS READING ISAIAH 53:7,8: WHAT A COINCIDENCE!?! Isaiah 53 in 12 verses has 9 refs. to the substitutionary death of Messiah for our sins (53:4,5 (4), 6, 8, 10, 11). This is what the Secretary of the Ethiopian treasury was reading!

v. 34, 35 Key Principle of Evangelism: Philip began at the same Scripture and preached (lit. "evangelized") unto him Jesus."

v. 36-38 Believer's Baptism: the order is important: belief first, then water baptism. The method is also important: "they went down into the water;" that is, immersion, not sprinkling, not pouring, not daubing.

v. 37 has almost no Greek manuscriptural evidence (only in E): how did it get into the KJV (the authorized text). Listen for explanation later.

v. 39, 40 While the Eunuch rejoices in his new found salvation, Philip is led of the Lord to travel northward up the coast evangelizing the cities on Palestine Highway #1: Azotus (Ashdod), Lydda, Joppa, etc., to Caesarea.

The next mention of Philip is 20 years later in Acts 21:8 where he is still in Caesarea as a family man with 4 daughters old enough to prophesy.

Application: Principles of Evangelism

1. Person (#1) to person (#2): both were prepared

— Person #1 - knows the Gospel; knows key Scriptures

Get a plan: memorize Scripture for

- Jesus as Sin bearer _____.
- Jesus as the Only Saviour _____.
- Mans Need of Forgiveness _____.

— Person #2 - has personal spiritual needs unmet (sin issue: Saviour issue)

Remember: some plant, some water: God gives the increase, 1 Corinthians 3:5-8

2. Acts 8:26, 29, God wants to save sinners, the Holy Spirit will lead you.

3. Acts 8:30, as Philip used a lead question, so can you.

"Are you saved?"

"Were you to die in the next minute, would you go to heaven?"

"What reason(s) can you give for God to receive you into heaven?"

"Have you ever sinned?"

"What must I do to be saved?"

"Who is Jesus Christ?"

4. Acts 8:35, Whatever the answer, like Philip, get to the real issue — Jesus Christ.

5. Acts 8:36, 37, Where possible, follow-up.