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青少年团契 / Acts 8:26–40

Questions about context

What is a eunuch? Why did he go to Jerusalem?

In ancient times, eunuchs were men who had been castrated, typically employed to manage the emperor's harem. This practice was common because only castrated men were trusted by emperors to oversee the inner chambers of the palace. Some eunuchs held significant power and high status, essentially serving as the royal household managers. The Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in this context was one such figure.

In ancient Ethiopia, kings did not personally handle state affairs. They were regarded as descendants of the gods and considered too sacred to involve themselves in the day-to-day matters of the kingdom. Instead, the responsibility for governing fell on the queen, who were referred to as "Candace." This term could either be a name or a title.

The eunuch in question was likely a foreigner who had adopted the teachings of Judaism. According to the Old Testament, Jewish men were required to come before God three times a year. Despite being a eunuch, this man maintained a reverence for God. **It is possible that his journey to Jerusalem was to worship God during a specific festival or holy day.**

Reread verses 30-36. Is there anything that jumps out to you about how the eunuch approaches the biblical text? If so, what is it and why?

Although the eunuch did not fully understand the meaning of the scriptures written by the prophet Isaiah at that time, he did not stop searching or thinking. Instead, he pondered on his own, hoping to gain understanding. The eunuch's attitude toward scripture is one we should emulate: only those who are eager to understand God's Word and willing to pay the price to do so will receive more wisdom from God to comprehend His teachings. At this moment, God had prepared Philip to come to the eunuch and reveal the true meaning of this ancient prophecy.

The passage from Isaiah that the eunuch was reading was written about 800 years

before Jesus' arrival. It was not until Jesus' crucifixion that this prophecy was fulfilled and made clearer. His word is always true and His word was prepared in advance to help us understand the salvation of Jesus Christ.

How did Philip share the gospel with the eunuch? Why did he choose to do so?"

From this account, we can also see that Philip was a true evangelist. Although the Ethiopian eunuch was likely a foreigner, he was familiar with the Old Testament scriptures. **Philip used the Old Testament to directly verify that Jesus Christ is the Messiah prophesied in those scriptures.**

Many people have misconceptions about evangelism and cannot distinguish it from giving a testimony. **Testimony involves sharing with others the great works God has done in your life. Evangelism, on the other hand, is about conveying the gospel message found in the Bible.** This message is not about personal experiences but rather the objective truths of Scripture. For example, it includes the creation of the world, the fall of humanity, human sinfulness, the redemption through Jesus Christ, His ascension, and His future return. While evangelism may initially involve describing the gospel message from the Bible to the listeners, the ultimate goal is to encourage them to read God's Word for themselves.

Romans 10:17 says, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." The book of Romans teaches us that all faith comes from hearing the Word, and that truth is the seed of a person's rebirth. **Without truth, one cannot be born again, and without truth, the Holy Spirit will not work to justify or sanctify a person.**

Read what the eunuch says in verse 36. How would you describe his mood or tone in this verse?

When the eunuch heard the truth, he joyfully accepted it and eagerly desired to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. He actively requested baptism; baptism is the first thing any true Christian desires to do. It is also the first act of obedience to the Lord's command as a disciple. Baptism is not just a symbol; it is an act of obedience that publicly declares one's identity to the world.

Though it may sound surprising, many churches today consider baptism unnecessary. Some people think that believing in their hearts is enough and question why they need to be baptized to express their faith. However, a true disciple will naturally desire baptism, and if conditions permit, they will be baptized—just like the Ethiopian eunuch. When he encountered a body of water, there were no obstacles left, so he eagerly accepted baptism. Someone who claims to be a disciple yet does not desire to be baptized only proves that they are not truly a disciple.

Furthermore, the most important mark of a disciple is obedience. The Ethiopian eunuch was willing to obey all of the Lord's commands, which is the hallmark of a true disciple. Baptism is the first step; refusing baptism is equivalent to refusing to obey Jesus' command and, therefore, refusing to be His disciple. Such belief is in vain and self-deceptive.

Read verse 39. Here, we see that the eunuch went away rejoicing. Why do you think the eunuch was so joyful?

The Ethiopian eunuch's joy stemmed from two main reasons. First, he met Philip on his journey and came to understand that the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament was Jesus. As a result, he believed in this Messiah. Second, he rejoiced because he witnessed the work of God! Philip was sent by God, although the eunuch was unaware of this at first. However, during his baptism, God revealed His presence, making the eunuch suddenly realize the great grace he had received. God had specifically sent Philip to find him, and during his baptism, God performed a miracle, showing that He was with him. God's guidance and protection filled the eunuch with great joy and gladness.

On the other hand, we can see what the Ethiopian eunuch truly valued from his joy. Despite his high position and significant wealth, he was still spiritually hungry and seeking God. The eunuch was a high-ranking official, trusted by the queen, with money and power at his disposal, yet he traveled a great distance to Jerusalem to worship. This shows that despite his material abundance, he was not satisfied and sought spiritual nourishment.

Many people believe that Christianity is for those who have failed in the world or those who lack material resources. However, few can match the success of this eunuch. Ethiopia, a major power south of Egypt, had a finance minister who was willing to travel such a long journey to Jerusalem for worship. This indicates that material wealth does not bring satisfaction; it cannot fill the void in one's soul.

The world is deceived by Satan's lies, thinking that their dissatisfaction is due to unmet material needs. In reality, the pursuit of wealth is often a reflection of a deeper spiritual emptiness. Everyone needs the gospel, regardless of whether they are a king or a beggar. The state of one's soul does not differ because of external material conditions.

What do you notice about God's involvement in this passage? What does this tell you about God and the way He works? What do we learn from Philip's obedience?

A central theme of the Book of Acts is based on Jesus' words after His ascension: Acts 1:8 states, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and

you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth.” The Book of Acts is a testimony of this command from Jesus being fulfilled—the gospel spread from Jerusalem to Samaria, and Philip was one of the evangelists used by God in this mission.

Philip was sent by the Holy Spirit to the south, where he encountered the Ethiopian eunuch. The Holy Spirit instructed Philip to approach and catch up with the eunuch, who was reading from the book of Isaiah at that very moment—the passage that spoke about the suffering of Jesus Christ. Philip used this opportunity to share the gospel with the eunuch. While Acts records much of Paul's missionary journeys, the gospel was spreading in all directions. According to church history, Ethiopia became a stronghold of the gospel in the following centuries, and the beginning of this movement was due to the eunuch's conversion to Christ.

The entire missionary journey of the Christian faith is ultimately led by God. It is God who calls and sends people, and the Holy Spirit who moves individuals to share the gospel with those around them and in distant places. This is the duty of every disciple, and it is the burden the Holy Spirit places on each person. But ultimately, it is God who initiates it all and enables people to respond to the gospel—this is entirely the work of God's mighty power.

On the other hand, Philip's obedience to God's will is something we should learn from. He was in Samaria, where the gospel was flourishing significantly. Yet, when the Lord's messenger told him to go to another place, he showed no reluctance. He was willing to follow the Lord's command and share the gospel with more people.

As a Christian, are you willing to follow the Lord's command and bring the gospel to those around you? Sharing your faith with friends and family requires courage, but more importantly, it requires a heart willing to obey the Lord and a genuine love for those close to you. Evangelism does not mean that you have to talk about the gospel immediately upon meeting someone. It's about guiding them towards God through your interactions and bringing them to the Word of God.

You don't need to worry about whether the person will accept the gospel because that is beyond your capability. No matter how eloquent you are, you cannot make someone truly believe. Only the Spirit of God can do that. What you can do is share your testimony with them and, when possible, present the message of the gospel. Pray that God will use you greatly in this endeavor.

Reflection Questions

Philip and the eunuch both show a real passion for God's word. Do you feel this same passion for God

and His Word? Why or why not?

What ultimately brings you joy? Is there anything that makes you so happy or fulfilled that you feel like you'll never be sad again?

What are some practical ways you could try to find your joy in the Lord more than other things?