

"Acts of the Apostles: Lesson 16" by Faber McMullen, Union Grove Baptist Church ©2018



### "The Ethiopian Eunuch"

The writer of Hebrews wrote, *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him [God], for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* Hebrews 11:6, NKJV). Today we will see how the Ethiopian Eunuch did just that, and was rewarded with being introduced to Jesus, his Messiah. Let's look at this in the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts:

### *Christ is Preached to an Ethiopian*



*26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. 27 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. (Acts 8:26-28, NKJV).*

Last week we saw Philip and the other disciples spreading the Gospel in Samaria and dealing with Simon the Sorcerer. Now God speaks to Philip by an angel and tells him to go south on the road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza. Earlier Philip had been described as "full of the Holy Spirit," and here we see his faith in action. When God gave him a command, he did not try to second guess what God was doing, but simply obeyed him.

But Philip was not the only one who needed faith in this instance. The Ethiopian Eunuch, a man of great authority who served in the court of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia, had just been at the temple in Jerusalem to worship YHVH. Now, why would an Ethiopian man of great importance come all the way to Jerusalem to worship at YHVH's temple? What is his back story?



First we will start with his boss, Candace. This was not really her name, but the name of a dynasty. You see, 1,000 years earlier the Queen of Sheba (which included Ethiopia) had come to visit King Solomon of Israel. You can read the story in 1 Kings 10:1-13. This queen had heard marvelous things about King Solomon's wisdom, as well as about his God, and she came to discover for herself if the tales were true. She states, "The half has not been told me." But the story does not end there, because in Ethiopia the legend is told that the Queen was so impressed with the worship at the temple that she requested of Solomon a

copy of the Ark of the Covenant, so that she could also worship YHVH. This was done, and a large party of Jews went back to Sheba with the Queen so that her people could be properly instructed in the Covenant and Laws of YHVH.

**Israel holds the world record for most airline passengers on one plane: 1088\***



\*During the airlift of Ethiopian Jews home to Israel in 1991, one plane took off with 1086 passengers. 2 babies were born en route. So the airplane landed in Israel with 1088 new citizens of Israel!

tip

Judaism was therefore practiced in Ethiopia long before Christianity came to this Eunuch. Ethiopian Jews have been practicing a form of ancient Judaism since the time of Solomon. In 1984 and in 1991 the Israeli government enacted Operation Moses and Operation Solomon. Tribes in Ethiopia claimed to be Jews and the Israelis determined to bring them "home" to Israel. They conducted extensive religious and DNA testing. When they determined the Ethiopians to indeed be of their own people, they removed the seats from Boeing 747 jets and the Jews of Ethiopia returned to Israel. Why is this important to us as Christians? Because once again we are reminded that

God doesn't forget His own, the Bible is true, and biblical prophecy is being fulfilled in our lifetime:

*<sup>11</sup> It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea.*

*<sup>12</sup> He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:11-12, NKJV).*



Meanwhile, here we find this Jewish Eunuch, who had come to Jerusalem to worship YHVH. Did Candace send him there to purchase the scroll, or did he of his own accord buy it with his own money? A scroll of that type would be costly at any rate, and an investment. He doesn't wait to get home before reading it, but opens and reads it there along the way, just south of Jerusalem.

Acts 8, verse 29: *<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." <sup>30</sup> So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"*

*<sup>31</sup> And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup> The place in the Scripture which he read was this:*

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*“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;  
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
So He opened not His mouth.*

<sup>33</sup> *In His humiliation His justice was taken away,  
And who will declare His generation?*

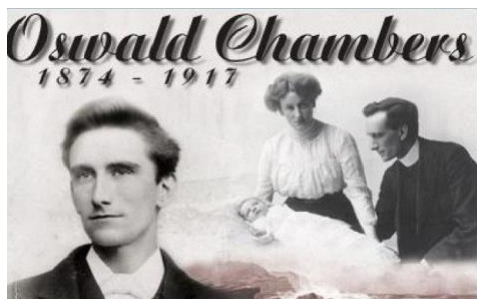
*For His life is taken from the earth.” (quoted from Isaiah 53:7b-8)*

<sup>34</sup> *So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” (Acts 8:29-34).*

The Eunuch had just been to the temple, and was no doubt familiar with the sacrificing of animals. And here he reads of a Man that is being sacrificed as a lamb. Had he heard of the recent sacrificial death of Jesus while he was in Jerusalem? Perhaps he said a prayer that YHVH would reveal the truth of all this to him. The Spirit told Philip to "Go near and overtake this chariot," and he obeyed. Guys, Philip was in a dead-on run to catch a chariot on foot. Philip ran up along side the Ethiopian and he heard him reading Isaiah 53, and Philip yelled out, "Do you understand what you're reading?" The Ethiopian in humility said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?"

Church, God is pursuing you. God wants to teach you. God wants to change you. God wants to bless you. God wants to transform your mind. He puts teachers in your life to help you understand what His Word means and to teach you how to apply His Word to your life. The Eunuch was on his way back home and was sincerely seeking God, and God had a plan for the Eunuch. God had heard the heart of the Eunuch, when he said, "I've got the book and I'm trying my best to understand it, but I'm not sure what all of this means!"

Every now and then God will send someone your way to give you an update. It's kind of like a software update. Your update might be in church, or it may be while you read this sermon, but it may happen somewhere and by someone that takes you totally by surprise. You might get your "update" from someone at work. I sometimes get updates when I'm out mowing on my zero-turn lawn mower (my chariot). God has somebody chasing your chariot right now. He wants to reveal Himself to you. God sent someone as humble as Philip to give someone as majestic as this minister of the treasury an update. God does this all along our journey. This reminds us that we tend to get hung up on the destination, but God wants to work with us on the journey.



It's the things that God does along the journey that mold us and make us who we are. Oswald Chambers said, "What we call the journey, God calls the destination". Yes, our final destination is to be Christ-like, but there is a lot of journey traveled before we reach that point. In fact, it is on that journey that we get to that point. Along the journey God whispers into your heart. In this process of Him whispering truth to your heart,

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you'll go from knowing Him by the hearing of the word to seeing him become real in your life, and changing you!

*<sup>34</sup> So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" <sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. <sup>36</sup> 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?" <sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." <sup>38</sup> So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup> Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so 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. (Acts 8:34-40, NKJV).*

God had not forgotten His people in Ethiopia. He sent Philip to give them an update, and here we see the first convert. Note that the Ethiopian Eunuch believed and immediately was baptized. As I've often said, scripture has no big gaps between belief and baptism. The Eunuch went down into the water as an earnest seeker of Jehovah, and he came up out of the water as a dedicated Christ-follower.



Another legend from Ethiopian history is that the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon had a tryst—not difficult to believe considering his 1,000's of wives and concubines. The Queen went back to Sheba to have her baby, and the rulers of Ethiopia have claimed the child to be the descendant of King Solomon ever since. The last King of the Ethiopians was on the cover of time magazine in 1930. It is interesting to look at his face because he is supposedly a descendent of King Solomon. In this photo he has the cross of Jesus over his heart inside of a Star of David. His official title was "The Conquering Lion of Judah and the Elect of God." He was also called "The Power of

the Trinity, the First."

It is believed that Christianity in Ethiopia originated with this account that we have read this morning. The Ethiopian was sincerely seeking the deeper meanings of scripture, and he was seeking God's will for his life. God did not forget him or his people—God sent Philip to introduce that noble man to Jesus. And guess what? We are His people and He hasn't forgotten us. Are you seeking for a word from Him today? Hold out and hold on—your Philip is on his way!

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Fryday Neese - Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.