

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #39

COMMENTARY ON: 8:26-31

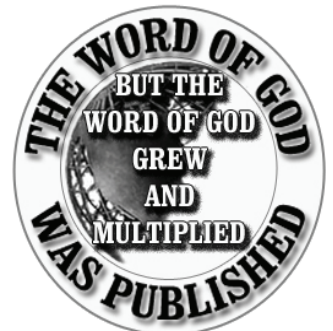
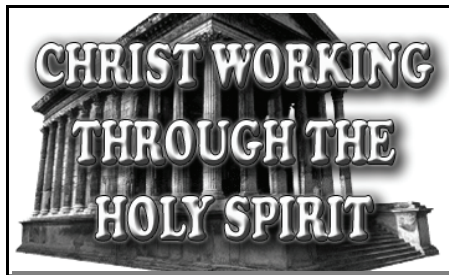
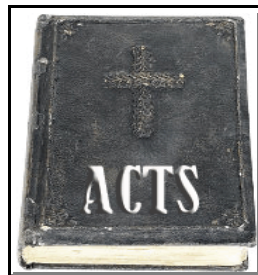
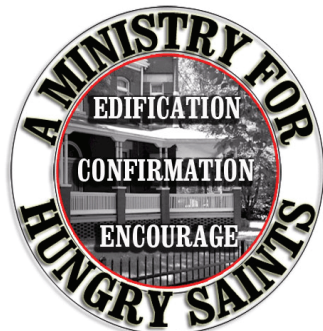
PHILLIP IS SENT TO THE DESERT

Confirming the rapidity with which the Gospel can spread, the city of Samaria, as well as numerous villages in the region of Samaria, have now been saturated with the Gospel. A once spiritually barren region has become a fertile field, and streams have broke out in a spiritual desert. There has also been a liberation from a longtime bewitchment under which the Samaritan people had been held. All of this was initiated by a single disciple who was filled with the Spirit and wisdom, and was tutored in the apostles' doctrine. The apostles themselves followed up his effective ministry, confirming the Gospel he had preached, and establishing the people firmly. Now, Philip is sent from a teeming environment of many people in a city, to a single man in the desert – a key man, who himself was journeying through a natural desert to the spiritual desert of Ethiopia. He had been drawn out of Ethiopia through some unknown, yet faithful, Jewish influence. His quest for the truth will be rewarded by insights he had never before experienced, and he would gladly receive the word, and be added to the church.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

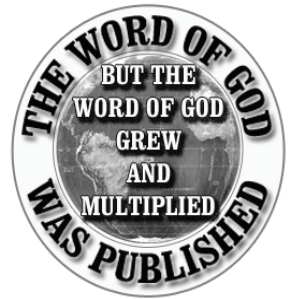


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 39



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.LITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833),WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

PHILIP IS SENT TO THE DESERT

“^{8:26} 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. ²⁷ 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, ²⁸ Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. ³⁰ And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? ³¹ 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.” (Acts 8:26-31)

INTRODUCTION

Confirming the rapidity with which the Gospel can spread, the city of Samaria, as well as numerous villages in the region of Samaria, has now been saturated with the Gospel. This has been accomplished without the launching of an expansion program, or the development of a man-made strategy. We are witnessing the expression of “newness of life.” This is something that cannot be confined to a system. True Christian growth, whether on an individual or corporate level, is the result of “holding to

the Head,” Jesus Christ (Col 2:19). The purpose of salvation involves joining the saved to the Lord (1 Cor 6:17), being one with Him, even as He is one with the Father (John 17:21-22), and experiencing fellowship with the Son (1 Cor 1:9). **This being the case, it is not possible that any valid work can be accomplished independently of that conscious and productive union with Deity.** All other professed Christian work, regardless of its successful appearance, is spurious in every sense of the word. It is not possible

for any valid work to be done within the church without the One who Himself is building it (Matt 16:18).

One of the serious deficiencies of the American church is its insistence upon working independently of the Person of Christ, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and the awareness of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Considering that this is the day of the open heavens, access to God and the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and

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the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, this is a totally unacceptable condition. When prevailing disinterest and its consequent ignorance persist within the professing church, it is evidence that the “*great salvation*” of God has been neglected.

By way of contrast, the once spiritually barren region of Samaria has become a fertile field, and streams have broken out in a spiritual desert. The prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled in that region. “*Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes*” (Isa 35:6-7). There has also been a liberation from a longtime bewitchment under which the Samaritan people had been held.

All of this was initiated through a single disciple who was filled with the Spirit and wisdom, and was tutored in the apostles’ doctrine. The apostles themselves followed up his effective ministry, confirming the Gospel he had preached, and establishing the people more firmly in the truth. Thus, what had happened in Jerusalem has now taken place in Samaria – and that in strict accordance with the word of the King: “*and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria*” (Acts 1:8).

NOT A HUMAN STRATEGY

This was not the result of a human strategy. It rather was the result of souls being yielded to the Lord, and therefore they could be directed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus set the tone for the workings of God among men by Himself being “*led by the Spirit*” (Luke 4:1). When He assaulted the kingdom of darkness, casting out demons, He said He did so “*by the Spirit of God*” (Matt 12:28).

As Jesus began building His church, He did so through the Holy Spirit. After all, the intention of God is for the church to become His own habitation “*through the Spirit*” (Eph 2:22). When the time arrived for the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles, it was the Holy Spirit who directed Peter in what to do (Acts 10:19). When a Divine work was purposed for men of God to perform, it was the Holy Spirit who said, “*Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*”

(Acts 13:2). Later when the disciples were spreading the Word everywhere, “*they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word on Asia*”^{NKJV} (Acts 16:6). Again, “*they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them*”^{NKJV} (Acts 16:7).

It ought to be clear that Jesus is not the *Head Emeritus* of the church – like a retired corporate president that is called in from time to time to give advice. Judging from the amount of time that the contemporary church gives to planning, strategizing, and hawking canned plans and procedures, one might imagine that Jesus was like the idol Baal. When the devotees of Baal got no answer from him, Elijah taunted them saying, “*Cry aloud, for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked*” (1 Kgs 18:27). The church has, indeed, fallen on hard times when it must caucus with consultants, advisors, coaches, financial analysts, motivators, psychologists, and the likes. Such activities are a reproach to Jesus, evidence of resisting the Spirit, and a denial of the truth. They are not innocent, and must not be approached as though they were. The Lord has given us a record of the manner in which the church of the living God conducts itself. He has provided records confirming how He regards the church directing itself and plotting out its own course. As well, He has made clear that there is no place – absolutely no place – for worldly wisdom among His people.

CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH


BARRIER

THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD
STRATEGIES OF MEN
EXPRESSIONS OF
INEFFECTIVE LABORS

* NO GROWTH
* UNSTABLE

BY GRACE
THROUGH FAITH
IN THE HOLY SPIRIT
EFFECTIVE LABORS

* EMPOWERED
* GROWTH
* ESTABLISHED



After a successful mission in a city, heaven sends Philip into the desert for some one-on-one work — by Given O. Blakely

In fact, when professing believers depend upon the wisdom of the world, it is evidence that they are, in fact, friends with the world, adopting its way. As such, they become enemies of God. As it is written, *“friendship with the world is enmity with God . . . whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world IS the enemy of God”* – or, *“whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God”*^{AMPLIFIED} (James 4:4).

THE RELEVANCE OF THIS

The relevance of all of this is seen in the fact that the early church knew nothing of all of the organizational and strategical procedures that have been adopted by the modern church. Yet, the results that it realized so dwarf that of today that a connection can scarcely be made between the churches of the first and twenty-first century. Of course, it is quite possible that there is no real association – that they represent two mindsets that are at variance with one another.

While some find it difficult to comprehend, the condition of the church is always the result of what it is doing. This is true when the church is stable and growing up into Christ in all things, or when it is declining and getting further and further from the Lord. It is as though the soul has only one hand. If it takes hold of the things of God, it has to let go of the world. If it chooses to take hold of the world, it must, of necessity, let go of the Lord. Both cannot be held simultaneously. A penchant for the truth causes the lie to become loathsome. The same is true of a predilection for the lie. It makes the truth obnoxious. It is no wonder that men are admonished, *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Prov 4:23).

The bottom line here is that the Lord is prominent in our text. He is building His church, and directing His servants through His Holy Spirit. The means through which this is being done is the faith of the people. That faith has

been confirmed in their abandonment of the world and pursuit of the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me”* (Luke 9:23). That is what is taking place in our text: it is actually happening among the people. In our time, this is more like a goal to be realized than an experience that is taking place.

PHILIP IS SENT TO A NEW PLACE

Now, Philip is sent from a teeming environment of many people in a city, to a single man in the desert – a key man, who himself was journeying through a natural desert to the spiritual desert of Ethiopia. He had been drawn out of Ethiopia through some unknown, yet faithful, Jewish influence. Now, his quest for the truth will be rewarded by insights he had never before experienced, and he would gladly receive the word, and be added to the church. In this man it will be confirmed that those who seek do, indeed, find (Matt 7:7-8)!

DIRECTED BY A HOLY ANGEL

^{8:26a} **And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying . . .**” Other versions read, *“But as for Philip,”*^{LIVING} *“Now and angel of the Lord said to Philip,”*^{WILLIAMS} *“But an angel of the Lord said to Philip,”*^{AMPLIFIED} *“The Lord’s angel said to Philip,”*^{CEV} and *“Messenger yet of Master talks toward Philip.”*^{INTERLINEAR}

Here the direction of Philip is distinguished from that of Peter and John. They returned to Jerusalem, but he did not return with them. The Lord had another work for him to do. He had been faithful, and now he will be given more to do. That is the manner of the Kingdom (Matt 13:12; 25:29). This is not the kind of work men can take upon themselves. It

involves reaching a man of whom Philip probably knew nothing. Nor, indeed, was the church in Jerusalem apparently aware of him. But such a lack of awareness did not exist in heaven, and *“the heavens do rule”* (Dan 4:26).

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

It is good that we consider the angels and their involvement in redemption. They are integral to spiritual life, and to the various activities of the body of Christ. In revealing the vast society into whose company salvation has brought us, the holy angels are mentioned. *“But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an*

innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24). It is good for us to be faithfully reminded of this circumstance. I am persuaded that the awareness of this sacred society would significantly alter what goes on in the churches of the land. You can rest assured that many of the things that appear so impressive to men have absolutely no such impact on these heavenly hosts.

So far as the inspired record is concerned, the angels are regularly involved with the elect. It is revealed that they are *“ALL ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation”* (Heb 1:14). That means that an unfathomable number of these mighty and wise hosts are at work for the saints of God. The extent of their

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involvement has not been revealed. However, from time to time the word of the Lord informs us of things they have done in the behalf of the *"heirs of salvation."* In these accounts, we are provided some insight into the manner of their activities.

- ⇨ Already in the book of Acts, *"the angel of the Lord"* opened the prison doors where the apostles were being held, brought them out, and told them *"Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life"* (Acts 5:20).
- ⇨ Stephen told the council that an angel appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Acts 7:30).
- ⇨ The ministry of Moses, sent *"to be a ruler and a deliverer,"* was carried out *"by the hand of the angel"* (Acts 7:35).
- ⇨ The angel of the Lord accompanied Israel to Mount Sinai and through the wilderness (Acts 7:38).
- ⇨ The Law of God was given to Israel *"by the disposition of angels"* (Acts 7:53).
- ⇨ A holy angel spoke to the Gentile Cornelius, instructing him how to contact Peter (Acts 10:3-7,22; 11:13).
- ⇨ *"The angel of the Lord"* released Peter from prison, causing him to

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rise up and the chains to fall off of his hands. He instructed Peter to follow him, and the gates of the prison opened of their own accord by his leadership: (Acts 12:7-10).

In these few instances, we catch a glimpse of the involvement of heaven with the saints on earth. We cannot speculate about the extensiveness of this involvement, but it certainly is not a temporary arrangement, intended only for first century believers. The word of the Lord is that angels ARE ministering spirits, and that they ARE sent forth to minister to those *"who shall be heirs of salvation."* As long as such souls exist, therefore, we can depend upon this faithful mass of spirits.

From Romans through the Revelation, there are one hundred references to angels. With very few exceptions the references pertain to holy angels. There are eight references to unholy angels (1 Cor 6:3; 2 Cor 11:14; Gal 1:6; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 1:6; Rev 9:11; 12:7,9).

The messengers of the seven churches are referred to as angels (Rev 2:1,12,18; 3:1,7,14). That leaves eighty-five references to the holy angels from Romans through the Revelation. That certainly is significant enough to get our attention. **You will notice that with remarkable consistency, an increase in Divine activity was always matched by increased activity among the angelic hosts.** The pinnacle of this activity will occur when Jesus comes again, being unveiled by the Father in all of His glory. At that time, He will be accompanied by *"all the holy angels"* (Matt 25:31).

But angels not only work on a large scale. In our text, a holy angel focuses on a single man, being sent to a solitary traveler. As with all of God's servants, both seen and unseen, the number of people involved is not what drives their activity. It is the significance of what men are doing, and how it relates to God's eternal purpose. Once a person sees this with some degree of discernment, it alters all of life.

THE PRECISION, YET GENERALITY, OF THE DIRECTION

" 26b Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert." Other versions read, *"Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."* *This is desert,* ^{NKJV} *"the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza."* *(This is a desert road),* ^{NASB} *"the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza,"* ^{NIV} *"This is a wilderness road,"* ^{NRSV} *"through the waste land,"* ^{BBE} *"the same is desert,"* ^{ERV} *"take the desert road that goes south from Jerusalem to Gaza,"* ^{GWN}

"the desert route." ^{NAB} *"the road that isn't used much now,"* ^{IE} and *"out in the desert,"* ^{PHILIPS}

Those who have a love for convenience will find the work of the Lord very tedious and difficult. "Ease," as the world defines it, is not in the believer's vocabulary. By experience they find that the way that leads to life is "narrow" and difficult for the flesh, and is entered through a gate that is "strait," small and confining (Matt 7:13). Sometimes the path of holy duty leads

through perils: i.e. *"in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren"* (2 Cor 11:26). The illustrious *Christian* career was unknown in the church for a considerable period of time. Oh, there have always been men who sought to exploit religion for strictly personal purposes, but they were not common at the first.

Philip does not balk at this

After a successful mission in a city, heaven sends Philip into the desert for some one-on-one work — by Given O. Blakely

calling. The angel of the Lord directs him to a desert – a wasteland, a wilderness road. It was a way of getting from Jerusalem to Gaza, but it certainly was not a sightseeing route, and one that was conducive to pleasure. The stretch of road from Jerusalem to Gaza was in the vicinity of fifteen miles. Yet, the angel of the Lord does not pinpoint exactly where Philip is to go, or what his business is going to be. He only tells the evangelist to “go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”^{NKJV} Yet, that is sufficient to get Philip started on his way, and therefore he will ask for no further directions. He does not know precisely where he is headed, or why he is going there.

Something to be Learned

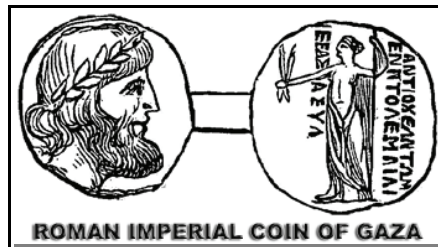
Something of the Divine manner is to be learned from this text. **Those who want all of the details spelled out will have a difficult time obeying the Lord. His instructions are not always as detailed as men desire.**

- ⇒ Abram was told to leave his country and his fathers house and go to a country God would later identify (Gen 12:1).
- ⇒ When the Lord commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering, He told the patriarch “upon one of the mountains” in “the land of Moriah,” saying He would tell him which one later (Gen 22:2).
- ⇒ When the Lord led Israel out of Egypt, it was in a general direction at the first – “through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea” (Ex 13:18).
- ⇒ When the Lord called Paul and Silas into a new region, it was through a dream in which Paul saw a man in Macedonia saying, “Come over into Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). This was not a city, but a region, or country, even having its own race.

Historically, Divine direction generally came in stages. That is, it was along the way, **as the people traveled**, that more specific directions were received. This was a marvelous depiction of the nature of spiritual life. **The Lord guides His people as they walk with**

Him. Doctrinally, it is through the knowledge of God, or in the process of Divine fellowship with the Lord, that supplies and instruction are received. This it is written, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you **through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord**” (2 Pet 1:2). And again, “His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him” (2 Pet 1:3). This is one of the reasons God has called us “unto the fellowship of His Son” (1 Cor 1:9). **It is in the process of that “fellowship” that required resources and direction are ministered from heaven.** This is being lived out in our text, as Philip heads down to the desert road leading to Gaza.

GAZA



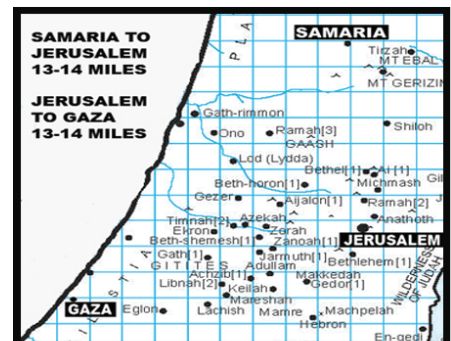
Gaza was an historical city in Canaan, and was formerly a principle stronghold of the Philistines. When entering the promised land, “Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded. And Joshua smote them from Kadeshbarnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon” (Josh 10:40-41). However, he spared some of the Anankims (giants), allowing them to live in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (Josh 11:21). Years later, “Goliath of Gath” was among those coming from these giants who were permitted to stay in the land. Gaza was the city where Samson “took the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of an hill that is before Hebron” (Judges 16:3). It is also the city where they took Samson after Delilah had betrayed him, put out his eyes, and caused him to be chained him to a

grinding mill. It is also the place where he pulled down the pillars of the Temple of Dagon, killing “about three thousand men and women” (Judges 16:21-31). Now, in the time of Philip, the city was a familiar place on the landscape of the promised land. Every place it is mentioned in Scripture, although it was in the promised land, and given to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:21,47), it is associated with the Philistines – not the Jews (Judges 16:21; 1 Sam 6:17; 2 Kgs 18:8; Jer 47:1).

The “desert road” to which our text refers is said to be a road favored by those with carriages, as compared to a walking. “Besides the ordinary road from Jerusalem by Ramleh to Gaza, there was another, more favorable for carriages (Acts 8:28), further to the south, through Hebron, and thence through a district comparatively without towns, and much exposed to the incursions of people from the desert.”^{McCLINTOK STRONG'S}

LEARNING ABOUT SERVING THE LORD

There is much to be learned in this text about serving the Lord. **First, the notion of convenience and ease is obviously lacking.** Philip is sent to a lonely road in the desert with a minimal amount of initial information. In fact, he is not even told why he was to go “toward



the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”^{NKJV} He is not told if this is for personal prayer and mediation, preaching, or some other holy activity. He does not know what awaits him there, if he is on a specific mission, or if further directions will be delivered.

Notwithstanding these rather ambiguous circumstances, Philip knows that “The steps of a good man are

ordered by the LORD” (Psa 37:23). Faith does teach the ones possessing it to “commit” their “way into the Lord,” trusting in Him (Psa 37:5). It is a blessed day, indeed, when the trusting one can discerningly say, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23). In Philip’s case, I suppose he could have reasoned that there might very well be perils associated with his

journey. Then, there was the matter of provisions, etc. **However, the person who lives by faith also obtains wisdom from above.**

Steps that are “ordered” by the Lord are not characterized by foolishness, rashness, or ignorance. It is an aspect of faith to depend upon being directed in a manner that is wise as well as effective. Faith is willing to trust God in this way.

THE INSTANT OBEDIENCE OF PHILIP

^{27a} **And he arose and went . . .**”

Other versions read, “*So he started out.*”^{NIV} “*So he got up and went.*”^{NRSV} “*rising up, he went.*”^{DOUAY} “*So Philip went.*”^{GWN} “*He got up and set out.*” and “*Philip arose and began his journey.*”^{PHILLIPS}

As soon as the angel told Philip what to do, he immediately set out on the required journey. **This is a vivid picture of the nature of obedience. It is instant, willing, and thorough.**

Philip had been intensely active

scenario into our own day, that would be something like telling a person in Joplin Missouri to go toward the West to the road that led from Tulsa Oklahoma to Bartlesville, Oklahoma – without any word about anything that might happen there, or whether of not the journey would continue on from there.

While this would present some difficulties for the flesh, it is perfectly reasonable to faith. Faith is sustained by an immediate connection with the living God. It also comes with an inner

life. This is the time of short-range and long-range planning. People are eager to plan the details of their careers, retirement, and even their death. While there is nothing particularly wrong in such things, those in Christ must be careful not to carry this mode of thinking into their life with God. When we live by faith, there are opportunities set before us that require an immediate response – one that is wholly independent of planning, as ordinarily perceived. The objective of the believer is to keep spiritually tuned to heaven, maintaining a robust faith, a confident hope, and sensitive heart. When these conditions are found, obedience will always be instant and complete.

Obedience Unto Righteousness

Lest we be led to think of obedience as something optional, or that is unrelated to our standing with the Lord, the apostle informs us that it is “unto righteousness.” As it is written, “*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*” (Rom 6:16). Other versions read, “*obedience leading to righteousness.*”^{NKJV} and “*obedience resulting in righteousness.*”^{NASB} The basic meaning of the word “obedience” includes the ideas of listening to, submitting to, being subject to, yielding to, surrendering to, and hearkening to, and to allow oneself to be governed by.^{THAYER} By its very nature, obedience is a response, or reaction of the heart that dictates what a person does. As used in Scripture, it presumes the presence and dominance of faith, and unquestionable

As soon as the angel told Philip what to do, he immediately set out on the required journey. This is a vivid picture of the nature of obedience. It is instant, willing, and thorough.

in Samaria, moving about, working great signs and wonders, and preaching the Gospel. He had also been with Peter and John as they prayed that the people would receive the Spirit, laying their hands upon them. They also preached to the people, confirming them in the Lord. Now, without much lapse in time, and without the benefit of advanced modes of travel, Philip is directed to take a significant journey of somewhere between fifteen and thirty miles. His instructions are sparse, to say the least. The only point of specificity pertained to a “way,” or road, that went from Jerusalem to Gaza. Bringing this

awareness that the Lord directs our steps – one at a time. **That is, we are provided details when we need them.** Even then, they might not be specific. For example, in the broad spectrum of life, we might simply be told that we will receive a “crown of life” (James 1:12). The extent and implications of that crown are not provided, but the fact of that promise is sufficient to keep us in the path of obedience.

The Time In Which We Live

The time in which we are living, now 2007, is one in which there is a remarkable penchant for the details of

submission to the Lord. Obedience cannot be successfully feigned – it is either real, or the person who pretends to obey is a hypocrite, or mere actor.

The fact that Philip instantly responded to the word of the angel confirms the strength of his faith. It also reveals the tenderness of his heart, and the willingness that dominated his spirit.

OBEDIENCE IN SCRIPTURE

Philip's response was in strict accord with other records of obedient souls.

The Scriptures contain a considerable number of records of the obedience of people to God. These include references to those who are expressly said to have been obedient – such as Abraham (Gen 22:18; Heb 11:8), Israel (2 Chron 11:4), Zerubbabel and his workers (Hag 1:2), a company of priests (Acts 6:7), believers in Rome (Rom 6:17; 16:19), and Philemon (Phile 1:21). There are numerous indirect references to the obedience of people, where they are said to have responded in faith to what they were commanded to do. These include Noah (Gen 6:22; 7:5; Heb 11:7), Jacob (Gen 35:1,7), Moses (Num 27:22), Caleb (Deut 1:36), Joshua (Josh 11:15), Gideon (Judges 6:25-28), David (1 Kgs 15:5), Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:6), Josiah (2 Kgs 22:2), Asa (2 Chron 14:2), Jehosaphat (2 Chron 20:32), Ezra (Ezra 7:10), Hanani (Neh 7:2), Job (Job 1:8), Jonah (Jon 3:3), Joseph, Mary's husband (Matt 1:24; 2:14), James and John (Matt 1:19-20),

Matthew (Matt 9:9), Simon and Andrew (Mk 1:16-18), and a host of others.

The "How-To" Mentality

Without laboring this to the point of distraction, I again want to briefly note the absence of "how-to" details in the words of heaven's messenger. Philip is not told how to get down to the road. I am sure there were several possible routes. It seems to me that he would have chosen the quickest route, as compared to the most scenic or enjoyable one. He is not told what he is going to do when he arrives, how long to stay, or what to do if he has to wait.

If you were to remove the "how-to" materials and activities from the contemporary *church* scene, it seems to me that very little would remain. There would definitely be a significant

things is a kind of epitaph to the level of spiritual ignorance that presently exists in the professed Christian community. It also accounts for the absence of kingdom initiatives in which there is a bold proclamation of the truth – independent of perceived domestic and social needs. It is something like a society in which little that makes for growth and advancement is ever introduced. The burden of the time is spent attempting to recover those who were once better off than they are now. **Whatever may be said of such a thrust, it seems to me that it comes short of the revealed Divine objective, which it to change men "from glory to glory," advancing them forward to their appointed conformity to the image of God's Son** (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29). Where this type of advancement is not being realized, obedience will not be found to any measurable degree. Consequently,

Whatever may be said of such a thrust, it seems to me that it comes short of the revealed Divine objective, which it to change men "from glory to glory," advancing them forward to their appointed conformity to the image of God's Son

reduction in all *Christian* communication media, including visual, audio, and literary.

The massive presence of these

men like Philip will be exceedingly rare, and therefore great works are not apt to be done. Spiritual insight will also be at a low level. That is the penalty for a lack of spiritual growth.

THE MAN THAT PHILIP CONFRONTED

^{27b} . . . 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 . . ."

We have no idea how long it took Philip to get to this desert road, or the means through which he arrived there. While such details might be interesting to the flesh, they would only prove to be a distraction to *the new man*. Knowing

the flesh as I do, it would have viewed such details as some form of code, standardizing it as a precedent for getting where God wants you to be.

In the book of Acts, we are assisted in thinking objectively – with a mind to **what** is being accomplished, rather than **how** it is being done. This is the kind of approach upon which flesh cannot capitalize. This is because such an approach is driven by the Divine agenda, into which human wisdom has no input

whatsoever.

Something to be Noted

Remember the activities that had taken place in Jerusalem.

⇨ The ministry of John the Baptist, announcing the presence of the promised Messiah, had been known in that city (John 1:19).

⇨ Jerusalem had been exposed several times to the aggressive ministry of

Jesus (Matt 15:1; 20:17; Mk 10:32; 11:11,15; John 5:1; 12:12; Matt 26:55).

- ⇒ On the day of Pentecost, when the Gospel was preached, a great harvest of souls was reaped in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5,14,41).
- ⇒ Multitudes of sick people had been healed by the apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 5:16).
- ⇒ The apostles were charged with filling Jerusalem with their doctrine (Acts 5:28).
- ⇒ Following the ordaining of the first deacons, the Word of God increased, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem were multiplied (Acts 6:7).
- ⇒ A great persecution had been launched against the “church which was at Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1).

One might imagine that it would be impossible for anyone to come into Jerusalem – particularly to worship the God of the Jews – without being made privy of the marvelous things that had been taking place there. As Paul told Fetus, “this thing was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). Yet, Philip will now confront a man who was apparently not privy to what had taken place – including the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, together with the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit, powerful preaching, and numerous signs and wonders.

Although the Gospel had filled Jerusalem at the first (5:28), by this time it does not appear to have permeated Jewish activities. In fact, with the passage of time and the persecution of the church, the awareness of the burst of newness of life had apparently faded from both the thoughts and conversations of the people. This clearly appears to be the case in the narrative that follows.

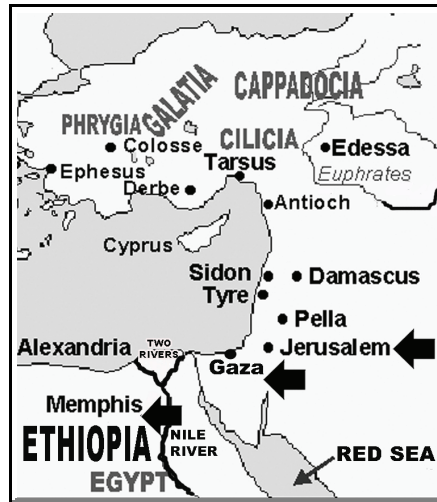
A MAN OF ETHIOPIA

“ . . . and, behold, a man of Ethiopia . . .” Other versions read, “an Ethiopian.” ^{NASB} “who had come from Cush,” ^{MRD} and “a man from the country of Ethiopia.” ^{IE}

Now that Philip has arrived on

“the desert road” leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, our attention is turned to someone who is traveling on that road. Circumstances are being orchestrated so that Philip’s attention will be turned from a city to a solitary man.

He Was from Ethiopia



Ethiopia is a land of Scriptural significance. It is located in the upper Nile region in the African quadrant of the world. This was the land of Cush, and is mentioned in Genesis 2:13 as a land compassed by one of the rivers flowing out of the garden of Eden. Moses married an Ethiopian woman (Num 12:1). On one occasion, one million Ethiopians (a “thousand thousand”) fought against king Asa and Judah, and were soundly defeated by the Lord (2 Chron. 14:9-12). During the days of Esther, Ahasuerus, her husband, reigned over Ethiopia (Esth 1:1). The book of Job mentions that topaz came from that country (Job 28:19). The Psalmist foretold a time when Ethiopia would “stretch out her hands unto God” (Psa 68:31). When Isaiah “walked naked and barefoot for three years,” it was a “sign and wonder upon Egypt and Ethiopia” (Isa 20:3). Ethiopia is mentioned along with Egypt and Seba as being given by God as a ransom for Israel (Isa 43:3). When Jeremiah was thrown into prison, it was an Ethiopian that interceded for him, leading to the prophet’s deliverance from the pit (Jer 38:7-10).

Now, a man from this part of the world is found on a desert road in the land of the Jews.

A EUNUCH OF GREAT AUTHORITY

“ . . . an eunuch of great authority . . .” Other versions read, “a court official,” ^{NASB} “an important official,” ^{NRSV} “a minister of the candace,” ^{RSV} “who was minister in charge,” ^{CJB} “high official,” ^{CSB} “a man in power,” ^{DARBY} “chief Governor,” ^{GENEVA} “high ranking official,” ^{GWN} “chamberlain of great authority,” ^{TNT} “man of rank,” ^{YLT} “important officer,” ^{IE} “in a position of high authority,” ^{WEYMOUTH} and “potentate.” ^{INTERLINEAR}

A Eunuch

A eunuch was a man who was who was not married, and did not have children. Among ancient civilizations, some men in the royal courts were emasculated in order to ensure no improprieties took place, and they could be wholly given to their duties. We do now know if this was the case with this man – only that he was called a eunuch. It is quite probable that condition was imposed upon him.

Jesus spoke of eunuchs, declaring that there were several different kinds of them. “For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (Matt 19:12).

- ⇒ Those who were born eunuchs were, by nature, incapable of begetting children.
- ⇒ Those who were “made eunuchs of men” had the condition forced upon them, so that they could not beget children.
- ⇒ Those who “made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” are those who voluntarily abstained from marriage in order to serve the Lord. There is no indication that this involved physical alteration. Paul is an example of such a man. He said that such a condition was a “gift” (1 Cor 7:7).

A Man of Great Authority

This man was an officer of the court, a high ranking official in the

government of Ethiopia. Thus, Philip is being directed to a single political dignitary after he had ministered to, what Jews considered to be, lowly Samaritans.

You see how this contradicts the notion of specialists in the ministry – i.e., those who specialize in youth, married, singles, and special segments of society. Some feel they are called to minister to athletes, entertainers, business men, etc. Whatever may be said of such an approach, how does it look when compared with the text before us? **The truth of the matter is that there is no sense in which the Gospel is tailored for a particular segment of society.** Fleshly distinctions have nothing whatsoever to do with the manner in which the Good News is presented. The present trends of speciality Bibles (Men’s, Women’s, Youth, etc) is **not** good. It leads men to approach the Word of God with themselves in mind rather than God, His Son, and His great salvation.

Those who labor in the vineyard

In view of the fact that God does not call many from among the wise, mighty, and noble, it ought to be apparrant that such status’ cannot be dignified by faith. Those individuals who can maintain faith in God while remaining in those domains are exceedingly rare, as confirmed by Scriptural history.

of the Lord must eventually get to the point where they are persuaded the Gospel addresses men precisely as they are. It does not have to be tailored for the people, adapted to their circumstances, and made relevant to their situation. All of that is inherent in the Gospel itself. In order to make some sort of adaptation to a special person or group of persons, one must step away from the Gospel and present it differently than God intends. If that happens, what is presented no longer has any “power unto salvation.”

We will find that Philip will not present a special Gospel for political dignitaries. He will preach the same

Christ He declared to the Samaritans.

HIS OFFICE

“...under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, . . .” Other versions read, “in charge of the entire treasury,”^{NRSV} “controller of all her property,”^{BBE} “had charge over all her treasures,”^{DOUAY} “had the rule over all her treasure,”^{GENEVA} “her chief treasurer,”^{NJB} “the treasurer of Ethiopia,”^{NLT} and “responsible for taking care of all her money.”^{IE}

The term “Candace” was a common name for queens in Ethiopia, like “Pharaoh” was of rulers in Egypt, and “Caesar” of Roman rulers. The historian Pliny speaks of this custom: “The edifices of the city were few; a woman reigned there of the name of Candace, which name had been transmitted to these queens for many years.”^{NAT HISTORY 7:29}

This man would be considered roughly equivalent to the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States – although he no doubt had more authority than that position. He had charge of the

interest in the things pertaining to “the world to come.” But here and there, a person will surface from among these categories of people who is discontent with this world, and engages in a fervent quest for the Lord. Philip is about to confront such a man.

In view of the fact that God does not call many from among the wise, mighty, and noble, it ought to be apparrant that such status’ cannot be dignified by faith. Those individuals who can maintain faith in God while remaining in those domains are exceedingly rare, as confirmed by Scriptural history. Even then, men like Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not called while occupying such position. Instead, they were exalted there to fulfill certain Divine objectives.

HE HAD COME TO JERUSALEM TO WORSHIP

“... and had come to Jerusalem for to worship . . .” Other versions read, “had been to Jerusalem to worship,”^{CJB} “had been on pilgrimage to Jerusalem,”^{NJB} “had gone to Jerusalem to worship,”^{NLT} “came to Jerusalem for to worship,”^{NLT} “came to Jerusalem to pray,”^{TNT} “had visited Jerusalem to worship there,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “had come worshipping to Jerusalem.”^{INTERLINEAR}

This political dignitary, a man of great authority, had come to Jerusalem – the center of Judaism – to worship. The Queen whose treasures he managed, had apparently been congenial toward him, as Artaxerxes was toward Nehemiah (Neh 2:5-8). Thus, because of her kindness, the eunuch had made the lengthy pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

His position and responsibility did not interfere with his commitment to the Lord. He rather gave way to the preeminence of the faith that he had, not allowing his devotion to God to be neutralized by his responsibilities to the Queen.

Although we do not know the name of this man, we learn very much concerning him by this brief account.

With the technical exceptions of Nicolas the Proselyte (Acts 6:5), and the

collection and distribution of the Queen’s treasury.

Here is an fulfillment of the word spoken by Paul: “*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*” (1 Cor 1:26). The Scriptures do not say that the “wise,” “mighty,” and “noble,” are neglected people groups – groups that ought to be targeted by the church. It says that not many are “called” from those groups – **heaven does not call them.** It is not that it unlawful for such to be called. Rather, they are more firmly nailed to this world, and therefore have no fundamental

Samaritans converted through Philip's ministry (some of whom were probably not pure Jews), here is the first example of a pure Gentile being exposed to the Gospel of Christ. In a sense, he was much like Nicolas, himself being a proselyte. **The journey from Ethiopia to Jerusalem is estimated to have been around 1,500 miles – a staggering distance when you consider the mode of travel.** It was a journey much like that of the wise men who came from the East to see the infant Jesus. (Assuming they commenced their journey as soon as the Holy Child was born, it probably took them around two years to get to Bethlehem – Matt 2:16). That is why one version of Scripture refers to the eunuch's journey as a "pilgrimage" ^{NJB} – the word "pilgrimage" meaning "a journey of a pilgrim," ^{MERRIAM-WEBSTER} going through whole regions to which he does not belong.

The Influence of Jewry

The fact that this man was worshipping the God of the Jews confirms

their influence in their dispersion. God had told the Israelites He would scatter them because of their waywardness (Jer 9:16; Ezek 4:13; 5:10; 20:23; Dan 9:7; Hos 9:17; Amos 9:9). Even in Jesus' day, the Jews were in a state of dispersion. Once, when Jesus told the Jews He was going where they could not come, they replied, "Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? **will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?**" (John 7:35). On the day of Pentecost, "devout" Jews "out of every nation under heaven" had assembled in Jerusalem, confirming they were still in a state of dispersion (Acts 2:5).

While scattered, the Jews still maintained their identity, not being absorbed by the cultures into which they were dispersed. There were people who took the counsel of the Lord seriously: "And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have

peace" (Jer 29:7). Here is a case of a man who was reached by the faithfulness of Jews in his native region. As a result, he had come to worship "the God of the Jews" (Rom 3:29). In him the Psalm was fulfilled, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Psa 68:31). And again, "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; **this man was born there**" (Psa 87:4). This was also a pledge to the greater fulfillment of the prophesy of Zechariah: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, **We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you**" (Zech 8:23).

This is a marvelous depiction of the potency of a godly witness, and of maintaining the ordinances that God has set in place. Faithfulness to God is a telling witness to those beholding it.

COMING BACK FROM A HOLY GATHERING

²⁸ . . . Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet."

WAS RETURNING

" . . . Was returning . . ." Other versions read, "on his way home," ^{NIV} "returning home," ^{NRSV} and "going back." ^{BBE} Having spent time in Jerusalem in worship – for that was his reason for going there – we are confronted with this man as he was returning to Ethiopia. We are not told what he heard when he was in the holy city. It is assumed that he spent considerable time in the Temple complex. Again, there is something to be said for the faithful observance of the ordinances of the Lord. Although the Jews had been widely dispersed, and their Temple twice destroyed, yet when someone came to Jerusalem, the feasts of the Lord were still being observed, the Temple was open, and some commitment to the Lord was evident. All of this was not maintained in a perfect manner, to be sure, and there was gross hypocrisy present among the leaders. **Yet, the ceremonies of the Law had been given by**

God Almighty, and there was a valid association that could be made with Him through them. Thus, after Jesus had died, been raised, and returned to heaven – after He had been enthroned and the New Covenant inaugurated – the Law and its attending ceremonies still had a ministry. It is true that this situation gradually faded from the picture. The ceremonies were not intended to be perpetual, or to be the continual means of readying people for salvation. Yet, during the infancy of the church, gracious provision was made for sincere souls to

gain advantages from the details of the Old Covenant which was, as the book Hebrews affirms, "ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:13).

Here we have a man returning from a time of worship in Jerusalem. It will be interesting to see **how** he returns, and what activities his visit to the holy city has provoked.

READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET

" . . . and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet." Other versions

All of this was not maintained in a perfect manner, to be sure, and there was gross hypocrisy present among the leaders. Yet, the ceremonies of the Law had been given by God Almighty, and there was a valid association that could be made with Him through them.

After a successful mission in a city, heaven sends Philip into the desert for some one-on-one work — by Given O. Blakely

read, "reading the book of Isaiah the prophet,"^{NIV} "reading the prophet Isaiah aloud,"^{CSB} "reading the prophet Isaiah out loud,"^{GWN} "as reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah,"^{NLT} and "reading aloud from the book of the prophet Isaiah."^{LIVING}

A Minor Point

Although the Scriptures do not make a point of which version of Scripture the eunuch was reading, it is generally assumed that it was the Septuagint Version. The Hellenization of the world under Alexander the Great no doubt contributed to this. This was a project of the Grecian monarch in which the whole world was brought to speak Greek. The Septuagint Version was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and was widely distributed in the world.

All of this being true, here is an instance of Divine providence shaping the culture of the world with a mind to give the advantage to those who were seeking Him. While this is not a doctrinal point over which men should contend, it does provide a profitable perspective for those who are able to receive it.

So, what does a man do who is returning from a time of worship – real worship? In our country, men can go straight to an athletic event, or some form of entertainment, or some other casual affair. The very concept of worship has been so dumbed down that it is scarcely associated with a serious quest for God. Here, however, there is no need to indulge in speculation. Here is a man who had been to Jerusalem to worship. He is returning home, and we are expressly told what he was doing.

Not only did this man have a copy of the Scriptures, he was reading from them. In some way stimulated by his time in Jerusalem, he was reading from the prophet Isaiah, applying his mind to the Word of God. Enough cannot be said about the Word itself, and its centrality in the use and shaping of the mind. Those who have been deprived of Scripture have been robbed of nearly everything of lasting value. The Scriptures are able to make men "*wise unto salvation*" (2 Tim 3:15), and then equip them to be "*thoroughly furnished unto every good work*" (2 Tim 3:16-17). A person or a

group of persons who are fundamentally ignorant of the Word, or are guilty of neglecting it, will inevitably decline spiritually.

At any rate, the eunuch's time in Jerusalem had provoked him to read the Scriptures. He did not do this to impress anyone, or out of a sense of duty. He was on his own time, so to speak, and chose to consider the Word of God. That was the effect worship had upon him. One

CONCERNING THE SEPTUAGINT

"Among the Greek Church fathers Irenaeus (lib. 3, c. 24) relates that Ptolemy Lagi, wishing to adorn his Alexandrian library with the writings of all nations, requested from the Jews of Jerusalem a Greek version of their Scriptures; that they sent seventy elders well skilled in the Scriptures and in later languages; that the king separated them from one another and bade them all translate the several books. When they came together before Ptolemy and showed their versions, God was glorified, for they all agreed exactly, from beginning to end, in every phrase and word, so that all men may know that the Scriptures are translated by the inspiration of God. Justin Martyr (Cohort. ad Graecos, p. 34) gives the same account, and adds that he was taken to see the cells in which the interpreters worked. Epiphanius says that the translators were divided into pairs, in thirty-six cells, each pair being provided with two scribes; and that thirty-six versions agreeing in every point were produced, by the gift of the Holy Spirit (DePond. et Mens. c. 3-6)."^{McCLINTOK}

STRONG'S CYCLOPEDIA

wonders why the current worship-fads have not produced similar results.

Another Point

Also, note the inclination of the Lord toward a devout person – one who worshiped God, and was engaged in a serious quest for the truth. While this is not the only kind of people who were given to hear the Gospel, it is arresting to consider how such individuals were the target of Gospel labors.

- ⇨ On the day of Pentecost "*devout men*" were subjected to the Gospel (Acts 2:5).
- ⇨ The Apostles preached and wrought many signs and wonders in

Solomon's porch, a structure within the Temple complex (Acts 5:12).

- ⇨ After releasing the apostles from prison, an angel from heaven instructed them to go and preach "*in the temple to the people all the words of this life*" (Acts 5:20).
- ⇨ The Lord made special provisions for Cornelius to hear the God, who was "*A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway*" (Acts 10:2).
- ⇨ Paul and Silas gained a following of "*Devout Greeks*" in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4).
- ⇨ Paul spoke with Jews and "*devout persons*" in Athens (Acts 17:17).
- ⇨ The book of Acts contains sixteen references to the outreach activities of believers in the synagogues (6:9; 9:2,20; 13:5,14,15,42; 14:1; 17:1-2,10, 17; 18:4,19,26; 19:8).

The Blight of Sectarianism

One of the spreading blights of sectarianism is its tendency to attach little or no worth to an earnest quest for God – particularly among those who have little or no knowledge of the truth, and are not acquainted with either the scope or the details of the truth. Thus far in the book of Acts, there has been a total absence of this way of thinking. All of this has taken place without any tolerance for doctrinal corruption. Neither has there been any excusing of ignorance.

Yet, there has been a longsuffering and tenderness evidenced in the teaching of uninformed souls. That same marvelous quality will be seen in this passage. It is good that we make a special note of this, and determine to participate in such a life-sapping approach. The Scriptures are consistent in their representation of sincere souls getting the attention of God, and being sent faithful laborers to assist them in apprehending the truth more fully. We must not allow any sectarian corruption to rob us of having the mind of Christ toward such people. Such an attitude will put us at variance with God.

THE SPIRIT SPEAKS A WORD OF DIRECTION

“²⁹ Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.”

In keeping with the manner of the Kingdom, further direction will be given to Philip while he is obeying – living by faith and walking in the Spirit. Within the framework of fellowship with Christ, he will be told what to do. Within the perimeter of the knowledge of the Lord he will become cognizant of the proper thing to do.

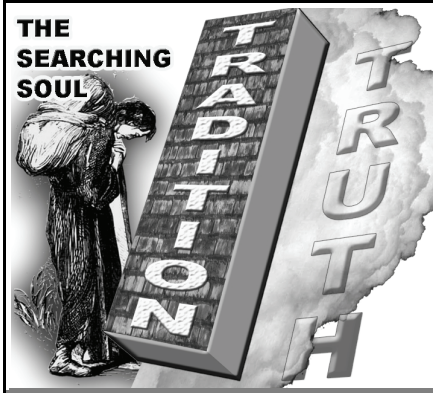
My Own Experience

It seems to me that enough cannot be said about this principle. I know how long it was before I had any cogent thought concerning this Divine manner. I had unwittingly adopted an approach to life in Christ that did not require closeness to the Lord, and a lively fellowship with Him. In all honesty, I was not averse to this thought, but did not perceive how central it was to spiritual life. In personal experience, I found that my most productive thoughts were realized when I felt the closest to the Lord, and was most aware of Him. During those times, the world had no attraction to me, I had a voracious appetite for Scripture, and I was eager to please the Lord in all things. Yet, I had not yet put it all together, making the vital association between my own growth and those times of closeness to the Lord.

It was not until some years later that the phrases “*knowledge of God*” (Col 1:10; 2 Pet 1:2), “*knowledge of Him*” (Eph 1:17; 2 Pet 1:3) “*knowledge of the Lord*” (Isa 11:9; 2 Pet 2:20), “*knowledge of Christ Jesus*” (Phil 3:8), “*knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Phil 1:8; 2 Pet 3:18,) and “*know Me*” (Heb 8:11), arrested my attention. It was absolutely revolutionary when it burst upon my soul that eternal life is knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).

What had happened was that I had unwittingly bought into a religious system that actually obscured the truth, even though it boasted of having a kind of monopoly on the truth. I was not coerced into this position, but was greatly

handicapped by my ignorance of the purpose of God and the nature of



salvation. The “*tradition of men*” casts a cloud of obscurity over the entirety of the revelation (Col 2:8). Once accepted, it forces men to consider Scripture in view of the tradition. **This is owing to the fact that men tend to ascribe to their own tradition the traits that belong to the Word of God.** Their view is thus equated with Divine utterance. All of this is done without ever plainly declaring that is what has taken place. The one who has embraced the tradition of men will adamantly declare that this has not taken place. However, once freed from the clutches of human wisdom, it all becomes so apparent that the liberated soul marvels he was ever seduced.

The Reason for Saying These Things

My point in drawing attention to my personal experience is simply this: the conditions that hindered my own progress were not present during the time of our text – at least not to the degree that they exist now. The great falling away that Jesus and the Apostles foretold has, however, come to pass (Matt 24:12; 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 2 Pet 2:1-3). The liabilities that have been introduced by this departure are staggering – so much so that it is nearly impossible to delineate it.

The purity of motive, earnest inquiry, and instant obedience of which we are reading are all standard in the Kingdom. However, they appear

extraordinary because of their clash with present-day religious manners. My prayer is that the record itself will awaken a fervent desire for doctrinal purity and thoroughness of commitment within the hearts of everyone hearing these words.

THE SPIRIT SAID

“*Then the Spirit said unto Philip . . .*” Other versions read, “*The Spirit told Philip,*”^{NIV} and “*The Holy Spirit said to Philip.*”^{LIVING}

Notice the progression in Philip’s life. It speaks to us of the nature of living by faith.

- ⇒ He was noted for being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3-5).
- ⇒ He faithfully joined in the administration of food to the needy within the community of believers (Acts 6:6).
- ⇒ Upon the raising of a persecution of the church, he was forced out of Jerusalem (Acts 8:1).
- ⇒ He went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them (Acts 8:5).
- ⇒ An angel directed him to go down to the desert road that led from Jerusalem to Gaza.
- ⇒ Now, the Holy Spirit directs him to an even more specific action.

It is evident that being “*led by the Spirit*” (Lk 4:1; Rom 8:14) is not a sporadic event. There are some who consider the Spirit moving, directing, or leading the individual to be something unexpected, sudden, and much like an interruption to the normal course of life. However, this is not how the working of the Spirit is depicted in Scripture. A few examples will suffice to buttress this point.

- ⇒ When the Holy Spirit came upon the early disciples, it was while they were all together with one accord and

in one place, waiting as the Lord had commanded them (Acts 1:4; 2:1).

- ⇒ When the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and great grace came upon them all, it was after they prayed together with one accord for boldness to preach the Word (Acts 4:31).
- ⇒ When Peter and John prayed that the Samaritans would receive the

Barnabas and Saul to the work to which He had called them, it was after they had been ministering to the Lord and fasting (Acts 13:2).

Now, Philip is directed by the Holy Spirit **while he is engaged in doing the revealed will of God.**

I am persuaded that many people are not directed by the Spirit of God, whether being steered away from danger,

walk along beside the carriage,^{NLT} *“Go up and join him in his chariot,”*^{WILLIAMS} *“Go forward and join yourself to this chariot,”*^{AMPLIFIED} *“catch up with the chariot.”*^{CEV}

Once again, note that the Spirit does not think in terms of convenience and ease. Philip has been traveling, and he is in a desert. A man riding in a chariot is within sight, and the Spirit tells Philip to join himself to the chariot. The language is very precise. The expression “*join thyself to*” is translated from a single Greek word – *κολλήθητι* (kol-lath-a-ti). The word means “to glue, to glue together, cement, fasten together to join or fasten firmly together.”^{THAYER} There was no question concerning what Philip was to do. He was not sent to survey the situation, evaluate the circumstances, or consider the possibilities. His mission was straightforward: connect with that chariot, and do not leave it.

I am persuaded that many people are not directed by the Spirit of God, whether being steered away from danger, or brought into holy involvements, because they are not walking in the Spirit. Their lives are being lived outside the perimeter of Divine fellowship.

Holy Spirit, it was after they had received the Word of God, believed, and been baptized (Acts 8:15-17).

- ⇒ When the Spirit directed Peter to go with the men sent to him by Cornelius, it was while Peter was thinking on a vision that had been given to him from heaven (Acts 10:19).
- ⇒ When the Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household, it was after they had gathered to hear words whereby they might be saved (Acts 11:14-15).
- ⇒ When the Holy Spirit told the brethren in Antioch to separate

or brought into holy involvements, because they are not walking in the Spirit. Their lives are being lived outside the perimeter of Divine fellowship. It ought to be obvious that this greatly complicates life, putting one in a state in which deception is more liable to occur, and Satan’s devices will not be readily perceived.

GO NEAR AND JOIN

“... Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Other versions read, “Go near and overtake this chariot,”^{NKJV} “Go up and join this chariot,”^{NASB} “Go to that chariot and stay near it,”^{NIV} “Go over to this chariot and join it,”^{NRSV} “Go near, and get on his carriage,”^{BBE} “Approach and join this chariot,”^{DARBY} “Go over and

We observe here the nature of spiritual life – a step at a time. The flesh would rather have an elaborate plan developed, laid out upon the table, and all of the details spelled out up front. However, this is not the manner of the Kingdom. **In Christ Jesus direction springs from fellowship, and guidance is the fruit of familiarity.** In view of this, it is apparent that a deliberate aloofness from the Lord involves a forfeiture of participation in His will — and that is the very reason we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. We have been “*created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*” (Eph 2:10). Walking “in” these good works involves living by faith, relinquishing self-centeredness.

THE TYPE OF OBEDIENCE RENDERED BY PHILIP

^{30a} **And Philip ran thither to him** ... “Other versions read, “*So Philip ran to him,*”^{NKJV} “*Philip ran up to the chariot,*”^{NIV} “*running up to him,*”^{BBE} “*when he came near,*”^{MKD} “*having run near,*”^{PHILLIPS} and “*ran up close.*”^{CEV}

I have noticed over the years the manner in which professed believers are

generally addressed from the pulpit. They are regularly told how they balk at the word of the Lord, are slow to learn, and are generally in disagreement with the Lord. I cannot begin to tell you of the times I have heard preachers and teachers confess after reading some Divine utterance, that they would not have said it that way. Others, relating

the aggressiveness of some personality of Scripture, might point out how that is certainly not what **they** would have done. All of this is covered over with a psychological shroud that represents the people of God as fundamentally wayward, bucking against the will of the Lord, and pretty much in a state of ignorance when it comes to the things of

the Lord. They want things conveniently packaged for them, steer away from any demands upon their lives, and want to take the easy course. At least this is how they are being represented.

However, this is not the way believers are exemplified in Scripture. Disobedience and recalcitrance are always presented as departures that are totally unacceptable to God. Rather than explaining how this is the manner of those in Christ, the Spirit testifies that we are to rid ourselves of such tendencies, mortifying the deeds of the body, and cleansing ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit (Col 3:5; 2 Cor 7:1). In fact, it is plainly stated, *“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Gal 5:24).

Rather than treating dullness of hearing and slowness of response as a characteristically human trait of Christians, such things are held out as putting one in eternal jeopardy (Heb 3:12; 6:4-8; 10:38-39).

By way of comparison, behold the type of obedience found in Philip. **Upon being told by the Spirit to catch up with the chariot ahead of him, he instantly runs to it.** His spiritual senses are honed, as it were to a fine edge, so that he knows when the Spirit is speaking to him, and is ready to leap into action immediately.

How blessed are those whose response to the Lord is immediate! When Jesus called James and John, they *“immediately left the ship, and their father, and followed Him”* (Matt 4:22). When Jesus told the palsied man who had been lowered through a roof to His feet, *“Arise, and take up thy bed, and go*

thy way into thine house,” it is written, *“And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all”* (Mk 2:11-12). Once Jesus told an impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, *“Rise, take up thy bed and walk.”* It is written, *“And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked”* (John 5:9). When Peter confronted Aeneas, a man who was bedridden for eight years, he said, *“arise and make thy bed.”* Upon hearing him, Aeneas *“arose immediately”*

“immediately” (Luke 12:36).

I am confirming that Philip’s response was not an unusual one – even though it might be so considered today. This was the Kingdom norm. It is the way faith moves a person to respond, as the eleventh chapter of Hebrews confirms. Jesus called those who were *“slow of heart to believe”* fools (Lk 24:25). He asked those who were surprised when He calmed the storm in which they found

Rather than treating dullness of hearing and slowness of response as a characteristically human trait of Christians, such things are held out as putting one in eternal jeopardy

(Acts 9:33-34).

When Paul was called into the ministry by Jesus Himself, he testified, *“immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood”* (Gal 1:16). When the Lord sent Paul a vision in the night of a man in Macedonia saying, *“Come over into Macedonia and help us,”* it is written, *“immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia”* (Acts 16:9-10). On the Isle of Patmos, when a holy angel said to John *“Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter,”* John said, *“And immediately I was in the Spirit”* (Rev 4:2).

Jesus admonished His disciples, *“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him*

themselves, “Where is your faith” (Lk 8:25). When His disciples did not believe the testimony of His resurrection, delivered to them by some women, and two who had been blessed with His presence, He *“upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart”* (Mk 16:14). When Paul confronted those who were slow to understand he wrote, *“ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat”* (Heb 5:12).

Philip’s response is one of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17). It depicts the character of *“the new man”* who is *“created in righteousness and true holiness”* (Eph 4:24). **No other kind of response is acceptable.**

THE IMPACT OF THE JERUSALEM TRIP UPON THE EUNUCH

^{30b} . . . and heard him read the prophet Esaias . . .” Other versions read, *“heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet,”* ^{NIV} *“could hear the official reading the prophet Isaiah out loud,”* ^{GWN} *“he heard the man reading aloud. He was reading from the prophet Isaiah,”* ^{1E} and

“listened to him reading the prophet Isaiah.” ^{WILLIAMS}

Although I have already made a point of this, it seems me that the circumstance here described justifies further comments. We are not provided

the details of the eunuch’s visit to Jerusalem. **However, his activity on his return signifies the impact of his time in Jerusalem.** It also reveals something of what took place during Jewish gatherings. Keep in mind, that this man did not know about the Lord Jesus

Christ. His exposure had only been to the Jewish people and their activities under the Law. **Yet, he had made an association of the worship of God with the reading of the Scriptures.** Later in this book, Paul will deliver a stirring recap of Jewish history in Antioch of Pisidia. During that message he referred to **“the prophets which are read every sabbath day . . .”** in Jerusalem (Acts 13:27). Here was a man who had taken the reading seriously, and, as a consequence, he was reading the Scriptures on the way back home. **His heart and mind had apparently been stirred, and thus he was drawn to the Word of God.**

Not only was he reading, he was reading out loud, for Philip heard him.

There is no hint that the eunuch was reading in a section of Scripture with which Philip was not familiar. Philip appears to have instantly recognized the passage, and therefore confidently asks if the man understood what he was reading.

Many, myself included, have found that reading Scripture aloud has an undeniable impact upon the soul, moving one to have extended thoughts on the text being read.

We see in this passage the working of the Lord. Philip is led by God to meet a man who has been led to read the Scriptures. None of this is mere

coincidence. This is a sterling example of those who seek finding, and those who ask receiving (Matt 7:7-8). It is also an example of someone being drawn to Jesus by God (John 6:44,65). The role of the Scriptures in all of this is very apparent, and is to be duly noted by all. A person or a church that neglects the Word of God is not apt to be drawn to the Lord Jesus, much less receive salvation through Him.

A WISE AND APPROPRIATE QUESTION

^{30c} . . . and said, **Understandest thou what thou readest?**” Other versions read, **“Do you understand what you are reading?”**^{NKJV} **“Is the sense of what you are reading clear to you?”**^{BBE} **“Dost thou then know what thou art reading of?”**^{DARBY} **“Thinkest thou that thou understandest what thou readest?”**^{DOUAY} **“Do you understand it?”**^{LIVING} and **“Do you really understand what you are reading?”**^{AMPLIFIED}

Philip knew that before God understanding is a critical matter. Jesus spoke of those who could not profit from Him or His words as not understanding (Matt 13:13-15). Furthermore, He said that when a person did not understand the Word, **“then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away what which was sown in his heart”** (Matt 13:19). Conversely, the one who understands the Word is the one who brings forth fruit (Matt 13:23). When explaining why some people **“could not believe,”** John said it was because God blinded their eyes and hardened their heart so they could not understand

(John 12:39-40).

In accounting for the reprobacy of the Gentile world, Paul said they were **“without understanding”** (Rom 1:31). The fallenness of the human race is accounted for in these words: **“there is none that understandeth”** (Rom 3:11).

Believers are admonished to **“be men”** in understanding (1 Cor 14:20). Again Paul admonished them to **“understand what the will of the Lord is”** (Eph 5:17). Paul prayed for the churches that then **“eyes of their understanding”** might be opened so they could know essential matters (Eph 1:15-19), and that they might be **“filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”** (Col 1:9). John declared that Jesus **“is come, and hath given us an understanding”** of God Himself (1 John 5:20).

These things were to some significant degree known by Philip. This is why he asked if the eunuch understood

what he was reading. **He knew that Scripture has no favorable effect upon person unless he understands it.**

There is no hint that the eunuch was reading in a section of Scripture with which Philip was not familiar. Philip appears to have instantly recognized the passage, and therefore confidently asks if the man understood what he was reading. One can only imagine how this whole event would have fared if an average twentieth-century deacon had been dispatched to that chariot.

Here we are introduced to the thoroughness of sincere Jewish teaching, and the caliber of disciples that were developed under the apostles’ doctrine. While we are not sure of the precise time frame involved in this text, it could not have been too long after Pentecost. Yet, here was a man that was grounded in the truth and could handle aright the Word of God. Surely, Philip was a diligent workman that had no need to be ashamed (2 Tim 2:15).

A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND WISDOM

^{31a} **And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?”** Other versions read, **“explains it to me,”**

NIV *"How is that possible when I have no guide?"*^{BBE} *"unless some man shew me?"*
 DOUAY *"How can I understand, unless some one instruct me?"*^{MRD} *"Why, how am I able, if some one may not guide me?"*^{YLT}
"How in the world could I, unless someone teaches me?"^{WILLIAMS} *"Why, how can I unless someone shall show me the way?"*^{MONTGOMERY} and *"How is it possible for me to do so unless someone explains it to me and guides me [in the right way]?"*^{AMPLIFIED}

We immediately learn that the man had been seriously considering what he was reading. His thoughts were wrapped up in the text so that he instantly responded to Philip's inquiry.

JUST READ THE BIBLE

Perhaps you have heard people say to the spiritually unlearned, "Just

There is altogether too much naivety in the professing church on this subject. I am not sure of the value of holding up signs at a public event reading John 3:16, or dropping copies of Scripture, or sections of Scripture in populated areas.

read the Bible." Also, it is possible for a person to read the Scriptures naively, thinking that repeated exposure to them will somehow cause the meaning of them to come through. Well, we have before us a man who was exposing his mind to the Scriptures – a choice section of them at that. If a person can really study themselves into an initial grasp of the truth, then surely this man will be able to do it. Apollos is another case in point. He was a man who was *"mighty in the Scriptures."* He was also *"instructed in the way of the Lord, being fervent in spirit,"* He even *"taught diligently the things of the Lord."* Yet, he had this dark spot in his understanding. He knew *"only the baptism of John."* This was at least twenty-four years after Pentecost. However, notwithstanding, the path of Apollos was crossed with two who knew the way of the Lord more perfectly, just as the account of our text (Acts 18:24-26).

HOW CAN I

I am impressed with the guileless manner of this unnamed man. To him, arriving at an understanding on his own simply was not possible. He seemed to sense that repeated exposure to the text would not magically clear it up. Now, all of this reflects the manner of the Kingdom, and the ordained way of learning. Initially, a person cannot read their way into Jesus. In this case, we have a man who was obviously learned and in possession of a disciplined mind. Yet, as it is written, *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom 10:14-15). That is the

Divine arrangement. Paul confirmed this when he said to the Corinthians, *"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"* (1 Cor 3:5).

There is altogether too much naivety in the professing church on this subject. I am not sure of the value of holding up signs at a public event reading John 3:16, or dropping copies of Scripture, or sections of Scripture in populated areas. I would certainly not be so foolish as to set myself against such a work. However, at some point, a person who actually knows the truth must deliver it to the people. That is one reason for Christ's injunction, *"Preach the Gospel to every creature"* (Mk 16:15).

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

There is something also to be learned here regarding the interdependency within the body of

Christ. No member of the body of Christ can stand on their own, for we are *"every one members one of another"* (Rom 12:5). No one can say of other members of the body, *"I have no need of thee"* (1 Cor 12:21). God has placed all believers *"in the body as it hath pleased Him"* (1 Cor 12:18). That placement is in order that mutual edification may take place. Furthermore, *"the body"* is certainly not limited to a specific congregation, or even to those who remain alive in the world.

It is possible to read the Scriptures with minimal benefit, simply because the mind is not exposed to the insights of other members of the body of Christ. Permit to cite a few examples.

⇒ David, for example, was a man with understanding far beyond his peers. He had a working knowledge of the Law, and frequently asked the Lord for understanding (Psa 119:34,73, 125,144,169). Yet, he also had his own seer, or prophet. It is written, *"For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying"* (2 Sam 24:11). Note, God did not speak to David, but to David's "seer" – a name formerly applied to a prophet (1 Sam 9:9).

⇒ The example of young Jesus who asked questions. Although He was the Son of God, yet, when young, He availed Himself of known teachers. *"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers"* (Lk 2:46-47). We know that Jesus did not always have all knowledge and understanding, for as He grew, He is said to have increased in wisdom (Lk 2:52).

⇒ Take the proclamation of the mystery, kept secret from the beginning of the world. Although it was hidden in the text of Moses and the prophets, God did not reveal it to everyone. He made it known to Paul, and Paul proclaimed it to the people. *"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me*

to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3:5). Paul correlated this teaching with Scripture, but apparently everyone

could not do this.

A Modern Circumstance

In our times there is a circumstance similar to that of Apollos. In his case, he had been subjected to the teaching of those with limited understanding. The effects of that lingered with him for some time, until Aquila and Priscilla discerned the situation, and gave him the advantage of more advanced understanding. I am

persuaded there are great numbers of believers in our day who have also been limited by the understanding of those who have taught them. The impact of a great falling away cannot be understated. This can prove to be an excellent opportunity for those with understanding to bring desired advantages to hungry souls. It will require, however, that they be discerning, and themselves free from sectarian tendencies. There is a great need for insightful proclamation.

SEEKING FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

^{43b} **And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.** Other versions read, "he asked,"^{NKJV} "invited,"^{NASB} "besought,"^{ASV} "he made,"^{BBE} "begged,"^{DARBY} "requested,"^{MRD} "urged,"^{NJB} "earnestly invited,"^{WEYMOUTH} "earnestly requested,"^{AMPLIFIED} "called Philip near,"^{LITV} and "asked."^{MKJV}

Here we behold the Lord working in the human heart. Here is a dignitary traveling on a desert road reading the Bible. A man appears out of nowhere, and asks him if he understands what he is reading. The man does not ask the eunuch what text he is reading, but gave him reason to believe he could assist him. Some men might have considered this to be a robber, or someone bent on doing mischief. But this is not the attitude of the eunuch.

The word "desired" is a strong one. Coming from the Greek word Παρεκάλειν (para-ka-le-sen), it has a lexical meaning of "to call to one's side, call for, summon." As used here it means "to beg, entreat, beseech,"^{THAYER} "earnestly ask for, implore, beg,"^{FRIBERG} "request, ask, appeal to,"^{UBS} and "To ask for earnestly, to request, to plead for."^{LOUW-NIDA}

It is apparent that this man would not take "No" for an answer. **His appetite had been whetted for the word**

of the Lord, and he seized upon the opportunity to know it more fully.

- ⇨ Here is an excellent example of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt 6:33).
- ⇨ It also lives out hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt 5:6).
- ⇨ There is also a sense in which this is calling upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21).
- ⇨ This is how "the love of the truth" impacts upon the heart 2 Thess 2:10).

"The written Word stands immovable, the touchstone of truth, the standard of doctrine, the referee in doubt, the pattern and model, the crucible of error, the court of final appeal in all controversies of faith."^{PULPIT COMMENTARY}

This man not only confessed his ignorance, and his understanding of how to address it, but was eager to do something about it. Such a strong desire will be answered to his thorough satisfaction.

I know by experience how satisfying this response was to Philip. Having himself seen the truth, his love for it was accompanied by a burning desire to speak it. That is how "the spirit of faith" affects a person (2 Cor 4:13). Young Elihu was not the last man who determined, "I will speak, that I may be refreshed" (Job 32:20).

We have no lived in this area for fifteen years (1992-2007). During that time there have been two things that have greatly impacted my life. First, the disappointment at the relative rarity of the love of the truth in this area, coupled with a fervent pressing toward the mark. During our first years here, this condition proved to be very disconcerting. However, it was wonderfully offset by the presence of a very commendable spirit in these meetings, and the spiritual quality of the people who attend them. In fact, it is of a caliber that I have rarely witnessed anywhere else.

Much of my own advance in the faith is owing to the presence of such souls. I know they are of great price in the heavenly realms, and that a book of remembrance has no doubt been written of these very gatherings. They have also been a source of strength to many people who are not able to attend them.

CONCLUSION

Thus far in the book of Acts great things have been done. The day of Pentecost, the preaching in Solomon's

porch, and the marvelous prayer of the brethren when they were threatened. There have been remarkable preaching and defenses of the faith before the Jewish leaders, and a host of signs and wonders as well. Stephen has confounded those who refused to believe on Jesus, and has nobly laid down His life for the sake of Christ, bearing a strong testimony in the doing of it. When the church was scattered by persecution, it did not faint, but the disciples went everywhere preaching the Word. Philip took up the cause following the death of Stephen, and powerfully preached Christ

in the city of Samaria, working signs and wonders among them as well. The entire city believed, and was freed from influence of Simon the Sorcerer. Now, a dignitary from Ethiopia is going to be subjected to the preaching of the Gospel, and will carry the truth into that barren region. **All of this is the marvelous working of the Lord.**

The particular thing to be seen here is that all of this was done by grace through faith. Those involved in the work were not recognized leaders, and there were no strategy meetings to orchestrate

the events that took place. **This was simply God working among a people whose faith was unqualifiedly in Him.**

This is the newness of life being displayed before us. It is the New Covenant in operation, and the Holy Spirit working in an environment where He is neither quenched nor grieved. The truth has sway because of the purity and fervency of the preaching. This is not a first century phenomenon but Jesus at work, building His church, sending out preachers, confronting unbelief, and giving repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 10/26/2007. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Fortieth lesson will cover verses 32 through 40 of the eighth chapter: "THE CONVERSION OF THE EUNUCH." After making contact with the eunuch, as directed by a holy angel, Philip confirms his grasp of the Scriptures and the Gospel of Christ in directing this Gentile from Ethiopia into faith in, and obedience to, Christ. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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COMMENTARY on Second Corinthians: <http://wotruth.com/2Corinthians.htm>

After a successful mission in a city, heaven sends Philip into the desert for some one-on-one work — by Given O. Blakely

COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

 <p>The Word of Truth Radio Broadcast WITH RADIO EVANGELIST GIVEN O. BLAKELY 91.7^F M KNEO RADIO MONDAY THRU FRIDAY AT 4:00 PM. Clarifying the nature and content of the Gospel</p>	 <p>THE WORD OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST KNEO, 91.7 FM 4:00 - 4:15 PM Monday thru Friday</p> <p>The purpose of this program is to clarify the nature and content of the Gospel of Christ. Our target is the body of Christ, and our aim is to strengthen their faith and enhance their hope.</p>
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BROTHERS AND SISTERS SPEAKING/LEADING/MINISTERING IN THE ASSEMBLY DURING SEPTEMBER 2007

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| 1. <i>Given O. Blakely</i> (PM Sermon, PM Sermon). | 11. <i>Michael Blakely</i> (Am Sermon). | 24. <i>Gene Hutchcraft</i> (AM Exhortation, AM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation, PM Exhortation, PM Exhortation). |
| 2. <i>Aaron Hutchcraft</i> (AM Sermon, AM Table Meditation, AM Sermon, PM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation, PM Table Meditation). | 12. <i>Tasha Sims</i> (AM Opening Word, PM Opening Word, PM Opening Word). | 25. <i>Debbie Hutchcraft</i> (AM Calling, Lead PM Singing). |
| 3. <i>Ricky Sims</i> (AM Class, AM Sermon, AM Table Meditation, AM Class, AM Table Meditation). | 13. <i>Levi Miller</i> (AM Scripture Shower). | 26. <i>Charlene Tucker</i> (AM Opening Word, Lead AM Singing). |
| 4. <i>Robert Cobb</i> (Am Table Meditation, AM Class, AM Sermon, AM Exhortation, PM Exhortation). | 14. <i>Amanda Miller</i> (PM Opening Word). | 27. <i>Judah Hutchcraft</i> (AM Scripture/ Benediction, Read PM Sermon Text, Read PM Sermon Text). |
| 5. <i>Jeremy Williams</i> (AM Exhortation, PM Sermon, PM Sermon). | 15. <i>Nichole Williams</i> (AM Scripture Shower). | 28. <i>Logan Williams</i> (Play AM/PM Lord's Table Interlude, AM Scripture/ Benediction, Read AM Sermon Text, AM Scripture Shower, Read Am Sermon Text). |
| 6. <i>Tony Parker</i> (Am Table Meditation, PM Sermon). | 16. <i>Mattie Blakely</i> (AM Calling, Lead PM Singing). | 29. <i>Eva Blakely</i> (Lead AM Singing, Reading Poems) |
| 7. <i>June Blakely</i> (Lead PM Prayer Session, Lead PM Singing). | 17. <i>Rebecca Scalf</i> (Lead AM Singing). | 30. <i>Baylie Sims</i> (Read PM Sermon Text). |
| 8. <i>Barbara Hutchcraft</i> (AM Scripture Shower, Lead AM Singing, PM Opening Word, Lead PM Singing). | 18. <i>Michele Cole</i> (Play Piano, AM Scripture/ Benediction, AM Opening Word) | 31. <i>Annie Sims</i> (Read AM Sermon Text, Read AM Sermon Text, AM Scripture/ Benediction). |
| 9. <i>Jonathan Blakely</i> (AM Calling, AM Exhortation, PM Exhortation, PM Table Meditation). | 19. <i>Melissa Parker</i> (Lead AM Singing, AM Opening Word, AM Scripture Shower, AM Opening Word, Lead PM Singing). | 32. <i>Laura Stuhlman</i> (Prepare Lord's Table). |
| 10. <i>Matthew Cobb</i> (PM Table Meditation). | 20. <i>John Hill</i> (Lead Intercessory Prayer). | 33. <i>Preparing Lord's Supper</i> (Various sisters). |
| | 21. <i>LaVaine Murphy</i> (PM Opening Word). | |
| | 22. <i>Micaela Murphy</i> (Read AM Sermon Text). | |
| | 23. <i>Mariah Murphy</i> (AM Scripture/ Benediction, Read PM Sermon Text, Read PM Sermon Text). | |