

Seven Lessons From The Ethiopian

Introduction: We tend to think of big things.

- A. Many do not want to get involved in things that seem small and unimportant.
1. *Zech 4:10 For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."*
 2. In Zechariah's day, about 520 BC., many of the Jews who returned from Babylon were disappointed in the glory of the new temple.
 3. The temple Zerubbabel was building was smaller and less impressive than Solomon's. This upset many of the people.
 4. Yet Jehovah said He rejoiced to see the building of this temple. It showed the people's commitment to Him.
- B. We see many examples of great conversions in the book of Acts.
1. Three thousand are converted on just one day in Acts 2 —the day of Pentecost; 2:41. The Holy Spirit is poured out and there is a great noise. The church is begun and this was a great event that was remembered by many for a long time.
 2. By Acts 4:4 just the number of men comes to 5,000. The church is growing despite some opposition by the Jewish leaders. Yet within a short time even many of the priests are converted.
 3. *Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*
- C. In Acts 7 we see the first martyr of the church, Stephen.
1. Then in Acts 8 a great persecution comes upon the church. It is led by a young man named Saul. The church is scattered everywhere.
 2. Yet despite this the church grows. Philip goes to Samaria and many are converted. A large church is started.
 3. The apostles send Peter and John to them to lay hand on the Samaritans and give them the miraculous gifts of the H.S. Philip has a great work going there.
- D. Yet the Lord does not allow Philip to remain there and work.
1. In Act 8:26 the Lord's angel sends Philip to the wilderness to meet just one man and preach to him.
 2. This would seem like a waste of time to many. Philip leaves a good, growing work to convert just one man.
 3. Yet God knows what He is doing and has a reason for this. We may never know the results of converting this devout man who was returning to Ethiopia.
 4. Scripture does not tell us all he did when he returned home. Certainly God is interested in just one person. Yet this devout man probably told many in Ethiopia of his conversion and the events surrounding it.
- E. We will see some lessons we can learn from the Ethiopian today.

I. The conversion of the Ethiopian

- A. Luke records his conversion in Acts 8:26-40.
1. The Ethiopian is in Jerusalem to worship. This is probably at one of the feasts, probably the Passover or Pentecost.
 2. The trip to Jerusalem is about 8 or 900 miles. This was not an easy trip or a quick one. Travel was much more difficult then.
 3. He is traveling by chariot. This shows he is very well off. He will probably sail up the Nile river when he gets to Egypt. This is the easiest way to travel but again it is a long trip.
- B. Lets consider then his conversion from Acts 8.
1. **Act 8:26;** The angel of the Lord is usually a special angel in scripture. He is sometimes called, 'The Lord'. This is a mission directly from God for Philip.
 2. Much of the road from Jerusalem, in the mountains, to Gaza, on the coast, is deserted. It is 50 or 60 miles. While we could cover the distance in an hour or two it probably was a day's journey, or more, then.
 2. **Vs 27;** The man Philip is going to meet is a eunuch in the service of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He is

- in charge of her treasure so he has great authority.
3. He evidently is a wise and prudent man. He is a hard worker to advance to such a position. Yet he is a believer in God. Success in business does not have to conflict with our faith in God and service to Him.
 4. He has been to Jerusalem to worship. As an Ethiopian he is a Gentile. As a eunuch he is probably emasculated. This may not be so as the term eunuch came to be used for any officer in the palace.
 5. As a Gentile (Act 27:21-29) and as a eunuch (Deut 23:1) the Ethiopian could not enter the temple. There was the courts of the Gentiles, the women and the men. The Ethiopian had to send his sacrifice to the temple from the outer court of the Gentiles.
 6. **Vs 28;** He is returning home and is spending his time studying the Bible. He probably bought an Isaiah scroll in Jerusalem. This again shows his wealth.
 7. **Vs 29-30;** Philip, by command of the Spirit, runs up to this man in the middle of the wilderness and asks him if he knows what he is reading. Many would take offence at his presumption. Others would be afraid of a stranger running up to them this way.
 8. **Vs 31;** The Ethiopian not only does not take offence but asks Philip to ride with him and help him with his Bible study.
 9. **Vs 32-33;** The Ethiopian is reading from Isaiah 53. This is a long way into the scroll. He either has been reading awhile or is studying this particular passage. Either way, the H.S. gets Philip there at just the right time.
 10. **Vs 34-35;** The man of Ethiopia asks Philip a question the Jews wondered about then, and still do today. Philip begins right there and preaches Jesus to the man.
 11. **Vs 36;** Involved in the preaching of Jesus is the teaching about baptism. When they come to a pool of water the Ethiopian wants to be baptized. Passover and Pentecost were in the spring and early summer. There would be many pools of water because of the winter and spring rains.
 12. **Vs 37-38;** Philip says he will baptize him **if** he really believes. The Ethiopian says he does and they go down into the pool of water. The man of Ethiopia is baptized into Jesus Christ there in the water —Rom 6:3-7.
 13. **Vs 39;** They come up out of the water. The Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away. Many wonder what this means. Some think it simply means the Spirit told Philip to leave quickly. There would be nothing miraculous about this.
 14. Many others think Philip is caught away miraculously as Elijah was. The miracle would reinforce the faith of the Ethiopian. This is probably the meaning.
 15. The Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing. He has understood a very important passage. He has learned of the Messiah and become his follower. There is little doubt but that he will return to Ethiopia and tell everyone.
 16. **Vs 40;** Philip is found at Azotus —the old Philistine city of Ashdod. This is where the Spirit takes Philip. He preaches his way north to Caesarea and settles down there.
 17. Philip stays there over twenty years, marries and has four daughters who prophecy —Act 21:9. This then is the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.
- C. From an amazing conversion we find several great lessons.

II. Some lessons from the Ethiopian.

A. 1st, he loved to worship.

1. God's people have always worshiped Him as He directed. Cain and Able are the first examples of this. The Ethiopian had to travel 8 or 900 miles, each way. It took a strong commitment for him to worship.
2. Abraham worshipped God often as he traveled about the land of Canaan. He would build an altar and worship Jehovah.
3. *Gen 12:7-8 Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8 And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.*
4. David also loved the worship his God. David was a man after God's own heart. He wanted to build Jehovah a temple, but could not. He had to be content to worship in a tent. Yet he was glad to worship.
5. *Psa 122:1 I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."*
6. We should want to worship God with His saints also. We do so to 1) hold fast our own confession of hope and 2) to stir up our brethren to being stronger.
7. *Heb 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of*

ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

B. 2nd, he accepted a second class status.

1. The Ethiopian was a Gentile and a eunuch. He could not take his own sacrifice to the temple. Yet he still considered the worship of God so important that he came to be as close as he could be to His temple.
2. In one sense some of us are better and stronger and have greater abilities than others. We should not complain that we can't do what others can. We shouldn't stop working just because others can do things better than us.
3. **Matthew 25:14-30**; This is the story of the Talents. One man was a 5 talent man, another a 2 talent man and a third a 1 talent man. It was not wrong to be a one talent man. It was wrong to not make use of it.
4. Very few of us are five talent people. We should recognize that and accept it. We then do what we can with the abilities God has given us. We can grow and do more but we still must accept who we are.
5. *Matt 10:41-42 "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*

C. 3rd, he was interested in Bible study.

1. He was studying on his way back to Ethiopia. When we are traveling or have free time do we use it for Bible study? Or do we use our free time only for business or pleasure. We must love God's word if we love Him.
2. *Acts 17:11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out if these things were so.*
3. *Psa 119:97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

D. 4th, he was humble; he accepted an offer of help.

1. A stranger ran up to him in the wilderness and asked him if he understood what he was reading. He did not take offense but said that he did need help. He asked Philip to come into the chariot and sit and study with him.
2. *1 Pet 5:5 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*
3. *Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*
4. We are be surprised sometimes at who can help us. We must never think ourselves to be so great we do not need help from the least of men.
5. *Psa 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.*

E. 5th, he was hospitable.

1. He took a complete stranger in. He did not know Philip was a man of God. He may have intended to teach this stranger.
2. *Heb 13:1-2 Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.*
3. In the O.T. both Abraham and Lot entertained angels unawares. The eunuch may think Philip an angel for what he did for him —and perhaps by his miraculous exit. We need to be hospitable —consider the **Parable of the Good Samaritan**.
4. *1 Pet 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*

F. 6th, he asked to be allowed to obey the gospel.

1. He did not demand to be baptized. He was polite and humble. He may have wondered if he would still have second class status. As a Gentile he may have wondered if he could even be baptized.
2. *Isa 6:5-7 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."*

3. Isaiah was called before God in a vision in Isaiah 6. He did not exalt himself because he was called before God. He humbled himself as a man of unclean lips. He should not even speak to Jehovah. Yet God provided forgiveness and called him to be a prophet.
4. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
5. Peter told everyone to repent and be baptized on the day of Pentecost. Salvation is for all. The only things that stops us from being saved is ourselves. However we must be humble, believe in Jesus Christ and repent of our sins.

G. 7th, we see God's providence.

1. Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wants all men to be saved. He knew the heart of the Ethiopian. He sent a preacher to him to tell him what to do to be saved.
2. *Isa 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*
3. God wants all men to be saved —1 Tim 2:4. He sent preachers into all the world to see that men had a chance to obey the gospel —Matt 28:18. God's word will do what He intends.
4. *Acts 16:6-7 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. 7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.*
5. God directed Paul and Silas on their Second Missionary journey to go to Macedonia. God still directs things today. He does not do so directly as with Philip and Paul. Yet God is still in control and we must depend on Him.

H. We see then seven lessons we can learn from the eunuch.

Conclusion; We tend to be impressed by big things.

A. Some don't want to be bothered with the small things.

1. An old saying is, "Watch your pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves." The idea is that if we take care of the small things then the larger things will be in better shape.
2. This is true in religion. We need to try to do all we can, no matter how small or insignificant. If we are doing what we can then God will bless us as the master did the five and two talent men.

B. The most important thing we can do is to obey the Gospel.

1. We must believe in Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God. We must then repent and turn from our sins. We decide we are going to follow Jesus Christ as our Lord.
2. We are then baptized into Christ to have the forgiveness of our sins. Baptism is an immersion in water. Philip and the Ethiopian went down into the water and Philip baptized him there. Then they came up out of the water.
4. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
4. *Acts 18:8 Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.*
5. If we have done this and then fallen away we need to repent and ask the congregation to pray for us.

C. If we can help anyone obey the Gospel today, please let us.