

Opening comments overheard in an evangelism class at imaginary Quest Bible College

Dr. Quest (an opening question)

Philip the evangelist is one of my favorite Bible characters, and I especially like his interaction with the Ethiopian eunuch. So I hope you like this great passage as well. If you do, would you please share something about why?

Frank (on the shortness of the story)

Well, frankly, I like it because it's short, much shorter than the two chapters about Cornelius. Apparently nobody objected to Philip meeting with this Gentile on the road. Probably it would have been different if he had gone to his house.

Red (on the scroll being in Greek)

I love the fact that someone was reading Scripture. Yet, most scrolls that I see in photos are in Hebrew, and the one in this passage was probably actually in Greek. Philip was a native Greek speaker and reader (6:5). So he was a good one to send.



Joy (on the happy ending)

I like the happy ending. Even the part about Philip being caught away suddenly (8:39) was probably a blessing, as a special confirmation that he was God's messenger. Maybe the eunuch would have liked more teaching, but he had blessed assurance for sure.

Dr. Quest (on PLUS+ studies and negatives in Jerusalem)

Great, but is there anything in the passage that you do NOT like? Since we are using the PLUS+ Bible study method, we need to look for negatives in the passage as well.

Personally, I wonder why nobody shared the gospel with the eunuch while he was in Jerusalem. Perhaps the apostles paid little attention to visiting Gentiles or perhaps persecution (8:1-2) made it difficult for them to do much.

Aside from that, would the eunuch have been likely to hear anything about Jesus while there? I think he would have, since Jesus' ministry was well known. As Paul said, it was not done in a corner (26:26). Jewish critics often claim that Jesus was little known in Jerusalem, but the Gospels and the book of Acts show otherwise.

Caution: this is the answer sheet or study leader's note page. Use the blank worksheet for personal and group studies.

NEGATIVES	POSITIVES
<i>bad, dangerous, difficult, evil, inadequate, sad, sinful, ugly, etc.</i>	<i>good, blessings, clean, healthy, joyful, safe, well done, wise, etc.</i>
(25) Philip left a big ministry for an uncertain one (26).	(26) Philip was given special instructions by an angel.
(27) He traveled alone and probably on foot. (hot, too?)	He obeyed and went without hesitation. (27)
Ethiopian's time in Jerusalem seemed unhelpful.	Ethiopian must have believed in the God of Israel.
(28) He was returning without knowing Jesus.	Going to Jerusalem to worship was a good thing.
<i>Had he heard about Jesus at all in Jerusalem?</i>	(28) Reading Isaiah was good & he could afford to buy!
. . . Probably, but maybe not linked to Scripture.	. . . Isaiah about 700 BC. (Notice eunuch in 56:3-4.)
The Isaiah scroll would have been expensive.	They were moving, but providential timing . (29)
(30) Philip had to run to catch the chariot (29-30).	(30) Philip was young enough to run. (6:5)
Ethiopian probably read Isaiah in Greek. Not Heb.	He was a native Greek speaker (6:5). Peter wasn't.
(30- He did not understand and didn't have a teacher.	Philip's Question was biblical, fitting, evangelistic.
-31) The scroll was like an unusable expensive car.	(31) Ethiopian's Answer was honest and humble.
. . . People took his money, but bias against him?	He was more teachable than most Jews.
(32) The Messiah's rejection was evil (Isa. 53:7-8).	(32) Isaiah 53 Reading – was providential .
	(34) Ethiopian's Question was biblical & about Messiah.
(34) Isaiah 53 does not say, "This is the Messiah."	. . . Though ignorant, he wanted to be taught.
(35) Philip's message is not given in detail.	(35) Philip's message went beyond the two verses.
(36) Baptism : Ethiopian had to ask.	(36) Baptism : the water was providentially there.
His question was somewhat negative.	His question was good – not pressured re. baptism.
(37) No direct answer to his question is given.	(37) Verse 37 controversy does not change the story.
Verse 37 is not in most manuscripts. – Added later.	The man's question showed his belief well enough.
(38) Baptismal mode is not directly stated.	(38) Baptismal mode is shown by <i>went down & came up</i> .
The water may not have been very clean.	Main point is the water providentially being there.
(39) Philip was removed. So he was not taught for long.	(39) Philip's miraculous removal confirmed God connect.
	Ethiopian rejoiced with faith AND assurance.
What is the biggest negative in the passage?	What is the biggest positive in the passage?
the man potentially going home without gospel	1.) the man getting saved & having assurance
The Jerusalem visit did not help him much.	2.) the leading and providence of God

APPLICATIONS

Preach Jesus, like Philip did (35), but also trust God to providentially lead.

Commentary from various perspectives as overheard in an evangelism class at imaginary Quest Bible College

Dr. Quest (on the Isaiah scroll)

The scroll of Isaiah, that the eunuch was reading is often taken for granted, since we have easy access to Bibles today. So let's think about how the Ethiopian came to have it. He was a wealthy man according to verse 27. So he could afford to buy one, but I suspect there was more involved than that. Look at Isaiah 56:3-5. There are special promises in these verses to foreigners and eunuchs, which are not found in the other prophets. This may explain why the Ethiopian was reading Isaiah. Also chapter 53 is near chapter 56. What do you think?

Red (on reading Isaiah)

You said earlier, Dr. Quest, that the man would likely to have heard something about the Lord while he was in Jerusalem. I believe that is why he was reading Isaiah chapter 53, though he may have purchased the Isaiah scroll earlier because of chapter 56. People often buy books for one reason but end up using them a different way. Moreover, the hostility toward Christians in Jerusalem at the time (8:1-2) may have stoked the eunuch's interest in Isaiah.

Cal (on providence and honoring God)

Maybe you are both right, but there is no need to speculate about background matters. The providence of God is clearly seen in the passage itself. The important thing is to give God credit for everything!

Evan (on faith and evangelism)

No, the important thing is that the man believed and was saved! That's why God sent Philip in the first place! I know that verse 37 is controversial, since it is not found in some translations, but even without it the eunuch's desire to be baptized shows that he was a true believer. He believed what Philip said. So let's give Philip credit for being a good evangelist.

Ed (on teaching and being teachable)

Ok, but Philip was a teacher as well as an evangelist. Of course, he preached the gospel (35), but he must have taught the eunuch something about baptism as well. Otherwise, would the man even have asked about it (36)? Moreover, God Himself is the great Teacher. So he gave the man assurance of salvation by removing Philip in a spectacular way (39). What great visual teaching that was! So really it was the teaching in the passage that mattered most in the long run. Also it was a great blessing that the man was so teachable.

Dr. Quest (on various possible stresses)

As usual, Red stressed reading; Cal stressed providence; Evan stressed evangelism; and Ed stressed teaching. You are all mostly right but a bit onesided. Personally, I noticed that there are some great questions in the passage, but maybe that is just me.