

Date: September 7th
Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Acts 8: 26-40
Subject: The Ethiopian Eunuch
Speaker: Sandy Laing

In the present day, people may try various places of worship, often choosing a place that is close. In Acts 8 we read of a man who travelled from Ethiopia to Jerusalem because he wanted to learn the truth. While we do not know the exact reasons, it is evident that he realised that there was something that he was missing and he wanted to satisfy his soul.

As he returned, it is clear from his actions and the comments that he makes that he was not satisfied but that he was still confused and searching for the truth by reading the Old Testament.

As he journeys, God begins to intervene. He sends Philip from Samaria to Gaza. As Philip approaches, the Ethiopian has reached Isaiah 53 in his reading, but he is still puzzled by what he has found. God intervenes again to tell Philip to speak to the man. Philip hears what he is reading and asks if he understands it. When the man asks for help, he begins from that point and preaches "Jesus".

What would he say?

He might start by pointing out that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He was completely sinless, but that He came to seek and to save those who were lost in sin (Luke 19:10, I Timothy 1:15). The preaching struck a chord with the Ethiopian and Philip would continue to explain how he was taken by the Jews, mocked, spat on, put in a purple robe, given a reed and a crown of thorns in mockery of His claim to be the Messiah and therefore both Son of God and King of Israel. They flogged Him until His face was barely recognisable (Isaiah 52:14). All this was fulfilling the Scriptures because it was why He came – to save sinners, to deliver from the burden of sin.

The Ethiopian may have thought that he could find deliverance in the temple rituals, but he left without the answers he wanted. Many have tried religion, they may have learned about Jesus Christ, but they have failed to realise that there must be a change of heart. Without this, it is of no effect. He came as the Lamb of God to offer a sacrifice that would make it possible for sins to be forgiven, but there must be a response. The two crucified with the Lord show the difference. Both had the same opportunity, but the first mocked and said, "If .." (Luke 23:39). The second turned and asked "Jesus, Lord remember me" (Luke 23:42). Only the second received the promise, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

The centurion also responded, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47)

They laid the body in the grave, but on the third day, the women were given the message, "He is not here, He is risen". Today, we preach a living Saviour, God manifest in the flesh, Who has overcome death.

Knowing the truth requires action. We must be either for or against Him. There is no neutral ground. When Paul realised the truth, He asked, "What must I do?" The Ethiopian went a step further, he asked to be baptised as a confession of his faith. The result was that he went on his way rejoicing. Why? Because his questions had been answered. He had fulfilled the requirements of Romans 10:9, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved". He was a different man. He came to Jerusalem and back to Gaza with questions, but he went from Gaza knowing his sins forgiven, that he was not under the judgment of God.

We all must make the choice, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and know sins forgiven or ignore Him and face judgment. It is a choice that we make as we hear of the Saviour and we cannot promise another opportunity.

If you died today would it be with Christ in Heaven or without Christ in hell?