



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. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:26-39)

Many are seeking God in religion, but if the central object of religion is any consideration other than God and His Glory, that religion is vain. Religion, in the modern sense, is not very different from a Hollywood entertainment production. The religionist dresses in his finest apparel in order to be respectable among the other

socialites he will meet at the so-called 'worship center.' Notice the term CHURCH is falling into lesser favor with the advent of more worldly religion. Or, he may dress as casually as a participant at a beach party – no one will object.

He will be greeted at the door and given a bulletin that conspicuously contains a small envelope for monetary contributions. Remember, nothing in this life is free – except the salvation offered by our Lord Jesus Christ to His elect. After being seated in a cushioned pew, the excitement soon follows as the musical entertainment begins. Sometimes, the pulpit area is illuminated by strobe lights and smoke; or it may simply resemble the night club scene as a handsome fellow, or a pretty young lady in evening gown, sing with sensual connotation into the microphone which is connected to a 600 watt speaker system. After long moments of this entertainment, the star of the show approaches a clear, glass podium that serves for a pulpit. He begins with an appeal that we are to all be happy, for that is what life is all about. He tells a couple of jokes designed to garner attention. He relates several illustrations perhaps of his experience on the golf course the previous week, or how the favored team faired on the football field yesterday. He ties in some very positive conclusions concerning these stories about how the Christian life is one of unrestrained happiness and always victory in the mundane games of life. There is not much mention made of the Giver of Life, or the Redeemer who makes life a joy. The final, and most important, undertaking comes as the plate is passed around after a high-minded appeal for a more opulent building in which to worship.

The religionists, having been fed a respectable dose of positive vibrations, depart the church – leaving behind for another week any consciousness aroused of a luke-warm Christ – and go back to their mundane lives that are not so very different from the mundane worship service they have just concluded. This is the modern definition of religion! The music is adopted from the world, and so is the sermon.

But the biblical text above relates a different kind of religion and worship. It is a religion that is obedient, in mind, body, and soul to God. There are two men at the center of the account related in Acts 8:26-39 – Philip and an Ethiopian eunuch. These men were strangers to each other and one, the Ethiopian eunuch was also a stranger to faith in Christ; but He was known to Christ, and Christ would have him come to faith. (see John 15:16)

There are men and women today much like the eunuch who had just departed a religious worship in Jerusalem whose object was religion-only and not the worship of the Almighty. The eunuch felt compelled to study the Word of God, but had not the slightest idea of whom the Word spoke. Had God not known the eunuch on that desert road, Philip would never have been commanded to go down to him where he was. We have all been, in our lives before, found by the Holy Ghost, on a lonely desert road all alone and without God.

Philip had been among the other disciples preaching to the Samaritans, but God chose out Philip specifically for an important mission from among the others. That important mission was for the sake of a single soul in the desert. *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.* Note first of all that the command was specifically for Philip only. God elects those who are foreordained to His purpose to fulfill it. Secondly, the command was specific concerning where Philip was to go. Philip knew no details of his mission, but he immediately obeyed God. “. . . And he arose and went:” Like Abraham, we do not question the commandment of God. We simply respond with immediate dispatch. Like Abram leaving Ur of the Chaldees, we may not know the destination or purpose, but know that it is enough that God KNOWS!

When Philip was on his way on the desert, he spotted the Ethiopian eunuch, servant of a wealthy lady of Ethiopia, riding a chariot and reading from Isaiah. God never leaves His servant in bewilderment. He continues to guide and direct him. The Angel of the Lord said to Philip: *“Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.”* Even our soul’s actions are directed by the Holy Spirit. When Philip observed the man reading from Isaiah, he asked him if he understood it. *“How can I, except some man should guide me?”* God has chosen Philip from long before there ever was an Ethiopian eunuch, or even an Ethiopia. He has also chosen the Ethiopian from long before there was ever a Philip, or a Jerusalem from which to call him. He knew you, and chose you, long before you knew Him, or even before you were conceived in your mother’s womb.

Here we have a very fine example of true religion – to feed those who hunger for God’s Word. To clothe those with the White Robe of Righteousness who are naked in their filthy rags of sin. To visit those who are in the prison of unbelief.

The eunuch showed Philip that part of Isaiah which made him to wonder: *The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?* Now all who wonder at the Word of God shall be filled thereby. God makes provision for the doors of doubt and unknowing to be opened. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?* (Matt 7:7-10) Philip has been given the knowledge which the eunuch seeks. He has been led by the Holy Ghost to deliver the same in wisdom. Instead of discussing the ordeal of desert travel, or the beauty of the Temple at Jerusalem, Philip preached to the eunuch the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a genuine and Godly worship service. We need no more in worship than to glorify and worship our Lord Jesus Christ. Philip did not only teach the eunuch concerning the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, but the how’s and when’s of it – and the purpose!

The result? The Ethiopian was drawn to confess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ – not just His earthly ministry, His wise teachings, His miracles, but ALL of Christ. His sacrificial and redeeming blood shed for the eunuch at Calvary, and his resurrection and ascension – all of it. This is the result of all Godly worship and religion. Let us pray that such worshipful religion will be restored to the fair shores of our wonderful land and nation.