

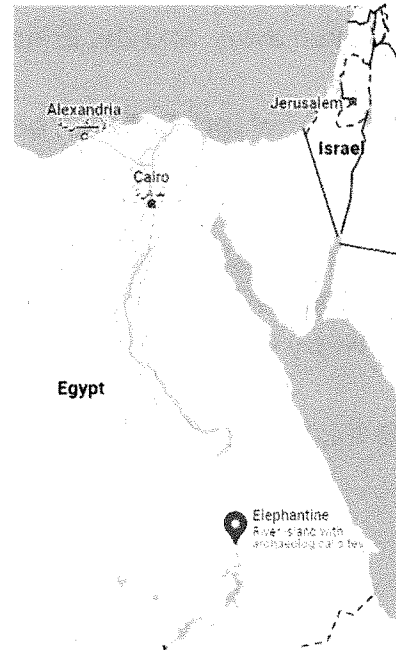
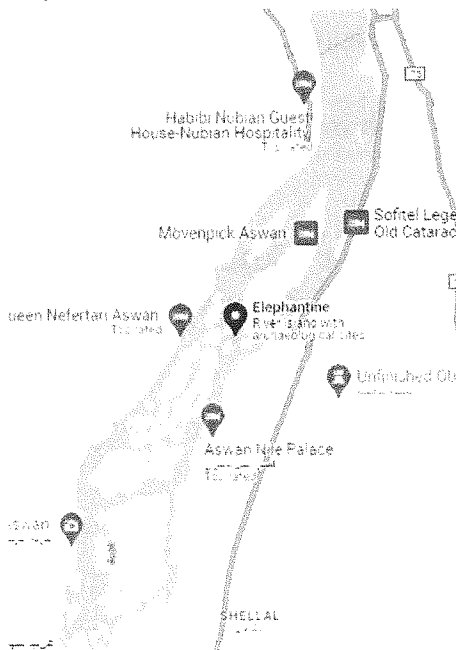
Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26–40

Conversation Starter: What is your favorite OT prophecy that comes true in Jesus Christ? (Ex. Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:2, Psalm 40:6-8, Isaiah 40:3-4, Isaiah 53:3, Daniel 9:24)

This incident in Acts describes an act of loving obedience that produced God's desired fruit—a new Christian. This Philip was one of the seven men appointed as deacons in the Jerusalem Church (see Acts 6:1–6). Like Stephen, Philip had gone beyond “waiting on tables” to become an effective preacher of the Word. When persecution arose, Philip was among those who fled to Samaria, where he carried on a Gospel ministry that was being blessed with good response. Then Philip was told by the Spirit to interrupt his work in Samaria and travel south some 50 miles to have contact with one person. That's the value of one individual in God's gracious outlook!

The man to be contacted was an Ethiopian official, probably from the region of the upper Nile where a matriarchal kingdom had gained some kind of political acceptance by Rome. He had a position of influence as “secretary of the treasury” for Candace, the queen mother. The Ethiopian official had evidently been attracted to Judaism and had become a “God fearer,” a proselyte of the gate. He was a eunuch, probably castrated originally so he could serve in the royal harem, but had advanced to a position of high responsibility.



How is it that the Ethiopian official was able to read a scroll of the prophecy of Isaiah, and that he and Philip were able to converse?

Note the focus on the Word. It is through the Word that the Spirit of Jesus touches hearts. In God's will for this man, he was reading from "the evangelist of the Old Testament," a section that provided Philip an easy transition from prophecy about the Suffering Servant to its fulfillment in Jesus. They were traveling through hot, dry desert, but the same Lord who arranged their meeting evidently arranged for some water to be in one of the wadis they passed.

How did the Ethiopian show his eagerness to receive Jesus and His blessing?

Does verse 36-37 really show the weight of his concern? The Greek text says, "Is there anything that prevents me from being baptized?" This question came out of his position in Judaism. As a eunuch, he could never be received fully into Judaism, nor enter the inner temple courts—even if he wanted to accept circumcision and become a proselyte of the altar (see Deuteronomy 23:1). With his question, he was concerned about his eligibility for life in Christ.

What does it say about the Good News of Jesus that Philip was immediately ready to baptize him?

With God's purpose in Philip's traveling to the Negev to meet this one man fulfilled, Philip was taken away, and the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing.

How could this "infant" Christian be allowed to return to his homeland without receiving more complete instruction in the Christian faith?

Tradition says the Ethiopian was not only valued by God, but was valuable in God's plan. He evangelized his people and even baptized Candace. The Coptic Church of that region traces its history to early Christian times.

How does this Lesson tie in with today's Holy Gospel?