

Acts 8:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

Analysis

Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. The Ethiopian eunuch's posture—returning from worship, reading Isaiah—shows spiritual hunger that God sovereignly meets through Philip's Spirit-directed ministry.

Was returning from Jerusalem indicates the eunuch's commitment to worship despite enormous investment—traveling 1,000+ miles from Ethiopia. As a eunuch and Gentile, he faced exclusion from full temple participation (Deuteronomy 23:1), yet continued seeking God. This demonstrates genuine faith persisting despite obstacles.

Reading Esaias while traveling shows serious engagement with Scripture. Ancient reading typically occurred aloud; he's audibly processing Isaiah's prophecy. This providential detail enables Philip to hear what he's reading, creating divine appointment. God orchestrates circumstances to bring hungry seekers together with gospel messengers.

The specific text—Isaiah 53 about suffering servant—providentially prepared the eunuch for Philip's explanation. Reformed theology emphasizes God's sovereignty in salvation: He draws, prepares, and brings elect to saving faith. The eunuch's spiritual hunger resulted from God's prior work, not mere human initiative.

Historical Context

Ethiopian (probably from Nubian kingdom of Meroe) eunuchs sometimes held high governmental positions. This treasurer (Acts 8:27) served the Candace (queen mother). His Judaism may have been proselyte status or God-fearer—Gentile attracted to Jewish monotheism without full conversion.

Travel from Ethiopia to Jerusalem required months, suggesting extraordinary devotion. His possession of Isaiah scroll indicates wealth and literacy—scrolls cost substantially in ancient world. Reading Isaiah 53 aloud while traveling shows serious spiritual seeking. This encounter dates to approximately 35-37 CE, representing early gospel advance toward Africa and fulfilling Psalm 68:31's prophecy of Ethiopia stretching hands toward God.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God reward genuine spiritual hunger even when institutional religion offers limited access?
2. What role does Scripture reading play in preparing hearts for gospel conversion?
3. In what ways does this passage illustrate God's sovereignty in orchestrating divine appointments?
4. How should believers balance between planned evangelism and responsiveness to Spirit's spontaneous leading?
5. What does the eunuch's persistent seeking despite obstacles teach about genuine faith?

Interlinear Text

ἦν τε ὑποστρέφων καὶ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἅρματος
Was ^{G5037} **returning** **and** **sitting** **in** ^{G3588} **chariot**
G2258 G5290 G2532 G2521 G1909 G716

αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεγίνωσκειν τὸν προφήτην Ἡσαΐαν
G846 **and** **read** ^{G3588} **the prophet** **Esaias**
G2532 G314 G4396 G2268

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:16 (Parallel theme): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Acts 28:25 (Prophecy): And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,