

Acts 8:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

Analysis

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? The eunuch's question demonstrates intellectual honesty and spiritual hunger—seeking correct interpretation rather than presuming understanding.

His question—of whom speaketh the prophet?—reflects legitimate interpretive challenge. Jewish scholars debated Isaiah 53's referent: corporate Israel? Isaiah himself? Future Messiah? The eunuch doesn't force premature interpretation but seeks guidance. This teachable spirit contrasts with pride that claims understanding without adequate knowledge.

Of himself, or of some other man? shows the eunuch recognizes prophetic texts can be autobiographical (like many Psalms) or predictive. He's thinking carefully about literary genres and prophetic functions. This intellectual engagement shows genuine seeking, not merely emotional experience. Reformed theology values both heart and mind in conversion.

The question creates perfect evangelistic opportunity—Philip can now explain how Isaiah prophesied Christ's suffering 700 years beforehand. God orchestrated circumstances: right text, prepared heart, available teacher. This demonstrates divine sovereignty in salvation—God draws elect through ordained means.

Historical Context

Jewish interpretive tradition (Second Temple period and rabbinic) offered multiple readings of Isaiah 53. Some identified the servant with righteous remnant of Israel; others with prophets like Jeremiah; some with coming Messiah. The ambiguity required authoritative interpretation.

Early Christians unanimously identified the Suffering Servant with Jesus, whose recent crucifixion fulfilled details with stunning precision. Philip, representing apostolic teaching, could authoritatively explain the text's meaning. This conversation around 35-37 CE demonstrates Christianity's apologetic strength—explaining how recent historical events fulfilled ancient prophecy. The Ethiopian court official's question and Philip's answer model the Christian teaching office's role in interpreting Scripture.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does asking good questions demonstrate spiritual maturity and teachable spirit?
2. What role does correct biblical interpretation play in genuine conversion versus emotional experience alone?
3. In what ways does prophetic fulfillment strengthen confidence in Christianity's truth claims?
4. How should believers balance personal Bible reading with seeking instruction from qualified teachers?

5. What does this interaction teach about evangelism's intellectual dimension alongside emotional appeal?

Interlinear Text

Ἀποκριθεὶς	δὲ	ό	εὐνοῦχος	τῷ	Φιλίππῳ	εἶπεν	Δέομαί
answered	And	G3588	the eunuch	G3588	Philip	and said	I pray
G611	G1161		G2135		G5376	G2036	G1189
σου	περὶ	τίνος	ό	προφήτης	λέγει	τοῦτο	περὶ
thee	of	whom	G3588	the prophet	speaketh	this	of
G4675	G4012	G5101		G4396	G3004	G5124	G1438
ἢ	περὶ	έτέρου	τινός				
or	of	other man	some				
G2228	G4012	G2087	G5100				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 13:36 (Parallel theme): Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

Matthew 15:15 (Parallel theme): Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.