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**The Sabbath-School.**  
INTERNATIONAL LESSON.  
Third Quarter-lesson XI. — Sept. 11.

**PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN.** — Acts 8 : 26-40.  
GOLDEN TEXT.—*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.* — John 3 : 36.

Judea, in the uncultivated region south-west of Jerusalem, toward Gaza, which is near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. The Gospel had been planted in Samaria by the evangelist Philip. The apostles had come from Jerusalem, and endorsed his work. The Holy Spirit had conferred his special gifts. This work could now go on through the Samaritans themselves. The Lord had other work for Philip. He must go a long distance to find a single hearer. The Gospel field must again be enlarged, extending to the heathen populations, from Asia to Africa. We will trace the steps by which a sincere inquirer found his way to the Lord Jesus.

God will lead each earnest seeker step by step to the light. *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip.* The deacon, or the evangelist, not the apostle. This message came to him doubtless while he was somewhere in Samaria. *Arise, and go toward the south.* Which would lead him directly across all the roads that led from Jerusalem to Gaza. It may be said that the time of starting was of the greatest importance, as Philip, if he started at a later hour, might not find the man whom he was told to seek. *That goeth down.* For Jerusalem was on high land, and any road toward the coast must be a descending one. From Jerusalem unto Gaza. Gaza was the chief of the five cities of the Philistines, 50 miles south-west of Jerusalem, three miles from the Mediterranean. There was more than one road from Jerusalem to Gaza. One was by Hebron, and through the most desert country which lay to the west of it, and this is most likely the road intended in the narrative. *Gaza* (i. e. strong, a fortress) is one of the oldest cities of the world. It was the scene of Samson's exploits. In later years it was of great importance as a frontier fortress, and the key to Egypt on the south and to Syria on the north. It has now 16,000 population, mostly Moslems. *Which.* The way, not the city. *Is desert.* "Thinly inhabited, and unfit for tillage." This desert way gave opportunity for the eunuch to read the Scripture, and to Philip to baptize him without attracting observation. So often in the desert parts of life, in places where we least expect it, in people whose religious nature seems a desert, we find work for the Master. *And he arose and went.* Apparently not knowing the purpose for which he was sent. "He walked by faith, not by sight." "He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." "If, like Jonah, he had looked for excuses, he would have found them in abundance. He was well employed in a populous district. He had a wide door; a multitude of listeners when he was done. But the demand is that he should leave the city and go to a desert. It required a simple, unquestioning trust. When he had obeyed, then the reason was made evident to him. Let us learn this, that they who unhesitatingly do God's command, to them does he reveal his will the more fully. *And, behold a man of Ethiopia.* In its largest sense the term Ethiopia was applied to all the African lands south of Egypt; more definitely, it included the northern Nubia, Sennar, Kordofan, and part of Abyssinia. Its inhabitants were black in color and large in stature. Their land appears to have been one of wealth, and to have maintained some commercial relations with Palestine. Its Hebrew name was Cush, from the son of Ham. This man was not, as some have suggested, a Jew who lived in Ethiopia, but most probably was a heathen convert to Judaism, and now was returning home from a pilgrimage to the chief shrine of his adopted religion. *A eunuch of great authority.* The word, although meaning a chamberlain or a servant of the bed-chamber, denoted, as now, the condition of a man who was chosen to watch over the women's apartment in great houses. Such persons, deprived of family ambition, were thought more trustworthy than others, and often held high offices. *Under Candace.* Not the name of an individual, but of a dynasty. *Queen of Ethiopians.* The kingdom of Meroe was governed at this time by queens, who bore the title of Candace, as the kings of Egypt had that of Pharaoh, and the emperors of Rome that of Cæsar. In the reign of Augustus (22 B. C.), a queen of this name was forced by the prefect of Egypt to accept terms of peace. Eusebius tells us that this country continued to be governed by women even to his time, 300 years after Christ. *Charges of all her treasure.* Treasure-houses were common in the East, where not only

money but also important documents were kept (Ezra 3-17).  
SEEKING LIGHT FROM THE WORD OF GOD — Vers. 27. *Had come to Jerusalem for to worship.* He had learned about the true God from the Jews of his own country, and about his temple and worship at the religious capital. He had accepted the truth that was given him. But he wanted more light, and he travelled a long distance, at great expense, that he might obtain it. This Ethiopian was a notable example of a sincere inquirer. He realized the inestimable value of religious convictions. He did not wait for the whole way to be made plain, but as fast as he saw the way opened before him, he walked in it. *Was returning.* From his expedition to Jerusalem. He would naturally pass through Gaza on his way to Egypt. The Ethiopian must have heard of Jesus and his claim to be the Messiah, and of his disciples and their deeds. But it was natural that he should go first to the Jewish leaders, and they would misrepresent the Christians to him. Still the very air was full of discussion of the Scriptures relating to the Messiah, which would awaken in him a desire to study them for himself. Hence he had turned to the particular passage in *Isaiah the prophet*, which he was reading when Philip met him. The great Jewish teachers insisted, in many instances, upon their scholars reading aloud. They would say, in effect, "If you wish this word to abide in you, you must speak it aloud. Oliver Wendell Holmes is reported to have said that he spoke his thoughts aloud to others to aid his thinking, to crystallize his thoughts. Hence one great value of teaching. It is a proper and profitable employment, on returning from worship, to examine the sacred Scriptures.

AN UNEXPECTED INTERPRETER — Vers. 29-31. *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, i. e. by a prompting from within.* God leads us, as he did Philip here, by inward impulses not only, but by judgment, providence, sound sense, his Word applied to hearts made tender by the Spirit. *Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.* No doubt this royal treasurer had a numerous retinue, and a single traveller on a desert road would be doing what was natural in attaching himself to a train of people who were journeying in the same direction. *And Philip ran thither.* Eagerly obeying the divine monitor. *And heard him read.* Philip walked or ran alongside the chariot while the Ethiopian was reading aloud. *And said, Understandest thou what thou readest? How can I, except some man guide me.* It seemed almost impossible to put together the idea of Christ as a sufferer, as despised and slain, and the promise that he should be a glorious king, triumphing over the world. But God will send light to the diligent and desirous student. *And he desired Philip.* This is stronger than merely asking him to do so.

NEW LIGHT UPON OLD SCRIPTURE. — Vers. 32-35. *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.* The essential truth taught here by the figures of the sheep and lamb, is the quiet non-resistance with which Christ submitted to all the indignity put upon him. *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away.* His judgment—the judgment due to him. His rights of justice were withheld by his enemies. *Who shall declare his generation? Many understand this as equivalent to, Who can describe his contemporaries.* His generation cannot be declared, for his divine nature is incomprehensible. It is eternal. His human nature, as conceived by the Holy Ghost, is beyond the reach of man to declare. His spiritual generation, the multitude of the faithful, in number as the sands of the seashore, are known only to God. For, as a proof of this great wickedness. *His life is taken from the earth.* The Hebrew admits of no other meaning than that the sufferer was hurried to a violent death. *Then Philip... began at the same Scripture.* Which was fulfilled in Jesus, and has been fulfilled in no other. *And preached unto him Jesus.* Philip showed the strange and marvellous correspondence between the many descriptions of the Messiah in the prophets and the then well-known life of Jesus of Nazareth.

FAITH IN THE CHRIST. — Vers. 46-37. *Unto a water.* Eusebius and Jerome point out as the scene of this baptism a fountain near Bethsur, now a village, some twenty miles south of Jerusalem. *See, here is water!*—more simply, "Behold water!" He was eagerly looking out for the first water in which he might seal his reception of the truth. *What doth hinder me to be baptised? Faith within and water without were ready.* *If thou believest, etc.* It is precisely that believing with all the heart which is the condition of a profession of faith. *I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.* He believed with his mind and his heart. *He commanded the chariot.* He ordered

the chariot-driver to stop, and of course the whole retinue would see what took place, and they may certainly be regarded as the nucleus of a congregation to be established in Ethiopia. *He baptised him.* Without waiting further to instruct him, or delaying for a public ceremonial. *The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.* The words clearly relate a supernatural disappearance of Philip. But in what way is not stated.

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OUR MOTTO.—*If God be for us, who can be against us.*

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The next convention will be held in Winnipeg. The Superintendents of departments are the same as those of last year with four exceptions, Mrs. Carman, lately of Toronto, now a resident of Montreal will have charge of the press department, Mrs. Asa Gordon, of Ottawa, formerly of Aylmer, Que., is the Dominion superintendent of narcotics, and Mrs. Cowan, of Gananoque, will have charge of the work among soldiers.

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