

PHILLIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

Written by Ted Swartz

Characters: Phillip, Ethiopian

Scripture text: Acts 8: 26-40

Props: Book—Something that signifies a chariot

Setting: Philip is running to catch up to a man on a “chariot”.

Length: 5 minutes

ETHIOPIAN: (*Reading.*) “In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?”

PHILLIP: Hang on, hang on. (*Wheezes to a halt.*) Can you ... can you wait ... just give me a minute.

ETHIOPIAN: Take all the time you need. You know, this isn't the best neighborhood for a run. And why are you running?

PHILLIP: To catch up with you.

ETHIOPIAN: And I am so honored you have chosen to do so—my chariot is your chariot. But, why are you chasing me?

PHILLIP: I was told to.

ETHIOPIAN: Again, I am so very happy you have been told to, but who told you to chase me?

PHILLIP: (*Still breathing hard, getting a little easier.*) It was an angel ... of God ... who ... told. I was told to...

ETHIOPIAN: An angel. How interesting.

PHILLIP: Oh, you have no idea.

ETHIOPIAN: But I am interested to learn. Did your angel speak of me by name?

PHILLIP: No, I don't think so.

ETHIOPIAN: Pity, I should have liked to know how that sounded—to have an angel speak my name. Where have you come from, that you need to chase me?

PHILLIP: Jerusalem.

ETHIOPIAN: As was I! Did you see me there?

PHILLIP: Well...

ETHIOPIAN: I am joking. Jerusalem is a big city, there are many people there. It would

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have been a wonder to have seen one another ... unless, your friend the angel told you where to look. ... yes?

PHILLIP: Yes. Why were you in Jerusalem?

ETHIOPIAN: I was following a star. And now I have found you! I am glad you have run to this place. To be here with me.

PHILLIP: Where are you from?

ETHIOPIAN: I am from Ethiopia. A land far to the south of this place. (*Gestures.*) Can you see?

PHILLIP: Ahh...

ETHIOPIAN: Again, I am joking. It is much too far away to see. Unless, your friend the angel...

PHILLIP: Right. And who are you?

ETHIOPIAN: I am the Queen's accountant.

PHILLIP: Which queen?

ETHIOPIAN: Does it matter? (*Pause.*) Again the joke. She is Candace, Queen of Ethiopia.

PHILLIP: I see.

ETHIOPIAN: Some might say I am an important man.

PHILLIP: Yes.

ETHIOPIAN: And here you are with me. I believe that makes you an important man.

PHILLIP: I suppose it does. Did I hear you reading...

ETHIOPIAN: ... The book of Isaiah. Yes. (*Holds it up.*)

PHILLIP: Oh?

ETHIOPIAN: A most wonderful book. Full of powerful imagery, symbolism ... the language, the poetry...

PHILLIP: And you understand it?

ETHIOPIAN: It is a wonderful book. The quality of the pages alone could make one weep.

PHILLIP: And you understand?

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ETHIOPIAN: No. But I am interested to learn. Perhaps you can help me.

PHILLIP: Perhaps.

ETHIOPIAN: Or you could ask your friend, the...

PHILLIP: ... the angel. Look I'm not on a regular speaking basis with angels.

ETHIOPIAN: Pity. I would think that to be most helpful.

PHILLIP: But, I might be able to help you.

ETHIOPIAN: Excellent! Listen ...

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before the shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
For his life was taken from the earth."

Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?

PHILLIP: He's not talking about himself.

ETHIOPIAN: No?

PHILLIP: No. He's talking about a man named Jesus.

ETHIOPIAN: Ah. Jesus.

PHILLIP: He was a man who preached words of hope and peace. Did great works of healing. Taught us a way of love ... forgiveness of sins.

ETHIOPIAN: That is good. Many of us have many sins.

PHILLIP: Yes.

ETHIOPIAN: A teacher of love. Why would such a man be killed?

PHILLIP: He was considered to be a threat.

ETHIOPIAN: To?

PHILLIP: Love can be threatening to those with power.

ETHIOPIAN: Yes?

PHILLIP: But he rose again...

ETHIOPIAN: Ah, a happier ending.

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PHILLIP: and he lives in me, and maybe he lives in you?

ETHIOPIAN: I should like that. To have a man who teaches love to live in me. What must I do?

PHILLIP: When someone wishes that, we baptize them...in water.

ETHIOPIAN: So a bath?

PHILLIP: You could say that.

ETHIOPIAN: *(Delighted.)* And I have.

PHILLIP: Yes, you have.

ETHIOPIAN: Look! Some water ... you could baptism me right now. Is there someone you should check with first? Your friend the angel ... Is he here now?
(Looks around.)

PHILLIP: I don't think so.

ETHIOPIAN: Pity. Come! Let's go! Come! *(He rushes off, PHILLIP is left behind.)* Once again, you are chasing—come! *(He rushes off; with a smile PHILLIP hurries after him.)*

THE END

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