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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Lesson X.—First Quarter, For March 7, 1909.

THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.

Text of the Lesson, Acts viii, 26-40. Memory Verses 29-31—Golden Text, John v, 39—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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 In the midst of all this great work in Samaria, Philip is commanded by a messenger from heaven to arise and go toward the south to a certain road through a desert place. That Heaven is really interested in affairs on earth, that God Himself cares for my personal affairs, that He careth for me as truly as He cared for Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Hagar or Samuel or Gideon or the many others to whom He sent special messengers or special messages, is a great truth to have grasp one's soul. Yet it is so plainly stated in such passages as II Chron. xvi, 9; Prov. xv, 3, as well as illustrated in so many individual cases that to question it is simply unmitigated unbelief. Here is the story of a great man in the eyes of the world who had charge of all the treasure of the queen of Ethiopia, a man who was well fixed, as far as this world goes, but he evidently had no rest in his soul, but a great hunger for something that money could not buy. He had made a long journey to Jerusalem, the city of the great king, where the queen of Sheba had once gone to see the greatness of Solomon, but he was returning home unsatisfied, not having found that which his soul sought.

As he journeyed he was reading the prophecy of Isaiah. It would be a rare thing today to find any one traveling by train or trolley or steamer reading such a book. Whether he possessed the book before he left home or obtained it in Jerusalem the record does not say, but the record does say that he read it as he journeyed, and that is the important thing. He was diligently seeking the truth, and he was noticed in Heaven, and events were ordered that he might obtain what he sought (Jer. xxix, 13). God used an angel and a man to bring it about.

In connection with angels I love to ponder Ps. ciii, 20, "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, harkening unto the voice of His word," and then Heb. i, 14, where we read that they minister to the heirs of salvation. They are His ministers doing His pleasure, and we should be the same, proving always that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Philip was evidently one with the angels in this matter, a willing and obedient servant of Christ, for without questioning he arose and went. The Lord knew His man and could say in this case as in some others: I have found Me a man. He is ever saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" But how few reply like the prophet, "Here am I; send me!" (Isa. vi, 8.) It was wholly against human reason and so called common sense that a man who was being used as Philip was should leave a great work and go down to the desert. But the great question is, Whose work is it, and who is doing it? That being settled, then it must be day by day, What wilt Thou, or where wilt Thou? And to the reply there is nothing for us but prompt and cheerful obedience. Philip was a man to whom an angel or the Holy Spirit could talk. He had obeyed the voice of the angel, and now the Spirit says, "Join thyself to this chariot." So he ran to it and heard the man reading the prophet Isaiah and said to him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" (Verse 30.) We are reminded of our Lord's oft repeated similar question, as in Matt. xlii, 51; xvi, 9-11, and of Heb. xi, 3, where we learn that the way to understand is to believe. Philip is invited to ride in the chariot that he may explain the portion being read, which was what we call Isa. llii, 7, 8, and beginning at that Scripture he preached Jesus, His sufferings and glory, His kingdom and the way to enter it. The eunuch, seeing him whom he unconsciously longed for thus set before him, at once received Him and confessed it by baptism and went on his way rejoicing, no doubt to carry the glad tidings to many in Ethiopia. Philip was caught away by the Spirit and from Azotus to Caesarea preached the gospel in all the cities through which he passed.

Our Lord was as ready to preach to one as to hundreds, and if we are truly His followers we will be ready to do likewise. How varied was Philip's experience in this incident—a long journey on foot, a ride in a royal chariot, caught away supernaturally by the Spirit, but best of all, used by God to turn a seeking soul to Himself! What an illustration of "for any manner of service, wholly at thy commandment" (I Chron. xxviii, 21). As to preaching Jesus, there is no one else to preach, and unless He is set forth as God manifest in the flesh, suffering for our sins, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, risen, ascended, interceding and coming again in glory to establish His kingdom, the preaching is not according to the Scriptures. Philip began just where the man was reading and preached Jesus, and, while Isa. llii is a specially good portion to begin at and to preach from, there is no part of the whole Bible where He cannot be seen and from which He cannot be set forth as the suffering and the glorified one.

There is no possibility of following Him as our example until we have received Him as our Saviour.

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