

The Queen of Sheba and the Eunuch

1 Kings 10; 2 Chr. 9; Acts 8.

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(These notes have not, as far as known, been hitherto published. E.D.)

These two narratives, found in distant parts of the Word, in common illustrate truths which are as clear and important to us in this distant age and place as ever they were, whether in the time of 2 Chronicles 9 or of Acts 8. In the queen of Sheba and the Ethiopian eunuch, who belonged it may be to the same country, though at such different times, we find dissatisfaction in the best things short of Christ; but rest and fulness in Him, be He known by us, whether in grace or glory.

The queen of the south had all royal honours upon her, and all royal resources around her; she could command the delights of the children of men, and evidently had health and capacity to enjoy them. The world was at her disposal, but the world had left her with an aching, craving heart, and she found no satisfaction in her royal estate, and, ill at ease, she took a long, untried journey from the uttermost parts of the earth to Jerusalem, because she had heard of the wisdom of the king there "concerning the name of the Lord."

She reached Jerusalem, and there she found all and more than she had heard of or calculated on. Her spirit was filled; her eye saw something in everything there that possessed her soul with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; for Christ was there. He shone in those days, in His image and reflection — Solomon, and she was brought into communion with Christ in His glory in the city of the great king, called, as it has well been, "The heaven below the skies." The world had left her heart an aching void, and Christ had now filled it to overflowing; she counted this merchandize better than that of gold and silver, better than that of riches, and getting her questions answered, her soul satisfied, her eye filled with visions of glory, of glory according to God, she presented her gold, her frankincense, her precious stones, the wealth of her kingdom, as a small thank-offering.

The eunuch was a great man under Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians; but he had long since, I may say, proved that the vanities of the Ethiopians would not do for him. He appears before us as one who had already cast the idols of that land to the moles and to the bats, and taken up the confession of the name of the God of Israel. In the obedience of this faith he had just gone, where first we see him, to Jerusalem, the city of solemnities, where the worship of the God of Israel was conducted, and he had gone there as a worshipper. But he had left Jerusalem dissatisfied; he was on his way home to the south country with a craving, aching heart; he was still an enquirer, as surely so as the queen of Sheba had been in her day, when she left her native country for the same city — Jerusalem — and the contrast here is vivid. Jerusalem had satisfied the spirit of the queen, but it had left the soul of the eunuch a barren and thirsty place.

These are among the things which show themselves to us in these most interesting pieces of history. But why this? Why would not Jerusalem do for the eunuch what it had done for the queen? Christ was not there in this his day as He had been in her day. Jerusalem was not now the city where the king of glory, in His beauty, was seen and reflected, and where some image of Him, and some token of His presence and magnificence, might be traced everywhere. It was no mount of transfiguration to him as it had been to her. Religiousness was there, but not Christ; the observances and ceremonials of a carnal worship, the doings of a worldly sanctuary, were there, but not the

presence of the Christ of God. This made all the difference, and tells us why the eunuch left that very same Jerusalem with an aching heart, which had filled the spirit of the queen of Sheba with an abounding, overflowing joy.

His heart however is to be filled as well as hers, and that too out of the same fountain — Christ; only it is through the prophet Isaiah that Christ is to fill it, and not through Solomon. In a desert spot, on the journey which was taking him back from Jerusalem to Ethiopia, Philip, the servant and witness of Jesus, is directed by the Holy Ghost to meet him. He addresses himself to him in the aching, craving state of mind to which I have already alluded; it possessed him thoroughly, so that no strange circumstance, such as that of meeting a stranger in that desert place, and being addressed by him, has power to move him. The whole scene bears this character — there was the absorbing presence of one thing in his soul, "the expulsive power of a new affection" there. He was reading Isaiah with emotion of heart under the convictions and awakenings of the Spirit of God; but Christ was soon to be introduced to him, and the desert should then rejoice, and in the thirsty land springs of water should flow. "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." And the eunuch then "went on his way rejoicing." Joy did in him and with him now what in earlier days it had done in and with the queen of the south. She trafficked for wisdom, and counted the merchandize of it better than that of gold and silver and precious stones, and she was willing to part with the wealth of her kingdom for it. He now can part with Philip, since his spirit is filled with the joy of the Lord, and he has got the Christ of God as she had got Him.

Precious and beautiful illustrations of these like weighty truths, only we make certain differences. It was the world in all its royal splendour and resources which had left her heart a beggar, as she had tasted it in her own country. It was religiousness which had left his heart a beggar, as he had proved it in the city of solemnities; but whether it be this or that, the splendour of the world, or the religion of the world, the heart is but beggary and drought without Jesus.

And then again there is this further difference — it was Christ in the glory that was introduced to the queen, it was Christ in grace and humiliation that was introduced to the eunuch. Solomon reflected the King in His beauty to her, Isaiah preached the Lamb in His blood to him; but no matter, both were satisfied. Christ, in the dispensation of present grace and blood-sealed salvation, gives satisfaction and rest to the sinner. Christ, in the display of coming glories in the kingdom, will give satisfaction to the natives of the world, and to the whole creation of God. It is Christ, whether as the Lamb of God on the altar, or as the King of Glory on the throne; and His people are satisfied, their searchings and enquiries are over. The sinner goes away with the Lamb satisfied and at rest; the creation of God will rejoice in Him of whom it is written, "Glory and honour are in His presence, strength and gladness are in His place." The whole creation, in all its range of manifold regions, shall share in the power of that day. The daughter of Zion, the natives with their kings, the beasts of the forests and the cattle of the hills, the floods and the woods, the hills, the valleys, shall there in their several ways taste and witness this universal joy, the deep satisfaction in which the creation of God shall then repose.

But once more, and I will notice another difference. In the day of the glory the king must be sought — the queen of the south went up to wait on the king in Zion. In the day of grace the Saviour *seeks* - the Ethiopian nobleman was sought and found by the servant and witness of Jesus the Saviour. How fitting! how beautifully correct though various all this is! How all commends itself to our souls, telling us something of the perfections which shine in the ways of Him with whom we have to do! J. G. B.