

In the mountains of Abyssinia the church survived, but had to live apart from the rest

of the Christian world till modern times. It lives to-day, rather helpless and degenerate.

THE GEOGRAPHY LESSON

[SEE SKETCH MAP, LESSON XI.]

Nobody to-day knows precisely where it was, on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, that Philip overtook Queen Candace's treasurer. Let us, however, see part of the country near Gaza, through which he journeyed on his way to the queen's African realm. The number 12 on our Judea map (see last lesson) shows a spot on a low hill from which we may look off northwesterly over Gaza and towards the sea. Jerusalem is about fifty miles to our right, up among the hills. The ground we see before us has no high hills. Fields and orchards, separated by cactus hedgerows, extend for half a mile

before us ; then a low, broad hill rises a little above the orchard levels, with the buildings of a town covering its own summit. Looking beyond the housetops, we can see lower ground beyond the hill which reaches to the Mediterranean Sea. It was on the way to this town that the man from Ethiopia was riding, and reading while he rode. The route that he followed is used this very year by traders on the way to and from Egypt.

Use a stereograph entitled, Gaza, Lowland Stronghold of the Philistines, from the South-east.

THE LESSON APPLIED

This passage is a beautiful "missionary idyl," and its object is to show the gradual extension of the gospel to people of Gentile race, or belonging to foreign countries. What is the meaning of this extension of Christianity to all peoples ? Is it not this : The gospel is the religion that unites all men who accept it, to God, without regard to their past ?

The Book of Acts tells the story of the overflowing of the river of Christianity. The banks of Palestine could no longer contain it. Its waters broke forth over the cities of Europe and Asia. Our lesson teaches us also that the waters reached even to Africa, for the eunuch was an Ethiopian. The first sign of the universal sweep of Christianity was the reception of the gospel by the Samaritans (see Acts 8 : 5, 6). If possible the teacher should trace Paul's missionary journeys on a map to show how the gospel overleaped Jewish boundaries and prejudices. Discuss the question : Is Christianity destined to be the universal religion ? If so, why ? Again : Will the gospel be extended to all corners of the earth by miracle or by the agency of the church ? Another question may give rise to an interesting discussion : Is it sufficient to have the gospel proclaimed to the whole earth ? Is it enough to have the religion of Jesus introduced into all lands ? Must it

not permeate all our institutions ? In other words, the mission of Christianity is not only *extensive*, but *intensive*.

A third lesson gleaned from this passage is the requirement or qualification for membership in the kingdom. The Ethiopian was a black man, not circumcised, and yet Philip does not hesitate to baptize him. Why ? Because he had grasped the heart of the Christian message. He might not understand all the implications, all the details involved, all the doctrines connected therewith, but he understood that Jesus had died for him. Gladstone spent much of his life in continual reflection upon the deepest mysteries of time and of eternity, and yet at the close he gave this simple expression of his faith : "Commending myself to the infinite mercies of God in the incarnate Son, as my only and sufficient hope." It was that, rather than any elaborate views which the great statesman held in regard to the church which gave him the right to call himself a Christian.

What a world of anxiety and suffering would have been saved if the church had always been guided by this simple, direct rule which Philip followed. Sometimes the church declared that its members must believe that salvation came through the sacraments, and that apart from the church and its mighty protection there could be only