

THE RIM OF THE CHARIOT WHEEL  
A Good Friday Play in Two Acts by Jewell Ellen Smith

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

[Return to Jewell Ellen Smith Home Page](#)

Theme: God is all things to all men: A Spirit. A Lamb. The Bread of Life. Like the rim of a chariot wheel, God has no beginning and no end. God is eternal.

Scripture basis: Acts 8:26-35; Genesis 22:1-14, Matthew 26:17-30.

Résumé of plot: "And the angel of the Lord spake to Phillip, saying Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza... And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship. Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.... And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.... Then Philip opened his mouth ... and preached unto him Jesus."

Time and Place: Jerusalem, and a desert place in southwest Palestine, near Gaza. About 40 AD. Also, the Upper Room in Jerusalem, at the Last Supper. And, the land of Moriah, upon one of the mountains, where Abraham worshiped.

Summary:

Act I: In the Jerusalem home of the Evangelist Philip, one evening at dusk.

Scene 1: As Philip prepares to retire for the night, his four daughters prophesy that he will take a journey toward the South.

Scene 2: Philip's bedroom, the same evening. As Philip sleeps, the Voice of the Lord speaks to him. And his daughters appear in his dream, singing.

Act II: The next morning, after Philip's dream.

Scene 1: Philip's home in Jerusalem. Philip arises and leaves quickly for his journey.

Scene 2: The roadside, north of Gaza, where the Ethiopian Eunuch's chariot has sustained a broken wheel. The Eunuch reads his newly acquired copy of Isaiah as he waits for his servants to go to Gaza for a new wheel. Philip appears and explains the Scriptures to the Eunuch-after the servants had tried entertain the Eunuch with singing and dancing.

Sub-scene A: The Upper Room in Jerusalem, where Jesus had the Last Supper with the 12 apostles. Pantomime, while Philip continues explanation to Eunuch.

Sub-scene B: The Land of Moriah, upon the mountain where Abraham prepared to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering to God. (Angel appears, sings solo. Abraham and Isaac sing duet.)

Scene 3: The roadside, adjacent to the Eunuch's chariot, a few minutes after Philip finished explaining the Scriptures. The servants return with a new chariot wheel. Immediately afterward all players converge near chariot for the Grand Finale.

Grand Finale: The Angel is the central figure in the Grand Finale and sings the solo part of the final song.

Characters (in the order of their appearance):

Philip the Evangelist, a leader in the Church at Jerusalem

Four daughters of Philip, "virgins, which did prophesy."

The Voice from the Lord

Ethiopian Eunuch, Queen Candace's treasurer

The Eunuch's retinue of servants:

Number One Servant

Chariot Driver

Two Musicians, who also hold the Eunuch's canopy

Two Fanners

The Christ Figure

The Twelve Apostles:

Simon Peter

Matthew

James the son of Zebidee

Thomas

John the brother of James

James the son of Alphaeus

Andrew

Thaddeus the Canaanite

Philip

Judas the brother of James

Bartholomew

Judas Iscariot

Abraham

Abraham's two Servants

Isaac

## The Angel of the Lord

Songs: One quartet, one solo, two duets, and the climaxing hymn.

### SCRIPT

#### ACT I, Scene 1

*Philip the Evangelist sits at his study table, reading a scroll by lamplight. His head is bare. He rises and takes off his cloak in preparation for going to bed. He spreads a blanket on his couch, sits down on the couch, and begins taking off his sandals. His four daughters enter. The first carries a headdress; the second, a new cloak; the third, a cake of bread and bowl of fruit; the fourth, a new staff.*

1<sup>ST</sup> DAUGHTER: Father, may we come in for a minute before you go to sleep?

PHILIP: Do! Do come in, my daughters! And what have we here? *Feels of new cloak.* It looks as if you've been busy with your needles.

2<sup>ND</sup> D.: It is a new cloak for you, father Philip. One for you to wear on your journey.

1<sup>ST</sup> D.: *quickly* And here's a new headdress for you to wear. It will be very hot on the desert. And this white material will help keep away the dreadful heat of the noonday sun.

PHILIP: *perplexed* What journey? What desert place? What are you daughters talking about?

4<sup>TH</sup> D.: I thought you would need a new staff for this journey.

PHILIP: I'm not planning to go anyplace.

3<sup>RD</sup> D.: Yes, father, we know that you are to travel--probably at dawn tomorrow. God has revealed to us that you will take a journey for Him. Southward, down toward Gaza. You'll need food, and there are no places along the way for lodging. So, do take this with you. *Sets food on the table*

PHILIP: My dear daughters! I scarcely know what so say! I'm aware that all four of you have the gift to prophesy--it's a power given from God--but I think you must be mistaken! There's no reason for me to go down south toward Gaza! Besides, I'm duty-bound to stay in Jerusalem. I'm extremely busy with the Church. Many believers depend on me. I'm a deacon, remember?

3<sup>RD</sup> D.: Oh yes, Father, we know you've one of the seven chosen to see over the Church.

PHILIP: I just shouldn't leave Jerusalem at this time. Why, I just came back yesterday from Samaria where I preached the word of the Lord in village after village.

That's my work: telling the Good News that Christ has risen! And baptizing in His name. I can't be going off on a long journey to Gaza!

4<sup>TH</sup> D.: Perhaps you will feel differently in the morning, Father. You must go to sleep now. Rest well. Here, let us arrange your covers.

*Fourth and First Daughters tuck Philip into bed. Third daughter extinguishes lamp.*

2<sup>ND</sup> D.: Come, Sisters. Our father is weary.

*Sisters leave room. Philip goes to sleep.*

## Scene 2

*Voice from the Lord enters Philip's room. She stands at the foot of his bed and speaks to him.*

VOICE FROM THE LORD: Arise, Philip, thou servant of the most high God, and "go south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza," walk along the desert road. Talk to a stranger of Jehovah, thy God.

*Philip rises up momentarily, rubs his eyes, lies back down, and goes back to sleep. The Voice is joined by the Four Daughters. The five sing, then, fade away. Philip continues to sleep. A musical interlude indicates passage of night.*

## Act II

### Scene 1 (same as above)

*Philip awakens slowly, sits up on side of bed, and talks to himself.*

PHILIP: Surely that was God appearing to me in a dream. Or, was it a dream? I did hear a voice. It seemed so real. I saw my daughters clearly! But who am I to question the Lord? I must leave immediately! Whether it was a voice or a dream or what, it was from God!

*Philip hurriedly puts on his new clothing, packs the bread and fruit in a knapsack, takes the new staff, and leaves.*

## Scene 2

*On the roadside, not far north of Gaza. The Ethiopian Eunuch's chariot is stopped. The Eunuch and his retinue of servants stand, looking at and talking about the right wheel, which has several broken spokes. Two servants are holding a canopy over the Eunuch. Two others are fanning him with long palmetto-like fans. Number One Servant is down on his knees, working with the wheel. The Eunuch is exasperated.*

EUNUCH: This is too much! Why do such things happen to me? Here we are in the middle of the desert, with a broken down chariot! And no place to get it fixed! If Ethiopia ever gets control of this strip of land, I'll persuade Queen Candace to set up some chariot repair places along the way!

*The Fanners redouble their efforts.*

#1 SERVANT: But, my lord, perhaps we can mend the wheel. It's just broken spokes.

EUNUCH: Just broken spokes! How many?

#1 SERVANT: *counts* Two broken. One more loose. And I'm afraid there's one badly cracked.

EUNUCH: Oh, me! What to do? What to do? (Paces back and forth.) Such things ought not to happen to me or anybody else in the service of the Queen of Ethiopia.

CHARIOT DRIVER: Some of us could walk out to Gaza and buy a new wheel there. Our horses need the rest anyway.

EUNUCH: I suppose so. But it's a long way to Gaza yet. It would take you hours and hours to go there and back.

DRIVER: That's all right, my lord. We'll go. And we'll hurry.

EUNUCH: Such is life! Such is life! *Opens money pouch* Here, take money. The merchants of Gaza don't give away chariot wheels. I'll have to make an accounting to Queen Candace as soon as we get back home.

*Number One Servant takes money.*

Don't spend any more than you have to.

*Eunuch moves to side of chariot, talking to himself. He takes a scroll out of the chariot.*

EUNUCH: *to himself* This trip I've made up to Jerusalem to worship didn't please the queen too much in the first place. But when I start reading these fascinating old scrolls I bought for her, she'll forget all the expenses--maybe even the cost of wheel repairs.

*Eunuch climbs into chariot, picks up scroll, takes out a different one, unrolls it. The servants don't move. They talk among themselves. Audience hears, Eunuch doesn't.*

DRIVER: The main thing we have to worry about is keeping the Eunuch in a good mood.

#1 Servant: That's not easy.

1<sup>st</sup> Musician: We'll play music for him!

2<sup>nd</sup> Musician: Yes. Songs always please the Eunuch.

1<sup>st</sup> Musician: *to Second M* Let's do our new song--the one we wrote for Queen Candace.

2<sup>nd</sup> Musician: Not the one about the queen and the fish and the fox!

1<sup>st</sup> Musician: Sure! That one! 'Course we haven't ever practiced it, but the Eunuch won't know that!

1<sup>st</sup> Fanner: I think we ought to dance for him, too.

2<sup>nd</sup> Fanner: Yes! I'd rather dance any day than fan, fan, fan! *waves fan* My arms are positively numb, anyway.

*Eunuch interrupts.*

EUNUCH: Well? What are you waiting for? Be on your way to Gaza, or we'll still be sitting here when the sun goes down.

#1 SERVANT: Please, my lord, how many of should go?

EUNUCH: It doesn't matter. All of you can go.

#1 SERVANT: No, no, my lord, we can't leave you alone here in this forsaken place. Two of us will go. And four will stay to look after you. *Aside to musicians* Get your instruments right now, and try to help our master pass away the hours pleasantly.

*Eunuch becomes absorbed in his scroll again. Number One Servant and Driver leave to go to Gaza. One carries the hub and broken spokes, the other the rim of the wheel. The Musicians put aside the canopy and run to get their instruments. The Fanners resume their task, standing behind the Eunuch.*

EUNUCH: *to himself* Now, to re-read this part here, one more time. It's hard to understand. *Reads aloud, to himself, part of Isaiah 53*

"Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: He hath no form or comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.... Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows..."

I simply don't understand it. *He reads on*

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all... He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth..."

This is strange writing. Very strange. The scribe who sold it to me said it was written 700 years ago. I believe it's poetry! It sounds beautiful, even if I can't get the meaning. -I'm just going to keep reading it until I do understand it.

*Reads aloud again, this time more slowly and deliberately.*

"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter..."

*The two Musicians come rushing back to the side of the chariot, playing their instruments and singing. At first the Eunuch pays no attention, but as the song becomes louder and louder and worse and worse he is distracted from his reading. The Fanners drop their palm branches and begin dancing, circling the chariot and musicians. Their dancing is exaggerated, anything but graceful.*

EUNUCH: Quiet! Quiet! *Music and dancing subside* What's the meaning of all this noise and prancing around?

1<sup>ST</sup> MUSICIAN: We're just trying to entertain you, my Lord.

EUNUCH: Entertain? Such entertainment as that would take the hump off a camel's back!

2<sup>ND</sup> MUSICIAN *with disappointment*: That was our newest song for Queen Candace.

1<sup>ST</sup> MUSICIAN: The title of it is "The Moon and the Queen of Ethiopia." We're sure she is going to like it! And we thought you would.

EUNUCH: If you two dumb-- *hesitates* Uh-- Uh-- What I mean to say is this: if you two self-styled musicians play that song in front of the queen, she'll have your heads! *Makes throat-cutting gesture with hand*

2<sup>ND</sup> MUSICIAN: But, but, my lord-- what'll we do?

EUNUCH: Go 'way out there in the desert and practice it some more! *points across desert* Or better still, write a different one. And when you sing it for the queen, don't make yourselves sound like two desert foxes on your last legs!

*Musicians walk away dejected, heads down, instruments almost dragging ground.*

1<sup>ST</sup> FANNER: My lord, do you want us to dance some more for you?

2<sup>ND</sup> FANNER: We will, Sir! Or, we'll keep on fanning you.

EUNUCH: Do me a small favor, will you? Go fan the musicians. They need it. But just one thing!

1<sup>ST</sup> FANNER: What's that, my lord?

EUNUCH: Make sure that you do your fanning 'way, 'way out across the sand-- so far that I can't see or hear any of you! I want to read this scroll, in peace!

BOTH FANNERS: Yes, Sir. Yes, my lord. We will!

*Fanners start to leave. Musicians come hurrying back, for they have seen Philip the Evangelist approaching.*

1<sup>ST</sup> MUSICIAN *out of breath*: A stranger is coming, my lord! A traveler on foot. *Points to Philip, who is some distance away*

EUNUCH: Good!

2<sup>ND</sup> MUSICIAN: What shall we do, my Lord?

EUNUCH: Go write your song. Far, far away. Where I can't hear you! Remember? All of you, be gone! Be gone! *Waves them away* I know how to talk to strangers-- I'll have time to read this manuscript some more before the traveler arrives.

*Four servants leave hurriedly. Eunuch reads aloud to himself again. Philip looms nearer chariot, stops.*

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.... He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter ..."

PHILIP: Good day, Sir.

EUNUCH: Good day. Perhaps I should introduce myself. I am the Treasurer to the Queen of Ethiopia. And you?

PHILIP: I am Philip. Called in Jerusalem "Philip the Evangelist." May I inquire if you understand what you are reading?

EUNUCH: I certainly do not. Perhaps you could tell me what it all means, that is, if you are acquainted with the old sacred writings of the Hebrews.

PHILIP: Yes, I know the writings well-- the Law, the Prophets, and the Books of Wisdom.

EUNUCH: Then please climb up here in the chariot and explain this to me. *Philip gets into chariot, sitting on side next to audience.* I bought these copies in Jerusalem just this week, when I went up there to worship. This scroll here *holds up scroll* is evidently some sort of prophecy or poetry, or both. But I can't decide if the writer speaks of himself, or some other man.

*Philip examines scroll.*

PHILIP: Oh, Sir, what you have here is the writings of the great prophet, Isaiah! He foretold the death of the Messiah more than 700 years ago. And it happened just as he said, word for word!

The Messiah was crucified! He shed His blood, just like a lamb. He was the Lamb of God.

EUNUCH: Who was a lamb? And when? Tell me about it! It sounds incredible!

PHILIP: He was Jesus of Nazareth. He came into the world to die as a lamb, to shed His blood. For, God sent Him. He was crucified just a few years ago. But he arose from the grave and went back to heaven. I wish you had been in Jerusalem then, to see Him and hear Him teach God's love. The people who killed Him didn't know He was the Son of God. I don't think they would have nailed Him to the cross.

EUNUCH: The Son of God? Tell me more!

PHILIP: All who believe in their hearts that He is the Son of God will have everlasting life!

EUNUCH: Please help me to believe it! I want to have eternal life! *Pauses* But, I don't understand about the shedding of His blood.

PHILIP *slowly, deliberately*: God speaks to people and reveals Himself in ways they can understand. For hundreds and hundreds of years--generation after generation—the Hebrews worshipped God by sacrificing a lamb. The blood of the lamb took away their sins, so to speak. So, perhaps God knew that if He sent His Son, Jesus, as a Lamb, the people could understand that He would take away their sins.

EUNUCH: Did this Jesus have many followers?

PHILIP: Indeed, He did. And He had 12 special apostles, who were very close to Him. I know many of them now. Often, they recount what He said about His blood being spilled for man—the very night before He was crucified. It was at the time of the Passover, and they were having the Supper, in an upper room..

### Sub-scene A

*Curtains open to show Christ Figure and 12 apostles seated at Feast of the Passover table in a pose to resemble the celebrated Leonardo da Vinci painting. These 13 do pantomimes, as recorded in Matthew 26:26-28, while Philip explains same to the Eunuch.*

PHILIP: While they were eating the Passover Supper, Jesus took the bread and blessed it. Then He broke it up and passed it around among His disciples and told them to eat it. For, he said: "This is My body."

Then, He took the cup of wine and gave thanks for it. This time, He said:

"Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

*Curtain closes as cup is passed from apostle to apostle.*

EUNUCH: *in amazement*: Remarkable! In fact, this is amazing! I think I'd like to follow this Jesus! This Lamb who gave His life!

PHILIP: Let me read for you the story of another lamb God sent-a real one, with wool on his back. *Looks among scrolls* It's about our father Abraham and his son Isaac. You must have it here, somewhere. Ah, you do have Genesis. When I read you this, you can understand even more about Jesus *unrolls scroll*. I'll skip this first part. Here's the place! *Reads*

### Sub-scene B

*Philip reads first two verses of Genesis 22. On verse 3, Abraham, Isaac, and two servants come on stage. One servant carries huge bundle of sticks. Second has flaming torch and a long knife fasted to his belt. At verse 5 Philip stops reading. Abraham begins to talk and action starts.*

PHILIP: "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning...and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him."

*Abraham, Isaac, and two servants advance toward center stage.*

"Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off."

*Curtain parts to reveal wooded scene, up on an elevated stage.*

ABRAHAM: There it is! There is the mountain of which God spoke.--I want you two *gestures to servants* to stay right here. My son Isaac and I will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. Son, let's put the wood for the burnt offering on your back.

*Sticks are tied onto Isaac's back. Servants help.*

ABRAHAM: *to servant with torch and knife* Here, let me have the fire and the knife.

*Abraham and Isaac start toward mountain scene, Abraham in front.*

ISAAC: Father?

ABRAHAM: What is it, my son?

ISAAC: I know we're going up on the mountain to worship. You have the fire, I have the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

ABRAHAM: Isaac, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.

*Both stop near some bushes. Abraham unstraps wood from Isaac's back. Together, they lay the wood in order. Quickly, Abraham binds a rope around Isaac, lays him across the wood, and raises the knife in the air! The Angel appears, calling out to Abraham.*

ANGEL: Abraham! Abraham!

ABRAHAM *dropping knife and turning quickly*: Here am I, O Lord!

ANGEL: Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him! For now God knows that you trust in Him. You have not withheld your son, your only son.--And Abraham, forget not that the Lord will keep His Covenant with you, forevermore.

*Abraham kneels before the Angel. Isaac sits up, on stack of sticks. The Angel sings a solo.*

SOLO: "A Lamb He will send."

*The Angel fades into background. Abraham gets up off his knees, turns around, and sees a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.*

ABRAHAM: Look, my son, a ram! Caught by his horns in the thicket!

*Abraham begins untying Isaac.*

ISAAC: God did provide a lamb! Just as you said!

ABRAHAM: Yes my son. "In the mountain Jehovah will provide."

*Abraham and Isaac sing a duet (see below). As Abraham takes the sheep from the thicket and places him on the altar of sticks, the curtain closes.*

PHILIP: Now, I can understand that God sent that sheep to the mountain to die for Isaac. He sent His only son to be the Lamb to die for us. These sacred writings teach many more things about God. We can--

*Philip is interrupted by the return of the Eunuch's two servants who have returned from Gaza. One carries the old wheel and rim. The other has a new chariot wheel.*

EUNUCH: I'm sorry for this interruption. *starts getting out of chariot* We'll continue this studying the Holy Writings as soon as my servants have put on the wheel. *To servants* I see you had to buy a whole new wheel.

#1 SERVANT: Yes, my lord. This one couldn't be fixed. The spokes are just worthless. But the chariot repairman in Gaza said the rim is as good as gold. In fact, he told me he had never seen such a well-made rim.

PHILIP *now out of chariot and standing near Eunuch*: Our God is like this rim of the chariot wheel *takes rim from servant, runs fingers along it* But we are like the spokes that bend and break. Notice how this rim has no beginning and no end. God is like that. He has no beginning and no end. God is eternal.

*Angel begins singing "God is Like the Rim of a Chariot Wheel," etc. She leads all players onto stage for Grand Finale song.*

FINAL CURTAIN

# In the Mountain God Will Provide

Jewell Ellen Smith

Abraham-Isaac duet in "Rim of the Chariot Wheel."

Prelude (Abraham)

Is - aac, be - hold what our God hath now done,

3

here on this Mount Mo - ri - ah. He hath sav - ed

6

thy life for thee to - day. The might - y

Abraham, continuing:

9

great Je - ho - vah! (verses)

1. In the moun - tains  
2. O, Is - aac, my  
3. In the moun - tains  
4. In all moun - tains

12

of son, the God will pro - vide; He will hide thee  
of life the Lord's ears will hear; on - ly call His  
of life God God will does pro - vide; the tears may cov - ship  
of life God God does pro - vide. Let us wor - ship

15

from great harm. List - en now, my th - son,  
ho - ly name. He will stre - ng - en  
er thy face. Turn to Him, find his strength,  
Him al - ways. Ho - ly are his deeds;

vs. 3: back to start of verses  
vs. 4: to postlude

18

while I tell of dis - God; for he is a strong right arm.  
thine heart in thy dis - tress. Day or night, He is the same.  
a might - y ref - uge, and his peace. Let Him be thy hid - ing place.  
might - y are his ways. Let us sing out in his praise!

Isaac, only on verses 1 and 2.

rit.

21

1. Tell me more! More! More a - bout this God, for I  
2. So you know, Know? Know He will pro - vide? Ev - il

25

a tempo

fear what life can hold. There are ter - rors! Sor - rows!  
ev - er lurks so near. Let me doubt not! Doubt not!

28

On the dark - est night, can the Lord then make con -  
Doubt the God on high. Will He help me con -

Postlude, Abraham and Isaac

31

me bold? When you climb up your high  
quer fear?

34

Musical notation for measures 34-36. The treble clef staff contains the melody with lyrics: "Mount Mo - ri - ah, let God be there by your side." The bass clef staff contains the accompaniment.

37

Musical notation for measures 37-40. The treble clef staff contains the melody with lyrics: "If you build in your heart, Him an al - tar, He will for". The bass clef staff contains the accompaniment.

41

Musical notation for measures 41-42. The treble clef staff contains the melody with lyrics: "you pro - vi - de!". The bass clef staff contains the accompaniment.

[Return to the Jewell Ellen Smith Home Page](#)