

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 389
Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8
Verses: Acts 8:39-40
Topic: Philip Is Caught Away
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THIS CONCLUDES THE SERIES ON ACTS 1-8 YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR A TOPIC FOR THE NEXT SERIES ARE WELCOME AND CAN BE EMAILED TO JOHNED@AIBI.PH

Acts 8:39-40 MKJV And when they had come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing. (40) But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached the gospel in all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

These two verses are so unusual that they are skipped or glossed over in most commentaries, but I will tackle them as we need to expand our view of the Spirit's work in this final look at Acts 1-8.

The Codex Alexandrinus and several other MSS. and in some versions have the following reading:

The Spirit of the Lord fell upon the eunuch:
But the angel of the Lord snatched away Philip.

It thus appears that as the Spirit fell on them both in the baptismal pool, the eunuch was filled with joy and power and Phillip was moved to another form Philistine city - Azotus or Ashdod. According to Dr. Lightfoot Gaza is about 34 miles from Azotus.

"Translation" is relatively rare in Scripture, the most famous examples being Moses after his death who was buried by God (Deuteronomy 34:5,6), Elijah caught up in the chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11), Ezekiel goes on journeys a couple of times being "lifted up" by the Spirit (Ezekiel 3;12,14, 8:3, 11:11,11:24, 43:5) one occasion being held between earth and heaven by a lock of his hair ! (Ezekiel 8:3). On these occasions Ezekiel sees events happening in real time and claims to be moved back and forth between Babylon and Jerusalem (Ezekiel 11) and speaking to the exiles.

In the New Testament Paul or someone known to him was taken up into heaven by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 12:1-4) and John in his Revelation is carried up to Heaven (Revelation 4:2) and carried away to a desert place in which was the Harlot (Revelation 17:3) and carried away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain to see the coming of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10)

Elijah was apparently a master of this so much so that it exasperated everyone: 1 Kings 18:12 MKJV And it will be as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of

Jehovah shall carry you where I know not. And when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I, your servant, have feared Jehovah from my youth. (see also 2 Kings 2:16)

There are also numerous modern day reports of village evangelists and missionaries suddenly finding themselves at home or at a certain place when they had been miles from it - often this sudden journey removed them from certain danger.

Time and distance are as nothing to God, so He can do what He likes in this realm. The Spirit seems to do these things with those that are most committed to Him, those who are most in tune with God's purposes. Philip was leading the Spirit-led life and his journey just became part of that natural resonance with God.

Acts does not sensationalize the journey or give lurid details of the ground rushing by as the Spirit carried him. It just happened, and it is just part of the things that happen to people who lead the life of the Spirit. Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of the unpredictability of the spiritual existence:

John 3:8 MKJV The Spirit breathes where He desires, and you hear His voice, but you do not know from where He comes, and where He goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Various explanations have been given for why this occurred. One is to remove Philip from temptation – from being given money by the wealthy eunuch, another is that Philip was being sent on a powerful missionary journey while the anointing was mighty upon him and that seems to be supported by Acts.

“But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached the gospel in all the cities until he came to Caesarea.” Philip preaches the gospel mightily through a number of towns and arrives at Caesarea. In Caesarea Phillip makes a home and has four daughters who were prophetesses. (Acts 21:8,9) This Caesarea was not Caesarea Philippi but the Caesarea formerly called Strabo's Tower and was a very Hellenized Jewish city from which the Jewish Rebellion of AD 66-73 broke out.

Philip was highly itinerant, he did not “do follow-up” but just kept moving on and preaching the gospel under the anointing and leaving the results to God. He saw mighty miracles in Samaria and great opportunities in the Ethiopian eunuch. He was a fire-starter, and just lit the fires and let them burn as they would.

We need to trust the new convert and God a bit more - especially now that the Internet and Christian bookstores have made a huge amount of resources for personal growth available. By all accounts the eunuch, with no further follow-up did quite well and even shared the gospel in Ethiopia. He did not need two years in bible college before doing this. Now bible colleges are good and I run one – (see www.aibi.ph) and lecture in them. But we cannot teach anyone anything unless we are co-teachers with the Holy Spirit. God is the real Teacher (see 1 John 2;20,27) and I am just a mouth-piece He uses from time to time.

As we finish up this series in Acts and approach the New Year let us make a resolution to live the Spirit-led life, trusting God for all things and moved by Him.

Blessings,

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