

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XIX. God's Drive Fully To Disciple The Whole Earth

(Acts 8:26-40)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as it is presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 8:26-40 records an event that reveals God's drive fully to disciple the whole earth, and we view this passage for our insight, application, and edification (as follows):

II. God's Drive Fully To Disciple The Whole Earth, Acts 8:26-40.

- A. Christ's last words to His disciples before ascending to heaven directed them to be witnesses unto Him in Jerusalem, in all Judaea, in Samaria and even to the ends of the earth, Acts 1:8. In doing so, they were to teach not just basic truths, but all things that Christ had commanded them, Matthew 28:18-20.
- B. A special event occurred under direct divine guidance in Acts 8:26-40 that revealed how **strongly God** wanted the Church to disciple **all** men in **all** parts of the earth in **all** of His revealed truths, and we view it as follows:
 1. First, though Philip had reached Samaria with the Gospel apparently on his own motivation (Acts 8:5), the angel of the Lord then authoritatively directed him to arise and go to the road "to Desert Gaza, the old city which had been destroyed in 93 B. C. and which was inland from the Gaza of N. T. times," Acts 8:26 NIV; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Acts 8:26.
 2. Heeding this authoritative directive from God, Philip encountered an Ethiopian eunuch, a key official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, Acts 8:27a NIV. This nation was "ancient Nubia, south of Aswan" in Egypt, showing "how far the gospel was spreading," Ibid., ftn. to Acts 8:27.
 3. The eunuch was returning from worshiping in Jerusalem, sitting in his chariot and reading from the book of Old Testament Isaiah, Acts 8:28. It was customary to read out loud, so Philip could easily have heard and understood the portion that the Ethiopian official was reading, Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 374.
 4. The Holy Spirit of God then directed Philip to approach the chariot and join himself to it, Acts 8:29.
 5. Philip obeyed the Lord, running to the chariot and asking the official if he understood what he read, Acts 8:30. The Ethiopian eunuch replied that he could not understand it unless someone might guide him, so he invited Philip to join him in his chariot to help him understand the passage, Acts 8:31.
 6. The official was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8 about the death of Christ (Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Acts 8:32-33), and the eunuch asked Philip of whom the prophet was speaking, of himself or someone else, Acts 8:34.
 7. This interpretive question had either just become, or it would soon become, a big theological issue, for before Jesus' time, "the Jews understood Isa. 53 as referring to the Messiah. This interpretation was abandoned as Christians applied the prophecy to Jesus of Nazareth, and Isa. 53 was then considered by the Jews to be referring either to Isaiah himself or to the people of Israel." (Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Acts 8:35)
 8. Philip opened his mouth and, beginning at the passage, preached unto the official about Jesus, Acts 8:35.
 9. While travelling, they came to a place with water, and as most manuscripts omit Acts 8:37 [as it is a Western text type addition only, there is no reason for a manuscript to omit it if it were original, and "**ton 'Iesoun Christon**" ("the Jesus Christ") of v. 37 is not a Lukan expression] (Ibid., ftn. to Acts 8:37; Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Grk. N. T., 1971, p. 359-360), Acts 8:36 and 38 state that the official asked what would hinder him from being baptized, he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip baptized him!
 10. Immediately after they had come up out of the water, the Holy Spirit once again led, catching Philip away to where the Ethiopian eunuch saw him no more, and the official went on his way rejoicing, Acts 8:38-39.
 11. Philip was next found at Azotos, 20 miles north of Gaza, and he passed through all the cities, evangelizing them until he came to Caesarea where he resided, Acts 8:40; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 375.

Lesson: By directing Philip to go to the Desert Gaza road, by telling him to join the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot, by having Philip explain a passage that was or would become badly misinterpreted when it truly foretold Christ's substitutionary death, and by immediately moving Philip 20 miles away to keep evangelizing in Israel, God showed His intense desire that the Church disciple ALL men in ALL parts of the world in ALL of His truth!

Application: May we aim to disciple ALL men in ALL places of the world in ALL the Biblical truths of God!