

Episode: Acts Series No. 11

Narrator: Philip of Caesarea

Primary Scriptures: Acts 9:40

Story Summary: A description of the influential city of Caesarea

Location: Roman Empire; Caesarea

Time: 10 BC Caesarea founded by Herod the Great

30 AD Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost.

48 AD Council of Jerusalem

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Acts 8:40; 10:1; 21:8-9; 23:23

Two cities in Israel had remarkable influence on the growth of the early church. The first was Jerusalem, the home of the Temple and the Jewish leadership. The church started in Jerusalem, but soon began to spread to other places because of persecution by the Jewish leaders.

The second most influential city in Israel was Caesarea, a port city on the Mediterranean Sea. Caesarea was built by Herod the Great shortly before the birth of Jesus. As the only deep-water port on the west coast of Israel, it exerted tremendous influence over Israel's economy, and Herod's ownership of the city was a main cause of his immense wealth.

Caesarea was on the Via Maris, the most famous trading route across Israel. The ancient Via Maris went north out of Egypt, up the coast of Israel, and north through Lebanon. One important spur off of the Via Maris went northeast to the Sea of Galilee, along the north edge by Capernaum, north past Hazor, and east to Damascus. In Damascus it met up with the King's Highway.

Although the Bible never mentions the Via Maris by name, it is clear that the trading route controlled many aspects of life in Israel. It was probably the reason why Jesus chose to locate his ministry in Capernaum and was instrumental in Israel having a good economy in the time of Herod the Great.

Caesarea's location and function as a deep-water port made it an ideal hub for spreading the Gospel. Philip the Evangelist probably lived in Caesarea during virtually all of his ministry. He is one reason that Caesarea was such a critical city for the Christians: instead of Philip having to travel, the travelers came to Philip—a strategy Paul would use in Ephesus.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who built Caesarea Maritima? What else did they build?
 2. What made Caesarea so strategic?
 3. Why did the Romans prefer Caesarea over Jerusalem?
 4. What is the difference in Caesarea Maritima and Caesarea Philippi?
 5. In the video, you learned a lot about ancient boat travel. Does that change the way you think about the missionary journeys? Why or why not?
 6. Who lived in Caesarea? Why was that helpful?
 7. When, if ever, did Philip move to Caesarea permanently?
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1. Herod the Great. Temple Mount, Masada palace, Herodium. 2. Only deep-water port in this part of Mediterranean Sea, controlled the strategic Via Maris trade route. 3. On the sea, easier to get to Rome, a Roman center of government, didn't have to deal with quarrelsome Jews as much. 4. Caesarea Maritima was on the ocean. Caesarea Philippi is near Mount Hermon in northern Israel and was place of Peter's confession of the Messiah. 6. Philip and Cornelius. Good place for Philip to help traveling Christians, and to help Paul when he was imprisoned there. 7. The Bible doesn't say, but it appears he moved there shortly after converting the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:40.

Application Questions:

1. The early Christians tended to interpret events as if God was acting through them. When an important event is reported, is your tendency to think that God was in control or that things just happen?
2. It seems as if the Holy Spirit intentionally located Philip in Caesarea long before he was needed so that he could develop relationships ahead of time. Can you point to something in your life that is preparing you to be more useful for God?
3. Philip and the Christians in Caesarea provided rest and hospitality as a form of ministry. In what ways are you prepared to do the same? Can you identify with them? Why or why not?
4. Philip had to be ready to minister to anyone God brought into his path. How aware are you of similar opportunities in your own life? How can you be more responsive?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Can you make a compelling case that Herod the Great was actually a good king?
2. What do you suppose life would be like as a child of Philip the Evangelist?
3. It seems as if the Holy Spirit intentionally located Philip in Caesarea long before he was needed so that he could develop relationships ahead of time. Can you point to something in your life that is preparing you to be more useful for God?
4. Philip had to be ready to minister to anyone God brought into his path. How aware are you of similar opportunities in your own life? How can you be more responsive?