



**Gentile Outreach Begins at Gaza
Who Knows What the Spirit Wants to Do
Acts 8:26-40**

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Acts 8:26–31

“But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Get ready and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) So he got ready and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” Philip ran up and heard him



reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him." (NASB 2020)

Question – What is God's will, right now, for you? I struggled with that question for years after I was saved. I was serious and wanted be in and to do God's will. After recovering from the multiple frying pan encounters from my loving wife, I learned that His will is...wait for it...to simply be obedient to His word today. That is our first step as believers and is also to be an integral part of our walk with Christ.

This is what Philip will demonstrate for us here in Acts 8. If you want to know God's will for your life, here is the secret, obey what He tells you to do. Just take that next step He asked you to take.

He does not leave us out in the cold even though we may not understand why as we obey. We must trust Him.

For me, I have heard the Lord point to the next step more than once. Some made sense, and many did not make sense.

I am a rather stubborn person, and I have also put off taking that next step more than once as well. I have learned that when the Lord wants you and leads you to that next step, and you don't go there, it gets really quiet until you do. Then when you do, you hear Him getting you ready for the next step.

Abraham was an old man when he finally sent Lot packing, then God began moving, again. Moses was 80 years old when he saw a bush that burned without burning up and said yes, again.

King Saul said yes, then said no and it cost him everything.

When we step out in faith, we may not see the next step until the Lord says to take it. If we refuse to take that next step too long, God may then use someone else to do what he wanted to use you to do.

Faith is being obedient to what the Lord would have you and me do. Saul was asked to wait until Samuel arrived, then they would worship together. But he didn't and lost a dynasty (1 Samuel 13:8-14). Later, Saul was instructed how to conduct war against Amalek, he no longer had the faith in the Lord to do so as per the instructions and instead made some decisions without the guidance of the Lord.

That cost him his throne, and his relationship with the Lord which was never patched up to where it had been before. He did not repent.

When God says go, and He does that through His word, or you are moved to action because of a need you see and decide to do something about it, or the Holy Spirit impresses you to do this particular action, we are to be obedient. Who knows what God wants to do through you.

I had a brother, Mike Macintosh, tell me that several years ago. I was being considered to be the next Senior Pastor of a Calvary Chapel in Arizona, but the Lord slammed that door shut, and Mike confirmed it was closed.

Mike then said to me, "why not start a work there in Florida? Who knows what the Lord wants to do." I thought he was out of his ever-loving mind when he said that. But after the Lord spent a few years dealing with me as I tried to not do that, that is exactly what I wound up doing.

Calvary Chapel Martin County is His church, He is the one who has directed that we do this and then He has confirmed and reconfirmed repeatedly that yes, this is where we are supposed to be.



We, in the flesh, like to know what we are getting in to. We want to plan a bit, then the Lord takes those plans and turns them upside down as He says, “Do you trust Me in this?”

God is the one who knows everything to include the past, present and future. He knows what you and I have to do today to have us ready for tomorrow and for those events yet coming that if we knew about them right now, we would fall right over in shock.

Following the crowd, because it seems the right thing to do, when the Lord says otherwise, in retrospect, makes no sense. I have several black racers, that is a snake by the way, in my yard. They aren't large snakes and tend to eat insects and small lizards. I watched one in front of my garage who was the laziest snake on the planet. He found an ant trail. Ants were marching from one place to another along the lip of the garage door.

This enterprising snake slithered over to that trail and then opened his mouth. The ants kept moving in a line and now marched right down his throat. Yummy. They were all following the crowd right to lunch, for the snake.

We are not herd animals nor are we swarming insects, but we act like herd animals when we follow the crowd rather than what the Lord asks of us, or when we think we know better. And let me be really honest about what that is.

We are called sheep, when one of them decides it knows better, it gets in trouble, maybe falls in a hole and can't get out, or worse, becomes a fallen sheep. A fallen sheep is one who falls over on their back and cannot get up and will be like that until they die unless rescued by the shepherd.

Our Shepherd, Jesus Christ, loves us and wants the best for us. When we run off with the crowd, or think we know better about what it is He is asking us to do, He does not abandon us. He has always still been there when I have finally said yes, because I was tired of the discipline, exercised 1 John 1:9, and then agreed with what the Lord had wanted me to do. And He was right there and hadn't changed His mind about the next step of faith for me.

Philip is in the middle of fantastically effective ministry. Everything is doing great. Samaritans are being saved, the gospel is indeed going out. Then he actually has an angel of the Lord stop by and say hi. You need to leave all this and go to the boonies.

Acts 8:26–27

“But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Get ready and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) So he got ready and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,” (NASB 2020)

With that guidance from the Lord, we find out that the Lord is more interested in this man, the Ethiopian official, than He is in Philip's growing ministry. It is all about telling others about the Lord.

Wait a minute. Hundreds, thousands were being saved, and Philip was now overseeing a vigorous growing ministry. From our perspective, why would God pull Philip from this and send him to Gaza for just one man. This makes no sense from our perspective. But we have no idea, not really who this man is and what would happen if he met Jesus Christ today.

We will later meet a man here in Acts who feared what the Lord asked him to do. He thought that going to pray over this man would be a death sentence since that was what Saul was all about. Yet he obeyed and Saul had his sight restored and was filled with the Holy Spirit.



Here we have Philip, deep in a successful ministry, asked by the Lord to give it all up, head out to Gaza and take the desert road, you know, the one no one travels on, and meet up with someone. Philip is being directed by the Lord. It is the Holy Spirit who directs the ministry of Philip and the reality we see here is that one person may be more important to the Lord than thousands, again, because He sees the future. Philip is the opposite of Jonah, Philip was obedient, Jonah, not so much.

So, for those of us who are still trying to figure out why God would do this, a quick jump to the future.

There is a tradition that this minister of Candace, whose name was Judich, preached the Gospel on his return to Ethiopia with great success, and that his royal mistress was among his converts; but we possess no certain records of the conversion of any number of the Ethiopians until the time of Frumentius in the reign of Constantine (fourth century). (Schaff 1880, 337)

There is also another tradition about this man as well.

Significantly, both the Messianic Jews of Ethiopia and the Coptic Church trace their spiritual roots to this man's encounter here. (Kasdan 2022, 66)

In other words, because Philip was obedient, thousands were saved over the centuries.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, this lay evangelist went wherever God sent. Philip was on his way to the end of the Palestinian world of that time. South and west of Gaza the desert trailed off across Sinai into Egypt. There was nothing. (Gangel 1998, 125)

God intends to have the gospel go global, to the ends of the earth. Philip has already taken the first step and entered a missionary endeavor in Samaria. Now, acting on directions from the Lord, in obedience to the guidance of the Spirit, here he is, in the desert, in the middle of nowhere, because there is a divine appointment with someone.

Here he is, away from the cool highlands around Samaria, to the flat desert plan near Gaza. On the less traveled road no less, and he meets this foreign chariot there on the road and overhears someone reading Isaiah. Yes, it was common to read out loud at that time.

Before the conversation gets started, we are provided a bit of background on just who it is that is being driven south on this road. This is an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians and he was her CFO. If this were the scene today, we would see Philip walking along all alone and then this limo goes slowly by with this executive of the Ethiopian government riding in the back reading Isaiah.

He is called a eunuch. That means he had also been physically altered in order to remain fully loyal to his job of the CFO and not have any other physical connections externally at all. This was not unusual around the Middle East at that time. We are also told he had been in Jerusalem worshipping, most likely a God-fearing man and now he is headed home. He has the scroll of Isaiah with him, a Greek version by the way, which means he bought this, think wealthy, powerful and multilingual.

There are those who jump out to say he was a proselyte Jew, but as a eunuch, that would be a problem.

Deuteronomy 23:1

“No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.” (ESV)



And since eunuchs could not become proselytes (Deut 23:1), he is probably a God fearer, a Gentile who worshiped the one true God and identified with the Jewish synagogue in ethic and piety (cf. Levinskaya 1990). In his case, Jewish regulations prevented him from converting to Judaism. (Trites and Larkin 2006, 453)

In Isaiah 56 though, he sees blessing for the Millennial age.

Isaiah 56:3–5

“Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.” (ESV)

In the day of this meeting, not a Jew, not a proselyte. He worshiped but was prohibited from entering anyplace other than the court of the gentiles. There are some traditions that hold he was Jewish, a Beta Yisrael Jew who could track lineage to the Queen of Sheba.

Those are traditions though.

“Ethiopia” here refers not to modern-day Ethiopia but to ancient Nubia, the region from Aswan in southern Egypt to Khartoum, Sudan. Candace was a title given to the queen-mother, as Pharaoh was used of the king of Egypt. Governmental power rested in the hands of Candace, for the royal son, worshiped as an offspring of the sun, was therefore above such mundane activities as ruling over a nation. Rulership was therefore vested with the queen-mother. (Toussaint 1985, 374)

The Israelites regarded Ethiopia as the furthest extent of the earth in a southwesterly direction (Isa 11:11–12). (Squires 2003, 1232)

This is to be an outreach to Africa, to a man from the ends of the earth who is now returning there via this chariot rolling down the road, all alone with his driver, in Gaza.

Acts 8:28–31

“and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.” Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.” (NASB 2020)

Philip hears this man reading from the scroll of Isaiah as this as the chariot goes by, probably a bit faster than walking speed but on this road, they may be the only two on it at this point. And Philip hears clearly what he is reading as he reads out loud.

What Philip heard were the familiar words of Isaiah 53. Talk about a divine appointment, the Ethiopian Eunuch is reading from the section of scripture that contains 22 prophecies in it that could only be fulfilled by Jesus Christ. He is clearly reading the section about Messiah and in the fourth Servant song found in the book of Isaiah.

The Holy Spirit guides Philip further telling him to go up to the cart and join this man. By the way, the section of scripture he is reading has seven things to consider about it.

The following things may be said concerning Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12:

- It is “a fifth Gospel”;



- it is “a summary of the four Gospel narratives”;
- it is “the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament”;
- it is “the Mt. Everest of Old Testament prophecy”;
- it is “the heart of the book of Isaiah”;
- it is the most preached-on portion of the Old Testament, and
- it is the section of Scripture most used to convince the unsaved Jews that Jesus is their Messiah. (Gingrich 1993, 65)

And Philip knows it. Let’s look at the context of Isaiah here.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

“Behold, My Servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were appalled at you, My people, So His appearance was marred beyond that of a man, And His form beyond the sons of mankind. So He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what they had not been told, they will see, And what they had not heard, they will understand. Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of dry ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we would look at Him, Nor an appearance that we would take pleasure in Him. He was despised and abandoned by men, A man of great pain and familiar with sickness; And like one from whom people hide their faces, He was despised, and we had no regard for Him. However, it was our sicknesses that He Himself bore, And our pains that He carried; Yet we ourselves assumed that He had been afflicted, Struck down by God, and humiliated. But He was pierced for our offenses, He was crushed for our wrongdoings; The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed. All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the wrongdoing of us all To fall on Him. (And here is what Acts has in it) **He was oppressed and afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off from the land of the living For the wrongdoing of my people, to whom the blow was due?** And His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the LORD desired To crush Him, causing Him grief; If He renders Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, For He will bear their wrongdoings. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the plunder with the strong, Because He poured out His life unto death, And was counted with wrongdoers; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the wrongdoers.” (NASB 2020)

Philip asks the most logical question possible, “do you understand what you are reading?”

This man was struggling with the text. He was trying to identify the man that is the suffering servant here in this section of Isaiah.

Acts 8:32–35

“Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: **“HE WAS LED LIKE A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND LIKE A LAMB THAT IS SILENT BEFORE ITS SHEARER, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. IN HUMILIATION HIS JUSTICE WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL DESCRIBE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS TAKEN AWAY FROM THE EARTH.”** **The eunuch answered Philip and said, “Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?”** **Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.**” (NASB 2020)



This section of scripture, including what the Ethiopian is reading, is all about the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ for our sin and it is so crystal clear, it causes serious issues within synagogues even today. Again, 22 prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ are here.

It is quite common today to hear rabbis say that this passage speaks, not of Messiah, but of Israel suffering in a Gentile world. They may even go as far as to say that this has always been the traditional view of Judaism. At that point they are entirely dependent on the ignorance of their listeners. **All of the ancient Jewish writings—the Mishnah, the Gemara, (the Talmud), the Midrashim and many others—all regard this portion of Scripture as relating to the Messianic Person.** The first rabbi to suggest otherwise was Rashi, around 1050 A.D. Every rabbi prior to Rashi, without exception, viewed this passage as describing Messiah. When Rashi first proposed that this passage spoke of the nation of Israel, he sparked a fierce debate with his contemporaries. The most famous of these was Rambam, perhaps better known as Maimonides. Rambam stated very clearly that Rashi was completely wrong in going contrary to the traditional Jewish viewpoint. (Fruchtenbaum 1998, 54)

Of course, realizing that would take you to Yeshua (Jesus) and bang, fulfilled prophecy in Him and Him alone.

In verse 7, which Philip explains to the Eunuch, we discover that the suffering servant will suffer in silence. We see this fulfilled in Matthew 27. Philip explains this is Jesus who did this.

Matthew 27:12–14

“But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he did not respond. Then Pilate said to him, “Don’t you hear how many charges they are bringing against you?” **But he did not answer even one accusation, so that the governor was quite amazed.**” (NET 2nd ed.)

What is one of the major characteristics seen in Christ during all the ordeals leading up to the crucifixion...**His silence.** He did answer questions but only related to who He is. In regard to the fabricated charges...silence.

This would be part of what Philip explains to the Eunuch. Just as sheep were submissive as they were led to the altar, Jesus was as well.

Then there is verse 8, also explained by Philip.

Isaiah 53:8

“He was led away after an unjust trial— but who even cared? Indeed, he was cut off from the land of the living; because of the rebellion of his own people he was wounded.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Christ was arrested and then did not go through just one unjust trial, He went through six trials and based on the rule of law in operation at the time, all of them were illegal as was His original arrest.

Philip would move from talking about how Jesus suffered in silence, just as a lamb would, here he would explain that the suffering servant, Jesus Christ, will endure an unjust trial. Actually, six unjust trials.

Trials of Christ

1. Before Annas – John 18:12 – 14, 19-23
2. Before Caiaphas – Matthew 26:57 – 65
3. Before the Sanhedrin – Matthew 27:1 – 2
4. Before Pilate – Luke 23:1 – 7, John 18:28 – 32
5. Before Herod – Luke 23:8 – 12
6. Before Pilate – Luke 23:13 – 25, John 18:33 – 40



In the first illegal trial, Jesus asked for the presentation of witnesses, and of course none could be found. While witnesses were sought, He was kept incommunicado. Away from the land of the living while witnesses were being sought. Jesus fulfilled this and it is referenced for us in John 18:12-24.

Next Philip would explain how the ordeal sustained by the Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ, would be misunderstood by his contemporaries as he is cut off, killed because of the sin of all of us.

No, this is not the prophet talking of himself, Isaiah is prophetically telling us what Jesus will go through when he was crucified for our sins.

When the packed public hearing hall from Pilate was queried about who should be released, a known revolutionary and murderer named Barabbas or Jesus, the second part Isaiah 53:8 was fulfilled.

Those of the Suffering Servants "generation who observed Him dying would not appreciate that He was dying a substitute death (cf. vv. 1–3). The Hebrew of this verse may point to a meaning beyond this. The Hebrew word *dor*, translated "generation," also means "line." If that is the meaning (or one of the meanings) of this word here, Isaiah may also have meant that no one would consider that the Servant died childless. Childlessness in His culture suggested a futile existence and a curse from God. People would conclude that He died cursed by God rather than as a substitute sacrifice. (Constable 2003, Is 53:8)

This fulfillment is outlined for us in Luke 23:13-21 as the people ask for Barabbas.

Then there is third part of verse 8 being read here by the Ethiopian.

Isaiah 53:8

"His judgment was taken away in humiliation; who will describe his family? **For his life was taken from the earth; he was led to death because of the lawless acts of my people.**" (Brannan, et al. 2020, Is 53:8)

Acts 8:34–35

"The eunuch answered Philip and said, "**Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?**" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him." (NASB 2020)

Who is it that had his life taken away on behalf of others? Peter answers that by talking, most likely, about this entire section of scripture. "Philip talked about more than this passage from Isaiah, but he started there. He began at common ground with the Ethiopian, but made his way to talking about Jesus. It was easy to talk about Jesus beginning at this Scripture." (Guzik 2013, Ac 8:32-35)

Philip preached Jesus to this man. He explained who Jesus was, that He was like a lamb and here is what He has done for us, He was the one who was led to slaughter on our behalf.

Philip did not focus on what the Ethiopian can do for God, instead, he focuses in on what it is that God has done for us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the same Jesus he served in Jerusalem, the same Jesus he preached in Samaria, and now preached to this man here in the chariot.

Did this man understand what he was told? Absolutely. He was barred from becoming a Jew, he could not even enter into the mikveh pool for cleansing because of his physical state. He knows what it means in the Temple as part of the process to become a Jew, but he cannot do this act there. Because of that, he frames his question as he expresses his faith.



Acts 8:36

“As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! **What prevents me from being baptized?**” (NASB 2020)

This man had heard, in the past, your physical ailment, the fact you are a eunuch prevents that. But he now realizes that Jesus Christ died for him, and he understands the need to identify with Jesus.

Did he expect to be told, your physical problem prevents you? Possibly since he frames the question the way he did. Instead, he hears no prohibition, none at all. I have baptized folks in the past who have become believers and wanted to tell the whole world about their new faith through baptism.

Several had physical issues that would make that difficult, but we always found a way. I will never forget the elderly gentlemen who was seriously ill, on oxygen, but he came to Christ, and he wanted to be baptized, not sprinkled, he wanted the whole immersion experience to fully identify with his new Lord and Savior. He wanted his family to see him do this. It took three of us to lift him up and place him in the water and we baptized him and then lifted him back into his chair.

I have never seen anyone smile as large as he did. And after the service was over, he met and shared with whoever who talk to him about what Jesus had done for him.

No, there is nothing that prevents this. In Christ, the Ethiopian is just one more brother in Christ who is identifying with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Acts 8:38–40

“And he ordered that the chariot stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.” (NASB 2020)

The Ethiopian has his driver stop and Philip heads off with him to the water to baptize him. Baptism did not save him he became a believer while listening to what Philip had to say about Isaiah 53. He either knew enough about the need for symbolic purification, which is what baptism would signify for a Jewish proselyte, or he may have been invited to do this by Philip, we are not told.

But here, in the middle of nowhere, he has become a believer and is baptized demonstrating his new faith to the world, in this case, his driver.

The man would have been thrilled, for he was denied Jewish circumcision and recognition as a full proselyte due to his being a eunuch (see above) but now is finally fully an accepted member of the body of Christ. (Osborne 2019, 169)

We see him rejoicing in his new faith in Christ and the discovery that nothing could separate him from the Lord. God accepted him just as he was.

What happens next is unexpected. As they both come out of the water together, the Holy Spirit snatches Philip away to Azotus.

The word here in the Greek is ἥρπασεν (haparsen) which a form of the word haparzo. This is the exact same word that Paul uses in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when he discusses the rapture of the church. The word means to “snatch away, carry off...to steal, be a thief...to seize hastily, snatch up.” (Liddell 1996, 119) We use the term rapture for this using the Latin word rapiemur that is in 1 Thessalonians 4:17.



This has nothing to do with how Philip wound up out here in the boonies in the first place, he is suddenly and without notice forcefully taken by the Holy Spirit post baptism. He is indeed raptured by the Spirit but sideways to Azotus, also known as Ashdod in the Old Testament. But the interesting thing to me is found in the meaning of the word. Philip is taken by the Holy Spirit and placed into “a stronghold. Greek form of Ashdod = A strong place.” (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 28)

Technically, after the ascension of Jesus, called in Revelation 12:5 as one being “caught up” to God and His throne, we wonder.

“The fact that the Apocalypse uses the same word to speak of the ascension as 1 Thessalonians 4:17 uses to speak of the rapture (Greek, *harpagometha*) clearly indicates Jesus’s ascension is a form of rapture.” (Hitchcock and Hindson 2018, 51) We would say that is our first example in the NT.

The “rapture” of Philip is the second one we read of in the New Testament. His instant removal shows that God was supernaturally involved in this entire situation as Philip is removed, suddenly.

There are two significant observations to be made with regard to Philip’s rapture. **First, it took place by the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit.** This is the first mention of the third Person of the Trinity being involved in a rapture event. Certainly Father, Son, and Spirit will be involved in the future rapture of all believers. **Second, the passage notes that after the baptism, “the eunuch no longer saw” Philip. Though Philip was only temporarily raptured to another location, this event highlights an important aspect of the future rapture of the church: Those who remain on the earth will no longer see those who were raptured.** (Hitchcock and Hindson 2018, 53)

There are other references to rapture events in the New Testament. The next one Paul referring to what happened most likely to him in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

2 Corinthians 12:1-4

“I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. **I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.** And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.” (ESV)

Paul states that he was raptured into Paradise, heaven is referred to as Paradise in Revelation 2:7. He was immediately in the presence of the Lord and unlike many spiritual tourists today who want to tell you all about it, Paul didn’t. He was in Christ when he was caught up, meaning a believer, his sins had been taken care of by Jesus which is the only reason he could now be caught up into heaven and see and hear those things he did.

Paul will also tell us in 1 Corinthians 15:52 as well as in 1 Thessalonians 4 that this is an event for believers and will happen suddenly, just as the meaning of the word *harpazo* indicates.

There is a fourth possible rapture in the New Testament, that would be of John in Revelation 4:1-2.

Whether he is changed or not before arrival in heaven after hearing the invitation to come up here, we do not know, and we are not told.

There is also the rapture of the two witnesses in Revelation 11:12.

Here is the thing that I have observed though in all these rapture events to include here with Philip, those who are raptured are all believers.



Before we leave this, let me also touch on two raptures in the Old Testament.

The first example we have is that of Enoch who was in the 7th generation post Adam. He walked with God for 300 years and was then taken.

Genesis 5:24

“Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” (ESV)

The expression “he was not” (’ênénû) means he was translated. See Heb. 11:5. It could not mean: he died, because of the double preceding emphasis on his communion with God, and because “God took him” (laqach) involves the same word as that used in the translation of Elijah (2 Kings 2:3, 5). (Leupold 1942, 243)

And yes, the second OT example is that of Elijah. Just as Enoch escaped the judgment of the flood by being translated, caught up, so will all of the church as well, any day now.

2 Kings 2:11–12

“And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.” (ESV)

As God had formerly taken Enoch away, so that he did not taste of death (see at Gen. 5:24), so did He also suddenly take Elijah away from Elisha, and carry him to heaven without dying. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 208)

Elijah was not being saved from any coming judgment, instead, he was blessed and rewarded for his service to the Lord.

This, too, foreshadows one of the purposes of the yet-future pretribulation rapture. Believers will not only escape the judgment of the tribulation; they will also receive the blessing of following the Lord. However, just as men questioned the disappearance of the prophet Elijah, so they will likely question the rapture of the church. (Hitchcock and Hindson 2018, 49)

Philip has been snatched away to Azotus and the Ethiopian with joy heads home to the ends of the earth. We already looked at the spoiler of what the Lord used him to do.

Philip continues on with his ministry of being an evangelist upon arriving at Azotus and he preaches his way north to Caesarea, the Roman capital of Judea where we will see him and his family again later here in Acts.

About the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, there are no signs that must be fulfilled for it to take place. It is imminent and has been so since the time of Paul. The only difference today, those signs that Jesus said were pointers to His second coming, we see them beginning to be fulfilled. We are also seeing other prophecies connected to the end of the age being fulfilled almost in real time as well.

Luke 21:31

“So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.” (ESV)

I am looking up and expecting Him to come, any second. Are you ready? You can be. As we learned, all the rapture experiences took place with those who were believers, which means you need to be found by Him in that condition when He returns for us.



Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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