

Acts 8:14: *'Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: ¹⁵ Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: ¹⁶ (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) ¹⁷ Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.'*

Now remember! This is the time of serious transition between the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Grace. The Apostles are being moved away from believing that Christianity is simply the next natural progression in Judaism. They did not, yet, know that God's plan was to create a completely new thing, a New Covenant of God's Grace, a new people chosen, called and gathered from all nations: Christianized Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, barbarians... from every nation, tribe, tongue and family line but not a people to replace Israel.

They do not have any New Testament Scriptures: no Epistles/letters, no Gospels and not The Revelation. All they had, heretofore, were the Old Testament Scriptures which pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

These Samaritans did not know of the Holy Spirit; just as later, we'll see in Acts 19: *'And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, ² He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, **we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.** ³ And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism:...' ('Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand!')*

We don't know why Philip did not clearly explain the Holy Spirit's indwelling of every True Christian.

During this time of transition, these Samaritans, too, needed to understand the Truth of the Holy Spirit's work and residence within every believer. It would be Paul, now Saul, who will later, after having been taken up into Heaven to receive all His Doctrine for the Church, in person, from the Lord Jesus Christ, which is why he would later write: *'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'* 1Cor 6:19

As to Paul's journey to Heaven: Paul later wrote: *'It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord... (obviously visions and revelations given to Paul, by Jesus Christ, in Heaven) ... I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one **caught up** to the third heaven. ³ And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) ⁴ How that he was **caught up** into **paradise**, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.'* 2Cor 12:1

Notice so much from these verses: First, Paul was taken up into Heaven to be taught. He's not sure as to whether he was there in his physical body or in his spiritual body which, therefore, shows us that those in Heaven now, even though they don't yet have their glorified eternal bodies... they seem, to themselves and to each other, to be just normal people... not even noticing a difference. He was **caught up** into **Paradise**.

Remember Paradise? That is where all the Old Testament Saints were kept in wondrous '*captivity*' until the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, fully paying for and removing all their sin and then He went down to Paradise and '*...When he ascended up on high, **he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.***' Eph 4:8

We surmise that He took the entire Paradise back up to Heaven; we know this because Paul, just a few months later was **caught up** into **Paradise** and also, in Revelation 22: in the New Heaven, in the New Jerusalem... we find the **Paradise of God**. Also, in Revelation 2:7, the Lord Jesus Christ promises believers: *'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is (now) in the midst of the **paradise of God.***' I would also surmise that God placed the Garden of Eden/the Garden of God down under the Ground to then be the place for all His O.T. Saints, beginning with Abel, until Jesus paid for all their sin and took them, within Paradise, back up to Heaven.

Now... here's the topper: no one who **honestly** studies Scripture, can deny that Paul was **caught up** into Heaven! The Greek word Paul uses there, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is harpazo; it means: **to seize, carry off**

by force, to claim for one's self eagerly, to snatch out or away!

Later in this Chapter we're now studying, Luke, inspired by the same Holy Spirit, writes that after leading to faith and baptizing the Ethiopian Eunuch, Philip is harpazoed up, and away, by the Holy Spirit and deposited 30 miles away in Azotus: *'And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **caught away** Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus.'* Acts 8:39 No **honest** student of Scripture can deny that Philip was **snatched away**, by the Holy Spirit, from one place to another, 30 miles away!

When Paul writes of the Rapture, of which he was taught, in Heaven, he writes: *'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.'* 1 Thes 4:17 Paul was inspired by the same Holy Spirit to use the very same word for that which we await: harpazo/Rapture!! No **honest** student of Scripture should deny the truth of the Rapture; God gave us the very same picture at least 3 times!

The only reason we call it The Rapture, instead of The Harpazo, is that when the Bible was translated into Latin, in the A.D. 380's, which then became the main Bible used for 1000 years, the Latin verb Jerome used was rapiemur from which we get our English word: raptor: these are birds of prey who swoop down and **snatch away by force** their unsuspecting prey to take them far up and away, into the clouds to their nest.

And so, again, no **honest** student of the Bible can claim that Rapture is not even in the Bible!

Jesus said: *'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.'* John 7:17

Paul calls the Rapture, *'Our blessed hope!'* *'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;'* Titus 2:13

Every person who comes up with errant ideas from Scripture is ever digging to find something new! Pastors and teachers pontificating false doctrines of demons on TV and beyond... they burrow deep to find some new thing, seeking their own glory for having been the brilliant scholar to finally discover this new thing every scholar has missed for thousands of years and then to write a book to make their next million and sadly, tragically, many more are taken in by their lying distortions.

Jesus said that the hallmark of these Last Days would be the grand deceptions in which we now live daily.

I study and teach prophetic Truth, including the Rapture, which is revealed throughout God's Word. Its purpose is **to comfort us as our blessed hope during these evil and treacherous times**; these are the times, above all times before, when we, who see the nearness of His coming, need His comforting hope like never before! And so we pay close attention to God's Word to recognize, whenever and wherever we see that God is once again showing forth His comforting Word to assure us that, at any moment, He WILL come for us to receive us unto Himself to take us, His beloved Bride, back to the marvelous place He has prepared for us in His Father's unimaginably, shockingly wonderful Home... our home! He will come for us very soon... maybe even today!

Verse 18: *'And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.'*

This, which we see during the time of Biblical transition, before the Word of God is finally available in written form, this is that upon which an entire 'wing' of the Church, today, is based: laying on of hands to receive God's Holy Spirit which the Word tells us is the right and possession of every True Believer, received at the moment of Salvation, not at some subsequent later time as a 'second blessing.' We read that Paul wrote, to EVERY believer in Corinth, that your body IS the temple of the Holy Spirit... not that it might be or that it can be, but only after the laying on of hands.

The writer of Hebrews says: *'Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this will we do, if God permit...'* Hebrews 6:1

The writer *to the Hebrews* is saying: 'Let's get beyond the elementary principles of the faith and move on to maturity, to really understanding the depths of True Faith which God expects us to seek after: the elementary things include: repentance, faith in God, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and Judgment; he is saying: you understood all these things in Judaism; now I will begin to teach you deeper things of the New Birth, Life and Light! Grace and Truth in the Lord Jesus Christ.'

This is what Simon sees instead of the wondrous miracle of the New Birth... the laying on of hands resulting in something he recognizes as having some similarity with the sorceries he had always used to amaze others. He offers money because he sees this as the way that he can continue to make money... just like today: 'Send in your best gift now to receive your miracle!'

Verse 20: *'But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.'*

Peter proves it! Simon believes he can purchase the gift of God with money so that he can charge money for the gift of God... this has been the heart of the apostate church for nearly 2000 years!

Verse 21: Peter said: *'Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.'*

Neither part nor lot! In other words: perhaps you are not even saved; perhaps you are headed to Hell! But there is still hope: Repent before God Who is still Love, Grace and Mercy! Come boldly before His Throne to find help in time of need: He will hear you and He will forgive a repentant heart.'

Simon recognizes the horrible mistake; God enlightens him and grants His gift of repentance!

Verse 24: *'Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the LORD for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.'*

This sounds like true repentance but we're not told of the outcome for Simon...

Verse 25: *'And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.'*

Now that the Apostles have seen the truth that the Gospel is successfully going out to the Samaritans, they willingly begin preaching the Gospel to them in earnest.

Verse 26: *'And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.'*

This is no small thing. Philip is in Samaria, successfully preaching the Gospel and leading many to Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; surely this is his calling... but no... he is told to pack up and go down toward Gaza which is 80 miles away! No car, no bus, most probably walking! And it's desert to boot!

But this is Philip... God has been doing many mighty miracles through him; he knows the voice and leading of God and he jumps right on it... *'Yes Lord, at your command!'*

Verse 27: *'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 Isaiah the prophet.'*

This was one of the very highest officials in all of Ethiopia: *'an eunuch of great authority.'* He had been made a eunuch, early in life so that he could be trusted with the care of court females. Because of his faithfulness and integrity, he was eventually lifted up to be in charge over all of the queen's treasures which had been acquired by the Ethiopian dynasties over many hundreds or thousands of years.

He had traveled some 1700 miles from Ethiopia up through Egypt and on to Jerusalem in order to worship at the Temple. He traveled by chariot, probably powered by camels. A camel can walk 30-100 miles in a day; when carrying a 600 lb load, or pulling a chariot, they can walk up to 70 miles in a day. This high official of the Ethiopian court will have been surrounded by a large entourage for protection while traveling through many hostile areas. This journey will have taken him up to 2 months, one way; now he is on his way back to Ethiopia to report to Candace all that he is about to learn! But how is it that someone from Ethiopia has as much faith and knowledge of the God of Israel that he would even want to travel all that way to worship in the Temple? And how is it that he has a copy of the Scroll of Isaiah?

The Word of God had reached the Ethiopians at least 1000 years before this time in Acts.

David writes: *'Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee... Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.'* Psalm 68: 29,31

This was probably fulfilled during the reign of David's son, Solomon:

'And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.' 1Kings 4:34

Verse 29: *'Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. ³⁰ And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?'*

Don't we wish all evangelistic encounters were so handed to us by the Holy Spirit!

By the way, this brilliant Ethiopian, having been trained in all the wisdom of the times is doubtless reading this scroll in Hebrew unless copies had been made of an Ethiopian translation from the Hebrew!

Verse 31: *'And (the Ethiopian Eunuch) said, How can I (understand), except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.'*

'For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (or the Ethiopian): for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?' Rom 10:12 Philip was God's available preacher.

Verse 32: *'The place of the scripture which he read was this, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: ³³ In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth." ³⁴ And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and **began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.'***

Philip could do this because he understood the O.T. Scriptures and how they point directly to Jesus Christ. Without that understanding, Philip might be lost and confused, leaving the Eunuch lost and confused!

Verse 36: *'And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? ³⁷ And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, **I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.** ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.'* Philip gave him the entire plan of Salvation even unto being baptized which the Ethiopian eagerly sought with no thought of embarrassment before his entire entourage. This, unlike Simon, was a genuine conversion!

Verse 39: *'And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord **caught away** Philip, 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 in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.'* There it is! One more proof of the Rapture given by God for our encouragement, comfort and strength in the Holy Spirit in these evil Last Days!

Philip was raptured up and away 30 miles. Paul was raptured up and away to Heaven. We who are alive and remain will be raptured up and away to our wonderful new home with God. Each instance uses the same word, **harpazo**, meaning snatched away by force, eagerly taken unto oneself; that word was translated into the Latin: **rapiemur**... from which we get raptors, birds who rapture their prey up and away!