THE QUESTION

What did early Christians say about Philip being caught away after baptizing the eunuch?

Asked by a THF member on August 9, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 9 numbered quotations · the 9 early Christian passages and 31 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-early-christians-say-about-philip-being-caught-away-after

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

The early writers treat it as a real event. Irenaeus says Philip left right after the baptism because baptism was all the eunuch still lacked. Tertullian says once the baptism was done, Philip was taken away. They saw the eunuch as already prepared by God, and he went on rejoicing to preach in Ethiopia.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
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POINT 1 OF 6

They retold it as a real event

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Both writers simply retell Acts: the eunuch heard Philip, believed, was baptized, and then the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. Neither treats the scene as a mere picture or story.

1 "At the Spirit's prompting, he heard the truth from Philip the deacon, believed, and was baptized. And when he had come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Anonymous,** *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 **Source 9, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 "Faith did not delay. The water did not need to wait. The act was completed, and the apostle was snatched away."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Baptism* 18 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 3, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 6

Philip left because nothing else was lacking

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus explains why Philip could leave at once. The eunuch already knew God from the prophets and only needed to learn that the Son of God had come. Once he believed and was baptized, Philip's task was done.

3 "And immediately after Philip baptized him, he left him. For baptism was the only thing he lacked, having already been taught by the prophets; he was not ignorant of God the Father or of the rules of proper living, but only unaware of the coming of the Son of God, which, once he had learned of it, he continued on his way rejoicing, to become the herald of Christ's coming in Ethiopia."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 1, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 6

God had prepared the eunuch beforehand

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian stresses that the Spirit sent Philip to that road and that the eunuch was already praying and reading Scripture. Another early writer notes he was reading Isaiah and hoping in Christ before Philip came.

4 “The Spirit had commanded Philip to go to that road. The eunuch also was not idle, and he was not someone suddenly seized by a strong desire to be baptized.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Baptism* 18 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 3, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

5 “For he was a Jew, and when he came from the temple of the Lord he was reading the prophet Isaiah, and he was hoping in Christ, although he did not yet believe that Christ had come.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Life and Passion of Cyprian* 1 (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 6, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 6

A quick baptism was not every case

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian warns that this fast baptism should not become a careless rule. He says God had first given clear signs that the eunuch was worthy, and that, depending on the person, some delay is usually wiser.

6 “If Philip baptized the chamberlain so quickly, we should remember that clear and public evidence had come first that the Lord considered him worthy.”

later in the same passage

“And so, according to each person's circumstances, disposition, and even age, delaying baptism is preferable.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Baptism* 18 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 3, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 5 OF 6

The eunuch went on to preach Christ

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus says the eunuch did not need Philip with him any longer. He went on his way rejoicing and carried the message about Christ back to Ethiopia.

7

> "For baptism was the only thing he lacked, having already been taught by the prophets; he was not ignorant of God the Father or of the rules of proper living, but only unaware of the coming of the Son of God, which, once he had learned of it, he continued on his way rejoicing, to become the herald of Christ's coming in Ethiopia."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 1, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

8

> "This man was also sent to the regions of Ethiopia to preach what he had believed himself: that there was one God preached by the prophets, and that the Son of this God had already appeared in human form and had been led like a sheep to the slaughter, along with all the other statements the prophets made regarding Him."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 2, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 6

One writer used him in the laying-on-of-hands debate

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

The Treatise on Re-Baptism names the eunuch right after saying many baptized people die without the bishop's laying on of hands yet count as complete believers. Since Philip was taken away at once, the writer seems to treat the eunuch as one such case.

9

> "Nor can it be doubted that the same kind of thing is common in the present day and happens often: many people, after baptism, leave this life without the laying on of the bishop's hands, and yet are considered complete believers."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Anonymous,** *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 **Source 9, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not explain how Philip was carried away or where he went next.
- They do not say whether the eunuch ever received the laying on of hands later.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 9 early Christian passages and 31 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–9, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 10–30, in Bible order), then 10 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *9 passages from 6 writers*

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quotes 3, 7, pages 2, 4** “this reason, Philip, when he found the eunuch of the Ethiopian queen reading these words: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb is silent… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 8, page 4** “But again: To whom did Philip preach when he was with the eunuch of the queen of the Ethiopians, who was returning from Jerusalem and reading the prophet Esaias? Was… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 3–4*

3 *On Baptism* 18 **Quotes 2, 4, 6, pages 2, 3** “7:6, and, "Do not lay hands on anyone too quickly, and do not share in other people's sins." If Philip baptized the chamberlain so quickly, we should remember… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *On Baptism* 4 (1885 English) “is there any distinction between those whom John baptized in the Jordan and those whom Peter baptized in the Tiber, unless withal the eunuch whom Philip baptized in the midst… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 5*

5 *Commentary on John* 1 (1885 English) “can he begin with the prophet and preach Jesus, if Isaiah was not a part of the beginning of the Gospel… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 6–7*

6 *Life and Passion of Cyprian* 1 **Quote 5, page 3** “Although in the Acts of the Apostles the eunuch is described as… [continues online] **read ›**

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7 *Epistles* (1885 English; on point 6) “they who had believed in Samaria had believed with a true faith… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 8*

8 *Apostolic Constitutions* “For it was fitting for him, as a martyr for Christ, to preserve good order. But if some blame Philip our deacon, and Ananias our faithful brother, because the one… [continues online] **read ›**

Anonymous · *source 9*

9 *Treatise on Re-Baptism* 1 **Quotes 1, 9, pages 2, 4** “that the same kind of thing is common in the present day and happens often: many people, after baptism, leave this life without the laying on of the bishop's… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *21 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

10 **Bel and the Dragon 1:36** And the angel of the Lord took hold of him by the crown of his head and, carrying him by the hair of his head, set him in Babylon above the den with the rush of his spirit. **read ›**

11 **John 1:43** The next day Jesus decided to go out into Galilee, and he found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” **read ›**

12 **John 1:44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. **read ›**

13 **Acts 8:12** But when they believed Philip as he preached the gospel concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. **read ›**

14 **Acts 8:13** Simon himself also believed, and after being baptized he stayed with Philip. Seeing miracles and signs taking place, he was amazed. **read ›**

15 **Acts 8:26** An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Rise and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert road. **read ›**

16 **Acts 8:27** He arose and went; and behold, there was a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem to worship. **read ›**

17 **Acts 8:28** He was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. **read ›**

18 **Acts 8:29** The Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and stay beside this chariot.” **read ›**

19 **Acts 8:30** Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” **read ›**

20 **Acts 8:31** He said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” He invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **read ›**

21 **Acts 8:34** The eunuch answered Philip, “I ask you, about whom does the prophet say this—himself, or someone else?” **read ›**

22 **Acts 8:36** As they went on the way, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Behold, here is water. What is keeping me from being baptized?” **read ›**

23 **Acts 8:38** He commanded the chariot to stand still, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. **read ›**

24 **Acts 8:39** When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away. The eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. **read ›**

25 **Acts 20:4** These accompanied him as far as Asia: Sopater of Beroea, Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. **read ›**

26 **Acts 21:8** The next day Paul and his companions departed and came to Caesarea. We entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. **read ›**

27 **Ephesians 1:20** which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, **read ›**

28 **Ephesians 2:2** in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience. **read ›**

29 **Ephesians 3:12** In him we have boldness and access with confidence through his faithfulness. **read ›**

30 **Ephesians 3:14** For this cause, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **read ›**

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ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *10 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Matthew 7:6 · 19:14

Mark 10:14

Luke 6:30 · 7:18 · 18:16

Acts 9:5 · 9:11

1 Corinthians 14:33

1 Timothy 5:22

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What did early Christians say about Philip being caught away after baptizing the eunuch?” on August 9, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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