

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE



New Testament Conversions

Lesson 20

The book of Acts is the book of conversions. It contains nine distinct accounts of how people became Christians. The word "convert" means to turn. One converted to Christ has turned from the ways of the world to Jesus. Modern teachings on this subject often disagree with apostolic practice. We must try to discover how people were converted in the first century rather than to justify ourselves.

Accepting God's Grace

Previously we studied God's part in our salvation — His love and grace as expressed in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross to atone for the sins of mankind. To avail ourselves of this forgiveness Christ requires that we obey Him. "And being made perfect, he (Christ) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Heb. 5:9.) By obedience we do not earn salvation, but we do appropriate that offered by God.

To illustrate, suppose that a drowning man is thrown a rope by a bystander. He is commanded, "Grab hold of the rope and I will pull you out." If one wishes to be saved he must obey the command, yet his obedience in grasping the rope in no sense takes away from the "grace" of the man on shore, nor does it mean that he has earned his salvation. Likewise, our obedience to the gospel commands in no way minimizes divine grace, but rather enables us to accept that grace.

Examples Of Conversion

By comparing accounts of conversion in Acts we learn how God requires us to become Christians. Totaling the nine following cases of conversion we may find what all of them did to be saved.

THE 3000 ON PENTECOST (Acts 2) — The multitude on the day of Pentecost was told to "know assuredly" (or believe) that Jesus was both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36.) They did believe and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37.) Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you

Repentance is a change of heart which is prompted by godly sorrow
(II Cor. 7:10) and results in a reformation of life.

in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38.) That day 3000 believed, repented, and were baptized in order to have their sins forgiven.

THE SAMARITANS (Acts 8) — Philip, the evangelist, went to Samaria to preach the word of God. The people "gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." (Acts 8:6.) Having heard, "they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, (and) they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8:12.)

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH (Acts 8) — Philip then preached to a man of Ethiopia riding in a chariot. The Ethiopian believed in Christ and confessed his faith to Philip. Coming to a certain water, they stopped, and "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. (Acts 8:38.)

SAUL OF TARSUS (Acts 9, 22, 26) — To get the complete story of the conversion of Saul we combine the three accounts of his conversion. On his way to Damascus he fell blinded to the ground when a bright light shone from heaven. Christ told him to "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:6.) Ananias came to him and commanded, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16.) Saul was baptized and his sins were washed away. Notice that Saul was not saved on the Damascus road. Were his sins forgiven then Ananias would not later have told him to be baptized to wash them away.

CORNELIUS (Acts 10, 11) — The first Gentile convert was a Roman soldier instructed by the Lord to send to Joppa for Peter "who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." (Acts 11:14.) Peter preached Christ to Cornelius and his friends and declared, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) Having believed, they were baptized. (Acts 10:47.)

LYDIA (Acts 16) — At Philippi Paul converted Lydia of whom it is said, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household . . ." (Acts 16:14, 15.) Lydia heard and evidently believed because she was baptized.



THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR (Acts 16) — In Philippi Paul and Silas, who had been cast into prison also succeeded in converting their jailor. Convinced that they were men of God he asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30.) They replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:31.) That same hour of the night he took the prisoners, washed their stripes, and was baptized, "having believed in God." (Acts 16:34 — A.S.V.)

THE CORINTHIANS (Acts 18) — The story of the conversion of the people of Corinth is to the point. "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." (Acts 18:8.)

THE EPHESIANS (Acts 19) — Twelve disciples of John the Baptist were converted by Paul at Ephesus. He told them, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 19:4, 5.)

The following summary shows what these converts did or were commanded to do. All references are from Acts.

THE 3000	Heard—2:37	Know—2:36	Repent—2:38	Baptize—2:38
SAMARITANS	Heard—8:6	Believed—8:12		Baptize—8:12
ETHIOPIAN		Believed—8:37		Baptize—8:38
SAUL	Hear—22:14			Baptize—22:16
CORNELIUS	Hear—10:33	Believe—10:43	Repent—11:18	Baptize—10:47
LYDIA	Heard—16:14			Baptize—16:15
JAILOR		Believe—16:31		Baptize—16:33
CORINTHIANS	Heard—18:8	Believed—18:8		Baptize—18:8
EPHESIANS	Heard—19:5	Believed—19:4		Baptize—19:5
SUM	HEARD	BELIEVED	REPENTED	BAPTIZED

Some Conclusions

1. New Testament converts were saved when having heard God's word they believed, repented, and were baptized. Forgiveness through the blood of Christ was not received until all of these acts of obedience were performed.

2. Since no other means of becoming a Christian has been revealed, we today cannot be saved in any other way.

3. In the nine accounts of conversion there is no example of one being saved by having an "experience", "praying through", or going to the "altar".

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

After studying from God's word how we are saved from our sins, do you believe that you are a Christian?

Check One Yes _____ No _____

If your answer is "no", we will be happy to assist you in becoming a Christian if you will let us know your desire.

"Seek and Ye Shall Find"

Read Acts 8:26-40 (the conversion of the Ethiopian). Write true or false before each statement:

- 1. The angel of the Lord told Philip to go to the road between Jerusalem and Jericho.
- 2. The man he met was treasurer for Queen Candace of Ethiopia.
- 3. This Ethiopian had come to Jerusalem on business.
- 4. The man did not understand the scripture he was reading until Philip explained it to him.
- 5. As they rode along they came to a certain water and the eunuch said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"
- 6. The confession the eunuch made was, "I believe that God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins."
- 7. They stopped the chariot, Philip took some water out of a cup and sprinkled it on the eunuch.

Read Acts 22:1-16 (Paul's account of his conversion) and circle the letter representing the correct answer:

a b c 1. In making his defense Paul spoke to the people in: (a) Greek; (b) English; (c) Hebrew.

a b c 2. Paul was born in: (a) Jerusalem; (b) Tarsus; (c) Antioch.

a b c 3. On his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, a light shone on him about: (a) noon; (b) midnight; (c) the third hour.

a b c 4. The man who spoke to him from heaven was: (a) Peter;

- a b c 5. He was told to: (a) go into Damascus where he would be told what to do; (b) repent and pray; (c) thank God he was saved the moment the light shone out of heaven.
- a b c 6. In Damascus there was sent to him a man named: (a) Barnabas; (b) Peter; (c) Ananias.
- a b c 7. When this man came he restored Saul's: (a) hearing; (b) sight; (c) smelling.
- a b c 8. Ananias told him to arise and be baptized: (a) because he was already saved; (b) as an outward sign of an inward grace; (c) to wash away his sins.

After each quotation write whose conversion is referred to in the scripture reference. First is done correctly:

1. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." 3000 on Pentecost
2. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" _____
3. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." _____
4. "They believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God." _____
5. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" _____
6. "They went down both into the water." _____
7. "... hearing believed, and were baptized." _____
8. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." _____
9. "Arise, and be baptized." _____
10. "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." _____
11. "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." _____

Name..... Grade.....
 Address..... Date.....
 City..... By.....