

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts



## Examples Of Conversions As Recorded In The History Of The Early Church

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**To God Be The Glory!**

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# **Conversions In The Book Of Acts**

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# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## The 3000 On Pentecost (2:1-41)

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Book of Acts serves a **unique role** in the New Testament and the history of the church...
  - a. It picks up where the gospels leave off, and serves as the backdrop for the epistles
  - b. It details the spread of the gospel, and expansion of the Lord's church
  - c. It is the only record, inspired or otherwise, of the first thirty years of the church
2. Included in the historical record of Acts are many **examples of conversions** ...
  - a. In which we find the apostles and other preachers leading people to Christ
  - b. In some cases we can read the very sermons used to proclaim the gospel
  - c. We also have descriptions of what people were told to receive God's saving grace
3. The **value** of such examples of conversion cannot be overstated...
  - a. For today we can hear or see many different "gospels" being proclaimed
  - b. Even when the gospel facts are faithfully proclaimed, sometimes people are told to respond in a manner not found in the New Testament
  - **With the help of The Book of Acts, we can make sure that the gospel facts and commands are being faithfully proclaimed!**
4. **In this series**, we shall examine a number of examples of conversions described in Acts...
  - a. Noting the background of each conversion
  - b. Considering the sermons proclaimed and the responses to them
  - c. Analyzing the sermons and responses, seeking to glean the elements of the gospel message and what response to expect of those coming to Christ

[In this study, we start with the first example of conversion, "**The 3000 On Pentecost**", as recorded in **Acts 2**. As we begin, let's do so with...]

### I. THE BACKGROUND OF THE CONVERSION

#### **A. IT WAS THE DAY OF PENTECOST... - Ac 2:1**

1. An annual Jewish feast, celebrated 50 days after the presentation of the first fruits
2. One in which Jews would travel from great distances to attend - **Ac 2:5**

#### **B. THE SPIRIT FELL ON THE APOSTLES... - Ac 2:2-13**

1. As promised by John and Jesus - **Ac 1:4-5**; cf. **Lk 24:49**
2. Accompanied by audible and visual signs...
  - a. A sound as of a mighty rushing wind - **Ac 2:2**
  - b. Divided tongues as of fire sitting upon each of them - **Ac 2:3**
3. Enabling the apostles to speak in foreign languages - **Ac 2:4-11**
  - a. Every man heard them speak in his own language - **Ac 2:6,11**
  - b. That those who spoke were "Galileans" (**Ac 2:7**) suggests the apostles
    - 1) For the apostles were from Galilee
    - 2) Whereas the 120 disciples were from all over Palestine

4. The reaction of the crowd was mixed - **Ac 2:12-13**
  - a. Some were amazed and perplexed
  - b. Others mocked, accusing the apostles of being drunk

### C. PETER EXPLAINED WHAT HAPPENED... - Ac 2:14-21

1. It was too early for them to be drunk - **Ac 2:14-15**
2. Rather, it was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy - **Ac 2:16-21**
  - a. Found in **Joel 2:28-32**
  - b. In which God promised to pour out of His Spirit on all flesh

[So we find a large gathering of religious people initially drawn by the miraculous events which occurred this day in Jerusalem. Having explained the meaning of the events, Peter immediately proceeded with the first recorded gospel sermon...]

## II. THE SERMON AND ITS RESPONSE

### A. JESUS IS PROCLAIMED...

1. Peter began with the **life** and **miracles** of Jesus, with which his audience was well acquainted - **Ac 2:22**
2. He laid the blame of Jesus' **death** at their feet, but said it was in keeping with God's predetermined plan - **Ac 2:23**
3. He declared that God **raised** Jesus from the dead, and provided three lines of evidence - **Ac 2:24-35**
  - a. The testimony of David - **Ac 2:25-31**
    - 1) Who prophesied of the resurrection of God's Anointed - **Psa 16:8-11**
    - 2) Who could not have been speaking of himself, but of Jesus

-- **Thus, the testimony of Scripture**
  - b. The testimony of the twelve apostles - **Ac 2:32**
    - 1) Who had to be eyewitnesses to qualify as apostles - cf. **Ac 1:21-26**
    - 2) With twelve witnesses, the demands of Scripture were overwhelmingly met ("by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.")

-- **Thus, the testimony of eyewitnesses**
  - c. The testimony of the Spirit's outpouring - **Ac 2:33-35**
    - 1) The outpouring of the Spirit on that day, as evidence of:
      - a) Christ's exaltation to the right hand of God
      - b) Christ receiving from the Father the promise of the Spirit
    - 2) And so another prophecy of David was fulfilled - cf. **Psa 110:1**

-- **Thus, the testimony of the day's events**
4. Finally, Peter reached the climax of his sermon - **Ac 2:36**
  - a. The Jesus they crucified, God had made...
    - 1) "**Lord**" (Ruler of all - cf. **Mt 28:18**)
    - 2) "**Christ**" (The Anointed One prophesied in Scripture)
  - b. This fact they were to "**know assuredly**"
    - 1) To understand, to accept as fact
    - 2) To believe firmly

### B. THE RESPONSE TO PETER'S SERMON...

1. The listeners were convicted - **Ac 2:37**
  - a. They were "**cut to the heart**"

- b. They asked *“what shall we do?”*
- 2. Peter replied with commands and a promise - **Ac 2:38-39**
  - a. The commands to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins
  - b. The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, a promise for *“as many as the Lord our God will call”*
- 3. Luke then summarized what followed...
  - a. Peter continued to offer testimony and exhortation - **Ac 2:40**
  - b. Those who *“gladly received his word were baptized”* - **Ac 2:41**
  - c. 3000 souls were *“added”* (later, we learn it was the Lord who was adding them to His church - cf. **Ac 2:47**)

[With this response to Peter’s sermon, the Lord’s church began in Jerusalem (cf. **Ac 2:42**). It was an amazing day, in which 3000 souls responded to the gospel of Christ. What can be gleaned from this example of conversion?]

### III. AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERSION

#### **A. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING PETER’S SERMON...**

- 1. **Peter’s focus** was on the Word, not the signs and wonders
  - a. His explanation of the miraculous was no more than a quotation from Joel
  - b. Having explained the miraculous, he directed their attention to Jesus
- 2. **Peter’s theme** was the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus
  - a. His life and death they knew
  - b. It was His resurrection and exaltation to God’s right hand that he seeks to prove
- 3. **Peter’s objective:** for them to accept Jesus as their Lord and Messiah (Christ)

#### **B. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE RESPONSE...**

- 1. The reaction of the people is noteworthy: *“cut to the heart”*
  - a. This shows the power of God’s word to convict - cf. **Ro 1:16**
  - b. While convicted, not all people will respond in the same way - cf. **Ac 7:54**
- 2. The reply to their question (*“what shall we do?”*) is also noteworthy
  - a. Peter commanded them to *“repent”*, which was what Jesus expected Him to say - cf. **Lk 24:46-47**
  - b. Peter commanded them to *“be baptized”*, which was also in keeping with what Jesus commanded the apostles - cf. **Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15-16**
- 3. The purpose of their baptism was explained: *“for the remission of sins”*
  - a. The identical phrase was used by Jesus in **Mt 26:28**
  - b. His blood was shed for many *“for the remission of sins”*
  - c. In both cases, the preposition *“for”* means *“with a view toward, in order to”*
    - 1) Jesus shed His blood in order to provide remission of sins
    - 2) One is baptized in order to receive remission of sins (for in baptism we are baptized into Christ’s death - cf. **Ro 6:3-6**)
- 4. Those who are baptized were promised *“the gift of the Spirit”*
  - a. I take the gift to be the Spirit Himself - cf. **Ac 5:32**
    - 1) Not something the Spirit gives (such as salvation or spiritual gifts)
    - 2) All who become Christians receive the Spirit - cf. **Ga 4:6; 1 Co 12:13**
  - b. The Spirit is therefore *“the promise”* referred to in **verse 39**
    - 1) Who was promised by the Father and received by Christ - **Ac 2:33**
    - 2) Who was poured out by Christ on the day of Pentecost - **Ac 2:33**

- 3) Thus poured out, one can now receive the *“washing of regeneration and renewal of the Spirit”* in baptism, resulting in justification - cf. **Ti 3:5-7**
5. Those who were baptized were *“added”* to the church - **Ac 2:41,47**
  - a. When one is baptized (i.e., saved), the Lord adds him or her to His church, which is His body - cf. **1 Co 12:13**
  - b. Baptism is therefore the “door” to the church (in the universal, not local) sense

### C. LESSONS FOR TODAY...

1. When preaching the gospel...
  - a. Our focus should be on death, burial, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ - e.g., **1 Co 2:1-2; 15:1-4**
  - b. The evidence we offer as support should be:
    - 1) The testimony of Scripture (e.g., the Old Testament prophecies)
    - 2) The testimony of the eyewitnesses (i.e., the apostles)
  - c. Our goal is for people to accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him to be the Messiah, God’s Anointed One
2. When people are convicted of sin, and ask *“what shall we do?”*, we should reply:
  - a. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (though not specifically mentioned, it is assumed in the call to “know assuredly...”) - cf. **Ac 16:30-31**
  - b. Repent of your sins - cf. **Ac 17:30**
  - c. Be baptized for the remission of sins - cf. **Ac 10:48; 22:16**
3. Along with remission of sins, we should tell of the promise of the Spirit
  - a. The Spirit’s role in the life of the Christian is important - **1 Co 6:11; Ro 8:13**
  - b. While the role of the Spirit is often misunderstood, we should not hesitate to make mention of Him as a promise and gift to those who obey God! - **Ac 5:32**

### CONCLUSION

1. With the first example of conversion, we find Peter faithfully carrying out the commission of his Lord...
  - a. To preach the gospel - **Mk 16:15**
  - b. To preach repentance and remission of sins in His name - **Lk 24:47**
  - c. To include baptism along with faith as a proper response to the gospel - **Mk 16:16**
  - d. To make disciples by baptizing them - **Mt 28:19**
2. Is this the gospel and response being proclaimed today?
  - a. Some preach the gospel of health and wealth, with a focus on “signs” and “wonders”, rather than on the death, resurrection and exaltation of Christ!
  - b. Some would tell the lost to simply “say the sinner’s prayer”, is that what Peter said?

Those who presume to preach in the name of Christ, should be careful to preach as did His apostles; those who wish to respond to the grace of God in Christ, should be careful to respond as did those who heard the apostles preach!

Have you responded to the preaching of the gospel in the same manner as did **“The 3000 On Pentecost”**? Remember...

*“...those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” (Acts 2:41)*

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## The 2000 At Solomon's Porch (3:1-4:4)

### INTRODUCTION

1. In our previous lesson, we considered the conversion of **“The 3000 On Pentecost”**...
  - a. Precipitated by the outpouring of the Spirit - **Ac 2:1-21**
  - b. Where Peter proclaimed the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus - **Ac 2:22-36**
  - c. In which 3000 souls responded to the gospel commands to repent and be baptized - **Ac 2:37-38**
2. The next example of conversion in Acts is one often overlooked...
  - a. Many charts listing examples of conversions in the Book of Acts do not include it
  - b. Perhaps because little is said about those converted, other than **“many of those who heard the word believed”** - cf. **Ac 4:4**
3. But since our purpose includes looking at the sermons which led people to Christ, we should certainly consider...
  - a. Peter's second gospel sermon, proclaimed on Solomon's Porch in the temple court
  - b. A sermon that led 2000 more people to believe in Jesus Christ! - cf. **Ac 4:4**

[As we did in the previous study, let's begin with...]

### I. THE BACKGROUND OF THE CONVERSION

#### **A. PETER AND JOHN HAD GONE TO THE TEMPLE - Ac 3:1**

1. Christians had been gathering daily in the temple - cf. **Ac 2:46**
2. Peter and John arrived at the **“hour of prayer, the ninth hour”** (3 p.m.)

#### **B. A MAN LAME FROM BIRTH HAD BEEN HEALED - Ac 3:2-8**

1. Who was left daily at the gate of the temple called **“Beautiful”** - **Ac 3:2-3**
  - a. To ask alms from the people entering the temple
  - b. Who asked Peter and John for alms
2. Peter healed him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth - **Ac 3:4-8**
  - a. The lame man expected alms
  - b. But Peter offered him something much better than silver or gold!
  - c. The miracle was immediate and total!

#### **C. A CROWD HAD GATHERED - Ac 3:9-11**

1. Drawn by the scene of the man walking, praising God; one they knew had been lame from birth - **Ac 3:9-10**
2. Amazed and wondering, they gathered in the porch called Solomon's - **Ac 3:11**

[The similarity to the events in Acts 2 should be apparent. A miraculous event occurs, it attracts the attention of the people. As before, Peter uses the opportunity to proclaim Jesus...]

### II. THE SERMON AND ITS RESPONSE

**A. JESUS IS PROCLAIMED, AS THE MIRACLE IS EXPLAINED...**

1. Peter explains the true source of the miracle - **Ac 3:12-16**
  - a. It was not by the power or godliness of Peter and John themselves
  - b. It was through faith in the One whom they killed!
    - 1) God's Servant, Jesus...
      - a) Whom the God of their fathers had glorified!
      - b) Whom they had delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate!
        - Calling Jesus God's "Servant" may be an allusion to **Isa 52:13-53:12**
      - 2) The Holy One, The Just, The Prince of Life...
        - a) Whom they denied, asking for a murderer to be released in his stead!
        - b) Whom God raised from the dead, as seen by witnesses!
          - Calling Jesus by these terms emphasized His true person and power
    - c. It was through faith in His name that the lame man was healed; note...
      - 1) It was Peter and John's faith in Jesus, not the lame man's faith
      - 2) For the lame man had not expected a miracle, but silver or gold
2. Peter acknowledges their ignorance, but still calls upon them to repent - **Ac 3:17-26**
  - a. He recognizes that they and their rulers acted in ignorance
  - b. That what happened was...
    - 1) Foretold through God's prophets
    - 2) Fulfilling God's predetermined plan - cf. **Ac 2:23**
  - c. Yet ignorance is no excuse, so they must "***repent and be converted***" - **Ac 3:19**
  - d. Several reasons to so respond are given - **Ac 3:19-26**
    - 1) That "***your sins may be blotted out***"
      - a) Alluding to the ancient practice of erasing mistakes made on papyrus
      - b) I.e., another way to describe the remission of sins through Jesus' blood
    - 2) That "***times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord***"
      - a) Here is a positive counterpart to the remission of sins (Stott)
      - b) God provides more than just remission of sins, but refreshment for our spirits (Stott)
    - 3) That God "***may send Jesus Christ***" (a reference to His second coming)
      - a) Who was preached to them before (via the prophets)
      - b) Whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things (of which the prophets of God had also spoken)
        - 1] As an example of the prophets who had spoken, Moses is quoted
        - 2] Others since Samuel have likewise told of these days
    - 4) They were "***sons of the prophets, and of the covenant***" God made with their
      - a) A covenant made with Abraham, to bless the world in his seed
      - b) A promise fulfilled by God through His Servant Jesus, Whom He raised
        - 1] Who was sent by God to bless them
        - 2] To bless them by turning them away from their sins

**B. THE RESPONSE TO PETER'S SERMON...**

1. A negative response by the religious leaders - **Ac 4:1-3**
  - a. They were greatly disturbed, because in preaching Jesus, Peter preached the resurrection of the dead
  - b. The Sadducees in particular denied the idea of a bodily resurrection - **Ac 23:6-9**
  - c. So they had Peter and John placed in custody for trial the next day
2. A positive response by many who heard - **Ac 4:4**



- a. Many who heard the word “*believed*”
- b. As many as two thousand men accepted the preaching of Peter!

[The power of the gospel to convict the hearts of men continues to be seen, though with some the effect appears to be a hardening of their hearts. But as we focus on those who responded, what can we glean from this example of conversion?]

### III. AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONVERSION

#### A. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING PETER’S SERMON...

1. Again we note the Christ-centeredness of Peter’s preaching
  - a. As in his sermon on Pentecost
  - b. While explaining the miracle, he directs their attention to Jesus, not the sign
2. Again Peter’s main theme is the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus - **Ac 3:13-15**
  - a. The One they killed, God raised from the dead
  - b. The One they killed, God has glorified
3. Yet Peter also introduces a new element...
  - a. The coming of Jesus from heaven!
  - b. Jesus is coming again! - **Ac 3:20-21**
4. The sermon’s climax is the call to “*repent therefore, and be converted*” - **Ac 3:19**
  - a. From this we learn that repentance and conversion are not same thing
    - 1) Otherwise, Peter was redundant
    - 2) I.e., he would have been saying “repent and repent”
  - b. Repent (metanoeo) means “**a change of mind**”
    - 1) True repentance is brought on by “*godly sorrow*” - **2 Co 7:9**
    - 2) Such repentance then leads one to “*salvation*” - **2 Co 7:10**
    - Thus they were being called to change their minds regarding Jesus and their sinful ways
  - c. What is meant by “*be converted*”?
    - 1) The NKJV and KJV suggest a passive act, but the Greek is aorist active imperative, implying there is something we must do
      - a) The key idea is to “turn” or “return”
      - b) The NIV has “*turn to God*” and the NASB has “*return*”
      - But how does one turn to God?
    - 2) Compare Peter’s word’s **Ac 3:19** with **Ac 2:38**
      - a) “*Repent*” (Ac 2:38) and “*Repent*” (Ac 3:19)
      - b) “*Be baptized*” (Ac 2:38) and “*Be converted*” (Ac 3:19)
    - 3) Could Peter be referring to baptism when he says “be converted”?
      - a) When one submits to baptism, they so do with an appeal for a clear conscience - cf. **1 Pe 3:21**
      - b) In baptism they are calling upon the name of the Lord - **Ac 22:16**
      - Therefore I believe the call to “turn” likely involved baptism
5. The blessings promised are similar to those found in the first sermon
  - a. There is the forgiveness of sins...
    - 1) Described as the “*remission of sins*” in the first sermon - **Ac 2:38**
    - 2) Described now as having one’s sins “*blotted out*” - **Ac 3:19**
  - b. There is the positive counterpart to the remission of sins...
    - 1) Described as “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*” in the first sermon - **Ac 2:38-39**
    - 2) Described now as “*the times of refreshing...from the presence of the Lord*”

- **Ac 3:19**

- 3) I understand Peter to have reference to the same thing...
  - a) I.e., the Spirit as a gift to the Christian - cf. **Ac 5:32; Ga 4:6; Ep 1:13-14**
  - b) Whom Jesus promised as a refreshing blessing - **Jn 7:37-39**; cf. also **Jn 4:10-14**
6. In this sermon we find a warning
  - a. In the first sermon Peter pleaded with the people to *“be saved from this perverse generation”* - **Ac 2:40**
  - b. Now we find a reason why, with Moses’ prophecy: *“every soul who will not hear*

## **B. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE RESPONSE...**

1. As mentioned in the introduction, little is said, other than many *“believed”* - **Ac 4:4**
2. Are we to conclude from this that was all they did?
  - a. Did they not also “repent”?
  - b. Did they not also “turn”?
3. I think it fair to conclude that the term “believed” encompassed more than simply an acceptance of the facts that had been proclaimed
  - a. That it involved a complete reception of the message preached
  - b. That it included an obedience to whatever conditions had been proclaimed by the apostles (such as repentance, turning, baptism)
  - c. That just as faith was not explicitly mentioned in the first sermon, but is fairly inferred, so also with baptism here

## **C. LESSONS FOR TODAY...**

1. When preaching the gospel...
  - a. We must not lose the Christ-centeredness of our focus
    - 1) That includes preaching his death, resurrection and glorification
    - 2) That Jesus provides more than just the forgiveness of sin; but as the Prince of
    - 3) That preaching Christ includes preaching His return from heaven, for He is coming!
  - b. The clarion call of the gospel is one of repentance!
    - 1) Faith and baptism are certainly important, yea, essential
    - 2) Yet repentance was the theme of preaching by:
      - a) John the Baptist - **Mt 3:1-2**
      - b) Jesus - **Mt 4:17; Lk 13:3,5**
- And now by the apostles - **Ac 2:38; 3:19**; cf. **Lk 24:47; Ac 20:21**
2. When people respond to the gospel, we should expect to see...
  - a. A change of mind (repentance), brought about by *“godly sorrow”* - cf. **2 Co 7:9-10**
  - b. A change of life, as they “turn” from their sins and “turn” to God - cf. **2 Co 7:11**
    - 1) Implied by the word “converted” (turn)
    - 2) A process that involves their baptism into Christ, in which they die to sin and rise to walk in newness of life - cf. **Ro 6:3-7**
- All of which can be summarized as having *“believed”*!

## **CONCLUSION**

1. With this example of conversion, Peter continues to fulfill the commission of his Lord...
  - a. To preach the gospel - **Mk 16:15-16**
  - b. To preach repentance and remission of sins in His name - **Lk 24:47**

2. We saw that not all responded in the same way...
  - a. Yes, 2000 heard the word and believed
  - b. But some religious people with their preconceived ideas were resistant to the gospel
  - Sadly, many people today reject the apostolic preaching of the gospel for similar reasons

I pray that such is not the case with you; that as we study the preaching of the apostles and the responses to it, your heart will be open to the Word of God. Especially to this key verse in our study:

***“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,” (Ac 3:19)***

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## The Samaritans (8:4-25)

### INTRODUCTION

1. With the preaching of the gospel and its reception by many, the Lord's church grew rapidly in Jerusalem...
  - a. 3000 souls were added after the first gospel sermon - **Ac 2:41**
  - b. Following the second sermon, the number grew to about 5000 - **Ac 4:4**
  
2. What was the gospel message that sparked the conversion of so many?
  - a. One that centered on Jesus Christ, proclaiming His death, resurrection, exaltation, and eventual return!
  - b. A message that expected the following response from those who heard...
    - 1) Faith in Jesus as both Lord and Christ - e.g., **Ac 2:36**
    - 2) Repentance from sin - e.g., **Ac 2:38; 3:19**
    - 3) Turning to God, with baptism for the remission of sins as the first step - e.g., **Ac 2:38,41; 3:19**
  
3. Preaching this message was not without controversy...
  - a. Some took issue with the message of Christ's resurrection - **Ac 4:1-3**
  - b. Persecution against the church in Jerusalem became progressively worse
    - 1) Peter and John were at first simply threatened - **Ac 4:21**
    - 2) Soon after all the apostles were beaten - **Ac 5:40**
    - 3) Then Steven was stoned to death - **Ac 6:8-7:60**
  - c. Steven's death led to widespread persecution, and the dispersal of many Christians from Jerusalem - **Ac 8:1-4**
  
4. But as Christians were scattered abroad, so was the gospel of Christ!
  - a. The Christians went everywhere, "**preaching the word**" - **Ac 8:5**
  - b. Among those was the evangelist Philip, whose preaching provides us with two examples of conversion
    - 1) "The Samaritans" - **Ac 8:4-25**
    - 2) "The Ethiopian Eunuch" - **Ac 8:26-40**

[In this study, we shall examine "**The Samaritans**", whose example of conversion and follow-up is one of the more challenging ones found in the Acts...]

### I. THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITANS

#### **A. PHILIP'S MINISTRY AT SAMARIA - Ac 8:4-13**

1. He preached Christ to them - **Ac 8:5**
2. Multitudes heeded the things he spoke - **Ac 8:6a-12**
  - a. Having heard and seen the miracles which he did
    - 1) Such as casting out unclean spirits, healing the paralyzed and lame
    - 2) Though previously they had been impressed by a sorcerer named Simon
  - b. Now they believed Philip as he preached about the kingdom of God and the name of

Jesus Christ

- c. They were baptized, both men and women
- 3. Even Simon the sorcerer was converted - **Ac 8:13**
  - a. He too believed and was baptized
  - b. He continued with Philip, amazed at the miracles and signs Philip was doing

## **B. THE FOLLOW-UP BY PETER AND JOHN - Ac 8:14-25**

- 1. The apostles sent Peter and John upon hearing of the conversion of the Samaritans - **Ac 8:14**
- 2. Peter and John imparted the Spirit to the Samaritans - **Ac 8:15-17**
  - a. While the Samaritans had been baptized, they had not received the Spirit
  - b. Through prayer and the laying on of the apostles' hands, they received the Spirit
- 3. This power to impart the Spirit becomes a stumbling block for Simon - **Ac 8:18-24**
  - a. He sought to buy the ability to impart the Spirit - **Ac 8:18-19**
  - b. Peter rebukes him strongly, and calls upon him to repent - **Ac 8:20-23**
  - c. Simon asks Peter to pray for him - **Ac 8:24**
- 4. Peter and John preach the gospel in many villages in Samaria on their return to Jerusalem - **Ac 8:25**

[The example of the Samaritans' is really quite remarkable, and for several reasons. This is the first preaching of the gospel to those not fully Jews (Samaritans were half-breeds, and disdained by most Jews; cf. **Jn 4:9**). But also because of the questions that are raised, some of which I hope to address as I offer...]

## **II. SOME OBSERVATIONS**

### **A. CONCERNING THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITANS...**

- 1. The gospel message preached by Philip
  - a. We are told that he preached "*Christ*" - **Ac 8:5**
    - 1) This undoubtedly included Christ's death, resurrection, etc.
    - 2) I.e., the same things Peter preached about Christ in Acts 2 and 3
  - b. We are told that he preached "*the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*" - **Ac 8:12**
    - 1) What things concerning "*the kingdom of God*"?
      - a) John, Jesus, and the apostles had earlier taught the kingdom was "at hand" - cf. **Mt 3:1; 4:17; 10:7**
      - b) Later, Paul and John wrote of the kingdom as present - **Co 1:13; Re 1:9**
        - As the expression "kingdom of God" literally means the "reign of God", it is likely that Philip spoke of the rule and reign of God now present in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ - cf. **Mt 28:18; Ac 2:36; 5:31**
    - 2) What things concerning "*the name of Jesus Christ*"?
      - a) Most likely that repentance and remission of sins were now being proclaimed in His name - **Lk 24:47**
      - b) And from the response of the Samaritans, we conclude that included whatever Jesus commanded - cf. **Ac 8:12** with **Mk 16:16**
- 2. The response of the Samaritans
  - a. Note first that they "*heeded the things spoken by Philip*", implying obedience on their part - **Ac 8:6**; cf. **He 5:9**
  - b. Later we are told that they "*believed*" and "*were baptized*" - **Ac 8:12**

- 1) Like Peter, Philip faithfully fulfilled the Lord's commission - **Mk 16:15-16**
- 2) Heeding the things spoken by Philip therefore included baptism

## **B. CONCERNING THE CONVERSION OF SIMON THE SORCERER...**

1. Was Simon truly converted?
    - a. Many deny that he was, because of what soon happened afterward
    - b. But Luke (the author) says Simon **"also believed"**
      - 1) I.e., he believed just as the others did
      - 2) Therefore his faith was just as real as the rest of the Samaritans
    - c. While there may be many fanciful traditions concerning Simon outside of the Bible, the indication of Scripture is that his conversion was sincere
  2. Simon is an example of how fallen Christians can be restored...
    - a. He was told to **"repent"** and **"pray"** - **Ac 8:22**
    - b. When a Christian sins, therefore, he needs not to be baptized again, but to repent and pray, confessing his sins- cf. **1 Jn 1:9**
- Simon reveals how quickly Christians can be overtaken in sin, but also how they can obtain forgiveness and be restored!

## **C. CONCERNING THE FOLLOW-UP BY PETER AND JOHN...**

1. Many questions are raised by what we read...
  - a. Why is it that the Samaritan's received baptism by Philip, but not the Spirit?
  - b. What does it mean "that they might receive the Holy Spirit"?
  - c. What did the apostles have that Philip did not?
 

-- The challenge is to reconcile what we read here with what is revealed elsewhere
2. As I seek to understand this passage, the following observations are made...
  - a. Whatever Luke meant to **"receive the Holy Spirit"...**
    - 1) It required the apostles' laying on of hands
      - a) Philip could not impart it, making it necessary for the apostles to come
      - b) Simon could see that it was through the apostles' laying on of hands the Spirit was given - **Ac 8:18**
    - 2) It was something visible
      - a) It caught Simon's attention, who sought to buy the ability to impart it
      - b) It was clearly something miraculous (perhaps speaking in tongues)

-- But was it actually the Spirit Himself, or something the Spirit gives?
  - b. Elsewhere we learn that one receives the Spirit upon obedience to the Gospel
    - 1) As indicated in **Ac 2:38; 5:32; 1 Co 12:13; Ep 1:13-14; Ga 4:6**
    - 2) Whose indwelling is necessary to being a Christian - **Ro 8:9-11**

-- Since the Samaritans had been baptized (**Ac 8:12,16**), I believe it is fair to assume that they had received the Spirit Himself as any Christian would
3. Therefore I offer the following explanation...
  - a. The expression **"receive the Holy Spirit"** is a metonymy for receiving a miraculous gift from the Spirit
    - 1) **Metonymy** - A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for
    - 2) E.g., as in *Washington* for *the United States government* or of *the sword* for

-- What the Samaritans had not received, then, were any miraculous spiritual gifts that the Spirit bestowed - cf. **1 Co 12:1-11**
  - b. The apostles had the ability to impart spiritual gifts
    - 1) Paul hoped to impart such a gift to the Romans - **Ro 1:11**
    - 2) He had imparted such a gift to Timothy - **2 Ti 1:6**

- c. The ability to impart spiritual gifts was limited to the apostles, which explains:
  - 1) Why Philip could perform miracles, but not pass the ability on to others
    - a) The apostles had laid hands on him earlier - cf. **Ac 6:5-6**
    - b) Like Steven, Philip could then do miracles - cf. **Ac 6:7; 8:6-7**
  - 2) Why it was necessary for Peter and John to come
    - a) If spiritual gifts came simply by praying, why send for Peter and John?
    - b) It took an apostle for the spiritual gifts to be imparted
- d. It was this ability to impart spiritual gifts that Simon wanted to buy!
  - 1) He was not content to receive a spiritual gift
  - 2) He wanted that apostolic ability to impart spiritual gifts! - **Ac 8:19**

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The conversion of the Samaritans is simple and straightforward...
  - a. We learn that when Christ is preached, believed, and heeded, people will be baptized - cf. **Ac 8:5-6,12**
  - b. What we read in **verse 12** is as simple and direct as the commission under which Philip preached (***“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”***, **Mk 16:16**)
2. The follow-up of the Samaritans may be challenging...
  - a. It has been described as one of the most extraordinary passages in Acts
    - 1) It has been used to teach all sorts of conflicting doctrine related to confirmation, sanctification, and spiritual gifts
    - 2) We must be careful not to draw conclusions that are contrary to the rest of the Scriptures
  - b. But we can still glean important lessons concerning conversion
    - 1) Conversion requires that one “heed” (obey) the Word of God
    - 2) Such obedience involves believing and being baptized
    - 3) Conversion does not remove the temptation to sin
    - 4) When we fall, restoration does not require re-baptism, but repentance and prayer

In our next study, we shall follow Philip as he is led by the Spirit to teach just one individual, a queen’s treasurer who is on his way home from a journey to Jerusalem...

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## The Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-40)

### INTRODUCTION

1. The conversions we have noted so far have involved large numbers of people...
  - a. The 3000 at Pentecost - **Ac 2:1-41**
  - b. The 2000 on Solomon's Porch - **Ac 3:1-4:4**
  - c. The multitudes in Samaria - **Ac 8:5-13**
2. In each case, the gospel message was basically the same...
  - a. Christ is proclaimed
  - b. Responses called for included faith, repentance and baptism
3. Now we have the opportunity to examine the conversion of just one person...
  - a. A queen's treasurer, a eunuch from Ethiopia
  - b. A very religious man, who had traveled a great distance to worship God
4. With the account of the conversion of "**The Ethiopian Eunuch**"...
  - a. We not only have the opportunity to confirm what we have already learned
  - b. We can also glean a few more points regarding Biblical conversions

[Let's start with a reading and review of the basic facts related to this conversion...]

### I. THE CONVERSION OF THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

#### **A. PHILIP IS SENT TO THE EUNUCH - Ac 8:26-29**

1. An angel of the Lord tells Philip to go toward Gaza - **Ac 8:26**
2. On the way there is a man sitting in his chariot - **Ac 8:27-28**
  - a. A eunuch of Ethiopia, in charge of the treasury of Queen Candace
  - b. Returning home from having gone to worship in Jerusalem
  - c. Reading from the prophet Isaiah
3. The Spirit tells Philip to overtake the chariot - **Ac 8:29**

#### **B. PHILIP PREACHES JESUS TO HIM - Ac 8:30-35**

1. Hearing the eunuch reading Isaiah, Philip asks if he understands - **Ac 8:30**
2. The eunuch asks Philip to help him - **Ac 8:31-34**
  - a. He expresses a need for someone to guide him, and invites Philip to sit with him
  - b. The scripture under consideration is **Isa 53:7-8**
    - 1) Which speaks of one led as a sheep to the slaughter
    - 2) Which describes one whose life is taken from the earth
  - c. The eunuch asks if Isaiah was speaking of himself, or of someone else
3. Beginning with that Scripture, Philip preaches Jesus to him - **Ac 8:35**

#### **C. THE EUNUCH IS BAPTIZED - Ac 8:36-40**

1. The eunuch expresses a desire to be baptized - **Ac 8:36-37**
  - a. Seeing some water along the way, he wonders what would hinder him from being



- baptized
- b. Philip replies that if he believes with all his heart, he may
- c. The eunuch confesses his faith in Jesus as the Son of God
- 2. Philip baptizes the eunuch - **Ac 8:38-40**
  - a. Stopping the chariot, both Philip and the eunuch go down into the water
  - b. Philip then baptizes him
  - c. When they come up out of the water, the Spirit catches Philip away
  - d. Though seeing Philip no more, the eunuch goes on his way rejoicing
  - e. Philip is found at Azotus, and continues preaching in the cities until he arrives at Caesarea

[One might properly wonder why the Spirit saw it fit to lead Luke to spend so much time describing the conversion of just one person. Clearly there must be important lessons or principles that we can glean from this historical account.

With that in mind, let me offer..]

## **II. SOME OBSERVATIONS**

### **A. CONCERNING PROSPECTS FOR THE GOSPEL...**

1. The Ethiopian eunuch was a very religious man
  - a. He had traveled a great distance to worship in Jerusalem
  - b. He was reading from the Scriptures when Philip found him
2. In fact, most examples of conversions involved very devout people
  - a. The 3000 at Pentecost, who had traveled to observe the feast day
  - b. Later, we will study the conversions of such people as:
    - 1) Paul, the Pharisee zealous for the Law
    - 2) Cornelius, the devout Gentile who feared God and prayed always
    - 3) Lydia, a woman who met every Sabbath to pray with others
3. From this we can glean the following...
  - a. Just because one is religious does not mean they are saved!
  - b. Religious people are often good prospects for the gospel!
    - 1) They already fear God and respect His authority
    - 2) As such, they simply need to be shown *“the way of God more accurately”* - cf. **Ac 18:26**
  - c. Those who are truly seeking God’s will, will one day have an opportunity to hear the gospel and obey it!

-- This does not discount the fact that rank sinners are often receptive (cf. the Corinthians, **1 Co 6:9-11**), but good people are usually more open to the Word

### **B. CONCERNING WHAT IT MEANS TO PREACH JESUS...**

1. From **Isaiah’s “quotation” (Isa 52:13-53:11)**, we know it involves teaching:
  - a. How Jesus died for our sins - cf. **1 Co 15:1-3**
  - b. How Jesus has been exalted by God - cf. **Ac 2:36; 3:13; 5:30-31**
2. From the **Eunuch’s “question” (Ac 8:36)**, we know it includes stressing:
  - a. The importance of baptism
    - 1) Why did the eunuch ask, *“What hinders me from being baptized?”*
    - 2) Perhaps because Philip told him...
      - a) What the Lord had said - **Mk 16:15-16**

- b) The purpose of baptism, as expressed by Peter and Paul - **Ac 2:38; Ro 6:3-4; 1 Pe 3:21**
  - As we have seen and will see, baptism is the expected response when one believes in Jesus
- b. The immediacy of baptism
  - 1) Why did the eunuch asked to be baptized right then (“*See, here is water.*”)?
  - 2) Perhaps because baptism’s purpose is such that one does not want to delay
    - a) It is “*for the remission of sins*” - **Ac 2:38**
    - b) It is to have one’s sins “*washed away*” - **Ac 22:16**
    - c) It is an appeal for a clear conscience - **1 Pe 3:21**
  - Indeed, in every example of conversion found in Acts, people were baptized immediately, after just one lesson!
- 3. From **Philip’s “qualification” (Ac 8:37)**, we know it requires explaining:
  - a. The necessity of faith in Jesus
    - 1) One must believe in Jesus as the Son of God - **Jn 8:24; 20:30-31**
    - 2) Without faith, God won’t do His work in our baptism - cf. **Co 2:12**
  - b. The necessity of whole-heartedness in our faith
    - 1) God has always required whole-heartedness - cf. **Mt 22:37**
    - 2) Without it, even those saved are in danger of falling away - cf. **He 3:12-14**
  - Unless “*you believe with all your heart*”, you are not a proper subject for baptism!

### C. CONCERNING BAPTISM...

- 1. We see that baptism involves water
  - a. When the eunuch was baptized...
    - 1) “*...both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water*” - **Ac 8:38**
    - 2) “*...he baptized him*” - **Ac 8:38**
    - 3) “*...they came up out of the water*” - **Ac 8:39**
  - b. Later, we see the same truth expressed by Peter - cf. **Ac 10:47-48**
- 2. We see that baptism involves a burial in water
  - a. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water - **Ac 8:38**
    - 1) If sprinkling satisfies the meaning of baptism, it seems strange that Philip would need to go down into the water
    - 2) Why get wet, when all he needed to do was get a handful of water?
  - b. Baptism means “to immerse”, and such requires the baptizer to get in the water with the one being baptized
  - c. Later, Paul describes baptism as a “burial” - cf. **Ro 6:3-4; Co 2:12**
- 3. We see that baptism is NOT a public confession of one’s faith
  - a. Some say that the purpose of baptism is to publicly confess one’s faith in Christ
    - 1) Especially those who deny that baptism is for the remission of sins
    - 2) Seeking to provide a reason for baptism, they offer this as an alternative
    - 3) But the Bible nowhere says this is the purpose for baptism!
  - b. If the purpose of baptism is to publicly confess one’s faith...
    - 1) Why did Philip baptize the eunuch?
      - a) There was no one else around to witness the baptism
      - b) They were all alone in the desert
    - 2) Why didn’t Philip answer the eunuch’s question differently?
      - a) He wanted to know what would hinder him from being baptized
      - b) If baptism is a public confession of one’s faith, we would expect Philip to say he must wait until they get to town, find a church, etc.

- c. But the purpose of baptism is such that it can be done...
  - 1) In public or in private
  - 2) With thousands present, or with just the one doing the baptizing
- Later, we will see that the conversion of the Philippian Jailor also involved a baptism in relative privacy

## CONCLUSION

1. With the conversion of “**The Ethiopian Eunuch**”, we are impressed with simplicity of salvation...
  - a. With a simple presentation of the gospel, one can be saved after just one lesson
  - b. Whether it is preached to large crowds or to just one person, the gospel is indeed God’s power to save! - cf. **Ro 1:16**
2. When the gospel of Jesus is truly preached...
  - a. The death of Jesus for our sins will be stressed
  - b. The importance of baptism as commanded by Jesus will be mentioned as well
    - 1) Such that people will want to know “*what hinders me from being baptized?*”
    - 2) Such that people will want to be baptized immediately
  - c. The purpose of baptism will be properly understood, knowing that one can be baptized in private just as well as in public
  - d. The necessity for a wholehearted faith in Jesus will be emphasized, otherwise one simply gets wet in baptism!

Was your conversion anything like that of “**The Ethiopian Eunuch**”? When someone “*preached Jesus*” to you, were you compelled to ask:

*“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” - Acts 8:36*

If not, have you considered why not? Could it be that the gospel of Jesus Christ was not shared with you in its fullness...?

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## Saul Of Tarsus (9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18)

### INTRODUCTION

1. From the conversion of “**The Ethiopian Eunuch**”, we now turn our attention to what is perhaps the most famous of conversions in the New Testament...
  - a. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, chief persecutor of the early church - **Ac 8:1,3; 9:1-2**
  - b. Who became Paul the apostle (**Ac 13:9**), a recipient himself of much persecution for the cause of Christ - cf. **2 Co 11:23-28**
  - Whose conversion stands as a powerful testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ
2. There are actually three records of his conversion in The Book of Acts...
  - a. **Ac 9:1-19** - where Luke describes it as it happened
  - b. **Ac 22:6-16** - where Paul recounts his conversion before a large crowd
  - c. **Ac 26:12-18** - where Paul defends himself before King Agrippa
3. From the example of the conversion of “**Saul of Tarsus**”...
  - a. We find not only a powerful testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ
  - b. But also more evidence concerning the nature of conversions as they are revealed in Acts
4. For example...
  - a. **When was Saul (Paul) saved?**
    - 1) Was it on the road to Damascus, when the Lord appeared to him?
    - 2) Or was it in Damascus, at some point after he arrived there?
  - b. **How was Saul (Paul) saved?**
    - 1) Through saying a sinner’s prayer?
    - 2) Or by being baptized?

[Such questions can be answered by a careful consideration of Biblical evidence. Let’s begin then with a review of the evidence provided by all three accounts of Saul’s conversion...]

### I. A HARMONY OF THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

#### **A. SAUL WAS ON HIS WAY TO DAMASCUS...**

1. To persecute more Christians - **Ac 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11**
2. When a light shone around him from heaven - **Ac 9:3; 22:6; 26:12-13**
3. When a voice began to speak to him in Hebrew...
  - a. Identifying itself as the voice of Jesus - **Ac 9:4-5; 22:7-9; 26:14-15**
  - b. Jesus then tells Saul...
    - 1) Why He has appeared to him - **Ac 26:16-18**
    - 2) To go on to Damascus, where...
      - a) He will be told “*what you must do*” - **Ac 9:6**
      - b) He will be told “*all things which are appointed for you to do*” - **Ac 22:10**

#### **B. SAUL ARRIVES IN DAMASCUS...**

1. Led by the hand, having been blinded by the light - **Ac 9:8; 22:11**

2. For three days, he neither eats nor drinks - **Ac 9:9**

### C. THE LORD SENDS ANANIAS TO SAUL...

1. The Lord appears to Ananias in a vision, and tells him to go to Saul - **Ac 9:10-16**
2. Ananias goes to Saul, and...
  - a. Has his sight restored - **Ac 9:17-18a; 22:12-13**
  - b. Is told why the Lord appeared to him and how he will be a witness of what he has seen - **Ac 22:14-15**
  - c. Is told to be baptized and wash away his sins, calling upon the name of the Lord - **Ac 22:16; cf. 9:18b**

### D. HIS CONVERSION COMPLETE, SAUL BEGINS HIS WORK...

1. Preaching immediately in Damascus - **Ac 9:20**
2. And later in Jerusalem, Judea, and to the Gentiles - **Ac 26:19-20**

[As mentioned previously, the conversion of Saul is a powerful testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What other reasonable explanation can be given for the drastic change from “**chief persecutor**” of the Christian faith to “**chief proclamaator**” of the Christian faith?

But the conversion of Saul is also valuable for the insights we can glean into the process of conversion. With that in mind, allow me to share...]

## II. SOME OBSERVATIONS

### A. CONCERNING “WHEN” SAUL WAS SAVED...

1. It is often stated that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus
    - a. When the Lord appeared to him
    - b. That his conversion took place at that moment
  2. Saul not saved until after he arrived in Damascus
    - a. Note that while on the road, the Lord said it would be in Damascus where he would be told “*what you must do*” - **Ac 9:6**
    - b. In Damascus, Ananias told him to “*wash away your sins*” - **Ac 22:16**
      - 1) At that point, Saul was still in his sins!
      - 2) I.e., he was still not saved!
- While in one sense he was indeed “converted” on the road (his view of Jesus certainly changed), conversion in the sense of salvation did not occur then

### B. CONCERNING “HOW” SAUL WAS SAVED...

1. From the statement of Ananias in **Ac 22:16** (to wash away his sins), we learn that:
  - a. Saul was not saved by virtue of the vision on the road
  - b. Saul was not saved by virtue of the prayers and fasting he had offered for three days - cf. **Ac 9:9,11**
2. Saul was saved when his sins were “*washed away*” - **Ac 22:16**
  - a. Which occurred after spending three days in Damascus
  - b. Which occurred when he was baptized to wash away his sins!

-- This concurs with what Peter said about the purpose of baptism in **Ac 2:38**

### C. CONCERNING BAPTISM AND CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD...

1. After quoting Joel who wrote of calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved (**Ac 2:21**),

- Peter told his crowd to be baptized - **Ac 2:38**
2. Now Ananias commands Saul to be baptized, *“calling upon the name of the Lord”* - **Ac 22:16**
  3. As Peter wrote, baptism saves us, and is an appeal for a clear conscience - **1 Pe 3:21**
  4. In baptism, then...
    - a. We are *“calling upon the name of the Lord”*
    - b. We are appealing to God by the authority of His Son Jesus to forgive our sins
  5. While we can certainly pray as we are being baptized, baptism itself is a prayer (an appeal) to God for a clear conscience!

## **CONCLUSION**

1. From the conversion of Saul we learn that one is not saved by...
  - a. Visions of the Lord (who could have a vision more impressive than Saul's?)
  - b. Saying the sinner's prayer (Saul had been praying and fasting for three days!)
2. In keeping with what we have seen already, one is saved when...
  - a. They are baptized for the remission of their sins - **Ac 2:38**
  - b. They are baptized to have their sins “washed away” - **Ac 22:16**
3. Of course, we learn from Paul's discourse in Romans 6 that the simple rite of baptism is efficacious because in baptism...
  - a. We are baptized into Christ's death - **Ro 6:3-4**
  - b. We are united with Christ in the likeness of His death - **Ro 6:5**
  - c. We are crucified with Christ, and our body of sin is done away - **Ro 6:6**
  - d. We die to sin, and are therefore freed from sin - **Ro 6:7**
4. In his commentary on **Ro 6:3**, Martin Luther wrote:

**“Baptism has been instituted that it should lead us to the blessings (of this death) and through such death to eternal life. Therefore IT IS NECESSARY that we should be baptized into Jesus Christ and His death.”** (Commentary On Romans, Kregel Publications, p. 101)

And so we say, as did Ananias, to anyone who has yet to be baptized for the remission of their sins...

*“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”*

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## Cornelius And His Household (10:1-48;11:1-18)

### INTRODUCTION

1. Up to this point, the gospel had been somewhat limited in its outreach...
  - a. It had spread throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria - **Ac 9:31**
  - b. But other than the Samaritans (who were half Jewish), it had only gone to the Jews
  
2. With the conversion of “**Cornelius And His Household**” the first Gentiles are saved...
  - a. A conversion noted not only because they were the first Gentiles
  - b. But also because of the miraculous events that precipitated the conversion
    - 1) An angel appearing to Cornelius
    - 2) Peter’s vision, followed by the Spirit’s instruction
    - 3) The Spirit falling upon Cornelius, his family, and close friends
    - 4) Cornelius and his household speaking in tongues
  
3. As in the case of Saul of Tarsus, we have more than just one account of the conversion...
  - a. There is Luke’s description - **Ac 10:1-48**
  - b. There is Peter’s description, as he is called to defend his actions - **Ac 11:1-18**
  
4. Important questions are raised as we consider the events of this conversion...
  - a. Exactly when did the Spirit fall upon Cornelius and his company?
  - b. What was the purpose of the Spirit falling upon them?
  - c. Were they saved when the Spirit came upon them, or later when they were baptized?

[These are some of the questions I intend to answer as we examine the conversion of “**Cornelius And His Household**”. Since we have two accounts, let’s consider them together as start with...]

### I. A HARMONY OF THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

#### **A. THE ANGEL APPEARS TO CORNELIUS...**

1. Cornelius, a centurion, is described as very religious - **Ac 10:1-2**
2. The angel appears to him - **Ac 10:3-6**
  - a. With an announcement that his prayers and alms have been noticed by God
  - b. With instructions to send for Peter; please note:
    - 1) The angel said, “*He will tell you what you must do.*” - **Ac 10:6**
    - 2) As Peter recounts it, “*...who will tell you words by which you and all your*”
3. Cornelius then sends two servants and a devout soldier to Peter - **Ac 10:7-8**

#### **B. PETER HAS A VISION...**

1. While the three men are traveling toward Peter, he has a vision - **Ac 10:9-16; 11:4-10**
  - a. It involves a sheet descending from heaven, containing all sorts of creatures
  - b. A voice tells Peter to “*kill and eat*”
  - c. Peter objects, for he has never eaten anything common or unclean
  - d. The voice tells him, “*What God has cleansed you must not call common.*”
2. Three times the vision is repeated

**C. THE SPIRIT TELLS PETER TO GO WITH THE MESSENGERS...**

1. The men from Cornelius arrive as Peter contemplates the vision - **Ac 10:17-18; 11:11**
2. The Spirit tells Peter to go, “**doubting nothing, for I have sent them**” - **Ac 10: 19-20; 11:12**
3. Peter receives the men and takes six with him as they go to Cornelius - **Ac 10:21-23; 11:12**

**D. PETER ARRIVES AT CORNELIUS’ HOUSE...**

1. Cornelius has gathered his family and close friends - **Ac 10:24**
2. Peter deflects attempts by Cornelius to worship him - **Ac 10:25-26**
3. Peter explains his presence a violation of Jewish custom, but now understands “***I should not call any man common or unclean***” - **Ac 10:27-28**
4. Asked by Peter to explain why he was called, Cornelius recounts the appearance and instructions of the angel - **Ac 10:29-32; 11:13-14**
5. Cornelius and his household were ready “***to hear all things command you by God***” - **Ac 10:33**

**E. AS PETER BEGINS TO SPEAK, THE SPIRIT FALLS UPON THE LISTENERS...**

1. At this point, we need to carefully note the actual sequence of events
2. Luke’s record gives attention given to the sermon first, and then the Spirit coming upon the Gentiles - cf. **Ac 10:34-44**
  - a. But Luke also says that “***while Peter was still speaking...the Holy Spirit fell***”
  - b. From this we do not exactly when the Spirit fell
  - c. It could have been at the beginning, in the middle, toward the end, of his sermon
3. Peter, however, explained what happened “***in order from the beginning***” - **Ac 11:4**
  - a. He describes the events as they happened
  - b. He says “***as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them***” - **Ac 11:15**
4. So we learn from Peter that the Spirit actually came upon the Gentiles at the **beginning** of the sermon!
5. With the Spirit falling upon the Gentiles, they begin speaking with tongues, which amazed Peter and his Jewish companions - **Ac 10:45-46; cf. Ac 2:4,6,8,11**

**F. PETER’S SERMON TO THE HOUSEHOLD OF CORNELIUS...**

1. He begins with a full perception that God shows no partiality - **Ac 10:34-35**
  - a. A perception started with the vision of the sheet and unclean beasts
  - b. A perception continued with the Spirit’s instruction to go with the messengers
  - c. A perception made clear with the Spirit falling upon the Gentiles - **Ac 11:15-17**
2. Peter then proceeds to proclaim Jesus Christ - **Ac 10:36-43**
  - a. As Lord who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power - **Ac 10:36-38**
  - b. Who was killed, but then raised from the dead and seen by eyewitnesses who knew Him well - **Ac 10:39-41**
  - c. Who has commanded the apostles to proclaim Him as ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and dead - **Ac 10:42**
  - d. Through Whom remission of sins is offered to those who believe - **Ac 10:43**

**G. PETER COMMANDS THEM TO BE BAPTIZED...**

1. How could anyone forbid water to those who had received the Spirit just as the apostles did? - **Ac 10:47; cf. 11:17-18**



2. So Cornelius and his household were commanded to be baptized in the name of the Lord  
- **Ac 10:48**

[The events surrounding this conversion are certainly remarkable. They evidently were intended to convey important truths. As we endeavor to glean what those truths were, here are some...]

## **II. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THIS CONVERSION**

### **A. RELIGIOUS PEOPLE NEED TO BE SAVED...**

1. Many people believe that if you are religious, you will be saved
  - a. That if you go to church, do good, etc., you have a hope of heaven
  - b. That you will have earned the right to enter heaven
2. Yet, though Cornelius was a man who...
  - a. Was a devout man
  - b. Feared God with his whole family
  - c. Gave alms generously
  - d. Prayed to God always
 ...he still needed to be told *“words by which you and all your household will be saved”*
3. Clearly, being religious isn't what saves you (it's the blood of Christ!)

### **B. THE GOSPEL IS FOR ALL...**

1. Peter perceived that God is no respecter of persons - **Ac 10:34-35**
2. Indeed, God desires that ALL men be saved - cf. **Jn 3:16; 1 Ti 2:3-6; 2 Pe 3:9**  
-- Therefore He has not predestined some to be saved and others lost!

### **C. THE PURPOSE OF THE SPIRIT FALLING...**

1. Some presume that the purpose was to save Cornelius and his family
  - a. That therefore they were saved before obeying the command to be baptized
  - b. But the Spirit came upon them as Peter *“began to speak”*, before they could hear words by which they could be saved! - cf. **Ac 11:14-15**
2. The purpose of the Spirit can be gleaned from the following:
  - a. The effect it had on the Jewish brethren who were present, and Peter's response - **Ac 10:45-47**
  - b. The reaction of the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem when Peter told them what happened - **Ac 11:17-18**
  - c. Peter's explanation at the council held later in Jerusalem - **Ac 15:7-11**
3. The purpose of the Spirit falling on them was therefore to show Jewish brethren...
  - a. That God was no respecter of persons - **Ac 10:34-35**
  - b. That God was willing to grant them opportunity to repent and have life - **Ac 11:18**
  - c. That Gentiles could be saved in the same way as Jews...
    - 1) By faith, repentance, and baptism - **Ac 15:9,11; cf. 2:38 with 10:48**
    - 2) Which faith comes through hearing the word of God - **Ro 10:17**

### **D. THE POINT AT WHICH CORNELIUS WAS SAVED...**

1. Remember that Cornelius was told to send for Peter, who would tell him:
  - a. *“what you must do.”* - **Ac 10:6**
  - b. *“words by which you...shall be saved.”* - **Ac 11:14**
2. From this, and from what we have already seen in other conversions...

- a. Cornelius was not saved until he heard the “words” (i.e., after sermon)
- b. Cornelius was not saved until he obeyed what he was told to do
- c. What were the words he was told to do?
  - 1) Certainly they were told to believe, as implied in **Ac 10:43**
  - 2) Clearly they were told to be baptized, as commanded in **Ac 10:48**
3. Thus Cornelius and his household were not saved until they “believed and were baptized”!  
- cf. **Mk 16:16; Ac 8:12,13**

## **CONCLUSION**

1. So while miraculous events surrounded the conversion of “**Cornelius And His Household**”, their salvation was no different from what we have already seen...
  - a. They heard the gospel of Jesus Christ
  - b. They were taught to believe and be baptized
  - Thus they were saved “*in the same manner*” as all those previously
2. As Peter said at the council, it is “*through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*” that both Gentiles and Jews are saved - cf. **Ac 15:11**
  - a. We are saved by grace, not works - cf. **Ep 2:5,8; Ti 3:4-5**
  - b. For it is not enough to be religious...
    - 1) Who could be more religious than Cornelius?
    - 2) Or even the 3000 at Pentecost, or the Ethiopian eunuch?
3. The grace of God which saves does require a response, however...
  - a. A response of faith - **Ac 10:43**
  - b. A faith in Jesus that comes by hearing the gospel - **Ac 10:42**
  - c. A faith which expresses itself in obedience - cf. He 5:9
    - 1) E.g., repentance and baptism - cf. **Ac 2:38; 3:19; 10:48**
    - 2) Not as works of merit, but as acts of faith by which one receives God’s grace

Those of us who are not descended from Israel can rejoice in what God revealed with the conversion of “**Cornelius And His Household**”. As properly concluded by the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem:

“*...God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.*” (**Ac 11:16**)

Have you taken advantage of this wonderful gift, by responding to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## Two Households At Philippi (16:6-34)

### INTRODUCTION

1. With the conversion of Cornelius, we were introduced to an event that was not uncommon in the early church...
  - a. A situation where an entire family, or household, was converted
  - b. We have three similar cases recorded in Acts
    - 1) The conversion of Lydia and her household - **Ac 16:15**
    - 2) The conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household - **Ac 16:33-34**
    - 3) The conversion of Crispus and his household - **Ac 18:8**
  
2. Such households likely consisted of both family and servants...
  - a. Cornelius sent two of his household servants to Peter - **Ac 10:7**
  - b. He had gathered his family as well as friends to hear Peter - **Ac 10:24,33**
  - Some wonder whether such families included infants as well, and if so, were they were baptized too
  
3. As the gospel spread to Europe, the first two examples of conversion involved **“Two Households At Philippi”**
  - a. With the conversion of Lydia - **Ac 16:11-15**
  - b. With the conversion of the Philippian Jailer - **Ac 16:25-40**

[As we continue our study in the book of Acts, we shall examine both of these examples in this study, to glean whatever we can about conversion, including the issue of “infant baptism”. Let’s first consider...]

### I. THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA AND HER HOUSEHOLD

#### **A. PRECIPITATED BY “THE MACEDONIAN CALL”...**

1. Paul and his traveling companions had been making their way through modern day Turkey, with the Spirit limiting their options - **Ac 16:6-8**
2. Paul has a vision of a man of Macedonian pleading, *“Come over to Macedonia and help us”* - **Ac 16:9**
3. Taking the vision as a sign that the Lord wanted them to go there, they travel to Philippi (a chief city of Macedonia) - **Ac 16:10-12**

#### **B. LYDIA AND HER HOUSEHOLD ARE BAPTIZED...**

1. Paul and his companions go down to the riverside on the Sabbath - **Ac 16:13**
  - a. It was Paul’s custom to find a synagogue and on the Sabbath to reason with Jews about Christ - cf. **Ac 17:1-3**
  - b. Evidently there were not that many Jews in Philippi, and no synagogue
  - c. But at least there were some Jewish women who met at the river to pray
2. Paul speaks to them, and Lydia heeded his word - **Ac 16:14**
  - a. She was evidently a successful business woman, yet one who worshipped God
    - 1) Her name is Greek, perhaps a convert to Judaism
    - 2) From Thyatira, she was seller of purple dye

- b. The Lord *“opened her heart”* to heed the things spoken by Paul
    - 1) In what way the Lord opened her heart is not specifically stated
    - 2) But she had *“heard”* what Paul was speaking (cf. **Ac 16:13c, 14a**), and we know that *“faith comes by hearing the word of God”* - **Ro 10:17**
    - 3) Through the gospel, then, one’s heart can be opened to be receptive
  - c. She was receptive enough *“to heed the things spoken by Paul”*
    - 1) I.e., to do or obey whatever Paul had said
    - 2) We can infer from what follows that it included baptism
3. Lydia and her household are baptized - **Ac 16:15**

### C. SOME OBSERVATIONS...

1. Once again we see things gleaned from earlier examples of conversion
  - a) Very religious people are being receptive to the gospel - cf. **Ac 2,3,8,9,10**
  - b) Baptism occurs immediately, after hearing just one lesson - **Ac 2,8,10**
2. In begging Paul and his companions to stay with her, she asks *“If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord...”*
  - a) What evidence was there to determine whether she was faithful?
  - b) At the very least, there was her willingness to be baptized!
3. Did her “household” include infants?
  - a. Proponents of infant baptism often appeal to the example of a “household” being baptized as evidence of infant baptism in the early church
  - b. They say it is plausible to assume infants were present, but is that the case here?
    - 1) Lydia was a businesswoman, with no mention of a husband
    - 2) She was from Thyatira, possibly in Philippi only on business
  - c. We can just as easily assume that her household was made up of servants, or at the least, children old enough to travel
    - The burden of proof rests upon those seeking to support infant baptism, and the evidence in this case simply isn’t there

[From the example of one who was evidently a truth-seeker, we now turn to the conversion of one who appears to have “stumbled” onto the gospel...]

## II. THE CONVERSION OF THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

### A. PRECIPITATED BY THE ARREST OF PAUL AND SILAS...

1. Paul exorcises a spirit of divination from a slave girl - **Ac 16:16-18**
2. Her masters have Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned - **Ac 16:19-24**

### B. THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER AND HIS HOUSEHOLD ARE BAPTIZED...

1. Events leading up to the jailer’s conversion - **Ac 16:25-29**
  - a. Paul and Silas are singing in prison at midnight, with others listening
  - b. An earthquake shakes loose the doors and everyone’s chains
  - c. The jailer, fearing prisoners having escaped, is about to commit suicide
  - d. He is stopped by Paul, who reassures him that all the prisoners are present
  - e. Trembling, he falls down before Paul and Silas
2. The conversion of the jailer and his household - **Ac 16:30-34**
  - a. He asks, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved”*
  - b. Paul responds, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household”*

- c. Paul then proceeds to speak the word of the Lord to him and those in his house
- d. In the same hour of the night, the jailer washes the stripes of Paul and Silas, and is baptized along with all his family
- e. He then brings Paul and Silas into his home, feeds them, and rejoices that he and his family have believed in God

### C. SOME OBSERVATIONS...

1. This example of conversion does not teach salvation by “faith only”
  - a. It is common for some people to simply note **verses 30-31**
    - 1) They offer this verse as containing the whole plan of salvation
    - 2) Denying therefore the necessity of baptism
  - b. Of course, this verse says nothing about repentance, confessing Jesus, etc., which the Bible requires elsewhere - cf. **Ac 3:19; 17:30; Ro 10:9-10**
  - c. The context of **verses 30-31** must be taken into consideration
    - 1) Salvation requires faith, so it is natural that would be the first thing to tell someone who asks “*What must I do to be saved?*”
    - 2) Without faith, one is not a suitable subject for baptism - cf. **Ac 8:36-37**
    - 3) Having established the necessity of faith, Paul proceeded to speak “*the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.*” - **Ac 16:32**
      - a) Though not mentioned, would this not have included the need to repent?
      - b) What is mentioned, though, is that they were baptized immediately!  
-- Clearly the “word of the Lord” included baptism - **Mk 16:16**
    - 4) It is not until after he and his family were baptized, that Luke describes them as “*having believed in God with all household*” - **Ac 16:34**
  - d. Taken out of context, one might use **verses 30-31** to teach salvation does not involve baptism, but in the context it certainly appears to play a significant role!
2. This example of conversion reveals something about the “purpose” of baptism
  - a. Contrary to the doctrine of many churches, the purpose of baptism is not to make a public profession of one’s faith
  - b. As we saw in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, baptism can occur when there is only the baptizer and the baptizee - **Ac 8:36-38**
  - c. In this case, a family is baptized in the wee hours of the morning (after midnight, in the same hour) - **Ac 16:25,33**
  - d. The purpose of baptism is hinted at by the fact...
    - 1) It was done immediately, even in the pre-dawn hour
    - 2) It was done whether in private or public
  - e. This example of conversion is consistent with the purpose expressed...
    - 1) By Peter (“*for the remission of sins*”) - **Ac 2:36**
    - 2) By Ananias (“*wash away your sins*”) - **Ac 22:16**  
-- As such, you don’t delay, and it doesn’t matter if done in private!
3. This example of conversion provides no evidence of infant baptism
  - a. Again, some appeal to the mention of “household” to infer infants were included in the baptism
  - b. Yet the text states that:
    - 1) Paul “*spoke the word of the Lord...to all who were in his house*”, implying that all were able to listen and understand what was said - **Ac 16:32**
    - 2) The jailer rejoiced, “*having believed in God with all his household*”; i.e., everyone believed, implying the ability of all to believe what they heard - **Ac 16:34**
  - c. There is nothing here to preclude what we have already concluded as necessary

requirements to be a subject qualified for baptism:

- 1) Repentance - **Ac 2:38**
- 2) Wholehearted faith - **Ac 8:37**
- Both of which infants are incapable

## **CONCLUSION**

1. With the conversion of **“Two Households At Philippi”**, a wonderful church was born...
  - a. The church at Philippi, to which the epistle to the Philippians was written
  - b. A congregation that supported the apostle Paul and the preaching of the gospel throughout Macedonia and into Achaia - **Ph 1:3-5; 4:15-16**
  - c. A congregation that was mindful of Paul even toward the end of his life, as he awaited trial in Rome - **Ph 4:10,14,17-18**
  - Never underestimate the effect of the gospel in the life of a family!
2. The conversion of **“Two Households At Philippi”** are illustrative of what Jesus taught in two parables...
  - a. **“The Hidden Treasure”** (**Mt 13:44**) depicts one who stumbles onto the truth; the Philippian jailer was such a person
  - b. **“The Pearl Of Great Price”** (**Mt 13:45-46**) depicts one who is searching for the truth; Lydia of Thyatira was certainly seeking to please God
  - What is important to note is that the Lord knew such people existed at Philippi (cf. the “Macedonian Call”), and saw to it that they had an opportunity to hear the gospel

What kind of person are you? Whether you are one who has been on a lifelong search for truth, or have simply stumbled across the gospel, are you willing to allow God to open your heart through the gospel and heed the word of the Lord?

Only God knows, but perhaps you will save not only yourself, but your whole family...

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## The Athenians (17:16-34)

### INTRODUCTION

1. Our next example of conversion is another one often overlooked...
  - a. It is the conversion of the Athenians, two of whom are specifically mention by name
  - b. Yet they are usually not listed in charts showing examples of conversion
  - c. Again, it likely because little is said, other than that they “*believed*” - **Ac 17:34**
2. But our purpose in this series is to also consider the sermons which led people to Christ...
  - a. In this case we have a remarkable by sermon by the apostle Paul
  - b. A sermon proclaimed not to Jews or even Gentile God-fearers (like Cornelius), but to pagan philosophers and polytheists
3. So our focus in this lesson will be more on the sermon itself, with attention to...
  - a. How Paul addressed those who did not know the God of Israel
  - b. The themes Paul addressed in this sermon

[We begin our study with a look at...]

### I. THE SETTING OF THE SERMON

#### **A. PAUL HAD JUST ARRIVED IN ATHENS...**

1. Following a hasty departure from Berea - **Ac 17:13-15**
2. Provoked by the idolatry rampant in the city, he began preaching at every opportunity - **Ac 17:16-17**
  - a. Reasoning in the synagogues with the Jews and Gentile worshipers
  - b. Reasoning daily with any who happened to be in marketplace

#### **B. HE ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF SOME PHILOSOPHERS...**

1. In particular, certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers - **Ac 17:18**
  - a. Some of which viewed him as a proclaimer of foreign gods
  - b. Because Paul was preaching of Jesus and the resurrection
2. They bring him to the Areopagus and invite him to speak - **Ac 17:19-21**
  - a. A rocky hill about 370 feet high, not far from the Acropolis and the Agora (marketplace) in Athens - Holman Bible Dictionary
  - b. As Luke explains, it was a place where Athenians and visitors spent their time discussing any new idea or thing that came along
  - c. Not having heard of the doctrine of Christ, they wanted to know more

[With such an invitation, you can imagine that Paul was delighted to accommodate them...]

### II. PAUL’S SERMON AT THE AREOPAGUS

#### **A. THE THEME: THE GOD THEY DO NOT KNOW...**

1. Acknowledging their religious devotion, he makes mention of one altar in particular - **Ac 17:**

**22-23a**

- a. An altar with the inscription: *“To The Unknown God”*
  - b. So devout, they sought to worship a god they did not know
2. He uses this as an opportunity to preach concerning the True God they did not know! - **Ac 17:23b**

**B. THE MAIN POINTS...**

1. **God is the creator of the universe - Ac 17:24**
    - a. He made the world, He is Lord of heaven and earth
    - b. As such, He does not dwell in temples made with hands - cf. **1 Kin 8:22-30**
  2. **God is the sustainer of life - Ac 17:25**
    - a. He gives to all life their breath and what they need - cf. **Ja 1:17**
    - b. Therefore God is not worshipped as though He needs it
  3. **God is the ruler of all the nations - Ac 17:26-27**
    - a. He has created every nation and determined their rise and fall - **Dan 2:20-21; 4:17**
    - b. Everything is designed to prompt men to seek God, who is not far from any of us
  4. **God is the Father of mankind - Ac 17:28-29**
    - a. From God we come; and in Him we live, move, and have our very being
    - b. Therefore we should not think that God is like any idol of gold, silver or stone
  5. **God is the Judge of the world - Ac 17:30-31**
    - a. What ignorance He may have overlooked in the past, such is no longer the case
    - b. He now commands all men everywhere to repent
    - c. Why? Because of the coming Judgment, in which...
      - a. God will judge the world in righteousness
      - b. God will judge the world through Jesus Christ - **Jn 5:22,26-27; 12:48**
    - d. As proof such will occur, God has raised Jesus from the dead
- The five points are from John Stott's book, **The Spirit, The Church, And The World**

**C. THE RESPONSE...**

1. The mention of the resurrection provoked a response - **Ac 17:32**
  - a. Some mocked (to many philosophers, the idea of a bodily resurrection is foolishness)
  - b. Others were more cordial, offering to listen again at another time
2. But as Paul left, some joined him and believed - **Ac 17:33-34**
  - a. Specifically mentioned are Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris, a woman
  - b. Others also joined Paul and believed

**III. SOME OBSERVATIONS****A. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING PAUL'S SERMON...**

1. **Paul used tact - Ac 17:22-23**
  - a. He acknowledges their spirituality, though misdirected
  - b. We should not hesitate to acknowledge the devotion one might have; if in error, our task is to explain *“the way of God more accurately”* - e.g., **Ac 18:24-26**
2. **Paul began with the present spiritual condition of his audience - Ac 17:23-27**
  - a. They believed in supreme beings, but didn't know the True God
  - b. With the Jews he began with the Law, with the Gentiles he began with the nature of God; we too should take into consideration where one is spiritually
3. **Paul made use of an accepted authority - Ac 17:28-29**
  - a. He quotes from one of their own prophets to make his point



- b. When appropriate, we can appeal to an uninspired authority accepted by others
- 4. **Paul led his audience to the main themes of the gospel - Ac 17:30-31;**
  - a. Such as the need to repent, the coming Judgment - **cf. 2:38; 3:19**
  - b. So our ultimate goal in preaching should be the gospel message
- 5. **Paul used the resurrection of Jesus as the ultimate proof - Ac 17:31**
  - a. God has given assurance of the coming Judgment by raising Jesus
  - b. Indeed, if Jesus truly did rise from the dead, it is proof of:
    - 1) The existence of God
    - 2) The truthfulness of all of Jesus' claims
    - 3) The reality of sin, judgment, and the need to repent
  - c. This is why we need to develop a strong apologetic for the resurrection of Jesus

## **B. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE RESPONSE...**

- 1. People responded in three different ways - **Ac 17:32-34**
  - a. Some mocked what they heard
  - b. Some put off making a decision until later
  - c. Some decided to follow with Paul and believed
  - Since we have no promise of tomorrow, the only safe course is the last!
- 2. Of those who responded favorably, it is only said that they **"believed"** - **Ac 17:34**
  - a. Are we to conclude from this that was all they did?
  - b. Did they not also "repent", as commanded in **Ac 17:30**?
  - c. The term "believed" encompassed more than simply an acceptance of the facts that had been proclaimed
    - 1) It involved a complete reception of the message preached
    - 2) It included an obedience to whatever conditions had been proclaimed by the apostles (such as repentance, baptism)
  - d. Just as faith was not explicitly mentioned in **Acts 2**, or repentance in **Acts 16**, but is fairly inferred from what we know other passages, so also with baptism here
    - 1) **"There is, indeed, much to be said for the contention, independently advocated by theologians of varied schools, that in the New Testament other is presupposed, even if not mentioned."** - G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism In The New Testament*, p. 272
    - 2) **"Baptism and faith are but the outside and inside of the same thing"** - James Denny (as quoted by Beasley-Murray, *ibid.*)
    - 3) **"Where baptism is spoken of faith is presumed, and where faith is spoken of baptism is included in the thought"** - N. J. Engelsen (as quoted by Beasley-Murray, *ibid.*)

## **CONCLUSION**

- 1. Whether Jew or Gentile, philosopher or simpleton, the gospel of Christ is for all...
  - a. Where we begin may vary with the spiritual condition of our audience
  - b. Where we end must always be the same:
    - 1) Proclaiming the reality of sin, judgment, and the need for repentance
    - 2) With Jesus as the only way to salvation!
- 2. When one becomes convicted of their sinful condition and their need for Jesus, the proper response should also be the same no matter who we are...
  - a. Faith in Jesus as the Son of God, who died for our sins and was raised from the dead, whom

- we are willing to confess before men
- b. Repentance from sin
  - d. Baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of sins through His blood

One's reaction to the gospel will always be one of three ways:

- ◆ **Rejection** (“some mocked”)
- ◆ **Reluctance** (“others said, ‘we will hear you again on this matter’”)
- ◆ **Reception** (“some men joined him and believed”)

In Athens, people such as Dionysius and Damaris exemplified the proper response; are you willing to imitate their example?

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## The Corinthians (18:1-11)

### INTRODUCTION

1. Following his limited success at Athens, Paul went to nearby Corinth...
  - a. An economic center of Greece, known for its immorality
  - b. It became an important focus of Paul's ministry
    - 1) Where he stayed a year and a half on his second missionary journey
    - 2) Where he visited once and possibly twice on his third journey
  - c. A well-known church was established, the recipient of at least two epistles by Paul
2. The establishment of the church is described in **Ac 18:1-11** in which we read of...
  - a. Paul's work in the local synagogue
  - b. The conversion of many Corinthians, including the ruler of the synagogue
3. We also read something about their conversion in **1 Co 1:14-17**...
  - a. Where Paul expresses thanks for personally baptizing just a few of the Corinthians
  - b. In which some have concluded that Paul was declaring the non-essentiality of baptism
4. In this study we shall examine the conversion of "**The Corinthians**"...
  - a. Once again, to glean what we can about the gospel's message and response
  - b. To determine whether Paul was actually demeaning the importance of baptism in his epistle to the Corinthians

[Turning to **Ac 18:1-11**, let's review Luke's account of...]

### I. THE CONVERSION OF THE CORINTHIANS

#### **A. PAUL'S ARRIVAL IN CORINTH...**

1. He meets up with Aquila and Priscilla - **Ac 18:1-2**
2. Of the same trade (tentmakers), Paul stays with them - **Ac 18:3**

#### **B. PAUL'S MINISTRY AT CORINTH...**

1. He goes to the synagogue, as was his custom - **Ac 18:4**; cf. **17:1-3**
  - a. He "*reasons*" with the people, as he did with...
    - 1) Those at Thessalonica - cf. **Ac 17:2**
    - 2) Those at Athens - **Ac 17:17**
    - 3) Those at Ephesus - **Ac 18:19; 19:8-9**
    - 4) Felix the governor - **Ac 24:25**
    - 5) Festus and Agrippa - **Ac 26:25**
  - The gospel is designed to appeal to the mind as well as the heart!
  - b. He "*persuades*" both Jews and Greeks...
    - 1) As he did at Thessalonica - **Ac 17:4**
    - 2) As he did at Ephesus - **Ac 19:8**
    - 3) As he came close to doing with King Agrippa - **Ac 26:28**
  - Again, the gospel appeals to the reasoning processes of the mind

2. When Silas and Timothy arrive, Paul is constrained to preach even more - **Ac 18:5**
  - a. He *“testified”* to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ - cf. **Ac 20:21,24; 23:11; 28:23**
  - b. Such testimony likely involved:
    - 1) Using the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament - **Ac 17:2-3**
    - 2) His eyewitness testimony as an apostle - cf. **Ac 26:16**
3. Rejection by some of the Jews sends him to the Gentiles - **Ac 18:6-7**
  - a. Just as it did at Antioch of Pisidia - **Ac 13:45-46**
  - b. In Corinth, Paul has only to go next door, to the home of Justus
4. The gospel bears fruit in Corinth - **Ac 18:8**
  - a. Crispus, ruler of the synagogue, believes with all his household - cf. **1 Co 1:14**
  - b. Many of the Corinthians believe and are baptized
5. Encouraged by the Lord in a vision, Paul stays for a year and a half - **Ac 18:9-11**

[With Luke’s description, we see a similarity with what we have read before. Upon hearing the gospel, those persuaded both believe and are baptized (cf. **Ac 8:12; 18:8**). This is certainly in keeping with the commission of our Lord (cf. **Mk 16:15-16**).

But often people will use Paul’s comments in **1 Co 1:14-17** to say that baptism has nothing to do with conversion (salvation). Is that true? Let’s take a close look at...]

## **II. PAUL’S COMMENTS TO THE CORINTHIANS**

### **A. THE CONTEXT...**

1. The church at Corinth was badly divided - **1 Co 1:10-11**
2. People were aligning themselves as followers of different men (perhaps based upon who baptized them) - **1 Co 1:12-13**
3. Paul illustrates the absurdity of calling themselves after men with several rhetorical questions
  - a. *“Is Christ divided?”*
  - b. *“Was Paul crucified for you?”*
  - c. *“Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”*
 -- The implied answer to each question was **“No!”**
5. But notice what else is implied by each question...
  - a. Christ is not divided
  - b. It was Christ (not some man) who was crucified for you
  - c. You were baptized, not in the name of some man, but in the name of Christ!
 -- So the context itself implies what we read in **Ac 18:8** (*“...many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.”*)

### **B. PAUL’S COMMENTS...**

1. *“I thank God that I baptized none of you except...”* - **1 Co 1:14**
  - a. Paul should be understood in light of the context
  - b. Since some of the Corinthians were dividing over who may have baptized them, Paul was grateful that he had not **personally** baptized many of them
  - c. His reason?
    - 1) Not because he did not consider baptism important
    - 2) But as he states himself: *“...lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.”* - **1 Co 1:15**
  - d. The Corinthians had been baptized - cf. **Ac 18:8; 1 Co 1:13**
    - 1) As a result of Paul’s preaching, by the way

- 2) But not many by Paul personally, for which he was later thankful!
2. ***“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...” - 1 Co 1:17***
  - a. Are we to understand Paul to say that he did not preach baptism?
    - 1) Clearly he did to Lydia and the Philippian jailor - **Ac 16:14-15; 32-33**
    - 2) Clearly he did to the Corinthians - **Ac 18:8**
    - 3) He taught baptism as the means by which one puts on Christ - **Ga 3:27**
    - 4) He taught baptism as the means by which one dies to sin - **Ro 6:1-7**
  - b. Rather, we are to understand that Paul was emphasizing his function as apostle
    - 1) He was sent to preach the gospel (which includes the command to be baptized - **Mk 16:15-16**)
    - 2) It was not his primary function to perform the baptisms of those who responded to the gospel!
      - a) Though he did in some cases - **1 Co 1:14,16**
      - b) But he was often accompanied by others (e.g., Silas, Timothy, Luke), and they were likely the ones to handle the physical act of immersing people
    - 3) In view of what later occurred at Corinth, he is simply thankful that his involvement in the act of baptizing others was rather limited
- Such was the point of Paul’s comments, and they should not be understood as Paul demeaning the value or place of baptism in the process of conversion!

## **CONCLUSION**

1. The conversion of **“The Corinthians”** confirms what we have seen in previous examples of conversions in the book of Acts...
  - a. The gospel concerning Jesus as the Christ (Messiah) was proclaimed
  - b. Those “persuaded” by the gospel message believed and were baptized immediately
2. The conversion of **“The Corinthians”** also stands out because of the impact the gospel had in their lives...
  - a. As mentioned, the city of Corinth was known for its immorality
  - b. Many of the members of the church had lived immoral lives - cf. **1 Co 6:9-11a**
  - c. Yet through their faith and obedience to the gospel of Christ, Paul could write:

***“But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Co 6:11)***

Such is the power of the gospel of Christ to the obedient believer. Have you been “washed”, “sanctified”, and “justified”? Let the conversions in the book of Acts show you how!.)

# Conversions In The Book Of Acts

## The Twelve Disciples Of John (19:1-10)

### INTRODUCTION

1. In our survey of “**Conversions In The Book of Acts**”, we have consider the following examples of conversion...
  - a. The 3000 on Pentecost - **Ac 2:1-41**
  - b. The 2000 at Solomon’s Porch - **Ac 3:1-4:4**
  - c. The Samaritans - **Ac 8:4-25**
  - d. The Ethiopian Eunuch - **Ac 8:26-40**
  - e. Saul Of Tarsus - **Ac 9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18**
  - f. Cornelius And His Household - **Ac 10:1-48; 11:1-18**
  - g. Two Households At Philippi - **Ac 16:6-34**
  - h. The Athenians - **Ac 17:16-34**
  - i. The Corinthians - **Ac 18:1-11**
  
2. There were others that we might have considered, but did not...
  - a. Those at Antioch of Syria - **Ac 11:19-21**
  - b. Sergius Paulus on the island of Paphos - **Ac 13:4-12**
  - c. Those at Antioch of Pisidia - **Ac 13:13-48**
  - d. Those at Iconium, Lystra and Derbe - **Ac 14:1-20**
  - e. Those at Thessalonica and Berea - **Ac 17:1-12**
  - f. And Apollos, who was taught by Aquila and Priscilla - **Ac 18:24-28**
  
3. But in the examples we considered, I made the following observations:
  - a. **The gospel message** was one that focused on Jesus...
    - 1) Who died for our sins
    - 2) Who was raised from the dead
    - 3) Who is both Lord and Christ, returning again one day to judge the world
  - b. That **the response expected** of those who heard was one of...
    - 1) Faith in Jesus as the Christ, the son of God (which included confessing that faith)
    - 2) Repentance of one’s sins
    - 3) Baptism for the remission of sins
  
4. Before we conclude this series, I wish to examine one more case of conversion...
  - a. It is the last example of conversion in Acts (with the possible of exception of some in the audience when Paul spoke at Rome - **Ac 28:23-24**)
  - b. It is unique for several reasons, one of which is that describes a “re-baptism”

[I am referring to “**The Twelve Disciples Of John**”, recorded in **Ac 19:1-10**. As we begin this study, let’s review the Biblical record...]

### I. THE CONVERSION OF TWELVE “DISCIPLES”

#### **A. PAUL’S ARRIVAL IN EPHESUS...**

1. He had just started his third journey - **Ac 18:22-23**

2. At the end of his second journey, he had made a quick stop at Ephesus - **Ac 18:19-21**
3. True to his word, he returned to Ephesus - **Ac 19:1**

#### **B. PAUL MEETS TWELVE “DISCIPLES”...**

1. He finds some “*disciples*”, who were twelve in number - **Ac 19:1b,7**
2. Upon questioning, he learns they were disciples of John the Baptist - **Ac 19:2-3**
  - a. He asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed
    - 1) As explained in the conversion of “**The Samaritans**” (**Ac 8:4-25**), I believe the phrase “*receive the Holy Spirit*” to be a metonymy for receiving a miraculous gift from the Spirit
    - 2) As an apostle, Paul had the ability to impart spiritual gifts - **Ro 1:11; 2 Ti 1:6**
    - 3) Assuming the “disciples” to have been baptized into Christ, he desired to give them gifts from the Spirit (such as the gifts of tongues and prophesy, cf. **1 Co 12:10**)
  - b. Their immediate answer sparks another question from Paul
    - 1) They had not heard about a Holy Spirit
      - a) They must not have known much of John’s own teaching, for he taught concerning the Holy Spirit - cf. **Mt 3:11**
      - b) They clearly could not have been properly baptized into Christ, for it is a
    - 2) So Paul inquires into their baptism
      - a) He learns that it was John’s baptism
      - b) Some have suggested that these 12 may have been converted by Apollos before Apollos himself learned the truth - cf. **Ac 18:24-25**

#### **C. THE TWELVE ARE “RE-BAPTIZED”...**

1. Paul explains that while John did teach a baptism of repentance, he directed people to believe on Jesus who would come after him - **Ac 19:4**
2. The twelve are then baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus - **Ac 19:5**
  - a. This would be the baptism commanded by Jesus - **Mt 28:18-20**
  - b. And the baptism expected of all would-be disciples of Jesus - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
3. Following their baptism, Paul laid hands on them and the Spirit imparted gifts of tongues and prophesy - **Ac 19:6-7**

[Such was the beginning of a very successful period for the gospel (cf. **Ac 19:8-10**). Again we see what was considered the normal response of one who wished to become a disciple of Jesus (faith and baptism).

The example of “**The Twelve Disciples Of John**” does raise an interesting question concerning “re-baptism”: Under what circumstances should one be “baptized” again? Here are some thoughts regarding this question...]

## **II. IS “RE-BAPTISM” EVER NECESSARY?**

### **A. OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE TWELVE DISCIPLES...**

1. They had been previously “baptized”
2. Their baptism, however, was lacking in some way
  - a. Even though it was immersion
  - b. Even though it was “*for the remission of sins*” - **Mk 1:4**
  - c. But baptism was not in the name of Jesus - **Ac 2:38; 10:48; 19:5**
    - 1) That is, by His authority

- 2) Which would have been a baptism into the name of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son - **Mt 28:19**
3. Because their first baptism **lacked an essential element**, “re-baptism” was necessary!  
 -- May we not conclude that if an earlier baptism lacks some essential element, then “re-baptism” is necessary?

**B. WHEN “RE-BAPTISM” IS APPROPRIATE...**

1. There are four “essential elements” of Bible baptism
  - a. The proper **mode**: a burial (immersion) - **Ro 6:3; Co 2:12**
  - b. The proper **authority**: in the name of Christ - **Ac 19:5**
  - c. The proper **purpose**: remission of sins - **Ac 2:38; 22:16**
  - d. The proper **subject**: penitent believer - **Ac 2:38; 8:37; Mk 16:16**
2. When one of these “essential elements” was lacking, “re-baptism” was commanded
  - a. In **Ac 19:1-5**, the proper **authority** was lacking
  - b. Even though their previous baptism had the right **mode, purpose, and subject**
3. Some cases where “re-baptism” would seem appropriate
  - a. If we were baptized **by sprinkling or pouring**, for the proper mode is immersion
  - b. If we were baptized **by the authority of anyone other than Jesus**, for the proper authority is Jesus Christ
  - c. If we were baptized **as a public confession faith** (thinking that we were already saved), for the proper purpose is the remission of sins
  - d. If we were baptized **but were not penitent believers**, for a proper subject is one who believes “with all their heart”
    - 1) E.g., when one is baptized just because their friends are doing it
    - 2) E.g., Because their spouse, fiancé, or parents are pressuring them to do it (and they do it to please them, not God)
4. But let me be sure to clarify:
  - a. When one is baptized because their “first” baptism lacked an essential element...
    - 1) It is not really “re-baptism!”
    - 2) For in the strictest sense, that person is finally being baptized scripturally for
  - b. When one has been scripturally baptized **once**...
    - 1) There is never a need to be baptized again!
    - 2) For once we have clothed ourselves with Christ in baptism:
      - a) The blood of Christ continually cleanses us of our sins
      - b) As we **repent** and **confess** our sins to God in prayer - **Ac 8:22; 1 Jn 1:9**

**CONCLUSION**

1. The example of “**The Twelve Disciples Of John**” certainly illustrates that one can...
  - a. Be religious
  - b. Have undergone some baptismal experience
 ...and still not be a true disciple of Jesus Christ!
2. One can rest assured that they are a true disciple of Jesus when their baptism had...
  - a. The right **mode** - immersion
  - b. The right **authority**- Jesus Christ
  - c. The right **purpose** - remission of sins
  - d. The right **subject** - penitent believer
 -- **Lacking any of these “essential elements”, one should consider being baptized again in**



**order to “make your calling and election sure”**

3. If we desire to truly be the disciples of Jesus Christ, then let’s be sure...
  - a. We proclaim the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, as preached by His apostles in the first century
  - b. We personally have responded to that gospel in the same manner as those who heard the good news preached in its purity and simplicity

I pray that this study, **“Conversions In The Book Of Acts”** has been beneficial toward that end.