

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

Accepting God’s Grace

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

To illustrate, suppose that a drowning

man is thrown a rope by a bystander. He is commanded, “Grab hold of the rope and I will pull you out.” If one wishes to be saved he must obey the command, yet his obedience in grasping the rope in no sense takes away the “grace” of the man on shore, not does it mean that he has earned his salvation. Likewise our obedience to the gospel commands in no way minimises divine grace, but rather enables us to accept that grace.

Examples of Conversion

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

THE 3000 ON PENTECOST (Acts 2) –

The multitude on the day of Pentecost was told to “know assuredly” (or believe) that Jesus was both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36) They did believe and said, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37) Peter replied, “**Repent, and be baptised** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins,** and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38) That day 3000

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

believed, repented, and were baptised in

order to have their sins forgiven.

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

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

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

Damascus road. Were his sins forgiven then, Ananias would not later have told him to be baptised to wash them away.

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

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

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR (Acts 16) – In Philippi Paul and Silas, who had been cast into prison, also succeeded in converting their jailor. Convinced that they were men of God he asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30) They replied, “Believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16:31) That same hour of the night he took the prisoners, washed their stripes, and was baptised, “believing in God.” (Acts 16:34 – A.V.)

THE CORINTHIANS (Acts 18) – The story of the conversion of the people of Corinth is to the point. “And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptised.” (Acts 18:8)

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

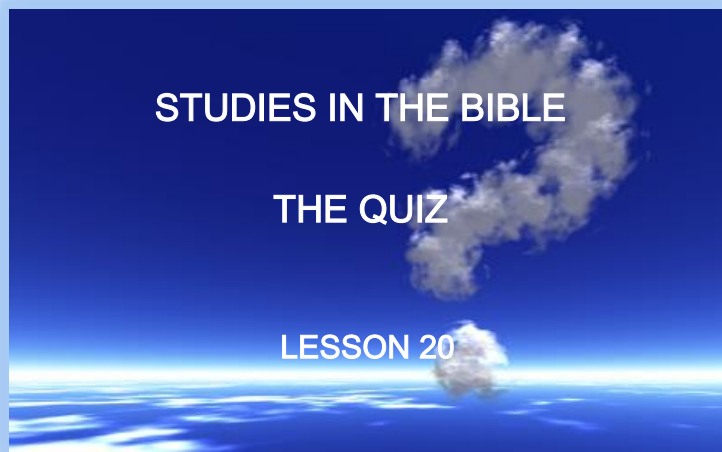
Jesus.” (Acts 19: 4, 5)

SOME CONCLUSIONS

1. New Testament converts were saved when having heard God’s word they believed, repented, and were baptised. Forgiveness through the blood of Christ was not received until all of these acts of obedience were performed.
2. Since no other means of becoming a Christian has been revealed, we today cannot be saved in any other way.
3. In the nine accounts of conversion there is no example of one being saved by having an “experience”, “praying through”, or “going to the altar”.

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

	HEARD	BELIEVED	REPENTED	WERE BAPTISED
	Acts	Acts	Acts	Acts
The 3000	2:37	2:36	2:38	2:38
Samaritans	8:6	8:12		8:12
Ethiopian		8:37		8:38
Saul	22:14			22:16
Cornelius	10:33	10:43	11:18	10:47
Lydia	16:14			16:15
Jailor		16:31		16:33
Corinthians	18:8	18:8		18:8
Ephesians	19:5	19:4		19:5



Seek and ye shall find

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

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

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

1. In making his defence Paul spoke to the people in
(a) Greek; (b) English; (c) Hebrew. a b c
2. Paul was born in: (a) Jerusalem; (b) Tarsus; (c) Antioch. a b c
3. On his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, a light shone on him about: (a) noon; (b) midnight; (c) the third hour. a b c
4. The one who spoke to him from heaven was; (a) Peter;
(b) Jesus; (c) an angel a b c

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

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

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

LESSON 20 – ANSWERS

Seek and ye shall find

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

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

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

1. In making his defence Paul spoke to the people in
(a) Greek; (b) English; (c) Hebrew. (c)
2. Paul was born in: (a) Jerusalem; (b) Tarsus; (c) Antioch. (b)
3. On his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, a light shone on him about: (a) noon; (b) midnight; (c) the third hour. (a)
4. The one who spoke to him from heaven was; (a) Peter; (b) Jesus; (c) an angel (b)
5. He was told to: (a) go into Damascus where he would be told what to do; (b) repent and pray; (c) thank God he was saved the moment the bright light shone out of heaven. (a)
6. In Damascus there was sent to him a man named:
(a) Barnabas; (b) Peter; (c) Ananias (c)
7. When the man came he restored Paul's (a) hearing; (b) sight; (c) smelling. (b)

8. Ananias told him to arise and be baptised: (a) because he was already saved; (b) as an outward sign of an inward grace; (c) to wash away his sins. (c)

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

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

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

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

Yes

No

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