

# UPON THE ROCK

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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians

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## EXCEPT YE BE CONVERTED

By Phil Grear

Jesus' disciples approached him with a fascinating question. "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1) Their question showed an undue concern with power and prestige, so Jesus explained to them that greatness in his kingdom would require a different mentality than they were displaying. They would need to change their thinking in some radical ways. They needed to be "converted". (Matthew 18:3)

"Converted" means "to turn or make a change". It refers "to a change in one's course of principle and conduct." It is thinking differently than before. Jesus told his disciples that if they were not converted they would not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. Pursuing power and prestige would have to give way to following a new course of principle and conduct, one that focused on humility. "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:2-4) "Humble" means "to descend to a low position". It means looking for the lowest position, not the highest. It is puffing others first, and self last. Jesus lived by this principle, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matthew 28:20) He humbled himself to serve others, and wanted them to do the same. Let the world strive for the limelight, they must be willing to descend to a low position, and not push for the higher ones. Without this conversion, it would not matter who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they could not even be in it.

The first step in coming to Jesus is humbling ourselves and being converted. We must submit to the teachings of Jesus, and quit trying to make our own rules. We must be as little children who humbly obey their parents, genuinely believing they know what is best.

The book of Acts is a book of conversions. It records several accounts of how conversion to Christ took place. People from varying backgrounds humbled themselves and became obedient to the truth.

There was the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:25-34). Having come from a completely pagan, and perhaps irreligious background, he obviously needed to change his course of principle and conduct. He knew absolutely nothing of God until Paul and Silas “spoke unto him the word of the Lord.” Many today are like him. They live their lives with little or no real knowledge of God. They are not “evil people”, they just are not religious. They devote themselves to worldly pursuits, thinking that is enough. As long as they are good people, treat their neighbors right, and do not hurt anyone, surely God will be pleased with them. What do they need to change? They need to change their basic assumptions about life. They need to submit to God, and understand his rightful place in their lives. If not, they will someday pay an awful price when Jesus comes “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 1:8) It would be tragic to someday face God without having known him in this life.

Some in the book of Acts came from a religious background. They were sincere and honest in their convictions, and undoubtedly had no idea they needed to change anything in their relationship to God. Many today are like those on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), who have lived their lives practicing unquestioned devotion to the beliefs of their fathers. Like Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9) they are convinced that they are right to the point that their consciences are clean. “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” (Acts 23:1) They are like Cornelius, a “devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.” (Acts 10:2) There are sincere women like Lydia, who although far from home, did not neglect her worship to God, but gathered with a group of women “by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made.” (Acts 16:13) These were good, sincere, honest religious people, and yet they all needed to be converted to Jesus Christ.

Obviously it is not enough to be religious, we must also be religiously right. Many who have been sincerely religious all of their lives still

need to be converted. They need to change their course of principle and conduct in the realm of religion. Men's teachings are no substitutes for God's. As a matter of fact, following the teachings of men will render our service to God invalid. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9) Jesus portrays a sad scene on the Judgment Day for those who only *think* they are right. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity," (Matthew 7:21-23) Yes, even some who are very religious need to be converted to Christ.

Where do you stand in your life? Is it possible that you need to "Repent... and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..."? (Acts 3:19) Sincerity is no substitute for conversion. Confidence that one is right is no guarantee that conversion is not necessary. Please search your heart and your life to see if you are in need of being converted to Christ. As you read the various articles in this issue of *Upon The Rock*, ask yourself this question, "Does what I did to be saved match what those in the book of Acts did to be saved?" We know what they did was right. God said so. So if you did something different than they did, you are the one who must change. Do you have the humility to be converted, that you might enter the kingdom of heaven?

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## The Conversions On Pentecost

Brad Poe

Everybody understands the merits of precedent. Precedent comes from the word "precede" meaning "to go before", and a precedent is "an action that may serve as an example, reason or justification for a later one." Precedent gives us confidence to take our car back to the same mechanic who was honest when it broke before. Precedent allows us to measure the baseball skill of today's superstars by

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

not teach the false doctrine of inherited sin. Since children are not born guilty of any sin, then the reason for infant baptism does not exist. The New Testament teaches that baptism is for those who believe. The Jailer was told to believe. Little children do not have the ability to receive Bible teaching and come to any conclusion in regard to that teaching. They do not have the ability to believe. The New Testament teaches that baptism is for those who repent of their sins. Little children do not have the ability to repent, even if they had any sins of which to repent. Repentance involves a change of heart resulting in the change of life. Little children do not have the ability to make that determination. The practice of infant baptism is without any Biblical foundation and is absolutely and completely unnecessary. Without faith and repentance, baptism is of no value whatsoever. A person must follow the example or pattern of the Philippian Jailer if they are to have the forgiveness of their sins, not the false teachings of mankind.

Several years ago I met a woman who had become a Christian. She had come out of a manmade religion which practiced infant baptism. When her first child was born while she was still in that false religion, she had that child baptized (sprinkled). After becoming a Christian she realized that was not New Testament baptism. She told me on one occasion, "I never want my child to know that was done. I do not want him to believe that baptism is what the Bible teaches." How right she was. Many today have chosen to go into eternity and face Jehovah God on the basis of their infant baptism, which is no baptism at all. Do not be misled, become a Christian today.

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comparing them to Ruth, Aaron and Mays. A court uses precedent when it appeals to an old decision for the authority to rule upon a new case.

There is precedent for conversion to Christianity in The Book Of Acts. Examining these prior cases gives authority for conversions today, allows us to measure any doctrine about "conversions" and feeds our personal confidence that we performed it correctly. In order, the first Christian conversions occurred on Pentecost at Acts chapter 2. The Feast of Pentecost was celebrated fifty days from the offering of the barley at the beginning of the Passover and required the attendance of all Jewish men at Jerusalem (Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-22; Deuteronomy 16:9-12). The twelve apostles—the original eleven, minus Judas, plus Matthias (Acts 1:15-26)—were waiting in Jerusalem for the Promise as Jesus commanded them (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). While the apostles were *with one accord in one place* (Acts 2:1; of, Acts 1:26), they experienced *the baptism of the Holy Spirit*, according to the Promise (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:4-8).

Pentecost brought Jews from every nation to Jerusalem, the festivities brought them to the temple and the strange noise brought them to the place where the apostles were preaching *with other tongues—that is, foreign languages* which these Galilean men were uneducated and untrained in. Greek was the international language, each Jew would have understood the Aramaic of their home country but the twelve were speaking the native dialect of each geographical region represented (Acts 2:5-11). Immediately, there was confusion. They began asking, *Whatever could this mean?* (Acts 2:12)

Peter answers with a sermon, but notice, when Peter is finished with the explanation there is clarity (2:37). The Holy Spirit here, as elsewhere, brought clarity instead of confusion; order where there was disorder; certainty in the place of doubt. In addition, this supervision by the Holy Spirit to bring sinners together with preachers happens elsewhere in the narratives of The Book Of Acts (Acts 8:29; 16:6-10). The reader may wonder, "If these sinners were the ones who needed God, then why did God go first to the apostles instead of to the sinners?" God has arranged for conversion to be generated by the preached message of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

Peter's sermon has three parts. First, he briefly refuted the foolish explanation for the apostles' strange behavior (*They are full of new wine*) (Acts 2:14-15). Second, Peter identified the event that was in progress as the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy (Acts 2:16-21; cf. Joel 2:28-32). Third, Peter preached Jesus (Acts 2:22-36). All recorded evangelistic sermons in The Book Of Acts have unique information in them that was required by their audience and occasion; but all of them also have the same basic content—Jesus and His kingdom (Acts 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 7:1-53; 10:34-43; 13:15-41; 17:22-31; 21:37-22:21; 26:2-23).

Regarding the sermon about Jesus and His kingdom that Peter delivered on Pentecost, Peter affirmed three main facts: Jesus' ministry with miracles (Acts 2:22), Jesus' violent death (Acts 2:23) and Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:24). His ministry and death were publicly observed without restriction, so they required no proof His resurrection appearances—while public and irrefutable (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)—were regulated, so these did require proof. As for the evidence to Jesus' bodily resurrection, Peter cited the Old Testament Scriptures since he was speaking to Jews who already accepted them as a credible witness (Acts 2:25-28, 34; Ps, 16:8-11; 110:1). While Peter did offer the eyewitness testimony of himself and the other apostles, he relied primarily upon Scripture for corroboration, quoting the text then giving commentary. Peter did not deliver an emotional speech like an audience might hear at a rally. Read it for yourself (Acts 2:29-36). He delivered a methodical, logical argument like an audience might hear during a Bible study. Peter's conclusion? *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" (Acts 2:36). The response of many from the crowd to Peter's message was immediate, and recorded with detail: *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* (Acts 2:37). The text reads: *Then Peter said to them, "There is nothing you can do. You had your chance. God was here. You killed Him. You blew it. It's all over for us."* "No. That is not the answer he gave. *Then Peter said to them, "There is nothing you must do. We have no obligation to respond, no command to obey, no responsibility in the matter. Go about your business. Nothing else is required."* "No. That is not what Peter said. *Then Peter said to them, "Pray this sinner's prayer. Pray Jesus into your heart. If you do that, God will forgive your sins."* "No. Peter did not say that either.

of Jesus Christ. This is the very heart of the gospel message. Preaching of the gospel, the preaching of the Word of the Lord involves the preaching of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we can safely conclude that the Jailer and his family understood what was required of them because of their actions following the teaching of Paul and Silas. The Jailer washed the stripes of Paul and Silas, an indication of repentance, and then they were baptized. Following this they rejoiced because the question asked in that dark prison cell had now been answered. Thus faith, repentance, and baptism are all a part of this conversion of the Jailer and His Family. All those today who would be saved must follow this exact pattern of the Jailer if they are to be saved. There are no substitutes, there are no shortcuts, there are no abbreviated plans whereby one might be saved but the response of the Philippian Jailer and his family to the preaching of the gospel is exactly the same response required of one today who would have salvation in Christ Jesus. There is no other way.

In the religious world today there is a false practice often called "infant baptism". This is the practice of baptizing (which is actually no baptism at all since in this false practice it is the usual practice to merely sprinkle a few drops of water upon the baby) an infant usually only a few days or few weeks old. There is no justification from the Scriptures for this false practice. However, in an attempt to establish Biblical authority for infant baptism, the proponents try to use the example of the conversion of the Philippian Jailer and his household to justify said practice. Their argument goes somewhat like this. Since the Scriptures tell us that the Jailer and his household were baptized, and since there must have been infants in the Jailer's household, then the infants must have been baptized. This may sound logical but the truth of the matter is that they simply assert that there were infants in the Jailer's household but they do not and cannot provide one shred of proof for that which they assert. Furthermore, they assume that infants and small children were baptized if there were such in the Jailer's household. Thus in trying to find support for a doctrine and a practice which the New Testament in no way teaches, they simply assume and assert that which they cannot prove. This passage gives no place for infant baptism whatsoever. The practice of infant baptism is foreign to the teaching of the New Testament and is itself an outgrowth of the false teaching that children are born sinners. Suffice it for our purposes in this study that the Bible does

In prison at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises unto God so that the other prisoners heard them. A great earthquake occurred and shook the foundations of the prison and the doors of the prison were opened and their bands were loosed. The Jailer knowing what had happened proceeded to take his own life thinking the prisoners had all fled. But Paul cried from with a loud voice instructing the Jailer not to harm himself for the prisoners were all present and accounted for. The Jailer then calls for a light and goes in to where Paul and Silas are and asks them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

No greater question could any man ask. Certainly there were other things to capture ones attention. Certainly there were untold numbers of questions that the Jailer could have asked. He could have inquired into their singing and praying. He could have inquired about what they knew about the tremendous earthquake that had occurred. He could have inquired concerning how was it that none of the prisoners had fled. In this great moment of history many questions could have been asked. But the Jailer realized that the greatest need that he had at that time was to receive salvation.

The response that they gave to his question is found in verse 31. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Many want to stop right here. They want to park right here and not go any further. Their position is that faith only is all that is needed for salvation and they believe that this passage support their theory. However, such is not the case. First, this passage can not be misapplied to contradict other plain passages of Scripture. Secondly, the entire context must be considered. We do not know exactly what this man knew, but evidently he knew enough to understand that Paul and Silas had something he needed. At least to some degree we would agree that this man exhibited some degree of faith. If faith is all that is necessary, why go any further? Evidently something else was necessary because the story does not end here.

The next verse tells us that they preached unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in his house. We can safely conclude that Paul and Silas taught this Jailer and his family the gospel just as they did in every place every time. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Paul states that the gospel which he preached was the death, burial, and resurrection

How did Peter answer them? The text reads, *Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* (Acts 2:38) The outcome? *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.* (Acts 2:41) Who was the "them"? The church of Christ named in Acts 1:15 as *the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty).* The fact is reinforced in the last sentence of chapter 2: *And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.* (Acts 2:47)

This identifiable precedent for conversion established in the first response of the first audience to the first gospel sermon about Jesus Christ is the pattern repeated throughout The Book Of Acts.

Each case of conversion in The Book Of Acts has its own exceptional, inert features that decorate the case, but the core action-response in each case is like at Pentecost: someone *heard* (Romans 10:14) the gospel information about Jesus Christ; they came to *believe* (John 8:24) the testimonial argument of the apostles and/or Christian community about that information; they *repented* (Luke 13:3)—were sorry and changed their mind and lifestyle—of their sins; they *confessed* (Matthew 10:32) Jesus publicly that He is the Christ; and they were *baptized* (Mark 16:16) for the forgiveness of their sins, and consequently and simultaneously added to the church of Christ.

There are other models given by other sincere religious people for conversion to Jesus Christ. There is a great variety in our age of answers to the question "What shall we do?" offered by denominational groups. Different people who claim to speak for God argue different action responses to acquire the free gift of salvation. But the only precedent for conversion to Christianity in the New Testament is belief, repentance, confession and baptism.

## THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITANS

Emmanuel Daugherty

Acts 8:1-25

"..And ye shall be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 8:1). The design of the gospel was to radiate ever outward from Jerusalem, the beginning place of the church, until the good news had gone throughout the whole world. Samaria was near the beginning of the spread of the gospel message.

Preliminary Groundwork — The backdrop of the conversion of the Samaritans is the groundwork laid by Jesus when he taught the woman at the well and she in turn told the citizens of Samaria who came to hear and became believers in the Christ (John 4:39-42). There is no doubt but that Jesus' tour through Samaria and the teaching of the women and men in that place played a great role in the ready reception of the gospel when Stephan preached there some three or four years later. Jesus had told the apostles that the fields are white unto harvest among the Samaritans (John 4:35). Jesus sowed the seed among them. Philip was there to reap the harvest. Philip, the evangelist, was one of seven men appointed to care for the needs of the Grecian widows in Acts 6. When these men began their work, the problem of the care of these widows that was disrupting the church ceased "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priest were obedient to the faith (1-6). When all in the church do their job, problems are eliminated, the work goes on, and souls are saved. A great lesson for churches of Christ today.

Persecution Spreads the Gospel —As Acts chapter 7 opens, we find Stephan engaged in open dispute with the synagogue council in Jerusalem. Edersheim says the rabbis claimed there were 460 synagogues in Jerusalem, but he says this is a gross exaggeration (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, 254). These men could not resist Stephan's words of "wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke" and summarily took him out of the city and stoned him to death (55-60).

After her obedience Lydia said to Paul and his companions, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us" (Acts 16:15). Lydia was faithful to the Lord. She was obedient to the commands of the Gospel. She manifested a faithful attitude by her support of preachers of the Gospel. She demonstrated Christian hospitality to Paul and his co-workers. How long they remained in Lydia's house we do not know. After Lydia's conversion, we learn that Paul and Silas were arrested, beaten, and imprisoned for casting a demonic spirit from a certain slave girl. Upon their release from prison, Paul and Silas returned to Lydia's house and found comfort there (cf. Acts 16:40).

Lydia was a great woman. She listened to the Word of God with a receptive heart and was converted to Christ through her obedience to the Gospel that was proclaimed. She was a person of prayer and a friend who gave support and comfort to her fellow companions in the Kingdom of Christ. How does your life compare to Lydia's? Have you prepared your heart to receive the Word? Have you obeyed the Gospel of Christ? If so, are you faithful to the Lord? Are you a person of prayer? Do you support those who faithfully proclaim the Truth? May each of us truly be converted like Lydia and live a life of faithful service to the Lord.

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## Conversion of the Jailer

Acts 16:25-34

Bill Williams

In this passage we have the conversion of the Jailer in the city of Philippi. The background for this text is found in the preceding verses where Paul and Silas had been preaching and teaching Jesus in this city. In that city there was a damsel who had a spirit of divination. This damsel was a source of profit for certain ones in Philippi. Paul cast the spirit out of the damsel. When those who profited from her saw that their source of income was gone, they brought charges against Paul and Silas. The rulers of the city had Paul and Silas beaten and cast into prison.

doubt, as Jesus said in the parable of the sower, received the Word into “an honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15). The notion that there must be a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of man for him to be saved is false. The power to convict one of sin and to convert the sinner from the error of his way is the Word of God. Paul wrote, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). The gospel of Christ “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth it” (Romans 1:16). When the Gospel is proclaimed and it falls upon a heart ready to receive it, the end result will be obedience. Without such obedience one cannot be saved from sin. On preaching and obeying the Gospel, our Lord said to His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). We learn that upon hearing the Word Lydia and her household were baptized. Literally, she was immersed. The word baptize is actually a transliteration of the Greek word baptize. To “transliterate” a word means that a letter-to-letter equivalent is used in bringing the word from one language to another. To “translate” a word means to express the meaning of that word in another language. Baptizo translated from Greek to English literally means, “to dip, to immerge, submerge” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament, pg. 94). The Bible describes the action of baptism as a burial. To the church at Rome Paul wrote, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

The importance of baptism is seen in the fact, that in immersion in water, the blood of Christ washes away sin. In speaking of Jesus Christ, the apostle John wrote, “unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5). The washing in the blood of Christ of which John spoke took place in the waters of baptism. Saul of Tarsus upon repenting of having persecuted the church was told by the preacher Ananias, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Lydia and her household washed away their sins by obeying the Gospel of Christ, thus, becoming the first European converts to Christianity.

This marked the beginning of a period of persecution that scattered the church abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria...and “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:1-4). At last, the command of the great commission is again going forward from Jerusalem and Judea and spreading out into Palestine proper.

Philip Proclaims Christ to the Samaritans — As the church began to fan out spreading the word, Philip went down from Jerusalem to a city of Samaria, probably Sychar (John 4:5), “and preached Christ to them” (8:5). “Said an ancient worthy, 'Were the highest heavens my pulpit, and the angels, with the numberless host of the redeemed, my audience, and eternity my day, Jesus should always be my text” (Quoted from The Book of Conversions, Frank L. Cox). This is the first detailed account of conversions since those on Pentecost. In between Acts 2 and Acts 8 are several brief statements of conversions: “And the Lord added to the church daily, such as were being saved...Many of those who heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand...And believers were the more added to the Lord; multitudes both of men and women...And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly: and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7).

With Philip’s preaching in Samaria, the spread of the gospel has bridged the gap from being preached just to the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea to the part-Jew, part-Gentile Samaritans. Since the Samaritans already knew Jesus and believed on Him, what more would Philip need to say? Of what did “preaching Christ” consist? In the case of the Samaritans, they perhaps would need to know why Jesus had been crucified and what should be their response to that knowledge. In verse 12 we see that preaching Christ involved “preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” Let us develop further these thoughts.

Preaching Christ — Philip’s preaching of Christ was no doubt much the same as the preaching of Christ already done by Peter, John, and the other apostles and inspired men: that Jesus was the fulfillment of all

that the Old Testament prophets and writers said of Him who was to be the Messiah (2:16; 8:35), His life and miracles (2:22; 10:38), His death on the cross for man's redemption (2:23; 8:32; 10:39); His resurrection from the dead (2:32; 10:40), His ascension to the right hand of God and His reign in heaven (2:30-36), and His return (10:42). Surely Philip's preaching of Christ would reflect that of other inspired men in the book of Acts.

**Preaching the Kingdom of God** — The kingdom of God refers to the rule of God; either in heaven (2 Peter 1:10-11), or on earth through the church (Matthew 16:18,19). Peter presented Jesus as having ascended and sitting at the right hand of God where He rules as King, but His kingdom is on the earth and is also that church Jesus said he would build. If, as some contend, that Jesus has not yet brought his kingdom into existence, why would Philip preach this subject? The kingdom over which Christ rules (Hebrews 1:8-9; 8:1) is a kingdom "not of this world" (John 18:36-37); the kingdom into which those redeemed by His blood are translated (Colossians 1:13-14); it is the place where the Lord promised he would "eat and drink" with his followers (Matthew 26:26-29) and is the kingdom over which he "must" reign until death itself is conquered (1 Corinthians 15:23-28).

**Preaching the Name of Jesus** — Preaching the name of Jesus means one is preaching by the authority of Jesus who after His resurrection from the dead was given "all power in heaven and in earth" authorizing His Holy Apostles and subsequent generations of followers to "go preach to all nations" (Matthew 28:l8ff). It is in the name of Jesus that one is baptized (2:38), and in His name saved from their sins (Acts 4:12). The early Christians counted it a privilege to suffer in His name (Acts 5:41). Paul would later say, "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow..., and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

**Philip's Preaching Brought Results** — As a result of the preaching in Samaria "they were baptized, both men and women." It is significant to note that what saved the Jews on Pentecost was what saved the Samaritans. There is not a different plan of salvation for the Jews and another for half-Jews and Gentiles. The gospel that Peter preached is the same that Philip preached, and John and Paul, etc. Like others,

She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' So she persuaded us" (NKJV). It is to this conversion we give our attention in this article.

The apostle Paul and his companions, Silas, Timothy, and Luke traveled with him during his second missionary journey. They traveled to Macedonia in response to the vision Paul received in the night of a man of that region urging him, "Come over into Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). Paul and his companions eventually made their way to Philippi, a Roman colony of Macedonia. There they encountered on the Sabbath certain women who had come to the river bank to pray. Among the group of women was one named Lydia, which means, "bending." Lydia was from the city of Thyatira, which was well known for its trade guilds. Lydia was "a seller of purple," an expensive, bright, and permanent dye which was produced from certain types of shellfish and was used to dye fabrics. R.C.H. Lenski in his commentary on Acts wrote, "Purple cloth of all kinds would be in high demand in this colony with its many Romans. It formed the trimming of the white Roman toga as well as the tunic; the rich wore purple (Luke 16:19); prominent ladies loved the royal color; rugs and tapestries contained much rich purple; and besides it was used by officials for state robes and by emperors and their courts. 'Royal purple' is still a current phrase" (pg. 657). Lydia was living in Philippi conducting business when she came into contact with the Gospel of Christ.

Lydia was one who "worshipped God" (Acts 16:14). She was likely a proselyte Jew and went to the river on the Sabbath with other women where people customarily gathered to pray. Lydia was not a Christian, but her belief in God was important to her. She evidently did not conduct business on the Sabbath. Paul and his companions used the opportunity to speak to the women concerning God's Word. The text says that "the Lord opened" Lydia's heart and "she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts 16:t4). In what sense did the Lord open Lydia's heart? This simply means that she heard, understood, believed, and was willing to obey the teachings that she heard. Paul was able to so teach and explain the Word that the heart or mind of Lydia could understand and receive the Word. She no

case does not mention every step specifically). Saul was honest enough to change when he learned that he was wrong. He acted immediately on his newfound knowledge. If only more people were like Saul in this respect. If you have not obeyed the Gospel we would ask you in the words of Ananias, “Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins...”

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## The Conversion Of Lydia

Bob Vincent

After the apostle Peter healed a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb, the people who knew the man “were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him” (Acts 3:10). The apostle Peter had the opportunity to preach the Gospel of Christ to those who marveled at the miracle that was performed. Peter declared that Jesus, the Son of God, whom they had crucified, was responsible for the man’s healing. Peter then said to his Jewish hearers, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). The word “converted” in the original language means, “to turn about, turn towards” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words, pg. 241). The conversion of which Peter spoke was the turning of the sinner from sin and turning to Christ Jesus for salvation. Jesus stressed the necessity of conversion when He said to the disciples, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

The book of Acts is a book about the turning of many people from sin to Christ. In Acts 16:11-15 the conversion of a woman named Lydia and her household is recorded: “Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us.

whose salvation is recorded in this same book, they “believed and were baptized” according to the command of Jesus (Mark 16:16; Acts 18:8) and were saved. Preaching Christ evidently includes instruction about baptism—its purpose, to be saved (Acts 2:38; 22:16), its mode—a burial in water in the likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 1:12). How can one claim to preach Christ and not teach the gospel plan of salvation?! Dear friend, have you heard the Good News of salvation in Christ? Like the Samaritans of old, have you been baptized into Christ? (Galatians 3:27).

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## CONVERSION OF THE ETUIOPIAN EUNUCH

Terry G. Jones

The Book of Acts records for us several cases of conversion where people were saved through their obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Given the fact that there are many false teachers today that are leading folks into religious error, it is imperative that we turn to the Bible and study “to present yourselves approved to God” (2 Timothy 2:15). The New Testament conversions serve as a pattern for us to follow that we might know what to do in order to be saved. One of the favorite accounts of conversion is that of the Ethiopian eunuch, as recorded in Acts 8:26-39. Let us examine this wonderful text and notice some vital points.

**THE PREACHER (v.26).** Romans 10:13-14 says, “For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” God knew that the Ethiopian was searching for the truth so He sent him a preacher by the name of Philip. Philip had a “good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3,5). When the great persecution broke out in Jerusalem, “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them” (Acts 8:4). As a result, multitudes of men and women were baptized, including one Simon the sorcerer. Having completed his work in Samaria, the angel of the Lord sent him to the Ethiopian.

**THE PROSPECT (vs. 27-28).** These verses describe a highly prospective candidate to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, thus, becoming a Christian. There are several things about this man that we do not know, such as, his name, his age or the color of his skin. Yet, there are several things about him that we learn from the inspired record. For example, we are told that he was an **Ethiopian**. This was not modern Ethiopia but the ancient kingdom of Cush which was south of Egypt. Secondly, this man was a **Eunuch**. Eunuch's were often used in the service of royalty and frequently were appointed to high positions because of their trustworthiness. Thirdly, he was a man of **Extreme Authority**. He was appointed treasurer for Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. Fourthly, we must be impressed with this man's **Effort** to serve God. He had traveled several hundred miles to Jerusalem to worship. He likely was a Jewish proselyte, and being a eunuch would have prohibited him from entering the temple (Deuteronomy 23:1). This man was serious about his religion and sincere in his faith. Realizing that his worship would be limited to that of a second class citizen did not diminish his effort to please God.

**THE PROBLEM (vs. 29-31).** Having completed his worship, the Ethiopian began the long journey home, "and sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet." Likely, he had purchased this scroll in Jerusalem and was passing the time by reading it as he traveled. In so doing, a problem surfaced. There are three things here that bring this problem to light. First of all, there is **The Instructions For Philip**. "Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go near and overtake this chariot'" (v. 29). This is the second time in this passage that the Lord instructed Philip to "go" and, without question, he went. He was always ready to go wherever the Lord needed him. Secondly, there is **The Inquiry By Philip**. When Philip heard the eunuch reading the scriptures he inquired, "Do you understand what you are reading" (v. 30)? The problem is seen in the answer that was given. The eunuch replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" This humble admission led to **The Invitation To Philip**. "Then he invited Philip to come up and sit with him" (v. 31) [McCord's Translation]. This is a wonderful occasion where God brought together a man who was seeking truth with a preacher of truth.

**THE PROPHECY (vs. 32-33).** The place in scripture where the Ethiopian was reading was Isaiah 53:7-8 which was a prophecy of the suffering of Christ. Isaiah described the Messiah as a sheep being led

lived on Straight Street (Acts 9:11). He fasted for three days while waiting to be told what to do (Acts 9:9).

In Acts 9:10-17 we find Ananias being sent to Saul. In verses 17 and 18 Ananias restores Saul's sight. Notice that he does not tell Saul to believe (there is no mention of faith – he is already a believer). Ananias does not tell Saul to repent. He is already penitent– he has ceased his persecutions and now desires to be a follower of Christ. Nor does Saul tell him to keep on praying. If anyone could have "prayed through" to salvation, seemingly Saul was the one to do it.

Obviously Saul still needed to do something in order to be saved. Ananias tells him in Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Here, the purpose of baptism is specifically stated–to "...wash away thy sins." How could anyone read these words and get the impression that baptism is not important or not essential to salvation?

Acts 9:18 tell us that Saul "...arose and was baptized." In so doing he was not only obeying the Lord's command, but he was baptized into Christ and the church (Rom. 6:3; I Cor 12:13; Eph. 1:22,23; 4:5).

Notice Saul's prompt obedience. He did not procrastinate or put off his obedience. He (like every convert we read about in Acts) was baptized immediately. This fact should further illustrate the importance of baptism. After his obedience, Saul took food and was strengthened (Acts 9:19):

### Conversion Today

It takes the very same things today to make a Christian that it took in the first century. Obviously none of us have or will experience the circumstances surrounding Saul's conversion; however, the conditions of pardon are the very same. As we study the great commission and other conversion examples, we can see that Saul's conversion harmonized with every one. In every case of conversion people heard the gospel, believed it, repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Christ and were baptized (although every conversion

## Saul Becomes A Christian

In spite of what many believe and teach, Saul was not saved on the Damascus Road. In the past, some have said that he was saved “between the stirrup and the ground.” However, if Saul were saved on the Damascus Road... he certainly didn’t know it. He asked the Lord, “...What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10). Can you imagine a saved man asking such a question? Consider these observations: If Saul were saved on the Damascus Road...the Lord didn’t know it. Listen to the Lord’s statement to Saul: “... Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). Can you imagine a man being saved and the Lord knowing about it?

If Saul were saved on the Damascus Road, he was the most miserable saved man you’ll ever hear of. He fasted for three days (Acts 9:9). As a rule, saved people are happy people. Happy people eat, they don’t fast. Saved people rejoice, as the Eunuch did in Acts 8:39.

If Saul were saved on the Damascus Road...Ananias didn’t know it. He told Saul, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). If Saul were saved on the Damascus Road...neither Luke nor the Holy Spirit knew it, for they record the facts and do not record that he was saved on the Damascus Road.

If Saul were saved on the Damascus Road,. .he was saved in his sins – saved without having his sins washed away. After traveling to Damascus he was told “. . .arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Does anyone believe that he was saved without having his sins washed away?

Clearly Saul was not saved on the Damascus road – he was still a lost man.

In Acts 9:6 Saul was told to “. . .arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). Notice, he would be told what he “must” do. He was then led by the hand into the city (Acts 9:8). In Damascus he went to the house of a man named Judas who

to the slaughter and a lamb silent before its shearer. John the Baptist spoke of Jesus similarly when he said to the disciples, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

**THE PREDICAMENT (v. 34).** “So the eunuch answered Philip and said, ‘I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?’ The eunuch revealed that his predicament was that he did not know of whom the prophet was speaking. Fortunately, the answer to his predicament was sitting right beside him in the chariot.

**THE PREACHING (vs. 35-39).** Preaching was the method chosen by God for the saving of the world (1 Corinthians 1:21). Luke informs us that the eunuch’s predicament was solved by Philip’s preaching to him which led to the salvation of his soul. There are six things mentioned in this passage that brought about that salvation. **The Content (v. 35)** of the preaching is mentioned specifically. “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.” Jesus Christ was always the basis of Philip’s preaching. That is the very same message that he preached in Samaria (Acts 8:5). The reason for that is revealed in Acts 4:12, which says, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Next, it is significant to notice **The Conclusion (v. 36)** the eunuch made. He said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” Upon hearing Philip preach about Christ, he concluded that he needed to be baptized. This is certainly an indictment against those preachers that try to preach Christ and leave out baptism. That is impossible! What good is it to preach about Christ and not tell people how to become members of the body of Christ? That’s definitely not gospel preaching. Jesus said to His disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16).

Then Philip revealed **The Condition (v. 37a)** upon which the eunuch could be baptized. “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” Upon hearing those words the eunuch was quick to make **The Confession (v. 37b)**, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” That was the confession Peter made in Matthew 16:16. Paul said, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that

God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Not only was the eunuch willing to confess faith in Christ, but he was ready for **The Completion (vs. 38)** of his obedience to Christ. The inspired record says, “So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.” Upon hearing that Christ suffered for his sins he wanted to be baptized. Philip did not have to beg and plead with him to be baptized. He couldn’t wait to be cleansed by Christ’s blood by being immersed in water for the remission of sins. Upon coming up out of the water, we see **The Celebration (v. 39)**. The Bible says, “he went on his way rejoicing.” In the words of that great old hymn, “Happy day, happy day, When Jesus washed my sins away.” This great account of conversion has helped multitudes since to know how to be saved.

## The Conversion of Saul

Mark Bass

The New Testament devotes more space to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus than any other New Testament character. Accounts of his conversion are found in Acts 9, 22 and 26. By studying all three accounts we can get a more complete view of just what took place in the conversion of Saul. Keep in mind that what Saul did to be saved was no different from what anyone else did to be saved. Let’s consider the Conversion of Saul.

### Some Facts About Saul

Saul was a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3). More specifically, he was a Pharisee. According to Acts 18:3 he was a tentmaker by occupation. Having studied at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 23:7), Saul was well-educated in the Jewish faith. He describes himself in Galatians 1:14 as being “zealous.” Even though he was well educated he was ignorant of the gospel. He was a religious man, but he was lost. After his conversion Saul described himself as “chief of sinners.”

## Saul’s Great Sin

The first mention of Saul is Acts 7:58 when he is involved in the stoning of Stephen. It would seem that Saul was a ringleader in the persecution against the church which followed (Acts 8:1,3; 22:4; 26:9-11). We find him traveling great lengths to arrest God’s children (Acts 9:1ff). Even though he was wrong he still had a clear conscience (II Tim. 1:3). Here is proof that one can have a clear conscience and still be wrong. The conscience is no better than the training it has received. The gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16) not our conscience. Our conscience is not a safe guide unless it is directed by God’s Word.

## Saul’s Mission

In Acts 9:1,2 we find Saul setting out for Damascus (about 140 miles from Jerusalem) with authority from the high priest to arrest and bring Christians back to Jerusalem for prosecution. About mid-day, as he drew near to Damascus, he was stopped and stricken blind by a light from heaven (Acts 9:3,8,9; 22:6,7,11; 26:13,14). The Lord then asked him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (Acts 9:4). In amazement, Saul asked, “Who art thou Lord?” (Acts 9:5). Imagine Saul’s shock at learning that it was “Jesus of Nazareth” (the one he had been persecuting-- Acts 22:8).

## Why Did The Lord Appear To Saul?

It needs to be clearly understood that the Lord did not appear to Saul in order to save him or to tell him what to do to be saved (he would be told that in Damascus). The Lord appeared to Saul in order to qualify him to be an apostle (Acts 26:16-18). One of the qualifications for being an apostle was to have seen the Lord following his resurrection. We must be careful to distinguish between the things that made Saul (Paul) an apostle and the things which made him a Christian.

With this introduction behind us let’s consider the conversion of Saul.