

# Conversion

1. Definition (dictionary)
  - a. The act or an instance of converting or the process of being converted.
  - b. The fact of changing one's religion or beliefs or the action of persuading someone else to change theirs.
  - c. Synonyms
    - i. transformation
    - ii. change
    - iii. alteration
2. Lessons in this series
  - a. Examples of Conversion from the New Testament
  - b. Modern Teachings Which Depart from the Scriptures
  - c. Converting Someone Else

## Examples of Conversion from the New Testament

1. Beginning of the Church: Multitudes Converted on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47)
2. Samaritan Village (Acts 8:4-25)
3. The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)
4. Saul: Later Became the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-19)
  - a. Paul Retells His Conversion (Acts 22:1-21; 26:1-32)
5. Cornelius: The First Gentile Convert (Acts 10:1-8, 24-48)
6. Lydia and Her Household (Acts 16:14-15)
7. The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:25-34)
8. Multitudes in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-13)
9. Crispus and His Family (Acts 18:5-8)
10. Some at Ephesus Previously Baptized in John's Baptism (Acts 19:1-7)
11. Colossians 2:6-15; 3:1-17
12. Titus 3:4-7
13. Romans 6:1-xx
14. 1 Peter 1:22-23

<b>Example</b>	<b>Hear</b>	<b>Believe</b>	<b>Repent</b>	<b>Confess</b>	<b>Baptized</b>
Pentecost					
Samaritans					
Ethiopian					
Saul (Paul)					
Cornelius					
Lydia					
Jailer					
Thessalonians					
Crispus					
Ephesians					
Ref. Colossians					
Ref. Titus					
Ref. Romans					
Ref. 1 Peter					

# 1. Beginning of the Church: Multitudes Converted on Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47)

- a. Deuteronomy 16:1-12
  - i. Seven weeks
  - ii. Day following seven weeks would be 50<sup>th</sup> day
- b. Acts 1:3 --- 40 days between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus
- c. Matthew 26:17-20 --- Passover began on Friday (sundown Thursday by Jewish time)
- d. Who was there?
  - i. Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5)
  - ii. Many nations (Acts 2:9-11)
- e. What was the message?
  - i. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2:36)
- f. What was the response?
  - i. Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37)
- g. How did Peter and the other apostles answer the question?
  - i. Did they tell them to utter the sinner's prayer? NO!
  - ii. Did they tell them to invite Jesus to come into their hearts? NO!
  - iii. What did Peter and the apostles say they should do?
  - iv. For what purpose did they say to repent and be baptized?
- h. Man-made Deviations
  - i. The kingdom did not begin at Pentecost; the church began but the kingdom is yet to come.**
    1. Throughout the gospels, it was proclaimed "the kingdom is at hand".
      - a. Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 6:10; 10:7
      - b. Mark 1:15; 9:1
      - c. Luke 9:2; 10:9; 16:16; 17:20-21; 19:11; 21:31; 22:29
    2. Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God during the 40 days after his resurrection.
      - a. Acts 1:3
    3. After Jesus' ascension into heaven, the kingdom is no longer preached as being "at hand".

- a. Acts 2:33 --- Jesus exalted at the right hand of God
- b. Ephesians 1:20-22 --- Jesus seated at his right hand; all things under his feet; head over all things to the church
- c. Colossians 1:13 --- has transferred us to the kingdom
- d. Colossians 4:11 --- workers for the kingdom
- e. 1 Thessalonians 2:12 --- calls you into his kingdom and glory
- f. 2 Thessalonians 1:5 --- suffering for the kingdom
- g. Revelation 1:9 --- brother and partner in tribulation and the kingdom

**ii. Baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Instead, those who are saved are baptized into the church.**

1. Jesus and the apostles spoke very plainly about baptism and forgiveness of sin.
  - a. Mark 16:16
  - b. Acts 2:38
  - c. Colossians 2:11-14
2. Some Objections to Baptism
  - a. Baptism is a meritorious work, whereas we are saved by grace, not works.
    - i. Titus 3:5 --- not by works, by mercy
    - ii. 1 Peter 3:21 – an appeal to God ...
    - iii. Romans 6:3-11 --- died to sin, raised to walk in newness of life
  - b. If baptism is necessary to salvation, Jesus would have said, “but he who does not believe **and is not baptized** will be condemned” in Mark 16:16. And besides, the last nine verses of Mark 16 are not included in the oldest and best Greek manuscripts.
    - i. Mark 16:16 --- no need to include the negation of baptism in the second part of Jesus’ statement. Baptism is for believers; one who does not believe is not a candidate for baptism.
    - ii. The textual evidence supporting the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20 is exceptional in light of the vast sources available for establishing the original text. While it is true that *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus* omit the last 12 verses, it is positively misleading to assume that “the validity of these verses is weak.” In fact, the vast number of witnesses are in favor of the authenticity of verses 9-20. The rejection of *Vaticanus* is less weighty in light of its comparable exclusion of the Pastoral

Epistles, the last part of Hebrews and Revelation. The rejection of Sinaiticus is similarly unconvincing, since it includes some of the Apocryphal books.

**iii. “The preposition ‘for’ in the phrase ‘for the remission of sins’ in Acts 2:38 means ‘because of.’ Hence, they were baptized because of sins for which they were forgiven when they believed.”**

1. The English word “for” has, as one of its meanings, “because of.” However, the Greek preposition *eis* that underlies the English word “for” **never** has a causal function. It always has its primary, basic, accusative thrust: unto, into, to, toward. We must not go to the text, decide what we think it means, and assign a grammatical meaning that coincides with our preconceived understanding. We must begin with the grammar and seek to understand every text in light of the normal, natural, common meaning of the grammatical and lexical construction. The exact same grammatical construction of Acts 2:38 is found in Matthew 26:28—“into the remission of sins” (*eis aphesin hamartion*). Jesus’ blood, the blood of the covenant, was undeniably shed for many “in order to acquire remission of sins.” This is the natural and normal meaning of the Greek preposition—toward, in the direction of. Had the Holy Spirit intended to say that baptism is “because of” or “on account of” past forgiveness, He would have used the Greek preposition that conveys that very idea: *dia* with the accusative.
  - a. In Acts 2:38, if repentance is not “because of” remission of sins, neither is baptism. Regardless of person and number considerations, Peter told his hearers to do both things. The act of baptism (connected to the act of repentance by the coordinate conjunction) cannot be extricated from the context of remission of sins by any stretch.

## 2. Villages of Samaria (Acts 8:4-25)

- a. Jesus said the gospel would spread to Samaria (Acts 1:8).
- b. Because of persecution, disciples left Jerusalem, and went about preaching the word (Acts 8:1, 4).
- c. Not exactly what the Pharisees and Sadducees might have expected.
  - i. Acts 4:17 --- “spread no further among the people”
  - ii. Acts 5:17-18 --- “jealousy”
  - iii. Acts 5:28 --- “you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us”
  - iv. Acts 5:33 --- “wanted to kill them”
  - v. Acts 6:11-14 --- Stephen falsely charged
  - vi. Acts 7:54-60 --- Stephen stoned to death
- d. Philip
  - i. Acts 6:1-5 --- one of the seven
  - ii. Acts 1:6 --- the apostles prayed and laid hands upon the seven
  - iii. Acts 8:4-5 --- went to a city of Samaria
  - iv. Acts 8: 6-8 --- preached, performed signs and wonders
- e. Acts 8:12-13 --- The Samaritans believed and were baptized
- f. Acts 8:14-17 --- Peter and John came from Jerusalem
- g. Acts 8:18-19 --- the Holy Spirit given through the hands of the apostles
  - i. Simon perceived this and wanted to do the same himself.
  - ii. Notice that Philip performed signs and wonders, but **COULD NOT** pass on the gift.
- h. Acts 8:25 --- Peter and John (and Philip?) preached in villages of Samaria on their way back to Jerusalem.

### 3. The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)

- a. Acts 8:26 --- An angel of the Lord appeared to Philip.
  - i. The Lord would send an angel to intervene for Cornelius (Acts 10).
  - ii. Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).
- b. Acts 8:26 --- This is a desert place.
  - i. Map of vegetation of Palestine indicates the area was mostly scrub and grassland rather than sand dunes.
  - ii. Desert can be used to indicate “sparsely populated” rather than arid sand dunes.
  - iii. In Matthew 3:1 the term “wilderness” is used.
  - iv. In Luke 7:24 Jesus used the term “wilderness”.
- c. Acts 8:27 --- Ethiopian treasurer, high-ranking office of Ethiopia
  - i. In the Old Testament, the name “Cush” was used for Ethiopia.
    - 1. Zephaniah 3:10
    - 2. Nahum 3:9
    - 3. Ezekiel 38:5
    - 4. Jeremiah 46:9
  - ii. Genesis 10:6 --- Cush descended from Ham
- d. Acts 8:27 --- had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning
  - i. A proselyte to Judaism, sometimes called “God-fearer”. Otherwise, why would he go to Jerusalem to worship.
  - ii. Ptolemy I, a general of Alexander, was Pharaoh in Egypt from about 330 BC.
    - 1. He greatly admired the Jewish people
    - 2. Established a library in Alexandria
    - 3. Initiated the translation of Hebrew scriptures into Greek (Septuagint)
    - 4. Thus Jewish influence was known in Egypt and neighboring countries such as Ethiopia.
- e. Acts 8:28 --- was reading the prophet Isaiah
  - i. Was literate
  - ii. Had the means to have his own scroll
  - iii. He was reading from Isaiah 53
- f. Acts 8:29 --- Philip did as the Spirit told him.
  - i. Acts 6:3 --- he was full of the Spirit
  - ii. Acts 6:6 --- the apostles had laid their hands on him

- g. Acts 8:30 --- Philip has a question
  - i. A very good question to approach the Ethiopian
  - ii. An angel had told Philip to go; the Holy Spirit pointed to the chariot; now Philip becomes the messenger of the gospel.
- h. Acts 8:31 --- how can I ...
  - i. The Ethiopian was seeking
  - ii. But he needed someone to guide him
- i. Acts 8:32-34 --- The Ethiopian was reading about the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, and was wondering whether Isaiah was speaking of himself or someone else.
- j. Acts 8:35 --- Philip began with that scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.
- k. Acts 8:36 --- comments by J. W. McGarvey
  - i. The appearance of the water to which they had come suggested this question, but it could not have been done so unless the eunuch had been taught something concerning immersion as a religious ordinance. But he had enjoyed no opportunity for instruction on this subject, except through the teaching of Philip.
  - ii. Had Philip, then, preached him a sermon on immersion? No. Luke says Philip "preached to him Jesus." How, then, had he, while hearing Jesus preached, obtained instruction in reference to immersion?
  - iii. There is only one answer to this question. It is, that to *preach Jesus*, after the apostolic method, involves full instruction upon the subject of immersion.
  - iv. The prejudice, therefore, which exists at the present day against frequent introduction of this subject in discourses addressed to sinners, is altogether unscriptural; and those only preach Jesus correctly who give to it the same prominence which belongs to it in apostolic discourses.
  - v. It was a part of Peter's sermon on Pentecost, of Philip's preaching to the Samaritans, and of his present discourse to the Ethiopian.
- l. Acts 8:36 --- my comments
  - i. Philip learned from the apostles, men who had been with Jesus.
  - ii. To the apostles Jesus said in Matthew 28:18-20: "**18** And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching

them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- iii. Philip was carrying out what the apostles had heard and what they were teaching.
- iv. We understand that to “preach Jesus” as Philip did, would encompass all that Jesus commanded.
- m. Acts 8:38 --- they both went down into the water
  - i. If baptism meant anything other than immersion, why would it have been necessary for both Philip and the Ethiopian to go down into the water?
  - ii. Add to this Acts 8:39 --- they came up out of the water.
- n. Man-made Deviations
  - i. It was desert; there could not have been enough water for immersion.
    - 1. Map of vegetation of Palestine indicates the area was mostly scrub and grassland rather than sand dunes.
    - 2. Desert can be used to indicate “sparsely populated” rather than arid sand dunes.
    - 3. In Matthew 3:1 the term “wilderness” is used.
    - 4. In Luke 7:24 Jesus used the term “wilderness”.
  - ii. I read an article (which I cannot find now) in which the writer states that Philip and the Ethiopian stood beside the water while Philip poured water on the Ethiopian’s head. The justification offered was based upon an unusual translation of the Greek for “into” (κατέβησαν). I fail to find any such usage of this word.
    - 1. Acts 27:30 --- lowered the ship’s boat into the sea
    - 2. Acts 16:8 --- they went down to Troas
    - 3. Acts 14:25 --- when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia,
    - 4. Matthew 3:13-17 --- Jesus went up from the water

4. **Saul/Paul** Acts 9:1-19 (Luke's account), Acts 22:1-21 (Paul's account before the people, following his arrest in Jerusalem), Acts 26:1-32 (Paul's account before Agrippa)
- a. What the scriptures say
    - i. Saul had persecuted Christians prior to his conversion. He had authority from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to go to Damascus and bind Christians there to return to Jerusalem for punishment. On the way to Damascus, a great light from heaven appeared to him. The light is identified as Jesus.
      1. Acts 9:1-5
      2. Acts 22:4-8
      3. Acts 26:9-15
    - ii. Saul inquires what to do, and is told to go into the city and he would be told what to do.
      1. Acts 9:6-9
      2. Acts 22:9-11
      3. Acts 26:16-18
    - iii. Saul was led by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was without sight and he neither ate nor drank.
      1. Acts 9:8-9
      2. Acts 22:11
    - iv. Ananias was instructed by the Lord in a vision to go to Saul, and he expressed reluctance because of Saul's reputation.
      1. Acts 9:10-16
      2. Acts 22:12
    - v. Ananias laid his hands on Saul, who received his sight, was baptized, and ate.
      1. Acts 9:17-19
      2. Acts 22:12-16
    - vi. A mission is given to Saul to go to the Gentiles. A slight difference exists between Luke's account and Saul's account.
      1. Acts 9:15 --- mission stated through Ananias
      2. Acts 26:16-18 --- mission stated directly by Jesus.
  - b. Comments of Lord George Lyttelton
    - i. Lord George Lyttelton (1708-1773) was an Oxford educated scholar who also served with great distinction in the British Parliament. Initially he

was highly skeptical of Christianity. He determined he would do a critical examination and expose' of Luke's record of Paul's "conversion experience." He believed he could establish that Paul's radical transformation was grounded in base motives of self-interest. He knew there had to be some rational justification for such a major alteration of Saul's life.

- ii. After carefully researching the matter in a thoroughly scholarly fashion, he reversed his skeptical view, having concluded that Paul's conversion was genuine. There was no reasonable explanation for the radical turnaround, other than the fact that Paul actually had seen the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road. The Christian movement was founded, he therefore concluded, upon the truth that Jesus of Nazareth in fact was raised bodily from the dead.
- c. Comments by Wayne Jackson in the Christian Courier
  - i. Some have criticized the book of Acts for containing three accounts of the conversion of Paul. It has been alleged that this makes the New Testament record unnecessarily redundant. Further, it is charged, the varying narratives conflict with one another in the details presented. The allegations are both superficial and false.
  - ii. First, there is the initial **historical narrative** as recorded by Luke in Acts 9. It hardly needs to be mentioned that long ago Luke passed the test of being a superb historian. Sir William Ramsay, who investigated Luke's writings in the light of archaeological data, contended: "Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness" (1979, 81). The primary function of Acts 9 is to sketch the basic details of Saul's conversion to Christ.
  - iii. Second, Acts 22 constitutes Paul's "defense" of his change, from opponent to proponent of Christianity, to his **Hebrew** kinsmen (v. 1). The narrative is designed to show that there is a connection between his Jewish background and his present religious posture. He wanted his Israelite brethren to realize that there was no conflict between Judaism and Christianity, as divinely designed. Rather, the former was intended to be preparatory to the latter (cf. Galatians 3:23-25), and thus the lesser was to give way to the greater (as argued in the book of Hebrews).
  - iv. Third, the aim of Paul's "defense" in chapter 26 was to argue that Christianity was never intended to be a **political rival to Rome**. Paul thus presented his case before Festus, a Roman procurator of Judea under Nero Caesar's authority, and Agrippa II, a Jewish "king" who was the last of the bloody Herod line. Agrippa's father executed the first apostle martyred for Christ (Acts 12:1-2). Agrippa was very familiar with Jewish affairs, hence was an ideal source of information for Festus. That the apostle's argument was successful is demonstrated by the declaration of

the unlikely confederation: “This man is doing nothing worth of death or imprisonment.” Indeed, as Agrippa commented: “This man might have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar” (Acts 26:30-32).

d. Man-made Deviations

- i. It is frequently asserted that Paul’s conversion occurred on the road to Damascus. There is no trace of evidence for that theory. Saul saw Christ on the road and was convinced that he was the risen Jesus. The persecutor asked what he should do (22:10), and he was instructed to enter the city, where he would be told what he “must do” (9:6). There is nothing in any of the three records that would indicate that he received pardon on the Damascus road. In fact, we find him still in his sins at the time Ananias arrived (22:16).
- ii. Following the Christ’s injunction, Saul entered Damascus. For three days he neither ate nor drank, and he prayed vigorously (9:9,11). It is sometimes alleged that Saul’s prayers were the means of his salvation. Again, however, this conflicts with Paul’s later testimony. The preacher sent by Jesus commanded: “And now, why do you wait? Arise, and be immersed, and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (22:16). Some have contended that the use of the term “brother” (9:17) indicates that Saul was recognized already as a Christian. Not so; “brother,” was a common form of address such as any devout Hebrew might employ to a national kinsman (cf. 2:29,37; 3:17; Romans 9:3).
- iii. Some, appealing to 9:17b, would venture to suggest that Saul was saved by a supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There are a couple of serious problems with that view. First, it assumes what the text does not say. Second, the reference to being “filled with the Holy Spirit” was, we believe, an allusion to the Spirit’s empowerment of this man as an apostle of Christ—though some see this as a reference to the ordinary “gift of the Holy Spirit” subsequent to his baptism. While Ananias was a preliminary instrument in the process that would lead to Paul’s spiritual endowment, the Holy Spirit was not conveyed to the penitent Hebrew by means of Ananias’ hands. As a non-apostle, the Damascus disciple did not have such power; that acquisition was to be provided directly by the Lord Himself. The New Testament does not cite the precise time when Saul was filled with the power of the Spirit. The notion that the reception of Saul’s sight and the endowment of the Holy Spirit occurred at the same time is not demanded by the text under consideration. These things aside, this theory likewise contradicts 22:16.
- iv. The fact that baptism here is associated with cleansing from sin has been a real “thorn in the flesh” for theologians who deny the connection. Some theologians concede that the language is capable of being viewed as a

proof text for the essentiality of baptism, but on strictly arbitrary grounds they reject that idea, claiming that the sacred text must not get in the way of one's denominational bias!

- v. In submitting to immersion, one is actually by that act “calling on” the Lord's name. (22:16). A popular, though erroneous, view is that “calling on the name of the Lord” is the uttering of a prayer. Romans 10:13 is a popular scripture which many use to justify their belief while completely ignoring Acts 2 and Acts 22.
- e. When did Saul received the gifts of the Holy Spirit?
  - i. There is no question that he had miraculous gifts.
    - 1. 1 Corinthians 14:18
    - 2. 2 Corinthians 12:11-12
    - 3. Acts 13:9-12
    - 4. Acts 20:7-12
    - 5. 9 additional miracles recorded in Acts plus
  - ii. Paul, like Peter, John, and the other apostles, was able to bestow spiritual gifts.
    - 1. 2 Timothy 1:6
    - 2. Romans 1:11
  - iii. Ananias laid hands on Saul (Acts 9:17)
    - 1. But Ananias was not an apostle
    - 2. Philip had received spiritual gifts through the apostles, but he could not pass that on.
      - a. Acts 6:6
      - b. Acts 8:4-24
    - 3. Ananias may have received spiritual gifts like Philip, but it would be contradictory for Ananias to be able to bestow spiritual gifts when Philip could not.
    - 4. He did say that Saul was to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - iv. There is an indication that Jesus would appear to Saul on occasions following His appearance on the road to Damascus.
    - 1. Acts 26:16
  - v. First recorded miracle of Saul/Paul is found in Acts 13.
  - vi. At some time between Acts 9:17 and Acts 13, Paul was endowed with spiritual gifts as an apostle.

- vii. He was taught the gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:11-12).
- viii. He went into Arabia (Galatians 1:15-17).
- ix. My opinion is that this must have been a direct operation of the Holy Spirit as it was with Peter and the apostles at Pentecost, and with Cornelius and his household.
  - 1. Acts 2:6-7 --- everyone was hearing in his own language
  - 2. Acts 10:46 --- Cornelius and his household were speaking in tongues; no other miraculous gift is recorded.

## **5. Cornelius: The First Gentile Convert (Acts 10:1-8, 24-48)**

### a. Characteristics of Cornelius

- i. Acts 10:1
  - 1. A centurion of the Roman army
- ii. Acts 10:2
  - 1. Devout
  - 2. Feared God with all his household
  - 3. Gave alms generously
  - 4. Prayed continually to God
- iii. Acts 10:3-8
  - 1. An angel of God spoke to him
  - 2. Send for Peter
- iv. Acts 10:9-16
  - 1. God's preparation of Peter
- v. Acts 10:17-23
  - 1. Peter was still pondering the vision when the three men sent by Cornelius arrived.
  - 2. The Spirit told Peter to go with the three men.
  - 3. Cornelius wanted to hear what Peter had to say.
- vi. Acts 10:24-33
  - 1. Cornelius had gathered all his relatives and close friends.
  - 2. Peter now understood the vision – “God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.”
  - 3. Cornelius and his relatives and close friends were prepared to hear all that Peter had been commanded by the Lord.

### b. Peter's Sermon and Explanation at Jerusalem

- i. Acts 10:34-43

1. Peter's sermon – 3 points
    - a. God shows no partiality (34-35).
    - b. Salvation is through Christ (36-43).
    - c. What man must do (47-48).
      - i. Peter commanded them to be baptized.
  - ii. Acts 11:1-18
    1. Needed to explain to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
    2. Peter relates more detail of Cornelius' request (14)
      - a. "He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and your household."
- c. A Gentile Pentecost
    - i. Acts 10:44-46
      1. Has been called "The Gentile Pentecost".
      2. Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit before baptism, without the laying on of the apostle's hands, in the same way the apostles had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
      3. This was important in that it convinced Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to glorify God and accept that "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:18)

## **6. Lydia and Her Household (Acts 16:11-15)**

- a. Apparently no synagogue in Philippi
  - i. City founded by Alexander the Great
  - ii. A Roman outpost on the main route from Rome to the east
- b. A small number of Jews who met beside a river on the Sabbath
  - i. Where there was no synagogue, Jews would meet at a designated place on the Sabbath, such as beside the river in Philippi.
- c. Lydia a worshipper of God
- d. She actually came from Thyatira
- e. The Lord opened her heart to what was said by Paul.
- f. None of Paul's message is stated, but it apparently included baptism.
- g. After release from imprisonment, Paul and Silas visit Lydia, and encouraged the brothers.

## 7. The Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:16-34)

- a. The circumstances under which Paul and Silas were imprisoned (16-23).
  - i. The slave girl with a spirit of divination
    1. Abominable under the law (Deuteronomy 18:9-12)
    2. Made her owners wealthy.
    3. She cried out what Paul and Silas were doing, for many days.
    4. Paul was annoyed and commanded the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.
  - ii. Imprisonment
    1. Motive for seizing Paul and Silas was loss of gain.
    2. Accusation before the magistrates was, they are Jews.
      - a. Disturbing the city.
      - b. Advocating customs that are not lawful for Romans.
    3. The crowd joined in the attack.
    4. Paul and Silas were beaten with rods.
    5. The jailor was order to keep them safely.
    6. They were put into the inner prison and their feet were fastened with stocks.
- b. What happened in prison
  - i. Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns.
  - ii. The prisoners were listening.
  - iii. An earthquake shook the foundations of the prison.
  - iv. All the gates were opened.
  - v. Everyone's bounds were unfastened.
- c. The jailor
  - i. The jailor was awakened by the earthquake.
  - ii. Saw that the prison doors were open.
  - iii. Was about to take his own life (he was responsible with his life for the prisoners).
  - iv. Paul stopped him with a loud voice.
  - v. The jailor called for lights, rushed in, and fell down before Paul and Silas.
- d. The jailor's question – What must I do to be saved?
  - i. The jailor must have heard something of what was going own.
    1. A spirit cast out of a slave girl, who for many days followed Paul and Silas, proclaiming, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."

2. Praying and singing hymns.
3. Not a single prisoner escaped.
- ii. By their answer, Paul and Silas understood what the jailor was asking.
  1. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household.
    - a. A favorite among many
    - b. But not the whole story
  2. They spoke the word of the Lord to him and all who were in his house.
  3. The jailor washed their wounds.
  4. The jailor was baptized at once, he and all his family.
  5. They rejoiced because they had believed in God.
  6. Evidently, from what follows, they returned to the prison.
- e. Paul and Silas are set free and asked to leave the town.
  - i. The magistrates had decided to let them go and sent the police to do so.
  - ii. Paul addresses the mistake of the magistrates in beating and imprisoning Roman citizens.
  - iii. The magistrates apologized, and asked them to leave town
  - iv. Paul and Silas went to encourage Lydia and the brothers before leaving town.
- f. Comments
  - i. A popular message in the religious world is “accept Christ into your heart as your personal savior.” But, upon being asked what to do by the jailor, Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to him and all who were in his house. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
  - ii. The immediate answer “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ ...” was intended to redirect the jailor’s religious attachment to the pagan gods of Greek and Roman mythology toward the true object of belief --- Jesus Christ.
  - iii. If baptism were unnecessary to salvation, why is it even mentioned following the preaching of Paul and Silas?
  - iv. Where did the jailor get the idea that he needed to be baptized? It had to have been included in Paul and Silas speaking the word of the Lord to him.
  - v. Why were the jailor and his family baptized immediately, in the middle of the night, after midnight, if baptism was not necessary? A common practice in the religious world is to wait a week, a month, or longer.

- vi. Following baptism, the jailor rejoiced along with his household that he had believed in God.
- vii. Where did the wide-spread rejection of baptism for forgiveness of sins begin?
  1. My own search leads to a time early in the Reformation movement, in the early 1500's.
    - a. Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) was a reformer in Sweden.
    - b. To him is attributed the statement “it is an outward sign of an inward grace”.
    - c. The necessity of baptism for salvation had been universally accepted for 1500 years, but the reformers, in their zeal to reform the Catholic church, were prone to reject things they viewed as merely Catholic in origin.
    - d. More detail will be given in an upcoming lesson.

## 8. Multitudes in Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-13)

- a. Letters to Thessalonica
  - i. 1 Thessalonians 1:1 --- to the church of the Thessalonians
  - ii. 1 Thessalonians 2:2 --- declared the gospel in boldness
- b. Thessalonica – 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey
  - i. Acts 17:1 --- synagogue at Thessalonica
  - ii. Acts 17:2 --- reasoned with them from the scriptures
  - iii. Acts 17:3 --- Jesus is the Christ
  - iv. Acts 17:4 --- some were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas
    1. Jews (some)
    2. Devout Greeks (a great many)
      - a. To the extent that having Gentile converts to Judaism was a source of pride to the hereditary Jews, the hereditary Jews of Thessalonica were all the more troubled and angered by Paul and Silas.
    3. Leading women (not a few)
  - v. Acts 17:6 --- dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities
- c. Berea – 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey
  - i. Acts 17:10 --- a Jewish synagogue
  - ii. Acts 17:11 --- these Jews examined the scriptures
  - iii. Acts 17:12 --- many believed
    1. Jews
    2. Greek women of high standing
    3. Greek men
- d. Comments
  - i. In Thessalonica, *some* Jews believed (Acts 17:4).
  - ii. In Berea, *many* of them believed (Acts 17:12).
  - iii. Note that in these two locations, baptism is not mentioned.
    1. No reason to presume they were NOT baptized.
      - a. Would be inconsistent with all the other examples of conversion in Acts.
      - b. Some might disagree with me and say there is no reason to presume that they WERE baptized.
      - c. It is stated that some joined Paul and Silas at Thessalonica (Acts 17:4).

- d. It is stated that many believed at Berea (Acts 17:12).
- iv. The mention of Greek ladies of high standing and of Greek men
  - 1. Turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).
  - 2. The churches in these two cities included both Jews and Gentiles.
  - 3. Probably, by reason of their presence in the Jewish synagogues, these Gentiles were worshipping God with the Jews.
    - a. Devout Greeks (Acts 17:4).

## 9. Crispus and His Family (Acts 18:5-8)

- a. No report of any believers at Athens. Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.
- b. Found Aquila and Priscilla there.
- c. Trouble by Jewish opposition moved him to focus on preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.
  - i. Acts 18:6
  - ii. 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16
  - iii. Acts 9:15; 26:16-18
- d. Paul went to the house of Titius Justus, whose house was next door to the synagogue.
- e. Crispus, his household, and many of the Corinthians heard Paul, believed, and were baptized.
  - i. Crispus was baptized by Paul (1 Corinthians 1:14).
  - ii. Crispus had a high standing among the Jews (he was the ruler of the synagogue)
    1. He was not deterred by the Jewish opposition.
    2. He was willing to abandon his high standing in order to obey the gospel.

## **10. Some at Ephesus Previously Baptized in John's Baptism (Acts 19:1-7)**

- a. Paul found some disciples at Ephesus
- b. There were some irregularities about the disciples, which Paul apparently noticed
  - i. Paul's question "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"
  - ii. They had never heard of the Holy Spirit
    1. What they had been taught was lacking if they knew nothing of the promise of the Holy Spirit.
  - iii. This led Paul to question their baptism
    1. John's baptism was for repentance, with no promise of the Holy Spirit.
    2. The Spirit could not come before Jesus was risen (John 7:39).
  - iv. So they were immediately baptized in the name of Jesus
- c. Miraculous gifts of the Spirit came then, not as a result of baptism in the name of Jesus, but because Paul laid his hands on them.
- d. Apollos had spoken eloquently at Ephesus (Acts 18:24), and he was instructed more accurately by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26).
- e. A connection between Apollos' inaccurate teaching and the condition of these 12 men might be implied, but it is not specifically stated.

## **11. Colossians 2:6-15; 3:1-17**

- a. Colossae was a city in Phrygia
  - i. Acts 2:10 – some from Phrygia were in Jerusalem at Pentecost
  - ii. Acts 18:22-23 – went through the region of Phrygia, strengthening the disciples
- b. Colossians 2:6 – just as you were taught
- c. Colossians 2:11-12 – buried with Him in baptism, raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God
- d. Colossians 3:1 – If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above ...

## 12. Titus 3:4-7

- a. Titus 1:4 – To Titus, my true child in the common faith
- b. Titus 2:1 – teach what accords with sound doctrine
- c. Titus 3:1 – Remind them to be ...
- d. Titus 3:3 – For we ourselves were once ...
- e. Titus 3:4-5 - **4** But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit

## 13. Romans 6:1-14

- a. The understanding that we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins is fundamentally known.
- b. Less well-known is that we were also baptized into his death.
  - i. Jesus died to take away our sins.
  - ii. We partake of the benefits of his death.
  - iii. His death, representatively, becomes our death.
  - iv. Only the dead are buried.
  - v. Baptism was given to us upon his ascension to show our death to a life in a sinful kingdom of darkness, and our resurrection to live again in righteousness in a sunless kingdom of light.
- c. Since this is the case, the idea that a baptized person should continue a life of sin after dying to sin evokes perhaps the strongest possible negative response from Paul.
- d. Also, not emphasized very much, is the commitment to live a life of righteousness following baptism. (The word **obligation** might well be used instead of **commitment**). Whether it is a commitment or an obligation, it is not to be taken lightly. *Warning! The following points may seem offensive to some.*
  - i. Only the resurrected rise from the grave.
  - ii. One who has not fully resolved to live as having died unto sin has no right to be resurrected.
  - iii. Or, one who is still dead in sin should remain buried.
- e. What of some objection that we might die to sin in baptism, and still be under no obligation to refrain from sin after baptism?
  - i. We cannot be united with Christ in one part of baptism (death, burial) and be severed from Christ in the other part (resurrection).

- ii. If we died to sin in baptism, we must also rise with Him to lead a new life in a new (to us) kingdom of God.
  - iii. We do not actually die, as did Christ, but we participate in Christ's death; we do not actually rise to a glorified life, as did Christ, but we strive to maintain a likeness to it.
  - iv. When real death and resurrection come, Christ actually unites with us, we shall indeed be dead to sin and alive to righteousness; for there is no sin among immortals, and there is no lack of perfection in those who are changed into Christ's image.
- f. A change of masters
- i. In dying to sin, we are no longer enslaved by it, no longer in the dominion of the darkness of sin.
  - ii. Instead, we are under a system of grace rather than a law which condemns.

## Modern Teachings Which Depart from the Scriptures

### 1. Some History

#### a. “Clinical” Baptism

- i. 251 AD – Novation, afraid he would die unbaptized, had himself sprinkled on his deathbed.
- ii. 337 AD – Emperor Constantine was “sprinkled” on his deathbed by Eusebius of Nicomedia
- iii. Some people decided to wait until late in life to be baptized so they could die soon thereafter without having amassed a load of sin.
  1. However, there was the risk of becoming too ill or not being able to get to a pool or river in time.
- iv. If they recovered, they were to be immersed (until 1311 AD)
- v. 753 AD – Pope Stephen III legislated that “in cases of necessity”, pouring water on the head was “acceptable”.
- vi. 1311 AD - A council of bishops meeting at Ravenna in Italy voted that either sprinkling or immersion was acceptable for everybody. The practice of sprinkling then took over universally (except in the GREEK CATHOLIC Church), and has spread into Protestant denominations.

#### b. Infant Baptism

##### i. 415 AD – Emperor Augustine

1. Made Christianity the official state religion of Rome
2. Passed a law by which infant baptism was decreed to be the law of the land in 416 AD.
  - a. All infants had to do it within a specified time.
  - b. Could only be done by an authorized Roman priest.
  - c. Those who disagreed were sometimes called Anabaptists, and were persecuted and even executed for non-compliance.
  - d. Escalating fees began to be charged by priests for performing infant baptism, to the point where poor people could not afford it.
  - e. Infants who died without being baptized were not given “last rites” and were to be buried in a separate part of a cemetery due to their “lost” condition.
  - f. Parents would give the deed to their property rather than have their infant child die without having been baptized, and therefore be doomed eternally.

3. A belief in “original sin” and that sprinkling or pouring water on the infant purified the original sin was the justification given. Opposition was treated rather harshly.
  - a. Catholic dictionary gives this definition:
    - i. “Original sin may be taken to mean: (1) the sin that Adam committed; (2) a consequence of this first sin, the hereditary stain with which we are born on account of our origin or descent from Adam.”
4. Opponents who were not executed would surely be “anathematized” .

## 2. Baptism and the New Birth

- a. A major division within Christendom pertains to the point at which the “new birth” occurs.
  - i. Most of Christendom maintains that a person is born again, and thus has sin washed away by the blood of Christ, when that persons “accepts Jesus as his personal savior.”
  - ii. By this it is understood that a person must mentally (and perhaps verbally) decide to embrace Christ as the Lord of his life.
  - iii. Therefore, the new birth is seen simply as a determination of the will.
- b. John 3:1-7
- c. Much effort is expended to avoid identifying “water” as water baptism.
  - i. A variety of interpretations have been proposed during the last 60 years.
    1. One proposal is that “water” is a reference to the Holy Spirit
      - a. It is true that Jesus uses water symbolically to represent the Spirit in John 7:37-39.
      - b. However, in John 3 the literal meaning of water is understood for three reasons:
        - i. Water baptism is consistently associated with salvation throughout the New Testament.
        - ii. In John 3:23-24 “John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized (for John had not yet been put in prison).”
        - iii. If “water” in John 3:5 is an allusion to the Holy Spirit, the result would be “unless one is born of *Spirit* and

the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”, which would not make sense.

2. Another proposal is that “water” is a symbol for the blood of Jesus.
  - a. Fruit of the vine is used as a symbol of the blood of Jesus (Matthew 26:26-29)
  - b. Do not know of any instance in which water is used as a symbol for the blood of Jesus.
  - c. 1 John 5:6 distinguishes between water and the blood.
3. In recent years the notion has been advanced that “water” is a reference to the amniotic fluid that accompanies the physical birth of a child.
  - a. Nicodemus thought that Jesus was referring to physical birth.
  - b. Jesus would not have told Nicodemus that he needed to be born again physically.
4. Other related scriptures to consider:
  - a. 1 Corinthians 12:13
    - i. “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”
  - b. Ephesians 5:25-27
    - i. [25](#) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26](#) that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27](#) so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
  - c. Titus 3:5
    - i. he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

### 3. Calling on the Name of the Lord

- a. Some equate “calling on the name of the Lord” with the idea of saying to Jesus, “Lord, save me.” (See Romans 10:13, Acts 2:21)
- b. Matthew 7:21-23 stands in contradiction to this idea.

[21](#) “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22](#) On that

day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ [23](#) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

- c. What is the correct understanding of “calling on the name of the Lord”?
- i. Acts 25:11 --- When Paul said “I appeal to Caesar”, the word “appeal” is the same word translated as “call” in Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13.
    1. Paul was not appealing to Caesar to “save” him; he was claiming the right of a Roman citizen to have his case judged by Caesar.
    2. In resting his case on Caesar’s judgment, Paul had to submit to whatever was necessary in order for his case to be brought before Caesar.
    3. When a person submits to the will of God, that person is “calling on the name of the Lord.”
  - ii. 1 Peter 3:21 states that baptism is an “appeal to God for a good conscience”.
  - iii. Acts 22:16 connects baptism and the washing away of sins with “calling on His name”.
    1. When Paul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus
      - a. Asked “What shall I do?”
      - b. Jesus’ answer was not “call upon the name of the Lord”
      - c. Jesus’ answer was “Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.”
      - d. Ananias told Paul (in part) “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”
  - iv. Romans 10:5-17
    1. A favorite scripture of many in Christendom.
    2. Does not mention baptism explicitly.
    3. What is mentioned:
      - a. Confession (v. 9)
      - b. Belief (v. 9)
      - c. Hearing, Preaching (v. 14)
      - d. Obedience (negatively implied) (v. 16)
      - e. Faith, Hearing, word of Christ (v. 17)

## The Sinner's Prayer

1. Earliest notion of a “Sinner’s Prayer” is less than 500 years ago.
2. It was formalized as a theology about the time of Billy Graham.
3. Also known as the “Four Spiritual Laws”.
4. C. S. Lewis used the term “a great cataract of nonsense” to describe how people use a modern idea to construe Bible theology.
  - a. What happens when someone looks backward at the Bible based only on what he or she has known.
  - b. Instead, we should first discern conversion practices from the Scriptures and then consider the topic in light of New Testament teaching and practice.
  - c. The “Sinner’s Prayer” is a novel technique popularized through modern revivals and has replaced Biblically sound practice.
5. Billy Sunday
  - a. Played professional baseball from 1883 to 1891 for Chicago, Pittsburg, and Philadelphia in the National League.
  - b. Left baseball for ministry after 1891.
  - c. Was “converted” in 1886 or 1887.
  - d. Has been called the most influential American evangelist from 1900-1920.
  - e. The “sawdust trail”.
6. John Webb
  - a. During the 1700’s came an era of strong preaching
    - i. Created an environment where people felt the need to respond to the message.
    - ii. Eventually Revelation 3:14, 19-20 became a popular passage for appeals.
    - iii. Revelation 3:14, 19-20 is directed toward lukewarm Christians, not unbelievers.
    - iv. The message was altered by John Webb in the mid-1700’s, as follows:
      1. “Here is a promise Union to Christ; in these words, I will come in to him, i.e. If any Sinner will but hear my Voice and open the Door, and receive me by Faith, I will come into his Soul, and unite him to me, and make him a living member of that my mystical body of which I am Head.”
      2. By looking straight into the sinner’s eyes while speaking as if Christ was talking instead of the preacher, raised great emotions – more emotion than one displays at baptism. So, preachers concluded

that the point of faith was more important than the point of obedience. This is when Huldreich Zwingli put into words the famous statement that baptism was only an outward sign of an inward grace.

7. Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531)

- a. A leader of the Reformation movement in Switzerland.
- b. Baptism was universally seen by Christians as in some sense necessary for salvation, until Huldrych Zwingli in the 16th century denied its necessity.
- c. To Zwingli is attributed the statement about baptism “It is an outward sign of an inward grace.”

8. Cane Ridge, Kentucky

- a. A sensational revival that lasted for weeks.
- b. Allegedly, people barked, rolled over in the aisles, and became delirious because there were long periods without food in intense heat.
- c. The Cane Ridge revival became a paradigm for revivalists for decades.
- d. A lawyer named Charles Finney came along about a decade later to systemize the Cane Ridge experience through the use of the “Mourner’s Seat” or “Anxious Seat”.
- e. According to Finney, “The church has always felt it necessary to have something of this kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles, baptism answered this purpose. The gospel was preached to the people, and then all who were willing to be on the side of Christ were called out to be baptized. It held the place that the anxious seat does now as a public manifestation of their determination to be Christians.”

9. Dwight Moody

- a. Modified Finney’s system.
  - i. Instead of calling for a public decision, he asked people to join him and his trained counselors in a room called the “Inquiry Room”.
  - ii. In the Inquiry Room, the counselors asked the possible convert some questions, taught from the scriptures, and prayed with them.
  - iii. The idea that prayer was at the end of the process had been loosely associated with conversion in the 1700’s, but by the late 1800’s it was a standard technique for “receiving Christ” as Moody’s influence spread across both the USA and the UK.
    1. This was where a systematic “Sinner’s Prayer” began, but it was not called such until the time of Billy Sunday.

10. Billy Graham, Bill Bright

- a. In the 1950's, Graham's crusade counselors were using a prayer that had been sporadically used for some time.
- b. It began with a prayer from Grahams's "Four Steps to Peace with God", which originated with Billy Sunday's tract called "Four Things God Wants You to Know".
- c. The altar call system of Graham had been refined by a precise protocol of music, trained counselors, and a speaking technique all geared to help people "accept Christ as Savior".
- d. In the late 1950's Bill Bright came up with the exact form of the currently popular "Four Spiritual Laws" so that the average convert could take the crusade experience into the home of their neighbors. Those who responded to crusades and sermons could have the crusade experience at home when they prayed, *"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be."*

**Like the "great cataract of nonsense" (term used by C. S. Lewis), the developers of this system of theology were blind to the plain teaching of scripture on salvation.**