

CONVERSION TO CHRIST (Matt 18:1-5)

A. **The gospel** does not convey a message of "Come as you are & live like you want to."

1. Instead, it is about converting sinners into saints.

B. **Acts** records many such conversions.

1. We can follow Peter, Paul & others throughout the world as they preach Christ & pave the way for many to be converted to Christ.

[Today, we are going to examine those cases of conversion]

I. BE CONVERTED & BECOME AS LITTLE CHILDREN

A. (**Discuss the context** of Matt 18:1-5)

1. This teaching was meant to extend far beyond the time of the apostles, even down to our own age (**Acts 2:39**).

B. **Conversions** make things useful to us (e.g., currency), the same is true of conversion to Christ.

Eph 2:1, 12 – (Before we are converted to Him we are) “dead in trespasses & sins...without Christ...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel...strangers from the covenants of promise...having no hope & without God in the world.”

1. But conversion brings regeneration (**Titus 3:5**)– renewal (**Col 3:10**) – rebirth (to make us useful).

John 3:5-8 – Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8" The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

2. A conversion does NOT change people instantly.

- a. Conversion is like a birth & growing period.
- b. Conversion is like planting, watering & harvesting (1 Cor 3:6-9).
- c. It takes time, desire, effort & many reminders *to be & to remain converted* to the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 12:1-2).

C. A conversion result in salvation & God's plan of salvation is clearly marked.

1. The gospel must be heard & understood (no knowledge of the Savior, no salvation) –

Rom 10:13-14 – For "whoever calls on 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?

2. Hearing the word of God obligates one to decide if it is worthy of belief.

John 1:12 – But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

3. Belief must be followed by repentance.

Mark 2:17 – Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

4. Many Jews believed in him, but remained in their sins—unwilling to confess that belief.

Rom 10:8-10 – But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 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. 10 FOR with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

5. Finally, conversion is realized when one is baptized; sanctified by the washing of water by the word (Eph 5:26; Mk 16:16 (Why is he saved?); Acts 2:38 (His sins are forgiven); 3:19 (He is converted)).

3. They didn't even know they were guilty of any sins, so Peter had to exhort them, "*Be saved from this perverse generation*" to get them in the watery grave of baptism where sinners are buried & disciples are raised to a new life.

[Over the years, people have tried to evade the human actions involved in conversion & salvation. As we look at the examples of conversion in Acts we will see that what we have studied thus far is true.]

II. CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

A. The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-42).

1. 50 days after Jesus raised, Peter preached the gospel to an audience of Jews gathered for the Pentecost celebration.
2. When he finished, they were "cut to the heart", &, while in that frame of mind, they were instructed to "repent & be baptized" for the remission of their sins.

B. Down In Samaria (Acts 8:5-13).

Acts 8:12 – Philip "preached Christ" to the people, & "when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God & the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized."

Acts 8:13 –Then Simon (a sorcerer) himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

C. Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:30-39)

1. Next, we find that Philip "preached Jesus" to a nobleman, on the road to Gaza, who had been worshipping God in Jerusalem.

2. As they traveled together, the sight of water sparked the conscience of this nobleman, & he expressed his desire to be baptized.
3. Upon his confession, he was immersed in that water to begin his walk in newness of life.
4. The eunuch's baptism did not make him a member of any local congregation; he was not joining the church of his choice; the eunuch was being added to the church that forever belongs only to Christ.

D. Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-18).

1. Most people assume that Saul was saved on the Damascus Road when Jesus spoke to him & Saul called Him "Lord", but if that is so then he was a miserable saved person—blind & hungry.

2. The fact that he was still in his sins when the preacher arrived becomes clear when Paul recounts his conversion later in life (Acts 22:16).

- a. Ananias came to tell Saul what he "must do" (Acts 9:6).

3. Despite having called Jesus Lord out on the road, Saul was still in his sins until Ananias persuaded him to be baptized.

E. Cornelius (Acts 10:1-6, 34-48)

1. The gospel finally makes its way to a non-Jewish household.
2. But only after God assured Peter that it was proper for him to preach to these people.

3. After the preaching, & for the first time since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit caused those who believed the gospel to speak in tongues.
4. This convinced Peter that the command to be baptized should be given so that those who received the word could be in Christ. (Gal 3:27).

F. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15)

1. Prayerful, kind Lydia was still in her sins until she met the apostle Paul, whose preaching “opened her heart” to the truth.
2. Lydia was not a fornicator, thief, or murderer; her good works may have been greater than her mistakes, but without Christ she was lost.
3. Lydia's faith came by hearing the word of God; she was baptized & thus “judged...to be faithful to the Lord.”

G. Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:25-34)

1. Even a prison cell cannot stop preachers from preaching & sinners from being converted.
2. Paul & Silas “spoke the word of the Lord to him & to all who were in his house”
3. He showed signs of repentance by washing the stripes of Paul & Silas.
4. He & his family consented to be immersed in water so that they could be “healed” by the Savior’s “stripes” (Isa 53:5: 1 Pet 1:24).
5. In spite of the risk of a jailbreak, the jailer spent the night rejoicing “having believed in God with all his household”.

H. Corinthians (Acts 18:8).

1. Paul after reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath...persuaded both Jews & Greeks.
2. After being forced to leave the synagogue, he began preaching from the “house of a certain man named Justus” who lived next door.
 - a. “And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed & were baptized.”

- a. Holy Spirit; infant; a mode other than immersion; merely symbolic of salvation.

[Such "baptisms" are as ineffective today as John's baptism was to the Ephesians.]

CLOSING

I. Ephesians (Acts 19:1-7)

1. Here is a group who had been baptized into John's baptism, a baptism that was no longer in effect, so Paul commanded them to be “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”.
2. Did you know there are baptisms today that are not in effect?

- A. This is a lesson about conversion; conversion is brought about by:

preaching that is believed,
repentance that rejects all sin,
confession that announces faith & a new loyalty
baptism that initiates one into Christ by a new birth.

- B. No step in the process is more vital than another, but none is any less vital either.
- C. Won't you come to Jesus Christ today as these men & women did & be saved?